

**An Examination of How Children with Dyslexia Experience Reading in
Two Languages in a Gaelscoil**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the Master's Degree in Special Educational Needs, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged in the text of my work.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of children with dyslexia reading two languages in an all-Irish medium school (gaelscoil) and by extension, their ability to access the wider curriculum through Irish, their second language (L2). The current reading attainment of three children with diagnosed dyslexia was established, in Irish and English, by means of standardised and diagnostic assessments. The policies and practices within the school, along with parental support in the home, were investigated to establish the appropriateness of the support provided to these children in meeting their needs in reading two languages. This was a predominantly qualitative research project, employing a collective case study design. A range of instruments were used in the collection of data, including assessments, documents, interviews, observations and questionnaires. Three children, their parents, their present class and learning support teachers, the principal and the other staff members of one co-educational gaelscoil, participated in the study.

The study shows that the three children are progressing well in both languages, being marginally more successful in English. They showed themselves to be capable of using a range of strategies to decipher unfamiliar words in English but were heavily reliant on automatic recognition of basic sight vocabulary and/or contextual analysis for reading in Irish. Learning support is provided in English within the school, while Irish is not actively supported in the home. Through the implementation of language-based and co-operative strategies, the children are assisted in accessing the curriculum through Irish. This study identifies the need for a whole-school approach to literacy-related issues, ensuring that policy on immersion education is fully implemented, while encouraging teachers to incorporate more phonological-based strategies when teaching reading in Irish. Equally, the learning support policy requires reappraisal, ensuring that the needs of children with dyslexia are being met, while encouraging and supporting parents to assist their children in reading Irish in the home. Currently, there is a paucity of research in relation to children with special educational needs (SEN) attending gaelscoileanna and with the increased demand for education in such settings, future studies on related issues are imperative to ensure best practice is implemented.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In Ireland, there has been a significant growth in the demand for primary education through the medium of Irish since the 1980s. At present, the number of all-Irish primary schools, *gaelscoileanna*, outside Irish speaking areas of the country (the *Gaeltacht*) now stands at 171, a substantial increase since 1972 when only 16 schools were in existence (Cummings, 2008). *Gaelscoileanna* operate an immersion programme of education which involves immersing children in the language of the school, Irish. For the majority of pupils, Irish is their second language (L2) with English being spoken in the wider community and at home. Consequently, the school environment is their only opportunity to speak in Irish.

The implication for a child attending a *gaelscoil* is not merely in relation to second language acquisition, but extends equally to acquiring literacy in two languages. Owing to the fact that all subjects, with the exception of English, are taught through Irish, mastery of reading the language is a prerequisite to accessing the wider curriculum. For most children, biliteracy is not problematic, but for those who experience a specific learning difficulty in relation to literacy, they face the added challenge of having to read and write in two languages. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the experiences of children with dyslexia reading two languages in an all-Irish setting.

Focus of the Study

This study is concerned with establishing how three children with dyslexia, who are currently enrolled in a *gaelscoil* (the researcher's own school), achieve in both Irish and English reading, and by extension, how they access the wider curriculum through Irish. Children with dyslexia encounter difficulties with various aspects of literacy which include decoding, word-recognition, use of contextual clues, fluency in reading and comprehension (Westwood, 2003). By evaluating each child's reading ability in relation to these aspects of literacy, a comparison between their achievements in both languages

can be drawn, establishing the strategies employed during the reading process. The provision of learning support and the implementation of practices in the teaching of reading in both languages are examined. In addition, support for reading within the home is determined. This study seeks to establish how the various supports in relation to policy and practice within the school, along with the support provided in the home, combine to enable these three children with dyslexia to read two languages and to access the curriculum through Irish.

Purpose of the Study

There has been extensive research carried out internationally in relation to immersion education and its effects on student learning. However, these studies do not reflect the particular characteristics of the Irish context. Of the research which has been carried out in Ireland to date, the focus has been on comparisons of academic achievement between students attending gaelscoileanna, Gaeltacht and monolingual schools, in areas of literacy and maths. Notwithstanding the value of these studies, they do not appraise the achievements or experiences of children with SEN in all-Irish settings. Therefore, the rationale for this particular project stems from the paucity of research in relation to children with special educational needs (SEN) in immersion education in Ireland and the suitability of such settings in meeting their needs.

Context of the Study

For gaelscoileanna, there are many issues around the practice and policy of literacy that, as yet, require clarification. In the absence of comprehensive guidelines from the Department of Education and Science (DES), three discernable literacy policies have emerged where (i) Irish reading commences first, (ii) reading in English commences first, and (iii) reading in Irish and English commence concurrently (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004). The latter is the only practice against which the DES has advised (DES, 1999c), while the former is the most commonly implemented policy (Ní Bhaoill, 2004; Ó hAiniféin, 2007) and one which is reflected in the researcher's own school. This would seem a considered choice given that Irish is the language of the school and, that

interdependence between oral language learning and literacy acquisition exists (Cummins 1984).

Ewart and Straw (2001) maintain that the initial language of literacy instruction may not be as significant an issue as the methodologies employed in the teaching of reading. Hence, the emphasis is firmly placed on the type of instruction and approaches used when teaching a second language. In relation to such instruction, the DES acknowledges the importance of teaching phonics particular to Irish in *Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, Treoirínte do Mhúinteoirí* (DES, 1999b). However, no such systematic scheme is available to gael scoileanna within these guidelines. Similarly, the need for comprehensive guidelines for teaching reading in Irish has been reiterated, given the particular language and literacy needs of children in gael scoileanna (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 2007). These issues impact on children with dyslexia as their specific difficulties relate to matters of literacy.

Of equal importance to children with dyslexia is the language for which learning support is provided within a gael scoil. The Learning Support Guidelines (LSG) (DES, 2000) state that the principal aim of learning support is to “provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources....in English and mathematics” (p.15). In the majority of gael scoileanna, learning support is provided through English, in accordance with these guidelines, notwithstanding the fact that Irish is the initial language of literacy instruction in these schools (Ní Bhaoill, 2004). This practice is reflected in the researcher’s own school where provision of support is solely in English. Research, into the Canadian experience of immersion education, shows that children with SEN are not disadvantaged by such programmes, as long as appropriate supports are put in place to meet their needs (Neil, Nig Uidhir and Clarke, 2000). Cummins (1984) asserts that this support should be provided in their second language, a view held by Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004). Consequently, in the absence of any clear guidance for gael scoileanna on this matter, a practice continues that is contrary to research-based evidence.

The findings of Ó hAiniféin (2007) in relation to English reading achievements of students attending gaelscoileanna, as compared with those in monolingual schools, demonstrate the former to be significantly ahead of their counterparts in this area. This study indicates that immersion programmes impact favourably on a child's first language though the effects of such programmes on children with SEN are not specifically targeted. Consequently, information on the effectiveness of the policies and practices of gaelscoileanna for these students is essential.

It is the right of parents to send their child to a school of their choice (Education Act, Ireland, 1998) and equally, it is the function of each school to provide appropriate education to meet the needs of all children. Moreover, "best practice in teaching methods with regard to the diverse needs of students and the development of the skills and competences of teachers" should be the concern of all those involved in education (Education Act, Ireland, p. 10). With the accomplishments of immersion education widely acknowledged in relation to achievements in biliteracy, gaelscoileanna should be continually striving to maximise the learning outcomes of children with SEN, ensuring that policies are well informed and that teachers employ best practice in their teaching.

Research Questions

In carrying out this study a number of research questions need to be addressed. The overriding research question examines if the existing teaching practices and school policies in the areas of literacy and learning support meet the needs of children with dyslexia. In establishing the answer to this question, the following issues are investigated: (i) What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages? (ii) How are children with dyslexia achieving in reading two languages in a gaelscoil? (iii) How are these students accessing the wider curriculum through Irish? (iv) How are these children being supported both in school, through appropriate policies, and in the home?

Summary

This study establishes the achievements and experiences of the key participants, the three children with dyslexia, by means of assessments, questionnaires, interviews, classroom

observations and documentary evidence. Various methods of data collection assist in compiling information on the current level of attainment of these children while assessing their ability to access other subjects through Irish. The perspectives of all the participants, including the principal, the teaching staff, the three children and their parents, are ascertained in an effort to evaluate the support provided for children with dyslexia. Use of teacher questionnaires and interviews establish relevant information on methodologies employed in teaching reading and on accommodations afforded to children with dyslexia within the class. Literacy and learning support policies are examined to determine if practice reflects policy and if existing policies meet the needs of these children. In forming a comprehensive picture of the reality for children with dyslexia reading two languages in a gaelscoil, this study aspires to identify pertinent issues affecting their progress and to make recommendations effecting change, if judged appropriate.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Children with dyslexia have a specific learning difficulty, the result of which makes basic literacy skills problematic (Westwood, 2003). However, for children with dyslexia attending a gaelscoil, there is the added requirement of attaining literacy in a second language. For these students, both languages, though equally important, are functionally different. By and large, English is the community language in Ireland hence, a societal need for literacy in English exists. On the other hand, in a gaelscoil setting, Irish is the language of the school, with all subjects, except English, being taught through this medium. Consequently, Irish reading becomes the means by which the wider curriculum is accessed. Given that this specific learning difficulty can affect up to 2% of the school population (Westwood, 2003), it is deemed vital to establish key issues for children with dyslexia in an environment which necessitates literacy in two languages.

Outline of Literature Review

Many areas considered pertinent to children with dyslexia in such settings, are presented in this chapter. Initially, an historical overview of the position of the Irish language in education is outlined along with an examination of immersion education, its origins and effectiveness. Dyslexia and related matters around effective teaching approaches are discussed in general terms, while specific factors which impinge on children with dyslexia in acquiring a second language are considered. These include such issues as (i) oral proficiency in a second language, (ii) the interdependence of language and phonological awareness, (iii) the orthography of Irish, (iv) the initial language of literacy instruction, (v) learning support provision in gaelscoileanna and (vi) parental support.

Search Procedures Implemented

Much of the literature was accessed by means of the various library facilities in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, including on-line resources. The databases most widely

searched were EBSCO, ERIC, Sage, SpringerLink and Swetswise. The search engines Google and Google Scholar were also utilised. The initial search included key words such as ‘bilingualism’, ‘immersion education’, ‘second language acquisition’, ‘biliteracy’, ‘all-Irish education’ and ‘dyslexia’. Various permutations of these terms were tried which narrowed the field of reference, making the information more pertinent to the study. Governmental and organisational websites including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), An Chomhairle um Oideachas Ghaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), The Dyslexia Association of Ireland and Gaelscoileanna.ie were also accessed on-line.

There is a proliferation of information regarding bilingualism and immersion education, outlining the international perspective. However, it is important to acknowledge that much of this research is not readily applicable to the Irish context insofar as Irish is not a community language, outside of Gaeltacht areas. Therefore, relevant studies from the Irish perspective were included where possible.

An Historical View of the Irish Language in Education

Historically, the education system in Ireland has been the vehicle for the revitalisation of Irish, the national language of Ireland (Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002). This is evidenced by the many language planning policies which were delegated to the school system, the teaching of the language being the predominant method of achieving “the Irish State’s objective of societal bilingualism” (Murtagh, 2007, p. 428). By the early 1940s, Coady and Ó Laoire claim that the positive approach to all-Irish education resulted in 5% of primary schools being taught through the medium of Irish, with half of the remainder offering varying amounts of instruction in the language. However, this declined to 1% by the beginning of the 1970s with the effectiveness of education through Irish being disputed (Coady and Ó Laoire). A study by Macnamara (1966), found that the academic achievement of students in all-Irish schools was questionable in relation to attainment in maths with “the effect on English being very grave indeed” (p. 137). However, the poor attainment in English demonstrated in Macnamara’s findings may have been due to cultural and curricular factors in that significantly less time was spent on instruction in

English (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984; Baker and Hornberger, 2001). Moreover, Baker and Hornberger maintain that the adverse context in which all-Irish schools operated in relation to Irish being a “low-prestige, low-utility language” with little parental support, militated against positive academic effects (p. 59).

The resurgence of interest in education through Irish began in the mid-seventies with the establishment of new Irish medium schools (gaelscoileanna) at the behest of parents (Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002). Ó Riagáin (1997) postulates that parental involvement and enthusiasm, as opposed to governmental policy, was the fundamental difference between the gaelscoil movement and the previous all-Irish school system. Parental influence continues to be the driving force behind each new gaelscoil to the present day. However, the category of Maintenance/Heritage Language Programme (Baker and Jones, 1998) is still applicable to gaelscoileanna as they promote the use of the minority language, Irish (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004).

Immersion Education

Origins of Immersion Education

Immersion bilingual education has its origins in Montreal, Canada. The main objective of this programme was to provide an education that would lead to competency in French, the community language, while allowing for normal attainment levels in all curriculum areas including English, the first language of the students (Baker and Jones, 1998). Many studies set out to evaluate the efficacy of these programmes in relation to language acquisition and proficiency in both English and French, along with general learning outcomes relating to the broader curriculum. To date, research reveals that pupils attending immersion schools make significant gains in second-language acquisition with no apparent cost to their first language (Baker and Jones, 1998). Furthermore, evidence suggests that immersion education not only leads to bilingualism and biliteracy, but also “tends to heighten achievement across the curriculum” making such programmes a strong form of bilingual education (Baker, 2006, p. 287).

Immersion Education in Ireland

In Ireland at present, all-Irish medium education is provided through immersion programmes which are available from preschool through to second level (Ó Muirheartaigh and Hickey, 2008). For the majority of children attending these schools, English is their first language (L1), with Irish being their second (L2). All subjects are taught through Irish with the exception of English at primary level. Ó Muirheartaigh and Hickey state that there has been a significant increase in the number of gaelscoileanna in the recent past, culminating in at least one gaelscoil in every county in Ireland since the school year 2005-2006.

In an effort to evaluate the success of these programmes within the Irish context, research has set out to compare achievement in L2 proficiency of students in gaelscoileanna with that of students in mainstream and in Gaeltacht schools (Harris 1984; Harris and Murtagh, 1988). The evidence confirms that much higher levels of achievement, both in spoken Irish and in literacy skills, are gained by students in gaelscoileanna in relation to their peers in monolingual settings (Harris) while similar levels of attainment are realised when compared to those students in Gaeltacht areas (Murtagh, 2007). These studies demonstrate evidence of high levels of achievement among the general student populations in all-Irish medium schools. However, no specific evaluation has been carried out to assess the educational outcomes for children with SEN within these settings.

Dyslexia

Definitions of Dyslexia

The Irish Task Force on Dyslexia (ITFD) appointed by the Department of Education and Science (DES) (2001) describes dyslexia and its main characteristics as:

a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading and/or writing, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterized by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in

organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present. (ITFD, DES, 2001, p. 29).

The International Association of Dyslexia (IAD) (2002) outlines the various features associated with dyslexia. A particular focus on word decoding leading to “difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition ...poor spelling and decoding abilities” is emphasised (Internet). As a consequence of a deficit in phonological processing of language, other literacy skills, including comprehension, become problematic (IAD).

In an effort to overcome these difficulties, the ITFD (DES, 2001) advocates the necessity for children with specific learning difficulties to receive support appropriate to their needs. Lyon, Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2003) maintain that when instruction does not match the needs of the child, reading failure is more prevalent. Torgesen (2000), in a study on children deemed to be at-risk in literacy, demonstrated that effective early intervention significantly reduced the propensity for failure in the majority of instances. Consequently, the approaches and methods employed in teaching children with dyslexia have a bearing on their progress (ITFD).

Approaches to Teaching Reading

Theories surrounding the approaches to teaching reading abound from the top-down theory, or whole language approach, to the bottom-up theory which is based on phonics. In relation to the latter, The Report of the National Reading Panel (RNRP) (2000) claims that the synthetic phonics approach involving the explicit teaching of phonics, has “a positive and significant effect” on the reading skills of children experiencing difficulties (p. 9). Many of these programmes are typified by: (i) multisensory components which can be visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile (ii) sequential approaches, (iii) cumulative and progressive planning and (iv) over learning by means of repetition (Reid, 2005). However, the implementation of this bottom-up approach is only one element of a whole reading programme which “should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension strategies” (RNRP, p. 11).

Ehri (1998) identifies five strategies which can be employed by readers during the

reading process: decoding, blending and pronouncing familiar sound patterns, sight words, analogising and contextual cues. Of these methods, automatic sight reading is the most efficient. Pikulski and Chard (2005) maintain that when reading is automatic and accurate, attention is drawn away from decoding and the reader can become focused on comprehension. High frequency words are those which appear repeatedly in a language but are nonetheless critical to developing fluency. In acknowledging the importance of automatic sight reading, Hickey (2007) has identified 103 high-frequency words from a corpus of Irish books aimed at primary school children, many of which are function words such as pronouns and prepositions. Westwood (2003) states that “children need to acquire, as rapidly as possible, a bank of words they know instantly by sight” (p.136). Whole-word approaches with an emphasis on repetition are often adopted in teaching these words (Pikulski and Chard)

In applying a framework for the various teaching approaches which can be employed for children with dyslexia, Reid (2005) identifies four distinct categories: (i) Individual programmes which include well structured, stand-alone programmes specific to the needs of children with dyslexia; (ii) Support approaches and strategies that are similar in some respects to the individual programmes but can be integrated into curricular activities; (iii) Assisted learning techniques, employing strategies that have a peer or adult related component, involving learning from others; (iv) Whole-school approaches which acknowledge that school policies on dyslexia are vital to the progress of these children while accepting that responsibility and onus lies with the school.

Peer and Reid (2000) claim that if obstacles for children with dyslexia are overcome then they “can benefit from a range of learning experiences which can develop language skills and facilitate progress in attainment” similar to all multilingual learners (p. 7). However, for bilingual children with dyslexia the challenge is to identify these barriers.

Oral Proficiency in a Second Language

It is widely accepted that reading skills of a normal reader develop competently in the language with which he/she is most familiar. Evidence shows that there is a link between

competency in language and achievement in literacy (Fitzgerald, 1995). The effect of limited language proficiency in L2 was investigated by Verhoeven (2000) in a longitudinal study into the differences between the reading processes used by first language (L1), native Dutch-speaking students and L2, minority children. In all, 2,143 children, from working class families, participated in the study of which 1,812 were Dutch and 331 were minority children. Instructional methods for teaching reading were uniform for all students, with a combination of language experience, whole-word and decoding approaches being employed. A wide range of tests were administered, at various intervals in grade one and two, to assess literacy skills in areas such as decoding, vocabulary and reading comprehension and spelling. Arising from the findings, Verhoeven deduced that vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners was significantly lower than that of their L1 counterparts, leading to a serious impediment for L2 reading “at both the word and discourse levels” (p. 326). Moreover, L2 readers experienced considerable difficulties in reading comprehension particularly when “decontextualised, cognitively demanding language” was used (p. 326).

To access the curriculum through a second language, as is the case in immersion programmes, development of cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) is required (Cummins, 1984). Baker and Jones (1998) maintain that the complexity of the curriculum necessitates more than a conversational fluency, as the child progresses through the school. Research indicates that children in early, total immersion programmes can develop subject-specific knowledge while gaining the appropriate language skills (Met, 1994; Baker and Jones, 1998). As language and content learning occur in tandem, classes in curricular subjects should have clearly-defined objectives to fulfil both requirements, with teachers establishing the necessary academic language for “successful mastery” of the subject matter (Met, p. 179).

The Interdependence of Language and Phonological Awareness

It would appear that there is no relationship between the attainment levels of students in the majority language and the amount of instructional time received in that language (Cummins, 1984). This fact alone infers that an “underlying cognitive/academic

proficiency” (p. 143) exists across all languages, thereby enabling transfer of literacy skills from one to another.

....although the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation, fluency, etc.) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages. This common underlying proficiency makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy related proficiency from one language to another (Cummins, 2005, p. 4).

Cummins (1984) maintains that this transfer is likely to happen from minority to majority languages due to “the greater exposure to literacy in the majority language and the strong social pressure to learn it” (p. 143). Consequently, teaching of literacy skills in L2 help to develop literacy skills in L1 and teachers should “actively teach for transfer across languages” in immersion programmes (Cummins, 2005, p. 8). Conversely, Durgunoglu (2002) claims that the development of phonological awareness in L2 develops at a slower pace as a result of lower oral competency levels. He suggests that by developing this skill in the strong language, L1, the cross-linguistic transfer will impact positively on L2, thereby facilitating progress in the second language.

In an effort to evaluate the degree to which phonological skills are a necessary component in reading a second language, Wade-Woolley and Geva (2000) studied 34 English speaking pupils (L1) from second-grade, across four classes, who were learning Hebrew as their second language (L2) in an immersion setting. Each child was administered a number of phonological assessments which included phoneme identification, non-word decoding, phonological recognition and word reading. Their findings conclude that a general level of phonological ability is required for reading to progress in both languages. Operations which required manipulating elements common to both languages were found to be straightforward while general phonological skills transferred positively across both languages. This evidence confirms that “phonological processing skills in one language are predictive of word recognition skills within and cross-linguistically” (Geva, 2000, p. 20). Furthermore, Geva maintains that it is possible to gauge reading difficulties across languages as a result of the relationship between an individual’s phonological skills and word recognition, even if L2 proficiency is limited.

Lipka and Siegel (2007) carried out a longitudinal study to ascertain whether predictors of reading skills differed between third-grade English speaking (L1) and English-Second-Language (ESL) students. In all, 831 pupils were assessed in kindergarten and again in the third-grade. Age-appropriate tests in areas of phonological processing, syntactic awareness, spelling and memory were administered in kindergarten. Additional assessments were included to appraise reading processes in third-grade. Significantly, the findings highlighted the fact that, for all children, whether L1 or L2 learners, letter identification and phonological awareness were predictors of future reading difficulties.

These two factors are known for their important role in building future reading skills, and analysis was able to identify 71% of the students who would later show reading difficulties. (Lipka and Siegel, 2007, p. 126).

The importance of phonological awareness is acknowledged in the Primary School Curriculum, English, Teacher Guidelines (DES, 1999a)

In acquiring the ability to use sound-letter relationships (grapho/phonic cues) the child needs to develop phonological and phonemic awareness, that is, an ability to manipulate the sound segments in words (DES, 1999a, p. 58).

Similarly, in *Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, Treoiríní do Mhúinteoirí* (DES, 1999b), the difference in phonology between Irish and English and the need to teach letter/sound correspondence is alluded to, but no framework for the implementation of a structured phonics programme is laid out.

Tá fóineolaíocht na Gaeilge difriúil le fóineolaíocht an Bhéarla, áfach agus caithfear cabhrú leis an bpáiste an ceangal idir litreacha agus fuaimeanna a aithint (DES, 1999b, p. 129).

The Primary Curriculum has the expectation that children will “generalise the skills of reading one language to another” but orthographic differences between English and Irish are not emphasised within schools (Hickey, 2007, p. 473). These differences in themselves pose considerable challenges for children in reading Irish (Hickey).

The Orthography of Irish

Definition of Orthography

The transparency of a language refers to “the relationship between the written symbol of the script and the associated sound in speech” (Smythe, Everatt and Salter, 2004, p. 1). A shallow or transparent orthography describes a language which has a high degree of correspondence between grapheme and phoneme. English is considered to have a deep orthography owing to the various inconsistencies in linking symbols and sound (Smythe et al.). The speed at which children progress when learning to make the association between letter and sound depends on the consistency of the orthography (Goswami, 2002). Children learning to read transparent orthographies develop competency faster than those learning deeper orthographies (Goswami, 2002; Seymour, Mikko, and Erskine, 2003).

In determining the relationship between the consistency of the orthography of a language and the development of reading skills, Spencer and Hanley (2003) carried out a study comparing Welsh, a transparent orthography, and English, an opaque orthography. The reading performance of 74 Welsh speaking children, educated in Welsh-medium schools, and 88 English speaking children attending English-medium schools, was evaluated. These assessments took place in their second year of formal reading instruction and again a year later in areas of phoneme detection and reading. They found that phonological awareness skills develop more rapidly in children reading Welsh as compared with children reading English. This evidence supports the claim that reading develops more quickly in shallow orthographies. Moreover, children with dyslexia find more consistent orthographies “easier to handle” (Lundberg, 2002, p. 179). Significantly, Miles and Miles (1999) found that even in transparent orthographies, children with dyslexia had difficulties if a word became blurred as a result of changes to its beginning or ending due to additions such as pronouns. Such blurring often occurs in Irish orthography.

The Orthography of Irish

Hickey (2005) states that Irish is a reasonably transparent orthography when compared with English. Notwithstanding this fact, Irish is governed by different sets of rules and

features which contribute to the complexity of the language, thereby causing significant challenges to readers. Complications arise in spelling and pronunciation due to grammatical rules making it difficult to decipher the root of the word because of the mutation which has occurred (Lyddy, 2005, Internet). Hickey concludes that the teaching of Irish reading tends to reinforce “language items learned orally” with little systematic instruction in the consistent grapheme-phoneme relationships (p. 403). This lack of explicit instruction in the orthography of Irish has led to ineffective decoding skills which makes reading in Irish difficult for weaker readers (Hickey, 2007). Hickey (2005) identifies a number of problematic areas for children in reading Irish, which include either decoding to an incorrect or a similar-looking word. This is due to an over dependence on the look of the word rather than the meaning within the context of the sentence, while encoding can also occur with the L2 reader employing L1 sounds. Therefore, explicit teaching of word analysis for the most frequently used and phonetically regular words would help resolve some of the difficulties for readers of Irish (Hickey, 2006).

Instruction explicitly promoting analysis of the most regular sound-symbol correspondences and the most frequent words in early readers is a critical step in addressing problems with reading fluency in Irish (Hickey, 2006, p. 27).

Many benefits accrue to readers of English who can segment words into syllables and can further decode those syllables. However, Ní Bhaoill and O Duibhir (2004) contend that further analysis is needed to ascertain if similar advantages apply to the Irish language.

In determining the strategies used by normally developing bilingual readers and those with dyslexia reading English and Afrikaans (a shallow orthography), Klein and Doctor (2003) carried out a study among 20 competent readers and three children with dyslexia. Initially the children with dyslexia had difficulties in whole-word recognition and phonological processing which were apparent across both languages. However, over a period of time they used both logographic and phonological strategies in both languages although “the relative use of each strategy influenced performance differently in the two languages” (p. 132). Consequently, having a number of different strategies which can be drawn upon benefits those experiencing difficulties in reading.

Resources for Teaching Irish

Hickey (2005) maintains that even though the need for the teaching of phonics in Irish is acknowledged in *Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí* (DES, 1999b), resources for teaching the specific “grapheme-phoneme rules of Irish to beginners” are lacking (p. 402). The NCCA (2007) re-emphasise the need for the development of a broad range of resources to facilitate the acquisition of literacy. Similarly, Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) highlight the necessity for comprehensive guidelines on the teaching of Irish literacy, but point out that guidance on the initial language of literacy instruction also remains imperative.

Initial Language of Literacy Instruction

Ní Bhaoill (2004) carried out a comprehensive study into the initial language of literacy instruction within the Irish context. Of the 88 schools surveyed regarding this issue, she found that 58% of gaelscoileanna began formal reading through Irish, while 36.4% started reading in English. The remainder commenced reading in both languages. A more recent study carried out by Ó hAiniféin (2007) established that 72% of a total of 92 gaelscoileanna surveyed, commenced formal instruction in literacy through Irish, a considerable increase on this practice since the Ní Bhaoill study in 2004.

Table 2.1. Comparison between the findings of Ní Bhaoill (2004) and Ó hAiniféin (2007) on the practices of gaelscoileanna in relation to the initial language of literacy instruction.

Initial Language of Literacy Instruction	Ní Bhaoill (2004)	Ó hAiniféin (2007)
Irish Initially	58%	72%
English Initially	36.4%	15%
Two Languages Together	5.7%	13%

The lack of guidance and clarity regarding the initial language of instruction in literacy in gaelscoileanna is a cause for concern (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; NCCA, 2007). Consequently, policies on literacy remain a matter for the school although, the simultaneous commencement of reading in both languages is deemed inadvisable.

Moltar gan tosnú ar léitheoireacht fhoirmiúil sa dhá theanga ag an am céanna i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta. Ba cheart i gcónaí fanacht go mbíonn an páiste réidh don léitheoireacht agus bunús maith faoina c(h)umas cainte (Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, DES, 1999c, p. 5).

Ewart and Straw (2001) carried out a study into the effects of initial language of instruction in literacy in two first-grade early French immersion classes in Canada, to establish the sequence for reading instruction within immersion programme schools. In one class, English (L1) was the language of literacy instruction, while the other implemented total French immersion (L2), with no instruction in English literacy. The scope of the study was limited to the pedagogical practices implemented by the two teachers and their role in fostering literacy development. Based on numerous class observations, Ewart and Straw conclude that the “effectiveness of the teacher is probably the single most important consideration” (p. 197) in relation to the debate on initial language of instruction in literacy. The decision to commence literacy in one language over another “needs to be placed in the broader context of instructional strategies” (p. 187). Similarly, Ó hAiniféin (2007) evidenced comparable findings in his study into English literacy achievements in gaelscoileanna adopting the two opposing literacy policies, reaffirming that reading instruction is of utmost importance.

Nonetheless, Cummins (1984) states that transfer across languages takes place more frequently from the minority to the majority language because of the dominance of the latter, in literacy terms, and the desire to learn it. Conversely, for children experiencing difficulties in literacy, a “strong promotion” of their first language gives a good foundation for literacy in their second (Cummins, p. 151). This dichotomy becomes significant when the issue of learning support provision within gaelscoileanna is examined.

Learning Support Provision

Cummins (1984) states categorically that SEN students, in immersion schools, progress as well as their counterparts in English settings.

The fact that children with language and learning problems make equivalent academic progress in immersion to similar children in English programmes suggests that there is little justification for assuming (as many educators and parents do) that such children should be switched to an English programme (Cummins, 1984, p. 174).

Neil, Nig Uidhir and Clarke (2000), in a review of literature, state that there is substantial research-based evidence to support the claim that benefits accrue to children with learning difficulties within immersion programmes “assuming that appropriate remedial resources are available” (p. 59). This is borne out in a study by McAuliffe (2003) into the progress of four children with learning difficulties in a gaelscoil and in receipt of learning support. She established that the children “*could* and *did* achieve success in immersion education” albeit that this support was provided through the medium of English (p. 150).

However, Cummins (1984) maintains that within an immersion situation, provision of support should be delivered in L2, a conviction held by Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004). Nonetheless, of the 14% of children in receipt of learning support in gaelscoileanna, assistance is provided predominantly through English even though the curriculum is accessed through Irish (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir). This is in keeping with the Learning Support Guidelines (2000) which state that the principal aim of learning support within primary schools is to “provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources...in English and mathematics” (p. 15). Consequently, no provision is made to support children experiencing difficulties in the Irish language within an all-Irish setting, a point which is highlighted by Ó Murchú (2001).

Nonetheless, the introduction of SP02/05 (DES, 2005) which outlines The General Allocation Model (GAM) has afforded schools flexibility in the deployment of resources to cater for children with the greatest learning needs. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that children experiencing difficulties in Irish, within a gaelscoil, should be eligible for and provided with such support.

A survey on the provision of special educational needs within Irish-medium primary schools in Northern Ireland, Department of Education, (DfE) (1999) outlines the fact that

the provision of learning support is “focused, appropriately, on the development of the Irish language at KS1, and on English at KS2” (p. 7). The report identifies the need for a consistent approach to “SEN procedures and practices, in relation to the needs of children learning in two languages” (p. 12). A recent report by the DfE (2008) into Irish-medium education recommends that children with SEN should have their needs met “through the medium of Irish where possible, with a particular emphasis on those needs that are most acute” (p. xix). Furthermore, the need for “appropriately skilled SEN support staff with high-quality language skills” (p. xix) is emphasised.

Following a review of practice in six all-Irish and Gaeltacht schools, the NCCA (2006), stated that teacher guidelines on supporting “children’s language and literacy development in Irish-medium schools” (p. 3) would be forthcoming, acknowledging the complexities for children learning through a second language. However, as of yet, no guidelines on key issues affecting children in all-Irish education have materialised. In the interim, much uncertainty prevails around the issue of learning support in gael scoileanna and, as Ní Fhoighil (2008) postulates, this lack of clarity will, in turn, “effect the provisions for pupils with SEN” (p. 71).

Parental Support

Baker (2006) postulates that parents whose children attend immersion schools are generally middle-class, involved in school committees and interested in the academic progress of their children. Within the Irish context, gael scoileanna similarly enjoy the support of parents, many having been founded as a result of parental initiation (Baker and Hornberger, 2001). However, in determining the motives for parents wishing to have their children educated through Irish, the NCCA (2006) affirm a plethora of reasons including the positive ethos of the school, smaller classes, preference for a mixed school with learning Irish being a “strong motivating factor” (p. 26). Notwithstanding the variety of reasons, the NCCA (2007) reports that less than 2% of 273 gael scoil parents surveyed cited fluency in Irish as being a predetermining factor in their decision.

Harris, Forde, Archer, Nic Fhearaile and Ó Gorman (2006) demonstrate that parents who send their children to gaelscoileanna generally display a positive attitude to Irish along with a certain command of the language when compared with parents whose children attend monolingual schools. In fact, 82.4% of a total of 609 gaelscoil parents are either favourably or very favourably disposed to Irish, as compared to 48.7% of 2,744 parents from ordinary schools regarding the same attitude categories. In relation to ability in Irish, only 10% of gaelscoil parents rated their ability to speak Irish in the lowest categories of ability (little or no ability) in comparison to 32% of their counterparts in ordinary schools. However, Harris et al. in ascertaining the frequency with which Irish is spoken at home found that only 6.3% of gaelscoil parents either always spoke, or very often spoke Irish at home, while 33.9% either seldom, or never, spoke Irish at home.

Evidence based on national samples demonstrates that gaelscoileanna, despite growth in the sector, have maintained their high levels of proficiency in Irish when compared to ordinary schools where a drop in standards has been recorded (Harris et al., 2006). Nonetheless, Harris et al. state that their success is not attributable in any meaningful way to the previously mentioned linguistic differences in home background. Consequently, the critical element of their success is due to the sustained use of Irish during the school day, the effects of which are experienced by all pupils in equal measure.

Summary

A review of the literature in relation to the needs of children with dyslexia reveals that if obstacles to literacy are overcome and, if appropriate supports are in place, the same learning experiences can be enjoyed by children with dyslexia as their peers (Peer and Reid, 2000; Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Similarly, international research establishes that children with learning difficulties are not disadvantaged in bilingual settings as long as they are supported appropriately (Cummins, 1984; Baker, 2006). However, in Ireland, guidelines regarding key aspects of bilingual education are scant, and, in relation to matters of SEN are virtually non-existent.

This study focuses on the needs of one particular category of student with SEN, namely those with dyslexia. While the literature clearly addresses key aspects for children with dyslexia in bilingual settings in relation to (i) immersion education, (ii) approaches to reading, (iii) language proficiency, (iv) the interdependence of language and phonological awareness, (v) the orthography of Irish, (vi) the initial language of literacy instruction, (vii) the provision of learning support and (viii) parental support, both the policy and practice within gaelscoileanna are undoubtedly at variance with international research in a number of areas.

In acknowledging the absence of significant research in relation to SEN and immersion education, this study sets out to ascertain the experiences of three children with dyslexia in reading two languages in a gaelscoil. The overarching research question seeks to establish if existing teaching practices and school policies on literacy and learning support meet the needs of three particular children with dyslexia attending a gaelscoil. In addressing the main question, other related issues are investigated.

- (i) How are children with dyslexia achieving in reading two languages in a gaelscoil?
- (ii) How are they accessing the wider curriculum through Irish?
- (iii) What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages?
- (iv) How are these children being supported at home?

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The focus of this study is to examine how three children with dyslexia are experiencing reading English and Irish, in a gaelscoil, and how the policies and practices within the school, along with parental support, combine to assist them in accessing the wider curriculum through Irish. In this chapter, the methodologies and procedures employed in carrying out this investigation are outlined with reference to the relevant literature. The rationale for the use of the various data-collecting instruments is ascertained along with pertinent information on piloting and establishing validity. Ethical considerations and details of data analysis procedures are also outlined.

Research Design

The study utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods of research, the latter being the most predominant. Bell (2005) postulates that researchers who espouse this paradigm are concerned with gaining an insight into the perceptions of individuals regarding the world in which they live. This method of research is “exploratory” by nature and is eminently suited to studying experiences and attitudes of participants (Creswell, 2003, p. 20).

Case Study Strategy

The case study strategy was deemed applicable, given the nature of the research. Opie (2004) describes a case study as a thorough examination of “interactions of a single instance in an enclosed system” (p.74). It focuses on the attitudes and perceptions of an individual within a particular context including the experiences and practices which have lead to a particular outcome (Robson, 2002). The strength of this approach lies in the fact that situations are understood by means of real examples rather than through theories or philosophies (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Denscombe (2003) asserts that by studying individual cases insights can be gained which can “illuminate the general”

(p. 30). Yin (2003) informs us that the focus of the research questions indicates the nature of the case study. In this instance, the inquiry was deemed to be exploratory as it established information and developed relevant theories. The overriding strength of the case study is the array of evidence which the researcher can employ including documents, interviews, observations and questionnaires (Denscombe, 2003; Yin, 2003). All of these measures were utilised during the course of the inquiry.

This study involved a number of cases which had common characteristics relating to dyslexia. Stake (1995) classifies this as a collective case study which provides a broader picture across a number of individuals. The information garnered through multiple cases is often particularly persuasive, leading to a more compelling study, but nonetheless, one which involves “extensive resources and time” (Yin, 2003, p. 47).

Limitations of Research Design

A criticism of the case study design pertains to the lack of generalisability of findings and the degree to which the results of the investigation can be applied to other situations (Robson 2002). Even if generalisability is limited, Opie (2004) maintains that the power of the case study is in the “reliability of the findings to similar settings” (p. 74).

Therefore, the onus is on the researcher to provide adequate contextual information to enable the reader to assess the “transferability” of the findings to other situations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 124). As a result, practice may be influenced and change instigated (Opie). The opportunity to effect change, on the strength of the findings, was deemed to be an important outcome of this study.

The Setting

The school involved in the study is a co-educational, all-Irish medium school situated in a satellite town near Dublin. The author chose to carry out the investigation in her own school due to the ease of access to the participants who would have been acquainted with her as a long standing member of the staff. This prior knowledge was considered to be advantageous to both the researcher and participants alike as it facilitated an immediate rapport between all those involved. Nonetheless, the researcher was aware of the ethical

issue inherent in this decision.

Access to Setting

Robson (2002) states the need to negotiate access to the site of the research by seeking permission from the appropriate sources and discussing the study with the relevant participants. At the initial stages of the project, the principal was broached with an outline of the study plan. She was supportive of the project and a letter was sent to the Board of Management seeking permission to conduct the research in the school (Appendix A). Following a meeting of the Board in January 2009, permission was granted and the project commenced.

At a subsequent staff meeting, an oral presentation was delivered to the staff outlining the details of the study and the contributions each member of staff might make, with their consent. An assurance was given to safeguard the identity of the school and the various participants, though this could not be guaranteed in respect of the children with dyslexia owing to the small sample from which the participants were taken.

The Participants

The Children

Three children aged 10 years, two boys and one girl with a psychological assessment of dyslexia, were the key participants of the study. One child was from third class while the other pupils belonged to the same fourth class. Details of the study were outlined to each child individually, at a meeting. Their right to decline involvement was also emphasised. The children were happy to participate and signed a consent form which was written in a comprehensible fashion. Given the nature of the children's difficulty, this form was read to each of them in turn, ensuring clarity (Appendix B). In order to shield the identity of the children, the following pseudonyms were employed: Ailéin (the boy in 3rd class), Bláthnaid (the girl in 4th class) and Cormac (the boy in 4th class).

This is known as a purposive sampling, being specifically picked by the researcher to “satisfy her specific needs in a project” (Robson, 2002, p. 265). Selection of participants

is made on the basis of the value of the information to the study, resulting in the researcher dealing solely with instances that are “critical for the research” (Denscombe, 2003 p. 16). However, Cohen et al. (2000) caution that although the purpose of the study is served by such a sample it should not be misconstrued as being representative of the wider population. This limitation of this study is acknowledged.

The Parents

The parents of the three children were contacted by phone to arrange a meeting to discuss the details of the study. All of the parents were known to the author in her capacity as a teacher in the school. During a follow-up meeting, the details of the study relating to their role, and that of their children, were outlined. A plain language statement was read, highlighting aspects of anonymity and all parents signed the letter of consent (Appendix C).

The Teachers

In all, 17 teachers from the staff, including the principal, contributed to the research by means of a questionnaire, interview or both. At the initial stages of the project, a questionnaire survey was administered to each of the 15 mainstream teachers while the two teachers, in whose class the students were placed, were also interviewed. The learning support teacher was interviewed, as was the principal. Teachers were given a plain language statement (Appendix D) outlining their specific involvement in the study and their right to withdraw if they so wished.

Methods of Data Collection

Table 3.1 Methods of collection of data with the various participants and research questions.

Methods of Collection	Participants	Research Question
1. Assessments	Three children	How are children achieving in reading in both languages?
2. Documentary Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Reports and Psychological Reports 	Three children	How are children achieving in reading in both languages?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Policies on Literacy and Learning Support 	Plean Scoile	Are policies meeting the needs of children with dyslexia?
3. Unstructured Observation	Three children	How are the children accessing the wider curriculum through Irish?
4. Questionnaires	Class Teachers	What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages?
5. Semi-structured Interviews	Three children	Is the literacy policy meeting the needs of children with dyslexia? How are children accessing the curriculum?
	The parents of the three children	How are children supported in the home? Are school policies meeting the needs of children with dyslexia?
	Two teachers teaching three children	What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages? How are children achieving in reading in both languages? How are children accessing the curriculum?
	The learning support teacher assigned to the children	Is the learning support policy meeting the needs of children with dyslexia? How are children achieving in reading in both languages?
	The school principal	Are school policies meeting the needs of children with dyslexia? What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages?

1. Assessments

Initially, a comprehensive range of age-appropriate assessments were administered to each child in both languages to ascertain their progress in literacy in areas such as phonology, non-word reading, word recognition and comprehension. Standardised and diagnostic tests were used, both of which are readily available in English. Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) have drawn attention to the lack of availability of assessments in Irish. Therefore, construction by the author of all diagnostic assessments in Irish was deemed necessary. Modifications to existing diagnostic tests in English were also carried out to suit the time frame of the study.

Robson (2002) advocates that, in the initial phase of the study, all data gathering instruments are piloted to ensure that possible difficulties in design are located and amended. Due to time constraints, the researcher-devised tests in Irish were not piloted but were constructed using age and class appropriate material, were based on equivalent tests in English and were thoroughly checked by a third-party.

Standardised Tests

Standardised tests are commercially produced and have been piloted on a representative sample of a whole population. There are many advantages to such tests not least the fact that they are objective, easy to administer and score, and proclaim reliability and validity (Cohen et al, 2000). Many of these tests are norm-referenced, allowing for the comparison between one pupil's achievement and that of others within the same year or age group. The standardised tests used were (i) The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II), Neale (1997) and (ii) The Young Cloze Reading Test (YCRT), Young (1992).

(i) The NARA II

The NARA II, Neale (1997) was administered to all participants. It assesses accuracy, comprehension and rate of oral reading ability. Accuracy is measured by recording the errors that the child makes while reading, which when analysed, serve a diagnostic function (Neale). Similarly, comprehension is assessed by the child's ability to answer questions based on the story and the sequence of events, including some inferential

questions. The rate of reading is a useful diagnostic tool insofar as it can help to identify children who sacrifice accuracy and comprehension for reading at speed (Neale).

(ii) Cloze Procedure

The YCRT, Young (1992) is a standardised test which assesses comprehension ability and was administered to all three children. It is based on the premise that if the reader can “reconstruct” meaning from a passage, which has a number of missing words, then “the intentions of the writer” have been understood (Young, 1992, p. 5).

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests provide information on the specific strengths and needs of children regarding literacy skills (DES, 2000). They are generally criterion-referenced tests, showing the capabilities of each child and their attainment of particular objectives (Cohen at al. 2000). A number of diagnostic tests were administered, comprising of a phonics test, a non-word test and a word recognition test. Miscue analysis and cloze procedure assessments, devised by the researcher, were administered in Irish in the absence of equivalent standardised tests.

(i) Phonics Tests

In English, short criterion-referenced phonics tests were used to assess each child’s capability in consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, initial consonant blends, final blends, consonant digraphs, vowel phonemes and long vowel phonemes. These assessments were compiled with reference to the Jackson Phonics Tests (JPT), Jackson (1971), (Appendix E).

In Irish, using key phonic elements of the language from Hickey (2007), a number of phonic assessments were constructed. Salient characteristics of Irish phonology pertain to the long vowel sounds (gutaí fada), the mutation of certain initial consonants through lenition (séimhiú) and eclipsing (urú), each of which was assessed individually (Appendix F).

(a) All of the long vowel sounds (gutaí fada), *á, é, í, ó, ú* were introduced individually. Subsequently, two and three letter words, each containing a long vowel, were assessed.

(b) All of the lenited consonant samples (séimhiú) listed, were used. These include *ph, bh, th, dh, ch, phr, fh, mh, sh, gh* and *chr*. Both long and short vowels occurred within the words tested.

(c) Similarly, each of the eclipsed consonants (urú) was assessed - *bp, mb, dt, nd, gc, ng, bhf, ngr, tsr* and *mbr* - through their inclusion in the correct grammatical context. As with all such tests, an accurate pronunciation incurred a correct score.

(ii) Non-word Tests

Frederickson, Frith and Reason (1997), authors of the Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB), state that non-word reading sets out to assess a child's ability in phonological processing and decoding. As these words are read in isolation and have no meaning, the child can not draw on their sight vocabulary or spoken vocabulary for clues. The test administered was based on the non-word reading test in the PhAB (Appendix G). One- and two-syllabic words were used in this test. Scores for this assessment and those pertaining to the Irish form, were recorded separately for each child, owing to its significance in relation to assessing phonological processing.

Similarly, by using letter strings and clusters particular to Irish, a list of non-words (focail gan chiall) was compiled. These clusters included examples such as *thá* found in the word *tháinig*, *lé* found in *léigh*, as well as common Irish words with the insertion of beginnings or endings, such as *ól* in *ból*, *sé* in *sém* and *tá* in *tán*. All of the non-words in the test were one-syllabic (Appendix H).

(iii) Word Recognition Tests

A word recognition test was administered in both languages. Clay (1979) maintains that word lists should be compiled from high frequency words read by the children in their everyday reading material, thereby enabling the early identification of reading

difficulties. Gardner (2004) states that in an effort to achieve a basic level of fluency in reading both first and second languages, high frequency words must be mastered. Therefore, a selection of 220 high-frequency words by Dolch (1948) was administered to each child to test word reading ability in English.

A list of the 103 most frequently used Irish words (*focail is coitianta*), assembled by Hickey (2007) from *Corpas na Leabhar Gaeilge do Pháistí* (CLGP), was administered to the participants. This assessed their high-frequency word reading ability in Irish (Appendix I).

(iv) Miscue Analysis

In order to assess the participants' oral reading and comprehension ability in Irish, the researcher devised a miscue analysis assessment in Irish comprising of a 100-word unseen passage from class-appropriate reading material (Appendix J, *Anailís Míleideanna, Rang Trí*). Goodman (1969) identified three main strategies, or cues, used by readers: grapho-phonetic, semantic and syntactic cues. The former involves the ability to employ word attack skills in decoding unfamiliar words. Children who are not sufficiently adept at this skill may have difficulty in extracting meaning and using "context to confirm their understanding of what they are reading" (Neale, 1997, p. 37). However, both semantic and syntactic cues permit the reader to gain contextual information. In analysing the errors made during oral reading, insights can be gained into the strategies employed by the child and the degree to which the various cueing systems are being utilised (Neale). A comparative analysis on levels of accuracy, error types and comprehension was also carried out. Errors were recorded under headings of mispronunciations (decoding errors), substitutions, refusals, additions, omissions and reversals, as advocated in Neale.

In order that text is understood, a large percentage of the words must be recognisable and easily read (Ehri, 1998). Ehri claims that a calculation of the error rate allows for an assessment of the difficulty of the passage. If a student correctly reads 98% of the words in the text, it is considered easy, 90-95% is considered to be at the instructional level,

while below 90% infers difficulty at a level of frustration. The difficulty level of the text was determined for each child.

Comprehension of the passage was assessed following reading. In total, eight questions were posed, all of which tested comprehension of the narrative and the sequence of events.

(v) Cloze Procedure in Irish

The researcher constructed this cloze procedure from class-appropriate, unseen passages (Appendix K, fourth class cloze procedure). In constructing the measurement, the first and last lines of the passage were left intact, while approximately every fifth word was omitted. All of these words were inserted in a word box, avoiding the difficulty posed by spelling. Instructions accessed on the internet (Instructional Strategies Online) assisted in the construction of both cloze procedure assessments utilised.

2. Documentary Evidence

In research, documents are considered to be a significant source of information, comparable to interviews and observations (Stake, 1995). To be of use, Denscombe (2003) postulates that they must contain a “systematic picture of things that have happened” (p. 215). Documentary evidence was collected from two sources - school reports and school policies on literacy and learning support.

School Reports

All reports relating to the participants were collected. These documents included psychological assessment, end-of-year school reports and standardised assessment results. This data supplied a comprehensive picture of the participants from their initial assessment of dyslexia to their progress over the years.

School Policies on Literacy and Learning Support

These documents form part of the overall school plan (plean scoile) and, as such, inform practice within the school on issues relating to literacy and learning support provision.

These policy documents are available to the parents. Denscombe (2003) maintains that such documents, by virtue of being in the public domain, “serve the function of accountability” (p. 215). Scrutiny of these policies was necessary to ascertain the systems and customs which have been established within the school in these specific areas.

3. Observations

Observation facilitates the researcher “to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 305). Similarly, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to witness events at close quarters rather than glean data through an informant (Denscombe, 2003). The objective of these observations was to study at first hand, the experiences of the three children in relation to accessing the curriculum in Irish. This was achieved by observing the accommodations being made in the class by the teachers, and by extension, the children’s ability to read and comprehend subject-specific texts. An unstructured format was considered appropriate using a descriptive system of recording events which allowed for the children’s behaviours and interactions to be studied in sequence and in context. Simpson and Tuson (1995) maintain that the use of descriptive records can inform an observer on issues relating to “the capabilities and competencies” of students on performance of tasks, which can then be further investigated by other means (p. 47).

Hopkins (2002) maintains that the focus of the observation needs to be clarified with the participants prior to commencement. During the interviews with the pupils, the criteria for the observation were outlined, while agreement was reached with the participating teachers as to the nature of the observation. Similarly, a letter (Appendix L) was sent to the parents of each child in the two classes notifying them of the impending observations. This allowed parents the opportunity to withdraw their child from proceedings if they so wished.

Observation sessions were organised in time-blocks of 40 minutes. Each session was broken into five minute intervals during which time a descriptive record was kept on the behaviours and activities of those involved. Two observation periods for each child were

completed. At the end of each session, checking was carried out with each teacher to clarify interpretation of events and so avoid observer bias. Likewise, field notes were written-up directly after each observation in an effort to ensure accuracy (Hopkins, 2002).

Table 3.2. Schedule for classroom observations for each child

Date	Child	Subject Observed
20-4-'09	Bláthnaid	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) (History)
21-4-'09	Cormac	SESE (History)
22-4-'09	Ailéin	SESE (Geography)
27-4-'09	Bláthnaid	SESE (History)
28-4-'09	Cormac	SESE (History)
28-4-'09	Ailéin	SESE (Geography)

4. Questionnaires

Oppenheim (1992) deems the questionnaire a valuable instrument in the collection of data. Its primary function is one of measurement, determined by the issues under investigation in the study. A semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix M) was administered to all of the class teachers at the outset of the study to establish the methodologies employed in teaching reading in both languages. Cohen et al. (2000) contend that a semi-structured questionnaire permits sequencing of ideas and clarity of purpose while, at the same time, allowing the participant to answer as he/she deems appropriate.

The questionnaire was predominantly qualitative with the majority of the questions being open-ended. This question format was deemed appropriate, allowing valuable data to be collected regarding pertinent aspects of teaching reading by ensuring that respondents feel “unencumbered by a prepared set of responses” (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 113). Nonetheless, he warns that open-ended questions are often “difficult to answer, and still more difficult to analyse” (p. 113). The closed-question format was employed at the beginning of the questionnaire when teacher-specific information was required and when a new topic was introduced.

The objective of the questionnaire was to ascertain the various methodologies employed in the school for the teaching of reading and whether or not the same approach is used in the instruction of both languages. Lundberg (1994) suggests that it is unlikely that “a universally best method for teaching reading can be defined” given that the effectiveness of instruction depends on “its implementation, its teachers, its materials, its cultural context and the compatibility of each with the other” (p. 149). Notwithstanding these variables, there is merit in determining the methodologies of reading instruction employed for each language and the various policies on literacy which may affect children experiencing reading difficulties. Therefore, many issues pertinent to the teaching of reading in both languages were addressed in the questionnaire, including phonics teaching, word attack skills, emphasis on language development and promoting a print rich environment. Other questions were based on school policies relating to literacy and the language of learning support provision.

Piloting

The importance of piloting questionnaires is widely acknowledged. Munn and Drever (1999) suggest that piloting establishes the amount of time taken to complete the questionnaire, the clarity of the questions and the ease with which questions can be answered and interpreted. They suggest that individuals chosen for the purpose of piloting the questionnaire should “be sympathetic to your work” and be involved in similar situations (p. 34). Consequently, piloting of the questionnaire took place among two teachers from the school, teaching in the area of learning support and resource, and who would not be in receipt of the amended survey. A third professional, from outside the school, was also involved in piloting.

The covering letter was found to be clear and concise in relation to the aim of the questionnaire. However, one teacher felt that the time specified for completion was underestimated and should be revised upwards. Another teacher considered that some of the questions displayed an element of bias in the phraseology used. These were altered to remove any trace of partiality. The insertion of a question on the exceptional cases that might occur in relation to Irish being the language of initial instruction in literacy was

suggested and included in the final questionnaire, along with corrections on some clerical errors identified by different individuals.

5. Interviews

Interviews are an integral part of qualitative research. They allow the interviewer to “follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings” (Bell, 2005, p. 157), while permitting participants “to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 267). In opening up this forum, the respondents are enabled to express their view openly and in a way that allows for “a greater richness and spontaneity” (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81), while the onus is on the interviewer to devise questions that will evoke such responses (Stake, 1995).

A semi-structured interview format was deemed appropriate. This format allows for flexibility in sequencing questions, in time allocation and attention to detail (Robson, 2002). The researcher can have a “general structure” in mind, deciding in advance what the significant questions are (Drever, 1995, p.1). Keats (2000) maintains that having a prepared interview schedule safeguards consistency, while at the same time allowing for individual differences in responses to occur. In total five semi-structured interview schedules were devised. The formulation of each schedule took cognisance of the pertinent issues for each participant group which in turn, gave rise to the structure of the interview. Though the interview format was similar for each respondent within the group, probing questions allowed for the development of themes which arose during individual interviews. Oppenheim (1992) postulates that probing affords the interviewer the opportunity to delve further into the question, either in a general or more specific way and is one of the major advantages of the interview as compared with a survey questionnaire.

Interviews were held with the two class teachers (Appendix N), the learning support teacher of the children (Appendix O), the principal (Appendix P), the children (Appendix Q) and their parents (Appendix R). Interviews with the teachers, the principal and the children were carried out in Irish, with the exception of questions relating to English.

Interviews with parents were held through English. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Teacher Interviews

These interview schedules were formulated on the basis of the children's competencies and confidence in literacy in both languages and their ability to access the broader curriculum through the medium of Irish. The LST's interview focused on existing provision of support for children with dyslexia along with the progress of the participants in this study. School policies on literacy, including the initial language of instruction in literacy within the context of immersion education, and learning support were discussed with the principal.

Child Interviews

The three children were interviewed regarding their literacy abilities and preferences. According to Article 12 of the Convention of Rights of the Child, The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) (1989) a child who is capable of formulating his/her views has "the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Internet). Establishing the children's views on their experiences on literacy matters, added considerable depth to the data already collected. This schedule was formulated taking cognisance of previously collected data.

Parent Interviews

Parent interviews set out to elicit the support provided for both languages in the home, their child's experiences in reading both languages and by extension their access to the wider curriculum through Irish. They were also encouraged to suggest additional ways in which support could be provided within the class and through learning support.

Piloting

Bell (2005) proposes piloting "a draft schedule" (p.159) outlining the issues to be covered during the semi-structured interviews. This piloting procedure determines whether the

structure of the interview serves the purpose for which it was intended. Both the teacher and parent interview schedules were piloted with two different people to ensure clarity of wording and sequencing. Some minor alterations were made to the sequencing of the teacher interview schedule.

Drever (1995) maintains that along with pointing out flaws in the structure of the interview, piloting assists in preventing “leading, interrupting or talking too much” (p. 58). As a consequence of piloting, the researcher improved her interviewing technique by avoiding such pitfalls, maintaining “a comparable pattern of questioning, prompting and probing” throughout the interviews (Drever, p. 58).

Validity and Reliability

Validity

Validity is a vital component of qualitative research and can be addressed by means of the breadth of the data collected, the participants involved, the degree of triangulation and the impartiality of the researcher (Cohen et al. 2000). By virtue of the fact that the case study design was used, data from a multiplicity of sources, involving various participants, were collected adding to the depth and scope of the information available. Robson (2002) states that data triangulation, employing multiple methods of data collection, enhances validity. During the course of the study, assessments, questionnaires, interviews, observation and documentary evidence were utilised, allowing the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast the findings. Similarly, methodological triangulation, which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, contributes to the thoroughness of the study (Robson, 2002). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed, increasing the credibility and validity of the research.

Nonetheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that a number of threats exist to the validity of qualitative research, one of which is researcher bias. In this regard, they allude to the assumptions and prejudices that the researcher may bring to the study which can impact on validity in a variety of ways, from the selection of the participants, to the choice of data for reporting. Ahern (1999), while conceding that total impartiality is

unattainable, advocates that researchers “make sincere efforts to put aside their values” in an effort to clearly present the participants’ experiences (p. 407). This is referred to as “reflexive bracketing” (p. 408). This process enables the researcher to minimise the potential of bias during the research by taking appropriate measures which include identifying interest in the project, acknowledging partisanship, being aware of areas of possible conflict and recognising the onset of prejudice (Ahern).

The researcher acknowledges her interest in the Irish language, the concept of immersion education and the right of children with learning difficulties to be educated within an all-Irish setting. Moreover, as the researcher is currently working in the field of special education within the school, the requirement for objectivity, in formulating findings and implications for practice, becomes imperative. By the same token, Hammersley (2002) suggests that the researcher/practitioner role lends itself to “practical implications of research evidence” owing to “practitioner expertise” (p. 144).

In an effort to counteract the effects of partiality, thereby augmenting the validity of the study, an audit trail, which included preliminary schedules and piloted surveys, all collected data and documentation on activities carried out during the research, was kept (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Robson 2002). Verbal summaries were given to all respondents following interviewing to confirm interpretation of the information gleaned from the interviews and in some cases transcripts were provided for checking. This is referred to as member checking and ensures that researcher bias is minimised (Robson 2002). Likewise, following observations, interpretation of events was checked with each teacher to offset “observer bias” (Simpson and Tuson, 1995, p. 18).

Reliability

Bell (2005) describes reliability as the degree to which a procedure used in the study reproduces the same results “under constant conditions on all occasions” (p. 117). She suggests certain checking systems which ensure reliability but are not feasible given the time constraints of the study. Nonetheless, checking for reliability of an instrument, as in the case of surveys and interview schedules, occurs during the construction and the

piloting phase ensuring that all questions are easily understood and evoke a similar response by all respondents (Bell). Checking for reliability took place at the piloting phase of both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Ethical Issues

As the study was carried out within the researcher's own school, dealing correctly with ethical issues was deemed essential. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) contend that a number of responsibilities exist for the teacher-researcher in relation to colleagues within the school, the wider teaching community and the participants. Clearly stating the aims and objectives of the study, ensuring the viability and the adequacy of the research design while maintaining the confidentiality of those involved, are considered essential in relation to all participants (Hitchcock and Hughes). Equally, the researcher should consider the balance of power in relation to the informants, in light of the fact that he/she may be "older, in possession of more knowledge, be in social or organisational positions that give them greater influence" (Sikes, 2004, p. 30). Due regard was given in respect of all of these issues when dealing with colleagues, the three children and their parents.

Denscombe (2003) stresses that at all times "the interest of the participants should be protected" (p. 136). In meetings with the various participants, matters of anonymity in relation to their identity and confidentiality in relation to information gathered, was emphasised. Similarly, the right of all contributors to withdraw from the study was highlighted. Consent was received in writing as a means of recording agreement on elements of the research and as a method of confirming the nature of the study to all participants (Denscombe).

Audio-tape recording of interviews and the intention to use quotes in the written report was stated. Guarantees were given that, on completion of the study, transcripts and audio-tapes, having been securely kept in the possession of the researcher for a year, would be destroyed. In respect of a college requirement, a completed ethics form, with extensive details of the study from the research design to a sample of each of the measures, was submitted to St Patrick's College Research Ethics Committee. Research approval was

granted on the strength of this submission.

Data Analysis

The data collected during the course of this study was predominantly qualitative in nature and provided rich, descriptive information. Quantitative data in relation to closed-questions on the teacher survey and assessments were dealt with separately. The data analysis of each instrument is outlined.

Analysis of Questionnaires

All closed questions from the questionnaires were imputed into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This data was explored by means of frequency distributions and graphical displays.

As the majority of the questions were open-ended, coding of the responses was necessary to reduce the information into suitable categories and themes. Robson (2002) suggests that the responses to each question are copied under the text of the question, the objective being to “develop a smallish set of categories” into which the responses can be placed (p. 258). As there were only 14 questionnaires, patterns were identified and consistent themes emerged which provided rich descriptive information.

Analysis of Assessments

The various assessments were corrected in accordance with the relevant test procedures and the quantitative information on scores was presented in various tables. Descriptive analysis was carried out on the miscues of each child, creating a comprehensive picture of the pattern of error across the two different languages.

Analysis of Interviews

Thematic analysis was the method used for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Braun and Clarke advocate a number of phases in this process. The transcription of interview data facilitates familiarisation of the content, allowing for initial basic coding to take place. Analysis at a broader level ensues,

which identifies themes and relationships and allows for the formulation of main and sub-themes. At this stage, Braun and Clarke maintain that significant themes will be evident which can be reviewed to ensure that they are clear and distinguishable. Equally, they contend that having “fully worked-out themes” contribute to the construction of a comprehensive and consistent picture (p. 93).

In transcribing all interviews, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to become familiar with the content. The format of the semi-structured interviews was conducive to facilitating a thematic framework and identification of patterns transpired, based on the “number of different speakers who articulated the theme” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). A thematic map was then constructed, establishing the relationship between the various ideas which eventually determined the overarching theme. Once this was realised, a detailed analysis was written under each heading using suitable quotes to demonstrate the frequency of the theme.

Analysis of Observations

Data collected from class observations was considered in conjunction with other information collected, affording contextualization for the behaviours of the three children and their teachers. As the observations were unstructured, the key issues materialised during the sessions (Cohen et al., 2000). Analysis related to commonly observed behaviours during the various interactions of both teachers and pupils, which were then arranged thematically.

Documentary Analysis

Robson (2002) maintains that documentary analysis is different from other techniques of analysis, in that information has been “produced for some other purpose” (p. 349). In this case, school policies and school and psychological reports were used. The latter were analysed in relation to the achievements and progress of the individual children.

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This study examined the experiences of three children with dyslexia in relation to reading Irish and English within a gaelscoil. Existing literacy and learning support policies and practices within the school were reviewed to ascertain if the particular needs of these children were being met. The children's facility in reading both languages was assessed along with their ability to access the wider curriculum through the medium of Irish. Support provided in the home was also established. All data was collected by means of assessments, questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary evidence.

Three sections are detailed in this chapter. The findings from teacher questionnaires provide the context in which literacy in both languages is taught, establishing the methodologies and practices employed. The reading experiences of each child are illustrated with reference to documentary evidence, analysis of assessments and interviews carried out during the study. Finally, the overarching theme of support provision emerges following a thematic analysis of all data collected and is presented under the headings: support provided by the class teacher, learning support provision, support provided by the school and support in the home.

Methodologies used in the Teaching of Reading in the School

Issues relating to the research question on the methodologies employed in teaching reading in both languages were ascertained by means of a questionnaire. Other information, regarding accommodations and supports provided both in the class and in the school, was pertinent in answering the research questions relating to the children's experiences in reading two languages and their ability to access the wider curriculum.

In all, 15 questionnaires were administered with 14 being returned. Cohen et al. (2000) maintain that a response rate of 50% is satisfactory in the case of surveys. A return rate of

93% was deemed sufficient to reflect current practices in literacy within the school. Moreover, each standard was represented, contributing to a comprehensive picture of teachers' views at each level. A division of class groupings between junior classes (JC), infants to second class, and senior classes (SC), third to sixth class, was made. There are two classes at each standard, except for sixth, where there is only one.

The questions were grouped into various categories: (i) phonics, (ii) sight vocabulary development, (iii) language proficiency in Irish, (iv) a print-rich environment, (v) initial language of literacy instruction, (vi) support and accommodations for children within class and (vii) the language of learning support for children with dyslexia. The findings are dealt with under each heading.

(i) Phonics

A number of closed questions established the views of the teachers in relation to the teaching of phonics in both languages. These findings established a general consensus amongst teachers regarding the importance of phonics in reading in Irish.

Table 4.1 Findings relating to the teaching of phonics in both languages

Question	Class group	Yes	No	Uncertain
An úsáideann tú scéim fóineolaíochta le léitheoireacht na Gaeilge a mhúineadh?	JC	3	5	0
	SC	1	5	0
An cóir fóineolaíocht a mhúineadh sa Ghaeilge?	JC	7	0	1
	SC	6	0	0
Do you use phonics to teach English reading?	JC	8	0	0
	SC	3	3	0

One teacher was concerned about the inherent difficulties of teaching two phonics programmes simultaneously which might result in confusion. Teaching reading in both languages simultaneously is discouraged in Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí, DES (1999b) but there is a lack of guidance on the introduction of the second language or the management of different phonics schemes for two languages.

Although there was consensus on the importance of teaching phonics in Irish, a disparity on the implementation of any systematic phonics scheme was evident, with only four teachers providing instruction on aspects of phonics, particular to the language. The remaining 10 questionnaires revealed no information on phonics instruction. Despite the fact that Irish has a more transparent orthography than English, Hickey (2005) maintains that there is a lack of systematic instruction “of regular grapheme-phoneme correspondences” with minimal use of phonics amongst second language learners of Irish (p. 403). These findings concur with this. Nonetheless, all teachers recorded encouraging phonological analysis as a strategy to assist children in deciphering unfamiliar words in Irish, with contextual analysis also cited as a strategy. Many teachers mentioned the lack of suitable phonics programmes in Irish as the reason for the deficit in instruction, a paucity which has been acknowledged by Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) and, latterly, the NCCA (2007).

Explicit teaching of phonics as advocated in the RNRP (2000) occurred in English, in the junior classes, with all teachers at this level citing initial sounds, onset and rime and blends as part of a systematic approach to phonics instruction. Implementation of a specific phonics programme was less regularised in the senior classes. Nonetheless, as with Irish, a range of phonological strategies, word attack skills and contextual clues was advocated by all respondents in tackling unfamiliar words in English.

(ii) Sight Vocabulary Development

Automaticity of reading high-frequency words is critical to reading fluency, facilitating the efficient processing of reading material (Verhoeven, 2000; Gardner, 2004; Pikulski and Chard, 2005). The findings show that agreement was unanimous on the importance of teaching high-frequency words in Irish, similar to the Dolch words in English.

Respondents listed the implementation of a variety of approaches in teaching general sight vocabulary to the children in Irish. In the junior classes, these strategies included some element of phonological analysis, but by and large, they involved rote and repeated learning of vocabulary through dramatisation of words, matching pictures with words,

flash cards, word walls and word boxes. These whole-word strategies involving repetition are widely adopted in teaching high-frequency words (Pikulski and Chard).

In the senior classes, phonological analysis was listed as a strategy for teaching vocabulary in Irish in conjunction with alternative approaches, including reading and re-reading, explanation and contextualization, reproducing other sentences in written and oral form along with translation to English. Hickey (2005) refers to the tendency, when teaching Irish reading, to reinforce items of language which have been learned orally in the absence of any systematic phonics-based instruction. This teaching strategy is prevalent within the school with an emphasis on the ‘look-say’, whole-word method of learning sight vocabulary within a contextual oral-based framework.

(iii) Language Proficiency

There was unanimity regarding the existence of a relationship between proficiency in the Irish language and reading. Research suggests that a certain level of L2 oral language proficiency is necessary for literacy skills to develop in that language (Verhoeven, 2000). Moreover, Verhoeven advocates that children with limited fluency in L2 “should be given the opportunity to strengthen their oral L2 skills prior to formal L2 literacy instruction” (p. 327). This position is reflected in *Curaclam na Bunscoile, Gaeilge, Treoirínte do Mhúinteoirí* (DES, 1999b) in relation to children attending *gaelscoileanna*, stating “Ba cheart i gcónaí fanacht go mbíonn an páiste réidh don léitheoireacht agus bunús maith faoina c(h)umas cainte” (p. 5).

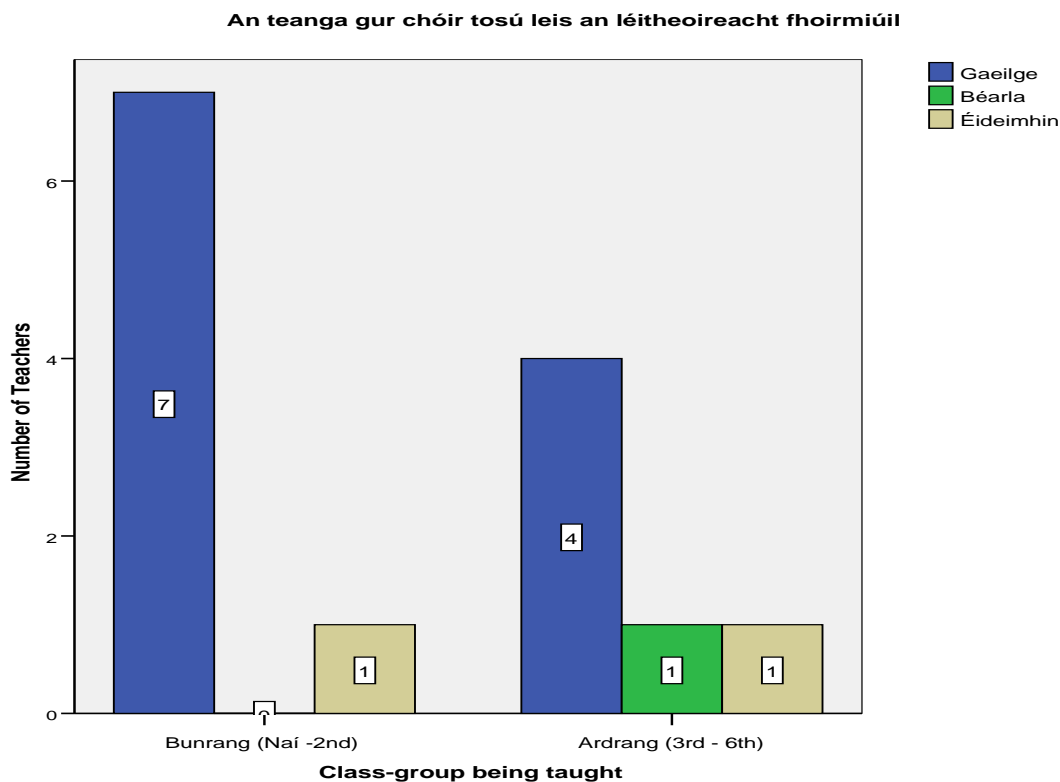
(iv) A Print-rich Environment

All respondents cited the merits of a print-rich environment in Irish, correlating the ease of access to print in a child’s surroundings to its use. Its importance relates to supporting the development of sight vocabulary, scaffolding written work in aspects of grammar, spelling and sentence structure. Some teachers cautioned against too much exposure to English in the junior classes of the school, when children are immersed in Irish at the initial stages.

(v) Initial Language of Literacy Instruction

Of the 14 respondents, 11 stated that Irish should be the language of initial instruction in literacy in a gaelscoil (Figure 4.1.). This view concurs with school policy which states that Irish reading is taught in junior infants with English reading being introduced in the second half of senior infants. However, all the teachers in the junior classes responded in the affirmative to the question posed regarding teaching English reading, indicating that some instruction in reading L1 occurs in junior infants, contrary to policy.

Figure 4.1. Breakdown of respondents' views on the initial language of literacy instruction (n = 14)



In relation to teachers' views on the policy, it was widely considered that reading should commence in the language of the school, Irish. The notion of transfer of literacy skills from Irish to English was mentioned by a number of teachers in the junior classes. In *Curaclam na Bunscoile*, Gaeilge, *Treoirínte do Mhúinteoirí* (DES, 1999b), the concept of the transfer of skills from English to Irish is acknowledged in the case of English schools,

where well-established reading skills in English will transfer to Irish when reading commences in second class.

De ghnáth ní thosófar ar léitheoireacht na Gaeilge go foirmiúil roimh rang 2 i scoileanna T2. Faoin am sin beidh bunús maith ag an bpáiste i léitheoireacht an Bhéarla agus b'fhéidir go dtarlódh méid áirithe den traschur scileanna. (Gaeilge, Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí, DES, 1999b, p. 12)

However, a transfer of skills from Irish reading to English, in the case of gael scoileanna, is not similarly acknowledged within the curriculum even though this linguistic transfer is more likely to happen from minority to majority languages (Cummins 1984).

(vi) Support within the Class

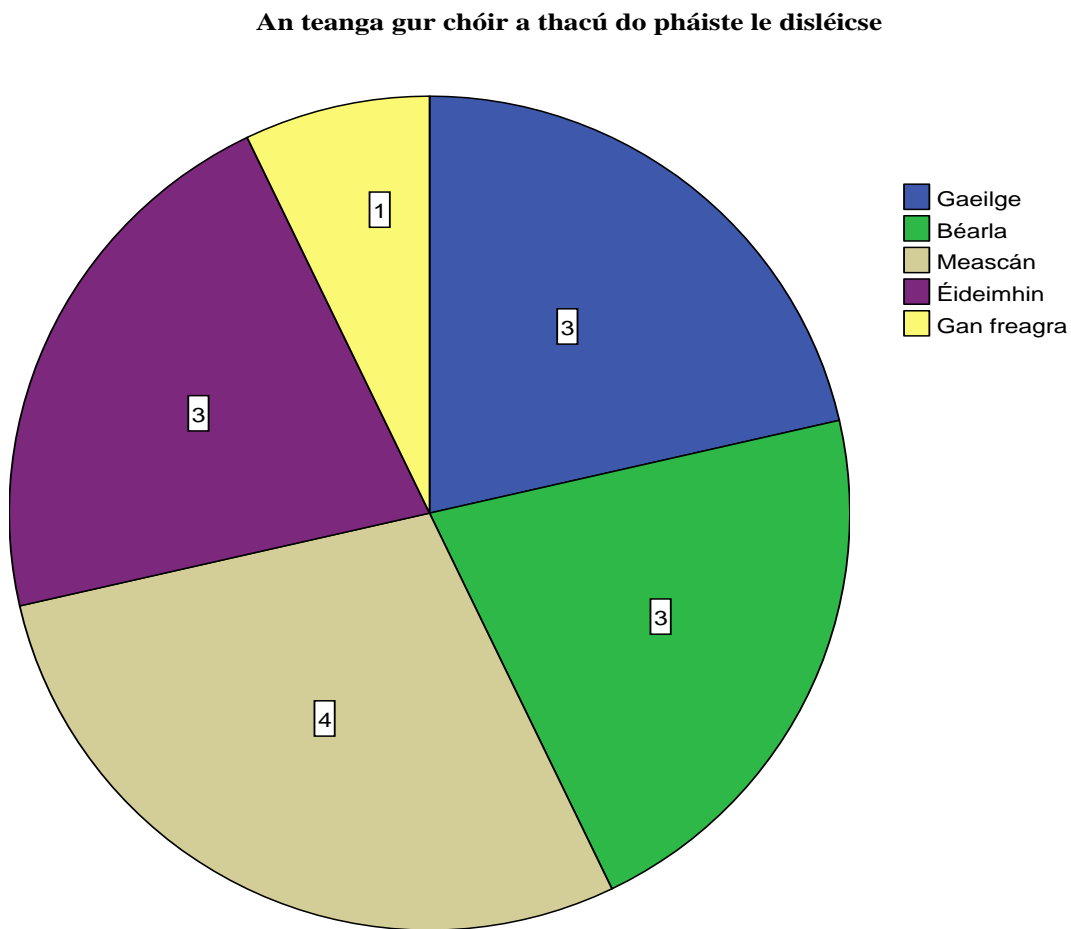
In all, 11 respondents recorded teaching children experiencing difficulties with reading. Submissions to the ITFD (2001) advocate “dyslexia-friendly” teaching methods in assisting children with dyslexia within mainstream education (p. 10). Most teachers in the junior classes cited devoting more time to reading, in an effort to assist pupils experiencing such difficulties. Two teachers referred to the use of CDs for Irish readers as a means of supporting Irish reading in the home along with using different chalk colours and varying print sizes. In the senior classes, teachers cited providing additional help with reading, while accommodations on written work in relation to flexibility on quantity and presentation, were also listed.

(vii) Language of Learning Support for Children with Dyslexia

Opinion was divided amongst teachers in relation to the language for which learning support is provided (Figure 4.3). Some teachers cited preserving the current position which provides for support in English only, with one teacher stating, “*Tá tacaíocht foghlama sa Bhéarla níos tabhachtaí do pháistí le disléicse*”. Others believed that the language of the school should be supported, thus enabling the children to access the curriculum. Those who advocated a mixture of support, in Irish and English, felt that this twin approach would fulfil not only the children’s present learning needs but their future needs in English, their first language.

Nonetheless, Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) state that where Irish is the initial language of literacy instruction, learning support should be provided in that language. Guidance in relation to this issue is imperative, with the need for information to be compiled in relation to international practice pertaining to matters of SEN in immersion education (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir).

Figure 4.2. Teachers' opinions in relation to the language of learning support (n = 14)



Children's Reading Experiences

Combined information on documentary evidence, assessments and interviews with key participants addressed the research question in relation to the children's experiences of reading two languages, English and Irish within a gaelscoil. The findings show that the three children are achieving satisfactorily in both languages, though marginally better in English overall. The findings also reveal that the strategies employed in reading Irish are limited owing to a lack of phonemic knowledge, specific to the language.

1. Ailéin

Ailéin was 10 years and one month at the time of testing and in third class. He was assessed in first class owing to a discrepancy between his general ability and his progress in English reading.

Psychological Assessment

Ailéin was assessed using the British Ability Scales (BAS-II). His overall intellectual functioning was within the Above Average range at the 79th percentile (Table 4.3) while results on educational skills (Table 4.4) established that Ailéin was attaining significantly below his predicted level of ability, revealing a severe level of dyslexia.

Table 4.3. Ability and percentile rankings on individual tasks – Ailéin

Domain Assessed	Skills or Knowledge Assessed	Ability Range	Percentile
Spatial Domain	Visual Spatial Skills	Above Average	92 nd
Non Verbal Reasoning	Non Verbal Reasoning Skills	Above Average	77 th
Verbal Domain	Oral Verbal Skills	Average	45 th
Memory Skills			
Verbal Recall	Short Term Memory Skills	Below Average	10 th
Delayed Verbal Recall	Long Term Memory Skills	Above Average	96 th
Immediate Spatial Recall	Short term Visual Memory Skills	Average	58 th
Delayed Spatial Recall	Long term Visual Memory Skills	Average	50 th
Recall of Digits	Auditory Sequential Memory Skills	Average	73 rd

Table 4.4. Ability and percentile rankings on educational skills – Ailéin

Educational Attainments	Age Range	Ability Range	Percentile
BAS-II Word Reading Test	Word Reading Age: 5 years, 10 months	Low	2 nd
BAS-II Spelling Scales	Spelling Age: 6 years, 4 months	Low	2 nd
BAS Basic Number Skills	Number Age: 8 years, 9 months	Average	50 th

Progress in School

Ailéin attends learning support for English on a daily basis. The LST noted his steady progress in English reading, his competent use of phonics and his increased reading fluency “*Tá scileanna iontach maith aige...word attack skills agus mar sin de*”. He is a diligent worker in school, a trait mentioned in his school reports. Scores on the standardised Drumcondra Primary Reading Test-Revised (RDPT-R) (2007) administered annually from first class, reflect this improvement: Level 1 - 16th, Level 2 - 27th, Level 3 - 42nd percentile.

Results on Recent Assessments

Various assessments administered to Ailéin ascertained his present level of attainment in both English and Irish. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 display his results in standardised and diagnostic tests in English, while Table 4.7 outlines the scores achieved in Irish.

1. English

(i) Standardised Tests

Table 4.5 Standardised tests results, English – Ailéin

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II)	Reading Age	Standardised Score	Percentile Rank	Stanine
Accuracy Substitutions -11 Mispronunciations -10 Refusals – 5	7:11	86	18	3
Comprehension	8:07	90	26	4
Rate	8:03	88	22	3

Young Cloze Procedure	Quotient	Reading Age
	89	8.6

(ii) Diagnostic Tests

Table 4.6 Diagnostic test results, English – Ailéin

Phonics	Raw Score	Percentages
CVC Words	9/10	90%
Initial Consonant Blends	19/20	95%
Final Blends	13/15	86%
Consonant Digraphs	13/15	86%
Vowel Digraphs	16/20	80%
Long Vowel Phonemes	13/20	65%
Non-Words	9/20	45%
Word Recognition	76/80	95%

2. Irish

(iii) Diagnostic Tests

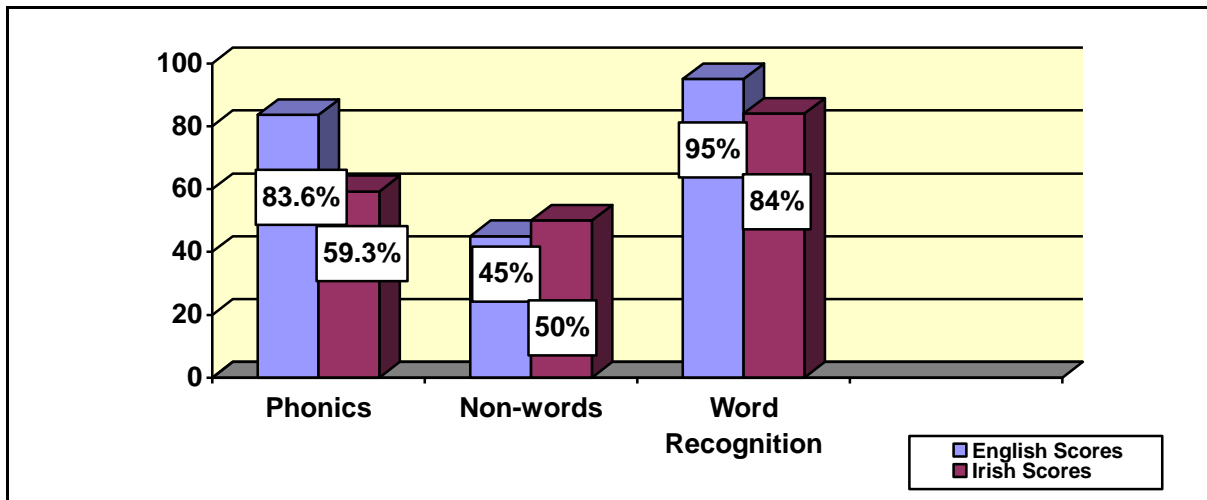
Table 4.7 Diagnostic test results, Irish – Ailéin

Fóineolaíocht	Raw Score	Percentages
Gutaí Fada	13/15	86%
Séimhiú	7/15	46%
An t-urú	7/12	46%
Focail gan Chiall	10/20	50%
Focail is Coitianta	87/103	84%
Anailís Míleideanna		
Botúin	13/100 - 9 substitutions - 4 mispronunciations	87% = difficult level
Trial Tuisceanna	8/8	100%
Cloze Procedure	14/16	87.5%

Summary of Diagnostic Assessment Scores

Figure 4.3 displays results attained by Ailéin on diagnostic assessments in terms of percentages. Scores in both Irish and English phonics were averaged to obtain an overall count.

Figure 4.3 The comparison between English and Irish scores of Ailéin on diagnostic tests in phonics, non-words and word recognition



Error Analysis

(i) Standardised Tests in English

The nature of the errors made by Ailéin on the NARA II, Neale (1997) fell within the substitution and mispronunciation categories. The substitutions had similar beginnings and endings to the target word: 'fiercely' for 'furiously' and 'tamer' for 'trainer'. Many of these substitutions did not detract from the meaning of the sentence and indicate the use of contextual and phonological strategies. Regarding mispronunciations, Ailéin showed phonological ability in attacking words but needed prompting in all cases to maintain reading rate. The Young (1992) Cloze Procedure posed few difficulties for Ailéin initially, but proved more difficult in the latter stages.

(ii) Diagnostic Tests in English

Analysis of the errors on the phonics subtests showed that the mistakes were mainly grapho-phonemic in nature, with correct beginnings and endings and incorrect middle: ‘steam’ for ‘stem’ and ‘wisp’ for ‘wasp’.

Non-word reading posed little difficulty for Ailéin, in three letter CVC format. However, two-syllabic non-words were problematic.

(iii) Diagnostic Tests in Irish

Ailéin displayed confidence when reading the ‘gutaí fada’ subtest. In the ‘séimhiú’ subtest, he omitted the pronunciation of the ‘h’ sound in five of the words, rendering them incorrect even though the root word was known. Lyddy (2005) refers to this difficulty of pronunciation in Irish resulting from grammatical rules which render deciphering the root word problematic. Likewise, errors recorded on the ‘urú’ assessment indicated this difficulty.

In the Focail gan Chiall test, Ailéin read the majority of the two-letter words, with ‘gutaí fada’, correctly. Nonetheless, his recognition of these sounds was not consistent throughout the test, and, with the addition of the ‘séimhiú’ and ‘urú’, there was little discernable pattern to the mistakes. This is indicative of a lack of knowledge of letter strings within the language (Frederickson et al, 1997). He read ‘focail is coitianta’ with considerable speed and accuracy.

In the Anailís Míleideanna, the main errors related to substitutions. In a small number of cases, these substitutions did not detract from the overall meaning of the passage. However, the majority were based on similar looking words which did not make sense in the context of the sentence. Hickey (2005) has identified decoding to a similar-looking word as one of the errors made by children reading L2. This error is indicative of an over reliance on the ‘look’ of the word as opposed to meaning when reading. Owing to the error count, falling within the 89%-50% bracket, this passage, though class appropriate, was deemed too difficult. Nonetheless, Ailéin displayed competency in answering all

questions. Similarly, this comprehension skill was demonstrated in the cloze procedure where only two errors were recorded.

Comparative Analysis of Errors

A comparative analysis between the errors in Irish and English showed that Ailéin drew on different strategies when reading both languages. While he had the facility to use phonological and contextual analysis in English, he was confined to automatic word recognition in Irish with little reference to meaning or syntax. Ailéin's teacher, in his interview, considered that the nature of his difficulties were similar in both languages stating ' *S iad na deacrachtaí céanna atá aige sa Bhéarla 'sé sin go bhfuil réimse 'sight words' sort íseal, go mbíonn deacrachtaí aige díchódu a dhéanamh ar fhocail* '.

2. Bláthnaid

Bláthnaid was 10 years and six months at the time of testing and in fourth class. She has attended learning support since first class due to difficulties experienced in reading.

Psychological Assessment

The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WISC-IV) was used to assess Bláthnaid's level of cognitive functioning, while her ability on literacy tests was ascertained using The WIAT-II. The findings indicated a discrepancy between her ability level (Tables 4.8) and her performance in literacy (Table 4.9).

Table 4.8 Ability range and percentile rankings of Bláthnaid - WISC-IV

Factor Indexes	Skill or Knowledge Assessed	Ability Range	Percentile
Verbal Comprehension Index	Language skills	Low Average	23 rd
Perceptual Reasoning Index	Visual and Spatial Skills	Average	61 st
Working Memory Index	Auditory Sequential Memory	Average	34 th
Processing Speed Index	Clerical Tasks	Average	50 th
Full Scale IQ		Average	34th

Table 4. 9 Ability range and percentile rankings of Bláthnaid - WIAT-II

WIAT II	Standard Score	Ability Range	Percentile
Reading Composite	78	Borderline Low	7 th
Maths Composite	92	Average	30 th
Written Language (Spelling)	78	Borderline Low	7 th

Progress in School

The LST, who has taught Bláthnaid over the last three years, has noticed a significant difference in both her reading fluency and her interest in reading, stating “*Bhí sé chomh deacair í a thosnú ag léamh...bhí an-ghráin dearg uirthi sa léamh*”. However, this is no longer the case, with her mother confirming an enthusiasm for reading and love of books. The RDPT-R (2007) reveals a consistent improvement in percentile rankings since first class: Level 1 – 12th, Level 2 – 13th, Level 3 – 24th and Level 4 – 30th.

Results on Recent Assessments

Various assessments were administered to establish Bláthnaid’s current attainment in literacy in both Irish and English. Tables 4.10 and 4.11 display results of standardised and diagnostic tests in English. Table 4.12 outlines her scores in Irish.

1. English

(i) Standardised Tests

Table 4.10 Standardised test results, English – Bláthnaid

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II)	Reading Age	Standardised Score	Percentile Rank	Stanine
Accuracy Substitutions - 8 Mispronunciations - 32 Refusals – 3	9:04	95	37	4
Comprehension	9:10	96	40	4
Rate	7:10	87	20	3

Young Cloze Procedure	Quotient	Reading Age
	83	8.4

(ii) Diagnostic Tests

Table 4.11 Diagnostic test results, English – Bláthnaid

Phonics	Raw Score	Percentages
CVC Words	10/10	100%
Initial Consonant Blends	20/20	100%
Final Blends	15/15	100%
Consonant Digraphs	15/15	100%
Vowel Digraphs	18/20	90%
Long Vowel Phonemes	20/20	100%
Non-Words	16/20	80%
Word Recognition	78/80	97.5%

2. Irish

(iii) Diagnostic Tests

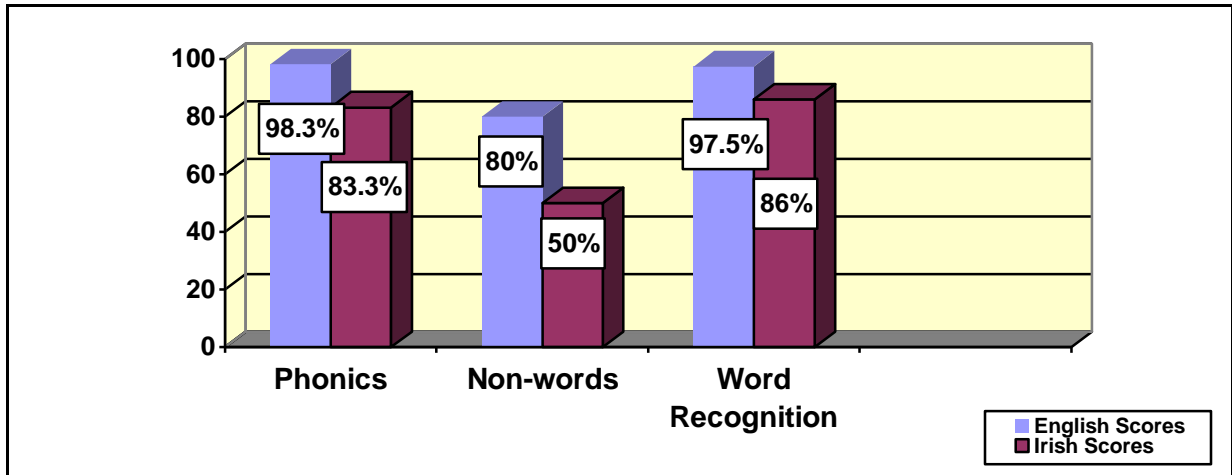
Table 4.12 Diagnostic test results, Irish – Bláthnaid

Fóineolaíocht	Raw Score	Percentages
Gutaí Fada	11/15	73%
Séimhiú	13/15	86%
An t-urú	11/12	91%
Focail gan Chiall	10/20	50%
Focail is Coitianta	89/103	86%
Anailís Míleideanna		
Botúin	8/100 - 2 refusals - 6 mispronunciations	92% = instructional level
Trial Tuisceanna	8/8	100%
Cloze Procedure	11/19	61%

Summary of Diagnostic Assessment Scores

Figure 4.4 shows a summary of assessment scores for Bláthnaid. The scores achieved in phonics in both languages were averaged to obtain an overall score.

Figure 4.4 The comparison between English and Irish scores of Bláthnaid on diagnostic tests in phonics, non-words and word recognition.



Error Analysis

(i) Standardised Tests in English

Mispronunciations were the main error category recorded on the NARA II (1997). Bláthnaid attempted to decode these words with a relative degree of accuracy. However, the correct word was supplied to prevent reading rate being interrupted. Substitutions were similar to the target words and generally, did not impact on the meaning of the text. The Young (1992) Cloze Procedure proved to be more difficult and many blanks were left unfilled.

(ii) Diagnostic Tests in English

Bláthnaid read confidently and competently during the various elements of the phonic assessments. Some of the errors recorded on the non-word reading test related to reversals of sounds: 'term' for 'trem' and 'bultskirl' for 'blutskirl'. The marginal error

count suggests an ability to decode letter strings without the aid of “visual processing and meaning” (Frederickson et al, 1997, p. 2).

(iii) Diagnostic Tests in Irish

Bláthnaid displayed little knowledge of the ‘gutaí fada’ when introduced singly.

However, within words, they posed little difficulty suggesting that the words were read as sight words, with little reference to phonological analysis. Neither the ‘séimhiú’ or ‘urú’ subtests posed difficulties, with few errors recorded.

In the ‘Focail gan Chiall’ test, Bláthnaid displayed many inaccuracies in phonological aspects encountered in the previous tests. This was indicative of the use of automatic word recognition as a strategy, rather than decoding.

In Anailís Míleideanna, Bláthnaid read with fluency. Both mispronunciations and refusals represented the nature of the errors recorded. One of the mispronunciations involved encoding to English - ‘size’ for ‘sise’ - a common error among L2 readers as identified by Hickey (2005). The refusals which occurred pertained to infrequently used words. As there was an 8% error rate, this passage was within the instructional range, indicating that appropriate vocabulary instruction would assist Bláthnaid in managing this text.

Comprehension of the passage posed no difficulties and she answered each question confidently and competently. In the cloze procedure, she left a number of blanks, and appeared not to comprehend the overall meaning of the passage.

Comparative Analysis of Errors in Both Languages

In comparing the nature of the errors occurring in both languages, Bláthnaid displayed ability in utilising word attack and contextual skills in English in tackling unfamiliar words. Conversely, in Irish, automatic word recognition was the predominant strategy at her disposal, though her mother identified her use of meaning as a strategy “*She works it out for the meaningI don’t think she works out the words but she works out the meaning*”.

3. Cormac

Cormac was 10 years and five months at the time of the testing and in fourth class. He received a psychological assessment in second class having attended learning support for a year.

Psychological Assessment

Cormac's level of cognitive functioning was assessed using The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC III) (Table 4.13). The Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions (WORD) was used to establish his ability on literacy tests (Table 4.14).

Table 4.13 Results of Cormac - WISC-III

Indexes Assessed	Ability Range	Percentile
Perceptual Ability	Average	47 th
Verbal Ability	Average	32 nd
Verbal Comprehension Index	Average	34 th
Perceptual Organisation Index	Average	53 rd
Full IQ Score	Average	39 th

Table 4.14 Results of Cormac – WORD

Area Assessed	Age Equivalent Range	Ability Range	Percentile
Reading	6 years 6 months	Borderline Low	7 th
Spelling	6 years 6 months		4 th
Comprehension	6 years 6 months	Borderline Low	7 th

Progress in School

Cormac is a diligent worker which is reflected in comments on school reports written by previous teachers *“He works very hard in school and has progressed well”*. The LST noted in her interview that he has made significant progress since the previous year but required continuing support in areas such as word attack skills, comprehension and fluency. The following are the percentile rankings of the RDPT-R (2007) from first to

fourth class respectively: Level 1 - 13th, Level 2 - 8th, Level 3 - 21st, Level 4 – 10th percentile.

Results on Recent Assessments

Cormac was assessed using standardised and diagnostic tests to establish his current attainment in literacy in both Irish and English. Tables 4.15 and 4.16 illustrate his results in these assessments in English, while Table 4.17 outlines his achievements in Irish.

1. English

(i) *Standardised Tests*

Table 4.15 Standardised test results, English – Cormac

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II)	Reading Age	Standardised Score	Percentile Rank	Stanine
Accuracy Substitutions - 1 Mispronunciations - 7 Refusals – 2	7:09	84	14	3
Comprehension	7:09	84	14	3
Rate	8:04	89	24	4

Young Cloze Procedure	Quotient	Reading Age
	87	8.7

(ii) *Diagnostic Tests*

Table 4.16 Diagnostic test results, English – Cormac

Phonics	Raw Score	Percentages
CVC Words	10/10	100%
Initial Consonant Blends	18/20	90%
Final Blends	13/15	86.6%
Consonant Digraphs	14/15	93.3%
Vowel Digraphs	15/20	75%
Long Vowel Phonemes	18/20	90%
Non-Words	8/20	40%
Word Recognition	72/80	90%

2. Irish

(iii) Diagnostic Tests

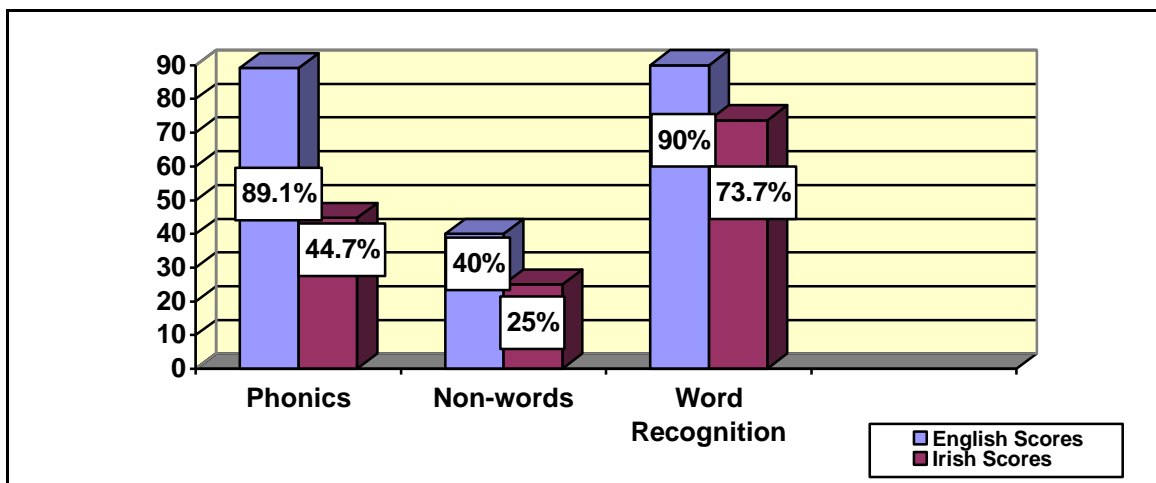
Table 4.17. Standardised test results, Irish – Cormac

Fóineolaíocht	Raw Score	Percentages
Gutaí Fada	9/15	60%
Séimhiú	5/15	33.3%
An t-urú	5/12	41%
Focail gan Chiall	5/20	25%
Focail is Coitianta	76/103	73.7%
Anailís Míleideanna		
Botúin	18/100 - 11 substitutions - 6 mispronunciations - 1 refusal	82% = difficult level
Trial Tuisceanna	6/8	75%
Cloze Procedure	17/19	89%

Summary of Diagnostic Assessment Scores

The various diagnostic assessments covered are summarised in Figure 4.5. Scores achieved on phonics in both Irish and English were averaged to illustrate an overall score.

Figure 4.5 The comparison between English and Irish scores of Cormac on phonics, non-words and word recognition.



Error Analysis

(i) Standardised Tests in English

The errors recorded on the two passages used for calculation on the NARA II (1997) were mainly mispronunciations. The one substitution noted, made little sense within the context of the passage. This category of error was prevalent in a third passage, which was not calculated in the overall score. Cormac appeared to find the Young (1992) Cloze Procedure difficult in parts.

(ii) Diagnostic Tests in English

Throughout the various assessments, Cormac employed his word attack skills to help him decipher unfamiliar words. Many of the mistakes were within the word, with beginnings and endings being similar to the target word: 'disk' for 'desk' and 'grape' for 'graph'. Mistakes on the non-word assessment had no discernable pattern, with errors being made at the beginning of the word and within, in equal measure.

(iii) Diagnostic Tests in Irish

Cormac displayed little knowledge of the 'gutaí fada' when viewed singly but within the context of common words, such as 'tá', 'tú' and 'ól', they presented little difficulty. On the 'séimhiú' subtest, he recognised the root word in five of the 10 incorrectly read words, omitting the 'h' sound in these cases. In the 'urú' subtest, four of the errors had the correct root word but were minus the eclipse. Again such errors demonstrate the difficulty in both the pronunciation and accurate deciphering of words in Irish (Lyddy, 2005).

The 'Focail gan Chiall' posed difficulties for Cormac as he was unable to draw on phonological skills. Consequently, in the absence of phonic knowledge in Irish, automatic word recognition is the strategy employed.

In the 'Focail is Coitianta' test, many of the errors were similar in composition to the target words: 'cheannaigh' for 'chuaigh' and 'anseó' for 'anois'. These errors are

comparable to those identified by Hickey (2005) indicating the ‘look’ of the word as the overriding strategy employed.

The nature of the errors made by Cormac in ‘Anailís Míleideanna’ fell within the substitution category. By and large, these did not make sense contextually and appeared to impinge on his ability to comprehend the passage. Some of the mispronunciations involved encoding to English. Within the cloze procedure exercise, he was systematic in his approach, eliminating words used. This strategy assisted his achievement on this assessment.

Comparative Analysis of Errors

A comparative analysis of the error patterns in both languages indicated the use of two different strategies in deciphering unfamiliar words, the consequences of each approach impacting on meaning. In English, Cormac was over-reliant on phonics as a strategy in English without reference to meaning. This reliance on phonics over meaning was affirmed by Cormac’s mother in her interview. In Irish, automatic word recognition was the overriding strategy employed, the consequence of which limited Cormac’s ability to extract meaning from context thereby preventing confirmation of understanding. Cormac, in his interview, rated Irish as being “*saghas deacair*”, deeming English reading to be easier because “*I know a lot of English*”.

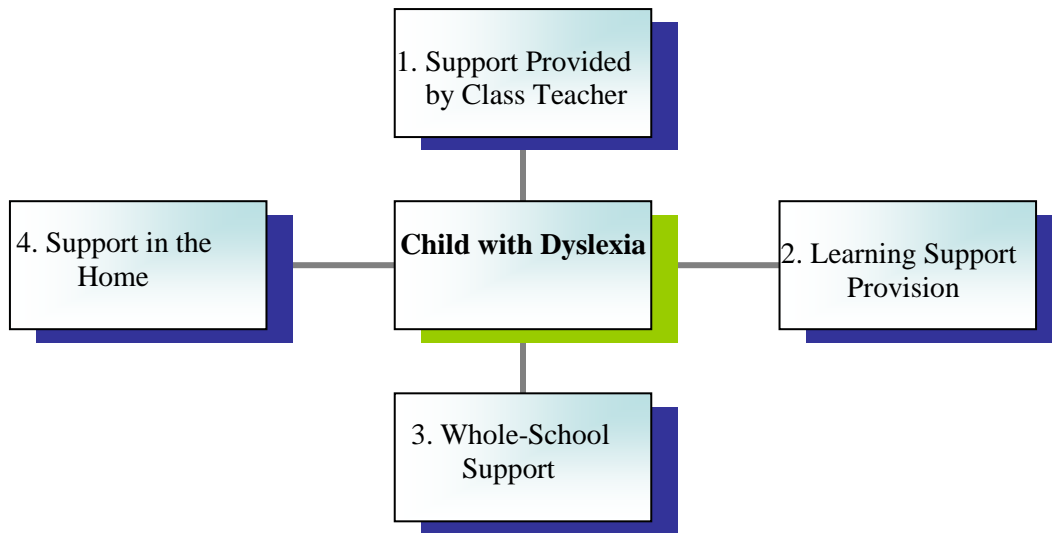
Provision of Support

The research questions relating to methodologies employed in teaching reading and the children’s ability to access the curriculum are addressed in this section along with the way in which school policies on literacy and learning support combine to support these children. The research question relating to support within the home is also reviewed.

There was a commonality across the various themes as they emerged from the interviews with the key participants. This common thread related to the various supports provided within the class, within the school and at home for the children with dyslexia in relation

to reading in both languages, thereby facilitating access to the curriculum in Irish (Figure 4.6). Through teacher questionnaires and interviews, opinions regarding support provided within the class were gleaned, the reality of which was seen in subsequent classroom observations. Whole-school support and policies were reviewed by means of questionnaires and interviews with evidence of a lack of cohesion in relation to the policy on literacy emerging. Interviews with parents revealed significant levels of support for all aspects of English literacy with Irish garnering little or none.

Figure 4.6. Thematic analysis of issues relating to support at all levels



1. Support Provided by Class Teacher

The findings establish that support for the children with dyslexia is provided in a number of ways by the class teachers. Such methods can be classified into overt and covert approaches to assistance. The former entails teaching practical strategies for use by the children in reading, including contextual analysis and word attack, while the latter involves accommodations established by the teacher within the class to support the student, of which the child may be unaware.

Overt Support Approaches

Teacher questionnaires established that English phonics is widely taught in the junior classes, whereas only four respondents recorded teaching phonics in Irish. Both teachers interviewed confirmed this position, with neither giving systematic instruction in phonics in Irish. Nonetheless, Ailéin's teacher stated that he taught strategies to assist children in reading difficult words "... *briseadh síos focail, focail bheaga a phiocadh amach, comthéasc a úsáid*". Likewise, all of the three children reported using word attack skills to decode unfamiliar words, as they would in English, even though, based on examination of the assessments, they do not have the facility in Irish to carry out such phonological analysis. In immersion programmes, teaching of literacy skills in L2 assists in the development of literacy skills in L1 (Cumminns 1984, Geva, 2000; Wade-Woolley and Geva, 2000; Cummins 20005), though the transfer of skills from Irish to English is not acknowledged anywhere in the Primary School Curriculum. Moreover, Cummins (2005) advocates that this transfer of skills should be actively taught across languages. However, within the school, it would appear that the cross-linguistic transfer is being encouraged from L1 to L2, even though Irish is the initial language of literacy instruction.

All three parents acknowledged that word recognition was the predominant strategy used by their children in reading Irish. Ailéin's mother noted: "*If he's seen the Irish word before, he can say it and I think because he's immersed in Irish he will know what the word is. Whereas, if it's a new word he probably won't be able to do the word attack on it because he doesn't really...they don't really do that*". Although Bláthnaid's mother concurred with this, she felt that Bláthnaid also employed contextual strategies.

Ehri (1998) has identified five different ways in which readers read words, three of which involve using the alphabetic system through decoding, blending and analogising. The remaining methods appear to be relevant, to varying degrees, in relation to the strategies applied when reading Irish, namely sight word reading and contextual cues. Moreover, Ehri iterates that to support sight word reading, decoding and analogising strategies need to be acquired for reading unfamiliar words. Equally, Klein and Doctor (2003) contend that for bilinguals experiencing difficulties in reading, having a number of different strategies at their disposal assists with their reading.

Covert Support Approaches

In the teacher questionnaires, additional time devoted to reading was mentioned as one of the accommodations for children with dyslexia. The teachers interviewed emphasised this approach, particularly with regard to accessing the broader curriculum. Each commented on the complex nature of the vocabulary in the subject-specific text books. Hickey (2005) maintains that texts “aimed at native speakers” when translated, pose linguistic difficulties for L2 readers owing to unfamiliar vocabulary (p.407). Difficulty of text books, where subject matter is translated from English, continues to be problematic for children in gaelscoileanna. When asked, Bláthnaid and Cormac confirmed that reading was more difficult for them in these subject-specific books with Bláthnaid stating “*Tá focail an-mhór ann*” while Cormac cited, “*Tá alán eolaíocht isteach ann agus tá sé deacar chun léamh*”. Conversely, Ailéin thought that these books were easier to read in comparison to the regular Irish readers.

Bláthnaid and Cormac’s teacher stated that for history and geography, the text book was merely a reference, with the bulk of the content being taught through oral work and projects, while in the case of science, by means of activity-based work. Met (1994) claims that “language cannot stand apart from content learning” (p. 179). Therefore, an awareness among teachers of the linguistic needs for instruction in subject-specific areas is required (Met). This language-based approach to teaching the wider curriculum was observed as the overriding method of introducing topic-related vocabulary in both classes. During observations, it was noted that teachers ensured that all children had knowledge of relevant vocabulary, thereby enabling comprehension of the topic covered. This was done by means of explanation, provision of alternative words in Irish, use of words in other contexts, repetition, discussion of pictures and, at times, translation to English. The children’s ability to access the curriculum was measured by their willingness to contribute to discussions and their facility to employ topic related language. Equally, it was observed that the three children in question completed written tasks associated with the lessons taught within the timeframe allotted and with relative success. Table 4.18 shows a section of one observation session for Cormac.

Table 4.18 A section of a descriptive observation record for Cormac in which history was being taught. (Appendix S shows complete observation session)

1.15	Teacher instructs class to look at the picture in the book. Cormac looks at the picture. Uses his finger to point to the various parts of the picture as the teacher explains meaning. She asks a number of questions relating to the picture. He puts up his hand. Appears anxious to answer each question. Looks at other children who are asked to answer. Teacher asks class to think of sentences for individual words covered. Individual children contribute. Praises all efforts. Cormac has hand up for most of the words. Appears anxious to answer. Is asked. Answers well but shyly. Praised by teacher
1.20	Teacher draws children's attention to another part of the picture. Gives the word which the class repeats. Cormac repeats the word with the others in class. He looks at the teacher as she asks someone to put word into a sentence. He listens - puts up his hand. Looks at the child who answers. Teacher repeats what the child has said and praises the effort.
1.25	Teacher asks a child to read. Cormac follows using his finger. Teacher asks a question following a few lines of reading. Cormac puts up his hand. Is asked and answers the question hesitantly. Teacher supports him in his answer and praises him. Asks a number of follow-up questions of the class. Recaps on meaning of the word. Writes it on the blackboard. Class repeats the word

Ailéin's teacher alluded to the use of co-operative group strategies for teaching these subjects. Reid (2005) identifies various teaching approaches used in supporting children with dyslexia, one of which entails assisted learning techniques involving cooperative learning through peer collaboration. This was observed during one class session where mixed ability groups were organised to facilitate reading, discussion and commentary on issues related to a specific topic. This observation session is shown in Appendix T. This approach facilitated peer collaboration and appeared productive and beneficial to both Ailéin and the other children in the class in equal measure.

2. Learning Support Provision

In accordance with school policy and the LSG (DES, 2000), learning support is provided through English. Opinions of the teaching staff varied on this matter. One of the teachers interviewed was strongly in favour of maintaining the current position, while the other expressed an inclination for supporting both languages. The learning support teacher was in agreement with the latter position, particularly in relation to emergent readers

experiencing difficulties, stating *“Is dóigh liom go bhfuil sé ag teastáil go háirithe sna bunranganna. Bíonn tacaíocht ag teastáil ó pháistí áirithe chun tús a chur leis an léitheoireacht”*. The principal concurred with the provision of support in Irish in the junior classes, particularly in relation to language. As the acquisition of literacy and language skills are interlinked, literacy practices should originate from the language policy within the school (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; NCCA, 2007). Moreover, submissions to the NCCA recommended that learning support reflect the prevailing literacy policy. At present, this recommendation is not implemented within the school.

All parents agreed that a mixture of support in both Irish and English would be beneficial, with one parent stating *“Well, it makes far more sense to support both, because the Irish goes along on a wing and a prayer”*. Another alluded to the fact that reading Irish was necessary to access the curriculum. The third parent did not wish to see the priority being averted from English, stating *“I would have no problem with that, but I would prefer the emphasis to be on English”*. The children themselves, when asked about the provision of support in both languages, were positively disposed to the idea.

3. Support Provided by the School

Support provision within the school is divided into two sections, whole-school initiatives and school policies. The findings show that though there is a high level of parental satisfaction in relation to the support provided, no whole-school policy regarding dyslexia exists, with accommodations for children experiencing literacy difficulties being managed by individual teachers within the class. Equally, the findings show differences between practice and policy in the area of literacy owing to variations in teacher interpretation.

Whole-School Initiatives

A number of suggestions were proffered through the questionnaires in relation to how children with dyslexia should be supported within the school. Varying teaching strategies, diversity in presentation of written work and flexible class systems around testing were mentioned. However, no whole-school policy exists to coordinate such

accommodations. There was agreement amongst the staff regarding the need for professional advice to raise teacher awareness about relevant issues for children with dyslexia, a position supported by the ITFD (DES, 2001). A whole-school approach is identified by Reid (2005) as a way of ensuring that policies are established in relation to “consultancy, whole-school screening and monitoring of children’s progress” (p. 142). Equally, this approach recognises that dyslexia is a whole-school matter and not the sole responsibility of individual teachers, a sentiment echoed by the Department of Education and Science (DES, 2000; DES 2005).

All of the parents voiced positive opinions on the support offered by the school. One parent spoke of the ‘open-door’ policy that had afforded her the opportunity to consult with class teachers, past and present, regarding issues affecting her child. She also referred to accommodations made by a previous teacher “...*the way she approached the spelling, reduced the workload, the CD, stuff like that was really supportive in the classroom*”. Likewise, each parent alluded to the level of support offered to their children by the LSTs with one parent citing “*I have to say, resource here is a lot better than in a lot of schools and that is my other reason for keeping them here*”, while another parent referred to the LST offering “*little tips*” to her on how to support her child at home. Nonetheless, some suggestions on accommodations were forthcoming, such as the use of coloured chalk to assist in demarcating work for transcription from the blackboard. Mention was made regarding systemic accommodations on reading aloud in class and swapping spelling tests with ‘neighbours’ for correction. Conversely, one parent wanted no special treatment afforded to her child saying “*And I’d prefer everything to be the same and if the others get ten spellings, he should.....and if there’s one or two pages of reading he should have it too*”. This variance in opinion highlights the importance of discussion with parents around their expectations and wishes for their children ITFD.

School Policies

The principal stated that the policy on learning support was established in consideration of the long-term needs of children with dyslexia, prioritising reading in the community language, English. Nonetheless, she considered that in-class support should be provided in Irish to develop language skills in the junior classes.

The principal stated that Irish is the initial language of instruction in literacy. However, she confirmed that total immersion was not being implemented in infant classes, a fact evidenced in teacher questionnaires. Within these classes, CD ROMs pertaining to an English phonics scheme were used and nursery rhymes in English were taught. This practice has come about due to the apparent lack of knowledge of nursery rhymes amongst junior infant children. Moreover, the principal cited the concern of some teachers regarding children with learning difficulties as impacting on the successful implementation of total immersion. This occurs despite the availability of other resources in managing such difficulties, *“éirimid ‘an-hung up’ faoi pháistí le fadhbanna foghlama agus má bhíonn beirt no triúir in aon rang amháin le fadhbanna tá an baol ann go n-athróimid an córas scoile iomlán chun freastal ar an mionlach agus tá go leor bealaí againn chun freastal orthu seachas an córas iomlán a athrú”*. The principal considered that a review and consultation on the implementation of the immersion programme and literacy policy is necessary in order to institute reform of current practice.

4. Support in the Home

Each parent supported literacy in English either by encouraging reading and/or actively reading with their children. Books in English were available in the home with regular trips to the library being mentioned by one particular mother. Each child reiterated these sentiments.

In contrast, despite their own level of ability in Irish (up to Leaving Certificate standard cited in two cases), parents revealed that they did not actively support Irish in the home, except when assisting with homework in the subject. This concurs with the findings of Harris et al. (2006) in relation to parental ability in Irish, which although of a good standard, has little meaningful impact on the children’s progress within the school. Each parent stated that they had prioritised English, following their child’s diagnosis of

dyslexia. One parent commented: *“I have to be honest and say that when (Child’s name) was diagnosed with dyslexia, at home I put my heart into English, with the words, the spellings, understanding, the meaning, the reading, the whole thing was English...and that is what I do”*. Moreover, all parents declared their child’s preference for reading English, a fact borne out in the children’s statements with each child citing that they found English easier to read. Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) highlight the need for additional reading material not only “to encourage children to achieve a high standard in Irish reading” but also to give them a purpose for the attainment of these standards (p. 14).

Summary of Findings

In determining the methodologies employed in teaching reading in both languages, it is apparent that two different instructional approaches have been adopted. These, in turn, impact on the reading strategies used by children with dyslexia. Whereas a phonic-based system is followed in teaching reading in English, Irish reading is heavily reliant on automatic word recognition and to a lesser extent, contextual clues. Though the teachers encourage children to draw on word attack skills to decode unfamiliar words in Irish, there is no evidence to suggest that this is happening. Equally and, perhaps more importantly, there is little evidence to suggest that the children have the facility to use phonological analysis in a similar fashion to English.

In establishing how the three children are experiencing reading in two languages, all performed well in English in phonics and word recognition, relative to their ability. There were individual differences in non-word reading, which would suggest a difference in decoding ability and phonological processing. Whereas there was evidence of phonic-training in English, this was lacking in Irish, with all three children relying heavily on word recognition when reading. In the miscue analysis assessment, the same patterns were evident, though by and large, comprehension was not affected.

In relation to the research question as to whether or not school policies meet the needs of children with dyslexia there is evidence of a lack of clarity over the implementation of

the immersion programme which, by default, has impacted on the literacy policy in Irish. Consequently, the transfer of literacy skills from the minority to the majority language has been impeded to an extent. In contrast, the learning support policy is adhered to even though opinion is divided as to whether the practice of supporting English only, should continue. Likewise, parents feel the need to include support for Irish, though not to the exclusion of assistance in English.

In relation to accessing the curriculum, it is apparent that teachers make considerable efforts to ensure that content-related vocabulary is understood prior to any reading occurring. Simple, effective accommodations assist the children in their reading and understanding of reading material. Both teachers deemed the reading material in subject-specific areas to be challenging for all children.

It was apparent from interviews with both parents and children alike, that Irish reading is not supported in the home outside of homework. The parents stated that they had focused on English solely, following the diagnosis of dyslexia, in an effort to ensure that their children would progress in this language. The children themselves expressed a preference for reading English over Irish, commenting that the latter was easier.

Given that no additional support is provided within the school for Irish, and that Irish is not actively supported within the home, progress in reading is directly attributable to the instruction and methodologies employed by the teachers within the class. With this in mind, the findings indicate that these children have made considerable progress in Irish and are not precluded from accessing the curriculum.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

In this case study, the progress of three children with dyslexia was examined. The policies and practices within the school, along with parental support in the home were investigated to establish the appropriateness of the support provided to these children in their reading of English and Irish, and in their access to the curriculum through Irish.

In relation to the research question on the achievements of the three children in both languages, the findings indicate that they are performing better in English, though not significantly. Given that no additional support is provided within the school or in the home for Irish, as evidenced in the findings, this result is not unexpected. Variation in teachers' interpretations of the total immersion programme has led to a lack of clarity regarding the implementation of the literacy policy in the infant classes, while the evidence suggests that different approaches have been adopted in teaching reading in both languages. In teaching Irish reading, the whole-word, 'look-say' method is emphasised, while contextualisation is encouraged. Conversely, a range of strategies, including phonics and word attack skills, are employed in teaching English reading. The findings indicated that children were facilitated in accessing the curriculum by means of accommodations, including co-operative and language-centred approaches.

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn from these findings and recommendations on policy and practice are suggested. In the light of the paucity of research relating to children with SEN in gaelscoileanna, implications for future research are discussed. The limitations of this study are also addressed.

Research Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study in relation to the small sample size and the restricted time span for carrying out the research. With regard to the former, the research was based on a small number of participants. Though this afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain an in-depth, comprehensive view of their experiences within a particular gaelscoil, no generalisations can be made from the findings to other settings as a consequence of this. Nonetheless, issues raised may have similarities to other settings and, in this regard, the proposed recommendations may have some resonance and “relatability” for other gaelscoileanna (Opie, 2004, p. 74).

Similarly, the short timeframe imposed its own restrictions on the study, resulting in a limited amount of observations due to busy class and school schedules. Such observations were essential in assessing how the children access the curriculum. Though two, 40 minute observation sessions were carried out for each child, more valuable information might have been revealed if additional time had been available to this end.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions arise as a result of the findings. Conclusions are presented under the appropriate research question.

What methodologies are employed in teaching reading in both languages in the school?

- The methodologies employed in teaching reading vary considerably according to the language being taught. In English, emphasis is placed on a range of strategies which have been taught systematically throughout the junior classes and on which the children can draw, when they encounter unfamiliar words. Such approaches include phoneme-grapheme awareness, blending, analogising, contextual analysis and high-frequency sight-word recognition. The approach to teaching word attack skills is less formal in the senior classes.
- In Irish, there is little evidence of a systematic approach to teaching phonics and consequently, emphasis is firmly placed on rote learning of words albeit in the context of an oral-based framework. This results in words being connected to

meaning. Children with dyslexia are therefore ill-equipped to draw on any phonological-based strategy to deal with unfamiliar words and are limited to word recognition and/or contextual analysis.

How are the children with dyslexia achieving in reading in both languages?

- The children are more successful overall in English than in Irish in diagnostic tests. This is not surprising given the lack of support provided, both within school and at home, for reading in Irish. Therefore, in light of these findings, a number of issues need to be reassessed: (i) a reappraisal of the methodologies employed in teaching Irish reading is deemed necessary, particularly in relation to the systematic teaching of Irish phonics; (ii) the introduction of learning support in Irish for children experiencing difficulties with literacy in the language, particularly in the junior classes.

How are the children accessing the curriculum through Irish?

- Methodologies employed in teaching subject-specific areas were language-based. This was observed in both classes where the teachers ensured that the children had a grasp of the necessary vocabulary prior to reading. This approach facilitated the children with dyslexia in reading and comprehending the text, thereby enabling them to access the curriculum.
- The staff recorded employing a variety of accommodations to facilitate children in their reading. The two teachers interviewed showed a genuine empathy with the children in their classes who were experiencing difficulties in reading. Moreover, this was observed in the caring and discrete ways in which they accommodated these children in accessing the wider curriculum.
- Parents in their interviews expressed great satisfaction at the level of support provided by the teaching staff and the learning support teachers alike. The knowledge that this level of support was available was the overriding reason for their children remaining within the gael scoil subsequent to their diagnosis of dyslexia.

- Based on the assessment scores and the children's ability to access the curriculum, there is no evidence to suggest that these pupils are being disadvantaged by remaining within an all-Irish setting.

Is the existing policy on literacy meeting the needs of children with dyslexia?

- The school operates a total immersion programme with Irish being the language of literacy instruction in the school. Nonetheless, the practice of total immersion is not strictly adhered to in the infant classes. Although instruction in Irish phoneme-grapheme correspondence is given, CD ROMs pertaining to an English phonics programme are used and nursery rhymes in English are taught. This practice is contrary to the implementation of total immersion and could militate against the development of phonological ability in Irish, which is of particular importance for children with dyslexia.

Is the existing learning support policy meeting the needs of children with dyslexia?

- Learning support is provided in English, with no support offered in Irish. This practice is in keeping with the LSG (2000) and the existing school policy in the area. However, it ignores the fact that children with dyslexia may need help with their reading in Irish and with accessing the wider curriculum. No consensus was reached among the general staff, though the principal and LST envisaged that some support could be provided in the junior classes in relation to language development and emergent reading skills. There was widespread agreement among the parents that some support in Irish should be given to children experiencing difficulty, though not at the expense of support provision in English.

How are these children being supported in the home?

- In the case of the three children, Irish is not actively supported in the home and no additional reading is covered except for homework given in Irish. All parents acknowledge that they have prioritised English and that their support has been directed towards ensuring that their children are confident and competent in

English. The children are not exposed to reading other Irish books in the home and their own preference is for reading English.

Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations arising from this study, some of which are directed at the wider education community, while others are specific to the school.

Therefore, the recommendations will be presented starting with the former.

The Department of Education and Science

- Comprehensive guidelines should be compiled specifically for gael scoileanna on issues relating to the teaching of Irish literacy. Such guidelines should contain information on (i) the language of initial instruction in literacy, (ii) phonological instruction in Irish and (iii) the timeframe for the introduction of second-language teaching.
- A comprehensive range of both standardised and diagnostic tests in Irish should be provided for gael scoileanna to allow for the accurate assessment of children in literacy in Irish.
- An addendum to the Learning Support Guidelines should be written for gael scoileanna which acknowledges the specific nature of immersion education and provides some pertinent directives on what support should be provided for children experiencing difficulties within these settings.
- Research and development is needed to augment the existing resources in Irish. This extends from the provision of suitable, easily-read, subject-specific text books to CD-ROMs and internet sites. The provision of such materials would make Irish more accessible and attractive to children.
- Continual Professional Development (CPD) should be made available to teachers in gael scoileanna relating to the practice of immersion education.
- CPD should be provided for teachers on specific disabilities, particularly in relation to second language learning.
- Colleges of Education should provide specific training on immersion education for student teachers who intend to teach in gael scoileanna.

Recommendations for the School

Literacy-related Recommendations

- A whole-school review on the Irish literacy policy is necessary to ensure (i) that vital aspects pertaining to literacy throughout the school, including the development of phonological awareness in Irish and teaching of Irish phonics in tandem with word attack and contextual strategies, are adequately addressed and (ii) that progress is maintained throughout the school enabling children, particularly those with dyslexia, to access the curriculum.
- Accordingly, a comprehensive phonics scheme in Irish should be developed to ensure that all children, particularly those children with dyslexia, have recourse to decoding skills.
- In order to implement this literacy policy, appropriate resources in Irish should be made available, particularly in the junior classes.
- Each class library should be well stocked with suitable Irish books that can be easily read by the children.
- CPD should be provided in relation to the implementation of an effective immersion programme.

SEN-related Recommendations

- A whole-school review is needed, in relation to the learning support policy, to investigate the way in which Irish can be supported appropriately in the school considering the wishes of the staff, the parents, the pupils and the obvious time constraints due to the existing workload.
- A whole-school review is needed to examine the accommodations that are made for children with dyslexia within the school as a whole. A variety of ideas were submitted, but this forum would ensure that a degree of consistency exists across the classes. This would be particularly constructive in relation to systemic changes around correction of spelling tests and flexibility on amount and presentation of written work.

- Simplified versions of subject-related books should be compiled so that all children experiencing difficulties in reading might have access to easier texts which can be used in conjunction with the main text.
- CPD should be provided in relation to working with children with SEN in an immersion setting, with particular emphasis on dyslexia.

Parent-related Recommendations

- At the initial meeting for parents of the new junior infant pupils, the literacy policy should be clearly stated, ensuring that parents are aware that English will not be taught in junior infants.
- Continued guidance should be given to the parents of children in the junior classes throughout the year on how best to support their children in Irish at home.
- Information meetings on paired reading should be arranged and encouragement given to promote reading for leisure in both Irish and English.

Implications for Future Research

Though there has been an increase in the number of gaelscoileanna over the last number of decades, there still exists a dearth of research on how best to facilitate children with SEN, in such settings. Therefore, future research should incorporate some of the following suggestions.

- A more extensive, longitudinal study should be undertaken to ascertain how children with dyslexia achieve in literacy in both languages as they progress through a gaelscoil. Such a study would follow in detail the input from each class teacher, the methodologies used in teaching both languages, the strategies employed by the students in reading, the difficulties experienced in written work along with the supports provided in school and in the home. A study of this nature would supply a wealth of information that could inform practice on a wider scale.
- A comparative, empirical study should be carried out to investigate reading achievement in Irish and English of pupils with dyslexia attending a gaelscoil and that of similar students in a monolingual setting. Such a study would further demonstrate the suitability of immersion education for children with dyslexia.

- Research needs to be carried out in relation to children who have been withdrawn from all-Irish schools in favour of a monolingual setting to evaluate the impact on both their self-esteem and their academic attainment.
- More extensive research is needed to ascertain the prevalence of children with specific language difficulties attending gaelscoileanna. Once established, research would examine the suitability of an all-Irish setting in relation to a language-related disability.
- Further research is needed into ways in which children with SEN are catered for in countries with a long established history in immersion education. This information could be useful in structuring appropriate supports for children experiencing difficulties within our immersion programmes.

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Appendix A: Letter to the Board of Management

21-1-‘09

A Chathaoirligh,

Mar is eol duit tá Máistreacht in Oideachais Speisialta ar siúl agam faoi láthair i gColáiste Naoimh Phádraig, Droim Conrach. Mar chuid den chúrsa, tá taighde le déanamh agam agus tá sé i gceist agam é a dhéanamh sa scoil. Beidh an taighde seo faoi pháistí le deacrachtaí foghlama acu sa léitheoireacht agus conas mar atá sé acu tabhairt faoin léitheoireacht i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge i ngaelscoil. Ina theannta sin, tá sé i gceist agam fiosrú faoin mbealach isteach atá acu ar an gcuraclam ar an iomlán agus an slí go dtacaíonn an scoil leo a ndeacrachtaí a sháru.

Tá sé ar intinn agam triúr pháiste le disléicse a roghnú don taighde ó ranganna éagsúla. Tá súil agam pictiúr iomlán a fháil ar chonas atá ag éirí leis na páistí seo sa scoil trí labhairt lena múinteoirí, lena dtuismitheoirí agus leis na páistí iad féin. I ndeireadh na dála, tá sé i gceist agam go mbeidh moltaí fiúntacha ar fáil don scoil agus go mbeidh deis againn mar fhoireann athbhreithniú ar an mbealach a múintear an léitheoireacht sa scoil chomh maith leis an gcóras tacaíochta foghlama más gá. Ní luafar ainm na scoile nó ainmneacha na bpáistí sa tuairisc scríobtha ag an deireadh.

Bhéinn buíoch díot ach ligint dom tabhairt faoin taighde seo sa scoil. Beidh mé i dteangmháil le (ainm an phríomhoide) le linn an phróisis agus coimeádfaidh mé í ar an eolas faoi chúrsaí. Agus an taighde déanta agam, bhéinn sásta teacht ós chomhair an Bhoird chun na torthaí a phlé.

As you are aware, I am doing a Masters in Special Educational Needs in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, at present. As part of the course, I am required to do a thesis based on some aspect of special education. It is my intention to carry out my research in the school, with the permission of the Board.

The basis of the study is to examine how students with dyslexia manage to read in both English and Irish and how they are succeeding in accessing the broader curriculum through Irish. The teachers in the school, three children with an assessment of dyslexia and their parents will contribute to the study. It is my hope, that on completion of the project the school will be able to determine how best to accommodate children with dyslexia, ensuring that they are enabled to meet their potential in all aspects of their education. Confidentiality in relation to the particular children involved will be guaranteed and the school will not be identified at any stage in the written report.

I would be grateful for your permission to carry out the study as I feel it would be beneficial to all children experiencing reading difficulties both in English and in Irish. I will be in contact with (principal's name) during the process and will keep her informed of proceedings. On completion of the report, I would be happy to come before the Board to outline the findings and recommendations.

Mise le meas,

Mairéad Ní Chiaruáin

Appendix B: Letter of Consent for the Children

Tá Mairéad tar éis a insint dom faoin tionscanamh atá ar siúl aici sa choláiste.

Tá sí tar éis a rá liom go mbeidh mé pairteach sa tionscanamh seo.

Chun cabhrú léi tá mé sásta

- Scrúdaithe léitheoireachta a dhéanamh dí thar cúpla lá
- Ligint do Mhairéad féachaint orm ag léamh sa rang cúpla uair
- Labhairt le Mairéad faoi mo chuid léitheoireachta i mBearla agus i nGaeilge
- Go ndéanfaidh sí taifeadadh orm agus mé ag labhairt
- Go bhfeicfidh sí siar ar mo thuairiscí scoile
- Go labhróidh sí le mo thuistí faoi mo chuid léitheoireachta sa bhaile.

Tá a fhios agam gur féidir liom éirí as an tionscanamh a dhéanamh le Mairéad aon uair gur mian liom.

Tá Mairéad tar éis é seo a léamh dom agus aon rud nár thuig mé a mhíniú dom.

Tá Mairéad tar éis é seo a léamh dom

Tá / Níl

Tuigim gach rud a dúirt sí faoin tionscanamh

Tuigim / Ní thuigim

Bhí deis agam ceisteanna a chur ar Mhairéad faoin tionscanamh

Bhí / Ní raibh

Tá mé sásta leis na freagraí a fuair mé

Tá / Níl

Síniú : _____

Tá Mairéad tar éis gach rud ar an bhfoirm seo a léamh dom agus tuigim é.

D'fhreagair Mairéad aon cheist a bhí agam agus tá mé sásta a bheith pairteach sa tionscanamh.

Síniú : _____

Finné: _____

Appendix C: Letter of Consent for Parents

An Examination of How Children with Dyslexia Experience Reading Two Languages in a Gaelscoil

I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine how children with dyslexia are managing to read English and Irish in a gaelscoil. I have met with Mairéad and she has explained the different aspects of the study to me.

I therefore give my permission for Mairéad

- To assess _____ to find out how he/she is progressing in reading in Irish and English.
- To observe _____ in the classroom on three occasions to see how he/she manages reading in different subjects through Irish.
- To send a letter home to all children in his/her class to get permission to observe in the class
- To look back over school records/ reports and use relevant pieces of information in the written report where applicable.
- To interview me in relation to the support that I give to _____ at home in reading in both languages.
- To interview _____ about his/her reading in Irish and English
- To record both interviews and use quotes in the written report where applicable.

I understand that all information will be treated confidentially and that every effort will be made to conceal the identity of my child, myself and the school in the written report. All information collected during the course of the study will be kept safely and destroyed within a year of the completion of the written report.

I also understand that both myself and my child can withdraw from this study at any time without any repercussion.

Please complete the following

Do you understand the information that has been provided regarding the study? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Signature: _____

I have read and understood the information in this form. Mairéad has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to allow my child to take part in the research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement for Teachers

Ráiteas Mínteach do na Múinteoirí

Tá Máistreacht in Oideachas Speisialta á dhéanamh agam i gColáiste Phádraig faoi láthair. Mar chuid den chúrsa, tá taighde le déanamh agam agus teastaíonn uaim é a dhéanamh in ár scoil.

Beidh an tráchtas faoi pháistí le deacrachtaí foghlama acu sa léitheoireacht agus conas mar atá sé acu tabhairt faoin léitheoireacht i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge i ngaelscoil. Teastaíonn uaim fiosrú faoin mbealach isteach atá acu ar an gcuraclam ar an iomlán agus an slí go dtacaíonn muid uilig leo ina gcuid scoilíochta. Minic go leor bhíodh díospóireacht againn faoi thacaíocht foghlama a bheith tugtha i mBéarla seachas i nGaeilge agus b'fhéidir gur deis é seo teacht ar réitiú maidir leis an gceist.

Chun an staidéar seo a chur i gcríoch beidh orm dianstáidear a dhéanamh ar thrúir pháiste le measúnú disléisce orthu ó rang 3 go rang 4. Beidh mé ag iarraidh oraibh uilig, ceistneoir a líonadh dom maidir leis na modhanna mínte léitheoireachta atá in úsáid sa scoil sa dhá theanga.

I ndiaidh sin, cuirfidh mé agallamh ar na múinteoirí atá ag plé leis an dtriúr pháiste atá roghnaithe. Déanfaidh mé taifeadadh orthu, más cuma leo, agus úsáidfídh mé ráiteisí éagsúla agus mé ag scríobh an tuairisc ag an deireadh lena gcead.

É sin déanta, beidh mé ag lorg cead isteach sna ranganna ina bhfuil na páistí seo iontu chun breathnóireacht a dhéanamh ar chonas a thugann siad faoin léitheoireacht in ábhair eile. Agus é sin ráite, beidh socrú déanta leis na múinteoirí cuí maidir leis na rudaí a bheidh mé ag diriú orthu agus mé sa rang.

Beidh mé ag labhairt leis na múinteoirí tacaíochta foghlama a dhéanann freastal ar na páistí seo i gcomhtheasc na stráitéisí agus na cláracha éagsúla a mbaintear úsáid astu. Beidh mé ag labhairt leis an bpríomhoide faoi na polaisithe scoile a bhaineann le cúrsaí léitheoireachta agus tacaíocht foghlama. Breathnóidh mé ar shean tuairiscí scoile agus measúnaithe na bpáistí.

Níl sé de dhualgais ar aon duine a bheith páirteach sa taighde seo muna mian leo. Dár ndóigh, is féidir tarraingt siar ag am ar bith. Tugaim ráthaíocht go mbeidh ainmneacha na bpáistí, na múinteoirí agus ainm na scoile ceilte sa tuairisc scríobhtha. Cóimeádfaidh mise an t-eolas a bhailím slán sabhailte faoi ghlas agus i gceann bliana gheobhaidh me réidh leis.

Appendix E: Phonics Assessment for English

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

CVC

jam

hen

Tin

log

rug

bus

hat

Pet

hut

hop

Initial Consonant Blends

bring

green

glass

spot

flag

pram

plan

drop

class

twin

skip

frog

cross

trap

stem

flag

blink

slip

snow

swim

Final Blends

lamp

milk

sink

wasp

rest

desk

bend

went

fist

bolt

bang

felt

help

hand

lost

Consonant Digraphs (beginnings and endings)

chat

ship

when

phone

thin

fish

tick

rich

chest

graph

with

brush

watch

school

whip

Long Vowel Phonemes

bee

shine

treat

sheet

road

bone

knife

Spain

shade

rude

hide

train

spade

feet

hope

tree

home

team

flute

shake

Vowel Digraphs

cow

new

raw

about

term

ray

low

foot

dew

mark

toy

bowl

boil

bird

soon

hurt

shirt

horn

shout

deaf

Phonics test based on aspects of phonics detailed in Jackson (1979)

Appendix F: Measúnú Fóineolaíochta na Gaeilge

Gutaí Fada

é á Ó í ú

ól sé Tú tá sí

níl cáca Súil rópa béal

Séimhiú

bhí

chuir

dhá

ghlan

mo mhála

phóg

mo shúil

thug

sa chrann

ghearr

sheas

thit

phreab

dhún

an fharraige

An t-urú

ar an bpláta

ar an mbord

ar an gcóta

ar an ngeata

ar an bhfón

ag an bpáiste

ar an bhfeirm

i gcónaí

i dtír

ar an mbád

ar an mbróg

an bhfuil

Appendix G: Non-word Test for English

zim

chig

calput

liptade

jat

trem

lutmip

cramgat

vot

fran

fusnate

ripsatch

mub

habe

tootfeg

rizzbick

Nin

meaze

shandom

blutskirl

Based on: Frederickson, N., Frith, U. and Reason, R. (1997) *Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB)*, London: NFER-Nelson.

Appendix H: Focail gan Chiall

lé	dá	có	mí	rú
ból	sém	túp	tán	síd
chí	dhúl	shúp	thá	bhín
mbóg	bpim	gcip	bhfám	dtá

Appendix I: Focail is Coitianta

an

a

tá

ar

ag

sé

agus

mé

na

is

arsa

sa

mo

atá

go

é

sí

seo

bhí

maith

bhfuil

le

níl

liom

ní

í

do

tú

cé

deir

ann

isteach

amach

chonaic

mise

beag

ach

ina

anois

teach

cad

leis

Liam

cá

ó

deas

siad

dul

féin

agam

leat

béar

Mamaí

sin

Daidí

fear

trí

chuaigh

mór

féach

nach

rith

sciob

buí

leaba

in

Bran

cat

rua

anseo

breá

féidir

air

as

Bhrain

orm

raibh

bíonn

chuir

dearg

faoin

mhála

Mhamaí

súgradh

cén

chodladh

linn

San

duit

gorm

agat

dtí

léim

sicín

amharc

eile

liomsa

sneachta

am

Daideo

mhaith

tar

Appendix J: Anailís Míleideanna, Rang a Trí

Ainm : _____ **Rang:** _____ **Dáta:** _____

Ráta Earráidí: 1:__

Ráta Féincheartaithe: 1:__

Ráta Beachtais : ____%

Ráta Léitheoireachta: ____

Anailís na mBotún :

Easca: 95-100% ☐

Leibhéal Teagaisc: 94-90% ☐

Deacar: 89-50% ☐

Méid Botún	Féin-cheartúcháin	Cinéal Botún
------------	-------------------	--------------

Breithlá Aoife a bhí ann. Bhí sí deich mbliana d'aois. Fuair sí rothar nua mar bhronntanas ó Mhamáí agus Daidí. Bhí áthas an domhain uirthi. Thaispeáin sí an rothar nua do gach éinne. Dath dearg agus dubh a bhí air. Thug na páistí léine rothaíochta di mar bhronnatnas. Bhí an léine go hálainn. Bhí sé ró-mhór di. Chuaigh Aoife agus Fíona ag rothaíocht go dtí an siopa rothair chun léine eile a fháil. Bhi gloine bhriste ar an mbóthar. Ní fhaca na cailíní í. Go tobann, lig Aoife béc aisti. Bhí poll sa roth aici. Chonaic an siopadóir Aoife bhocht.

(O Néill, S. (1993) *Stór Nua 4*, Baile Atha Cliath: Folens. p. 68)

Cómhaireamh na mBotún

Cineálacha Botún	Mispronunciations (M)	Omissions (O)	Substitutions (S)	Additions (A)	Refusals (R)	Reversals (Rev)	Iomlán
Méid na mBotún							
% iomlán							

Trial Tuisceana

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Cé a fuair rothar nua? | (Aoife) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Cén fáth a bhfuair sí an rothar nua? | (mar a breithlá a bhí ann) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Cé a thug an rothar nua di? | (Mamaí agus Daidí) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Céard a thug na páistí eile d'Aoife mar bhronntanas? | (léine rothaíochta) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. An raibh an léine ró-bheag nó romhór? | (ró-mhor) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Cén fáth go ndeachaigh na páistí ar ais go dtí an siopa rothaíochta | (chun an léine a athrú) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Cad a bhí ar an mbothar? | (gloine) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Cén fath gur lig Aoife béic aisti? | (mar chuir an gloine poll sa | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | roth/ cheap sí go mbeadh | |
| | timpiste aici) | |

Iomlán Ceart

Appendix K: Cloze Procedure in Irish for Fourth Class

Lá Fhéile Pádraig

Líon na bearnaí leis na focail sa bhosca thíos

Lá Fhéile Pádraig a bhí ann. Bhí _____ peile i bPáirc an Chrócaigh. _____ Eanna ag dul. Chuir _____ hata glas agus scaif _____ air agus seamróg ina chóta. Ach _____ raibh aon suaitheantas aige. _____ Eanna píosa de ribín glas _____ cláirseach agus rinne sé suaitheantas. Chuir _____ an suaitheantas ar a chóta. _____ Eanna go dtí Páirc _____ Chrócaigh ar an traein. Bhí Róisín in éineacht _____. Cheannaigh Róisín bratach ghlas agus balún glas. Thug _____ an bhratach ghlas d'Eanna. Nuair _____ bhí an cluiche thart rith slua _____ amach ar an bpáirc. Rith Eanna _____ ar an bpáirc. "Cá _____ do shuaitheantas?" arsa Róisín _____ hEanna agus iad ag _____ abhaile ar an traein. D'fhéach Eanna _____. Bhí a shuaitheantas imithe.

Bosca Focal

Eanna, ní, Chuaigh, sé, a, Bhí, mór,

bhfuil, Róisín, dul, ghlás, cluiche, síos,

an, Fuair, leis, amach, le, agus

Lá Fhéile Pádraig, *Am don léamh*, Rang a Céig, Dublin: Fólens.

Appendix L: Letter to the Parents Regarding Observation

29-3-‘09

A thuistí,

Faoi láthair, tá Máistreacht oideachasúil ar siúl agam. Mar chuid den chúrsa tá tionscanamh ar bun agam sa scoil. Chun é seo a chur i gcríoch, tá breathnóireacht le déanamh agam i rang do pháiste, ar dhalta faoi leith. Déanfaidh mé é seo thar dhá bhabhta a mhairfidh 40 noiméid an ceann. Le linn an ama sin, ní bheidh aon mhúinteoireacht ar siúl agam agus ní bhaileofar eolas faoi aon pháiste eile sa rang. Ní luafar ainm na scoile nó ainm páiste ar bith sa tuairisc scríobhtha ag an deireadh. Tá sé seo ar siúl agam le cead ón mhúinteoir ranga, tuismitheoirí an pháiste, an príomhoide agus Bord Bainistíochta na scoile.

Má chuireann sé seo as duit nó, as do do pháiste, ba mhaith liom dá gcuirfeá glooch ar an scoil agus beidh mé i dteangmháil leat chun socrú a dhéanamh maidir le do pháiste le linn na tréimhsí breathnóireachta.

At present, I am doing a year long, Masters in Education. As part of the course, I am undertaking a research project in the school. In order to complete this work, I will be spending 2 sessions observing a pupil within your child's class over the coming weeks. I will be in the class for no longer than 40 minutes at a time. During these sessions, I will not be taking part in any of the teaching. No information will be collected in relation to any other child in the class and at no stage in the written report will the name of the school be mentioned or any child therein. All of this is being done in consultation with the class teacher and with the approval of the child's parents, the principal and the Board of Management.

If, for any reason, you do not wish your child to be present while the observations are taking place, please ring the school and I will contact you to make an alternative arrangement for your child during this time.

Mise le meas,

Mairéad Ní Chiaruáin

Appendix M: Class Teacher Questionnaire

Ceistneoir maidir le stráitéisí atá in úsáid chun léitheoireacht a mhúineadh i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge sa scoil.

Tá dhá aidhm leis an gceistneoir seo:

1. Eirim ghinearálta a fháil ar an gcur chuige atá againn i léith múineadh léitheoireachta i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge sa scoil.
2. Fáil amach conas mar a chuirtear an léitheoireacht in oiriúint do pháistí le disléicse i nGaeilge, ach go háirithe, agus iad ag iarraidh teacht ar an gcuraclam iomlán sa dara teanga.

Tá stráitéisí agus cur chuige gach múinteoir sa scoil ar chomhthábhacht i bhforbairt na léitheoireachta. Tabharfaidh an taighde seo seans dúinn pictiúr cuimhsitheach a fháil ar na fáthanna go bhfuil ráth orainn maidir leis an léitheoireacht i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge sa scoil, go ginearálta. Ina theannta sin, is deis í seo na staitéisí éagsúla atá in úsáid ag múinteoirí a chabhraíonn le páistí le disléicse a chlarú agus, i ndeireadh na dála, na bealaí is éifeachtaí le freastal do na páistí seo a thiomsú.

Is ceistneoir rúnda é seo agus ní ghá d'ainm a lua in aon áit. Ní ainmneofar an scoil sa thráchtas scríobhtha ag an deireadh. Má bhaintear úsáid as ráiteas múinteora sa tuairisc scríobhtha ní bheidh aon mharc aitheantais ag baint leis.

Tá leathnaigh faoi léith don Ghaeilge agus cinn eile don Bhéarla. Ní chóir go dtógfaidh sé níos mó ná 20 nóim ort na bileoga a líonadh.

Is féidir an ceistneoir comhlánaithe a chur sa chlúdach litreach agus é a sheoladh ar ais do _____ roimh an 13ú Feabhra.

Tá mé an-bhuíoch daoibh as ucht bhur gcuid ama a chaitheamh leis seo.

Mise le meas,

Mairéad

Réamheolais

1. Cén ranghrúpa atá á mhúineadh agat faoi láthair ? Bunrang ☐ Ardrang ☐

(Naí – 2) ☐ (3 – 6) ☐

2. An méid bliana taithí atá agat ag múineadh an ranghrúpa seo. _____

3. An bhfuil léitheoireacht Gaeilge á mhúineadh agat? Tá ☐ Níl ☐

4. An bhfuil léitheoireacht Béarla á mhúineadh agat? Tá ☐ Níl ☐

5. An bhfuil páiste le deacrachtaí foghlama sa léitheoireacht á mhúineadh agat faoi láthair?

Tá ☐ Níl ☐

Múineadh léitheoireacht na Gaeilge

Beidh roinnt de na ceisteanna seo nach mbeidh in oiriúint do na ranganan naíonáin.

Sa chás sin, freagair de réir mar a oireann.

1. An úsáideann tú scéim fóineolaíochta le léitheoireacht na Gaeilge a mhúineadh? Úsáidim ☐ Ní úsáidim ☐

Má úsáideann freagair ceist 2. I gcás nach n-úsáideann, lean ar aghaidh go ceist 3.

2. Scríobh cuntas gearr ar an scéim fóineolaíochta a leanann tú.

3. Cad iad na stráitéisí go mbaineann tú úsáid astu chun focail nó tearmaíocht nua a mhúineadh don rang?

4. Cén stráitéis a mhúineann tú do na páistí chun cabhrú leo focal nach bhfuil ar eolas acu a oibriú amach?

5. An cóir fóineolaíocht a mhúineadh sa Ghaeilge? Is cóir ☐ Ní chóir ☐

6. Do thuairim faoi aon scéim fóineolaíochta réamhdhéanta nó féin-chumtha a bheadh úsáideach.

7. An cóir go múinfí na focail is coitianta sa Ghaeilge ar nós na Dolch Words sa Bhéarla?

Is cóir ☐ Ní chóir ☐

8. Do thuairim faoi chló Gaeilge i dtimpeallacht na bpáistí mar chabhair i bhforbairt na léitheoireachta?

9. Do thuairim faoi líofacht teanga i bpróiseas na léitheoireachta Gaeilge?

10. Cén teanga go mba chóir tosú leis an léitheoireacht fhoirimiúil? _____

11. An fáth le do fhreagra

12. An bhfuil cás eisceachtúil ar bith go ndéanfaí athbhreithnú ar an léitheoireacht fhoirimiúil a thosú i nGaeilge? Tá ☐ Níl ☐

13. Luaigh na heisceachtaí sin.

14. Do thuairim faoi thacaíocht foghlama i nGaeilge seachas i mBéarla do pháistí le disléicse?

Ceisteanna 15, 16 agus 17 do mhúinteoirí le páistí le disléicse sa rang faoi láthair.

15. Cén freastal a dhéantar don pháiste le disléicse i leith na léitheoireachta sa rang?

16. I do thuairim, cad iad na deacrachtaí is mó atá ag an bpáiste i leith na léitheoireachta Gaeilge?

17. Cad iad na cosúlachtaí/ na difríochtaí a bhaineann leis na deacrachtaí atá ag an bpáiste le disléicse i léitheoireacht Gaeilge seachas léitheoireacht an Bhéarla?

Methods used in the Teaching of English Reading

*Some of these questions will have limited significance to teachers in the infant classes.
Please fill in questions that pertain to your particular class.*

1. Do you use phonics to teach English reading? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, answer question 2. If no, answer question 3 next.

2. Write a short account of the phonics scheme you use.

3. What strategies do the children employ to work out difficult words?

4. Does a print-rich environment have a bearing on reading progress? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. If yes, please comment on how a print-rich environment is achieved.

6. In your opinion, how can children with dyslexia be supported within the school?

Questions 7 and 8 for teachers teaching children with dyslexia at present.

7. What accommodations are made for the child with dyslexia in reading English within the class at present?

8. Please comment on how you believe the child with dyslexia in your class is managing to read two languages and where the main difficulties lie in relation to this.

Míle buíochas arís as ucht do chuid ama a chaitheamh ag líonadh an cheistneora seo.

Appendix N: Teacher Interview Schedule

A) Ráiteas Tosaigh

I dtús, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leat as ucht tacú liom an tionscnamh seo a dhéanamh. Trí labhairt leat inniu, tá sé i gceist agam inniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an gcur chuige atá agat maidir leis na páistí le disléicse atá sa rang faoi láthair ó thaobh na léitheoireachta de.

Mar a luaigh mé nuair a thug mé faoin dtaighde i dtús, ní bheidh d'ainm, nó ainm na scoile luaite in aon áit ar an dtráchtas ag an deireadh. Coimeádfaidh mé an t-eolas seo faoi mo churaim ach gach seans go mbainfidh mé usáid as ráiteas nó dhó chun pointe a shoiléiriú, más cuma leat. Arís, déanfar taifeadadh ar an agallamh seo, muna gcuireann sé isteach ort.

B) Ba mhaith liom cúpla cheist ginearálta a chur ort maidir le do thaithí múinteoireachta, an tumoideachas.

1. Cé mhéad bliana atá curtha díot ag múineadh?
2. An i ngaelscoil a mhúin tú i gcónaí?
3. Cad é do mheas faoin dtumoideachas go ginearálta mar chóras oideachais?
4. An oireann an córas seo do gach pháiste?
5. I do thuairim, an bhfuil riachtanais speisialta faoi leith nach bhfeileann an cineál oideachais seo dó?
6. Cén teanga gur chóir tosú leis an léitheoireacht fhoirmiúil?
7. An bhfuil aon eisceacht ann nach dtosófá leis an léitheoireacht sa teanga sin?

C) Anois díreoimid ar an disléicse, léitheoireacht na Gaeilge ach go háirithe an páiste atá i do rang faoi láthair

1. An bhfuil eolas agat faoi disléicse, go ginearálta?
2. Cad é an t-eolas sin?
3. An gcabhródh sé le do mhúinteoireacht dá mbeadh breis eolais agat faoi disléicse?

4. An bhfuil taithí agat ar pháistí le disléicse a mhúineadh?
5. Cad é an taithí sin?
6. I do thuairim, an éiríonn le páistí le disléicse léitheoireacht na Gaeilge a fhoghlaim ar an gcomhchaighdeán leis an mBéarla? An fáth le do fhreagra?
7. Maidir leis an bpáiste le disléicse atá i do rang faoi láthair:
 - An bhfuil deacracht faoi leith aige/aici maidir leis an nGaeilge seachas an Béarla?
 - Cad iad na deacrachtaí is mó atá aige/aici leis an léitheoireacht Gaeilge go ginearálta?
 - An bhfuil fóineolaíocht na Gaeilge ar eolas aige/aici?
 - An gcuireann tusa béim ar an bhfóineolaíocht sa rang go ginearálta?
 - Conas mar a thugann sé/sí faoi fhocail a oibriú amach?
 - An bhfuil stráitéisí faoi leith múinte agat dó/di le tabhairt faoi fhocail nach bhfuil ar eolas aige/aici?
 - An bhfuil deacrachtaí aige/aici teacht ar na hábhair curaclaim eile sa Ghaeilge?
 - Cén freastal atá déanta agat dó/di agus é/í ag léamh sna hábhair curaclaim eile ar nós stair/ tíreolas/ eolaíocht srl.
8. An cóir go mbeadh scéim fóineolaíochta in úsáid sa scoil?
9. An bhfuil eolas agat faoi scéim fóineolaíochta réamhdhéanta atá ar fáil?
10. Do thuairim faoi thábhacht an teanga labhartha i gcúrsaí léitheoireachta?
11. Cad é do thuairim faoi na focail is coitianta sa Ghaeilge a mhúineadh don rang?
12. An bhfuil tuairim agat faoin gcineál tacaíocht foghlama gur chóir dúinn a thabhairt do pháistí le disléicse?
13. Cad é do thuairim faoi thacaíocht foghlama a bheith i nGaeilge seachas i mBéarla?
14. Do thuairimí faoin bhfreastal go bhféadfaidís a dhéanamh do pháistí le disléicse sa scoil go ginearálta? (fógraí/ print rich environment/ leabhair ar cds)
15. An bhfuil fáth ann nach chóir go mbeadh páiste le disléicse i ngaelscoil?
16. Do thuairim faoi siceolaithe a mholann do thuistí gan páiste le disléicse a chur chuig gaelscoil?

17. Aon rud suantasach eile?

D) The next number of questions will centre on the teaching of English reading.

1. What importance do you place on the teaching of phonics within your class?
2. Do you have a particular scheme that you follow?
3. What other strategies do you teach the class for working out difficult words?
4. Do you see an advantage in overtly teaching similarities that exist in phonology between the two languages?
5. What accommodations do you make for the child/ children with dyslexia in your class in relation to reading English? (novels/ library)
6. In your opinion, are the difficulties experienced by a child with dyslexia similar in both English and Irish reading?
7. In your opinion in which language do the children prefer to read? The reasons for your answer.
8. Should English be the sole language that is supported for children with dyslexia within the school?
9. Name other ways in which children with dyslexia could be supported within the school?
10. Any other pertinent issues which you feel should be raised.

Díreach chun a chinntiú leat faoin méid atá ráite agat, déanfaidh mé achoimire ar na pointí suantasacha.....

An aontaíonn tú leis an achoimire sin?

Míle buíochas as ucht do chabhair leis an agallamh seo a dhéanamh.

Appendix O: Learning Support Teacher Interview Schedule

Interviewer	<p>I dtús báire, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leat _____, as ucht an agallaimh seo a dhéanamh dom agus chun a rá leat nach mbeidh d'ainm nó ainm na scoile luaite in aon áit sa tuairisc agus más cuma leat úsáidfidh mé roinnt do do ráitéisí de réir mar a oireann</p> <p>Tá mé ag iarraidh labhairt i dtús faoin gcleachtas tacaíocht foghlama atá againn sa scoil agus ansin iarrfaidh mé ort faoi na páistí le disléisce atá faoi do chúram.</p> <p>Cén teanga ina thugtar tacaíocht foghlama do pháistí le disléisce?</p>
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Do thuairim faoi seo?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	An cóir tacaíocht a thabhairt i nGaeilge amháin?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	An mbeadh tú sásta meascán do thacaíocht i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Déan cur síos ar an dtacaíocht foghlama a thugtar do pháistí le disléisce faoi láthair?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Cén sort tacaíochta gur féidir a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí agus iad ag plé le páistí le disléisce sa rang?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Cén sort tacaíochta gur féidir a thabhairt do thuistí le páistí acu le disléisce?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Agus céard faoi a leithead go Paired Reading ?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	An cóir a leithéad a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	An gcuireann an t-easpa cumais léitheoireachta isteach ar an mbealach isteach atá acu teacht isteach ar an gcuraclam?
Múinteoir Tac.	

Foghlama	
Interviewer	Meas tú an cóir dúinne teacht ar bealach éigin chun an tacaíocht sin a thabhairt dóibh?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	I do thuairim cad iad na deacrachtaí is mó atá ag Ailéin
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Cad é an dul chun cinn is mó atá déanta aige?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	I do thuairim cad iad na deacrachtaí is mó atá ag Bláthnaid.
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Cad é an dul chun cinn is mó atá déanta aici?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	I do thuairim cad iad na deacrachtaí is mó atá ag Cormac
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	
Interviewer	Cad é an dul chun cinn is mó atá déanta aige?
Múinteoir Tac. Foghlama	

Díreach chun a chinntiú leat faoin méid atá ráite agat, déanfaidh mé achoimire ar na pointí suantasacha.....

An aontaíonn tú leis an achoimire sin?

Míle buíochas as ucht do chabhair leis an agallamh seo a dhéanamh.

Appendix P: Interview Schedule for Principal

Interviewer	I dtús báire, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leat _____, as ucht an agallaimh seo a dhéanamh dom agus chun a rá leat nach mbeidh d'ainm nó ainm na scoile luaite in aon áit sa tuairisc agus más cuma leat úsáidfidh mé roinnt do do ráitéisí de réir mar a oireann Tá mé ag iarraidh labhairt faoin gcleachtas atá againn sa scoil maidir le litearthacht agus tacaíocht foghlama. An gcleachtaíonn an scoil an tumoideachais?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	An dóigh leat go bhfuil an córas litearthachta ceangailte le labhairt na teanga?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	Na munlaí seo atá aitheanta ag an NCCA, cén múnla atá in úsáid againn ó thaobh léitheoireachta de?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	An cóir dúinn fóineolaíocht Gaeilge a dhéanamh?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	Cad é an polaisí maidir le tacaíocht foghlama?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	An dóigh leat gur chóir go mbeadh an Ghaeilge á thacu againn toisc go dtosaíonn muid le léitheoireacht sa Ghaeilge?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	Conas tá sé acu sna hard raganna agus iad ag iarraidh teacht ar an gcuraclam?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	Cad is féidir linn a dhéanamh mar scoil iomlán chun cabhrú le páistí teacht ar an gcuraclam agus fadhbanna acu sa léitheoireacht?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	Cearr is féidir linn a dhéanamh chun léitheoireacht na Gaeilge a spreagadh i measc na bpáistí?
Príomhoide	
Interviewer	An bhfuil ‘whole-school approach’ o thaobh páistí le disléicse gur féidir linn a chur i bhfeidhm?
Príomhoide	

Díreach chun a chinntiú leat faoin méid atá ráite agat, déanfaidh mé achoimire ar na pointí suantasacha.....

An aontaíonn tú leis an achoimire sin?

Míle buíochas as ucht do chabhair leis an agallamh seo a dhéanamh.

Appendix Q: Interview Schedule for Child Interview

1. Ráiteas Tosaigh

Go raibh maith agat as ucht páirt a ghlacadh sa tionscanamh seo. Beidh comhrá beag againn anois faoi do léitheoireacht go ginearálta. Toisc go bhfuil tú ag freastal ar ghaelscoil bíonn ort gach ábhar a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge seachas an Béarla féin. Ciallaíonn sé sin go bhfuil tú ag léamh i ndá teanga. Toisc go bhfuil disleicse ort tá mé ag iarraidh a fháil amach conas mar atá sé agat ag léamh i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge agus má tá deacracht faoi leith agat le teanga amháin thar an teanga eile.

Nuair atáimid ag labhairt faoin mBéarla, is féidir leat mé a fhreagairt i mBéarla agus mar an gcéanna sa Ghaeilge. Tóg d'am agus tú ag caint. Níl aon deifir orainn agus muna dtuigeann tú mé, abair liom agus míneoidh mé ceard atá i gceist agam.

Mar eolas duit, nuair atá an tuairsc á scríobh agam ní bheidh a fhios ag éinne cé tú féin mar ní bheidh d'ainm scríobhtha in aon áit. Tá mé chun an comhrá seo a thaifeadadh más cuma leat.

An dtuigeann tú gach a bhfuil ráite agam. An bhfuil aon cheist agat orm?

Is feidir linn tosú mar sin.

2. Ceisteanna Ginearálta

1.	An maith leat an léitheoireacht ?	Is maith/ ní maith
2.	Cén sort leabhair a léann tú de ghnáth?	Scéalta greannmhara/ scéalta draíochta/ Harry Potter/ leabhair faoi fíricí/ _____
3.	Cad atá á léamh agat faoi láthair?	_____
4.	Cathain a léann tú?	Aon am/ am luí/ tar éis dom m'obair bhaile a dhéanamh/
5.	An léann tú i mBéarla nó i nGaeilge nuair atá deis agat do léitheoireacht féin a dhéanamh?	I nGaeilge / I mBéarla
6.	Cén fáth go roghnaíonn tú _____ thar _____ ?	Níos easca/ níos mó leabhair spéisiúla/ _____

3. Ceistanna faoin Léitheoireacht Ghaeilge

1.	An bhfuil Gaeilge éasca nó deacair le léamh?	Easca/ deacair/ beagáinín
2.	An dtaitníonn sé leat a bheith ag léamh i nGaeilge?	Taitníonn / ní thaitníonn
3.	Nuair a bhíonn tú ag léamh conas mar a oibríonn tú amach na focail nach bhfuil ar eolas agat?	Iad a fhuaimniú / i gcomhthéasc/ na pictiúir/ deireann an múinteoir linn/
4.	Cad a deireann do mhúinteoir leat le déanamh nuair nach bhfuil focal ar eolas agat?	Fuaimniú/ pictiúr/ comthéacs/ focail bheaga a aithint/
5.	Ar múineadh duit conas focal a bhriseadh síos nó a fhuaimniú amach?	Múineadh/ níor múineadh
6.	An mbéadh sé úsáideach dá múinfí duit conas focail a oibriú amach?	Bheadh/ ní bheadh
7.	Cad tá níos éasca le léamh – leabhar léitheoireachta nó leabhair cosúil leis na leabhair staire/ leabhair tíreolais/ leabhair eolaíochta	Leabhair léitheoireachta/ leabhair staire
8.	Cén fáth go bhfuil na leabhair sin deacair?	
9.	Cad a dhéanann do mhúinteoir chun an léitheoireacht sin a dhéanamh níos éasca duit (athrá/ focail ar an mballa/ pictiúir a tharraingt/ dlúthdhiosca)	
10.	An bhféadfadh do mhúinteoir aon rud eile a dhéanamh duit chun na leabhair sin a dhéanamh níos éasca? (athrá/ focail ar an mballa/ pictiúir a tharraingt/ dlúthdhiosca a dhéanamh)	
11.	An gceapann tú go mbeadh sé úsáideach cabhair breise a bheith agat le léitheoireacht Gaeilge faoi mar a bhíonn agat sa Bhéarla? (cabhair le focal a fhuaimniú amach/ a bhriseadh síos)	Bheadh/ ní bheadh
12.	An gceapann tú go gcabhródh sé leat dá mbeadh cabhair agat le léitheoireacht in ábhair eile, ar nós stair / tíreolais srl.	Cabhródh/ ní cabhródh
13.	An bhfuil leabhair Ghaeilge agat sa bhaile nach leabhair scoile iad?	Tá /Níl
14.	An léann tú iad seo sa bhaile?	Léim/ Ní léim

15.	Cé a thugann cabhair duit le d'obair bhaile a dhéanamh i nGaeilge?	Mamaí / Dadaí / foighlaí
16.	An ndéanann _____ aon rud speisialta chun cabhrú leat an Ghaeilge a léamh?	_____ _____
17.	An mbeadh sé úsáideach dá mbeadh leabhair léitheoireachta agat ar dlúthdhiosca le seinn sa bhaile?	Bheadh/ Ní bheadh
18.	An bhfuil smaointe eile agat a chabhródh le daoine cabhrú leat agus tú ag léamh i nGaeilge?	_____ _____

4. Questions Relating to English Reading

1.	Do you find reading English easy or difficult?	Easy / difficult
2.	Why do you think it's _____?	_____ _____
3.	Which do you find easier, reading in English or Irish?	English / Irish
4.	Why is _____ easier?	_____ _____
5.	When you come across a word you don't know what do you do?	Sound it out/ use phonics/ look at pictures/ try and understand form the story
6.	Do you find the English readers in school easy or difficult?	Easy/ difficult
7.	What books are more difficult to read? (class novels/ library books)	_____
8.	What makes these books difficult?	Hard words/ difficult to understand/ _____
9.	How does your teacher help you in class with your reading in English?	_____ _____
10.	Are there other ways in which you could be helped with your English reading in class?	Yes / No
11.	Can you think of some ways?	_____ _____
12.	Do you think that having extra help in school is	Yes/ no

	useful to you for reading English	
13.	What other extra help would be useful to you in helping you to read in English?	_____
14.	Would you prefer extra help in English rather than Irish?	Yes/ no
15.	Do you think that a mixture of help with Irish and English would be useful?	Yes/ no
16.	Do you read English books at home?	Yes/no
17.	Who helps you with your English reading at home?	Mam /Dad/ minder
18.	How often do you read with your _____?	How often do you read with your _____?
19.	How does your _____ help you with your English reading?	_____
20.	Would you like to say anything more about your reading	_____ _____

Appendix R: Interview Schedule for Parents

A) Opening Statement

I'd like to thank you for agreeing to be part of the study and agreeing to talk to me today about your child's reading and the support you give to him/her at home.

I would like to remind you at this point that everything you say will be treated confidentially and neither your name nor your child's name will appear on any written report that is submitted to the college.

With your permission, I am taping this interview as I may wish to use statements from this recording.

B) We might start with a discussion on how _____ manages to read in English

1. Does _____ enjoy reading?
2. Does _____ read voluntarily, or is it a chore to get him/ her to read?
3. Does _____ ever comment on his/ her reading ability?
4. What do in your opinion, are _____'s main areas of difficulty in reading English?
5. Does _____ rely on phonics to read difficult words?
6. Besides phonics, what other ways does _____ work out words that he/she doesn't know?
7. Does _____ understand what he/she reads?

C) We might discuss _____ reading in Irish for a moment.

1. Does _____ enjoy reading in Irish?
2. Would _____ choose to read in Irish over English?
3. Does _____ ever comment on his/ her Irish reading?
4. How does _____ manage in reading Irish?
5. How would you compare _____'s ability to read in Irish with his/her ability to read in English?

6. Does _____ use any strategies (phonics/ small words etc.) when working out difficult words in Irish?
7. Does _____ bring home history / geography books to read for homework?
8. How does he/she manage these books?

D) From my interview with _____ I know that you do his/her homework with him/ her and part of this involves reading. We might look at other ways in which you help with reading in both languages.

1. Do you read to _____ in English?
2. How do you _____ encourage to read?
3. Have you developed any tricks to develop interest in reading?
4. In what ways do you encourage reading in Irish at home?
5. Apart from school books, do you have Irish story books at home that you can read to _____?
6. What Irish books have you found that appeal to _____?

E) In relation to the support that _____ gets in school have you some opinions on the following

1. Would you like to see support for Irish only within the school?
2. Would you like to see a mixture of support available for both languages?
3. Would you prefer if the support remained as it is?
4. What ways might the school help in supporting parents with children with dyslexia (paired reading courses etc.)?
5. Do you think that having school books on cd for Irish in particular would be beneficial?

Just to recap on some what you have said in relation to _____.

Are you happy with that summary in relation to _____.

Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed.

**Appendix S: Full Descriptive Record of Observation of SESE Lesson
(History) for Cormac**

Child: Cormac

Class: SESE - History Lesson

1.15	Teacher instructs class to look at the picture from the book. Cormac looks at the picture. Uses his finger to point to the various parts of the picture as the teacher explains meaning. She asks a number of questions relating to the picture. He puts up his hand. Appears anxious to answer each question. Looks at other children who are asked to answer. Teacher asks class to think of sentences for individual words covered. Individual children contribute. Praises all efforts. Cormac has hand up for most of the words. Appears anxious to answer. Is asked. Answers well but shyly. Praised by teacher
1.20	Teacher draws their attention to another part of the picture. Gives the word which the class repeats. Cormac repeats the word with the others in class. He looks at the teacher as she asks someone to put word into a sentence. He listens - puts up his hand. Looks at the child who answers. Teacher repeats what the child has said and praises the effort.
1.25	Teacher asks some one to read. Cormac follows using his finger. Teacher asks a question following a few lines of reading. Cormac puts up his hand. Is asked and answers the question hesitantly. Teacher supports him in his answer and praises him. Asks follow-up questions of the class. Recaps on meaning of the word – and writes it on the blackboard. Class repeats the word
1.30	Resumes reading with class. Another child reads. Stops after a number of sentences. Asks some questions. Teacher refers to the picture. Gets children to point to the appropriate picture. Cormac follows as instructed. Some more discussion on previous work covered on the topic
1.35	Teacher asks a question on what has been read. Cormac looking for answer in the book. Doesn't look at the teacher as she explains word. Then looks at teacher as she talks. Goes back to looking at the book to find the answer. Looks at his neighbour. Finds the answer in his own book. Teacher asks another question – praises child who answers. Asks the class to put one of the new words learned into an alternative sentence. Gives an alternative word in Irish for the new word.
1.40	Brings the class back to reading. Teacher starts the sentence for the next child who is reading. Asks Cormac to read. She starts the sentence for him. Scaffolds as he reads giving the word when he falters. Unsure of 'ceir beiche' 'buachaill' 'mbliana' 'fadú'. Reads 4 sentences. Keeps following with his finger as he reads. Continues to follow with finger having stopped reading. Teacher asks questions
1.45	Three more children read. Teacher asks each child to think of one thing they have learned. Cormac is asked. Able to answer one thing that he learned. After he answers. Hand shoots up again. Gives another answer. Teacher praises him. Follows the book as another child reads. Looks at picture as directed by teacher. Listens to child talking. Watches and listens. Looks at the book again. No obvious sign that he is reading. Not using finger.
1. 50	Puts up is hand again to answer question. Instructed to turn over book. Looks

	confident that he knows the answer. Hand up again. Teacher asks class to translate a word into English. Cormac has his hand up. Is asked. Thinks about the word that the teacher has asked him to translate. Teacher tells him to take his time. Thinks about it and he gets it right. Asks the children to put some new words learned into sentences. Finishes reading page with some more children reading.
2.00	At end of lesson teacher asks for three facts. Doesn't put up his hand initially. Then puts his hand up when others start answering. Asked by teacher. Slowly starts to answer - is hesitant. Teacher tells him to take his time. Thinks of answer but doesn't know word in Irish. Teacher gives him the word and he continues with another fact. Puts hand up again. Has answer to question that teacher asks.

**Appendix T: Full Descriptive Record of Observation of SESE Lesson
(Geography) for Ailéin**

Child: Ailéin
Lesson: SESE

1.15	<i>Teacher organises the children into groups by giving each child a number from one to five. All children of a specific number sit together. This means that all groups are mixed. All children move to their positions. Teacher gives instructions as to the page they need to read. He instructs all children to read first and then to discuss points as he details.</i> Children read first. Ailéin pointing to pictures and talks to one of the other children in the group. Laughs with his partner.
1.20	Ailéin and his partner appear to have the same talking point. They talk to the other child within the group about it. He flicks through to other pages and talks about another chapter. His partner watches as he talks and points to the picture. They laugh.
1.25	Teacher addresses the group. Tells them to stop messing and concentrate on the reading. Ailéin starts to read. Uses his finger to point as he reads. Teacher calls the class to attention and instructs the group to discuss the most important points that they have found. Ailéin is discussing some point but appears to point to the pictures to get at the information. Some of the other boys contribute and also look at the picture in the book.
1.30	Teacher calls the class to attention and asks the children to contribute. He singles out Ailéin's group to commence. One boy answers mentioning things that you need to survive – Ailéin puts up his hand but is not asked to contribute. Each group contributes one point. Teacher reiterates the points as they stated.
1.35	While the attention of the class is focused on the teacher, he questions the children about a related topic. Ailéin puts up his hand to answer. He contributes. Another child makes another point. Ailéin watches as others answer. Teacher goes over the salient points and redirects the children to the books again.
1.40	<i>The teacher directs the children to discuss the points. He instructs a child with a particular number (assigned to a child from the beginning) to be the writer. This child writes down the important elements on a piece of paper in order of their importance. All children in the group are asked to contribute ideas to the writer.</i> One child in Ailéin's group writes down the contributions as the others call them out. They discuss each point until they get consensus. A lot of discussion and pointing. Ailéin looks at a different book. Teacher takes it from him and he continues to work. The other children in the group look over what the child has already written and more discussion follows. They concentrate again on the book.
1.45	The writer writes again. Ailéin talks to him and points to the book. He listens to what Ailéin says. .He looks at something else on his table and loses concentration for a few minutes. The others in the group continue to work. One child asks Ailéin a question. The teacher calls the class to attention. He asks a

	question and Ailéin puts up his hand. Teacher asks the writer from each group to contribute. Some discussion ensues on the various points as they are read out by the writers. Teacher gets agreement on the order of the various points
1.50	Ailéin concentrates for a while the teacher is talking. Then looks around the room while other children are contributing. Teacher calls his attention by asking him a question. He contributes some information. Teacher directs children to go back to their places while a child gives out the workbooks. Teacher directs the children to open a particular page. Ailéin looks for the page - doesn't get the correct page- looks again. Looks at his neighbour's book and finds the page

Situation/Setting:

Teacher gives number to each of children and they break into groups according to these numbers. They bring their books with them and the class has been totally rearranged.

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