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An Bhuil Gaeilge Agat?: Perspectives on the Irish Language in Ireland

Georgia Katherine Fyke

AN BHUIL GAEILGE AGAT?: PERSPECTIVES ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN IRELAND

by
Georgia Katherine Fyke

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Approved by

Advisor: Assistant Professor Allison Burkette

Reader: Assistant Professor Tamara Warhol

Reader: Associate Professor Deborah Chessin

ABSTRACT

GEORGIA KATHERINE FYKE: *An bhuil Gaeilge agat?*: Perspectives on the Irish Language in Ireland

(Under the direction of Allison Burkette)

The future of Irish as a living language is uncertain, and some fear it will vanish completely. In this paper I explore how the main language of Ireland shifted from Irish to English and discuss the perspectives of the Irish themselves toward the Irish language. Chapter 1 summarizes the history of the language from its introduction to the island by the carliest Celts to its current secondary role. Chapter 2 reviews the concepts of language death and revitalization both generally and as they apply to Irish, using models by David Crystal and Joshua Fishman. The final chapter is an analysis of my interviews of four Irish natives living in the United States. While the Irish government fervently supports the continued teaching and use of the language and the majority of the Irish people themselves believe it to be an important part of being Irish, few people actually use it. While opinions of the interviewees differed in some respects, all were overwhelmingly favorable toward maintaining Irish as a living language. It seems unlikely that Irish will ever again be the primary language in Ireland. Nonetheless, even if it remains in its current state, the Irish's sense of national identity appears secure with their historic language being more symbolically than practically important.

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Introduction

That Irish—also known as Gaelic or *Gaeilge*—is **the** official language of Ireland would come as a surprise to most visitors. English is everywhere and Irish rarely heard. This is actually quite remarkable considering the public and private support for the mandatory teaching of Irish and for a bilingual culture with Irish as **the** official language. To wit, for over eighty years, Irish government policy has fostered its maintenance, indeed its revitalization, as a living language, working to reverse the effects of centuries of English rule. In 2006 the government declared its "aim to ensure that as many citizens as possible are bilingual in both Irish and English." Irish became an official language of the European Union in 2007. Teachers in all primary and secondary schools as well as all government officials must exhibit proficiency in Irish; all primary and secondary education in Ireland includes compulsory Irish language classes. On the surface, public sentiment seems concordant with government policy. In the 2002 Irish census, 42% of Irish citizens claimed to speak Irish and almost all of those surveyed said that the language was important both to themselves personally and to the vitality of traditional Irish culture.

Reality is discordant with both public policy and private sentiment. Most Irish people either cannot or choose not to speak Irish, even in local interactions. The Irish themselves, while acknowledging the critical significance of the language for the

sustenance of their particular identity and culture, overwhelmingly fail to maintain their language for normal discourse. Thus, despite government policy initiatives and stated public sentiment, English flourishes while the future of Irish as a living language remains very much in doubt.

This work explores the current state of Irish. To understand the present, one must know something of the history of the language and the people who have spoken it. This history is reviewed. Second, the concepts of language death and language revitalization are defined in general and then applied to Irish in particular. Lastly, to provide insight into the personal perspectives of the Irish themselves, data taken from interviews conducted with four Irish natives currently residing in the United States is discussed. Finally, in conclusion, the importance of the survival of the Irish language is explored.

Chapter 1 History of the Irish Language

Section 1 - Early History of the language

Irish, along with Manx and Scots Gaelic, is a Q-Celtic language; its linguistic ancestor was brought to Ireland by a people known as the Celts. The Celts emerged around 1000 BC. Their name is derived from the Greek *keltoi*, or barbarian, appropriate for a group infamous for intertribal warfare (Fry, 1988, p. 12). These people first appeared in Ireland at around the beginning of Ireland's Iron Age, roughly 2200 BC. Several waves of Celtic peoples appeared in Ireland, but the Gaelic Celts, or Gaels, became the dominate group and imposed their version of the Celtic language on Ireland by the beginning of the first century A.D. (Fry, 1988, p. 17).

Figure 1. Ogham Symbols

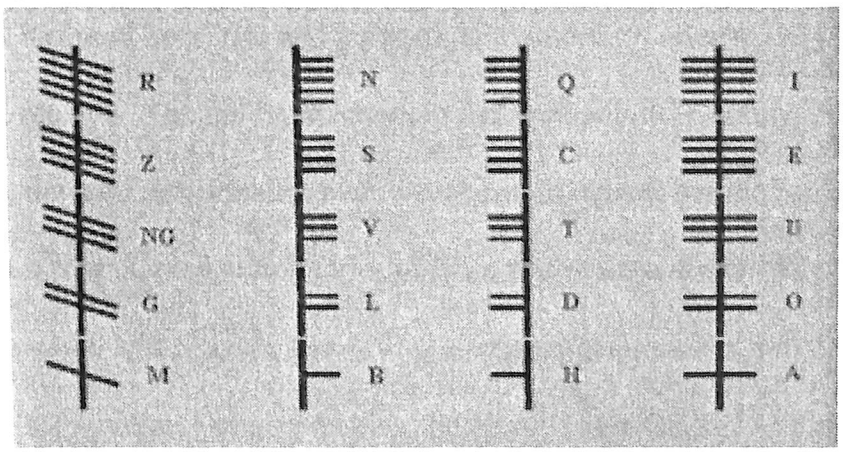

Figure 1. Ogham Symbols

Some ogham symbols and the Latin letters to which they correspond.

Source: Dineen, K. (2005). Retrieved March 20, 2008, from http://www.nd.edu/~archire/sites2005/MountBrandon.html.Dineen, 2005).

Because Ireland is an isolated island, lying off the far western edge of Europe, it remained relatively undisturbed for centuries. The Romans knew of it; they invaded what is now Britain, but never settled in Ireland (Fry, 1988, p. 21). A pagan religion thrived there, and the leaders of this religious tradition, the druids, set up a school system which came to be known as the Bardic Schools. St. Patrick, the patron Christian saint of Ireland, encountered these schools when he first appeared in Ireland in the 5th century A.D. (Corkery, 1954, p.39). St. Patrick and his contemporaries brought Christianity with them, but they did not, as so often was the story in the spread of Christianity, come as conquerors (Corkery, 1954, p. 15). Christian schools were established, but the Bardic schools remained.

A strong monastic tradition accompanied these Christian schools. Ireland never became part of the Holy Roman Empire and thus Latin was never the vernacular language of Ireland as it was for so many lands at the time. Latin was used by Irish monks, however, for various academic and sacred purposes (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 69). Irish monks used both Irish and Latin in their studies (Corkery, 1954, p. 16). These monks were the first to assign Latin letters to Irish phonemes (Corkery, 1954, p. 18). Prior to this, the only orthographic Irish was found in ogham writing, which often appeared on stones marked with a series of lines that represented Greek or Latin letters. Because this was a relatively simple writing system, ogham stones were used mostly to record basic information like genealogies and names (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, 67). The lack of writing from the early Celtic-speaking inhabitants of Ireland should not be

confused with a lack of concern for recognizing and remembering history; the Bardic Schools were dedicated to preserving the oral-narrative tradition (Fry, 1988, p. 23).

Ireland was invaded by several peoples, namely the Norse and the Anglo-Normans. The Norse, commonly known as Vikings, were the first to invade Ireland. The first ones came in 795 A.D., and they brought their language, Old Norse, with them (Mac Giolla Chríost, 71). Old Norse never surpassed Old Irish as the main language of the land, though Irish borrowed extensively from it. This influence is still evident today in Irish place names (ex. Limerick, Wexford, Howth, Dalkey and Helvic), family names (ex. Cotter, Skiddy, Copinger, Curran) and specific, often nautical, terms (ex. the Irish words for boat, rudder, line) (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, 72-73; Corkery, 1954, 31). One of the reasons these words have remained in the Irish language is because the Norse also stayed in Ireland, in fact, Dublin, Ireland's capital city, was founded not by Irishmen but by two Vikings, Olaf the White and Ivor 'Beinlaus' (Corkery, 1954, p. 35).

It was during this time, around the 11th century, that many of the oral narratives from the Irish tradition began to be recorded (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 74). The *Filidh*, a class of literary poets, were important proponents of this work. These men were well educated and became associated with the Church after it was established in Ireland (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 70). They were part of a larger elite class in Ireland known as the *des dána*, which included all manner of men associated with the arts (Fry, 1988, p. 32). The *filidh* composed poetry for the landed upper class and were often employed by a particular family to do so. The *filidh* came to be an important link to the past because they were the keepers of the oral tradition; they preserved all manner of knowledge including

that about the Brehon law, language, folklore, grammar, poetry and *dinnshenchas* or placenames (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 70). They were also responsible for the *Lebor Gabála*, the first histories of Ireland written in Irish (Fry, 1988, p. 32).

The second people to invade Ireland were the Anglo-Normans. They were a Norman-French and English speaking group that first appeared in 1169. How much these people used French is debatable. Mac Giolla Chríost (2005) cites the Statute of Kilkenny of 1366 to support his view that French was not long the language of these invaders; the statute was written in French, as were most official documents of the time, but it never mentions the French language:

> [I]f any English or Irish living amongst the English use the Irish language amongst themselves contrary to this ordinance and thereof be attaint, that his lands and tenements, if he have any, be seized into the hands of his immediate lord until he come to one of the places of our lord the King and find sufficient surety to *adopt and use the English language*...
>
> (as cited in Harris, 1991, p. 76; emphasis mine)

Crowley (2001) mentions that the Statute of Kilkenny mandated that English, not Irish, names be used (i.e. John not Seán, James not Séamus). Crowley also makes the important point that the statute is only addressed to those 'Irish living amongst the English'; this only included a small percentage of the population who lived in the urban centers of the east coast, namely Dublin (p. 5). Because of its location on the east coast, and thus nearer to England, and its position on the River Liffey, Dublin became, and would remain, the center of English speaking and commerce in Ireland. Dublin and the

surrounding area became known as 'Pale' or the 'English Pale' in the 1490s because English was spoken there and English law was practiced there (Crowley, 2001, pp. 13-14).

The majority of the Norman settlers assimilated quickly into the Irish culture; they were even accused at the times of being "more Irish than the Irish." Their assimilation into the culture later gained them the title of the "Old English," to distinguish them from the later English who would never assimilate (Fios Feasa Teo, 1999). The Irish language enjoyed relative safety until the Tudor re-conquest of the 16th century and the Ulster plantation scheme of the 17th century (Fios Feasa Teo, 1999; Harris, 1991).

Section 2 - The Influence of the English from Henry VIII to the Union

In 1541, King Henry VIII of England created the Kingdom of Ireland, making it part of the English state. Though Irish would remain viable in many parts of the country for years to come, this marked the beginning of a significant shift in language use in Ireland. The Tudor and Stuart monarchs of England worked diligently at this time to centralize the lands of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (Corkery, 1954, p. 18). One of the most successful means of doing this in Ireland was via plantations. By 1630, around 6,500 English and Scottish settlers lived in the Ulster plantations and around 22,000 lived in the plantations in Munster by 1641 (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, pp. 93-94). By 1800, English had replaced Irish as the language of the majority of the population in Ireland (Harris, 1991, 37-38).

The English seemed to emulate the Roman's policy about conquered peoples' languages; "it hath ever been the use of the conqueror to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his" (Crowley, 2001). Several edicts and acts imposed by the English attest to their view on Ireland and the language of her people. Crowley (2000) quote a telling passage from *An Act for the English Order, Habit, and Language* of 1537:

> and be it enacted...that every person or persons, the King's true subjects, inhabiting this land of Ireland ... To the uttermost of their power ... Shall use and speak commonly the English tongue and language, and that every such person and persons, having child or children, shall endeavour [sic] themselves to cause and procure his said child or children to use and speak the English tongue and language (p. 22)

The English started establishing plantations in Ireland as early as 1553. This was the first of three waves. Queen Mary established several plantations in the Irish counties Laoise and Offaly between 1553 and 1558. The second wave of plantations occurred in Munster between 1597 and 1580. The most significant and lasting plantations were established in the early 1600s, following the Flight of the Earls. (Mac Giolla Chríost, 93).

The Flight of the Earls refers to the departure of the Gaelic Irish leaders from Ireland in 1607. This marked the crumbling of the last stronghold of Brehon law, the traditional governing system of Ireland, and the establishment of English common law. Until this point, Ireland was run by a strong but non-centralized network of ruling families. The Irish language was one of the common features that held the system

together. Many of the ruling families came from "Old English" stock, descendants of the Normans who had adapted well to Irish culture (Corkery, 1954; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005). These Irish families fought to keep their position in Ireland, but with the English's advances in the form of plantations and military force and finally Ireland's loss at the Battle of Kinsale in 1602, they gave up hope and fled to mainland Europe.

The Flight of the Earls also represents the end of the *filidh*. The *filidh* were the guardians of the Brehon law, which was kept alive through oral tradition. The Gaelic Irish leaders of Ireland (i.e. the Earls) were their last patrons. With the Earls went the Brehon law and the patronage for the *filidh*. Many of the now displaced class of poets recognized English's place in society. Mac Giolla Chríost (2005) quotes a translation from a poem by one the most famous of these poets, Daibhi Ó Bruadair, who wrote about the new importance of English and the insignificance of his once revered class:

> Woe to him who cannot simper English,
> Since the Earl hath come across to Erin;
> So long my life upon Conn's plain continues,
> I'd barter all my poetry for English. (pp. 92-93)

The departure of the Earls allowed for mass appropriation of Irish lands. The plantation schemes of the seventeenth century were centered in Munster and especially Ulster and involved the immigration of thousands of Scottish and English settlers. Oliver Cromwell, and English general sent to Ireland after an attack on Protestants in Ulster, was a key figure in securing plantations for these settlers. Before Cromwell, the new land owners either evicted the Irish owners from their property or forced them to become

tenant farmers (Corkery, 1954). After 1652, with the passage of the Cromwellian Act of Settlement, all of the remaining Irish land owners were ordered to be across the river Shannon by 1655 (Fry, 1988, p. 157). The English and Scottish settled in Ulster and Munster; the Irish were forced to the west coast of Ireland, mainly to the province of Connacht (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 94). Cromwell had effectively devastated the last of the native Catholic landed class in Ireland.

This influx of English speakers was accompanied by a change in attitude towards the English language. People came to view English as the language of the higher class, regardless of ethnicity. It became fashionable, or at least desirable, to speak English, even if it wasn't particularly well spoken. Ó Cuív quotes one seventeenth century writers' take on the this trend in all manner of people; he describes them as "coarse and brutish peasants ... Too low to understand the meaning of refinement, but lost in admiration of a man who could talk broken English" (as cited in Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 89). Daibhi Ó Bruadair, the poet mentioned above, also comments on the new inclination:

> How queer this mode assumed by many men of Erin,
>
> With haughty, upstart ostentation lately swollen,
>
> Though codes of foreign clerks they fondly strive to master,
>
> They utter nothing but a ghost of strident English. (p. 89)

This positive attitude toward English was only fueled by the advent of the printing press. Normal people, not just scholars, were becoming literate, and most books were printed in English (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 90).

Though English was gaining ground, Irish was still important at the time. Many of the new settlers learned enough Irish to communicate, especially for business transactions. Despite this, they did not embrace the culture and literature of the Irish language; they only used it when it was practical (Corkery, 1954, p. 81).

Besides the practicalities of daily business transactions, the English crown saw an important use for Irish -- proselytizing the Irish people. The Tudor king Henry VIII is well-known for his infidelity and the consequent establishment of the Church of England. Because of this, most settlers coming to Ireland were Protestant. This posed a problem because Ireland was staunchly Catholic. England set out to convert Ireland, and it used the printing press to do so. The first book printed in Irish was the *Presbyterian Book of Common Order*, printed in 1567; an Irish version of the New Testament and the *Book of Common Prayer* followed in 1602 and 1608 respectively (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 91).

Though the English preferred to convert the Irish, they also used the Catholic church to their advantage. The aforementioned *An Act for the English Order, Habit, and Language* of 1537, which demanded that all loyal English subjects speak Irish, called for the Catholic clergy to do the same:

> And further be it enacted ... That every archbishop, bishop, suffragan, and every other having authority and power, to give order of priesthood, deacon, and subdeacon...endeavour [sic] himself to learn the English tongue and language, and use English order and fashions... (Crowley, 2000, p. 22)

This was decreed relatively early, in 1537, but by then the country had already become polarized between not only Irish and English but also Catholic and non-Catholic (Wall, 1969, p. 82). By the turn of the next century, England had imposed a series of anti-Catholic laws on Ireland; these would come to be known as the Penal laws.

The Penal laws, enacted after 1695, denied basic civil rights to Catholics (and also, to an extent, to Presbyterians, who were mostly Scottish immigrants to Ulster). Catholics were limited in their ability to buy, sell and lease land; they could not hold position in the British army or navy; they could not be lawyers; they could not study outside of Ireland (Crowley, 2000; Durkacz, 1983; Wall, 1969). Many Irish people chose to drop the 'O' or 'Mac' from the front of their surnames in an attempt to appear less Irish and thus less Catholic (Wall, 1969, p. 83). There were other rights denied Irish Catholics. For example, a famous Irish language poem from 1773, *Caoineadh Airt Ui Laoghaire,* The Lament for Art O'Leary, tells the allegedly true story of a young man who was killed for not selling his horse to a Protestant (Cullen, 1993).

Education in Ireland changed significantly because of the Penal codes. A number of Irish colleges were established in mainland Europe, particularly in France, Italy, Belgium and Spain, during this time (Durkacz, 1983, p. 76). Hedge schools were also formed all over Ireland. These furtive schools were prolific, vastly outnumbering the Protestant schools set up by the English (Durkacz, 1983, p. 76). The English could not stop hedge schools altogether, but there were consequences for teaching in them. The most severe punishment was exile to Barbados, although it was usually imprisonment or a fine (Durkacz, 1983, p. 76). Despite this threat of punishment, Irish hedge schools

remained a part of the Irish landscape until the establishment of the National School System in 1831 (Durkacz, 1983, pp. 77-78). Dowling emphasizes that though hedge schools were decidely Catholic, they were not necessarily taught through the Irish language (as cited in Durkacz, 1983, p. 77). By 1800, English was undoubtedly the language of instruction (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 97).

In the early 1700s, one Dublin writer bemoans the loss of the Gaelic Irish lords; the few remaining descendants left had abandoned Irish in favor of English, so they could better blend in to the predominately English society (de Fréine, 1977, p. 72). Though the common people, as observed in 1776, still spoke Irish, preference for English was the general attitude of the upper classes in Ireland. Prohibited from land ownership by the Penal laws, a new generation of Irish turned to commerce. These new urban Irishmen saw English as a stepping stone toward a better, and more profitable, life (de Fréine, 1977, p. 73).

English had become the language of "commerce and utility" in Ireland (Durkacz, 1983, p. 217). This was also the case in Wales and Scotland. One scholar argued that not even education could alter English's course:

> Is it to be apprehended in common sense, that anything that can now be done could prevent the gradual progress of the English tongue, which is the commercial, the legal, the political, the fashionable medium of communication, towards its finally becoming the universal language of the country? (as cited in Durkacz, 1983, p. 217)

Irish had been so maligned that there was a proposal for an Irish language society as early as 1752, a proponent of which said, "Irish, the mother tongue of this nation, has long been neglected and discouraged...and the natives find themselves alone among the natives of the earth ignorant for the most part of the language of their fathers" (de Fréine, 1977, p. 73).

The turn of the eighteenth century marks a change in the views toward Irish. The last concerted effort of the Irish people to rid Ireland of the English failed in the rising of 1798 by the United Irishmen which lead to the Act of Union of 1801, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Section 3 - The 18th Century up to Revival

The turn of the eighteenth century marks a change in the history and views of Irish. A concerted effort of the Irish people to rid Ireland of English rule failed in 1798; this lead directly to the unification of Great Britain and Ireland. The nineteenth century held many changes for Ireland and her language, including the formation of the National School System, the infamous potato famine, the clamor for Home Rule and the establishment of the Gaelic League.

The French Revolution of the late eighteenth century and the ideals of republicanism inspired the people of Ireland, particularly the group that would come to be known as the United Irishmen. The United Irishmen were devoted to establishing an independent and republican Ireland. They collaborated with the French, who would supposedly provide the man-power to force the English out of Ireland. This may have

worked, as the French sent over 14,000 soldiers to Ireland in 1796, but they were forced to return to France due to inclement weather (Bartlett, 2001). After the English realized the magnitude of the threat that the United Irishmen posed, they reinforced their military presence and imprisoned those accused of being involved with the plot.

The United Irishmen redoubled their efforts, but they were never able to overpower Britain's military presence. A failed three month uprising in 1798, known as the Irish Rebellion of 1798 or the 1798 Rebellion, with tens of thousands dead, was the last concentrated effort by the United Irishmen. This defeat led directly to the Act of Union of 1801, which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. It would be more than one hundred years before Ireland would again be free from Britain. (Fry, 1988)

The unrest in Ireland was not about language; it was about freedom from the British crown. Some United Irishmen were interested in the Irish language, but their business was conducted through English, not Irish (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 100). De Fréine claims that by that time, around 1800, "English was the first language of about half of the population, with Irish becoming increasingly associated with poverty and disadvantage" (as cited in Harris, 1991, pp. 37-38). Mac Giolla Chríost (2005) also mentions that while Irish was still widely spoken in rural areas, especially in the south and west of the country, it no longer had "instrumental value" to either the government or the church (p. 100).

Crowley (2000) contradicts the assertion that Irish held no value for the church. He claims that, at the turn of the century, the Irish language remained important for two

reasons. One was for academic purposes, the other for proselytizing. Academically, the church needed to be able to understand and translate documents produced by Irish monks for centuries. The Church of Ireland was interested in reaching the rural masses, most of whom still spoke Irish. The Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language was founded in 1818 for this purpose.

Several societies were built upon the academic premise; the Gaelic Society in 1808 and the Iberno-Celtic Society in 1818 are two examples. These groups' interests were in Irish as a means for studying literature and history. The Townland Survey of Ireland, better known as the Ordnance Survey, also appeared around this time; it documented the geography of Ireland, including the history and meaning of place-names. This is still of academic interest today.

Despite interest and support from academics and the church, the language was in a precarious position. Irish natives, especially rural natives, were generally very poor. Many of them were living on a few acres of land, if that, owned by an English landlord. This had been the case for years; one man wrote in 1691 that it was in Irish farmers' best interest to speak English because they needed to be able to understand leases and contracts issued to them by their landlords (Crowley, 2000, p. 134). Another observer, in 1778, noted that Irish workers who could speak English were paid more than those who only spoke Irish (Crowley, 2000, p. 134). The Irish language had come to be associated with these poor, illiterate people; knowledge of English was, in their eyes, one of the best things they could provide for their children (Wall, 1969, pp. 85-85).

The 1800s bore the three most cited causes of Irish language decline: the National School System, Daniel O'Connell, and the Catholic clergy (Wall, 1969, p. 81). Before the establishment of the National School System there had not been a unified schooling entity; in fact, there were still some hedge schools at that time (Durkacz, 1983, pp. 77-78). Daniel O'Connell was a political figure in the mid-nineteenth century. He campaigned for tenants' rights and Catholic emancipation; despite being a native speaker of Irish himself, he had a decidedly utilitarian view of language. The Catholic clergy are blamed because once Catholics regained their civil rights, the clergy began using English as their main medium for education (Wall, 1969, p. 84).

The National School System was established in 1831. All schools were conducted through English. The Irish language was not offered in any form until 1879, and then only as an after school subject (Akenson, 1970, p. 381). With the establishment of a new, British-run, legal school system, there can be no question that the national schools contributed to Irish's decline, but there are differing views on just how fundamental it was. The Archbishop at the time, a strong supporter of spoken Irish, claimed that the national schools were the "the graves of the national language" (Crowley, 2001, p. 15). Corkery (1954) proclaims that just as the law had ignored the presence of Irish Catholics, so did the school board "simplify their...problem by presuming that the Irish language did not exist" (p. 114).

While it is true that Irish was not taught in schools and that certain aspects of Irish history and especially Irish language literature were omitted, it is not fair to say that the school system blatantly ignored the Irish's pleas for their language to be taught in the

schools (Corkery, 1954, p. 115; Akenson, 1970, p. 384). The reason these pleas were ignored is because there were none; the native people were *not* clamoring for Irish language instruction. There are only two mentions of the language in the minutes of the Commissioners of National Education between the years of 1831 and 1870 (Akenson, 1970, p. 381). The people availing of the schools were often the same poor tenant farmers who wanted their children to speak English. Durkacz (1983) compares this situation to those in Wales and Scotland. Parents in Wales regarded their language in much the same way Irish parents regarded Irish; "the vernacular Welsh of the parents is exchanged for English in the next generation, while the Welsh is gradually abandoned, and in the third generation is not found" (p. 216). At the time the masses in the Celtic countries were forgetting their native languages in favor of the more useful English tongue.

A favorite example of many on this subject is that of the tally-stick (de Fréine, 1977; Wall, 1969). The tally-stick was a stick that parents would string around the necks of their children before they went to school in the morning. For every time the child spoke in Irish, the teacher was supposed to carve a notch on the stick. When the child got home they would be punished according to how many notches they received. This actually occurred in the hedge schools, before the inception of the National Schools (Wall, 1969, p. 86). Note that this arrangement was orchestrated by parents, desperate for their children to speak English, not teachers.

De Fréine (1970) claims that Irish parents even embraced the presence of the English-teaching schools as a vehicle for suppressing the Irish language (p. 84). Akenson (1970) echos this sentiment, stating that the national education system may have had a

hand in the decline of the Irish language, but only "with the tacit approval of the great majority of Irishmen" (p. 383).

Daniel O'Connell was born into one of the few remaining land-owning Irish Catholic families. He rose to prominence as a lawyer and eventually used his position to champion the fight for Catholic emancipation, tenants' rights and gaining the vote for the new Catholic middle class (Fry, 1988, p. 218; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 100). He enjoyed popularity with the common people of Ireland, and his work eventually earned him the name 'the Liberator'. Though he was a native speaker of Irish, O'Connell promoted the use of English as a means for mobilizing the Irish people (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 100). Upon being asked what he thought about the decline of the use of Irish among the peasantry O'Connell replied:

> "I am sufficiently utilitarian not to regret its gradual abandonment. A diversity of tongues is no benefit; it was first imposed on mankind as a curse, at the building of Babel. It would be of vast advantage to mankind if all the inhabitants spoke the same language. Therefore, although the Irish language is connected with many recollections that twine around the hearts of Irishmen, yet the superior utility of the English tongue, as the medium of modern communication, is so great, that I can witness without a sigh the gradual disuse of the Irish."

Because O'Connell was so well-liked by the *hoi polloi*, this attitude supposedly gave them a green-light to forsake the language. Whether or not this is true is debatable, but it is one of the main reasons for the language's decline still taught in Irish schools today.

By the nineteenth century the Catholic clergy had largely abandoned the cause of the Irish language. Their lack of concern for its preservation is highlighted by the legacy of the few who did speak out for the language. John MacHale, the Archbishop of Ireland, was one such man. MacHale's father, a monoglot Irish-speaker, was one of the parents who used the aforementioned tally-stick. He wanted John to learn English and would not allow him to use Irish even at home (Wall, 1969, p. 86). MacHale is famous for his sentiment about the langauge; he has been quoted, telling the Irish people to "keep the Irish which is your own, and learn English" (Wall, 1969, p. 87). That is a stark contrast to O'Connell's utilitarian view that it would be just as well to abandon Irish altogether.

MacHale was an exception among Catholics clergy, the majority of whom embraced English. By 1795, the anti-Catholic laws had become relaxed enough for Irish Catholics to establish schools in the country and they started a college in Maynooth, County Dublin. This new center for Catholic learning was significant because it chose English as its medium of instruction (Crowley, 2001, Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005; Corkery, 1954). With only an estimated 4.9% of the population of the country not able to speak English by 1851 (see Table 1), it did not seem that Catholic clergymen would need Irish to effectively perform their duties.

These three elements, the National Schools, Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic clergy, have long been cited as almost exclusive reasons for Irish's decline. They are written in textbooks and taught in schools without much question;[1] Wall (1969) goes so far as to say that they are given as a sort of catechism answer (p. 81). Other reasons

[1] As of 1969. I have heard this recently as well, but I can not find documentation to verify that it is true.

Table 1. 1851 Census Data

	Leinster*	**Munster**	**Ulster**	**Connacht**	**Ireland**
Total Population	1,672,738	1,857,736	2,011,880	1,010,031	6,552,385
Irish speaking only	200	146,336	35,783	137,283	319,602
% speaking only Irish	0.01%	7.9%	1.8%	13.6%	4.9%
Irish and English speaking	58,976	669,449	100,693	375,566	1,204,684
% speaking English and Irish	3.5%	36.0%	5.0%	37.2%	18.4%
English speaking only	1,613,562	1,041,951	1,875,404	497,182	5,028,099
% speaking only English	96.5%	56.1%	93.2%	49.2%	76.7%
Able to speak Irish	59,176	815,785	136,476	512,849	1,524,286
% able to speak Irish	3.5%	43.9%	6.8%	50.8%	23.3%

Table 1. 1851 Census Data
Source: Adapted from Akenson, D. H. (1970). *The Irish Education Experiment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

The 1851 census was the first to record language data.

discussed earlier, especially the discrimination against Catholics and thus the language in every manner of life, from owning land to having a seat in Parliament, had been in place for hundreds of years, but these are seldom discussed in detail as salient causes of Irish's decline. Obviously these three things did contribute to Irish's deterioration, but citing only three reasons is far too simplistic (Wall, 1969, p. 81).

It is difficult to talk about Irish history without mention of another component in the decline of Irish. The Great Hunger, the Great Subsistence Crisis, Black '47, the Great Famine, the Irish Potato Famine. Ireland's famine occurred in the late 1840s and was caused by several abnormally cold winters, poor harvests and a blight. The majority of the poor farmers were dependent, almost solely, on potatoes for their nutritional needs, so when three out of four harvests failed, the population was devastated (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 101). Those hit hardest were the rural tenant farmers in the west - the Irish speakers.

Despite political unrest and discontent in the nation, Ireland had enjoyed relative security and stability for many years, and her population was at its peak by the mid-nineteenth century (Corkery, 1954, p. 116). This population boom only magnified the devastation of the famine. Estimates suggest that some one to one and a half million died (Wall, 1969; Corkery, 1954; Crowley, 2000). More significant to the language were the millions of people who did not die but instead emigrated. The Irish population dropped by 20 per cent between the years of 1844 and 1851 alone due to death and emigration (Crowley, 2000, p. 135). Millions more would leave the country in the following half of the century (Corkery, 1954, pp. 116-117).

Those who emigrated from Ireland often sent letters home. In these letters we can find invaluable contemporary information about the attitudes of the displaced Irish, especially those who migrated to North America. These letters were almost always written in English and often encouraged those back home to learn English if they didn't already speak it. The writer of one such letter, conspicuous in that it was written in Irish, urges his friends and family to acquire the English tongue:

> *I gcuntas De muin Bearla do na leanbhain is na bidis dall ar nos na n'asal a teacht anseo mac.*
>
> For God's sake teach the children English and don't be blind like the asses who have come out here (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 101).

The famine further embittered the Irish toward their English landlords. Tenant farmers had no rights at the time, and they paid their landlords in labor. When the potato crops failed they had no way of fulfilling their duties, and because they had no legal rights, the landlords simply evicted them (Ranelagh, 1993, p. 115). So many dispossessed and starving people died that mass graves were utilized to cope with the vast number of bodies ((Ranelagh, 1993, p. 115). Perhaps the most antagonizing of Britain's acts at the time was that it did nothing to alleviate the situation.

> "...no issue has provoked so much anger or so embittered relations between the two countries (England and Ireland) as the indisputable fact that huge quantities of food were exported from Ireland to England throughout the period when the people of Ireland were dying of starvation." (Woodham-Smith, 1962, p. 75)

If alleviation efforts had been made then, perhaps, the devastation of the language would not have been so great.

The Famine of the mid-eighteenth century tipped the scale for Irish. Those who could afford to emigrate needed English to survive in their new homes in England, Australia and North America (Crolwey, 2000, p. 135). The deaths and the mass exodus that resulted from the famine solidified the link between Irish and disadvantage in the minds of the people (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 101; Crowley, 2001, p. 15). The pragmatic attitudes of parents towards their children's acquisition of English, discussed above in regards to education, would only become stronger after the famine. Crowley (2001) puts it succinctly, "the Irish loved their language, but they loved their children more" (p. 15). Speaking only Irish was becoming rarer and rarer as the twentieth century approached.

The 1851 census was the first census in Ireland to gather information about the Irish language. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of the population who spoke only Irish, those who could speak Irish, those who were bilingual and those who only spoke English. The original chart, from Akenson (1970), did not include the percentage of those speaking Irish and English (bilingual) or the number or percentage for those speaking only English, but I was able to deduce it from the information given. The comparably large number of Irish-only speakers in Connacht, which is in the north west of the country, is the result of forced migration, dating to the seventeenth century. According to the data, the majority in each of the four regions of Ireland, save Connacht by less than a per cent, were monoglot English speakers. Upon looking at census data

from 1871, one contemporary observed that Irish was quickly becoming a language used almost exclusively by only the oldest members in the population:

> "It will be seen that spoken Irish is withering at the root and upwards all along the stem; that its disuse in the various periods of life up to 70 extends to thousands or to tens of thousands yearly; and that after a very brief interval its last refuge will be among the septuagenarians." (Durkacz, 1983, p. 216)

Section 4 - Home Rule and the Language Revival Movement

This time in Ireland is pregnant with pertinent information; there is no way I can mention or elaborate on all of it given the limited scope of this paper.

The last half of the nineteenth century in Ireland is marked by a clamor for home rule. The Famine had left a bad taste in the mouths of the Irish. Daniel O'Connell, mentioned in the last section, was an early proponent of tenants' rights as well as Catholic rights. Other important figures succeeded him: Charles Parnell, Michael Davitt, Douglas Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, to name just a few.

The struggle between English landlords and Irish tenants had been raging for years. Tenants had very few rights, and landlords had very few restrictions. Violent organizations like the Whiteboys and the Defenders threatened the landlords, sometimes turning to murder (Fry, 1988, p. 245). The Land League was a non-violent organization supported by Davitt and Parnell. They demanded the three Fs for tenants: fair rent; fixity of tenure as long as rent was paid; freedom to sell the right of occupancy (Fry, 1988, p.

255). Truly the Land League was for the Irish people, but it's communications were all through English (Corkery, 1954, p. 122).

The tenants' rights and Land League movements gave way to a push for Home Rule, which would allow Ireland to govern herself. The most revolutionary group, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), took their desire a step further by supporting the formation of Ireland as a republic, completely free from England (Fry, 1988, p. 277).

Language revival groups began forming in the last half of the century. These groups were non-religious and non-partisan and aimed to revive the spoken language (Crowley, 2000; Ó hAilín, 1969). This was unique as there had been an academic interest in saving Irish literature for some time, but not one aimed at preserving and reviving it as a spoken language (Ó hAilín, 1969, p. 91). These groups echoed the work of Thomas Davis from the early to mid-nineteenth century who said "a people without a language of its own is only half a nation" and "to have lost entirely the national language is death." They viewed the language as a symbol of their national identity (p. 94, O hAilin, 1969).

One of the first groups formed was the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in 1876. Its goal was "to create such a tone of public feeling as will utterly banish the ignorant and unpatriotic notion (of foreign origin), that our native tongue is one which no Irishman of the present day should care to learn, or be willing to speak" (Crowley, 2000, p. 176). This statement highlights the point that Ó hAilín (1969) makes - the majority of Irishmen at the turn of nineteenth century were "ashamed to admit they knew Irish, because it was associated in their minds with illiteracy, poverty and proselytism" (p. 93).

The most important of the language revival groups, *Conradh na Gaeilge* (the Gaelic League), was formed in 1893. The League's goals were twofold, first to restore Irish to the spoken language of all of Ireland and second to create a new Irish literature (Ó hAilín, 1969, p. 96). The first president of *Conradh na Gaeilge*, Douglas Hyde, identified the Irish language as the most important component of Irish national identity (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 112). He expressed his opinion on the language in his 1892 essay, written *as Gaeilge* (in Irish), "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland" (Crowley, 2000; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005). "The losing of [Gaelic] is our greatest blow, and the sorest stroke that the rapid Anglicisation of Ireland has inflicted upon us. In order to de-Anglicise ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language." His use of the word 'decay' belies the fact that Irish was already well on its way down a slippery slope. Hyde himself admitted that a total revitalization, as he envisioned in his essay, was impossible, especially given that only 19% of the Ireland's population reported speaking Irish in the 1891 census (Crowley, 2001, p. 16; Williams, 1999, p. 269).

The Gaelic League promoted other cultural activities that would give Irish people a sense of their own national identity, such as Irish music and dancing. It also established festivals, called *feis* or *feiseanna* (plural), where music, dance, folklore and language were celebrated. It published several newspapers and journals in Irish or bilingually (Ó hAilín, 1969; Crowley, 2000). The League thought these activities were important, but the language was at the heart of its mission.

Though its original purpose was more or less linguistic, many of the League's members were already enmeshed in the increasingly intensifying political situation.

Remaining uninvolved became more and more challenging. Eoin MacNeill, co-founder of *Conradh na Gaeilge*, would later start the Irish Volunteers, a group that fought to maintain Ireland's right to Home Rule, though a sect of which supported the formation of a separate republic (Fry, 1988, p. 277). Though MacNeill remained an advocate for peace, the Irish Volunteers was a leading proponent in the Easter Rising of 1916, a bloody standoff between the English and the Irish at the General Post Office in Dublin (Fry, 1988, p. 293). The other co-founder of the Gaelic League, Douglas Hyde, would later become the first president of Éire, the Republic of Ireland, and would use his nationalistic view of language as a basis for early policy regarding the Irish language in Ireland, especially in schools. These men's political stance, and the stances of other Gaelic League members, made it increasingly difficult for the League to remain politically neutral.

Despite, or perhaps because, of the political unrest in Ireland, the Gaelic League grew steadily in the first years of the twentieth century. The number of branches grew from 80, in 1988, to at least 400, in 1902, some say even more; there were even branches in the United States (McMahon, 2002, p. 2). But, even with such successful growth, it was hard to convince people, especially native speakers, the importance of the language. Those who used Irish as their first language, usually rural people clustered along the western seaboard, were ashamed of it. It marked them as poor and backward. Hyde, highly aware of this, addressed the issue in 1982:

> We must arouse some spark of patriotic inspiration among the peasantry who still use the language, and put an end to the shameful state of feeling ... which makes

young men and women blush and hang their heads when overheard speaking their own language. (as cited in Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, pp. 115-116)

This is the same attitude that had been prevalent for years, and that I have mentioned in previous sections; parents saw no means of advancement for their children if they could not speak English and saw no reason for them to speak Irish at all.

The political unrest in Ireland grew in the first decades of the twentieth century. The request for Home Rule gave way to a demand for a free state, separate from the United Kingdom. The Easter Rising of 1916 polarized the Irish people, even more, toward the cause. Sinn Féin became the party of the people and established the Dáil Éireann (the Irish parliament) and eventually the Irish Free State in 1922. The Free State was succeeded by the Republic of Ireland in 1949, which remains to this day what most people know as 'Ireland'.

The 'six counties' in the north of Ireland make up the country of Northern Ireland, which is currently part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland did not unite with the rest of Ireland in its course toward separation from Britain in 1922. This has been the cause of many fiery disagreements and conflicts. Violence plagued the country of Northern Ireland for much of the twentieth century, as Unionists (those loyal to Great Britain) fought Nationalists (those wanting the island to be one nation). This ostensibly ended only recently with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, though there is still residual tension between Unionists and Nationalists, Protestants and Catholics. That the Irish language can be so symbolic of Irish nationalism, it is not surprising that it is a political issue (Melchers & Shaw, 2003, p. 73).

Section 5 - Current State

All of this history must say something about the current state of the language. According to the Republic of Ireland's *Statement of the Irish Language*, this is the context of the language as of 2006:

1. Ireland is a bilingual State in which Irish is the first official language according to Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland.
2. In the context of our European heritage, Irish is the oldest spoken literary language in Europe.
3. According to the 2002 Census of Population, 42% of the population of Ireland have the ability to speak Irish.
4. Irish is the main community and household language of 3% of the country's population.
5. According to surveys and opinion polls, most of the population believes that Irish is of particular importance for themselves personally and/or for the country as a whole.
6. Irish has official and working language status at EU level with effect from 1 January 2007. (Rialtas, 2006, p. 11)

At first glance, the Irish language doesn't seem to be doing poorly at all. Ireland is, technically, bilingual. Irish *is* the oldest remaining literary language in Europe. The Republic's population *did* claim a 42% speaking ability and 3% of the population do use Irish as the main language in their homes and communities. The people overwhelmingly

think that Irish is important; my interviewees, from both Northern Ireland and the Republic, held this opinion. Finally, Irish did become an official language of the European Union in 2007. But all of this is very optimistic.

Ireland is bilingual, but don't expect to walk around Ireland and hear people speaking Irish. Street signs, bus scrolls and official government documents can be found in both languages, but this hardly constitutes bilingualism (Melchers & Shaw, 2003, p. 73). This contradiction has received some attention by several Irish filmmakers in recent years.

Manchán Magan, host of the Irish television show *No Béarla* (No English), wanted to find out what living life through Irish would be like. The first episode aired, ironically, in January of 2007, right after Irish was made an official language of the European Union. In the first season of the documentary-style show, Magan travels to different cities and towns throughout Ireland while speaking only in Irish; he has great difficulty getting anything accomplished because there are so few people who can understand him. One scene shows Magan asking for a bus tour of Dublin; though he could get a tour in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, or Japanese, there was no tour given through Irish. Another scene, this one from the second season, shows Magan asking a panel of university students to differentiate Irish words from Klingon words; they did not do very well. Every episode of Magan's show highlights the paucity of actual bilinguals in Ireland, despite what the numbers show.

Daniel O'Hara, director of the short film *Yu Ming is Ainm Dom* (My Name is Yu Ming), addresses the bilingual issue from the view of an outsider. Yu Ming, a young

Chinese man, wants to see another part of the world. He spins the globe to determine where he will travel; his finger lands, of course, on Ireland. Yu Ming excitedly learns as much about Ireland as he can, including the country's official language, *Gaeilge*. Armed with his new language skills, Yu Ming easily finds his way through the airport and to the city center because all government signs are bilingual, but when he steps off the bus he is in an English-only world. No one can help him because no one can understand him until an old man takes pity on him when he overhears Yu Ming trying to order a drink in a pub. The man explains that though Irish is the official language of Ireland, few people actually speak it. While Magan comes to the situation with the knowledge of an insider, O'Hara's Yu Ming, only seeing what the official statistics state, has no way of knowing that Irish is not in fact a viable language in most parts of Ireland.

Admittedly, census data is based on self-report and therefore its accuracy is dubious; regardless, it is the best numerical information about language and attitudes available. While a 42% ability rate may seem high, its meaning is difficult to interpret. Considering the fact that most Irish citizens take compulsory Irish in school for more than ten years, one would hope that more than 42% of the population would report being able to use the language. If 3% of Ireland's population (4,239,848) use Irish as their main language, that only totals about 130,000 people (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2006). Even if census data is not completely accurate, the fact is that not many people in Ireland know and use the language.

That most Irish people believe Irish is important is well documented, but this can be misleading. The 1973 report from the Committee on Language Attitudes, examines

this closely. Brudner and White (1975), two of the study's main researchers, found that there were several components that make up peoples' attitude toward the Irish language. People felt differently about the language according to how they were viewing it. Brudner and White identified five such views: attitude toward Irish as a spoken language, attitude toward Irish speakers, attitude toward Irish as a school subject, attitude toward its transmission, and attitude toward Irish as a symbol of nationality. Ultimately they found, even considering each category of attitude, that there is "no evidence that positive attitude towards Irish is a sufficient motivation for its use" (p. 65). Therefore, though it is encouraging that the Irish people care about the Irish language, that does not translate into those same people learning or using it. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Irish is now an official language of the European Union, while that is a positive step in gaining recognition for the language, it is not without problems. An article from the *Irish Times*, "Brush up on your *Gaeilge*, EU warns Government[2]," outlines some of the concerns surrounding the language's new official status. Most of the official European Union documents have to be translated into Irish; the law guidelines alone are 100,000 pages long. The main issues were, as of October 2007, that there are not enough qualified translators and interpreters, there is not an up-to-date Irish grammar, and there is not an appropriate training program in place for them. Though these problems are hopefully resolved by now, the fact that they existed in the first place indicates that Irish is not as functional as the powers that be suggest.

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[2] Text from this article can be found in A-5.

Despite the above criticisms, Irish does have a lot of support right now, especially from institutions. The Irish government passed the Official Languages Act in 2003. This guaranteed that many government related tasks would be available through Irish. It allows citizens to ask questions and get responses in Irish and go to court through Irish. It guarantees that official publications will be made available in both Irish and English, and that offices in the *Gaeltacht* will be able to function through Irish (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 2003).

Technology has allowed Irish to be widely and readily available. There are several Irish language newspapers in Ireland, including *Lá* and *Foinse*. There are Irish language radio and television stations. Manchan Magan's show, *No Béarla,* is in its second season, and I have seen *Spongebob Squarepants as Gaeilge* more times than I care to admit. The BBC's Northern Ireland website has an Irish learning section. There are even Irish language podcasts, for both learners and speakers. Mass media has put Irish a click away from anyone who wants it, but it is the individual's responsibility to take that step.

Chapter 2 - Language Death and Revitalization

That the Irish language has been in decline in the past few hundred years is incontrovertible. It is hardly alone in this regard. There are an estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world today, but fully 96% of those languages are spoken by only 4% of the world's current population (Crystal, 2000, p. 14). That's about 5,760 languages thinly spread among only four per cent of the population. With ongoing globalization and assimilation of cultures, that the languages of these cultures die is not surprising. From a linguistic perspective, a language is considered dead when no one any longer speaks it. This is not so uncommon today; in fact, there are documented death dates for some languages as they die with the people who have spoken them. When the last speaker of a language dies, so does the language (Crystal, 2000, p. 1).

By definition, then, Irish is not a dead language. Recent census data shows that about 3% of the Republic of Ireland's population still speak Irish as the primary language of their home and community (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2006). That is about 127,000 speakers. According to Crystal (2000), Irish would fall under the descriptor 'endangered.' An endangered language is one that is "spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favorable circumstances and with a growth in

community support" (p. 20). Whether such favorable circumstances and community support among Ireland's people exist remains to be determined.

There are many reasons that languages decline and potentially die. Two that apply particularly to the evolution of Irish are physical hardships specific to speakers and changes in the speakers' culture. For example, the Irish language was profoundly and adversely affected by the Potato Famine in the mid-nineteenth century. The poorest of the Irish people, who were also the most likely to speak Irish rather than English, were hardest hit by the Famine. Millions died or emigrated, resulting in a major decline in the number of Irish speakers. Culturally, Ireland changed over the centuries from a land ruled by tribal law with Irish as its native tongue to an English colony with Irishmen as tenant farmers. A society with little if any need for English was replaced with one characterized by almost universal parental desire for one's children to learn English as an economic stepping-stone out of poverty.

When a language declines because of cultural pressure, it usually does so in three stages:

1. Overwhelming cultural pressure creates strong incentives to learn the dominant language.

2. This eventually leads to the stage of bilingualism. People improve in the new language, but remain proficient in the old one.

3. After a time the youth stop using the old language as much; they don't speak it to each other and often don't speak it to their parents, who in this stage are often bilingual. The native language becomes a language used, if at all, only by an aging generation in the home. (Crystal, 2000, p. 79)

Durkacz (1983) identified this phenomenon in Celtic culture in particular. Celtic monolingualism evolved to bilingualism, which in turn became English monolingualism (p. 222). He does point out that, while the schools aided in the shift from monolingual Celtic speakers to bilingual speakers, they were not complicit in the further shift to English monolingualism. It was the people themselves, not the schools, who propelled the language out of its bilingual state.

Crystal (2000) could well have been writing about Irish when he described the South American indigenous languages Quechua and Aymará. They both have a sizable number of speakers, but they live mainly outside of cities.

> This would not be so serious if the language was being strongly maintained in rural areas ... The indigenous languages are being viewed by their speakers as a sign of backwardness, or as a hindrance to making improvement in social standing. They have no confidence in them. The negative attitudes may be so entrenched that even when the authorities get around to doing something about it - introducing community projects, protective measures, or official language policies - the indigenous community may greet their efforts with unenthusiasm, skepticism, or outright hostility. (Crystal, 2000, p. 84)

Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League of the late nineteenth century encountered just such a situation. While the learned Hyde championed the language, mostly in urban Ireland, the Irish country dwellers were desperately trying to acquire proficiency in English at the expense of their own language. They had been doing so for years before any real attempts at revival were pursued.

Hyde and others claimed that English was to blame for the decline of Irish. More than one writer has accused English of being a "killer" language (Ager, 2003, p. 55). Whether or not Irish was 'murdered' by English is not likely to be resolved in the minds of many Irish people, but Crystal suggests an alternative to the "Irish 'linguicide' by English" schema, which he terms "language suicide." Language suicide occurs when a people choose to stop speaking their language or refuse to teach it to their children because it is "an intolerable burden" (p. 86). This paradigm seems a better fit to the Irish situation.

In Crystal's view, the fate of Irish appears to be sealed. All three stages of the monolingual to bilingual to monolingual shift have already occurred in Ireland. The only viable point of arrest for this process is in the second stage, but there are fewer and fewer true bilinguals in Ireland (Crystal, 2000, p. 79). Most parents are not transmitting the language to their children, in part because they lack proficiency themselves. If Irish has reached stage three, which is in fact the case, Crystal gives little hope of survival much less revival.

6. The local/regional (i.e., Non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among X-men (Irishmen) and among Y-men (Englishmen?)

7. Local/regional mass media and governmental services.

8. Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.

This model starts from the ground and works its way up. Stages 1-4 do not require any cooperation from Y (English) and are relatively inexpensive, since they are grassroots movements. Of the first stages, stage 3 is particularly critical; without the collaboration of the older and younger generations, the language cannot be revived (p. 400). When and if these first four stages are accomplished, diglossia develops, meaning that there are two languages spoken in the country, each relegated to its own domains. Stages 5-8 require collaboration with and assistance from Y (English) and are therefore potentially harder to achieve. However, if achieved, Xish could become again a viable and powerful language in the country.

Each language situation has its own unique character. Ireland does not perfectly fit into the RLS model. According to Fishman (1991), Irish has achieved stages 1, 2, 5a and 7 (p. 405). From my own experience in Ireland, I am reticent to concur that stages 1 (reconstructing Irish and adult acquisition as a second language) and 2 (cultural interaction in Irish primarily in the older generation) have been met on a large scale. In the case of Irish "a historically inauthentic, non-native local variety" of the language had to be used because local varieties had dwindled so that they were no longer viable

alternatives. This, of course, brings into question the authenticity of the movement (p. 397). Regardless, there is evidence of these two stages, especially in the Gaeltacht. Still, that Irish has entered stages 5a (Irish in supplementary schools for both adults and children) and 7 (Irish in mass media and governmental services) without passing through all of the first four stages seems incongruous with the RLS model. The reason for this stage-skipping is the Irish government's active promotion of the language since its inception in 1922. It has, overall, not promoted so-called linguicism – a pejorative term defined as "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language" (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, p. 437). The 2003 Official Languages Act is a recent example (see page 35).

Despite the government's persistent support[4] of the language, the Irish people at large are not now and have never been fully behind the movement. Stage 3, the most important stage according to Fishman, is conspicuously missing in Ireland; and that is a stage that must be championed by interested citizens not the government. Unfortunately, there simply is not enough genuine public support or, more importantly, action at this time for Irish to reclaim its place as even the equal of English, much less as the stock and trade language of the majority.

[4] I am speaking of Ireland as a whole here, not about the Gaeltacht. I am aware that language policy in Ireland is not without its faults.

Chapter 3 - Interviews

Section 1 - Interview Information

I used an interview schedule (see A-1) as a rough guide to conduct the interviews, but I allowed the interviewee to talk about whatever they deemed appropriate. I did not worry if not every question was answered.

To conduct this research I used friend-of-a-friend networking (Milroy, 1987). Because I am involved in the Irish music community in Jackson, Mississippi, I have immediate access to several Irish natives. I used these connections, as well as my brother who lives in Washington, D.C., to attain the subjects for my interviews. I initially interviewed five people but narrowed my analysis down to four, each person representing a significant group.

1. JF is a native Irish speaker from *Baile Mhúirne* (Ballyvourney) in the Cork *Gaeltacht*. He is about sixty years old. He currently works in the sociology and anthropology department at a university in the American south. He has lived in the United States since the mid 1970s.
2. RM is a citizen of Northern Ireland and is in his late twenties. He was born in County Derry but grew up in County Antrim. He has lived in the United States, in Washington, D.C., since 2004.

3. DM is from just outside of Dublin City in the Republic of Ireland and is in his early twenties. He is a college student in Jackson, Mississippi, and has been in the United States since 2004.
4. RS is also from the Republic of Ireland and is about sixty years old. He grew up in both County Sligo and Dublin City. He has lived in the United States since the mid 1970s.

See Figure 1 on the following page for home counties of each of the interviewees.

I chose to include DM and RS, even though they are both from the Republic of Ireland, because there was a policy change in the mid-70s as a result of an comprehensive sociolinguistic study on language attitudes in Ireland. Prior to the study, passing an Irish language examination was required in order to graduate from Ireland's high school equivalent and in order to acquire a civil service job. I thought it would be informative to have opinions from a person who experienced life before and after these changes and from someone who has only experienced life after the changes were made.

All of the interviewees were male, an unfortunate coincidence, but since this is by no means a comprehensive study I do not feel that this is detrimental. Each participant gave oral consent to be tape-recorded and was asked to sign a consent form (see A-2). They were each emailed a copy of the consent form for their records.

All interviews were conducted in March of 2008. Each was done over the phone and recorded using a Marantz PMD201 portable cassette recorder. The transcriptions are not particularly detailed; I did not include every discourse marker, pause, stutter, and repeated word. These things are common in speech and can be useful depending on what

Figure 2. Map of Ireland with
Interviewees' Home Counties Marked

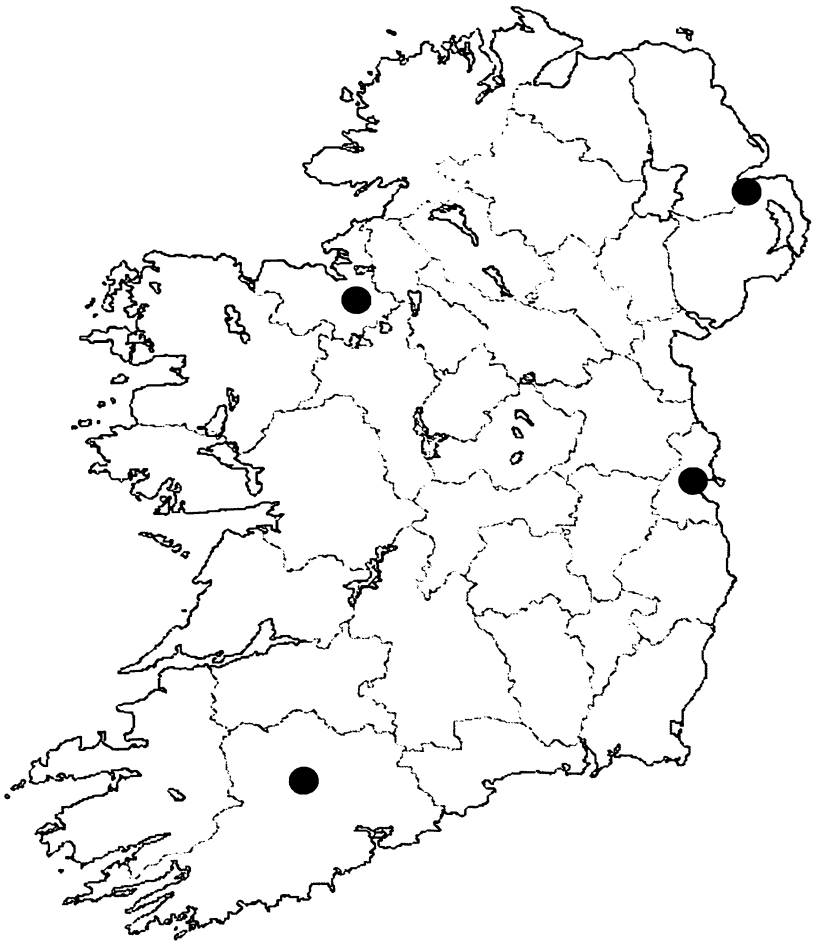

Figure 2 Map of Ireland with Interviewees' Home Counties Marked
Source: Adapted from http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/maps/base_map.gif

kind of analysis is being done. However, they do not add anything to my study so I omitted them.

I use several markings in the transcripts. I use ellipses (...) to indicate omitted speech or indiscernible speech; I use square brackets with words to add necessary information ([information]).

Because I used the same interview schedule for each interview, the interviewees talked about many of the same topics. I have divided our discussion into six sections: Irish Education, Irish in the *Gaeltacht*, Irish in the Home, Why Irish has Declined, Irish Today and Future Outlook.

Section 2 - Education

> "If second language acquisition and ethnic identity were related in a causal way, all governments wishing to foster unity should require that citizens learn and use a national language" (Eastman, 1984, p. 260)

Eastman's point in this passage is that acquiring a second language is not equivalent to acquiring the ethnic identity associated with that language. Regardless, this is a common approach to language policy around the world including in Ireland (p. 260).

One of the most tangible ways that language policies impact the people of Ireland is through education. The Irish language in education has been an important issue since the National School System was established in 1831. Under British rule, the National Schools did not have Irish on the curriculum until the 1870s, though it was only as an after-school elective (Akenson, 1970, p. 381). Under the influence of language

revivalists, the policy makers in the Free State and then the Republic of Ireland sought to put Irish on the curriculum and use the school system as a springboard for language revival.

Since children were not learning the language from their parents in the home, schools would have to step up to teach it to them. By 1934 Irish was compulsory in both primary and secondary schools; if you failed Irish in your final exam you failed school (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 117). By the 1950s, after the first generation of children had been through the new school system, there was not a country full of competent speakers, in fact, numbers were declining (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005, p. 118; Melchers & Shaw, 2003, p. 73). The findings of the Committee of Irish Language Attitudes Research (1975) resulted in the elimination of the mandatory Irish leaving certificate in 1973 (White, 2008).

I'll start my examination of the interviewees' opinions on school by contrasting RS and DM. Remember RS was in school when Irish was still necessary for graduation.

a)

GF: Well, so in your Irish classes, did you like your teachers and stuff?

RS: Yeah.

GF: They were good?

RS: Yeah, I liked Irish, and my brother liked Irish so.

GF: Did your friends like, I mean, was it OK to like Irish? Or was that not cool?

RS: No, no, definitely not, I mean like ... the plague as they called it, most kids did.

GF: Just hated it?

RS: Yeah.

RS enjoyed his Irish classes and did not complain about the teaching, however it was not socially acceptable to enjoy Irish. His peers even called it "the plague." For DM, who is now in college, the school experience was different.

b)

GF: Was that, like if people were more interested in Irish...were there kids who were just like mad for Irish and just.

DM: Oh yeah, yeah, I have friends that are fluent in it.

GF: Yeah. Oh really?

DM: Yeah.

GF: Was that OK? Or were they like really uncool for that? Or did anybody care?

DM: They were just, they just put more effort into it really, no they wouldn't, I mean, you wouldn't think something, you're uncool or something I don't know

GF: Right.

DM: I actually envy my friends who have fluent Irish, you know?

In DM's school, where Irish classes were compulsory, some students were good in Irish and some were not, but it was not considered 'uncool' if you were. Now, only four years out of secondary school, DM wishes he had put more effort into learning Irish in school; he expresses this several times during our interview.

c)

GF: Did you like your teachers, do you think they did a good job, like your Irish teachers? I know that's often kind of a point of contention with people when they say that they hate their Irish teachers and they hate the way it's taught.

DM: Yeah, I know what you're saying ... one of the main Irish teachers I had ... I wasn't mad about him to be honest, but he taught it well and stuff. It really, to be honest, it came down to not the teachers, it was general attitude toward it, and at that age when I was growing up, the last thing I wanted to do was school you know? I was all about playing football ... but as I said, I regret it so much now that I wish I could, I wish I could go back and

GF: Do it again?

DM: Yeah put some proper effort into it and ...

d)

GF: Oh right, so did you like Irish at all? Did you like it in school, or?

DM: I really really regret not, em, putting as much effort into it as I should have.

GF: Yeah.

DM: Now that I'm older I can realize, when I was in school I kind of had that attitude of oh what's the point of this?

GF: Right.

DM: Not going to use it anyway kind of thing.

GF: Have to do it?

DM: Yeah, now I especially, now that I live in a different country, have a different perspective of Ireland, I wish I had much more [Irish], you know?

GF: Sure.

DM: I wish I had put much more effort into, but eh

GF: I mean did you view it, did you view like any other subject? Like French or something? Or was it even kind of worse, you know?

DM: I did French as well, I never liked French either.

GF: I mean French, you could go to France and use French, did you feel like, oh god Irish, when am I ever, ever

DM: Yes, well, I suppose that was the feeling and it was kind of like you have to do it, it's mandatory.

GF: Right.

DM: Just by the government kind of thing and it's like ... people definitely do have that attitude of why, why do we have to do this, you know?

GF: Right.

DM hits on an important point - though Irish is not mandatory in all schools in Ireland now, it is in many, and students do not usually like mandatory subjects, regardless of what they are. Edwards (1984) gives two reasons why language revival efforts usually fail. The first is that they usually ignore the daily "reality for the mass of the population" (p. 288). This is just as true today as it was when Douglas Hyde was trying to convince starving Irish peasants that they should hold on to their language.

e)

RM: I think when something isn't going to be of immediate value in career terms, people want to know why they have to learn it.

GF: Right.

RM: And the answer is, the students are lazy, more or less.

GF: Yeah, high school students.

RM: They don't want to have to do anything. They don't want to do Shakespeare even though ten years later they realize that they should have, at least if they're thinking.

There are few outlets for the use of Irish outside of the school system; if students see no use for a subject in school, why would they care about learning it? As RM points out, students are lazy in general, and if they can't use something in their career, that is the "daily reality," they don't see the point. This is part of Edwards' (1984) second reason language revival usually does not work.

The second reason that language revivals don't often work is that one can't expect to bring a change based on "abstractions" such as culture and tradition. These are important, yes, but they are not in the forefront of most people's minds (p. 288). This is especially true of students. DM does say now that he regrets neglecting his studies, especially after leaving Ireland, but the clarity of hindsight is not apparent when one is in the midst of the situation. RM mentions this as well:

f)

RM: I remember my English teacher in high school putting it very well. He says if there's one way you ever want to kill a cultural project, force children in school to learn it and very quickly it will become something they resented something they would walk away from, you know?

It seems that Ireland has expected a cultural revival to just happen because she is teaching her youth to speak Irish in school. Edwards (1984) says that this is simply not possible. Education cannot be the agent of language revival, especially when there are no strong pressures or policies in place outside of the education system (p. 304). Fishman (1991) asserts that language revival efforts must begin at the bottom; they simply do not work from the top down.

Section 3 - Irish in the Gaeltacht

One of the few places outside of the school system that Irish students can use their Irish is in the *Gaeltacht*. It is not uncommon for students to attend summer programs where they either live with Irish speaking families or associate closely with them. I never asked about these summer programs, but all three of the none-native speakers brought them up. RS and RM had been themselves and the DM had friends who had. Each reported positive experiences.

RS, who would have been visiting the *Gaeltacht* around 1960, reported enjoying his time there. His brother liked it even more than he did and seemed to have had more

success at learning Irish while he was there because he lived with Irish-speaking families not in dorms.

g)

RS: So we went to the *Gaeltacht*. I only went one year or two I think, I don't know. My brother went every year.

GF: So like a summer thing?

RS: My brother went several more years than me.

GF: Was that like a summer program?

RS: Yeah.

GF: And how long would you go for?

RS: Uh, I think at least a, more than a month, I know it was a long time, it was several weeks, maybe a month I think.

GF: Too long?

RS: Yeah, well, I liked, he went for even longer, my brother went for two or three months, he was gone for a long time.

GF: Oh wow ... so did you live with families or did they put you up in dorms kind of?

RS: Yeah we were in dorms [in] west Cork. My brother was with families.

GF: Oh right, so did he, did he learn Irish or no?

RS: Yeah, he did more, yeah.

GF: Did, I mean, did he like it?

RS: Yeah, that's the thing, he did ... yeah he liked it a lot, he talked about it, you know, the rest of the year.

GF: Well I guess that worked, I guess that's good [laugh] that's what they were going for anyway.

RS: Well definitely ... [they] enjoyed it even if they didn't learn that much Irish ... the odd kid was sent home, I guess to make an example or something, for speaking English ...

RM also enjoyed his time spent in the *Gaeltacht*, which he would have visited in the 1990s. Before talking to him I did not realize that any schools in the North focused on Irish as much as they do. His school required Irish for one year and continued to offer it to interested students. He mentions the value of learning Irish in a real world setting not in a classroom.

h)

RM: If you're interested personally speaking, I went to the *Gaeltacht* twice, two summers in a row when I was in high school ... went when I was 13 or 14 to a place called [Irish name] in Donegal, which was one of the remaining Gaelic speaking areas, and I don't know if you know how that works, but it's an opportunity for kids all over Ireland to learn the language by properly living in an environment where it's spoken at home ... It was brilliant. It was genuinely very very enjoyable; you know it wasn't learning by writ you weren't.

GF: You were actually using it?

RM: Yeah, [not a] didactic take on this, rather everything you did morning noon and night you had to first attempt it in Irish. In fact, the law was if you were caught speaking English you got sent home. Now I never saw anybody get sent home but I didn't see too many people take a chance either.

RM reported that he thoroughly enjoyed his time in the *Gaeltacht* and continues to view it as an important place for Irish young people to experience the language in normal interactions outside of the classroom.

Though DM never went to the *Gaeltacht*, but many of his friends did. He too mentions that students are not allowed to use English while they are there. Despite this, neither he nor the others who mentioned it indicate that it was a problem.

i)

GF: Did you have any friends who went to a *gaelscoil*[5] or did you know anybody that did?

DM: Yeah, um, a lot of my friends went to what's called the *Gaeltacht*.

GF: Oh right, like during the summer?

DM: Yeah, you go down and you spend two weeks there and, two or three weeks and you, you're only allowed to speak Irish, if you speak English they like kick you out.

GF: Ship you out, yeah.

DM: A lot of my friends did that, when they were younger, just to help them

GF: In school?

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[5] A *gaelscoil* is a school that is conducted completely through Irish.

DM: In school more than anything, you know?

GF: Did they enjoy it? Like did you [get] any news?

DM: Yeah, a lot of people said they enjoyed it now, because, when you go, normally you go like maybe between the ages of ten and fourteen, and you're getting away from your parents for two weeks, so

GF: Sure.

DM: And all that kind of thing, but the Irish is just thrown in as well.

Despite the threat of being kicked out for using English, DM's friends relished the time away from their parents and school. The beauty of the experience is that "the Irish is just thrown in as well." That's the point of the *Gaeltacht* summer program; it allows students to enjoy their summer while simultaneously learning Irish - a stark contrast to the obligations of the classroom.

This seems to be one of the few ways for students to enjoy learning Irish, but it may not be around for much longer. Both RS and RM mention that the *Gaeltacht* is in trouble, for two very different reasons.

Here RS talks about the immigrants who move to the *Gaeltacht*, including, apparently, a lot of Germans.

j)

GF: But there's a lot of people in the *Gaeltacht* now who aren't, that aren't even there for the Irish so.

RS: No, yeah, down in Dingle ... a Spar[6] down there, there's ... all these German newspapers.

GF: Oh, right.

RS: Yeah.

GF: That's crazy.

RS: There's all these German daily newspapers out there.

GF: That's crazy that they have German daily newspapers. Do they have *Lá* or *Foinse*[7] or whatever?

RS: No ... they have the *Irish Times* and they have *Spiegel*[8].

There are so many German immigrants in the Dingle *Gaeltacht* that the convenience store had German daily newspapers; they did not, however, have Irish language newspapers. Since you do not have to be Irish or speak Irish to live in the *Gaeltacht*, there is a danger that Irish will decline their even more rapidly than it already is. Many immigrants and retirees move there to enjoy the relatively slow pace of life.

RS shared another story about when he was in the Connemara *Gaeltacht* in Galway and started to speak to a woman as *Gaeilge*. Though she spoke Irish and could understand him, she preferred to converse in English.

k)

GF: Well do, do you have Irish like? Could you talk to people?

---

[6] Spar is a convenience store.

[7] *Lá* and *Foinse* are Irish language newspapers

[8] *Spiegel* is a German newspaper

RS: Well, I don't know ... when I went to Connemara, you know, I used to talk to people in Irish.

GF: Sure.

RS: In Rosmuc ... north of Galway ... I gave her a lift anyway and I started to her in Irish and she, 'what are you talkin' to me in Irish for?' [laughs]

GF: [laughs] OK so.

RS: In English. So they don't even, you know, they don't even try to use Irish.

Even though his Irish is perfectly acceptable, when he began talking to the *Gaeltacht* woman in Irish she chastised him and began speaking in English. RS's take on Irish in the *Gaeltacht* is that, for the most part, people choose not to speak it.

RM suspects a decline in Irish speaking in the *Gaeltacht* not because of outsiders, like RS's first story (j) but because of the people already living there, like the woman in RS's second story (l). According to Ó Dochartaigh (2000), many parents in the *Gaeltacht* no longer teach their children Irish but instead rely on schools to do so. Between this and the economic situation in the *Gaeltacht*, language use there is in decline.

l)

RM: I do remember when I was there [the *Gaeltacht*] the people saying that we might be some of the last generations to have the access we did, because the young people in those areas were becoming more and more inclined to use English for economic reasons.

New generations abandoning the language or leaving the *Gaeltacht* altogether is a real threat. Ó Dochartaigh (2000), explains that the *Gaeltacht* has never had a firm

economic standing, and, as in centuries past, English is the language of money. Government funding has been allocated to Irish speakers in the *Gaeltacht*, to encourage them to continue in their Irish. When this does happen, however, neighboring English speakers in similarly difficult economic situations become envious. Both RS and JF mention this social jealousy brought on by the special privileges alloted to *Gaeltacht* Irish speakers. JF, who attended University College Cork, mentions some of the harsh things that were said to him because he was from the *Gaeltacht*:

m)

GF - Well what kind of things, like just about, I don't know, what kind of things would they say?

JF - Oh it's just. Well, one you had, there were certain advantages that were given to people throughout the *Gaeltacht* area. There were certain government scholarships to go to university for folks who were Irish speakers, there were housing loans available to people in the *Gaeltacht* and things like that. And the non-Irish speakers were very resentful of some of that.

JF did not go into detail about what was said to him, but there was obviously resentment from some of his classmates. RS explains that these feelings of bitterness extend not only to those Irish speakers from the *Gaeltacht*, but to Irish speakers in general, who are usually associated with the country.

n)

RS - ... that's right, that's why people from Dublin always complain about how many people from the country have government jobs.

GF - Oh right.

RS - My aunt from Dublin, one of them says a lot of people in Dublin ... are people from the country who work for [the government].

GF - Because they have Irish?

RS - ... because they could speak Irish. So it's like they all just walk into the jobs.

GF - Sure.

RS's aunt explained to him that many people in Dublin and other cities are jealous of 'country' people because they can walk into a decent government job simply because they speak Irish, thus putting otherwise-qualified non-Irish speakers at a disadvantage. Though RS would have heard this from his aunt some years ago, there are still many jobs that require a degree of proficiency in Irish. The Official Languages Act of 2003 and Irish's new status as a European Union official language in 2007 have only created more jobs that require proficiency in Irish.

Finally I asked JF, who grew up in the *Gaeltacht*, how much he thought Irish was actually used there.

o)

GF: So like everybody in your community, at least at the time, pretty much everyone had Irish and used it, like daily, in their?

JF: Uh, everyone had it, I wouldn't say that, even at that time, that everybody was using it on a daily basis. They were, there were people who used Irish almost exclusively. There were kids who came to elementary school at the age of four that had not a word of English when they walked in the door. So, but of course,

everybody was, by the time you get to adulthood, everybody's bilingual basically, you know?

JF confirms that almost everyone in his hometown *could* speak Irish, but many did not use it often. Though some children began school not knowing any English, by the time they finished school they were all bilingual Irish and English speakers,

Though the *Gaeltacht* plays an important role in the language education of many young Irish students, it is threatened from both the outside and the inside. Non-Irish speakers are moving in, parents are not teaching their children Irish, and the young Irish speakers are moving out.

Section 3 - Irish in the home

If we believe Fishman (1991), then it is safe to say that language revival starts on the home and community level. Language decline also ends in the home. Crystal's chart (see pages 40-41 above) outlines the path of language decline due to social pressure; it ends with the new generation abandoning the language in all settings outside the home and finally, perhaps, altogether. Census information from 2006 shows that Irish is the main spoken language in only 3% of Irish homes and communities. The above section explains that Irish use is declining within the *Gaeltacht* itself, but I wanted to discover what role, if any, the Irish language played in the homes of my interviewees.

Only one of the interviewees reported using Irish in his childhood home on a regular basis; this was, not surprisingly, JF, the native speaker from the *Gaeltacht*. Upon being asked about this, the other three did describe some minimal use of Irish, often in

words or phrases, by an older member of the family, often an aunt or grandmother, but never in actual conversations being undertaken by family members in the childhood home.

Even JF, who grew up in the mid-twentieth century, was not satisfied with the amount of Irish spoken in his home.

p)

GF: So, but you, you learned English at home?

JF: Yeah, I had English by the time I went to school as well, yeah.

GF: But what, what was the main language spoken in your home?

JF: I'd say at the time we started out it was probably about fifty-fifty, you know?

GF: Yeah.

JF: There was a, there was a deliberate effort on my parents' part to make sure that we spoke reasonable English, on the idea that that was

GF: Needed it?

JF: What was necessary to get on in the world.

GF: Right.

JF: You know which I, looking back on it, I think is a rather unfortunate concept, but it certainly was there despite their own fluency in Irish you see.

JF's parents were both fluent in Irish, his mother grew up speaking it and his father learned it in school, but they felt compelled to use English extensively in the home. When he says 'it was probably about fifty-fifty you know', he means that he grew up speaking Irish half of the time and English the other half. JF fears that, as Ó Dochartaigh

(2000) says, many *Gaeltacht* parents will stop teaching their children Irish and rely on the schools to do it instead.

RS, who grew up on a farm in the rural west of Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, explains that Irish was not spoken on a regular basis in his home.

q)

GF: So, did you speak any Irish at home?

RS: No.

GF: No. Did your parents speak Irish at all?

RS: No, my granny and my aunt and uh my uncle were [indistinguishable] on the farm they would say words, you know [indistinguishable: giving Irish words and their English equivalents] *a grá*[9], you know?

GF: Right.

RS: Or whatever, they would just use words like that, but they wouldn't, didn't say any, they just used individual words.

GF: They didn't actually converse, like?

RS: [indistinguishable] no they didn't, no, no one around there spoke Irish.

GF: No one up in Sligo?

RS: No.

Some of RS's older family members would use Irish words and phrases, but they never had conversations in Irish. He even claims that no one around his home in Sligo spoke Irish when he was growing up.

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[9] I could not make out most of what he said in Irish, but *a grá* is a term of endearment meaning, basically, 'my love'.

RM, who grew up in Northern Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, also heard very little Irish at home, though at least one of his parents could speak Irish.

r)

GF: So did your parents, do your parents have Irish, like do they speak it, or?

RM: My dad would have, my mom less so, but it wasn't something in the home that we would have spoken.

GF: Right.

Though he did not speak Irish at home, he pointed out later in our conversation that some of his family does often use Irish.

s)

RM: A lot of my extended family, particularly in the northwest and in Derry, are people who speak Irish as a first language.

GF: Really?

RM: At home they speak to each other all the time in Irish. There's more of that that goes on than I think people often realize, but it goes on usually behind closed doors because it has to, I mean, cause if you're going to interact with people and most of them don't speak the language.

GF: Right, yeah.

RM: ... but two of my aunts ... are completely fluent and they teach the language to other people in the town I grew up in, so on both sides of my family there were a lot of Irish speakers.

RM has several aunts who are highly skilled in the language; they even teach Irish classes. He also claims that more people than one might expect do use Irish in their homes; whether or not all of those who do report this in Ireland's census is not known.

The youngest interviewee, DM, is also the most urban, hailing from just outside of Dublin City, thus he would have the most recent and cosmopolitan view of how Irish is used in the home.

t)

GF: Do your parents have any Irish[10]? Do they speak it at all?

DM: Very little.

GF: Right. I'm gonna go ahead and assume if you're from [suburb of Dublin] you didn't speak it at all at home.

DM: Ha, no, no.

GF: Do your grandparents or any other kind of family, a little bit older?

DM: Yeah, uh, my granddad who was who passed away last year, he would have been fluent in Irish now.

GF: Really? Where was he from?

DM: He was, where was he from? He was from Dublin as well.

GF: Oh right.

DM: But a lot of his family now was from the countryside.

---

[10] The phrase "to have Irish" is used frequently; this is generally what people say instead of "to know Irish" or "to speak Irish." It is actually a translation from the Irish language, *tá Gaeilge agam*, which would be literally 'Irish is at/upon me'. Irish does not have the verb 'to have' and uses this combination of the verb 'to be' and a preposition to indicate possession.

DM spoke no Irish in his home; he is not even sure if his parents can speak Irish. His grandfather, however, was fluent in Irish. Though his grandfather was from Dublin, DM claims that he knew Irish because a lot of his family was from the country. He associates Irish with the country at another point in the interview as well. Here, he is talking about his Irish friends in America.

u)

DM: But there's one boy here who's from Laois, you ever heard of Laois?

GF: Sure yeah.

DM: And he, he has more Irish than the rest of us.

GF: Really?

DM: Because he's from the country really and

GF: Right.

DM: they use it more.

He and his Irish friends speak Irish occasionally; one of them is far better than the others. DM says that this is because his friend is from Laois, a relatively rural county in the middle of the Republic of Ireland, and that rural people use the language more. Though it is true that Irish is associated with the country more than with cities, it is dangerous to assume too much. For example, RS, who is from the rural west, claims that when he was growing up no one there spoke Irish at all.

It is not surprising that only one of the interviewees spoke Irish at home; the most striking fact is that all of the interviewees have or had family members who could speak Irish. RM has two aunts who teach Irish; DM's recently deceased grandfather was fluent

in Irish; RS and his brother speak Irish. It seems like there was enough Irish in the interviewee's families that they could have learned and spoken some Irish at home, but they did not. This lack of intergenerational transmission is and has been one of the Irish language's greatest challenges.

Section - 4 On Why Irish declined

We've already looked at several reasons why Irish has declined, but I want to know what Irish people think.

Though Douglas Hyde, co-founder of the Gaelic League and first president of the Republic of Ireland, was an Irish speaker, he was not a native speaker. He was a Protestant Anglo-Irishman, from a wealthy family who learned Irish at a young age. It is one thing for a wealthy, established politician to say that Irish is important; it is another thing to have to worry about being able to provide for your family and for future generations' well-being. Mac Giolla Chríost (2005), I believe rightly, notes that both Hyde and Corkery romanticized the Irish peasantry and its language. Hyde asserted that the language's decline was a recent phenomenon brought on entirely by the cruelty of the English (p. 117). Corkery's (1954) book, *The Fortunes of the Irish Language*, ends with the echo of English swords and guns; "languages," he says, "do not die natural deaths at all: they are killed by violence, usually, if not always, by imperial violence" (p. 128).

This view is reverberated in other sources. Perhaps the most extreme version of this is presented by Price:

> English is a killer...It is English that has killed off Cumbric, Cornish, Norn, and Manx. It is English that has now totally replaced Irish as a first language in Northern Ireland. And it is English that constitutes such a major threat to Welsh and to Scottish Gaelic, and to French in the Channel Islands, that their long-term future must be considered to be very greatly at risk. (as cited in Ager, 2003, p. 55)

Both Crystal (2000) and Mac Giolla Chríost (2005) disagree with this view. From a general perspective on language death, Crystal asserts that linguicide, where a language is 'murdered', is often, in reality, linguistic suicide, where its speakers stop speaking it and stop transmitting it to their children (p. 86). Mac Giolla Chríost, discussing Irish in particular, agrees. He says that Hyde, MacNeill and other influential revivalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century stated "false premises in regard to the historical, geographical and social reality of the Irish language" (p. 111). Crystal and Mac Giolla Chríost admit that English played a role in the decline of Irish, but that it is too readily made a scapegoat by the Irish people. The real reason for Irish's decline is far more complex than simply the presence of English.

I never directly asked about English's role in Irish's decline in my interviews, but three of the four interviewees brought it up in some way. DM, from the Republic of Ireland, sides more closely with Hyde and Corkery than with Crystal and Mac Giolla Chríost, placing the majority of the blame on the English.

v)

> GF: What's your position on that? On Irish being mandatory in schools and on it being mandatory for for a lot of jobs, like do you think that's cool or not?

DM: Well uh, well I think that's good, and I'm for it, I think it should be still, because it's like they fought against the English, fought against the English for so many years.

GF: Sure.

DM: And now like we, we're speaking their language, you know?

GF: Right.

DM: And if we don't have ours at all it, they've kind of worn it away and, I don't know, I don't know that sounds a bit em

GF: Patriotic?

DM: Yeah.

GF: Well yeah, I mean it's it's a hard line to draw.

DM: Yeah but you see before the English came over everybody spoke Irish.

GF: Right.

DM: And now everybody speaks English BUT at the end of the day English is the third biggest language in the world and you couldn't get by without it.

GF: Right.

DM: And you know it's like you can't, I don't know, even if everyone did speak Irish, everyone would still have to speak English anyway, you know?

GF: Sure.

DM: You know, the way things are going.

He says that English has "worn it [Irish] away" and that Irish was spoken before the English came to Ireland, but "now everyone speaks English." However, it was

apparent that he was not entirely comfortable saying that it was the English's fault. In the end he concedes that it would now be impossible to navigate the world without English, but he still say that it is 'their' language.

RS only mentions the English in passing, while talking about his sisters' children and their lack of interest in the language. He does not blame English for Irish's decline, but he does say that the English tried to eradicate Irish. In a way, though not directly, he says that the decline is the Irish people's fault.

w)

RS: ... but I also think, if they'd just ban it or something, that's one way to get people to, wait a second, if it was outlawed or something, 'cause the English tried to stamp it out during Penal times

GF: Yeah sure.

RS: and they never did.

RS's point is that now that Irish is being forcefully taught to the Irish people in schools, and thus readily available, they don't want to learn it (we were talking about Irish in schools). In contrast, centuries ago, when the Irish-condemning Penal Codes were in place, the Irish language did not suffer. He posits, only half-jokingly, that perhaps if the language were forbidden now, people would be more interested in it. Regardless, he does acknowledge that the current way Irish language teaching is packaged is not working and he wishes that there was a way to stop the decline of the language.

RM, who is from the North, holds a much different opinion from DM and a slightly different one from RS of why Irish declined. Being from the North and being

aware of the politics of language in Ireland, RM had a lot to say on the subject. He is in agreement with Mac Giolla Chríost (2005), who claims that many revivalists romanticized Irish's place in society and the Irish speaking peasants and dramatized English's role in the decline of Irish. RM calls this the 'cultural myth'.

x)

RM: ...or at least why did it become from what was the main tongue to something that people had to either be forced to learn or learn ... not necessarily with their economic interest. There's the cultural myth that explains this and there's probably the reality, and I think the myth is that it was eradicated by a foreign body, i.e. British influence in Ireland.

GF: Right, it's nice to have someone to blame isn't it?

RM: Well exactly and people tend to, in all political contexts, probably define their political views frequently by saying you know, 'if people were more like us we wouldn't have to deal with these problems' rather than 'what is it that we've done that's created this problem in the first place'.

GF: Right.

RM makes a seminal point; he highlights that there is a dichotomy of thought among Irish people in regard to the language's decline. One view, the 'cultural myth,' is the view that English is a killer language that came in and destroyed the Irish language. The other view, 'reality', is that the Irish people allowed the language to decline. He acknowledges the economic situation for the Irish peasantry, how it was of financial benefit or even a "prerequisite" for people to learn English, but does not think that that is

grounds enough to say that the English killed the Irish language. He then mentions a play that addresses the issues of how and why Irish use declined in Ireland. Speaking of the playwright he says:

y)

RM: I think he captures the Irish view quite well. Where he's looking at, well really, why did Irish or Gaelic fall away and if it is much more because people chose to walk away from a language than the language was taken away from them?

RM further questions how people have reacted to the realization that they may have voluntarily given up their own language:

z)

RM: What has that done for peoples' sense of national identity since? And I think one of the main things that it has done ... for the 1940s and 50s and the modern days, there's clearly a certain sense of shame. People knew that they had effectively abandoned their own language.

GF: Right.

RM: And they started realizing that the arguments based on how it was taken away from them, while true, were really only part of the story and maybe only a minority part at that. And so how did that sense of, that sense of shame and that sense of failure transform itself into political action?

Though none of the interviewees espouse Corkery's view that the language was violently killed by English, each has a different view on why use of the Irish language in

Ireland has declined. Despite this, they all agree that the Irish language is an important issue in Ireland today.

Section 5 - The new Ireland

Ireland has done very well in recent years. The Celtic Tiger, the name given to the Irish economic boom of the 1990s has changed the country immensely. Waves of immigrants have been moving to Ireland since it joined the European Union. It has become a modern European country with a serious economy, which is great for the country, but may have negative implications for the language.

RM has the most to say about this. Again, as a native of Northern Ireland, and a politically minded individual, he is highly aware of the political climate of the island of Ireland. Here he comments on the new economic presence of Ireland in the world and how that has affected the Irish people themselves.

aa)

RM: What you had in the 90s...is suddenly people saying 'it's great to be Irish' suddenly we're doing really well we're no longer the Irish that's 200 depicted in Saint Patrick's day in America as you know, the kind of drunken stupid lazy party, instead we're serious people with a serious economy. We're outperforming everybody else in Europe; we're a modern country; we have a female president, two in a row now; we're embracing globalization instead of running away from it. And more and more and more people realized that their place in the modern world was a uniquely Irish place. It wasn't a diluted version of Britishness. It wasn't a

hangover from our cultural past. It was a real genuine new fresh way of interacting with the world, and with that, in my opinion, came a new sense ... that never existed before of being proud of being Irish ...

RM excitedly talks about the new-found Irish identity, one that is not tied up in the problems of the past and particularly one that is not a subset of the British identity. This new-found Irish pride, he says, is one reason that people are becoming interested in the Irish language again - because it is acceptable to be Irish and the language is a symbol of that. While he thinks that is good and he himself has interest in the language, he has two reservations. The first is about how language, as a symbol for Irishness, is being used by some in the North:

ab)

RM: ... in the North there was a revival for very different reasons, but a revival that was very real nonetheless. It had much more to do with the political developments, and without wanting to bog you down in that, it basically boils down to a ... recognition that Northern nationalists had every right to be Northern nationalists and they shouldn't apologize for that. People started embracing more and more their sense of Irishness and to them again the language often plays a big part of that ... and I think this is very much a minority activity, but it was there nonetheless, is there was also maybe a slightly more ... unfortunate tendency to use that ability to speak Gaelic as a way of say we're not Unionists. It wasn't just a way of saying we are Irish people, or even just saying we are Irish Nationalists, but as a way of saying we're not Irish Unionists ...

In recent years some northern Nationalists have been using the language as a tool for alienation and insult instead of a tool for unification or a symbol for Irishness. Though this is generally thought of as particular to the North, RM is quick to point out that now, with Ireland receiving emigrants from all over the world, the Irish language can potentially be used to alienate these 'new Irish'.

RM's second reservation has to do with the actual name of the language. One of the first things we talked about was the fact that the language is called 'Irish'. Though 'Irish' is interchangeable with 'Gaelic' and '*Gaeilge*,' 'Irish' is the most common term for the language.

ac)

GF: You earlier, like even when I first started talking and I called it Irish, you were kind of, I don't know? Do people in the North call it Irish? Do they call it Gaelic? Or is that a point, is that a point of contention, or?

RM: No, people almost always call it Irish. Even it's opponents call it Irish, but the reason they would call it Irish is because they don't even consider themselves Irish...You know, I think it's more moral and more effective [to call it Gaelic], but I use it interchangeably. I do often call Gaelic Irish, but it's probably more appropriate and more sensitive to call it Gaelic, frankly.

GF: Oh right, interesting. Is that a commonly, I mean is that just because you're more aware kind of politically and socially?

RM: ... Yeah, it's an awareness issue.

He says that some people call the language Irish because they do *not* identity themselves as Irish and that separates them from it. RM points out that calling the language "Irish" alienates many Irish citizens, men and women who are not, as he says, 'Gaels.' This is true for both Unionists in the North and new emigrants to Ireland.

RM's thoughts about the language's place in Irish society align with those of Alfred Cobban who argues that a nation is the result of the collective desire of people to live together. It is chiefly based on "living in common and sharing common ideals" rather than from "any racial, linguistic, or cultural inheritance" (as cited in Safran, 1999, p. 87). Though most people do call the language 'Irish,' RM thinks the term 'Gaelic' is more appropriate. Ireland is becoming more diverse with modernization, and it follows that there will be new Irish citizens who do not have Gaelic ancestry. Separating the idea of 'Gaelic' from the idea of 'Irish' should promote solidarity among all of Ireland's citizens instead of alienating those who are not, as RM says, Gaels.

Section 6 - Final Words

My final question to each of the interviewees was how important he thinks the Irish language is to Ireland. All of them expressed a desire for Irish to be viable to some degree. RS was the most negative, observing his own nieces and nephews and their lack of interest in the language. RM, speaking of schools and jobs, is behind Irish as long as it is not used as a means of alienating some Irish citizens. Both DM and JF expressed an interest in maintaining Irish because it is important as an ethnic symbol. Though they

have different reasons and different degrees of hope, all of the interviewees want to see Irish prosper.

ad)

GF: How important do you think Irish is to Ireland, like the Gaelic language, and I know you've already expressed that you think it should be completely voluntary to learn it, I mean do you think they should abolish it being mandatory in schools, like everywhere?

RM: No, I wouldn't go that far. I will stress that. I think when I was talking about it being voluntary I meant according to getting employment.

GF: Oh right.

RM: So I don't think there should be a qualification criterion when you're applying for a job, other than maybe if you're applying to teach Irish.

GF: Yeah.

RM: But in schools ... I'd be strongly strongly in support of it being taught in schools. I think we've learned how to do that differently. We've learned how to do it in a way that's about cultural celebration rather than social debt to dead generations. No, so I'm all for it being taught, but I think it's important that it doesn't become a barrier to people who aren't Gaels if you like.

GF: Sure.

RM: Whether Northern Protestants ... nevermind the new immigrants who have been coming for decades, especially in the last three decades, it shouldn't be used as some sort of obstacle to stop them from advancing.

RM is generally in favor in Irish, though he does have some reservations. He does not believe that there should be mandatory Irish testing for jobs, except if the jobs actually require Irish use. He is not opposed to Irish being taught in schools, though he does qualify that it should be seen as a 'cultural celebration' not a 'social debt'. On a positive note he believes that Irish language education has become more tolerable, even enjoyable, in recent years. He is in favor of the language as long as it is not used to suppress those who may not be considered 'Gaelic' enough because they don't speak the language.

RS has mixed feelings on how the Irish language will fair in the near future.

ae)

GF: So another question is, how, do you think Irish is important? Like do you think it's, I don't know, do you think it's dying? Or do you think it's not going to? Or how important do you think it is to Ireland, like as a symbol?

RS: I think it's important, but I also think it's dying, it's slowly dying you know ... They finally got it made an official language of the EU.

GF: Right, back in 2007. Yeah.

RS: Yeah ... They might get some funding for stuff, but I don't know if they'll actually get people to use it.

GF: Right. You have, have to want to learn it to to learn it.

RS: Right. I don't think people are really that into it. A lot of people in Dublin aren't really that interested ... well one of my sisters' kids, he went to ... a famous Irish speaking school in Dublin ... she said that when, if he was ever out in the

shops in [town name], he'd be talking on in English or whatever, and if he saw one of the kids from school he'd start speaking in Irish. Pretty cool. [laughs] But obviously if you do live like that ... if a lot of people would do that ... but most people won't do that.

GF: Sure.

RS: ... I don't know, I don't know how we can get it to be more acceptable you know.

GF: Yeah.

RS: ... My other sister's kids ... they're all, you know, one of them works for Dell, one of them works for Worldcom. I know she's in Munich now working for somebody else ... so they're completely into English and IT stuff. So they're not, they're not at all ... Irish, they're like the new European.

GF: Right.

RS does not see how Irish could make a recovery at this point. He says that it is slowly dying and that he does not have much hope for it, even now that it is an official language of the European Union. One of his sisters' son and daughter do not care about Irish at all; they are, as he says, the 'new European', cosmopolitan and globally-minded. He looks at his other nephew, who has attended several Irish-speaking schools, with hope; he enjoys Irish and uses it with his other Irish-speaking friends. RS concedes, however, that most people in Ireland either can not or will not do this. He wishes there was some way to make Irish appealing, but he does not see how that would be possible.

DM does not comment on whether or not Irish will remain viable but he does express interest in it because he views it as part of what it means to be Irish.

af)

GF - So you do feel though that Irish is really important like to Ireland and kind of, symbolically at least?

DM - Yeah, just because it's ours you know what I mean? It's what we have it's, em, I wouldn't like to say defines us, 'cause it doesn't define us, but it, you know what I mean? It's um

GF - Well it's something that's uniquely yours? That's not, um, English. I guess?

DM - Yeah.

DM does feel that Irish is a significant symbol for the Irish people. Several times in our interview he lamented that he had not learned more Irish himself. He feels that it is one of the few things that the Irish people have that is truly theirs. He hesitates with how to say what he is thinking. He does not want to say that the language defines the Irish people, but he does believe it is very important.

Finally, JF takes a conservative stance on Irish's future. He does not believe that it will ever be the main language of Ireland again, but he does hope that it can remain a viable language in some sectors of the population.

ag)

JF: ... Seamus Heaney ... said something like, even if Irish was dead sociologically it would be alive mythologically because it's where we get our origins from.

GF: Right.

JF: And I think that's a very interesting

GF: Concept?

JF: kind of idea. But for that to continue there has to be, it can't be some kind of stabilized literary myth that exists in the past, it has to be an ongoing creation, and that's where I think the the real value of the new poets, the people who are writing new poetry, like ... they're writing poetry for now, you know, they're writing poetry that

GF: Isn't like the pastoral about it?

JF: Yeah, especially Nuala[11], Nuala, now she's she's something else

...

JF: So that's, yeah, I think that whatever the possibility of an actual revival of the language to the point that it's used by everybody every day, which is really unlikely, I would hope that we can carve out a future where it'll always be there as a living language for some sector of the population for some domains of interaction.

JF references Seamus Heaney, the well-known Irish poet, who said that Irish will always remain alive, even if no one speaks it, because of its mythological status. This mythological status is, I believe, the very thing that DM tries to describe above - the almost-defining significance that the language holds for the people of Ireland. JF likes this positive outlook but thinks that for Irish to truly survive it must "be an ongoing

[11] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, a modern Irish language poet.

creation." He applauds the efforts of modern Irish language poets for writing about contemporary subjects, not the idyllic stereotype of Ireland. He concludes by saying that there is very little chance for Irish to become the majority language in Ireland, but that it can remain viable for some people under specific circumstances.

Though each of my interviewees has a unique relationship with Irish, they voice many of the same opinions and have shared similar experiences. Even though their ages span forty years, each of them had positive experiences relating to the *Gaeltacht,* which indicates that it is currently an important factor in the language's survival. They all indicate that, as Fishman states, language revival in Ireland is not going to happen from the top down. For example, the way in which Irish is taught has long been an reason for its decline, but when I asked DM about this he said that the teaching was not the issue, whether or not a student achieved in Irish is based on their own efforts. RS, citing Irish's new status as an official European Union language, says that while language projects will probably receive funding, no amount of money can make people want to learn a language. Though they do not always agree about the political issues centered around the language, they all respect Irish and, to varying degrees, want to see the language remain part of life in Ireland.

Conclusion

The native tongue of Ireland has been largely replaced by English. The reasons for this shift are readily understood from the perspective of linguistics. However, its continued viability remains questionable despite ardent efforts from the Irish government and at least the expressed sentiment of the Irish people themselves. For the vast majority in Ireland, proficiency in English is required to lead a normal life and pay the bills. Mastering Irish, now a second language, is simply not required with the notable exceptions mentioned. In this setting, the language may quietly become an item of interest only to historians and linguists.

One might legitimately ask why any of this matters. Languages have developed and died throughout history. There are perhaps several reasons that we should care, one of the most often cited being that languages express identity. Crystal (2000) quotes a Welsh expression, "a nation without a language is a nation without a heart" (p. 36). The mid-nineteenth century Irish language advocate Thomas Davis agreed, stating that "a people without a language of its own is only half a nation" (Safran, 1999, p. 78). The view that language and ethnic identity are connected is common among the many supporters of language revival.

There are two views about how language and identity are intertwined. One says that language is an essential part of identity; the two cannot be severed without dire

consequence. The other concurs that language is a component of ethnic identity but not so important that losing a national language would equal losing a national identity.

Members of the early Irish government were staunch adherents to the former opinion - that the Irish language was an invaluable and essential part of being Irish. In the early days of the Free State, Éamon de Valera, who was at separate times the president and *Taoiseach* (prime minister) of Ireland said, "Ireland with its language and without freedom is preferable to Ireland with freedom and without its language" (Melchers & Shaw, 2003, p. 73). Not surprisingly, de Valera was influenced by Hyde and MacNeill. To these revivalists "the loss of Gaelic" meant "the loss of Irishness" (Crowley, 2001, p. 16). Remnants of this sentiment are still heard today, as seen in some of the interview excerpts.

Fortunately, Irish identity has not disappeared with the decline of the native language. In fact, the Irish have left their own cultural mark upon, as well as through, English. Irish-English, or Hiberno-English, is not the same as British-English; it has its own idiosyncrasies, its own means of expression. It is uniquely Irish. Similar examples may be found among other colonial states, which have taken the English language and made it their own. For example, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe concedes that English is a suitable vehicle for his African experience but that "it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Crowley, 2001, p. 18). A similar transformation has been accomplished by Irish writers and artists. Irish literature, poetry, political publications, theatre and music have all flourished through the medium of English. Examples include the works of William Butler Yeats, Sean O'Casey, John Synge, and James Joyce. At the same time the

Gaelic League was pushing for language revival and claiming the language was imperative to Irish identity, these men were writing in English about their Irish experience. Surely that does not make them less genuinely Irish.

Another example showing that Irish is important but perhaps not essential comes from the Irish Nationalists themselves. If speaking the Irish language were somehow equivalent to authentic Irish identity, surely the nationalists would have used Irish at every opportunity. This was far from the case. The propaganda, flyers and meetings for the promoters of Home Rule and the Free State were in English, not Irish. See Appendices A-3 and A-4. The same happened in India; native Indians used the English language to successfully express their nationalism and assert their independence from the British crown (Safran, 1999, p. 83). These activists, fighting for their country's independence, were no less Indian for adopting English than the Irish nationalists were less Irish.

While languages do form part of our ethnic identity, they do not completely define it. Therefore, the fate of a people's ethnic identity is not inextricably tied to that of their language. According to Eastman (1984), ethnic identity is never fully lost; "linguistic assimilation need not mean ethnic assimilation...in fact...total ethnic assimilation for all practical purposes does not occur" (p. 271). Whether Irish declines further or flourishes, Irish ethnic identity will not necessarily crumble. Language use is only one of many determinants of ethnic identity, and it may be a relatively insignificant one at that (p. 275). Edwards (1984) echoes this sentiment:

> If we accept that (a) there is an Irish national identity, and (b) the vast majority neither speak Irish nor seem particularly interested in doing so, then it follows that identity does not depend upon language alone. (p. 289)

It is possible for ethnic identity to continue in the face of language decline not only because ethnic identity and language are not inextricably linked but also because language itself has two domains. Language is both communicative and symbolic, and the two are separable (Edwards, 1984, p. 289). The 1975 report of the Committee of Irish Language Attitudes Research showed overwhelming positive attitudes toward the Irish language generally, but very little willingness to use Irish (Brudner & White, 1979). This, Edwards claims, is because most people view Irish symbolically not communicatively. Thus, they could readily say that Irish was an important historic and ethnic symbol and, in the same questionnaire, say that they were not willing to learn Irish or use the Irish they already had.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A1 Interview Schedule

Basic background info
- Where from - county/city
  - What it's like there: big/little/whatever
- Parents - Irish too?
  - Any Irish spoken at home?
  - Did their parents speak Irish?
- How long ago did you leave Ireland?

Extra curricular
- Ever do anything with GAA? (gaelic athletic assoc. - Irish sports)
- Comhaltas? (Irish music assoc.)
- Do you do any of that here?

School
- Gaelscoil? Or Regular school
- When were you in school - years-ish
  - Did you have to pass the Irish part of the leaving cert?
- Irish classes - how were they?
  - Did you like your teacher?
  - Did you like Irish?
  - Did your friends like it?

Now
- Did you come over here with anyone?
- Are you/I know you are part of the Irish community here?
  - How long did it take you to find them?
- Did your attitudes toward Irish change after leaving Ireland?

General
- What do you think about Irish being mandatory in schools?
- How important do you think Irish is to Ireland and the Irish people?

Appendix A2 Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in an Linguistic Study

Title: Language Attitudes

Primary Investigator
Allison Burkette, PhD
Department of Modern Languages
The University of Mississippi
(662) 915 - 1458

Undergraduate Investigator
Georgia Fyke
(601) 941 - 2246
gkfyke@olemiss.edu

Description The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of native Irish people toward the Irish language. If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to participate in a tape-recorded interview.

Risks and Benefits Some people feel mild discomfort at being tape-recorded, but other than that, no risks are associated with participation in this study. The benefits of study participation is the opportunity to share stories and opinions that you wish to share.

Cost and Payments Other than the opportunity to discuss attitudes and experiences you wish to share with others, you are not being offered compensation for your participation. The interview will take about a half an hour to forty-five minutes.

Confidentiality The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Excerpts from interview recordings or interview transcripts may be used for educational purposes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Mississippi. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have been given a copy of this form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and I have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____
Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

Appendix A3 Land League Flyer

Figure A3. Land League Flyer

NO RENT!

NO LANDLORDS' GRASSLAND

Tenant Farmers, now is the time. Now is the hour. You proved false to the first call made upon you. REDEEM YOUR CHARACTER NOW.

NO RENT

UNTIL THE SUSPECTS ARE RELEASED

The man who pays Rent (whether an abatement is offered or not) while PARNELL, DILLON &c., are in Jail, will be looked upon as a Traitor to his Country and a disgrace to his class.

No RENT, No Compromise, No Landlords' Grassland, Under any circumstances.

Avoid the Police, and listen not to spying and deluding Bailiffs.

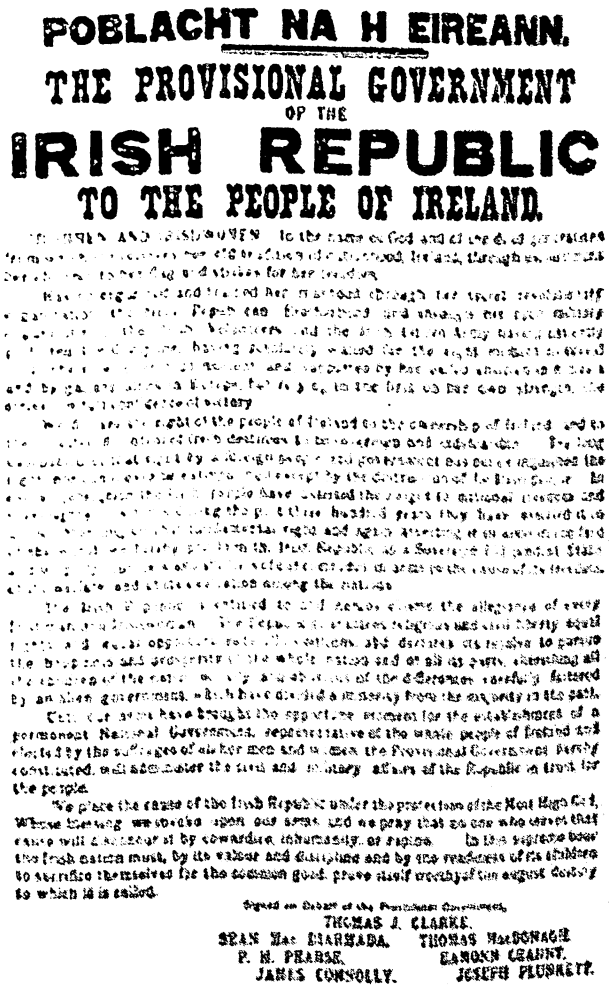
NO RENT! LET THE LANDTHIEVES DO THEIR WORST!

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE!

Figure A3. Land League Flyer
Source: http://www.indymedia.ie/cache/imagecache/local/attachments/may2007/460_0___30_0_0_0_0_0_landleagueposter.jpg

Appendix A4 Republic of Ireland Flyer

Figure A4. Republic of Ireland Flyer



POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

THOMAS J. CLARKE.
SEAN Mac DIARMADA. THOMAS MacDONAGH
P. H. PEARSE. EAMONN CEANNT.
JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

Figure A4. Republic of Ireland Flyer
Source: http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/uploadedfiles/Photo%20Gallery/proclamation2.jpg

Appendix A5 Opinion Article from the *Independent*

Total immersion is critical if Irish is to be rescued

by Marc Coleman Sunday April 13 2008

If you will it, it is no dream. Yes, an Irish- speaking Ireland -- not exclusively Irish speaking, but bilingual -- can re-emerge. It will require a unity of vision and willpower that has been lacking in Irish politics these past few decades.

Over a half century ago, Israel rescued Hebrew from obscurity. It was then a language spoken by a few thousand persons, but it is now flourishing with around five million speakers. Hebrew's revival is proof that Ireland can do the same with Irish.

The signs are hopeful. The incoming Taoiseach, for one, wants to see the language flourish. Taking the order of business on behalf of the outgoing Taoiseach, Brian Cowen, Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny and Labour leader Eamonn Gilmore sustained a good quarter-hour of leaders' debate in the Dail in Irish.

Another positive sign is the depoliticisation of Irish. By voting to de-politicise its constitution in relation to the North, Conradh na nGaeilge has greatly expand its appeal (stressing the Protestant religion of its founder, Douglas Hyde, will also reach out to Protestants in the north).

Unfortunately, there are those who are willingly sabotaging this good work. God knows Mary Hanafin is not one of them. But she has become their pawn. As she pointed out to me when I interviewed her, she has done more than many ministers in her brief to promote the language in secondary school. But secondary school is the last resort for learning Irish, and if we are to maintain spoken Irish in the Gaeltacht and beyond, then maintaining the policy of total immersion -- a policy Hanafin's department is trying to destroy -- is critical.

Before going any further, I should clarify that we are not talking about plumbing policies west of the Shannon. Immersion -- so called -- is a highly successful policy of educating children in a bilingual environment. To compensate for hearing one language at home and on TV, kids are educated totally in another language for the first two or three years of education before switching to dual language teaching. The crucial word here is "totally". Until it can compete with the dominant language around it, Irish must be given a leg up and a fighting chance in primary school. Introducing any English into those crucial early years -- as the Department's notorious circular 0044/2007 requires -- defeats the policy.

As Donal O Hanafein of NUI Maynooth has shown, immersion children are better not just in Irish, but in English as well. Given this evidence, the Department of Education should be enforcing immersion across the country.

Unfortunately, when it comes to this issue the minister's policy advisers have little interest in evidence -- and if ever there was a case of a great minister being given bad and unsupported advice, this is it.

But neither she nor her advisers are responsible for the root of the problems facing Irish. The first is what can only be described as a second plantation of the Gaeltacht whereby native Irish speakers are becoming strangers in our own environment. Ironically, the Cabinet recently decided to issue a stamp to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Plantation of Ulster. Like Conradh na nGaeilge's decision, it was a generous gesture towards the million Irish Protestants whose history and origins deserve respect and recognition. Were a second wave of incomers not threatening the Gaeltacht's existence, it might be easier to celebrate this commemoration.

Like a glacier, the Gaeltacht has shrunk back to the western fringes and is in danger of disappearance. Like a glacier, its small size disguises its huge role in our cultural ecosystem. Its existence feeds how English is spoken and sung in the rest of the country. Wipe it out, and Ireland is little more than a culturally lobotomised province of England, no more culturally different from London than Yorkshire or Devon.

A stalwart of sport, Micheal O Muircheartaigh has also been promoting Gaelscoileanna since Mary Hanafin was in primary school. "The Gaeltacht is the remnant of an Irish-speaking Ireland. The decline began in the east, so every effort should be made to preserve what is still there. It is far more important to preserve the language than any of the national monuments. There is no comparison between even the greatest of national monuments and a living language," he told me recently. He is dead right.

He also echoes the findings of professional research on immersion. "English doesn't suffer, it might even benefit ... They can't help but have English because it's in their surrounds and it's the language of most of their parents. The immersion helps in setting them off in initial stages. I can't see how anyone would be against it."

Grand statesman that he is, TK Whitaker is reluctant to get involved in contemporary debates on policy. But he does favour publishing the results of research more widely.

"All that sort of information should be more widely available so that parents are not adopting their present habits about bringing up their own children in English unnecessarily," he believes.

Another statesman of younger vintage, former Finance Minister and Labour leader and the party's current Education spokesman, Ruairi Quinn, agrees. "There is international evidence that immersion is the way to go to facilitate the early learning of another language while the home language may be different. The merits and demerits of this issue are hotly contested and the national response in this case would be to seek detailed research."

The smoothness and policy competence of the response tells you why this man became Finance Minister.

Alarmingly, and in total contrast, Hanafin's department has conducted no research at all.

One reason might be a lack of competence. Bodies with such competence -- the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum Assessment) and COGG (Council for Education in Gaelscoilleanna and the Gaeltacht) have said no change should be made before research is conducted.

Another reason could be a hostility towards the language that would make Oliver Cromwell blush. When he said, "To hell or to Connaught," Cromwell at least accepted the idea of an Irish-speaking west of Ireland. Not so some of our officials. As Irish language Commissioner Sean O Cuirreain exposed last week, someone in the Department of Justice disgracefully obstructed an investigation into why a judge unable to speak Irish was appointed in a Gaeltacht area.

Hanafin admits that it was her senior officials and members of the inspectorate who advised her on this matter. She also failed to produce any research to back up this policy change. Neither was there any mention of it in Fianna Fail's manifesto or in the Programme for Government. In short, a minority of unelected, unaccountable officials have hijacked a democracy.

They have also given their minister a bum steer. When she told me that the 1999 curriculum gave her no choice but to abandon immersion, saying, "I cannot allow a situation where schools can pick and choose any aspect of the curriculum," Hanafin revealed the poor quality of her department's advice. Page 70 of the 1999 curriculum clearly states that teaching English in early years is recommended but not mandatory. The fact that the Department has issued a circular -- and plans to issue a Regulation to back it up -- proves that it is the Department itself, and not the curriculum, forcing the change.

As she goes down this road, Mary Hanafin should contemplate the fate of a woman with whom she has much in common: Niamh Breathnach was an Irish speaker, a TD for Dun Laoghaire and also an Education Minister. She also from time to time ignored sound advice, and her absence from today's political scene speaks volumes about the wisdom of

this approach. She should also note that none of her colleagues has spoken in favour of the policy.

With or without her, the struggle to revive the language will go on. Just as the Israelis nurtured Hebrew back to life, we should actively nurture Irish-speaking areas to the point where they are economically viable and growing of their own accord. Like Israel, there are some who would push Irish-speaking Ireland into the sea. And just as Israel does, we must oppose these enemies of our culture with resolve, determination and ruthlessness.

Appendix A6 Yahoo! Answers Question

Decline of the Irish Language?

So, what would you guys say the main causes are/were?
I'm not ignorant to this - I just want to hear what some Irish folk have to say about it.

ANSWER 1: I think the main causes are that firstly no one can speak it (or at least not many people) because of lack of enthusiasm with learning the Irish language. It is such a boring, dull, hard subject at the school that most people I know did not enjoy at all.
I don't know whether it's a good thing or not, but I think the sooner it dies, the better (and yes, I know the amount of thumbs down I'll get for that but that's my opinion).

Instead of learning Irish in primary school, I think it should be compulsory that we learn a foreign language like French/German/Spanish etc. instead. A language that people can speak, it will be useful and you can eventually be fluent in it.

ANSWER 2: 1)well Irish isnt spoken anywhere in the world apart from ireland.

2)english is the most important language to learn all around the world, so its useful. and people where taught whatever language their parents spoke

3)young people are seeing the Irish language as useless because unless you want to be a teacher or study Irish, you really dont need it to a certain extent.

4)Some politicans want to make Irish an optional choice for secondary school

....in a way id like to see the Irish language around for a good while. Im average at it i enjoy it anyways.
what i think they should do is, make Irish compulsary to learn, but maybe not an exam subject due to amts failing the leaving cert.
or even make it a core exam subject for junior cert(like now) and then make it compulsary to learn at leaving cert and not an exam.
you still get the knowledge

- 2 days ago

Source(s):
leaving cert student...oh the joy....:(

ANSWER 3: the Irish language almost died out for the same reasons that many other minority languages in Western Europe have declined Scots Gaelic , Welsh , Breton , Fresian to name a few. English became the dominant language of trade.government , education and the legal system under British rule. Additionally the Potato Famine of 1845-48 hit the west of Ireland and the poorest tenant farmers hardest and these were the people who still spoke Irish. Continued depopulation and emigration throughout the nineteenth century continued the trend until we were left with Irish being spoken only in the *gaeltacht* areas in Kerry , Connemara and Donegal With the Celtic cultural revival of the late nineteenth / early twentieth century Irish became an integral part of the nationalist movement. Following the establishment of the Free State the new government set about attempting to revive the language. This was instituted by adding Irish to street signs and compulsory Irish teaching in schools and using Irish as another official language of government. In practise this went with a fanatical social conservatism and a particularly joyless version of catholic piety , sexual repression and economic depression. Unfortunately for the Irish language all this official effort was submerged by the rising flood of US/British dominated mass media and popular culture. With the increasing engagement of Ireland in the global economy . fuelled in part by being an English speaking workforce, the prospect of the Irish Language being he primary language of Ireland seems farther away than ever. It's a bit of a shame really as the Irish language has quite a lot going for it and it is a part of who we are. Now almost thirty years later I wish I'd actually listened at school

ANSWER 4: Irish isn't spoken anywhere else in the world except for remote parts of the west of ireland

parents discouraged their children from speaking it as it was seen as backward so their kids could get jobs in the uk,america,australia etc.

it's thought in a very bad way(rammed down our throats)i was put through 14 years of learning it and can't speak a word on the other hand i went through 8 years of french no i speak it fluently,thatt's an example of how bad it's thought

it's really a useless language because no other countries speak it,it's still useless no matter which way you try to dress it up.

in my opinion it's an awful language it's very harsh to the ear

- 1 day ago

Source(s):

i'm Irish and learned Irish in school(unfortunately)

ANSWER 5: i do believe things and attitudes are changing especially at school level when it comes to Irish children starting school are learning Irish in a fun new and exciting way which makes it more enjoyable to them children now in primary are alot more interested in the language because of the way it is taught it all has to do with attitude of the educational board and i feel they have learned from past mistakes and want children of today to embrace their national language and enjoy it my son is in primary school and they enjoy learning Irish because of the way it is taught to them today i think it is an important part of our culture and heritage for our children to experience.i think people maybe have had bad experiences of learning Irish at school years ago but things have changed and why destroy it for our children who are the adults of tomorrow

ANSWER 6: The causes for the decline of the Irish language are as follows and happened between the mid 1800's and 1900's

(im studying this for my leaving cert)

1. During the famine people needed to emmigrate to other countries for better lives and jobs, to do this they needed to speak english so many never bothered to teach their children how to speak it.

2.Only the smallest regions of ireland were fluent, Ghaeltachs such as connemara and kerry, as the years went on the people were forced to speak english or be brutally murdered by the RIC or the Black and Tans.

3.The introduction of english sports such as rugby and football replaced the traditional hurling and gaelic football so this alienated many Irish people from their heritage and began speaking even more english.

4.The Irish language was mainly associated with Catholics/Nationalists and Rebels, while english was associated with Unionists, Protestants and Those who gave into british rule. To speak Irish was dangerous back in that time

5.Even the way it is still taught in school today! you spend 14 years learning it and then your tested on some **** poetry and stories in your final two years.Everything you have learned goes out the window and all those verbs that have been beaten into over your life are forgotten.The teaching of the language has to be fun otherwise nobody will lear it and i think that Irish will be dead in 200 years.

ANSWER 7: Irish is still spoken in Canada, in Newfoundland, as well as in some *Gaeltacht* areas in Ireland itself.

I am slowly bringing my own knowledge of the language back by watching TG4, the Irish language channel. I didn't use it for years because I was learning other languages..

I think a huge obstacle to learning the language is how it's taught. It could be made fun, it doesn't have to be dry and difficult at all. I have worked as an English language teacher and this is a difficult language, but it can be made fun and interesting - why not do the same for Irish?

It's true that the Norman invasion and subsequent English settlement of Ireland did a great deal of damage to the Irish language. This cannot be ignored. However, this also added an element of mysticism and poetry to the English language that had been played down a lot in the Age of Reason - it has been said of the English that 'They took our language and destroyed it, but we took theirs and made it more beautiful'. The finest English in the world is now spoken in Ireland.

I'm watching the redevelopment of the Irish language with great interest.

ANSWER 8: the english. we would speak it now, if the english didnt murder us for doing it.

BEST ANSWER 9: the actual decline of the Irish language is due to the hedge schools, not the british to the extent that most people believe
At a percentage the british are 15% responsible, but it is the Irish ourselves that made the decline more rapidly.
People sending their children to hedge schools insisted that they were taught english so as to emigrate as english would help them find employment.
Although the factors of emigration could be layed at the door of the british, it is the Irish who insisted to speak english, we dont see thuis problem with the welsh do we!

Source(s):
H dip education ucd,
The history of Irish education by coolahan