

## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme leading to the award of the degree of Professional Master of Education, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this Institute and any other Institution or University. I agree that the Marino Institute of Education library may lend or copy the thesis, in hard or soft copy, upon request.

---

Niamh Ní Mhurchú

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**Word Count:** 10,759

## Acknowledgements

*I would like to thank my supervisor Tomás Ó Dúlaing for his all of his advice and words of encouragement throughout the year.*

*I would like to thank the school, teachers, parents and children who made this piece of research possible.*

*I would like to thank all of the staff at Marino Institute of Education.*

*Finally, I would like to thank my parents Cyril and Helen. They have supported and encouraged me every step of the way and I am extremely grateful to them.*

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to ascertain children's attitudes towards the Irish language. The study takes place in light of the launch of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* and the recent implementation of the new Primary Language Curriculum (DES, 2015; Government of Ireland, 2010). The researcher sought to investigate the impact of the school and home environments of children's attitudes towards the language. The researcher also examined children's motivation to learn Irish. Throughout, the researcher considered previous studies that have been carried out in this area while referring to relevant literature. Empirical research was carried out with forty fifth and sixth class students, attending an English-medium primary school. Through the use of a questionnaire the researcher collected data which was then analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings assert that respondents hold an overall negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of Irish. With 70% of respondents selecting Irish as either their first, second or third least favourite school subject. These findings give rise to recommendations relating to the teaching and learning of Irish in primary schools. The researcher recommends that further studies should be carried out in this area, that schools should reconsider their teaching methodologies and that initial teacher training should be improved.

## List of Figures

Figure	Page
1	28
2	29
3	31
4	32
5	33
6	34
7	35
8	35

## List of Tables

Table	Page
1	19
2	27
3	27
4	36
5	36
6	36
7	37

## **List of Abbreviations**

- Twenty Classes Study = TCS
- Growing Up in Ireland = GUI
- Irish Language Survey = ILS
- Attitude/Motivation Test Battery = AMTB
- Irish-medium school = T1 school
- English-medium school = T2 school
- Department of Education and Science / Department of Education and Skills =  
DES
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs = DCYA

## Table of Contents

<b>SUPERVISION MEETING FORM NUMBER 4</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>VI</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 RESEARCH TOPIC</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 PERSONAL MOTIVATION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.6 SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.2 THE REVISED PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM 1999-PRESENT</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3 THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>2.4 THE HOME ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>2.5 THE CHILD’S MOTIVATION</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>2.6 A MINORITY LANGUAGE COMPARISON; WELSH</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>2.7 SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>3.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>3.4 KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>3.5 STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>3.6 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>3.8 SAMPLING STRATEGY</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>3.9 PILOT STUDY</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>3.10 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.11 VALIDITY</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.12 RELIABILITY</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>3.13 LIMITATIONS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>3.14 DATA ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>3.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>3.16 SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>4.2 FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>4.3 THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>4.3.1 School Subjects</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>4.3.2 The Teaching and Learning of Irish</b> .....	<b>32</b>

<b>4.4 THE HOME ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.4.1 <i>The Use of Irish within the Home</i>.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.4.2 <i>The use of Irish outside the home</i> .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4.5 A MINORITY LANGUAGE COMPARISON; WELSH .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4.6 SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.1 RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5.4 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: BOARD OF MANAGEMENT LETTER OF CONSENT.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PRINCIPAL LETTER OF CONSENT .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: PARENT/GUARDIAN LETTER OF CONSENT .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>58</b>



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Research Topic

Irish is the first official language of Ireland, yet the 2016 Irish census reported that only 1.7% of the population (aged three or over) spoke Irish daily, outside education (Central Statistics Office, 2017). The researcher would argue that the education system plays a vital role in the maintenance of the Irish language. Ó Laoire and Harris state “The school has become one of the most critical sites for reversing language shift and for language revitalisation in minority/endangered language contexts. Of all domains, the school is perhaps the most crucial and often bears the entire burden of language planning implementation” (2006, p. 7).

In 2010 The Government of Ireland published the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* (Government of Ireland, 2010). One of the aims of the *20-Year Strategy* is to increase the number of families who speak Irish on a daily basis. The Government identifies the Education System as a key focus of the strategy. It proposes that within education the strategy wants to “reverse negative attitudes towards Irish language usage and foster positive attitudes in their place” (2010, p. 11). Additionally, September 2016 saw the phased introduction of the new Primary Language Curriculum, which applies to English-medium and Irish-medium schools (DES, 2015). The new curriculum takes an integrated language approach to the teaching and learning of Irish and English. It is asserted that the new Primary Language Curriculum “supports children to develop positive dispositions towards language and literacy” (NCCA, 2015).

In line with this on-going conversation surrounding the maintenance of the Irish language and the influence the education system will have on changing attitudes, the researcher chose this area for inquiry. Six years following the introduction of the *20-Year Strategy* the researcher wanted to investigate primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language. The current piece of research seeks to study children's attitudes towards the Irish language by carrying out empirical research with fifth and sixth class students in an English-medium primary school.

## **1.2 Research Context**

There is a paucity of research regarding primary school students' attitudes towards the Irish language. The *Twenty Classes Study* was the first research of this kind to be undertaken with Irish primary school children (as cited in Harris & Murtagh, 1999). This study provided a comprehensive insight into sixth grade students' experiences of the teaching and learning of Irish. The study provided students with the opportunity to express how they felt about Irish and the teaching and learning of Irish in their school. In more recent years the *Growing Up in Ireland* research has referred to the topic briefly, however in no great detail (DCYA, 2007). Therefore, there is broad scope for further research and analysis in this area. The researcher believes that it is important to engage with primary school children and provide them with the opportunity to express their experiences of learning the language. With the aim of fostering positive attitudes in mind, teachers and parents alike, need to include primary school children in the conversation surrounding the Irish language.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research question central to this piece of work is:

- What are the attitudes of fifth and sixth class students towards the Irish language?

The researcher has also chosen some sub-questions to further guide the research:

- What are fifth and sixth class students' experiences of the teaching and learning of Irish?
- What elements of learning the Irish language do fifth and sixth class students enjoy?
- What elements of learning the Irish language do fifth and sixth class students not enjoy?
- Do fifth and sixth class students recognise the Irish language as a form of communication?
- Do fifth and sixth class students use the Irish language as a form of communication?
- What impact does the home environment have on fifth and sixth class students' attitudes towards the language?

The researcher used the central research question and the sub-questions as a guide to ascertaining the attitudes of fifth and sixth class students towards the Irish language.

The researcher carried out empirical research with a sample of the target population.

Data was collected on the phenomenon using a quantitative instrument. The researcher then analysed and discussed the findings and made recommendations based on that discussion.

## **1.4 Personal Motivation**

The researcher comes from an English-speaking family and throughout her schooling learned Irish through English-medium schools, similar to the majority of children in the country. The researcher enjoyed studying the language in both primary and secondary school. However, the researcher learned the majority of her spoken Irish when she attended Gaeltacht summer camps during her secondary school years. The researcher has an admiration for the Irish language and would like to consider herself a Gaeilgeoir. The researcher's first language is English, however she makes small efforts each day to include Irish in conversation with friends and family. During the 2015/16 academic year the researcher completed a school placement in both an English-medium primary school and a Gaelscoil. The difference in terms of students' confidence and competence when using the language was stark. Of course, it might seem natural that students in a Gaelscoil would have a more fluent grasp of the language. However, the contrast led the researcher to consider the communicative approach to teaching Irish that is currently in use in English-medium primary schools.

## **1.5 Research Design**

This piece of research contains five chapters. The current chapter provides context and rationale for the proposed research and presents the research questions to the reader. This chapter also briefly introduces the research method and instrument. Chapter two will provide a review of literature relevant to this piece of research. Chapter three will outline the research methodology that was employed throughout the research. In chapter four, the researcher will present findings, analysis and discussion of those findings. Chapter five is the conclusion, where the researcher will provide a summary of the findings and make some final recommendations regarding the phenomenon.

## **1.6 Summary**

This first chapter has introduced the research topic and context to the reader. The research questions guiding the study have been addressed and the instrument has been introduced. The researcher has outlined her personal motivation for the research and the research design has been set out for the reader.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will compare and contrast literature relating to primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language. For the purposes of this research the literature discussed throughout refers to schools where English is the first language, unless otherwise stated. Firstly, the researcher will clarify the position the Irish language has held within the national school curriculum since the establishment of the national school system in 1831. Secondly, the researcher will discuss the impact of both the school and home environment on children's formation of their attitude towards the Irish language. Thirdly, the researcher will discuss children's motivation to learn the Irish language. Lastly, the researcher will consider the Welsh language for the purpose of a minority language comparison.

The researcher will make reference to key research that has been conducted in this area including, *The Twenty Classes Study* (as cited in Harris & Murtagh, 1999), *The Growing Up in Ireland Longitudinal Study* (DCYA, 2007) and *Irish in Primary Schools Long-Term National Trends in Achievement* (Harris, Forde, Archer, Nic Fhearaile & O'Gorman, 2006). These studies will be considered in relation to one another, journal articles and reports.

### **2.2 The Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999-Present**

Irish is one of eleven subjects currently taught under the Revised Primary School Curriculum, where the recommended time to be spent on a second language per week is 3 hours 30 minutes (DES, 1999a). "At the heart of the Gaeilge curriculum is a

communicative, taskbased approach to language learning, in which the child learns to use the language as an effective means of communication” (DES, 1999c, p. 44). The curriculum comprises ten themes that are relevant to the children’s lives; myself, home, school, food, television, shopping, past times, clothes, the weather and special occasions. The children are encouraged to use the vocabulary they learn in relation to each theme, in context, through a variety of media such as games, role play, pair work, stories, songs and so on. Informal communication through Irish is encouraged in the classroom. The Irish curriculum is divided into four strand units; listening, talking, reading and writing (DES, 1999b). In English-medium schools, emphasis is placed on listening and speaking from junior infants until second class and the children start reading and writing through Irish from second class onwards. Overall, the curriculum encourages a communicative approach to learning the Irish language. Through learning Irish in primary school, children not only develop their communication skills but learn about the culture, literature, traditions and songs of Ireland (DES, 1999b).

### **2.3 The School Environment**

A child’s primary school education will influence the child’s perception of the Irish language. Harris et al. assert that due to the extent that primary schools introduce students to the Irish language, they can have a significant impact on students long-term attitudes towards the language (2006). *The Twenty-Classes Study (TCS)* consisted of a comprehensive examination of the teaching and learning of Irish in English-medium primary schools (cited in Harris & Murtagh, 1999). What set this research apart from previous national surveys conducted on the Irish language, was that it went further than solely analysing students’ achievement and provided a much broader scope for analysis. The study allowed for children to express in their own words how they felt about Irish

lessons. Almost 30% of the sixth-grade respondents disliked some aspect of the audio-visual method of teaching Irish while almost 17% had a general difficulty in understanding Irish lessons. The study found that 14% of students disliked reading in Irish and 12.9% disliked writing. Hickey and Stenson assert that over-use of textbooks and workbooks, as opposed to “modern, attractive print and digital materials” has a negative impact on “motivation to read in Irish” (2016, p.311). 41% of students in the *TCS* strongly agreed with the statement “I think that learning Irish is boring” (Harris & Murtagh, 1999, p. 107).

According to key findings of the *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)* study, published in 2009, children displayed positive attitudes towards school overall with only 7% of 9-year-olds saying they never liked school, 27% saying they always liked school and 53% saying they always liked their teacher (DCYA). However, similar to the findings of the *TCS*, children displayed negative attitudes towards Irish overall in comparison with reading and Maths. The number of children who said they never liked Irish, far outweighed the number of children who said the same about Maths and Reading. 29% of 9-year-old children said they never liked Irish, whereas 10% said they never liked maths and 5% reading (DCYA, 2009). The results of the *GUI* study provide a stark increase of negative perceptions towards Irish in comparison with the *TCS*. Far less students in the *TCS*, only 8%, stated that they “Like nothing about Irish” (Harris & Murtagh, 1999, p. 109) in comparison with 29% of students in the *GUI* study.

The *TCS* observed positive results in relation to students’ willingness to participate in class, with approximately 50% of students observed during an Irish lesson “speaking individually – and in Irish in nine out of ten cases” (Harris & Murtagh, 1999, p. 333). It



was noted that encouraging students to speak Irish during class is important as it is often the only opportunity the child receives, to speak Irish. However, it was also noted that when students spoke during these lessons answers were often short and scaffolded by the teacher's questions. Students with higher abilities in Irish were more likely to speak and students with weaker levels of Irish were less attentive, than stronger students, during moments of silence. Harris et al. noted differences in achievement in Irish based on the gender-composition of schools. Boys in single-sex schools performed worse than pupils in mixed schools while girls in single-sex schools performed better than pupils in mixed schools (2006). Harris et al. also noted that students attending rural schools performed better in tests compared to students attending in cities or large towns. McCoy, Smyth & Banks, based on data from the *GUI* study found that "girls in single-sex schools are somewhat more negative about Irish than those in coeducational schools" (2012, p. 48). In terms of students' gender and attitudes towards the subject McCoy et al. identify differences when it comes to children's attitudes towards Irish, with girls having a more positive attitude towards the subject. They state, "a third of boys and a quarter of girl's report never liking Irish" (2012, p. 44). Furthermore, students in Irish-medium primary schools held more positive attitudes towards the language than those in English-medium schools. The reasoning behind this could possibly be that parents who hold positive perceptions towards the language enrol their children in Irish-medium schools where the ethos promotes the Irish language and culture and therefore influences children's perceptions (Darmody & Daly, 2015).

Harris et al. reported an overall decline in students Irish listening and Irish speaking achievements compared with students assessed in the mid 1980's (2006). Due to the fact that the majority of students attend schools where English is the first language,

Harris et al. note the significance that a decline in achievement in these schools, will have on the survival of the Irish language.

## **2.4 The Home Environment**

Fishman argues that intergenerational transmission of a minority language is paramount to its survival (Fishman, 1991). “Without intergenerational mother-tongue transmission”, he says, “no language maintenance is possible. That which is not transmitted cannot be maintained” (Fishman, 1991, p.113). In line with Fishman therefore, it is important not to underestimate the influence of parents’ attitudes, or home and family circumstances, on a child’s attitude towards Irish. Harris et al. referring to their survey results state, “One clear message emerging from this work is that a range of factors, both inside and outside the school, combine to determine the eventual level of pupil achievement in Irish” (2006, p. 166). Harris & Murtagh’s analysis of the *TCS* provides insight into the impact of parental involvement and encouragement on children’s motivation and ability to learn Irish (1999). Overall, it was found that parents who belonged to a higher social class, had a greater ability with Irish or used Irish at home, had children who achieved significantly higher at Irish in school. However, it was claimed that of these variables only the use of Irish at home “makes a significant contribution in the case of Pupil Irish attitude/motivation” (1999, p. 163). Harris & Murtagh assert the importance of parents exposing their children to the Irish language and demonstrating to them that the language is a valid means of communication in order to foster positive perceptions towards the language.

The *TCS* data, as analysed by Harris & Murtagh,

show that parents who use some Irish at home (a) have more positive attitudes to Irish themselves and to the notion of their child learning it at school (b) are more likely to know more about how Irish is taught (c) tend to promote a more positive attitude to learning Irish in their child and (d) are more likely to praise the child's school achievements in Irish (p. 164).

Harris et al. recognise the impact of a parent's education, and their ability to speak Irish, on their child's achievements in reading, writing and speaking in Irish (2006). Regarding a parent's ability to speak Irish, children's level of achievement in all three areas of reading, writing and speaking in Irish, improved alongside their parent's ability to speak Irish. Finally, children's achievements in Irish increased in relation to the frequency with which their parents spoke Irish to them. Although Harris et al. did not assess the correlation between the use of Irish and attitudes or perceptions, the relationship between achievement and use in the home is relevant for overall contextual purposes.

Harris et al. note that only 14.5% of parents from T2 (English-medium) schools chose "very favourable" when asked, "what is your general attitude towards Irish now?" in comparison with 56.5% of parents from T1 (Irish-medium) schools (2006, p. 137). Only 0.7% of parents from T1 schools expressed "unfavourable/very unfavourable" compared with 11.2% of parents from T2 schools (2006, p. 137). These percentages compliment the reasoning provided by Darmody & Daly that parents who have positive perceptions of Irish will send their children to Irish-medium schools, of which the ethos

celebrates the language which in turn, will foster a positive perception of Irish amongst the children (2015). When parents were asked “about the general attitude to Irish which they try to encourage in their child” only 32.5% of T2 parents chose “I let my child know that Irish is important” compared with 55% of T1 parents (Harris et al., 2006, p. 145). Hickey and Stenson identify negative attitudes towards the language at home as a contributory factor to children’s reluctance to learning Irish in school. They also asserted a correlation between children’s negative attitudes and the lack of support they receive for Irish homework (2016).

Darmody & Daly analyse the *2013 Irish Language Survey (ILS)* extensively (2015). According to the *ILS* four-in-five adults agreed that the language should be taught in school. A trend was noted in relation to wanting to learn the language, “adult respondents whose parents wished them to learn Irish at school themselves reported a wish to learn Irish” (Darmody & Daly, 2015, p. x). Another variable considered by Daly & Darmody, as discussed earlier in relation to the *TCS*, is the influence of the language spoken at home in cultivating attitudes towards Irish. Unsurprisingly, those who grew up with Irish in the home, were more likely to use the language as an adult. While only 18% of people in Ireland who were seldom exposed to Irish in the home where they grew up, using it during adulthood.

## **2.5 The Child’s Motivation**

Gardner and Lambert assert that there are two types of motivation for second language learning, instrumental (in order to get employment or education) and integrative (to become assimilated into the community) (1972). Gardner asserts that the major determinant of achievement in second language learning is motivation. Harris and

Murtagh apply Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to their research (1985). The AMTB is comprised of three motivational clusters – motivation, integration and attitude toward the learning situation. Overall, the *TCS* found that the children's integrative attitudes towards Irish were more positive than their motivation to learn the language. Children held positive attitudes towards integrating with Irish speakers and wished to have a closer link with the Irish language.

Gardner highlights the necessity for positive integrative attitudes when acquiring a second language (1985). In support of this, 88% of pupils in the *TCS* agree both that "The Irish Language is an important part of Ireland and the Irish people" and that "If Ireland lost the Irish language and the Irish way of life, it would be a great loss" (Harris & Murtagh, p. 74). However, in relation to their motivation, what Harris & Murtagh describe as "their commitment to actually learning Irish", findings were less positive (1999, p. 91). In terms of motivation the *TCS* focused on children's desire to learn the language, the level of commitment they were willing to give to learn the language and the extent to which they enjoyed learning the language.

Hickey and Stenson reported teachers claiming they had difficulty convincing children of the need to learn the Irish language "I think that one of the biggest challenges facing Irish is that the children don't see a use to it, because everyone that speaks Irish also speaks English, and they find it difficult to understand why you would to it" (2016, p. 310). The use of the second language outside of the classroom is considered vital to motivation to learn the language. Dörnyei and Chan discuss the concept of language learners having an imagined second language self and conclude that a positive image of yourself as a second language user promotes use, learning and fluency (2013).

Therefore, in order to find intrinsic motivation to learn the second language, children must be enabled to see themselves as active second language communicators. According to Darmody and Daly “If learners of Irish had more opportunities and motivation to use the language outside the school context, the level of Irish language proficiency is likely to be much higher” (2015, p. 24). Darmody & Daly also noted that respondents who had learned Irish “for its own sake” in school, still spoke the language daily having left school (2015, p. x). In contrast, those who learned Irish “to pass exams” were unlikely to use the language, illustrating the importance of intrinsic motivation and second language learning (2015, p. x).

## **2.6 A Minority Language Comparison; Welsh**

Similar to the Irish context, when primary school children in Wales were asked about their attitudes towards Welsh, it was generally a mixed response (Thomas, Apollini & Lewis, 2013). Thomas et al. found that children were motivated to learn the language because “Welsh is the language of Wales” (2013, p. 350). Children asserted that they felt they had opportunities to speak Welsh in school, however some children felt discouraged from speaking the language due to a lack of confidence. Children felt “embarrassed” speaking in Welsh and found English “easier” (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 350). In relation to the impact of the home environment on their learning of the language, the children contended that having Welsh at home was necessary for encouraging use of the language. Children who came from English speaking homes claimed that they had to work harder to learn and use Welsh than children who came from Welsh speaking homes. Overall, the study found that children’s attitudes towards Welsh were dominated by an integrative motivation to learn the language. However,

children often chose to speak English over Welsh when provided with the opportunity. Similar to the high statistics noted by Darmody & Daly (2015), 86% of Welsh parents in another study “wanted their children to learn Welsh at school, or to be fluent in Welsh” (Lyon & Ellis, 1991, p. 242). Therefore, it is fair to assert that the Welsh and Irish positions are extremely comparable.

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the literature pertinent to the research question being explored. The researcher has considered *The Twenty Classes Study, Growing Up in Ireland* research and the *Irish in Primary Schools Long-Term National Trends in Achievement* study (as cited in Harris & Murtagh, 1999; DCYA, 2007; Harris et al., 2006). The researcher has discussed the relevance of these studies while considering the impact of the school environment and the home environment on children’s attitudes towards Irish. Children’s motivation to learn the language has also been examined. The researcher introduced Welsh as a minority language comparison, in order to ascertain whether there are any similarities regarding children’s attitudes towards a minority language in a similar position to Irish.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will set out in detail the research methodology employed in conducting this study. The researcher will outline the aim of the research. The research design that has been employed will then be considered in relation to, knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods of data collection. The researcher will then outline the questionnaire design and chosen sampling strategy. The pilot study will be discussed and the data collection process will be explained. The concepts of validity and reliability will be outlined. The researcher will then consider the limitations to the study. The method of data analysis will be discussed and lastly, the ethical considerations will be considered.

### **3.2 Aim of the Research**

The overall aim of this research is to investigate children's attitudes towards the Irish language. Throughout the study, the researcher considers the impact of the school and home environments on the formation of children's attitudes, while also considering their motivation to learn the language.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Creswell establishes "three questions central to the design of research:

1. What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective)?
2. What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedures?



3. What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?" (2008, p. 5)

### **3.4 Knowledge Claims**

There are four schools of thought to be considered regarding knowledge claims and research, post positivism, constructivism, advocacy participatory and pragmatism (Creswell, 2008, p. 6). The researcher has approached this piece of research from a post-positivist or "scientific method" standpoint (Creswell, 2008, p. 7). The philosophy behind the post-positivist view of research is the idea that objective theories can be examined by looking at the relationship among variables. Post-positivist researchers seek to make generalisations based on their research, as they view themselves as "analysts or interpreters of their subject matter" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 7). The post-positivist school of thought is supported by the use of quantitative research. Post-positivist researchers look at the world from an objective point of view, they acknowledge that society is governed by rules and values and they seek to "discover the universal laws of society and human conduct within it" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 8). These post-positivist interpretations of society and research are conducive to the researcher's views. The researcher sought to investigate the influence of the school and home environments on the formation of the respondents' attitudes towards the Irish language.

### **3.5 Strategies of Inquiry**

The overarching strategy of inquiry the researcher has chosen to apply to this piece of research is the survey. Denscombe outlines three characteristics of surveys, stating that they provide "wide and inclusive coverage", they seek to represent information "at a

specific point in time” and involve “empirical research” (2007, p. 8). The researcher asserts that the characteristics and benefits of the survey, were specifically applicable to the aim of this research. According to Creswell, “survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (2013, p. 249). Therefore, the researcher contends that the use of questionnaires was specifically applicable in this case. The use of surveys allows the researcher to gather information “straight from the horses mouth” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 31). As asserted by Thomas et al., “Listening to the learner’s voice provides an additional perspective to any discussion, and can help ensure that our children are well equipped to use minority languages confidently into the future” (2014, p. 358). The survey strategy allowed the researcher to gather empirical data directly from a sample of the target population.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Collection**

Denscombe asserts that selecting a method of data collection is “a matter of horses for courses”, in that the methods being applied to the social research must be appropriate to that specific piece of research and “fit for purpose” (2007, p. 3). There are three overarching methods to choose from, as can be seen in Table 1 on page 19.

Table 1. Quantitative, Mixed, and Qualitative Methods

<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Mixed Methods</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Pre-determined	Both predetermined and emerging methods	Emerging methods
Instrument based questions	Both open-ended and closed-ended questions	Open-ended questions
Performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data	Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities	Interview data, observation data, document data, and audio-visual data
Statistical analysis	Statistical and text analysis	Text and image analysis
Statistical interpretation	Across databases interpretation	Themes, patterns interpretation

(Creswell, 2013, p.17).

The researcher chose a quantitative method of gathering data. As can be seen from Table 1, quantitative methods are used in order to gather attitude data, and therefore it is asserted that a quantitative method was applicable to the current piece of research. The instrument utilised by the researcher was a questionnaire. The researcher has considered the usefulness and appropriateness of the questionnaire to the research at hand (Creswell, 2013; Denscombe, 2007; Porte, 2010). The questionnaire is designed to collect data directly from the target population by using written questions (Denscombe, 2007). It is asserted that the use of a quantitative method of data collection allowed the researcher to access the respondent's attitudes through the use of pre-determined questions. The data collected provided a measurement of attitudes that could be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, which in turn provided clear, accessible conclusions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, it is asserted that the use of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to fulfil their research aim of conducting empirical research with a sample of the target population.

### **3.7 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was designed in order to obtain the data needed to assess the respondents' attitudes towards the Irish language. It is asserted that there is a paucity of methodological expertise regarding surveying children and that researchers often rely on the methodological knowledge available on surveying adults (Borgers, Sikkel, & Hox, 2004). The questionnaire investigated the impact of the school and home environments on the respondents' attitudes, while also considering their motivation to learn the language. The questionnaire comprised of seventeen questions made up of open and closed questions, continuous scales, categorical scales and Likert scales (Creswell, 2008; Likert, 1932). The various scales used provide easily accessible data with which the researcher could "construct a statistic to indicate a person's position on the spectrum of attitudes" (Newby, 2010, p. 319). During the design phase of the questionnaire careful consideration was given to ensure that each question was easily understood and answerable for the target population (Austin Research, 2014; Bell, 2007). Each question provided clear instructions as to what was required from the respondent to ensure the collection of accurate information (Denscombe, 2007). The researcher also sought to provide appropriate "content and context" for questions (Bell, 2007, p.462). Questions from the *TCS*, *GUI* and *Irish in Primary Schools Long-Term National Trends in Achievement* were considered during the design phase, for comparative purposes (as cited in Harris & Murtagh, 1999; DCYA, 2007; Harris et al., 2006). The questionnaire included an element of qualitative data collection. Where respondents were asked about their most and least favourite school subjects, they were asked to explain their choice. The qualitative aspect allowed for further scope during the analysis of findings (Creswell, 2013).

### **3.8 Sampling Strategy**

“A good sample is a miniature of the population – just like it, only smaller” (Fink, 2002, p.1). There are two types of sampling techniques that can be used for social research, probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Denscombe, 2007). For the purposes of this research, the researcher utilised probability sampling. Probability sampling requires that the researcher chooses respondents who are representative of their target population (Creswell, 2013). Non-probability sampling involves sampling methods that “are not drawn on the basis of equal probability selection” and therefore do not provide for conclusions and generalisations about a particular population (Newby, 2010, p. 223). The form of probability sampling used by the researcher was cluster sampling (Mertens, 2014). Cluster sampling was deemed suitable as it allowed the researcher to focus on naturally occurring clusters of the target population within the school environment (Denscombe, 2007). The sample was made up of forty respondents, consisting of eighteen male and twenty-two female. Of the forty respondents, there were twenty-six students from fifth class and fourteen students from sixth class.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

“Pilot testing your questionnaire means that you try it out with a small sample similar to your intended group of respondents” (Mertens, 2014, p. 200). The researcher sought to “increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire” by running a pilot test (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 341). The execution of the pilot study allowed the researcher “eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording”, measure the time it took the respondents to complete it and to gain feedback in relation to the

questions, instructions and general layout of the questionnaire (2007, p. 341). The pilot study was conducted with six respondents from sixth class and six respondents from fifth class. The respondents completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. Following the completion of the questionnaire the researcher discussed each question with the group, encouraging them to relay any questions or difficulties they experienced with the questionnaire. The questionnaire was modified accordingly following the pilot study.

### **3.10 The Data Collection Process**

Consent forms were issued to and completed by the parents and guardians of each respondent. The Board of Management and school Principal also gave written consent for the project. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide their consent to participate. The researcher accessed the sample at two sites; two separate classrooms. Respondents were informed that participation in the study was optional. The questionnaires were self-administered and completed in the presence of the researcher. The respondents were not given a time limit within which they had to complete the questionnaire. Due to the presence of the researcher, any queries were addressed immediately and the researcher could ensure that each question on the questionnaire had been answered and in the correct manner before collecting them. This provided for efficient collection of the required data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

### **3.11 Validity**

Validity describes the extent to which a measure represents the concept it claims to represent (Punch, 1998). The researcher sought to ensure that, the data was accurately recorded and scored, the instrument measured what it set out to measure and that the

conclusions derived from the analysis were logical and appropriate (Denscombe, 2007). It is asserted that research cannot be 100 per cent valid and that “quantitative research possesses a measure of standard of error which is inbuilt and which has to be acknowledged” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 133). There are several kinds of validity including; face validity, content validity, criterion related validity, formative validity and sampling validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Face or surface validity is subjective, is not a scientific approach and is based on opinion only. This study demonstrated the application of content and construct validity by involving and consulting with a panel of peers and experts when designing the questionnaire. In this regard the researcher consulted with two qualified primary school teachers and a group of six Professional Masters in Primary Education students, regarding the suitability of the questionnaire. Also, the idea that the researcher can provide appropriate recommendations, based on the use of the instrument, to improve areas of the phenomenon indicates that the level of formative validity can be assessed as adequate. The researcher is satisfied that the recommendations made following an analysis of the data provided, are correct and are favourable over any alternatives (Denscombe, 2007).

### **3.12 Reliability**

“Reliability of survey measurement has to do with the quality of the information gathered in responses to survey questions” (Alwin, 2007, p. 15). Reliability refers to the concept of consistency and repeatability within the researcher’s survey. When designing the questionnaire, the researcher was careful to ensure that questions were clear and unambiguous and that they could be answered. The researcher took into account the age and reading ability of the respondent group (Newby, 2010). The researcher was present when each group of respondents completed the questionnaire

and therefore, was available to answer any questions regarding the questionnaire. Administration of the questionnaires was standardised for both groups (Creswell, 2013). There was a one hundred percent response rate to the questionnaire, due to the naturally occurring cluster of respondents in the classroom on the day of administration of the questionnaire. Therefore, non-response bias was not a factor within this research (Denscombe, 2007).

### **3.13 Limitations**

Firstly, it is asserted that exaggerated claims should not be made based on small samples. It is acknowledged that the representativeness of the data collected within this research is limited by the size of the sample (Gray, 2014). The researcher would be reluctant to make generalised statements in relation to the data gathered as there were only forty respondents involved. Ideally, future research would involve a wider sample of the population. Secondly, it is asserted that the presence of the researcher could impact on the respondents' completion of the questionnaire. Respondents may want more time to consider questions and think about their answers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). It is noted that "the motivational context of the setting that produces the information" can lead to measurement error (Alwin, 2007, p. 2).

### **3.14 Data Analysis**

Prior to data analysis the researcher input the data into Excel and scored it (Creswell, 2013). The researcher checked the data, ensuring there were enough corresponding answers to respondents. Secondly, the researcher explored the data for any initially "obvious trends or correlations" (Denscombe, 2007). Once the data was organised the researcher utilised both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to analyse the



data. The researcher used descriptive statistics to “describe trends in the data to a single variable or question” on the instrument (Creswell, 2013, p. 182). The researcher analysed the data to consider general tendencies, exploring the mean and mode score of certain questions. The researcher then used a small amount of inferential statistics to compare groups within the sample such as boys and girls, or groups that selected certain answers. Due to the size of the research project the researcher did not go further beyond descriptive statistics to analyse the data and did not use a statistical computer programme to analyse the data (Creswell, 2013).

### **3.15 Ethical Considerations**

Robinson, Kellett, Fraser, Lewis and Ding outline three bodies of thought that should be applied when conducting ‘good’ research with children;

1. The principle of respect and justice
2. Rights based research and
3. Best outcomes based ethics (2004).

The concept of consent and informed consent is inextricably linked with the ethical considerations of any research project. For the purposes of this research project, the researcher obtained consent from the board of management and principal of the school, alongside a parent or guardian of each respondent and the respondents themselves, prior to commencement of the research. Diener and Crandall define informed consent as “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (1978, p. 57). This definition encompasses four components: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Together, these components of informed consent mean that the individual respondent is competent

enough to make the decision to take part in a piece of research, has done so on a voluntary basis, thus has not been coerced into taking part. Respondents within this research were awarded confidentiality (Frankford-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). The researcher respected the children as independent respondents within this project and the information was obtained in a transparent manner that encouraged respondents to share their thoughts and attitudes.

### **3.16 Summary**

This chapter has explored the methodology employed during the execution of this research project. The researcher outlined the research aim which was to ascertain the attitudes of fifth and sixth class students towards the Irish language. The researcher addressed the research design with regard to knowledge claims and the chosen strategy of inquiry and instrument. The questionnaire design was examined and the cluster sampling technique was explained and justified. The researcher outlined the pilot study and the data collection process. The researcher then addressed the issues of validity and reliability within the research. The limitations of the study were clearly outlined. The researcher described the method of data analysis used and the ethical considerations were addressed.

## Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter the researcher will display the findings of their research in tables and figures. The researcher will discuss and analyse the findings found in the tables and figures in the order that they are displayed. The findings will be discussed in relation to the impact of the school and home environments on children's attitudes towards the language. Throughout the analysis of the data the researcher will consider the literature that was reviewed in chapter two. Children's motivation to learn the language will also be considered. Finally, the researcher will compare the findings with the position of Welsh as a minority language being taught in Welsh primary schools.

### 4.2 Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Table 2. Respondents age. (n= 40)

Age	10	11	12	13
Number	5 (12.5%)	24 (60%)	10 (25%)	1 (2.5%)

Table 3. Respondents gender and class. (n=40)

	Gender	5 <sup>th</sup> class	6 <sup>th</sup> class
Girl	22 (55%)	14 (35%)	8 (20%)
Boy	18 (45%)	12 (30%)	6 (15%)

The target population for this research was fifth and sixth class students in English-medium primary schools. As can be seen from tables 2 and 3 the sample consisted of forty respondents; twenty-six fifth class students and fourteen sixth class students, from one school. Eighteen male and twenty-two female respondents took part in the research.

## 4.3 The School Environment

### 4.3.1 School Subjects

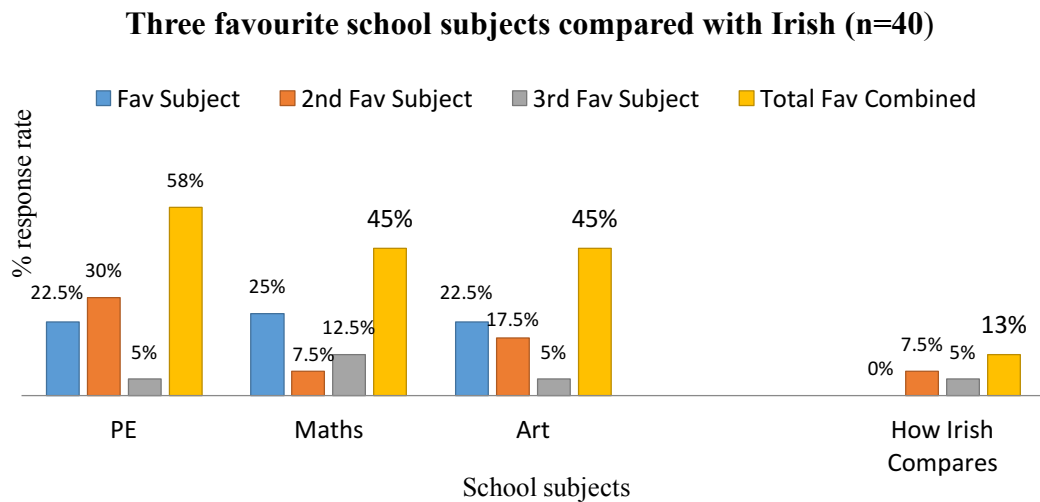


Figure 1. The three most popular school subjects compared with Irish. The figure displays the respondents' choice for their first, second and third favourite school subjects. The figure also displays the combined score received by each subject.

Similar to the findings of the *TCS* and *GUI* study, the respondents in this study displayed an overall negative attitude towards Irish as a school subject. As can be seen from Fig. 1, when asked about their favourite school subjects only 12.5% of respondents included Irish in their top three with 0% of respondents choosing Irish as their number one favourite subject. It is substantial to note, that out of a group of forty respondents not one respondent chose Irish as their number one favourite school subject. With regards to gender differences, only 11% of boys, included Irish in their top three favourite subjects compared with 13% of girls. For the purposes of comparison, the researcher has included Irish in Fig. 1. This figure shows that Irish received a score of zero as a first favourite subject, 5% of respondents chose it as their second favourite subject and 7.5% of respondents chose it as their third favourite subject. Respondents were provided with the opportunity to add a qualitative response

to this question and explain why certain subjects were their favourite. The respondents who chose Irish as a favourite subject mentioned the appeal of the ability to speak “another” language. Whereas other respondents said they enjoyed reading stories in Irish, enjoyed “learning new words in Irish” and found learning Irish to be a “great experience”.

**Three least favourite school subjects (n=40)**

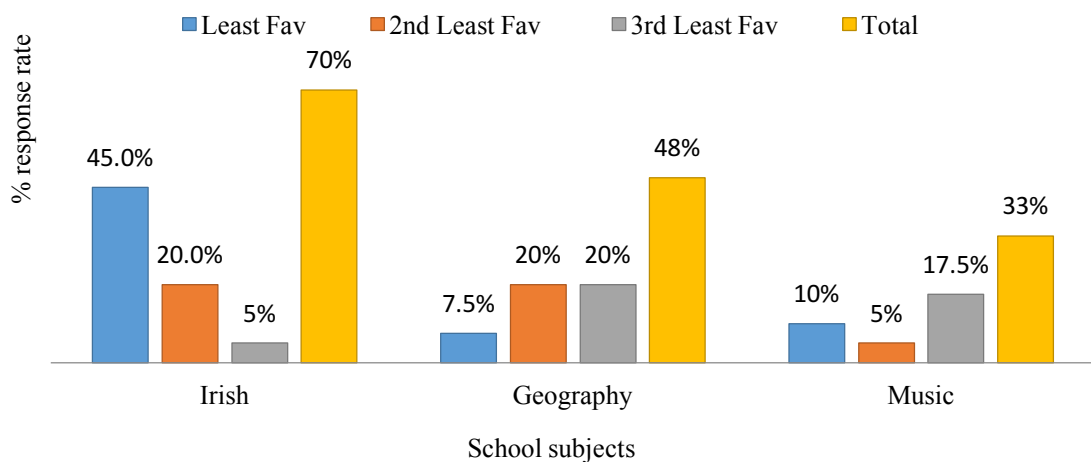


Figure 2. The three least popular school subjects. The figure displays the respondents’ choice for their first, second and third least favourite school subjects. The figure also displays the combined score received by each subject.

When asked to rank their least favourite school subjects in order from one to three, a sizable number of respondents included Irish here. As can be seen from Fig. 2 70% of respondents included Irish as one of their top three least favourite subjects with 45% choosing Irish as their overall least favourite school subject. Therefore, over half of the respondents within this study included Irish as either their first, second or third least favourite school subject. 55% of boys chose Irish as their least favourite subject in comparison with 40% of girls. Although there is not a landslide difference between

gender, these results support the findings of McCoy et al. where it was asserted that girls have a more positive attitude towards Irish than boys (2012). Even in comparison with Geography and Music, the two other least favourite subjects, Irish received a significantly higher score and was the least favourite subject by far. The researcher will not generalise findings from this research, due to the small sample size. However, these results are striking and extremely informative in relation to this sample group and their attitudes towards their experience of Irish in the primary classroom. Respondents were provided with the opportunity to add a qualitative element to this question and explain why they chose certain subjects as their least favourite. Amongst the comments regarding Irish there were a number of themes that arose:

1. A lack of confidence regarding Irish
2. The inability to comprehend Irish
3. The difficulty of learning Irish
4. Learning Irish is boring
5. The inability to speak Irish
6. The uselessness of Irish

Themes one, two and three arose most frequently. These findings compliment the work of Harris and Murtagh, who found that between a quarter and over half of respondents in their study, lacked confidence and experienced anxiety or embarrassment about speaking Irish (1999). The *TCS* also stated that “21% of pupils *disagree* that they ‘understand most of what the teacher says in Irish at school’” (1999, p. 97). Harris and Murtagh found a significant correlation between children’s opinion of their own ability in Irish and parental encouragement. Through analysis of this question it can be

gathered that respondents hold an overall negative view of Irish as a school subject. They experience difficulty learning and comprehending the language and lack confidence regarding the language.

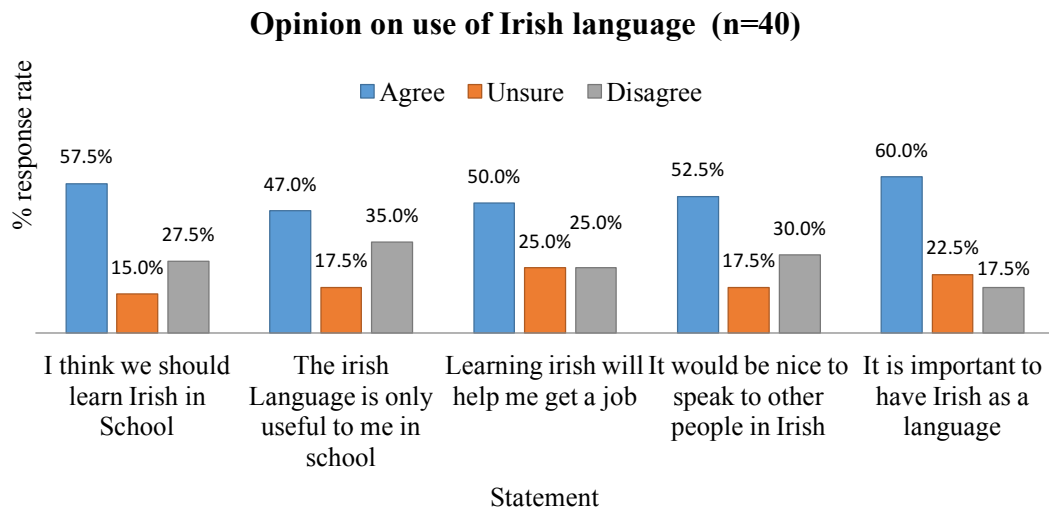


Figure 3. Five statements from which respondents had to choose agree, unsure or disagree in response to them.

Fig. 3 above presents us with the respondents' opinions on several statements about the Irish language. Interestingly, 57.5% of respondents agreed with the statement "I think we should learn Irish in school", with only 27%. It is certainly worthy to note that although 70% of respondents included Irish in one of their top three least favourite school subjects, 57.5% of respondents still believe that Irish should be taught in schools. These findings are consistent with the findings of the *TCS*, where it was asserted that children's integrative attitudes towards the language were generally positive, however their commitment to and enjoyment of learning the language was not. The findings displayed assert an integrative motivation among respondents, to learn the language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). 60% of respondents agreed with the statement "It

is important for Ireland to have Irish as a language” with only 17.5% of respondents disagreeing with that statement. These figures are significant in that, although the majority of respondents do not enjoy learning Irish as a school subject, they are motivated by the importance of the language to Ireland. 52.5% of respondents agreed with the statement “It would be nice to be able to speak to other people in Irish”, which supports an integrative motivation to learn the language and the ability of the child to visualise themselves as an Irish language speaker (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013). This question provided respondents with a combination of cultural and practical statements regarding the language, and in each case to which the majority of respondents chose “agree”. In line with Gardner and Lambert, it appears that the majority of respondents are motivated to learn the language for instrumental or integrative reasons (1972).

#### 4.3.2 The Teaching and Learning of Irish



Figure 4. Comparing the findings of two questions; Question 5: What part of your Irish lessons do you most enjoy? Question 6: What part of your Irish lessons do you least enjoy?

Similar to the *TCS* the current piece of research explored the teaching and learning of Irish in English-medium primary schools (cited in Harris and Murtagh, 1999). As can



be seen in Fig. 4 on page 32, 47.5% of respondents chose speaking activities as the part of their Irish lesson they most enjoy. It is worthy to note that 70% of respondents chose Irish as one of their least favourite school subjects yet, the majority of respondents when asked (47.5%) enjoyed speaking and using the language during Irish lessons. Ultimately the goal of the curriculum is that children can “use the language as an effective means of communication” (DES, 1999c, p.44). Skehan states, “Only by frequent use is the fluency side of speech likely to be improved” (1998, p. 18). 45% of respondents chose writing activities as the part of their Irish lesson they least enjoy. These results show a stark increase on the 12.9% of respondents in the *TCS* that disliked writing in Irish lessons (cited in Harris and Murtagh, 1999). These results are significant in that they show a majority choice regarding the part of Irish lessons that respondents both most and least enjoy.

**Irish activities pupils would like to see more of in an Irish lesson (n=40)**

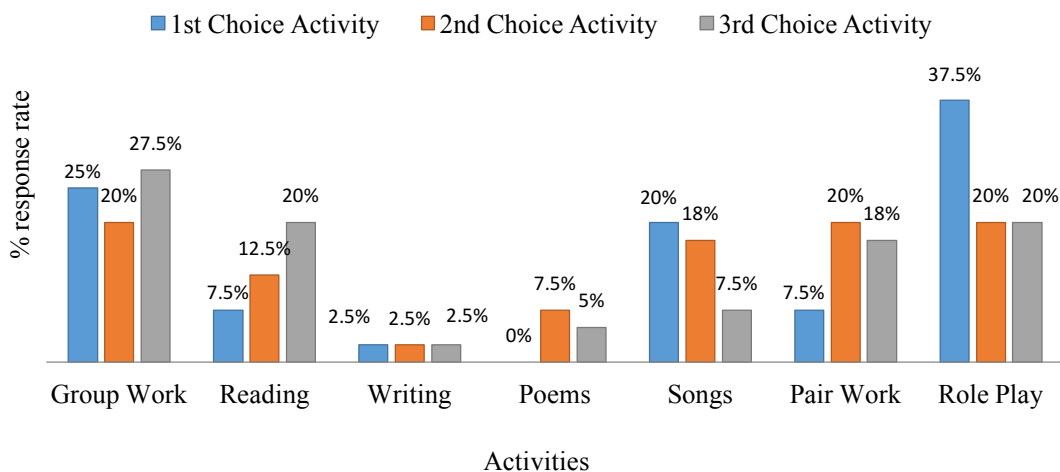


Figure 5. Question 11: Select three activities you would like to see used more in an Irish lesson. Choose 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice activities.

With regards to the teaching methods used during Irish lessons the researcher sought to find out which activities the respondents would like to see more of in an Irish lesson.

Respondents chose from a list of activities, ranking their three favourite from one to three. As can be seen from Fig. 5, p.33, the most popular activity was Role Play with 37.5% of respondents choosing it as their number one activity. 25% of respondents chose group work as their number one activity with 20% choosing song-singing as their number one. Again, it can be seen here that writing activities receive very low scores in comparison with the active, speech-orientated teaching methods. Similarly, the *TCS* reported positive findings in relation to children's willingness to speak the language and participate in class (cited in Harris and Murtagh, 1999). The *TCS* found that 25.7% of children enjoyed conversation, drama, songs and poems. Therefore, the research would suggest that children enjoy speaking the language, and engaging in activities which provide them with the opportunity to utilise the language. These findings support the concept of integrative motivation to learn a language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

#### 4.3.3 The Experience of Learning Irish

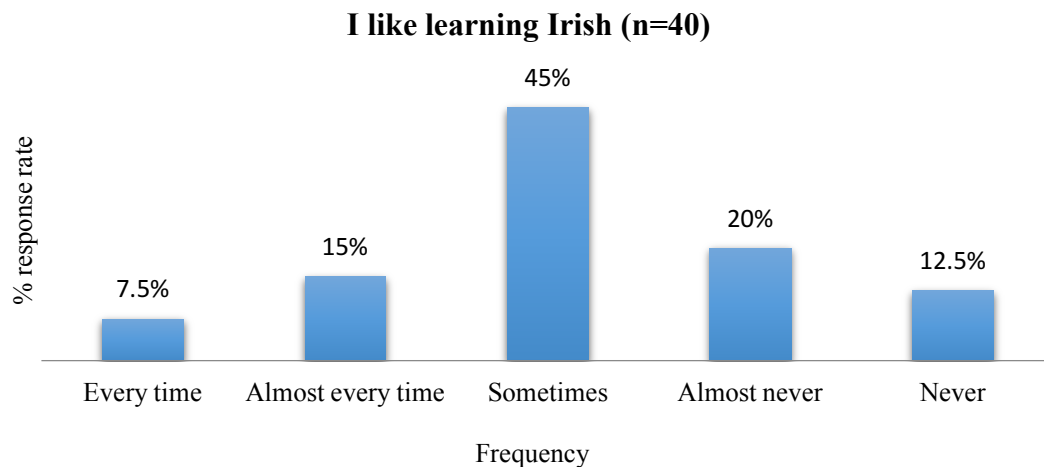


Figure 6. Reports how often respondents like learning Irish.

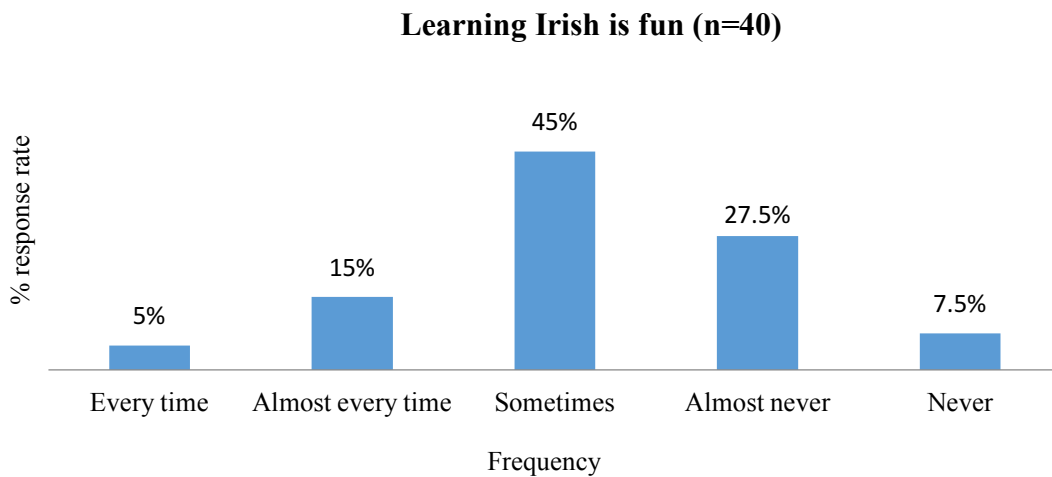


Figure 7. Reports how often respondents think learning Irish is fun.

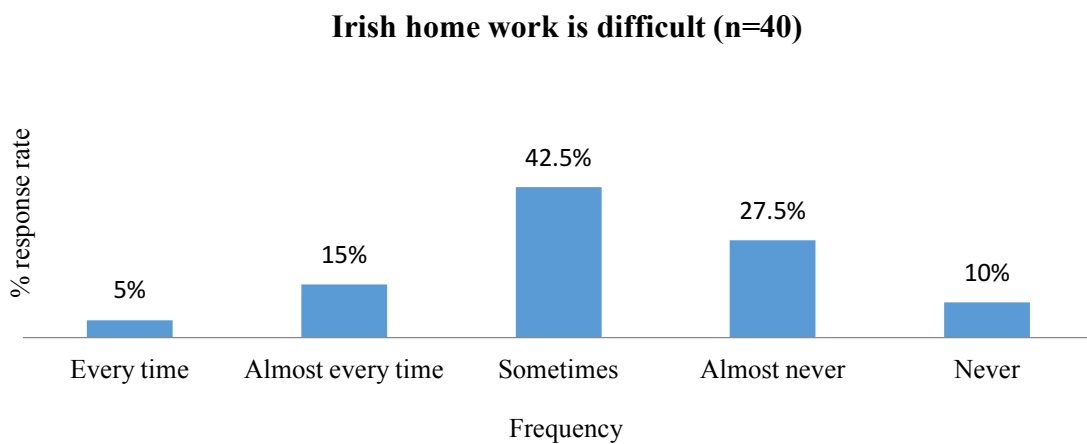


Figure 8. Reports how often respondents find Irish home work difficult.

The Likert scales used in questions eight, nine and ten to gather information relating to the respondents' experience of learning Irish each yielded an average score of "sometimes" answers (1932). When asked how often they liked learning Irish only 7.5% of respondents said they enjoy learning Irish "every time" with 12.5% stating they never enjoy learning Irish. When asked how often they found learning Irish fun only 5% of respondents chose always in comparison with 7.5% of respondents choosing never. A slight improvement could be noted here in relation to children's enjoyment of Irish lessons in comparison with the 41% of students in the *TCS* strongly agreeing with

the statement “I think Irish is boring” (1999, p. 107). Whereas, 29% of respondents in the *GUI* study stated that they did not like anything about Irish (McCoy et al., 2012). Although there are not an overwhelming number of respondents who “always” enjoy learning Irish or who “always” find learning Irish fun, it could be asserted that in comparison with the 70% of respondents who chose Irish as one of their least favourite subjects, these results are worthy to note.

#### 4.4 The Home Environment

##### 4.4.1 The Use of Irish within the Home

Table 4. Frequency with which respondents speak Irish at home. (n=40)

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Do you speak Irish at home?	0%(0)	0%(0)	15% (6)	85% (34)

Table 5. Respondents who speak Irish at home with family members. (n=6)

	Mam	Dad	Brother	Sister	Guardian
If you speak Irish at home, who do you speak it with?	17%(1)	Nil(0)	33%(2)	33%(2)	17%(1)

Table 6. Number of parents/guardians of respondents who learned Irish in school. (n=40)

	Yes	No
Did your parents/guardians learn Irish at school?	30% (12)	70% (28)

Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the findings surrounding the use with Irish within the home. When asked “Do you speak Irish at home?”, a substantial 85% of respondents chose “never”, with the remaining 15% choosing “sometimes”. Zero respondents chose “always” or “often”. Although, perhaps it is not surprising that there are no respondents

who “always” speak Irish at home, as this questionnaire was not carried out with respondents living in or near a Gaeltacht area. Harris and Murtagh assert the importance of parents demonstrating to their children that Irish is a valid means of communication in order to promote positive attitudes towards the language (1999). Harris et al. note a direct correlation between children’s achievements in the language and whether or not parents can speak the language (2006). This is significant in relation to the survival of the language as Darmody and Daly assert that only 18% of people in Ireland who were seldom exposed to Irish in the home where they grew up, use it during adulthood (2015). 77% of respondents answered “no” to the question “Did your parents/guardians learn Irish in school?” Harris and Murtagh assert that where parents use some Irish at home they will foster positive attitudes towards the language amongst their children (1999). Hickey and Stenson identified a link between children’s negative attitudes towards the language and the lack of support they receive for Irish homework. 77% of respondents in this survey are living in a household where their parents did not study Irish in school, therefore they are automatically at a disadvantage regarding homework and language support.

#### 4.4.2 The use of Irish outside the home

Table 7. Number of respondents who speak Irish outside of school or home. (n=40)

	Yes	No
Do you ever speak Irish outside school or home?	30% (12)	70% (28)

When asked if they ever spoke Irish in any place other than at school or at home, 30% of respondents answered yes. This can be seen in table 7. The respondents were provided with the opportunity to then write where they spoke Irish outside of the home.

Each of the respondents were referring to a voluntary school trip to the Gaeltacht that they had attended the previous year (6<sup>th</sup> class students) or would be attending later this academic year (5<sup>th</sup> class students). One respondent however, noted that they would sometimes speak Irish with their GAA team. Where children are provided with the opportunity to integrate with second-language speakers, this will provide integrative motivation as suggested by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Gardner links the success of second language learning with a motivation to learn the language (1985). Dörnyei and Chan refer to the concept of the language learner being able to see themselves using the language outside of the educational setting, as a means of motivation, leading to proficiency in the second language (2013). However, although a trip to the Gaeltacht would not be unique to this school, the opportunity would certainly not be readily available to the majority of children in the country. Therefore, it is reasonable in assessing these responses, to assume that the majority of primary school children are not presented with the opportunity to visualise themselves actively using the language outside of the classroom. This in turn, may impact negatively on their overall attitude towards the usefulness of the language. This would be reflected in question sixteen which is displayed in Fig. 3 on page 39 above, where 47.5% of respondents agreed that Irish was only useful to them in school. Darmody and Daly support the necessity for the opportunity to utilise the language outside of the educational setting, as a means of increasing Irish language proficiency (2015).

#### **4.5 A Minority Language Comparison; Welsh**

Lyon and Ellis, reported parents displaying both, integrative and instrumental motivation, for wanting their children to learn Welsh (1991). The majority of parents within the study wanted their children to learn Welsh for cultural reasons, regardless of

their own language background. However, practical reasons for learning the language, with regards to job prospects, also featured. Similarly, Thomas et al. noted children referring to practical and cultural reasons for supporting their learning of Welsh (2013). Amongst children attending Welsh-speaking schools, “all children displayed more favourable views towards English” (2013, p. 347). The children within the study recognised the importance of home and family transmission, towards their learning of the language. Similar to the respondents within this research, positive attitudes were displayed towards the language, however ultimately children had a more positive perception of English over Welsh.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In this chapter the researcher presented the findings of each question from the questionnaire in a table or figure. The researcher then analysed and discussed these findings in relation to the impact of the school and home environment on children’s attitudes towards the Irish language. Children’s motivation to learn the language was also considered. Throughout the analysis and discussion, the researcher referred to the literature that was reviewed in chapter two. It can be asserted from the findings that the respondents in this study displayed an over negative attitude towards Irish as a school subject. It can be noted that similar to the findings in the *TCS*, respondents display an integrative motivation to learn the language however, they do not enjoy learning the language as a school subject. It is asserted that the Welsh students’ attitudes towards Welsh are similar to those of Irish students’ towards Irish.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Research Question**

The research question central to this piece of work was:

What are the attitudes of fifth and sixth class students towards the Irish language?

The researcher sought to ascertain the attitudes of fifth and sixth class students towards the Irish language while considering a number of factors. The researcher examined the impact of the school and home environment on children's attitudes, while also investigating their motivation to learn the language. The researcher looked at the children's experiences of the teaching and learning of Irish in their classroom. The researcher explored the content of Irish language lessons. The home environment was considered, with regard to analysing how often the Irish language is used outside of education. The researcher considered the respondents' motivation for learning the language, exploring cultural and practical possibilities.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The researcher established a number of findings following analysis of the data:

- A substantial number of respondents hold a negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of the Irish language, in that 70% of respondents included Irish as either their first, second or third least favourite school subject.



- A lack of confidence regarding Irish, the inability to comprehend and the difficulty of learning Irish were the three most reoccurring themes regarding reasons for choosing Irish as a least favourite subject.
- No (0%) respondents chose Irish as their favourite school subject. Only 12.5% included Irish as either their second or third favourite school subject. PE was found to be the most popular school subject, with Maths and Art ranking joint second and Science third.
- 57.5% of respondents agree with the statement “I think we should learn Irish in school”.
- 60% of respondents agree with the statement “It is important for Ireland to have Irish as a language”.
- 52.5% of respondents agree with the statement “It would be nice to be able to speak to other people in Irish”.
- 50% of respondents agree with the statement “Learning Irish will help me get a job”.
- 47.5% of respondents agree with the statement “The Irish language is only useful to me in school”.
- The most disliked element of the Irish lesson was writing activities.
- The most liked element of the Irish lesson was speaking activities.
- When asked to select activities they would like to see more of in an Irish lesson, the most popular choices were active learning methodologies such as role play, group work and song-singing.
- 7.5% of respondents said they enjoy learning Irish “every time” with 12.5% stating they “never” enjoy learning Irish.

- 5% of respondents “always” find Irish homework difficult in comparison with 10% who “never” find it difficult.
- 5% of respondents “always” find learning Irish fun with 7.5% choosing “never”.
- 85% of respondents “never” use Irish at home, with 15% “sometimes” using it.
- Respondents speak Irish at home with their mother (17%), brother (33%), sister (33%) or guardian (17%).
- 70% of the parents/guardians of respondents did not learn Irish in school.
- 70% of respondents never use Irish any place other than school or home with the remaining 30% using it on a school trip to the Gaeltacht.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the research the researcher has made several recommendations. It is acknowledged that the findings cannot be generalised due to the small sample size.

- Firstly, it is recommended that large scale research should be carried out in this area. It is asserted that if the *20 Year Strategy* aims to foster positive attitudes through the education system, the Government and teachers need to establish a starting point by giving children a voice in the conversation. The education system needs to learn more about primary school children and their attitudes towards the Irish language.
- It is recommended that schools should take a more integrative approach to the teaching and learning of Irish. Particularly for the respondents within this study, the researcher would recommend conducting PE or Art lessons through the medium of Irish with the aim of fostering positive attitudes towards the

language. The researcher would commend Irish language projects such as the one run in Griffeen Valley ETNS, Lucan. The project ran for four years, whereby one of the junior infant groups were taught through Irish only. The project was deemed a success from the schools, parents and pupils point of view (Pollack, 2014). On a larger scale, Synge Street Primary – Sancta Maria, Dublin 8 is transitioning into a Gaelscoil. From September 2017 the junior infant classes will be taught through Irish. This decision is as a result of falling pupil numbers and an increased demand for Irish medium education in the area (Nolan, 2017). The concept of English-medium schools transitioning to Gaelscoileanna is topical at the moment, with journalist Ger Colleran recently commending the idea (Jones, 2017). It is recommended therefore, that English-medium schools should consider some level of Irish language immersion. It is important to note, that in line with this recommendation Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD recently asserted that primary schools should explore CLIL (content and language integrated learning) by teaching aspects of the curriculum through Irish (DES, 2017).

- It is clear from the above findings that the children in this research do not enjoy learning the language, however they recognise its importance from both cultural and practical points of view. Therefore, it is suggested that teaching methodologies should be reviewed and considered in greater detail. This is in line with the fact that respondents were far more willing to engage with active methodologies and wanted to see them used more during Irish lessons.
- It is recommended that initial teacher education should make greater provisions for ensuring fluency in the language amongst teachers. It is necessary to ensure the language is being taught to a high standard and that teachers have the ability

to utilise the methodologies that respondents in this research have highlighted as appealing to them. The researcher commends the policy that is in place in Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth, whereby trainee teachers must attain a first class grade in their final Irish oral exam before graduating as a primary school teacher.

- Respondents in this study showed an interest in speaking the language, and although these findings cannot be generalised, if this were found to be representative of the wider population it is something to be capitalised on. In line with the aim of the *20 Year Strategy* to increase the number of families speaking Irish daily, speaking Irish is what these respondents enjoy most about the language, which is certainly worthy to note. It is recommended that the curriculum should place more of an emphasis on speaking the language.
- It is recognised that there is a need for children to be provided with opportunities to speak the language outside of education. Although the education system undoubtedly plays a vital role in the maintenance of the language, the home environment and wider community also has a part to play (Hickey & Stenson, 2016).

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is asserted that the respondents within this study held an overall negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of the Irish language. However, it can be asserted that the majority of respondents within this study recognise the important role the Irish language plays for them and for Ireland, from both practical and cultural points of view. This research has ascertained that although the respondents are not enthusiastic about learning the language as a school subject, the majority maintain

that they enjoy speaking the language during Irish lessons. A large proportion of the respondents recognise the language's status as; a form of communication, an aid to acquiring a job and a cultural attribute to the country of Ireland. It is asserted that research similar to this study should be carried out on a larger scale as a means of gathering information that can be used to improve our education system and in turn, foster positive attitudes towards the Irish language.

## Reference List

- Alwin, D. F. (2007). *Margins of error: A study of reliability in survey measurement* (Vol. 547). New Jersey, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Central Statistics Office. (2017). 7. *The Irish Language*. Retrieved from <https://static.rasset.ie/documents/news/census-2016-summary-results-part-1-full.pdf>
- Bell, A. (2007). Designing and testing questionnaires for children. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 12*(5), 461-469.
- Borgers, N., Sikkel, D., & Hox, J. (2004). Response effects in surveys on children and adolescents: The effect of number of response options, negative wording, and neutral mid-point. *Quality & Quantity, 38*(1), 17-33.
- Burgess, T. F. (2001). Guide to the Design of Questionnaires. *A general introduction to the design of questionnaires for survey research, 1-27*.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education seventh edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education sixth edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.

Darmody, M., & Daly, T. (2015). *Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland*. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Denscombe, M. (2007). *The good research guide*. England: Open University Press.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2007). *Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study of Children*. Dublin: Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2009). *Growing Up in Ireland Key Findings: 9-year-olds No.3 The Education of 9-year-olds*. Retrieved from <https://www.dcy.a.gov.ie/documents/growingupinireland/keyfindingsquantatives/No3TheEducationof9YearOlds.pdf>

Department of Education and Science (1999a). *Curaclam na bunscoile: Gaeilge: teanga*. Dublin: Stationary Office.

Department of Education and Science (1999b). *Primary school curriculum/Curaclam na bunscoile*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Education and Science (1999c). *Primary school curriculum: Introduction*. Dublin: Stationary Office.

Department of Education and Science (2015). *The Primary Language Curriculum*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Education and Skills. (2017). Minister Bruton to Prioritise Teaching of Foreign Languages. [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR17-04-19.html>

Designing Surveys for Children. (2014, July 16). Retrieved from <http://austinresearch.co.uk/designing-surveys-for-children/>

Diener, E. & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in social and behavioural research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Dörnyei, Z., & Chan, L. (2013). Motivation and vision: An analysis of future L2 self images, sensory styles, and imagery capacity across two target languages. *Language Learning*, 63(3), 437-462.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fink, A. (2002). *How to sample in surveys 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages* (Vol. 76). Multilingual matters.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C. & Nachmias, D. (1992). *Research methods in the social sciences*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). *The attitude/motivation test battery: Technical report*. Department of Psychology: University of Western Ontario.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning*. Massachusetts, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Government of Ireland (2010). *The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*. Dublin: Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Green, J. L., Camilli, G., & Elmore, P. B. (2006). *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. New Jersey, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Harris, J., Forde, P., Archer, P., Nic Fhearaile, S., & O’Gorman, M. (2006). *Irish in Primary Schools Long-Term National Trends in Achievement*. Dublin: Stationary Office.

- Harris, J., & Murtagh, L. (1999). *Teaching and learning Irish in primary school – A review of research and development*. Dublin: Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann.
- Hickey, T. M., & Stenson, N. (2016). One step forward and two steps back in teaching an endangered language? Revisiting L2 reading in Irish. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1-17.
- Jones, F. (2017, April 19). How to revive the Irish language? Make every school a Gaelscoil. *Newstalk.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.newstalk.com/How-to-revive-the-Irish-language-Make-every-school-a-Gaelscoil>
- Kelly, A. (2002). *Compulsory Irish: Language and education in Ireland 1870s – 1970s*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- Mertens, D. M. (2014). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. California, CA: Sage publications.
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2015). *The Primary Language Curriculum*. Retrieved from [https://curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Language-New-Junior-infants-2nd-class/Language-Home/Introduction/\(i\)-About-the-new-Primary-Language-Curriculum](https://curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Language-New-Junior-infants-2nd-class/Language-Home/Introduction/(i)-About-the-new-Primary-Language-Curriculum)
- Newby, P. (2010). *Research methods for education*. England: Pearson Education.

- Nolan, L. (2017, March 14). Why one of Ireland's most famous schools is going Gaelscoil. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/why-one-of-ireland-s-most-famous-schools-is-going-gaelscoil-1.3002628>
- Ó Laoire, M. & Harris, J. (2006). *Language and literacy in Irish primary schools: Review of literature*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Pollack, S. (2014, August 27). Laughter and tears on first day of school in Lucan. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/laughter-and-tears-on-first-day-of-school-in-lucan-1.1909621>
- Porte, G. K. (2010). *Appraising research in second language learning: A practical approach to critical analysis of quantitative research* (Vol. 28). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Robinson, C., Kellett, M., Fraser, S., Lewis, V., & Ding, S. (2004). *Doing research with children and young people*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Punch, K. (1998). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. London: Sage publications.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Appendices**  
**Appendix A: Board of Management Letter of Consent**



An Associated College of The University of Dublin, Trinity College

6<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Board of Management,

X School.

Dear X and members of the board of management,

My name is Niamh Ní Mhurchú and I am studying to obtain a Professional Masters in Primary Education from Marino Institute of Education with the aim of qualifying as a primary school teacher in June 2017. I am currently on a ten-week placement in X. As part of my qualification I am required to complete a research thesis. The focus of my research is on primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language. I am writing to you as I would like to request your permission to use the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes in your school as the sample for my research.

In order to carry out my study I will be asking students from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class to complete a questionnaire about their attitude towards the Irish language. Some of the areas that will be explored in the questionnaire are; how useful children think the language is to them, if they enjoy learning Irish and what they like or dislike about learning Irish. No form of Irish language assessment will be carried out on the children and in no way will the data from the questionnaire be used to investigate their class teachers chosen methodologies.

While considering my data, I will observe absolute confidentiality. I am the only person that will have access to the collected data. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home and the questionnaires will be shredded once the data has been analysed. The school, class teachers or the children will not be identified in any way in my thesis. The data will be analysed on a completely anonymous basis.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to access your 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes for the purpose of my research. Please find attached a draft copy of the questionnaire and a permission slip.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Niamh Ní Mhurchú

**Board of Management Consent Slip**

I permit Niamh Ní Mhurchú to use 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> students from X as her research sample.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Principal Letter of Consent



An Associated College of The University of Dublin, Trinity College

6<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Principal,  
X School.

Dear X,

My name is Niamh Ní Mhurchú and I am currently studying to obtain a Professional Masters in Primary Education from Marino Institute of Education. I am currently on a ten-week placement in X. As part of my qualification I am required to complete a research thesis. The focus of my research is on primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language.

In order to carry out this research I will be asking students from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class to complete a questionnaire based on their attitude towards the Irish language. I would like to ask your permission to use your 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes as part the sample for my research.

Some of the areas that will be explored in the questionnaire are; how useful children think the language is to them, if they enjoy learning Irish and what they like or dislike about learning Irish. No form of Irish language assessment will be carried out on the children and in no way will the data from the questionnaire be used to investigate the class teachers chosen methodologies.

While considering my data, I will observe absolute confidentiality. I am the only person that will have access to the collected data. The questionnaires will be stored in my home in a locked cabinet. Once the questionnaires have been analysed they will be shredded. The school, class teachers or the children will not be named in my thesis. The data will be analysed on a completely anonymous basis.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to access your 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes for the purpose of my research. Please find attached a draft copy of the questionnaire and a permission slip.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Niamh Ní Mhurchú

**Principal Consent Slip**

I permit Niamh Ní Mhurchú to use 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> students from X as her research sample.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Letter of Consent



An Associated College of The University of Dublin, Trinity College

Marino Institute of  
Education,

9 Griffith Avenue,

Dublin 9.

14<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Niamh Ní Mhurchú and I am currently studying to obtain a Professional Masters in Primary Education from Marino Institute of Education, with the aim of qualifying as a primary school teacher in June 2017. As part of my qualification I am required to complete a research thesis. The focus of my research is on primary school children's attitudes towards the Irish language.

In order to carry out this research I will be asking students from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class to complete a questionnaire based on their attitude towards the Irish language. Some of the areas that will be explored in the questionnaire are; if children think they should have to learn Irish, if they enjoy learning Irish, what they like or dislike about learning Irish and how useful they think the language is to them. No form of Irish language assessment will be carried out on the children.

While considering my data, I will observe absolute confidentiality. I am the only person that will have access to the collected data. The questionnaires will be stored in my home in a locked cabinet and once the data has been gathered and analysed the questionnaires will be shredded. Neither the school or the children will be identified in my thesis. The data will be analysed on a completely anonymous basis.

I would greatly appreciate your consent to allow your child to participate in my research.

If you consent to your child's participation, please sign and date the consent slip on the reverse side of this page and return it to school with your child by Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Niamh Ní Mhurchú



### **Parent/Guardian Consent Slip**

Please complete and return to school by Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February.

I give permission for my child to participate in this research project through the completion of a questionnaire. I understand that my child may remove their completed questionnaire from the research if they no longer want their data to be included.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

## Appendix D: Questionnaire

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read **each** question carefully before answering.

Q 1. How old are you? <input type="text"/>
Q 2. Are you a Boy <input type="checkbox"/> or a Girl? <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ Tick Box
Q 3. What class are you in? 5 <sup>th</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <sup>th</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> ✓ Tick box

Q4. From the list below select your **3 most** favourite school subjects.

English	
History	
Drama	
SPHE	
Irish	
Science	
Art	
Ethics	
Maths	
Music	
PE	
Geography	

Write:

No 1 in box beside 1<sup>st</sup> favourite.

No 2 in box beside 2<sup>nd</sup> favourite.

No 3 in box beside 3<sup>rd</sup> favourite.

**Do not** write in the any other boxes.



Q4 (A) Write why numbers 1, 2 & 3 are your favourite subjects.

<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>

Q5. From the list below select your **3 least** favourite school subjects.

English	
History	
Drama	
SPHE	
Irish	
Science	
Art	
Ethics	
Maths	
Music	
PE	
Geography	

Write:

No 1 in box beside least favourite.

No 2 in box beside 2<sup>nd</sup> least favourite.

No 3 in box beside 3<sup>rd</sup> least favourite.

**Do not** write in the other boxes.



Q 5 (A) Write why numbers 1, 2 & 3 are your least favourite subjects.

<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>

Q6. What part of your Irish lessons do you **most** enjoy?

Reading activities    Writing activities    Speaking activities    Listening activities

Circle  
one  
answer

Q7. What part of your Irish lessons that do you **least** enjoy?

Reading activities    Writing activities    Speaking activities    Listening activities

Circle  
one  
answer

**Q8.** I like learning Irish [Please tick ✓ **one** box you agree most with].

- Every time
- Almost every time
- Sometimes
- Almost never
- Never

**Q9.** Learning Irish is fun [Please tick ✓ **one** box you agree most with]

- Every time
- Almost every time
- Sometimes
- Almost never
- Never

**Q10.** Do you find Irish homework difficult? [Please tick ✓ **one** box you agree most with].

- Every time
- Almost every time
- Sometimes
- Almost never
- Never



**Q 11.** Please select **3** activities you would like to see used more in an Irish lesson.

Write:

Group work	
Reading stories	
Writing	
Poems	
Songs	
Pair work	
Role play	

No 1 in box beside 1<sup>st</sup> choice activity.

No 2 in box beside 2<sup>nd</sup> choice activity

No 3 in box beside 3<sup>rd</sup> choice activity.

**Do not** write in the any other boxes.

**Q 12.** Do you speak Irish at home? [Please tick ✓ one box you agree with].

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

**Q 13.** If you do speak Irish at home, who do you speak it with?

[Skip this question if you do not speak Irish at home – go to Q 14].

Mam  Dad  Brother  Sister  Guardian

**Q 14.** Did your parents / guardians learn Irish in school?

Yes  No  ✓ Tick Box



Q 15. Do you ever speak Irish any place other than school or home?

Yes  No  √ Tick Box

If your answer is yes, say where you speak it?

---

Q 16. Please read each statement below. [Place a tick √ in one box opposite each statement].

Statement	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
I think we should learn Irish in school			
The Irish language is only useful to me in school.			
Learning Irish will help me get a job			
It would be nice to be able to speak to other people in Irish			
It is important for Ireland to have Irish as a language			



Q17. If you would like to say anything about Irish that has not been mentioned so far, please do so in the space below.




**Thank you for completing the questionnaire.**

