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TESI DI LAUREA

IRISH GAELIC: IN BETWEEN COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Forewords

The choice of this specific topic comes from a trip in the mysterious lands of Ireland where I spent the most beautiful four months of my life. While doing the tour guide in a XIX century Neo-Gothic Castle, known as Charleville Castle, I had the chance to meet wonderful Irish people who could speak Irish Gaelic and made me increasingly charmed by the history of this ancient language and its speakers. Fortunately, I had the chance to travel and visit historical sites and monuments, thus plunging into both Irish people's current lifestyle and Gaelic history. Time after time, I discovered Ireland's secrets and felt absorbed in its inhabitants' magic beliefs, powerful legends and ancient energy. In particular, I slowly began to wonder how such a long-standing language could have lost its importance and use while being replaced by English and nearly on the verge of extinction. This question pushed me to research on the causes that started the erosion of Irish Gaelic to fully understand this phenomenon of language shift and the actual state of the language in the current Irish society.

The thesis presents the Gaelic language of Ireland (or "Irish Gaelic") starting from its origin and focalizing then on the causes that contributed to the progressive erosion of Irish Gaelic in the community life, especially after the plantations (late XVI century), which started a heavy English influence all over Ireland. Furthermore, it analyses the Reversing Language Shift (RLS) efforts made to preserve the language since the late XIX century to nowadays. At this point, trying to answer this fundamental underlying question: "is still nowadays the Irish language a real means of communication linked to the needs of its speakers, or should it be regarded more as a legacy of Ireland's cultural heritage and a sort of *cultural nicety*?" it is argued if Irish may, in the next future, reacquire a solid number of daily speakers and a higher prestige in the economic life of the Irish society. After an essential historical survey on the Irish (or "Irish Gaelic") language (Chapter 1), in the following part of the thesis Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption scale (GID-scale) together with the main principles of Language Planning policies will be used as the reference models to better analyse the RLS efforts undertaken by the government, linguists and organizations in the recent past. Finally, these two tools will be of help to assess the actual impact of RLS efforts on the use of Irish Gaelic in its homeland (Chapter 2) and point out some critical considerations about the current state of the language in the Irish society (Chapter 3).

1. Irish Gaelic: an historical survey

Irish Gaelic is the national and first official language of the Republic of Ireland and an official minority language in Northern Ireland. It is also one of the three existing Gaelic languages, the other two being Scottish Gaelic and Manx Gaelic, in Scotland and the Isle of Man respectively. Since 1st January 2007, Irish Gaelic is one of the official languages of the European Union, however, in spite of its apparent elevated status the language has gradually been replaced by English in the current Irish society losing most of its native speakers. Today Irish Gaelic has a strong symbolic function related to identity and authenticity in Ireland, and the government as well as many voluntary organizations are clearly dedicated to its protection and preservation, seeking to foster the spontaneous use of the language especially in the young generation to ensure its transmissibility. To understand the current status of the Irish language it is crucial to look back at Ireland's past and thoroughly analyse the causes that triggered its erosion through a detailed historical survey as follows in the next four Chapters.

1.1. From the origins to the XVI century: the Golden Age

The history of this ancient language begins with the Celtic invasion of Ireland, placed by historians around 500 BC, even if modern archaeology suggests that the more likely scenario is a slow migration, starting around 1200 BC and then gradually bringing the Celts throughout whole Ireland[1] (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 10). With their arrival on the island, they brought, along with their iron-based technology, a new culture, which would evolve into the traditional Gaelic way of life. Indeed, they were not pacifists and as soon as they settled in large numbers, they succeeded in obliterating the previous existing culture in Ireland.[2] They spoke a language called Q-Celtic, or *Goidelic*, spoken in Ireland and northern Britain and belonging to the insular group of the Celtic language family; on the contrary the P-Celtic, or *Brittonic*, was spoken in southern Britain and France (Leonardo.it, *I Celti*).

In Ireland, it is likely that the Celts mixed with the earlier inhabitants, gradually absorbing some of their language and culture. For this reason, Irish Gaelic lived together with older languages for several centuries before emerging as the dominant language throughout the entire island. Along with its culture, Irish Gaelic managed to distinguish itself from the other Celtic languages in the

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[1] The Celts developed in several parts of central Europe and the Mediterranean coastal areas from the late Bronze Age onwards. The first phase of Celtic development was represented by the "Halstatt culture" developed between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age in Austria, near Salzburg. Successively, the "La Tène culture" group carried out the next phase of Celtic development in the area of the middle Rhine, where they started trading with the Etruscans of Italy. Finally, between the V and I centuries BC Celtic tribes migrated to Eastern Europe and the British Isles (Britannica.com, *Celt*).

[2] The Bronze Age Irish dwelled in Ireland since around 2500 BC.

rest of Europe[3]. Finally, it is unlikely that the Celts ever outnumbered the Bronze Age Irish but perhaps because of their vanguard iron-based technology, the close organization of their family units and their long-standing culture, they managed to bring all the inhabitants together into a Gaelic whole.

In the last centuries BC, the rest of Celtic Europe fell under the expanding Roman Empire. However, invasion in Ireland never took place, not because Romans thought Irish were too strong to be defeated, but simply because they estimated it would not be worth the effort. In spite of the absence of Roman rule, Ireland came under heavy Roman influence anyway. As a matter of fact, during the I and II centuries AD, there is evidence of trade between Irish and Romans and of contact between Ireland and the Romanised Great Britain. The Irish dynasty of the Eóganachta of Munster, for example, spoke a language that had been heavily influenced by Latin and finally, even Ogham, the first Irish alphabet, was based on the Latin alphabet. This latter species of writing, consisting in a combination of short lines and points, originated before the coming of Christianity in Ireland and was used by the pagan Irish to write their lore in vellum books deifying national heroes such as Cù Chuculainn, cut inscriptions on rods of yew or oak and engrave on stones (Libraryireland.com, *Ogham Alphabet and Writing*).

If today it is still possible to read the ancient Irish history and mythology, it is thanks to the role of the Druids, or guardians of Celtic beliefs, that served Celtic society as priests, prophets, judges and historians. Afterwards, the *Filidh*, or the poets of the Celts, used to study and memorise the ancient oral lore including histories, genealogies and the law (Britannica.com, *Druid*). With the coming of Christianity in Ireland, many Druids were inspired by the new upstart religion and worked some of its aspects into their own belief system whereas the *Filidh* took the Latin alphabet and used it to produce the first written works in the Irish language. At the same time, the Gaelic society underwent huge changes involving the gradual extinction of this powerful class of learned men of the pagan Celts because overwhelmed by the church. As a matter of fact, St. Patrick managed to convert most of Ireland to Christianity within a few centuries after his mission throughout the V century, becoming one of the most important figures in Irish history. He spent years travelling around Ireland preaching to the pagan Irish and he is said to have picked a bunch of shamrocks in order to explain the Holy Trinity, thus giving Ireland its current national symbol, and to have driven out of Ireland all the snakes. However, many pagan traditions, magic worship and legends still survive in Ireland to this day.

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[3] As a matter of fact, at some point, the Irish adopted the term Gaels, a word that may derive from the Welsh term for Irishman "*Gwyddel*" itself again derived from the word for "wild" or "savage" (Leonardo.it, *I Celti*).

Along with Christianity came the Monasteries, new form of societal structure established as religious focal points for Gaelic Christianity. They became unrivalled centres of art and learning at the point that several European monarchs sent their children to Ireland in order to receive education by the wise monks. Inside the monasteries, monks were copying ancient Latin religious texts adapting Latin characters to the Irish language while artists produced stone-carved Celtic crosses and illuminated manuscripts such as the world-famous Book of Kells. This period is considered as the golden age of Ireland since the expression of Irish Gaelic culture reached its peak and Ireland became known as the "isle of Saints and scholars" (Irlandando.it, *Dai Celti ai Vichinghi*). Incredibly while Ireland was flourishing, most of Western Europe sank into the Dark Age as a result of the collapsing Western Roman Empire.

By the end of the VIII century, the Vikings, who were incredible master sailors and traders, invaded Ireland burning, pillaging in search of gold and treasures and sacking the great monasteries. They built permanent bases or towns with fortified harbours that became places of trade and commerce. Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Wexford were all Norse foundations (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 38).

By the X century, Old Irish, the language used from the VI to the IX century, had evolved into Middle Irish, spoken throughout Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man (Udaras.ie, *Background on the Irish Language*). Middle Irish has a large corpus of literature including the Ulster Circle, one of the most impressive works telling the wonderful and heroic legends of Ireland's greatest warriors, kings and mythical heroes such as Cú Chulainn.

The Norman invasion started in the early XII century and it caused over eight centuries of English involvement in the governing of Ireland[4]. Although, linguistically speaking, it is likely that the Normans, like the Vikings who preceded them, could make little influence on the linguistic habits of the Gaelic population at large. They were not numerous enough and had been rapidly assimilated into Irish culture and language. At that time, the population was divided into the "Gaelic Irish" and the "Old English" (contrasting with the "New English" arriving with the Tudor conquest of Ireland) descendants of medieval Norman settlers and heavily Gaelicised. These two groups were both against English settled areas such as The Pale, around Dublin, and Wexford; for this reason, the divide between these two groups gradually declined, as many Old English lords not only spoke Irish, but also were greatly familiar with Irish poetry and music to be defined as

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[4] These settlers became known as Hiberno-Normans. They came from England and Wales and were loyal to the Kingdom of England. Between 1100 and 1500 the Hiberno-Normans established the Lordship of Ireland, a feudal aristocracy, ruled by the Kingdom of England. King John was the first English King to also be "Lord of Ireland". (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 46).

Hiberniores Hibernis ipsis. The coining of this phrase, meaning "more Irish than the Irish themselves", describes the phenomenon of "Gaelicisation" that characterized this period.[5] By then Middle Irish evolved into Modern Irish in Ireland, into Scottish Gaelic in Scotland and into Manx Gaelic in the Isle of Man.

1.2. XVI (1542)-XVIII centuries: the forewarning of the Gaelic decline

It was with the Tudors and the Irish Reformation that forces were truly set in motion creating a divide in the country that still haunts both the Irish and the English to this day, almost leading to the destruction of the Irish language.

The "Reformation Parliament" of 1536 called for the dissolution of the monasteries, which came as a shock to many of the Irish. Thereafter, King Henry VIII was declared King of Ireland in 1542 and was recognised as the head of the Church of Ireland with the aim of restoring central authority throughout the country. The first attempt at large-scale English plantation came in 1556 in Offaly and Laois Counties followed by the Elizabethan Munster Plantation in 1586 (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 284). Plantations involved confiscation of the land occupied by Gaelic clans and Hiberno-Normans dynasties while the new English settlers from Great Britain were given that land in return for rent to the Crown. At the same time, Queen Elizabeth emanated the Thirty-nine Articles clearly stating the difference between the fundamental principles of the Protestant and the Catholic churches, meanwhile initiating the cruel persecution of Catholics (Britannica.com, *Thirty-nine Articles*).

In 1607 the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, champions of the Gaelic nobility, boarded a ship and left the island forever after 4 years of subjugation and oppression. Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyron, and his allies had been a challenging enemy of the English rule in Ireland during the Nine Years War (1593-1603[6]) but by then, they had been definitely defeated. King James VI & I[7] declared the Earls and their companions as traitors and confiscated their lands (nearly 500'000 acres)

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[5] The Statues of Kilkenny, emanated in 1366, aimed at restraining the process of "Gaelicisation" and curb the dissolution of English laws and customs among English settlers in Ireland. Many social practices were outlawed e.g. intermarriage, the use of the Irish language and Irish dress (Irlandando.it, *Le invasioni*).

[6] Or Tyrone's Rebellion, was a rebellion led by an Irish alliance against the ongoing Tudor conquest and English rule in Ireland.

[7] He was King of Scotland as James VI (1567-1625) and King of England and Ireland as James I, forming the union of the English and Scottish crowns (1603-1625) (Britannica.com, *James I*).

(MᴄCᴜʟʟᴏᴜɢʜ, 2010: 78). To the later Irish romantics, the Flight of the Earls is described as the final act of defiance of the Irish noble class and the end of the Gaelic era in Ireland.

Afterwards, the Ulster Plantation (1606), organized during the reign of King James VI & I, followed with two-thirds of the planters coming from Scotland and about one-third from England; therefore, both Ulster Scot and English became important languages in the province. However while these two linguistic elements were introduced in Ulster the Irish language was not completely removed and endured into the early XIX century as Catholics continued to speak it almost to the exclusion of English (Ó Nᴇ́ɪʟʟ, 2005: 324). It is to mention the fact that English and Scots colonists did not feel safe in western, central and southern Ulster because they were far from the new anglicized towns and markets, where they were an exposed minority among dispossessed native Irish. As a matter of fact, the increasing tensions between Catholics and Protestants exploded into violence during the 1641 Ulster rebellion, which saw thousands of Scots and English planters slaughtered, murdered by roving bands of wood kerns[8] and oppressed Irish workers. The rise started as a "coup d'état" by Irish Catholic gentry seeking to seize control of the English administration in order to obtain more concessions for Catholics. Then for a moment, the rising developed into an ethnic conflict, known as the Irish Confederate Wars, between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English Catholics on one side and both English Protestants and Scottish Presbyterian on the other.

All things considered, the Ulster plantation can be seen, in the long-run, as a partial success for the British since the land became more profitable and Anglo-centric. Many Catholics became bilingual English-Irish speakers increasingly involved in the English-speaking economic world of Dublin, Britain and the Empire at large (Ó Nᴇ́ɪʟʟ, 2005: 324). For the very first time, these new colonists did not integrate with the native population and maintained their cultural and religious identity.

Finally, another major event, forerunner of the Gaelic decline, was the passing of the Act of Settlement by the English Parliament in 1652, led by Oliver Cromwell at the time. According to this statue, farmers were deprived of their land and home if they refused to prove loyalty to the English Parliament and were forcedly sent to county Connacht where the land was rocky and very difficult to cultivate, with Cromwell's infamous edict "Hell or Connacht!" (Irlandando.it, *Cromwell e Guglielmo d'Orange*).

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[8] Bandits or robbers who lived in the forest (MᴄCᴜʟʟᴏᴜɢʜ, 2010: 87).

1.3. The XIX century and the Gaelic decline

Between 1800 and 1901, the Irish language witnessed a rapid contraction passing from some 3.5 million Irish speakers, or 85% of the population, to some 641'000 speakers, or 14.4% of the population (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 285). This loss derives from a combination of culturally, socially, politically and demographically dislocating factors that contributed to the early and still ongoing erosion of Irish.

First and foremost, the interior political status of the language dating from the Williamite period[9] followed by legal prohibitions against Irish and the gradual abandonment of the Irish language by the Catholic church. The Penal Laws were highly reminiscent of the medieval Statues of Kilkenny (1366) and prohibited Catholics to buy land, stand for election in Parliament or join the army; they could not send their children to foreign schools and Trinity College did not accept them. Even the teaching of Irish Gaelic was banned and priests could not recite mass, which became almost outlawed (McCULLOUGH, 2010: 104). The majority of Catholics, who had the knowledge and command of Irish Gaelic, ended up living in miserable conditions whereas those belonging to the upper classes preferred to convert to English Protestantism, in order not to ruin one's career.

Secondly, the establishment of a dominant English-speaking class in towns and urban centres of commerce, industry, wealth and political power[10] brought about the need to know English for economic and employment reasons added to the increased will of all classes to educate their children exclusively through English.

Finally, the potato famine of 1846 led to the deaths of nearly a million people and the emigration of over a million more, most for the New World. Unfortunately, Ireland's population had grown too dependent on the potato as a food source and because of this when this sort of "evil course" crept into the soil they paid the price.

We can get an idea of the devastating and long lasting effect that the Great Famine had on both Ireland's population and the language from this underlying extract and picture: «The famine was the hammer blow which almost destroyed Irish. On the famine's eve, Irish was spoken by

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[9] The Williamite War or "War of the two Kings" between Jacobites (supporters of the catholic King James II) and Williamites (supporters of the Dutch Protestant Prince William of Orange). The Williamite victory ensured closer British and Protestant dominance over Ireland. The majority of the Irish Catholic community and the Ulster-Scots Presbyterian were excluded from power. As a result, the prestige of Irish drastically diminished (McCULLOUGH, 2010: 98).

[10] English acquired important symbolic functions for Irish people, especially in Dublin where the language became refined and bearer of high independent literature e.g. Swift, Joyce, Yeats, Beckett and others (IANNÀCARO, 2014: 136).

some four million souls as opposed to about 414,000 reasonably fluent speakers in 2002. The famine was severest in the Irish-speaking districts of the west and southwest. About 1.5 million people died between 1845 and 1851 and some 3 million left Ireland for the United States, Canada and Britain between 1845 and 1855» (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 288).

Table 6.1
Irish population change

Irish Population Change 1841 – 2001/2002		
Province	1841 Census	2001/2002 Censuses
Ulster (9 counties)	2,339,263	1,931,838
Leinster	1,982,169	2,105,449
Munster	2,404,460	1,101,266
Connaught	1,420,705	464,050
6 Ulster co. (N. Ireland)	1,649,000	1,685,267
3 Ulster co. (Don., Cav., Mon.)	740,263	246,571
26 co. (Irish Republic)	6,526,124	3,917,336
Total Ireland	**8,175,124**	**5,620,603**

Note: The census of 1841 is considered an undercount of the population by several hundred thousand persons. The first language census of 1851 which recorded 1,524,000 Irish speakers is also regarded as a severe undercount as one fourth of households did not receive the language questionnaire with more recent estimates putting Irish speakers between 2.1 million and 2.5 million in 1851 – *after* the famine.

Figure 1: Irish population change 1841-2001/2002 (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 290).

The Great Famine probably had a much greater disastrous influence on the contraction of the Irish language than five centuries of English rule in Ireland had. Since that moment, attitudes toward Irish began to shift to a fatalistic, negative and hopeless tone. Mass emigration escalated as never before and parents realized that their children must master English in order to have access to civil service positions and therefore many people excluded Irish from their homes. In the popular imagination, Irish became the language of the poor, the peasants and the vagabonds.

1.4. The XX century and the "Gaelic revival"

Despite the fact that Irish, by the end of the XIX century, had become a language mainly spoken by those people over the age of 30 or 40, organized efforts to salvage the Irish language were since then undertaken in earnest.

A new nationalism swept through Ireland at the end of the XIX century continuing throughout the XX century as the Irish started to look to their past to help define their country and search for a national identity. In those dying days, they grabbed hold of their remaining culture and fought to preserve it from the point of extinction.

Some of the earliest revolutionary attempts related to the Irish nationalist fight were the foundation of Young Ireland in 1840 as a mixed Catholic and Protestant group and the subsequent

creation of the current tricolour flag. In particular, Thomas Francis Meagher, leader of the Young Irlanders, spoke in a Dublin meeting as follows: «The White in the centre signified a lasting truce between Orange and Green. I trust that beneath its folds the hands of the Irish Catholic and Irish Protestant may be clasped in generous and heroic brotherhood. » (Tfmfoundation.ie). Furthermore, in political terms as well, Irish nationalists grabbed onto Ireland's cultural and historical background when they formed the Fenian Brotherhood commemorating the legendary band of Irish warriors and determined to fight for the foundation of an Irish Republic and the expulsion of the British (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 150). Afterwards, in 1876, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded, followed by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884 with the aim of improving the national morale and opening the way to the ancient Gaelic games of Gaelic football and hurling (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 290). Finally, the Gaelic League, or *Connradh na Gaeilge*, was founded in 1893 by a group of academics in order to support Irish, as both a spoken language and a language for literature (Cnag.ie). This association ran classes in Irish, held Irish-speaking social gatherings and sponsored the publication of contemporary poetry and prose in Irish; later on, it also took on a political role fighting against any legislation that could have a detrimental effect on the language and proposing legislation to encourage its revival.

As soon as the First World War broke out, several branches of the Gaelic League had been established all over Ireland and, for the first time in a century, the Irish language began to experience growth in both speakers and national prestige. As a matter of fact, anglicized urban middle-class dwellers and intellectuals in Dublin, Belfast and elsewhere gradually reacquired expertise and interest in Irish Gaelic (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 290).

However, it is crucial to bear in mind that the Irish revival (begun in the late XIX century) was favoured by the Celtic trend in Europe and was mostly conducted by the well-read Anglicised middle-class. This situation shows that those who desired, and desire to this day, to be concretely active in the Reversing Language Shift often are an economically satisfied minority of the population, whose mother tongue is the majoritarian language (English) and who chose to reacquire the traditional Irish language for ideological purposes. Unfortunately, this being a weak point for the Irish language since more people who know Irish does not mean more people who use Irish.

By the time of independence in 1921[11], the number of Irish fluent speakers had fallen to approximately 250.000 (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 290). This certainly marked a drastic change, for the worse,

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[11] The signing of the controversial Anglo-Irish Treaty, in 1921, finally marked the end of the Anglo-Irish War and saw the birth of the new Irish Free State as a dominion of the British Empire but at least granting

about Irish people's view on Irish Gaelic, given the fact that even before the famine in the early XIX century Irish remained the unquestioned national language despite British rule and the consequent advance of English. In this situation, the new Free State Government attempted to redefine the place of Irish and its status in the everyday life of the nation. Irish was made the official language of the nation as Irish signage was posted, new Irish coins, stamps and banknotes used Irish and, finally, it was introduced into all primary schools throughout the Irish Free State.

Since 1930's Eamon De Valera led Ireland in a period of radical restructuring and separation from Great Britain, especially aiming at abolishing the Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown. In 1935, he set up a group of civil servants to produce a new Irish Constitution, ratified in 1937[12], depicting the fundamental basis for Irish Government and marking the end of over 5 centuries of British Government intervention in Ireland for the southern 26 counties. Moreover, it was committed to ensure the survival and rebirth of the Irish language and culture making the study of Irish Gaelic a mandatory part of childhood education, and fluency a requirement for work in civil service. By then, all documents started to be produced in both Irish and English.

However, by then, things begun to go astray. Paradoxically, the number of daily mother tongue speakers was dropping while the number of people who knew Irish actively and passively was constantly increasing (thanks to the school system campaign). We could call this phenomenon as the *"crystallisation"* of Irish Gaelic, explained as the loss of its communicative function, practicality and actual use, in parallel with the fostering of its symbolic function, seeking to preserve the language as part of the national identity and cultural heritage. Exactly in the meanwhile that Irish was introduced into the bureaucracy, the civil service and the school system to be reinvigorated, INTO, the Irish teachers' organization, attempted to alert that the system in place was precarious, as competent and fluent Irish speakers were not increasing. Therefore, it is possible to understand that, in spite of the intensive school system campaign and all the efforts made by voluntary agencies and the government, the Irish revival did not start on the right foot. At this point, the difference between knowing the language and using the language daily recurs.

Ireland
dominion status and a separate parliament largely to regulate its own affairs (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 202).

[12] It is the second constitution since independence replacing the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State. Nowadays it is the fundamental law of the Republic of Ireland (Citizensinformation.ie).
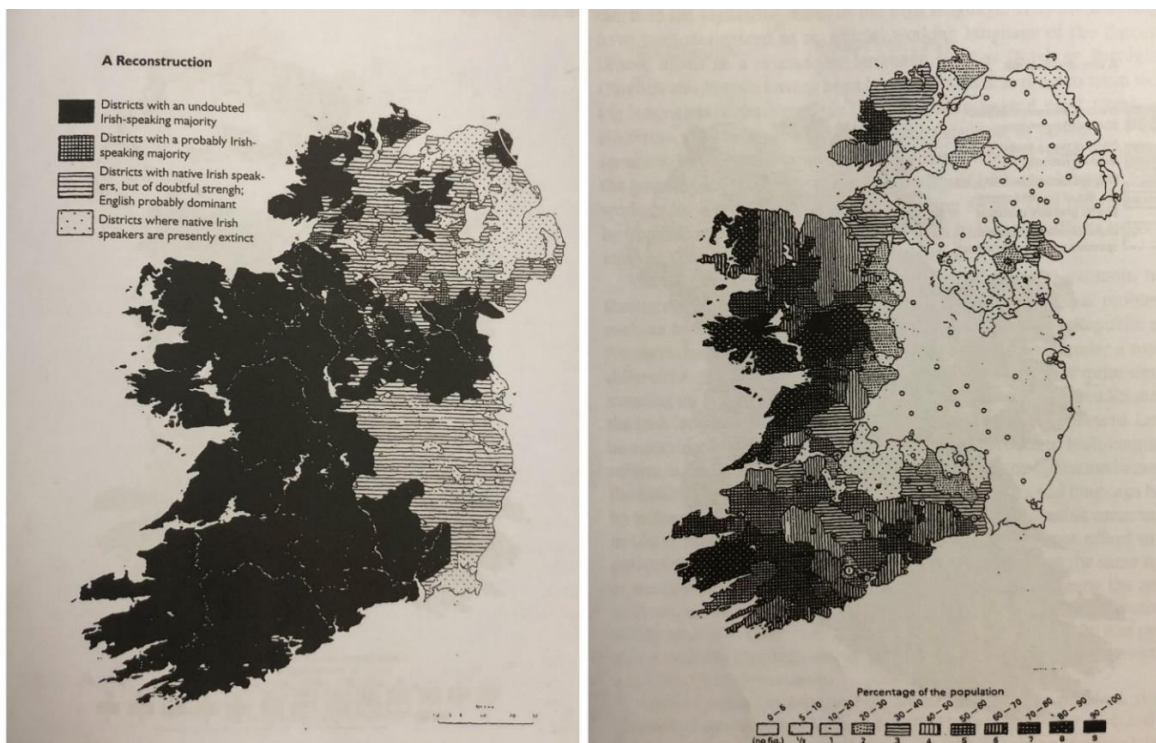
Figure 2: on the left «The Irish language in 1800. Source: projected figures based on Census 1851, produced by the Irish government. The Ministry of Culture in Dublin owns the copyright of figures 2 to 8».
Figure 3: on the right « The Irish language in 1851. Source: Irish speakers by towns and baronies, Census 1851» (Ó NEILL, 2005: 303-304).
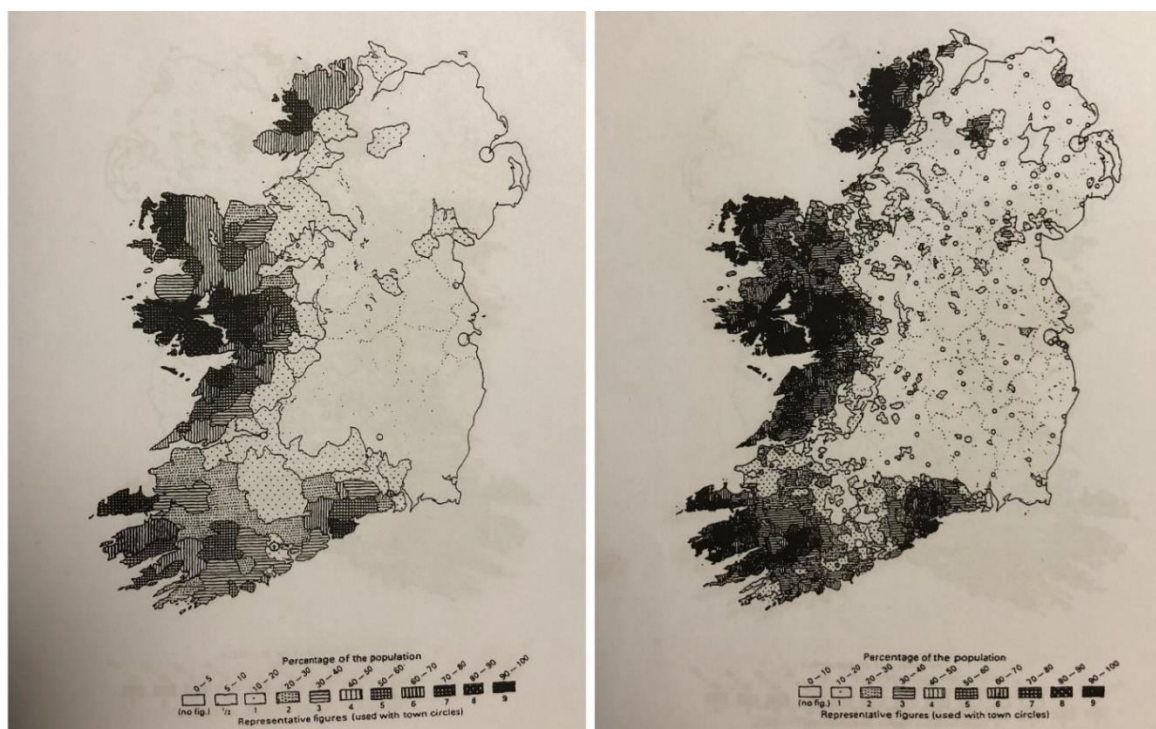

Figure 4: on the left «The Irish language in 1891. Source: Census 1891».
Figure 5: on the right «The Irish language in 1911. Source: Irish speakers by towns and district electoral divisions, Census 1911» (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 305-306).
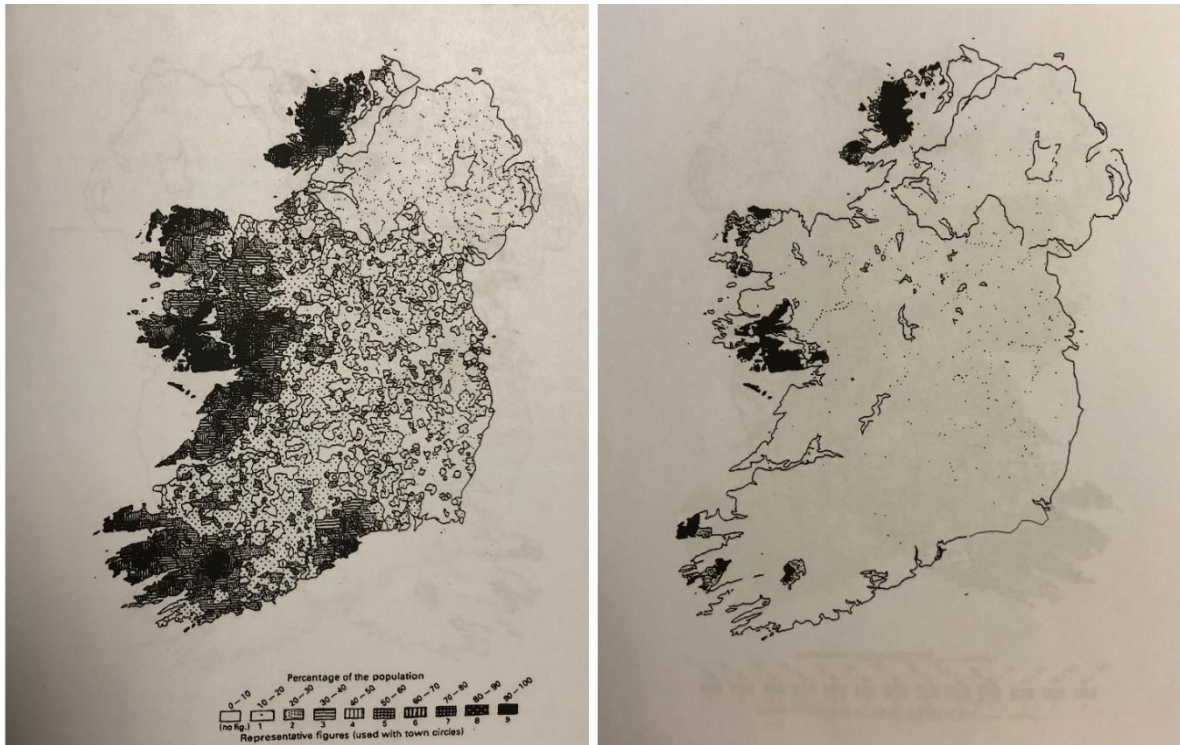
Figure 6: on the left « The Irish language in 1926. Source: Irish speakers by towns and district electoral divisions, Census 1926».
Figure 7: on the right «The Irish language in 1956. The dark and shaded areas reflect the density of Irish speakers. The Gaeltacht was redefined in 1956 as 'Nua-Ghaeltacht'. Sources: *Límistéirí* Gaeltachta 1956 and the author's survey, 1957.» (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 307-308).
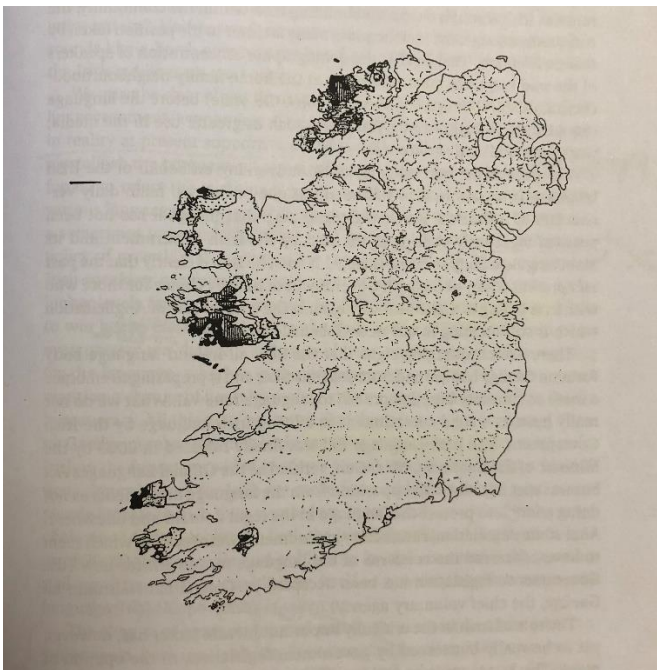

Figure 8: «The Irish language in 1985. The Gaeltacht 1981-6: a tentative categorizing of the real state of the language. The dark and shaded areas reflect the density of Irish speakers. Sources: Census 1981; deontas returns 1981-2, 1985-6» (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 309).

2. Linguistic policies in the XX-XXI Éire

Throughout the XX and XXI century, as already mentioned in Chapter 1.4, the Irish Government and many voluntary agencies took measures to restore the prestige and actual use of Irish Gaelic. First of all, with the promulgation of the New Irish Constitution in 1937 Irish was designated as the first official language followed by English as the second official language.

In this context, an interesting initiative carried out in the 1930s was the transplantation of Irish-speaking families from Galway to county Meath, leading to the establishment of a new eastern Gaeltacht. The experiment was about finding out if it was possible to maintain a Gaeltacht in the proximity of an urban centre such as Dublin. It is clear that such project has not been easy to carry out as moving to a different place and assimilating in a new cultural environment can be challenging. Tensions between the Meath inhabitants and the newly settled migrants sometimes reached violence, as reported by articles such as this from «The Independent» (*Colonised* 2018): «a local Meath resident was arrested for threatening the life of a Land Commission employee for giving the migrants land instead of him. The newly arrived migrant women were harassed by "gangs" and told -to quit talking that gibberish here-» (*Colonised* 2018). The woman interviewed commented: «I remember the Irish speakers trying to come into the local pub for a drink and being run out of the place as soon as they spoke. Sadly, instead of embracing them for what they could teach us, they were looked down on. My mother was a schoolteacher in the small national school in Kilbride. Some of these new settlers wanted to put their children in the school in Kilbride to learn English rather than keep them stigmatized in their brand new Gaeltacht.» (*Colonised* 2018). Finally, other extracts from the article report again: «The transition of the newly settled people's lives from the rocky fields of the West into the flat fertile lands of Meath was not easy» with miserable slogans painted on doors saying: «this land is not for Connemara people - it is for Meath men» (*Colonised* 2018).

These statements show the difficulties of transplanting western populations to the East into a completely different lifestyle and the complicated integration between the rural farmers of the West and the city dwellers of the much more urban and Anglicized area surrounding Dublin. Furthermore, there is evidence of a disparaging attitude towards the Irish language, referred to as "gibberish". Nevertheless, these struggles had at least brought about a new Gaeltacht region in the Meath area with an estimated population of 1,857 nowadays (Udaras.ie, *Meath Gaeltacht Facts*). Overall, this "pocket" of Gaeltacht seems to have little hope of survive.

During World War II and the following years (1940s and 1950s), Ireland witnessed a period of economic decline and emigration because of Eamon de Valera's protectionism policy that made

the island unappealing to foreign investors, who took their business and their money elsewhere. Therefore, a lack of jobs produced a wave of Irish emigration, especially to Britain, that at the beginning appeared to be a war-related episode. However, when the war ended, a large number of Irish workers did not return home and, even more worrying, several Irish continued to seek employment abroad. The country fell into an ever-deepening spiral of migration and economic decline reaching the lowest population for the 26 counties in the last century (MCCULLOUGH, 2010: 226). Hopefully, new policies were set in place during the Lemass government to turn things round, especially to reduce the protective import duties and encourage overseas companies to establish manufacturing in Ireland. In 1972, Ireland joined the European Economic Community, which brought immediate benefits such as the Common Agricultural Policy granting Ireland subsidies and higher prices. Emigration dropped to nearly a third of its earlier levels and Ireland's population began to increase once again. As a matter of fact, between 1990 and 2005 employment raised from 1.1 million to 1.9 million and the population increased by almost 15% (Heritage.org). For this reason, Ireland became known as the "Celtic Tiger" matching the growth of East Asian nations e.g. the "Four Asian Tigers".

Getting back to the initiatives concerning the promotion of the Irish language, another prominent project was *Údarás na Gaeltachta* established in 1980 (Udaras.ie). Today it is the regional development authority for the seven Gaeltacht regions aiming at promoting their linguistic, cultural, social and economic development with the overall objective of maintaining Irish as their main communal language. Moreover, the association seeks to protect and invigorate strong Irish-speaking communities, revive Irish to strong second-language status in those Gaeltacht areas where it has weakened as well as funding several enterprise development and job creation initiatives.

It is also important to bear in mind the vastness of serious organized efforts carried out by state planners and RLSers with the aim of revitalizing a language abandoned by over 90% of Ireland's population. And the prove of such adamant RLSers stance in the face of defeat can be Joshua Fishman's endeavour, resulting in his first publication of the book "Reversing Language Shift" in 1991, that will be analysed in Chapter 2.1.

In the recent past and the present, initiatives continue to be undertaken by both voluntary agencies and the government with a positive attitude toward the revival of Irish Gaelic. The main objective is to build a bilingual Ireland through Irish by choice and not imposition (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 293). However, one of the few irritants is the lack of sufficient funding and actual will by the Irish Government when dealing with more ambitious and complete initiatives. For example, dealing

with the Official Language Act, establishing new Irish-speaking communities[13], broadcasting in Irish without subtitles (something that *Raidió na Gaeltachta* refuses to do stating that a bilingual service is necessary unless more funding is available from the Government). Another example can be the action taken by the Department of Education in order to reduce the growth of new *Gaelscoileanna*[14] Irish-medium schools introducing stricter rules and a lengthier process for recognition. The reason of this existing resistance to Irish may lie in economic considerations as Ireland's successful programme of industrialization, begun in the 1970s and previously explained, is strictly tied up with foreign investment, where indeed English is an essential economic tool. Hence, the Government is reluctant to implement real and thoroughgoing projects to re-establish Irish on a community basis, mainly for economic reasons, therefore holding a somewhat dishonest position on the Irish language inasmuch being apparently not opposed to efforts on behalf of Irish but actually not really involved in the struggle to save Irish. Finally, mentioning Joshua Fishman warnings, it is evident that the "re-vernacularisation" of Irish as a daily vehicle of speech is doomed to failure unless Ireland foster to the full extent the creation of new Irish-speaking communities, especially in the urban east where the concentration of Irish speakers is limited.

2.1. Reversing Language Shift (RLS)

In 1991, the book "Reversing Language Shift" by the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman was published. In this fascinating work, he examines endangered languages such as Irish, Basque, Frisian, Navajo, Yiddish, Maori, Hebrew, Catalan, Quebec French and the Aboriginal languages of Australia. The concept of *Reversing Language Shift*, or language reversal, is described by Fishman as «assistance to speech communities whose native languages are threatened because their intergenerational community is proceeding negatively with fewer and fewer users or uses every generation» (FISHMAN, 1991: 1). As a matter of fact, Fishman focuses on the fact that threatened languages must be strengthened at the family, community and neighbourhood levels – which is the cornerstone of stage 6 in his eight-point scale, proposed in order to appraise the necessary efforts for reversing language shift (Chapter 2.3.1.). Stage number 6 is of utmost importance since it involves the establishment of the vital linkage with family and community and therefore pave the

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[13] Scéimeanna Pobail project in the 1980s promoted by *Board na Gaeilge* aimed at establishing six new Irish-speaking communities in the much more industrialized and Anglicized East but it failed because of blocking attitudes of the government (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 294).

[14] When Gaelscoileanna project was established in 1973, it led to a successful growth in number of Irish-medium schools. They produced competent Irish speakers thanks to language immersion and the fact that they were, and still are, fueled by an effective community support and a good administrative infrastructure (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 294).

way for the critical intergenerational transmission of a threatened language. In most cases, an endangered language is a receding language that belongs to a minority ethnic group, normally with a different origin than is the conventional of the country in which they reside (FISHMAN, 1991: 135). However, for the Irish language should be different because it has a state clearly dedicated to its protection and in which it is declared the national language and the first official language.

Generally, the image of Irish Gaelic has been a positive one in Ireland associated with the affirmation of authenticity and creativity for a population that witnessed exploitation and suffering for so many years. However, could Irish only rely on patriotism or other sentimental values to reacquire nationwide learning and use? Especially when positive attitudes and "positive actions" on behalf of the threatened language are quite distant to be the same. Further to this point, Fishman reports: «when we leave the attitudinal sphere and turn to actual language use and to RLS policies on its behalf, the differences between the Gaeltacht and the rest of Ireland become manifold» (FISHMAN 1991: 124). For this reason, it is crucial to dwell on the distinction between two Irish language realities: that of the Western part of Ireland, or *Gaeltacht*, and that of the Eastern part of Ireland closer to Dublin. The latter has undertaken Anglicization earlier compared to the West and has lost most of its native Irish speakers, thus contributing to the Anglicization of the whole country.[15]

The term Gaeltacht is used to denote those areas in Ireland where the Irish language is the communal language of the local population. According to the 2016 Census, the total population of the Gaeltacht is 96,090 (Cso.ie, *The Gaeltacht*). The area covers extensive parts of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry, all along the western seaboard, and parts of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford. In these regions, about 66,3% of the population can speak Irish (Cso.ie, *The Gaeltacht*), but again not all the people who know the language then actually speak it. In spite of the struggles on behalf of Irish such as establishing Irish Summer Colleges or supporting investment in the Gaeltacht, it is increasingly difficult to find residents actually using Irish as their habitual language and rearing their children in Irish. In addition, the ongoing modernization and urbanization of the Gaeltacht aiming at improving the lives of its inhabitants and preventing them from moving

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[15] As a matter of fact, travelling both to the East and West made me realize the gap between these two realities. On the Aran Islands (County Galway), for instance, the pace of life is slow and quiet, nature dominates the landscape and people are attached to their land and cattle. An old man told me he still knows Irish and uses the language at home, as well as a young boy told me. On the other hand, in Dublin people walk in a hurry to their office drinking in the meanwhile a cup of coffee. They are focused on their career and often do not even know what is the reality standing outside the city, being fully convinced there is nothing interesting outside of the metropolis. Here, normally the young generation knows some Irish words such as "Sláinte" which means "cheers" for a toast (commonly used in pubs) or "Fáilte" which means "welcome" often seen on posters at the entrance of shops or restaurants, but they probably do not think that speaking Irish can be an advantage in their life.

permanently to the English East, has at the same time brought about an increasing influx of English speakers from outside contributing to the Anglicization of its native people. Finally, tourists have greatly increased in the last two decades, which is a good point both for Gaeltacht's economy and continued interest in Gaelic traditions, but, on the other hand, detrimental to the preservation of the Irish language. Predominantly English signs have been posted in order to easily guide visitors thus creating an Anglicised environment in which the new generation run the risk of becoming rather prone to study and speak English than Irish.

2.2. Language Planning

The expression *language planning* means essentially the linguistic activity of study and intervention on multilingual communities with the aim of fostering the use of one or more languages. It can be oriented toward several options such as increasing the multilingualism, limiting the compresence of different codes or even maintaining or reducing the multilingualism in a specific   community.
The policies of language planning are usually of two different types: *conservative* or *expansive* (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 145). In the first case, the idea is the recovery of customs and traditions, of which especially the language, while limiting the access from the outside for fearing cultural invasions. Here, the fear of losing the identity of the ethnic minority is high and intense since the presence of the dominant language and culture is massive. The attainment of prestige is about revitalizing the archaic language towards young people who do not want to use it anymore or having legislations that deliver economic benefits to the native community. Whereas in the second case, the activity of language planning is oriented toward the proposition of the language to the others providing with recognized rules, dictionaries and grammars. In this case, what truly matters is that there is no fear of external contact and the language is "launched on the market". In effect, a language available to the others and that people want to learn is a language with prestige and worth to speak and preserve.

Unfortunately, the policy of language planning for the Irish language seems to be more oriented toward the conservative approach trying to salvage "the granny's language" (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 146) along with the traditional customs, legends and culture of the Gaelic society. In this way, the language risks appearing on the one hand beautiful but on the other hand useless and troublesome. Further to this point, the Irish linguistic policy seems to be exclusively focused on learning the language through the school system but there is a lack of attention concerning the daily life of people and their actual use of the language to socialize with the others. As a matter of fact,

there is a remarkable and often underestimated difference between knowing the language and using it, as already stated in Chapter 1.4.

An interesting project has been carried out recently in Ireland in order to finally grow in another direction compared to the traditional linguistic policy. Putting aside the sentimental values, the cornerstone is to promote the economic potential of the threatened Irish Gaelic, as it will be later described in Chapter 2.3.4.

Finally, concerning the operational plan, the activity of language planning can be divided into three main "levels of action" which are corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning (more carefully examined in Chapters 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4). The last one being particularly complex and linked to the operations of corpus and status planning during its implementation.

2.3. A survey on Éire most recent linguistic policies (1960s-nowadays)

The most recent Census of 2016 reports that the total number of persons who could speak Irish was 1,761,420 with more females able to speak Irish (55%) than males (45%). Again the difference between knowing the language and using it recurs since, of the previously stated number, 418,420 persons (23,7%) declared to never speak Irish while 558,608 (31,7%) persons indicated to speak Irish only within the education system. Of the remaining group, 586,535 reported to speak Irish less often than weekly, 111,473 reported to speak Irish weekly and finally only 73,803 spoke Irish daily, respectively 34%, 6% and 4% of the total number of persons who indicated to know Irish (1,761,420). 73,803 people using Irish on a daily basis represents 1,7% of Ireland's total population of 4,75 million and a slight decrease from 2011 Census. Concerning the Gaeltacht, 66,664 persons indicated to be able to speak Irish but only 20,586 were daily speakers. Furthermore, there has been a dramatic fall of an 11% in daily speakers outside the education system, which provides further evidence of the decline of Irish in its traditional heartland (Cso.ie). Therefore this survey is relevant to understand how much it changes from having the knowledge of Irish Gaelic to effectively using it in common life. Actually, what matters concerning the revitalization of the Irish language is the number of daily speakers who use Irish in the family and community environment, thus more inclined to pass on to the newly born generation the knowledge of the language, as Dr Fishman argue when referring to the importance of stage 6 in his GID-scale.
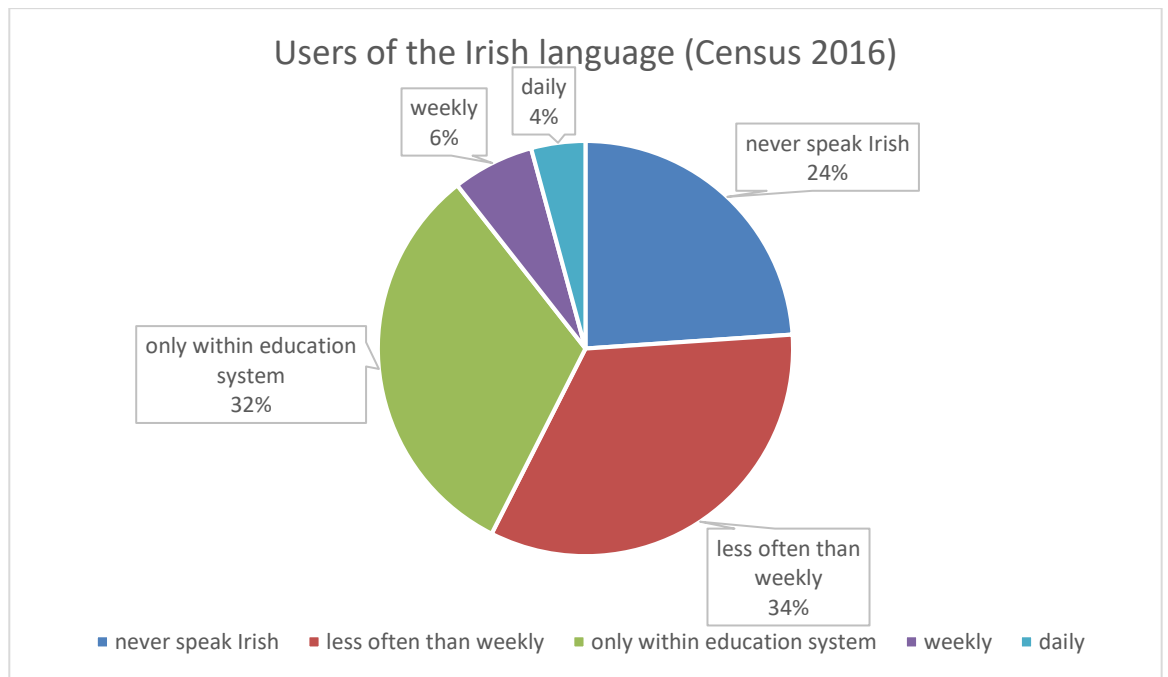
Figure 9: The graphic above illustrates the frequency of speaking Irish within the group of persons who declared to know Irish (1,761,420) in Census of Population 2016 (Cso.ie).

In the next Chapters, the most recent linguistic policies implemented in Ireland will be examined following two models of analysis. The first one being Fishman's Graded International Disruption Scale and the second one being the model of Language Planning subdivided into Corpus Planning, Status Planning and Acquisition Planning.

2.3.1 The Eight-Stage GID-scale for Irish in the Republic

In order to evaluate the level of endangerment for minority languages, Fishman developed a scale with eight levels, which has become a standard in such studies. In this scale, the first three levels deal with the "language utilisation domains", fourth and fifth levels pertain to "literacy" (reading and writing), and the last three levels concern "intergenerational transmission".

As far as Irish is concerned, according to DWYER (2011; see also Table 1 here below), in the first six levels (1–6) the language is being maintained while in the last two levels (7-8) the newly born generation has shifted to the majoritarian language thus abandoning the threatened language. Hereafter a stage-by-stage analysis, following the GDIS model, examines recent RLS efforts made on behalf of Irish and their effect on the revitalization and actual use of the language.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
1	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level
2	The language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services
3	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders
4	Literacy in the language is transmitted through education
5	The language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community
6	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language
7	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it with their elders but is not transmitting it to their children
8	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation

Table 1: The *Graded International Disruption Scale* for Irish (DWYER 2011: *Tools and techniques for endangered-language assessment and revitalization.*)

Stages 8 and 7: reconstructing Irish and bringing it to adults

Concerning interaction in Irish among adults, a large amount of Irish classes have been made available since the creation of the Gaelic League in 1893. Informal Irish-speaking "pub nights" and Irish coffee are a fairly strong tradition in the Republic and bodies such as *Conradh na Gaeilge*, *Udaras na Gaeltachta* and the Department of Education have been supporting courses for newcomers, summer courses for secondary school students and for teacher interns. Furthermore, during the XX century, academics and intellectuals have rescued and published in modern Irish and often translated the entire body of Irish literature; manifold books, magazines, newspapers, films and tapes were made available, and still are, to those who may have interest in buying them. All in all, citizens can witness a full, varied and stimulating cultural life via Irish. This may work as long as they have the opportunities to (re)learn it and above all are willing to do so, because sometimes the saying "it is easier said than done" has its part of truth.

Stage 6: establishing the vital linkage with youth, family, neighbourhood and community

Creating a speech community and establishing the basic building blocks of home-family-neighbourhood-community in order to restore the intergenerational language transmission is definitely something that requires considerable persistence and resourcefulness. Joshua Fishman reports in his book "Reversing Language Shift" that both government and voluntary organizations have made some attempts to do so, but unfortunately not with any great success. Hereafter, the analysis of a number of projects carried out in Ireland since 1962 to nowadays.

Glór na nGael or "the voice of the Irish" is an annual competition established over 50 years ago, in 1962, rewarding the community that has done the most to promote the use of Irish in daily life. Each competing community has its own committee in charge of setting up a plan of action aiming at making progress in the community use of Irish; the committee can be given support and advice by the *Glór na nGael* organization for what it concerns planning and developing projects. Finally the winner is given a prize fund that today amounts to 80'000€ (Glornangael.ie). The main issue is that the *Glór* projects have a partial nature, or in other words, an influence that is circumscribed to the duration of the event and does not carry on into the normal everyday life of the community.

An interesting project aiming at creating a small Irish community is *Fundúireacht Chlann Lir* originated by Domhnall O'Lúbhlaí, a creative and dynamic linguistic activist, who believes in the creation of a special mini-societal context in order to have Irish learnt and used by people in real-life. The mini-society consists of a school, a chapel, student residences, a leisure centre, a museum, staff quarters and even an industrial base. Furthermore, there are "animateurs" who guide the community towards the use of Irish with the final aim of making Irish Gaelic a real means of communication and maximizing involvement and development on the part of its members. However, there is a problem: the project seems to be too much utopic and conceptualized to succeed in making the newly born generation capable of "building upon the older generation, instead of only catching up with it" as Fishman denotes in its work (FISHMAN, 1991: 134). Consequently, the risk is to create a sort of "artificial *enclave*", which is likely to lead to the loss of the spontaneous use of Irish.

The initiatives do not end yet. *Eigse- Carlow* was born as a weekend festival in the town of Carlow in 1979 with the aim of proposing a 'funnier' atmosphere where to learn and speak Irish, instead of the tedious contest of the school, involving varied forms of cultural entertainment such as traditional music, drama, poetry, quiz and film presentations. It has proved to be successful and it is still ongoing nowadays in the city, being a popular and beloved part of the community life.

This year Carlow celebrated the 40th anniversary of Carlow Arts Festival organizing a special night called "Sugartown". In this context, Carlow's past came to life through narrative, stories, real life characters and images, furthermore having the chance to collaborate with professional and community performers, local and national artists (Carlowartsfestival.com).

Finally, another pertinent example at this stage is the Cork Gaeltacht counting 3'932 people which is about 4% of the total Gaeltacht population (Udaras.ie). *Údarás na Gaeltachta* has carefully targeted areas of industry producing high value added and sophisticated products and services in Cork as they offer the best growth potential for the Irish language.

Such projects as those mentioned above are certainly the cardinal point for the rebirth of the Irish language because they are focusing on the real family and community use. However, they are only laying the foundations for the intergenerational transmission of Irish and ought to be promoted on a wider scale in Ireland in order to be successful.

Stage 5: the attainment of literacy in Irish, independent of the public education system

Related to the attainment of literacy outside the regular public school system, there is the *Naíonraí* pre-schools project begun in the late 1960s and proposing playgroups for three to four years old children, guided by group-leaders with a high level of linguistic competence in Irish. They excluded direct teaching while privileging informal play and natural communicative situations to create a rich language acquisition environment. Unfortunately, although children acquired proficiency and developed positive attitudes toward the language, the *Naíonraí* did not solve the problem of transmissibility of Irish from one generation to the other since the gap between the time the *Naíonraí* children "graduate" and the time they should begin to teach the language to their newly born children is too wide. Today, the outcome of this initiative is for example the early immersion setting for children aged from three to five years proposed by *Gaeloideachas*, a voluntary organization supporting the development of Irish-medium education (Gaeloideachas.ie, *Naíonraí*).

Another interesting initiative related to stage 5 is the summer language courses for young people, known as *Coláiste na bhFiann* and whose founder is again Domhnall O'Lúbhlaí (Colaistenabhfiann.ie). The courses aim at creating a solid structure of young people who will be able to lead the Irish revival in the future. Even here, the problem is the gap that there is from one summer to another, which makes the knowledge and language skills acquired to be mostly lost. In fact, the courses are run during the months of June, July and August even if today the organization also offers seasonal courses to obtain a certificate and give the opportunity to young people to integrate Irish into their lives in a natural way. Obviously, there has to be will in children and especially families to make them learn and use the language since they are young.

Stage 4: education in Irish and learning Irish at school

The *Gaelscoileanna* movement has been expanding since 1974 thanks to the increased enthusiasm for Irish and, in 2003, there were over 200 primary and secondary Irish-medium schools operating in the sector (Ó NEILL, 2005: 299). On this subject, there is a pertinent difference between *Gaelscoileanna* 4A schools children (all-Irish schools) and 4B[16] schools children in that the first ones are fluent Irish speakers whereas the latter ones never are. Therefore, the 4A model shows to be more efficient and should become the norm in order to strengthen the foundations for wider use of the Irish language in those areas outside the Gaeltacht. One of the main issues encountered to this point, is that 4A schools, or all-Irish schools, generally end up being reserved to middle-class children while not affordable for most working-class children who instead attend the ordinary schools learning little Irish in the process. As a matter of fact, 94% of the generally available public schools taught Irish as a second language up until the 1990s (FISHMAN, 1991: 138). In recent years, the demand for Irish-medium education grew at a higher rate and more people would like to choose a local *Gaelscoil* for their children. However, parents are often unable to do so since there are not enough *Gaelscoileanna* due to open in the next future thus not enough places to meet the demand. An article from «The Irish Times» (*More Gaelscoileanna must be opened to breathe life into Irish* 2018) reports: «This level of demand is the most open goal the State has ever seen in its Irish language policy, and yet we cannot puck the sliotar into the empty net.». A greater number of all-Irish schools should be established in the next future especially in those areas where there are no existing Irish-medium primary schools. Thanks to the new online patronage process, parents have the chance to express their preferences concerning the model of patronage when new schools are due to open (Patronage.education.gov.ie). Further to this point, decisions were taken in favour of the Irish language: if a school planning area is lacking of an Irish-medium provision, the new school that ought to be established in order to meet demographic demand, will be designated as a *Gaelscoil.*

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[16] Joshua Fishman uses "X" (Xish) to denote the threatened language and "Y" (Yish) to denote the dominant language. 4B: public schools for Xish children offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control. 4A: schools "in lieu" of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular staffing and control.

Stage 3: Irish in the work sphere

The place occupied by Irish in the workplace is nowadays minimum and not very significant, except for the Gaeltacht area, the administration of Irish-language organizations and specific other positions such as civil service posts. One of the reasons for this situation can be the fear of losing foreign capital and investors felt by the Irish government when undertaking programs imposing Irish (Chapter 2). The purpose would be to find the right way to promote and make room for Irish whilst retaining British and American investors. *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, for example, offers incentives and supports to businesses and companies in order to start up, develop or expand in a Gaeltacht area (Udaras.ie, *Support for Businesses*). Further to this point, the *Glór na nGael* organization seeks to support and develop new businesses through Irish and helps to set up economic ventures that uses Irish as their workplace language through assistance and prearranged meetings. Visiting its website and exploring its business initiatives, two short YouTube videos talk about encouraging businesses to use more Irish in their signage and services to customers. However, they only have 15 visualizations, thus the facts speak for themselves (Glornangael.ie, *Irish in business*).

To sum up, it is very hard to move on at this stage since the role of Irish in the workplace and Irish people's economic life remains very limited not to mention the greater improvement and consolidation that are still urgently needed in the previous stages.

Stage 2: local governmental services and media

Since the promulgation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language nearly a decade ago, the DES Staff Training and Development Unit (STDU) is committed to the provision of an acceptable level of service through Irish in the Public Service, training professionally a number of staff. Further to this subject, a telephone line in Irish has been made available on a pilot basis and the Inspectorate is committed to enhance the provision of bilingual services increasing the ability of its staff to carry out inspections in Irish (*20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 to 2030 Progress Report: 2010-2015*, Education.ie).

With respect to the realm of media, it witnessed considerable advances in fostering Irish thanks to the government aid in recent years. *Radió na Gaeltachta* and *Teilifís na Gaeilge* started broadcasting in 1972 providing exclusively Irish programs throughout the whole country, and especially the Gaeltacht, managing to relate the scattered Gaeltachts to each other. In addition, *Raidió na Life* began broadcasting in the late 1990s to the greater Dublin area and today a number of newspapers include Irish language columns such as The Irish Times, Irish News, Metro Éireann and others. (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 300). However, today *Teilifís na Gaeilge* broadcasts Irish language programs for only an average of 6 hours per day, the rest being in English and it is sure that all of

these efforts made in order to promote Irish cannot be compared to the greater amount and diversity of English programs available.

All in all, to grab the heart of the matter «it is quite possible that more Irish speakers are Anglicized via the ocean of English radio than English speakers are strengthened in their Irish via the single existing channel of Irish radio» as Fishman writes (FISHMAN, 1991: 140).

Stage 1: Irish in the higher spheres of work, education and government

At this stage, Irish campaigns are sadly influenced by *tokenism*, which means that all the efforts made are the mere result of pretending to give advantage to Irish Gaelic in order to give the impression of following the rules and being fair, but actually without any real accomplishment.

It is possible to understand better the official attitudes of the government towards Irish reading part of Joshua Fishman's underlying disappointing letter addressed to the government (1971): «… during the past decade I have been consultant on language matters to a dozen governments… most of my recommendations being accepted… some rejected recommendations that were not to their liking… what does disturb me is the now quite apparent delaying tactics whereby recommendations are neither rejected nor implemented but simply surrounded by administrative silence and inaction… after four years, I have come to the conclusion that I have been used not as a consultant but as an unwitting participant in a master plan to do nothing» (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 293).

For instance, in Parliament, formal documents and motions are bilingual, but most of the discussions take place in English. The reason being perhaps the great solidity of the model "Xmen via Yish" in the Irish society[17]. This means that people in Ireland feel attached to Irish Gaelic, considered as a symbol of their nation and culture, but they actually "act via Yish", in other words in English, regarded as much more convenient. Moreover, there are several newspaper articles criticizing the government inefficiency regarding the implementation of new linguistic policies on behalf of Irish such as this from «The Irish Central» stating: «the Irish government is simply paying lip service to the language without taking any definitive action to ensure its survival.» (*The ongoing battle to preserve the Irish Language in Ireland* 2019).

Overall, it is evident that energies must be firstly addressed to the family and community level, corresponding to stage 6, before even begin to argue Irish position and status in the upper echelons of government and the economic sector.

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[17] With "X" being the threatened language and "Y" the dominant language.

2.3.2. Corpus planning actions

The activity of corpus planning affects the structure of the language, aiming at creating standards such as spelling, grammar, alphabet, morphology and syntax as well as creating dictionaries. It also includes the creation of new words and expressions and the recognition of loan words or "calques".

Fortunately, Irish has never become a forgotten tongue because the Gaeltacht kept it alive. As a matter of fact, the Irish literature is relatively easy to access through dictionaries and grammars, thanks to the existence of extensive written records in manuscript form from the XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries (Ó NÉILL, 2005: 297). Therefore, there is no need to reconstruct missing pieces of the language; moreover, during the XXI century academics and intellectuals have rescued and published in modern Irish and often translated the entire body of Irish literature.

Since the very beginning, Irish was transmitted through the manuscript tradition and was a language predominantly of literary and spiritual expression. Under colonialism, from the XVIII to XX centuries, Irish became primarily an oral language although with a rich lexicon of literature and song especially in rural communities, where the language was strongest and best able to develop new forms and expressions. Along with the irreversible language loss characterizing the late XIX century, came the necessity of developing a written standard and grammar as well as lexicography and terminology for modern use. Revivalists grappled with these challenges promoting new journalism and publishing. Thereafter throughout the XX century, contrasting trends emerged. The native speaker base witnessed an incessant contraction due to the modernization of the Irish society and economy that caused a major loss in domains of everyday speech. In parallel with this, the learner base expanded due to the intense school system campaign and Irish began to be introduced to a variety of new domains such as the media, education, legislation and public administration. However, in recent times written standards are declining year after year, thus the urgent necessity of drafting new modern dictionaries and updating terminology, especially since Irish became an official European Union working language (NIC PÁHIDÍN, 2008: 94). Further on this point, the existence of monolingual dictionaries for established languages is generally obvious, however, an Irish dictionary is bound to have an English-Irish translation to be accessible to all.

The Royal Irish Academy administered the work on the Dictionary of the Irish Language, which begun publication in 1913 in Dublin, and was mainly based on Old and Middle Irish materials, not including the modern language. Successively in 1976, the academy launched an historical dictionary of modern Irish (Foclóir na Nua-Ghaelige) for the period 1600-2000 and based

on two different strands, one involving literary and linguistic sources prior to the revival movement while the second one from the revival period onwards (NIC PÁHIDÍN, 2008: 96).

Always during the XX century, a lot of work was undertaken on bilingual dictionaries, dialect lexicons[18] and terminological dictionaries but users were predominantly teachers and students in the education system seeking to widen their vocabulary and deepen their knowledge of the complex native idiom. In 1922, the government had already founded about 2.000 new schools in which Irish was taught as a subject of study (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 135). For this reason, some issues about corpus planning arose because the literary old language was considerably different from the contemporary Irish spoken in those areas where it endured, without considering that it was also subdivided into many local varieties. In 1958, an important step in corpus planning was made: the Official Standard of Irish Spelling, or *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil,* was first published in order to be used in the school system and for official publications. The Translation Section of the Houses of the Oireachtas is committed to the translation of the Acts that are currently available on the website Achtanna.ie and represent a valuable linguistic resource.

Since the late XX century, terminology was the major area of expansion in Irish somehow masking the irreplaceable domain loss in native speakers' lexicon. The creation of new terms became the social pastime of the early print media in Irish and new coinages such as *leictiúr* (lecture), *feadán cainte* (telephone) and *ardscoil* (university) appeared in the weekly newspaper *Fáinne an Lae* (1898-1900) (NIC PÁHIDÍN, 2008: 102). Terminology also benefited from the interaction with international bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and UNESCO formulating best practices. Furthermore, a large corpus of English literature has been translated into Irish since the first half of the XX century in response to the demand from education and new terms have appeared on broadcast media. In 1968, the government established the Terminology Committee on a permanent basis and dictionaries about specific topics such as Astronomy, Biology and others were published. However, this context is different from that in which new terms and expressions emerge through the living usage. As a matter of fact, new Irish terms are often created on purpose to comply with the request from education, communications or public administration.

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[18] Caint an Chláir (Mac Clúin 1940) and An Béal Beo (Ó Máille 1936) are dialect lexicons used by generations of students. Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla (Pádraig Ó Duinnín 1904) stands tall above all the other XX century works on Irish lexicography. The author captures the capacity for figurative expression in Irish and focuses on the native traditions, as claimed in the preface: "the folklore, habits and beliefs, the songs and tales, the arts and crafts of the people". McKenna (1935) and de Bhaldraithe (1959) published two English-Irish dictionaries. (NIC PÁHIDÍN, 2008: 97-98).

Following the emanation of the Official Languages Act 2003, Dublin City University in collaboration with Foras na Gaeilge embarked on a project to develop a national database for Irish terminology. The result of this valuable work is the Online Database of Contemporary Irish Words in which users can find every contemporary Irish word and new terms and domains are constantly added (Focal.ie).

In conclusion, the new international status of Irish indeed creates opportunities for the language: it has boosted the focus on meeting the current deficits in corpus resources, translation and interpreting while young people are enhanced to acquire higher proficiency. Nevertheless, the effect of a disproportionate translation of official documents and the production of functional texts could become detrimental to the poetic and artistic streak. «Corpus planning is only worthwhile in a language in which poetry is still possible» as Nic Páhidín writes in his book (NIC PÁHIDÍN, 2008: 107).

2.3.3. Status planning actions

The status planning consists in the normative and legislative system intended to actualize the linguistic rights of a population.

By the first half of the XX century groups of English-speaking intellectuals were active in the Irish revival trying to give back the language its dignity and social status as already mentioned in the previous chapter. Indeed, some great progress was made. Today, Irish is the national and first official language of Ireland as Article 8 of the Constitution reports:

> « 1. The Irish language as the national language is the first official language. 2. The English language is recognised as a second official language. 3. Provision may, however, be made by law for the exclusive use of either of the said languages for any one or more official purposes, either throughout the State or in any part thereof.» (Irishstatutebook.ie).

The emanation of the Constitution of Ireland in 1937, besides its several purposes, included the objective of protecting the Irish language and ensuring its revitalization (Chapter 1.4). The constitution was translated into Irish by a group of academics working for the Irish Department of Education. However, the Irish text is less used than the English one since it can be cumbersome. In this circumstance, the Constitution resolves this potential dilemma by favouring the Irish text even though English is actually much more convenient, giving yet again the false impression of privileging Irish and recalling the concept of "tokenism" commonly encountered in the Irish government (Chapter 2.3.1).

The Official Languages Act 2003 was emanated with the main aim of ensuring the use of Irish by public bodies. According to the act, the state should be able to provide services in both Irish and English languages, giving them equal status. In this way, Irish speakers should be able to do their business with the state through Irish, if willing to do so. In addition, all public policy proposals, annual reports, statements of strategy and matters of major public importance must be available in both Irish and English. As well as an Irish language option on public sector customer phones lines and state-run websites has been put in place (Education.ie). Of course, these proposals can be actualized only if there are enough Irish speakers working in the public sector and able to provide the services. Furthermore, Irish became the official working language of the European Union on the 1st January 2007 and was first used at a meeting of the EU Council of Ministers, by Minister Noel Treacy TD. Something that can be considered, at the same time, as a one of a kind event but also very limited to that moment and not having a real future impact on the communicative revitalization of Irish.

Another delicate activity concerning the status planning is the regulation of the language at school. In Ireland, the initiative to create a new interest and value for the language through a cultural revival of customs and traditions has been attained. What instead is lacking is the practicality and spontaneous use of the language in the everyday life. At this point, it is crucial to understand that the "cultural recovery" and the "linguistic recovery" are very different and subject to different conditions (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 119). This is why they should be projected and conducted separately to obtain efficient results. As a matter of fact, the bond between language and traditional culture can give the appearance that the language itself is anchored to the past and static, without possibility of growth, development and improvement. In other words, people can sympathize with the system of values promoted around the language, such as the Celtic background and traditions, but normally it is still associated to localism, inferiority and seen as static.

In conclusion, the heart of the matter lies in the economic aspect. A language to be fully revitalised needs to be dressed up not only with positive cultural and symbolic functions but also with innovative and practical values. Irish should firstly be felt useful in the workplace and in the economic life in general to become again a daily means of communication, whereas its symbolical background and legislative system ought to be taken into account at least in parallel with this or at a later time.

2.3.4. Acquisition planning actions: *Gallimh le Gaeilge*

Beside corpus planning and status planning there is acquisition planning, in other words the totality of public interventions aiming at increasing the number of potential users of a specific language, thus having consequences on the sociolinguistic relationships between the different languages existing in the territory, in this case Irish and English.

The Irish experience clearly shows the issue that communities have to deal with, which is the imbalance between sentimental values of the language on one side (such as national, religious, identity and differentiation) and, on the other side, practical, immanent and economical values, which often end up triumphing.

In this situation is particularly interesting a leading experiment called *"Gallimh le Gaeilge"* that has been carried out in the city of Galway (Glelg.ie). It represents a real innovation compared to the traditional linguistic policy of the Irish language. Instead of focusing on those "sentimental" values previously described, linguists have decided to concentrate on boosting the economic potential of the language. *Gallimh le Gaeilge* is declared as a non-profit company and works in association with Galway City Council, Galway Chamber, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and other groups (e.g. Fáilte Ireland) in order to increase the visibility of the written language in the city and create a bilingual environment. Moreover, it also aims at fostering the oral language through manifold business events such as the monthly *Lón Gnó*, which takes place in pubs where people can speak Irish among themselves in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere. *Gallimh le Gaeilge* project works toward the positive alteration of speakers' and non-speakers' attitudes concerning the Irish Gaelic trying to avoid the direct and mandatory imposition of a specific variety. The important aspect is to show that the use of Irish is convenient, regardless of the fact that the language is pleasant or not. In this way avoiding the so-called "tokenism" or in other words a situation in which the local speakers are committed to speak the language and live in the "world of the local minority" in exchange for substantial economic incentives.

However, in spite of the fact that Galway is the most solid and populated core of the Gaeltacht, it represents a city that, throughout the years, has witnessed Anglicization as well. Here, the native Irish speakers have, in any case, to deal with the typical contrast city/majoritarian language/newness (English) vs countryside/minority language/backwardness (Irish) (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 138). For this reason, the project is not intended to "salvage the granny's language" but, on the contrary, it shows to the economic operators that Irish can be an excellent sponsor and source of income for Galway and its inhabitants. No sense of duty neither solidarity towards the language has been involved in the project; actually all the people concerned in this venture are very welcomed only if they believe that their adhesion will be beneficial to them. In this way, Galway would be

presented as the "Mecca of the Celts" (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 139) reinforcing its image as the first bilingual city of Ireland. Furthermore, it was proved that the presence of Irish would have brought economic and social benefits to the population whereas its loss would have impoverished the city, far more than the transfer of two or three multinational companies would. This argument demonstrates that the decision of fostering the actual use of Irish ought to be based on the good business sense.

In conclusion, the initiative has been undertaken in order to tempt the economic operators to introduce and boost the use of Irish in the business life, developing bilingual signage, bilingual websites, letterheads and menus thanks to the provision of translation services and finally increase the use of written and oral rapports with clients. The project is still ongoing with the first assessments regarding cost-benefit analysis apparently encouraging.

3. The XXI century Irish Gaelic: state of the language

Nowadays Ireland is still attempting to recover the linguistic roots of its native idiom through different measures but still misunderstanding the differences between "cultural recovery" and "linguistic recovery" (Chapter 2.3.3), communicative and symbolic function of the language and finally between knowing the language (thanks to the public school system) and using it as a daily vehicle of speech.

What has certainly been attained is the "cultural recovery", or the appreciation of and interest in the Irish language and traditions of the Gaelic society as Irish people are still to some extent practicing ancient rituals and passing on to their children the legendary Celtic mythology. The most famous Celtic festivals symbolising the changing of the seasons were *Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane* and *Lughnasadh* from which much emerges of the old life of the countryside. *Samhain* represented the beginning of the Celtic New Year, celebrated on the 1st November, and the thinnest division between this world and the otherworld allowing spirits to pass through; nowadays it is still practised but under the shape of Halloween (All Hallows). Then, *Imbolc* represented the herald of spring and, back in time, celebrated the Celtic Goddess Brigid of inspiration and healing whose name changed in St Brigit with the coming of Christianity and lost much of her symbolism; however, the making of Brigid's cross out of straw by schoolchildren and adults is still to this day widely practised (KERRIGAN, 2015: 208). *Beltane* was associated with the beginning of summer and the return of fertility. It consisted in the lighting of a big bonfire to which farmers would have brought their cattle to cleanse and protect them; nowadays this festival is still a deeply felt custom during which people gather together to dance, jump and sing around the fire to the rhythm of

Celtic music (Uisneach.ie) (Fig.10). Finally, *Lughnasadh* represented the end of summer and the beginning of the harvest season, during which people used to gather on hilltops or near watersides spending the day in festivity, sports and bilberry picking. Today the Puck Fair, celebrated in county Kerry, seems to be strictly associated with *Lughnasadh* festival since it has pagan origins celebrating the abundance of the harvest at the beginning of August. A cheerful crowd of people and children fill up Killorglin's streets along with horses, sheep and other various types of cattle, but the king of the fair is the white puck, or wild mountain goat, adorned with bows and ribbons. The legend, saying that if an unmarried girl takes part in the fair she will probably go back home with a partner, and the joyful dances around fires are a constant summoning of ancient pre-Christian rituals. Overall, it is pretty clear that in Ireland myths, legends and traditions are considered as current part of Irish society and people's lifestyle by both the old and young generations: «In Ireland, the Otherworld and its spirits are taken for granted. Wherever you go, you will find evidence of ancient beliefs, customs and traditions. » (KERRIGAN, 2015).

Figure 10: Beltane Fire Celebration, photo taken on 05/05/2019 at Uisneach Hill (Co. Westmeath).

Always dealing with Irish traditions, the Irish Pub is one of those that has never weakened. Nowadays it is still an institution in Ireland and the first gathering place for Irish citizens: whatever time is good to go in for a rich Irish breakfast, a quick lunch, a break after work or a good pint of Guinness shared with friends. In particular, it is right here that Irish speakers can relax and use their language in a cheerful and informal atmosphere. Nearly two years ago, Osgur Ó Ciardha and

Peadar Ó Caomhánaigh launched the Pop Up Gaeltacht project to fight against the negative attitudes surrounding the Irish language, seeking to give Irish speakers the chance to actively participate in conversation in the most beloved Irish space, the Irish Pub. As a matter of fact, the Pop Up Gaeltacht takes place monthly in different pubs across Dublin, as well as internationally, and is no-profit and open to everyone since you can organize your own event by choosing a bar, downloading publicity materials from the website (Cnag.ie, *Pop Up Gaeltacht*) and sharing your Facebook event. In this way, Irish Gaelic becomes the natural background sound of pubs and restaurants giving them an edge, especially considering that both local and foreign customers can learn little bits of words and expressions and live a unique experience.

The weird fact, according to the latest trends, is that it seems there are more "new speakers" than native speakers of Irish are. These people are interested in learning the Irish language (but also other minority languages across Europe) by non-traditional means, for example through adult classes or self-study, and are seeking diverse opportunities to speak the language on a regular basis (such as organizing a Pop Up Gaeltacht). The "new speakers" can be of different types: some of them of Irish origin and determined to put 13 years of Irish teaching into practice, others with a lack of confidence and grammatical accuracy, and often reluctant to engage in becoming fluent speakers. Young people of non-Irish origins are also part of this group, usually having a high language proficiency and a strong desire to support Irish Gaelic deeply shared with other Gaeltacht speakers. All in all, this is a widespread trend across Europe defined as "new speakers in a multilingual Europe" (*Census show we must rethink our approach to Irish and the Gaeltacht* 2017) highlighting the importance of fostering the use of Irish outside the traditional Gaeltacht. However, events such as the Pop Up Gaeltacht and the existence of a new speaker base represent an uncertain source and remain too limited to achieve a full revitalization of Irish and reacquire its communicative function in people's daily lives.

In conclusion, in spite of some achievements, constant struggles and positive attitudes toward the cultural background of the Irish language, we still have to deal with recent figures that demonstrate a significant decline of Irish in its traditional heartland (an 11% drop in daily speakers outside the education system as stated in Chapter 2.3). The language planning process needs to be intensified both in the Gaeltacht and in networks of new Irish speakers to have an actual impact on the communicative function of Irish Gaelic. Moreover, since the introduction of Irish among the 24 official languages of the European Union, all documents, EU laws and legislative texts should be published in Irish, as it is for all the other official languages. In this respect, a funding of €3.5 million euro was given to the Irish government in order to cover new translator and interpreter positions, however, the stark reality is that 23 vacancies remained to this day unfulfilled, mainly because there are too few daily Irish speakers having such a high proficiency in Irish to pass the

demanding EU's "Concours" tests. This situation led the European Union to the drafting of a special derogation withdrawing the obligation of publishing all documents in Irish, with its deadline being recently postponed to 2022 (Unitedlanguagegroup.com).

Thus, the final question is if in effect Irish is needed to survive or it is more a sort of cultural beauty to have, but it will not "put bread on the table". At this point, it is of primary importance to understand that the growing separation between the two fundamental functions of the language - *communicative* and *symbolic* - undermines the possibility of a full revitalization of Irish Gaelic. In spite of its very high theoretical, cultural and symbolic prestige, the Irish language is frequently associated to a "wonderful but very complex language" and remains a socially and economically weak language, whose use is undoubtedly scarce and confined in poor and rural areas. A situation that is likely to lead to a decrease in its prestige and a gradual emigration from rural areas toward the more developed ones, where English prevail over the native idiom. For this specific reason, whenever a linguistic policy is taken into account, it must be associated with programs aiming at a wider economic restoration and social development, such as *Gallimh le Gaeilge* project (Chapter 2.3.4) in order to avoid the so-called phenomenon of "death for extinction". On the other hand, if an economic revitalization is launched exclusively throughout the minority areas it could lead to a massive immigration from the outside, definitely diluting the native element of the Irish language. In this case, we may face the so-called "death for dilution". Lastly, attempting to create a linguistic and legislative protected area, wherein the linguistic use of Irish is specifically fostered, the risk is to create a sort of "artificial *enclave*" with the resulting loss of the spontaneous use of the language, such as in the *Fundúireacht Chlann Lir* project (Chapter 2.3.1) (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 137).

To sum up, every situation taken into account seems to bring with itself the risk of addressing the death or loss of the language in the near future. People do accept Irish as part of their cultural heritage as well as visible everywhere in public signage but in the meanwhile they seem to be restrained to accept it for daily usage. An arduous choice if we think that the language was actually last spoken by their great grandparents.

Conclusion

The main aim of the thesis was to demonstrate that a language without a solid communicative function is fated to gradually erode and die. For this purpose, it is crucial to understand the difference between *symbolic* and *communicative* function of the language already mentioned in the previous Chapter (IANNÀCARO, 2004: 19). The first one is the abstract function that confers social identity and sense of belonging to a shared past, customs and traditions to the

community that speaks the language; the second one instead is the immanent, concrete function concerning the practicality of the language and its possibility to serve as a vehicle to exchange information. These two functions generally coincide for established languages but at times, they can diverge – just like in Ireland. The majority of Irish people speak English (communicative function) but at the same time are ideologically tied up to the Irish language, often barely knowing it (symbolic function). This is the reason why Irish literature, Celtic festivals, customs and traditions are so lively in Ireland, as well as Gaelic writings on souvenirs, entrances of shopping malls and goods are frequent. People are deeply attached to their historical past and identity and do their best to teach the ancient language to the young generation, for example enrolling their children in *Gaelscoileanna* schools; but, at the same time, they do need to speak a language that can be useful in their daily social and economic life. This is the reason why most of the Irish people have gradually abandoned Irish Gaelic and switched to English, and most of RLS efforts are regrettably worthless.

For the moment, the best solution would be to preserve and protect the language as a valuable cultural heritage to honour Ireland's history and past that somehow brought this country to be what it is nowadays. The Irish language does not have to be forgotten but at the same time, we do have to accept that its nationwide communicative function has been lost more than a century ago. In this situation, the fate is in the hands of those no-profit independent companies (e.g. *Gallimh le Gaeilge, Carlow Arts Festival, Glor na nGael* and others) working together and collaborating locally to foster the economic value of the language, carrying out new projects and contributing in language planning efforts. Foras na Gaeilge is also responsible for the promotion of speaking and writing of Irish in the public and private arena while the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht also plays an important role in supporting the sustainable development of Ireland's heritage, culture and the Gaeltacht funding a number of state bodies and agencies aiming at intensifying the use of the Irish language. Finally, part of the challenge is also addressed to language activists in order to break down psychological barriers to the acceptance of Irish as a daily vehicle of speech, if this will ever become a widespread reality.

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