

Linguistic Attitude and the Failure of Irish Language Revival Efforts

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ABSTRACT: As a case of language maintenance Irish is seen by many as a failing attempt to survive an indigenous language. Irish is not a language which lacks poor support from the authorities; on the contrary Irish has the official status in Ireland. Since the commencement of the home rule movement there has been much effort invested to revive the Irish language; yet there is little chance that Irish would be able to maintain a status as the linguistic capital for Irish people. The fact of the situation is that for many Irish speakers, Irish is viewed as a useless language. This process is broad and complex, but one major factor is negative attitudes to a language, both in government policy and local communities. The paper briefly traces the history of the Irish language and discusses the linguistic behaviour or attitude of Irish people being responsible for the failure in language maintenance and revival efforts and consequently resulting in slow and gradual decline of the Irish language. The paper also presents few facts, figures and the reasons that highlight the fact that people's language attitude has negative impact on the Irish language's revitalization efforts. The present study also offers few suggestions on the change of attitude and the consequent possibility for the Irish language to be alive again in the rapidly changing situations.

KEYWORDS: Linguistic Attitude, Language Revival, Language Policy.

As a case of language maintenance Irish is seen by many as a failing attempt to survive an indigenous language. Irish is not a language which lacks poor support from the authorities; on the contrary, Irish has the official status in Ireland. The numbers of the speakers of Irish in Ireland is around 80,000. Since the beginning of the home rule movement in the middle of the last century there have been much efforts invested to revive the Irish language. According to the constitution of the Republic of Ireland, Irish is the first language of the country. There is also extensive political and economic support for the revival effort. There is strong positive consensus among the policy makers and the masses regarding Irish language revitalization movement; yet there is little chance that Irish would be able to maintain or regain its status as the linguistic capital for Irish people. The fact of the situation is that there are just too few Irish speakers and too few environments where Irish is preferred to English as a lingua franca. For many Irish speakers, Irish is viewed as a useless language. This process is broad and complex, but one major factor is negative attitudes to a language, both in government policy and local communities. The linguistic behaviour of the people towards Irish as a useless language is responsible in the failure of the Irish language maintenance efforts.

In this paper I would trace the history of the Irish language briefly and discuss the linguistic behaviour or attitude of Irish people being responsible for the failure in language maintenance and revival efforts and consequently resulting in slow and gradual decline of the Irish language. The attitude of Irish person towards Irish as a useless language is exhibited in the light of a number of facts surrounding various spheres and situations. Such attitude is reflected in social standing, preferences, poor language planning, geographic realities and monetary concerns - all interacting to conspire against the language. Very few people of Ireland speak Irish today. International commerce and trade are preferably carried out in English. For many people, including many governmental officials, Irish is viewed as a tongue for formal or ceremonial purposes only rather than a language for everyday use. There is very little academic, scientific, or technical material written in the language. The influence of English is so irresistible that Irish people prefer English to their own language almost everywhere. The ambivalent attitude of the people towards Irish language is manifested in almost all the spheres in the society. Such an

attitude influences the language maintenance efforts negatively. In this regard, language policies, introduction of immersion programs, retaining and maintaining the official status of the Irish language, cultural and literary productions, symbolic existence of the language in religion, tourist industry, and publication of text books, electronic media's contribution - none of these have been able to produce desired results. I will discuss the attitudes and linguistic behaviour of Irish people as the reason and the threat to their language, attitudes of children and parents affecting language policies in the elementary schools throughout their primary and post-primary careers, sociolinguistic context where success and failure in teaching Irish at primary level has important consequences for the success of the national efforts to maintain and revive Irish, and the evaluation of contextual factors outside the school which determine success in developing proficiency in Irish.

In this paper, I hope to sketch out some of the history of the Irish language revival movement and of its failure to resurrect the language. Then I will present some facts and figures that show that Irish is well on its way to death, unless some radical action is taken. I will then turn to the many interrelated reasons for the decline of the language and the failure of the revival movement. Finally, I will offer some words on the change of attitude and possibility for the Irish language to be alive again in the rapidly changing situations.

Languages die through cultural change and language replacement, by assimilation to a dominant culture and language. The Irish language can be taken as a living example of the victimisation of the dominant cultures and languages. In this section, I will briefly discuss the high and low points in the history of the Irish language and its revival movement. This discussion, owing to its length, is clearly not exhaustive; there are many other important events in the history of the Irish language which I have omitted here for reasons of space constraints. Modern Irish is a Celtic language spoken today mainly in isolated pockets on the west coast of Ireland. It is closely related to Scots Gaelic and Manx Gaelic and slightly more distantly related to Welsh, Cornish, and Breton. What were the Dark Ages in the rest of Europe was the Golden Age for Irish. At that time, Ireland was the center of learning in Western Europe and the language flourished, with large amounts of literature being written in it at that time. In the late Dark Ages, Ireland, like the rest of Europe, was the victim of raids from the Vikings. The Viking incursions mark the emergence of towns in Ireland. For example, Dublin, Galway, Cork, and Waterford were all founded by the Norse. These towns were primarily Norse-speaking and never assimilated to Irish. In 1170, we see the start of the Anglo-Norman invasions of Ireland. The Anglo-Normans conquered large parts of the country, including all the towns [1, 2]. The Anglo-Normans who lived in the rural areas quickly absorbed in the new land and learned Irish. Those in the towns, however, did not. Towns and cities, then, became the first place in Ireland that English took hold. The Statutes of Kilkenny, in 1366, are the first example of official oppression against the Irish language. Irish was banned in the court system and for use in commerce. Later, in the early 16th century, the Tudors attempted to unify their realms. Languages other than English were banned during this period. The year 1609 marks the start of the plantations of Ireland, starting under the rule of James I. English-speaking Protestant settlers, mainly from Scotland, were settled in the rich farmlands. The Irish-speaking Catholics native to the plantation areas were evicted and displaced to less hospitable land. These plantation areas became almost exclusively English-speaking. In 1633, the Cromwellian government cleared much of the Irish-speaking nobility of Leinster and Munster and heavily settled these areas. This plantation was less successful than the Jacobite plantations; however, by 1700 the Cromwellian settlers had assimilated and started speaking Irish. Paradoxically, looking at the present situation of the Irish language today it can be said that it was the culmination of the glorious period of Irish language [1, 2]. The period around 1780 marks the start of the Industrial Revolution in Ireland, primarily centered in the north around Belfast and in the south of Dublin and the Pale. The resultant change in demography and social structure perhaps marks the beginning of the end for the primacy of the Irish language in Ireland.

In the 1840s, the Irish potato famine took its toll on the rural population of Ireland, who were the bulk of the Irish speakers. During this time there was widespread death and emigration, especially among Irish speakers. In the decades following the famine 1840s the number of Irish speakers declined rapidly so that "in 1911 there were only 553,717 Irish speakers left in Ireland compared to 8,000,000 prior to famine" [3]. Emigration was primarily to English-speaking places like Canada, the United States, and Australia, so a whole generation of Irish speakers was lost. The 1937 Constitution of Ireland gave official recognition to both Irish and English but designated Irish, a minority language, as the first official language. 1922 marks the foundation of the Irish Free State and the division of Ireland into two sections (the Free State and Northern Ireland). At this time, schools were required to teach at least one hour of Irish each day. Soon after this division, the Irish civil war broke out in the south. This conflict was particularly divisive in the language revival movement. Language revivalists were found on both sides of the war, so little progress was made during that period. In 1937, Irish was officially declared the south's first language in the constitution. With this, the language revival movement received perhaps its greatest level of official and public support.

Many authors [3, 4, 5] however, feel that, despite this support, the language is still in irreparable decline. Only about 5% of those people who live in the mainly English-language areas of the country speak Irish frequently either at home or at work, though another 10% or so speak or read Irish regularly. Larger percentages report occasional use of Irish, most often passive

use such as listening to or watching Irish-language radio and television programmes [6, 7]. In the relatively small Gaeltacht (Irish speaking) areas, mainly along the west coast, about 43% of people speak Irish on a daily basis according to 1996 census data [Ó Riagáin, 2001 as cited in 7, p. 964]. Without a doubt, emigration from Irish-speaking regions has been and continues to be a major problem for the revival movement and the survival of the language. In the last century there was widespread migration from the rural Irish-speaking areas. This has continued to this day. A visitor to the *gaeltacht* today will be surprised at how few young people there are. Most young people flee to the larger English-speaking cities of Ireland or to North America and Australia. This is, without a doubt, due in turn to the economic weakness of the *gaeltachtaí*. The *gaeltachtaí* are physically remote and tend to have fairly poor land and natural resources [7, 8]. They are mainly farming communities and have relatively little industrialization. Because the Unemployment is very high in gaeltacht areas, for many young people, English is viewed as a kind of economic liberator. Speaking English well benefits the young person in his or her quest for a job outside the *gaeltacht*, where the bulk of jobs are to be found. On the flipside of the emigration issue is the amount of monolingual English immigration into the *gaeltacht*. Often when an Irish speaker goes away to university or for employment, he or she will meet a spouse who is a monolingual English speaker. If ever this couple decide to return to the *gaeltacht*, the language of the home will be English. Since English is the prestige language of Ireland, their children will also become English speakers.

Today the “Irish language is an official language in Ireland but it is minority language, because English is the lingua franca” [3, P. 144]. There was in Ireland, as in England, widespread movement of the population from the countryside to the cities and towns. Not only is English the language of the cities and towns, technology also brings the people there who speak English. There is thus a widespread switch from Irish to English in much of the population. Irish has come to be spoken primarily by the peasantry in the countryside.

The 19th century is when the Irish language experienced its greatest decline. A number of factors contributed to this. In the wake of unemployment, for many young people, English is viewed as a kind of economic liberator. “Make any people intelligent and rational and they will gradually lose their prejudices; many of them acquire a taste for general knowledge, and they will seek for it in the general tongue of the empire.” [Dewar 1812, as cited in 3, P. 148]. No doubt, the language of empire in Ireland is English. Speaking English well benefits the young person in his or her quest for a job outside the *gaeltacht*, where the bulk of jobs are to be found. Similarly, we find English immigration due to the industrialization projects. In the development of highly technical industries, it is often the case that the outside native English-speaking managers and technical advisors come in to assist in the project. Since these people have relatively high status and are outsiders, the language in these environments naturally shifts towards English. A related problem has to do with the fact that technical material (for example, computer manuals) to do with these projects is very often monolingually English.

On a related note, there are also widespread transient English-speaking populations which annually visit the *gaeltachtaí* as tourists. Some of Ireland’s most spectacular scenery is to be found in the Irish-speaking regions. Ireland conforms in many ways to this contemporary economic-cultural phenomenon. It is also worth noting that “English is the *lingua franca* of the tourist industry” [4, p. 24]. François Vellas and Lionel Bécherel in their widely cited book *International Tourism*, [as cited in 4, p. 26] for example, have a mere twelve lines to discuss the socio-cultural effects of tourism which reveals almost no reference to the Irish language. The preeminent journal in the field, *Annals of Tourism Research*, contains no serious article on the subject of Irish language. “It is as if in an Anglophone world, no language exists other than English” [4, p. 26]. Tourists, most of whom are English-speaking, provide the bulk of the economy in these regions. The Gaeltacht Industrialization Agency (Údaráis na Gaeltachta) has opened several *ceardlann* (craft centers) in the *gaeltachtaí*. These craft centers are meant to provide the local artisans and artists who specialize in traditional craftwork with a place to sell their wares to tourists. Although these are primarily restricted to Irish speakers, these have started a boom in craft stores throughout the *gaeltacht* regions. Unfortunately, the unofficial craft centers have widely attracted artists from outside the *gaeltacht*. For obvious reasons, then, the language of service people and others who have interaction with the public is primarily English.

One of the most troubling facts about the Irish language revival movement is that despite a general increase in population in the nation as a whole, the number of Irish speakers and the amount they use the language have declined considerably. Despite the language revival efforts, the Irish language is on its way to death. “Language death is a protracted change of state. Used to describe community based loss of competence in a language, it denotes a process that doesn’t affect all speakers at the same time nor to the same extent...total death is declared when no speakers are left of a particular language variety in a population that had used it” [9, p. 203]. It was estimated that by “1800 there were around 800,000 monoglot Irish speakers in Ireland. This had dropped to 319,602 by the mid century and even further to 16,873 by early in the twentieth century” [Cowley, 2005 as cited in 3, P. 146]. Today there are no monoglot Irish speakers...there are also non Irish speakers living within the boundaries of the Gaeltacht, resulting in the continuing decline in the percentage of Irish speakers from 82.9 percent in 1971 to 77.4 percent in 1981 and from 76.3 in 1996 to 70.8 percent in 2006 [Census 2006, as cited 3]. The language question on the Irish census is primarily self-reporting; that is, people are asked whether they are Irish-speaking or

not. There is no clear definition of what it means to be an “Irish speaker.” This could mean anything from having taken a few lessons in school to being a fluent native speaker. There is no objective standard as to what it means to be a speaker of the language for the purposes of the census. These percentages that come out are not only contradictory to the reality but also highly inflated. The attitudinal preference of English over Irish has been implicitly affecting the revival movement. The number of native speakers of the language (that is, people by whom Irish is learned as a first language or is learned simultaneously with English as a first language) is very low. The geographic regions in which Irish is spoken on an everyday basis are much smaller than the official *gaeltacht* regions. The actual area in which Irish is a living language is very small. Further, all the Irish-speaking regions are highly geographically remote from large population centers and are themselves among the most sparsely populated parts of the country. This is less than positive for the status of the Irish language.

In the late 19th century, the republican home-rule movement was growing in strength. The 19th century, however, was also the time when resurgent interest in the language and its revival grew among non-native speakers. Irish became a symbol of the republican movement. The English governmental reaction to this was to suppress Irish culture and language. (From the 1840s onwards there was a movement to revive the Irish language because it was regarded as a symbol of Irish national identity. These efforts were institutionalized by the state after independence in 1922 [3, P. 145]. There was also growing interest in the language from linguists, philologists, and folklorists who traveled to the remaining Irish-speaking areas (*gaeltachtaí*) to collect stories and data. The Gaelic League, one of the main promoters of the language revival movement, was founded in 1893. In 1878, it became possible for students to take Irish as a subject for intermediate examination. The new language policies were introduced to promote the Irish language, but “From the sixteenth century onwards there has been a confused education and language policies” [3, P. 144]. In 1879, primary schools were finally permitted to teach Irish, but only outside of school hours. In 1900, primary schools were finally allowed to teach Irish inside school hours, but only if they met certain standards.

A language is always associated with national identity and vice versa. The attitudes of people are reflected through the symbolic capital of a language, but “Ireland is an exception e.g. Ireland’s nation building efforts are based, not on language but... on religion... moreover, not all communities defined by language could be given independence, either because they were geographically dispersed or because such a solution ran counter to the strategic interests of the major powers [10, p. 44]. The focus in educational policies can be “traced back many centuries,” to 1537 as the chief aim of the clergy has been the instruction of the Irish and their children in the English language [3, P. 148]. While language is often a core cultural value for many ethnic and national groups, it is not so in relation to Irish identity., the core values of the Irish ethnic group are unquestionably centred on the Catholic religion rather than on the Irish language itself, a process that has been intensified by the fact that English was adopted as the language of Irish Catholicism from the late eighteenth century onwards [11]. It is in Catholicism that the Irish have always found the refuge and shield behind which they can retain their identity, and awareness of their distinction from the conquering British Protestants [1]. This might well explain the ongoing decline of the Irish language. Most Protestants regard Irish as a largely “dead and useless language” [12, p. 396]. These notions are reflected at school in pupils’ perceptions of Irish Language.

Unfortunately, owing to the poverty and remoteness of many of the *gaeltachtaí*, most schools in Irish-speaking areas do not meet the standards of compulsory Irish propounded in language and education policies, so English continues to be the only language of instruction in the schools. “One must surely question the issue of teaching methods and language planning for Irish in Ireland after 1922” [13, p. 125]. Due to the inherent drawbacks in the teaching methods and language planning, “it has been argued, there is a slow but steady decline in the position of Irish in primary schools.” [Harris & Murtagh, 1988 as cited in 7, p. 965]. By 1980-1981, for example, only 5% of schools were teaching entirely through Irish, 1% were teaching some classes through Irish while the remainder were teaching Irish as a subject. The gradual decline of Irish in schools and students competence is due to their attitude towards Irish. There are number of factors effecting attitudes towards Irish [7, 8]. We begin with general academic ability and social class and then proceed to a number of other factors, including regional/urban-rural location, and home language and amount of Irish-medium instruction at school.

This brings us to one of the most spectacular failures in the Irish language revival program. Each year, thousands of English-speaking school-aged children are sent to language immersion programs at “Gaelic colleges” throughout the *gaeltachtaí*, in an attempt to make them fluent and familiar with the language. “This has backfired terribly” [1, p.139]. By forcing an annual infusion of thousands of English speakers who are reluctant and resistant to the Irish language, the Irish speakers are both outnumbered and overwhelmed; English quickly becomes the language of use outside the colleges. Free secondary education was introduced in 1960s and this resulted in more people remaining in education for a longer period of time. As a result of compulsory Irish at school, and increasing length of years spent in education, “the majority of Irish people still see Irish primarily as a school subject” [3, P. 144]. There is another kind of negative stigma associated with Irish, however, and that comes from the educational system. Until the 1970s, in order to get a higher-learning certificate in Ireland,

students had to pass an exam in Irish. This, coupled with exceedingly bad pedagogical methods in the teaching of Irish, has resulted in widespread resentment of the language among people who were forced to take it in school.

The importance of attitudinal factors and how they determine successful acquisition of a foreign language has been stressed in many studies. It has often been indicated, for instance, “that learners who have favourable attitudes towards a language and towards its speakers and their culture tend to be more successful in their learning than those who have negative attitudes” [12, p. 393]. The fact of the matter is that there are simply too few Irish speakers and too few environments where Irish is to be preferred to English. Such linguistic behaviour “can be regarded as...the apparent willingness of Irish speakers themselves to abandon the language. The mass of Irish people are more or less active contributors to the spread of English” [1, p.138]. For many seemingly Irish speakers, Irish is viewed as a useless language for the reasons of economical benefits that the English language accrues. The vitality and use of “languages cannot be disassociated from the socioeconomic interests and activities of their speakers” [9, p. 206]. For the same reason, very few people both inside and outside of Ireland speak it; international commerce and trade are much more likely to be conducted in English. Various national and international studies have also indicated that social-class background is positively linked to general educational outcomes, including second-language achievement and attitude. In interpreting such findings, it should be borne in mind that social class tends to be primarily defined in terms of parents’ occupation. It has been argued, however, that the really critical factors in determining success in school life are ‘cultural capital’ indices such as parental values, attitudes, tastes, beliefs and linguistic practices [Bourdieu, 1974, as cited in 7, P. 966]. In this regard, parental attitude in the home use of Irish is also an important factor. A national survey on languages in Ireland in 1994 reported that Irish was never spoken in over two-thirds of Irish homes [6]. The opportunities for children outside the Gaeltacht to use Irish at home are fairly limited; pupils tend to have a poor estimation of their own ability in Irish compared to their self-concept in relation to other subjects. A substantial minority are anxious about speaking Irish in class. Pupils and classes with low levels of achievement in Irish often complain of difficulty in understanding the lesson or the teacher and express general apathy and discouragement about learning Irish. For example, a majority of parents do not directly promote positive attitudes to learning Irish; they are much less likely to praise their child’s achievements in Irish than they are to praise other subjects; and they are less likely to help with homework in Irish than in other subjects [7]. Such attitude towards Irish is caused by many reasons. First, it is more difficult for both teachers and pupils to identify a proximal goal or motivation outside school for learning to speak the language in the classroom. In addition, in teaching the language, and in developing tasks and materials for use within the classroom, it is more difficult to identify situations, contexts and even language registers which make the prospect of using Irish credible or plausible. Another reason is that the range of authentic Irish-language materials and the volume of commercially-produced resources available for teaching and learning Irish at this level bears no comparison with that available in English [7]. Although a certain number of degrees are now available through the medium of Irish at the University College Galway and there is a new business program at the City University of Dublin taught through Irish, these are the exceptions to the rule. English is viewed by most Irish people as the language of education and learning.

The view of Irish as a useless language is exacerbated by a number of factors. There is very little scholarly, technological, or technical material written in the language. Most Irish publication today seems to consist mostly of poetry and traditional stories. This is consistent with the fact that, for many people, unfortunately including many governmental officials, Irish is viewed as a tongue for formal or ceremonial purposes only (that is, for inscriptions on monuments) rather than a language for everyday use. This gives rise to widespread linguistic tokenism. For example, road signs in Ireland are bilingual Irish/English, yet there has been no real attempt to push for the language to be used in other realms outside of the *gaeltacht*. Even native Irish speakers generally ignore the token Irish on the signage and read the English translation.

A related problem to language tokenism has to do with general linguistic attitudes towards Irish. Historically, especially among plantation populations and among people in the city, Irish was viewed as a peasant’s language. Being heard speaking Irish was to be marked as an uneducated and poor peasant. “For several centuries the British state opposed the Irish language. The result was that by the late nineteenth century Irish was spoken only in the poorest and remotest parts of Ireland. Even in those remote places in the nineteenth century the national education system worked against the Irish language. As a result, the Irish language was associated with poverty and ignorance” [3, P. 144]. We often hear tales of how Irish was beaten out of children in the middle of the last century. This situation is strongly reminiscent of religious missionaries of the last century. Where the missionary in Africa, ignorant of the culture of people he was dealing with, went to convert the “poor pagans” to Christianity, the teacher in Ireland went to cure the Gael of their “ignorant” and “barbaric” tongue. The result was devastating to language: Irish became highly stigmatized and speaking it carried a strong negative connotation. This attitude, although somewhat counteracted by the association of the language with republicanism and national pride, continues to this day for many people.

The widespread opinion is that although in principle they support the revival of the language for political reasons, Irish English speakers themselves want nothing to do with the revival personally. They have absolutely no desire to learn the

language at all. On the other side of the coin, however, is the general resentment of Irish speakers to outsider language revivalists and linguists, who are viewed with suspicion since, in a sense, it is not their (Irish's) battle. For many native speakers, language revivalists from outside the *gaeltacht* are viewed as radicals or, worse yet, as cultural pirates and thieves. To a certain extent, then, the language revival movement has suffered from internal resistance and strife.

Apart from these attitudinal difficulties, there are several problems inherent to Irish that have given rise to failure for the language. First, we have the problem that the *gaeltachtaí* are fairly widely spaced from one another, so there is little inter-*gaeltacht* interaction. There is also somewhat of a lack of a social continuity among Irish speakers. This in turn has led to the somewhat problematic situation that there are essentially three very distinct dialects. This can be seen in the fact that each of the three dialects has a different name for the language itself [8]. This is reflective of the fact that the three dialects are widely different in their lexicons, their syntaxes, and their phonologies. There is no prestige dialect among them. There is a government-defined official standard (the *Caighdeán*); however, it does not really approximate any of the individual dialects, so native speakers tend to avoid it and label it as "artificial." From the perspective of teaching the language to people living outside the *gaeltacht*, this causes problems. Learners must either learn an artificial standard or choose to identify themselves with one particular dialect.

To make matters worse, there is the public perception that Irish is a difficult language to learn. This is in part based upon the fact that its spelling system is very different from that of many of the more common European languages, and its VSO syntax is somewhat exotic in the context of languages like English, French, and German. The official standardization of the language is not without fault. The most serious problem with it is that it does not agree with any systematic way with the spoken dialects. A system of spelling intended for general usage must take account of a certain amount of variation, and in the case of Irish the standard should reflect the pronunciation of the main dialects. Since the pronunciation in the dialects varies, having either of three pronunciations, there is no any unanimous agreement on any one standard pronunciation. In cases such as those given above, the recommendations of the standard orthography by their random and unsystematic nature fail to achieve a desirable level of abstract representation in the spelling to which speakers of all dialects could feel linguistic loyalty [14]. Perceptions about the difficulty of the language, however, have caused many people to avoid the revival movement entirely, thus giving rise to the current situation. "In Irish-language circles—especially in non-native, teaching, and academic circles—"mistake-spotting" is a widespread pastime that some have developed almost into an art form" [13, p. 117]. As regards the current generation of young Gaeltacht speakers, there may be a danger of creating an inferiority complex if the prescriptive grammatical norms of the three or four generations back are not revised.

Perhaps the highest blame that can be assigned for the failure of the language and its revival can be firmly placed with the language revivalists themselves. a great deal of language policy making goes on in a haphazard or uncoordinated way, far removed from the language planning ideal [Fettes, 1997 as cited in 15, p.25]. Despite obvious good intentions, some remarkably bad policy decisions have been made. Probably the biggest problem for the revival movement has been in putting the burden on the educational system, rather than in promoting the usefulness of the language in everyday life. It has been argued "that public opinion, which can be defined as the aggregate of individual beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes held by the adult population, eventually, if not immediately, is the basis of language policy" [16]. It is fairly clear that in order to revive a language, emphasis has to be placed on usage in the home and in the general community rather than isolating it in the educational system. Unfortunately, there has been little progress in this area. We find that Irish suffers wherever there is language competition. Although there are a few Irish language newspapers, they tend to be in tabloid form, rather than examples of high-quality journalism. Since all speakers of Irish are bilingual; it is the case that when offered a choice of services in both languages, the English is usually better, so they choose to use the English. This is an area in which funding from governmental sources could easily make a difference. Comparing Irish revival movement with Hebrew [10] says that a language much must have a rich literary tradition, which could hold its own against those of rival languages, whereas Irish literature is no match against English literature. A lot of people who could understand a story they cannot read Irish or afford to buy a book, while those who read Irish only consider the linguistic aspect [13]. On the top of that, most Irish nationalists are more familiar with the English literary tradition than the Irish one [10, p. 44]. Although there are several publishers working very hard at producing a wide variety of interesting Irish language material, it is still the case that Irish language print material cannot compete with English. There simply are more books published in English; those books tend to be better and more professionally produced and, because of their wide distribution and popularity, are significantly cheaper than Irish books.

There is no Irish language television station, and what Irish television is available on the English stations tends to be targeted at older native speakers, rather than at the younger generations who are the next step in continuing the survival of the language [13]. Furthermore, what shows are available tend to be shown at less than desirable hours, often competing with more popular (and better funded) English language shows.

It is clearly the case that a myriad of problems have hindered the Irish language and its revival. We have social pressure, bad attitudes, poor planning, geographic concerns, and monetary concerns all interacting to conspire against the language. The influence of English is so overwhelming that it is not clear in what contexts Irish would ever be used if the majority of Irish could be convinced to become functionally bilingual. What is the solution to the problem? Citing Cooper, (1989) [15] proposes that the solution lies in the language policies made with the idea of “what actors attempt to influence what behaviours of which people for what ends under what conditions by what means through what decision making process with what effect?” [15, p.24]. In order to revive a language attitude should be changed in all the contexts. In order to revive, Irish it must be made relevant for use in a wide variety of contexts, including, but not exclusively, schools. It must be spoken in such a way and in such a quantity that children of language-acquiring age can learn it. Irish also shows that language attitudes are very important and, where changeable, should be the initial focus of the revival movement. Money should be invested in the glossiest and appealing forms of mass media available. In particular, these media should be aimed at people of parenting age and younger and should be not only accessible but entertaining and interesting as well. Irish people are now genuinely more proud of their culture than they were a few years ago. If it continues, then it may well serve in *lieu* of a demographic shift. More people will be proud of and display their Irish language skills. This in turn will lead to more awareness of, more use of and, by extension, more acquisition of the language. Looking at the future it is difficult to say what the long term effect of the shift from policies of compulsion to minority rights policies will be. It appears that the increasingly positive attitude to Irish (expressed chiefly in private and opinion polls) will mean that Irish will survive at least as a private symbol of national identity.

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