

Dóchas is Dúchas, Hope and Heritage

Gaelscoileanna; Transforming Power and Linguistic Ideology

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Summary of Thesis

This thesis examines *Gaelscoileanna* in terms of the socio-historical, political, and ideological contexts from which the movement emerges, and their place in contemporary Irish society. Employing ‘machine theory’, the project examines the movement as both the product of, and also productive of power, desire, and competing social realities.

Chapter one examines the position of the Irish language in Education throughout history, focussing on the marginalisation of the language, and current disparities of policy and practice that persist today. *Gaelscoileanna* emerge in response to the marginalisation of the Irish language in Education. *Gaelscoileanna* are both produced by and productive of social machinations involving power and desire, emerging to facilitate the reproduction of an Irish language community, not catered to by the state. Through ethnographic interviews, the emergence of *Gaelscoileanna*, and the structural barriers to their emergence, is examined.

Chapter two explores the rationale for the discrepancies in State language policy that has provided *Gaelscoileanna* their impetus. Employing a cross-cultural, post-Colonial comparison, it is argued that the imperial structure of Irish education has been maintained as a means of legitimising the State, by producing citizens to the state. In so doing, the rationale for the marginalisation of the Irish language has also been maintained. In this way, it is argued that *Gaelscoileanna* represent an indigenous movement reacting against cultural imperialism, rather than a minority language initiative struggling against language shift. *Gaelscoileanna* represent a

democratisation of education, demanding the decentralisation of the primary means of socialisation – education – from state to people. This implies that the subjectivities created in *Gaelscoileanna* differ, then, from those produced by the state.

The third chapter examines the transformation of education in ideological terms, exploring *Gaelscoil* subjectivity and the production and reproduction thereof, language acquisition, innovation and ownership. Thus, the production and products of *Gaelscoileanna* are examined, in the machine of their production.

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Introduction

'Táimid ag snámh in aghaidh na habhainn'

'We're swimming against the current'

Múinteoir Maire, Scoil Neasáin

Gaelscoileanna are a locus of contemporary negotiations of Irish identity. Ireland's colonial history has produced specific modern concerns with notions of tradition, indigeneity, identity, and cultural continuity. At least in part, the *Gaelscoil* movement is reactive to these concerns. Its relatively rapid expansion as a pivotal instrument of institutional reform in Irish education system (www.gaelscoileanna.ie) is also indicative of a confluence of modern linguistic ideology and institutional democratisation. *Gaelscoileanna*, as a relatively new educational movement, is a challenge to mainstream socialisation of children, the product of which is a new reflection of a transformed power dynamic.

This thesis will examine the education system of Ireland historically, linguistically and politically, and attempt to situate the *Gaelscoil* movement therein. Treating education as a machine productive of subjects/subjectivities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), I will attempt to examine the products of this newly constructed/reconstituted mechanism.

The project focuses on one primary level *Gaelscoil* for a single school term, concentrating on how *Gaelscoil* ideals operate in the classroom context, parental expectations of *Gaelscoil* education, and the self-conscious construction of identity through language. Participant-observant ethnographic methods provide insight into the *Gaelscoil* classroom, and the experience of the children, parents, and teachers,

whilst also examining the social context of this movement. The project provides an insider's view of the process of *Gaelscoil* education and childhood socialisation, and its correlative impact on the social currents against which they perceive themselves as swimming.

Theoretical Context of the Research

The project falls within three interrelated areas in Anthropology; the first concerning the Anthropology of education, the second area regarding the Anthropology of Colonisation and the impact thereof on Indigenous peoples/cultures, and the third relating to issues of tradition, identity and language maintenance.

The primary theoretical basis for my research is Deleuzian, treating society and its institutions (in this case Education) as a machine, productive of subjects and subjectivities. The products of these machinations directly reflect the power politics of their time, be it Colonial, National, or as I later argue, the democratic assertion of indigenous language rights. '[S]ocial-production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 29). This project examines the conditions and desires from which the production of *Gaelscoileanna* and their pupils have emerged and in which they operate.

Bourdieu and Passeron argue that schools, acting as a principal socialising force in early childhood, produce a system of relations that reflect social hierarchy and are fundamental tools of social reproduction. The authors argue, 'every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the

power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, 4).

In Ireland, schools have historically been employed to reinforce and legitimise Colonial, State or Church power, productive of subjects, citizens, or believers. Academic literature of education in Ireland has documented the various power politics articulated through the education system (Akenson, 1975, Altbach and Kelly, 1978, Coolahan, 1981, Drudy and Lynch, 1993, Inglis, 1998). Each of these powers utilised the educational structures established by their predecessor, or have worked cooperatively (for largely pragmatic, power-political reasons), in their ambition to produce pliable subjects. Yet, whilst the power and interests behind the education system have evolved over time, the structure itself has retained a largely hierarchical configuration. In this way, the transformation of the school system instituted by *Gaelscoileanna* – from a top-down institutional structure, to a community-based, flatter management structure represents a departure from normative schooling. Central to this project is the investigation of the implications of this reconstituted power dynamic, and the effects of this innovative socialisation of children.

Managing the machine in Ireland

The contention that society is a machine - a contentious, powerful and potentially dangerous machine - appears throughout Irish social commentary and social thought (both past and present). In many ways Irish identity has been fraught with reflexive anxiety about cultural encroachment from the 'other', which reinforces a simultaneous and intrinsic connection to the linguistic politics of identity. (Crowley, 2000). What emerges from the mire of Irish linguistic politics, evident in Crowley's

The Politics of Language in Ireland 1366-1922, is that central to the creation of an 'Irish identity' (in whatever form it was argued should take) was/is the question of language. Key to the production of these contested identities was the education system, a machine capable of producing Anglo-Irish, Gaelic Irish, Colonial subjects or Irish Nationals. Crowley's compilation of various policy documents and social commentaries, from the broadest variety of the Irish political spectrum, reveals that regardless of the specificities of what these agents agitated for, or commented upon, language and identity (both English and Irish), are intrinsically connected to one another in the Irish context. Language, from the time of the Statute of Kilkenny to the present-day Irish State, is used to mark and maintain a political, social and cultural boundary between 'us' and 'them'. Equally evident in this volume is the importance placed on education (or at times the lack thereof) on maintaining identity boundaries.

Previous to the foundation of the National Education system in 1831, a system of social apartheid was enforced in Ireland to maintain a barrier between British colonial and Irish Native. This arrangement, known as the 'Penal Code', was a broad system of laws governing social, economic and educational rights of Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Edmund Burke described it as 'a complete system full of coherence and composed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.' (quoted in Dowling, 1971, 73). Education (or in this case, its prohibition) was an essential part of the mechanics of producing and reproducing the structure of Irish society at a time when 'native' Catholics were

subservient to 'colonial' Protestants whose interests in turn were best served by the maintenance of the Colonial order.

As will later be discussed, social circumstance and political pragmatism necessitated the creation of a National Education system in 1831. The realisation that such a powerful machine for socialisation was designed to produce a specific subjectivity under Colonial Rule - the Colonial subject - prompted Pádraig Pearse's famously biting polemic *The Murder Machine* (1915) a warning to the future Government of an Irish Free State. 'Modern education systems are elaborate pieces of machinery devised by highly-salaried officials for the purpose of turning out citizens according to certain approved patterns. The modern school is a State-controlled institution designed to produce workers for the State...articles necessary for the progress, well-being, and defence of the State.' (Pearse, 1915, 13). Pearse called for nothing less than the recreation of an Irish education system, designed to serve the Irish state, and therefore, the Irish people, 'what is needed here is not reform, not even revolution, but a vastly bigger thing - a creation. It is not a question of pulling the machinery asunder and piecing it together again; it is a question of breathing into a dead thing a living soul.' (Pearse, 1915, 10).

In a more recent critique of the Irish education system, Akenson reviews the Educational policies of the Irish Governments since partition, concluding that only a 'tinkering of the machinery' (Akenson, 1975, 25) was achieved in that time, and effectively Irish children were still being educated in a British system initially designed to subjugate them, now being used to create citizens, at each stage reinforcing a social hierarchy which places them at a disadvantage. 'In most matters

of public policy', Akenson writes, 'the Irish revolution was less a revolution than a change in management and in no area was the essential conservatism of the revolution more clearly exemplified than in the refusal of the new government to change fundamentally the school systems inherited from the imperial administration.' (Akenson, 1975, 25).

De Valera (and successive Governments), whilst invoking the same romantic vision of Irish identity, ultimately oversaw what amounted to the application of an inherited educational institution, but newly imbued with Irish cultural symbolism, and almost inextricably linking the Irish language to Irish nationality. The creation of Irish nationals became bound to the re-emergence of an Irish speaking polity, where the anxiety of threatened identity, that 'Irishness' itself might be subsumed by the other, just as the Irish language was under threat of subjugation to the English language. That De Valera's government chose to do so through the medium of a British education system is an irony later investigated.

"Next to our pillar boxes," an Irish educationalist wrote in 1955, "probably the most distinctive monument recalling English rule in Ireland is the system of education." (quoted in Akenson, 1975, 25)

This observation was reiterated to me during a recent interview with a representative of *Gaelscoileanna*. When questioned about the 'change of management' which had occurred in lieu of reform of Irish education, and whether or not it could account for the emergence of *Gaelscoileanna*, the spokesperson responded; 'I suppose the education system still does refer back to Britain an awful lot. It's like we took the

system, glossed over it with a bit of Irish language and culture and hoped that'd be enough'. Evidently, for the parents, teachers and pupils involved in the *Gaelscoil* movement that was not enough. They sought, and established, an education system, which addressed the linguistic and cultural needs that had been 'glossed over' by previous administrators. It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate why the desire to do this occurred, and what this newly constructed machine now produces.

Aims of the project

... 'schools can be used as cultural litmus paper telling us things about the Irish people which are otherwise apt to be overlooked' (Akenson, 1975, x)

In *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face*, Akenson examines the Irish education system as reflective of Government and society and constructs a convincing critique of the relationship of successive Irish Governments (and those whom they have represented) to the Irish language within the Education system. Akenson skilfully exposes the smoke and mirrors fallacy that has been Irish language policy through the Education system, and the complicit part an apathetic Irish people has played in the charade of linguistic maintenance/revival.

Gaelscoileanna represent a significant cultural departure from the socio-linguistic norm. They are a community-based initiative aimed specifically at Irish medium Education, by means of substantial educational autonomy. As such they represent the reflection of a considerable shift in the structure of Education, and the structure of society, not to mention an articulation of dissatisfaction and frustration with the

linguistic status quo - the maintenance of Irish as a symbolic index of National identity rather than 'a living language and a language for living' (*Gaelscoil Mide* prospectus.)

This project will investigate the *Gaelscoileanna* in the context of their relatively recent rapid expansion, and their contribution to the improvement of educational options for linguistically marginalized communities.

Gaelscoileanna emerge from the confluence of the above discourse of linguistic ideology by means of what I define as socio-economic pragmatics. The presence of *Gaelscoileanna* in marginalized communities represents the conflation of such pragmatics on the part of the *Gaelscoil* movement with those of parents. The foundation of a *Gaelscoil* is often contingent upon the monetary support and commitment of parents, and the availability of suitable, affordable sites for such a school. Often these sites are schools vacated by national schools (as in the case of *Gaelscoil Mide*), or temporary pre-fabricated buildings (usually vacated after the school gains official recognition). The sites available to such communities are often deemed inadequate for schooling purposes, and the majority of *Gaelscoileanna* (specifically on the Northside of Dublin) are located in marginalized, and hence, more 'affordable' areas.

In spite of these disadvantages, and the structural barriers to official recognition and funding, not to mention the difficulty of finding parents willing to enrol their children in schools that may not yet be fully recognised by the Department of Education,

Gaelscoileanna have mushroomed throughout Dublin, and indeed the whole country (see growth chart, appendix (i) and (ii), or www.gaelscoileanna.ie).

This project will investigate the impact of *Gaelscoil* education, for children, their parents, and the wider community. Placing a focus on the ‘intangible’ factors such as parent/teacher commitment, school size, benefits of bilingualism etc. is done with a view to providing valuable data for the future exploration of how these factors might be employed in the wider national school system to the benefit of Irish pupils.

Fieldwork

Scoil Neasáin, an Irish-medium primary school in Harmonstown, North Dublin, provided the primary field site for this study. The fieldwork took place over the course of a single school term, conducted each Monday from January to June, and consisted of participant observation in each classroom, from *Naíonáin Beaga* (Junior Infants of 4-5 years), to Sixth class (11-12 years). Supplementing this fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the principal, teaching staff, parents and pupils (in a classroom context). Due to a previous undergraduate project at *Gaelscoil Míde* in Kilbarrack, I also had the opportunity to attend an induction day for the parents of children preparing to join the school the following September, and interviewed these parents regarding their motivations for choosing a *Gaelscoil*, the perceived advantages of such a decision, and the importance of Irish to their families. In a bid to broaden the context of the study, and so enable a more useful, credible examination of the social context of the movement, I also conducted an interview with *Máistir* Ray MacManais, principal of *Gaelscoil Míde*, and Nóra Ní Linsigh of

Gaelscoileanna - an organisation which advises and supports parents interested in founding *Gaelscoileanna*. School prospectuses from both *Scoil Neasáin* and *Gaelscoil Míde* were also useful references.

Scoil Neasáin was founded in 1969, and following an initial period of insecurity, without permanent buildings for 3 years, the school has established and distinguished itself in the north Dublin community of Harmonstown.

Scoil Neasáin was chosen as a field site largely, and significantly, by default. The first encounter a researcher of *Gaelscoileanna* has with the inordinate pressure under which *Gaelscoileanna* operate comes in attempting to find a school able to facilitate fieldwork. After contacting by phone and email each of the *Gaelscoileanna* I could conceivably reach for fieldwork, I had grown accustomed to the corresponding genuine interest in the project, followed by the polite declines. Cited were a variety of reasons - the most common of which was the existing burden of a chronic shortage of teaching staff preventing practical support of any outside initiatives.

Scoil Neasáin was one of the first schools I contacted (being one of the closest to where I live). Although Maire, acting principal at the time, at first declined to host the project, she kindly offered to reconsider should I run into difficulty in the future - an invitation of I later gladly took advantage of. Fieldwork began in late January, and it was arranged that I visit the school each Monday morning from then until the end of the school term in June. *Scoil Neasáin's* staff and pupils were very open to the project, and I was permitted access to observe each class throughout the term. I began my research in the junior classes and worked my way up through the school to the senior

classes (as much as the timetable permitted). Doing so provided valuable insight into levels of attainment and degrees of fluency at each class level. Observation of classes significantly improved my own fluency, such that, by June, class and staff interviews could be conducted through Irish. Throughout this thesis I present these interview transcripts in the language they were recorded, and my own translations where necessary. It is my hope that any errors in these transcriptions and translations will be received with a similar degree of patience for my linguistic limitations, to that which was afforded to me during my fieldwork.

Methodological approach

This project employs ethnographic methodologies, primarily participant observation, supplemented with formal and informal interviewing. Participant observation enabled an insight into the day-to-day life of the school.

This project focuses not only on the school, but its place in the wider community, and the effect, if any, the school exerts thereon. Therefore, this ethnographic methodology is underpinned by formal and informal interviews with key informants; parents, teachers, pupils, and representatives of *Gaelscoileanna*. Semi-structured ethnographic interviews were conducted with these informants during the course of the fieldwork, in English and Irish (contingent upon the abilities of the informant, and the setting of the interview, for example, interviews which took place in the *Gaelscoileanna* were primarily *as Gaeilge*, in keeping with the school ethos). Interviews with informants connected to the school in an official capacity provided data on the socio-cultural component of the project. Interviews with parents, coupled with informal participation

with, and observation of, their children, provided an insight into the socio-cultural factors that mobilise community support for the *Gaelscoil*. The project examines the *Gaelscoil* phenomenon as relevant to the communities in which they are situated, whilst also investigating the attractions of *Gaelscoileanna* within the broader social network.

Methods

Optimum results from the participant observant method were gained from spending one day per week in the *Gaelscoil* for the duration of one school term (January to June 2006). This method provided valuable insights into the administration of the *Gaelscoil* and its obligations to the families and community it serves, whilst simultaneously enabling close observation of the process of education and language acquisition in *Gaelscoileanna*.

Fundamental to the educational process of the *Gaelscoil* is the cultivation of the bilingual capacity of the pupils. The observation of this process was facilitated by the size of the school. The single-stream structure of *Gaelscoil Neasáin*, coupled with the openness of the school to the project, enabled the observation of classes from the *Naíonáin Béaga* (lower infants) to *Rang a Sé* (sixth class) and proved advantageous in this regard.

The research was conducted both in Irish and in English, again contingent upon context and the abilities of participants. Although I had maintained a basic proficiency in Irish, my own linguistic limitations had, during my undergraduate research (also conducted in a *Gaelscoil*), proven beneficial to the observation of the process

bilingual attainment and code-switching. Nevertheless, the participant observant of a *Gaelscoil* is engaged in a process of language immersion, which mirrors the experience of the pupils, and the effect to my perception of, and ability in *Gaeilge*/Irish was to transform it from a school subject to a living language.

Interpretative analysis will be informed by *descriptive integration* (Wolf, 1999). This enables the researcher to draw generalisations without compromising the quality of the empirical data. This will allow me to draw conclusions from my research that could potentially be employed in a cross-cultural context (explored in chapter two).

Chapters

The first part of this thesis will focus on three specific political eras of Irish education, Colonial, (Irish) National/post-Colonial, and contemporary, and the power dynamics, which govern(ed) them. This project will examine *Gaelscoileanna* as products of, and productive of socio-educational machinations. For this purpose the first chapter of this thesis will consist of a history of the confluence of Irish education and the Irish language, complemented with a history of *Gaelscoileanna* specifically, and their place in the Irish education system.

The second part of my project will examine the importance of Education to culture. Education is the primary method of childhood socialisation, the locus of identity formation, whether that identity be subject, citizen, or *Gaeilgeoir*. This chapter will explore why control over the subjectification of children is so contentious an issue,

especially in a post-Colonial context, and how the decentralisation of such control impacts the individual and his/her community and society.

The Irish language is often treated academically as a minority language, and thus examined in the context of other European minority language issues. (Coady, 2001, Hindley, 1990, Oudin, undated, et al) However, the decline of Irish under Colonial rule (whether that decline be intentional or circumstantial - and it surely has been both -) warrants study of the language, and the movements thereof, in a specific post-Colonial context. This context includes the Irish revival in a variety of indigenous rights movements against Colonial institutional biases and linguistic imperialism, rather than merely as a minority language struggling against 'language shift' (Fishman, 2001). For this reason, in the second chapter of this thesis, I will compare and contrast the experience *Gaelscoileanna* to that of Maori language schools in New Zealand. The limits to this approach are clearly evident. New Zealand is by far a more successful and comprehensive 'settler colony' than Ireland, creating a 'bi-cultural' society (Bishop, T. and Glynn, T., 1999) as opposed to Ireland's 'famously' homogenous society (Loyal, 2003, 83). Nevertheless, the very fact that this similitude in struggle could occur across such distant parts of the post-British empire, that the struggle should be articulated in the same manner, in terms of culture, heritage and identity - regardless of the indigenous/settler 'divide' - evidences clearly the fact that Ireland's education system, inherited from Great Britain, is failing to accommodate Irish culture outside of a nation state model.

It is this confluence of Colonial subjectification, 'glossed over' with exactly that which it once sought to eradicate - cultural-linguistic difference - which produces the specific subjectivity and anxiety from which the *Gaelscoil* movement has grown.

The final part of this thesis examines the impact of the structural transformation of Irish education on Irish linguistic ideologies, and how the emergent *Gaelscoil* ideology is articulated in the classroom. The aim of *Gaelscoileanna* is the support and creation of a community identity predicated upon linguistic affiliation. As such *Gaelscoileanna* are machines productive of society and social desires. Yet, to succeed in this aim *Gaelscoileanna* must become reproductive machines, creating a self-sustaining community of speakers. This final chapter examines whether or not this goal is, or can be potentially realised. Through examining the immersion experience of the pupils, teachers and parents involved, the project will account for this unusual movement and its place in contemporary Irish society.

Chapter One

The socio-historical context of Gaelscoileanna;

Ag snámh in aghaidh na h-abhainn, swimming against the current

Introduction

This chapter endeavours to locate *Gaelscoileanna* in socio-historical context, with a view to the further exploration of the impact of this movement on Irish socio-politics and linguistic ideologies. For this purpose the period of 1800 to present is considered with respect to what I have termed ‘the fortunes of the Irish language’, the context and politics of education, and the articulation of linguistic ideology as a means to legitimise state nationalism. *Gaelscoileanna*, it is argued, have emerged as an educational means of addressing failures of state language policy.

The fortunes of the Irish language in the 1800s

In his detailed sourcebook *The Politics of Language in Ireland*, Crowley (2000) charts the political, social, and ideological history of the English and Irish languages in Ireland. The statute of Kilkenny, ‘[t]he first legislation proscribing the use of Gaelic [...] enacted against the English colonists rather than the native speakers of the language’ (2000, 2), aimed to distinguish English habits and identity from the cultural miscegenation in the Colony. The primary means of achieving this boundary was linguistic apartheid. Crowley includes policy documents, dictionaries and grammar books, contemporary opinion and literature to illuminate the specific concerns and constructions of language and identity throughout Irish history. From the conflicting, conflating quagmire of agendas over such an extensive period of history, one thing becomes clear; for both the Coloniser and the Colonised, regardless of political stance, language and identity have historically been intrinsically connected to one another. From the perspective of the settlers, the English language became iconic; any declination from this linguistic paramount represented a threat to social stability, and

a blurring of the lines between rulers and ruled. The similar symbiosis between Irish identity and language meant that Irish oscillated between being a marker of inferiority and poverty, to an elitist pursuit and political impetus (contingent, of course, on the motivations of individual agents).

The decline of the Irish language over the Colonial period has been described as ‘a cumulative process of language shift which began under the British administration in the 17th century’ (Ó’Riagáin, 1988, 6). The colonial past is often cited as contributing significantly to the decline in the fortunes of the language - a decline that Ó’Ciosáin has termed a ‘cultural ethnocide’ (Ó’Ciosáin, 1991, 16). As made evident in Crowley’s sourcebook, throughout Colonial history, language was a political tool utilised by both sides for at times conflicting or concurrent ends. To understand the current state of the Irish language with regard to institutional education, the pivotal (for education and the language in Ireland) preceding period— from 1800 to the present - will be considered. It was during the 19th century that ‘the language spoken by the great majority of a people became the badge of a scattered minority; and within a further fifty years a tongue which had been habitually spoken by literally millions shrank to a bare two or three per cent of its former strength.’ (De Freine, 1965, 3)

In an essay entitled *The Decline of the Irish Language*, Maureen Wall argues that the impact of the Colonial project on Irish socio-linguistics was to afford primacy to the English language over the country’s native tongue; ‘By 1800 Irish had ceased to be the language habitually spoken in the homes of all those who had already achieved success in the world, or who aspired to improve or even maintain their position politically, socially, or economically. The pressures of six hundred years of foreign

occupation, and more particularly the complicated political, religious and economic pressures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had killed Irish at the top of the social scale and had already weakened its position among the entire population of the country.’ (Wall, 1969, 82). The incentive to prioritise English over Irish is clear, however it was not limited to the upwardly mobile/merchant classes. English had become a necessity across the social spectrum, and the impact this had on the rural poor, the backbone of the language, was soon to be exacerbated by factors which compelled their emigration en masse during the course of the century; ‘English was the language of fair and market, and of currency; and [...] those who wished, or were compelled, to emigrate to America, or to sail to Newfoundland for the fishing, or to go to England for the harvest wanted to learn English’ (Dowling, 1971, 93). In the comprehensive history *Ireland 1912-1985* (1990), Joseph Lee dismisses the claims that language shift resulted from a conscious, pragmatic preference of English over Irish in recognition of the economic advantages to be derived from the former rather than the latter. This claim, Lee argues, can account for the acquisition of a second language only, and not the abandonment of the first, ‘unless it be assumed that Irish brains were too small to accommodate two languages, or that the Irish were simply too lazy, or too utilitarian, to be bothered with the less materially useful one’. (Lee, 1990, 663). Rather, he posits that state structures made Irish redundant to the populace. That these structures remained largely untouched after independence meant that for the Irish language, this political disadvantage continued unabated (Lee, 1990, 666).

Atkinson identifies the Act of Union of 1800 as a political watershed in Irish history, after which ‘Ireland was governed by an administrative system that was decidedly

English.’ (Atkinson, 1969, 153). National politics enjoyed enormous popular support and relative success, leading to Catholic Emancipation of 1829 led by Daniel O’Connell. However, O’Connell’s ‘utilitarian’ approach to the language (despite his own background as a native speaker) has been cited as a contributing factor in the declining status of the Irish language. (Crowley, 2000, Wall, 1969). In 1831 the National Board of Education was established (discussed more fully below). The exclusion of Irish from the curriculum, with the correlative institutionalisation of the English language prompted Archbishop MacHale to describe the National schools as ‘the graves of the national language’ (Crowley, 2000, 134)

In spite of, or perhaps, as a result of this socio-political disadvantaging of Irish, Crowley identifies two significant ‘modes of interest in Irish culture’ which effected the status of the Irish language at the beginning of the 1800s. The first was the ‘[p]atriotic attention to Irish literature, history and language’ embodied by a variety of societies and bodies. The second ‘strand of continuity’ Crowley attributes to the Protestant churches proselytising projects aimed at the rural poor (and therefore necessarily in Irish) (2000, 133).

However any advancement made towards promoting the esteem of the language and supporting its position amongst the rural poor was destroyed by the famine during the mid 1840s and its subsequent impact (see Atkinson, 1969, Corkery, 1954, De Freine 1965, Dowling 1972, Hindley, 1990, Wall 1969). Atkinson notes both the effect on the population and the correlative impact upon the language in the aftermath of the famine, a period of mass emigration. ‘[T]he Great Famine of 1846/7, [...] reduced the population from about 8 ½ millions, in 1841, to 6½ millions ten years later. Whereas,

in 1851, 40% of the population could still speak Irish, by 1891 the figure had fallen to 14.5%' (Atkinson, 1969, 153).

The post-famine period was politically reactive and saw 'the revival of an aggressive tradition of nationalism', with organisations and movements such as Young Ireland and Fenianism coming to the fore, and 'interest in the Irish language [beginning] to take a more practical form.' (Atkinson, 1969, 153). The pinnacle of the revival movement was the establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893, however, despite the League's decidedly apolitical orientation the effect of this cultural movement on the political climate of the time was undeniable; 'There is little doubt that the revolution which gained for Ireland at least partial independence from colonial rule was inspired by the Irish language movement, of which, from 1893, the Gaelic League was its mainstay.' (Crowley, 2000, 4)

Language revival, then, played an intrinsic role in National realisation and the independence movement, and the reversal of the decline in the fortunes of the language became an integral policy of the emerging government; 'There was [...] a well-established dynamic of decline to be taken into account as well as the small demographic base and limited social structure of Irish language communities. Nonetheless, because the late-19th-century language revival movement had become so closely incorporated in the wider political independence movement, the new native government in 1922 launched not merely a policy of maintenance but of revival as well.' (Ó'Riagáin, 1988, 6).

The 1934 constitution, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, reified the position of the language in Nationalist discourse and the National ethos, (see articles 4, 8 and 25 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*). In many ways the constitution is emblematic of the current, complicated relationship between nation state and national tongue. Enshrined in the document is the position of Irish as the first language of the state. The text was originally written in English and subsequently translated into Irish (a fact reflected in the physical position of the English version, written above the Irish translation). In spite of this however, any dispute over the interpretation of the Constitution is resolved with reference to the Irish (translated) version.

The legal and symbolic preference of Irish over English permeated the institutions of the state, the ‘affirmation of the language revivalists’ ideals was one way in which the new government could establish that it was Irish to the hilt’ (Akenson, 1975, 37). This linguistic reorientation of inherited institutions had a detrimental effect on the language, alienating the majority English-speaking populace from what was considered a marker of national identity. ‘Irish became a compulsory subject in public examinations and a prerequisite for entry to the Civil Service and professions such as the law. The effect of this, as both Thomas Davis and Douglas Hyde had foreseen, was significant alienation from the language not simply amongst the Northern Unionists, but also, and more damagingly, amongst generations of Irish school children faced with imposed tuition in a language which was not that of their home, their playground or, for the vast majority, their adult life.’ (Crowley, 2000, 4)

This position of the language, as symbolically fundamental to the identity of the State and its citizens, and legally enshrined as such, yet spoken fluently by so very few (less

than 18% at the beginning of this century (Ó'Riagáin, 1988, 6)) has resulted in the contemporary confused state of language policy in Ireland. Yet, as evidenced by the CLAR (Committee on Irish Language Attitudes report, 1975), '[d]espite relatively low levels of active use in the general population [...] the majority of the population are highly supportive of the language and regard its continued existence as an important element of national identity' (Harris, J. and Murtagh, L., 1988, 86).

The importance of the Educational system in the propagation of an Irish Nationality contingent upon the elevated status of the Irish language was paramount to the new State. In his scathing critique of the Irish Education system, Akenson describes the national schools as 'a means to an extra-educational end, [...] schooling was directed not at developing the potentialities of the individual pupils for the pupils' sakes, but at developing certain cultural traits for the nation's sake.' (Akenson, 1975, 41). 'The Irish language programme' he continued, 'was given the people as a cultural prescription, a medicine that would cure the ills of years of alien rule.' (Akenson, 1975, 59). The next section will examine just how this 'cultural prescription' was administered, and how the Irish schools were transformed from the 'graves of the national language', to the primary means of its maintenance and survival.

Socio Historical context of Education

Introduction

Education in Ireland has developed over three distinct, yet overlapping, political stages, informal pre-Colonial, National, and State, the variety of which can be

described as indigenous/informal, institutional/formal, denominational, exclusionary, elitist, egalitarian, aspirational, but essentially, and at all times, political. It is from these multifarious, intersecting origins that *Gaelscoileanna* have recently emerged and it is within this contextual disorder that this chapter attempts to place the *Gaelscoil* movement. For this reason it must be stated that this is not a comprehensive history of either education in Ireland (for such see Dowling 1971, Atkinson, 1969, Akenson, 1975) nor indeed an exhaustive survey of the linguistic politics of the country (see Crowley 2000), but rather a constructed synopsis of the emergence of the movement in relation to the various power-structures which have governed and shaped the present-day Irish Education system. It is hoped that the obvious omissions of such reductive selectivity will be excused as necessary to constructing such a brief thesis on such broad a topic. The crux on which this thesis revolves is the transition of power between the Colonial administration of the 'National' Educational system to the Irish Free State in 1922, and the implications thereof on Irish socio-linguistic and cultural concerns as expressed through the Education system.

The Politics of Knowledge: Penal Laws and Hedge-schooling

In his comprehensive account *Irish Education, a History of Educational Institutions*, Norman Atkinson (1969) considers the disparity between the post Enlightenment European movement towards educational reform, (the provision of universal education), and the suppression of indigenous Irish Education articulated in the Penal code. Atkinson attributes the counter-Enlightenment stance of the Colonial Regime to the contention that the repression of and strictures imposed upon informal channels of indigenous education, (such as the hedge schools and the Irish Sunday schools), were

considered a necessary means of curbing discontent and popular rebellion - a bid to maintain the political status quo (the fear was that popular education would lead to popular revolution, as witnessed in France). Coolahan, however, argues that the reluctance of the British State to follow its European counterparts into an era of municipal provision of Education, was more likely a reflection of the 'prevailing political philosophy of laissez-faire' governance (1981, 3). What is clear is that the established education policy of the time was one of exclusion based upon the system of denominational apartheid known as the Penal laws (17th century to Catholic Emancipation, 1829) - the impact of which can be still be seen in the largely denominational structure of the contemporary Irish education system. The more immediate effect of the Penal laws that emerged during the post-Enlightenment period was a flurry of informal and semi-formal Educational activity in the country, which (for a variety of social and political reasons) tended to be governed primarily by the main religious denominations (Atkinson, 1969, Coolahan, 1981, Dowling, 1971).

Hedge schools represented one such indigenous educational movement, the aim of which was to subvert the Penal code, and provide education to the Catholic population. Hedge schools were noted for their crucial contribution to the education of the poorer, disenfranchised classes of Ireland, yet they were far from a coordinated education system, and much diversity in methods and curriculum was apparent. Indeed as Dowling (1971) notes, the lessons of most Hedge schools were contingent upon the reading materials available to the masters. As mentioned above, the privileging of English as a language of commerce and trade, as well as a means to social mobility, led to an educational orientation prevalent in the Hedge schools which disadvantaged the Irish language; 'The hedge schools must take some of the

blame for the decline of the Irish language in the early part of the nineteenth century. Those who knew English taught it' (Dowling, 1971, 93).

The Hedge schools represented a contentious subversion of Colonial power and, as such, were perceived of as a potentially dangerous threat to social stability. 'The Hedge School owes its origin to the laws against education and its name to the practice of keeping school under the sunny side of the hedge.' (Dowling, 1971, 86) Hedge schools were perceived as a significant threat to the colonial authorities and were described as 'receptacles of rags and penury, in which a semi-barbarous peasantry acquired the rudiments of reading, writing, Irish history and high treason.' (quote taken from Dowling, 1971, 94). Hedge schools, supported by local communities, and increasingly the Catholic Church, were an uncontrolled movement that threatened the Colonial State through an unregulated education and socialisation of the populace. The repeal of the Penal Laws in the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, and the institutionalisation of National Education in 1831 were a response to socio-political agitation of the time, however, they created the space for the Colonial State to legitimise, and so control, these informal channels of Education. In many ways the National Education Board founded in 1831, was a pragmatic response to an ideological vacuum created by an exclusionary penal code.

The Institutionalisation of Education

Arguably the most significant watershed in Irish Educational history was this creation (of the National Board of Education in 1831). Previous to this, education in Ireland had been reflective of numerous political and denominational interests funded

variously by State, Churches, communities, or a combination of all three (Atkinson, 1969; Dowling, 1971). Coolahan (1981) attributes the establishment of National Board of Education to an Educational policy experiment in the Irish social laboratory. However, the gradual realisation of the Colonial government (in the face of persistent informal educational movements) that the institutionalisation of, rather than failed attempts to stifle indigenous education, would provide a level of control of the knowledge disseminated to Irish subjects. 'The greatest need of the hour was to condition the lower classes to resist the influences of revolutionary propaganda' (Atkinson, 1969, 91), a danger perpetuated by the uncontrolled dissemination of knowledge in such contexts. 'In the context of post-union politics the government felt that the schools could serve politicising and socialising goals, cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation. The danger of separate school systems operating without official supervision needed to be countered.' (Coolahan, 1981, 4).

The new National Education system however, was not egalitarian at its inception, only becoming compulsory over sixty years later in 1892. Initially the official aim of the National Board of Education was to provide a non-denominational system of schools. However, the existing structures of Education in Ireland, founded on the basis of religious discrimination, provided powerful agitators against this goal. Neither Church was willing to concede power of the subjectification of their flocks to the secular ambitions of the State (Atkinson, 1969). It is for this reason that until the Dalkey school project of 1978 and the subsequent Educate Together movement for multi-denominational schooling (Ní Fhearghusa, 1996) Irish schools have been largely divided along denominational lines.

In the tussle for power over the religious orientation of the schools, the question of language was largely ignored. The schools, founded under the auspices of the Catholic Church, would later prove useful to the Free State in their idealistic predisposition. Atkinson observes that 'secular instruction [in these schools] was impregnated with nationalism' (Atkinson 1969, 79). The Nationalism propagated by the Church was, however, connected to religion rather than language and in their role as primary providers of Education to the Irish populace, many authors argue that the Church had an important role in the demise of the language (Ó'Ciosáin, 1991, Wall, 1969, Crowley, 2000).

Akenson (1975) has argued that the omission by the Commissioners of the Board of Education of the National language in the curriculum was one of benign neglect rather than a malicious, political attack on the language itself; 'That a proper education could occur in any language other than English never seems to have occurred to the education commissioners and thus they could not conceive of the Irish language as a serious rival to English; therefore they did not attack Irish, they merely ignored it.' (Akenson, 1975, 38). Regardless of the intent of this policy, the effect was a further blow to the language, a reinforcement of the linguistic dominance of English as the language of progress and social mobility; 'the National Schools in their early days were responsible for discouraging the use of the Irish language. Unwittingly perhaps; for the only subjects then taught were reading, writing and arithmetic, and the medium of instruction was English' (Dowling, 1971, 93)

To what extent the National education system contributed to the further decline of the language is impossible to quantify, especially considering the devastating impact of

the famine and subsequent mass emigration during the 1840s and fifties (as discussed above).

However, the cumulative effect of the conflation of natural, social, and institutional disadvantage is clear; 'It seems that when the National Board of Education was created about two million people spoke Irish; by 1850, this number had fallen to about one and a half millions; and in 1871 the figure was less than a million.' (Dowling, 1971, 93).

With the emergence of Nationalistic language movements in the late 1800s (discussed above), space was gradually conceded to the Irish language in the schools when in 1879 it permission was granted for it to be taught as an additional subject, although outside ordinary school hours. In 1900 Irish gained the status of optional subject permitted within ordinary school hours. And in 1904 recognition of Irish as a native tongue was achieved when 'the commissioners introduced a bilingual programme for use during ordinary school hours in Irish-speaking areas' (Akenson, 1975, 41). The impact of the language movement of the turn of the century on the political struggle for independence, and the subsequent educational policy of the Irish Free State was profound and far-reaching. 'A cultural revolution at the end of the nineteenth century preceded the political revolution of the twentieth. The restoration and development of the Irish language was then a significant issue for the native government' (Ó'Murchú, 2001, 3). However, the weakened position of the Irish language at the inception of the Irish state necessitated a pragmatic compromise of Nationalist, idealist ambitions for the transformation of Irish society through the Education system.

In his 1915 essay, *The Murder Machine*, political activist, educationalist, and committed nationalist Pádraig Pearse argued for nothing less than the total reformation of the Education system in favour of the implementation of an indigenous, Nationalistic school system the backbone of which was to be the Irish language. This vision was realised in the establishment of the first Irish-medium schools, *Scoil Éanna*, 1907, and *Scoil Bhríde*, 1917 (Ó'Murchú, 2001, 19). Language for Pearse was a National, rather than an, ethnic identity marker, and it was the function of the education system to transform Ireland into an Irish nation, distinct from Britain both culturally and linguistically. (Pearse, 1915)

Pearse's was linguistic vision shared by the Government of the Irish Free State, which set about introducing a policy of linguistic revival at its foundation. However, it was a vision which was limited in application due to the tenuous position of the language itself. A linguistic transformation of the Education system would of course be contingent upon a competent staff of fluent teachers, a resource in short supply for the new State. The Government instituted a rigorous policy of teacher training (including *Gaeltacht* immersion programmes) to realise their ideal. It was a policy, which, on paper at least, enjoyed significant success. 'The vigour with which the new policy on Irish was implemented can be judged from the fact that within 20 years 12% of primary schools were teaching entirely through Irish, 43% were teaching at least some classes entirely through Irish (most often infant classes), while the remainder were teaching Irish as a single school subject.' (Harris, J. and Murtagh, L., 1988, 86) The success of this policy in promoting the use of Irish as a medium of education is observed by Cummins, who notes that 'up to the early 1950s about 50% of the state's primary schools taught at least some subject matter through Irish in addition to

teaching it as a subject. However, during the past thirty years the number of schools outside the *Gaeltacht* teaching through the medium of Irish declined dramatically, such that teaching the language as a subject became almost the universal norm' (1988, 306).

Arguably the most pivotal point on which the fortunes of Irish bilingual education turned was Mac Namara's *Bilingualism and Primary Education* of 1966. This report found that the emphasis on second language acquisition in Irish education was in fact retarding development of arithmetic and English skills. In his conclusion Mac Namara appreciated/anticipated the impact of his findings;

'For Irish education these findings are of the utmost importance. It is a serious matter that the native-English speakers who are taught arithmetic in Irish should be retarded in arithmetic as a result. But this is not so serious as the effect of the general policy for the restoration of the Irish language on the attainment of English. The retardation in arithmetic appears to be confined to problem arithmetic; and the number of children who are taught arithmetic in Irish is relatively small. The effect on English attainment, on the other hand, is very grave indeed, since all Irish national school children whose mother tongue is English (over 96 per cent of national school children) are involved.' (MacNamara, 1966, 137).

The basis upon which the findings were made has since been questioned and discredited (Cummins 1977, Ó'Riagáin, 1997). Cummins (1977), for example, points out that the results relating to arithmetic retardation can in large part be attributed to the fact that the tests were administered in English, the less familiar language for

many students. One former *Gaelscoil* pupil (now attending an English language secondary school) reported this difficulty as one of translation rather than retardation; ‘At first it was really difficult going into a Maths class and you didn’t know any of the terms, you were like, ‘What?’. But after a week or two you pick up the terms, and it’s the same thing, just in English.’ (Informal interview, May 2006). In fact, the linguistic challenges the transition from Irish to English presented (especially in technical subjects such as Maths and Geography) were at the forefront of the sixth and fifth class pupils of *Scoil Neasáin* when considering secondary school options. (Class interviews with rang 5 and 6, June 2006).

Regardless of the shaky foundations on which the conclusions were drawn, the MacNamara report, linking mental incapacitation to second language education precipitated the demise of the States bilingual project articulated in the All-Irish schools (Cummins, 1977, Coolahan, 1981, Ó’Riagáin, 1997, Ó’Murchú, 2001). ‘In the 1940s 55% of Irish Primary schools were teaching partly or solely through the medium of Irish. This figure dropped dramatically in the next three decades. [...] the number of primary schools teaching through Irish had reached an all time low in 1973 when the number of schools teaching through Irish dropped to 11 outside of *Gaeltacht* areas.’ (Ní Fhearghusa, 1996)

The *Gaelscoil* movement emerged in the aftermath of this damning indictment of bilingual education, the impact of which presented yet another structural obstacle to their success. Yet, paradoxically, the condemnation of All-Irish Schools created the space for community driven Irish medium education, the success of which, (see Irish Times article, June 26th 2006), have retrospectively exposed the failures of the All-

Irish schools as systemic rather than linguistic, ‘the Irish which was learned was an academic tongue rather than a living language’ (Akenson, 1975, 54, see also Ó’Riagáin, 1997). Indeed, it has recently been argued that, contrary to concerns that bilingual education retards cognitive development, bilingual education has in fact proven advantageous to pupils (Baker, 2006).

Perhaps the foremost feature distinguishing the All-Irish schools from the *Gaelscoileanna* is that the former constitutes ‘revival ‘by decree’ and [the latter] revival ‘by planning’ (Ó’Cíosáin, 1988, 263), and indeed, just as importantly, revival by consent. ‘[T]he 1970s heralded a new era of resurgence with parents making decisions for themselves and taking power into their own hands in order to establish Irish Medium Schools for their children’ (Ní Fhearghusa, 1996, not numbered). *Gaelscoileanna* are demand driven initiatives the broad, and definitive aim of which is summed up effectively in their motto, ‘All things through Irish’ (www.gaelscoileanna.ie). That the movement is borne of such demand, and independence, means that they are reflective of their founder’s aims and ambitions. As we will see in the following chapters, *Gaelscoileanna* act as mirror, reflective of the concerns, aims, and ambitions (linguistic, social and political) of the founders, teachers and parents. They are also pragmatic agents, working within the structural confines of the society in which they are conceived, such that the movement itself is reflective of the changes in Irish society over time. A good example of this is the movement from necessarily denominational orientation of *Gaelscoileanna*, to the more recent emergence of non-denominational *Gaelscoileanna* (facilitated in large part by Educate Together, another parent driven educational movement, aimed at providing non-denominational education).

At their very inception *Gaelscoileanna* are democratic, and representational of both those at their helm and the society from which they emerge. To that extent *Gaelscoileanna* are independent (even of each other), and so atypical entities. Nevertheless, they are each part of a broader movement to provide Irish medium education and so face similar obstacles to their foundation and success. Inasmuch as one *Gaelscoil* can represent the movement as a whole, and given the dearth of analytical literature on their foundation, the following account of the early years of a *Gaelscoil* should be read as emblematic rather than typical.

Inis dom piosa beag faoi Scoil Míde, do thaithí agus thuairimí.

'Gaelscoil Míde. Gaelscoil Míde, bunaíodh i mbliana naoi déag ochtó haon. Agus grúpa tuismitheoirí i Donach Míde (Donaghmede) a bhunadh i, hence Gaelscoil Míde - Donach Míde. Faraor, ní raibh an Gaelscoil riamh suite i Donach Míde. Em, nuair a thanaigh na tuismitheoirí seo le cheile, agus nuair a fuair siad go leor páistí le rang a bheith acu agus le thathanta sealadach a fhail, eh, an t-aon áit a bhí siad ábalta a teacht ar cumraíocht, eh Halla hEaglais, eh, Halla na hEaglaise Protastúnaigh i Rath Eanaigh. So chuaigh siad isteach ansin leis an chead mhúinteoir, ____, naoi déag ochtó haon, Meán Fómhair. Agus roimh Nollaig tharla dóiteán ann, tine. Agus eh, bhí orthu a bheith amach as an áit. Fuair siad áit shealadach den chuid eile den bliain sin i gclub an GAA, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael i Rath Eanaigh. So, samhraidh naoi déag ochtó do bhí an dara rang ag tosú, eh bhí an dara múinteoir ag teacht, agus fuair siad áit sealadach arís, thíos i mBaile Dúinn. [...] Samhraidh na

bliana naoi déag ochtó a trí, bhí go leor páistí acu don tríú múinteoir. Agus bhí siad ina dhiaidh a bheith dhá bhliain ar an saol gur sealadach. Bhí Aontais sealadach acu ón Rionn Oideachas - provisional recognition ar feadh dhá bliain. In dhiaidh dhá bliain mar bhí an scoil fós ag dul b'éigean don Rionn Oideachas Aontais buachan a thabhairt dóibh. Agus bhí siad in ann teideal ansin 'príomhoide' a ceapadh, seachas an chead múinteoir agus an dara múinteoir. So, d'fhógair siad sa nuachtáin go raibh siad ag iarraidh príomhoide. Chuir mise isteach ar an post, agus fuair mé é. Agus thosaigh mé i Meán Fómhair naoi cead ochtó is a trí. Agus ó thuile le, d'fhás muid in haghaidh na bliana, thanaigh múinteoir nua, rang nua, múinteoir nua, rang nua. Agus théann spás ag iarraidh an ____ [...] B'éigin dúinn é sin a bhaint gach seachtain mar rudaí a bhí ar súil ag an, ag an halla pobal fhéin. So ba mhór an crá croí é. Thuismitheoirí ag teacht isteach agus an spiel seo a bhaint anuas, a chur suas arís táblaí a thógáil amach, táblaí a thógáil isteach. Agus ansin, ní raibh aon spas fágtha, so chuir muid ceist ar an sagart, paróiste síos ansin. Agus lig seisean dúinn prefab, no kabinpak a cur isteach i ngairdín an séipéil díreach ar an bhall. An bliain ina dhiaidh sin chuir muid ceann i gclos na scoile. Bhí muid, literally, cúpla slat ón fharraige. Bhí sé an seomra ranga leis an radharc ab haille in Éireann! Ach bhí sé iontach iontach mí-uirsineach, mí-oiriúnach do scoil. Em, an bliain ina dhiaidh sin fuair muid dhá seomra i scoil an clochar - Irish sisters of Charity - áit a bhfuil... Áit nach bhfuil ina úsáid níos mo. Bhí sé ina dhiaidh damnaighe de a bheith scoil i mBaile Átha Cliath, damnaighe is condemned, a condemned building. So, chaith muid an samhraidh, mise, mé fhéin, cathaoirleach an Bord Liam Bared, agus roinnt tuismitheoirí ag cur isteach fire escape, agus ag cur

cuaillí isteach, agus faoi dheireadh an tsamhraidh, thanaigh na cigirí agus dúirt siad, 'Right, tá an foirgneamh slán arís. So is féidir libh dhá seomra anseo a úsáid chun páistí a chur isteach ann'. So, agus, sin an theoracht mí-oiriúnach a bhí againn go dtí naoi déag ochtó naoi. Agus ní raibh, ní raibh muid, i rith an am sin, faoi, mar a déarfá, faoi aon dian amháin, bhí muid scaipthe. Agus níor thanaigh na páistí le cheile ach ar an Aoine, gach Aoine thánaigh muidne le cheile, thanaigh na múinteoirí le cheile, thanaigh na páistí le cheile. So sin an mbána a bhí againn, 'faoi aon dian amháin', we wanted to be under one roof. Agus thóg muid feachtas. In san bliain naoi déag ochtó naoi thanaigh chomh tháthú, no chomh... teacht le cheile ar an dhá scoil anseo i gCill Bharróg, [...] Cuireadh dhá scoil le cheile agus fagú an foirgneamh seo folamh. Agus tógú an chuid seo dúinne, agus tógú an chuid eile de North Bay, St Michaels House, agus thógú an Naíonra. So bhí muid sásta. Ach gur gairid dúinn teacht isteach fuairimid amach go raibh deacrachtaí struchtúireatha ag an scoil seo. So sin deacracht a bhí againne, eh, thar ocht mbliana ina dhiaidh dúinne é seo le fhaill amach now. Ar cur in iúl dúinn rinneadh cúis go raibh an foirgneamh seo chaolach. Ach, ní raibh muid ag iarraidh na tuismitheoirí a scanrúil. Agus ní raibh muid ag iarraidh a bheith chomh láidir sin faoi gurb éigin dúinn in aon áit a fhágáil agus gan aon áit le dul againn. Faoi deireadh thanaigh rudaí i gceart, agus fuair muid cead an áit a iompú, dul isteach go áit sealadach. Agus eh, scoil nua a thógáil anseo agus anois táimid istigh ann. So tá áit againn duinn féin díreach in am dá fiche cúigiú breithlá. Meán fómhair seo chugainn dhá mhíle is a sé, beidh Gaelscoil Míde fiche is a cúig bliain ar an mbóthar!

Tell me a little bit about Scoil Míde, your experiences and opinions.

‘Gaelscoil Míde. Gaelscoil Míde, it was founded in nineteen eighty-one. A group of parents from Donaghmede founded it, hence Gaelscoil Míde - Donagh *mede*. Previously there was no Gaelscoil in Donaghmede. When these parents came together, and when they had enough children for a class, and with provisional recognition, the only place they were able to use was a parish hall, the Protestant Parish Hall in Raheny. So they went there with their first teacher, _____, in September, 1981. And before Christmas there was a fire. And they had to be out of the place. They found temporary accommodation in a Gaa club for the rest of the year, the Gaa club in Raheny. So in the summer of 1982 the second class was beginning, eh, the second teacher was coming, and they found again a temporary site in Dollymount.[...] Summer of 1983, they had enough children for a third teacher. And they were now two years into their provisional recognition. [...] they had provisional State recognition from the Department of Education - provisional recognition for two years. After two years, with the school under the Department of Education, were awarded full recognition. And so they could appoint a principal, besides the first and second teachers. So they advertised in a newspaper that they were looking for a principal. I applied for the position, and got it. And I began in September 1983. And as well as that, we grew each year, a new teacher came, new class, new teacher, new class. And space was in demand [...] We had to take everything out each week because there things were to facilitate all that

was going on in the public hall itself. It would break your heart. Parents coming in to play it out over and over, taking out the tables, putting them back in again. And then, there was no space left, so we asked the parish priest. And he allowed us to erect a prefab, or kabinpak, in the church garden. The following year we erected one in the schoolyard. We were, literally, a few yards from the sea. It was the classroom with the best view in all of Ireland! But it was very seriously deficient, inappropriate as a school. The following year we got two rooms in a Sisters of Charity school [...] A place that is not used anymore. It had just been condemned as a school in Dublin [...]. So, we spent the summer, myself, chairman of the board of management _____, and a few parents putting in a fire escape, and putting our backs into it, and by the end of the summer the inspector came and said, 'Right, this building is safe again. So you can now use the two rooms for the children'. So, that was the inappropriate situation we were in until 1989. And we weren't, in that time, as it's said, under one roof, we were scattered. And the children only came together on Friday, every Friday we came together, the teachers came together, the children came together. So that was our motto, 'Under one roof', we wanted to be under one roof. And we began a campaign. In 1989 there was an amalgamation of two schools in Kilbarrack [...]. The two schools came together and left this building vacant. And we took this place, and the other part was taken my North Bay, St Michaels House, and the Naíonra (Irish medium pre-school). So we were satisfied. But shortly before we were to move in we found out that there were serious structural faults with the school.[...] So that is the difficulty we had, eh, for eight years. We were advised that the building was weakened. But we weren't looking to scare the

parents. And we weren't strong enough to leave one place, without anywhere else to go. In the end things came out right, and we got permission to improve the place, and temporary accommodation while this went on. And a new school was erected here and now we're in. So we have a place of our own just in time for our 25th birthday. This September 2006 Gaelscoil Míde will be twenty five years on the road!

(interview with Ray MacManais, principal G.Míde)

As stated above, the experience recalled here is atypical in circumstance, indeed *Scoil Neasáin* (primary site of research) by comparison spent only 3 years in temporary accommodation before the school in its present form was established. Nevertheless, many of the structural obstacles (specifically those pertaining to accommodation), and the means by which these obstacles are overcome (community support and parental commitment, work, and political agitation), as well as the parent driven establishment of the schools are common to all *Gaelscoileanna*. The foundation of *Gaelscoileanna* is contingent on the monetary support and commitment of the parents, and the availability of suitable, affordable sites for schools. Often these sites are schools vacated by national schools (as in the case of *Gaelscoil Míde*), or temporary pre-fabricated buildings (usually vacated after the school gains official recognition). The sites available to such communities are often deemed inadequate for schooling purposes, and the majority of *Gaelscoileanna* (specifically on the Northside of Dublin) are located in marginalized, but more 'affordable' areas. However, even in such areas, the acquisition of affordable school accommodation in Dublin's booming property market has emerged as a further obstacle to *Gaelscoil* establishment (referred to below by principal of *Scoil Neasáin*).

In spite of these disadvantages, and the structural barriers to official recognition and funding, not to mention the initiative required of parents (who must enrol their children in schools that may not yet be fully recognised by the Department of Education), *Gaelscoileanna* have seen a dramatic increase throughout Dublin, and the whole country. Indeed, demand has grown exponentially since the movement's inception in the 1970s, with four new *Gaelscoileanna* opening last year alone. The *Gaelscoil* movement can now boast of their achievement in establishing 'a *Gaelscoil* in every county' (www.gaelscoileann.ie see also appendix i and ii, *Gaelscoil* growth charts furnished by the organisation *Gaelscoileanna*).

Both *Scoil Míde* and *Scoil Neasáin* are well-established schools, 25 and 37 years respectively. For this reason, and the afore mentioned historical specificity of each and every *Gaelscoil*, it would be unwise to suggest that there has been no change in the circumstances dictating the foundation of contemporary *Gaelscoileanna*. During my fieldwork I was informed that a close friend of Derbhla (principal of *Neasáin*) had recently been made principal of a newly founded *Gaelscoil* in Finglas. Given the circumstances, I questioned Derbhla during our interview as to the difficulties and/or relative ease with which *Gaelscoileanna* are now established, and to what factors she attributes the contemporary climate in which *Gaelscoileanna* are situated.

'Ní raibh mise ann nuair a bhunú an scoil. Tá cara agam a thosaigh mar príomhoide i scoil i mbliana. Tá go leor obair le déanamh ó taobh bunú na scoile de. Ní bheith aon chuir in as agam i ndáiríre ar cad é an próiseis. Ach táim cinnte go mbíonn an t-uafás deacrachtaí ann. Tá deacrachtaí ann ag an

dtús abair, choiste áit a chuir le cheile, ag lorg suíomh, an lorg foirgneamh. Ag iarraidh paiste a fháil chun chuir ar an liosta. Ag iarraidh ainmneacha a fháil agus a rá bhféidir go mbeidh scoil againn bhféidir nach mbeidh scoil i Mheán Fómhair. Tá sé an-deacair thuismitheoirí cinnte a dhéanamh nuair atá an é gcinnteacht sin ann. Agus ansin nuair atá an scoil bhunaithe agat, tá sheans go mbeidh tú i suíomh sealadach, nach mbeidh scoil bhuaib agat ar fháithe deich, fiche bliain. Tá sé hara bheith deacair. Agus chomh maith leis sin tá cósta bunaithe i scoil a rinne an obair ar an talamh ag iarraidh an scoil a tosú. agus ansin thagann an príomhoide agus boird bainistíocht isteach agus uaireanta bíonn sé deacair an dá ról a eisint. Ina dhiaidh sin thagann an príomhoide isteach leis an a rith. Agus ceapaim go mbíonn go leor deacrachtaí ag an tús ag scoileanna ag lorg ionad, ag lorg suíomh, ag lorg daltaí. Agus ansin an iarraidh gaol idir cúiste bunaithe, boird bainistíocht agus múinteoirí a chineál le gur féidir le gach duine obair le cheile. [...] Tá deacrachtaí difriúil ann. Ceapaim go raibh sé an an-deacair nuair a bhí an scoil seo a bhunú. Ach bhí go leor daoine ana dílis don Gaeilge. A chreid go dian, docht, daingin i gcas na Gaeilge, agus a bhí sásta bheith amuigh ansin maidin de Sathairn. A bhí sásta obair déanach san oíche. A bhí sásta an t-am seo a thabhairt. Nil an t-am sin ag daoine a thuile. So nil a fhios agam ag bhfuil an díograis cheana den teanga ann. Tá an díograis bhféidir den ideal agus den scoil nua agus a leitheadaí ach nil a fhios agam. ’

‘I wasn’t there at the founding of the school. I’ve a friend who started as a principal during the year. There is a lot of work involved in founding a school. I’m not sure of the exact process. But I’m sure there are a lot of difficulties.

Difficulties from the beginning, say, forming a committee, looking for a site, looking for a building. Needing to find children to put on the list. Needing to find names when you have to say, maybe there'll be a school there in September, maybe not. It's difficult to reassure parents at the inception. And then, when you've founded the school, there's a chance you'll be in temporary accommodation, that you won't be awarded a school site for ten or twenty years. It's extremely difficult. As well as that, to found a school requires a lot of groundwork. And then the principal and the Board of Management come into the running. And I think there are a multitude of difficulties for new schools looking for a building, a site, pupils. And then to bring together the founding committee, the Board of Management, and a staff of teachers who are all able to work together. There are different difficulties now. I understand it was very difficult to found this school. But there were a lot of people who were very committed to Irish. Who were earnestly, stubbornly, committed to the cause of Irish, who were happy to be out there on a Saturday morning. Who were happy to work late into the night. Who were happy to give their time. People no longer have that time. So I don't know whether there's the same commitment to the language. Perhaps to the ideal, and the goal of spreading new schools, but I don't know.'

Despite overwhelming evidence to the effectiveness of, and public support and demand for, *Gaelscoileanna*, the response from the Department of Education has been 'at best ambivalent and at worst hostile to the establishment of Irish-medium schools' (Cummins, 1988, 305), leading to a situation in which 'hedge-schooling' has re-emerged, if not in the public imagination then in the reality of the conditions in which

some *Gaelscoileanna* operate (see Irish Times article, June 26th 2006). A recent article in the Irish language weekly *Foinse* reported that upwards of 60% of primary level *Gaelscoileanna* operate in substandard accommodations, and it is not uncommon for them to be so for in excess of twenty years (*Foinse*, 30th July 2006). The following is a translated reproduction of a table published alongside the same article.

Gaelscoileanna in the Republic of Ireland 127

Gaelscoileanna in temporary accommodation	62
Number of pupils in temporary accommodation	9069
Schools in temporary accommodation for 10+ years	36
Number of pupils in these schools	6550
Schools in temporary accommodation for 15+years	12
Number of pupils in these schools	2279
Schools in temporary accommodation for 20+years	6
Number of pupils in these schools	1347

Gaelscoileanna figures put the number of primary level *Gaelscoil* pupils at 26,603, which means that 34% of these children attend schools housed in temporary

accommodation. That such a large number of their fellow *Gaelscoil* pupils are so structurally marginalized, is a state of affairs not lost on the pupils of *Gaelscoileanna*. The following statement from a 12 year old boy in sixth class demonstrates the democratic subjectivity (independent of, and oft times in opposition to, the State) which is being produced, intentionally or not, in *Gaelscoileanna*. *Gaelscoil* pupils are fully aware that in their very attendance of a *Gaelscoil* they are ‘swimming against the current’.

‘Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá na Gaelscoileanna don teanga, nó fás an teanga?’

‘Tá siad tábhachtach ach, like, tá nil an rialtas a thug mar in ard mar tá scoil, a theann mo chol ceathair go dtí, tá sí Gaelscoil síos i. Ceapaim Seantarbh, agus tá siad a úsáid em, cumann peile anois mar scoil, mar nil, nil a scoil féin acu, like, agus tá siad ag dul ar aghaidh mar sin le háigh like timpeall seacht bliana fos, like, níor bhris siad. Like, dúirt an rialtas go raibh siad chun ceann a thabhairt dóibh ach, níor thug siad ceann dóibh. Like, nil sé taispeáint gur thaitníonn siad leo. Ni bacann an rialtas leis mórán, mar is cuma leo.’

‘How important are the *Gaelscoileanna* to the language, the growth of the language?’

‘It’s important but, like, the Government don’t place them high [on their list of priorities]. My cousin goes to a *Gaelscoil* down in, Santry, I think, and they’re using, I think, a Football club as a school, because they, they don’t have a school of their own. And they’re going on like this for like around seven years now, like, they didn’t break. Like, the Government said they’d give them a

place but they didn't give them one. Like, they certainly don't seem to like them. The Government don't take notice of them very much, because they don't care.'

As chapter three will show this oppositional consciousness fosters a particular cooperative spirit in the *Gaelscoileanna*, which inevitably contributes to their success. Inherent in this 'mission consciousness' is the creation of subjectivity specific to *Gaelscoil* pupils. *Gaelscoileanna* create *Gaeilgeoirí*, subjects to culture and language rather than nationhood, thus facilitating the conceptualisation of opposition to state in relation to the aims of *Gaelscoileanna* (as the twelve year old quoted above evidences). Through such networks of linguistic affiliation *Gaelscoileanna* work towards ensuring their own reproduction and, therefore, the maintenance of the Irish language.

Despite the structural, monetary, and political barriers to their establishment and security, *Gaelscoileanna* have flourished over the past 30 years (as the appendix figures from *Gaelscoileanna* have shown). Chapter two will further investigate these obstacles, asking why the Government supports *Gaelscoileanna* - who have succeeded in areas where successive Governments have failed with regard to bilingual attainment - reactively rather than proactively. The response of the Department of Education to the *Gaelscoil* movement has been muted, responding reluctantly to demand. Once again this exposes a gaping discrepancy between policy and practice. Given the contemporary criticism of the Educational system and the administration thereof as 'a change of management', chapter two will investigate the implications with regard to language policy and the emergence of *Gaelscoileanna*. In many ways,

Gaelscoileanna represent a radical departure from traditional education. The pressure exerted by *Gaelscoileanna* has resulted in the transformation of the educational system from a top-down, to a flatter management system. This transformation has significant implications on the structure and function of the schools themselves, fostering an egalitarian, ideologically invested community supportive of the school.

Chapter Two

The Socio-Cultural context of *Gaelscoileanna*;

Colonialism, post-Colonialism, and the democratisation of Education

Introduction

Language immersion education, I argue, is a product of a ‘post-colonial condition’, and those involved in this educational practice are reactive to such. This ‘condition’ is not culture specific, but rather is common to cultures emerging from Colonial regimes. Therefore reactions to such, connect otherwise disparate communities in a trans-national, cross-cultural web of identity politics and negotiation.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a cross-cultural comparative study of immersion education as both reactive to a ‘post-colonial condition’, and as a successful means of addressing indigenous (or otherwise marginalized) communities’ needs. In this sense, it is argued that rather than conceptualising Irish language maintenance/revival solely as a minority language issue (Coady, 2001, Hindley, 1990, Oudin, undated), it is important and useful to understand it as a struggle for indigenous linguistic rights (Kontra, Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Varady, 1999) in a post-Colonial context.

A cross-cultural study of conditions of post-colonial identity, and indeed the perceived insecurity and instability of that identity as a result of a post-colonial condition, will illuminate the structures and conditions of Irish society; constructions of national and political identity, linguistic ideologies, and the contested role and strategies of educational institutions.

Gaelscoileanna represent a modern reaction to an Educational system inherited from a Colonial power, which serves the dominant (State) power, and fails to cater to indigenous cultural-linguistic aspirations (Altbach and Kelly, 1978, Lee, 1990). In

assuming the role and structures of the Colonial state, the nation state thus became an 'us' to the indigenous 'other' (Said, 1993), necessitating an indigenous struggle for linguistic and cultural rights within an ethnically indigenous nation state. The transformation of the structures of education that *Gaelscoileanna* have instituted, results in a corresponding transformation of school structures. It is argued that this democratic reformation of education fosters an egalitarian system of childhood socialisation, in which bonds of linguistic affiliation are cultivated, thus investing linguistic communities (rather than nation-state) in the production and reproduction of their own subjects and subjectivities.

Colonialism and Education

As stated in the introduction, the primary theoretical basis of this project is Deleuzian (1983), treating society and its institutions (in this case Colonialism) as a machine, productive of subjects and subjectivities. My hypothesis is that the similar concerns and strategies employed by Irish and other revivalists/traditionalists are directly related as a result of Colonial machinations, rather than merely coincidental occurrences.

In his introduction to *Colonialism and Culture* Nicholas B. Dirks wrote; 'If Colonialism can be seen as a cultural formation, so also culture can be seen as a colonial formation' (1992, 3). It is my contention that the Colonial enterprise produced certain structures, insecurities, and concerns in it's subjects, in short a specific condition of culture for indigenous peoples, which is nowadays referred to as

'post-coloniality'. Whilst the historical specificities of the Colonial project varied greatly to accommodate multitudinous encounters and varying degrees of resistance, many of the results, I would argue, are almost identical in post-Colonial societies, despite the obvious cultural differences. This, I argue, is a result of the overwhelming structure and the totality of the process of Colonisation.

In the same piece Dirks warns; 'Any attempt to make a systematic statement about the colonial project runs the risk of denying the fundamental historicity of Colonialism, as well as conflating cause with effect' (1992, 7). In order to mitigate the possibility of proffering a reductive view of such an amorphous system, it is hoped that an investigation of the effects of colonialism will reveal the fundamental mechanics necessary for their production. Obviously historical differences such as date of inception, racial versus religious distinction and constructions thereof, etc. will have necessitated dramatically differing specificities of the system in the respective countries. However, the British Colonial project – refined in an Irish social 'laboratory' – provided a blueprint for the institution of British rule elsewhere in the world. This is reflected in the similar structures of civic society in various post-colonial countries, an inheritance of the common Colonial legacy.

In a similar way, such societies inherited post-colonial subjectivities. In an article entitled *The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity*, Jonathon Friedman writes, 'cultural realities are always produced in specific socio-historical contexts and that it is necessary to account for the practice of identity and the production of historical schemes [...] the processes that generate the contexts in which identity is practiced constitute a global arena of potential identity formation.

This arena is informed by the interaction between locally specific practices of selfhood and the dynamics of global positioning' (1992, 837). In this chapter the 'locally specific practices of selfhood' represented by *Gaelscoileanna* are considered in the context of their 'positioning' in a global hegemonic system of post-Colonial identity politics, by means of comparison with the indigenous educational movement of another former British colony, New Zealand.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have argued that the primary means of producing and reproducing social and 'cultural realities' is through an educational system that reflects social hierarchy and power, thus producing subjects indoctrinated/enculturated to serve that power. Put simply, the production and reproduction of society and power is a universal function of education. Control of education is a contentious issue precisely because it offers control of the creation of subjects to hegemonic power. In this respect colonial education was designed to produce subjects to colonial power, thereby reproducing the hierarchy of empire itself, '[s]chools which emerge in colonies reflect the power and the educational needs of the colonizers' (Altbach and Kelly, 1978, 2).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said identifies as a common trait of post-Colonial governance the appropriation of colonial educational structures by national elites to serve their own socio-political position. 'The national bourgeoisies and their specialized elites [...] in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms' (Said, 1993, 269).

Gaelscoileanna emerged as an indigenous educational movement reactive to an educational system inherited from, and so reflective of, Colonial powers. As argued by Akenson (1975), ours is an educational system created to serve colonial power, appropriated by the nation state, and symbolically infused with a national tongue for the purpose of identity creation. However the history of the Irish language in the education system was not simply one of wilful neglect subsumed by strident revival, rather it is much more complex, and the examination of this history yields important insights into the present state of the Irish language. As was recently observed, '[o]nly by settling linguistic claims within this historical context [...] can we see the specifically political anti-imperial nature of these claims. Otherwise, the claims appear to be relatively apolitical in relation to the 'backdrop' of the colonial state. This de-politicising of movements for linguistic security therefore serves to legitimise the original (and, too often, ongoing) colonial practices that created the 'problem of declining diversity' in the first place' (Nichols, 2006, 41).

Nichols argues, 'language has always been the companion of empire' (Nebrija 1980, 97, quoted in Nichols, 2006, 28), such that the elimination of 'linguistic diversity' was viewed as essential to the unproblematic exploitation of the colonies (Nichols, 2006, 37). Viewed in this light the question of the position of Irish (or, rather, lack thereof) in the National Board of Education established in 1831, becomes one of political-linguistic policy, rather than, as Akenson contends, the ignorance of the plausibility of an education conducted in a medium other than English (Akenson, 1975, 38).

The implications of a system of education, and the society it reproduces, whereby linguistic diversity is eliminated are stark indeed for post-colonial societies. In as

much as post-colonial nations may 'tinker with the machinery' of their own domination, they essentially inherit and become complicit in the reproduction of this hierarchy, and therefore, the policy of destruction of indigenous languages. It is precisely this aspect of post-colonialism, or rather, '*neo-colonialism* [...] the persistence of foreign control despite seeming national independence' (Altbach and Kelly, 1978, 29) which needs to be examined in relation to failures in addressing the maintenance/revival of the language. The persistence of such 'neo-colonial' policy necessitates a reconceptualisation of the Irish language struggle, from that of a minority language issue in a European context, to that of an indigenous rights issue in a post-Colonial context.

For this purpose, this chapter will explore comparisons between the indigenous language movement of New Zealand and *Gaelscoileanna*. Of course, the difficulty of such a reconceptualisation lies in the variety of society in the two countries. New Zealand is a 'bi-cultural society' (Bishop and Glynn, 1999), of settler (Pakeha) and native (Maori), the distinction between Colonial and Native is predicated upon racial distinction, European and Other. In Ireland however, the indigenous struggle takes place not against an outside group, but a Colonial mentality/hegemony, which is so ingrained in our society as to be almost invisible. That *Gaelscoileanna* are a native language struggle opposing a native Government does not negate the fact that they are an indigenous rights movement struggling against a hegemonic linguistic hierarchy.

Gaelscoileanna agitate for provisions to which the Government is constitutionally committed, although obviously remiss of this commitment. Such fraction occurs, I argue, as a result of neo-colonial governance. Indigenous movements must react

against their own governments which, consciously or not, are reproducing a system through which their indigenous language and culture is overtly threatened.

Irish as a minority language

‘Linguistic minorities are created by nationalisms which exclude them. At the same time, the logic of linguistic nationalism is available to minorities as a way to resist the power of the majority’ (Heller, M, 1999, 7).

In its status as a minority language the Irish language has been both the rationale for exclusion, and the means of resistance of its speakers. In his rebuttal of Reg Hindley’s damaging ‘obituary’ *The Death of the Irish Language* (1990), Ó’Ciosáin (1991) argues that language policy in Ireland created a situation in which the language could not survive as a medium of communication outside of the *Gaeltacht* (pockets of native Irish-speaking communities primarily found on the Western periphery of the country). The geographical fallacy of the *Gaeltacht* as the site of survival of the language, and the investment therein, provided the anthropomorphic rationale behind discussions of the language’s mortality, whilst simultaneously excusing the Government of its responsibility to support the revival and maintenance of language communities outside these narrow geographical boundaries.

The disparity between policy and practice is discussed at length by Maria Coady (2001) and was referred to during a recent interview with a *Gaelscoileanna* representative in her consideration of the comparative status of Irish amongst European minority languages. However, it was not an encouraging comparison.

Citing the example of the Welsh language, the *Gaelscoileanna* spokesperson stated that, despite not having the constitutional status and protection afforded to Irish (until relatively recently), the Welsh language was faring far more favourably. The reasons for the failures in Irish language policy are discussed in the previous chapter, however these failings fall into sharp relief when one considers the efforts made to elevate the status of the language on an institutional level.

The institutionalisation and recognition of Irish as a working minority language within the European Union, which comes into force on the first of January 2007, is further evidence of the utilisation of the language as a symbolic marker of National identity. Native speaker and member of the European Parliament Seán Ó'Néachtáin praised the move as “a passport to EU employment” for Irish speakers (Irish Times, June 14th 2005) (a sentiment echoed during my interview with the *Gaelscoileanna* representative, and also cited repeatedly by parents as a motivating factor in their choice of *Gaelscoil* education for their children). Elsewhere, however, the move came in for sharp criticism as a “starvation ration” offered in lieu of practical support for an impoverished language. “It’s an empty gesture and we have had too many of them. If we don’t look after the Irish language and its culture ourselves - and we seem to have no wish to do so - why should we ask others to do it?”, asked Professor Ó'Corráin of UCC (Irish Times, Feb 25th 2004).

As evidenced in the previous chapter, the symbolic status of Irish, and its constitutional reification, whilst having proved detrimental to the language, has also provided the *Gaelscoil* movement its legitimacy. However, Governmental support for

the movement is at best reactive, providing recognition retrospectively rather than assistance to their foundation.

It is in this area that critical examination and reconceptualisation of policy and practice in terms of post-Colonialism could be beneficial to the language. Heller argues that this redefinition of linguistic struggles is a necessity of modernity in which the value of state nationalism is in decline; 'Linguistic minorities used the logic of ethnic state nationalism to resist that older form of power in order to enter the modern world. That modern world uses a different logic, and so linguistic minorities now have to redefine themselves in order to retain their economic and political gains, but without losing their legitimacy' (Heller, M, 1999, 4).

The case for treating the Irish language as a post-Colonial indigenous rights issue

Heller calls for a pragmatic redefinition of linguistic minority movements to enable a more beneficial negotiation of their position in a modern world. Certainly, as observed above, Irish as a linguistic minority movement is limited by the symbolic value placed upon it by Government, constitution, and society. However, a redefinition of the terms of reference, which does not examine the debate itself, may simply serve to reinforce the symbolic limitation. Nichols has argued that 'questions of language rights, linguistic diversity and the political legacy of colonialism cannot be clearly separated from each other' (Nichols, 2006, 44), therefore, I would argue, the examination of the Irish language movement needs to be recontextualised as a post-Colonial indigenous rights movement.

It has been observed that, '[o]nce established, it is very difficult for the governments of Third World nations to break with pre-independence institutions. Inertia is a strong force in that functioning institutions, even if they are not ideal, are often seen as sufficient. There are often no readily available models to take the place of the colonial structures' (Altbach and Kelly, 1978, 33). As argued in the preceding chapter, the educational institutions of Ireland are permeated with this inertia (Akenson, 1975).

Indigenous language movements are a response to such inertia. That indigenous educational movements are contemporaneous and analogous, indicates that they are products of, as well as reactions to, Colonial activity. Rosenblatt has argued that understanding contemporary movements of indigenous culture reveals the outcome of the colonial project; 'attention to the meaningful worlds of the colonized - their cultures - is essential to understanding the outcome of the interaction between them and the colonizing powers.' (Rosenblatt, 2004, 464). Where the meaningful worlds of the colonized are articulated institutionally, in schools, the researcher is presented the opportunity 'to examine the school's role in class/status legitimating in former colonial countries with non-universal education and competing indigenous status systems' (Lea Maseman, 1986, 19).

Language Rights as Indigenous Rights a comparative case study

The Maori Struggle

‘Maori, or Te Reo Maori, is the indigenous language of New Zealand. As with other former British colonies, the language has a history of being subjected to neglect and language shift in favour of English. In 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between 45 Maori chiefs and British colonizers in New Zealand. The Treaty required that the British Crown protect “all things of value” to the Maori people. Though 1923 figures show that 90% of Maori children could speak the language, this decreased to less than 5% by 1975 [...] During the 1970s questions were raised regarding the future of the language. However, it was not until 1986 that a tribunal was formed to review the Treaty, subsequently declaring that “things of value” also included the Maori language [...] Maori language was subsequently granted official status in 1987’ (Coady, 2001, 64).

Just as the Irish Constitution recognises Irish as the National language of Ireland, and places subsequent obligations upon the Government with regard to its support and maintenance, so the reinterpretation of the Treaty of Waitangi places a duty of care for Maori with the Government of New Zealand. ‘Maori people have long seen the Treaty as a charter for power-sharing in the decision-making processes of this country, for Maori determination of their own destiny as the indigenous people of New Zealand and as the guide to future development of New Zealand’ (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 14). The policies and practices of the Irish Government have largely been to support the status quo with regard to educational practice and language maintenance. However, in New Zealand (primarily as a result of the implications of a preceding indigenous educational movement) the official status awarded the Maori language has led to a re-evaluation and reform of the education system to accommodate and support indigenous language initiatives.

Another significant difference between Ireland and New Zealand (which cannot be ignored in this comparison) is the specificity of the Colonial impact (historical and demographic) upon the respective countries. Chiefly, New Zealand is a settler Colony, the indigenous population is estimated at 15% in 2001 (www.wikipedia.com), see also Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 43). Although plantations were carried out and were, at least in part, successful in Ireland (particularly in Ulster), the indigenous population remains above 90% (Irish Times, Oct 21st 2006). The 'bicultural' society of New Zealand, however, is a useful counterpoint to the Irish educational system, the colonial origins of which may yet be obscured by a mono-cultural demography. In particular because the disparity of achievement within New Zealand's 'universal' education system falls along cultural/racial lines; 'on average, Maori have lower educational achievement than non-Maori. While the reasons are complex, a factor may be the failure of the mainstream education system to adequately meet the educational needs and aspirations of Maori' (tpk.govt.nz). Whilst there is no comparable disadvantage present in the Irish school system, the disparity highlights the need for an examination of an educational system that does not address and cater to indigenous culture, and the reproduction thereof. As Bishop and Glynn have argued, in terms of education, *Culture Counts* (1999).

'Although the Maori struggles against colonial hegemony persisted in many regions of the country throughout the 20th century, a new era of national Maori activism began in the 1970s' (Harrison and Papa, 2005, 60). The educational aspect of this indigenous rights movement grew from the *Kohanga Reo*, or language nest schools, the first of which was established in 1982 (tpk.govt.nz). *Kohanga Reo* are similar to *Naíonáin*, in

that they are pre-school immersion programmes, which feed demand for primary immersion schools. 40% of Maori pre-schoolers now attend *Kohanga Reo* (tpk.govt.nz, see also Bishop and Glynn, 1999).

The success of these language nests was realised with the establishment of the first primary immersion schools, known as *kura kaupapa* Maori. The initiative, like that of *Gaelscoileanna*, was demand driven. 'The first *kura kaupapa* Maori were set up by parents who were concerned that their children's knowledge and use of the Maori language and competency in the culture would soon be lost if they went to an English-medium school. Eventually the state took over the funding of these schools, although initially, when they were first established in 1985, the parents and communities had to cover all the expenses themselves. This highlights the dedication and commitment these parents had to the concept and practice of Maori-medium education' (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 80-81). As with *Gaelscoileanna*, the growth of Maori-medium schools has been relatively rapid. 'The number of these schools has grown significantly, such that by 1993 the schools accounted for nearly 17% of all primary schools for Maori students (Benton, 1996, cited in Coady, 2001).

However, the structural opposition to these schools has been great. Bishop and Glynn noted that the growth of the schools was hampered by past mono-linguistic policy, the schools struggle to find staff fluent enough to teach through Maori (1996, 44-45). A similar problem which inhibits the expansion of *Gaelscoileanna*, demand for schools is fast outstripping the supply of qualified bilingual teachers (Interview with *Gaelscoileanna* representative), although to a limited degree, *Gaelscoileanna* are

beginning to meet their staffing needs by drawing from their pool of fluent past pupils (discussed further in the following chapter).

Another similarity between the two countries occurs with relation to Government support for their respective indigenous language movements. As pointed out above the Governments of both New Zealand and Ireland are obligated by law to protect and promote their national languages. However, as Flynn (1993) argues, political/symbolic support and practical support are not necessarily concurrent (see also Ní Fhearghusa, 1996). Similarly, in New Zealand, '[t]he state's response to the *kura kaupapa* school growth had been sluggish. Durie (1997) notes that the Ministry of Education limit's the number of newly established *kura kaupapa* to five schools per year. This significantly reduces the impact of *kohanga reo* such that only a limited number of preschool graduates can realistically attend a *kura kaupapa* school' (Coady, 2001, 65).

Not only do indigenous immersion schools address Maori linguistic and cultural aspirations (Harrison and Papa, 2005, Rosenblatt, 2004, Bishop and Glynn, 1999), the *kura kaupapa* have redressed the perpetuation of 'Maori 'underachievement' [by presenting an alternative to] a system that was in fact designed to promote such underachievement' (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 13).

However, it is the political impact of the programme which has resonance in the Irish context; 'the revolution of 1982 [the establishment of *Te Kohanga Reo*; independent, parent-driven, Maori language preschools] may be significant not so much as a language revitalization initiative, but as a major shift in the thinking of Maori people

with respect to no longer waiting for a 'benevolent' *Pakeha* society to deliver on Maori aspirations. On the contrary, they assumed increased responsibility for developing the social transformation of their own lives' (Nichols, 2006, 35, citing Smith, 2000, 64). Recent transformations include the launch of a Maori language television channel, and indeed the establishment of the Maori Party, a political party founded to represent indigenous issues in Government. The Government has recently introduced a programme whereby civil servants are encouraged to learn the language through immersion in Maori language communities (Nichols, 2006, 36). Nichols (2006) succinctly evaluates the effect the reorientation of the educational system has had on Maori rights movements and New Zealand society more generally; 'The social impact and policy implications have been nothing short of startling: the *Kohanga Reo* has resulted in (a) the politicisation of aboriginal issues in a relatively unthreatening manner; (b) the legitimating of aboriginal claims as valid and necessary in a bicultural society; (c) the presentation of aboriginal demands on terms that central policy structures can relate to; and (d) the mobilization of the Maori public around the principal of Maori self-determination.' (Nichols, 2006, 36, citing Fleras, 1993, 31).

Further to this social and political enfranchisement, the transformation of the education system from a hierarchical structure, reproducing and reinforcing a culturally bound subordinate-dominant relationship, to a flatter management community driven initiative, represents a reconstitution of social machinery. Thus the education system is transformed from Bourdieu's machine productive of power and social hierarchy, to a Deleuzian vision in which desire and aspiration are realised in machines of social reproduction, and thereby creative of reality.

Of the Maori struggle for self-determination and linguistic rights, Rosenblatt wrote; 'The form of their resistance to colonialism is patterned by their culture, and their ability to engage in that resistance is contingent on their ability to maintain their distinctiveness. Without some idea of culture, we can only understand their struggles in terms of our projects.' (Rosenblatt, 2004, 467). Surely, educational reform has 'created space away from the state' (Nichols, 2006, 40-1), in which Maori 'follow a curriculum which validates Maori knowledge, structures, process, learning styles and environment that is immersed holistically in the Maori language and culture' (tpk.govt.nz). However, despite the fact that resistance is a culturally framed (and so culturally specific) activity, Gaelach and Maori patterns of resistance so closely resemble one another that it may be more profitable to examine them as conditions produced by the Colonial machine.¹

Patterns of indigenous resistance in Ireland

A cultural revolution - the assertion of indigenous linguistic and cultural rights - was a principal aim of the Gaelic Revival. Intrinsic to the transformation of Ireland into an independent, post-colonial nation was the reformation of her public institutions. However, as Akenson points out, '[i]n most matters of public policy the Irish revolution was less a revolution than a change in management and in no area was the essential conservatism of the revolution more clearly exemplified than in the refusal of the new government to change fundamentally the school systems inherited from the imperial administration' (Akenson, 1975, 25). The revolutionary assertion that "an

¹ The connection was, and is, made explicit in Maori agitation for an indigenous language television station (maoritelevision.com/newsletter, see also rights.apc.org.au/culture).

Irish school, like an Irish nation, must be permeated through and through by Irish culture, the repository of which is the Irish language” (Pádraig Pearse quoted in Atkinson, 1969, 158), made way for political pragmatism and educational conservatism. The education system remained largely intact in post-independence Ireland, the only significant modification being that it was infused with the Irish language as part of a project of nation building, a tool to ‘group-image creation’ (Flynn, 1993, 76, also Akenson, 1975).

Curricular reform was abandoned, ‘de Valera was such an educational conservative that when in office in the 1930s and 40s he reintroduced the British scheme of set texts which had been abolished in the 1920s’ (Akenson, 1975, 26). In place of institutional or curricular reformation was an appropriation of existing patterns of knowledge and subjectification. The purpose of the Irish language in this context was political rather than pedagogical (Flynn, 1993, Akenson, 1975).

As argued in the previous chapter, the pursuit of this linguistic policy proved detrimental to the language itself. Yet the symbolic investment, of both Government and polity, in the national tongue prohibited any critical examination of the practices instituted for its maintenance;

‘While the government is careful to support the expanding all-Irish school movement, it has also relaxed further the requirements for pupils to study Irish and the requirements for teachers to have professional competence in Irish. The proposals to restructure the National University of Ireland raise questions about the continued status of Irish as a required matriculation subject. There

is now a clear possibility that Irish as a school subject will revert to its pre-independence status as a voluntary subject. There are dangers in this development. [...] the more policy singles out [native] 'Irish-speakers' as the target for language policies on the grounds of their rights as a minority group, the less plausible it becomes to sustain existing policies to revive Irish. Nor is it easy, in political terms, to move from a universal policy, which has been in operation for 70 years, to one which is more selective without severely damaging public confidence in the policy objective' (Ó'Riagáin, 2001, 211).

It is in the 'space away' from this 'paralysis of policy' (Flynn, 1993, 79) that the *Gaelscoil* movement has emerged. The socio-political implications of their emergence have required nothing short of the transformation of the educational system from a top-down structure to a democratic reflection of indigenous desires. '[O]nly the powerful decide whose values and beliefs will be deemed worth adopting by the group, which historical events are worth commemorating, which future is worth imagining. Cultures, and especially national cultures, resonate with the voices of the powerful, and are filled with the silences of the powerless' (Kramsch, 1998, 9). That the voices of indigenous language movements are being heard (or made to be heard) represents a significant shift in power between state and subjects.

'Resistance - to some concrete existing institution or structure - may take the form of seeking power rather than seeking to destroy or evade power.

Resistance is not a distinct form of action, it is interested social activity, ontologically the same as all other interested social activity. It is constituted as resistance only in terms of specific conditions, not in relation to some

unspecified abstract power. And [...] it was always in the service of some (culturally) particular goal or good. When (as is often the case) resistance employs some of the same categories and concepts that constitute that which it is directed against, it is not because resistance is “complicit with power” but because human activity takes place because it is meaningful to those who engage in it.’ (Rosenblatt, 2004, 469).

Indigenous educational movements require not the destruction of the systems created to subordinate them, but the power to operate and influence such systems, to make them ‘meaningful’ to their own lives and cultures. That such movements require the maintenance or revival of indigenous languages is reflective of the ideological connection of language and culture; ‘language is the key to accessing the culture and together language and culture are the key to socio-political interventions’ (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 76). With regard to *Gaelscoileanna*, Coolahan further suggests that the significance of such a movement is not necessarily the impact they will have upon the language, but the impact they have upon society as a whole; ‘Such developments are important not for the numbers involved but as signs of a more alert and concerned interest in educational needs and rights on the part of local communities.’ (1981, 138)

The Democratisation of Education through indigenous language movements

Indigenous educational movements represent ‘an alternative model of relationships within which the patterns of oppression are broken and where previously marginalized peoples can successfully participate’ (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 7). In

this context, culture is no longer unconscious but rather 'super-conscious', invoked for socio-political ends. (Rosenblatt, 2004, 467).

As Ni Fhearghusa (1996) points out, *Gaelscoileanna* owe much to other educational movements (namely, Educate Together) which, through the assertion of cultural rights, pioneered the way for other movements to follow, creating 'space away' from the state within the education system. However the impact of the movement, with the subsequent establishment of *An Foras Pátrúnacht*, the patronage system for *Gaelscoileanna*, in addition to the *Gaelscoileanna* organisation which assists with the foundation of the schools, has effectively revolutionised the Irish education system. 'Until the advent of this type of democracy in education, there existed only the denominational schools or private schools. The regulations, however, did not preclude interdenominational school or lay management. The Irish-medium schools then broke the mould and provided a democratic management model which is now the norm' (Ó'Murchú, 2001, 18).

This structural transformation has had considerable implications for the curriculum, and the ways in which the curriculum is formulated. Indeed, as recognised elsewhere, it is a condition of immersion education to demand curricular reform (see Irish Times, Feb 4th 2004, Professor Ó'Corráin of UCC's call for textbooks to accommodate secondary immersion education, also Nichols, 2006, 35). 'It is through the use of cultural metaphors to reorient curriculum content, curriculum structuring processes and interaction patterns and pedagogies that we will be able to address power differentials within the classroom' (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 72).

Outside the classroom, the implications for policy makers are clear. Indigenous movements require the conversion of the education system from one which reflects autocratic domination, to one which elevates the status of community leaders to policy partners. '*Kaupapa Maori* aims to restructure power relationships to the point where *partners* can be autonomous and interact from this position rather than from one of dominance and subordination' (Bishop and Glynn, 1999, 63 emphasis mine). Consider the correspondence of this evaluation with that of *Gaelscoileanna* in considering their status within the Irish education system; '*Gaelscoileanna Teo* is recognised by the Department of Education and Science as the national co-ordinating body for all-Irish schools at both primary and post primary level. The organisation is one of the *partners* of education that the Department consult on many topics regarding education' (*Gaelscoileanna, Billeog Eolais* emphasis mine).

'From its earliest years the national system had effectively excluded parents and the majority of the local citizens from a voice in the management of the primary schools. Parents had almost no rights concerning their children's education and at the local level the manager of the national school was insulated from the citizen's influence by his being neither an elected official nor a representative of a local government body' (Akenson, 1975, 4). It is in the context of educational autocracy and ideological domination that *Gaelscoileanna* present a forum for the aspirations and input of teachers and parents, and the benefits derived there from (investigated further in chapter 3). As a democratic movement, *Gaelscoileanna* act as a locus for such aspirations (pedagogical and parental), and the products obtaining from these schools are reflective of such and more. *Gaelscoileanna* are re-territorialized desiring machines from which reality, and subjectivity is produced (Deleuze, 1983).

Dependent upon the ideological input of parents, teachers, and policy makers, *Gaelscoil* pupils emerge with an Irish, *Gaelgeoir*, bilingual, multicultural, middle-class, independent, fill-in-the-blank identity.

Filling in the blanks - Parental and Pedagogical Aspirations

Academic literature on *Gaelscoileanna* tends to focus on its place within the Irish educational system (Ní Fhearghusa, 1996), state politics of language policy and its implications (Coleman, 2004, Coady and Ó'Laoire, 2002, Coady, 2001, Bourke, 1998, Ó'Laoire, 1996), and the ideological impetus of the movement, and those in support of it, in the context of failings of state language policy, or based on a cost-benefit analysis (Harris, 1988, Ó'Riagáin and Ó'Gliasáin, 1979)

Each of these studies provides the researcher with valuable perspectives on language and identity politics in a national context, whilst also offering an insight into the 'fairly widespread feeling of dissatisfaction' (Harris, 1988) attributed to the failings of the education system, especially with respect to language policy. Such sociological research provides the background to this investigation of the motivations and perceived necessity of the *Gaelscoileanna*, mainly insofar as it illuminates the macro-social dynamics inherent in education policy. However, such analyses lack any situation in the lives of those choosing to teach in, or to send their children to, this educational option. The following qualitative investigation into the actions and implications of 'real people doing real things' will therefore contribute important data to complement these earlier perspectives (see Lea Masemann, 1986).

Linguistic and communal affiliation

During my fieldwork in *Scoil Neasáin*, I had opportunity to meet with some parents, several of whom agreed to an informal, taped interview, whilst waiting to collect their children from school. The research questions focused on their reasons for choosing a *Gaelscoil* for their children and the perceived advantages of this choice (See appendix v). Uniformly, although for a variety of reasons, the primary factor in their choice was a linguistic one. As one parent put it “*Gaeilge, sin an cúis amháin*”, meaning Irish was the foremost reason for her choice. Ray MacManais, principal of *Gaelscoil Míde*, emphasised the primacy of language as a factor of parental choice, stating;

“Tá sí iontach tábhachtach do thuismitheoirí. Nuair a bíonn daoine... bíonn níos mo daoine ag iarraidh teacht isteach anseo mar a bhí ag an dtús, ná mura bhfuil spas againn dóibh. Agus bíonn orainn sceathrú iad. Cuir muid agallamh ar dtuismitheoirí, d'iarramar an ceist ceanna ar an fáthanna a bíonn orthu, 'Cén fáth go bhfuil tú ag iarraidh do phaist a chur seo seachas an scoil Béarla thuas bóthair?'. Agus sin freagair is coitianta atá againn, 'Tá, táim ag iarraidh go mbeadh mo phaiste ábalta an Gaelic a labhairt. Mar nach bhfuil mise. Ni raibh mise ábalta é a dhéanamh, ba bhreá liom go mbeadh mo phaiste ábalta é a dhéanamh.' , 'Cén fáth?', 'Mar is ar dteanga féin i.' So é sin mar a mothaíonn an chuid is mo de na tuismitheoirí. So tá sé an-tábhachtach don tuismitheoirí.”

“It[the language] is very important to parents. When people are... more people are looking to come in here than in the beginning, than we have space for. And

we have to screen them. We interview each parent, examining their reasons for choosing the school, ‘Why do you want your child here and not in the English language school up the road?’ And the most common response is, ‘I want my child to be able to speak Irish. Unlike myself. I wasn’t able to do it, I would like if my child was able to’, ‘Why?’, ‘Because it’s our own language’. So that’s how most of the parents feel. So it’s very important to the parents.”

However, when questioned about the perceived advantages of *Gaelscoileanna*, responses also revealed that pragmatism (at least potentially) overruled factors concerned with linguistic ideology. One such pragmatist observed, “I’m here because it [*Gaelscoil* education] works, the language is great but if it didn’t work, my kids wouldn’t be here”. This assertion of parental independence of choice was a common factor amongst respondents. Nichols has observed that ‘linguistic diversity and the devolution of power to the local level are in a mutually reinforcing relationship’ (2006, 27). Parental (and of course concomitant pedagogical) empowerment featured prominently in the factors influencing parent’s educational choices. In response to the question, ‘What, in your opinion, are the advantages of *Gaelscoileanna*?’, one parent articulated succinctly the hierarchy of parental concerns; “Well the fact that it’s a small school, I think is really important, and the fact that the parents are really involved. And the language, I mean, please God they’ll have a bit more interest in their culture, they’ll keep the language alive!”

In empowering parents with regard to the input, and therefore, output of their child’s school, *Gaelscoileanna* become an ideological blank canvas, on which parents inscribe their own aspirations and desires. This is not to say that the *Gaelscoil*

movement is devoid of ideological impetus - far from it (investigated in the proceeding chapter). However, *Gaelscoileanna*, as carriers of idealism, rather than performers of a perfunctory social reproduction, permit such imaginative, and in many cases emotive, attachments to their role. Thus, for some parents the importance of their choice was deeply personal, a means by which to maintain or re-establish a pre-existing connection to the language, ones cultural heritage, or, indeed, direct family. In one interview a very open young mother, <A>, disclosed the motivation behind her choice as a means of addressing a linguistic severance caused by the death of a parent.

<A> “My father’s from Galway, from Cararoe, so...”

<Interviewer> “And you don’t speak Irish?”

<A> “I don’t. My father actually died before I was born, just about a month before I was born so we kind of used to go up and down, but not as much as we used to. I’m hoping to go down now in August, on holidays, for a week or two. I have family down there you know, and they come up and they stay in the house, and we all speak Irish together, like, it’s great, you know what I mean?”

This parent hopes that through her children she might improve her own grasp of the language, and, in so doing strengthen familial bonds by means of linguistic affiliation. In this sense, the community of speakers that *Gaelscoileanna* seek to create stretches

far beyond the immediate transmission of language from teacher to pupil, inculcating families, and indeed social networks (discussed further in the proceeding chapter).

Issues of national, cultural and social identity with regard to the demarcation through linguistic attainment were asserted more frequently than those of communal affiliation. Although, evidenced repeatedly, the various agendas that the discussion of such issues revealed were particular to individual parents. In this sense *Gaelscoileanna* act as vehicles for aspirational projections of identity - desiring machines writ small. Whether or not they function in the ways in which individuals conceive of them functioning is in many ways irrelevant. What is important to the parents is that the schools lend themselves to carrying their aspirations for their children, families and communities.

Class concerns; linguistic vs. social elitism

In his recent book *The Pope's Children*, economist David McWilliams criticised *Gaelscoileanna* as creative of exclusivity (2005). This observation received a blanket refutation by the vast majority of parents, teachers, and a representative of *Gaelscoileanna*. One teacher dismissed the claim most succinctly saying, “before, Irish was considered a mark of poverty, now it’s exclusive! People will always find ways to criticise the language”. When I asked Derbhla for her interpretation of the debate she conceded that *Scoil Neasáin* was necessarily selective of pupils due to over-subscription. However such selectivity was not based on class but rather a perceived obligation to the founding imperative. In fact, for Derbhla, and many of the

teachers in *Neasáin*, the term ‘elitist’ was associated with a linguistic rather than social distinction;

“Ni glacaim leis go bhfuil sé elitist, ach an rud atá deacair faoi ná abair sa scoil seo tá go leor daoine ag iarraidh áiteanna agus nílimid ag glacadh ach le shraith amháin insan scoil. agus bhféidir gur mothaíonn daoine “bhuel bhféidir nach bhfuil siad ag thógáil ach na Gaeilgeoirí nó an dream is fearr le Gaeilge”. [...] Nílimid ag iarraidh cineál airithe daoine nó nílimid ag iarraidh ach Gaeilgeoirí a thógáil isteach. Ach bunadh an scoil seo, nílím cinnte faoi scoileanna eile, bunadh é le freastail ar lucht na Gaeilge. Sin an fáth a bunaíodh sa chead áit agus tá muid dílis don aidhm sin.”

“I don't accept that it's elitist, but it's difficult for the school, say, there are a lot of people looking for placements and we just can't facilitate everyone. So perhaps people feel “well maybe they won't accept anyone but the Irish speakers or the people speak Irish”. [...] we're not looking for a specific kind of person, and we're not looking exclusively for Irish speakers. I'm not sure about other schools, but this school was founded by Irish speakers to facilitate Irish speakers. That's the reason they founded the school in the first place, and we're obligated by and committed to this aim.”

Nevertheless, class rather than linguistic distinction was clearly on the agenda of one couple attending a parent's open day in *Gaelscoil Míde*. Whilst the husband, <H>, was dismissive of such criticism, his wife, <W>, fully embraced confirmation of her own social status.

<H> “Sorry, something I recently came across was people talking about a middle class reverse snobbery of people sending their children to *Gaelscoileanna mar seo nil* [like that, there’s not], like as a snobbery towards other things, a way of creating exclusivity. I was kind of taken aback by that because they were educationalists, like it was a deputy principal of a school down the road and the principal of another school, and they were talking about it. But they were quite vehement in their hatred of the language, which I hadn’t considered, that somebody could be so bitter, because their own school...”

<Interviewer> “It’s very strange that they all crop up in like disadvantaged areas primarily, and it’s only in recent years that they’ve started to...”

<W> “Well like, look around, you’re talking about a middle class, I mean it’s a very middle class phenomenon really, do you know what I mean. I mean yes, they were opened in primarily working class areas, and I suppose the ethos of the *Gaelscoileanna* was to bring back the language to where the people were which is *Baile Átha Cliath* [Dublin], do you know what I mean? You know, as opposed to the other, *as na Gaeltachta* [the Irish speaking areas], out in the middle of nowhere places which are far more remote. But I think it’s become more of a middle class phenomenon.”

In this case the *Gaelscoil* was viewed as reflective of, and responsive to the class concerns of the parents, the husband refutes any association with exclusivity, whilst his wife embraces the distinction. Unfortunately, statistical analysis of the social

make-up of the families involved in *Gaelscoileanna* has yet to be undertaken, and any assertions of such distinctions should be treated, at best, anecdotally, and wholly speculative. Niamh, *Neasáins* fourth-class teacher had her own interpretation of the claims made in *The Pope's Children*:

“Ceapaim gur bhun sé an staidéar sin i dhá scoil a bhí liomaithe le D4’s. Agus caithfidh mé a rá aon scoil a bheith sa ceantair siad bheifeá an rud ceanna a rá.”

“I think he based the study on two schools full of D4’s [slang term for people living in the affluent Dublin 4 area]. And I could make the same claims of any school in that area”.

Given the controversy which surrounded McWilliams’ claims, it is important to reiterate that the above example was atypical of parents responses in this regard, and serves the purpose of illustrating the way in which parental empowerment has allowed space for individual aspirations.

Language acquisition and Cultural Capital

The more common reasons cited for choosing *Gaelscoileanna* echo closely the promotional leaflets of the organisation. For example, future foreign language acquisition featured prominently in parent’s assessments of the long-term advantages of bilingual education, echoing *Gaelscoileannas* assertion that ‘Being bilingual will help your child learn a third and fourth language when they are older’

(*Gaelscoileanna, I dTreo a dTodhchaí*). Indeed many parents cited perceived failures of the Irish education system with respect to foreign language acquisition as a factor in their decision to choose *Gaelscoil* Education; “Ahhhhh, I think Irish Education is appalling within languages, it has a shocking record, like really atrocious... Yeah like in French and German....Italian and in every language”. Indeed, English language monolingualism, Lee (1990) argues, fosters such linguistic underachievement. ‘It is convenient to have vernacular command of a world language, but that language, inducing a certain linguistic insularity, also erects a barrier between Ireland and the wider world. Knowledge of English has opened some doors for the Irish. It has, ironically, helped close many others. It has made the Irish bad linguists’ (Lee, 1990, 667). The hope of parents, as articulated in the following quote, is that early childhood bilingualism might redress such educational disadvantage;

<Parent> “Oh, there are wonderful advantages, the fact that they have their own `language would give them an insight into their culture, into their music, into their history. And as well as that, it enables them to learn other languages, very, very easy, you know. They’re very good with French, and they’re very good with German, and they’ve an interest in learning all these languages, you know. So I think it’s great, it gives them an ear for other languages.”

This ‘ear for other languages’ forms the basis of parent’s rationale for choosing bilingual education. When asked whether or not they could foresee any opportunity or occasion in which their child might use Irish in their future lives, the majority of monolingual parents responded negatively (interpreting the question as referring to their child’s future profession). The more hopeful amongst them cited RTÉ (the

national broadcaster) as a potential professional avenue. Bilingual parents concurred, lamenting the dearth of opportunity for Irish speaking professionals (although many were mindful of the broadening horizon in translation services following the accession of Irish as a working language of the EU). All parents agreed, however, that the advantage to their child with regard to the subsequent acquisition of foreign languages, within a burgeoning pluralistic Irish and international context, was a decisive factor in their choice of *Gaelscoileanna*. It has been observed that 'Communicative resources [...] form an integral part of an individual's symbolic and social capital' (Gumperz and Gumperz, 1982, 5). Indeed, this is specifically so, given what Gal has identified as 'the EU imagery of a 'Europe of Nations' and a 'Europe of Regions' [...] in which multilingualism is presented as a valuable skill in the expanding knowledge economy' (Gal, 2006, 167). *Gaelscoileanna*, therefore, offer an opportunity for individuals to increase their own linguistic and cultural capital.

Rud éigin speisialta, something special

In *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland*, Liam Kennedy laments, '[t]aking away the language of a people might be considered the cultural analogue of material dispossession. Language is not simply a means of communication. It is a repository of cultural meanings which are vital to the well being of the individual and the wider society' (1996, 204). In providing opportunity to acquire and access this 'repository of cultural meanings', to those involved, *Gaelscoileanna* transmit more than linguistic ability. A former *Gaelscoil* pupil described the language as 'the key to our culture', a source of cultural confidence. *Gaelscoileanna's* leaflet *I dTreo a dTodhchaí* (towards their future) assert that 'children who are bilingual can often have

enhanced self esteem'. One parent, who had been a *Gaelscoil* pupil herself, drew this connection between language acquisition and self-confidence;

<W> “Em...Bhuel, ar dtús foghlaíonn tú teanga eile, agus cabhraíonn sé sin le teangacha eile a fhoghláinn, Fraincise, no Gearmáinis, no aon rud mar sin. Ma tá tú ábalta athrú idir na dhá teanga, is féidir leat athrú idir teangacha eile níos easca. Ach an príomh bhuntáiste is i grá don cultúr agus an teanga agus muin..féinmhúineach agus gur Éirineach tú.”

“...Yeah ceapaim gur tugann sé féinmhuinín agus go dtugann sé neamhspleáchas, independence, sets you, not sets you apart but gives you something special, rud éigin speisialta.”

<W> “Em...well, learning a language from the beginning helps you learn other languages, French, or German, or anything like that. If you are able to switch between the two languages, you can switch to another language more easily. But the most important advantage is the love of culture and language and self-confidence that you are Irish.”

“...Yeah, I think it gives you self-confidence and independence, sets you, not sets you apart but gives you something special, something special.”

The self-confidence of the pupils, or the ‘something special’ to which the parent refers is fundamental to the school ethos and function. The co-operation of *Gaelscoil* pupils, parents and teachers is integral to the mission of the school, as products and producers

of the language (explored more fully in the proceeding chapter). The co-operative spirit of those involved - pupils, teachers and parents - creates what informants regularly referred to as the 'special atmosphere' of the school. One parent connected this 'atmosphere' directly to the space for input afforded to parents, and the concomitant dedication of the staff;

“is scoil beag í agus tá atmaisféar ann, nach faigheann tú i scoileanna móra. Tá sé ar nós teaghlach, teaghlach mór, ach teaghlach ann freisin. Tá an suim ag tuismitheoirí freisin agus cuireann siad a lán obair isteach chun go mbeadh gach duine ar shuaimhneas anseo. So reputation maith ag an scoil freisin. Tá gach duine, bíonn gach duine ag labhairt faoi agus ag rá go bhfuil scoil iontach i agus tá na múinteoirí go hiontach freisin. Cumann siad an atmaisféar agus rud a dhéanamh mar sin...”

“it’s a small school and it has atmosphere that you wouldn’t find in bigger schools. It’s like a home, a large home, but a home anyway. The parents take an interest, and they put in a lot of work in to make sure everyone is at their ease here. So the school has a good reputation too. Everyone, everyone says that the school is fantastic and that the teachers are fantastic too. They create the atmosphere like that...”

Teaching through what is, for most pupils, a second language presents significant challenges, and demands creativity and innovation of teaching methods (further discussed in chapter 3). It is the mission of *Gaelscoileanna* to teach Irish as ‘a living

language, and a language for living' (*Gaelscoil Mide* prospectus) - a sentiment invoked repeatedly by the parents interviewed. It was clearly recognised in *Scoil Neasáin* that this aim demanded careful attention to extra-curricular activities. Through sport, drama, music and singing, quizzes and competitions, the children broaden their vocabulary so as to facilitate the application of the Irish language to every aspect of the child's life. The enthusiasm and involvement this requires of the teaching staff engenders the school spirit and co-operative atmosphere, and is viewed as a huge advantage by parents.

“everything is just focused on the kids. All the teachers know all the kids in all the different classrooms. The extra curricular stuff that they do, like, C__ plays the violin, and he loves it. A__'s really into the dancing, and the music. And the teachers really seem to get down to their level. It's not like, when I went to school, you know, same old routine. It's really, I don't know, it's really focused and they seem to learn more. It's not like when I went to school at all! You know what I mean, my kids have no problem coming to school, they love it, like. And that's the main thing.”

Pedagogical perspectives

It has been observed that, '[t]he preservation of linguistic diversity may not only be desirable as a good in itself; it is also a means to the realisation of a politics of local community. It therefore implicates the freedom and autonomy of indigenous peoples' (Nichols, 2006, 33). At school level, the independence of the *Gaelscoil* movement

grants such autonomy to parents and teachers and has allowed for the negotiation of the pedagogical imperative itself. The staff of *Scoil Neasáin* are talented and dedicated (and luckily for this researcher, self-reflective) educationalists. Indeed, any school would be fortunate to have one or two such teachers amongst their ranks. That a single stream school enjoys such a wealth of experience and commitment implies that the *Gaelscoil* is specifically attractive to such educational innovators.

Seán, who teaches Senior infants, for example, expressed his interest in holistic education as complimentary to the experience he gained in his practice of homeopathy. He views teaching as a means of developing the 'whole child', a multi-faceted process as opposed to what he viewed as a reductive, singular academic experience. For Seán even the language is secondary to the full realisation of the individual child's personality and potential - a largely arbitrary medium through which self-realisation is achieved by means of an holistic educational experience. That he rhetorically downplays the importance of the linguistic and academic aspect of schooling is no reflection of practice in the class. Senior infants enjoy their learning experience immensely and benefit greatly from Seán's previous experience as a performer as they pick up words through play.

Teaching is a vocational profession, so it is unsurprising that as such it would prove attractive to dedicated idealists. However, *Gaelscoileanna*, again due to the egalitarian nature of their structure and the requirement of pedagogical innovation, provide a space for individual, personal input and experience into the educational process. For example, during an interview with Brid, of first class, it was revealed that she viewed teaching as an opportunity to have a positive influence on the child's life.

Through her classroom, Bríd envisions having a formative influence on the children's understanding of environmental issues, including the benefits of organic produce, and by implication, an awareness of a healthy diet. She stated that the advantage of the *Gaelscoil* in this respect was that she was enabled and encouraged to input her self into her classroom, and thereby, the curriculum. The democratisation of education achieved by *Gaelscoileanna*, therefore, creates a 'space away' from traditional, hierarchical teaching practice. In so doing *Gaelscoileanna* provides teachers with a freedom to innovate, indeed, teaching through a second language fundamentally demands such innovation. The ability of teachers to input, innovate, and inscribe themselves upon the school and teaching practice, is a significant function of the democratisation of education to facilitate indigenous, linguistic, and community rights and demands.

Conclusion

Indigenous cultures are, as a condition of post-coloniality/modernity, highly reflexive. Colin Coulter wrote; 'The assertion that the process of modernisation in effect entails the obliteration of those inclinations and practices conventionally understood as 'traditional' simply flies in the face of historical evidence. It is the experience of most developed societies that the onset of modernity allows for the persistence and even the revival of certain forms of tradition' (2003, 17). During interviews with parents, children and teacher, the emergence of a modern pluralist Irish society within a European, even global framework, was often cited as a spur to language maintenance, and traditionalist revival.

<D> *Ceapaim, sa lá atá inniu ann béim ag go leor...tá go leor rudaí ag bogadh an, an sciopaidh. Tá béim ar theicneolaíocht, tá béim ar dul chun chinn an t-am ar fad, ach go chaithimid smaoinigh ar dúchais an tire agus ar an Gaeilge, agus ar an iarracht tá sé tábhachtach an teanga a chuimhni, agus a bheith broidiúil as an teanga agus ag iarraidh ____ ceart a fhail, gnó a dhéanamh tríd an teanga agus an teanga a bheith beo in Éirinn.*

<D> I think that nowadays there's a lot of emphasis...things are changing rapidly. There's an emphasis on technology, there's an emphasis on progress all the time, but if we need to think about the heritage of the country, and of the Irish language, and of the effort. It's important to consider our language, and to be proud of it, and to do right by it, do business in the language and make sure it's kept alive in Ireland.

'Doing right' by the Irish language involves the transformation, and decentralisation of power from state to community. The independence of the *Gaelscoil* movement creates a 'space away' from the state in which negotiations of identity and modernity take place. This is a reality to such a degree that teachers and parents have relative freedom from structural/curricular constraints. That they have created space for the language within the broader system of education has led to an inadvertent opening up of the possibility of reforming other aspects of the curriculum. The high value placed upon independence (social, structural, and personal) allows teachers to exercise their creativity and input their personalities into their classrooms, whilst, simultaneously, allowing parents project and input their own concerns and ambitions for their children

onto the school. In this way the school becomes a funnel for aspirations from which emerges the ‘*Gaeilgeoir*’, in all its varieties. The schools as such are a ‘litmus test for society’. On the macro-social level they reflect the continued movement from autocratic rule to an egalitarian imperative. On the micro-social level, they reflect the multitudinous voices of a modern democracy.

This chapter examined the emergence of *Gaelscoileanna* as a movement oppositional to a dominant linguistic ideology inherited from a regime of cultural and linguistic imperialism. The transformation of the school structure instituted by *Gaelscoileanna* (and indeed other post-colonial indigenous language initiatives) is a function of opposition to this dominant ideology, and, at the same time, constitutes a reformation of Irish linguistic ideology that rationalises such opposition. As a ‘grass-roots’, egalitarian movement *Gaelscoileanna* have transformed the education system from a top-down, hierarchical structure to a flatter management model. As evidenced above, structural transformations, facilitated by this egalitarian movement, have opened up an ideological space in which parents can imaginatively input and ascribe their aims, ambitions and concerns onto the education of their children. As such, parents and teachers have a stake in, and some measure of control over, the process of socialisation. Thus, *Gaelscoileanna* are ideological vehicles, carrying independent, egalitarian principals. *Gaelscoileanna* do not merely oppose a **structure** that disadvantages speakers, but also the **ideology** that rationalises such disadvantage, thereby endangering the language. The structural transformation *Gaelscoileanna* have exerted on the education system, therefore, entails a concurrent, and mutually reinforcing, transformation of Irish linguistic ideology. The proceeding chapter

examines this transformation of linguistic ideology, and explores how *Gaelscoil* ideology operates in the classroom, and on their community of speakers.

Chapter three

The transformation of Irish linguistic ideologies;

'Is beatha an teanga í a labhairt, the life of a language is to speak it.'

Introduction

‘it is inadequate to study either the formal structure of social institutions (educational systems) or to survey the effects of such institutions in terms predefined by the researcher. Rather, the task is to uncover the workings of [...] educational systems in terms of their meanings for the participants, either as teachers or learners.’

(Lea Maseman, 1986, 15)

In the previous chapters I have attempted to trace and locate the Irish language through Education, and the modern *Gaelscoil* movement, in their historical and socio-cultural context. In so doing it has been argued that *Gaelscoileanna* represent a novel transformation of educational structures reflective of the democratization of the institutions of education, and, as such, are reflective of the aspirations and ambitions of those agents involved. The movement has transformed educational structures from a top down ascriptive process the aim of which was to create state subjects, into a flatter management, democratic model, reactive to the needs of pedagogues and polity. This transformation has also, and necessarily, transformed linguistic ideologies associated with Irish. The language, intrinsically tied to, and the impulse of, the democratization movement in schooling, has itself become a vehicle for, and so reflective of, the same aims and ambitions of those at the helm of the movement. This chapter examines the correlative transformation of Irish linguistic ideology² by *Gaelscoileanna*, giving context to this transformation by examining the movement in

² Employing the definition posited by Woolard in *Language Ideologies; Practice and Theory*, ‘linguistic ideology’ refers to the ‘[r]epresentations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world’ (Woolard, 1998, 3).

terms of its' impact and 'meanings for the participants', the language, and the community of speakers *Gaelscoileanna* create.

Schools as sites of Linguistic Ideology

'We reconstruct our ideas about the world and our relationships to it and to each other on the terrain of language, repositioning ourselves with respect to our old ways of thinking, being and doing, and trying out new ones'

(Heller, M, 1999, 10-11)

Language carries ideas and ideologies - cultural, political, and social. However, these ideologies can be ambiguous and difficult to identify, obfuscated by the very subjectivities they reflect. Woolard has argued that 'ideology is not necessarily conscious, deliberate, or systematically organised thought, or even thought at all; it is behavioural, practical, prereflective, or structural' (1998, 6). It is in the sites and structures of behaviour and practice that ideologies, and in the case of *Gaelscoileanna*, political (see chapter two) and linguistic ideologies, are reflected.

As implicitly argued in the previous chapters, schools are sites in which the ideologies of Colonialism, State Nationalism, and egalitarianism are articulated and negotiated. Silverstein has argued that '[t]he site of institutionalised ritual and ritualisation [...] provides an essential place where societies and social groups in effect articulate the ideological' (1998, 138). As integral components of the state, essential to the reproduction of state power and legitimacy, schools are important sites on which

ideology is inscribed structurally, and ascribed subjectively. That they have become sites for the negotiation and reconstitution of power infers that schools are sites in which these negotiations can be studied. The *Gaelscoil*, as one such institutionalised site in which the emergence of a transformed linguistic ideology can be observed, thus provides an insight into the cause and effect of such ideological transformations on both language and society. “[L]anguage ideology”, writes Errington, ‘is a rubric for dealing with ideas about language structure and use relative to social contexts’ (2000, 115).

Crowley observes that ‘language [is] often [...] the vehicle for debates concerned with cultural identity and therefore political legitimacy. [...] Cultural identity (in all its differing forms) and the modes of political legitimacy which attach to it, are of course central to our sense of who we are, where we are, what we have a right to claim and expect, and what others have a right to ask and receive from us’ (2000, 3). Therefore, as detailed in the previous chapter, language is a formidable means and impetus for community agitation and the negotiation and redistribution of power.

Language in Ireland has been both the tool of political domination and community creation. It is clear that the post-Colonial State gained advantage and legitimacy by invoking the Irish language as a means of politically realising an imagined community, that of Nation. The implications of state language policy have been examined thoroughly in the previous chapters. However, it is important to reiterate that in terms of the stated aim of Irish language policy - language revival - and, despite the leverage and power of the state to achieve this, overall Irish language policy has failed comprehensively. The Irish language is, arguably, in a worse state

now, after 80 years of ‘protection’ than was at the turn of the century (see Lee, 1990). That this failure was the result of flawed policy has been established in the previous chapters. However, the policy implemented by the Irish state, with the rhetorical nod to *Gaelic* revivalist ideology, has produced its own linguistic ideology with such an impact upon the language as to necessitate an indigenous movement for linguistic rights. The *Gaelscoil* movement, as discussed below, is one reactive³ to the imposition of a linguistic ideology that has disadvantaged the language and its speakers.

Transforming Irish Linguistic Ideology

‘Ideologies compete within any given society and historical period, but the struggle among them can give rise to distinctive approaches of states to the public regulation of language’

(Woolard, 1998, 21)

The persecution of minority languages during Ireland's Colonial period has been identified by Kennedy (1996) as part of a Europe-wide emergence of Nationalist rationale predicated on the Herderian political philosophy connecting language, people and place (see Woolard, 1998, and Gal, 2006). Such rationale justified the elimination of minority languages on the basis of their potential threat against the cultural hegemony of State/National identity. In an ironic example of *ideological*

³ I employ the term reactive here to refer to ‘*reactive* group formation whereby an ethnic group reasserts its historically established distinctions from other groups within a common national polity’ (Gumperz and Gumperz, 1982, 5).

*franchising*⁴, the same political philosophy, employed to justify the marginalisation of the language, subsequently informed the linguistic ideology of the post-Colonial state which employed a strategy of language revival in order to establish the legitimacy of Nationhood and common identity.

‘Linguistic state nationalism has [...] two connected facets: one which brings people to the state by giving them the state’s language, and one which brings the state to a people which defines itself in terms of shared language. Of course, these ideological visions of language and nation construct a way of evaluating specific situations, which can then be seen as more or less perfect or imperfect realizations of the linkage between language, nation and state, necessitating action to achieve the fullest realization possible’ (Heller, M, 1999, 8). Despite the impoverished position of the Irish language at the foundation of the State, the symbolic/ideological value of language as a marker of identity was such as to justify the project of language revival, not merely as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end - that of establishing commonality through a common goal - language revival - if not a common language. Indeed, Lee argues that it is the very loss of the language which engenders constructions of Irish national identity (Lee, 1989, 662).

Woolard writes, ‘[a]long with the equation of one language/one people has come an insistence on the authenticity and moral significance of “mother tongue” as the one first and therefore *real* language of a speaker, transparent to the true self [...]. Another

⁴ ‘the wholesale import of concepts and analyses from a powerful centre (usually the former colonial power) and their application in Procrustean fashion to the local society. This phenomenon is by no means confined to the long-established tendency of local capitalist elites to borrow dominant paradigms for regional application’ (Kirby, Gibbons, and Cronin, 2002, 14).

tenet often clustered with the Herderian ideology in both folk and scientific views demands linguistic purism as essential to the survival of minority languages, a kind of policing of the boundaries that have been drawn to create distinct language forms' (1998, 18, emphasis author's own). The national linguistic ideology proffered by Pearse (1915) and De Valera (1943), and which informed and shaped the Irish education system, is predicated on a perceived linguistic purity. The Irish language is perceived of as blighted, yet uninterrupted by Colonialism, thus forming an unbroken link between the modern Irish culture and her pre-Colonial cultural heritage.

This perception motivated an obligation to protect the language from cultural/linguistic miscegenation (Sahlins, 1987). The effect of this Puritanism has been the reification and objectification of the Irish language. Secondary to its status as a national identity marker, is the use-value of the language (Saris, 2000). The discourse of linguistic/cultural purity attached to Irish has had the effect of inhibiting Irish as 'a living language and a language for living' (*Gaelscoil Míde* prospectus, 2001). In the context of a language revered and 'revived' for its symbolic rather than its use value, the conflation of the reification of Irish, with its perceived vulnerability to linguistic/cultural miscegenation, has led to a situation in which the language is enforced as a static identity marker. The effect of this stasis is an inhibition of the innovation necessary to the natural development of the language which, by implication, negatively impacts the ability of 'native' speakers to reproduce themselves (examined later).

Woolard notes that '[m]oral indignation over non-standard forms derives from ideological associations of the standard with qualities valued within the culture'

(1998, 21). The perception of the Irish language as a symbolic boundary of National identity has led to the reification of linguistic standards as markers of cultural purity. Divergence from such standards, and the ‘moral indignation’ such divergences provoke, indexes an association between linguistic and cultural authenticity, an expression of discomfort with the past and the historical process of occupation, subordination and linguistic marginalisation. Ironically, through their ‘all things through Irish’ policy (www.gaelscoileanna.ie), *Gaelscoileanna* have created space for the effective transmission of standard Irish (Irish Times, June 26th 2006), whilst simultaneously maintaining space for the innovations of its speakers. This indicates a new comfort with bilingual (and in many ways bicultural) Irish identity, as well as the pragmatic realisation that ‘living’ languages are necessarily changing languages. Consider this evaluation by Ray Mac Mánaís of *Gaelscoil Míde*;

I do thuairim, cad í stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo faoi láthair?

<R> *Em, tá sé... Tá an dhá bealach le féach air. Tá daoine ann a deir go bhfuil na Gaeltachtaí tobar na Gaeilge, foinse na Gaeilge, faireann agus go tagann gach rud atá amuigh, sean agus luachmhar agus ar fiú é. Seo an Gaeltacht. Agus nil dabht ar bith le fheiceáil ar na Gaeltachtaí ag meath. Tá daoine le Béarla ag teacht isteach agus le Pholainn, agus daoine le gach sort teanga ag teacht isteach don Gaelscoileanna, gabh mo leithscéil, don Gaeltachtaí. Agus tá na scoileanna Gaeltachta ag iarraidh níos galldadh in aghaidh na bliana. Agus níos lú, agus níos lú Gaeilge le cloisteáil i gclos na scoile agus i meas na daltaí. Agus níos mó Béarla in úsáid. Tá scoileanna Gaeltachta ann, ón, eh, nach bhfuil an teagasc ar súil tríd Gaeilge níos mo. So*

tá na Gaeltachtaí ag imeacht, nil dabht ar bith faoi. Ar an taobh eile do, tá fás na Gaelscolaíochta, fás cuimse. Agus cé gur droch Gaelic a bhí ina úsáid ag na páistí, agus go bhfuil cineál 'Lingua Franca' darbh muid fhéin anois ag páistí Gaelscoileanna. Tá an Gaelic níos sláintiúla insna cathracha agus na bailte mór, níos mór ná a bhí riamh. Bhuel nil mar a bhí riamh ó thuig, ach ná a bhí riamh ag thus an cead seo caite. So sin tuar dóchais domsa. Nil dabht ar bith faoi ach i gceann daichead bliain go mbeadh athrú móra ar Gaelic labhairthe na hÉirinn. Beidh dul an Béarla ar an Gaeilge. [...] Agus tá sé tarlú, nil neart againn ar. [...] silim go mbeadh orainn cleachta le seo. Ar mhaith linn an teanga a bheith beo, agus ag athrú mar a n-athríonn gach teanga. Agus b'fhéidir nach mbeadh an teanga i gceann daichead bliana, i gceann caoga bliana chomh gceanamní, an dtuigeann tú ceanamní? Chomh pure, chomh chaste, agus a bhí sé le míle bliain roimhe seo, ach ar a leithéid beith sé beo. Agus dar loim gurab é sin an rud is tábhachtaí anseo.

<T> Ok, so tá difríocht mór idir Gaeilge ón Gaeltacht agus Gaeilge atá ag Gaelscoileanna?

<R> Difríocht an mhór ar fad! Difríocht an mhór ar fad. Ach tá, ar a laghad, tá Gaeilge ann. Rud ceard a dúirt sé, ach tá seanfhocail ann 'Is fearr Gaeilge briste na Béarla cliste!', Agus tagann sé leis an náisiún. Tagann sé leis an náisiún. Eh, eh, agus ní rud 'anti-Béarla' é, ach rud pro-Gaeilge atá i gceist agam. Is fearr liom daoine a bheith ag stracais leis an Gaeilge a úsáideann an méid atá acu.

In your opinion, what's the status of the Irish language in this country at present?

<R> Em, it's... There are two ways to look at it. There are people who say that the *Gaeltachts* are the source of the language, the fountain of the language, from where everything comes, old and valuable, and it's worth it. That's the *Gaeltacht*. And there's no doubt but that the *Gaeltachts* are diminishing. People with English are coming in and from Poland, and people with all sorts of languages coming into the *Gaeltachts*. And the schools in the *Gaeltachts* are becoming more foreign/anglicised each year. And smaller, and there is less Irish spoken in the school yard and from the pupils. And more English in use. There are some *Gaeltacht* schools, which, em, in which the instruction is no longer carried out in the Irish language. So the *Gaeltachts* are going, there's no doubt about that. On the other hand though, there's the growth of the *Gaelscoils*, a significant growth. And although it was 'bad Irish' the children were using, and there's a kind of 'Lingua Franca' amongst ourselves now, amongst the *Gaelscoil* children, the language is safer in the cities and towns now, more so than before. Well, not more so than it was ever, but certainly more so than the beginning of the last century. So that gives me hope. There's no doubt but that in forty years time spoken Irish will have changed significantly in Ireland. English is encroaching on Irish. [...] and it's happening and we've no control of it. [...] I believe that we'll have to get used to it. Do we want the language to live, and change as every language changes. And perhaps if the language is not as pure in forty or fifty years time, do you understand *ceanamni*? As pure, as chaste, as it was a hundred years previous,

but at the same time it'll be alive. And I think that that's the most important thing here.

<T> Ok, so there's a big difference between Irish from the *Gaeltacht* and the Irish of *Gaelscoileanna*?

<R> A huge difference! A huge difference. But, at the same time it's Irish. A thing they used to say, there's a proverb 'Better broken Irish than clever English!', [...] it goes along with Nation. It goes along with Nation. Eh, eh, and it's not an 'anti-English' thing at all, it's pro-Irish language. I prefer that people strive to use the Irish they have.

Ray's comments, although rooted in the ideology of linguistic purity and miscegenation (see Hill, 1985, and Coleman, 2004), highlights the pragmatic re-evaluation of Irish linguistic ideologies to best serve the needs of the *Gaelscoil* movement. Ray laments the disappearance of the *Gaeltachts* as the source of the language in its native form, evoking the threatening image of an 'encroachment' of English upon the Irish linguistic landscape. Yet pragmatically (and typical of *Gaelscoil* advocates) Ray relocates the future of the language in new speakers, new locations, and new forms. Indeed, in *The nation, the state, and the neighbours*, Coleman (2004) illustrates that such conflicting discourses can coexist in the same sentence, as Ray put it; 'Better broken Irish than clever English!'.

Gaelscoileanna agitate against a linguistic ideology predicated upon a geographical fallacy (Ó'Ciosáin E, 1991) which locates the *Gaeltacht* as the site of 'pure',

'authentic' language as opposed to viewing Irish speakers as repositories of Irish. In this schema the 'death' of the Irish language (see Hindley, 1990) is as logical, and as inevitable as the changes to the *Gaeltacht* that Ray outlines. Ó'Ciosáin argues that this perceived inevitability is employed and maintained as a means of rationalizing policy, and excusing failures of the state with regard to support for the language. Lee goes further in his criticism of State linguistic ideology, arguing that '[p]olicy for about two decades has clearly been to let the language die by stealth' (Lee, 1990, 673), adding, 'children were given no incentive to master Irish as a living language, only as a dead one' (Lee, 1989, 671). As illustrated in the previous chapter, the Irish Education system was inherited from, and constitutive of an imperial regime. It is a system that remained unchanged with the realisation of an Irish state, thus reproducing the ideology by which it was conceived. As a result Colonial linguistic ideology, which rationalizes the marginalisation of indigenous languages, underscores and undermines the proclaimed national policy of language revival. Schiffman refers to such contradiction as 'covert language policy' - the unofficial or unstated policy that contradicts official policy (Schiffman, 1996). In this sense, the language revival initiative instituted by the state has been rhetorical and ideological rather than pragmatic and realistic. As such the state has failed to provide a forum in which the language survives outside the classrooms (see Lee, 1990, also Akenson, 1975).

By contrast, *Gaelscoil* ideology dislocates the geographical fallacy of *Gaeltacht* (rather than *Gaeilgeoir*) as the repository of language, by locating the language in the mouths of her speakers rather than in an imagined Nationalist landscape. Coleman identifies this ideological shift as '[p]ersonalism [which] locates linguistic value in a universe of known or knowable persons and social types, as opposed to other

discourses which locate linguistic value in referential transparency or in an idealized national past' (Coleman, 2004, 409). As such, Coleman argues, personalism provides speakers a means of resisting identities ascribed to them, and discourses which aim to subjectify speakers in the service of legitimising nation-state ideology and power. In state linguistic ideology speakers both within and outside the imagined confines of the *Gaeltacht* are inhibited and censured by the above discourses of purity and miscegenation. The ideological empowerment of speakers through personalism, thus enables the deconstruction of the geographical fallacy which locates authenticity in the rapidly diminishing *Gaeltacht*. In so doing the language is thus relocated in the lives and mouths of its speakers, both those of the *Gaeltacht* and the *Galltacht*. In this was, Gaelscoileanna incorporate into the movement, speakers of various ability and background. Ray thereby minimizes his concession that *Gaelscoil* Irish might constitute '*droch Gaelic*' [bad Irish] with reference to this *Gaelscoil* linguistic ideology which locates the language in her speakers, and, therefore, accepts language variation as a necessary means of language survival;

'Do we want the language to live, and change as every language changes? And perhaps if the language is not as pure in forty or fifty years time, [...] but at the same time it'll be alive. And I think that that's the most important thing here'.

As argued above, it was the imagery of language loss, and the project of its revival which was used to foster Nationalism, rather than a value of the language itself as a communicative resource. As Nationalist discourse becomes less powerful, the symbolic connection between Nation-state and language has been weakened

(rhetorically at least). This shift in ideology Lee observes, precipitates the emergence of the Irish language as communicative tool as well, rather than exclusively, as a mark of identity;

‘but for the loss of the language, there would be little discussion about identity in the Republic. With language, little else seems to be required. Without language, only the most unusual historical circumstances suffice to develop a sense of identity. Those unusual circumstances existed in Ireland for perhaps two centuries. As that phase, broadly characterized by the reality, or the memory, of an obtrusive imperial presence, of a national revival, of a struggle for independence, draws to a close, the importance of the lost language as a distinguishing mark becomes more rather than less evident. As the circumstances normalize, only the husk of identity is left without language’

(Lee, 1990, 662)

It is the realisation of the failure and fallacy of state linguistic ideology and policy, conflating with the movement towards democratic education, which provides the impetus to speakers and language advocates involved in *Gaelscoileanna*.

A political commentator remarked of Irish society in 1985 that ‘nationalism - the posture provoked by imperialism - is being replaced by pragmatism, now that nationalism has served its usefulness’ (K.D. O’Connor, ‘Ireland - a nation caught in the middle of an identity crisis’, *Irish Independent*, 20th July 1985 quoted in Lee, 1990, 659). Lee cites this article and the examples of ‘post nationalist pragmatism’ therein as modern examples of Anglicization. However, it was this pragmatism, with

regard to identity and language in *Gaelscoileanna*, which proved most striking during my fieldwork. In many ways, *Gaelscoileanna* manage to usurp and imaginatively dislocate Irish nationalism from the State, and therefore, from the above mentioned stagnant and stifling linguistic ideology. In *Gaelscoileanna*, the Irish language is afforded the freedom and space the movement as a whole has carved out for itself (thus the pragmatic approach to code switching and English encroachment on the Irish language discussed below). If, as Lee contends, non-speakers are left with ‘only the husk of identity’, it appears that speakers have a more lucid, secure view of their own identity, which allows for pragmatic negotiations and innovations. During an interview with a representative of *Gaelscoileanna*, I asked whether or not speaking the Irish language made one ‘more Irish’, to which she responded, ‘I think it just makes you more secure in your identity, you don’t have to prove anything’ (interview with *Gaelscoileanna* representative).

‘Ideology’ it has been argued, ‘is seen as ideas, discourse, or signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power’ (Woolard, 1998, 6). An ideological shift such as that achieved by *Gaelscoileanna* involves a devolution of power equal to (and concurrent with) the power conceded to movements for democratic control of education. It has been observed that ‘ethno linguistic democracy is denied downward in the power hierarchy but appealed for (and struggled for) upward in the power hierarchy’ (Fishman, 2001, 456).

By detaching people from the ideological machinations of nation-state, *Gaelscoileanna* have managed to achieve success in debunking the dominant linguistic ideology by employing the same Herderian logic of one language, one

people. The displacement of state nationalism in favour of ‘‘linguistic nationalism’ in which language practices can be used to legitimate territorial demands, changed borders and new political arrangements’ (Gal, 2006, 166) has empowered the movement whilst not necessitating the diminishment of linguistic ideals.

‘The Irish language, which had been consigned along with Faith and Fatherland to the trash-can of late modernity not only did not do the decent thing and die but actually expanded, developed and was taken over by a new generation of younger, mainly urban speakers. At one level, this can be seen as a classic centrifugal response to globalising forces in a society, local identities being affirmed as local economies become globalised [...]. At another, however, it is one expression of the need in a society to source elements of a linguistic and cultural past to situate a people in the present, a need that has not disappeared with the radical economic changes in Irish society’

(Kirby, Gibbons, and Cronin, 2002, 14)

Indeed, it is precisely these ‘radical economic changes’, and the concomitant esteem and cultural confidence they inspire which, it is felt by Derbhla, principal of *Scoil Neasáin*, cultivated and hastened the success of *Gaelscoileanna*;

Cén fáth a bhfuil Gaeilge chomh tábhachtach dúinn mar daoine ón Éirinn?

<D> *Is chuid don dúchais é agus is dócha gur thugann sé aitheantais dúinn mar phobail. Go háirithe mar phobail nach bhfuil cheangalta le Sasana. Agus go rud é go seasann amach chomh maith leis an ceol, chomh maith leis na*

chluiche Éireannacha. Is aitheantas ar leith é nach bhfuil muid cosúil le gach Náisiún eile a labhraíonn béarla, ach go speisialta Sasana. Go dtugann sé an t-aitheantais sin dúinn. Ach athríonn sé ó ...braitheann sé ar an suíomh atá sa tír ag an am. Faoi láthair tá an tír ar fad an dóchasach. Bíonn siad ag caint faoin Tiogar Celtic seo. Tá dóchas sa tír. Tá muid broidiúil as an tír. Tá airgead sa tír. Tá abair céimeanna sa tír imithe ar fud an domhain. Tá sios sna seachtóidí agus bhíomar an... bhí inferiority complex sa tír. So aon rud a bhain le bheith i do Éireannach agus a bheith ina nGaelach, ní raibh sé tábhachtach. Tá muid bródiúil as a bheith Éireannaigh. Agus ceapaim leis an fás sin freisin tá an barrúil ar an gaeilscoilíocht. Agus tá daoine ag rá bhuel mar Éireannaigh tá muid in ann seasamh in aon tíre sa domhain. Tá muid chomh maith cheanna le aon tír eile ar domhain. Agus chuid do bheith i do Éireannach agus Gaeilge a labhairt no bhféidir an cheol a tagann as, agus tá daoine broidiúil as. [...] Just tá chúpla rud tagtha le cheile ag an am cheanna agus ceapaim go mbaineann sé go mór leis. [...] arís beidh daoine ag breithniú ar aon rud a thógainn t-aitheantais gaelach dúinn mar droch rud. Bhféidir gcasaidh an tide arís.

Why is the language important to us as Irish people?

<D> It's a matter of heritage and certainly it gives us a certain identity as a people. Especially as a people unconnected to England. And the things which make us stand out, like the music, and the Irish games.

Half of it is that we're recognized as a people with a separate identity to other English speaking nations, especially England. So it [the language] gives us

that identity. But it changes, it depends on the situation/climate in the country at the time. At the moment the whole country is more hopeful. They're talking about the Celtic Tiger. There's hope in the country. We're proud of the country. There's money in the country. The country has, say, an esteem, in the world. Back in the seventies and we were...there was a inferiority complex in the country. So anything that was Irish, or *gaelach*, was of no importance. We are taking more pride that we're Irish now. And I think the *Gaelscoileanna* capitalize on this sense of pride. And people are saying, well, as Irish [people] we have equal status as any country in the world. We're as good as any other country in the world. And things which make you Irish, to be able to speak Irish, and perhaps the music, and people take pride in these things. [...] Just, a few things came together at the same time and I think it came primarily from this. If these things hadn't been so successful then perhaps people would still associate Irishness with this kind of failure.

Rather than modernity presenting a challenge to tradition with state linguistic ideology (exemplified by the encroachment of the *Galltacht* on the *Gaeltacht*), *Gaelscoileanna* are a movement born of modernity, agitating for the ability to produce and reproduce their linguistic tradition. The global economy, and the wealth and status derived there from, has provided an opportunity and impetus for cultural introspection, whilst simultaneously allowing for the interaction with the modernity from which the movement springs. Indeed it is a mark of movements aimed at 'Reversing Language Shift' to engage actively with modernity in a bid to make viable the language for which they advocate. Joshua Fishman argues that language activists

‘generally aim at nothing more than to achieve greater self-regulation over the processes of socio-cultural change which globalization fosters. They want to be able to tame globalization somewhat, to counterbalance it with more of their own language-and-culture institutions, processes and outcomes’ (2001, 6). Crucially, whilst Fishman views the ‘modernization’ of languages as vital to language maintenance, a means by which a language becomes ‘viable’, *Gaelscoil* ideology does not seek to justify the *viability* of the language they speak. Indeed, it is in speaking the language that viability as ‘a living language, and a language for living’ is assured. As evidenced below, *Gaelscoileanna* are not dictated to by the demands of ‘modernization’, but by the needs of speakers. In *Gaelscoil* linguistic ideology, ‘tradition’ is no longer alienated from modernity, but rather a bi-product thereof.

Colin Coulter wrote, ‘The essential attribute of the late modern age is held to be ‘biographical autonomy’. Individuals are no longer constrained by those traditional forms of identity that arise out of the likes of nation, religion or class. Rather than adhere to the dictates of custom, social actors are increasingly willing and able to assemble their own biographies out of the manifold resources of everyday life’ (Coulter, 2003, 7). With regard to language, ‘biographical autonomy’ occurs in the field of ‘personation’, the process identified above, whereby speakers embody social identities (see Coleman, 2004). In the case of *Gaelscoileanna* ‘biographical autonomy’ involves facilitating an individuals’ embodiment of the social identity of speaker, whilst also providing protection from, and a means of resistance to, the linguistic ideology they oppose.

Gaelscoileanna represent a community of such individuals, the common goal of

whom is the pursuit of linguistic and cultural ideals. However, unlike the revival movement of the previous century, *Gaelscoil* linguistic ideology is premised upon pragmatism - its goals are realistic rather than idealistic. When questioned about the possible restoration of the Irish language as the first language of the country, from *Gaelscoil* representatives to principals, teachers, and parents, the response was a resounding negative. Ray Mac Mánaís, again, put it succinctly stating, 'that sacred cow is long dead'. Instead, the movement aim to achieve functioning bilingualism - that Irish has equal status to English, and that speakers are provided social space should they wish to live 'as *Gaeilge*' rather than through English - aims to which the government ascribe rhetorically but have, again, failed to deliver on.

To refer once more to Deleuze, machines productive of social reality do so by operating upon the desires of communities, cultures and societies - in the case of *Gaelscoileanna* those desires entail the production of a self-sustaining community of speakers. As illustrated above, the transformation of the education system, on both structural and ideological grounds, has entailed the devolution of power. *Gaelscoileanna* have become machines productive of the egalitarian power relations which have facilitated and rationalized the movement. In a mutually reinforcing relationship, the transformation of power relations (in both structural and ideological terms) has a correlative impact on the devolution of power as *Gaelscoileanna* produce and reproduce speakers and citizens in a linguistic and ideological space away from the nation state. Of the interaction and correlation between the production of social desires and the production of power within movements to reverse language shift, Fishman writes, '[t]hey are committed to pursuing the goals of strengthening their own particular threatened language, culture and identity via peaceful political

persuasion, advocacy of democratic cultural autonomy and self-initiated efforts to foster their own intergenerational continuity' (Fishman, 2001, 6-7). This last point is a crucial one. As illustrated by the efforts of the Government, a language community can neither be maintained nor fostered through education alone. Indeed a fundamental feature in the definition of a language community (or certainly a 'living-language' community) is its ability to reproduce itself. Similarly, it has been observed that whilst 'guaranteeing or fostering the specific language's acquisition and use is often viewed as fostering one's own personal (in addition to the culture's) triumph over death and obliteration via living on in one's own children and grandchildren. Life and death imagery is pervasive in ethno linguistic consciousness the world over' (Fishman, 2001, 5).

Just as Hindley's 'obituary' (1990) was predicated on the perceived failure of Irish speakers to reproduce themselves (at least within the confines of the *Gaeltacht*), so an evaluation of the success/impact of *Gaelscoileanna* cannot be based solely on the exponential growth of the schools, but rather on their ability to produce and reproduce a community of Irish speakers. In so doing, *Gaelscoileanna* may facilitate the further growth of Irish medium education by providing for their own staffing needs, thereby providing employment to the speakers they produce (as well as those draining from the *Gaeltacht*). And, in so doing, provide a social space (however limited) in which Irish speakers might operate professionally.

The production and Reproduction of a Language Community

Although rooted in constructions/interpretations of the past, an at times romantic, at

times power political reading of history, from which they draw their identity, indigenous language movements are aspirational, forward-looking, and at times almost evangelical in their cultural projects. Intent on spreading their vision of 'tradition', 'identity' and language throughout their community. Whereas previously geography and proximity defined community, modernity necessitates the construction of community on innovative grounds; 'Because of the complex communicative environment in which individuals must exist, the cohesiveness of the new ethnic groups cannot rest on co-residence in geographically bounded or internally homogenous communities' (Gumperz and Gumperz, 1982, 6). For *Gaelscoileanna*, therefore, community cohesion must be created through linguistic affinity.

Language distinction provides a fundamental tool of community cohesion (Ó'Murchú, 1971), and in the case of *Gaelscoileanna*, community creation. One of the chief strategies employed to achieve this aim is through the school pupil, who provides a conduit through which families and communities can be incorporated into the process of language immersion. In the same manner outlined by Tom Inglis in *Moral Monopoly*, by subsuming the role of the state and, latterly, the church, *Gaelscoileanna* aim to 'enculturate' its pupils so that they may 'embody the ideals of the *Gaelscoil* in their own lives' (*Gaelscoil Míde* prospectus, 2001).

Harris and Murtagh identify '*Gaelscoileanna* [...] as magnets around which activities involving Irish, or Irish-speaking networks, might accumulate' (1999, 7). And whilst extra-curricular activities featured prominently in parents perceptions of the advantage of *Gaelscoileanna* to their children, for the schools themselves, activities such as dramas, sports, and religious services conducted through Irish, and of course

language support programmes for parents, provide the primary means of inculcating a wider community in the process of language immersion, and, therefore, language acquisition. With regard to the role of the Church in education Inglis argues, 'Schools reached out and brought the family into the system of rules and regulations. The school required a transformation of the family' (1998, 153). With respect to the *Gaelscoil* goal of community creation through linguistic affiliation schools are viewed (and utilized) as a means of incorporating a child's family into the emerging linguistic community. Crucially, however, the egalitarian principals from which *Gaelscoileanna* emerge, involving a devolution of control to parents (as much as pedagogues) hands, are such as to prohibit such familial transformation without a parents' compliance. As previously stated, *Gaelscoileanna* represent revival by consent rather than decree. Hence, in a Deleuzian model whereby desire creates reality, on an individual and family level, everyone involved has control over their own subjectification. Should a parent desire to transform their family through language acquisition, the school has the structure in place to support and produce such desires. Nevertheless, it is not within the remit of the *Gaelscoil* ethos or structure to function (or, indeed, exist) without consent.

However, in their inception, *Gaelscoileanna* intimately involve parental input and support. Indeed, this support is of great advantage to *Gaelscoileanna*. Akenson has observed that, 'schools function most effectively when there is a connection between the home and the school. If parents are involved in the school in some way, they are more likely to be understanding of the school's methods and supportive of its objectives, so that the child's experience in school and at home complement each other' (Akenson, 1975, 5). In the *Gaelscoileanna* visited during my research parental

commitment was considered fundamental and essential to the success of the school. Thus, parental involvement was eagerly encouraged and welcomed. For example the Parents Council of *Gaelscoil Míde* provided refreshments at the parents open day, and the new parents were assured that they were welcome to join. Parents and staff at both *Scoil Neasáin* and *Gaelscoil Míde* commented on the ‘special atmosphere’ of ‘openness’ in the *Gaelscoileanna*. Ó’Riagáin suggests that the very success of *Gaelscoileanna* is contingent upon their ability to foster networks of parental, and thus, community support;

‘For network forming institutions, like schools, to become viable operations, they require sufficiently large numbers of supportive parents within a reasonable catchment area. But once the school is established in an area, all the indications suggest that it had an importance far beyond its basic aim of educating children through Irish. The capacity of the school-based networks to attract ‘novice’ or ‘reluctant’ bilinguals is evidence that Irish-speaking networks are capable, in these circumstances at least, of recruiting new members.’

(Ó’Riagáin, 2001, 209)

As discussed previously, it is not the function of *Gaelscoileanna* to cause, but rather to facilitate a family’s desire to adopt Irish. Yet, in their ambition to create a linguistic community, *Gaelscoileanna* provide a supportive network in which Irish is granted legitimacy as a means of communication (as we shall see later, within a classroom context this legitimacy is created through the elevated status of Irish with relation to English). In the project of linguistic community creation, the elevation of Irish,

coupled with the creation of a school space which supports and legitimizes the language, *Gaelscoileanna* engender an encouraging environment in which speakers (actual and potential) are fostered, supported, and legitimized.

During my time in *Scoil Neasáin* I observed the effects of this supportiveness as parents and grandparents collected their children after school. In many cases the teachers were able to strike up conversations, knowing in which language to address each parent - using Irish only with those fluent enough, an encouraging '*cúpla focal*' [few words] with linguistic novices. Such conversations did not necessarily revolve around the children, and were of a more personal than professional in nature. Similarly, during break times in the staff room, it was not unusual for the teachers to discuss pupils' progress in school with reference to their parents behaviours, attitudes and even professional circumstances. Derbhla described the close relationship between parents and teachers at *Scoil Neasáin* as such;

'Ceapaim go mbíonn na thuismitheoirí an-páirteach agus go bhfuil suim acu. So is féidir leat iad a tharraingt leat. Go bhfuil na múinteoirí an-díograiseach agus arís go bhfuil spéis acu sa Gaeilge'

'I think the parents really participate, and they take an interest. So you can bring them along with you. The teachers are very dedicated and, again, they have an interest in Irish'

Indeed, the considerations and support of the teachers engenders reciprocal support from the parents, who are encouraged to maintain the interest (linguistic and

educational) which led them to choose this *Gaelscoil* education in the first place. In this relationship of reciprocity parents who don't speak Irish are encouraged to learn, in fact some parents expressed a perceived duty to learn the language, and thus participate more actively with the school. In this way a social 'market' is created in which the language is the medium of cultural and community 'exchange'. 'As Pierre Bourdieu observes, 'those who seek to defend a threatened language, ... are obliged to wage a total struggle. One cannot save the value of a competence unless one saves the market, in other words, the whole set of political and social conditions of production of the producers/consumers' (Bourdieu, 1991:57, quoted in Ó'Riagáin, 2001, 213). However, such conceptualisation as 'total struggle' implies and reinforces a binary opposition between English and Irish (again the distinction of state linguistic ideology), such that one must either endeavour to speak Irish, or acquiesce to English. Such ideology, as previously evidenced, has the effect of holding the language in stasis, necessitating a struggle towards monolingualism. Coleman (1999, 2003, 2004) has observed that rather than engaging in a 'total struggle', speakers 'struggle on the plane of everyday life', creating space and legitimacy for their language, neither informed nor required by discourses of monolingualism, purism, or language engineering.

'Struggling on the plane of everyday life' is viewed as vital to the continued success of the *Gaelscoil* project of language-community creation. *Gaelscoil* staff and advocates insist that although it may appear to be the *effect* of *Gaelscoileanna* to create islands of Irish, or 'new *Gaeltachts*' (as some of the parents interviewed referred to them), the *aim* is to multiply and support a community of Irish language speakers. In providing a forum in which the language is relevant and related to their

everyday lives. ‘If the school cannot influence the parent body (actual or potential) also to learn and constantly to activate intimately the threatened language, then the school itself becomes one link in an established intergenerational sequence of teaching the threatened language as a second language [...] and on keeping it as a second language at least for another generation’ (Fishman, 2001, 14). Therefore, if *Gaelscoileanna* are unsuccessful in fostering Irish speaking homes, they, in effect, create the same impact upon Irish society as conventional, state schools; the production of citizens with a knowledge of Irish (or in this case a high degree of fluency) yet still lacking a social context in which to speak the language outside of the school.

In *Scoil Neasáin* teachers estimated that 30% of children spoke Irish at home with their parents. During class interviews still more divulged that they spoke Irish with their grandparents, relatives in the *Gaeltacht*, and friends or cousins also attending *Gaelscoileanna*. The advantage of such networks of support to a language revival effort have been documented by Joshua Fishman, who stated, ‘[i]t is infinitely easier to socialise children into an environmentally utilised language (no matter how small that environment may be in relative terms) than into one that remains unutilised outside of the easily compartmentalised school-experience’ (Fishman, 2001, 15). Derbhla clearly appreciated the advantage of such ‘intergenerational mother-tongue transmission’ (Fishman, 2001);

An bhfuil Gaeilge ag a lán tuismitheoirí?

Tá, yeah. Tá an t-ádh linn anseo. Tá go leor tuismitheoirí gur iarscoilairí den

scoil iad. Agus tá a lán tuismitheoirí just a bhfuil Gaeilge acu agus déanann siad a lán iarracht agus cuirtear ranganna Gaeilge ar siúl sa scoil. Agus thugann muid gach deis, muscail agus spreagaint dóibh thabhairt faoin Gaeilge. So, yeah, ceapaim gur labhraíonn cuid maith Gaeilge sa scoil.[...] Cinnte go bhfuil níos mo duine a labhairt. Tá níos mo duine ag teacht ar ais isteach sa corás. Mar aon duine a bhí i ngaelscoil, déanann siad an iarracht a bpáistí a chuir i ngaelscoil mar aithníonn said an bhun-úis a fuair siad fhéin sa teanga. So cinnte ceapaim go bhfuil níos mo abair gnáth duine taobh amuigh den Gaeltacht ag labhairt as Gaeilge agus tá chadáin abair i measc gnáth duine ardaithe. Cé nach bhfuil caighdeán iontach sa Gaeilge but tá sé ardaithe, breáthaim.

Do many parents speak Irish?

Yeah, yeah. We're very lucky here. Many of the parents are past pupils of the school. And many of the parents just know Irish and they make a huge effort to attend the Irish classes here in the school. And we provide every opportunity, incentive, and inspiration to them with regard to Irish. So, yeah, I think a good percentage of the school['s parents/families] speak Irish.

[...]

Certainly more people are speaking the language. More and more people are coming into the movement. If a person has been to a *Gaelscoil* themselves, they make an effort to put their children into *Gaelscoileanna*, because they recognise the foothold it gave them in the language. So, certainly, I think there are more, say, ordinary people outside the *Gaeltacht* speaking Irish, and the

standard, say, amongst ordinary people, is rising. Perhaps it's not a great standard of Irish, but it's improving.

The vision of a self-sustaining *Gaelscoil* movement, productive and reproductive of Irish speakers is one shared not only by parents who themselves have experienced *Gaelscoil* education, but also by parents who have not, yet who recognise the potential, exponential impact of the movement;

Na Gaelscoileanna, tá siad go hiontach, agus do i éigin chun i a choimeád beo... agus ceapaim mar sin chun i a neartú níos fearr, mar ciallaímid é leathan amach. Tá sí deacair teacht ar tuismitheoirí le Gaeilge. Bhféidir, is rud fad téarma é bhféidir, agus bhféidir amach anseo agus go mbeadh tuismitheoirí anseo, beadh páistí mar sin ag teacht ar ais i fiche bliain agus...

The *Gaelscoileanna*, they're fantastic, and they're growing, and to keep it alive, and to fortify it, because we lose it as it broaden out. It's difficult to find parents with Irish. It's a long term thing, perhaps, and perhaps, from here, there will be parents here, these children may come back in twenty years time and...

That former *Gaelscoil* pupils do return to the movement when educating their own children evidences the fact that through *Gaelscoileanna* a self-sustaining, and mutually reinforcing link between home language use and that of the school is

achievable, reproducible, and indeed being realised. *Gaelscoileanna* provide an educational opportunity for those interested in, and striving for, a viable ‘intergenerational transmission’ of the Irish language. One parent who is realising her role in the reproduction of *Gaelscoil* Irish speakers, herself a former *Scoil Neasáin* pupil, commented on the exponential growth in the demand for *Gaelscoileanna* comparing her own experience to that of her children;

I do thuairim, cad é stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo faoi láthair?

Cheapaim go bhfuil sí ag fás, toisc nuair a bhí mise ar scoil bhí siad ag tarraingt duine isteach insna Gaelscoileanna agus anois tá liosta breise againn chun seans a bheith agat teacht ar an Gaelscoil. Agus em, an meánscoil, nuair a bhí mise ann, bhí trocha do, beirt is trocha insna rang agus anois, insna rang cheanna, tá deirfiúr agam sola ag an meánscoil, agus tá timpeall cead caoga insan rang. So sin athrú mór, tá i bhfad níos mo Gaelscoileanna timpeall anois ná mar a bhí hana, so cheapaim go bhfuil sé...go bhfuil daoine ag smaoineamh ar toisc gur ___ atá ar an oideachas go maith. Tá an suim ar na múinteoirí agus chuig na tuismitheoirí insan oideachas i ngaelscoileanna, agus bíonn an, bíonn siad in ann páirteach le cheile. So ceapaim go bhfuil sí ag fás, agus tá a bhfad níos mo duine ag iarraidh Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus Gaeilge a labhairt.

In your opinion, what’s the state of the Irish language at present?

I think it’s improving, because when I was at school they were dragging

people into the *Gaelscoileanna* and now there's a waiting list for a chance to get into a *Gaelscoil*. And, em, in the secondary school, when I was there, there were 32 people in the class, I've a sister in a *Gaelscoil* and there are around 150 in the same class level. So that's a huge change, there are a lot more *Gaelscoileanna* around now than there were previously, so I think it's...that people think that they provide a good education. The teachers and parents have an interest in education in *Gaelscoileanna*, and they, they play a part in it together. So I think it's growing, and there are a lot more people who want to learn and to speak Irish.

And it's not just parents who return to the movement. As stated in chapter one, a feature of Irish language education, and the limited success thereof, has been the inadequate supply of fluent teachers. This deficit has been addressed surreptitiously by the state by lowering the fluency demands placed upon trainee teachers. Two teachers in *Scoil Neasáin* revealed in conversation that many of their fellow graduates and friends from teacher-training college, in fact, couldn't speak the language at all. In the face of increasing staffing difficulties, and competing with mainstream schools, *Gaelscoileanna* are effectively supplying their own teachers from their pool of past pupils. Three of the staff of *Neasáin*, including the principal, are former pupils of *Gaelscoileanna*. Kramsch has observed that, '[n]ative speakers have traditionally enjoyed a natural prestige as language teachers, because they are seen as not only embodying the 'authentic' use of the language, but as representing its original cultural context as well' (1998, 79). Whilst it is true in the case of the *Gaelscoil* researched here - 'native' speakers are considered great assets to the school - the former *Gaelscoil* pupils teaching are considered equally as vital, their Irish equally as fluent

and crucial to the school. Indeed, it may be the case (although it remains to be seen) that through necessity (given the relatively rapid expansion of the movement) the status of *Gaelscoil* Irish is being raised within the movement itself, thus providing *Gaelscoil* pupils with a status and prestige comparable to that of ‘authentic’, ‘native’ speakers.

As with the factors influencing parents’ decisions to choose *Gaelscoil* education for their children, for teachers, *Gaelscoileanna* provide the option of an Irish medium working environment for those whose home language, by birth, education, or choice is Irish. In the following interview extract, Maire, considers the importance of a working life in Irish to her use of the language in her personal life;

Cén fáth gur múinteoir i ngaelscoil thú?

Mar sin Gaeilge mo céad teanga dáiríre agus tá mé compordach a labhairt Gaeilge. Em, is dócha gur b'fhearr liom Gaeilge a labhairt ná Béarla ar an iomláin. Is dócha bhféidir toisc gur thógadh le Gaeilge mé agus bhí dearcadh láidir le Gaeilge i mo theach sa bhaile. So tá mise seas nádúir a labhairt Gaeilge. Tá suíomh nádúrtha dom Gaeilge a labhairt le páistí. Agus tá an-spéis agam i chúrsaí na Gaeilge. Yeah níor mhaith liom múineadh i scoil Béarla anois. Beidh sé deacair tar eis an méid seo bliain. Thaitigh uaim múineadh i ngaelscoil.

Cé chomh tábhachtach is ata an Gaeilge duit?

Ta se ana tábhachtach dom. Is dócha labhair me níos mo Gaeilge na Béarla i mo shaol. Mar is Gaeilge ata agam i mo shaol oibre. Is Gaeilge ata agam sa bhaile le mo mhac. Agus ar an teileafón le mo chairde is Gaeilge, le mo chlann is Gaeilge freisin. Agus is beag nach labhraím Béarla ach nuair ata me i siopaí. You know, ag ceannach rudaí. You know, sa bhainc no ag déanamh gnó. Ach déanaim an méid gnó is féidir liom tríd Gaeilge. So tá Gaeilge ana tábhachtach domsa.

Why do you teach in a *Gaelscoil*?

Because Irish really is my first language, and I'm more comfortable speaking Irish. Em, certainly I prefer to speak Irish rather than English for the most part. Certainly because I was reared with Irish and there was a strong emphasis on Irish in my home. So speaking Irish is kind of more natural to me. It's natural for me to speak Irish to children. And I've a strong interest in Irish language issues. Yeah, I wouldn't like to teach in an English language school now. It would be difficult after this many years. I like teaching at a *Gaelscoil*.

How important is Irish to you?

It's very important to me. I definitely speak more Irish than English in my life. Because it's Irish I use in my working life. It's Irish I speak at home with my son. And on the telephone with my friends it's Irish, with my family it's Irish too. And I speak very little English except when I'm in the shops. You know,

buying things. You know, at the bank doing business. But I do as much business as I can through Irish. So Irish is very important to me.

This piece evidences the potential role *Gaelscoileanna* play in the accommodation of native Irish speakers in a professional capacity. Through *Gaelscoileanna*, and other Irish language initiatives, those Irish speakers who leave the *Gaeltacht* have an opportunity to pursue a career through the medium of their first language, or simply gain assistance in the maintenance of Irish as a home language through support from educational institutions. Rather than discounting the migration of native speakers from the *Gaeltacht* as indicative of, and instrumental to, the ‘death of the Irish language’ as Hindley (1990) has, *Gaelscoileanna* provide an opportunity for the ‘relocation’ of native speakers from such geographical fallacy to novel (largely urban) contexts/realities.

The mechanics of desire, producing *Gaeilgeoiri*

‘Is beatha an teanga í a labhairt, the life of a language is to speak it.’

(Parent interview, *Gaelscoil Mide* induction day)

As argued above, a fundamental element to the transformation of Irish linguistic ideology, represented by the emergence of the *Gaelscoil* movement, has been the deterritorialisation of language. Irish, as a ‘living language, and a language for living’ has been dislocated from the narrow, vulnerable, *Gaeltacht* areas, and ‘relocated’ in the mouths of her speakers. If it is the case that ‘social identity and ethnicity are in

large part established and maintained through language' (Gumperz and Gumperz, 1982, 7), then *Gaelscoil* pupils represent a potential - if not (as demonstrated above) actual - avenue for the production and reproduction of an 'Irish' identity intimately tied to language.

Utilising a "human capital" approach to education [which focuses] individuals as products of a system' (Lea Maseman, 1986, 13), this section examines the production, and products of Irish speakers in *Scoil Neasáin*.

Language acquisition

'Bhféidir an rud is easca ná an bhealach nach mbíonn tú ag múineadh an Gaeilge mar theanga, an bhealach a múineann tú é i scoil Béarla. You know, gach abairt, gach focail a mhúineadh dóibh. Nil agamsa ach graiméir a mhúineadh. Just glacann siad leis an teanga sa naíonán. [...] em ní mhothaíonn tú go bhfuil ort an teanga a mhúineadh dóibh. Thugann tú an teanga dóibh, beagnach mar bronntanais'

Perhaps the easiest thing is the way we don't teach Irish as a language, the way you would in an English language school. You know, every sentence, every word taught to them. We don't have to teach them grammar. They just pick it up in the infant classes. [...] em, you don't feel like you have to teach them the language. You give the language to them, a bit like a gift.

(interview with Maire, 3rd class)

From the outset of my fieldwork what most struck me about the *Gaelscoil* teaching method was exactly what Maire refers to in the above passage, the conferral, rather than teaching, of Irish. The majority of *Gaelscoil Neasáins* pupils, although familiar with the language from pre-school immersion nurseries (*Naíonra*), are monoglot English speakers. For many of the pupils, their first days of school were recalled as confusing, if not intimidating. Memories of the daunting experience of total immersion into a new language environment featured strongly during an interview with sixth class pupils;

Ni raibh aon Gaeilge agam, bhuel bhí píosa agam ó naíonra ach eh, ní raibh an caoimhinn liom an céad la.

I didn't speak any Irish, well, I knew a bit from pre-school but eh, I couldn't remember it the first day.

(interview with 6th class)

Much to the amusement of the class, another girl recalled;

Bhí mise sa naoínra ach i naíonán beaga thanaigh mé isteach agus chuir múinteoir Maire mé in aice le Alice, agus thosaigh athair Alice a labhairt liom as Gaeilge, agus ní raibh mé in ann é a thuiscint, agus ansin thosaigh mé ag caoineadh.

I was in the Naíonra (Irish language pre-school) but when I arrived into the infant class Maire sat me beside Alice, and Alice's dad began speaking to me in Irish, and I couldn't understand him, and then I started crying.

(interview with 6th class)

Overcoming this transition from first to second language presents a huge challenge not just for pupils, but also for teaching staff. However, it is a challenge met with untiring enthusiasm and patience. It requires the teacher to act as interpreter, dramatist, and linguistic 'feeder' - figuratively putting words into the children's mouths. Coleman (2004) identifies this as the projection of voice, in this case from teachers onto children. It is a process most necessary, and, therefore, most obvious, in the infant classes. Furthermore, one should notice from the following examples that it is a highly effective method of language transmission through pedagogic translation. Whilst the junior infant class of the first passage are linguistic novices, by senior infants (second passage) they have grown into fluent, if not flawless, bilinguals.

'Sarah gathered the children on the mat and asked to hear their nuacht [news]. One girl told of her 5th birthday party over the weekend at which a magic show was performed. Sarah listened and translated what the children said, rearranged their stories into the form of a question which they then confirmed or disputed. She asked C____ about the birthday presents she received. C____ raised her hand and proudly displayed her new watch, to which Sarah commented, "*Uaireadóir nua, nach bhfuil?*" [a new watch, is it?], pointing to her wrist so that the children connect the new word to its meaning. "*Abair uaireadóir, gach duine le cheile.*" [Say watch,

altogether], in so doing Sarah added a new word to their vocabulary

During nuacht, Sarah kept order, and inserted lessons, with the clever use of questions. The children continued talking about birthday presents so she asked, “*Cén bréagáin no cluichí is fearr leat?*” [What toy/games do you prefer?]. To the children’s single word responses (in all cases brand-name popular toys), Sarah offered them an Irish sentence into which they fit, “*Brats/teddy bear an bréagáin is fearr liom*” [Brats/teddy bear is my favourite toy]. The children eagerly raised their hands to offer their preferred toys. As the children continued to offer one word responses Sarah instructed, “*Smaoinigh ar!*” [Think about it], pointing to her head. “*_____ an bréagáin is fearr liom*” [_____ is my favourite toy]. After a few false starts every child fluently bleated the required sentence, basking in Sarah’s validation. When they had each offered their own opinion, Sarah, much to their delight, gushed “*Ta mo chroí ag damhsa! Gaeilge álainn! Maith sibh. Gach duine abair “maith thú” duit féin*” [My heart is dancing! Beautiful Irish! Well done. Everybody say “well done” to yourself] and she patted herself on the back. The class enthusiastically complied.’

(Fieldnotes, Junior infants, February 13th 2006)

The effectiveness of the immersion process, and the above highlighted method of vocabulary expansion were also evident during my observations of the senior infants class. The following note was taken during a class discussion of the children’s ‘nuacht’ [news].

A young boy declared;

‘Bhuaigh me trophy, I mo Gaa club’ [I won a trophy in my Gaa club],

to which Seán translates and returns as a question,

'Bhuaigh tú duais, I do club Gaa. Cén fáth?' [You won a trophy in your Gaa club. Why?]

'Mar tá me the best!' [Because I'm the best!].

Again, Seán offers the correct sentence in a question,

'Mar is tusa an duine is fearr, an ea?' [because you are the best, is that it?]

'Sea' [Yes],

'Maith thú!' [Well done]

(Fieldnotes, Senior infants, March 6th

2006)

In this example the child is evidently, although limitedly, able to express his thoughts through Irish - correctly conjugating verbs and switching tenses where appropriate. However, whereas an unusual and unknown word, such as 'trophy' sits in its correct position in the sentence (albeit in the wrong language), with the more grammatically challenging self referential sentence, 'I'm the best', the child's mistake is due to misunderstanding the correct (yet varying) contexts in which one uses *'is mise'*, rather than *'tá me'* to express 'I am'. This is an example of what Gumperz and Gumperz define as 'interference - i.e., the tendency of second language learners to transfer patterns from their first language to the second language' (1982, 16) (the implications of which are discussed in the following section).

The children's *'nuacht'* [news] is utilized as a means of providing pupils with the vocabulary relevant to their lives and experience, thereby establishing Irish as 'a living language' in which their thoughts and experiences can be expressed. In this way the children's Irish vocabulary grows with them through the schooling process,

‘members of a community or social group do not only express experience; they also create experience through language’ (Kramsch. 1998, 3). However, as new experiences provide new vocabulary, the fact that the children’s experiences occur in English primarily, being then translated into Irish, presents it’s own challenges to the teaching of a second language.

Code switching

In *Gaelscoileanna*, these challenges manifest in the multiple examples of ‘interference’ similar to those cited above, where English grammar and syntax are expressed through Irish words. Intrinsic to this ‘interference’ are implications for perceived language purity inherent in current monolingual ideologies, ie. the judgment of *Gaelscoil* Irish as ‘*droch Gaelic*’ [bad Irish], as Máistir Ray put it, vs. the recent, positive endorsement of the Irish attainment in *Gaelscoileanna* in comparison to a drop in ‘standard Irish’ in the *Gaeltacht* (Irish Times, June 26th 2006). In each case a monolingual fallacy is reinforced, that Irish and English can exist independently of each other, exerting no influence over their speakers. Thus perceived linguistic ‘standards’, and any declination there from, are strictly monitored, the effect being the inhibition (potential and actual) of languages and speakers. ‘Language mixing, code-switching, and creolization thus make speech varieties particularly vulnerable to folk and prescriptive evaluation as grammarless and/or decadent and therefore as less than fully formed’ (Woolard, 1998, 17).

However, code-switching reveals more than monolingual ideologies. Gal has observed that what is ‘fundamental is the observation that talk always comments on

itself. Thus communication is inseparable from the metacommunicative, or more precisely, the metapragmatic frames through which speakers construe the signals available in talk. Such frames are crucial aspects of language ideologies, allowing the variegated and trivial-seeming features of talk to be construed by participants as indexical signals that point to possible identities of speakers, their momentary role-inhabitation or stance towards each other, different situations of talk, as well as institutional and cultural distinctions' (Gal, 2006, 165). Thus, by speaking English-through-Irish (or vice versa as frequently occurred), pupils effectively comment upon their own bilingualism, or more specifically, their bilingual lives;

'it is clear that whilst school events happen in Irish and are, therefore, experienced through Irish, home experiences occur predominantly through English. Perhaps they have the vocabulary to describe the weekends going on already, they just struggle to translate these memories from one linguistic space to another. Past pupils of *Gaelscoileanna* have described something similar regarding their school experience. When at home, and asked about school, these pupils often found it difficult not to speak about the school in Irish. Therefore, the medium of experience, at least in part, defines the medium of memory.'

(Fieldnotes, 1st class, March 13th 2006)

In many cases the reflection of bilingualism through code-switching is a subconscious choice in which the mixing facilitates more fluent communication, and/or performs non-referential functions in conversation. This is true of both children (and to a much lesser extent) teachers.

‘A good example of the English-through-Irish code-switching being performed was uttered by one girl to another in an overheard conversation regarding toys, ‘Ta babín pretend agam’ [I’ve a pretend baby]. To be sure the girl knew the word *bábóg*/doll, however she was trying to specify that rather than simply owning a run-of-the-mill, generic doll, she was in possession of a life-like variety. Employing an English word in this sentence performed a ‘metacommunicative’ commentary on the child’s bilingualism and her efforts to straddle the two linguistic communities she inhabits, translating memory and experience implies, at times, the correlative translating of one language structure onto another.

Other examples of the language switching, and loan word assimilation amongst the children occur in Irish conversations punctuated by English words or phrases which perform the function of conversation fillers/stallers - ‘like’, ‘it’s ok’, ‘just’, and ‘you know’ for example. Such words allow the speaker to say nothing at all, yet retain the attention of the listeners, but again make a metacommunicative statement about the children’s functioning bilingualism. Even in the staff room, amongst the *‘fíor Gaeilgeoirí’* [true Irish speakers], I noticed that the teachers code switch very often too. For example, the word ‘just’ has no equivalent in Irish (at least with regard to the versatility of it’s employment) and so is ubiquitous throughout fully fluent Irish conversations. For example, *‘Bhí se just uafásach’* [it was just terrible]. In this sentence just allows the speaker to place an emphasis on the terribleness of the subject, without escalating the terrible qualities to ‘seriously terrible’, which the suffix *‘i ndáiríre’* [really], for example, would add. Similarly, the word ‘like’ was employed as often in Irish conversation, as a means of stalling conversation whilst one thinks what to say, as one would find in English (with myself being the worst offender).’

(Fieldnotes, 1st class, 22nd March 2006)

Whilst one certainly expects to encounter and record difficulties related to the expression and acquisition of a second language with relation to a dominant one, more surprising are the difficulties experienced in the performance of conscious code-switching from Irish to English. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed numerous English lessons during which the transition from minor to major language did not run as smoothly as one would expect.

‘Brid proceeded with the English lesson, reading a poem entitled ‘My brother the cannibal’. Although the lesson is conducted through English, Brid uses common class commands in Irish. After she set the children their task in English, Brid then repeats the instruction in Irish, asking if everyone understands, Brid clearly thought the children needed further clarification of the task. That this clarification was conducted through Irish has three implications. The first being Brid felt that the children would better understand the instructions in Irish, which is entirely plausible given that they ordinarily receive their classroom instruction through this medium. Alternatively, she could have been trying to make sure the children were picking up the Irish vocabulary needed to address their English language lives. The final reason for the language switch would be that Brid was trying to facilitate a more easy relationship between the two languages for the children, thus, in that sense, making them more fluent with their bilingualism rather than having a distinct mental division between their two languages. The children, in turn, ask questions in Irish, and continue writing in English. English is like an invited guest in the classroom. Although most of the children speak English at home, they are slightly uncomfortable with it in class, or more probably simply unsure of the appropriate contexts in which to speak it, given

the emphasis on speaking Irish only at all other times.’

(Fieldnotes, 1st class, 27th March, 2006)

That English is an invited guest in *Gaelscoil* classrooms, implies that a significant part of the linguistic project of *Gaelscoileanna*, as mentioned above, is the elevation of the status of Irish to equal that of English. For *Gaelscoileanna* to be successful, they must reinforce the symbolic importance, and practice of this equal status. English lives must be given Irish realities, just as Irish realities and experience must be legitimised with reference to the dominant English counterparts, in the children’s lives.

In the above example the code-switching during the lesson was arguably initiated by the teachers translation of English instruction into the Irish language. However, there are many other examples in my fieldnotes in which the code-switching was initiated by the children and tolerated, rather than facilitated by the teachers. Many teachers switched languages with the pupils answering through English questions asked in English, and, conversely, answering through Irish questions asked in Irish. During a fourth class English lesson, however, múinteoir Niamh made the deliberate effort to conduct the lesson entirely through English, refusing to acknowledge questions or comments posed in Irish. The lesson began with each child being asked to read aloud a passage from a story - which they all managed with flawless competence and fluency. However, questions on the children’s comprehension of the story were repeatedly interrupted and punctuated with Irish. It would seem that the elevated status of Irish as the language of the school is fully appreciated, and internalized by the pupils. So invested are the children in this idea that they are uneasy and unaccustomed to speaking English in class, even when to do so is required and

insisted upon, and not to inspire a teachers dissatisfaction.

Language innovation, language ownership

It has been observed that '[i]n countries where identity and nationhood are under negotiation, every aspect of language, including its phonological description and forms of graphic representation, can be contested' (Woolard, 1998, 23). In Irish linguistic ideology '[m]odels of language, which one way or another are models or definitions of community, are [...] the basis upon which central acts of contestation have been played out. Tradition, innovation, purity, are amongst the things which have been at stake in the language debates' (Crowley, 2000, 3).

As argued above, *Gaelscoileanna* have facilitated the disconnection of linguistic ideology from state control, and, therefore, the stagnating effect of issues of standardization, purity, and authenticity. Relocating the language in the lives of its speakers allows for vital and various innovations. The egalitarian structure of *Gaelscoileanna* facilitates the demands, and accommodates the needs of both speakers and potential speakers. *Gaelscoil* linguistic ideology provides the imaginative space for, and ownership of, the language to those interested in its maintenance by recognizing their right to the language as an identity marker, regardless of ones fluency.

The following was recorded during an interview with a husband <H> and wife <W> in attendance at *Gaelscoil Mides* parent induction day. That neither informant could articulate their linguistic demands in the language for which the advocate may be

ironic, however, what the piece illustrates is that in the *Gaelscoil* 'space away' from the dominant linguistic ideology, limited fluency is no longer seen as incongruent to ownership and rights to accessibility of Irish medium communication. Indeed monolingual parents, by the very fact of their children's bilingualism, are now in a position to legitimately appeal for such vital innovation as a means by which the language may be made more accessible;

<H> You know you had to go out and seek a *cumann* [club] if you wanted to speak the language at all, do you know what I mean. And it [the *Gaelscoil*] makes it [the language] readily available, and, I think, you know, with x amount of social pressures you need it [the language] readily available like everything else now, you need it like a microwave dinner! That's what you need in the *Gaeilge* though you know, like you need...

<W> You need, like what I suppose what purists would see as like the change of the language a lot. It's going to be a Dublin language now. It's going to be a Leinster Irish, I think. You know like, I find *TG4* [Irish-medium television station] far easier to understand now. I remember my mother listening to *Raidió na Gaeltachta* [Irish-medium radio station], and I wouldn't understand a word, like literally. 'Cause it was all like Donegal Irish, or Kerry Irish, or whatever. I understand *TG4* very easily now.

<H> The Hectorisation⁵ of the Irish language!

⁵ Hectorisation, a reference to popular Irish-medium broadcaster, Hector O' H'Eochagain

<W> Yeah, exactly, the Hectorisation of Irish! That's exactly it!

Typically, principals, teachers, and advocates for *Gaelscoileanna* took a pragmatic view of these issues. Repeatedly affirming that more important than negotiating issues of language purity, their mission was to facilitate the proliferation of Irish as a spoken, living language. Again striking a practicable balance between the ideal and the achievable;

O tá yeah. Canúint sna gaelscoileanna no canúint i mBaile Átha Cliath. [...] Piocann siad suas píosaí de gach canúint sin. so canúint a leath é canúint an gaelscoil meascán na canúintí atá ag na múinteoirí. Ach ceapaim gur rud maith é. [...] Tá difríochtaí acu sa caighdeán agus tá Gaeilge i bhfad níos fearr, níos cruinne, níos líofa, níos saibhre a labhairt in sna Gaeltachtaí. Ach ní féidir linn ach chuid den saibhris sin a thabhairt de na páistí anseo.

Oh, yeah, yeah, there's a *Gaelscoil* dialect, or a Dublin dialect. [...] they pick up bits of every dialect. So the *Gaelscoil* dialect is a half dialect, a mix of all the teachers dialects. But I think that's a good thing. [...] there are differences [between *Gaelscoil* and *Gaeltacht* Irish] and the standard of Irish is far better, purer, more fluent, more richly spoken in the *Gaeltachts*. But we can only give the children a fraction of that richness.

(interview with Derbhla, principal S. Neasáin)

School Spirit - cooperative education and co-responsibility

Prioritization and maintenance of the language is a unifying ideal amongst teachers, parents, and, indeed, the pupils of *Gaelscoil Neasáin*. Such a unity of purpose creates an atmosphere and ethos of cooperative education, in which the children actively participate in their learning rather than passively absorb information. That is not to say that such cooperation is not achieved in English medium schools, however, unique to *Gaelscoileanna* is what I term a ‘mission mentality’ - a strong sense of purpose which guides educational practice. It is from the Irish language, and the consciousness of their crucial role in the life thereof, that this sense of purpose is derived.

Of Maori indigenous education, Harrison and Papa argue that the structure of ‘some instructional and social activities’ reflects the cultural values of the community these immersion schools serve (Harrison and Papa, 2005, 64). In *Scoil Neasáin* structure and activity reflect the linguistic ideology of this language community. On the walls of most of the classrooms in *Scoil Neasáin* are written class rules outlining the children’s roles and responsibilities. One such poster effectively represents the school philosophy and the structure of the prioritization of language with respect to ethos, and authority;

Ár gCód Ranga

-Labhair Gaeilge an t-am ar fad

-Bí cairdiúil agus deas le daoine

-Bí ag faire amach do dhaoine atá leo féin

-Admhaigh má dhéanann tú an rud mí-cheart

-Má tá aoine gránna leat, abair leis an múinteoir

-Éist go ciúin nuair atá an múinteoir ag caint

Our class code

-Always speak Irish

-Be friendly and nice to people

-Look out for isolated people

-Admit when you have done something wrong

-If someone is mean to you, tell the teacher

-Listen carefully when the teacher speaks

On this poster (and in the school itself) the priority is clearly and unambiguously the Irish language, and the related rule is stated without explanation or qualification. Secondary to the language are a set of rules outlining the children's responsibilities to one another, thereby reinforcing the importance of cooperation to the smooth running of the school. In no way less important, although structurally last in emphasis, is the child's obligations, and position in relation to his/her teachers. In this schema the child's deference to his/her teacher is a consequence of the internalization of the 'mission mentality' with regard to language, and his/her rights and responsibilities in relation to fellow pupils.

The means by which the *Gaelscoil* engenders such responsibility derives from the nature of the movement as oppositional to mainstream education. As noted in chapter one, the oppositional orientation of *Gaelscoileanna* is productive of a subjectivity independent of state, and creative of bonds of linguistic and cultural affiliation rather

than those of national unity. The function of *Gaelscoileanna* is the production of *Gaeilgeoiri* [Irish speakers], as opposed to the production of citizens which take place in mainstream education. *Gaelscoil* 'mission mentality' relates directly to the project of language maintenance, and the creation of a linguistically bonded community to ensure this end. The inscription of such a sense of responsibility to the life of the language is facilitated, in many ways, by the single stream structure of the school. For example, older pupils are inured with responsibility for assisting the language attainment of younger pupils, often asked to correct the novices when mistakes are overheard. Indeed, necessitated by the relatively few staff in *Scoil Neasáin*, sixth class pupils are called upon to supervise their younger counterparts during break times, especially so should the weather call for an indoor lunch time. The following note was taken of such a situation;

'After lunch I returned to the classroom a few minutes before Sarah, she had been supervising the yard that afternoon and had to take lunch a little late. Two sixth class pupils were supervising the class, pending Sarah's return. They had instructed the children to work on their pictures from earlier that morning. They interacted with the class in the same manner Sarah does, responding to English with Irish, explaining with exaggerated body language and dramatics to facilitate the children's understanding.

When Sarah returned she thanked the 6th class pupils and interacted with them almost as colleagues - which is typical of the cooperative spirit of the school. Everyone knows who's boss ultimately, but they work with a great team-spirit throughout their day.'

(Fieldnotes, Junior infants, February 13th 2006)

Such informality between teachers and pupils is in no way uncommon in *Scoil Neasáin*, and is indeed encouraged to a large extent. Teachers often related their lessons to personal experience as a means of facilitating the children's learning. At other times teachers played with the children, dramatically feeding their imaginations (thereby enabling the children to imagine in Irish). Most often one witnessed teachers informally chatting to pupils, getting to know them each as individuals. However, despite the informality and ethos of co-responsibility, *Gaelscoileanna* are not educational utopias, and (naturally) the school rules are at times transgressed. Such an incident occurred one Monday morning during school assembly. At each weeks assembly teachers are asked to rate their class' *'iompair'* [progress], and *'Gaeilge'* [Irish]. This particular assembly fell on the last Monday of February and so Maire was to announce the highest achieving class of the month;

'Maire added up and read aloud each class's tally of points for the entire month. *Rang a haon* [first class] won more points overall in *iompair* and *Gaeilge* for the month. The class are asked to stand for *'bualadh bos mór'* [a big applause]. However, the applause came to an abrupt end when booing was heard. *'Ta an díomá ormsa!'* [I'm very disappointed!], declared Maire, 'we should be happy for each others achievements', she continued (in Irish), 'booing is not acceptable behaviour for students of *Gaelscoil Neasáin!*'. When the assembly had been shamed into submissive silence *Múinteoir Sarah* was asked to read aloud *Gaeilgeoirí na seachtaine* [Irish speakers of the week], and each child selected walked to the front of the class to collect a lollipop, after which the collective stood to receive a *bualadh bos* (sans booing) from the entire school.'

(Fieldnotes, Junior infants, February 27th 2006)

In the above example, transgression is subdued and conceptualized with reference to the school ethos, and the expectations and responsibilities this inheres in the children.

Keeping English at bay; demerit and reward

The above referred to points table is realized in the classroom on a hand drawn chart - usually visible to the children. In so doing a keen interest in high achievement, and individual responsibility to the group, is engendered in the children. The classes are awarded and demerited points based upon their behaviour and linguistic efforts throughout the week. The method is particularly effective in the younger classes, as the children generally clamor for their teachers validation.

‘After break, as the class took to their seats. It was reported to Bríd that two boys had been overheard speaking English in the yard. Bríd acted disappointedly and asked them, “Cén fáth?” [why were you speaking English?]. One of the boys responded “*Rinne me dearmad don ‘ná bac’ - ní raibh an Gaeilge agam*” [I forgot how to say ‘never mind’ - I didn’t have the Irish]. Bríd accepted his excuse but went directly to the whiteboard to adjust the table recording the class progress/*iompair* and Irish/*Gaeilge*. The 7 the class had previously attained for their efforts in Irish was replaced by a 6 - much to everyone’s disappointment. Bríd herself looked disappointed, adding, “I hope you can improve on that”

(Fieldnotes, 1st class, March 22nd 2006)

Such hope is usually realized as the children constantly strive for improvement. Indeed, a far more powerful and prevalent a method of inspiring discipline is that of incentivisation. It would be misleading to describe the *Scoil Neasáins* ethos as disciplinarian, yet they enjoy remarkable obedience and cooperation from the children. *Scoil Neasáins* pupils are generally quite academically minded, and well behaved. Indeed, such is the impulsion to do well, that the children generally impose a regime of self-discipline. As noted during my observation of first class ‘the children discipline themselves, not for fear of punishment, but in hope of reward and validation.’ (Fieldnotes, 1st class, March 27th 2006).

As the above example of the assembly illustrates, the treatment of transgressions of behavioral codes as a shameful action against ethos is mirrored linguistically by the way in which *Scoil Neasáin* deal with infractions upon the fundamental ‘all things through Irish’ rule. In the following example such declinations, although admonished, are not dwelt upon, and indeed, are soon followed by positive reinforcement. In so doing the school incentivise the called for improvement, whilst at the same time recognize the efforts already made to do just that;

‘Particular emphasis was placed upon their use of Irish. A perceived decline in language standards, and the children’s efforts to maintain those standards, was duly admonished and an increase in the use of *Béarla* [English] was referred to as *rud náireach* [a shameful thing]. During the assembly a small green notebook was passed from teacher to teacher into which each entered the names of 2 pupils from their class. When each had made an entry the notebook was taken up by Maire and the names were read aloud. The children whose names were called excitedly stood up and made

their way to the side of the congregation. Each was praised for their use of *Gaeilge* - they had earned the title '*Gaeilgeoirí na seachtaine*' [Irish speakers of the week]. They were then rewarded with a lollipop and *bualadh bos mór* [big round of applause] from the entire school. It was a very positive way to end the assembly. This tactic of positive reinforcement in the context of admonishment for the use of English appears to me akin to a morale boost to a company suffering under the stresses of siege - it's a tall order keeping the foreign tongue at bay!

(Fieldnotes, Assembly, January 30th 2006)

Conclusion

The project of language maintenance involves the creation of a sustainable language community, in which the child is a conduit for the potential (in many cases realised) transformation of his or her family and community by necessitating a home-to-school connection. Commitment to this project engenders a 'mission mentality', which permeates the schools pedagogical practice as well as the attitudes of both teachers, pupils and parents. *Gaelscoil Neasáins* pupils embody the ideology of the *Gaelscoil* movement and their schools ethos. The motivation for high-achievement, both academically and behaviorally, serves to reinforce the ethos of co-responsibility and cooperation, which, in turn consolidates the Irish language 'mission mentality' that binds the group together.

The transformation of Irish linguistic ideology achieved by *Gaelscoileanna* has constituted the separation of language, Nation and place, and imaginatively places the language in the lives of its speakers and supporters. The decentralization of power in

the structure of the educational system has facilitated this concurrent decentralization of linguistic ideology, thus placing ownership of the language in the mouths, and lives, of her speakers and advocates. The ideological space away from issues of linguistic standards and stasis, provided by this transformation, has allowed vital and various linguistic innovations - thereby ensuring Irish as a living language in the lives, experiences and imaginations of her speakers. Teachers, pupils and parents are therefore invested in, and with, the production and reproduction of this burgeoning language community.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been the exploration of theories of social machinery productive of social realities, with respect to the transformation of the primary vehicle for socialization – the school. In examining *Gaelscoileanna*, it was hoped that these machinations would be revealed in a comparative framework, through an exploration of this educational movement in its socio-historical, cultural, and ideological context. *Gaelscoileanna* represent a transformation of both the structure and ideology of education, from a top-down management configuration to an oppositional, egalitarian structure.

This project has employed two primary theories of socio-structural machinations, those of Bourdieu and Passeron, and those of Deleuze and Guattari. Bourdieu and Passeron have argued that educational institutions are informed by power, such that the purpose of systems of education, is the reproduction of the very power which constitute them. In so doing, schools are a mechanism by which social hierarchy is articulated and reproduced. In contrast Deleuze and Guattari have observed that it is desire rather than power which is realised in socially productive machinations. The realities and subjectivities produced by schools, therefore, is reflective of the desires from which the machine is conceived and applied. Both theories are extremely useful for the examination of the implications the *Gaelscoil* educational machine. Such that each theory provides a perspective upon the social function of schools, and the process of subjectification undertaken therein.

The primary aim of this project has been the investigation of *Gaelscoileanna* in the

socio-structural and ideological contexts of their emergence. This has entailed an examination of the correlative impact on the speakers and society from which this movement has emerged. Central to this investigation has been the provision of an historical, political, cultural, and linguistic-ideological context to the movement. In so doing, it was intended to proffer an evaluation of the impact and impetus which drives such a significant force in the transformation of social structure and linguistic ideology - a force which operates in the service of local politics of community and identity.

Chapter one explored the socio-historical context of *Gaelscoileanna* and their impact upon Irish socio-politics. This chapter presented an examination of an historical period of significant social upheaval (1800 to present). This historical context was presented with respect to language and education as a means of political legitimisation in the creation of subjects, citizens and correlative subjectivities. It was argued that the function of state linguistic policy in education, is the production and reproduction of citizens who share a common identity, the purpose of which is the legitimisation of the state itself (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Irish state-national identity is predicated on the treatment of the Irish language, not as a communicative tool, but as an index of nationhood. In state linguistic ideology, therefore, the Irish language creates affiliation through the very project of it's maintenance and revival, rather than the production or reproduction of it's speakers. As such, the state has persisted with, and is legitimised by, the structures and ideology of a past imperial state. Linguistic marginalisation, previously a function of the imperial project, is now employed as a means of legitimising state power, to the ongoing detriment of the language. Thus, successive Governments have failed to cater to Irish speakers, by reproducing and

reinforcing a rationalisation for the proliferation of this disadvantageous educational policy, the reification of the language, and the subsequent marginalisation of its speakers. In this respect, the state has created both the impetus and the need for Irish speakers and advocates to agitate for the sequestering of society's primary means of social reproduction. In so doing, it is the hope of *Gaelscoileanna* that the machine might be employed to facilitate the production and reproduction of a community of speakers. Despite meeting the rhetorical aims of state language policy, Government support for *Gaelscoileanna* has been muted and wholly reactive. This reveals, both to the researcher, and indeed those involved in the movement, that a gaping discrepancy exists between state linguistic ideology and rhetoric. *Gaelscoileanna*, it has been argued, have emerged as an educational means of addressing failures of state language policy, a transformative desiring machine the origins and implications of which form the remaining body of the thesis.

Employing a cross-cultural comparative framework, chapter two examined the emergence of *Gaelscoileanna* as a movement oppositional to a dominant linguistic ideology inherited from a regime of cultural and linguistic imperialism. It was argued that the post-Independence Government of Ireland have employed the same structures, methods and ideologies of subjectification as were instituted to serve Colonial power hierarchies. To this end, state education in Ireland confirms Bourdieu's thesis that power produces and reproduces itself, as this power was transferred to, rather than transformed by, the Irish state. However, the confluence of imperial linguistic ideology with the rhetorical reification of the language to serve national identity constructions, has created the desire to redress and reform Irish linguistic ideologies and the structures and interests they serve. Thus, whilst schools reflect

power, they are also reflective of currents of democratization, the decentralisation of power, and the enfranchisement of local communities. These communities, bound by linguistic affinity, are engaged in a process of their own reproduction, and therefore their own subjection. What the transformation of Irish Education implies, therefore, is that whilst power certainly is articulated in social structure, the nature of that power is not inevitable, but pragmatic. It was a pragmatic, rather than predetermined, choice for the state to assume the dominant role vacated by the Colonizers. It was therefore necessary for the rationale behind the marginalisation of the language, to be obfuscated by nationalist, linguistic ideology.

As machines productive of social desires, *Gaelscoileanna* represent the transformation of the dominant linguistic ideology (which disadvantages Irish speakers) in favour of an ideology, as egalitarian as the principals and impetus of the movement itself. Parents and teachers have a stake in, and some measure of control over, this new process of socialisation. In this way *Gaelscoileanna* are ideological vehicles, carrying independent, egalitarian principals. *Gaelscoileanna* do not merely oppose a structure which disadvantages speakers, but also the ideology which rationalizes such disadvantage, thereby endangering the language. The structural transformation *Gaelscoileanna* have exerted on the education system, therefore, entails a concurrent, and mutually reinforcing, transformation of Irish linguistic ideology.

Gaelscoileanna represent a contemporary educational innovation, transforming the mechanics of social reproduction, power, and subjectification. This transformation has been concurrent with, and a bi-product of the significant shift in Irish society,

emerging from an autocratic past into a democratic future. This thesis, taking schools as 'a litmus test for society' (Akenson, 1975, x), has shown that schools are not merely productive and reproductive of social hierarchy (and therefore a function of power), rather, they are reflective of social currents - political and ideological. The transformation of education represented by *Gaelscoileanna*, from a system productive of hierarchies of power (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), to one productive of the politics of local identity, has emerged to exert a powerful impact upon Irish society and linguistic ideologies. An egalitarian movement in Education thus reflects the empowerment of local communities in shaping the society they inhabit.

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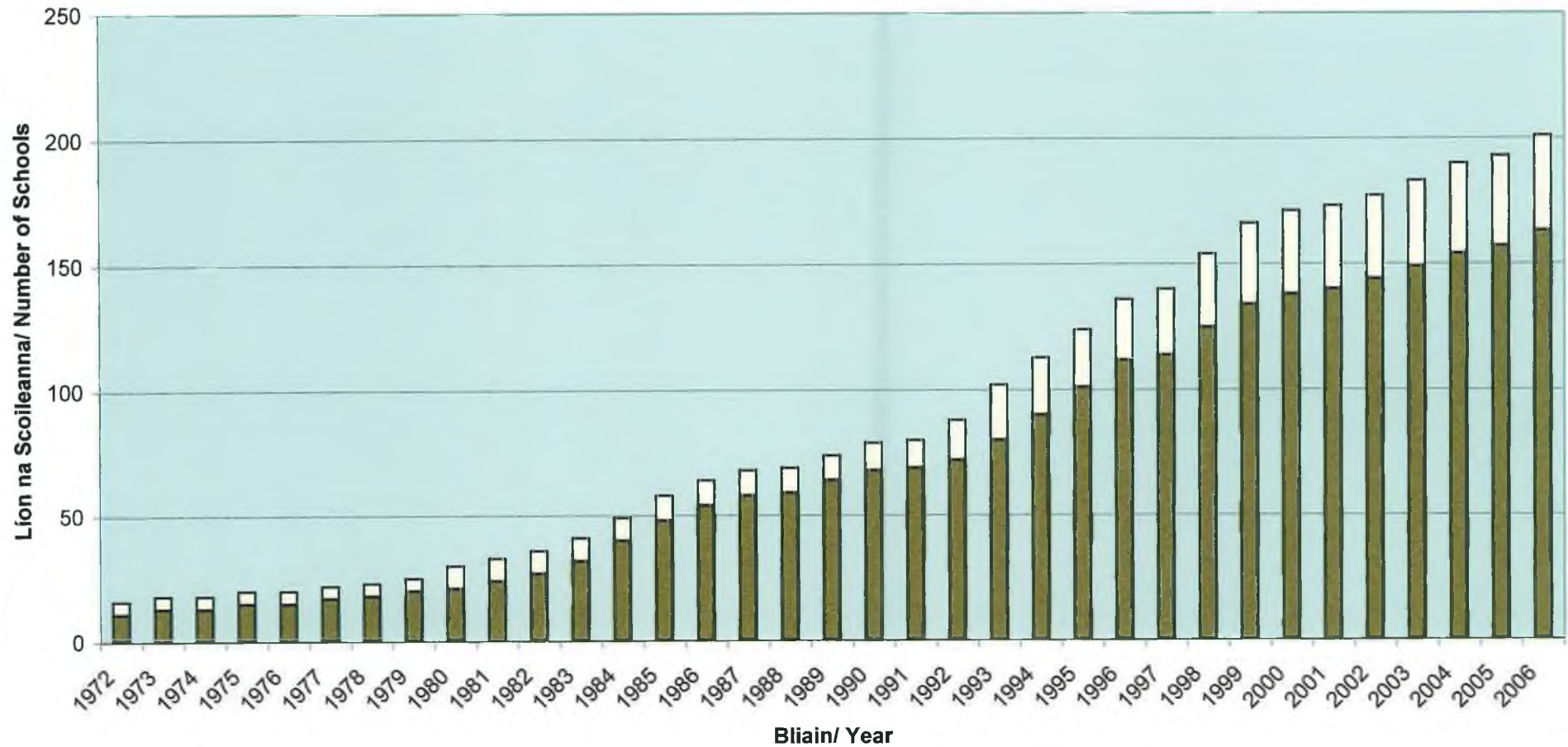
Appendix

Appendix (i)

***Gaelscoileanna* - Growth of schools**

Fás ar an nGaelscolaíocht sa Ghalltacht / The Growth of Irish Medium Schools outside the Gaeltacht : 1972-2005

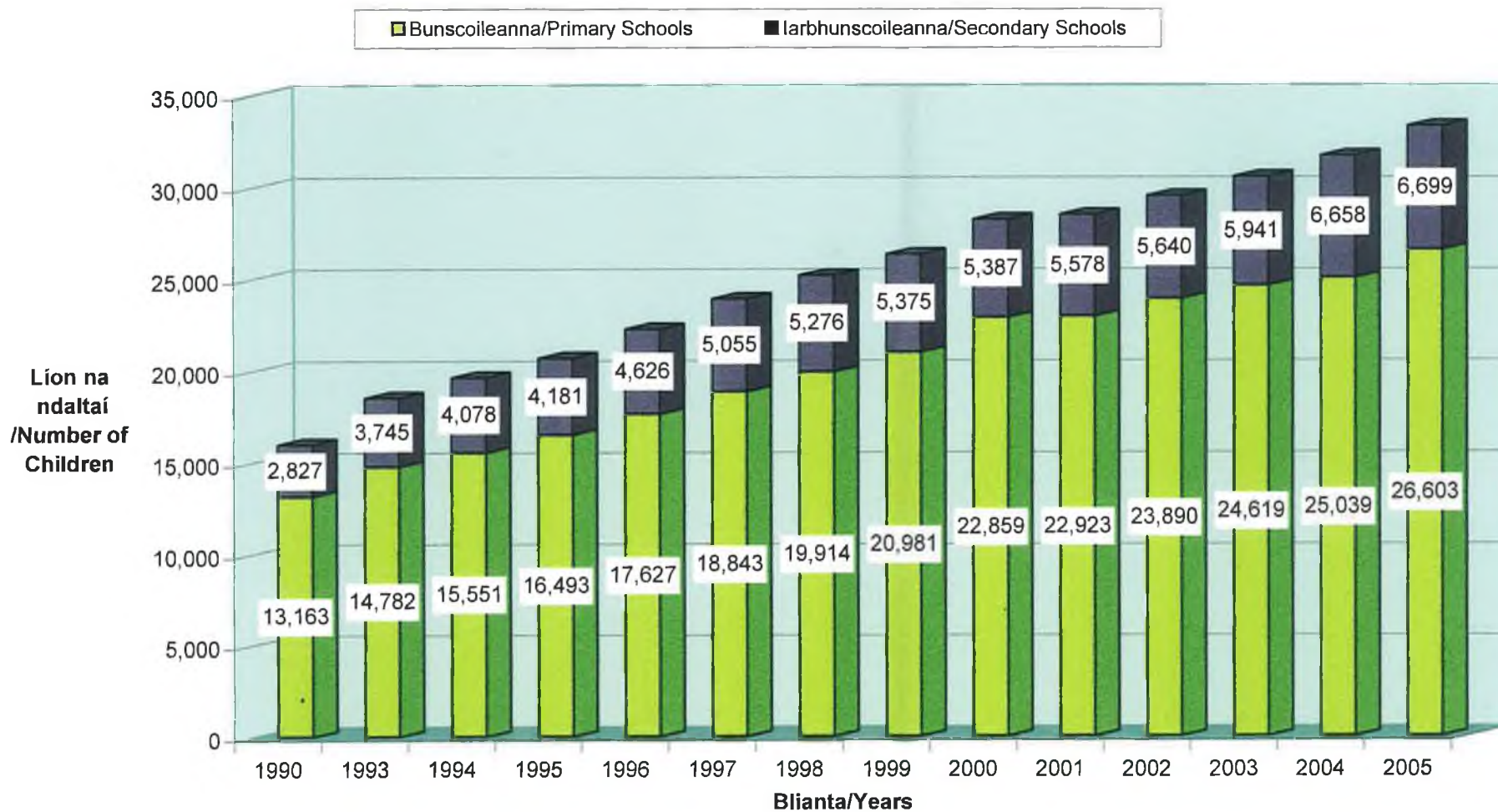
■ Bunscoileanna/ Primary □ Iarbunscoileanna/ Secondary



Appendix (ii)

***Gaelscoileanna* - growth in pupils**

Fás ar líon na bPáistí ag freastal ar scoileanna lán Ghaeilge sa Ghalltacht 1990-2005/The growth in the number of children attending all Irish schools outside the gaeltacht 1990-2005



Appendix (iii)

Ceisteanna dona múinteoirí, Questions for teachers

Inis liom píosa beag fúit, do ainm, cárbh as duit.

rudai mar sin.

Tell me a bit about yourself, your name, where you're from, things like that.

Inis liom píosa beag faoi Scoil Neasáin, do thaití agus thuairimí.

Tell me a bit about Scoil Neasáin, your experience and opinions.

Cén fáth gur múinteoir thú?

Why are you a teacher?

Cé chomh fhada is atá tú ag obair sa scoil seo?

How long are you working in the school?

Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá an Gaeilge duit?

How important is Irish to you?

Cá fhoghlann tú i?

Where did you learn it?

I do thuairim, cad i stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo faoi láthair?

Im your opinion, what is the state of Irish at present?

An cuireann sé isteach ort?

Does it upset you?

An ceapann tú go bhfuil sé ag fás nó ag dul i léig?

Do you think that it is increasing or decreasing?

Cad é éifeacht na Gaelscoileanna ar stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo? Cén ról atá ag Gaelscoileanna?

What effect do *gaelscoils* have on the state of Irish in this country? What role do *gaelscoils* play?

Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá na Gaelscoileanna don teanga, nó fás an teanga?

Important are the *gaelscoils* in relation to the language, or growth of the language?

Cén fáth a bhfuil sé chomh tábhachtach? Maidir leis ar gcultúr, nó tír grá srl?

Why is it so important? In relation to culture, patriotism, etc?

Ceard iad, I do thuairim, na buntáistí atá ag Gaelscoileanna?

What, in your opinion, are the advantages of Irish schools?

An bhfuil aon mi-bhuntaisti?

Are there any disadvantages?

Maidir leis an Gaeilge, ceard é an rud is easca, agus an rud is deacra, agus tú ag múineadh i mar sin/ an bealach sin?

In relation to Irish, what is the easiest or most difficult thing about teaching through Irish?

O do thaithí, conas a théann na paistí i ngleic leis an Gaeilge ag tús go hairithe, agus an tam ar fad sa scoil?

From your experience, how do the children come to terms with Irish, especially in the beginning, and throughout their time in school?

An úsáideann a lán paistí an Gaeilge taobh amuigh den scoil?

Do a lot of children use Irish outside of school?

An bhfuil Gaeilge ag a lán tuismitheoirí?

Do many parents know Irish?

Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá an Gaeilge dona tuismitheoirí, i do thuairim?

How important is Irish to the parents, in your opinion?

Cén fáth gur phioc siad an Gaelscoil? don Gaeilge nó toisc ard caighdeán na scoileanna?

Why did they choose the Irish school? Because of the Irish or because of the high standard of the school?

An gcuireann na tuismitheoirí béim mór ar an nGaeilge sa scoil nó an cuma leo ma tá an scoil go maith?

Do the parents put an emphasis on Irish or do they not mind so long as the school is

good?

An mbeifeá ag súil go mbeadh na paistí in ann Gaeilge a úsáid taobh amuigh den scoil/ sa saol mór?

Do you hope that the children will be able to use Irish outside of school/ in their lives?

An bhfuil na paistí ar fad ina cónaí sa ceantar seo, nó an mbíonn orthu teastáil i bhfad?

Are all of the children living in the area or do they have to travel a long distance?

An mbeadh a lán paistí ag freastal ar meánscoileanna lán Gaeilge?

Will a lot of children be attending Irish secondary schools?

Cén fáth, agus cén fáth nach mbeadh, i do thuairim?

In your opinion, why, or why not?

Cén fáth go bhfuil Gaelscoileanna ag fás chomh maith faoi láthair?

Why are Irish schools growing so rapidly at present?

Cá a mbeadh sibh ag dul?

Where will you be going?

Ceard atá, i do thuairim, an todhchaí atá ag Gaeilge? Cad atá i ndán don Gaeilge i do thuairim?

What is the future of Irish, in your opinion? What is, in your opinion, the future of Irish?

An ceapann tú go bhfuil sí ag fáil bás?

Do you think that it is dying?

Ceard atá sibh ag súil le baint amach?

What are you hoping to achieve?

Deireann cúpla daoine gur 'elitist phenomenon' é an tionscnamh, ceard a ceapann tú?

Some people say that the organization is an 'elitist phenomenon', what is your opinion on this?

Cé chomh easca nó deacair is atá sé na ngaelscoileanna a bhunú? Faoi láthair agus roimhe sin.

How easy or difficult is it to found an Irish school? At present and in the past?

Cén fáth go bhfuil Gaelscoileanna chomh tábhachtach anois? Cén fáth a bhfuil siad a fás chomh tapaigh anois?

Why are Irish schools so important now? Why are they growing so rapidly now?

An gceapann tú go mbeadh gach duine ag labhairt Gaeilge sa todhchaí sa tír seo? am éigin? sa fad téarma?

Do you think everyone will speak Irish in the future in this country? At any time? In the long term?

Appendix (iv)

Ceisteanna don Tuismitheoirí, Questions for Parents

An bhfuil Gaeilge agat? O dhúchas/ ón Gaeltacht/ ón baile/ ón Gaelscoil/ scoil?

Do you speak Irish?

Cén fáth gur phioc tú an Gaelscoil?

Why did you choose a *Gaelscoil*?

An bhfuil páistí eile agat ag freastal ar an scoil seo?

Have you any other children enrolled here?

Ceard iad, I do thuairim, na buntáistí atá ag Gaelscoileanna?

What, in your opinion, are the advantages of *Gaelscoileanna*?

An bhfuil aon mi-bhuntaisti?

Are there any disadvantages?

Ceard ba mhaith leat a bhaint amach as?

What do you hope to gain from the school?/ What are your expectations of the school?

I do thuairim, cad é stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo faoi láthair?

What, in your opinion, is the state of the Irish language?

Cad é éifeacht na Gaelscoileanna ar stad na Gaeilge sa tír seo? Cén ról atá ag Gaelscoileanna?

What do you think *Gaelscoileanna* can do for the language?

An mbeifeá ag súil go mbeadh do phaist in ann Gaeilge a úsáid taobh amuigh an scoil/ sa saol mór?

Do you foresee any opportunities/situations in which your child can use Irish outside the school?

Appendix (iv)

Ceisteanna dona paistí, Questions for pupils

(Questions suitable to all classes)

An Caoimhín libh bhur cead lá sa scoil?

Do you remember your first day in school?

An raibh sibh neirbhíseach? / An raibh scanradh ar aon duine?

Were you nervous? Was anyone frightened?

An raibh áthas ar aon duine?

Was anyone happy?

Céard é an rud is fearr sa scoil? Cad is maith libh? Cén fáth?

What is the best thing in school? What do you like? Why?

Céard é an rud is measa? Cad nach maith libh? Cén fáth?

What is the worst thing? What don't you like? Why?

Céard é an rud is deacra?

What is the most difficult thing?

Céard é an rud is easca?

What is the easiest thing?

Conas a éiríonn libh leis an teanga? An bhfuil sé easca Gaeilge a labhairt? An bhfuil bhur Gaeilge a feabhsú?

How are you getting on with the language? Is it easy to speak Irish? Is your Irish improving?

An dtuigeann sibh gach rud sa rang agus sa tinneall gach rud a deireann do mhúinteoir, mar shampla?

Do you understand everything that is said in the classroom and at assembly?

An ceapann sibh go bhfuil sé easca nó deacair?

Do you think it is easy or difficult?

An úsáideann aon duine Gaeilge le Daidí nó Mamaí, nó le bhur sean tuismitheoirí?

Does anyone use Irish at home with their parents or grandparents?

An úsáideann sibh Gaeilge agus sibh taobh amuigh don scoil?

Do you use Irish outside of school?

An bhfuil gach duine ina cónaí sa ceantar seo, nó an mbíonn teastáil mór ag aon duine ón baile ar scoil?

Does everyone live in the area or does anyone have to travel a long distance to school?

(Questions suitable for second and third class)

Cé chomh tábhachtach atá an Gaeilge i bhur saol?

How important is Irish in your school?

Cén fáth a bhfuil sé chomh tábhachtach?

Why is it so important?

An mbíonn sibh bródúil as?

Are you proud of it?

(Questions suitable for fourth, fifth and sixth class pupils)

Ceard é i bhur thuirim stad an Gaeilge faoi láthair? Conas atá an Gaeilge sa tír?

What is, in your opinion, the state of Irish at present?

Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá na Gaelscoileanna don teanga, nó fás an teanga?

How important are Irish schools to the growth of the language?

An mbeadh sibh ag freastail ar mean scoil lán Gaeilge?

Will you be attending Irish secondary schools?

Cén fáth?

Why?

Cén fáth nach mbeadh?

Why not?

Aon thuairimí eile faoin scoil, nó faoin teanga?

Do you have any additional thoughts about the school or about the language?