Teaching an Endangered Language: Situating Irish Language Teachers' Experiences and Motivations within National Frameworks of Continuing Professional Development

By

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Abstract

Language practices around the world have experienced a significant shift in the last number of years (McDermott, 2011; Walsh, 2005). Communities that continue to speak minority or heritage languages, such as Irish Gaelic, have felt the effects of the various social, political and economic pressures that have gone hand in hand with globalization, resulting in a breakdown in intergenerational transmission (Anderson, 2011; Hornberger, 1998; Norris, 2004). In the Republic of Ireland, the education system has been set as the corner stone of Irish language revitalization efforts since the 1920s, thereby assigning much responsibility to Irish language teachers. Yet, there is a dearth of existing research that gives voice to Irish teachers, and their experiences and motivations to teach a language that just 1.8% of the population speak on a daily basis remain unclear (National Census of Ireland, 2011). In this study, I engage with teachers from both Gaeltacht (where Irish is spoken as a first language) and primarily English speaking parts of Ireland, in order to give a broader account of Irish teachers' experiences in different educational settings. In addition, I look to identify what implications a better understanding of teacher motivation could have for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs offered to Irish teachers, and situate these recommendations within the current educational policies that exist within the Irish education system.

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Prologue

Positioning Myself as the Researcher

Engaging in qualitative research affords many unique opportunities to delve deeply into issues of importance to us and to put forth interpretations of how researchers come to understand these phenomena. Working within a qualitative research framework requires researchers not only to acknowledge their position within their research project, but also to offer the reader a sense of themselves and a glimpse into their own life story (Lichtman, 2013). I truly believe that every researcher needs to be reflexive in the way that she approaches her research, and allows her past experiences, biases and preconceived notions to come forth and be acknowledged as a part of the research process. My journey of what has brought me to researching heritage language teacher experiences is driven by not only my passion for languages and teaching, but also my experiences of being raised in a culture where I saw the daily struggles to keep the native language of my country alive. It is for these reasons that I include this prologue, so that the reader can understand my story and my motivations to embark on this research journey.

Being a second language educator has afforded me many wonderful and unique opportunities to experience different cultures and engage with people of many nationalities. Immersing myself as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in South Korea and Vietnam, where I was surrounded by unfamiliar languages and cultural practices, highlighted to me the importance of appreciating the language and culture of my own native country, the Republic of Ireland[1]. As an ESL teacher, I am frequently surrounded by multilingual

[1] The island of Ireland remained a part of Great Britain until 1921, when it was officially divided into the 6 counties of Northern Ireland (which remain under British rule) and the 26 counties of the Irish Free State. In 1949 the Irish Free State was declared a Republic, and so the 26 southern counties became officially known as the Republic of Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is also commonly referred to as Southern Ireland, the Irish Republic, or Ireland, which may be used interchangeably throughout this text when referring to the 26 counties

colleagues and students. However, every day I am reminded that I am essentially a monolingual speaker of English, as I unfortunately can not say that I am fluent in any other language. Being a second language teacher without being able to fluently speak a second language myself has, on occasions, drawn quizzical looks from my students and other teaching professionals. It seems a strange paradox for some, and perhaps they might question if I can relate to the challenges my students face in the classroom. And yet, although I do have experience learning Irish as a second language (L2) for almost half my lifetime, I cannot say that I am a fluent speaker of the native language of my country. This conundrum gives rise to my interest in this research.

Experience of Learning Irish

My relationship with Irish is a complex one and took place almost solely within school classrooms, as there were little to no opportunities for me to practice speaking the language in any other social setting. Learning this beautiful language is Irish students' first exposure to learning an L2 and we learned Irish the same way we learned every other subject, with a strong emphasis on rote learning. Reading, writing, and memorising verbs in isolation from any communicative skills were central to my Irish language learning experiences, with the aim being that we would be able to reproduce this knowledge for tests in Ireland's exam focused education system. Learning the language largely went over my head in those early days, as it did with most of my friends and classmates. It was just another subject in school and just more memorised words and phrases that meant nothing to me. It was not until my final years of primary school in 1996 at age 11, that I happened to have a teacher, Ms. Galligan, who introduced us to the concept of Irish as a *language*, rather than a subject. In her class, all common requests, such as opening the window, going to the bathroom or borrowing

of the Republic State. The 6 counties that remain under British rule will always be referred to as Northern Ireland.

a pencil, had to be asked in Irish and we were encouraged to communicate in Irish with each other. When another teacher or priest entered the room, the standard way of showing respect was for all students to stand up and say in chorus "Dia dhuit a Athair, tá fáilte rómhaith" (Hello Father, welcome to our class). During one of our first days of class with Miss Galligan, a priest came to visit and we all automatically stood up and droned out our welcome to him, sounding bored and robotic. Our teacher looked horrified and immediately after he left, she berated us for our disrespect, not to the priest, but to the language. "When you are saying something in Irish, remember that you are *speaking* it. It is our language and our heritage. Would you welcome someone to our class in English in the same way?" It was an eye opening experience for me, and I stopped viewing Irish as just meaningless words and phrases that had no relevance to my life. It fast became my favourite subject and I threw myself into learning it in those two years I spent in Ms. Galligan's class. When the time came to move to secondary school, I was disappointed to find that it was back to the same old routine of learning from texts with most emphasis placed on reading, writing and rote learning answers to essay questions. All our Irish studies became focused towards exam preparations and I began to feel the same disconnect to what I was learning as I had done for most of my life. It was at this point, during a family gathering in my parents' village, I was introduced to my second cousins, who lived in a Gaeltacht region of Ireland where they still speak Irish as their first language. They were young, only six or seven years old, and I was mesmerised as I sat and listened to them converse in Irish with each other and their parents. Because of their young age, their vocabulary was pretty basic and although they spoke a different dialect, I understood most of what they said. It was my first real interaction and emotional connection with the language since primary school and I so badly wanted to be able to speak with them and join their conversation. I tried to reignite the motivation and love of the language that I had previously developed and I pushed myself and took higher-level classes into my senior

years. Sadly, my senior year teacher and I did not see eye to eye and this, along with the pressure of applying for university within Ireland's highly competitive points based system, led me to dropping down to the lower level class, a decision I still regret to this day. The senior years school stream demands a lot from its students and there is great pressure on exam success should they wish to enter university in Ireland. With the Irish final exam previously consisting of a five hour written exam, a thirty minute listening exam and a ten minute oral exam, teachers were required to reduce the emphasis on speaking in order to adequately prepare students for their exams. Despite several failed attempts over the years to revive my passion for the language my final exams came and went, as did my need to use the language. I didn't need to speak Irish with my family or friends, or to get directions, or to be successful in a job interview or for any other reason, and so Irish became a part of my past, as it does for so many young people in Ireland.

Motivations to Teach

In retelling this story, I can see the important role that motivation, or a lack thereof, plays in the role of developing the Irish language in the daily lives of learners. Researchers such as Gardner (1985), Dörnyei (2003; 2006) and Noels, Pelletier, Clement and Vallerand (2003) have extensively documented the role that motivation, in both intrinsic and extrinsic forms, can play in students' second language acquisition. Therefore, without any motivation to learn or need to use the language, what else could I expect but for Irish to fade into my background? In trying to make sense of the broader dynamics at work here, I also found that Norris' (2004) review of Aboriginal languages in Canada presented some interesting parallels with my own experiences in Ireland. Norris (2004) suggests that in order for a language to survive, the role of the family and the community cannot be underestimated. Learning a heritage language as an L2 can only go so far in maintaining the language. Should we wish to stop the decline of the language, and more importantly, promote its transmission and

development, it must be transferred to children within the family as the mother tongue (Norris, 2004). Norris' (2004) description of the role of the community also helped me to make sense of another reason that may have affected my acquisition of Irish, as she described the emphasis that First Nation reserves place on protecting their language and cultural traditions as much as possible. I felt that I could equate this with the primarily Irish speaking Gaeltacht regions of Ireland, as they always appeared to me as some distant far off places, which were a million miles away from my social setting and comfort zone. Perhaps in doing this, I was unconsciously engaging in the process of 'othering' as described by House (2003), where I was creating imagined communities of those that were 'native speakers' of the language and those that were second language learners, and constructing a psychological barrier between the two. Perhaps this barrier that I had created was another factor in hindering my learning, but I'm glad to say that my relationship with Irish took an unexpected twist while I was teaching ESL abroad. I was living in Korea at the time and needed to contact my brother, who was now living in Northern Ireland. I sat down to write him an email and for reasons I can't explain, I started to write the email in Irish. I had had little to no contact with the language in close to eight years and no significant past experiences of speaking Irish with my brother in any other situation. And yet the words were still there, slow at first but faster as it started to slowly come back to me. I sent it to him, wondering whether he would question my sanity for sending such a strange email. He didn't. His response arrived back, fully in Irish and for the first time in so long, my heart leapt as I read his email in our native language. I had to read and re-read the sentences, as I tried to pull meanings out of his words that were so familiar to me but just locked away in some dusty box in my mind. The emails continued, back and forth in Irish and when we met during a visit home, we commented on how amazing it was to be able to communicate with each other in this way. That email exchange showed me that although I might not be exposed to Irish on a regular

basis, I still harbored a deep emotional connection to the language. The impact of all of this has undoubtedly had an effect on my relationships with language, and perhaps this is why I have embraced teaching English. I think that maybe I now feel that I'm no longer an outsider looking in at this imagined community (Kubota & Lin, 2006) of second language speakers. For so long I longed to be a part of the world of languages, but didn't know where my place was as a monolingual speaker. Despite feeling frustrated with this fact at times, taking the time to reflect on this since I have become an educator has shed a new and more positive light on my struggle to become an Irish language speaker. Having the opportunity to grapple with learning a second language, and experiencing the frustrations, successes and challenges that my current students face on a daily basis, has greatly shaped my teaching methodology and how I plan and deliver lessons. Feedback from other teaching professionals and students have most often commented on my focus on communicative language practices, with a large emphasis on having my students engaged in speaking and using the language in simulated real life situations as much as possible. I have no doubt that this is heavily influenced by the effect that my own Irish teacher, Ms. Galligan, had on me as a student and by what I feel was missing from my own L2 learning experiences. I continue to use this strategy as one of the major foundations of my teaching methodology today.

Since I immigrated to Canada in 2012, I have felt stronger ties to my cultural heritage and my nationality and cultural background has become the most prominent defining feature of both who I am and who I am not here. This is due largely in part to the widespread cultural diversity that can be found in Manitoba, which has experienced an influx of more than 125,000 permanent resident immigrants since 1999 and over 45,000 temporary foreign workers and international students since 2004 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). It seems a strange irony that the further away from my native country I go, the stronger my imagined ties to my native identity becomes. Although my memories of my Irish learning

experiences are rationalized through a student lens, my journey throughout my career as an ESL teacher and my post graduate education has led me to question the experiences of Irish teachers working in different contexts around Ireland. What successes and challenges do these teachers face on a daily basis? What kind of professional development supports are offered to Irish language teachers? What motivates them to teach a language that is spoken by so few of the population? It is hoped that my pervious experiences as an Irish student and growing up in Irish culture will give me an insider view of the place of Irish within the country. Being considered an insider in Irish society may also make it easier to access Irish language teachers for my study, hopefully resulting in rich, thick descriptions of their experiences through in depth interviews. These questions and many others have become burning issues for me, as I strive to achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of the experiences of Irish language teachers.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Language practices in communities around the world have experienced a significant shift in the last number of years (Hornberger, 1998; McDermott, 2011; Walsh, 2005). Significant shifts in economic mobility since the 18th century and the subsequent globalization that is evident today, has changed the way that people engage with each other and with languages through the generations (Norris, 2004; Walsh, 2005). Although language practices have ebbed and flowed for millennia (Walsh, 2005), the various social, political and economic pressures that have gone hand in hand with globalization have contributed to a more precarious situation for Indigenous and heritage languages today. The incredibly dynamic and large scale shift in the development of communication technologies, such as email and social networking, has altered the very basis of how people interconnect with each other, not just on a global scale, but within smaller communities and even in family homes. Therefore, with younger generations exposed to new technologies that may not cater to their heritage language, communities may be succumbing to an increased pressure to assimilate into a more dominant society customs and languages (Hornberger, 1998). As a result, minority languages have suffered greatly, as communities struggle to transmit their languages between generations (Anderson, 2011; Norris, 2004). Language revitalization and maintenance efforts, with varying degrees of success, have taken place in many countries where communities are experiencing language endangerment and there has been a significant increase in academic interest in the field in recent years (Anderson, 2011; Bale, 2010; De Korne, 2010). From Africa to New Zealand, Australia to Canada, Eastern Siberia to Ireland, the issue of language endangerment is a prevalent one (Anderson, 2011). The symbolic and

cultural ties that are lost when a community experiences the extinction of their heritage language cannot be overstated.

In this study I focus on the Irish language, which is one of three Gaelic languages found in Northern and Southern Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. At this point it is useful to note that while the Irish language may also be referred to as Irish Gaelic or Gaeilge, for the purposes of this study the language will be referred to as either 'the Irish language' or simply 'Irish'. This is based on the fact that Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland officially states that "The Irish language as the national language is the first official language" (Constitution of Ireland, Article 8, 1937). Given that this study is conducted through the medium of English, I will therefore use the official title of the language in the English translation of the Constitution.

The Irish language was chosen for inclusion in this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Irish form of Gaelic is classed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as being 'definitely endangered',[2] with their database recording a total of only 44,000 speakers out of Ireland's population of just over 4.5 million (UNESCO, 2011; Central Statistics Office, 2011). It should be noted, however, that UNESCO is not clear on how the figure of 44,000 speakers was generated. More accurate data can be found in the most recent Census of Ireland, which indicates that in 2011, 77,185 people spoke Irish on a daily basis, outside of the education system (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Nonetheless, intergenerational transmission of the Irish language has all but ceased for the majority of the population, and therefore, it fits the UNESCO criteria for a language that is

[2] UNESCO's Atlas of World Languages (2011) classifies language degrees of endangerment using a six category scale. These scales are: safe (language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted), vulnerable (most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains), definitely endangered (children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home), severely endangered (language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves), critically endangered (the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently) and extinct (no speakers left).

'definitely endangered'. The second reason for focusing on Irish language in this study is due to the fact that the social and political contexts of language revitalization and maintenance efforts in Ireland provide some interesting contrasts with other societies. In this sense it offers a unique opportunity to compare the successes and challenges that Ireland has experienced and frame these within the broader context of other communities struggling to maintain their native language (McKendry, 2007; Ó Laoire, 2012). Language revitalization and maintenance efforts in communities in Canada and the US offer some interesting parallels between situations in these two contexts and Ireland[3]. The final reason relates to my own background as an Irish citizen, which will be subsequently discussed in the prologue. Growing up within a society that has struggled with language revitalization and as a person who has experienced the Irish language education system myself, this has afforded me the opportunity to provide a valuable insider perspective on framing Ireland's language revitalization efforts within a more global context.

In this study, I present a review of literature examining heritage language (HL) and indigenous language (IL) revitalization and maintenance efforts in various communities across Canada and the US, as well as framing these efforts against the global background of other endangered languages. A brief history of the development of the Irish language is also offered, as it is necessary to present the current state of the Irish language against the historical backdrop in order to afford the reader with a broader understanding of the social processes that led to the demise of the language. In the Republic of Ireland the education system has been set as the cornerstone of Irish language revitalization efforts since the 1920s, thereby assigning much responsibility to Irish language teachers. Yet, there is a dearth of existing research that gives voice to Irish teachers, and their experiences and motivations to teach a language that only 1.8% of the population speak on a daily basis remain unclear.

Bearing this in mind, the literature review also highlights research that examines motivation within the field of second language acquisition. Dörnyei (2003) and Kaur (2015) suggested that the implications of examining teacher motivation could have far reaching consequences for both classroom based studies and policy implementation and education reform, and that this has been a frequently overlooked variable in many second language motivation studies. The review of literature also touches upon current language policies in Ireland and continuing professional development support for Irish language teachers, who are at the core of this study. Through presenting a thorough overview of what policies and supports are currently in place, this study highlights what implications a better understanding of teacher experiences and motivations could have for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs offered to Irish teachers. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1) What motivates post-primary teachers[4] in various contexts in Ireland to teach the Irish language?

2) What are the successes and challenges of being an Irish teacher?

3) What Continuing Professional Development supports are provided for Irish teachers?

4) What implications can the findings of this study have on policies and practices currently in use in the Irish Education system?

[4] 'post-primary teachers' refers to those teachers employed in the Irish Second Level education system. This is a five year program, over the course of which students are required to take two formal state examinations; the Junior Certificate (for students aged 15/16) and the Leaving Certificate (for students aged 17/18).

Chapter 2: Literature review

In order to adequately understand the challenges that come with heritage language maintenance and revitalization efforts in Ireland, it is necessary to first understand the broader context of the state of heritage languages more globally and the place of Irish language in Irish society. This review of literature presents three key areas; first, the global context of Indigenous and heritage language revitalization and maintenance efforts, focusing in particular on North American contexts. Second, an overview of the Irish language is presented, including a brief history of the Irish language, the place of Irish in society and language policies and practices in Ireland. As this research seeks to develop a more detailed understanding of Irish teachers' experiences and, in particular, their motivations to teach the language, the third section of the literature focuses on motivation research in the field of second language acquisition. In this section I offer an overview of the role of motivation in successfully acquiring a second language, and discuss the importance of including teacher motivation techniques in language policies. It is hoped that by discussing the relevant literature related to these three areas, this will facilitate a broader understanding of the contexts that Irish language teachers are working in today.

2.1 Heritage and Indigenous Languages – A Global Context

2.1.1 Defining Heritage and Indigenous Languages

Before giving an overview of some current research on IL revitalization, it is important to acknowledge the difficult task of defining the terminology used in the field. Bale (2010) suggested that many variations have become synonymous with the term 'Indigenous' languages, including heritage, Aboriginal, ancestral, minority, community, mother tongue and native languages, to name but a few. Walsh (2005) defined an indigenous language as "any language that is "native" to a particular area" (p. 294). But problems arise when deciding

what counts as an Indigenous or heritage language, in the sense of how long it takes for a language to be introduced to a population and be adopted as their native language. For example, the Gaelic language of Irish was originally brought to the country by the Celts from mainland Europe in around 200 BC, where it later became interwoven with influences from Latin, Norse and English (Hughes, 2001). Therefore, in the technical sense, the language is mainland European and not 'native' to Ireland. Similarly, one could argue that the Portuguese of Brazil is not 'native' to Brazil, but rather is a variation of a language indigenous to Portugal (Walsh, 2005). Notwithstanding these facts, Walsh (2005) suggested that the definition of an Indigenous or heritage language will always be a matter of degree. The broader social and cultural context should also be taken into account, as one cannot ignore community ancestral and cultural ties to a language, regardless of how long they have chosen to associate themselves with that language.

Bale (2010) highlighted other issues associated with labelling languages, debating how HL speakers or learners are defined. Many Indigenous Language Education (ILE) or Heritage Language Education (HLE) policies often define speakers/learners based on their language proficiency (Bale, 2010). Hornberger (2005) called for a less restrictive position that allows members of a language community to decide if they define themselves as HL speakers or learners, based on their own ties to the language or language community. While this position has its merits, it can cause problems in gaining a realistic picture of the current state of an HL, as there is no clear definition of how often the speaker/learner is actually using the language or in what capacities. This problem will be explored further in subsequent sections with regards to analyzing data from self-reported Irish language speakers and learners in the National Census of Ireland. Following on from Duff and Li's (2009) assertion that the term 'Indigenous' is becoming the term of choice in Canada when referring to First

Nation community languages, I have adopted this term to refer to languages based in North America, and will refer to the Irish language as a heritage language.

2.1.2 Barriers to Indigenous Language Revitalization

Research on ILs has increased substantially in the past number of years, due largely in part to the negative portrayal of the state of languages across the globe. Krauss's (1992) prediction regarding the extinction of the world's languages is well quoted by academics in the field, as he suggests that of the approximately six thousand languages currently in existence today, less than half will survive to the end of this century. Other researchers, such as Hornberger (1998) and Dalby (2003), provided a similarly damning summary about the state of ILs. Dalby (2003) suggested that in less than two hundred years we are likely to be in a situation where "English, French, Spanish and the other national languages of the world – somewhere around two hundred in total – are the only languages still in use" (p. 277). Indigenous communities faced with language endangerment or extinction must continually face an uphill battle in trying to find a place for their languages within a more dominant society. In reviewing various research articles on communities struggling to maintain or revitalize their ILs, there are many common themes that emerge. This review of literature will focus on four main barriers that appeared consistently across studies; namely intergenerational transmission, language ideologies, socio-economic influences, and 'top down' revitalization approaches.

(i) Intergenerational Transmission

Norris' (2004) review of Canadian Census data from 1981 – 2001 offered an insight into the maintenance of Aboriginal languages in Canada, where intergenerational transmission to Aboriginal youth has become disrupted or ceased. With younger generations being continually exposed to more dominant languages, Norris (2004) suggested that it is the

family and local community that play the most important role in ensuring language transmission. That is to say, if transmission is not occurring within home or family circles, the chances of Indigenous youth acquiring their language is significantly reduced. Whether the language is taught in the home as the mother tongue is also one of the most influential factors in terms of transmission. Norris (2004) highlighted that acquiring an Indigenous language as a second language (L2) is less likely to result in transmission and continuity between generations. McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol (2009) reported similar findings in the US, as they conducted a study with American Indian children over a five year period. Youth in this study reported being mainly "overhearers" (p. 294) of their IL, in the sense that they heard their parents and grandparents speaking the language, but typically not *to* them. This speaks to the complex dynamics of Indigenous families, where it appears that the elder family members (grandparents) may be fluent in their IL and the middle generation (parents), who need to regularly engage with the more dominant language, perhaps for education or employment purposes, may have a lower-level of IL proficiency. Students in McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol's (2009) study went on to describe their parents using different languages in different social settings and to different generations within their family. An example included speaking their IL with elder family members in the home, and speaking English or Spanish with younger generations or in their workplace. This is perhaps another reason why transmission is interrupted, as parents either do not have the confidence in their IL abilities or do not feel the necessity to pass the language on to the younger generation.

(ii) Language Ideologies

McDermott (2011) found that language ideologies can play an important role in shaping an Indigenous community's perceptions and attitudes towards the more dominant societal language. This issue was also identified by McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol (2009) who found that Native American youth viewed English as a "language of survival" (p.

300) and as a necessity to open up opportunities for employment and further education. That being said, they also carried strong sentimental ideologies related to their IL, describing it as their "blood language" and their "cultural language" (McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol, 2009, p. 300). The issue of identity was also a salient theme in McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol's (2009) study, as students demonstrated strong ties between their IL and their cultural identities within their Indigenous community. In some cases, however, negative ideologies regarding the IL had been passed down between generations, as those from older generations may have been coerced into speaking English within the education system. One student reported that "Some [parents and grandparents] had really bad experiences in school, so they said 'forget it [speaking the Indigenous language]…. It's all English, English, English'" (McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol, 2009, p. 301). In cases such as this one, rather than feeling pride and a sense of cultural identity, feelings of shame and negative attitudes towards the IL are more prominent, having been passed down through the generations.

(iii) Socio-Economic Influences

Hornberger (1998) indicated that of the one hundred and seventy five Indigenous languages that are still in existence in the USA, only twenty are being transmitted to younger generations. A significant factor in this interruption in transmission is a complex combination of socio-economic influences, which create challenging contexts for language revitalization and maintenance efforts. Norris (2004) highlighted that Indigenous communities are experiencing a shift in their demographics, as the younger generations move from Aboriginal reserves into urban areas. Norris' (2004) review of the 1996 Census found that only 3% of Aboriginal people in cities reported an Aboriginal home language, in comparison to 41% for those living on reserves. This has significant ramifications, as many of the challenges of saving an Indigenous language are exacerbated when families are living in cities. Here they

are immersed in an English speaking society, are required to speak English in their workplace and build social networks with English speaking neighbours, colleagues and others. Sallabank's (2010) review of research went further to suggest that an individual's social network can "be more significant in language maintenance and shift than factors such as migration, religion, intermarriage, age, and gender" (p. 187). Norris (2004) found that migration to urban areas also increased the likelihood of Aboriginal men and women marrying outside of their Indigenous communities. This also had a significant effect on language maintenance and transmission, as the language spoken in the home tends be one that both parents speak, and in these cases, the IL often becomes the second language (Norris, 2004).

Hinton (2010) suggested that with the predominance of the English language in the U.S., the only hope for the survival of endangered languages lies in promoting bilingualism among communities experiencing language loss. However, in situating these communities within the current economic climate, Hinton (2010) claimed that being a bilingual speaker of an endangered language does not offer any economically viable contribution to the U.S. economy, and that in essence, endangered Indigenous and heritage languages are 'economically irrelevant'. This provides yet another significant challenge in justifying the worth and value of the Indigenous or heritage languages for younger generations who must enter a workplace where their bilingualism will not be valued and their means of communication must be through the dominant language of English.

(iv) 'Top Down' Revitalization Approaches

Language revitalization policies have largely focused on planning and implementing strategies at an institutional level, with the education system providing the main vehicle for promoting IL development (De Korne, 2010). Smith-Christmas and Armstrong (2014)

suggest that while the education system must play its part in producing new Indigenous or heritage language speakers, it is vital that communities do not fall into the trap of assuming that this is *all* that is needed. That is to say, they advocated for a balance between macro-level approaches at the institutional level and micro-level approaches in the home (Smith-Christmas and Armstrong, 2014). De Korne (2010) and Norris (2004) were also somewhat critical of how language revitalization has been approached at the macro level, voicing concern that Indigenous language education has been approached with the same structure and pedagogical models that have been developed for second or foreign language acquisition. It was suggested that these approaches are not suitable for teaching an endangered language, as the ultimate goals of instruction will be very different (De Korne, 2010). That is to say, "For foreign language learners the ultimate goal of instruction is often moderate conversational or literacy skill, stopping short of fluency. For IL communities facing immediate endangerment of their language, the importance of language proficiency is much greater" (De Korne, 2010, p. 120). Walsh (2005) also suggested that too often indigenous communities assume that schools can handle the problem of language loss, when in reality, the problem runs much deeper than this and students continue to emerge with a minimal knowledge of the language.

In addition, Walsh (2005) highlighted the emphasis in the linguistic field on documenting and recording endangered languages, before they become extinct. He suggested that many linguists see documentation of endangered languages as a necessary pre-requisite to revitalization, work which can often be hindered by many Aboriginal languages being oral only languages (Walsh, 2005). Maffi (2003) offered a telling summary, suggesting that "books and recordings can preserve languages, but only people and communities can keep them alive" (as cited in Walsh, 2005, p. 301).

Notwithstanding the above challenges, there is evidence of indigenous communities in various parts of Canada implementing new initiatives in an attempt to revitalize language in

their local areas. In researching Maliseet language loss in First Nation communities in Eastern Canada, Perley (2011) found that community leaders had attempted to build a language and cultural resource centre in an attempt to create a centralized location where they could build community awareness of the language, hold classes and collect documentation and artefacts connected to the language. Perley (2011) also found that leaders were keen to embrace new media, such as television and the internet, as a means to broaden access to the language. Adult immersion programming and the use of online language learning tools, such as Rosetta Stone, were also reported as successful initiatives in the revitalization of Mohawk language in North America (Maracle, 2002; Canada NewsWire, 2004).

On a broader scale, Neegan (2007) found that attempts to revitalize indigenous languages at the institutional level have not resulted in improvements in language acquisition for some communities. Cardwell (2010) found that former government's promises to increase federal spending to $172 million over the course of 11 years were cut short, and that many programs are underfunded and still hindered by a colonial education system in residential schools in Canada. Indigenous language curricula that have seen some successes were found to be those who involved local communities in the implementation of these curricula (De Korne, 2010). De Korne (2010) found that Wisconsin's American Indian Language and Culture Education program allows for much flexibility in the implementation of its curriculum and requires parental involvement in an advisory capacity.

The next section will examine the Irish language specifically and give insight into the barriers to revitalization that exist in Ireland.

2.2 Irish Language

Increasing academic interest in minority languages has led more researchers to focus on Ireland's struggles to maintain its language (Bale, 2010; Carnie, 1995; Hornberger, 2008; Walsh, 2005). Many researchers, including those listed above, document the efforts of the Irish Government to revitalize the Irish language are regarded as a failure, as the language is currently spoken on a daily basis outside of the classroom setting by only 1.8% of the population (Central Statistics Office of Ireland, 2011). The vast majority of these speakers reside in territories of Ireland known as 'Gaeltacht' communities,[5] where Irish is still spoken as a first language (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2006). A brief history of the Irish language will be presented below, before analyzing barriers to revitalization in relation to Ireland's language revival efforts. As mentioned earlier, both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland will be included in this analysis. Despite the fact that the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are two individual countries, run by two separate Governments, they are united in the sense that Irish language revitalization efforts currently continue on both sides of the border.

2.2.1 A History of the Irish Language

The Irish language is a form of Gaelic, originally brought to Ireland in around 200 BC by the Celts (Carnie, 1995). The language is thought to have derived from mainland Europe and particularly the region of Northern Spain, before it was infused with influences from Latin, Norse and English when Ireland experienced waves of settlers over a period of five hundred years (Huges, 2001). Variations of the language also spread to Scotland and the Isle of Man to form a group of Gaelic languages, made up of Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic and Manx Gaelic. Among these waves of settlers came the Anglo-Normans in the 12th Century and the first documented challenge for the Irish language, as English became a common

[5] Gaeltacht areas of Ireland cover a small area of counties located along the western seaboard, including Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry. Gaeltacht communities can also be found in parts of counties Cork, Meath and Waterford. There are also six populated offshore islands. The total population of the Gaeltacht is 100,716 (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Please see Appendix 4 for a map of Gaeltacht areas in Ireland.

language in some of the major port towns of Galway, Waterford, Dublin and Cork (Carnie, 1995). The Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366 became the first example of official oppression against the Irish language, as it was banned from use in the legal system and in commerce (Carnie, 1995). However, with the Irish language still retaining a stronghold amongst people living outside of Dublin, the Statute was largely considered a failure. The language continued to thrive until the early 17th Century, when the British Empire initiated a series of plantations across the country, effectively removing Irish speaking communities from rich farming lands and forcing them to relocate to land in other, less hospitable parts of the country. These plantations of British settlers now controlled large areas of land and were exclusively English speaking. This, coupled with the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, started what would become the demise of the Irish language (Hughes, 2001). Huge portions of the population relocated to cities and towns in search of employment, to find English-speaking employers in control of industry and technology. The Irish language was then more difficult to find in urbanized areas, as it fast became the language spoken by what were regarded as the peasantry in rural areas (Carnie, 1995). Despite these challenges, Ireland experienced its most significant language shift during the Great Famine, between 1845 and 1849. Hughes (2001) noted that before the Famine, more than 50% of the country's 8.5 million population was estimated to still speak Irish as a first language, but in a five year period, over half the population was reported to have either died or emigrated to English speaking countries such as the UK, the US, Eastern Canada or Australia (McDermott, 2011). As a result of this mass death and emigration, the country lost an entire generation of Irish language speakers and those that survived were living in a society where the status of the Irish language was now significantly weakened.

The late 1800s saw an unexpected revival of interest in the Irish language, as unrest began to stir amongst Irish citizens. This was due to the increased efforts to supress the Irish

culture and language by the English Government and as a result, the Irish language became a symbol of identity and distinction between 'Britishness' and 'Irishness' within the Republican movement (McDermott, 2011). Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League), one of the main promoters of the language revival movement, was founded in 1893, and became a driving force behind improving the status of the language in communities and within the education system (Carnie, 1995). Through cultural festivals, the arts, language classes and the publication of materials in Irish, Conradh na Gaeilge tried to create a cultural movement that would be one of the first conscious efforts of language revitalization since the decline of the language (McDermott, 2011). By 1900, primary schools in Ireland were finally allowed to teach Irish within school hours[6], but only if the instruction met certain standards as required by the government. However, a lack of funding available to schools in more remote areas meant that many schools, even in Gaeltacht areas, were not able to meet these standards and English maintained its status as the language of instruction for many students. The disquiet that was beginning to spread among Irish citizens in the early 1900s reached a critical turning point in 1916, as Irish republicans staged an armed rebellion in a bid to end British rule in Ireland and establish an Independent Republic of Ireland. The uprising was quickly suppressed and the instigators executed, but this was to set in motion a chain of events that would eventually see the establishment of an Irish Free State. In 1921, twenty six counties in the south of Ireland split from Britain and the Irish language went from being marginalized at an official level to being accorded a primary role in the establishment of the Republic of Ireland[7]. In fact, Irish was declared (and remains to this day) the first official language of the

[6] The National School System was established in 1931 as a means of offering education to those living in poverty, and was largely overseen by various church denominations (McDermott, 2011). However, at the time in question Irish held such a low status as a language of opportunity that even Catholic schools didn't include it in their curriculum and even went as far as beating children who spoke Irish instead of English (McDermott, 2011).

[7] Despite the fact that Ireland declared itself as a Free State in 1921, it was not until 1949 that the South declared itself a Republic (McDermott, 2011).

Republic of Ireland, while English, despite its dominant societal position, is recognized as the second official language.

2.2.2 Irish Language Revitalization Policies

After the establishment of the free state of Ireland, the Government set in motion a revitalization strategy comprising of three policy themes; Pressure, Preferment and Projection (Hughes, 2001; McDermott, 2011). The Pressure aspect of the policy was concentrated on the educational system, as Irish was introduced as a compulsory subject in schools across Southern Ireland. The Preferment approach referred to the State declaration of Irish as the first official language and those members of society that could speak the language were given privileges in civic employment sectors such as education, health and public services[8]. The final aspect of the policy, Projection, looked to ensure that Irish became a part of the countries linguistic landscape, with all public road and street signs having both Irish and English translations. In addition, public bodies were required to use their Irish titles, such as the police force becoming known as 'An Garda Síochána' (Guardians of the Peace), and the Irish language was introduced on bank notes, stamps and official documents (McDermott, 2011; Ó Laoire, 2012). The success of this policy will be discussed below in the context of the barriers to language revitalization that Ireland experienced.

Another dimension of the Irish IL revitalization efforts centred on increasing the number of Gaelscoileanna or Irish immersion schools, both within Gaeltacht and English speaking communities. What is interesting to note is that these schools were established in response to parental demand for Irish-medium schools, particularly since the 1970s (Ó Laoire, 2012), which demonstrates that there was still an interest in reviving the language at the community level. The Government responded to this demand, and as a result, there are

[8] An example of this aspect of the policy still in practice today is the pre-requisite qualifications for primary school teachers in Ireland. All students applying for University courses must have taken Higher Level Irish for their Leaving Certificate final exams in order to be eligible to apply.

currently over one hundred and seventy Irish immersion schools in both Gaeltacht and English speaking regions of both Northern and Southern Ireland, educating approximately forty three thousand pupils (Gaelscoileanna Teo, 2011).

The Irish Government's most recent language revitalization policy was published in 2010, and gives a detailed 20 year plan to promote the development of Irish from 2010 – 2030. The policy adopts a three pronged approach; firstly, providing additional support to language maintenance efforts in Gaeltacht areas; secondly, increasing the number of daily speakers of Irish from 83,000 to 250,000; and thirdly, increasing the number of people who use State services through Irish and improving access to television, radio and print media in the language (Government of Ireland, 2010). The policy identifies many areas for action, including education, Gaeltacht areas, family life and intergenerational transmission, media and technology and many more (Government of Ireland, 2010). In the area of education, the policy quotes reports that indicate that the level of proficiency amongst Irish learners in both English and Irish medium Primary schools has fallen dramatically (36.1% and 40.5% respectively) (Government of Ireland, 2010). Irish teachers in English medium schools also expressed a lack of confidence in their own language proficiency, with 25% of teachers rating their standards of spoken Irish as 'weak' (Government of Ireland, 2010). Ó Laoire (2012) suggests that Irish language policies in the past have often excluded pedagogy, despite the fact that "it is in the micro-interactions in the classroom where policy is really played out" (p. 22). It appears that in the 20 Year Strategy (2010) an attempt has been made to address issues of curriculum and delivery. Although I would suggest that it falls far short of offering teachers a solid pedagogical base on which they can build their Irish language classroom practices.

2.2.3 Barriers to Irish Language Revitalization

The language revitalization policies implemented by the Irish Government in the Republic of Ireland and the British Government in Northern Ireland are often portrayed as a failure (Carnie, 1995; Hornberger, 2008; Walsh, 2005). Carnie (1995) was particularly critical of efforts to revive the language, however, it should be noted that his observations are not based on any formal research data and are limited to his own interactions with Irish language speakers. The political and social context of Irish in Ireland provides an interesting contrast to the North American studies by Norris (2004) and McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol (2009). It would appear that North American IL revitalization efforts are often situated in a societal context where the language holds no official status, lacks Government support and funding and is not widely visible within either the IL or wider society (Anderson, 2011; Walsh, 2005). The Irish language, on the other hand, holds full official status as the first language of Ireland and was recently recognized as a Working Language of the European Union in 2007 (Ó Laoire, 2005). It is also very much in the public eye across Ireland's linguistic landscapes, a prime example of which is the fully bilingual signage that can be seen across the country. The language also holds a prestigious place in Ireland's education system, as it is one of three compulsory subjects for all school-aged children[9]. Compared with the contexts of the North American IL revitalization efforts, one may question how the Irish language continues to be spoken by so few of the population, when so many supports seem to be in place to promote the language's development. A more in-depth examination of the barriers that have prevented language development will be presented below.

(i) Intergenerational Transmission

With data from the National Census of Ireland (2011) suggesting that only 1.8% of the country is speaking Irish on a daily basis outside the classroom, it would be safe to assume

[9] Mathematics and English are the other two compulsory subjects for all pupils in the Irish education system.

that intergenerational transmission has effectively ceased for the vast majority of the population. The Irish language still holds a strong ethno-cultural value as a symbol of Irish identity, but it would appear that in communities outside of the Gaeltacht regions, there are very few forums for families to engage with the language outside of the school setting (McDermott, 2011). Given that Irish has been a compulsory subject in the school system for well over fifty years, many Irish parents do have some knowledge of the language. But similar to the situation for Native Indians in McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol's (2009) study, parents may feel that their proficiency level is not high enough to converse with family in the home. This problem was acknowledged by the Irish Language Commissioner in 2005, who in his first annual report highlighted that many pupils have not attained even basic fluency of Irish, despite being taught the language for thirteen years (Ó Laoire, 2012). Because of this, and many other compounding factors, Irish youth are not being exposed to the language in the home, which Norris (2004) suggests is the biggest determining factor in the success of IL maintenance and revitalization strategies.

(ii) Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are defined by Kroskrity (2010) as a set of "beliefs, feelings and conceptions about a language structure" (p. 192). Language ideologies are fluid and can be influenced by a multitude of factors, including the socio-political and economic contexts of individual speakers (Kroskrity, 2010), and in Ireland's case, physical location within Gaeltacht or English regions of Ireland The Irish language continues to be a symbol of Irish culture and holds strong identity ties for many people within the country and amongst Irish Diasporas around the world (Bale, 2010; Carney; 1995; Hughes, 2001). Similar to IL research findings in North America (McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol, 2009; Norris, 2004), language ideologies were shown in some cases to generate feelings of pride in one's cultural identity. This is reflected in approximately 1.7 million people (37% of the

population) classifying themselves as Irish speakers (Central Statistics Office, 2011), despite only a small percentage of these actually speaking the language on a daily basis. Bale's (2010) debate is noteworthy here about how we classify HL speakers and learners and the problems that can be associated with asking people to self-report their language status. In addition to this, the negative ideologies that Native Indian students held towards their IL (McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol, 2009) are not a prominent theme within Irish research, as these seem to have been replaced with a more positive attitude towards the language by many of the population (McDermott, 2011). For example, in a survey carried out by MORI Ireland (2004, as cited in McCubbin, 2010, p. 458) 89% of people agreed that, "promoting the Irish language is important to the country as a whole". That being said, the ties that the language has to national identity seem have weakened from the past affiliations, as only 39% of people who believed that "actually speaking Irish is important to being Irish" (MORI Ireland, 2004, as cited in McCubbin, 2010, p. 458).

The status of Irish in Northern Ireland plays a central role in the language ideology of the Irish people. Throughout the political conflicts that occurred during the Civil War in Ireland in the 20th Century, Irish was viewed with great suspicion by those who supported the presence of the British in the North (McDermott, 2011). Northern Ireland's Government initially did not support any bilingual policies that incorporated the Irish Language (McKendry, 2007) and it became a clear marker of division between Catholic and Protestant groups in the North and South of Ireland. McDermott (2011) also highlighted that the language eventually became associated with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), fuelling a widespread perception that anyone who spoke Irish in the North was a member of the IRA. These negative language ideologies played a pivotal role in the socio-political context of the Northern counties for decades and withheld the implementation of any IL policies in Northern

Ireland until the Good Friday Agreement that was signed by both Governments in 1998 (McKendry, 2007).

(iii) Socio-Economic Influences

The socio-economic situation in Ireland has experienced a dramatic shift in recent years, as the country experienced high levels of immigration in the mid-1990s. McCubbin (2010) reported that "net immigration outpaced net emigration on a yearly basis from 1996 – 2008" (p. 457), due largely in part to the economic boom that Ireland experienced during this period. This has resulted in large numbers of immigrant children in school classrooms for whom neither Irish nor English is the first language, which presents new challenges for Irish language teachers. With language policies in Ireland focused solely on promoting Irish/English bilingualism, there were few strategies in place to guide educators who were now working in multi-lingual classrooms (Bale, 2010; Ó Laoire, 2012). As a result, McCubbin (2010) reported that many schools have implemented policies of withdrawing, on a part time basis, immigrant children from Irish classes and placing them in English immersion classes. McCubbin (2010, p. 473) went on to state that "It is telling that part-withdrawal from Irish class is a policy at all… It is not merely a case of the undeniable need for immigrant children to develop English language skills; it is a statement about the perceived irrelevance of Irish to modern life".

The increased number of immigrants working in the public service sector also resulted in unexpected changes in Irish language policy. McCubbin (2010) discussed the decision taken by An Post, the Irish postal service, to remove Dublin mailing addresses that were written in Irish, and change them to their English equivalents. This was justified on the grounds that the company now had an increased number of immigrant workers who could not read the Irish language. Similarly, An Garda Síochána also removed the requirement that new recruits have a basic ability in Irish before being admitted to the Garda Training College

(McCubbin, 2010). The implications of these policy shifts are clear, with McCubbin suggesting that "Irish is an obstacle to integration, but an obstacle that is easily surmounted by the general expendability of the language in practical affairs" (p. 473).

Other socio-economic influences such as employment opportunities and access to education have for many years been an incentive for Irish speakers to assimilate into the English speaking society (Carnie, 1995). This continues to be the case today, as young graduates are faced with high-unemployment rates that are a by-product of the global recession that crippled Ireland's economy in the last number of years. As a result, Ireland appears to be losing another generation to emigration, as young graduates leave to find employment abroad (Capall, 2010; McDonald, 2011). Young Irish graduates may feel that being a native English speaker affords them more opportunities for employment, not just in Ireland, but all over the world as English secures its status as the world's lingua franca (House, 2003). It is likely that these socio-economic pressures are felt across the whole country, not just in the major towns and cities. Therefore, Gaeltacht communities, which are usually located in smaller and more rural areas of Ireland, are also likely to feel the impact of young Irish speaking graduates leaving in search of employment elsewhere.

(iv) 'Top Down' Revitalization Approaches

One of the biggest criticisms of Irish language revitalization policies has been the inability to focus on language development at the community level (Carnie, 1995; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2006; Ó Laoire, 2012). Despite the fact that Irish was given official language status and heavily promoted in official Government legislature, these policies stood to develop the language at the institutional level only (McDermott, 2011). The promotion of Irish through the education system has been the corner stone of Irish language policies for over eighty years, but little has been done to promote the language development at the community level. The fact that Irish continues to be taught in the majority of schools in a foreign language

structure has raised doubts about the viability of the language for future generations (McKendry, 2007). Bale (2010) also highlighted a lack of teacher training and professional development for Irish language teachers, some of whom leave school after thirteen years of Irish language education with little fluency in the language they must now teach to the next generation of Irish youth. Any policies that have offered support at the community level have been aimed largely at the Gaeltacht areas, promoting language maintenance for a tiny portion of the Irish population (McKendry, 2007). McDermott (2011) summarizes the failures of Irelands 'top down' approaches to language revitalization as an "over-bureaucratization within public institutions" (p. 30) and a failure to redirect resources to the areas where they are most needed, in the homes and communities of Irish people.

This review of literature on the Irish language has sought to give a broad overview of the history of the language and some of the common barriers to the success of language revitalization policies in Ireland. The four barriers to revitalization were found to be consistent across research studies and demonstrated that language revitalization policies being implemented in very different contexts can still share the same challenges.

2.3 Motivation

Irish language teacher experiences continues to be an under-researched area, and little is known about what challenges and successes they face or what motivates them to teach an endangered language. The concept of motivation within the realm of second language education has drawn the attention of researchers since the 1970s, and there continues to be a growing interest in this area (Clement, Gardner & Smith, 1977; Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 1985; Williams & Burden, 1999). The concept of student motivation, and what implications this has on the successful acquisition of a second language, has been the main focus of much

research in the field (Clement, Gardner & Smith, 1977; Clement & Vallerand, 2003; Dörnyei, 2004; Noels, Pelletier & Engin, 2009; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). However, the issue of teacher motivation is of particular importance for this study, despite the fact that it continues to be an under represented topic in the field of motivational research. This section will firstly give an overview of some of the prominent theories of motivation, before looking specifically at teacher motivation and the wider ramifications more research in this area could have on developing Indigenous language policies.

2.3.1 Defining Motivation

Defining a concept such as motivation appears to be fraught with difficulties, and it has been widely debated by various second language acquisition (SLA) researchers in the field over the last number of years. For example, in reviewing research of some of the most prominent contributors since the 1970s, at least five separate definitions for the concept of motivation were evident. Terms such as 'integrative motivation' (Gardner & Smith, 1977; Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant & Mihic, 2004), 'instrumental motivation' (Gardner & Smith, 1977, Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991), 'intrinsic and extrinsic motivation' (Noels et al., 2003), 'state and trait motivation' (Dörnyei, 2003) are all terms that appear in the SLA motivation research. Indeed, Jordan (2004) questioned the validity of researching constructs, such as motivation, that he views as deeply subjective in nature and therefore easily interpreted as the researcher sees fit. Although not a particularly detailed definition, Dörnyei (2000) seemed to capture the essence of what has become a highly researched phenomena; "motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it" (p. 520).

2.3.2 Theories of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Macro Theories of Motivation – Integrative and Instrumental motivation

It has been suggested that motivation plays a primary role in L2 learning (Gardner *et al.*, 1997) with numerous research projects looking to examine the relationship between learner motivation and achievement in acquiring a second language (Clement, Gardner & Smith, 1977; Clement & Vallerand, 2003; Dörnyei, 2004; Noels, Pelletier & Engin, 2009; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Research regarding L2 motivation was initiated in the 1970s by Robert Gardner, and other colleagues have, over the years, continued to pursue the topic until present day. Much of their initial research appeared to be influenced by a positivist theoretical approach, grounded in empirical research using scientific procedures. Gardner's background in social psychology is evident as in that his initial theory is characterized by a more 'macro' approach to understanding motivation (Gardner & Lysynchuk, 1990). Situating the learner within a broader social context, Gardner's (1985) socio-educational theory looked to analyze the interplay between the learner and the L2 community to which the learner relates, or wishes to relate. The potential inter-relationships that may exist between the L2 learner and the L2 community they are surrounded by, forms the basis of Gardner's (1985) model. He suggests that it is the learner desire to integrate with an L2 community that is a driving motivation for them to acquire a second language. Gardner (1985) coined the term 'integrative motivation' to describe an L2 learner's desire to identify with an L2 community and it is presupposed by a positive disposition on the part of the learner towards the L2 community. That is to say, the L2 learner is likely to want to interact and perhaps even become a part of the L2 community, with Masgoret and Gardner (2002) proposing that "individuals who want (or are willing) to identify with the other language group will be more motivated to learn the language than individuals who do not" (p. 172). Dörnyei (2003; 2006) went on to suggest that in extreme circumstances, the learner may wish to withdraw

completely from their original community and immerse themselves within their new L2 community. Numerous research projects by Gardner and his associates have found an integrative orientation in L2 learners to be a strongly present variable in determining L2 learner success (Clement *et al*., 1977; Gardner *et al.*, 1997; Gardner *et al*., 2004; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

Another form of motivation, identified by Gardner and Smith (1977), was labelled as 'instrumental motivation' and can be defined as "the desire to learn the language in order to achieve pragmatic goals, such as a good job or social recognition" (p. 124). Acquiring a second language with the intention of profiting from learning, perhaps in terms of career advancement or progression in an academic field, has been shown to facilitate learning and have a motivational effect on L2 learners (Gardner & MacIntyre, 2001). Notwithstanding the fact that integrative and instrumental motivational orientations are certainly different in nature, Clement, Gardner and Smith (1977) highlighted that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive and, therefore, viewing them as orientations working in opposition to each other may present something of a false dichotomy.

The prevalence of one form of motivation over the other within L2 learners has also been a topic of debate, with research results proving inconsistent (Clement *et. al.,* 1977, Dörnyei, 1994; Masgoret & Gardner, 2002). For example, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) found instrumental motives to be positively correlated to motivation in L2 learners. In contrast, Clement *et al.* (1977) found that instrumental motivation was identified as a demotivating variable, and was linked to feelings of alienation and emotional dissatisfaction rather than positive associations. These are just two examples of such studies that reflect the broader trend of inconsistent data correlations in existing research.

Micro Theories of Motivation – Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation, the L2 Motivational Self System and Theorizing Desire

As interest in the field of motivation in SLA began to grow, inconsistent research results and an educational shift to focusing on a more 'micro' analysis of SLA, led to a broadening of theories regarding motivation in L2 learners (Dörnyei, 2003; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). In moving with this shift, rather than disregard the socio-educational model completely, much work has been done to expand the theory over the years (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Gardener *et al.,* 2004; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In the midst of the paradigm shift of the 1990s, Gardner and Tremblay (1994) stated that "the socio-educational model of second language acquisition is not a static formulation. It is continually undergoing change and development, as new relevant information is uncovered" (p. 524).

One such theory that emerged from these shifts is the self-determination theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Noels *et al.,* 2003). The self-determination theory situated motivation within two distinct, but not unrelated, categories. The first, 'intrinsic motivation', could be viewed as an innate motivation to engage in L2 acquisition simply because it is enjoyable and satisfying for the learner (Deci *et al.,* 1991; Noels *et al.,* 2003). The second, 'extrinsic motivation', seems to somewhat echo Gardner and Smith's (1977) definition of 'instrumental motivation', in that L2 learning takes place for an external purpose, such as to earn a reward or avoid punishment (Noels *et al.,* 2003). Noels *et al.* (2003) went on to suggest that these internalized motivations that are self-determined can yield more positive outcomes for SLA, noting that "the more internalized the reason for L2 learning, the more comfortable and persevering the students claimed to be" (p. 53).

More recent studies in the field of SLA motivation evidence another shift in how researchers conceptualize the construct of motivation, as we see theories now beginning to

utilize concepts from the psychological theories of the self (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Magid and Chan (2012) suggested that the use of imagery and self-visualization have long been successfully used in the fields of psychology, sports, music and education, and Dörnyei (2009) draws an interesting comparison between L2 learners and athletes in his attempt to exemplify the power of imagery in goal attainment, likening the "sustained and sometimes tedious process with lots of temporary ups and downs" language learning process, to that of an athlete's training program (p. 25). Drawing on the work of Markus and Nurius (1987) and Higgins (1987) ideas of 'possible selves', Dörnyei (2009) developed the L2 Motivational Self System, which consists of three main components:

(1) The 'Ideal L2 Self', which refers to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e. a representation of personal hopes, aspirations or wishes);

(2) The 'Ought-to L2 Self, which is defined as 'the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes'; (p. 29)

(3) The 'L2 Learning Experience', which takes into account 'situated… motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience' (p. 29).

A basic hypothesis of the L2 Motivational Self System is that L2 students often, consciously or unconsciously, harbour images of themselves in the context of someone they *wish* to become (the ideal self) or seeing themselves as someone they *should* become, perhaps in order to meet outsider expectations. Dörnyei (2009) suggested then that "if proficiency in the target language is part and parcel of one's ideal or ought-to self, this will serve as a powerful motivator to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between our current and possible future selves" (p. 4). Thus, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) argued that using the L2 Motivational Self System, we can formally identify three key motivational factors that can lead to the successful acquisition of an L2: "(a) the learners'

internal desire to become an effective L2 user [ideal self], (b) social pressures coming from the learner's environment to master the L2 [ought to self], and (c) the actual experience of being engaged in the L2 learning process" (p. 439). Dörnyei (2009) added the third component, the L2 learning experience, as a means to acknowledge the impact that the classroom learning situation (including the teacher, course content, bonds with other students etc.) can have on a student's motivation. That is to say, "for some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self- images but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process (e.g. because they discover that they are good at it)" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29).

Research utilizing Dörnyei's (2009) approach is somewhat limited but is continuing to grow. In Dörnyei and Chan (2013) and Magid and Chan's (2012) studies, both found that students with strong visualizations of their ideal selves demonstrated higher levels of motivation and in Dörnyei and Chan's (2013) case, this also corresponded with higher course grades. However, in this study Dörnyei and Chan (2013) also found that visualizations of the students ought to selves had mixed results when correlated with students levels of motivation and course grades. Students certainly demonstrated higher levels of motivation (in the form of self-reporting intended effort) but this did not necessarily carry over into students putting this intended effort into action, thereby failing to increase their course grades.

As part of the shift away from integrative motivation and other macro approaches, another theory that is emerging is the theory of desire and the role that students' conscious or unconscious desires can play in SLA. Motha and Lin (2014) propose that

> at the centre of every English language learning moment lies desire: desire for the language; for the identities represented by particular accents and varieties of English; for capital, power, and images that are associated with English; for what is believed to lie beyond the doors that English unlocks (p. 331).

Motha and Lin (2014) go on to suggest that desire can be conceptualized in two ways, first linking it to what we lack (that is, what we recognize or believe to be missing), and secondly, theorizing it as an energy that we harness to propel ourselves towards what we want most. Therefore, desire can simultaneously be both productive and oppressive, whether by moving towards a condition or state that we desire, or by moving away from one that is undesirable to us. Despite initial likenesses to goal achievement and motivational strategies, Motha and Lin (2014) are quick to highlight the differences between desire and motivation. Within the scope of this theory motivation is best conceptualized as "a reason or incentive and something that causes a person to act, whereas desire has been associated with yearning or longing, something more appropriately perceived as part of an individual's emotional self" (p. 340). Furthermore, it is argued that desire cannot exist in isolation or out of a social context, due to the fact that desires can be constructed and shaped in invisible ways by social relationships, school curriculum, media, state control and language policies, to name but a few (Motha and Lin, 2014). For example, students may express desires of acquiring English as an L2 in order to communicate effectively in English, to assume the identity of a person who speaks English proficiently, or be associated with an English speaking group or culture. However, these desires may have been subconsciously ingrained in students' minds through the state, who may be using media and curriculum control to portray proficiency in English as a means to access wealth and prestige, thereby fulfilling its need to produce an English speaking workforce to facilitate access to global markets (Motha and Lin, 2014).

Despite a lack of research that further examines the concept of desire in SLA, Motha and Lin (2014) do offer some concrete examples of how the concept of desire can be operationalized in the L2 classroom. These examples commonly include the use of reflection activities that look to bring students desires to the surface, and to acknowledge these as

important in setting goals for students' attainment of a L2. The next section will discuss other ways that motivation theories have been applied to L2 teaching practices.

2.3.3 Applying Motivation Theories to Teaching Practices

Research examining the effects of motivational strategies used in the classroom is still very much developing, with only a handful of studies focusing on this important area (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei; 2008). In one of the first studies of its kind, Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) analyzed responses from 200 Hungarian teachers of English about the importance of motivational strategies. From this, they produced a set of guidelines, called the 'ten commandments for motivating language learners', which included strategies such as "create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom; promote learner autonomy; personalize the learning process (and) increase the learners' goal-orientedness" (p. 215). Teachers were also asked to self-report how often they used these strategies in the classroom setting, with mismatches between the teachers' perceived importance of the strategy and how often they used it occurring in several cases (for example, increasing learners goal orientedness) (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998). It should be noted here that self-report questionnaires, while useful, might not paint an accurate picture of what strategies were actually used in class on a regular basis. In a similar study, but in a significantly different cultural context, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) also found a mismatch between teacher beliefs in the importance of motivational strategies and how often they used these strategies in their teaching. However, it must be acknowledged that the motivational strategies employed by a teacher can be constrained by any number of factors, which can often be culturally influenced (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Variables such as class size, pressure to cover curriculum topics and perceived social values (such as promoting student autonomy) can all significantly influence the strategies used by teachers in the L2 classroom.

Another study that examined motivational strategies used by teachers was conducted by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008). In attempting to provide a more comprehensive account of the ways in which teacher motivational strategies can affect student performance, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) ventured away from the previous methodological approach of using only self-report questionnaires for teachers, and instead utilized classroom observations as well as student questionnaires and teacher appraisal forms. The student levels of attention, participation, and volunteering were all monitored, and results of this study indicated that the teachers who translated motivational practices pedagogically in their classroom resulted in significantly higher levels of student motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). As a result, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) went on to call for a raised awareness of the importance of teacher motivational practices and further research into this area. In response to this paper, Ellis (2009) welcomed the study in what is an under-researched area, but questioned the methods of measuring the student levels of motivation, i.e. attention, participation and volunteering, questioning if these necessarily demonstrated motivation? Instead, Ellis (2009) suggested that more clearly defined variables would provide a greater insight into student levels of motivation in the L2 classroom.

In their study of primary and secondary teachers Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2014) found significant differences in motivational variables for these two groups of teachers. Interestingly, primary teachers more commonly reported a love of working with children as a significant contributing factor for them entering the teaching profession, whereas secondary teachers had a stronger correlation with a love of their subject as their main motivator to become and remain a teacher. They also highlighted the important role that intrinsic forms of motivation play for teachers, which is corroborated by Malmberg (2006), who suggested that intrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to stay in the profession and have higher levels of job satisfaction. In addition to this, Malmberg (2006) suggested that

students taught by an intrinsically motivated teacher are more likely to enjoy and be more committed to learning.

2.3.4 Teacher Motivation

Given that the previous study of Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) would seem to indicate that an L2 teacher use of motivational strategies in the classroom can significantly affect student motivation, this brings us to the final topic of this review. Teacher motivation has been an underlying but under-reported variable in the studies related to motivation in the classroom context. Kaur (2015) suggested that "It is human motivation that moves the wheels of civilization… [and] it is the motivation of teachers that moves the wheels in educational institutions. Quality of education essentially depends upon teacher motivation. Motivation is one of the most important themes in the psychology of learning" (p. 1). Hildebrant and Eom (2011) suggest that teachers are in a somewhat unique situation compared to workers in other professions, as the more common incentives for entering the profession (such as salary, power, status, working hours etc) are often not as prevalent in teaching as they would be in other jobs. Given that studies show that a teacher who uses motivational techniques will lead to higher levels of student motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), and higher levels of motivation in students is positively related with higher levels of achievement (Clement, et al., 1977; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Noels et al., 2003; Dörnyei, 2004; Engin, 2009), then it can be reasonably suggested that decreased levels of learner motivation in cases where the teacher is demotivated or neutral (Atkinson, 2000; Alam & Farid, 2011). The implications that teacher motivation has on L2 learner achievement is noted by Sugino (2010) and Sharabyan (2011), but, as is the case with much of the field of more specific areas of L2 motivation, there continues to be dearth of empirical research to support these theories. Sharabyan (2011) suggested a number of factors that heavily influence teacher motivation levels, including institutional support, positive relationships with co-workers and students and maintaining

autonomy to plan lessons and set outcomes for their students. Intrinsic motivational factors (such as self-efficacy or career goals) and extrinsic factors (such as salary or positive teacher evaluations) were also found to be salient motivators in Sugino's (2010) study. In addition to this, Alam and Farid (2011) found significant demotivating factors in their study on teacher motivation, as they cited that only 24% of teachers felt that they had a reasonable salary and that 70% of teachers in their study found that examinations were a constraint on their teaching.

While Dörnyei (2003) acknowledges that this area of L2 motivation could have far reaching consequences for classroom based research studies, Kaur (2015) went one step further and suggested that the implications of a better understanding of teacher motivation can affect every aspect of education, from the most basic interactions between students and teachers, to the implementation of policy and educational reforms.

2.4 Teacher Education in Ireland

The issue of teacher education and professional development has been a prominent topic in policy documents and education literature for many years (Collinson, Kozina, Lin, Ling, Matheson, Newcombe & Zogla, 2009; Lozano, Sung & Padilla, 2002; Molle, 2013). This is due largely in part to the significant and rapid shift in the role that educators have come to play in society, particularly towards the end of the 20th century. This period has seen a re-evaluation of knowledge in society and how people learn, and as a result, teachers' roles became ever more demanding and complex (Collinson *et al.*, 2009). This re-evaluation has also had repercussions regarding the ways in which teachers construct their professional identities, as teaching professionals attempt to negotiate the idealistic image that is created of what teachers should do, how they should act and what their role in society is (Beauchamp &

Thomas, 2009). As the scope of teachers' roles become increasingly varied, Guskey (2000) stated that "High-quality professional development is at the centre of every modern proposal to enhance education. Regardless of how schools are formed or reformed, structured or restructured, the renewal of staff members' professional skills is considered fundamental to improvement" (p. 16). With individuals (teachers, principals, support staff) often being viewed as agents of school improvement (Molle, 2013) schools, boards of education, government departments and related policy makers are now beginning to recognize the importance of implementing changes that encourage teachers to engage in continuous learning to share knowledge, improve their teaching and, by extension, improve learning for their students (Collinson *et al.*, 2009; Molle, 2013).

Teacher education in Ireland has experienced significant development and re-development since the 1980s, and with the collapse of the Irish economy in 2008, funding for education and professional development has become increasingly scarce (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). It is important to understand that, now more than ever before, Irish policy decisions are heavily influenced by both the global and EU context, and this is evident in the language used in the Department for Education and Skills (DES) documents (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). The most recent publication from the Irish Teaching Council (2011) situates teacher learning on a continuum of education that incorporates three aspects; induction, initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD). In order to promote a deeper understanding of Irish language teacher experiences over the course of their careers, this research project will focus particularly on the supports that Irish teachers receive in the form of CPD. This is due to the fact that, unlike initial teacher education and induction, CPD is not restricted to a finite amount of time, but rather will allow a broader perspective of their experiences of professional development supports over a longer period of time. This section will give an overview of the history of CPD in Ireland since the 1990s, as well as

documenting the current state of CPD within the context of Ireland's economic recovery. In addition, this section will also highlight the important place that teacher identity can have in CPD programs, as well as some challenges that Irish language teachers, and secondary education teachers in general, face while working as teachers in Irish society.

2.4.1 The History of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Ireland

Teacher education in Ireland underwent its first major restructuring during the period of 1965-1975, which saw the implementation of a number of significant changes across the education sector (Coolahan, 2007). A strong national economy at the time and an investment into education resources laid the foundation for a number of key reforms that would influence the structure of Irish education today, including the establishment of the B. Ed degree course, investments into colleges of education, increases in student numbers and the establishment of a number of regional teaching centres and academic associations with educational research interests[10] (Coolahan, 2004). This unprecedented period of progress and change continued until approximately 1980, when there then appeared to be a pronounced shift in thinking and priorities within the Department of Education and Skills (Coolihan 2004; 2007). Government publications on educational development during this time paid little to no attention to teacher education and threatened to diminish much of the progress that had been made in the 1960s and 70s. However, the 1990s saw a revival of interest in the education sector and teachers' professional development, as education reaffirmed its status as "a central plank of economic and social development" (Coolihan, 2007, p. 5). In 1991 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its review of the Irish education system, with a particular emphasis on the teaching career. The report placed a strong emphasis on fostering teacher education throughout the career, advocating for schools to adopt a 'Three

[10] These include the establishment of the Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) and the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) in 1976 (Coolahan, 2007).

I's' approach to teacher education, namely; Initial, Induction and In-Service Training (INSET) (Coolihan, 2004; 2007). The report went on to state that "the concept of continuing teacher education is not a new one, but its formulation is still at a rudimentary stage in Ireland as in most other countries" (OECD, 1991, p. 93). However, that is not to say that professional learning was non-existent in education system, but rather as Sugrue (2011) suggested that it was "fragmented, almost entirely voluntary and was facilitated by multiple and often competing providers" (p. 796). Coolihan (2007) noted that there was a widespread acceptance of the 'Three I's' framework, and that a number of major policy papers in the early nineties reiterated the support for this prescribed continuum of teacher education, including the Governments White Paper on Education (1995). The White Paper (1995) recognized the need for implementing what it described as "a comprehensive programme of in-career professional development for teachers, related to the long term development of the teaching profession and the education system generally" (p. 126).

The publication of policies with regards to teacher education in the mid-nineties coincided with a period of huge economic growth and social development in Ireland, marking the beginning of what became widely known as the 'Celtic Tiger'. Ireland, being a member state of the then economically steadfast European Union (EU), was immersed in an era of strong economic ties with the EU and benefitted from funding opportunities made available from Brussels (Sugrue, 2011). With the publication of the OECD (1991) report, £40 million of EU funding was made available to the Department of Education and Skills (DES), which the Government committed to spending on the further development of in-service education from 1994 – 1999 (Coolahan, 2007; Sugrue, 2011). This level of investment in CPD was unprecedented and the Government immediately set up a 'National In-Career Unit', which was tasked with disbursing the substantial funding. However, no centrally co-ordinated strategy was ever put in place, as committee members met infrequently and there appeared to

be little concern for need to create a longer term development plan to build infrastructure and partnerships to support CPD beyond the 1994 - 1999 time period (Sugrue, 2011). Despite experiencing an economic upturn, increased investment and a renewed interest in teacher education, little progress was made and again, support for improving CPD lost momentum and fell from the list of Government priorities (Coolahan, 2004).

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the issue of teacher education resurfaced back onto official agendas, but this period was characterized by a lack of interest and action on the part of the DES (Coolahan, 2007). In 2002 the Advisory Group on Post-Primary Teacher Education compiled and submitted a report to the DES with over 60 separate recommendations regarding the teacher education continuum and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), but this report was never disseminated and no public debates ever took place (Coolahan, 2007). All this is not to say that teacher education remained at a standstill, as Coolahan (2004; 2007) suggested that institutions themselves continued to up-date their programmes as much as possible, but "they lacked the type of resources, official commitment and supports which could achieve more fundamental reforms" (p. 20). A subsection of the DES, the Teacher Education Section (TES) was also created in 2004, which incorporated the work of the now dissolved In-Career Development Unit and manage aspects of initial teacher education, although it would appear that the establishment of this working group had little notable impact on the provision of teacher education.

In the 1990s and early 2000s teacher education had turbulent presence in Government policies, receiving significant supports one year and being largely ignored the next. It was not until the establishment of the Irish Teaching Council in 2005 that teacher education became a stable and prominent focus of reform and responsibility for improving structures formally located within one governing body (Conway, 2013). The Irish Teaching Council functions primarily to promote the teaching profession at both primary and post-primary levels, regulate

teaching standards and promote the professional development of teachers. Teachers pay an initial membership fee of €90 and a yearly membership fee of €65 to maintain their membership status (Irish Teaching Council, 2014). Overlapping with the establishment of the Irish Teaching Council was the publication of a second OECD report, Teachers Matter, in 2005, which listed Ireland among the countries where there is still no minimum professional development requirement for teachers in a school year (Coolahan, 2007). The OECD report was more forceful with its recommendations, stating that

> Teachers are central to schooling. They are even more critical as expectations grow for teaching and learning to become more student-centred and to emphasise active learning. They must be in a vanguard of innovation, including the informed, judicious use of ICT. Teachers must work in collaboration with colleagues and through networks as well as through active links with parents and the community. This calls for demanding concepts of professionalism: the teacher as facilitator, as knowledgeable, expert individual; as networked team participant, oriented to individual needs; engaged both in teaching and in research and development (as cited in Coolahan, 2007, p. 23).

In addition to this, the report called for professional development that is ongoing, includes training, practice and feedback, is conducive to improving classroom methods and provides adequate time and follow up support (Coolihan, 2007). The remit for filling these policy gaps was assigned to the Teaching Council, but Sugrue (2011) suggested that this was done without any substantial commitments to resource provision to allow the Council to fulfil its mandate. Time would work against the Irish Teaching Council before significant gains could be made, as the economic crash of 2008 brought the country to a standstill with regards to policy formation and investment in infrastructure (Conway, 2013). After 2 years of economic struggle Ireland was forced to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB) in December 2010 to the tune of €85 billion in order to keep the country from falling into bankruptcy. As was to be expected in a period of economic retrenchment, there was a parallel policy shift of 'back to basics' and teacher education again

faded into the background somewhat, as the Government scrambled to develop contingency plans for the repayment of the IMF/ECB bailout (Conway, 2013). It was not until the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) report was published at the end of 2010 that education was brought sharply back into focus, as scores for Ireland's 15 year olds in literacy had dropped more than any of the other 65 countries in the study, from 5th in 2000 to 21st in 2009 (Conway, 2013). The following changes took place in quick succession which resulted in the first major overhaul in teacher education in many years; a Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) was established as a functioning support service of the TES and brought together most of the 29 National Support Programs that were being run from local education centres around the country; the Irish Teaching Council published the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education in 2011; and a new reform orientated Minister for Education was elected (Conway, 2013). This resulted in a range of new directives being set in motion, and maths and science were quickly identified as priority areas for the professional development of teachers, which Clarke and Killeavy (2012) suggested was indicative of a Government approach to education that focused on economic development. However, Clarke and Killeavy (2012) also highlighted that a Government report, published as early as 2009, suggested that the Exchequer would not be able to sustain the then levels of expenditure on teacher education and recommended that it should be significantly reduced. So, with so many reactive changes over the previous decade, one may question what the current state of teacher education is in Ireland today, which will be addressed in the next section.

2.4.2 The Current State of CPD in Ireland

As is evident from the above summary of CPD provision in Ireland since the 1990s, teacher education in Ireland has been largely dictated by the ebb and flow of various governing bodies that have experienced periods of both economic prosperity and a

devastating economic downturn. What we are left with is what appears to be a still fragmented and confusing situation as to who is ultimately responsible for providing CPD for teachers in Ireland, with the Teacher Education Section (TES), Irish Teaching Council and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) all claiming responsibility in one form or another. To further confuse matters, we also have additional professional development services that are not affiliated with the PDST that operate as stand-alone agencies, including the Project Maths Development Team, the Special Education Support Service and, of particular importance for this study, an Seirbhís Tacaíochta Dara Leibhéal don Ghaeilge (Second Level Support Service for Irish) (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). Little documentation is available in English about the services provided by an Seirbhís Tacaíochta Dara Leibhéal don Ghaeilge, but online supports offered via their website (http://www.muinteoirgaeilge.ie) appear unused and outdated.

As mentioned earlier, teachers in Ireland do not have a number of prescribed hours or courses of CPD that they must complete per year and schools are still not allocated a specific budget for CPD (Sugrue, 2011). When teachers do attend CPD courses the issue of teacher secondment creates further difficulties. According to Clarke and Killeavy (2012), traditionally teachers absent from school for the purposes of attending approved courses were replaced by substitute teachers. However, the tightening of budgets across the education sector meant that courses were being arranged outside of school hours to a greater extent than ever before. Sugrue (2011) proposed that this issue of time has become a major thorn in the sides of principals and teachers alike, as teachers are not granted release time from teaching but are also not obliged to attend courses outside of their contracted working hours. Sugrue (2011) went on to suggest that all this is culminating in teacher development taking place on 'stolen time' from teachers, with principals appealing to the goodwill of teachers to collaborate and share their knowledge and skills with colleagues on their own time.

It is also important to situate teacher participation in CPD within the current challenges that Irish teachers face in gaining employment in a secure teaching environment. Clarke and Killeavy (2012) referred to Higher Education Authority reports in 2010, which suggested that only 10% of graduates from third level consecutive teaching programmes obtained full-time employment in second level schools in the year following their graduation. Most newly qualified teachers are employed on a contracted hours basis for a number of years, which means that working part-time and changing schools on a regular basis has become commonplace. This is problematic on a number of fronts, but particularly with regards to their CPD, which is likely to be either non-existent or at best fragmented and can have serious negative consequences on their classroom practices (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012). Another serious issue faced by newly qualified teachers was the Government announcement in 2011 of a 14% salary reduction for teachers securing new permanent contracts, meaning that teachers working alongside each other were on significantly different pay scales for the same work. It is fair to say that all of this is likely to foster a more stressful, de-motivating and unstable environment for teachers in Ireland, which is likely to have negative consequences for their classroom performance and the performance of the students in their care.

The economic recession that is still prevalent in Ireland can be seen to have greatly hindered the provision of CPD for teachers. Clarke and Killeavy (2012) predicted that the reduction in the provision of funding for CPD is likely to persist for the foreseeable future and that "teacher education will be viewed in terms of its use in promoting economic objectives with little consideration for educational philosophy, the ways children learn and making schools an enriching place for students and teachers" (p. 134). Little to no attention has been given in academic research to the impact that all of these wider social factors are having on individual teachers and Clarke and Killeavy (2012) call for more research in this area.

2.4.3 Teacher Professional Identity and its Role in CPD

A notable absence in the literature surrounding CPD development and provision in Ireland is the role of teachers' professional identities and the impact that these can have on how teachers view their role as educators. Given its wide reaching impacts on how teachers negotiate their place within the education system, it has been suggested that teacher professional identity stands at the core of the teaching profession and is critical to understanding modern schooling (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Mockler, 2011). Academics have long acknowledged that the term itself is fraught with difficulties to define (Sachs 2001; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) as it encompasses such a broad spectrum of traits that are difficult to measure and are constantly in flux. Sachs (2001) suggested that teacher professional identity is

> a set of attributes that are imposed upon the teaching profession either by outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity itself. It provides a shared set of attributes, values and so on that enable the differentiation of one group from another (p. 153).

While this is a useful definition, it fails to capture the rich, nuanced appreciation of what it is to 'be' a teacher or give much of an insight into the complex figurations that teachers are enmeshed in (Mockler, 2011). Sachs (2005) later went on to dig deeper in attempting to formulate a more rounded definition of what encompasses teacher identity, stating that professional identity

> provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand their place in society'. Importantly, teacher identity is not something fixed, nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (p. 15).

Sachs' (2005) acknowledgement that teacher professional identities are a deeper and more complex phenomenon is echoed by many professionals in the field (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Mochler, 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) and brings us closer to understanding identity's relationships with the self, emotion and the power of reflective stories in shaping how

teachers view themselves as educators (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Therefore, in my view, identity can be viewed as the ways in which teachers negotiate their understanding of their role, both in the classroom, in the school and, of course, in broader society. Our professional identities as teachers are closely linked not only to how we process daily experiences, but also how we learn from our past experiences as both students and student teachers. Teacher professional identity is also greatly influenced by external factors, be they colleagues or parents on a more local scale, or policy recommendations on both the local and global scale that offer recommendations of what the role of the teacher should be. Sachs (2001) also highlighted that teachers can often inhabit multiple professional identities, that can be broken down into being associated with the level of education (primary or secondary), a particular subject, year group and so on. In this way teachers may see themselves as belonging to the overarching category of being a secondary school teacher, but "can also identify closely with their area of specialization and year level" (p. 155).

The literature on teaching and teacher education reveals that much focus has centred around the formulation of identity for pre-service teachers, and that the ways that professional identity is continually re-formed over the course of teachers' careers is much less understood (Mockler, 2011). This is somewhat understandable, given that pre-service teachers are going through a time of immense change in their professional lives, and they are perhaps more susceptible to having their teacher identities influenced by the ethos of the teacher education programs and professional communities that they are a part of. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) found that teachers in induction phases of their education even experienced an identity crisis, as they struggled with entering a new professional culture that can often severely challenge their former beliefs and self-understanding. Mockler (2011) and Kennedy (2014) are both critical of teacher education programs that narrow conceptualizations of teacher training into a prescribed curriculum of 'what works' and which are influenced by the increasingly popular

policy of standardizing teaching, which reduces the role of the teacher to demonstrating particular skills specified in a national standard. Kennedy (2014) is particularly critical of teacher education and CPD programs that induct teachers into the status quo, requiring them to become passive recipients of specific knowledge and skills that are valued by other stakeholders in education. In reviewing the current state of CPD in Ireland, it is clear that education policy is highly influenced by external factors, such as the economic climate and the influence of European and international league tables that rank student, and thereby teacher success rates according to an agreed set of standards. Kennedy (2014) suggested that these moves towards increasing the standardization of teacher education at both the initial and continuing stages is a response to growing concerns about the ability of the nation state to compete in the global economy. Therefore, teacher education that is built around policy models such as these will result in teachers that will be reliant on central direction and may resort to using these nationally or internationally recognized 'standards' as their only means in assessing their capacity to teach (Kennedy, 2014). Dvir and Avissar (2014), Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), Mockler (2011) and Kennedy (2014) all call for teacher education models, for all career stages, to acknowledge the importance of fostering teachers' understanding of their professional identities. Instilling in teachers the importance of taking time to critically and systematically reflect on their practice, and advocating for "teacher learning located within an understanding of who they are and why they do what they do" (Mockler, 2011, p. 526) will result in a generation of teachers that will have a "sophisticated and clearly articulated understanding of their purpose, their identity and the implications of these for their practice, both within and beyond the classroom" (p. 525). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) also suggest that teachers that are in tune with their shifting professional identity can become active agents in their own empowerment, which can have significant effects on their ability to drive change, move ideas forward and challenge the status quo.

This chapter has offered an overview into the existing research in the four core areas that underpin this study; namely the challenges facing heritage and indigenous languages, an insight into the history and current state of the Irish language, theories of motivation in second language education and a background of continuing professional development in Ireland. The next chapter will examine the methodological approach utilized in this study, including the theoretical framework that informs this study, methods of data collection and the participant recruitment process.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This project looks to gain an in-depth understanding of Irish language teachers' experiences based on their current work within the second level education system in the Republic of Ireland. The methodological approach adopted by the researcher forms the crux of any research project, from the theoretical framework used to inform the ontological and epistemological considerations of the study, to the research methods used to generate data. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) suggested that one can facilitate the advancement of knowledge and increase the adequacy of research by conceptualising one's research within a theoretical framework, and this study will be informed by figurational theory, a form of social theory developed by Norbert Elias. In order to offer an explanation of the different methods that will be used to gather data in this study, this chapter will firstly look to give an overview of figurational theory and the ways in which this framework informs this qualitative project. Furthermore, this section will examine and offer justifications for the different research methods that will be used to gather data for this study.

3.1 Theoretical Framework – Figurational Theory

Developed by German sociologist Norbert Elias, figurational theory looks to examine human relationships and the ways in which people in society come to form dynamic 'figurations' with each other (Dunning, 2002). A figurational approach critiques the idea that people can exist in the singular and isolated from society (*homo clauses*), and instead looks to understand people as being interrelated and interdependent with one another (*homines aperti*) (Maguire, 1988). Elias (1978) suggested that viewing agency and structure and the individual and society as separate presented something of a false dichotomy, stating that

> we always feel impelled to make quite senseless conceptual distinctions like the individual and society', which makes it seem that 'the individual' and 'society' were two separate things, like tables and chairs or pots and pans. Yet on another level of

> awareness one may know perfectly well that societies are composed of individuals, and that individuals can only possess specifically human characteristics such as their abilities to speak, think and live, in and through their relationships with other people – 'in society' (1978, p. 113).

In addition to humans being interdependent with each other, another key focus of figurational theory are the balances of power in each figuration that lie at the root of every human interaction. Power balances between individuals and groups of people affect social phenomena at both the micro and macro levels, and it is important to acknowledge the roles that shifting power balances play over time. An example of this is Elias' (1994) concept of 'established-outsider' relations, which offers a framework for analyzing power relations and social dynamics within different groups. Within the 'established-outsider' figuration members of the more established group tend to be the more highly integrated group and in a sense, are "more powerful than the outsider group" (Dunning and Waddington, 2003, p. 353), while taking into account of course, that no group is absolutely powerful or powerless. Members of the established groups also tend to characterise all members of outsider groups in terms of the 'minority of the worst', which may contribute to negative treatment of those people whose behaviour does not follow generally accepted standards. This concept can be applied to examine relations between dominant and subordinate groups to explain a variety of social phenomena and will be revisited later in the study in relation to Irish language teacher figurations.

Human relationships are characterized by the ways in which we are all linked with one another, and figurationalists look to understand social phenomena in the context of the dynamic 'figurations' that people are a part of. Furthermore, Elias (1987) argued that the developmental nature of these figurations is an essential part of explaining the complexity of social interactions and he highlights the need to think processually and avoid what he describes as short-term, today-centred thinking. When viewing human interactions in this manner, it is also important to recognize and acknowledge that these social interactions and

figurations are in a constant state of flux and transformation, continually developing over longer periods of time (Loyal & Quilley, 2004). Hence, in order to generate a deeper and more adequate understanding of Irish language teacher experience and motivation, we cannot view these individuals in isolation or situate their experiences within one static time and place. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that Irish language teachers are enmeshed in multifaceted and interdependent social groups, both at the micro and macro levels, and that the language they teach is steeped in a complex history that has seen its social status transform over a period of over 300 years. Therefore, in this study I will adopt a theoretical approach that is more sociological in nature, and it is expected that this will provide a useful framework for generating a deeper understanding of Irish language teacher experience through situating them within the broader and longer term social processes of which they are part.

3.2 Figurational Approach to Research Methods

A fundamental starting point in any research project is the ontological and epistemological considerations that guide the study. When considering the choice of methods during the research process, it is important to assess the philosophical assumptions that influence this decision, in particular, the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions. Bloyce (2004, p. 144) suggested that the "figurational approach questions many of the conventional, taken for granted assumptions within social research methods". Social ontology and epistemology cannot be separated from the research process, that is to say, the researcher's philosophical position on what is knowledge and how it is generated, guides the process of social research and influences the choice of research strategy and methods (Finch, 2004). Ontology refers to the nature of social entities, that is, the 'nature of reality' and what

exists as opposed to what does not exist[11], while epistemology refers to the methods that lead to knowledge or the 'nature of knowledge'[12] (Bloyce, 2004; Bryman, 2004). Bloyce (2004) went on to suggest that these two philosophical positions are integrally interrelated to the point that one's ontological position governs one's epistemological considerations, and therefore, considering the two positions as separate from each other represents something of a 'false dichotomy'. In other words, "knowledge and reality are not separate entities; they are both part of the same process" (Bloyce, 2004, p.146). Similarly, figurationalists question the adequacy of considering quantitative and qualitative research methods separately. Typically, quantitative research is assumed to be objective in nature with the researcher often being portrayed as being value free and uninvolved with the research subjects. The role of theory in research using quantitative methods is also assumed to follow a *deductive* approach, that is, emphasis is placed on using data to test theories (Bryman, 2004). In direct contrast to this, qualitative research is often depicted as being more subjective, value laden and perhaps even somewhat biased in nature. The qualitative researcher is assumed to become more involved with their subjects in an attempt to gain a 'deeper' understanding of the social world through their eyes (Silverman, 2004; 2005). A qualitative approach is assumed to follow an *inductive* approach, in that it stresses the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge from the data rather than using the data to test theory (Bryman, 2004; Silverman, 2004). Elias (1978) classed the inductive/deductive approaches as presenting a false dichotomy, arguing that "the separation of theory and method proves to be based on a misconception" (p. 58). Rather, the

[11] Bryman (2004, p.16) suggests that a central consideration to one's ontological position is "the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors [also known as objectivism], or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from perceptions and actions of social actors [known as constructionism]". In this light it is evident that the ontological position (that of objectivism or constructionism) that the researcher adopts directly relates to their epistemological position. That is, how knowledge is generated and what is considered as appropriate knowledge.

[12] A central issue to the epistemological position of the researcher is "whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences" (Bryman, 2004, p. 11). 'Positivism' is an epistemological position that refers to the belief that the methods used in the natural sciences can be transferred over to the study of the social sciences. Contrasting this, 'interpretivism' argues that the subject matter of the social sciences is fundamentally different from the natural sciences and hence requires different research procedures.

two approaches are so interrelated that Bloyce (2004) suggested that it is completely inadequate to separate the two. In this way the figurational approach guides researchers to conduct empirical research without dominating it with theory but at the same time develop theoretical insights informed by the data they collect (Maguire, 1988). Figurational researchers would also question the adequacy of separating quantitative and qualitative approaches on the basis that quantitative research can be based on qualitative assumptions, while qualitative research can contain quantitative aspects (Mason, 1996). Furthermore, Maguire (1998) suggests that to limit the research methods on the basis of either a quantitative/qualitative strategy distorts the research from the outset. Rather, "the researcher must use the most appropriate research tool to address their question" (Bloyce, 2004, p. 154). With regards to the relationship that theory has with these quantitative and qualitative strategies, Elias (1978, p.58) concludes that 'the separation of theory and method proved to be based on a misconception'. That is to say, theory and research are encapsulated in a two-way relationship. It is inevitable, if not desirable, therefore, that theory will influence the research process and the choice of methods utilized.

Related to this, a figurational approach would also reject the notion that the researcher can adopt either an 'objective' or 'subjective' approach when attempting to explain the social world.[13] That is to say, rather than understanding values in research in terms of 'objective' or 'subjective' approaches, figurationalists conceptualise the problem in terms of a continuum of degrees of involvement and detachment (Maguire, 1988; Dunning, 2002; Bloyce, 2004). In this light, degrees of involvement and detachment are conceptualised not as polar opposites, but as something of which the researcher must obtain appropriate balance. Elias observed that, in a way, all social research is partial, as researchers themselves are always part of

[13] In adopting an 'objective' view point the researcher is assumed to be neutral, value free and unbiased in carrying out and interpreting his/her research. In contrast to this, a 'subjective' viewpoint is one in which the researcher is openly involved in his/her research to the point that projects that are conducted from an openly subjective point of view may be charged with being biased or value laden.

figurations and social processes: 'More involved forms of thinking, in short, continue to form an integral part of our experience of nature' (Elias, 1987, p. 19). Given that the researcher is inescapably a part of the social relationships they are researching, it is important to recognise that they cannot ever be completely detached from their work, but at the same time, can never be completely involved either. Bloyce (2004) argued, then, that

> the aim for figurational researchers is to recognise their involvement as far as is possible and in doing so strive to distance oneself as far as is possible from one's values. This approach…will facilitate a better, more reality congruent-understanding of the issues related to our area of research. (p. 149)

The issue of involvement and detachment in the research process of this study will be discussed further in relation to interviews in the next section.

Having given an overview of the figurational approach, it is hoped that this will facilitate an understanding of the important role that social theory can play in how the researcher carries out and interprets his/her research (Bryman, 2001; May 2001). Elias (1967) described this as "an uninterrupted two-way traffic between two layers of knowledge" (p.231). These layers consist of general theories or models and research of specific experiences or events, both of which are necessary to develop an adequate understanding of social relationships. It is expected that by informing this study with a perspective grounded in broader and longer term social processes, understanding and interpretation of Irish language teachers experiences in the social world can be further developed by sensitizing the researcher to political, economic, historical and social issues (May, 2001).

3.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to understanding a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers seek to develop

a deeper understanding of the complexity of human actions within specific contexts, while acknowledging that they themselves are inevitably part of the research process (Silverman, 2005). Therefore, the interpretive nature of qualitative research lends itself towards a more inductive approach, in that it stresses the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge from the data rather than using the data to test theory (Bryman, 2004; Silverman, 2005). This notwithstanding, adopting a figurational perspective requires researchers to acknowledge that whether we chose an inductive or deductive approach to research methods, it is important that we chose an approach that best offers a means to address our research questions, regardless of our preference of using data to test a theory or vice versa. It is also important that the qualitative researcher acknowledges from the outset that this data will be generated and interpreted through her own lens, as she allows herself to become more involved with her participants in an attempt to gain a 'deeper' understanding of the phenomenon in question through their eyes (Silverman, 2005). In framing this approach within the figurational approach, a primary concern is the issue of involvement/detachment, as the researcher must acknowledge that her connection with the project lies on a continuum, never wholly reaching a state of absolute involvement with or detachment from her research. In this study I seek to look beyond the census data, government initiated education policies and existing research on the current state of the Irish language, to the very people who are at the core of Irish language revitalization and maintenance efforts. Generating an in-depth understanding of the complexity of these teacher experiences and motivations requires a methodological approach that situates these experiences within the context of the broader and longer term social processes of which they are a part. Only then can we begin to develop our understanding of Irish language teacher experiences and the complexities of the role they play in ensuring the survival of the Irish language. Thus, the overall design of this study will be more qualitative

in nature and will adopt a multiple case study approach to understanding Irish teachers' experiences in contrasting contexts throughout Ireland.

3.4 Pilot Study

A pilot interview for this study was carried out in April 2013 as part of the course requirements for Qualitative Research Methods in Education (EDUB 7840). The pilot study took the form of a semi-structured telephone interview with an Irish language teacher currently teaching in an English speaking region in the North East of Ireland. The interview was approximately sixty minutes in duration, and under the pseudo name 'Liam', the participant gave a rich insight into his experiences of learning Irish throughout his childhood and his progression into teaching Irish as his chosen career path. Liam described how the Irish language in schools was highly associated with learning through forms of repetitive memorization and corporal punishment. This greatly impacted on how he viewed Irish at the time and how he has allowed this experience to shape his teaching methods today, stating

> Irish was very much associated with the strap, so it certainly wasn't the most popular [subject] at that time because it was learning by rote, constantly by rote. And if you missed your grammar you got a slap…I find that because of those experiences I can understand where kids are coming from. So, I don't use that system or anything like it. You have to give a reason for learning. (March, 2013, Interview transcript, p. 2).

The interconnections between language, cultural heritage and identity were also salient themes in the pilot interview, as Liam described how the marginalization of the Irish language has had broader and longer term effects on Irish people's identities. In addition to this, themes of both student and teacher motivation came forth, as Liam described challenging motivational times for everyone in the education sector due to the decline in the Irish

economy. "We're in probably the hardest motivational time I've ever known… Young people in Ireland are very lost" (Interview transcript, p. 7).

Challenges of the pilot interview included conducting the interview over the phone, rather than in person, as miscommunications were more frequent due to the quality of the phone connection. Liam voiced his reluctance to communicate via Skype, given that he was not familiar or comfortable with the technology and preferred to speak over the phone. As a result, it was more difficult to establish a rapport with the participant, as there was no opportunity for either party to react to non-verbal cues or read body language. Another challenge was trying to cover such a broad spectrum of experiences in one 60 minute interview, and it highlighted the importance of conducting multiple interviews, so that the participant would feel more comfortable unfolding his stories and experiences without feeling pressured by time constraints. Creswell (2013) highlighted the importance of conducting a pilot study, as this helps us to refine our research instruments and adapt our research procedures to ensure the data collection is as productive as possible. In response to the challenges that arose during the pilot study, it was decided that interviews must take place face to face with the participants in order to generate truly meaningful data. This meant relocating to Ireland in order to carry out the interviews over a period of four months.

3.5 Research Design

In adopting a multiple case study approach, this project has sought to generate data from four Irish language teachers based in two different contexts in Ireland. Ideally the study would have included two teachers currently teaching in schools in traditionally English speaking regions of Ireland and two teachers currently teaching in schools in traditionally Irish speaking, or Gaeltacht regions. However, delays and other unanticipated barriers

prohibited the recruitment of a second Gaeltacht teacher, meaning that the pool of participants was made up of three teachers from English speaking backgrounds, and one teacher from a Gaeltacht background. Through gaining insight into teacher experiences in these two different teaching contexts, it is hoped that this will present a deeper insight into what challenges, if any, that these teachers face in their experience on a daily basis. However, it should be made clear that given that this study utilizes a case study approach, the goal of this project is not to generalize findings to all Irish language teachers teaching in contexts similar to those outlined above. Rather, the case study approach looks to generate in-depth understandings and offer rich, thick descriptions of these teachers' individual experiences in their specific contexts (Creswell, 2013).

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a valuable form of data collection in qualitative research, as the complex nature of social relations can only be adequately explored by establishing a rapport with the participant and accessing their personal experiences, perspectives and views (Payne & Payne, 2004). This results in a direct verbal interaction that occurs between the researcher and the participant and allows for a greater depth and richness of information to be generated (McMillan, 2012). Given the centrality of the experiences, attitudes and dispositions of people in the qualitative research tradition, it has been suggested that such an objective, cannot be represented through a fixed set of static questions (Payne & Payne, 2004). Semi-structured interviews permit flexibility and allow for the opinions, experiences, ideologies and motivations of people to be expressed in greater depth. This position is supported by Silverman (2004) who claimed that:

> those of us who aim to understand and document others' understandings choose qualitative interviewing because it provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of our research subjects, while granting these points of view the cultural status of reality (p. 127).

Given that in this study I seek to gain an in-depth understanding of Irish language teacher experience and motivation, it was decided not to use a fully structured interview schedule, as I felt that this may make participants feel constrained to only answer set questions, rather than letting stories of their experience emerge throughout the interview process. Instead, a semi-structured face-to-face interview schedule was adopted to allow for the use of more open ended questions that encouraged participants to respond in a way that is meaningful for them. In addition to this, a minimum of two and maximum of three semi-structured interviews was held with each participant, in order to allow the interviewer to establish a strong rapport with the participants to generate rich and meaningful data. Throughout the interview process participants delved deeply into their experiences over the course of their teaching careers, allowing the researcher to hear stories and descriptions that might not have been possible in just one interview. Please see the attached appendices for a sample of questions that were used in the three semi-structured interview sessions. Many of these questions were generated as a result of analysing gaps in existing research on Irish language teacher motivation and experience. In addition, the questions were influenced by the figurational approach to this study, as I sought to probe Irish language teachers' longer term experiences, as well as the power relations that exist within the figurations they are part of. That being said, with a semi-structured interview approach being adopted, it is important to let the interview flow in response to the participant's reactions to questions, and these questions were designed to be used as guiding questions to drive further conversation on a particular topic as needed.

3.5.2 Policy and Document Analysis

In carrying out a research project that seeks to further develop understanding of a complex social phenomenon, it is important to acknowledge that one may not find adequate answers to research questions if a singular approach to generating data is adopted. Ayiro (2012) suggested that often "The complexity of our research problems calls for answers

beyond simple numbers in a quantitative sense or words in a qualitative sense" (p. 501). Ayiro (2012) went on to suggest that adopting a mixed method approach can strengthen our research, providing a means of triangulating data and giving us the opportunity to look at our research problem from different sides, thereby generating a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomena under investigation, a point that is echoed by many in the field of educational and social research (Bryman, 2004; May, 2001; McMillan, 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Payne & Payne, 2004). Goodwin (2006) suggested that policy analysis can be considered as a means of understanding contemporary social systems and cultural practices and opens up avenues for the researcher to decide how they would like to use their findings. That is to say, Goodwin (2006) suggested that, "researchers undertake policy analysis for multiple reasons, including *for* policy, in order to contribute to the making of policy, and *about* policy, in order to contribute to understandings of contemporary social life" (p.167). For this study, the reasons for including policy and document analysis are twofold; firstly, to ensure that we are situating Irish language teachers experiences within the broader and longer term social figurations that they are part of. Irish teachers are teaching a language that has a deeply rooted and turbulent history in Ireland, and over the last number of years the government of Ireland has drafted detailed policies with the aim of bolstering the use and status of the Irish language, both in Ireland and in mainland Europe. One of the main policy focuses for this study will be an analysis of the '20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030' (Government of Ireland, 2010). This policy is the Irish governments most comprehensive and detailed policy document on language revitalization in Ireland since the 1920s, and so will be a key factor in this study.

The second reason for including policy and document analysis in this study is to give a comprehensive overview of Irish language teachers' access to ongoing professional development training. Given that Irish language teachers are at the very core of the country's

language revitalization and maintenance efforts, it is useful to delve deeper into the supports they receive at the various different levels (school, district, government). Hence, this study will analyze the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a) and Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Program Providers (Irish Teaching Council, 2011b). In attempting to dig deeper into teacher experience and motivation, it is hoped that the findings of this study can help to inform professional development policies for Irish teachers, as they may encounter challenges and successes that are inherently unique to those involved in teaching an endangered language. Goodwin (2006) might have associated this with using research findings 'for' policy, in the sense that this study seeks to give voice to Irish teachers and an opportunity for them to share their experiences, in the hope that this can offer some insights that can be used to positively impact professional development policies that are currently in place. Despite the fact that policies are often informed by data that is on a larger scale and more quantitative in nature, Sallee and Flood (2012) argued that qualitative research can hold a valued place in informing practice and policy. Sallee and Flood (2012) went on to suggest that qualitative research has three major strengths that can prove valuable when considering policy development. The first is its ability to allow the researcher to focus on context, to help build a more in-depth and clearer picture than a quantitative study can provide. This can only be achieved by having the researcher more deeply engaged with the participants when they are immersed in the context and this ultimately allows the researcher to develop a more holistic understanding of the setting (Sallee & Flood, 2012). The second strength is the nature of emergent design that is often found in qualitative research projects. This means that qualitative researchers are often more open to modifying their research questions and approach to data collection, which allows them to pursue issues that emerge as relevant once they are in the field (Sallee & Flood, 2012). The final strength is the rich descriptions that are the most anticipated outcome

of qualitative research. While not disregarding the benefits of more macro social data against which to contextualize the findings of in depth interviews, Sallee and Flood (2012) suggest that qualitative studies of this nature can create insights that cannot be represented by numbers on a page, and they suggest that this can often generate more public support for policies.

3.6 Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment proved to be a challenging part of the research process, with a number of unanticipated problems presenting themselves during the data collection process. Participants were initially invited through purposeful sampling, utilizing contacts that I have with teachers based in various schools throughout Ireland. At the outset, my contacts gained consent of potentially interested participants to forward their contact details to me in order to initialize contact with them. I followed up the initial contact with an email offering more information of the nature of the study and what commitment I would require of the participants. At this point, a number of participants who had initially showed interested in taking part in the study withdrew from consideration, as they were unwilling to commit to a series of three interviews. This was a reoccurring issue for many potential participants, and eventually it resulted in me offering to reduce the number of interviews from three to two in order to secure teachers for the study. This was also impacted by the fact that participant recruitment and data collection had to take place within a relatively short period of time (approximately 10 weeks), before I was due to return to Canada. After negotiating the number of interviews required, participants who wished to take part in the study received a second email, containing more detailed information and clarification of the ethical considerations that were in place for the study. A participant consent form was also sent at this stage, which the participant was required to sign and return prior to the commencement of the study.

In order to offer some contrasting case studies, this study initially sought to engage with two teachers currently working in a Gaeltacht area and two teachers currently working in an English speaking area. However, due to some of the constraints mentioned above, it did not prove possible to secure participants from these contexts specifically. While I was able to successfully secure two participants from English speaking areas, the recruitment of teachers from Gaeltacht areas proved more difficult, as my contacts in these areas were significantly more limited. This resulted in just one teacher from a Gaeltacht area taking part in the study, who had also very recently retired from the profession. The last participant was an Irish language teacher who was finishing an eight year period of working with the Department of Education and Skills, having been seconded to deliver CPD to Irish language teachers after teaching for eight years. He was also returning to the classroom to teach Irish the following autumn of 2015. While the participant pool did not fulfil the initial expectations for the study, all participants were in a position to offer valuable insights into their experiences as Irish language teachers and add to the depth of research for this study.

The methodology chapter provided an insight into the theoretical framework that underpins this study, figurational social theory, and the methodological processes that were used to generate data for this study. In addition, the findings of a pilot study conducted prior to carrying out this study were briefly discussed, as well as the methods used to recruit participants for in-depth semi-structured interviews. The next section will begin by giving an overview of each participant, followed by an analysis of findings.

Chapter Four: Results/Discussion

Before discussing the experiences and motivations of the Irish language teachers involved in this study, it is imperative to utilize the figurational approach and seek understand their experiences within broader and longer term frameworks. Insights into each teacher's backgrounds offer a more in-depth understanding of their experiences as both learners and educators of the Irish language, as well as their access to and experiences of CPD throughout their careers. All four of the participants have unique and diverse backgrounds, particularly with regards to their relationship with the language from a young age, as well as the path that their chosen career has led them. Despite all of them holding the common title of 'Irish language teacher', throughout the discussion it will become apparent that their background and experiences of learning Irish as children and teenagers, their geographical location, their attitudes towards the Irish education system and their individual personalities all play a key role in shaping their journeys to becoming the people and educators that they are today.

The four participants, whose names have been changed to protect their anonymity, will be referred to throughout the rest of the study as Darragh, Claire, Meave and Seán. In the interest of offering a succinct analysis of each of the themes, it was not possible to include excerpts from all participants' interviews in discussing every theme. In the discussion I look to provide an overview of participants' personal and professional connections to the Irish language, and where teachers share a similar experience, excerpts from the interview transcripts will be provided where they are most appropriate. In doing so, I aim to provide a detailed but concise analysis of the data, while always striving to offer a balanced account of each of the participants' experiences as much as possible.

4.1 Participant Profiles

This section will give an overview of each participant, including their age, social and educational background, their first encounter with the language, their current teaching status and a brief description of the physical location of their school. A summary table describing the attributes of all four participants can be found at the end of this section.

Participant One: Darragh

Darragh is 30 years old and originally comes from a small village in Northern Ireland, with an approximate population of 150 people. Growing up in Northern Ireland there were no members of Darragh's family or circle of friends who spoke Irish, and Irish was not visible as part of the linguistic landscape, given that the six counties of the North remain a part of the UK and Irish would have been absent from the public eye (sign posts, currency, Government notices etc). Darragh attended local primary and secondary schools under the regulatory body of the CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment), whose curriculum is divided into four key stages (Foundation and Key Stage 1 from ages 4-8, Key Stage 2 from age 8 – 11, Key Stage 3 from age 11 – 14, Key Stage 4 from 14 – 16). Students study towards their state exam, the General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) during the Key Stages, and then move into Sixth Form from ages 16-18 to study for their second state exam, the GCE A-Levels. Given that the curriculum and state exams differ greatly between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, schools in Northern Ireland are not mandated to provide Irish language instruction at the primary or secondary school level. Therefore, Darragh did not have any formal connection or association with the Irish language in the education setting until he attended secondary school in 1999 at the age of 11, as his primary school did not provide Irish as part of the curriculum. In later years, Darragh would go on to study Irish in a Gaeltacht summer program, which required him to go to a small Irish

speaking part of rural Ireland for a three week period and undertake classes, games and activities, all through the medium of Irish. After completing secondary school in 2004 he continued to return to the Gaeltacht as a Ceannaire (leader) to help in the instruction of Irish at the program.

Darragh didn't always want to be a teacher, and after completing his A-Levels in 2004 he went on to study law at the undergraduate level. Having completed his bachelor's degree in law, he was heavily influenced by his time in the Gaeltacht and went on to study a master's degree in Irish. It was during this time that Darragh secured a part-time position working as a Teaching Assistant in a local secondary school, where he assisted A-Level students with their speaking and fluency skills in Irish over a period of 12 months. This was a turning point for Darragh, as he realized that he wanted to teach the Irish language as a career path, resulting in him studying for his Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PCGE) in Irish at a prominent university in Northern Ireland in 2009. He secured his current teaching position at an English speaking school in the north east of Ireland in 2010, and has been teaching there on a full-time contract ever since. Darragh estimated that approximately 90% of his timetable is assigned to teaching Irish, although he does teach some ICT (Information Computer Technology), CSPE (Civic Social and Political Education), SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) classes, as well as providing some resource teaching. The location of Darragh's school is set in a large town, which is located just 10-15 minutes away from the border of Northern and Southern Ireland. Located on the east coast, the town has a long history a market hub and trading point since as far back as the 12th Century and the development of its ports and railway lines meant that the town continued to thrive into the 1800s (Clarke, 1987). Through periods of redevelopment the town has maintained some of its old character, as the town centre and market square are dominated by small individual shop fronts that are typical of Irish towns, often with the family name of the business as the main header. In 1921, after the

partition of Ireland, the town became a border town and after numerous confrontations during Ireland's Civil War (1922 – 1923) and again during the 'Troubles' from the late 60s to the end of the 1990s, it was heavily associated with military activity and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (Clarke, 1987). Driving through the town, on more than one occasion, one was able to view anti-British graffiti on public signposts and walls, perhaps indicating that pro-republican and anti-British sentiments may still be prevalent for some in the area. Today the town is recovering from the economic recession and its prime location between Dublin and Belfast has contributed to it being home to some of the largest technological industry leaders in the world, with Xerox, Pay Pal, Ebay and many other international companies establishing offices in the town, providing employment to thousands of people from all over Ireland.

The school Darragh teaches at is a Catholic school, and has approximately 650 male and female students and a staff of 40 teachers. Students at the school tend to come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and, as with many secondary schools around Ireland, there have been increases in the numbers of international students attending the school in the last number of years.

Participant Two: Claire

Claire is 30 years old and comes from a large town in the north east of the Republic of Ireland, with an approximate population of 38,000 people in the town and surrounding rural villages. The town is an industrial and port town on the east coast and it has a long history of being a trading point on the River Boyne. Arguably, one of the most noteworthy parts of the town's history was being the setting of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, when English King James II was defeated by the Dutch Prince William of Orange. The town continued to develop as a trading port to cities across the west coast of England and today, due to its close

proximity to Dublin, it has become a popular commuters' hub for residents working in Dublin City. The town is quite picturesque, located on the banks of the River Boyne and it still has historical stone buildings located in its urban areas.

There were no members of Claire's immediate or extended family who spoke Irish, although she was exposed to the language from a young age. Claire's first formal exposure to the language was at age four, when she attended her first year of primary school in 1989. In addition, Irish would have been more visible on the linguistic landscape in Claire's physical surroundings, given that her hometown is located in the Republic of Ireland. Despite the fact that Claire's family did not speak any Irish, they were involved in other aspects of Irish culture that directly linked with Claire's transition to becoming an Irish teacher. Her father was actively involved with the local GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) Club, and so Claire became involved in playing Gaelic Football from a young age. It was through her county GAA board that she would eventually apply for and received a scholarship to attend a Gaeltacht summer program in her third year of secondary school in 2000. Claire attended the Gaeltacht in a small rural area of the north west of Ireland each summer for a total of three years, and described this as a turning point in her relationship with the language.

From a young age Claire always had an interest in becoming a teacher and this resulted in her choosing to study Arts in her undergraduate degree, focusing mainly on Irish, English and Geography. Despite the fact that Claire had a passion for Irish, she went on to complete a master's degree in health promotion at a university in the west of Ireland, before eventually making the shift back into education. Claire started in her current school as a substitute teacher in 2007, initially securing a seventeen-hour timetable (just five hours short of a full teaching schedule) in her first year. After teaching in the school for one year, Claire started a part-time Higher Diploma of Education through a well-known university in Dublin. Claire was able to maintain her full existing teaching schedule while simultaneously

completing her higher diploma to secure her teaching qualifications at night, two evenings per week from 2008-2010. She remained teaching Irish and Geography in the same school in the north east of Ireland at the time of this study, with Irish instruction taking 80% of her timetabled hours.

Claire's school is a non-denominational school with an active DEIS (Delivering Equality and Opportunity in Schools) status. The DEIS initiative was implemented as part of the Department of Education and Skills' Action Plan for Social Inclusion in 2005 (DES, 2005), which resulted more funding and support being made available for schools located in areas of economic and social disadvantage. Compared to an average secondary school in Ireland, Claire's school had higher numbers of students transitioning from primary school with low scores in literacy and numeracy, as well as high numbers of international students.

Participant Three: Seán

Seán was 39 years old at the time of the study, and comes from a large town in the north east of The Republic of Ireland, with a population of approximately 37,000 people. Seán grew up in an English speaking part of the country and did not have any members of his immediate family who spoke Irish. That being said, he does remember having a great granduncle who spoke Irish and his family were supporters of the Irish language. Irish was viewed very positively within his home throughout his childhood and although he attended an English speaking primary school from approximately 1980 to 1987, he has vivid memories of engaging with Irish outside of the classroom setting in his later years of primary school. Seán attended an Irish medium local secondary school, where he studied all subjects for his Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate through Irish. In addition, he attended a Gaeltacht summer program from the relatively young age of 12 years old, returning every year until he graduated

from secondary school in 1993. He continued to return to the Gaeltacht as a Ceannaire for an additional eight years, from 1994 – 2002, when he met his spouse and got married that year.

Seán was not always committed to the idea of being a teacher, initially starting an undergraduate degree in International Marketing and Japanese in 1994. After a year he felt that his interests lay elsewhere, and so he switched courses to Celtic Studies, after which he secured a part-time substitute Irish teaching position at a private English speaking school in the north east of Ireland in 1997. This year in the classroom spurred Seán to continue education towards becoming a qualified Irish teacher, and in 1998 he undertook his Higher Diploma in Education in Irish and History at a university in Kildare, on the east coast of Ireland. Seán taught Irish for eight years in two different schools in the north east of the country and in September 2007, he was seconded by the Department of Education and Skills to deliver in-service courses to Irish language teachers.

At the time this research was completed, Seán had been acting as an In-Service Course Facilitator for the DES and he has hosted in-service courses and workshops for numerous schools around the country. The DES generally has protocol that restricts teachers from being seconded for periods of more than five years, as according to Seán, teachers who are out of the classroom for longer periods are felt to be somewhat 'out of touch' with the classroom practices. Seán's contract was continually extended for an additional three years, giving him eight years of experience as a CPD facilitator in the Irish education system. Seán returned to the classroom as a full-time Irish teacher in September 2015, where he taught in a vocational post-primary school, as part of the county Education Training Board. Vocational schools (formally known as VEC or Vocational Education Committee schools) are typically non-denominational schools that offer instruction catered to preparing students for the workplace by equipping them with the appropriate necessary vocational skills.

Participant Four: Meave

Meave is 60 years old and was born and raised in a well-known Gaeltacht region on the west coast of Ireland. The location of her small community is extremely idyllic in nature, set on the west coast of Ireland, where a rugged landscape meets the Atlantic Ocean. Driving into her residence required navigation through a series of small laneways, each flanked by rolling green hills and hand constructed stone-walls that are commonplace in this part of the country and date back to pre-famine times. Meave's cottage is nestled amongst a cluster of other small houses, which belong to her family members. Entering the Gaeltacht area there is a visible shift across the linguistic landscape of the country, as all public signage and road markings cease to be bilingual, with information being provided in Irish only.

Maeve comes from six generations of Irish speakers having lived and worked on the same land where she currently resides. English was not a part of Meave's childhood and although she started learning English as part of the primary school curriculum of the time, she has no memory of learning the language and English was not spoken either in her home or in her community. Meave's grandparents were monolingual Irish speakers, and while English was prevalent in urbanized areas during the 1960s, she indicated that her village and surrounding community remained largely untouched by the English language until the 1970s, when a societal and cultural shift began to take place in Ireland. She did not have fond memories of attending school, either as a child or an adolescent, and she did not always harbour aspirations to be a teacher. As she continued through her education she was influenced by a nun who was teaching at her secondary school to become a primary school teacher. However, at the time Meave was too young to enter the Mercy Order training college, and so she changed paths and undertook a diploma in Galway, focusing initially on philosophy, and later Irish and geography for her degree subjects. Initially she took a job as an editor of Irish textbooks in Dublin, which she worked at in conjunction with completing

her degree. Upon qualifying Meave secured a job in a new community school in the north of Dublin in approximately 1982, and she remained there for a period of 24 years, as both an Irish and Geography teacher. Her teaching career spans a total period of 32 years and is peppered with other related ventures, getting involved with groups such as Comhar na Múinteoirí and Baird na Gaeilge, where she was an advocate of the communicative approach to learning and teaching. In conjunction with other vested colleagues, they developed a proposed curriculum for the Irish language based on the communicative approach and she was instrumental in influencing the Department of Education to overhaul the then curriculum to include aspects of this approach. Meave would go on to facilitate professional development workshops around the country on the communicative approach as part of the Department of Education and Skills in-service training program. In the later part of her career, she returned to the Gaeltacht to teach Irish and Geography in her local community school in 2006, where she remained for eight years until she retired in 2014.

Table 1.1 - Overview of Participants

	Darragh	**Claire**	**Seán**	**Meave**
Age	30	30	39	60
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female
First language	English	English	English	Irish
Subjects taught	Mainly Irish Some CSPE, SPHE, IT and Resource teaching	Mainly Irish and some Geography	Mainly Irish and some History	Mainly Irish and some Geography
Characteristics of current (or most recent) school	Public Catholic Co-ed English speaking	Public DEIS Non-denominational Co-ed English speaking	Public Vocational Non-denominational Co-ed English speaking	Public Catholic Co-ed Irish speaking
Educational background	Bachelors degree in Law, Masters degree in Irish, Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Irish)	Bachelors degree in Arts, Higher diploma in Education (Geography & Irish)	Bachelors degree in Celtic Studies, Higher diploma in Education (History & Irish)	Bachelors degree in Irish & Geography, Higher diploma in Education (Geography & Irish)
Years of teaching experience	6	9 (Including 2 years while she was completing her Higher Diploma in Education)	8	32
Other related experience	Experience as Ceannaire in Gaeltacht summer programs	Experience facilitating Ciorcal Comhras (Irish conversation groups) in her local community	Experience as Ceannaire in Gaeltacht summer programs, 8 years experience as a Department of Education CPD Facilitator for the Irish language	Experience as Irish textbook editor, member of organizations such as Comhar na Múinteoirí and Baird na Gaeilge, Department of Education course facilitator for the communicative curriculum approach

Data was collected from the participants in the form of two or three in-depth interviews, in which participants explored key themes, such as their relationship with the Irish language from childhood to present day, their journey into becoming Irish language educators, the successes and challenges they face on a daily basis and their experiences of CPD. As is evident from the participant profiles in the previous section, no two participants experienced the same journey into becoming an Irish teacher and each of their journeys are unique to them.

Through applying a figurational theoretical approach to this study, it is extremely important not to narrow our interpretation of our participants' experiences to what is happening solely in the here and now. Rather, a fundamental component of this study is to look at the longer term experiences of our participants, and analyze the ways in which their past interactions with the language have been shaped by the broader social figurations they are enmeshed in. The figurational approach will therefore be used to contextualize Irish teacher experiences within the broader structural changes that have taken place in Irish society and examine how these changes can be seen to influence teacher experiences both within and beyond the classroom. In addition the dynamics of their figurations and the power balances at play between different individuals and groups of people will also be analyzed, as Irish teachers can not be viewed as existing in isolation.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's relationship with the language, each part of the interview process required a period of self-reflection from each of the participants, revisiting their own learning experiences with the language as both learners and educators. By following an imagined timeline from their first conscious exposure to the language, to their decision to become Irish language teachers and to successes and challenges experienced in their careers thus far, the interview transcripts built a detailed and comprehensive narrative of each participant's journey. This allowed me to chronologically

track their experiences of and relationship with the language from a young age and analyze these experiences in the framework of figurational theory. Being a theory that is rooted in exploring sociological development, it was imperative to track participant's past experiences in this way and let themes emerge that were not contained within only a certain time period or context of the participant's lives. Despite the participants having an array of different backgrounds and experiences, a number of key themes became apparent throughout the data analysis. In the following section I will discuss the key themes that emerged from the data analysis and each theme will follow a chronological order, beginning with the participants' past experiences of learning Irish. Other themes will then follow, including the participants views on the influence of Gaeltacht summer programs, their teaching experiences, including teacher training and daily successes and challenges, their experiences of CPD and issues of language maintenance and revitalization.

4.2 Past Experiences of Learning Irish

This section will give a detailed insight into each participant's experiences of learning Irish from a young age, beginning with their exposure to the language in primary school and later giving accounts of their experiences of learning Irish through Gealtacht immersion summer programs. The influence of past teachers will also be explored in this section before moving to discuss each participant's teaching experiences.

4.2.1 Irish in Primary School

It was suggested in chapter two that Irish language revitalization and maintenance efforts since the 1920s were centred largely around the school system, in the hopes that the language would spread from the schoolyard into the homes of the average Irish family living in English speaking parts of the country (Hughes, 2001; McDermott, 2011). While this strategy was useful at building the status of the language at an institutional level, the

curriculum, even until very recently, appears to have placed an overemphasis on reading and writing in comparison to the key skills of speaking and listening. This is supported by Claire and Seán's memories of their first exposure to the language, as they weren't able to recall hearing it or seeing it for the first time outside the education system, locating their first memories of the language within their childhood experiences of primary school. Claire shared positive memories from her early years of primary school, recalling some Irish textbooks and stories she would have read in class as a child. Claire's primary school, similar to other primary schools in the Republic of Ireland, was split into two distinct sections; from junior infants to second class (ages four – eight) took place in one school, and from third class to sixth class (ages nine – twelve) Claire was required to move to a different school. While Claire does have some fond memories of Irish from her earlier years of primary school between approximately 1990 and 1997, she recalled a distinct shift where she felt the language became just another subject.

> I think I have good memories from the younger side of it, but then third to sixth class, I've no real recollection of having a love or hatred for it. It was kind of 'OK, now it's Irish time' and you did it for 30 or 40 minutes and then you moved on to your maths. It was the normal things, we did our reading, our writing and learned our spellings…but there was nothing in primary school that sparked a real love for it (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Seán recounted similar memories of learning Irish in primary school in the 1980s, revisiting his learning experiences with a more analytical lens, given his experience as both a teacher and CPD facilitator.

> We did a bit of a workbook, we read some texts, we copied down words, we looked at pictures. Even to the point that in 6th class we were given texts from our Irish books to translate into English. I realise now, looking back, that it was just a discipline mechanism that that primary teacher was using. We weren't really getting anything out of it. And certainly no speaking (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

The issue of Irish language instruction in primary schools and the important influence that this can play in the development of a child's relationship with the language was revisited on many

occasions by all participants. Three out of four participants saw this as one of the major obstacles they face as secondary teachers of Irish, as they increasingly observe primary school students transitioning to 1st year of secondary school either without the basic language competencies they should have after seven or more years of instruction, or students come with negative feelings towards the language as a result of poor instruction in their early years. This issue will be explored more fully in a later section, but it is worthy to note here Claire and Seán's less than enthusiastic feelings towards the instruction they received in primary school.

Meave's experiences of learning Irish differ greatly, given that she was raised in a Gaeltacht area and so Irish was her mother tongue. In contrast to the other participants' experiences, when Meave was young, the English language was neither visible nor spoken in her community. She recounted her memories of her family and community, and the fact that English speakers from outside her community were perceived to hold a higher status of importance.

> When we went to school all the children would have been Irish speaking, and our parents, and a lot of our grandparents would have been monolingual. You didn't hear English in our community. You went to Galway to hear English and maybe the nurse or the odd person [spoke it], but you didn't meet them. But you knew that everybody else spoke English that was important. You knew that if an inspector came looking at the cows or something like that, that they would be English speaking (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015).

Meave went so far as to say that when she was a child in the 1970s, Irish was a sign of "thickness" (an Irish slang term for referring to someone who is not intelligent) and that well respected older members of her community would often resort to speaking bad English, rather than perfect Irish, when in the presence of someone 'important' who they felt held a higher social position than them. The stigma of Irish speakers being cast as 'thick' or unintelligent dates back hundreds of years to the plantations of Ireland by the British Empire in the 1600s, as English speakers took control of political, economic, and industrial resources, particularly in existing urbanized areas (Carnie, 1995). This enormous upheaval in Irish culture and

customs resulted in the establishment of a class stratification, in which Irish speakers became more commonly found in rural areas and were viewed as peasants (Carnie, 1995). Notwithstanding this, Meave felt that the beginnings of a cultural shift are in motion, as she has observed the status of the Irish language improving amongst young adults to the point where a person is regarded as more highly educated if they are fluent in Irish.

> It's not like now where there are trendies in Galway speaking Irish. In those days to be trendy you spoke English. So there was this message; you speak Irish, so therefore you are thick. That was definitely there. It's the opposite now. People speak Irish now because they are well-educated and trendy (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015).

Meave's experiences of primary school are significantly different to those of the other participants, which is largely due to the fact that Meave studied in the 1960s, when the ethos of education was significantly different than it is today. She harboured very negative feelings towards her time in primary school, due much in part to the prevalence of corporal punishment within the school system at the time. Meave recalled that, "It was a different world in the 1960s. I hated primary school and I found it really boring. It was a torture chamber if you were weak. You either knew [the information], or you didn't. And if you didn't know it, you were beaten for not knowing" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). Experiencing regular corporal punishment went on to directly influence Meave's decision to become a teacher, as she explained, "I wanted to be a teacher so that I wouldn't beat the children. It was totally negative. I wanted to be a teacher because I didn't want to be like the teachers I knew" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). It is worth noting here, that Meave's motivations for wanting to become a teacher make her unique in the pool of participants. Rather than wanting to emulate a past teacher with whom she had positive experiences, Meave was instead motivated by the negative experiences she had in primary school, as she wanted to approach teaching in completely different way than her past teachers did. It is the first glimpse into Meave's underlying intentions to challenge the status quo of the education system at the time, as she fundamentally disagreed with the use of corporal punishment in the

classroom. In unpacking the rest of Meave's experiences throughout the data analysis, it is important to recognize Meave's early predisposition to questioning the system of Irish language teaching and, whether consciously or unconsciously, Meave was positioning her thinking to become an agent of change, even from a young age.

In addition to corporal punishment, another related issue was the lack of support for students who struggled academically in the school system. Meave recounted that these students were simply moved to the back of the class and given the answer book while the teacher taught the rest of the class. "If you had difficulty you were usually put at the bottom of the class...or else you were beaten. And you were more or less encouraged to stay at home when the inspector came. I remember that and I remember at the time thinking it was awful" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). Through listening to Meave recount her experiences of primary school, it is evident that the balance of power and authority held by teaching professionals have shifted dramatically since she was a primary student. There was no parental involvement in the school and if she highlighted the fact that she had been beaten by a teacher, she was simply encouraged to "hide so that she doesn't notice you and keep your head down" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). In her opinion "the whole system supported bullying" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015) in the sense that teachers were not answerable to parents or even school principals and she reported experiencing a dramatic shift in the balance of power between teachers and other vested parties throughout her career.

> It was very different, but no different than my parents' [experiences of education]. And that's the crucial thing here. In the 70s the world changed more than it did for 100 years before. My grandmother lived with us and her school experience was so like ours, even though she went to school in the 19th century. I don't even bother telling young people what it was like, because it's changed so much. Then we wonder why language change happened as well. Everything changed, but it's only the language that worries us. But the world changed and our world changed here (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015).

Meave's suggestion that the shift in the education system went hand in hand with other societal and cultural shifts during the 1970s is echoed by Coolahan's (2007) research, which indicated that Ireland's education sector saw significant restructuring in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s.

While Claire and Seán had no memories of engaging with the Irish language outside of their primary education, Meave has many memories of her relationship with the language outside of school. She shared memories of reading books aloud in her home, which was a very common activity given that her grandmother had poor eyesight and could not read as a result. She recalled not having a television and that the radio broadcasts at the time were very limited in terms of what was available through the medium of Irish, so reading aloud was a common pastime. Darragh also recalls engaging with Irish before attending secondary school, as he attended a two-week Irish language summer program in his local area when he was approximately 11 years of age. This summer program required Darragh to attend Irish classes in the morning, along with playing games and activities through Irish in the afternoon. This type of program is very reminiscent of the Gaeltacht summer programs, with the exception of Darragh being able to return home at the end of each day. Gaeltacht summer programs are an immersion learning experience for young people and are hosted by various Irish colleges throughout the Gaeltacht regions of Ireland, usually over a three week period. Programs are built on the foundation of providing an immersion experience for students, as they take classes, play sports and games, take part in dances and Ceile's (a traditional Irish music and dancing event), all through the medium of Irish. The important role that these programs play in the development of the language and Irish culture cannot be understated, as three out of four participants referred to them extensively throughout their interview process as a catalyst for Irish students developing an affinity for the language and further developing their communicative skills.

4.2.2 The Influence of the Gaeltacht

All of participants in this study from English speaking backgrounds attended a Gaeltacht summer program (commonly referred to simply as 'the Gaeltacht') at some point in their adolescence, and the influence these experiences have had on them as Irish speakers and educators is noteworthy. For all three participants their entire demeanour changed when they spoke about their time in the Gaeltacht; they became more animated, nostalgic and their recollections of memories and events during this period became more vibrant. For Claire, her experience at the Gaeltacht came as a result of her involvement with her Gaelic Football club, as she received a scholarship to attend a Gaeltacht program in a small Gaeltacht area on the North West coast of Ireland. Claire described this experience as a turning point in her relationship with the language, as she saw the language being spoken naturally for the first time. In trying to compare the experiences of learning Irish in the Gaeltacht and learning Irish in the classroom, she recalled,

> I was seeing the language being spoken and I was seeing teachers there who had a love for the language. I was seeing people carrying out their whole lives speaking the language. It was a completely different environment to the school environment, where it was just a case of being told to learn this and learn that (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Darragh also expressed similar feelings about his experiences in the Gaeltacht, which was also located in the north west of Ireland:.

> It can be very powerful, even when you go into a shop and you see staff talking to each other in Irish. Or you go into a pub and people are speaking Irish. Sometimes when people aren't surrounded by it, they don't realise that it is a living language. That it is communicated every day, and there's a richness and a way of communicating there. It's different there (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015).

When describing the Gaeltacht, participants used words like "magic" (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015) and described their time there as similar to that of "Tír na nÓg" (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th 2015) or 'Land of Youth', which references a popular tale in Irish mythology and folklore about a supernatural world of eternal youth, beauty and happiness.

This feeling of otherworldliness may have been intensified by the fact that there were strong geographical and physical differences between the participants' hometowns and the naturally beautiful and idyllic surroundings of the rural villages of Gaeltacht areas. This was a particularly poignant subject for Claire, as she stated that, "there was something really special about the place in terms of the language and the environment. The Gaeltacht areas are just so beautiful and so peaceful" (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

All three participants spoke of a shift in their personal characters and identities as Irish speakers as a direct result of their time in the Gaeltacht, describing it as a key part of growing up. It appears that they felt free to practice the language without fear of stigma or without judgement of their language abilities, as Seán recalled

> When you were in the Gaeltacht using Gaeilge you were nearly a different person. It's a different atmosphere and once you pass through the mountains you become a different person. A more liberated personality and character. I think the language probably does that. You got to speak it and you got recognised as someone who was willing to speak it. So that was a huge tipping point for me (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th 2015).

Claire also spoke at length on this subject, as she stated that

> There was no one there trying to make you feel uncomfortable about speaking the language, or about how little or how much you had. They were trying to encourage you and get the most out of you. That was probably the real change for me, because everyone was there together in the same boat and everyone was learning together (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) suggested that students who wish to identify with an L2 community demonstrate a form of integrative motivation, which can become a key driving force behind their motivation to acquire a second language. This appears to be particularly true for Seán, as he spoke numerous times about wanting to be a 'good Gaeilgeoir' (Irish language speaker) so that he could competently use the language and communicate with other Gaeilgeoirí. Given that Irish was not spoken in his local area, one may assume that the Gaeilgeoirí he refers to are the L1 communities in the Gealtacht regions where he studied as a youth and went on to teach in as an adult.

The English-speaking participants were steadfast in their belief that Gaeltacht summer programs play a vital role in fostering the development of the Irish language for young people in Ireland. Darragh was a particularly strong advocate of his students attending a Gaeltacht program, as he suggested that

> I think that as a teacher now, I can see the difference between students that go to the Gaeltacht and those that don't. Because when they come back, you can see their interest, their passion and they've seen that it is a living language. They can see the richness of the language and that is the big difference. Because when students go to the Gaeltacht, they see it spoken naturally, every day. They see the area where it comes from, and the culture, and that's what I think is something that really brings students on. I would say that the Gaeltacht is a major factor in getting people interested in the language. You do find those that grasp the language the most, those that are most passionate about it and those that do the best in the exams, generally are the ones that would go to the Gaeltacht in the summer. There's a very, very strong link, particularly with those that go on to do Irish at third level and use the language after school (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015).

Both Claire and Seán also expressed similar opinions regarding the important role the Gaeltacht summer experience plays in connecting students with the language to the point that they may be more likely to use it outside of the classroom setting. In analysing these comments, it would appear that even with the significant overhauls that have taken place in the Irish education system since the 1970s, the design of the Irish curriculum does not lend itself to facilitating the development of student proficiency in the language. This was noted as a significant challenge for all participants, and it is a point that will be revisited later in this discussion.

4.2.3 Influence of a Past Teacher

A commonly recurring theme across all participants was the influence of a particular Irish teacher that they encountered in their years as a secondary student. Participants spoke fondly of previous teachers who they described as "knowledgeable, enthusiastic and passionate" (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015) and "focused, directed and motivated" (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015). These teachers played important roles in many facets of

the participants' relationship with the language, including encouraging them to attend Gaeltacht summer programs and placing more of an emphasis on speaking the language in the classroom, meaning that students could have a forum to practice the language they were developing in the Gaeltacht. Claire described how her Irish teacher challenged her to push her Irish language abilities through activities not associated with the Irish curriculum, including initiating debates that required students to watch the news through Irish and using Irish language TV programs as a tool in her classes. "She was just a good teacher. You always felt she was interested and it wasn't just a paycheck. You know you can have those teachers where it's 9am - 3:45pm, but she was interested in us, she loved Irish and she did as much as she could for us" (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015). Darragh and Seán shared a similar experience of having the same teacher for a long period of their time (three years for Seán and six years for Darragh) in secondary school, with both teachers having a great passion for the language and putting a strong emphasis on spoken Irish in the classroom. Darragh and Seán shared insights into their teacher's ethos, stating that, "You could see he was passionate about it and he was able to pass that passion on to the students" (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015), while Seán's teacher was described as

> a hard task master who was the master of his craft. He scaffolded our language development and was always stretching you. It wasn't just a case of 'that'll get you through the exam and that'll do'. He was always showing you the next level and pushing you to get there (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

This could perhaps be viewed as anecdotal evidence of what Dörnyei (2003), Sugino (2010) and Sharabyan's (2011) research suggests, that teacher motivation is an important variable in determining success in the Irish language classroom. In three of four participant cases it was a teacher who was motivated and passionate about Irish who influenced their decisions to build a positive relationship with the language and engage with it outside of the classroom. Sharabyan (2011) suggested that teacher motivation is a complex subject and can be influenced by a number of factors, including extrinsic factors such as institutional support and

salary and intrinsic factors such as relationships with colleagues and seeing students attain goals and learning outcomes. Given that this study has found four positive links between having a motivated teacher who fostered their student language abilities and positive attitudes towards the language, and students choosing to undertake teaching Irish as a career, it would seem extremely important to recognize teacher motivation as an important factor in Irish language revitalization and maintenance planning.

4.2 Teaching Experience

4.2.1 Initial Teacher Training

The initial steps a secondary teacher takes to enter into the profession involve completing a post-graduate certification in their specialized subject area and registering with the Irish Teaching Council upon graduation. The Post Graduate Diploma in Education or Professional Diploma in Education (previously known as the Higher Diploma in Education or HDip) is typically a one-year full-time program offered at numerous third level institutions across Ireland. The UK equivalent is known as the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The program may also be taken in the form of a two-year part-time course, where students may continue teaching on a full-time schedule while they complete their post graduate teaching certification. Training typically consists of a balance of teaching practice and university-based courses of lectures, tutorials and seminars, with specialist subject pedagogy modules also forming part of the program. Upon completion, teachers are recognized as a NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher), meaning that they must complete an additional full year of teaching and pass additional assessments in order to be recognized as a fully qualified teacher. It should be noted at this point that while this is the current practice in teacher education today, all participants in this study completed their teaching certifications at different institutions and in different decades, so it is likely that they had diverse experiences of teacher

training. Darragh and Claire both completed their teacher education courses at similar times, with Darragh completing his PGCE in Northern Ireland in 2009, while Claire completed her Higher Diploma in Education in Dublin from 2008 – 2010. There is a ten year gap to when Seán undertook his Higher Diploma in Education in Kildare in 1998, and while Meave did not give specific dates of when she completed her teacher training, we can estimate that it was in the early 1980s. That being said, a common theme emerged of teachers completing their training and still not feeling adequately prepared to enter the classroom and teach effectively. Seán, who completed his higher diploma in education in 1998, recalled that he felt unprepared entering his teaching placements and that the majority of his teaching methods were developed through trial and error in the classroom. Seán's experience of teacher training was also somewhat unique, as it was somewhat interrupted by the fact that his placement school was also in desperate need of staff, and so they offered to have him teach on other days outside of his assigned placement hours instead of attending his lectures.

> I had experience of going into school on a Monday morning for teaching practice and the Principal would say 'Please, please don't go to college this week. We'll pay you'. So I wasn't going to lectures, but I was doing full weeks teaching, and full weeks teaching of Irish, as well as my four periods a week of history. And that's where I was able to try and fail, try and fail, fail and fail and try again. And I kept working on it with a very critical audience. So you learned quickly. So that was the best place to learn. The methodology tutor in the university, there was just nothing there for me (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Seán's teacher training program included a weekly methodology lecture, which should have focused on the methodologies of teaching Irish. However, in what appears to be a common theme for other participants, Seán noted that he never received any instruction of how to teach the Irish language specifically, as differentiated from any other subject.

> We didn't do even one teaching strategy with [the course instructor]. He didn't even do an exemplar. We never saw one exemplar lesson. So in our own teaching practice we were just making it up. So when I finished with the HDip and went to school, I had no experience of teaching a class of students that would scaffold them and bring them along on a three year journey towards attainment. So, no. We didn't receive any

> instruction of how to teach languages specifically. And it was one of the better renowned HDip courses [at the time] (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Claire voiced similar concerns about her teacher training, stating that "I think I learned more from being in the classroom myself and working with my colleagues than I did from the actual Dip" (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015). Claire's experience of teacher training is markedly different from all other participants, as she undertook her higher diploma in 2008 on a part-time basis while maintaining a full teaching timetable at her current school. This allowed her to build a rapport and a level of mutual trust and respect with her students, which she claimed is difficult for trainee teachers to establish when they are in the classroom just a small number of times per week.

> Mine was a part-time two-year course, which I would think is the better way of doing it. Some of the courses are set up where you are in the school for a morning a week or for two hours a week. I don't think that's ideal, because the kids see you as a substitute teacher. Whereas I was the teacher and they didn't know I was doing my Dip, they were none the wiser. For the full-time Dips, you're trying to cram everything into a six-week block or a two week block here and there, and you're trying to get to know the kids as well. So there are challenges there (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Similar to Seán, Claire voiced concern about never having received language specific training as part of her graduate diploma. Claire shared that she struggles greatly with her confidence in teaching the technical aspects of the Irish language, as she has never received instruction on how to teach Irish grammar.

> In the graduate diploma that I did it would have been nearly assumed that you know the syllabus, which not everyone did, and you would have focused on methodologies. Not how to actually teach the technicalities of the language. And that's something that's missing. That's a part that I hate. I hate grammar, because I'm not 100% comfortable with myself. So there does need to be something like that included, whether it's teaching grammar or how to actually just teach a language. Whereas, if you're studying ESL, you're taught how to teach grammar. It's a huge part of it. It needs to be brought in. Just because you've done a degree in Irish, doesn't mean you know how to teach grammar (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Meave shared similar concerns with regards to her experience of teacher training in the 1970s and felt that this continues to be a major contributing factor to the decline in the standard of the language over time.

> What I remember about my Dip was they didn't differentiate between teaching languages and teaching anything else. You were doing methodology but there was no expertise offered or any sharing of ideas about teaching languages specifically. We were learning teaching techniques, but there no difference between the approaches of teaching history or geography or Irish. So I never got anything on language teaching [specifically], or geography teaching [specifically], or anything else, because they didn't differentiate. So I actually got no training on language teaching at all (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015).

Meave later shared that the most significant contributor to her skills as a teacher come from her own experiences of learning French as a second language. She felt that this was where she truly learned the breakdown and mechanics of how languages are acquired, and feels that this influenced her approach to teaching in a far more meaningful way than any of the approaches she studied during her teacher training. She suggested that "I often felt that all language teachers, no matter what the language is, should do a full year at least of studying language. And one aspect of that should be to learn another language, so that you know the mechanics and how it works" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). In addition to this, three out of four participants voiced the opinion that a teaching module similar to the TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course or other ESL qualifications is sorely needed in Irish language teacher training today. Meave went on to say that

> there should be a proper system. But the training is totally inadequate. There needs to be a language teaching course, be it TEFL or whatever is needed. People get uptight and they say that [Irish] is not a foreign language, but it is for most people who are not from the Gaeltacht…so I think that would be more successful than anything else (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015)..

It was noted in the Irish Governments 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (Government of Ireland, 2010) that there has been a marked decline in Irish teacher confidence, with 25% of Irish teachers rating their own ability in spoken Irish as weak. In revisiting participants'

experiences of learning Irish and their noted lack of emphasis on learning to speak Irish, it is perhaps indicative of a wider problem amongst the Irish teaching community. For the three English speaking participants it appears that the postsecondary and postgraduate education systems as they currently exist, neither prepared them to be fluent Irish speakers as youths, nor prepared them to teach the language effectively as teachers. I suggest that this could be strongly correlated as the reasons why 25% of Irish teachers, like Claire, feel a severe lack of confidence in their Irish language abilities. Seán summarized his feelings on the issue eloquently, stating that

> We have to intervene because we know that they're not doing it the right way and we know that they don't have anywhere to go to see the right way. We're writing loads of books about it, we're writing loads of reports about the teaching of Gaeilge and we're writing loads of instructions about how it should be taught, but that's all music. I mean if you want me to dance the tango, you don't just play tango music at me or send me a music sheet of what tango music is. You're going to have to show me it and you're going to have to be my partner and stand and dance it through with me. And that's the only way. It's a huge intervention (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Seán also felt that the lack of formal language instruction is indicative of a wider ethos shift in higher education, which he feels has moved away from direct instruction methods. Seán felt that in the same that we are teaching children using methodologies such as guided discovery and learning through play, the shift has also become apparent in how teachers are being trained using reflective practice.

> What's wrong with instructing a trainee teacher that this is the way to use this strategy and this will work, as opposed to telling them to go on their own reflective journey? I'll be 40 years teaching before I find the right way and then you're going to pension me off. Instruct me, show me and I'll keep doing it. I'll see that its working and I can add on new and extra add on bits to it. But just don't throw me out there and tell me to try this and try that and try the other and then reflect on it. No, because I'm going to fail and I'm going to have a negative experience. I'm going to get angry with the kids, they're not going to like me and I'm not going to get a job offer. So I'm just going to do what the principal wants me to do, which is to get them an A in their leaving cert, which does little for their language development in the long term (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Responsibility for what is included in initial teacher education programs lies largely with the Irish Teaching Council, whose recommendations can be found in both the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a) and Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Program Providers (Irish Teaching Council, 2011b). The Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a) conceptualizes teacher education on a continuum, beginning with initial teacher education, followed by the induction phase for newly hired teachers and lastly, continuing professional development throughout teachers' careers. The policy is underpinned by the three guiding principles of innovation, integration and improvement. Innovation refers to the Teaching Council's suggestion that there is a need to re-conceptualize teacher education and apply fresh thinking to how we meet the changing needs of both teachers and students; integration refers to the need to streamline teacher education and reduce the fragmentation that was evident within the teacher education sector; and improvement refers to the need to do away with programs overloaded with contact hours and assessment, and instead shift towards developing teachers that are "reflective, enquiry-orientated lifelong learners" (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a, p. 9). This policy also specifically recognizes the Government's 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (Government of Ireland, 2010) and makes a point of highlighting the special effort that was made to factor the development of Irish standards for primary and post-primary teachers into each phase of the continuum. Despite Irish being the only subject specifically recognized in early stages of the document, neither policy document offers any kind of differentiation between teacher education for language teachers and teacher education more generally. It also appears that the policy recommendations with regards to increasing teachers' subject knowledge and fostering their pedagogical abilities to teach a language are somewhat vague, stating that

> Learning by student teachers should include their own learning of the curriculum subjects/syllabi they will teach, in terms of content, purpose and pedagogy. It should

> also include the insights, dispositions and pedagogical capabilities that enable them, with growing degrees of fluency and confidence, to draw others into the learning of such subjects in imaginative and age-appropriate ways (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a, p. 11).

The policy on Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Program Providers (Irish Teaching Council, 2011b) does acknowledge that "Time devoted to lectures, tutorials and independent learning should be apportioned so as to facilitate and promote subject content knowledge [and] subject pedagogical knowledge" (p. 15). However, this is notably absent from the policy's learning outcomes for graduates of initial teacher education. It should be made clear that I am not suggesting that Teaching Council policies should seek to specifically address initial teacher education approaches to each and every subject available to students in the Irish post-secondary system. However, given the initial teacher education experiences of three participants, it would seem pertinent to include more emphasis on subject content knowledge and subject specific pedagogical approaches. This is particularly important in light of the Teaching Council's claim that they "recognize the need for high standards of Irish among both primary and post-primary teachers in regards to teaching Irish as a subject ... [and that] this need can be factored in at each phase of the continuum" (Irish Teaching Council, 2011b, p. 9). It could be further argued that if the initial education needs of language teachers, as distinct from math, history or science teachers, are not made clear by the very policies that dictate the criteria and guidelines for teacher education program providers, then the same challenges experienced by three participants may continue to exist for new Irish teachers entering the system.

4.2.2 Induction

Upon graduating from postgraduate education and transitioning into a new school, the induction phase of actual classroom teaching can be an overwhelming period for newly qualified teachers. This is a time where teachers are exploring and developing not only their teaching skills and pedagogical approaches, but they are also in a critical phase of

constructing their identity as teachers (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Mockler, (2011) and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) have both expressed the view that this is a crucial time for new teachers, as they negotiate their way through a complex series of social figurations that they are enmeshed in. Relationships with co-workers, students and parents need to be negotiated, the expectations of superiors must be met and the requirements of national curriculums and education policies must be adhered to, amongst other aspects of the teachers working life. It is useful to conceptualize these figurations as interlocking and ever shifting circles, which are constantly in flux (Elias, 1987). For example, relationships with co-workers may shift and change over time, and can be affected by external factors such as the stress of meeting curriculum requirements. Similarly, relationships with superiors can be in a positive or negative state depending on if relationships with the rest of the teaching staff and students are strong. Student relationships can be affected by the pressure placed on teachers to attain high exam grades in their classes and so on. In short, each area of the newly qualified teacher's professional world is in a constant state of interdependence and change, with shifting balances of power also affecting the dynamics of each situation (Loyal and Quilley, 2004). All of this contributes to a time of great personal change and identity construction for new teachers, which can result in teachers even experiencing an identity crises, as described by Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013). Kennedy (2014) suggested that often, teachers are inducted into the status quo, where they are required to become passive recipients of specific knowledge and skills that are valued by other coworkers, superiors or policy makers. Seán described his experience on his second day of being a newly qualified teacher as one that he will remember for the rest of his life. While working with a group of transition year students Seán decided to use an active learning methodology involving an improvised role play technique, which required some students to step outside the classroom while Seán set the task for the rest of the class. Upon returning to the classroom the students would then be presented with a role play situation or

context and they would be required to improvise their responses through Irish. He was immediately reprimanded by the principal of the school because the Principal saw that students were out of their seats and not learning according to the traditional format. Seán stated that

> I got the message very clearly that they didn't want me implementing any active learning methodologies because there was going to be noise. I had to put these boys into rows, get them facing the blackboard and just give them notes. And that was a kick in the stomach. So I did what my principal wanted me to do from then on. Unfortunately it didn't work for me. It wasn't my style and I knew that they weren't learning. But I did what that principal required, even though I knew that it was the wrong thing to do for the teaching of the subject (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Seán described struggling with his professional identity numerous times in his first year, as he was increasingly under pressure from colleagues and superiors to fit into the status quo within the school. He described a feeling of competition amongst his co-workers, and he even felt a sense of disdain from more established teachers regarding his attempts to implement more innovative teaching strategies. He recalled that

> More established teachers didn't like the idea of that. One of them wanted to know what I was doing so he could try and copy it. Another wanted to know what I was doing she could undermine it, and the third one wanted to know what students I had so that he could get them for grinds [extra lessons]. You're moving into a very well established arrangement amongst very traditional people. Very conservative people. So it's always very difficult for a new teacher to find their space there (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Meave also recalled that she was part of a group of trainee teachers who were very much indoctrinated into the existing traditional approaches to teaching. She went so far as to say that, any methods that veered away from established methods of rote learning and the 'three R's' of reading, writing and arithmetic, were frowned upon. "Group work and pair work were for the birds. We were told to keep away from that, don't be messing up schools or timetables, don't be making noise and disturbing the neighbors" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015).

In analyzing the dynamics of newly qualified teachers struggling with their identity construction in the induction phase of their teaching careers, it is useful to refer to Elias' (1994) concept of 'established-outsider' relations. Within the 'established-outsider' figuration members of the more established group tend to be the more highly integrated group and in a sense, are "more powerful than the outsider group" (Dunning and Waddington, 2003, p. 353). In the cases of Meave and in particular, Seán, they were two young teachers who in the early stages of their careers looked to challenge the traditional approach to Irish language education; Seán through his attempts to innovate his classroom teaching strategies and Meave through her tireless efforts to promote the incorporation of the communicative approach into the Irish curriculum. They were active agents of change, which in some cases, served to put them in an 'outsider' role, leading to distrust and even derision by colleagues for their approaches to teaching. It is also interesting to note the shift in the balances of power as Seán and Meave continued through their careers, and the communicative approach became adopted into the Irish curriculum. Because of Seán's determination to incorporate new teaching techniques into his classroom, and his drive to share this knowledge with others, he would go on to be seconded by the Department of Education and Skills to be an In-Service Course Facilitator. This allowed him to share his teaching strategies with fellow Irish teachers, and contribute to creating a new ethos of diversifying teaching strategies in the Irish language classroom. Similarly, for Meave, once the DES adopted the communicative approach as the new way of teaching the Irish language, Meave spent a period delivering seminars to Irish language teachers on how best to incorporate the approach into their classrooms. Both, it seems, have succeeded in making significant contributions to the field as a result of their willingness to challenge the status quo.

In contrast, Claire and Darragh both had relatively positive experiences of their teacher training and their transition into their schools. They both shared stories of supportive

colleagues and superiors, as well as recalling a feeling of freedom to try implementing their own teaching strategies as they saw fit. This lies in stark contrast to Meave and Seán's experiences, and is perhaps indicative of the broader shift that has taken place over the decades in terms of encouraging teachers to be more innovative and dynamic in their classroom pedagogies. It is no coincidence that this change has occurred during the same period as a number of significant shifts in policy approaches to teacher education, between 1991 and 2011. During this period Ireland received £40 million in EU funding towards teacher education and CPD, the Irish Teaching Council and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) were established and the OECD in 2005 and PISA in 2010 both published reports that indicated that Ireland's levels of education and teacher training were falling well below the standards of other EU countries. This fueled a reorganization and new emphasis on teacher training, resulting in the formation of the policy on Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Program Providers (Irish Teaching Council, 2011b) and Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Irish Teaching Council, 2011a). Therefore, the fact that two younger participants experienced significantly different induction experiences into their schools should not be a surprise, and perhaps the ethos of inducting newly qualified teachers into the more traditionalist status quo appears, on the surface at least, to have changed somewhat since the late 1990s.

4.2.3 Key Motivators and Successes

4.2.3.1 Key Motivators

The issue of teacher motivation continues to be under researched area of second language education, and there is a dearth of research that examines the motivations of Irish language teachers specifically. Similar to other minority language educators, Irish language teachers may face different successes and challenges than their co-workers who teach more mainstream subjects, as the survival of the language may largely rest on their shoulders. In

discussing her motivations to teach, Meave described an intrinsic desire to keep the language alive as one of her key motivations for teaching the language for over 30 years. She described feeling a strong sense of responsibility towards the language and its revival in both English speaking parts of Ireland and in the Gaeltacht area she returned to teach in at the end of her career. When asked what motivated her to become an Irish language teacher and stay in the profession for so long, Meave replied

> Definitely the Irish language. I think if you're an Irish teacher, it's not like teaching Geography…it is a mission for an awful lot of Irish teachers, particularly in the all-Irish schools. You have to create opportunities for the kids to learn, you have to motivate them and you feel that the future of the language is resting on you in a very strong sense. And if you don't succeed, it'll break your heart. And most of the teachers that I know are committed to that. It is an idealistic thing I think. I don't think that's just true of Irish, it's all minority languages. It is people who put their heart and soul into it but I think you need it to keep going. If you didn't believe in language revival, which I did at that time, you couldn't keep going (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

This is a poignant and very real insight into the pressure Irish language teachers may feel about the future of the language and their role in preserving it. Meave is clearly driven by an intrinsic form of motivation, which manifests itself in her describing her love of the language and the fact that in her opinion, if it ceases to be spoken as a first language in the Gaeltacht areas, then there is no reason for Irish teachers to continue their efforts.

> I would hold that if the language dies in the Gaeltacht then there's no point. I mean my whole base in teaching Irish all those years was telling [the students] that when you go to the Gaeltacht you'll be able to talk to the locals. And they bought that. So they'd come down to Connemara and they'd practice their few phrases and they heard the little kids speaking Irish and they were absolutely amazed. That gave them the reason. But if you no longer have a community to speak the language, you're teaching a dead language. And there's no point in that for a teenager who has all kinds of possibilities in this world (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

Meave's strong grá (love) for the language and preserving it is indicative of intrinsic motivation, as described by Deci *et al.* (1991) and Noels *et al.* (2003). Meave appears to have been driven by internal factors with no tangible end goal or reward for her efforts, rather than external factors such as earning more money or improving her career prospects. However, it

could be suggested that Meave's motivational traits also show similarities to Motha and Lin's (2014) research on theorizing desire, as they describe desire as being "associated with yearning or longing, something more appropriately perceived as part of an individual's emotional self" (p. 340). They suggest that motivation, on the other hand, is a "reason or incentive and something that causes a person to act" (Motha and Lin's, 2014, p. 340). I suggest that in Meave's case, it was her deep seated desire to instill her love of the language in her students that was the catalyst for her to become an agent of change and fight for the maintenance and revitalization of the language for so long. Therefore, while desire may be differentiated from motivation, I suggest that they are interconnected and at times interdependent. Without innate desire there may never be an action to follow through on what a person wants to achieve, in the same way that an action triggered by motivation may cause a person to formulate new desires as they achieve goals throughout their lives.

Claire and Darragh's motivations to teach the language shared somewhat similar traits to Meave's, in that they spoke about a strong love of the language itself, but more importantly, they received great internal gratification from seeing young people being able to communicate in Irish.

> I love hearing [the language]. I love when the kids get it and they can go off and talk about themselves… Everybody can take up a geography book and read it themselves and learn it themselves. Irish I think, you have to be guided in it. You're giving them confidence and you're giving them belief. I think it's more of a skill than reading a geography book or reading a history book. People can just do that and pull it together. But if you can get someone to learn a language and understand it, then it makes it worthwhile (Claire, Interview 2, May 27th, 2015).

> Well, as an Irish teacher, something that is very motivating for me is if you're able to take a student through and they finish with a high level in Irish or are fluent in Irish at the end. I personally find that very motivating. You know, maybe you start off with them in 1st or 2nd year and at the end they've an interest in the language and they are able to communicate their interest in it. For me, that's very motivating (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

However, it should be noted that while Meave's motivations and desires were centred largely on keeping the language alive, Claire and Darragh both cited the relationships that they build with their students as one of their key reasons for remaining in the profession.

> It's the kids, the kids make it…I could go down the line of saying I do it purely for the love of the language and all that. And obviously I do love the language and I like teaching it. But it's the type of kids that I have. To get those engaged. They're not the same as every other school. When they get it and you can see them getting it…you know you're doing something right (Claire, Interview 2, May 27th, 2015).

Darragh also spoke about his positive relationships with the students and how seeing them attain the grades they want is a key part of how he keeps motivated. "If you can get them the grade that they want, even if it's only a pass, maybe that's all they're looking for. But if you can manage to push them through to get that grade, I find that very satisfying and motivating" (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015). Claire and Darragh's motivations to teach, while driven partly by intrinsic elements of their love of the language and seeing their students develop their Irish language skills, there are more extrinsic motivational factors at play here. Working with students to achieve specific grades and developing positive relationships and interactions with their students are both crucial motivating factors for Claire and Darragh, which is markedly different from Meave's reasoning for remaining in the profession. Sugino (2010) and Sharabyan's (2011) research found that there are many motivational factors at play for second language educators, with variables such as institutional support, positive relationships with co-workers and positive teacher evaluations all found to have significant impacts.

Seán's motivation for teaching the language stands in stark contrast to the rest of the other participants, as he appears at this stage to be driven overwhelmingly by extrinsic motivational factors. The opportunities for change and changing his teaching context were referred to as his key reasons for remaining in the profession, as teaching affords him the opportunity to set new challenges for himself, not just as a teacher, but more holistically as a

person. Seán's teaching career has been somewhat fragmented, with a number of shorter term teaching contracts proceeding his secondment into the field of CPD course facilitation, in which his job description has also changed numerous times over the course of his eight years with the DES. When asked specifically what keeps Seán interested in teaching the Irish language, he responded

> I've other interests in life. I have my politics outside of school... and I'm studying for a masters now because I wanted a change and to do something different. So you pick something, if it's IT skills you can concentrate on that. Or if it's being a counselling worker or facilitating skills you learn a new skill and keep freshening up on those. You have to keep changing. Because the Gaeilge is in the book. The Gaeilge is in the book and you could go in and read it out loud and that's that. But you have to make it interesting for you too. I personally believe that Ireland is full of bored teachers. And that's terrible, because students know when their teacher is bored (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Seán felt so strongly about this that he went on to say emphatically that "If I thought I was going to spend more than four years in a row doing the same thing over and over again, I would leave. And that's been confirmed in the last couple of years, as I've been travelling around visiting other Irish teachers" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015). While constant change may provide intense frustration for some teachers, Seán appears to thrive on it. Being an Irish language teacher affords Seán the opportunity to change his teaching context if he so wishes, or move into other areas in the field of education, and this is a key motivating factor for him. He appeared to welcome his upcoming return to the classroom, but his eight years of facilitating CPD courses for Irish teachers has instilled in him a strong sense of the teacher he *wants* to be when he returns. Seán spoke at length about his fear of reverting back to being a 'chalk and talk' teacher, who stands at the board dictating information for his students to absorb. Seán seems to be very strongly driven by his internalized view of his 'ideal self', as proposed by Dörnyei (2009), which is heavily influenced by his time as a CPD facilitator. Though Dörnyei's (2009) concept of the Motivational Self System has been largely only applied to L2 learners, there seems to be value in applying this concept to studying teacher

motivation also. For Seán, his 'ideal self' is reflected in his own aspirations to achieve his standards of what he now characterizes as a 'good' teacher, which for him appears to be someone who is ready to embrace change, take on new challenges, and most importantly, be innovative in their teaching strategies. In analyzing Seán's feelings on his return to the classroom, there may also be aspects of Dörnyei's (2009) 'ought-to self' present as a motivating factor, as Seán may feel some pressure after returning to his old school from secondment to be a leader and model in practicing new and innovative teaching methodologies. He stated that "I'm going to be designing strategies and trying them out in my own classroom. So my own teaching, and I hope my own practice in the classroom is going to be innovative. Because I'm going to be experimenting with strategies that I'm going to want to showcase later on" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015). It is also worth noting that Seán is at a significantly different career stage when compared to all other participants, and his time spent away from the classroom may further influence his motivations to teach.

Analysing participants' motivations for teaching the Irish language is a complex task, and one must look at the longer term journey each person has taken to get them to this point in their careers. Given that this study adopts a multiple case study approach, it is not the intention to suggest that participants' motivations are indicative of the motivations that drive other Irish teachers in Ireland more generally The motivational concepts are too complex to be generalized in this fashion, and a longer term perspective that takes into account the broader social settings and figurations each individual teacher is a part of needs to be adopted. A key element in determining why there was little consistency across motivational factors across participants may be the stage of career that they are at. Meave, having just retired from a 32 year long career of fighting to keep the Irish language alive, cited language maintenance and revitalization as her key motivator, despite her alluding to the fact that she may not feel as strongly about this as she did in the past. Nonetheless, given Meave's history of learning the

language, her experiences of seeing fewer and fewer people in her Gaeltacht community speaking the language, her perceived dominance of the English language and her career path where she was an agent of change in the field, it is not surprising that she cited language revitalization as the key determining factor in her teaching the Irish language. Similarly, Seán's experiences of learning the language and his career path so far has been characterized by his need for challenges and change. From when he attended the Gaeltacht from a very young age, to switching his field of study from international marketing and Japanese to Celtic studies as an undergraduate student and to when he entered the profession and changed schools three times over the course of eight years, Seán is truly motivated by the challenges that are associated with acquiring new skills and working in new contexts. Therefore, both Meave and Seán, having had over 45 years of experience between them, shared goals that are reflective of their broader interests, rather than focusing on their day-to-day interactions with the language in their school/classroom settings. Darragh and Claire, on the other hand, are still in the relatively early stages of their careers and their motivations lie largely within their classrooms and schools at this point. Perhaps at this point, being younger teachers in earlier stages of their careers, they are still cultivating their identities and skill sets as teachers, and so their motivations to teach are still driven by classroom based factors. This is reflected in their commitment to developing their students' language abilities, helping them to achieve specific grades and building positive relationships with their students being listed as their strongest motivators.

The social and geographical background of the participants may also influence motivation. For example, Meave is the only participant from a Gaeltacht area and whose first language is Irish, whereas other participants all have experience of attending Gaeltacht programs, but are English speakers first and foremost. Therefore, Meave's desire to teach the language in order to contribute to language revitalization, has likely been strongly influenced

by the geographical location of her upbringing and her status as a native Irish language speaker. That being said, one could also argue that this idea could work in reverse for both Claire, Darragh and Seán in that they all grew up in areas where Irish was not spoken as a living language in their local communities, and so they may be driven by the wish to hear the language being spoken outside of the Gaeltacht areas. All teachers spoke candidly about their experiences in the Gaeltacht and the personal joy they got from hearing the language being used in day to day interactions, and their geographical location and the lack of spoken Irish in these locations may also be a motivational factor.

4.2.3.2 Successes

Participants described the daily successes that are played out in the Irish language classroom as an extremely important part of their motivation to remain in the profession. Classroom based successes, such as instilling confidence in their students and helping them to achieve their desired grades in Irish form a key part of their ability to build positive relationships in the school. Claire described an occasion when she received a thank you card from a student, stating that

> I got a card off one of my sixth year students, saying thanks and that without my support she wouldn't have attempted higher level Irish. So that's a success, things like that. They're not big things, but it's being able to say that we're obviously giving someone some confidence so that they knew I believed in them" (Claire, Interview 2, May 27th, 2015).

Seán also spoke of occasions where past pupils that he has met when out socially have told him of their fondness for Irish, even though they may not have necessarily excelled at it during their time at school. He stated that it "made me reflect and think that they got more than just the exam Irish. They actually got a good attitude towards the language. And that's great" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Other successes that participants shared related to their involvement in being agents of change in how the language is taught. For example, Seán found that one of his greatest successes has been to abolish the foundation level[14] Irish course in his school, meaning that all students must take either the pass or honors level courses. He described this as a major achievement, not just for the students, but also for the teachers as well.

> Everybody, and I mean everybody, moved up a gear. In fact, teacher practice improved as well, because the teacher of the higher level class was motivated because they had more students and they were challenged because they had students who may have felt that they were going to be doing ordinary level, so they had to teach more of a mixed ability group. It also motivated the ordinary level teacher who now had students who were reluctant learners. So they had to find new methodologies to get them through. When was it an achievement? It was an achievement when they all passed, when they all obtained their grades and they all achieved. And it was an achievement when we were able to put it into our annual department report where we could say we had zero students doing the foundation level (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Meave also celebrated when her recommendation to adopt the communicative approach for Irish language teaching was accepted by the DES, and they formed a revised syllabus based on this approach. She described her initial joy at hearing that the approach she had advocated for so long was going to be utilized to improve the teaching of Irish, only to find that her initial intentions for the syllabus were not carried through.

> We celebrated when the Department of Education accepted the communicative approach as the basis of the syllabus. Now I celebrated that, and every teacher in the country got a syllabus that listed 20-25 topics and said the child should be able to do all of these practical language points. That was brilliant for the English speakers. But then they proceeded to give the same syllabus to L1 students. So it was a double edge sword. It was great…but at the same time, they didn't differentiate between L1 and L2 and that was the big disappointment. The big success was that the communicative approach was accepted as the basis, and obviously based on that developing oracy

[14] In the Irish education system, schools may offer three levels of courses for the core subjects of Irish, English and mathematics; foundation level, ordinary or 'pass' level and higher or 'honors' level. Each level is credited with grade point scores related to the level of difficulty of the course. For example, an A1 in higher level Irish equates to 100 points towards your college entrance points, an A1 in ordinary level Irish equates to 60 points, an A1 in foundation level equates to 20 points and so on. In 2015, 3,543 students took foundation level Irish exams, compared to 19,460 who took higher level and 23,562 who took ordinary level (State Examinations Commission, 2015).

> should have been centre place. But that didn't develop, so that was disappointing (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

This issue will be explored further in the next section, as all participants cited the lack of emphasis on oral Irish as a key challenge they face on a daily basis.

Claire and Darragh shared success stories of various extra-curricular activities that have been implemented in their schools to encourage students and teachers to engage with the language outside the classroom. Events such as Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish language week celebrating Irish language and Irish culture), school Ceile's (traditional Irish dancing event), Irish drama productions and Irish language lunchtime groups are all examples of programs that have been implemented in Claire and Darragh's schools in order to promote the development of the language. Darragh spoke of the important role that events like this play in keeping him motivated, stating that "I think it is important to get out of the classroom sometimes. It does motivate you to do more and I think you need that as a teacher. You know, that outside influence. You bring that back into the classroom. You're more enthused, so I think it's so important" (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

4.3.4 Challenges

The use of in-depth interviews as a method of data collection in this study gave me the scope to dig deeper into participants' experiences as Irish language teachers, and while they shared many successes with me, it was the challenges they face on a daily basis, which largely dominated the content of each of the interviews. While each teacher described their own personal difficulties they face, there were a number of themes that resonated with all four participants; including Junior and Leaving Certificate exam structures, student apathy and socio-economic influences. In the next section I will discuss these challenges in detail.

4.3.4.1 Junior and Leaving Certificate Exam Structures

By far the most prominent challenge that participants referred to was the structure of the Irish education system, whereby the development of the Irish language is dictated by the Junior and Leaving Certificate exam structures. To recap, the post-secondary Irish education system is split into two cycles; the three year Junior Cycle from ages approximately 12/13 to 15/16, and the two year Senior Cycle, from ages approximately 16 to 18. For the Junior Cycle, students will study for state exams in approximately 12 subjects, which are usually assessed via a written exam in June of their third year of post-secondary education. For Senior Cycle, students will study for state exams in seven subjects, six of which count towards their required grade points for entrance into third level education. Both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate exams are an extremely demanding time for students and teachers alike, as students are likely to take part in over 20 hours of mostly written exams over the course of approximately 10 days. For Senior Cycle students, the pressure to achieve specific grades is dramatically heightened, as the number of points (attributed by grade) attained in their Leaving Certificate exams is the sole determining factor on whether a student will get access to their chosen university or college courses that year. If the student fails to reach enough points for their chosen course, then he or she is left with no options but to attend third level education in that year. This is important information to bear in mind, as it will promote a deeper understanding of why exam preparation has become the backbone of the Irish education system, which some participants claim actually hinders the language development of Irish language students. In addition to syllabi being geared largely towards preparing students for exams, Darragh claimed that the Irish education system, specifically in relation to language education, is plagued by an over-emphasis on the productive language skills of speaking and writing, with the receptive skills of listening and reading only being more widely recognized as vital aspects of language acquisition since 2012.

> Even from the foundation of the state, if you go back to when Irish was first introduced, maybe around 1924, there wasn't an oral exam until the 1960s. It's carried on this generational thing where the emphasis is on writing, writing, writing and literature, literature, literature. People have been taught that way and that's how they have continued to teach, without enough emphasis on speaking the language. I would feel that it's vital to have a speaking exam in the Junior Cert, because it's too late by the time they reach Leaving Cert (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015).

This is evidenced by the fact the Irish exam in the Junior Cycle does not currently have a mandatory oral component, but rather, schools can choose to include an oral Irish exam or not, without penalty to the student or school. It should be noted that if schools choose to incorporate an oral component into the exam, examiners are drafted in at the schools own expense. In contrast, the oral component of the Irish Leaving Certificate has been granted a much more elevated status since 2012, and has been increased from 25% to 40% of the overall exam grade. While this move was welcomed by all participants as a step in a positive direction, there are a host of other issues at play, all of which paint a complex picture of the current state of Irish language education.

The crucial issue identified by most participants was the fact that neither the Junior Cycle or Senior Cycle syllabi acknowledge the fact that there are two types of students sitting Irish language exams; students for whom Irish is their first language (L1) and students for whom English is their first language and Irish is being learned as the second language (L2). This has created an interesting dichotomy in the Irish education sector, as the syllabi is trying to offer adequate assessment to two groups with vastly different levels of Irish. Darragh voiced his frustration with this issue multiple times in all three of his interviews, at one point stating at length that

> One of the major flaws with the system in the South is that there should be two separate syllabi and two separate exams at Junior Cert level and at Leaving Cert level, for those that are attending Irish speaking schools and those that attending English speaking schools. Because they're trying to cater for the two groups in the one syllabus and with one set of exams, which doesn't serve anyone. What I find is that the exam is set at a level that is too high for those students that are attending English speaking schools. So that means that teachers are forced to prepare them for an exam

> and forced to get them up to a level that is unrealistic, in too short a period of time. This means that instead of taking the time to go over the basic skills, teachers are basically just preparing them for the exams through rote learning and so on, because you want them to get their grades. If [the teachers] don't do that, then the students won't get their grades. But it's probably hindering their grasp of the language, because they're not taking the time to go over the basic skills in the way that's needed. On the other side of it, colleagues of mine teaching in Gaeltacht areas have said that the system isn't challenging enough for the students in the Gaeltacht schools, because it's at a level that is too low. So they're saying that there isn't enough literature, and they would like to go into much more depth and detail. Their students have the ability to do that. So they feel that they're not being pushed to develop their language to a higher order (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015).

This issue stands in contrast to the way Irish education is offered in the North of Ireland and the way the Welsh language is taught in Wales, as both countries offer two separate exams for native speakers and for L2 learners. However, neither of these systems are without their flaws, as it is not mandatory for L1 speakers to take the L1 exam paper, meaning that some students' language capabilities are never developed to their full potential. Meave felt very strongly about this issue and labelled it as the main cause for language deterioration in the Gaeltacht.

> The present leaving cert course serves nobody really. I know in Wales they have a L1 and an L2 paper, and some schools let native speakers do a L2 paper, because there was no law that said they couldn't. So L1 students did that and they did really well on it because they were native speakers, but, and this is the crucial thing here, it meant that the time that should have been spent enriching their own language was spent doing English or some other subject. So their own native language became babied and never developed. Their own personal development happened through English. And that's what happened in the Gaeltacht too. Because the English language course is so challenging, psychologically, emotionally with the poetry and the novels and all that, they get to experience second hand what's happening in their life. Therefore, all that traction and all that development is happening in the English language, so they don't have the emotional language to talk about their emotions in Irish. Anything like that gets talked about in English. The classroom situation is quite often your only situation, your only forum to discuss why you say something or why you disagree with something. And so there's a whole language and an emotional and personal development happening there, and if you do that in English, then that's it for life. That means that they will never be able to discuss that with their children, so the next generation will be speaking pigeon Irish. So it's quite serious (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

In an earlier interview Meave claimed that she has seen the standard of Irish consistently drop through the generations in her family, as her parents had poorer levels of Irish than her

grandparents, and she has poorer levels of Irish than her parents and so on. In essence, Meave felt the education system as it currently stands is creating a generation of young people who she describes as practically "illiterate", claiming that "we're turning out native speakers at Leaving Cert level who are basically illiterate. They can neither write, nor read, nor spell for the simple reason that they don't have to. They can get an A1 on the paper without doing anything from 6th class (primary school)" and that "native Irish speakers be treated as native Irish speakers. They need to be challenged and developed, so that their language improves in school rather than dis-improves, which is what's happening at the moment" (Meave, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Claire voiced a similar frustration, but in relation to her own L2 students who struggle with the demands of the Leaving Certificate exam. Claire, working in a DEIS school, typically has larger numbers of international students and low achieving students, and feels that the challenges of the single tier exam system makes for even greater challenges in her classroom.

> Coming from a DEIS school, we're behind everyone else. You would have schools who would have the majority doing higher level, whereas we're the opposite. Our majority would be doing ordinary level exams. I don't think the syllabus supports learning. It's too complex for where the kids are nowadays. Kids aren't interested in problems in the health sector, or politics or the socio-economic impact of the water charges and they don't have the language needed to be able to talk about things like that (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Related to this, Darragh claimed that an education system that is so focused on exam preparation causes significant problems for his exam classes, as he feels he is forced to choose between preparing students adequately for exams and actually fostering the development of their language abilities in Irish. This is similar to the findings of Alam and Farid's (2011) study, which found that 70% of teachers surveyed felt that examinations constrained their ability to teach. With so much content to be covered for exams and students who Darragh feels are out of the depth with regards to their language capabilities, he feels he is left with no

choice but to adjust his teaching strategy to revert back to a more traditional teaching style, with major emphasis on reading, writing and learning by rote.

> I do find myself when teaching [the Junior and Leaving Certificate classes] and when it comes up to exam time, that I am finding that I have to focus more on written work and so on, because I have to prepare them for their exam unfortunately. Now there could be other more worthwhile things that we could be doing that could help them to speak the language more, but at the same time we have to focus in on the exam. Otherwise, students and parents would be looking to know why students aren't getting the results they wanted. So there is a conflict there, between trying to teach the language and trying to prepare them for the exam (Darragh, Interview 1, April 14th, 2015).

Darragh also went on to claim that unless the exam focused education system changes, then we will not see any significant changes to how the language is taught by Irish language teachers, and hence, the Irish education system will continue to fail in its efforts to produce competent Irish language speakers. When asked about the Government's 20 Year policy to increase the number of bilingual Irish speakers from 83,000 to 250,000 by 2030, Darragh replied that those targets were unrealistic and simply unachievable, unless there is a dramatic shift in the Irish education system. Despite significant resources being put into developing teacher training and CPD in the last two decades, Darragh felt that all this effort may be in vain if the current assessment system is not re-evaluated. Speaking about CPD seminars he attended he stated that

> Those techniques are very useful, but until the way the language is assessed is changed, a lot of teachers will not change the way they teach. Because they're focusing on the exam and the approach that they have at the moment prepares students for the exam. However, it's at the expense of developing [the students] language skills fully. I suppose it's the way they've always taught. But I would say that until the way it's assessed and examined is changed, significant numbers of teachers will not change their techniques (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

One participant's opinion on the Irish exam system stood in stark contrast to the other three participants, who were all highly critical of the Irish education system as it currently exists. Seán's background as an In-Service Course Facilitator gives him a unique perspective on the issue and his views on the reasons why the education system is failing to produce

competent Irish speakers are more complex. Although he agreed that the exam system was not perfect, he assigned much of the responsibility back on to the Irish teachers themselves, claiming that it was their responsibility as educators to keep teaching the students, even if it means gathering content that is not required by the exam.

> Often I hear teachers complaining that the course is boring and the course is not challenging. I say to them that when they have the course done, they can still keep teaching. You don't stop teaching when you get to the end of the book. You can still keep teaching. So in any subject I'd recommend that, and if you've got a group of students where the history course isn't long enough or isn't in-depth enough, then every history teacher will bring in extra resources. But Irish teachers don't do that. We're satisficing. We're saying that's all you need for your exam, just do that and you'll get by (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Seán appears to be referring to teachers of L1 students here, and it is the first of several occasions that he demonstrates a more openly critical stance towards Gaeltacht or Irish - medium educators.

> Let's stop blaming the curriculum. Let's stop blaming the syllabus. I reject the notion from the Gaeltacht and Irish-medium sector, that the curriculum doesn't challenge their students and their learners. If your students are exceptionally able students who…are well able for the curriculum, professionally, a teacher must keep teaching. And if they're able for more than the exam requires, you should keep pushing them. If you don't do that, you are neglecting that child's education (Seán, Interview 1, May 18th, 2015).

Seán challenged the suggestion that L1 students find the Leaving Certificate exam paper too easy, claiming that those who achieve A1's (the highest grade) are not overwhelmingly coming from Gaeltacht or Irish-medium schools, but rather they are spread across the country in both English and Irish speaking regions. Unfortunately, I was unable to find data from the State Examination Commission or any other source to verify or challenge Seán perception and claim.

Participants' views on the post-secondary Irish exam system offer insights and first-hand accounts of the complexities of the Irish education system, and it is clear that each participants' views are shaped by their own teaching context and experience of learning.

While Seán's perceptions may be influenced by his own experiences as a teacher, or through hearing other teacher's views on the matter while facilitating CPD courses, it can not be denied that he seems to harbour more negative views towards Gaeltacht advocates than any other participant. Reasons for this are not clear, but it may be due to the fact that through his role as a CPD facilitator Seán has engaged with Gaeltacht teachers in ways that other participants in this study have not, and it may have hardened his views on Irish language development in Gaeltacht areas. Having worked for the DES for eight years, is understandably more defensive of the Irish syllabus than other participants, and his more critical stance towards Gaeltacht and Irish-medium educators may be driven by negative past experiences in engaging with Irish-medium teachers through his in-service course facilitation. While he does not give specific examples of negative encounters with Gaeltacht or Irish-medium teachers, one could reasonably assume that his CPD facilitator role would have put him in a position of being something of a sounding board for teachers to vent their frustrations with the system. In contrast, Meave is openly critical of the DES, as she views their support of Gaeltacht areas as substandard at best. While Meave, Darragh and Claire all call for a complete overhaul of the post-secondary assessment system for the Irish language, Seán's issues with the system are limited to the *content* of the course, rather than how and why students are assessed in the way that they are. In his view, once the exam requirements have been completed, then it is up to the teacher to further develop their L1 students by bringing extra resources and more challenging content to challenge their language development. However, I believe that other participants would challenge this view, arguing that if the exam requirements do not challenge L1 students to develop their language in a meaningful way, then the education system has failed them at a fundamental level. Ó Laoire and Harris (2006) stated that "The school has become one of the most critical sites for reversing language shift and for language revitalisation in minority/endangered language contexts. Of all domains, the

school is perhaps the most crucial and often bears the entire burden of language planning implementation (p. 7). If those in charge of the post-secondary Irish education fail to address issues such as those raised by participants, then it would appear that Irish schools' contribution to language maintenance and revitalization will continue to fail.

4.2.4.2 Student Apathy and Irish Beyond the Classroom

Most participants spoke about dealing with student apathy towards the language as a frustratingly common challenge for them, particularly with students in their first year of post-secondary education. They cited two main reasons that contribute to students harboring negative feelings towards the language; first, their experience of Irish language education in primary school and second, the influence of parental attitudes towards the language. While Claire acknowledged that some positive steps had been taken in terms of incorporating more oracy into the primary school curriculum, there was concern from all four participants about the impact primary school teachers can have on students' attitudes towards the language. Primary school teachers are required to teach a broad spectrum of subjects, Irish being just one of them. However, there was concern from participants (perhaps generated by their own experiences of learning Irish in primary school) that if the teacher does not have a love for the language, or even has negative feelings towards Irish, then this can be very easily passed on to their students from a young age. Meave stated that "I think that primary school is critical, because after eight years you've pretty much made up your mind, even at that young age" (Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). Claire and Darragh talked about first year of post-secondary as the crucial turning point in trying to build positive attitudes towards the language. Claire stated that

> I think that [apathy] hasn't improved. I deal with those kind of questions day one in first year when they come in and I ask them if they have any questions. It's always 'why do we need Irish? When am I ever going to use Irish?' I answer those on day one

> and then I never want to hear those questions again (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Interestingly, research conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in 2015 indicated that student's attitudes towards Irish were actually more positive in 1st year of post-secondary, and that these declined over time from 1st – 5th year (ERSI, 2015). This data stands in contrast to what three out of four participants describe as 1st year students coming in with negative attitudes towards that language, which they often reported as improving over time. In trying to combat student apathy, all four participants employed different strategies in answering the question of 'why do I need Irish?' Some framed their responses in terms of describing the link between the Irish language and our national identity and culture. Others, were more pragmatic in their responses, citing good grades and taking pride in their academic work as reasons to study the language. For Darragh, Claire and Seán, they felt that while the subject remains a compulsory part of Irish education, they will continually have to battle student apathy towards the language.

A related issue to student apathy is the relatively new phenomena of an increasing number of Irish students becoming exempt from having to study Irish, either due to their status as an international student[15] or because a psychological evaluation has deemed them unfit to study a language[16]. Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin (2015) stated that in 2012/2013, 2,023 students in their fifth or sixth year of post-primary schooling were exempted from studying Irish for their Leaving Certificate. This is an issue that was raised on numerous occasions by participants, as it appears that there can be longer term ramifications for students who do not study Irish in secondary school. For example, Claire cited a case of having international students who had previously opted out of studying Irish, only to later find that

[15] Under DES guidelines, International students who arrive in the Ireland after the age of 11, or in 4th class of primary school, can choose to opt out of studying the Irish language for the remainder of their education in Ireland.

[16] Under DES guidelines, a psychological assessment that indicates that students who fall below the 10th percentile of basic intellectual and sensory abilities in their mother tongue (within their age group) can claim for exemption from studying the Irish language (DES, date unknown).

because they had not studied the language, they were now disqualified from applying to be a primary school teacher, which was their career aspiration. Claire also cited multiple cases of where international students had been recommended to opt out of Irish, only to make their own choice to study the language and find they excel at it. She stated that

> In our school we have a lot of international students studying Irish, and it's interesting, but they're better at Irish than the Irish kids. They just seem to be. I don't know, but I think there's just something in the Irish mind, that just has a block. Our Polish kids would have English, Polish, and usually some knowledge of Russian, so for them they just come in and just think 'oh well, it's just another language'. (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015).

Seán also shared an experience of a parent wanting to withdraw their child from studying Irish, and the issue of psychological assessment was raised.

> I explained to this parent that if he gets one of these reports to state that neither his son nor daughter were psychologically equipped to learn a second language, that I would be comfortable with them not learning Irish. But then I asked the father, and 'what will they do instead of French as well?' I explained that there's no psychological condition that prevents you from learning Irish, but which allows you to learn other second languages. He didn't like that (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Seán's experience above is an example of how a parent harboring negative attitudes towards the Irish language, can severely impact their child's attitude towards the language. Again, in Seán's example, the child in question went on to become a primary school teacher, which she would not have been able to do had her father's wishes been carried through. Negative parental attitudes towards the language were described as commonplace three participants, and they described it as a difficult challenge to overcome. Demonstrating the impact of parental attitudes towards Irish, research by ERSI (2015) showed that 73% of adults from the Republic of Ireland and 71% of adults from Northern Ireland who felt their parents wanted them to learn Irish at school were significantly more likely to report a higher incidence of wanting to learn the language themselves, in comparison to those who felt their parents did not want them to or were disinterested (Republic of Ireland 17% and Northern Ireland 10%). This is evidence of the vital role that parents can play in influencing their child's attitude

towards the language. With such pressure to attain good grades in order to secure entrance to college or university, participants recalled stories of parents encouraging their child to drop from higher to ordinary level Irish, so that their attention could be focused on other subjects. Or in Meave's case, she was berated by a parent for covering content that was not on the exam, as she was asked "would you not just leave them alone and they could concentrate on maths and physics?" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). This is supported by data from the ERSI (2015) study, in which 68% of adults surveyed in the Republic of Ireland and 86% in Northern Ireland felt that science based were more important than studying the Irish language. Participants felt that reasons for this stigma of the Irish language being considered less important than other subjects may be linked to the parents' own negative experiences of learning Irish. Seán tackles this challenge by inviting parents to his classroom to show them that the teaching of Irish has changed significantly since they were at school.

> The only way to overcome that is for the parents to witness that Irish gets taught now a different way than when they were required to learn it. So you have to invite the parents into the classroom, so they can see. Parent teacher meetings, I insist they take place in my classroom and not in the hall. Because I then explain to the parents that they're not just learning Irish here. They're learning to learn. They're learning the skill of acquiring another language. They're learning oracy and how to speak publicly. They're learning how to explain themselves in a language that the listener may not fully understand. So yes, it takes a bit of work, but you wear them down. Parents are there to be won over (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

In analysing the more macro figurations that are in existence here, it could be suggested that the student and parent apathy towards the language that the participants of this study are experiencing may be as a result of a long term shift in the power balances relating to the status of the Irish language. Since Ireland gained independence from Britain in the early 1920s, the Irish language was quickly given a prestigious place in Irish society, being recognized as the first national language of Ireland in the constitution and being made a compulsory part of education in schools all over the country. However, it would appear that the status of the language has been somewhat diminished over time at an institutional level,

which one may suggest is a case of structure driving agency. Examples noted in the review of literature include a basic command of the Irish language being removed as a requirement for recruitment to the Irish police force and other civil service positions, which led McCubbin (2010) to describe the language as being entirely expendable when it becomes problematic or presents barriers to integration. If the government approach to the language is thus, then perhaps it is entirely understandable that this attitude may filter down to the community levels and unintentionally promote apathy towards the language.

In contrast to the student and parent apathy experienced by other participants, Claire cited examples of parents of international students who were actually more open to the language than Irish parents. She suggested that this was because in a DEIS school, the number of families who place value in education may not be as consistent as in other schools. Hence, when newly arrived immigrants to Ireland enter the education system, the parents take the approach of saying to their children that "we live here now and the language is very important and you must learn it" (Claire, Interview 1, 2015). This presents an interesting situation, whereby the DES seems to have put in place measures to offer exemption to international students, possibly with a view to helping families settle in Ireland and reduce pressure on students as they assimilate into a new culture and education system. But this may have unanticipated consequences in the longer term, such as students opting out of Irish without realizing that this may exclude them from some job opportunities in the future.

Another challenging aspect of teaching the Irish language is the lack of social contexts for L2 students to use the language outside of the classroom in public and private social contexts. This was quoted by participants as one of the main contributing factors not just to student and parental apathy towards the language, but also to the demise of the language in society more generally. Darragh felt particularly strongly about this issue, as he has seen

some successful initiatives implemented in Northern Ireland to foster the development of the language in the community.

> I think it's absolutely vital that there are big changes to the way Irish is assessed and examined and taught. But, that's not enough if we're to be realistically expecting people to be able to use the language. It's important that they have opportunities to use it outside of school and that there are things like youth clubs in Irish in different towns. That there are Irish Language Officers organising different activities in each town. I think you need [a Language Officer] in every main town in Ireland if it's going to be a serious thing. It's not enough to simply use the education system. We can equip them with the skills, but people need somewhere to use the language once they've finished with education (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

Meave and Seán found that they constantly needed to create occasions to use the language, as the opportunity for students in their areas to engage with Irish outside the classroom was non-existent. Seán feels that there are many opportunities where the language could be utilized in society, but be feels there is a large disconnect between Irish society and the Irish education system.

> Society in Ireland does not compliment the education that's going on in our schools. It's not just about Gaeilge. Society in Ireland doesn't compliment the learning of history, the learning of geography, the learning of science or maths. Not just Gaeilge. The knowledge we give them in the education system goes unused once they leave school. There's nothing wrong with the weather forecaster on television opening their presentation with one sentence of Gaeilge. There's nothing wrong with every member of staff at An Post post offices around the country saying 'go raibh maith agat, slán' [thank you, goodbye] after a transaction. So we're not even using the basic opportunities to use the language. And that can't be the fault of the teachers, it really can't be. Most school subjects would feel the same disparity as well. When do we explicitly offer opportunity to use maths or numeracy in the world around us? Why can't the motor tax office have a big poster saying please calculate your own bill? Or estimate your bill? (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Therefore, without the need to use the language outside of school, L2 learners may continue to view the language solely as a school subject, rather than a living part of their culture. The ways in which this issue affects language revitalization and maintenance efforts will be discussed further in a later section.

4.2.4.3 Socio Economic Influences

The third challenge that three out of four participants talked about was with regards to the impact of the economic recession, which brought Ireland virtually to a standstill in 2008. The failure of the Irish economy and the subsequent bailout from the IMF, have had far reaching consequences across all facets of Irish society, many of which are still felt today. A key issue here is the unstable working environment that was created for newly qualified teachers, as permanent contracts (as they had existed previously) were no longer available. Instead, teachers were placed on part-time contracts with limited numbers of teaching hours, or a CID (Contract of Indefinite Duration). At the time of this study, a CID was only offered to teachers who had completed one-year contracts for four years in a DES school, which created an extremely precarious situation for new teachers. Darragh described his experience during the recession, stating

> I certainly have been affected by it. The first year that I was employed was 2010, which was the start of the emergency bailout. While I was on close to full hours the first year I was employed, the second year my hours were dramatically reduced by almost half. I was on temporary contracts then for four years before I finally got a permanent contract this year. So that certainly is something that you see with young teachers that are coming into the profession. They are likely to be in a very precarious situation from year to year, not knowing if they're going to be re-employed, and they're likely to be on low hour contracts and trying to basically survive. They're working extremely hard and often taking part in extra-curricular activities and not getting remunerated for it to the level that they should be, because they're on low hour contracts. It does take a good few years to get permanent in the school, and even then there is no guarantee that you're going to be permanent with full hours (Darragh, Interview 3, April 27th, 2015).

It should be noted that since this study was carried out, the number of years a teacher must complete on temporary contracts has been decreased to two years (DES, 2015).

Darragh claimed that the economic recession was also felt by Gaeltacht programs, as families could no longer afford to send their children to summer programs in Gaeltacht regions. He quoted feedback from colleagues in traditionally busy Gaeltacht summer

programs who spoke of dramatically reduced student numbers from 2010 onwards, which was indicative of the financial pressure that families were under at the time. This period of economic recession also saw an overwhelming increase in the number of young people migrating abroad, not just from Gaeltacht areas, but from all areas of the country. At its highest point in 2011/2012, media outlets were reporting that 1000 people per week were leaving the country in search of employment abroad (Peacock, 2011; Ó Fátharta, 2013), which was considered one of the greatest mass exoduses the country had seen since The Famine in the 1880s. With job prospects for new graduates becoming scarce, the early period of the recession was described by three participants as being an extremely trying time, as morale amongst the teaching staff and students was particularly low. Meave suggested that it was actually the wealthier schools who were hit hardest during this period, as her school was always attended by students whose families had less than the norm. She recalled

> A friend of mine was teaching in a private school where the girls pay €8,000, and they were hit worse than us. Because if you can afford €8,000 for school, then you go on foreign holidays and you have a second holiday homes. And then suddenly, you're broke. Whereas with ours, it wasn't so noticeable. They're very enterprising, between turf and farming and seaweed and fishing. It was harder to recognize it here. Maybe the foreign holidays stopped and the year of the car got older (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

Meave also suggested that at this point it was harder than ever to 'sell' the value of the language, as the time when Irish was required for Government service jobs had come and gone. Therefore, there was no economic value to the language, which made it all the more difficult for teachers to motivate students and stimulate enthusiasm for the subject.

> There are economic advantages to learning a second language, but it's very hard to convince Irish speakers. In the 20s, all the civil servants learned Irish because the State said you must have Irish. Whereas the Civil Service doesn't care about Irish at all at the moment, so therefore there's no advantage at all. When there were Government clerical jobs, half of Connemara was working in Dublin because they could speak Irish. But that's gone as well now. So there is no economic selling point now, you can't sell English speakers the need to learn Irish for economic purposes (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

Irish teachers are faced with many challenges in their day to day lives, and the research above has shown that these difficulties go far beyond the doors of their classroom and schools. While issues such as student apathy manifest themselves within the classroom setting, it is clear that this issue is indicative of a broader social issue, related to the stigma of Irish language that still appears to exist within some Irish families. In addition to this, teachers struggling to 'create occasions' for students to use the language, raises up the problem of how little gains have been made in creating a social context outside the Gaeltacht areas where young people can speak the language. Similarly, in the classroom teachers struggle to balance the needs of their students language development with adequately preparing students for exams. These are two goals that seemingly should run in conjunction with one another to the same end, but sadly, language development appears to be most often sacrificed in order for students to attain their desired grades in state exams. The third issue, the influence of socio-economic factors that hinder language development, was heightened during Ireland's recession and made the issue all the more visible in the classroom and teachers rooms. But again, these issues are indicative of wider socio-economic problems, in which the development of Ireland's economy appears to have left little room for the Irish language to be given a chance to play its part. In addition, it would appear that a huge portion of an entire generation of young people and, possibly young native Irish speakers, were lost to emigration. It is clear that there is a trend here, where the micro issues the teachers face in the Irish classroom are very visibly tied to more macro issues within Ireland's education system, the national attitudes towards the language and the diminished role of the Irish language in contributing to Ireland's economy. The Government of Ireland's 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (2010) has set out many avenues in which it plans to address issues such as the ones noted above. However, it is somewhat concerning that only Meave, out of the four participants of this study had read this policy in its entirety. Both Darragh and Claire had

never even seen the strategy, while Seán was aware of its existence, but had not read the document in detail. To my mind, this is cause for alarm, as there appears to be a significant disconnect between those teachers on the ground, and the Government of Ireland language revitalization strategists. Surely, one would think, if this is to be the Government's most comprehensive and coordinated effort to reverse language loss, then the very first starting point should be to include those people who have the most influence on young people, those people who speak the language every day, and those people who have committed themselves and their careers to the language - the Irish language teachers. There is much research available which indicates that the education system is failing to produce competent Irish speakers (Mac Donnacha *et al*., 2005; Department of Education and Skills, 2005, 2007, 2015; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2008), and yet, a re-evaluation of the assessment strategies at post-secondary level of Irish education has not featured in either their original strategy objectives or subsequent progress reports (DES, 2015). Recent research by Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin (2015) analysed the current state of Irish education and the barriers that exist in hindering the progress of the Irish language. While many of the challenges that participants highlighted were included in this list of barriers, there were also some that were not, such as; the need for a new form of assessment for native speakers as distinct from L2 learners and the fact that for many parents, a stigma regarding the usefulness of Irish still exists and can contribute to students harboring negative views of the language. Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin (2015) call for more small scale qualitative research in this area, stating that "such research has the potential not only for crafting and legitimating policy on IMI education but may also herald benefits and expose challenges to advance this educational sector in Ireland in the coming years" (p. 191). It is hoped that this study has answered that call.

4.3 Continuing Professional Development

4.3.1 Experiences of CPD

CPD or in-service training is a crucial part of a teacher's career path, and is described by the Irish Teaching Council (2011a) as "life-long teacher learning [which] comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers" (p. 19). The history of CPD provision in Ireland has been addressed in the review of literature for this study, and it demonstrates that CPD has undergone a series of reforms, particularly since the 1990s. These reforms were generally dictated by the ebb and flow of various governing bodies that have experienced periods of both economic prosperity and economic shortfalls, meaning that teachers' experiences of CPD can vary hugely, depending on their era of employment. Participants' experiences of CPD are somewhat varied, with younger teachers reporting mainly positive experiences, while older teachers were more negative in their views on the effectiveness of CPD. Of the four participants, Meave was the most critical of CPD provision, stating that "PD, as far as I'm concerned, doesn't exist. It does, but it exists totally to service the assessment. So for me, it's of no interest" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). What Meave is referring to here is the fact that CPD sessions are most often provided in response to changes in the curriculum or assessment, which active teachers need to be made aware of. However, it should be noted that other participants, particularly from 2009 onwards, reported being provided with CPD services that did focus on additional teaching strategies, as well as curriculum and assessment changes. Meave does refer to some such sessions later in her interview, but was quite sceptical of their effectiveness. "You didn't come home invigorated, saying I must try that. All these people were telling us how to do things, but how do we know that they know? Most of us were sitting there thinking 'there's no way that you did that. There's no way the students bought that'" (Meave, Interview 2, May

18th, 2015). One of Meave's main concerns regarding CPD provision, was that often she was taking the CPD courses with teachers from English speaking regions, and she felt that the challenges they were experiencing in the Gaeltacht were significantly different to the challenges of L2 teachers.

> The fact is, we didn't have a lot in common with [the other teachers] because we were L1. We should have been with other all Irish teachers, and we should be dealing with the problems we had, because our problems were not the same as the other teachers. So we just stayed quiet, or slept, or just took notes and gave out. And when people got back to the Irish language schools…the biggest question was 'what was lunch like?' And I'm not being cynical, or well, maybe I am. But that was my experience (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015).

Unfortunately Meave did not specify as to when this CPD session took place, and so I was unable to situate this experience on a timeline in comparison to other participants' experiences of CPD. Meave also didn't identify how regularly CPD sessions were offered to her during her career, as her descriptions of CPD largely focused on describing individual sessions. Overall, Meave had extremely negative experiences of CPD and this has perhaps contributed to her hostile feelings towards the DES more generally.

Claire and Darragh appear to both have had significantly more positive experiences of CPD, and opportunities for them to attend sessions had been ample at the beginning of their careers. Beginning in the 2008/2009 school year, Claire and Darragh were given the opportunity to attend to Irish language CPD sessions on two occasions per year. While they acknowledge that sessions were often driven by changes to the curriculum, Claire and Darragh also received broader instruction on ways to improve their teaching strategies. Claire viewed these CPD sessions as particularly helpful to her and she found they had a very positive impact on her teaching techniques in the classroom.

> [The sessions] were provided by the Second Level Support Services, so the SLSS. So they were providing two sessions a year to teachers, so that was quite good. They give you loads of ideas, so that at least, even if you only take away one idea from each in-service, you take away 10 different ideas or 10 different strategies that you might

> bring into the classroom. So they have been really, really good and have definitely been really helpful for me. In our Irish Department there is only three Irish teachers, and myself and [another teacher] have been at all of them. And every time we go back, we think we must try that, or that would work with that group. So they have done a lot, definitely (Claire, Interview 2, May 27th, 2015).

Darragh had a similar experience of CPD and felt they were useful for him to improve his teaching skills:

> It is great to see other teachers to see what they're doing, to mix with them and talk. Even just to get wee ideas that you can bring into your own classroom. They would have been focusing a lot on the communicative approach and on getting students more actively involved, so that it's not all chalk and talk. But more like getting students actively involved and doing different tasks and speaking through group and pair work. Also, using a themed approach for teaching different topics. I think it's something that it's good when it happens and it was good for a few years there, when it was happening every year. But there's been nothing really happening the past two years now, so again, maybe it's something that could be worked on more (Darragh, Interview 3, April 27th, 2015).

Darragh and Claire both reported that CPD had effectively ceased since 2013, and while Claire welcomed the break, Darragh felt that there is still work to be done and that CPD should be continuous. Darragh also highlighted challenges with implementing new teaching strategies in his exam classes, as he felt constrained by the course requirements to cover exam topics. This left little room for exploring new teaching strategies or setting up group/pair work, particularly at Leaving Certificate level.

> For the exam classes the courses are very full and there is a lot of work to cover. Students have to get up to a very high level in, I would say, too short of a time. So unfortunately teachers have to just teach to the exam rather than having the time to get the students more actively involved in their own learning. So I think there is a big conflict there. I think it's more idealistic, like this is how it should be. I would agree with the suggestions that they have. I think the suggestions are very good, and I do try to implement them as far as possible. But there is that conflict there at the moment with the system as it is. The system needs to change if we're going to get students more actively involved and to get teachers to change the way they are teaching. The two things go hand in hand (Darragh, Interview 3, April 27th, 2015).

At the end of each session, teachers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the course content, and during the intensive CPD phase from 2008 – 2013, Claire reported a significant increase in collaboration between different groups of teachers and course

facilitators. She suggested that this was due to the fact that the course facilitators remained largely the same over the five year period, and so they were able to build relationships and more open lines of communication regarding whether the teaching strategies learned through CPD were effective in the classroom. This is an important point, as opportunities for teacher collaboration were noted as a significant motivational factor for teachers in Hildebrant and Eom's (2011) study of the professionalization of teachers. Overall, Darragh and Claire shared very similar positive experiences of CPD and were happy with the levels of course provision, at least until 2013. Since then, there has been no state wide provision of in-service courses for Irish teachers, with the exception of optional evening or weekend short courses, which the teachers must attend on their own time.

Seán's experience of CPD are very unique, as his 16 years in education have been split equally between being a CPD facilitator and an Irish language teacher. Therefore, Seán had experience of both receiving CPD and delivering CPD, and had some interesting insights to share. During his teaching career, Seán was not able to recall a single CPD session that he attended over the course of his eight years as an educator between 1999 and 2007. He did not elaborate as to why this was the case, stating that "It just wasn't there. At least I don't think it was there. If it was there, I wasn't made aware of its existence" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015). It is difficult to speculate why this may have occurred, as I am unable to find documentation to verify that CPD sessions for Irish language teachers were held during this period. However, if CPD sessions were offered, perhaps his school did not notify him at the time. Given that Seán taught in three different schools during this eight year period, it would seem unlikely that each school failed to notify him of CPD sessions, and he has no memory of other colleagues attending in-service training for the Irish language at any point in his teaching career.

Seán, therefore, spoke largely about his time as an In-Service Course Facilitator, noting that the transition from teacher to facilitator was difficult at first.

> It was tough. I felt like a fraud. We all felt like frauds because we all had to start standing up in front of rooms of teachers with fancy multi-coloured presentations and PowerPoints all about all the wonderful things we should be doing and how we should be doing it. But knowing that we hadn't been models of this either (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Seán was seconded by the DES and one of his main priorities was to facilitate the provision of an intensive phase of CPD, in order to educate teachers on the new Leaving Certificate oral exam marking scheme. This would explain the sudden surge in the number of CPD sessions since 2008, as experienced by Claire and Darragh. Initially, Seán said that teachers were somewhat sceptical of his encouragement to incorporate more innovative teaching strategies into the classroom. However, he has seen changes in teachers' attitudes in the last number of years, which he attributes to a large number of older generation teachers retiring due to the economic recession.

> We were put out to give CPD in the context of a new marking scheme for the Leaving Cert. So teachers were coming out saying 'just show us the new marking scheme and that's grand. And give us some examples of the sample answers and we'll go back and get our students to learn these off by heart'. So that was difficult. But with the economic crises, there's also been an awful lot of early retirements. So a lot of the traditional methods went home to do the garden, as opposed to continuing to do damage in the schools. So that gave an opportunity in some schools. Some schools embraced this opportunity to recruit younger Irish teachers with a bit more innovation (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

Seán also spoke of the continuity of contact with teachers that Claire referred to, and found that this was extremely helpful for both parties, as teachers were able to tell him what aspects of his teaching strategies were working for them. This allowed him to refine his own delivery of CPD over the years. He was also adamant on the point that the effect of this intensive phases of CPD won't be seen for a number of years, as he felt that Irish teachers will take time to adjust their approach to teaching and learning.

> When I was entering in the profession Irish teachers hadn't received CPD. And I think the important thing there is the *continuing* professional development. There was no coaching for teachers to change their teaching strategies. Because it does take a couple of years for the change to happen. They have to experiment and they have to decide what works and what doesn't work for them. They have to embed what does work and become confident in that and see the results coming through, so that they're brave enough to continue to experiment (Seán, Interview 2 June 3rd, 2015).

Seán was confident that he was seeing more acceptance from Irish teachers, particularly amongst the younger cohort of new teachers who were more willing to implement change. He also highlighted that a new round of CPD was due eventually across all subjects, but beginning with English, to coincide with the implementation of a new Junior Certificate structure in 2016. He suggested that this new structure appears to be moving away from the structure of single exam assessment at the end of the three year cycle, and towards forms of continuous assessment, a move he welcomed.

4.3.2 CPD – Suggestions for Future Directions

While participants' experiences of CPD varied greatly, it is clear that each participant held very strong opinions regarding the role of CPD in supporting Irish teachers. It is clear that with the establishment of the Irish Teaching Council, and the DES paying more attention to the continuum of teacher education, there has been great improvements made regarding the provision of CPD for Irish teachers, particularly since 2008. However, many issues still remain unclear. For example, there was some confusion from teachers as to who was actually providing the CPD they were received, with one participant stating that it was facilitated by the Second Level Support Services (SLSS) group, another that it was the DES and another that it was the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The reorganization of teacher support services over the years has resulted in a fragmented and confusing number of organizations, all involved in providing various forms of in-service to teachers. While Seán was delivering in-service courses as part of the PDST, who are funded by the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES, it is concerning that teachers are not clear on who is

providing their CPD courses. In addition to this, I was unable to obtain a clear answer from participants with regards to whether this CPD was mandatory to attend, with some teachers stating that it was at the discretion of the school, and some claiming it was mandatory. In fact, there does not appear to be a clear cut answer on this, as the CPD system is again being redeveloped by the Irish Teaching Council through their publication of a framework named Cosán (Irish Teaching Council, 2015). This framework would see credits being awarded to post-secondary teachers for attendance at CPD programs, with a certain number of CPD credits being required to maintain a status as a registered teacher in Ireland. There has been significant push back from teachers regarding this (Humphreys, 2015), as some teachers were reported to feel that there were already significant demands on their time, and that CPD should remain optional. This policy is not due to be implemented until 2016, but it is another example of how the provision of CPD in Ireland continues to be fragmented, given that the Irish Teaching Council and PDST do not appear to be working together on this initiative.

Participants had many suggestions of how they would like to see CPD developed in the future, which are detailed below in point form.

(i) Language development and mindfulness courses for Irish teachers – the issue of Irish teachers language proficiency has been raised numerous times over the course of this study, by both the participants and other researchers (Harris, Forde, Archer, Nic Fhearaile & O' Gorman, 2006; Government of Ireland, 2010; Ó Ceallaigh & Ní Dhonnabháin, 2015). Claire personally reported lacking confidence in her language abilities and felt that it was difficult to maintain her language proficiency. She stated

> for me, there's nobody at home that speaks Irish and there's just two people at work who speak Irish. So I don't have a massive opportunity in terms of speaking the language. So I'd like to just go back myself and build my own level of Irish again. Because in a DEIS school, and particularly because it's not my native language, my level can drop because you're on the basics a lot and you're always drilling the basics with the students. But it's never at that level where it's challenging my language or giving me a chance to improve my language (Claire, Interview 1, May 3rd. 2015).

The Government's 20 Year Strategy also highlighted this as a problem, quoting research figures indicating that 25% of Irish teachers rated their own standard of spoken Irish as 'poor' (Government of Ireland, 2010). This was an issue frequently encountered by Seán in his role as a CPD facilitator, to the point where he had been approached by teachers prior to a CPD session and asked not to ask them questions or force them to speak in public, because they were not confident in their own language abilities. This was extremely concerning for Seán, and he felt strongly that there should be a component of CPD that focuses purely on developing the language proficiency of the teacher. He also suggested that Irish teachers lack of confidence stemmed from anxiety, and felt that mindfulness and stress management course may also help teachers to develop confidence in their language and teaching abilities.

(ii) Forming CPD networks between local schools – Claire reported that while the intensive phase of CPD was being implemented there was a marked increase in the level of communication and resource sharing between CPD facilitators and teachers, as well as groups of teachers from other schools working together. She viewed this as an extremely positive step forward, and was disappointed to see it fade somewhat after CPD sessions ceased. Meave had previous experience of working on different initiatives with groups of teachers from the local area, and saw great value in what she described as 'hubs' or 'nests' of schools all taking CPD together and sharing resources and ideas to work towards a common goal.

(iii) Pair teaching – Seán suggested that he would like to see CPD develop so that coaching throughout teachers' careers becomes a normalized part of their day to day practice. Seán suggested that he sees great value in the way English is taught as a second language in some schools in Asia, where teachers are always working in pairs. He described this as an invaluable part of reflective practice, stating that, "when you are watching another teacher

teach, you are actually watching yourself" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015). He felt that team or pair teaching could have an array of benefits that go far beyond the induction phase for new teachers, where it is currently implemented in a mentor/mentee approach. He believed that pair teaching could allow for more collaboration, learning, resource sharing and better planning in schools, while also allowing newer teachers to utilize knowledge from teachers who may have been in the field for many years. Seán described this as similar to 'master and apprentice' roles for teachers, the value of which he felt is overlooked by schools. Referring to more experienced teachers who are approaching retirement, he argued that "All the things that they've learned, all the knowledge that they have, we don't do anything to have them share their experience. Team teaching could facilitate that" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

(iv) Re-evaluation of CPD for exam classes – Darragh felt that some CPD content was idealistic in nature, particularly in regards to applying new teaching methods and learning activities for Junior and Leaving Certificate exam classes. Claire also voiced frustration on this front, arguing that for teachers of L2 students, as things stand it is difficult to cover course content as required by the curriculum in order to prepare students for exams. This relates back to the exam-based structure of the Irish education system, and the fact that it is the exam that will most often dictate the content of the Irish language class. Both Darragh and Claire felt strongly that there is a disconnect between those who design policies for teacher education and the teachers on the ground, with Darragh stating forcefully "There's a gap there between what the Department of Education is providing and what problems teachers see on a daily basis. If they don't understand those problems then they're not going to be able to rectify them" (Darragh, Interview 3, April 27th, 2015)**.**

(v) Separate CPD for L1 and L2 teachers – One of Meave's main criticisms of the in-service courses she received was the fact that the course organizers didn't differentiate

between L1 and L2 teachers. Meave felt that the challenges that L1 teachers have in the classroom may be very different to the challenges that L2 teachers face, and therefore the content of teacher education should be tailored to recognize this fact. Therefore, she suggested that there be specific CPD for those teaching in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools.

4.4 The Future of the Irish Language

One of the final stages of each interview gave the participants a chance to reflect on their experience with Irish as a whole, and they were asked to think about what they felt the future held for the language. As has been a common theme throughout this study, Claire and Darragh's responses were significantly different than Seán and Meave's, which again, may be linked to the generation gap that exists between participants. For Darragh, he felt an extremely strong tie between the Irish language and his national and cultural identity. He spoke extremely passionately about the role Irish has played in his life and in his personal development, and he sees the language as something that is central to the cultural heritage of Ireland.

> I feel that the Irish language is part of who we are, it's part of our culture and it's part of our self-identity. It's engrained in us, in the way we live our lives. I know obviously if you're in the Gaeltacht areas you're speaking it all the time, but even in an English speaking area like this, we do use words every day. All our place names derive from it. I think it's particularly when you're immersed in the language that you can see the richness of the language, you can see its worth and you can see your connection to it (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

Claire was also quite protective of the language and the important role that it plays in preserving a sense of identity. She suggested that Ireland has undergone significant changes in the past 20 years, with many parts of Ireland becoming significantly more multi-cultural than ever before in the history of the country. While she was very much in favour of this, she

stressed the need for Ireland's acceptance of multi-culturalism to also be reflected in acceptance and promotion of a central part of its *own* culture; the Irish language.

> As a country we are so welcoming to other people and we do want say to people 'you belong here' and that kind of thing, but we don't necessarily do ourselves any favours. We have to make sure that we don't lose our own identity and I think that language is a way of promoting ourselves and having something unique to ourselves. For so many years there has been so much negativity [about the language] and I know the school system has had a role to play in that. But it's a massive change that we have to try to bring about now, because if we allow our language to disappear, what separates us from other countries? I think we need our language, like every single country needs something that defines them (Claire, Interview 1, May 27th, 2015).

Both Claire and Darragh felt that the biggest challenge facing the survival of the language is the lack of support from the Irish government, which they both said is felt right throughout every facet of the Irish speaking community. Darragh called for significantly more support for Gaeltacht regions, who he felt would continue to struggle with language loss if these communities are not given the infrastructure and economic support they need to keep Irish speakers there, or entice them back. They also alluded to the resignation of the Irish Language Commissioner, Seán Ó Cuirreáin, in 2014, who resigned in protest of the failure of the Irish government to promote the language in a meaningful way and follow through on plans to ensure Irish speakers can access public services through Irish. They cited this as an example of a public acknowledgement that while the government may create policies and make promises about securing the future of the Irish language, there has historically been little follow through on these promises. Claire felt that there are a huge number of groups who all claim to have a vested interest in revitalizing the language, but that these groups are entirely fragmented, with no coordinated efforts to put real action plans in place to do so. The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Education and Skills, the vested community and national interest groups who are pushing to revitalize the language, the Irish language teachers, the members of the Gaeltacht communities, the members of English speaking communities are all examples of groups who may be individually working towards

trying to save the Irish language, but with no real sense of direction and, Claire felt, no real sense of urgency. Claire and Darragh both alluded to the fact that the Irish government needs to take on leadership of this task, which is perhaps reflected in their 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (Government of Ireland, 2010). But with the resignation of the Irish Language Commissioner in 2014 due to a lack of progress being made, it would appear that this strategy is not being implemented to its full potential. That being said, the 2015 progress report for the strategy (Government of Ireland, 2015) does indicate that some positive steps have been taken, including (i) a full review of Irish education in Gaeltacht areas and a subsequent policy on revamping education provision in these areas, (ii) the formulation of new language curriculums for primary schools, to be implemented in 2016, (iii) increasing the weight of marks for the oral component of the Irish Junior and Leaving Certificate exams, (iv) increasing the length of Gaeltacht placements for trainee Irish teachers from three weeks to two blocks of two weeks, and (v) a review of the Irish language exemption policy for post-secondary students. So it is clear that while the government may be taking positive steps, the teachers on the ground remain unaware of what progress is being made and they certainly feel excluded from this process. Claire voiced frustration on this point, stating that

> I think teachers in schools, we get the educational policies, but we wouldn't get the overall direction of what they're trying to do with the language. And that's missing, it really is. It seems to be so fragmented. This is what you do, and this is we're trying to do. But there's no interconnectedness about it at all really (Claire, Interview 2, May 27th, 2015)

All this being said, Claire and Darragh were hopeful for the future of the language. Increasing numbers of Irish immersion schools, an increase in popularity for Irish immersion summer colleges and Gaeltacht programs and more opportunities for people to engage with Irish on the internet were all cited as reasons why they think there is hope for the future of Irish. Darragh summed up his feelings on the subject with a quote from famous Irish poet, Seamus Heaney:

> *Not to learn Irish is to miss the opportunity of understanding what life in this country has meant and could mean in a better future. It is to cut oneself off from ways of being at home. If we regard self-understanding, mutual understanding, imaginative enhancement, cultural diversity and a tolerant political atmosphere as desirable attainments, we should remember that knowledge of the Irish language is an essential part in their realisation – (Heaney, Date Unknown)*

In contrast to Claire and Darragh's more positive outlook on the future of the language, Meave felt that the language is "on its very, very, very last legs, because it needs a community" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). Meave's demeanour changed when discussing this topic, as she became visibly more tired than at other points in the interview, as if she had had this thought weighing on her for so long, that she was just exhausted from thinking about it. She claimed that the offensive actions to try to save the language had failed for numerous reasons, and that the government was now content with bi-lingualism in Gaeltacht areas. But Meave insinuated that this is as good as a death sentence for the Irish language as "a bilingual Gaeltacht doesn't transmit, when one language is the all-powerful English language" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). Although she acknowledged that it may not happen in her lifetime, she felt that the Irish language will be reduced to the same status as the harp, and it will become a little more than a symbol of national identity for politicians, officials and Irish people to put on when it suits. She voiced regret that national monuments and heritage sites such as Newgrange and the Hill of Tara are afforded an enormous amount of protection from the Irish government and conservationists, while the Irish language continues to die in front of people's eyes. Meave viewed this as a question of equality, stating

> the language is dying, and it doesn't seem to be a catastrophe at all. There are Irish speaking children, Gaeltacht children, who are totally deprived of their rights, and nobody sees it as a tragedy. At this particular time we're all mad about equal rights because of the referendum, but I would have thought that my child has the same rights to express and develop his personality through this language, as much as any other child. To me, that's huge inequality.

Although she welcomed the new recommendations from the DES regarding the provision of education in Gaeltacht areas, she was concerned that history would repeat itself and that the policy would fail to be implemented in the speed and manner it should be. She said that often "the Government is very good at asking us to tell them what they should do, but they don't usually do them. I went back to read the commission of Irish in 1926, and they had a lot of those suggestions in there, and it's nearly 100 years later" (Meave, Interview 2, May 18th, 2015). Over the course of her interviews, Meave alluded often to the fact that if the language dies within the Gaeltacht, then there is no selling point for the language anymore and no reason for young people to learn it. She finished her interview saying

> I've lost heart. I can't fight anymore. I'm sick of fighting. It's like all deaths. It will happen very gradually. We have the precedence, we have Gaeltachts all over the country that have essentially died out. Why should we be any different? 100's of languages die every year, so why should we be any different, you know?

Seán's outlook on the future of the Irish language stands in direct contrast to Meave, as he feels that the survival of the language is rooted in accepting that language loss is inevitable in Gaeltacht areas, and that efforts need to be refocused into allocating resources to the rest of the country. His reasoning behind this was that the language loss in Gaeltacht areas was now irreversible, and that the future of the language lies in creating a situation where people are every day speakers, rather than all day speakers of Irish. He saw this being facilitated through people carrying out basic daily interactions through Irish, such as buying coffee, paying for groceries, greeting people and so on.

> The future is more and more every day speakers of Gaeilge. More and more people who would be able to speak Gaeilge every day if the situation was engineered in society. But nobody's going to sit at home and discuss the Irish water crises, or politics or NAMA or the economic crisis through the medium of Irish. They will go to the fridge and ask for a pint of milk as Gaeilge (in Irish). And that's ok (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015)

Seán, like Meave, said he was tired of fighting the battle for Irish, and his position of fighting to promote the language heavily had softened considerably since his early years of teaching.

For him, he said he was very content with the current state of the Irish language, which he acknowledged is a controversial stance in his line of work.

> To be honest with you, I'm pretty comfortable with the state of play now and the condition of the Irish language. I know that a lot of people aren't comfortable with it, but it's unfair to expect people to live their lives the way I want them to live them. Even if my wife was a fluent Irish speaker, we wouldn't be an all day, every day Irish speaking household. That's just unrealistic. You talk about things where there's no context, and there's no Gaeilge context, so it's not going to happen. So I don't expect others to do it. I think that die hard Gaeltacht and Irish medium sector need to come to this realization or they'll be lost in history (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

With regards to the future of the language, Seán reiterated the need for the government to stop fixating resources and attention in Gaeltacht areas, and instead focus on the East of Ireland, where there is a much higher population. He was confident that Irish would not disappear completely, but that we needed to accept that it will not exist in the way that some people would like it to. "What we're expecting to be delivered isn't happening, so people are under-achieving and that creates negativity. For both teachers and students".

This section offered a detailed insight into the various themes that emerged from the in-depth interview data from four Irish language teachers in various teaching contexts in Ireland. In adopting a figurational approach, analysis included exploring areas that would offer insights beyond simply the participant's classroom challenges and successes. Developing a deeper understanding of participant's relationship with the language from a young age, their daily classroom struggles and successes, their individual motivations to remain in the profession and their experiences of CPD will allow for a more robust understanding of what life is like for teachers of endangered languages. In addition, several recommendations were made by participants with regards to changing examination structures and CPD provisions, in order to bridge the perceived gap between policy and practice in the revitalization of the Irish language. The next section will offer some concluding comments as well as some recommendations for further research in this area.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1 Summary

With this study I have sought to engage with Irish language teachers from both English and Irish speaking parts of Ireland in order to generate a deeper understanding of their motivations to teach and the daily successes and challenges they experience. In utilizing a multiple case study approach with four teachers in four different teaching contexts, I aimed to look beyond the policies and research regarding the teaching of the Irish language, and instead engage with teachers on the ground. The current state of the Irish language is one which is constantly in flux, and throughout this research project I have seen and heard multiple contradictory accounts from existing research and participants in this study about the role of Irish in modern Ireland. For example, the Irish language is currently classed as 'definitely endangered' by UNESCO (2011), which taken in isolation, is a fairly damning summation of the current state of the language. Teacher confidence in their own language abilities and student proficiency in the language are both reported as being in decline compared to previous years (Government of Ireland, 2010). However, in adopting a figurational approach to analysing data, one can not ignore the broader and longer term successes that the language has experienced, including being recognized as an official working language of the EU in 2007, increasing numbers of Irish immersion schools (Gaelscoileanna Teo, 2011) and participant's reports of improvements in CPD provision for Irish teachers. Successes and challenges will always continue to exist for the Irish language, as is the case for many other indigenous and heritage language communities across the world who are trying to save their language from extinction. The review of literature for this study gave an overview of the four main challenges faced in trying to revitalize or maintain indigenous and heritage languages; those being intergenerational transmission, language ideologies, socio-economic influences and top down revitalization approaches. In order to situate the findings of this study within the context of

wider research on this topic, I will revisit these challenges now in relation to the data generated from this study's four Irish language teacher participants.

(i) Intergenerational Transmission

As is the case for most endangered languages, all participants in this study confirmed the view that intergenerational transmission has all but ceased in the vast majority of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. For three out of four participants, none of their family, friends or relatives spoke Irish as either a first or second language. The case for Meave was somewhat different, as she was born and raised in a Gaeltacht region of Ireland, and in her case all of her immediate family, friends, relatives and wider community members spoke Irish. Meave described how language transmission in Gaeltacht areas is failing, as the standard of Irish continues to deteriorate amongst the younger generations. She felt that the outside pressures of the English language were too great to withstand, and that even in Gaeltacht areas, bilingualism is becoming the norm, rather than people speaking Irish as their mother tongue. Meave and Seán felt that this situation is becoming more common and that the decline of the language in Gaeltacht areas is now irreversible. Norris (2004) suggested that language being passed from parent to child and spoken as the mother tongue in the home is the biggest determining factor in the success of IL maintenance and revitalization strategies. While intergenerational transmission has not completely ceased for the 1.8% of the Irish population who speak Irish on a daily basis, participants were of the opinion that this was inevitable over time.

(ii) Language Ideologies

This study yielded some conflicting data when it came to language ideologies surrounding the Irish language. Claire and Darragh reported a strong sense of national and cultural identity tied to the language, and that it is one of the strongest parts of Irish culture

that differentiates Ireland from other countries. Meave and Seán also felt that there was a strong grá or love for the language amongst the general population of Ireland. This may be tied to the fact that in the 2011 Irish census 1.7million people self-identified as Irish speakers, despite the fact that only 77,000 people spoke the language on a daily basis outside of school (Central Statistics Office, 2011). ERSI (2015) research indicated that 67% of adults in the Republic of Ireland held positive attitudes towards the language, and that almost two-thirds (64%) believe that Ireland would lose its identity without the Irish language. However, participants also commonly encountered parents who displayed negative attitudes towards the language, with Claire stating that "I don't really think that people value the language as much as they value maybe [Irish] sports or other parts of Irish culture" (Interview 1, May 3rd, 2015). There seems to be something of a disconnect here, with some participants stating that there is an overall love for the language amongst the general public, while at the same time they are trying combating student apathy and parents negative attitudes towards the language. Possible explanations for this include the fact that negative interactions with parents may stand out more in teacher's memories and so distort the reality of how often they are encountering this issue. In addition, those adults who indicated a positive attitude towards Irish in the ERSI (2015) survey, may be somewhat nostalgic about their experiences learning the language and so this may increase their likelihood to respond positively. However, parents whose children are currently studying the language may not display the same sense of nostalgia, as they may see their child struggling with the language or be anxious about their upcoming exams for their child. While these are just some speculative suggestions as to why participants reported some conflicting situations regarding language ideologies that exist in their figurations, it is clear that the Irish language may still divide opinions amongst the Irish population.

(iii) Socio Economic Influences

In the past 20 years Ireland has experienced an unprecedented period of economic growth and a subsequent economic recession, the effects of which are still being felt today. A prolonged period of increased immigration from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s saw a sharp increase in the number of international students attending Irish schools, and participants reported challenges associated with getting this new generation of Irish residents engaged with the language, particularly for children who arrived to the country after the age of 11. While many of these newly arrived immigrants will settle and become part of the fabric of Irish society, those children who arrived and were exempted from learning the language will likely never have been exposed to the language, which according to ERSI (2015) research, is a vital part of Irish society for many Irish people. These new Irish residents will also enter the workforce, and as has been described by both Claire and Seán, Irish language exemptions can actually have unanticipated consequences for international students, excluding them from consideration for some professions.

Participants spoke of the numerous effects that the economic downturn had, not just on students and families who experienced job losses and reduction on incomes, but also for Irish language teachers themselves. With starting salaries for new teachers decreased by 14% since 2011 (Clarke & Killeavy, 2012) and participants reporting the difficulties that new teachers face in terms of securing permanent contracts, the professional landscape changed dramatically for teachers since 2008. During this period, the country experienced mass levels of emigration, with 1000's of young people reportedly leaving the country in search of job opportunities abroad (Ó Fátharta, 2013). This mass exit of young people may have put even more pressure on the already fragile economies in Gaeltacht communities. Darragh was a strong advocate for more government support in Gaeltacht areas, as he cited the need to

develop infrastructure and job opportunities in order to either entice young Irish speakers to stay or come back to Gaeltacht areas. Darragh stated that

> once [young people] leave those areas, the language is lost, because there's no other social context for them to use it. The chances are they're going to maybe move to Dublin or maybe abroad. So for the Gaeltacht areas, industry and employment are extremely important if we are to sustain the language in those areas in the long term (Darragh, Interview 2, April 20th, 2015).

Interestingly, Seán was in strong disagreement on this point, and was of the opinion that there is a need to pull resource allocation from maintaining the language in Gaeltacht areas and refocus efforts to revitalizing the language in the East of the country. In Seán's view, the language loss in Gaeltacht areas is irreversible and that there is a higher likelihood of Polish, Portuguese or Mandarin becoming the second most common 'language of work' in Ireland, before the Irish language itself.

(iv) 'Top Down' Revitalization Approaches

Maffi (2003, as cited in Walsh, 2005) suggested that "books and recordings can preserve languages, but only people and communities can keep them alive" (p. 301). Walsh (2005), De Korne (2010) and McDermott (2011) have all been highly critical of the 'top down' revitalization approaches in trying to reverse Indigenous and heritage language loss, as they suggest that all too often, resources that are funded at the government level are not distributed to the Irish communities where they are needed most. It has been well documented by other researchers that the Irish education system is failing to produce proficient language speakers after 13 years of education (Department of Education and Skills, 2005, 2007, 2015; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2008; Ó Laoire, 2012) and that Irish language teachers are lacking in confidence and proficiency as Irish speakers (Government of Ireland, 2010). This point was echoed by three participants, as they argued the Irish education system as it currently exists, actually hinders young peoples' development of the language, rather than promotes it. They argue that until the exam focused ethos of the

post-primary education system is changed then neither the acquisition of the language nor the teachers' pedagogies will change. This is an example of how the Irish government's longest standing and most fundamental language maintenance and revitalization strategy is failing, and while some changes have been implemented to try to improve course curriculums, Claire described this as having "no sense of urgency" (Interview 2, May 27th, 2015).

In analyzing the interview data, an interesting disparity arose between existing research and what participants felt was a necessary strategy to improve language acquisition in Irish schools. De Korne (2010) was highly critical of schools attempting to revitalize endangered languages by adopting pedagogical models that have been developed for second or foreign language acquisition. She stated that "For foreign language learners the ultimate goal of instruction is often moderate conversational or literacy skill, stopping short of fluency. For IL communities facing immediate endangerment of their language, the importance of language proficiency is much greater" (De Korne, 2010, p. 120). However, three out of four participants were of the opinion that L2 learners should be learning Irish in much the same ways as they are learning other foreign languages typically taught in secondary schools, as they felt that the current approaches in the Irish education system were clearly not facilitating language development. Three participants even called for teacher training course providers to incorporate an aspect of TEFL or ESL training into current Irish teacher training, as they felt that this would be of enormous benefit to Irish language teachers.

While a lack of social contexts for young people to speak the language outside of the classroom was listed as a significant challenge for all participants in this study, three of the teachers felt that it was not the most difficult challenge facing the Irish language. Claire, Darragh and Meave all felt that it was the lack of government support which was the biggest challenge, as they felt that there was no sense of urgency from the government on trying to reverse language loss in the Gaeltacht areas and revitalize the language in other parts of

Ireland. While the government has implemented a number of policies in an effort to address language loss in Ireland, three out of four participants felt that there was little follow through at the ground level with regards to implementing the strategies in these policies. They referred to the resignation of the Irish Language Commissioner in 2014 as evidence even at the highest levels, the view exists that the government does not do enough to promote language maintenance and revitalization in either Gaeltacht or English speaking parts of the country.

5.2 Implications of This Study

In order to analyze the implications of this study, it is necessary to first revisit the research questions that underpinned this study. Each of these will be revisited in order, followed by a short summary of findings related to the research question.

Research Question 1 - What motivates post-primary teachers in various contexts in Ireland to teach the Irish language?

Participants' motivations to teach the language were complex and varied. Analyses of participant experiences of learning Irish and their reasons for entering the teaching profession, clearly suggests that a broader and longer term scope is needed to adequately understand why participants choose to teach the Irish language. For three English as first language speaking participants there were two main factors that fuelled their motivation to develop their language abilities outside the classroom and eventually become teachers. Those factors were (i) the influence of a 'good' teacher, and (ii) attending Gaeltacht summer programs. Claire, Darragh and Seán all reported having a teacher who had a grá (love) for the language, which they felt was instrumental in instilling a positive attitude towards the language in them. Participants stated that it was their teachers who encouraged them to engage with the language outside the classroom, most often through pointing them towards Gaeltacht summer

programs. These Gaeltacht programs were found to be a significant influence in participants developing an affinity and emotional connection to the language, as well as using the immersion experience to dramatically improve their language acquisition. Meave was the sole L1 Irish speaking participant in this study and a key motivator for her was being an agent of change, as she saw many things wrong with the education system that she did not agree with. In her own words "I wanted to be a teacher because I didn't want to be like the teachers I knew" (Meave, Interview 1, May 17th, 2015). Growing up in a Gaeltacht community, the Irish language was always a central part of her life and upon entering the workforce, she was again driven by the desire to change how Irish was taught, and took her first teaching job. It appears on the surface that all participants in this study, the intrinsic love and affinity of the language was one of the key motivations behind them engaging in the further study of Irish after secondary school, and their subsequent entry into the teaching profession. No participant cited external factors such as salary, holidays, potential for promotion and so on, as motivations for them to enter the profession to teach Irish.

There was little consistency across all participants as to what continues to motivate them to keep teaching an endangered language that many of their students will not use after they complete their post-primary education. Meave, coming from a Gaeltacht background, described her motivations as solely driven by her grá (love) for the language and she has committed much of her life to playing a part in revitalizing the language. Meave, therefore, was driven by a form of motivation that is classed by Deci *et al.* (1991) and Noels *et al.* (2003) entirely intrinsic in nature, in that Meave was not seeking any tangible rewards or end goals for her efforts. Meave's motivations to teach may also be linked to Motha and Lin's (2014) research on theorizing desire, as Meave's internal longing to save the language from extinction could be likened more to desire, rather than motivation. Meave also demonstrated a strong idealized cultural identity, coming from six generations of Irish speakers in her

Gealtacht community. Despite teaching in Dublin for over 20 years, she maintained extremely strong cultural ties with the Gaeltacht, using these communities as a means to motivate her students and show them that Irish is a living language. She eventually returned to the Gaeltacht finish her career, and it was these unshakeable ties to her cultural identity and her idealized notion of the place of Irish language communities in Ireland that were also key driving forces in motivating Meave to continue teaching.

In contrast to Meave's love of the language being her sole motivation for teaching, Claire and Darragh were driven largely by the positive relationships they cultivate with their students. In addition to this, they suggested that helping students to attain their desired grades and build personal confidence within students was another key motivator for them. While the gratification received from seeing students succeed may be intrinsic in nature, these motivations may be partially driven by extrinsic factors, such as feeling accepted and receiving positive affirmations of their teaching performance from students (both in terms of grade achievement and receiving tangible rewards such as thank you cards).

Seán's motivations to teach and to remain in the profession were largely driven by external factors, as he cited the career opportunities for change as his biggest motivator. The change he refers to can take place both within the classroom, in terms of changing and innovating his teaching strategies, but also outside of the classroom. His previous experience is characterized by periods of intense variation, including changing schools three times in the course of eight years, and working under several different job descriptions in his role as a CPD facilitator. It is this opportunity for change that drives Seán, as he stated "If I thought I was going to spend more than four years in a row doing the same thing over and over again, I would leave" (Seán, Interview 2, June 3rd, 2015).

In this study I have adopted a multiple case study approach, it is not the intention to suggest that participants' motivations are indicative of the motivations that drive other Irish teachers in Ireland more generally. However, it should be noted that much can be taken from studying teacher's motivations to teach endangered languages. For example, in Meave's case, her background as a native Irish speaker has influenced her to become an agent of change in the Irish education sector. If further research indicated that this is a common theme amongst Gaeltacht teachers then perhaps this should be acknowledged by the appropriate bodies and these teachers could be hand-picked to pioneer programs for language development and revitalization. If this level of enthusiasm and dedication to the language can be funnelled into the teaching of Irish in primary schools, or the further development of Irish teachers' language proficiency, then the Irish government could have a very motivated and driven group of professionals to lead revitalization efforts from the ground up.

Research Question 2 - What are the successes and challenges of being an Irish teacher?

Participants reported a number of successes and challenges that they have experienced as part of their careers as Irish language teachers. Every day successes were found to keep morale and motivate the teachers to remain in the profession. Day to day successes included helping students to build confidence in themselves and their language abilities, as well as creating opportunities for students to engage with the language outside of the classroom through Ceiles, Irish drama clubs, lunchtime activity clubs and other similar initiatives. Longer term successes took the form of Meave successfully leading the campaign to get the communicative approach adopted as the core of the Irish language syllabus. Seán shared his success of having the foundation level Irish course removed from his school, while Claire felt that the increase in teacher collaboration as a result of the CPD supports that were in place during 2008 – 2013 was a huge success.

Challenges related to three main categories; Junior and Leaving Certificate exam structures, student apathy and Irish beyond the classroom and socio-economic influences. Within each of these categories there were a myriad of smaller challenges that all contributed to teachers feeling frustrated and unsure how to combat these issues. Individual challenges that manifest themselves in the classroom were often indicative of a broader problem at either the institutional level, or within society more generally. For example, student apathy in the classroom was linked to the influence of negative parental attitudes and a proven attitude that exists in the Irish population that Irish is not as important as other subjects. This is an example of a broader stigma that still lingers in Irish society regarding the status of the language, which can be traced back to Britain's occupation of Ireland and the resultant mission to eradicate the Irish language as another measure of Britain's control over Irish people (Carnie, 1995). In using this example, it is clear that the figurational approach to understanding social phenomena has been an underlying theoretical base for this study, it is important to avoid viewing teachers successes or challenges in isolation. Rather, I have sought to situate these challenges within the broader social context that they are a part of, as I strongly believe that this is the only way that we can truly generate an understanding of the complexities of Irish teachers' experiences. A summary of the successes and challenges experienced by Irish teachers is offered below.

Table 1.2 Success Experienced by Participants

	Successes
Day to day/ classroom based successes	- Fostering a positive attitudes towards the language - Developing positive relationships with students - Helping students attain their desired grades - Creating extra-curricular opportunities for students to use the language
Longer term/broader successes	- Abolishing foundation level Irish courses - Successfully campaigning for the communicative approach to be adopted by the DES as the basis for the Irish language syllabus

	- Improving teaching methods as a result of engaging with CPD - Increasing teacher collaboration as a direct result of CPD

Table 1.3 Challenges Experienced by Participants

	Challenges
Day to day/ classroom based challenges	- Lack of confidence in teacher's own proficiency in Irish - Over emphasis on Junior and Leaving certificate Irish exam preparation actually hinders language development - Leaving Certificate exam not challenging for L1 students and too challenging for L2 students - Student apathy towards the language - Negative parental attitudes towards the language - Lack of social contexts for students to use the language - Negative impact of economic recession
Longer term/broader challenges	- Lack of language specific training as part of teacher education - Single tier exam papers for both L1 and L2 students - Increasing number of students getting exemptions from having to take Irish - Exemptions for International students impacts on their ability to apply for being ineligible for some fields of further study e.g. Primary School teaching - Stigma of Irish language being regarded as less important than other subjects - No CPD provision since 2013

Research Question 3 - What Continuing Professional Development supports are provided for Irish teachers?

CPD supports in the Irish education sector have undergone a series of changes since the 1990s, with three out of four participants reporting that until 2008, CPD was not a visible part of teacher education. It has been established that CPD or in-service courses, are generally provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in response to changes in the Irish curriculum, and most commonly in relation to changes in the exam structure. This was verified by Seán, who acted as an In-Service Course Facilitator with the Professional

Development Service for Teachers (PDST), which is funded by the DES. The review of literature for this study suggested that the reforms in the teacher education sector since the mid-1990s have resulted in a confusing and fragmented situation for CPD provision in Ireland today. When the PDST was established in 2010, it resulted in 13 individual support services and programmes being amalgamated into one service provider, which gives an indication of just how fragmented CPD provision was before the establishment of the PDST. However, a number of other CPD providers are still in operation in Ireland, including the Association of Teachers'/Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI), the Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO), both of whom provide CPD courses for teachers. In addition to this, the Irish Teaching Council (2016) has just launched a new framework for teacher education, titled Cosán (pathway), which follows on from their previous publication of the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (2011a). While the document sets out many goals for the development of CPD, there is no reference to what role, if any, the PDST will play in this, which may be an indication of further fragmentation to come in the sector. The Cosán framework would see CPD become linked to course credits, a certain number of which would be required to remain on the Irish Teaching Council's register of qualified teachers. This, in essence, would be one of the first wide scale steps towards making CPD mandatory, which does not currently appear to be the case. There was confusion amongst participants as to whether CPD was mandatory or if it was at the discretion of their school, with participants citing both cases to be true to the best of their knowledge. In addition to this, they were also unclear about who provided CPD, which is indicative of a lack of clarity surrounding the provision of CPD in the education sector.

Participants in this study had varied experiences of CPD, with Darragh and Claire's experiences contrasting sharply with Meave and Seán's. For Meave, she found that all CPD appeared to exist solely to communicate changes in exams or course syllabi, which she stated

should not be the true purpose of CPD. Seán never experienced a single CPD session over the course of his eight years as a teacher before he was seconded by the DES to be an in-service course facilitator. Therefore, Meave and Seán's experiences of attending CPD were largely negative, which offered an interesting comparison to Darragh and Claire's experiences. As part of an intensive phase of in-service education to train teachers for the changes in the Leaving Certificate exam structure, Claire and Darragh both received two CPD courses per year between 2008 and 2013 (Meave did not mention if she received the same level of CPD). They were largely complimentary about these courses, stating that while they were instigated in response to changes in the exam, they were also used as a forum to improve teachers' teaching strategies and classroom pedagogies. Claire, in particular, had extremely positive experiences of CPD, and felt that these had contributed to her improving her teaching strategies. While Darragh saw the value in these sessions, he found that they were somewhat idealistic in nature and didn't acknowledge the challenges teachers face when trying to cover course requirements for exams. That is to say, he found it unrealistic to implement new teaching techniques that focused on things like group and pair work, while also being able to adequately prepare his classes for exams. He was steadfast in his belief that until the exam centred ethos of the Irish education changes, then teaching methods will not change.

While the intensive phase of CPD provision was welcomed and received positively by Darragh and Claire, at the time of the study CPD had effectively ceased for all participants. There had been no CPD support courses available to Irish teachers since 2013, with the exception of optional weekend or evening courses, which teachers must attend on their own time. Darragh was critical of the fact that CPD provision had ceased, while Claire felt that 10 CPD courses in the space of five years was more than enough, and at the time she welcomed the break from in-service courses. Seán confirmed that another round of CPD courses was due to be rolled out in 2016, in anticipation of the changes to the Junior Cert exam structure,

beginning with English language teachers and later to maths, science and other subjects as the new curriculums are implemented. This underlines the fact that CPD provision does indeed seem to be driven by changes in either the exam or the curriculum, so one may wonder if these courses are serving the needs of the DES, rather than the needs of the teachers.

The final point relating to CPD provision for Irish teachers relates to the assessment strategies associated with in-service courses. Participants indicated that feedback was normally submitted through feedback forms that were filled out at the end of each session. Participants were vague about the content of these forms, but information gathered from participants seemed to indicate that the forms were largely used to gauge whether teachers enjoyed the course content and found it useful. Therefore, it appears that there are no measures in place to truly study the effectiveness of CPD for Irish teachers in the long term, and given that much time and resources are being put into redeveloping Ireland's teacher education frameworks, this should be a vital aspect of CPD review processes in Ireland.

Research Question 4 - What implications can the findings of this study have on policies and practices currently in use in the Irish Education system?

Data generated from this study has offered an in-depth insight into the daily lives of Irish language teachers in both Gaeltacht and English speaking regions of Ireland. Their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to teach the language give an insight into what truly drives these teachers, and it is this knowledge that could prove extremely useful for both school board of management committees and CPD providers. CPD course designers and facilitators who are engaged with teachers on a deeper level, and who understand what parts of their jobs teachers value the most, could be in a much stronger position to provide lifelong learning that is meaningful for teachers. CPD that is built with a strong knowledge base of what engages and motivates teachers could promote higher levels of job satisfaction and boost job

performance. A better knowledge of what motivates Irish language teachers could also be helpful for school management teams, as they will be able to better understand teacher's needs, direct resources more effectively and be better equipped to manage staff team morale in the workplace.

A key issue raised by Darragh, was that he felt that Irish teachers do not have a voice or a forum to bring suggestions for positive change to those in power. He stated that "if we want to lodge our opinions…there isn't really a proper forum under which to make these suggestions, which is a frustration. Particularly when you can see what needs to be done and nothing is being done about it (Darragh, Interview 3, April 27th, 2015). Many of the daily classroom challenges experienced by Irish language teachers are indicative of a broader issue that exists at the institutional or societal level. Irish language teachers in this study felt that there was a serious disconnect between Irish teachers on the ground and those people who are creating education and language revitalization policies at the state level. This was evidenced by the fact that the Irish government's most comprehensive policy on the revitalization of the language to date had not been communicated effectively, or in some cases at all, to the very people who are the face of revitalization efforts – the Irish language teachers. The Irish education system has remained one of the main pillars of language revitalization since the 1920s, and Irish language teachers in this study all acknowledged that the system is failing. Irish Teachers are in a unique position to offer insights as to why this is the case and what changes need to be put in place to ensure that the exam system serves the development of the language, and not vice versa. If education policy makers make greater efforts to engage with Irish language teachers as to why the system continues to fail to produce competent Irish language speakers, then this would be a positive step towards ensuring that the education system plays an effective role in language revitalization.

Irish teachers also had valuable insights into how CPD provision could be altered to better serve the needs of the Irish language teacher today. Examples such as team teaching pedagogies, language proficiency courses for teachers and the formation of CPD networks between local schools were all examples of ways in which teachers can engage with and be part of their own education process. Irish language teachers know the daily challenges they face and they, above anyone else, are in the best position to give insight into what kind of supports they need to continue to improve their teaching and positively impact the lives of young people. If CPD course providers acknowledge this and seek to gain a deeper appreciation of the challenges teachers face and their motivations to face these challenges head on, then CPD can perhaps move away from the exam/assessment orientations and towards bettering the education of teachers. A summary of suggestions for how the findings of this study may influence policy and practice in the Irish education system is offered below:

Table 1.4 Recommendations for Influencing Policy and Practice in the Irish Education System

Policy Area	Recommendations
Initial Teacher Training Provision	- Acknowledgement that language teaching differs greatly from teaching other subjects and that teacher training needs to reflect this - Implementation of a TEFL/ESL style teaching component into initial teacher training - Implementation of language specific training into initial teacher training
Continuing Professional Development Provision	- Provision of ongoing courses for Irish language teachers to improve their own Irish language proficiency - Provide mindfulness courses for Irish language teachers to better manage stress and anxiety - Formation of CPD networks or hubs between local schools - Implementation of pair or team teaching to increase collaboration amongst staff - Re-evaluation of CPD course content for Junior and Leaving Certificate exam classes - Provision of separate CPD courses for L1 and L2 teachers
Junior and Leaving	- Separation of Irish curriculum and exams for L1 and L2

Certificate Syllabus	students - Shift ethos from exam preparation to language development - Creation of a forum where teachers can voice concerns or ideas or recommendations for change regarding course structures - A re-evaluation of the Irish language exemption policies, with emphasis on ensuring that students are made fully aware of the potential repercussions this may have in the future
Irish Language Revitalization	- A re-evaluation of the role of the education system in language revitalization efforts - More government support in implementing grass roots revitalization efforts at the community level - The introduction of Irish Language Officers to facilitate Irish language initiatives in local communities - More government support in supporting the economic development of Gaeltacht areas

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

This research set out to engage with Irish language teachers in multiple teaching contexts in Ireland. Adopting a multiple case study approach allowed for the generation of rich and meaningful data, which was gathered through a series of in-depth interviews with participants. Research focusing on the motivations and experiences of endangered language teachers can be seen to provide unique insights into the lives of Irish teachers, who face unique challenges and successes in their daily lives. There were a number of limitations that impacted this study, including difficulty in gathering participants in Gaeltacht areas. A lack of personal contacts in Gaeltacht educational communities and a limited amount of time to recruit participants resulted in just one participant being born and raised in a Gaeltacht area, instead of the two participants this study set out to engage with. This study also sought to engage with teachers who were currently teaching the Irish language, which again proved difficult in the recruitment stages. This resulted in one participant, Meave, being recently retired and another participant, Seán, being out of the classroom on a period of secondment for the DES. Nonetheless, Meave and Seán were able to provide valuable insights through

revisiting their previous teaching experiences, and it is my opinion that this did not impact the study in a negative fashion. Another limitation of this study was the fact that it proved difficult to recruit participants for a series of three interviews, as they were reluctant to commit themselves to an extended period of time for the research process. This resulted in two participants withdrawing from the study prior to the first interview, as well as three participants committing to two interviews instead of three. It could be argued that a two part series of interviews may not have been enough time to build a trust and rapport with participants, and therefore get more honest accounts of their experiences. Allowing more time for the recruitment of participants who fit the ideal description of the requirements of the study would therefore be recommended for similar projects in the future.

In assessing the challenges and priorities associated with the Irish language in Ireland's education system, Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin (2015) called for more small scale qualitative research in this area. Small scale research, such as this study, serves to truly engage with Irish teachers in ways that large scale surveys, or even focus groups can not. As the revitalization of the Irish language continues to be debated (O Rourke, 2011; Bradley, 2014; Shah, 2014; Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin, 2015) more research is needed examining what challenges Irish teachers are facing, and what strategies can be put in place to combat these difficulties. This could contribute to knowledge of how teachers could be better informed and better utilized in language revitalization efforts in Ireland. Including more teachers from Gaeltacht areas in future studies, and teachers currently teaching Irish in Northern Ireland would also provide another dynamic to research in this area. This could also provide some useful comparisons between the Irish and Northern Irish education systems.

Dörnyei (2003) and Karabenick and & Conley (2011) both call for more research into teacher motivation, as this has been a frequently overlooked variable in second language motivation studies to date. This study alluded to some generational differences in teacher

experiences and motivations between younger and older participants in this study, which Hildebrant and Eom's (2011) study also found evidence of. Therefore, further research investigating the role that career stage plays in teacher motivation would be a valuable addition to the field of teacher motivation research. Day and Leitch (2001) also referenced the importance of furthering motivation research in the context of CPD, stating that "Teaching at its best requires motivation, commitment and emotional attachment, and this ... interaction [has] a central role in programmes of teacher education and continuing professional development in all phases of teachers' lives" (p. 403). This is particularly important, as teacher motivation was shown to play an important role for teachers in this study, in terms of maintaining their moral, enthusiasm and drive to teach an endangered language.

Epilogue

In undertaking this study, I set out to engage with Irish language teachers, to learn more about their successes, their daily challenges, their experience of CPD and their motivations to teach an endangered language. In utilizing a figurational approach to this study, I was compelled to try to step back from my experiences as an Irish language learner and from my experiences as a second language educator. I had to attempt to detach myself as much as possible from what I had learned through studying existing research in this area and try not to let my assumptions of what I thought I might find direct the path of this study. A figurational researcher will always acknowledge that he or she is inevitably part of the research process and that one can never be wholly objective or detached from what they are researching (Bloyce, 2004). Rather, they try to see themselves on a continuum of involvement and detachment (Elias, 1987) and acknowledge the role that they play in the research process. In speaking multiple times with these teachers, getting to know them, seeing them get frustrated or emotional about certain topics, I found myself taking my own reflective journey alongside them. Their frustrations became my frustrations when I saw how much things had not changed since I was an Irish language student, and I celebrated their successes with them when I heard of the positive steps that had been made. This research took me on my own personal journey and gave me a broader perspective in analyzing my own experiences as a second language educator. My own personal motivations to teach, and the motivation of my students, have always been of paramount importance to me and my teaching career, and it is with a fresh perspective that I now look at the important role that motivation plays in my career. I, as an educator of one of the arguably the most powerful languages in the world, had students who were motivated to learn for a whole variety of economic, social and personal reasons. I am able to find positions as an ESL teacher in 100's of countries around the world and work in an area where demand for teachers is high. Irish language

teachers have very few of these opportunities and yet they still teach. They teach a subject that the vast majority of their students will not use after they have completed their education, and yet they still strive to improve their pedagogies. They fight student apathy and negative attitudes towards the language, and yet they seek to find ways to engage their students through Irish and help them to build an affinity for the language. They see the language in public spaces and on the TV, they experience it as a mandatory part of the education system and hear it on the radio, which are supports that many other endangered language communities could only dream of. And yet, despite all these supports these teachers continue to see the language die around them, particularly in Gaeltacht areas, and they devote their professional lives to the language anyway. All of this has shaped my perspective as an educator, and I have left this study with a new appreciation of the invaluable and, in my opinion, underappreciated role that Irish language teachers play in Irish society.

Irish language teachers are not immune to the failings of Irish society to embrace the revitalization of their national language, and this is seen in Meave and Seán both accepting that the language as we have known it in the past will almost certainly die. The Irish government has shifted its focus from creating more all day every day speakers of Irish, to creating bi-lingual communities, which participants view as the last nail in the coffin, so to speak, for the few remaining Gaeltacht communities. Younger participants in this study were full of a sense of hope for the language and for the ways in which they can positively affect student's lives through their role as an Irish teacher. Ireland, as a nation, has undergone a series of enormous transformations in the last 100 years, from recovering from the effects of The Famine in the late 1800s, in which half of the population either died or emigrated, to gaining independence from Britain in the 1920s. Power struggles, periods of civil war and periods of economic prosperity and economic instability, all have contributed to the current state of the Irish language and the situation for Irish language teachers. What the future holds

for the language and Irish language teachers is uncertain at this point, but what is certain is that Irish language teachers are faced with a great task, and they face it head on. An Irish poet, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, in her poem 'Ceist na Teangan' conceptualizes the fate of the Irish language as a boat filled with hopes and aspirations, but which must ultimately follow the path of the river it's placed in.

Cuirim mo dhóchas ar snámh… I place my hope on the water

i mbáidín teangan… in this little boat

faoi mar a leagfá naíonán… of the language, the way a body might put

i gcliabhán … an infant

ansan é a leagadh síos… in a basket

i measc na ngiolcach… then set the whole thing down amidst

is coigeal na mban sí… the sedge

le taobh na habhann… and bulrushes by the edge

féachaint n'fheadaraís… of a river

cá dtabharfaidh an sruth é, féachaint, dála Mhaoise… only to have it borne hither and thither

an bhfóirfidh iníon Fhorainn?... not knowing where it might end up, in the lap, perhaps, of some Pharaoh's daughter.

(Ní Dhomhnaill, 1991, as cited in Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin, 2015).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample Interview Questions for Interview One

Background and Experiences Learning Irish

1. Where are you from originally?
2. How long have you been teaching Irish?
3. Do you teach any other subjects?
4. Have you taught Irish in any other schools outside of the one you are currently working in?
5. Do you have experience teaching Irish in both the Junior and Senior cycles of second level education?
6. Did you grow up speaking Irish?
7. Can you describe some of your experiences learning Irish?
8. Do you feel there are differences between how you learned Irish and how Irish is now taught to young people today?
9. Did you experience any challenges in learning or maintaining your Irish language?
10. Do you speak Irish at home? Why or why not?
11. What does the Irish language mean to you?
12. What place do you feel the Irish language holds in modern day Ireland?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't discussed today?

Appendix 2

Sample Interview Questions for Interview Two

Experiences Teaching Irish

1. Is there anything that you thought about since the last interview that you would like to bring up or clarify today?
2. What motivated you to enter the profession of being an Irish teacher?
3. Do you feel that your previous experiences learning Irish influenced your classroom demeanour and teaching practices? How?
4. How would you describe a typical day in the life of an Irish teacher?
5. Can you describe some successes you have experienced since becoming an Irish teacher?
6. Can you describe some challenges you have faced since becoming an Irish teacher?
7. Do you feel Irish teaching methods have kept up with the technology boom in the last number of years? Why or why not?
8. The last Irish census, carried out in 2011, stated that over 1.7 million people in Ireland claimed to be Irish speakers. Of this 1.7 million just over 83,000 people spoke Irish on a daily basis outside the school system. What comes to mind when you hear these figures?
9. Many authors have written about Ireland's language revitalization attempts, with some (for example, Carny, 1995) labelling them as a failure. What do you think of claims like this?
10. Describe to me in your own words, what you feel is the current state of the Irish language.
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't discussed today?

Appendix 3

Sample Interview Questions for Interview 3

Policies and Professional Development Supports

1. Is there anything that you thought about since the last interview that you would like to bring up or clarify today?
2. What continues to motivate you to stay in this profession?
3. What is the most positive aspect of being an Irish teacher?
4. What is the most challenging aspect of being an Irish teacher?
5. In 2010 the Irish Government released a 20 year strategy that aims to advance Ireland towards a bilingual society. Are you familiar with this policy?
6. Here is a breakdown of some of the key points that the policy raises (these will be emailed to the participant prior to the interview). How do policies such as these affect your day to day teaching of the Irish language?
7. Can you tell me about what opportunities for continuing professional development have been made available to you since you entered this profession?
8. What kinds of supports or services would you like to see made available to Irish teachers?
9. What do you feel the future holds for Irish teachers in your area?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that hasn't be brought up in any of our interviews?

Appendix 4

Map of Gaeltacht Areas of Ireland

The dark green areas of this map represent Gaeltacht communities in Ireland (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2013)

Appendix 5

Participant Information Letter

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education

Participant Information Letter:

Research Project Title: Teaching an Endangered Language: Situating Irish Language Teachers' Experiences and Motivations within National Frameworks of Continuing Professional Development.

Researcher: Ciara Lane, M.Ed. student

Supervisor: Dr. Clea Schmidt

This information letter, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully.

Language revitalization and maintenance efforts, with varying degrees of success, have taken place in many countries where communities are experiencing language endangerment and there has been a significant increase in academic interest in the field in recent years. Given that the number of Irish speakers who speak the language on a daily basis (outside of the education system) stands at 77,185 or 1.8% of Ireland's total population (National Census of Ireland, 2011), the Irish language is currently officially classed as 'definitely endangered', according to UNESCO. Since the 1700s communities in Ireland have felt the effects of the various social, political and economic pressures that have gone hand in hand with globalization. With the exception of the surviving Gaeltacht regions of Ireland, this has resulted in the breakdown of the transmission of the language in the home, leading to language loss and a need for language maintenance or revitalization strategies to be implemented. In the Republic of Ireland, the education system has been set as the corner stone of Irish language revitalization efforts since the 1920s, thereby assigning much responsibility to Irish language teachers. Yet, there is little existing research that gives voice to Irish teachers and knowledge about their teaching daily experiences, successes, challenges and motivations remains unclear. This study looks to engage with a teachers in both Gaeltacht and English speaking regions of Ireland, in order to give an in depth account of an Irish teacher's experiences and motivations. The implications of examining teacher experiences and motivation could have far reaching consequences for language classroom based research

studies, as this has been a frequently overlooked variable in much second language motivation studies. In addition, this study will look to analyze what implications a better understanding of teacher experiences and motivations could have for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs offered to Irish teachers, and will situate these recommendations within the current policies and practices that exist within the Irish education system.

This study is guided by the following questions:

1) What motivates secondary teachers in various contexts in Ireland to teach the Irish language?

2) What are the successes and challenges of being an Irish teacher?

3) What Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are available for Irish teachers?

4) What implications can the findings of this study have on CPD policies currently in use in the Irish Education system?

I am seeking 4 Irish language teachers to take part in this study, which will consist of a series of 3 x 60 minute interviews about Irish teachers' teaching experiences, successes and challenges, as well as their motivations to teach the Irish language. Teachers' experiences of Continuing Professional Development will also be discussed. The interviews would take place in person at a date and time convenient for the interviewee. Teachers' anonymity will be maintained at all times and participation in the study will remain completely confidential.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, or have any further questions about the study, please contact me using my details below. I will be happy to address any questions or concerns you may have.

Kind regards,

Ciara Lane

Student Researcher
Faculty of Education,
University of Manitoba
Email: **lanec34@cc.umanitoba.ca**

Appendix 6

Participant Letter of Consent

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education

Participant Letter of Consent:

Research Project Title: Teaching an Endangered Language: Situating Irish Language Teachers' Experiences and Motivations within National Frameworks of Continuing Professional Development.

Researcher: Ciara Lane, M.Ed. student

Supervisor: Dr. Clea Schmidt

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I agree to take part in this graduate research thesis project analyzing Irish teachers' experiences and motivations to teach the Irish language and their experiences of CPD supports that are currently in place. I understand that my participation will involve:

- A series of 3 x 60 minute interviews about my teaching experiences, my motivations to teach the Irish language and my experiences of CPD. The interview will take place in person at a date and time convenient for the interviewee and will be audio recorded.
- Approximately 15-20 minutes in the week following each interview, at a time that is convenient for you, to review the interview transcripts and provide feedback if necessary.

I understand that to help protect my anonymity, I will be asked to read and revise my transcript. This process will allow me the opportunity to edit out any information that I feel is too sensitive or that I feel would serve to identify me. Transcripts will be sent to me within 5 days of the interview taking place, and any accompanying comments/concerns should be returned via email with within 5 days of transcripts being received. Should the researcher not receive any feedback from me after the 5 day period, it will be taken as an indication that no changes are necessary. I understand that my specific answers and comments will be kept confidential. I understand that my name and my school's name will not be identified in any

report or presentation that may arise from the study. I understand that only the principal investigator will have access to the information collected during the study and all audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher only. No third parties will be involved in the transcription of interview data. I understand that the data generated from this interview will be disseminated in the form of Master of Education thesis research paper as part of the researcher's graduate course requirements and that I am entitled to receive a copy of this paper if I so wish. Upon completion of the study, the thesis will be will be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba, Canada. An electronic version of the thesis will be made available online through Library and Archives Canada and will be searchable on the internet via Library and Archives Canada, Google and Google Scholar. I understand that direct quotes from the data I provide may be used, and that the benefits of participation are to have to opportunity to discuss my experiences of continuing professional development and provide information that may impact on policy development and in-class practices. Teachers will also be given the opportunity to engage in some reflective practice, as I will be asked reflect on my experiences of learning and teaching Irish. I understand that there is also a potential that information provided in this study may be used in academic and professional publications and presentations in the future.

I understand that the data from the project will be kept within the researcher's password protected computer in her locked home and destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the research. All audio recordings will be deleted from all of the researcher's computer files. Any paper copies of original or participant edited interview transcriptions will also be shredded and appropriately disposed of at this time. I understand that I am free to destroy any copies of data that I receive during the course of the study if I so wish.

I understand that my interview transcript will be sent to me, via e-mail or in hard copy as I prefer (mailing expenses will be covered by the researcher).

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in this study at any time and that should I wish to do so, I only need to contact the researcher or research advisor via phone or email and state my intention to withdraw. Participants do not need to give justifications for withdrawing and are free to do this at any stage of the study without penalty. I understand that if I withdraw from the study, any data I provided will be immediately destroyed.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 001- 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's signature: _____* Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

If you wish to return this form via email please type your name and the date into the spaces provided. I understand that in doing so my consent to take part in this study is evidenced by my typing my name, rather than signing.

I wish to receive my interview transcripts via:

☐ Email: _____

☐ Post (please provide mailing address):

_____

_____

_____

☐ I wish to receive a summary of the study results. Please choose how you would like to receive your summary:

Email: _____

OR

Post (please provide mailing address):

_____

_____

_____

☐ I do not wish to receive a summary of the study results

Should you have any further questions or concerns about this consent form or the contents of this study, please feel free to contact the researcher or research advisor. Please see below for contact details:

Researcher: Ciara Lane
Email: **lanec34@cc.umanitoba.ca**

Research Advisor: Dr. Clea Schmidt
Email: clea.schmidt@umanitoba.ca Phone: 001-204-474-9314
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