NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

Early introduction of trilingual education in primary schools in Ireland and Catalonia: a comparative study

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another award at any other university or institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

_____   15th November 2013

Signature   Date

ABSTRACT

The Irish language, despite being the first official language in Ireland, is an endangered minority language. It is spoken, as the daily language of communication, by less than 3% of the national population and only 27% of the Gaeltacht population. In education, two different Primary School Curriculum guidelines (one for Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools and one for national schools) reflect the different sociolinguistic roles that Irish plays within Irish society and the segregation existing between children of different linguistic backgrounds. Also, there is no language policy in Ireland for the teaching of foreign languages at primary level, which is in contrast to the support that the European Union gives to multilingualism from an early age.

From a different perspective, at pre-service level, primary school teachers receive their training through the medium of English, which results in poor levels of Irish being acquired. Also, there is no training available for the teaching of foreign languages within the Bachelor of Education or the Professional Diploma in Education (primary level).

The development of a combined language policy for primary education for English, Irish and foreign languages is a main component of this work. This thesis looks at the experience of Catalonia, where this challenge has already been overcome with regard to second language acquisition, and compares it with Ireland's experience. In Catalonia, there is a long tradition of early immersion education in Catalan; the agenda has now moved to third language development through researching the most effective teaching methodologies.

Consequently, this is a comparative study between Ireland and Catalonia based on two main research methods: firstly, a theoretical analysis of issues related to cognitive language acquisition and European and State policy regarding language status and language use; secondly, an empirical study (consisting of qualitative and quantitative data) of teacher attitudes on early trilingual education in primary schools in Ireland and Catalonia. Hence, we explore the proposition that Ireland requires an integrated national language policy that includes English, Irish and a foreign language in the Primary School Curriculum which is directed at the achievement of high levels of proficiency in the three languages by the end of compulsory education.

The results of this study suggest the appropriateness of developing a trilingual education system for primary education in Ireland based on early total immersion in Irish and the teaching of an L3 as content subject (1st-4th class) and through Content and Language Integrated Learning (5th and 6th class). This needs to be accompanied by strong institutional support with a redesign of both the Primary School Curriculum and of the pre-service training of primary school teachers.

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This thesis is the result of a story that began years ago with a trip to Ireland, the place where we would find my mother if she ever got 'lost'. She had seen "Ryan's daughter" in her teenage years and had fallen in love with this country. I came to Ireland, to Limerick, discovered the beauty of the west and decided to stay. Many adventures have occurred since that summer of 2003 but, undoubtedly, the most important of all has been to engage in research studies.

Many people and institutions have contributed to the completion of this dream, to whom I couldn't but show my appreciation by mentioning them in these lines. My first thoughts go to Mary Immaculate College, in Limerick, for giving me that very first opportunity to start a research masters and teach my first tutorials to student teachers. Secondly, and most important, I deeply thank NUI Maynooth, and my three supervisors, Professor Tom Collins, who believed in me and gave me the greatest opportunity of my life by allowing me to engage in this PhD, Ms. Anna Ní Ghallachair, without whom this thesis would probably have never seen the light of day, and Professor Aidan Mulkeen. I thank them all for sharing their valuable time, advice and knowledge with me for the last six years.

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Teanga ár Sinsear

Sweet Gaelic soft of melody
        swift too and strong like ocean's thunder,
now in Erin's land your sound must not be heard
        and your sentinel guard in strait and danger.

No tongue there is in this world alive
        so rich, so precise nor so soft and fine;
though long you have been in oppression's vice,
        yet stately you stand, though your friends are few.

From the rabble of English you suffered sore
        their onset and their cruel law;
manuscripts ruined and volumes fair;
        the wonder is you survive so far.

Terror has come on the foreign horde
        lest Erin's children recover their former pride,
and that spirit blaze forth in every son
        whose fathers were robbed in this land of theirs.

Our churches were burnt and our cherished books
        and my thousand sorrows! Our learned killed;
yet in spite of their malice, you stand in your pride
        and will forever, though fearful, your pain.

                                        Nioclás Ó Cearnaigh, 1843

Teanga ár Sinsear

A Ghaeilge mhilis is sáimhe fonn,
        Mear mór láidir mar réab na dtonn,
Níor chóir do labhairt i bhFódla am
        a's ní bhíodh do bharda mhil i nguais go teann.

Níl aon teanga sa mbeatha bhreas
        Chomh líonmhar ámhar nó chomh chaomhdheas;
Cé aimsir fhada faoi smacht an-teann,
        Táir cinnte i státa, cé do chairde fann.

Ó chlann an Bhéarla is mór an dua
        A tháinig chugat le reachta crua;
Do scriosadh scríbhinní a's leabhra grinn;
        Is mór an t-ionadh go mairir ann.

Ghlac eagla áibhéil clan na Galltacht

go bhfiosfadh an Fhál-treibh a ndínit fhíor,
a's go lasfadh meanma i ngach uile páiste
ar scriosadh a aithre faoi cháin i dtír

Do loisceadh teampaill a's leabhra bána
a's mo mhíle crá fós! gach saoi a cheap léann;
a's d'ainneoin a nglicis, táir cinnte i státa
a's beir go brách fós, cé ródhaor, i bpéin.

<div align="right">Nioclás Ó Cearnaigh, 1843</div>

A Ghaeilge im pheannsa

O Gaelic in this pen of mine,
your forebears have you lost?
Are you some stareling bastard tongue
with no family to your name, o tongue of mine?

Have we anyone in our company
as we make our way to the wellspring?
Is any age-old word to be heard
inmingled in our whispering?

Whatever ear you might come to
night long, whatever shape
Your thin body may fall into, o tongue of mine,
would it strike a bishop, a friar, a priest,
That it were unfitting to think long upon your limbs,
For fear of sinning?

Are those words yours
when I give way to my sin?
When this heart of mine falls still,
is this a silence of yours?
And this turbulence within me
do you feel it is equal?

<div align="right">Séan Ó Riordáin, 1965</div>

A Ghaeilge im pheannsa

A Ghaeilge im pheannsa,
Do shinsear ar chaillis?
An teanga bhocht thabhartha
Gan sloinne tú, a theanga?

Bhfuil aoinne inár dteannta
Ag triall ar an tobar?
Bhfuil aon fhocal seanda
Ag cur lenár gcogar?

An mbraitheann tú pianta,
Dhá chíoch bhfuilid agat?
Pé cuma ina luífeá,
Arbh aoibhinn an t-amharc?

Pé cluas ar a luífeá
San oíche, pé eagar
Ina dtitfeadh do chuail dheas cnámhsa, a theanga,
'mBeadh fhios ag an easpag, an bráthair, an sagart
Nár chuí dóibh aon mhachnamh rómhór ar do bhallaibh,
Ar eagla an pheaca?

An leatsa na briathra
Nuair a dheinimse peaca?
Nuair is rúnmhar mo chroíse
An tusa a thostann?
An suathadh so i m'intinn,
An mbraitheann tú a shamhail?

Do d'iompar atáimse,
Do mhalairt im chluasaibh,
Ag súrac atáirse
Ón striapach allúrach,
Is sínim chughat smaointe
A ghoideas-sa uaithi,
Do dhealramhsa a chímse,
        Is do mhalairt im shúilibh.

Seán Ó Ríordáin, Brosna, 1965

GLOSSARY

MLPSI - Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

CLIL - Content and Language Integrated Learning

L1 - Mother tongue

L2 - Second/foreign language

L3 - Third/foreign language

CPH or Critical Period (CP) - Critical Period Hypothesis

UG - Universal Grammar

FDH - Fundamental Difference Hypothesis

IDH - Independent Development Hypothesis

SDH - Separate Development Hypothesis

CCN - CLIL Cascade Network

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

NFER - National Foundation for Educational Research

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

EU - European Union

ECRML - European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

HLGM - High Level Group on Multilingualism

CILT - UK National Centre for Languages

UN - United Nations

NPLD - Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity

ECML - European Centre for Modern Languages

ECRML - European Charter for Minority Languages

ISCED - International Standard Classification of Education

INTO - Irish National Teachers Organisation

IRB - Irish Republican Brotherhood

IRA - Irish Republican Army

CILAR - Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research

NCCA - National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

CPSMA - Catholic Primary Schools Managers' Association

CNMG - *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*

NUIM - National University of Ireland Maynooth

UCC - University College Cork

UCD - University College Dublin

NUIG National University of Ireland Galway

TEG - Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge -

DES - Department of Education and Skills

ITE - Institiuíd Teangeolaíochta Éireann

IEC - Institut d'Estudis Catalans

ASOLC - Associació de sociolingüistes de llengua catalana

PIL - Projecte d'Immersió Lingüística

CIEMEN - Centre Internacional Escarré per a les minories ètniques i les nacions

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

INEE - Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa

CENU - Consell d'Escola Nova Unificada

LOMCE - Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa

SEDEC - Servei d'Ensenyament del català

LOCE - Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación

PLC - Projecte Lingüístic de Centre

CRLE - Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres

CIREL - Centre de Suport a la Innovació i la Recerca Educativa

AICLE - Ensenyament i aprenentatge de continguts d'una àrea no lingüística del currículum en llengua estrangera

PILE - Pla Integrat de Llengües Estrangeres

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years, language learning and multilingualism have been very much supported in the European countries. The European Union has expanded significantly in recent times and, with this, the number of languages spoken has increased; this means that there are now a large number of majority as well as minority languages cohabiting within the boundaries of the European Union. As a result, knowledge of languages of the European Union is considered to be highly beneficial, for it promotes social cohesion and increased competitiveness, as well as facilitating work mobility: "command of several foreign languages gives a competitive advantage: companies are increasingly looking for skills in a number of languages to conduct business in the EU and abroad. Those mastering more languages can choose among a wider range of job offers, including jobs abroad: lack of language skills is reported as the primary barrier to working abroad" (European Commission, 2008a:8). At a personal level, it enhances lifelong learning and it is considered a major contributory factor to personal development. As stated in the Barcelona European Council of 2002, "knowledge of languages is part of the basic skills that the Europe of the knowledge society requires; everyone should, as a general rule, be able to speak two foreign languages. Foreign language learning, included, where appropriate, at an early age, must be improved" (Council of the European Union, 2002:37). Ireland, however, is one of the countries with the lowest proportion of people able to speak at least one foreign language within the European Union. This fact has motivated the present study, which is a comparative study between language policy developments in Ireland and Catalonia.

In Ireland, when this research was initiated in 2006, the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative (MLPSI) had been in operation for eight years as a pilot project, providing hundreds of primary school children around the country with the opportunity of gaining insight into a new language and culture (namely Italian, Spanish, German and French) in the two years before they started secondary level. Funded by the European Social Fund and the Irish Government, this project was run by a small team of people from the Kildare Education Centre and proved very successful. More and more schools were expressing interest in becoming involved and the project was widely supported by all the education stakeholders. This was, in fact, the first project of its kind in the country that gave emphasis to the acquisition of languages other than English and Irish, from an early age.

In Ireland, English and Irish are the official languages of the State. English is the language spoken by the majority of the population and used as an international language for everyday communication, while Irish

is a minority language used only as a daily language by a small percentage of the population[1]. However, the weak social position of Irish as the first official language of the Irish State has for decades been the subject of extensive debate. It is feared that it may be in an endangered position unless radical measures are taken to protect it and expand its use. The education system, under pressure to tackle this issue, has felt, for years, solely charged with the difficult task of changing the language attitudes of almost an entire nation by enforcing the learning of a language that for many is only a part of the Irish past. The result of this complex relationship between the State and the education community is a system where the Primary School Curriculum has been adapted to suit the language preferences of its citizens with regard to the two official languages. Children's experience of the education system therefore occurs in different ways according to their linguistic background and the type of school they attend, whether an Irish-medium school or an English-medium school[2].

In theory, the social diversification existing at present in Ireland should not stop primary school students from achieving language proficiency in Irish and English by the end of primary education. In reality, however, Irish-medium schools, where high levels of proficiency in Irish are reached, are unable to respond adequately to demand for student places. Recent research (Harris, 2006) also shows that teacher proficiency in Irish in English-medium schools is not of an acceptable standard. This, combined with the lack of a national strategy, has affected directly the learning of modern languages at primary level, which continues to reach a relatively small percentage of privileged children. In turn, this absence of a strategy also means that, among other issues, there is no progression between primary and secondary level with regard to foreign language learning.

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[1] At present, Irish has several regional variations, which are differentiated by their morphology and lexicon, whereas in terms of syntax, they possess similarities. There are, however, three main dialects of Irish that bring together all the regional variations to be found across Ireland. These are, as follows: a) Munster, spoken in the south and south-west of Ireland; b) Connacht, spoken in Co. Galway and Co. Mayo (west of Ireland); c) Ulster, spoken in Co. Donegal (north-west of Ireland). Similar to other minority languages such as Welsh and Scots Gaelic, Irish shares its position, as a spoken language, with English. In all of these cases, English is the language spoken by the majority of the population and is used as an international language for everyday communication (Ó Murchú, 2008).

[2] The different types of educational contexts that can be found are as follows:
a) Irish is the child's L1. He/she attends an Irish-medium school and lives in the Gaeltacht.
b) Irish is the child's L2. He/she attends an Irish-medium school and lives in the Gaeltacht.
c) Irish is the child's L1. He/she attends an Irish-medium school but does not live in the Gaeltacht.
d) Irish is the child's L2. He/she attends an Irish-medium school but does not live in the Gaeltacht.
e) Irish is the child's L1. He/she attends an English-medium school and lives in the Gaeltacht
f) Irish is the child's L2. He/she attends an English-medium school and does not live in the Gaeltacht.
Of all these cases however, the last one, *f*, is the most commonly found among primary school students.

In this context, where no language policy has yet been developed in primary school education for the learning of modern languages, historically, it is only through private initiatives that children have been given the opportunity to experience a modern language at primary level. The recognition of an increased multiculturalism in Ireland and awareness of the importance of multilingualism in today's world stimulated the creation of the MLPSI. This initiative sought to allow a greater number of children to access modern languages and to foster an appreciation of language learning. As already mentioned, the 2002 Barcelona European Council had also emphasised the need for citizens to have knowledge of two languages other than their mother tongue from an early age and to make this a lifelong learning process. Ireland, as part of the European Union, had signed this European objective and had committed to adapting its education system to achieve this goal by 2010.

Undoubtedly, the work of the Kildare Education Centre was remarkable throughout the years in including more and more schools into the MLPSI and organising a very well-coordinated network of teachers and providing professional in-service training for them, as well as periodical reviews of the project by professionals in the field. This is the reason why, for years, it was envisaged that the next step would be to open it to all schools on a national scale in order to provide the same opportunity to all children regardless of their socio-economic or linguistic background.

In parallel, in Catalonia, in 2006, the Language Policy Law, which was designed to protect the status of Catalan, had been in force in the Spanish Autonomous Community of Catalonia for eight years. This policy means that early language immersion in Catalan is compulsory for all children in the region from when they start school at the age of three. By developing a detailed national language policy and creating a highly developed network of government bodies to support the Catalan language, its implementation in education was firmly established. Instruction in Catalan at all levels of education was streamlined and in areas where a high level of immigration was recorded, extra resources were allocated. Based on international research that supports early immersion education for lesser used languages, the Catalan education system adopted a model to prepare fully bilingual citizens. At the same time, third language acquisition was also part of the Pre- and Primary School Curriculum and even though at the time there was a focus on lowering the starting age for the learning of a third language, the design of an education policy that generated fully functional trilinguals was also on the agenda.

By conducting a comparative study of the Irish and Catalan context, I set out to explore the education systems in the two countries with the aim of studying the similarities and differences existing between them. More specifically, I am interested in learning how the teaching of Irish and Catalan takes place in each education context and what factors influence this practice. Also, given the lack of an exisiting policy that includes foreign languages in the Primary School Curriculum in Ireland, I intend to assess the

appropriateness of using the model used in Catalonia as an example of best practice in Ireland. This research project hence examines the language policies and practices in Ireland and Catalonia in order to develop a comprehensive national language policy in Ireland that revolves around the achievement of trilingualism in Irish, English and a third modern language from an early age, as proposed by European policy.

The following are the proposals to be analysed with a view to assessing their feasibility:

A) The appropriateness of continuing with the existing division between Irish-medium schools, English-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools and of adopting different forms of immersion education so as to achieve trilingual education in all schools of the country. These immersion forms would be as follows:

In Irish-medium schools (Gaelscoileanna), the possibility of conducting early (partial or total) immersion education with at least 50% of the students' classes in Irish, teaching English as a content subject and a L3 partly as a content subject and partly through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)[3].

In English-medium schools, a) conducting mainstream education in English and what is known as a 2nd language enriched programme or enrichment bilingual education, which would include the teaching of Irish and one modern language for a defined number of hours through content enriched language classes or CLIL from an early age; b) conducting early total immersion education in Irish, with English taught as a content subject and a third language as a content subject and/or through CLIL.

In primary schools within the boundaries of the Gaeltacht, conducting early total immersion in Irish, with English taught as a content subject and a third language as a content subject and or/through CLIL.

B) The inadequacy of continuing with an education system in Ireland that makes a distinction between regions based on the concentration of speakers of Irish and which offers different schooling options. I believe that the current organisation of the education system is too dispersed and does not allow to work towards common goals. I hence propose to implement a universal system with early total immersion in Irish in all primary schools in Ireland, with English taught as a content subject and a third language as a content subject and/or through CLIL.

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[3] It is worthwhile remembering that the CLIL methodology involves the teaching of content through the medium of a language. This concept is extensively treated by Baker (2006); Snow (1998) and Johnson and Swain (1997), among others. Bostwick (2004) tells us about other names used to refer to the same concept: content-enriched foreign language classes; language-enriched content classes or content-based foreign language class.

Once the background for research was established, I sought to look at the available research and policy regarding multilingualism in Europe and in the two countries to be studied, Ireland and Catalonia, as well as the language history of Irish and Catalan in order to find commonalities that could help to understand the current position of both languages. Also, I was interested in learning about the attitudes of Irish and Catalan stakeholders in education towards early bilingual education and the early introduction of 3rd language learning.

Consequently, a comparative study between the education system in Ireland and another educational context with similar sociolinguistic conditions could provide the experience and knowledge that Ireland was lacking. As already noted, the case of Catalan is well known internationally for its successful implementation of a consistent language policy programme based on the positioning of Catalan as a language of prestige, not only at home but also in the international sphere. This, along with the importance that the Catalan Government accords to the learning of languages other than Catalan and Castilian and the position that third language acquisition occupies in the Primary School Curriculum, suggested the suitability of using it as case study in this study, for it could be considered potentially inspirational for a future restructuring of Ireland's education system.

On the basis of this discussion, a series of research questions also emerged in order to analyse the viability of the different scenarios proposed:

a) Is it feasible to include Irish and one modern language in the Irish Primary School Curriculum using partial or total immersion in Irish and content-based foreign language learning (CLIL) in the L3? What would be the most appropriate structure of a model of primary education in Ireland that offered an efficient system of trilingual education in English, Irish and a L3?

b) What are the main advantages and limitations of introducing a 3rd language from an early age in bilingual education contexts?

c) What is the most appropriate age for introducing an L3 in the Irish education context?

d) What lessons can be learned from Catalonia's language policy and the Catalan education system, where early trilingual education in Catalan, Castilian and English applies, that could serve as an example of good practice for Ireland?

e) What changes need to be made in the current pre-service and in-service preparation of primary schools teachers so as to guarantee the effectiveness of a nationwide language policy that supported early trilingual education in English, Irish and a L3?

This thesis is structured in two volumes. Volume 1 contains the main body of the thesis, while Volume 2 is a collection of all the appendices referred to along the research. Therefore, in the main volume, chapters 2, 3 and 4 are a research literature review of the work conducted at European, Irish and Catalan level on the areas of phsycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and language policy in all three contexts. More specifically, Chapter 2 provides, in the first place, a theoretical background on the cognitive learning of languages by conducting an overview of the existing body of research in the last decades on bilingual and multilingual acquisition, whether in the home or within the school context. Secondly, the chapter offers a literature review and critical overview of all developments within the European Union in terms of language policy directed to language learning and multilingualism, as well as any advances made towards protecting lesser-used languages within the member states. This informed the researcher of the most recent studies and events in relation to this field, the outcomes of which were going to contribute to a critical evaluation of the results from the survey study.

The following chapters, chapter 3 and chapter 4, provide an exploration of the evolution of the Irish and Catalan languages in their countries as well as the relationship between language policy, politics, social status and language use. This analysis was critical in order to understand the social position of the Irish and Catalan languages at present and their role in education. More specifically, Chapter 3 seeks to reach an understanding of the position that English and Irish have in the Irish education system and in society as official languages of the State, at the same time as determining the place given to multilingualism involving lesser-used and foreign languages. There is a frequent argument that Irish should be replaced in favour of foreign language learning and this will also be reviewed. In this regard, the chapter analyses the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum in regions with a different sociolinguistic reality, for example in the Gaeltacht, where Irish receives special government protection, or regions where English is stronger. In terms of the inclusion of modern languages in education, it is envisaged that the study of the *modus operandi* of the MLPSI throughout its 14 years in operation, together with the rest of the study, will allow for the identification of areas with room for improvement. Additionally, a summary of the historical evolution of the Irish language in Ireland will be provided, paying special attention to its position within society throughout critical political periods. This will, in turn, allow for an understanding of the changes which have occurred in the area of education and language policy.

Chapter 4 is a study of the sociolinguistic situation of Catalan, similar to that conducted in Ireland. Given that this is a comparative transnational study, it is the intention of the researcher to offer a concise analysis of the advances made in language policy by the Catalan government, as well as the way the education system operates regarding the teaching of Catalan, Castilian and a third language. By conducting an exhaustive study of the education systems in Ireland and Catalonia at the same time as

taking into account the policy of the European Union and linking theory and practice, I aim to create a conceptual framework for the promotion of language diversity and multilingualism in Ireland where the restoration of the Irish language is enhanced and the learning of modern languages becomes part of the education system from an early age, as is the case in Catalonia.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodology employed in the present thesis based on the initial research questions and offers an extensive theoretical framework for the design of a survey study on language attitudes that was conducted in the year 2006. It therefore includes both the comparative historical analysis carried out in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the empirical research carried out in Chapter 6. In this regard, it gives an account of the research methods utilised in this thesis and offers details of the different stages of the above mentioned survey study, which included the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods, mail questionnaires and personal interviews involving primary school teachers and principals in Ireland and Catalonia.

While the survey study aims to offer an insight into the issues relating language teaching practice in Ireland and Catalonia, the literature reviews conducted in chapters 2, 3 and 4 were crucial in providing theoretical and historical background on the topic of research, as well as in underpinning the issues for investigation.

The results of the survey study are then presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis, where a summary of the information gathered has been compiled and is followed by a retrospective analysis and discussion of the results.

This thesis concludes with Chapter 7, which draws together the data examined and the results of this research with a view to finding possible solutions to developing a more focused strategy on language policy in Ireland. It also suggests recommendations to continue this research in the future and build even further upon our understanding of multilingualism in lesser-spoken languages and languages of wider use. Finally, it is hoped that this study will be of value to the Irish educational system and Irish society in general, by providing a framework to advance attitudes towards trilingualism, and the management of language education.

Chapter 2

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND EUROPEAN LANGUAGE POLICY

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is, in the first instance, structured to provide the reader with an overview of the general concepts and theories in psycholinguistics[4] and sociolinguistics[5] related to the cognitive and social aspects of the acquisition of languages, whether by an individual or at societal/community level; secondly, it aims to give an account of the events that have taken place in the last century at European level in terms of language policy development, as it relates to the learning of languages; more specifically, the main focus of attention is on the inclusion of second and third languages (whether lesser-spoken languages or languages of wider use to be learned as foreign languages) in the education systems of the different treaty countries[6] where a lesser-spoken language already coexists with a majority language.

The first section sets out to provide a scientific basis for the cognitive process implied in language learning and multilingual acquisition, as well as an evaluation of the implications it has for the design of language policies within the education system when the objective is mastery in two or three languages. This in turn will help clarify the adequateness of encouraging second language learning and even, multilingualism, from an early age in Ireland. Morever, I hope to gain an understanding of the different education approaches available at present for language learning.

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[4] The term physcolinguistics was first used by Jacob Kantor in 1936, but it was more widely used after his student, Nicholas Pronko, published his article: *Language and pshycolinguistics: a review* in 1946, in which he provided a comprehensive analysis of the different approaches related to the pshycology of language.

[5] Joshua Fishman, regarded as the father of the Sociology of Language, defines this discipline as "centrally concerned not only with societally patterned behavior through language but with societally patterned behavior toward language, whether positive or negative" (1991).

[6] The following are some of the lesser-spoken languages that cohabit with state languages in the European Union where, as at 2012, there is a total of 27 member states: Breton (France); Cornish, Gaelic and Manx (United Kingdom); Friulian, Ladin and Lombard (Italy); Saami (Finland); Irish (Ireland), Gallego (Spain), Euskera (Spain) and Catalan (Catalonia).

The second part of this chapter details the legislation that has been put in place in the European Union in recent decades with regard to language learning and multilingualism and how all treaty countries have adapted to it. Using this framework, this section highlights the advances that have been made at national level in developing structured programmes focused on the preservation of local languages in the long term at the same time as providing an opportunity to current students to become multilingual in languages of wider use.

2.2. Bilingualism and bilingual education

2.2.1. Definition of bilingualism

The concept of bilingualism has been extensively defined by many authors, among them, Colin Baker, who, in his numerous publications, describes it as the ability to use two languages in the day-to-day life of a person, utilising the four basic skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading.

Even though this definition seems to be very concise and clear, it covers a broad range of possible situations. A bilingual person can use one language at home and another in the street or at work; he/she can speak one language when talking to one member of his/her family and the other when talking to other members; he may have acquired the language of the region at school while he/she uses a language of wider use in all other areas of his/her life; or on the contrary, he/she can use the lesser-used language in the nuclear family as well as in the street and only make use of the language of wider use with some friends and when accessing the media (e.g. reading the newspaper, watching television or listening to the radio). It is also possible that a person becomes bilingual voluntarily, by maybe attending language lessons (Baker, 2006; Ball, 2010).

These are some examples of the many contexts in which bilinguals can be found. This wide range of definitions has led to much discussion and research in trying to define when a person can be said to be bilingual or otherwise. Some bilinguals simply have a better mastery of one language than another, but it can also be the case that a person can understand a language and is able to communicate through it but has not attained an academic level of understanding and communication; some however can read it but cannot speak. This means that it is very difficult to measure the language skills of an individual, as many different dimensions need to be considered, such as the ability to communicate, the context for the use of the language, the age of the speaker or the stage the learner has reached in acquiring the language (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982).

A person who is equally competent in two languages and can make good use of both in many varied situations is defined as a "balanced bilingual" (Baker, 2006:9): "the implicit idea of balanced bilingualism

has often been of 'appropriate' competence in both languages". A child who can perform at the same level at school, no matter which language is being used, is also included in this definition. Balanced bilinguals usually occur because of the presence of two languages within their families or society. Baetens-Beardsmore (1982) establishes a differentiation between the concepts of *ambilingualism* and *balanced bilingualism* (also known as *equilingualism*). Under his parameters, the ambilingual person could be identified as a monoglot in any of the two languages he speaks. His level of proficiency in the two languages is equal and no interference from one language is present when using the other. The equilingual person, however, who is more prevalent than the ambilingual, is that person who enjoys a similar level of knowledge in the two languages but whose discourse will, occasionally, show some instances of language interference: "only some bilinguals, and more specifically the ambilingual, acquire a competence in two languages comparable to that of two separate monoglots of the respective languages. Even equilinguals often betray features which distinguish them from monoglots" (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982:100).

Bilingual societies often occur in regions where a minority or regional language is spoken, as well as the official language/s of the country, which is generally a majority language. People in such regions may use the majority language on a daily basis (maybe because of family origins), although they have a perfect knowledge of the minority language; conversely, people may have been raised in the minority language, but have experienced a lot of contact with the majority language, as well as studied it at school, from which they have also gained a native-like level.

2.2.1.1. Studies on first and second language acquisition

Bilingualism and the learning of second languages have been much-debated topics over the past forty years. The first arguments were based on the belief that, firstly, the young brain allowed a greater understanding and faster learning of new languages. Secondly, it was thought that younger learners could gain a better native-like accent than older learners or adults (Harris, 1990; Baker, 2006).

Studies conducted by Penfield and Roberts in 1959 and by Lenneberg, in 1967, who made relevant contributions to the initial findings, introduced the idea of the *Critical Period Hypothesis[7] (CPH)* in second language learning. According to this theory, it is believed that the optimal age for learning a second language and achieving native-like results is the period before puberty, that is, before the age of 12, although different researchers have supported different ages: 5 years (Krashen, 1973); 6 years (Pinker, 1994), 12 years (Lenneberg, 1967) or 15 years (Johnson & Newport, 1989) (Hakuta et al., 2003). After

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[7] Henceforth CPH.

this, changes in the brain will make it not only very difficult for the individual to acquire a native-like accent, but will also diminish the ability to acquire the grammatical structures:

> "Neurological material strongly suggests that something happens in the brain during the early teens that changes the propensity for language acquisition. We do not know the factors involved, but it is interesting that the critical period coincides with the time at which the human brain attains its final state of maturity in terms of structure, function, and biochemistry (electroencephalographic patterns slightly lag behind, but become stabilized by about 16 years). Apparently the maturation of the brain marks the end of regulation and locks certain functions into place".

> (Lenneberg, 1969:639)

This is related to the idea of *Universal Grammar[8] (UG)*, defined by the nativist Chomsky, according to which we are born with a "knowledge base" or capacity to naturally learn the grammatical system of any language due to the activation of an innate "mechanism" in the brain (see Bialystok and Hakuta, 1999:165-166). Birdsong (1999:3) defines UG as: "a mental faculty consisting of innately specified constraints on the possible forms that natural language grammars may take". Children, once they find the adequate structure that matches the language by which they are surrounded, stop trying (hypothesising) further and develop that specific language: "nativists, following Chomsky, argued that children have an innate grasp of how language works. Thus, while language input activates their inborn capacity for learning language, their learning is internally guided" (Bell, 2010:12).

Studies that support the CPH (Moskovsky, 2001) are those conducted with deaf children or children who have been isolated for a number of years: although they acquired a certain language level when found, they never reached a normal ability to speak their native language[9]. This observation led to the conclusion that first language acquisition is closely related to biological maturation: it is a natural process that occurs at the same time and in the same way in all children regardless of the language (Moskovsky, 2001), as long as it is triggered by exposure to a given language.

Nowadays, the CPH applied in first language learning is well accepted by linguists and researchers, given the lack of scientific proof that demonstrates the opposite; however, studies on the age factor in second language learning have generated much data and, hence, different views on the matter. Arguments against the CPH propose that UG is an ability that remains active after puberty. Authors such as Long (1990), Birdsong (1992) and Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) among others, have challenged the CPH by

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[8] Henceforth UG.
[9] See Lenneberg, 1969 for a detailed explanation of studies in language acquisition conducted with children in orphanages and deficient environments.

demonstrating that people who have been initiated in a second language during adulthood can achieve native-like levels. In reviewing empirical data on the attainment of native-like accent, Bongaerts et al. (1995) present a study where a group of native Dutch speakers are tested in their pronunciation of English by a group of four native British English speakers. The results of this study show that, although the Dutch students had never been in an English-speaking country and had learned the language after the age of 12, as they had been intensively exposed to the language and received lessons in pronunciation and phonetics, coupled with their high levels of motivation to learn the language, they had attained a high level of proficiency in English. Some of them were rated as "definitely native". With this small test, the authors wanted to point out that rather than talking about a critical period "which excludes the possibility that there are late learners who can learn to speak a second language without a foreign accent", it is more appropriate to talk about a sensitive period, which implies the existence of specific biological advantages in an early start (Bongaerts et al., 1995:45)[10]. Additionally, some scientists, however, argue that access to UG is inevitable in any language learning process irrespective of age.

From a different perspective, some linguists support a new approach that indicates that there is no place for UG in L2 acquisition. This school of thought is known as the *Fundamental Difference Hypothesis*[11] (*FDH*), defined by Vroman in 1989. In spite of L1 acquisition being based on UG, L2 acquisition is based on the "learner's L1 as a linguistic knowledge base and a set of domain-general learning procedures" (Moskovsky, 2001:4). Bergman already talked about an *Independent Development Hypothesis (IDH)*[12], in 1976, in the study of her own bilingual child, whom she observed could differentiate between the two languages she was using, Spanish and English, for which she understood she was developing two different systems: one for each language.

Based on this point of view, it can be shown that people who engage in an L2 of the same language family as their L1 at a later date establish relations to make it easier for them to learn the new language. L1 and L2 acquisition are taken as completely different processes involving separate brain activity. The acquisition of the L2 is seen as just one more cognitive learning process of the adult, influenced by many outside factors. The decrease in capacity to acquire new knowledge (language) is understood to be a consequence of ageing: as we grow older, our cognitive capacity for learning diminishes, affecting all areas of learning. The FDH thus rejects the idea of the CPH and the involvement of biological constraints (Johnstone, 2002; Birdsong, 1999). Nonetheless, it is interesting to note Cook's point of view in the relation between the level of achievement in L1 and L2. Cook points to the need to

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[10] See Birdsong (2005) for additional evidence of studies on native-like acquisition.
[11] Henceforth FDH.
[12] Henceforth IDH.

differentiate between balanced bilinguals, who have learned their second language at an early stage in life, maybe from birth, from those learning a second language as a foreign language. The same parameters, therefore, should not be used to measure proficiency in L2. As well as this, the level of competence in L2 should be assessed from the point of view of L2 learners, never comparing them with L1 speakers (Birdsong, 2005b; Choong, 2006; Cook, 2008).

Additionally, Cook reminds us that a person who shows an 'accent' in L2 should not be classified as not having a good command of the L2; this factor should not be influential (Choong, 2006; Cook, 2008).

Other authors have examined theories to support the existence of a critical period (CP)[13] in second language learning, Lakshmanan (1995) (cited in Johnstone, 2002), suggests that UG is present in children when learning an L2, although the L1 exerts an influence too, leaving it unclear whether or not this continues in adulthood or, on the contrary, different cognitive processes take place. Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) discuss the proposition that UG is present in L1 acquisition within the CP, arguing that if this was the case the learning of a second language would also be determined by these innate rules. Therefore, language acquisition that took place after the CP would "reflect elements of the first language because general cognitive resources would be recruited to construct the linguistic system, and they would naturally begin with the linguistic structures already in place". Through this analysis, which concurs with Vroman's FDH, the authors engage in an extensive study of the issues involved in language transfer.

Seliger (1978), Walsh and Diller (1981) and Scovel (1969, 1988), cited by Bongaerts et al. in Singleton and Lengyel (1995), in line with Lenneberg's theory on the CP, claim that there are different critical periods through each stage of life and that some language abilities cannot be mastered after their 'time' has passed. In the case of the acquisition of a native accent, for example, they argue it is no longer possible after puberty. On the contrary, Ellis (1985:110) rejects the CPH as regards any aspect of language acquisition except for the acquisition of native-like accent, posing the argument that the existence of metalinguistic awareness among young teenagers can contribute positively to language learning: "only where pronunciation is concerned is an early start an advantage, and even then only in terms of eventual success, not rate of acquisition".

The concept of metalinguistic awareness, defined by Baker (2006) as "thinking about and reflecting upon the nature and functions of language" is extensively discussed in many of Bialystok's publications. It is believed that metalinguistic awareness is specifically present in bilingual and multilingual speakers

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[13] Henceforth CP.

more than in monolinguals, because it implies a consciousness of the processes involved in language learning. In the case of a bilingual speaker, for instance, he/she makes a clear mental separation of the two languages, the two sets of vocabulary, syntax and of the language structure in general, but also, he/she is able to control when to use one language or the other. In the acquisition of a third language, the learner has developed more strategies, which can suggest an advantage.

Metalinguistic awareness is believed to facilitate the language learning process and is one of the reasons why older learners generally progress faster than younger learners in the first stages of third language acquisition in school contexts (Cenoz, 1998; Muñoz, 2000; Cenoz et al., 2001). Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that a certain level in the two languages has to be attained before metalinguistic awareness can take place (Barnes, 2006):

> "The acquisition of more than two language systems leads to the development of new skills such as learning how to learn; it also facilitates subsequent additional language acquisition as learners use metalinguistic awareness to explore the cognitive and linguistic mechanisms underlying language."

> (Herdina and Jessner (2002), cited in Wojtowicz, 2006:3)

Barnes (2006:11) summarises Volterra's and Taeschner's (1978) and Taeschner's (1983) definition of a three-stage model of bilingual development. They believed that, in the first stage, "the child has one lexical system that includes words from both languages"; in the second stage, "the child distinguishes two different lexicons, but applies the same syntactic rules to both languages"; finally, in the third stage, "the child has two linguistic codes, differentiated in both lexicon and in syntax, but each language is exclusively associated with the person using the language".

The holistic view of the bilingual, who is seen to have a "unique linguistic profile" has been supported by many linguists in more recent years, i.e. Redlinger and Park (1980); Anderson (1983); Vihman (1985); Gasser (1990); Sokolik & Smith (1992), although others have rejected it and carried out studies that support the idea of the "monolingual or fractional view of bilinguals", which sees the bilingual as two monolinguals in one person (Cook, 1992, 2002 and Grosjean, 1985, 1994, 2001, cited in Baker, 2006).

Under the monolingual vision, a bilingual person is expected to be proficient in the two languages in all possible contexts, without considering that, in general, it is very difficult to find bilinguals with a native-

like mastery[14] of two languages (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982; Davies, 2003 and Baker, 2006). It is more common to find bilinguals who excel in some linguistic areas in one language and in other areas in the second language. These are known as *subtractive bilinguals* (Davies, 2003).

> "Only some bilinguals, and more specifically the ambilingual, acquire a competence in two languages comparable to that of two separate monoglots of the respective languages. Even equilinguals often betray features which distinguish them from monoglots. Thus even the highly competent bilingual when he uses his language A may well make himself identifiable as a bilingual who is different from a monoglot of language A".
>
> (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982:100)

Hence, De Houwer (1990) defined the *Separate Development Hypothesis* (SDH)[15], also known as *Differentiation Hypothesis*, which shows that these two different systems developed by a bilingual child work in a similar way to those used by a monolingual child.

> "The Separate Development Hypothesis (or SDH) says that children who hear two languages from birth develop their two languages as two essentially distinct morphosyntactic systems (the SDH does not make any claims about phonology or lexicon). The kinds of clear errors that bilingual first language learners make in each of their languages closely resemble the errors made by monolingual children."
>
> (De Houwer, 2005:1)

Meisel, in 2001, carried out studies that also support the SDH. Later, Cook (1995) stated that "a single mind with more than one language has a totality that is very different from a mind with a single language"[16]. She defines the multi-competent person as having acquired more than one language and being able to develop the two languages as separate systems:

> "So what for multi-competence? At first sight the implication is that lack of mixing shows two systems; mixing shows one. But keeping two languages separate does not mean that they do not form part of the same system. The system I use for hand-writing is quite different from the one I use for word-processing."
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> (Cook, 1995: 62)

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[14] See Appendix 2.1 for a detailed definition of the characteristics of a native speaker, as defined by Davies, 2003.

[15] Henceforth SDH.

[16] See also Murphy (2005).

Jessner (1997) defined the *Dynamic Model of Multilingualism*, adding the results of her studies to Cook's definition of multi-competence and emphasising that proficiency in each language in a bilingual individual can be different depending on the individual's needs.

Instead of differentiating between the cognitive structural process of the bilingual speaker and that of the monolingual speaker, some authors prefer to distinguish between early and late language learners, receptive and productive skills and interference and code-switching present in bilinguals as opposed to monolinguals. The argument is that early language learners will be easily taken for a monoglot in their adulthood, which will not happen with the late bilinguals, whose speech will always have some kind of interference, for their language has not been developed in the "formative years of speech development" (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982:100). Similarly, when comparing receptive and productive skills, it is the case that late bilinguals generally have developed their comprehension and reading skills at a higher level than their capacity of reproduction in the L2. Baetens-Beardsmore (1982) suggests as a possible cause for this phenomenon the lack of confidence in the L2, which may lead to an avoidance of public embarrassment. In this regard, Paradis (2000), cited in Barnes (2006:25), draws attention to the need to compare bilinguals with monolinguals when looking into cross-linguistic influence[17] to determine the relationship between how a monolingual acquires and develops the language and whether or not a bilingual follows the same process.

2.2.1.2. Bilingualism in early childhood

The acquisition of bilingualism in childhood can occur for several reasons and at different stages. Baker (2006) makes a distinction between *simultaneous childhood bilingualism,* which occurs when two languages are learned at the same time from birth; and *sequential childhood bilingualism*, when one language is acquired at home and the second one at a later stage (e.g. crèche, preschool, etc.).

For many years, the exposure to two languages at an early stage in life has been considered to be crucial in the development of proficient skills in the two languages spoken. More recently, early bilingualism has been proven not to be harmful or negative for the development of the L1, as research has shown this to be something totally natural and normal. Babies possess the capability of differentiating between languages from the moment they are born. Furthermore, it appears that in the fetal stage the fetus can distinguish between the voice of the mother and the voice of other people due to intonation. Newborns can also recognise their parents' voices and react to these in a different manner than they do to a stranger's voice. Toddlers, at the age of two or even earlier, depending on the child's natural language

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[17] The concept of cross-linguistic influence is discussed in section 2.3 of this chapter.

development and the factors that may have an influence on it, have the facility of switching languages and also know which language they have to use with different people. Later, at the age of three, they are conscious of people around them who are monolingual and bilingual, so they address monolinguals in their language and bilinguals in one language or the other (Baker, 2006). It is however with other bilinguals that children may use code-switching, meaning that they can use a mixture of two languages. The amount of code-switching will, nevertheless, depend on different factors, such as the input gained from parents or the language knowledge they have.

> "The social context in which children find themselves determines whether and to what extent they use more than one language in a single sentence. The same happens with bilingual adults; they use words from two languages in the same sentence only in sociolinguistic settings in which it is appropriate."

> (De Houwer, 1999:3)

It is believed though that code-switching in childhood is temporary and on occasion takes place because the child cannot find the word in one language, so he/she uses it in the other language, or just because it is normal in the home to hear the two languages at any time, so the child knows he/she will be understood (Barnes, 2006). In society, this is regarded as poor use of the languages, although if bilingual adults make use of code-switching, it may typically be seen as a sign of sophistication.

> "Code-mixing is partly about language proficiency levels in the child, but such mixing is temporary and decreases with dual language proficiency. Young children code mix, for example, to fill gaps in their language proficiency. Bilingual adults occasionally also do this when they cannot immediately remember a word or phrase in a language. For adults, this tends to be viewed as being pragmatic; for young children (in contradiction and incorrectly) as a problem. As children grow older, they acquire the language abilities found in their parents and community."

> (Baker, 2006:99)

For Gawlitzek-Maiwald & Tracy (1966), cited in Barnes (2006), the use of code-switching among bilingual children is not a sign of either poor usage of the two languages or confusion. On the contrary, it highlights the child's competence in both languages: as the two languages have an impact on each other there is said to exist cross-linguistic influence. For linguists discussing this topic, i.e. Hulk &Muller (2000), to speak about cross-linguistic influence does not mean to accept the existence of one system but to understand the possibility that, despite having two separate systems, the child takes advantage of what he/she knows in one language to help develop the other. Taking the SDH of De Houwer, it is important to remember the differentiation she makes between children learning two languages from birth and those who have acquired one from birth and the other later, but always before the age of 6.

She claims that children acquiring two languages from birth "will not generally make errors that show an influence from the other language". Children learning a second language not from birth "typically show some interference from the language they learned first" (De Houwer, 2005:1).

De Houwer's *Separate Development Hypothesis* is in accordance with Leopold's hypothesis of 1949, whose research results show that children acquiring two languages from early childhood can, between the ages of 4-6, separate "sound and meaning or name and object" faster than monolingual children (cited in Cummins, 2001:30).

As mentioned before, code-switching can occur more or less depending on family and social factors. Some parents encourage it among members of the family, and they move from one language to the other continuously, which results in their children imitating their actions. In other families, each parent uses one of the languages (known as "one parent, one language"); or the parents decide to use the minority language at home and leave the child to learn the majority language on the street, or at school as they know that they will receive sufficient contact with the second language as soon as they start attending school or just meeting other children (Baker, 2006). Another variation is related to the development of an imbalanced bilingualism because of what is culturally accepted in the community. This situation involves one of the parents using one language with the child and the other parent using the language that is used in the neighbourhood or at social level. This seems to be one of the main reasons why children learn one language better than the other, as one has a greater dominance in the child's life (Baker, 2006).

Even though there are no clear conclusions on whether one or more systems are used in the acquisition of an L2, nowadays it seems to be accepted that the child differentiates between two grammatical systems "as soon as they have access to grammatical knowledge", that is, De Houwer's *Differentiation Hypothesis*, and that he/she acquires the second language in the same way as it happens with the first language (*Autonomous Development Hypothesis*) (Meisel, 2001, cited in Barnes, 2006:16).

2.2.2. Bilingual education

Despite all of the research done in the area of early foreign language learning there is currently no clear evidence that an early start in the learning of languages is more advantageous than a later start (Johnstone, 2002). Although it is generally accepted that "on average, children achieve higher levels of second language (SL) proficiency than adult learners" (Moskovsky, 2001:2) different investigations have shown that older learners, i.e. children at the end of primary education or beginning of secondary school and adults, can advance in the learning process much faster than young students (overall in terms of

morphological and syntactic development) and achieve the same level in a shorter time (Singleton, 2000; Baker, 2006).

Johnstone (2002), in his review of research conducted in recent years, refers to a number of authors who argue that adults can develop language proficiency as well as or even better than children. Nicolov (2000), for instance, discusses the role of motivation in adults. People learning a second language who have the determination to sound like native speakers and who spend a significant amount of time studying or in contact with the language can become equally successful. Similar to this are the conclusions of Marinova-Todd, Marshall and Snow (2000) who believe that contextual, not biological factors are the reason why adults do not generally acquire high levels of proficiency in learning a second language (Johnstone, 2002:7; see Baker, 2006:127-129).

Taking into account the controversy involved in the neuro-cognitive development of the brain (as explained in the first section of this chapter), as well as the issue of age in language learning, and despite several researchers' belief that "no study provides convincing evidence for the popular belief that younger children are better language learners than older children in a school context" (Harris, 1991:6) many arguments have emerged over the years supporting an early introduction to second language learning. These can take four main directions:

1) A child who commences the learning of a second language or a foreign language in primary education is more than likely to acquire a high level of proficiency in the long term because of the amount of time he/she is exposed to the language.

> "The length of exposure (e.g. the number of years of second language instruction) is an important factor in second language success. Those children who begin to learn a second language in elementary school and continue throughout schooling, tend to show higher proficiency than those who start to learn the second language later in their schooling."

> (Baker, 2006: 128)

Harris (1990) also refers to the concepts of 'short term' and 'long term' by using Krashen's et al. (1979; 1982) and Long's (1990) approach. In the short term, children do not show any significant advantage over adults or older learners, but in the long term, children who learn a language for years can demonstrate greater achievement than adults. These results, though, can hardly be appreciated in the context of primary school, as the long-term concept refers to a much longer period of time than that of primary education.

Additionally, an early start, as observed by Johnstone (2002), gives more time for the inclusion of other languages at a later stage and, therefore, greater room for multilingualism.

2) It is agreed that the early learning of foreign languages does not cause any harm to the skills acquired in the L1 or to the further development of knowledge of that language. On the contrary, following Stern's (1976) conclusion that different stages in life have different advantages for language learning and Johnstone's point that "advantages of older learners become available to younger beginners as they grow older, making it possible for them to re-process their early language learning experiences in a more cognitive and analytical fashion" (Johnstone, 2002:13), early introduction to foreign languages thus allows the learner to benefit from the advantages attributed to both young and older learners.

3) It is also generally agreed that early exposure to a second or foreign language develops positive attitudes among children towards other cultures and ways of living, as well as generating a stronger predisposition to the learning of languages, as children learn them in a natural way.

> "There are many reasons why the individual child or adult can benefit from being taught a second or third language (…). One reason is for cultural awareness. To break down national, ethnic and language stereotypes, one motive in second language learning has become intercultural sensitivity and awareness. Increasing individual cultural sensitivity is seen as important as the world becomes more of a global village, with more sharing of experience and mutual understanding."

(Baker, 2006: 124)

4) The study of bilinguals over the last forty years has generated much data revealing the advantages that bilinguals show over monolinguals in terms of cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness. Cummins (2001) gives an account of studies conducted by Liedke and Nelson in 1968, Balkanin in 1970 and Bain in 1974, among others, that suggest that "bilingualism might accelerate aspects of cognitive growth" (Cummins, 2001:29) and enhance "cognitive flexibility" after comparing early bilinguals[18] with control groups of monolinguals on different aspects such as concept formation and non-verbal intelligence.

In this regard, researchers often also refer to Vygotsky's theory of 1962 on how the child's capability of using two languages enables him/her "to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations" (Vygotsky, cited in Cummins and Swain, 1982:21). Genesee (1987) reaches the following conclusions in his presentation of the results obtained in the language tests conducted among English-speaking students of all levels participating in the French immersion programmes, including early partial and total immersion and middle or delayed immersion. These results included a comparison of their results with

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[18] We define as "early bilinguals" children who were bilinguals before starting school.

those of English control groups, French control groups and English control groups taking French as a foreign language for a number of hours per week. Therefore, in the first place, there is no doubt that students in the immersion programmes achieve high results in the second language, becoming functional "for academic or interpersonal purposes" (Genesee, 1987). Nonetheless, when compared with French native speakers, it became apparent after several studies that the linguistic system of immersion education students is not as complex as that of native speakers and that their use of grammar, albeit correct, includes non-native forms.

> "Immersion students' (IM) language system is distinctively non-idiomatic; that is to say, IM students' use of lexical and syntactic forms deviates from native usage in ways that cannot necessarily be labelled incorrect but which are simply uncommon or highly unlikely in the case of a native speaker".

> (Genesee, 1987: 60)

In the second place, French immersion students demonstrated the same level of reading and writing skills in English as students following all-English programmes[19].

This is followed by a final overall analysis of the results, bringing Genesee (1987:61,191) to three main conclusions:

1.- Intensive or concentrated exposure to the second language can be more beneficial than exposure that is extended through a long period of time. This observation clearly relates to the differentiation made by Krashen and Long between "short term" and "long term".

2.- Under equal conditions, older students can learn a second language more efficiently than younger learners.

3.- "Programmatic factors" are determinant in the success of the programme, regardless of the amount of time of exposure to the second language and the age of the learner.

In summary, it has been pointed out by many researchers that contact with a new language in the early stages in life, in preschool or primary school, does not imply better results in language proficiency at the end of compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, children who start early definitely have an advantage over older children who start later, but as Doyle (2002) highlights in his studies "initial progress associated

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[19] More recently, Genesee (2012) has conducted a re-evaluation of the research conducted between the 1960s and the 1990s on the topic of reading and writing skills levels among immersion students, confirming the same results as in the first evaluations.

with an earlier start can be maintained as an advantage" (Harris, 1991:9) if a few main issues are addressed. By this, we refer to what Johnstone calls "key conditions" for the success of any programme that introduces young children to second language learning: i.e. well-trained teachers, adequate student-teacher ratio for each level and appropriate teaching and learning materials: "If any of the requirements are missing, second language instruction should not begin at an early age; a negative experience may harm children's attitude to the target language and to language learning in general." (Nikolov, 2000:43, cited in Johnstone, 2002:10).

These key conditions or issues are also mentioned by Doyle, who reminds us of the need for them to be taken into account when developing language policies so as to ensure their long-term success. They are summarised as follows:

1) Coordination between primary and post primary education;

2) Preparation of language teachers with high language skills and good knowledge of teaching methodologies applicable in the early years;

3) Support for early starters. It is imperative that they are offered continuity in later stages of education;

4) Adequate design of second and foreign language programmes, allocating enough time and frequency to foreign language learning.

Traditionally, school programmes that introduce a second language as part of the curriculum at any stage of pre-school or primary education aim for the students to become bilinguals or multilinguals through continued contact with that language, a planned progression in the learning process and an appropriate learning environment that offers multiple opportunities to develop competency in the language. The difficulty is however in predicting the potential outcomes because of the different nature of each programme and several intervening factors: the languages taught, whether they are minority or majority languages, the time of their introduction and the intensity of exposure, as well as the socio-economic background and the language ability in the L1.

> "The learning of two languages is likely to affect cognition in different ways depending on the age at which the languages are learned, whether they are learned separately or simultaneously, the opportunities for using both languages in the home, school and wider environment, the prestige of the two languages, the functions which the languages serve within a particular social context, etc."

> (Cummins, 2001:32)

Congruent to this idea, Baker (2006:12) reminds us of the capacity of all individuals to become bilingual and multilingual. In this regard, he establishes the need to link the potential failure of an individual in

acquiring a second language to the possible causes for it (whether this is a deficiency of the programme put in place, or any other reason) rather than thinking of the incapability of the person to become bilingual.

> "Rather than highlight the apparent 'deficit' in language development, the more equitable and positive approach is to emphasise that, when suitable conditions are provided, competence in language is capable of development to high levels. When a 'language deficit' is perceived, a more proper approach is to locate the causes in, for example, the type of tests used, material deprivation, in the quality of treatment in schooling and not in language itself".

Another matter for concern among researchers has been what is known as the *Threshold Hypothesis*, which supports the belief that, in order to cognitively avail of the inherent benefits of bilingualism and elude cognitive disadvantages, the child must attain certain "threshold levels" in both the L1 and L2 (Cummins and Swain, 1986). This concept was first developed by Skutnabb-Tangas and Toukomaa in 1976 in a study of Finnish children moving to Sweden and attending school in Sweden when they had not developed their L1 sufficiently. It was observed that these children had difficulties attaining an age-appropriate level of competence in the two languages, which explains the authors' definition of their language competence as "semilingualism" (Ball, 2010).

Cummins' studies have been based on the Threshold Hypothesis and have added to it by incorporating the Interdependence Hypothesis in 1978[20]. He emphasises that studies in which early bilingualism has proved beneficial involved balanced bilinguals in a community where the L2 was a "socially relevant language, the learning of which is unlikely to lead to a replacement of the L1, usually a prestigious or dominant language" (Cummins, 2001:51), as would be the case of Catalan in Catalonia. On the contrary, in the case that the L1 holds a low-status and that it is not present within the community, there is a significant chance that the child will develop it with important deficiencies, which will, in turn, influence negatively the learning of the L2 (or majority language in the school). This is the case of migrant children who come from African countries, for example, and who speak languages that have no presence in their host countries. Achievement in the second language thus depends on proficiency in the L1.

> "If the level of competence which a bilingual child attains in L1 and L2 mediates the effects of his bilingual learning experiences on cognitive growth, then in immersion or bilingual education programs there may be a threshold level of L2 competence which pupils must attain both in order to avoid cognitive

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[20] Although it was first proposed in 1978, the Threshold Hypothesis was elaborated in 1979 and 1981.

disadvantages and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual
to influence their cognitive functioning."

(Cummins, 2001:41)

This vision highlights the importance of promoting 1) bilingual programs in schools that enhance proficiency in the two languages; 2) the role of minority languages in society as much as possible. In line with this, Baetens-Beardsmore (1982:144) notes the importance, for minority language children, of "ensuring that there is sufficient maintenance and support for the minority first language in order to reach the requisite level of bilingual competence to make sufficient progress in academic tasks"[21].

2.2.2.1. Types of bilingual education

The classification of bilingual education into types enables better understanding of the different variations found within the school system. The idea of programmes for the learning of two languages was first introduced in Canada (1965), with the immersion programmes[22] in French, and in the United States, with bilingual education programmes designed to involve minority language students. Nowadays, however, bilingual education programmes have developed enormously and expanded to countries all over the world. Although the focus is always on the acquisition of bi-literacy in two languages, the languages involved as well as the reason for adoption of these programmes can be varied according to the context. Genesee (1987) and Baker (2006) make specific reference to the broad classification that some authors have made of the types of bilingual education. Fishman and Lovas (1970) established a classification that is based on the ultimate goal of the bilingual programme. According to this premise they talk about four different types: 1) transitional bilingualism; 2) monoliterate bilingualism; 3) partial bilingualism and 4) full bilingualism.

Mackey in 1972 defined as many as 90 different forms of bilingual education. Similarly, Ferguson, Houghton and Wells (1970) identified the different types of goals (Genesee, 1987)[23]. Baker, however, describes ten types of programmes, which are subdivided into two types: a) weak and b) strong. This thesis will follow Baker's classification and refer to it in future references to bilingual education programmes[24].

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[21] See section 3 in this chapter for an extensive discussion on the latest developments at international level to protect minority languages.
[22] Section 2.2.2.2. has been dedicated to a full discussion on the field of immersion education.
[23] See Genesee (1987) for a more detailed description of the classification of bilingual education programmes made by several authors.
[24] See appendix 2.2. for a definition of bilingual education programmes according to Baker (2006).

If we look specifically at the case of Ireland, it is believed to be a good example of *heritage language bilingual education* or developmental maintenance schools, where schools with Irish as a language of instruction or Irish-medium schools, are spread all over the country. In this type of schools, children also become proficient in English, even though Irish is the language most used at school and, to some extent, at family level[25].

2.2.2.2. Immersion education

Of all the existing forms of bilingual education, this research is most concerned with defining and analysing immersion education, for it is the most common form of bilingual education in Ireland and Catalonia.

The principle that lies behind immersion education programmes is the creation of natural language environments for students that enable them to acquire proficiency in an L2 at the same time as learning curriculum content from school subjects such as maths, science or art. As pointed out by Genesee (2005:7): "this approach contrasts with traditional L2 instruction where the L2 is taught for limited periods of time and there are fewer opportunities for authentic, meaningful communication in the target language". Based on this, students participating in immersion programmes are expected to achieve the same levels of knowledge in these school subjects as students attending classes in their L1.

Although Canadian schools were not the first to introduce education with an L2 as a language of instruction (see Cummins, 2001), as many other countries around the world had conducted or were conducting bilingual education programs, the so-called St. Lambert Experiment, introduced in the Montreal suburb of St. Lambert in 1965, was the first to be systematically evaluated (Lambert and Tucker, 1972: 9).

This project commenced when a group of parents from the English-speaking suburb of St. Lambert, in Montreal, Quebec, contacted a group of professionals of the Language Research Group in McGill University, aware of the difficulties their children would encounter in adulthood without a good command of French. The lack of good results obtained in the FSL (Foreign Second Language) programmes in English and certain political activity that aimed at making French the working language of the province of Quebec influenced the decision of this community to enroll their children in an experimental programme where French would be the language of instruction from kindergarten. The

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[25] Section 3.1.1. of this thesis extensively explains the different types of schools within the Irish education system, whether they operate through the medium of Irish or English.

main goal for these children was to become proficient in French in the four basic skills, upon completion of the national curriculum.

> "Our major purpose was to assess the impact of elementary schooling conducted primarily in a second language on the linguistic, intellectual and attitudinal development of children. (…) We were interested not only in how the children following this type of experimental program would fare in comparison with conventionally trained French-speaking children following a standard program in French, but also how they would compare with English-speaking children following the standard academic program in English."

> (Lambert and Tucker, 1972: 8)

Despite the reservations held by many schools and parents in the area, as well as the total opposition of the Association of (English-speaking) Catholic Principals of Montreal, based on the "negative effects" of being educated in two languages, the study began in September 1965 with a group of 26 kindergarten children, called the *Pilot Class*. A second group, called the *Follow-up class*, started in September 1966. Studies previously conducted on the intellectual ability performance of bilinguals by the McGill research group itself, Macnamara (1966) and the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1962), demonstrating the superior skills of bilinguals, were taken as a starting point. The advantages of bilinguals were not the only reason for starting the programme; studies of social psychology supporting the *Critical Period Hypothesis* were also a factor. Based on the belief that adults find greater difficulty than young learners in achieving proficiency in a second language, due to a reduction of the neurolinguistic, cognitive and psycholinguistic capacities, an early start appeared to be the most appropriate option (Genesee, 1987). Additionally, attitudes of children towards the language (French) were considered to change with age. It was argued that young learners were keener to learn French because of a more favourable opinion of both the language and culture. Older children and adults tend to have developed certain prejudices and stereotypes that could negatively influence their attitude in learning French (Genesee, 1987).

As a way of evaluating the results obtained in the experimental class, three other classes were also monitored and assessed: the English Control Group I, with 22 children from the same school as the Experimental group; the English Control Group II, with 26 children of a residential neighbourhood in Montreal, and a French Control Class of 22 children from another school in a middle class area in St. Lambert. The type of education that the three Control Groups were enrolled in is as follows:

1. English Control Group I: English-Canadian children following a traditional program with English as the language of instruction.

2. English Control Group II: English-Canadian children following a similar bilingual program.

3. French Control Class: French-Canadian children following a traditional program with French as the language of instruction.

This placed much emphasis on finding children for these classes who were comparable to the Experimental Group in terms of intellectual capacity and socio-economic background. The parents (especially mothers) of all participating children were extensively interviewed prior to starting the program to determine their socio-cultural and economic background, attitudes towards the French community and language, etc. (Lambert and Tucker, 1972: 9).

Bearing in mind that the majority of mothers described themselves as having very little French, it is interesting to note the parents' main motives for wanting their children to acquire a new language: "1) to meet and converse with more and varied people; 2) to understand members of the other group and their way of life; 3) to develop friendships with members of the other group; 4) to get a good job" (Lambert and Tucker, 1972:15). In other words, the results of this experiment revealed the possibility of generating "social change through educational innovation" (Genesee, 1987:11): "Improved French second language learning was not intended to be the sole goal of immersion. Rather it was intended to be an intermediate goal leading to improved relationships between English and French Quebecers".

Children in the Experimental Group followed instruction through the medium of French in the two years of pre-school and the first year of primary schooling with French native speaker teachers. The English language was introduced in 2nd class with two half-hour daily periods, although instruction through English was expanded in subsequent grades so that, by the end of primary school, students were receiving 40% of their instruction in French and 60% in English (Genesee, 1987).

Five years after the study had started, the findings were very revealing. The academic results for the Experimental and Control Groups were very similar, proving that instruction given in French had not been harmful in any way[26].

> "The development of additive bilingual and bi-literacy skills entails no negative consequences for children's academic, linguistic, or intellectual development. On the contrary, although not conclusive, the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic, academic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children."

> (Cummins, accessed 2008)

On the contrary, the Experimental Group had gained proficiency in a second language almost to the level of the French Control classes while achieving very good results in their mother tongue.

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[26] See Swain and Lapkin, 1982.

"The linguists who rated their oral proficiency found that their rhythm, intonation, and overall expression in French was clearly not equivalent to that of the French Controls, even at grade IV. (…) Although they are not yet as fluent as the Controls, the verbal content of their productions in French is as long and complex, the vocabulary is as diverse, and they show a similar degree of comprehension of the themes or plots. They make errors in their French productions, especially errors of gender and contraction. Their free associations in French are as rapid, mature, and appropriate as those of the Controls, and they show native-like skill in decoding spontaneous descriptions produced by French-speaking adults or by children their own age. In grade IV, however, they were not as able as the French Controls to decode the descriptive speech of children even though they were still as proficient as the Controls at decoding adult descriptions."

(Lambert and Tucker, 1972:204)

As a result of these outcomes it was envisaged, as a possible solution to the oral deficiencies identified, that the teaching of subjects such as physical education, music and plastic arts be conducted in French to provide further opportunities for oral communication. Moreover, parents had highlighted their concerns in relation to integration with the French community, something they were unable to do themselves, in part because of their poor command of the community language. It was however shown that, after being part of the Home-School Language Switch (name given to the program) the students saw themselves as being English-Canadian and French-Canadian, understanding and recognising the French language and culture (Lambert and Tucker, 1972).

Later studies (Swain, 1975, 1978; Tremaine, 1975; Dubé and Hebert, 1975; Genesee, Tucker and Lambert, 1978; Ekstrand 1978) have reported evidence that bilingual education through immersion can result in children achieving better results in their L1 than children from control groups who have followed monolingual programs. It is argued that intensive bilingual instruction "promotes an analytic orientation to linguistic and perceptual structures and increases sensitivity to feedback cues" (Cummins and Swain, 1986:10), therefore enhancing metalinguistic awareness (Vygotsky, 1962; Lambert and Tucker, 1972).

"Where immersion is introduced to young children, e.g. at pre-school into early primary school, pupils tend to make more rapid progress than monolingual children in developing metalinguistic awareness and an analytical approach to language."

(Johnstone, 2002:2)

Since first introduced, the Montreal immersion programme spread quickly to other Canadian provinces, maintaining the same common characteristic of immersion programmes: a) a voluntary programme, providing the parents with the option of enrolling their children in traditional education through

English, if preferred; b) conducted at primary education level, with French used as the language of instruction whether for all or only part of the school day c) providing a "naturalistic setting for second language acquisition: the second language is acquired in much the same manner as children acquire their first language, through interaction with speakers of the language in authentic and meaningful communicative situations" (Swain and Lapkin, 1982:5) and d) probably most important of all for the parents, the same curriculum was followed as in any other school which was not part of the immersion program, i.e., the learning of English, although it was not formally introduced until third or fourth year, was an "integral part of the program" (Swain and Lapkin, 1982).

Baker's (2006) extract of the account that Swain and Johnson (1997) gave with regard to the main characteristics implied in immersion programs can help the reader to further understand immersion bilingual programs at an international level:

Core features:

1. The second language is the medium of instruction
2. The immersion curriculum is the same as the local first language curriculum.
3. The school supports first language development.
4. Additive language occurs.
5. Exposure to the second language is largely confined to the classroom.
6. Students enter with similar (limited or nonexistent) levels of second language proficiency.
7. All the teachers are bilingual.
8. The classroom culture is that of the first language community.

Variable features:

1. The grade level at which immersion is introduced.
2. The extent of immersion, full or partial.
3. The ratio given to the first and second language in content-based teaching at different grade levels.
4. Whether there is continuity from elementary to secondary education, and occasionally from secondary to further and higher education.
5. The amount of language support given to students moving from their first to their second language, including the training that teachers need to provide bridging support.
6. The amount of resources available in the first and second language and the teacher training to use these.
7. The commitment of teachers and students, administrators and politicians to immersion.

8. The attitudes of students particularly towards the second language culture.
9. The status of the second language.
10. What counts as success in an immersion programme.

(Swain and Johnson, 1997, cited in Baker, 2006:248)

The success of this project, the Home-School Language-Switch program, is reflected in the fact that 2.5% of the English-speaking children in primary education, around 28,000 children, were enrolled in these programs in Ontario in the 1979-1980 school year. National figures for Canada in the school year 1981-82 show that about 88,000 students were taking part in it (Swain and Lapkin, 1982). Today, 7.3% of the total school population in Canada is engaged in immersion bilingual programs, with 357,000 English-speaking Canadian children in over 2,133 French immersion schools (Baker, 2006: 246).

2.2.2.2.1. Classification of immersion education programmes

Immersion education is traditionally understood as a form of education in which students receive all or part of instruction in a language that is not their first language. For some students the language of immersion can be their second, third or even fourth language. However, it can also be the case that a child is attending an immersion education programme in which the language of "immersion" is his/her first language. In this case, it is more appropriate to refer to L1-maintenance (Johnstone, 2002).

Under immersion education two main aspects have to be considered. The first one is the age factor: if children are involved as early as kindergarten, or even earlier than that, we can talk of *early immersion education*. If the inclusion occurs late in primary education we refer to *middle immersion programmes*. If the inclusion occurs as late as secondary school, then it is considered to be *late immersion education*. The other factor is the length of time, intrinsically related to the age factor: an early start will secure more time for contact with the language of immersion, primary in determining the difference in success of immersion programs over traditional programs. The language of immersion becomes the medium for the learning of a content subject. It is *total immersion* when the second language is used at all times during the first years and, to a lesser extent, at higher levels. *Partial immersion* generally involves 50% of the total amount of time spent on each language. Baker (2006), however, included immersion education as *heritage language bilingual education* in the classification he makes of *strong types of bilingual education.*

In immersion programmes, the students can use their L1 in the first years to communicate with the teacher/s or among themselves, until they have acquired a basic competency in the L2 to allow them to communicate solely in this language. Although the role of the teacher is to encourage the students to increasingly use the L2, it is also important that teachers possess a good command of the L1 of the

students, to assist them in this transition. This is, thus, a progressive process in which children are free to switch to the L2 until a time when they feel ready (Swain and Lapkin, 1982).

Although different in each school, region and/or country, the general pattern of an early total immersion program at primary level is that 100% of the instruction is given in the L2, at least, from pre-school to 2nd year. The L1 is then introduced in 3rd year and used for about 45-60 minutes per grade, although in the last years of primary education the two languages are allocated approximately 50% of the time (Genesee, 2005). In early partial immersion programs, half of the total instruction is given in the L1 and half in the L2, with some subjects covered through the L1 and some through the L2. In general, the early partial immersion program can start in pre-school, with half the day being instructed in the L1 and half in the L2 (Genesee, 2005). These definitions, however, do not always hold true, and there are also exceptions to be found. In Catalonia, for example, where early total immersion applies, education is solely through the medium of Catalan up to third level education, as we will see further on in this thesis. In the Spanish region, students attend full instruction in Catalan until 1st grade (instead of 3rd) of primary school, when Castilian is introduced for an average of one hour per day. This situation remains the same until the end of primary education, meaning that there is no occasion when instruction in the two languages is balanced in terms of time. In secondary school, the situation is much the same. All subjects are taught through Catalan, except for Castilian as a content subject. Catalan is the main language of instruction throughout compulsory education[27]. Clearly, this organisation of the immersion education programme contradicts the general pattern of early total immersion programme described by Genesee (1987, 2005).

In Ireland, Irish-medium schools at primary and secondary level operate in the same manner as Catalan schools. The only difference is that formal learning of English is introduced at the end of pre-school (as discussed in section 3.3.1.1. of this thesis).

Middle immersion programmes are characterised by the inclusion of the L2 late in primary education. The L1 is the language of instruction in pre-school and the first years of primary education, although the students receive one daily slot of 30-60 minutes in the L2 that serves as preparation for academic instruction of content subjects in the more advanced levels of primary schooling. Then, between grades 4 to 6, half of the time is allocated for instruction in the L1 and half in the L2 through partial immersion. In late immersion programmes, which usually commence in secondary school, there is total immersion in the L2, as this is the language of instruction of all academic subjects, although students immersed in these programs have already received some instruction in the L2 during previous years.

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[27] The Catalan immersion programme is explained in detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Following on from the experience gained in the Canadian schools, many European countries have implemented early total immersion programs: Finland, Australia, Japan, Scotland, South Africa, Switzerland, the Spanish Basque country and Catalonia, in Spain (Genesee, 2005).

We can conclude this section with the reflection that the selection of a particular type of programme and its adaptation to the specific needs of the context must be carefully considered, taking into account aspects such as the position of the language within the community, attitudes of parents and local government towards the language, status and social prospects, etc. (Genesee, 1987). It is thus important to note the observation of the St. Lambert's research group in relation to the foremost approach in bilingual education, particularly relevant to the present research and in accordance with the views of other researchers such as Swain and Bruck (1976).

> "In any community where there is a serious widespread desire or need for a bilingual or multilingual citizenry, priority for early schooling should be given to the language or languages least likely to be developed otherwise, that is, the languages most likely to be neglected."

> (Lambert and Tucker, 1972:216)

2.2.2.2.2. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

As highlighted in different meetings held in recent years at European level, in a Europe in which mobility among its citizens is becoming more and more widespread, it is necessary to develop and introduce new methodologies for the teaching and learning of languages that allow language learners to acquire a proficiency level in languages and to be better prepared for their future careers. It is for this reason that many initiatives have been put in place in both primary and secondary education in Europe, one of which is the practice of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Under CLIL the teaching of a second language and enhanced cultural awareness are included in the teaching of general subjects. The goal of this methodological approach is the mastery of good language skills and of knowledge of the content subject/s involved. Mehisto et al., (2008:12) identify five main goals of teaching in CLIL:

> "The ultimate goal of CLIL initiatives is to create conditions that support the achievement of the following:
> 1. Grade-appropriate levels of academic achievement in subjects taught through the CLIL language.
> 2. Grade-appropriate functional proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the CLIL language.

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3. Age-appropriate levels of first-language competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4. An understanding and appreciation of the cultures associated with the CLIL language and the student's first language

5. The cognitive and social skills and habits required for success in an ever-changing world."

CLIL is a teaching methodology that involves close co-operation between teachers in schools as well as the adoption of some changes to the Curriculum, for the focus when using CLIL is not only on the content but also the language and learning skills. The latter are, in fact, considered to be the principal advantage for second language learners over first language learners. Students learning a second language develop metalinguistic awareness, which translates into a greater understanding of how language works.

CLIL contains many different educational approaches implicit in the learning of a second language. The name given to each one of them depends on the time of exposure to the language, whether one or two languages are used for CLIL; one or several subjects are taught through CLIL. Also, it can consist of an intensive exposure through a short period of time or a prolonged exposure through a number of contact hours per week. The possibilities are endless. Mehisto et al. (2008) refer to as many as thirteen language education programmes that can be included under the term CLIL:

a) Language showers
b) CLIL camps
c) Student exchanges
d) Local projects
e) International projects
f) Family stays
g) Modules
h) Word-study abroad
i) One or more subjects
j) Partial immersion
k) Total immersion
l) Two-way immersion
m) Double immersion.

The practice of CLIL is not new, although it was not always defined as such. It has existed as far back as the 19th century in countries such as Luxembourg, Belgium and Malta, where it is still used routinely in all schools. Other countries, such as Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia

and the United Kingdom (Wales) have offered CLIL in minority or regional languages since the 1940s, but it is only since the 1990s that it has become more popular. In Ireland, where CLIL is an integral part of mainstream education at primary level and involves the two official State languages, English, and Irish, this practice has been present since the early 1920s (Eurydice, 2006). Whereas until then only a reduced number of pupils were involved in this type of learning, nowadays the practice of CLIL reaches a wide range of schools, communities and languages. In the US, content-based ESL (English Second Language) programmes, where English is used as the language of instruction for students from different linguistic backgrounds, are also very common. These programmes use a simplified form of English, as well as visual aids and gestures to explain content.

It is interesting to note that although CLIL provision is generally offered to all students on equal terms, some countries have established different types of access requirements. In France and Romania, for instance, students' level of the target language is tested prior to commencing any course. In others, such as Slovakia and Bulgaria, general school marks are taken into account and an exam needs to be passed before entering a course. Other countries also opt to review the students' general knowledge (Eurydice, 2006).

The languages chosen for CLIL can be foreign languages, regional and/or minority languages or also, second state languages. However, the target language usually chosen for provision of CLIL is either a foreign language or a regional or minority language. In the case of foreign languages, English, German and French are the most popular languages taught. The assessment of the subject is normally carried out in the target language, and some countries offer special certification to their students.

In primary school, art, sports and environmental science are the activities normally chosen for teaching through CLIL. Mathematics is also one of the subjects chosen. The intention is to give the same importance to the learning of the language as to the content subject, to make the most of the curricular time available and to involve the pupils in an active environment that allows them to have real experiences in the language/s they are learning. Due to the autonomy of the schools and the different types of projects, however, the subjects taught can vary from one country to another.

With regard to the preparation of primary school teachers, who play a major role in the attainment of results, it is rare to find teachers who hold appropriate qualifications related to CLIL provision. In general, teachers have been trained to teach content subjects or languages, but the difficulty lies in possessing the relevant skills to effectively teach a second language through a non-language subject. Those willing to teach through CLIL therefore need to have a good knowledge that encompasses both the subject and the language to be taught as well as having acquired the necessary skills covering the methodologies necessary for teaching in a foreign language. This is one of the biggest problems for

many countries, as there are not enough teachers qualified to do so. Some countries, however, tackle this difficulty by setting the requirement that teachers must be specialised in two subjects, a non-language subject and a foreign language, i.e. Germany, Austria and Norway. In the United Kingdom, for example, in-service training of teachers for CLIL is non-existent given that CLIL is rare and only available in some schools. Other certification requirements can be classified following the criteria summarised below (Eurydice, 2006:45):

1. Be native speakers of the target language

2. Have completed a course or studied in the target language

3. Be undergoing in-service training on CLIL type provision

4. Have taken a language test or examination.

Many benefits have been internationally identified in relation to the teaching of languages through CLIL, as stressed by Davison and Williams (2001) and Baker (2006:251): "CLIL allows students to learn a language faster because there is an integration of language and content, they can acquire competence in the language at academic level, as well as at social level", however, its implications make the implementation difficult. As already mentioned, the preparation of teachers is still under development in the majority of countries. As a matter of fact, the most common complaint from teachers is in relation to the lack of initial and in-service training programs in methodologies for the teaching of subjects in a language other than the normal language of instruction. In spite of a clear lack of trained teachers available, it must be said that in-service training courses are becoming increasingly available for teachers in several countries through special initiatives organised by educational bodies.

Other existing barriers relate to the paucity of teaching materials available, the high cost of this type of provision and, in some countries, a restrictive legislation that only accepts one language as a possible language of instruction in the country (Eurydice, 2006).

Alongside these difficulties are concerns expressed by parents and educators, partly due to the lack of available studies on outcomes obtained in pilot projects and other programmes in general. These concerns revolve around two main topics: firstly, the potential negative effect of learning a content subject through a language that is not well known to the students; secondly, the possible impact on the L1 that this practice may have, for reasons such as learning the vocabulary in the L2 and not in the L1 (Mehisto et al., 2008).

From an alternative perspective, there are, at present, a number of initiatives being promoted at European level that support innovative projects using CLIL. The first one, the European Label for

Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning, which acknowledges the best projects in each country, is open to all levels and aspects of education and seeks to improve the quality of language teaching.

The second, the European EuroCLIC network, was the first of this type set up at European level. Its aim is to share experiences and to promote collaboration among countries in the field of teaching languages through a content subject. Although this internet based initiative worked consistently between 1997 and 2003, it has currently been updated with the creation of a new website: the CLIL Cascade Network[28]. This website, which was officially launched in 2008 and has the support of the European Commission, comprises over 20 institutions involved in CLIL programmes from many European countries. The CCN supports the dissemination of ideas on good practice. It also offers a wide range of services to its users such as: a database of contacts for teachers, schools and practitioners; a teacher and learning area, where examples of best practice are shared; a resource area and a professional development area, where new programmes are designed through joint collaboration (CLIL Cascade Network, 2010).

2.2.3. Trilingual education and trilingualism

The concept of trilingualism serves as an umbrella for different situations: "children growing up in a trilingual environment, adults living in a trilingual or multilingual community, and fluent bilinguals who have learned a third language at school or for other reasons" (Barron-Hauwaert, 2000:2). If we focus on the early acquisition of trilingualism we can understand that a child has been listening to three languages from birth, which can also be defined as "trilingual first language acquisition" or "early trilingualism". Some authors, however, apply the same definition to the idea of a child listening to three languages not from birth, but before producing any word.

Hoffmann (2001), cited in Barnes (2006), defines the different social circumstances in which trilingualism can occur:

1. Trilingual children who are brought up with two home languages that are different from the one spoken in the wider community.
2. Children who grow up in a bilingual community and whose home language (that of either one of the parents) is different from the community languages.
3. Third language learners, that is, bilinguals who acquire a third language in the school context.
4. Bilinguals who have become trilinguals through immigration.

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[28] Henceforth CCN.

5. Members of trilingual communities.

Early trilingualism that occurs when a child is exposed to three languages from birth is rare and not as common as trilingualism that is acquired at school by, for example, learning two languages in the school and a third one at home. Cenoz (2000), cited in Wojtowicz (2006:2) defines four types of trilingualism depending on the order in which languages are acquired:

> "1. The three language systems are acquired consecutively.
>
> 2. The third language system is already acquired before the simultaneous acquisition of two other languages.
>
> 3. The first language system is already acquired before the simultaneous acquisition of the two other languages.
>
> 4. There is simultaneous contact with three language systems."

The learning of a third language in a school context is a very common experience in many multilingual communities around the world, and it is becoming more common in European countries, due to the constant mobility of people, a growing interest in introducing children to a foreign language at an early stage of their education, the development of minority language communities due to immigration and the teaching of minority languages at school (Cenoz et al., 2001; Cenoz, 2005). In the same way as second language acquisition in the school context refers to the learning of an L2 as a content subject and bilingual education refers to the use of two languages as languages of instruction, third language acquisition refers to the learning of an L3 as a subject and trilingual education refers to the use of three languages as languages of instruction (Cenoz et al., 2001).

Trilingual schooling can be found in many countries around the world. In the European context, however, it is currently being developed in different countries and regions, such as Friesland, in The Netherlands (with Frisian, Dutch and English); Finland (with Finnish, Swedish and English), Estonia (Estonian, Russian and English) or Luxembourg (Luxembourgish, French and German), among others, and in Spain, in regions such as the Basque Country (with Basque, Spanish and English); Catalonia (with Catalan, Spanish and English); Valencia (with Valencian, Spanish and English) and Galicia (with Galician, Spanish and English).

The positive effects of trilingualism at social, cultural and cognitive levels are highly acclaimed, as is the case for bilingualism. Trilinguals are found to have a special predisposition and interest in the learning of languages and cultures of other countries (Clyne et al., 2004, cited in Baker 2006).

Although there have been some studies undertaken on trilingualism, at present researchers base their work on what is known about bilingualism when referring to trilingualism, as research in this area is

admittedly still at a preliminary stage. As a matter of fact, for some authors such as Wojtowicz, the learning of languages after the L2 is known as third language acquisition, but so is the learning of any other language after that: "First, mother, or native language (or languages if learned simultaneously from birth) are referred to as L1, the subsequent language (or languages if learned concurrently) as L2, and the following or target language(s) as L3 (regardless of how many languages may actually follow the second language learned)" (Wojtowicz, 2006:2). Other authors refer to the learning of languages after the L2 as multilingualism and multilingual acquisition i.e. Cenoz (2005). Regardless of the term they use, researchers in this field of linguistics agree with the positive advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals in the acquisition of a third language, in terms of increased learning strategies, cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness, the latter being a crucial factor: "bilingualism does not hinder the acquisition of an additional language and, on the contrary, in most cases bilingualism favours the acquisition of a third language" (Cenoz and Genesee, 1998:20, cited in Baker, 2006: 108; Cenoz, 2005; Cenoz and Valencia, 1994, Thomas, 1988; Lasagabaster, 1997; Jessner, 1999). Nonetheless, the study of third language acquisition or multilingualism is more complex than the study of bilingualism because of the various languages implied in the process and the multiple combinations possible regarding the order of acquisition, the sociolinguistic context, the language group to which each language belongs and the age of acquisition, as well as the attitudes of students towards the third language (Cenoz et al., 2001; Cenoz, 2005).

With regard to languages that belong to the same language group, it is generally accepted that these are more likely to give rise to a higher degree of cross-linguistic influence and of code-mixing in their learners. Barnes (2006:29) makes reference to this:

> "In the context of the Iberian Peninsula for example, the trilingual acquisition of Spanish, Catalan and English is likely to present different characteristics from the acquisition of Spanish, Basque and English. Spanish and Catalan are not only Indo-European languages like English, but are also very close in linguistic distance. On the other hand, Basque is a non-Indo-European language unlike Spanish and English which, however, are relatively linguistically distant from each other."

There is, therefore, an inter-relation in the use of lexicon and grammatical structures from one language to the other, especially if they possess similarities in phonetics, vocabulary and syntax (Mohle, 1989; Singleton, 1987, cited in Cenoz, 2005). When two languages differ considerably from each other it is more unlikely that the speaker will resort to code-switching. De Angelis (2007) defines the term "language distance", as "the distance that a linguist can objectively and formally define and identify between languages and language families" (2007:22); and "perceived language distance" as "the distance that learners perceive to exist between languages that may, or may not, correspond to the distance that actually exists between them". This is explained because "learners perceive similarities at various levels,

and form and meaning are not equally relied upon in this process". Kellerman had already referred to this idea in 1983, calling it psychotypology. Cross-linguistic influence can, therefore, depend on the nature and number of languages that each learner is familiar with and the level of proficiency, as well as how the person perceives one language to be close to another: "relatedness does not automatically imply that cross-linguistic influence will occur" (De Angelis, 2007:23).

From a different angle, some authors argue that speakers of more than one language take the language they know that is more similar to the new language (which does not need to be the native language) and use it as the language for comparison or base language; hence, the *Base Language Hypothesis* by Chandrasekhar (1998). In this regard, Cenoz points to Ringbom's (1987) suggestion that "transfer is more likely from the first language than from later-learned languages".

New research in the area, however, has developed the idea that multilingual speakers can rely on more than one language, i.e., have more than one language base when acquiring an additional language (De Angelis, 2007:26). In fact, multilingual speakers of languages belonging to the same language family could take several of them as reference:

> "When languages belong to the same language family, but not to the same subgroup within the family, two general tendencies have been identified. First, learners continue to be influenced by the languages that are more closely related to the target language, irrespective of whether this is the native or a non-native language. Second, learners may be influenced by more than one language at the same time (combined cross-linguistic influence)."

(De Angelis, 2007:133)

Genesee details a study conducted in Canadian schools where English-speaking children were attending instruction in French, Hebrew and English, French and Hebrew being non-native languages and the languages of immersion. Whereas French was chosen for its official status within Canada and Quebec, the reason for choosing Hebrew was because of its religious and cultural significance. The treatment of this experiment would seem appropriate in that it shares many similarities with the cases of Catalonia and Ireland, which will be reviewed and discussed in further chapters of this thesis. In this study, three different cases were examined:

-Case 1: French and Hebrew were the only languages used for instruction until 3rd class of primary school, when English was introduced

-Case 2: French and Hebrew were the only languages used for instruction until 4th class of primary school, when English was introduced

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- Case 3: French, Hebrew and English are used as languages of instruction from pre-school. In this programme the exposure to French grew gradually, from five hours per week in 1st class to twelve hours per week in grades 5 and 6. At the same time, instruction through English was reduced: from 12 hours per week in grade 1 to nine hours per week in grade 6. The teaching of Hebrew was also gradually decreased.

Early hypothesis of this experiment's results expected a limited level of proficiency by students in the two immersion languages as compared to those following early bilingual education programmes. Also, there was a concern regarding the development of the L1, which led to the comparison of all groups with students attending non-immersion programmes and students involved in bilingual education programmes by subjecting them to a series of language proficiency tests. The results obtained can be summarised as follows:

1. The mastery of the L1, English, was not adversely affected by either delaying its start or reducing the number of contact hours with it in any of the trilingual education programmes.

2. With regard to the acquisition of French, it was found that students in cases 1 and 2 obtained similar results to students in bilingual education programmes; however, students in case 3 obtained lower results. Nevertheless, all three cases scored higher than students attending non-immersion programmes.

Achievement in French was found to be more similar among students in cases 1 and 2 and students in bilingual education programmes; however, students in case 3 obtained lower results than their counterparts. Nevertheless, all three cases scored higher than students attending non-immersion programmes

3. The level of proficiency of Hebrew was very high among students in cases 1 and 2, although students in case 3 showed poorer results in most of the tests, except for the reading comprehension.

In summary, two main observations can be drawn from this experiment: 1) The evident wisdom of delaying the introduction of the L1 (in this case, English) to favor the achievement of better results in the L2; 2) Proficiency in the L1 does not suffer negatively when introduced in grades 3 and 4 of primary education in trilingual education programmes (Genesee, 1987).

Cenoz conducted a study on cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of a third language (English) in the Basque country region of Spain, with the participation of 90 students from a Basque school where Basque was the language of instruction, although all the students were bilinguals in Castilian and Basque. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. Are there any differences in oral production in English when the results obtained by subjects with different first languages (Basque, Basque and Castilian or Castilian) are compared?
2. Are oral production results/outcomes in English different at different ages?
3. Is cross-linguistic influence affected by L1 or by typological distance?
4. Is cross-linguistic influence affected by age?

Among the results of this study, it is of special relevance to note that there was no difference in the results for oral production in the students, regardless of whether their L1 was either Basque or Castilian. With regard to the cross-linguistic influence, however, there were more words borrowed from Castilian than from Basque, again, irrespective of the L1. This is because "transfer from an Indo-European language (Castilian) is preferred to transfer from a non-indo-European language" (Cenoz, 2005: 286). These results support the idea that cross-linguistic influence can be more prejudiced by the language group and the status of the language from which interference is coming than by the L1 of the speaker (Cenoz, 2005).

Barron-Hauwaert (2000) carried out a study among ten trilingual families where the parents spoke two different languages and lived in a country where a third language was spoken. This meant that their children were exposed to three languages, although in different ways. Questions emerged in relation to "how the languages are acquired, the parents' educational choices and the social and cultural issues arising from daily contactwith two or more languages and cultures" (Barron-Hauwaert, 2000:2). In light of this, the author proposed four research questions:

1. - How do the three languages co-exist in the family?
2. - Which choices do parents make regarding their child's education?
3. - How does the family deal with language mixing?
4. - How do families define themselves culturally and linguistically?

In the results of her study, Barron-Hauwaert suggested that there is a progressive evolution in the use of languages in a trilingual child. In all cases except for two it was observed that, before the age of three, the child used the parents' languages. Between the ages of 3 and 6, the L3 was learned at school and used in both, the school and in the community, whereas the L1 and L2 were being used at home. However, from the age of 6 onwards, L3 became the L1 of the children and, thus, their preferred language at home. In terms of language usage within the home, there were different situations: a) parents who used their own language with their children and used either one of their languages or a combination of the two languages for communication among themselves; b) parents who decided to use a majority language in the belief that it would benefit the child to have it as L1, and c) parents who

emphasised the use of the minority language in the home so as to preserve its use in the family and the child's knowledge of it, having decided that the majority language/s would be easily learned.

Nevertheless, the author also found that, in the case of a minority language being one of the parents' first languages it could be "displaced by the other parent's language, if it was perceived as being more "prestigious than the local language" (Barron-Hawaert, 2000:10). Moreover, the choice of school was described as very relevant. In this study, children were attending schools in Switzerland and Belgium, some of them local schools and others multilingual schools or European schools, where a special regime applied regarding the learning of languages. Clearly, children attending the latter type of schools are generally in contact with a larger number of languages than those attending local schools, given the existence of multiple nationalities (Barron-Hauwaert, 2000).

The conclusion reached in this study was that the parents' level of involvement in their children's education is decisive in raising trilingual children, especially when minority languages are included in the process. The level of proficiency reached by the child in the different languages will depend, however, on many different factors, such as the amount of input received through contact with peers or the social status of the languages learned.

Cummins (2001) describes the conditions for instruction he believes are essential to the acquisition of bilingual and trilingual competency through schooling: meaning, language and use. In the description of meaning, he bases his argument on Krashen's definition of comprehensible input, or the need for the learner to cognitively understand what he is learning as a unique necessary condition to achieve a high level of competency. Krashen's rationale is that oral, written and reading activities can provide enough input to make the process successful and that using the language is not a requirement. Cummins supports this view but, in his experience, he analyses the reality in schools with bilingual and trilingual education programmes, seeing the impossibility of focusing on providing comprehensible input to the students. He therefore adds two more variables that can facilitate language learning: metalinguistic awareness and use, by "focusing on demystifying how the target language works, together with a focus on encouraging active use of the target language in oral and written modalities" (Cummins, 2001:62).

Barnes published a study in 2006 in which she reflects on the language development of her daughter between the age of one year and eleven months and three years and six months. Her daughter, Jenny, has been brought up in a trilingual environment from birth. Her father is Basque, her mother is English, and they live in the Basque Country, a region in the north of Spain with two official languages: Spanish and Basque. Thus, the girl acquires English from her mother and other sources, such as videos, books, music, and television, as well as from visiting family members. She is in contact with Spanish because, as the state's official language, it is widely used in the community, as well as Basque, a minority language,

which is the language her father uses all the time. The study focuses on Jenny's development of English and, more specifically, on the "acquisition of questions in this language from both a formal and functional perspective" (Barnes, 2006:2). It attempts to analyse whether "the child develops her English and interrogative behaviour in a way that is similar to other monolingual and bilingual subjects even though in her case it is a third language" (Barnes, 2006:5).

Barnes bases her argument and hypothesis on the belief that a multilingual person does not have two, in the case of bilinguals, or three, in the case of trilinguals, first languages added, but that they possess a personal multi-competent knowledge, following Cook's approach. The conclusions of her study are in accordance with the *Autonomous Development Hypothesis* formulated by Meisel (2001), which states that a child develops the languages in separate systems and that cross-linguistic influence will appear as the languages interact with each other. She also noted that her daughter developed three languages in the same way as a monolingual person would have done and that she did not make more lexical or morpho-syntactic mistakes than the average for a monolingual or a bilingual person. In concluding, Barnes says that "….given the right linguistic environment, albeit with limited input, a third language can develop in proficiency equivalent to that of monolinguals".

In conclusion, although it is clear that greater research and field work are required in the study of trilingual acquisition, especially because of the complexity implied in measuring and comparing different cases, studies carried out in the area are already very informative and form a path for future developments in the field. As highlighted in Barnes' study, due to globalisation and European mobility, many children are being raised in areas surrounded by many languages. They may live in the home country of one of their parents or in a totally foreign environment. It is their parents' and society's task to decide on the right approach to language learning. Policy makers and educators must, therefore, pay close attention to aspects mentioned in this chapter, such as metalinguistic awareness, attitude of the students towards the new languages, typology of languages, age of start, etc. in the design of curricular guidelines. The consideration of other pedagogical approaches also discussed in this thesis, i.e. preparation of teachers, materials available, cross-curricular co-ordination and coordination between educational levels may also make a positive impact.

2.3. The rise of foreign language learning in education

Before the 18th century, the idea of learning foreign languages had hardly been considered in the majority of European education systems. Although in Germany it was included in secondary schools, it was not until the 19th century that the teaching of a foreign language was introduced as a curriculum subject in countries such as Spain, mainly due to educational, social and economic reforms (Eurydice 2001a). In other countries, such as the Netherlands, for example, English, German and French became compulsory subjects in secondary education and, in Belgium, three foreign languages: Dutch, English and German were offered from 1863 in secondary schools. For reasons such as territorial occupation by minority groups, several languages were being used in other European countries at the time. This multilingualism brought about change so that governments implemented learning of their chosen official language as a means of confederation. Examples of this can be found in the Baltic States, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (Eurydice, 2001a).

In general, before the second part of the 20th century, teaching of foreign languages was confined to very few European countries and only at second and third level. Harris and Conway (2002) and Harris (1991), however, make reference to how UNESCO and the Council of Europe in the 1950s considered the introduction of a modern language at an earlier stage.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, while the education systems in Europe were experiencing major changes, which affected the teaching of languages, in the United States primary schools began offering foreign languages under FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) programmes (Stern, 1962; Harris, 1991) based on the audio-lingual method (see Appendix 2.3 on teaching methodologies in second language learning). In Canada, French was introduced at primary level in some schools, whereas in Britain, French was offered from 1963 to children aged 8 to 11 under a pilot project known as the French from 8 Project (Harris and Conway, 2002).

The French from 8 Project, supported by the Schools Council, Local Education Authorities and the Nuffield Foundation (Eurydice, 2001a) was considered to be very successful at the first stage as, by 1970, 35% of primary school children were learning French, involving 125 schools and 6,700 children. Despite parental interest in the implementation of language programmes and the initial positive results, however, studies from different authors carried out in the early 1970s revealed that children who had been initiated in the learning of foreign languages at an early stage did not show any significant difference by the end of secondary education compared with children who had started later; the initial advantage acquired in primary education was not maintained at post-primary level (Harris and Conway, 2002). The explanation for this came from the inadequate planning of the courses, poor preparation of

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the language teachers and a lack of coordination between primary and post-primary level, all of which led to the initial advantage of early learners not being maintained. As a result, the initial theory underpinning the belief that children had a special potential for the learning of languages was no longer upheld (McLaughlin, 1985, cited in Harris, 1991). In addition to this, the *Burstall Report[29]*, which was prepared by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on the teaching of French in English primary schools between 1963 and 1974 (CILT, 2004), under the French from 8 project, showed very negative results. The European Eurydice report of 2001 summarises the conclusions of the Burstall report as follows: "Pupils taught French from the age of eight did not subsequently reveal any "substantial" gains in achievement compared with those who were only taught French from the age of 11. The only area in which children that started at eight showed increased proficiency was aural comprehension" (Eurydice, 2001a:67).

The belief, therefore, that an early start in modern language learning would not produce any significant advantage in the long term resulted in the discontinuation of the project. From then on, it was left up to the English Local Education Authorities and the schools whether or not to continue to offer a modern language to the students (Eurydice, 2001).

In the 1970s, interest in the teaching of modern languages at primary level was minimal. Conversely, immersion programmes in Canada teaching both English and French in primary schools, initiated by Anglophone parents who had a great interest in their children receiving language instruction in French, enjoyed great success and have attracted much research since they began[30]. In northern European countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland) the teaching of foreign languages, especially of English, from the age of 10 since 1937 in the case of Denmark and from the age of 7 in the other countries since 1972, had already created a strong tradition, which facilitated the continuation of programmes with fewer problems than in the United States and England (Harris, 1991:14).

By the end of the 1970s, despite the problems that had been encountered in many countries, interest and research in the area of foreign language teaching had not disappeared and investigations were carried out with the aim of responding to issues relating to:

     1) The best language teaching methodology.

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[29] For full details of the discussion conducted by Burstall on the results obtained in the NFER French project (1964-1974) see: Burstall, C. (1975) 'Primary French in the Balance', Educational Research, 17:3,193 - 198. UK: Routledge.
[30] See section 2.2.2.2.on Immersion Education.

2) The advisable number of languages to be offered.

3) The starting age and the ideal classroom setting.

With regard to model programmes offered in this decade, opinions were divided between those who favoured a language competency model and those who supported a sensitisation model. The first model aims at proficiency in one language, whereas the second seeks, as the main goal, to introduce children to other languages more generally using a language-awareness approach (Harris and Conway, 2002).

In 1976, the *Resolution of the Council of Europe and of the Ministers of Education of the European Communities* encouraged the Member States to a) develop measures to help foreign national students to adapt to the education system of the host country and its way of life. To achieve this, it was proposed that intensive study of the language of the host country was offered, as well as opportunities to study the L1 and culture of the student; b) to develop teaching methodologies and education programmes to guarantee the learning of at least one other Community language, whether inside or outside formal education. Even though the Nordic countries had led the compulsory teaching of languages from as early as the 1930s, global education reforms in the rest of the Community countries had to wait until the 1980s for the necessary changes to include modern language teaching as part of the primary school curriculum. In Austria, these reforms were introduced in 1983; in The Netherlands, in 1985; in 1989 in Portugal; in 1990 in Spain; in 1992 in Italy and France and in 1988 in the French Community of Belgium (Harris and Conway, 2002:4).

In the Stuttgart European Council of 1983 the Heads of State or Government agreed "to promote, encourage or facilitate the development of the teaching of the languages of the Member States of the Community" (European Council, 1983:219). In addition to this declaration, the Education Council in 1984 recommended that European students should be facilitated in the learning of two foreign languages by the end of compulsory education and that initiatives should be undertaken to ensure that these skills were included in further stages of education (Eurydice, 2001a).

These first actions, enhancing European citizens' knowledge of foreign languages and cultural heritage, were followed by many others over subsequent years. The 1992 *Treaty on European Union* (also known as the *Maastricht Treaty*) established the basis for the development of a European policy that regulated the learning of languages. Reference to this can be found in Article 126 with a recommendation to develop "the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the

languages of the Member States". It is, however, worth noting that the first language programme at European level [31] had already been introduced in 1989, the Lingua Programme.

In 1995, the *European Commission White Paper: Teaching and learning – Towards the learning society*, stated that each citizen should be competent in two foreign languages of the Community but that three languages would be the more advisable for those citizens aiming to benefit from the opportunities offered by the single market. Four main objectives were specified:

- Promote the learning of at least two Community foreign languages by all young people

- Encourage innovative language-teaching methods

- Generalise the daily use of European foreign languages in schools at all levels

- Foster awareness of Community languages and cultures and their early learning.

In addition, the *European Council Resolution of 16 December 1997 on the Early teaching of European Union languages* advocates that "the early learning of one or more languages in addition to one's mother tongue(s) may contribute to achieving this objective (the White Paper's objective relating to the knowledge of three languages by all European citizens) since flexibility and receptiveness are greatest at a young age"[32]. With this declaration, the Council of Europe encouraged all member states to work from already existing community actions and to take new measures focused on the promotion of early language learning, such as school co-operation between different countries, the development of suitable teaching materials and the ongoing preparation of language teachers with high language skills. Also highlighted was the contribution of early language learning to the development of cultural understanding among children, as well as the relevance of offering this to everyone by making it compulsory in the school system.

Henceforth, the European countries focused their efforts on developing more effective policies in relation to foreign language teaching and learning, resulting in the 2000 Lisbon Strategy, in which member states agreed to convert Europe into the most competitive world economy by 2010, based on a knowledge society. In the following year, the declaration of 2001 as European Year of Languages by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe (following the proposal made by the European

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[31] See Appendix 2.4. on Programmes funded by the European Commission on language learning.
[32] The term "mother tongue" holds more than one definition and can refer to a number of situations, as acknowledged by UNESCO (Ball, 2011): the language(s) that one has learnt first; the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; the language(s) one knows best and the language(s) one uses most.

Commission) was as a direct result of the importance attributed to proficiency in languages and an attempt to promote a greater interest in language learning among the population. There were five objectives specified:

- To raise awareness of the wealth of linguistic diversity within the European Union and of its value in terms of civilisation and culture

- To encourage multilingualism

- To bring to the notice of the widest possible audience the advantages of proficiency in several languages.

- To encourage lifelong learning of languages, starting, if possible, at nursery and primary level, and the acquisition of related skills such as translation and interpretation, as well as some technical and office skills.

- To collect and disseminate information on the teaching and learning of languages.

> (Activities of the European Union. Summaries of Legislation. European Year of Languages 2001)

Later, the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages 2001, recommended the use of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)*[33], developed by the Council of Europe as a shared descriptor of the knowledge of second languages among European countries:

> "(7) to set up systems of validation of competence in language knowledge based on the common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment developed by the Council of Europe, taking sufficient account of skills acquired through informal learning"

> (Council Resolution of 14 February 2002:2)

A similar statement was made by the *Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission*, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training, also known as the *Copenhagen*

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[33] The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* is divided in six levels (A1- C2) and gives very specific guidelines on what the learner should be able to do in the four basic skills (writing, listening, speaking and reading) at each level. At present, it is used by all European countries and by all types of institutions. For a detailed description of the different levels, see: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp.

Declaration, which emerged as a response to the Barcelona Council and also recommended the use of the *CEFR.*

> "Increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework".

> (The Copenhagen Declaration, 2002:2)

Finally, the Council of the European Union of 26 February 2004 re-stated the need to adopt the measures mentioned in the *Copenhagen Declaration* in relation to developing common frameworks of qualifications:

> "The development of common European references and principles can usefully support national policies. Although such common references and principles do not create obligations for Member States, they contribute to developing mutual trust between the key players and encouraging reform".

> (Council of the European Union, 2004:27)

Also, the Barcelona European Council of March 2002 emphasised the need "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age" (Presidency Conclusions. Barcelona European Council 2002:20). This statement was made following the main objective set by the European Union in 2000 for the next decade for Europe "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (Lisbon European Council, 2000). The learning of languages was therefore established as an important issue on the agenda.

As a direct consequence of the Barcelona European Council the European Commission established, on the one hand, the Education & Training 2010 policy framework[34], which included a number of schemes in the field of education and training based on the co-ordination of all Member States and focused on the improvement of education systems to achieve the goals set by the *Lisbon Strategy*. There were three main principles: improved quality, facilitation of universal access, and opening-up to the wider world. Issues concerning language learning were covered in the *Promoting Multilingualism* section, which included different activities and follow up reports around the *Action Plan 2004-2006: Promoting Language Learning*

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[34] See http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/gcfp-files/diverse_systems_shared_goals.pdf for a complete résumé of the Education and Training 2010, Diverse systems, shared goals policy.

and Language Diversity (European Commission, 2008). Nonetheless, the Education & Training 2010 work programme was instituted in three main areas:

1.- Methods and ways of organising the teaching of languages

2.- Early language learning

3.- Ways of promoting the learning and practice of foreign languages.

On the other hand, 2005 was the first year that the European Commission made explicit its support of multilingualism in the European Union by publishing *A new framework strategy for multilingualism*. This document includes a number of plans for promoting multilingualism in society and to raise the competitiveness of the EU economy.

The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 is currently running with the aim of "providing people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning opportunities, and to a variety of learning experiences, throughout Europe".

The emphasis placed on the promotion of multilingualism and lifelong learning in the Union is therefore made clear through the continuous efforts made by the European Commission and the Council of Europe through their agencies. While the former, in its duty as a legislative body makes proposals and implements new policies that represent the interests of the European Union citizens, the work of the Council of Europe, which was initiated in the 1960s is to "ensure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law" in all the European continent, thus representing 47 countries. As regards languages, the Council of Europe is mainly focused on the protection of languages of the minorities, for which the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)*, the Language Policy Division and the European Centre of Modern Languages were created (ECML).

Through funding from the Council of Europe, the work conducted by the ECML in conjunction with the Language Policy Division is of particular relevance for it co-ordinates 4-year projects aimed at enhancing high-quality language learning among European citizens.

In this regard, the establishment of the High Level Group on Multilingualism (HLGM)[35] in 2006, which covers disciplines as varied as education, business and/or the media, and the subsequent creation of a separate portfolio for multilingualism in 2007, is clear proof of the realisation of the importance that languages have acquired within the European Union. Also important is the development of the EU

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[35] Henceforth HLGM.

Strategy for Multilingualism, launched in 2008[36], from which originated a number of proposals for the implementation of projects that promote language learning and linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as enhancing social cohesion, lifelong language learning, competitiviness, mobility and employability of citizens. Finally, actions directed at increasing the presence of EU languages in the international sphere have also been attempted.

Concrete policies are being developed on two fronts with the intention of fulfilling the requirements of Europe's multilingual project: firstly, new language policies are directed at recognising the value of speaking world languages, with a trend towards promoting the learning of more widely used languages such as Bengali, English, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish but also, the revitalisation and maintenance of community languages. Secondly, as highlighted in the report *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment of 2008*, multilingualism within Europe is enriching for it diminishes existing barriers among its citizens, enhancing, in turn, mutual understanding and competitiveness. In effect, the report stresses the fact that 1) lack of foreign language skills in enterprise affects small and medium companies to the point that about 11% of them lose business on a regular basis as a result. 2) Opportunities to learn two foreign languages within compulsory education are not currently available in around half the European countries, which is compounded by the fact that, in many cases, language teachers lack appropriate training, especially to deal with groups of students with different L1.

This report of the European Commission is however not the first to point to the benefits of multilingualism in improving competitiviness. In December 2005, CILT, the UK National Centre for Languages, together with InterAct International and a group of researchers also conducted a study on the impact that the knowledge of languages may have in national economies. Appointed by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, the resulting report: *ELAN - Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise* - ratified the general idea that competence in languages is determinant for the expansion of exports in SMEs and, consequently, for the EU economy. The outcomes of the study indicated the following needs: 1) to establish strong links between education institutions and enterprises so that education programmes can be adapted to market changes; 2) to encourage companies to foster their employees' language skills; 3) to take advantage of the knowledge of languages of migrant workers and fully develop its economic potential, given the growing demand for languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese and Russian, (HLGM, 2007).

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[36] *Council Resolution on a European strategy for multilingualism*, Council of the European Union, November 2008.

Similar is the 2007 report of the European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture: *The diversity of language teaching in the European Union and the Companies Work Better with Languages Report*, conducted by the Business Forum for Multilingualism, which is also part of the European Commission. The first of these two reports conducts a further analysis of the data gathered in the above-mentioned ELAN study and thus highlights the relevance of mastery in several languages to produce business: "there is a strong correlation between investment in language strategies, export proportion of sales and company productivity" (European Commission, 2007). In parallel to this, the second report is more specifically focused on SME's (Small and Medium Enterprises). It is a call for the integration of multilingual workers as a key to construct strategic business relationships at global level.

Related to this was the declaration of 2006 as the "European Year of Workers' Mobility" by the European Commission, highlighting the fact that professional mobility among European countries is becoming a regular practice and its positive implications for societal improvement. Not only does it allow citizens to experience different cultures and languages, but it has also become an integral part of good career progression. A number of difficulties for mobile workers were, however, identified in the multiple discussion forums conducted through the year relating to issues such as the recognition of qualifications, legal and administrative barriers or a lack of language skills.

The conclusions of the European Year of Worker's Mobility stressed the need to create measures to reduce existing obstacles to geographical mobility. In this regard, the Job Mobility Action Plan for 2007-2010 was launched with a view to improving awareness among citizens of all the supports that are available to them from each Member State and/or the EU as well as adapting existing policies and legislation to new trends in mobility patterns (European Commission, 2007).

At present, the Education and Training 2020 programme (*ET 2020)* is being implemented, which represents a step forward from the previous Education and Training 2010 and it is aimed at developing the educational and training systems of the European Union so as to create a knowledge-based society where lifelong learning is available to all. Within this strategic framework, co-operation among European countries is envisaged as key to making improvements on education based on examples of best practice taken from different contexts. Based on these principles, a number of objectives have been set, which are as follows:

a) making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
b) improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
c) promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
d) enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

A number of thematic working groups have been organised to achieve the goals mentioned above. In the area of languages, the group works on key issues identified in the most recent studies related to language competency: the *Council conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility,* from 2011 and the *Languages for Jobs – delivering multilingual communication skills for the labour market,* from 2012.

Additionally, specific work in the field of early language learning continues to be important within the European Commission at present. From the Barcelona European Council of 2002 mastery of two foreign languages from an early age remains a priority and a key objective, for which adaptation of the European education systems to accomplish this goal is an ongoing process. In this direction is the latest report published within the *ET 2020: Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable.* Based on the Critical Period Hypothesis, national language experts who participated in this work emphasise, once more, the cognitive and social advantages for the young learner in terms of achieving native-like competency, especially in terms of accent, metalinguistic awareness and gaining understanding of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

From this perspective, the expert group has formulated a set of guidelines for the implementation of an early language learning policy based on examples of good practice across Europe. It is envisaged that access to early foreign language learning becomes universal for all children at pre-school age, not only for those in advantageous socio-economic contexts, and that continuity between pre-school and primary education are ensured through co-ordination of institutions and programmes. In this context, bilingual education programmes, either through full or partial immersion, with native speaker teachers, are suggested to be the most appropriate[37].

Finally, the European Commission has also carried out several studies throughout the years on the learning of languages and how this is developed in the different countries of the European Union. One example is the Eurobarometer survey (as already mentioned above), conducted regularly since 1973 by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. Other examples are studies published by Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, which analyse how foreign language teaching is organised in schools in European countries, focusing on teaching organisation, teacher training and recruitment as well as the content of curricula, among other issues.

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[37] In the countries studied in this thesis, as will be seen in chapters 3 and 4, work conducted in relation to early foreign language learning has been developed in very different ways, with very different results.

2.4. Support received by minority and endangered languages within the European Union

Europe has experienced many important socio-political changes since the start of the new century. The inclusion of Central European countries as new members of the Union, together with the growth and unification of the economy, as well as the migration of people to other countries in search of better opportunities, represent the new challenges of today's society; multilingualism and multiculturalism are a reality.

The European Union now has 27 member states and 23 official and working languages (Eurydice 2008; European Commission), most of them being majority or national languages, spoken by the great majority of an individual state's citizens. There are also 60 languages recognised as minority, regional or lesser-used languages, spoken by indigenous groups. In Europe, there are approximately 240 spoken minority languages (SUS.DIV) and it is believed that around 46 million people speak them (European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, 2008). Linguistic diversity and multilingualim is thus a fact in today's Europe. Minority languages are defined in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2002)*:

> "Regional or minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants".

Protection of the L1 of migrant children living in communities where a national or majority language is spoken has not only been called for by language theorists such as Cummins or Baetens-Beardsmore but international organisations also (i.e. UN, UNESCO) have worked intensively to protect the fundamental right of a person to speak and to receive education in his/her L1 even when living abroad, for reasons such as ensuring the transmission of the linguistic heritage of small communities (Ball, 2011). In the case of migrant students, it has also been proven that learning through one's L1 enhances positive attitudes towards learning and participation in school, which in turns, may help reduce early school leaving. Article 5 of the *Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education* makes clear these principles by stating the following:

> "(i) It is essential to recognise the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or the teaching of their own language, provided however:
>
> (ii) That this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as

a whole and from participating in its activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty;

(iii) That the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities; and

(iv) That attendance at such schools is optional".

Although this was one of the first declarations in this respect, several other declarations have ratified this wish for protection of linguistic minorities: the 1948 *United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, the *European Council Directive* of 25 July 1977 or the most recent *Action Plan for implementing the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (Eurydice, 2001; Ball, 2011). In this regard, research indicates that a period of 6 to 8 years of continuous contact with the L1 is necessary to build a basic level of verbal and literacy proficiency and ensure future maintenance of the L1, as well as greater academic performance. This is the reason why UNESCO does not recommend an initiation to a second language at a very early stage of schooling (Ball, 2011:6):

> "Research confirms that children learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education. Fluency and literacy in the mother tongue lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages. When children receive formal instruction in their first language throughout primary school and then gradually transition to academic learning in the second language, they learn the second language quickly"

It is interesting to note that, during the 1990s, countries were encouraged to empower their official language(s), the language(s) of the nation, and not much effort was put into maintaining and spreading knowledge of the lesser-known languages. This approach has changed in recent years, since new trends have enabled people to recognise the significance of minority languages in terms of personal identity and cultural understanding. At community level, there is widespread interest in the conservation and promotion of the great variety of cohabiting minority or regional languages as part of the European linguistic heritage, most of which are considered endangered languages.

Minority languages carry on traditions; they are part of the cultural heritage of a nation, as well as a bridge between past and future generations. Some have received the status of official languages in their countries, for example, Irish in Ireland, Luxembourgish in Luxemburg, or Basque, Galician and Catalan in Spain (co-official). In Italy and Romania, for instance, a dozen minority or regional languages are officially recognised (Eurydice, 2008)[38].

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[38] See Appendix 2.5., where Map 2.5.1. and Table 2.5.2. give an account of all state languages and minority or regional languages with official status in the European Union as for 2011.

The large number of new European residents means that the continent now enjoys the co-existence of about 450 languages (High Level Group on Multilingualism, 2007) with 450 million people coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (European Commission, 2004). The use of (a) minority language(s) can vary from country to country, and depends on the support given by the country's Government, attitude and motivation as well as the importance afforded to it. In education, the use of minority languages in education depends on a number of factors "such as the legal status of the language, the existence of a linguistic standard, the availability of teaching material or the territorial distribution of the language group" (European Commission, 2004: 4), which, in turn, influences whether they are used as languages of instruction.

In this regard, as mentioned above, the European Union, through the European Commission and the Council of Europe has established a network of institutions whose work is the protection and promotion of languages within the community. The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, ratified by 22 countries at European level since its text was first put together in 1992 under the direction of the European Council, seeks "on the one hand to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage and on the other hand to enable speakers of a regional or minority language to use it in private and public life".

One of the first measures taken by the European Commission with a view to developing new policies for the protection of the linguistic diversity of the European Union, was the creation of the Euromosaic project, initiated in the same year, 1992, even though the final results were not published until 1996. This initiative produced a language report for each of the countries within the Union, covering all issues related to the use and position of minority languages. Later, in 2001, the various activities conducted as part of the European Year of Languages helped to promote the learning of minority languages and to decide on the course of action to follow in the coming years. Consequently, on 27 July 2003 the European Commission adopted the *Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity* with over 45 projects to be executed in the period 2004-2006 (European Commission, 2005:4; Mercator Media). Additionally, on the 4th September 2003 the European Parliament called on the European Commission to conduct a feasibility study concerning the creation of a European Agency for language learning and linguistic diversity. It was envisaged that this agency would ensure the implementation of the measures outlined in the *Action Plan*, follow up on any new developments and establish a network to promote linguistic diversity (European Parliament, 2003). The study produced a final report, published in May 2005, the conclusions of which suggested, as the best option, the creation of a network of "language diversity centres". As a result, on 11th June 2008, the European Commissioner responsible for

multilingualism launched the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD)[39] in Brussels, which focuses on "facilitating the sharing of existing best practice and the development of new and innovative ideas in the field of language planning in all linguistic domains amongst Europe's less widely used languages" (NPLD web site). The NPLD is co-funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning programme.

The Valeur (Valuing all languages in Europe) Project, which ran between 2004-2007 and was conducted at European level by CILT and the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) represented a first attempt to map ongoing projects directed at providing minority children with opportunities to learn their own languages. Additionally, this project was aimed at raising awareness within the communities of the benefits derived from linguistic diversity, specifically in those points identified by Lo Bianco (2001): intellectual and academic achievement, cultural practices, skills for work, social inclusion, engagement in public life and democratic practices, combating prejudice and promoting tolerance and mutual understanding (ECML, 2005).

In general, the European Union encourages its member states to "give special attention to measures to assist those language communities whose number of native speakers is in decline from generation to generation" (Action Plan 2004-2006). Respect for and protection of minority or regional languages is a requisite condition to become a member of the European Union and it is seen as a way to promote social cohesion among citizens.

It is, however, important to note France's attitude in protecting the French language against the influence of English and its position regarding the country's regional languages. Despite having signed the Lisbon Strategy, the French Government refused, on 7th May 2008, to ratify the European Charter for Minority Languages (ECRML), which meant that the State had no intention of recognising any language spoken in the country other than French. The argument was that it would be in contradiction of article 2 of the French Constitution, which declares French to be the only official language (Hicks, 2008). Only a few months after this decision was reached, however, pressure from several organisations and political parties led to a discussion in the French Congress, which ended with a favourable vote for a change to the Constitution to accept other languages in France as part of its national heritage. The President of the Republic, at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, together with the Minister of Culture, Christine Albanel, agreed to a compromise in defining a new law in 2009 that would give rights to speakers of regional languages in France (CIEMEN, 2008).

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[39] Henceforth NPLD.

In France, languages such as Breton, Catalan, Basque, Occitan and Corsican receive very little support from Government authorities. It is institutions such as the Occitan Studies Institute, the Cultural Council of Brittany or *Oui au Breton*, at national level and Mercator at European level that work for the protection and promotion of these endangered minority languages.

In contrast to France's position towards minority languages, the Spanish authorities and, especially, the relevant Autonomous Communities, are making constant efforts to gain official status within the European Union for their co-official languages, namely Galician, Basque and Catalan. This is presenting difficulties because of the first regulation adopted by the Council of the European Economic Community on 15th April 1958, which gives equality to all official state languages of the Member States and recognises them as official as well as working languages[40] of the European institutions (High Level Group on Multilingualism, 2007a).

> "With regard to the objective of the petitions in question, the rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community under the provisions of Article 217 of the EEC Treaty, Article 190 of the EURATOM Treaty and Council Regulation No. 1 of 15 April 1958 are determined by the Council acting unanimously and that for Member States which have more than one official language, the language to be used must, at the request of such States, be determined by the general rules of their laws."

(Resolution of the European Parliament A3-169/90:2)

Even though this convention can only be changed with the consent of all members of the Council, it is up to each Member State to decide on its official languages. In this regard, the first consequence of Regulation no. 1 of Article 127 on 15 April 1958 was the proclamation of French, Dutch, German and Italian as the first four official and working languages of the EU. The inclusion of Finland, Sweden and Austria in 1999 brought the number of official and working languages to eleven: Dutch, German, French, Italian, English, Danish, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, Finnish and Swedish. Irish and Luxembourgish were not included because the Irish and Luxembourg Governments did not insist on applying the parameters of Regulation no 1 (Wright, 2000). The enlargement of 2004 brought the number of member countries of the EU from 15 to 25 with the inclusion of: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta. Consequently, 9 new

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[40] Languages that have the status of official and working languages of the European Union have two main entitlements:
a) All documents that are sent to any of the institutions of the European Union in any of the official and working languages may receive a reply in these languages.
b) The Official Journal of the European Union, as well as the EU regulations and other legislative documents are published in the official and working languages.

languages were added to the existing ones: Czech, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Maltese, Polish, Slovene, Slovak.

On 1st January 2007 the sixth and most recent enlargement of the EU so far took place with the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria. On this occasion, three new languages were added to the list of official languages and working languages of the EU: Bulgarian, Romanian and Irish. Currently, the total number of official and working languages is 23[41].

Due to budgetary constraints, the main languages used for communication among the members of the European Commission are English, French, and, occasionally, German (European Commission, 2009; Wright, 2000). In terms of translation of official documents, the European Parliament uses the entire 23 official and working languages, as also happens with any major legislation or regulation of public interest. Some other documents may only be translated into a particular language. The Official Journal of the European Union is equally published in the 23 official and working languages. Any Member State or person may also send a document to EU institutions in one of the official languages and expect the answer to be in the same language[42].

2.5. Current issues concerning language teaching and learning in Europe

The last twenty years have served to establish a consensus on the aims and objectives that Europe, as a united force, seeks to reach in the area of education in the near future. In this regard, European countries are currently preparing the way for future generations to be efficiently trained in foreign languages. All the partners in education agree on the benefits of knowledge of languages and its contribution to the development of a successful career: "the value of languages, not only for individual social mobility, but also for business and for entire states, is increasingly acknowledged" (European Commission, 2007: 9).

As already mentioned there are currently many ongoing projects as well as actions that all Members can join but, equally, educational policies are being developed to increase the number of languages being taught within compulsory education and reduce the start age. The European Commission invests

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[41] The 23 working and official languages of the EU are: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish.
[42] An extensive discussion of the official status of Spain's co-official languages within the E.U. can be found in section 3.4 of chapter 4 of this thesis.

considerable effort in survey studies that periodically analyse the current situation of foreign language learning at European level i.e. Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Communities), which provides data for other institutions such as the UIS (UNESCO Institute of Statistics), the Council of Europe and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

At present, the Bologna process[43] regulates the composition of education systems in all European countries with the aim of offering the same standards in terms of quantity and quality of education. However, every European country develops and implements its own educational policies and, in some instances, different communities in the same country have different policies. Nonetheless, there are a number of 'indicators of quality and good practice' related to the learning of foreign languages that can be said to be common to all education systems. As acknowledged by the European Commission, the most relevant are the following:

> "1. A supportive classroom climate
>
> 2. Opportunity to learn
>
> 3. Curricular alignment
>
> 4. Establishing learning orientations
>
> 5. Coherent content
>
> 6. Thoughtful discourse
>
> 7. Practice and application activities
>
> 8. Scaffolding students' task engagement
>
> 9. Strategy teaching
>
> 10. Co-operative learning
>
> 11. Goal-oriented assessment
>
> 12. Achievement expectations."

(European Commission, 2006:32)

Also, several teaching methodologies have been developed around the world for second language teaching, although there seems to be a tendency in recent years to use the Communicative Approach. In this thesis, however, we will identify three main areas as directly related to good practice. These are as follows:

a) Compulsory age for foreign language learning in Europe and range of languages on offer.

b) Time allocated to the teaching/learning of foreign languages.

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[43] See Appendix 2.6. for a full insight of the implications of the Bologna process at European level.

c) Foreign language teacher training.

In the next sections, each one of the above-mentioned areas will be discussed with a view to providing a description of the current situation in the different countries and identifying concerns:

2.5.1. Age of introduction of foreign languages in primary education and range of languages on offer

The teaching of foreign languages in primary education has been compulsory in some European countries for many years. Data collected in 1998/1999 (Eurydice, 2001) revealed that some countries started as early as 1912; this is the case in Luxembourg. In other countries such as Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania, this practice has only been introduced very recently[44]. As a matter of fact, the number of countries that are not offering at least one foreign language to most of their students has greatly diminished in the last ten years; at present, Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) are the only countries where foreign languages are not mandatory at primary level (Strubell et al., 2007; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

The age at which foreign language learning is introduced has also been lowered significantly in the last two decades, making it available to a much larger number of students in all countries (Eurydice, 2008); however, it has developed differently in each European country. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland it was recommended that the learning of a foreign language should be introduced to students aged 11-14 at the start of the 80s, prior to the establishment of England's, Wales' (1988) and Northern Ireland's (1989) National Curriculum, which imposed the learning of a foreign language on students aged 11-16. However, more recent laws made optional the learning of foreign languages for students aged 14-16, although it remains compulsory from 12-14. In Northern Ireland, this change was introduced in 2007; in England, in 2004 and, in Wales, in 1995 (Eurydice 2008; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

In Scotland, the learning of a foreign language was recommended from 12-14 since the 1970s and from the age of 10 since 1993; however, the recommendations of the Ministerial Action Group on languages in 2000 made it more flexible. Even though it is not compulsory to learn a foreign language at present, most students learn one from the age of 10 (Eurydice, 2008). Also, all students in upper secondary level have to study at least one foreign language. In Ireland, as will be seen in Chapter 3, modern languages

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[44] See Appendix 2.7. for information on the year of introduction of foreign language teaching at primary level in European countries.

are not officially part of the Curriculum for primary schools, although a major pilot project to introduce modern languages, the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative, ran from 1998 until 2012, when it was cancelled due to the current economic crisis. Nevertheless, all Irish primary school students learn Irish, which is not regarded as a foreign language.

In Northern European countries, however, compulsory foreign language learning became mandatory between the 1960s and 1970s. In Belgium, different measures apply to each one of the three main communities. In the German community, French is introduced by law in pre-school to 3 year-old students since 2004 (in 10-40 minute daily periods) (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012). In primary schools, it is compulsory from age 6. In the French community, schools have taught a foreign language (English, Dutch or German) from grade 5 since 1998. There are however cases of schools teaching through CLIL at pre-school level. Also, in the French schools in the Brussels region Dutch is compulsory from grade 3 (8-9 years old). In the Dutch community, French has been compulsory in grades 5 (10-11 years old) and 6 (11-12 years old) since 2004. As in the case of the French schools in Brussels, French is also compulsory from grade 3 in Dutch schools (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

In Denmark, the learning of English or German was made compulsory in grade 6 of primary school in 1958, although the age of start has been progressively lowered. At present, English is compulsory from grade 3 of primary school (Strubell et al., 2007; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012). At secondary level, students must choose an additional language in grades 7-10 (13-16 years old) and another one from grades 8-10 (14-16 years old). Generally, German and French are the languages chosen (Strubell et al., 2007).

Over the last decade, the education system in Sweden has organised the Curriculum guidelines for modern languages at seven different levels, allowing schools to introduce a new language between the ages 7-10, athough more than 50% of 9-year-olds already learn at least one foreign language (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012). The Swedish government clearly values the knowledge of languages, which explains why several majority languages (French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Japanese, Danish and Finnish) are available to students, as well as more than 100 minority languages that are offered to native speakers. English is, however, the only foreign language that is compulsory. It can be learned as a content subject or as part of immersion programmes, in which case it can be used as a language of instruction in 50% of the teaching time. In upper secondary school, Swedish students must learn two foreign languages, one of which needs to be English.

In Norway, as in Italy, Luxembourg, Malta and Austria, students start learning a foreign language as soon as they commence schooling. At the age of 13, however, Norwegian students can decide between progressing further with English, Norwegian or Sami, or starting a new language (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2008).

Finland is another of the countries in Europe where knowledge of languages is paramount in education. Several policies and projects have been implemented in the last decade to improve and develop the teaching and learning of languages, as it is dictated by law that the mother tongue plus two other languages must be studied in school. Given the fact that Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, all students are obliged to study the one that is not their mother tongue as a foreign language, starting between 7-9 years of age. Most of the students also learn English. Interestingly, secondary school students learn their mother tongue, which can be Finnish, Swedish, Sámi, Roma or any other language (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2001; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

The case of Luxembourg is exceptional for several reasons:

1) It is the only European country where three languages are official, one of which (Luxembourgish) is the national language of the country, as well as a minority language.

2) It is also the European country where the highest percentage of the population are non-nationals (42%), making multilingualism a reality.

3) The number of students per class, 15.8, is below the European average of 24.

4) The percentage of students who finish secondary school, 50%, is also higher than the European average of 45%.

5) It has the highest percentage of school time dedicated to the teaching of languages among European countries.

6) A high percentage of students do not access upper secondary education, over 60%, which is attributed to the inability of students (especially non-national) to cope with so many languages in the curriculum. This may cause students to not want to continue further in their education, or move to a neighboring country to continue.

Although the case of Luxembourg is relevant for this thesis for these reasons, it cannot suitably be addressed within this chapter. Therefore, it has been expanded upon in a separate appendix (Appendix 2.8.).

Estonia has become well-known in recent years for the developments made by the Language Policy Department at the Ministry of Education and Research. The positive outcomes of a national project focused on the teaching of Russian, Estonian and English to children of Russian origin in pre-school settings have served as an example to many countries seeking to establish trilingual education programmes at an early age. At present, it is compulsory to study one foreign language in primary school, starting between 7 and 9 years of age, and to study a second language (English, Russian, German or French) from the start of lower secondary school.

Students in Iceland have learned a foreign language from the age of 9 since 2007/08. In secondary school, however, different rules apply in each school although, in general terms, students in the upper level can decide whether to continue with a language they have already been learning or to start a new one (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2008).

In southern European countries, the introduction of foreign languages at primary school did not take place until the start of the 1990s.

Since the publication of the *La Loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'Ecole*[45] in 2005, the education system in France has as a clear objective for its students to learn one foreign language to B1 level of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* by the end of compulsory education. Nonetheless, regional or minority languages are also on offer: at primary level, schools must teach either a foreign or minority language to students from age 7 onwards. In lower secondary school, all students take at least one foreign language. Indeed, 49% of students are studying two foreign languages. At upper secondary level, 60% of students take two foreign languages or more. At both levels English is the most popular language, studied by virtually all students, and Spanish the second.

In the case of Spain, which will be further discussed in Chapter 4, although not part of the school curriculum, foreign languages have been taught since 1911 in the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (Official Language School). Nowadays, however, foreign language learning is started as early as pre-school education, at the age of 3, although by law it must be introduced in grade 1 of primary school.

In Portugal, although the learning of either French or English from age 11 had been compulsory from 1947, in more recent times changes in the education system have made it compulsory from 6-15, and, since 2008/09, schools must offer English to children 6-8. Also, since 1989 a second language is optional from age 12 (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2008).

Central and Eastern European countries made a first attempt to teach languages such as French, English or German in the 1940s, but in the 1950s the learning of Russian became generalised for all countries except for Slovenia. Nonetheless, many of them (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) introduced bilingual education programmes for the best students and, in some cases, the foreign language is the language of instruction in lower and upper secondary level through CLIL programmes. In Poland, for example, one foreign language became compulsory for students 7-10 in the course year 2008/09. In fact, English is now compulsory from

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[45] Framework and Planning Law on the Future of Education.

grade 1 of primary school. A second foreign language is generally also introduced in primary school, to children aged 10. Bilingual education programmes with three languages of choice are also offered. In secondary school, students are obliged to study one foreign language in lower secondary school (ages 13-15) and two foreign languages in upper secondary (16-18) (Eurydice/Eursostat, 2008; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

In Latvia, teaching of one foreign language will be introduced from the age of 7 in 2013/2014 (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

In Germany, it was recommended that schools involve their students in the learning of a foreign language in grade 3 of primary school in the 1970s but it was not until 1994 that a stronger emphasis was put on starting in 1st year of primary school. At present, it is compulsory for students aged 8-10 to learn one foreign language. At secondary level, students usually learn English and can choose a second language if they are attending Hauptschule education, but in Gymnasium education all students must study a second language[46]. The most popular languages are French, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

Austria is one of the few European countries where foreign language teaching is compulsory from grade 1, which has been the case since 1998. English is the language that most students learn, but other languages are also available (Italian, Slovak, Slovene, Czech, Hungarian, Bosnian, Serbian, Albanian and Croatian), due to programmes such as the *Muttersprachlicher Unterricht* (Mother Tongue Teaching) or the Vienna 20, aimed at helping students from immigrant families learn their language of origin (Euryidice, 2001; Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

Finally, Cyprus and Slovakia are the two countries with most recent reforms to lower the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning. In Cyprus, English is now learnt from the age of 6 and it will be from the age of 5 after 2015, whereas in Slovakia the starting age is 8 (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

From the information outlined above, it can be observed that there has been a clear tendency among European countries to introduce the teaching of foreign languages in the Curriculum and to lower the starting age in recent years. Although many countries have developed policies and guidelines that aim to standardise this practice, in places where this is not possible the curriculum is generally flexible enough to allow for individual initiatives, such as pilot projects (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2008; Eurydice/Eurostat,

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[46] In Germany, students start lower secondary education after attending primary education for four years. At this point, and according to their grades, they are sent to a *Hauptschule* or a *Gymnasium*. The latter is attended by students with a high level of performance and who are most likely to progress to third level of education. Students with a lower academic performance will attend *Hauptschule*.

2012). This is the case for Greece, where 800 primary schools are teaching English to students aged 6 to 8, with the expectation that this will be extended to all schools in 2013; also, in Lithuania, German is taught to pre-schoolers in 26 schools.

Today, many students in primary education in European countries are receiving lessons in two foreign languages, as well as the language of instruction. The figure is more than 10% in countries like Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Iceland and 80% in Luxembourg (Eurydice, 2005). Nonetheless, it is in secondary education that the teaching of two languages is generally compulsory.

Examples of countries where a second foreign language is introduced in primary education (10-12 year olds, depending on the country), and compulsory, are Greece, Estonia, Latvia and Iceland. Luxembourg is the greatest exeption, as second foreign language learning starts at the age of 7 (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012). In other countries, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Norway, there are a number of pilot projects aimed at introducing more languages than dictated by the Curriculum. In Portugal, for instance, where, as previously mentioned, a second foreign language is compulsory from age 12, a pilot project is introducing it from age 10 to a number of students (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

2.5.2. English as preferred foreign language in bilingual education

Although the majority of European countries have the intention of offering a wide range of modern languages to their students, especially in secondary education, it is often the case that the demand for a particular language is very small and insufficient for the school to engage a language teacher but also, finding a qualified language teacher may prove very difficult. Consequently, even though a language may be offered at one of the levels of education, continuation to other levels may be impossible. Alternatively, the compulsory foreign language may be determined by the educational authorities of a country, a community or a school, not providing the student with any choice.

Notwithstanding these factors that influence the possible range of languages on offer, students, families and schools often choose the language that is more popular or perceived to be more useful at a wider level. This is the case for English as a worldwide language.

The most recent Eurostat report (2012), based on data obtained in the academic year 2009-2010 shows that, at primary level (ISCED level 1), English is the most common foreign language learned and that its presence in educational programmes is increasing progressively, a fact that can be noticed when comparing the latest Eurostat reports (60.7% in 2004/05 against 73% in 2009/2010). Consequently, more than 50% of primary school students in Europe learn English. In other countries such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Croatia German is also learned by between 10-22%.

French, however, is the most widely taught foreign language in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom[47].

The case of Luxembourg is different, given that English is not learned at primary level and German is the most common foreign language taught, as it is compulsory from the age of 6; further, French is also learned by all students as a compulsory subject from the age of 7.

With regard to the consideration of English as a useful language, the EuroBarometer 54 of 2006, referring to the Europeans and languages, indicated that, when European citizens were asked which two languages were most useful for them to know apart from their mother tongue, English was said to be the most (68%), followed by French (25%), German (22%) and Spanish (16%). Furthermore, English is considered to be the most useful language to know in 26 out of the 29 countries studied, although in three countries, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and Ireland, French was considered to be the most useful language besides the mother tongue.

The assessment of English as an important language to know can also be demonstrated by the fact that, in the same EuroBarometer 54, it was regarded by 77% of European citizens as the language that children should learn apart from their mother tongue, although the percentage obtained was variable in different countries: the range went from 99% in Sweden to 33% in Romania. French, German and Spanish were again the languages that followed in terms of score.

Similar results were obtained in the SurveyLang 2012 study, in which 80% of students from all European countries (except in France) considered English to be important in order to find a good job.

2.5.2.1. The use of English as *lingua franca*

English is becoming Europe's second language and the fact that it is the main language used for communication makes it a *lingua franca*, meaning that "it is the main channel of communication between European citizens" (Cenoz and Jessner, 2001:viii). People not only use English to communicate with native speakers of this language, but also with people from other nationalities. There is an overwhelming presence of English in many sectors: sport, tourism, music, technology, science, internet, advertising, media and information and technology (Hoffmann, 2000:5; James, 2000:24). "English is a *sine qua non* if one wants to gain access to international electronic information networks" (Hoffmann, cited in Cenoz and Jessner, 2001:5).

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[47] Appendix 2.11. shows the percentage of students learning English, French and/or German in Europe at primary level (Eurostat, 2012).

Hoffmann (2000), discussing the different forms of multilingualism and bilingualism that have emerged from the use of English in Europe, believes that in most cases there is an "achieved bilingualism", as "it is being embraced by growing numbers of people who need to be bilingual or multilingual in their daily communicative functions or who consider that they, or their children have a potential need for it" (Hoffmann, 2000:3).

In education, the use of English directly or indirectly in third level is widespread and it has also become a *lingua franca* in this field. Medical students, scientists and linguists find most of the information related to their subjects of study published in English. Furthermore, regarding vocabulary used, English is the main language in constant development in this sense, which suggests that the other languages are not developing new words as rapidly. Consequently, English words are often used to refer to new concepts in any language, which is compounded by a trend among researchers and academics to publish their investigations in English, aiming to reach a wider audience (Hoffmann, 2000).

As has already been stated, English also influences languages in the sense that many English words have been adopted as part of their normal lexicon. English, itself, is also evolving independently in each country, on every continent, to what is known as Englishes, or varieties of English that have originated from the contact of English with national and community languages. Examples are Spanglish, Japlish or Chinglish. Crystal's observation that "global English has fostered the growth of local varieties as a means of expressing regional identity" appears to be relevant in this research, because of the implications that this phenomenon has for lesser-used languages, especially those in small communities. In Crystal's view, at a time when globalisation and with it, linguistic diversity, has become widespread, there is also a search for homogeneity in communication; it's the need to find a system that is common to everyone and that facilitates international relationships (Crystal, 2009). But why English as a worldwide *lingua franca*? Jasone Cenoz and Ulrike Jessner give us an answer in their book *English in Europe. The acquisition of a Third Language* (2000):

> "It is the combination of British colonial power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and North American dominance of the twentieth century that has made English into the most important language of wider communication in the world. English is also the main language of global science and technology, and is expanding into many countries and regions where it has not traditionally been spoken before."

> (Cenoz, J. and Ulrike Jessner, 2000:vii)

The Welsh linguist David Crystal has also dedicated some of his reflection to explaining how English has gained such importance at international level, becoming the first global language. In the year 2006, Crystal gave an opening speech as director of the newly created *Casa de les llengües* in Barcelona (Spain).

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On that occasion, the scholar took the opportunity to review the current position of English as the world's most popular and powerful language, whilst reminding us of the likely repositioning of this order over the coming years and, consequently, the need to remain alert to the impact of social changes on language usage.

As previously mentioned, the use of English in the European context has experienced different levels of evolution in every country. Thus, in Northern European countries that have had a long tradition for many decades in the teaching of English such as Switzerland, it is not considered a foreign language but a national language, whereas in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands it is a second language (James, 2000:23). The high profile of English is demonstrated, for instance, in the way most television programmes are not dubbed, but subtitled (Scandinavia, Belgium and the Netherlands). Conversely, southern and eastern countries are still adapting their systems to the need for English, mostly because the preferred foreign language was, until not very long ago, French.

English is the foreign language chosen for study in most countries, although there are other major languages present: German, French, Russian, Spanish and Italian. The percentage of students learning English has increased significantly between 2001-2006, especially in Spain, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal. In Luxembourg, without doubt the European country with the greatest linguistic diversity, English is not taught at primary level. Most of the students at primary level study German and French as well as Luxembourgish. In Belgium, English is not included at primary level either, as Dutch, German and French take all the time available for languages in the Curriculum (Eurydice, 2008). In the Netherlands, it is compulsory for all students to learn a foreign language in the final two years of primary education; however, schools can decide to introduce English in the lower levels, which is actually the case in 33% of the schools, according to figures from 2006. Nonetheless, all students have learned English by the end of primary education (Eurydice, 2008).

According to statistical results presented by the European Commission (2007) for the school year 2004-2005, the average number of foreign languages learned per student in primary school in Luxembourg is 1.69%. In Belgium, the average is 0.44%. Estonia, for instance, has an average of 1.13%; Finland, 0.84%; Spain, 0.88% and Ireland, 0.05%. Ireland is thus the country with the lowest percentage of foreign languages studied per school year in primary education.

The case of Estonia is quite interesting to note. It is another example of a country where English is not studied massively as a foreign language in primary education; instead, the first foreign language, Russian, is chosen by 23% of students at primary school level, followed by German and French.

When looking at the statistical results for lower secondary school, we observe that in the schools years from 2001-2002 to 2004-2005 some countries have increased the number of foreign languages on offer and the number of students learning at least one foreign language, i.e. Italy and Malta. In Ireland the number of students learning more than one foreign language declined from 16% to 12% throughout the period 1999-2005, although 88% of pupils in this level were learning at least one foreign language.

Ireland, however, together with Spain and Iceland, has shown some improvement in terms of the number of languages taught and the proportion of pupils learning foreign languages in lower and upper secondary school. 85% of students were learning a foreign language by 2005, an increase of 3% compared to figures from 1999. Similarly, although 5.7% of students in upper secondary school were studying two foreign languages and 0.5% three, in the course year 1999/2000, five years later there had been an increase of 0.4% and 0.1% respectively. Notwithstanding this, Ireland has the second lowest percentage of students learning foreign languages in upper secondary school.

In relation to the teaching of foreign languages other than English, countries such as Luxembourg, Finland, Malta, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia, Romania and Cyprus are, in order, those who put most effort into this area: pupils learn at least one foreign language other than English.

2.5.3. Time allocated to the teaching of foreign languages

The teaching time allocated to foreign languages very much depends on each country and the education level, making it difficult to establish a general pattern among European countries. In general terms, however, the number of weekly sessions allocated to foreign language learning increases in higher grades in countries such as the French-community in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Liechtenstein, Croatia and Turkey. In some countries, the Government determines the teaching time per grade, or per cycle, or even a total number of hours to be covered by the end of compulsory education, as is the case in Sweden. The cases of the Flemish community in Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are however worth noting because of the high level of flexibility they avail of. In these countries, the taught time refers to all the subjects of the curriculum, which means that it is up to the schools to decide the time allocated to each one of them (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

In Spain, for instance, as is the case of other countries where the first foreign language is introduced in first grade, i.e. Bulgaria, France, Italy, Lithuania, Liechtenstein and Croatia, the teaching time can vary from 29 to 54 hours per year for the first year. Also, in countries where there are two foreign languages taught, the number of hours allocated is a lot higher from the start, especially when they also become languages of instruction at some stage, i.e. German-speaking community in Belgium, Luxembourg and Malta (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012).

With regard to the length of a teaching session, this can also vary, not only from one country to another but, also, according to the grade and even the type of school, although, in general, the average duration of a language class seems to be 45-50 minutes[48], according to figures obtained by Eurydice in 2001. These also indicated that, in general, three or four sessions a week are allocated to the learning of the first compulsory foreign language (Eurydice, 2001).

It is worth noting however that the latest reports published by Euryidice and Eurostat are not specific with regard to the length of teaching sessions in each country. Instead, they offer an account of the recommended curricular time per level of education, as directed by law: an average of 60 hours of foreign languages per year in primary education (Eurydice/Eurostat, 2012). In this regard, Luxembourg, with the highest number, dedicates a minimum of 408 hours per year at primary level. Other countries with a high number of curricular hours dedicated to foreign languages are Malta (127) and the German-speaking community in Belgium (121hrs.). On the opposite side, with very little curricular time dedicated are Hungary (21hrs), Slovakia (21hrs) and Cyprus (23hrs)[49].

2.5.4. Language teacher education

"Theories of language learning help us to develop our language teaching. In other words, if we can discover how languages are learned, then we can orientate our pedagogy to make the most of these processes".

(Grenfell, 2003:6)

The relationship Grenfell establishes above between language learning and teaching and between teacher training and practice serve to justify the need to pay close attention to the most recent developments in relation to teacher preparation.

Given that this thesis is mainly focused on the teaching of languages at primary level the following subheadings will be centered on the training of primary school language teachers in European countries.

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[48] See Appendix 2.9. for a breakdown of the average duration of language session in European countries, according to figures obtained in 2001 (Eurydice, 2001).
[49] Appendix 2.12. is a table of the recommended minimum number of hours of compulsory foreign language teaching per academic year at primary level in 2010/2011.

2.5.4.1. Qualifications of foreign language teachers at primary level

In Europe, there is not a clear pattern with regard to the profile of foreign language teachers. While some countries have dedicated specialist teachers, others do not avail of them and generalist teachers are more commonly used. On the one hand, in countries such as Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Norway, Ireland, Latvia and Romania, there are no clear guidelines as to the required qualifications of the foreign language teacher. Nonetheless, a generalist teacher seems to be the norm in the first three countries, whereas a specialist teacher is usually found in the next two. In Ireland, there is no possibility of pursuing a qualification as a foreign language teacher for primary level, as will be seen in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

On the other hand, qualified specialist foreign language teachers are the norm in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Slovakia and Turkey, although in the latter, it can be the case that a generalist teacher takes the place of the specialist teacher due to a shortage of teachers. In fact, the lack of qualified foreign language teachers in primary level is an ongoing issue in many countries, although there is now a general tendency to facilitating teachers' upgrading of qualifications through in-service training and other similar options.

Finally, it is worth noting the case of Iceland, for instance, where a combination of the three models mentioned above may occur and Estonia, where both semi-specialist and specialist teachers teach foreign languages at primary level (Eurydice, 2005).

2.5.4.2. Initial training of primary level foreign language teachers

When referring to qualifications obtained by language teachers in Europe, these can be classified in three different groups, depending on various factors, such as the structure of the country's curricula and the needs to be addressed (Eurydice, 2001; Euryidice/Eurostat, 2012):

> "- Generalist teacher: a teacher qualified to teach all the subjects in the curriculum, including foreign languages. This teacher only teaches at primary level.
> - Semi-specialist teacher: a teacher qualified to teach a group of subjects, including foreign language(s). This teacher normally teaches at primary level but could also teach in lower secondary level.
> - Specialist subject teacher: a teacher qualified to teach one or several foreign languages. The teacher could teach in primary or secondary level."

> (Eurydice, 2001:114)

Generally speaking, the initial training that future foreign language primary teachers receive in the different European countries is carried out in universities, but may also take place in Colleges of Education. The duration of courses is normally shorter in the latter and the level of preparation is thus lower. People willing to access either a university or a college course in language teacher training need to have obtained the equivalent qualification of the Irish Leaving Certificate examination and sometimes some knowledge of the target language may be required.

The length of courses may vary depending on the country, but they are usually offered at undergraduate level. It is interesting to note that, in France, initial teacher training is only offered to those already in possession of a degree (Nfer). Traditionally, in Spain, the duration of the university degree was three years, in which trainees studied common subjects related to general primary teaching practice, and other specific subjects related to the specialisation chosen (foreign language teaching in this case). Other countries with training programmes of similar duration were Austria, Ireland, Italy, the three Belgian communities, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the UK.

In countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, teacher training has traditionally lasted for four years. In others, such as Finland and the Czech Republic the training lasted five years, although this led to a Master's qualification (Kelly et al., 2002). Some countries offered additional, more specialised courses, at postgraduate level. The implementation of the Bologna process has however adjusted the duration and content of student teacher programmes to a more standarised model that will be followed by all European countries. This is orientated towards a four year programme at undergraduate level.

Regarding the content of teacher training courses, although this is different in each country, it usually relates to the acquisition of a high level of language competency. In some cases, more emphasis is given to methodological or pedagogical aspects and, in other cases, to linguistics. A percentage of time is also generally spent on literary and cultural aspects, but this depends on the institution and the total length of the programme.

On a different note, in 2002 the European Commission launched a report entitled *Training of teachers of a foreign language: developments in Europe*, which provides a detailed examination of the initial and in-service training available for language teachers in primary and secondary level in 32 European countries. It identifies existing problems in each country in terms of the organisation of training, co-ordination with the curriculum and those areas in need of development. This report also lists a number of actions believed to be required in order to establish the basis for a common framework to train language teachers in Europe, as well as guidelines for creating competent and efficient language teachers. All of these can be found in Appendix 2.10.

Additionally, the creation of a European Benchmark Statement for Language Teacher Training and a European Qualified Language Teacher Status for all levels of education was also proposed within this study. While the former would provide a framework for co-operation among European countries for the training of future language teachers under the same guidelines, the latter would provide qualified language teachers with a common accreditation system that would facilitate comparability, transferability of credits and mobility (Kelly et al., 2002). Similar to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the benefits related to both at European level would be as follows:

1. Easy recognition of accredited studies.

2. Easy mobility of language teachers.

3. A greater emphasis would be given to teaching methodologies used in every country. This would be the main focus of study for trainee teachers studying abroad.

4. Language teachers could train for the teaching of more than one foreign language. A plan of studies would be set for those languages that were more in demand, namely English, German, French and Spanish, which would be common throughout Europe. Prospective teachers could choose one or more languages, as there would be linkage between the different courses, with common subjects associated with pedagogical and didactic skills and specific subjects for every language.

5. The basis for all teaching materials would be the same in all countries. Additionally, all research in the preparation of new materials would be focused on the same objectives (Kelly et al., 2002).

Furthermore, the need for the creation of courses on teaching of the native language as a foreign language in primary education has also been identified (Kelly et al., 2002). This could somehow be related to the creation of a common European qualification for foreign language teachers so that foreign national children could benefit from this initiative. It would, however, not be advisable to include students in this area (teaching of the native language as a foreign language) in the exact same training courses as those who would be preparing to teach what would be a second language for them. For example, a French native person preparing to teach French as a foreign language should not join the same preparation course as a German person preparing to teach French. The French native student could, however, probably receive an exemption for those subjects related to language competency by undertaking a test, and studying only the subjects linked with pedagogical aspects of teaching of the language.

2.5.4.3. Availability of training for primary level foreign language student teachers at primary level

Students in all European countries have to follow certain periods or blocks of teaching practice in primary schools, where they have to carry out observation as well as some teaching, including planning and evaluation of the activities undertaken. The time students devote to training is decided by the different institutions but can vary from country to country. Figures show that Spain dedicates 10% of the whole education period to this, whereas countries like Malta, Slovenia and the Scotland devote 50% (Eurydice, 2005:63).

With reference to the time spent abroad whilst completing initial training, it is worthwhile mentioning the situation in Liechtenstein, where all prospective teachers undertake their entire teacher training abroad. Students in other countries such as Germany, Austria and the Nordic countries are encouraged to travel abroad to participate in language training courses (Kelly, 2002:35). Only in Luxembourg and Scotland is it compulsory for foreign language specialists to spend some time abroad. Notwithstanding this, students generally have the option to decide whether to spend some time in the target language country (Eurydice, 2005:65). At the end of the teaching practice period, whose length is understood to be different from country to country, students normally have to present a dissertation on their experience, including a self-evaluation of teaching practice (Kelly, 2002:36).

2.5.4.4. In-service training for primary level foreign language teachers

With the aim of ensuring the availability of professional language teachers who are aware of the new changes in the field of education, educational bodies such as teaching innovation institutes, departments of pedagogy, training centers and inspectorates, but also Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs and the European Union Commission offer in-service courses, considered a right and a duty of the teacher, so that language teachers can maintain and improve their language skills and also keep up to date with the new trends in language teaching for subsequent adoption in the classroom.

As pointed out in Kelly (2002):

> "In-service teacher training aims primarily at achieving three main outcomes:
> - to refresh the existing expertise of teachers, and introduce them to new ideas and approaches, such as ICT.
> - to remedy perceived deficiencies, or enable further career development.
> - to act as a means of implementing new policies decided on at a ministerial level."
>
> (Kelly, 2002: 41)

At the moment, only a small number of countries have institutions dedicated to in-service courses, and only some offer some type of qualification. The length of the courses may vary too from country to country (between one and five days), as well as the time devoted per year. In some countries in-service training courses are mandatory to achieve full accreditation, a pay raise or promotion.

Although it seems that there is not much agreement on the organisation of in-service courses among European countries in terms of content, duration and qualifications awarded, all of them participate in European programmes such as Lingua, Comenius and Socrates, and cross-border programmes through partnerships and networks (Kelly, 2002)[50].

2.5.4.5. In-service training of primary level foreign language teachers in the target language countries

There are many public and private organisations and teacher associations that provide ongoing programs for their associates and that are in contact with other countries through different agreements, with whom they may organise teacher exchanges. Some public institutions with a significant presence in the different European Countries are: the British Council (for English), the Alliance Française (for French), the Goethe Institut (for German), the Instituto Cervantes (for Spanish) and the Instituto Italiano de Cultura (for Italian) (Eurydice, 2001a).

In-service training abroad is generally not compulsory in primary teacher training (Kelly et al., 2002). However, it allows teachers to take part in courses of variable duration (between one and three weeks) in countries where the target language is spoken. Longer stays are normally not possible due to the cost involved and problems arising in finding a replacement to cover the teacher's absence (James, 2002).

These courses are normally aimed at helping teachers, either regular language teachers or retrained teachers to improve their skills in the target language. They are almost always optional and not as widespread at primary level as would be the case at secondary level.

The European Socrates program offers grants under the Comenius Action program for teachers to spend between one and four weeks abroad. However, the European Commission recommends that 70% of these grants should be devoted to the training of language teachers with regard to methodologies to be applied in the classrooms. It is worthwhile mentioning that although the most popular languages are English, French, German and Spanish, a total of 60% of the grants are given to

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[50] See Appendix 2.6 on Teaching methodologies in second language learning.

English courses, whereas only 14% are for French courses and 5% for both Spanish and German (Eurydice, 2005).

2.6. Chapter conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was two-fold. The first aim was to provide a theoretical background of the cognitive and social factors that intervene in first and second language acquisition, as well as the benefits associated with it whether in childhood or adulthood. The second aim was to provide an account of the approach that European institutions have adopted since the 19th century but, more specifically, at the end of the 20th century and start of the 21st century towards the maintenance of minority and regional languages and the knowledge of foreign languages.

The process of language learning and language acquisition is indeed a very complex task that encompasses many different disciplines: psychology, linguistics, sociology and education have been linked for decades in any study undertaken on this matter, which, despite the information we now have as to how the human brain works, has not yet been completely unravelled. Throughout the chapter, a change in the way languages are regarded becomes evident. Recent social emancipation, coupled with increased freedom of choice, has instigated a greater respect for the individual and his/her origins. In the past, States sought to unify the nation by imposing the nationalistic rhetoric of one-state language; however, in the present environment, respect for individual rights, including those of minority language speakers, has become of paramount importance but it has also made language education acquire a different dimension. The spread of multilingualism has reached all corners of the world; from the urban metropolis to the remotest rural areas of the planet. There are multiple reasons for this: tourism, work mobility, business interests, students foreign exchange programmes, aid work, etc. The presence of languages other than those that are official and "native" to a country can therefore no longer be ignored. In this regard, national and international institutions are co-operating to design a legal body that gives protection to languages of all origins and provides support to multilingual acquisition in order to increase mutual understanding and empathy for people of other backgrounds. The right of a person to speak and continue to learn his/her own language, despite not living in his place of origin, has been internationally recognised. Nonetheless, the implications of this agreement are many and the measures to be taken are highly demanding for the stakeholders involved.

All in all, many education systems are now designed to produce multilingual citizens who can speak their language of origin to the fullest possible extent, the language of the community and one or more languages of international status. A sound understanding of the cognitive process of language acquisition and of the periods of highest brain activity is a major determinant in establishing the best

language policy. However, despite many studies that have led to the common belief that younger students learn second languages better than their elders, there are as many studies, we have discovered, which show that, under the same conditions, a person can learn a new language at any age. It is nonetheless accepted that there are a number of optimal conditions that young learners (children before the age of 11-12) utilise that are harder to detect in adults and which greatly influence proficiency in a language, i.e. time, motivation and lack of prejudices or social constructions.

Nevertheless, it is also argued that if an adult was in contact with a new language for the same length of time as a child, he/she would make as much progress. In terms of motivation, it has been stated, however, that, in certain contexts, young children sometimes possess higher levels of motivation for learning than adults because of the need they have to be integrated with their peers. This need, which is not as prevalent in the adult population, encourages the child to imitate and copy other children in their actions and language use in a natural manner. Also, with regard to language learning, this has two direct effects on the young learner: acquisition of both native-like accent and native-like speech. The reason for the latter originates from the fact that, as a child is not conscious of the syntactic constructions of his/her speech, there is no metalinguistic awareness involved in his/her discourse. It is intrinsic in the child. Children can be differentiated from adults because of their willingness to, as already mentioned, imitate, copy and engage in new experiences. However, the assumption that early language learning is simply the best option has been challenged by a more holistic view of the issue. Endogenous variables such as attitude, motivation, relationship between the languages in contact, culture and cognitive ability in language learning also need to be taken into account. This is where the difficulty in drawing an appropriate language policy arises.

On a different note, countries where the best results are achieved in the learning of foreign languages, namely the northern European countries, have developed educational policies focused on lowering the starting age for language learning whilst nurturing their teachers through initial and in-service training, as well as ensuring that appropriate teaching methodologies are employed. Student teachers are highly encouraged to spend time abroad and several organisations have been created to support this type of initiative and special funding has been made available.

Teacher training is, undoubtedly, crucial, at both pre-service and in-service. Aware of this, European countries are implementing important measures to tackle an evident lack of qualified foreign language teachers at primary level. Also, current educational needs demand teachers with a good knowledge of the target language. Spending some time in the country where the language to be taught is spoken is becoming more common, as well as preparation in the knowledge of teaching methodologies and being in possession of a good sense of cultural awareness.

From a different perspective, the good results obtained by immersion students in different educational contexts in reading and writing skills at all levels of education are a matter of record since immersion education programmes were first introduced in the 1960s. In terms of competency in the L2, older and current studies show that students achieve virtually the same level as native speakers of the same age. Proficiency in the L1 has also been proven to be as high as that of students attending non-immersion programmes. These results, regarding bilingual immersion programmes, serve my investigation in that provide empirical evidence of the benefits of bilingual and immersion education for the achievement of bilingualism. Related studies on trilingual education are however not as common, we have seen, because of the relatively recent inclusion of minority and modern languages in education programmes with a majority language. Nonetheless, the available research also shows trilingual education to be highly beneficial for the cognitive development of the child and that it does not cause any negative impact on the structural development of the brain; compared to bilingual acquisition, trilingual or multilingual acquisition simply adds more complexity to the learning process because of the extra language/s involved.

Consequently, it has become apparent throughout the research I have conducted in this chapter that regional or minority languages and languages of wider use can be integrated successfully in a holistic learning experience if the right conditions are met. The experience of countries such as Estonia, Belgium, Finland and Sweden, where minority and second and third languages are an important part of the Curriculum at primary level, is evidence of this.

Referring back to my research questions, in order to define the right model of education for Ireland that included English, Irish and a L3, it is imperative that the specific sociolinguistics particularities of each region within the country are considered carefully: on the one hand, it is important to define the extent of the support that Irish receives from the Government and its role within the community and in education. On the other hand, issues such as the best age of start, time allocation, teacher training, teaching methodologies, curriculum planning, etc. also need to be looked at, as they are related to language policy planning. Therefore, an in-depth investigation of these issues in the context of Ireland and of its comparator country/region, Catalonia, is necessary. A historical review of language education policy will provide a better understanding of the challenges that the two jurisdictions are faced with at present and will help make an informed judgement of the best line of action to follow. This study will take place in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN IRELAND

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the role that languages play within Irish society. Through analysis of the historical development of both Irish and English in Ireland, we can gain a better understanding of their role at the start of the 21st century. Demographic and economic changes that have occurred in the past twenty years have also played an important role in introducing new languages and cultures to the country, which have made a significant impact on language use and attitudes. Taking this into account, the multi-dimensional aspects of language learning, i.e. education, language policy, sociolinguistics and national politics have been analysed to identify their relationship in the specific case of Ireland. This study, in conjunction with the research on languages carried out in Catalonia, will enable the identification of areas where Ireland and Catalonia have commonalities, areas for potential improvement and examples of best practices. This, in turn, will give focus to the creation of a multilingual education policy for Ireland that allows Irish citizens and Irish society in general to gain a greater appreciation for both the Irish language and multilingualism.

3.2. Historical background

3.2.1. The defeat and fall of the Gaelic order

From the time of the Celts, where the first forms of the Irish language originated, up to the 13th century, spoken and written Irish evolved among generations to become the dominant language within the home, the arts and society[51]. Even after the Anglo-Norman invasion in 1167, when English Common Law was imposed, Irish continued to be the language spoken by the vast majority of the population, with French and English seen as foreign languages, only utilised in senior governance and among the upper classes of Norman/English origin. The first major setback in relation to usage of the Irish

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[51] See Appendix 3.1. for a summary of the history of Ireland with regard to the origin and evolution of the Irish language up to the 17th century.

language occurred when a lack of control over the Gaelic Lords and Irish society in general prompted discontent among the English rulers at the end of the 13th century, who subsequently dictated that English language and customs should be adopted by all Englishmen and Irish citizens in the Statutes of Kilkenny (1366). From that moment on, the history of the Irish language was marked by a series of laws imposed by English rulers in Ireland to seriously undermine everything that was perceived as Irish.

In the sixteenth century, the Tudor conquest and Henry VIII´s position as Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of Ireland in 1536 (approved by the English and Irish parliaments in 1534 and 1537 respectively) brought about attempts to bring the Reformation to Ireland. One of the first measures taken was the closure and, often, destruction, of all Irish monasteries, which was seen as an important step on the road to extinguishing Roman Catholicism. Many manuscripts were also burned and poets eliminated: "not only was the poet's occupation gone, but also the lawyer's, the historian's, the musician's. The Irish landscape was made desert and with it Irish intellect" (Corkery, 1968:73). Additionally, English replaced Latin in the liturgy from 1551.

Edward VI (1547-53) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603), son and daughter of Henry VIII, were much more ruthless than their father in the imposition of English law, culture and language across the entire territory. During the first thirty years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Irish landowners were progressively dispossessed of their land as deliberate tactics were employed in a systematic attempt to impose significant deprivation on non-Protestants. It was in the Ulster region, however, that the discontent of Irish chieftains provoked the organisation of a rebellion against the English crown (March 1593). This forced the Nine Years War, led by Hugh O'Neill, Lord of Tyrone, and supported by an army sent by the Spanish King Phillip II. The Spanish forces landed in Kinsale, in County Cork, in 1601, where they were joined by the rebel Irish; this union was, however, insufficient to defeat the English army, which, led by Lord Mountjoy, ended the Gaelic system existing until then after winning the Battle of Kinsale in 1603.

As a direct consequence of this war, the old Irish nobility were forced to renounce their titles and accept English law. Unwilling to accept this imposition and fearing for their lives, the last Earls of Ireland, the O'Neills and the O'Donnells, together with 90 chieftains, left Ireland in 1607 in what is known as the Flight of the Earls, and found exile in Rome, never to return. This event gave rise to the Ulster Plantation of 1609 onwards, in which, firstly, all the land that had recently been abandoned was transferred to Protestant English and Scottish settlers. Secondly, all the land belonging to Irish natives was confiscated in the counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone, and given to Protestant tenants. This action not only affected the native Irish, but also the Old English, who were Catholic and supporters of the English Crown, who owned one third of the land. Charles I introduced Anti-Catholic legislation, to which these Old English were firmly opposed. The protection that the Old

English had enjoyed for a long time lost all meaning, as they were no longer trusted by the English Crown. In addition, their position within the Irish parliament was threatened after the arrival of a new Lord Deputy, Wentworth, in 1633, and became progressively weaker as Protestants gained more seats. Their ownership of land was no longer secure, being confiscated in the same way as that of the Irish landowners. In 1641, an attempt at rebellion[52] organised by the Irish upper classes was intercepted and frustrated by English forces. Its end was not without consequences however. In 1649, Cromwell arrived in Ireland with the intention of providing the country with a new order of rules with regard to the ownership of the land: those who had participated in the rebellion were to lose all their lands whereas those who had not taken part in it were to lose part of their land entitlement and retain the rest, although not in the same place, rather in either Connacht or Clare. The rest of the country was divided into counties and the ownership of the land was granted to creditors of the English government and members of the army, among others. Although the owners of the land were Protestant, from that moment on those who worked it were basically the old owners, who preferred to stay as tenants rather than resettling elsewhere (Clarke, 1994). The struggle for the recovery of confiscated land continued in subsequent years, even though in 1662 the Act of Settlement agreed to return part of the land to Old Irish and "innocent Irish" (those who could prove they had been Royalists in any war and had not taken any action against Protestants) but none to any Catholic Irish (Simms, 1994).

In addition to this, Catholic schools were closed and replaced by Parish schools, where Irish students were introduced to the English language. It was believed that the best possible way of converting the population to Anglicanism was to educate the children of the masses in the Protestant principles. Other educational initiatives available up until the nineteenth century were directed at the education of Protestant children: the Free Schools of Royal Foundation; the English schools of Private Foundation or the grammar schools of Erasmus Smith.

It should be acknowledged that one of the most significant forms of education that prevailed between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries was the bardic schools, which were mainly "colleges" of poetry where Irish literature and language were taught in conjunction with the Brehon laws. These schools, organised in Ireland and Scotland, were attended by descendants of both poets and wealthy families, although there was generally a lord who offered patronage to the student and for whom the poems were written. It is believed that a strict working regime was operating in the bardic schools and that students underwent up to seven years of training (Dowling, 1968; Ruckenstein and O'Malley, 2004). Also, the

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[52] Known as the Irish Rebellion of 1641.

study of Latin in bardic schools was immediately introduced following the arrival of Christianity; the work of monks and poets was closely linked.

The *Act to Restrain Foreign Education*, passed in 1695, established that Roman Catholics were not allowed to set up schools and that Catholic teachers could not gain employment. It also prohibited the education of Catholics abroad. Effectively, this measure resulted in the fall of the bardic schools, whose number had been greatly diminished. In his address to the jurors of Dublin City and County, the encouragement of Judge Robinson to prosecute any schoolmaster who was not complying with the dissemination of the Act is evident:

> "You are to Enquire of, and Present, all Misprisons of Treason, all Offences against the Acts of Parliament, made in this Kingdom, to restrain the Education of our Youth in Foreign Popish Seminaries; to hinder Papists bearing Arms at Home; and to prevent the King's Subjects from Enlisting in Foreign Service, without his Majesty's Licence; and all Offences against the Statute of Premunire".

> (Dowling, 1968:23)

3.2.2. The establishment of a new order after the 17th century: the survival of Catholicism and the rise of hedge schools in education

During George II's reign, Protestant schools for Irish Catholic children were established in different parts of the country (Crowley, 2000), as dictated in His Majesty's *Royal Charter for Erecting English Protestant Schools in the Kingdom of Ireland* in 1733:

> "That among the ways proper to be taken for converting and civilising of the said deluded Persons…one of the most necessary, and without which, all other are likely to prove ineffectual, has always been thought to be the Erecting and Establishing of a sufficient Number of English Protestant Schools, wherein the children of the Irish Natives may be instructed in the English Tongue, and the Fundamental Principles of True Religion".

Following this ruling, the Dublin Society for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland was founded in 1734 (Connolly, 1998) to "civilise and convert the Irish natives". With this idea in mind, the Charter schools[53] were created. Many families however refused to allow their children to be anglicised. Because they wanted them to be educated according to Irish traditions and in the Catholic faith, they

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[53] Charter schools were created to cater for Catholic children and with the intention of educating them in the Protestant faith, at the same time as teaching them the English language.

opted to send them to secret schools, known as hedge schools, organised in the open countryside and ruled by what was known as a hedge master, who was usually a poet or an ex-student of the priesthood (Dowling, 1968; Coolahan, 1981).

The income of any hedge schoolmaster was always dependent upon the number of children attending, weather conditions and the economic situation of the families. Therefore, only parents who could pay the fee were able to send their children to hedge schools, which meant that a large proportion of Catholic children did not receive any form of education (Dudley, 1973). It cannot be forgotten that Protestant schools were also privately funded, allowing access only to the middle-class. Also significant is the fact that, despite the emphasis afforded to educating children in the Catholic faith, the belief that the Irish language had no place in the future of Irish society became generally accepted as part of the process of deculturalisation; in this regard, it became common practice in hedge schools to teach English to provide children with an exit route out of poverty and marginalisation: "In the hedge schools, and in every other way open to them, Irish-speaking parents sought to give their children English, the language of success and of social mobility"(Ó Tuathaigh, 1990:2). Children were also instructed in reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic and some learned Greek, Latin, mathematics, history, geography, book-keeping, surveying and navigation (Dowling, 1968), depending on the school.

Despite all the ups and downs in Irish politics throughout the 17th century, it is remarkable that, despite the fact that English was becoming known and used within the Irish population, the Irish language remained the language of the home and sole language of communication among most of the population until 1750 (Hindley, 1990). Additionally, by the end of the 17th century, Ireland was the only one of the three kingdoms that, although it contained a powerful Protestant community[54] (largely imported) (Dudley, 1973) had not succumbed to the Reformation. Catholicism continued to be present, as 75% of the population was Catholic, although they only owned 14% of the country's land (Foster, 1989).

Irish history in the 18th century was marked by the slow but steady progress of Irish Catholics in society and by an economic improvement, due in good part to a prosperous commercial agriculture and the expansion of exports. This led to a demographic growth in the country (especially seen in the lower classes), meaning that by 1800 the population was 5-6 million (as compared to around 3 million in 1750). Studies on language usage from this period are not available; however, academic research has been conducted with approximate results on the areas where Irish usage had ceased (see section 2.4.).

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[54] The Protestant Ascendancy (also known as the Ascendancy) was formed by a minority of landowners, members of the clergy and wealthy people who ruled Ireland between the 17th and 19th centuries.

3.2.3. Catholic emancipation and the introduction of education for all

At the end of the 18th century, tensions between the government and rural classes were supplanted by a resurgence of the nationalist movement seeking Catholic emancipation. While the Ascendancy was campaigning for an independent Irish Parliament and more rights to defend "religious equality for all and political reform" (O'Beirne, 1997) the creation of the Society of the United Irishmen in Belfast in 1791 aimed at an independent Republic, based on the principles of the French Revolution. The most radical members of the Society rebelled in May 1798, which resulted in a victory for the British government and the abolition of the Irish parliament. As a direct consequence of the rebellion, in 1801, a single parliament was established for all of Great Britain and Ireland, under the Act of Union of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, with the Irish population being represented by one hundred members in the House of Commons in Westminster (all part of the Ascendancy).

The Act of Union brought with it a change of mentality among the Irish population. Although it made no specific reference to language usage in the country, a direct correlation can be identified between its implications and the realisation among the population that English was the language for advancement and integration in the new order. The consequent transition of the lower classes from Irish usage to English was a slow process during which bilingualism was the norm in Ireland but eventually led to the virtual abandonment of Irish (Hindley, 1990).

The work of many who opposed being ruled from London after the passing of the Act concentrated on bringing a parliament back to Ireland and achieving Catholic emancipation; Daniel O'Connell is renowned for such action. He based his campaign on obtaining rights for the Catholics by the use of law, never through violence. His strategy was centred on uniting all the Catholics of Ireland as a means of forcing the King to make a decision on the question of Catholic emancipation. Despite the King's reluctance to consent to such a measure, the Catholic Relief Act was finally passed in 1829. From that moment, Roman Catholics were allowed to be Members of Parliament again (Ó Beirne, 1997).

Education at this time was largely being provided by the Society for promoting the education of the poor in Ireland, also called the Kildare Place Society. Founded in 1811, it received grants from the Parliament based on the condition that it would be a non-denominational institution where children from all religious backgrounds could receive an education (although most of the students were Catholics) based on the reading of the Bible, but without any kind of specific interpretation. Under the auspices of the Society a large number of schools were opened with the aim of providing better teaching conditions: a new college was established for the training of teachers and a system of inspection for the

schools was created. Nonetheless, in the second decade following its creation, the first accusations were made by Catholics and members of the Church of Ireland that the Society was not delivering an adequate religious education (Dowling, 1968). Consequently, the National Board of Education was established in 1831 with a view to providing a government-led centralised national education system in Ireland, with a nation-wide network of primary schools, also called national schools. This initiative was successful in that it reduced the number of people unable to read and write from 53% in 1841 to 14% in 1901 (Coolahan, 1981) but the position of Irish clearly deteriorated during this period, as English was the only language to be used at school, leaving Irish totally excluded (Coolahan, 1981; Hindley, 1990). This, in effect, provoked an overall cultural and linguistic abandonment (Comerford, 2010).

In relation to hedge schools, these continued until 1880, as many Catholic families did not trust the national schools, for they had been established by the British Government (Greene, 1966). Indeed, figures from 1824 show that there were about 11,000 schools in Ireland providing education for over half a million children, of which 9,000 were hedge schools with circa 12,000 teachers employed (Coolahan, 1981). This meant that, even though only two out of every five children of schooling age were attending school, four out of every five children that were being educated did so through this unofficial system of education (Coolahan, 1981; Raftery and Parkes, 2007). Nevertheless, later data shows that the number of national schools grew considerably throughout the nineteenth century compared to earlier eras, as indicated in the following table (Coolahan, 1981):

Figure 1 – Number of national schools and children attending in Ireland (1835-1990)

Number of national schools and children attending in Ireland (1835-1900)		
Year	Number of schools	Children attending
1835	1,106	100,000
1850	5,000	500,000
1900	9,000	750,000

3.2.4. The language situation in pre and post-famine Ireland

The Irish language within the education system in the first part of the 19th century was non-existent, although interest in the study of Celtic language and culture had emerged in the 1830s, with a number of

scholars initiating studies in these areas (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003). In fact, the importance of Irish language and culture gained so much popularity, especially among scholars and higher level institutions that in 1838 Irish was given a chair in Trinity College (Ó Cuív, 2010). Later, in 1845, the Queen's Colleges Bill gave a new direction to third level education institutions, opening colleges in Cork, Galway and Belfast, all of them with chairs in Celtic languages. It should be remembered that university education until then had only been available to the middle and upper classes in the Protestant Trinity College in Dublin, established in 1591, and a few Catholic organisations, such as St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, founded in 1795 (Killeen, 2003).

The Great Famine (1845-51) provoked the mass emigration of 1.5 million people and caused the deaths of a further million (Hindley, 1990; Romaine, 2008). Before the famine, the population of Ireland had peaked at around 8,000,000 inhabitants, of whom approximately 2.5-3 million were Irish-speakers (Ó Tuathaigh, 1990; Killeen, 2003; Romaine, 2008). The disastrous effects of the famine resulted in a radical language shift (Ó Laoire, 2005). The disappearance of poets, who were the great transmitters of folklore among the population, coupled with the lack of scholars undertaking work in Irish resulted in a virtual abandonment of tradition (Corkery, 1968). English became the main language of communication and commerce, being adopted by those who wanted to prosper (Dudley, 1973; Ó Tuama, 1993). By the mid-1830s about 40% of the population had Irish as their vernacular language; however, figures from the 1851[55] census show that only a quarter of Irish people spoke Irish, around one and a half million (Greene, 1966; Ó Cuív, 2010; Ó Murchú, 2008) of whom 320,000 were Irish-speaking monoglots (less than 5% of the population) (Killeen, 2003; Hindley, 1990; Ó Cuív, 2010). Regionally, there was a disparity in the spread of Irish speakers: in some counties of the east and north-east less than 1% of the population was able to speak Irish, whereas in western counties in Munster, Connacht and Donegal as many as 50% of the population were Irish speakers, for they were less anglicised (Ó Cuív, 2010)[56].

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[55] The census of 1851 was the first census in Ireland in which the question of language usage was posed.
[56] See maps of Irish-speakers in 1851 and 1891, by baronies, by Brian Ó Cuív in Appendix 3.2.

3.2.5. The Revival movement

After the Great Famine, the Irish population was left with a great sense of insecurity with regard to the conditions surrounding the possession of land, coupled with a strong desire to gain independence from Britain. Daniel O' Connell formed the Repeal Association of Ireland against the Act of the Union 1800 during the 1830s and was joined by a number of young Irish men, mainly graduates from Trinity College and other young men of Catholic and Protestant origin, led by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, all of whom shared his nationalistic ideas. Known as the Young Ireland Movement, this group became embroiled in the fight for an Irish society that sought the de-anglicisation of Irish culture and where both Irish language and literature were used as a force to unite the Irish people. The publication of the newspaper The Nation, founded in 1843, was used as a propagandistic tool for the dissemination of nationalist ideas. Davis, an educationalist and fervent language enthusiast, published two main discourses in the Nation: Self-education and Our National Language, which clearly express his disdain for the imposition of English rule and his view of Irish as a "source which could be used to construct an independent Irish nation and which would have beneficial influences for Irish society in general" (Walsh, 2010: 72).

> "A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories- 'tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier, than fortress or river".
>
> (Davis, *Our National Language*, 1:98)

In his discourse Davis advocated the need to reinvigorate a sense of self-esteem and national identity by offering opportunities to the people to learn Irish and use it:

> "To impose another language on such a people is to send their history adrift among the accidents of translation- 'tis to tear their identity from all places- 'tis to substitute arbitrary signs for picturesque and suggestive names- 'tis to cut off the entail of feeling, and separate the people from their forefathers by a deep gulf- 'tis to corrupt their very organs, and abridge their power of expression".
>
> (Davis, *Our National Language,* 1:97-98)

In 1848, only six years after its creation, the Young Irelanders participated in an attempted uprising to gain independence, but this was promptly defeated by government forces. Despite this loss, the Irish Tenant League was created two years after the rising through the initiative of Duffy. Their motto was "the three F's": fair rent, fixity of tenure and freedom for the tenant to sell his interest in his holding (Woody, 1994). This organisation did not last very long due to internal disagreements, but the nationalistic ideas of Thomas Davis were inspirational for many Irish men during subsequent years. This

led to the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B) emerging in 1858. Also known as the Fenians, its leaders were Catholics who enjoyed support from America and England. Their vision of Ireland was that of an independent nation, free from the control of English rule, which could only be achieved by armed revolution. The defeat of the Fenians occurred in 1867 when an attempted uprising was intercepted by the British government, although the movement continued in secret afterwards and recruited new members in the years between 1867 and the Easter Rising of 1916, in which it played an important role (Walsh, 2010; .

The fight for the sovereignty of Ireland took a new turn with the creation of the "home rule movement" by the conservative Isaac Butt, who received support from the Fenians. His strategy was very much based on persuading the House of Commons of constitutional nationalism achieved through dialogue. Despite enjoying strong support during the general election of 1874, in 1875 Butt encountered his most fervent rival, Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell held far more extremist views than Butt on how independence could be achieved and soon gained many supporters among the Fenians, provoking a division. The appearance of Michael Davitt, an old Fenian member who had just been released from prison in 1877, marked the start of a new area in Irish politics. The threat of another possible famine period in 1879-80 prompted the creation of the Irish National Land League, which brought about the "land war", organised and led by Davitt and Parnell. Their leadership skills were fundamental in organising farmers nationwide to receive a reduction in the price of rents and to avoid the eviction of tenants where possible, although whenever this happened economic support was provided to those affected. This initiative was the first of a series of actions that eventually led to the landlords selling their lands and Irish farmers becoming landowners (Hindley, 1990; Walsh, 2010; Comerford, 2010).

Meanwhile, Parnell, the leader of the nationalist movement and also founder of the Irish Parliamentary Party, joined efforts with Gladstone, who was the leader of the English Liberal Party, to achieve "home rule". This meant that if the Home Rule Bill presented by Gladstone in 1886 was passed by the English parliament, Ireland would have been granted the right to have its own representatives within the country while still depending on Westminster for general matters. Gladstone's political life was directed and focused on giving Ireland the right to be in charge of its own internal affairs through the creation of its own Chambers of Deputies. Unfortunately, as expected, due to the total opposition of the English Conservative Party, this bill was voted down, as was the second one presented by Gladstone in 1893. In fact, it was not until 1914 that the English parliament granted home rule to Ireland or, in other words, the right to have its own representatives within the country while still depending on Westminster for general matters, although this was suspended due to the outbreak of the First World War. Subsequently, the War of Independence (1919-1921) would bring about a complete change of the political situation in Ireland (Hindley, 1990; Walsh, 2010; Comerford, 2010).

In this atmosphere of revolutionary social change, the Irish Language Revival, also known as the Gaelic Revival, was initiated with a series of actions directed at spreading the presence of Irish in society; these included the establishment of several societies (such as the Celtic Society in 1853) and the inclusion of articles in Irish in local and national newspapers, as well as the publication of newspapers in Irish (i.e. An Fíor-Éireannach, the Shamrock, Young Ireland and United Irishman). One man, David Comyn, took the initiative of, firstly, organising a meeting to proclaim the need for those living outside the Irish-speaking areas to learn the language and, secondly, founded the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language[57], with branches in Dublin and Belfast and which young people used as a place for socialisation (Comerford, 1989). In fact, the year 1878 is remembered as the "date at which the preservation of Irish became one of the objectives of the Irish nationalist movement" (Greene, 1974:16-17).

One of the biggest achievements of the Society (strongly supported by the Irish National Teachers Organisation, INTO[58]) which merits attention is its success in including Irish in the Intermediate Examination from 1878. The following year it was made available in primary and secondary school as an extra-curricular subject, taught outside the normal school hours under the name Celtic language and literature (Ó Cuív, 2010). Teachers were paid fees for results by the National Commissioners and grants were also made available to over 100 schools (Walsh, 2010). It would not be until 1900, however, that Irish could be taught during school hours (Hindley, 1990; Ó Tuathaigh, 2008).

Despite the great deal of work focused on the maintenance of Irish by offering classes in the language, as well as creating and publishing textbooks, the Society suffered a major upheaval one year after its foundation that resulted in some of its members leaving because of their lack of agreement on its *modus operandi*, giving rise to the Gaelic Union, which would in turn become the Gaelic League[59] (Greene, 1974). Formed in 1893, the League was a non-political organisation involving people from different ideological backgrounds, spanning the spectrum of Unionism to physical-force Republicanism, whose objectives were the revival of the Irish language and the preservation of Irish literature, music and folklore, but, most importantly, to "promote the use of Gaelic as a spoken language in Ireland" (Dr. Eoin Mac Néill, 1893). Chief among the League´s founders were Dr. Douglas Hyde, Dr. Eoin Mac Néill and Fr. William Hayden, S.J. Father Eugene O'Growney, who was professor of Irish in Maynooth[60].

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[57] Hereafter Society.
[58] Henceforth INTO.
[59] Hereafter League.
[60] Father O'Growney learned Irish after the age of 16 as a young priest; his interest in the language brought him to write "Simple lessons in Irish", which was periodically published in the period between 1897-1900 in the *An Claidheamh Soluis* Irish nationalist newspaper created by the Gaelic League (Sisson, 2004), although

The publication of periodical newspapers, as well as the organisation of cultural events, were also subsidiary objectives (O'Beirne, J., 1997; Killeen, R., 2003). Thus, the Gaelic Journal was a clear example of the use of the Irish language for political means of nationalism and patriotism (Ó Cuív, 2010).

Hyde's lecture *The Necessity for De-anglicising the Irish People*, his first as President of the National Literary Society (1892), was a call to Irish people to stop imitating English customs and traditions and to refuse the "modernisation" that came with it. Also, in his discourse the language was seen as a vital inheritance whose loss would result in the disastrous end to what was left of the island's glorious Gaelic past (Walsh, 2010). His suggestion was that should Ireland import industrialisation from England, Irish cultural heritage would be destroyed. This brought with it criticism, for it has been suggested Hyde's opinion was contrary to economic development and modernisation in Ireland. In his analysis of Hyde's discourse, Walsh (2010) rejects this interpretation relating to economic development, suggesting rather that indigenous cultural cohesion through Irish could provide significant empowerment to Ireland. Hence, he concludes that "Hyde views the contribution of Irish to Ireland's development as follows: the restoration of the language will 'foster a native spirit', increase 'the power of native initiative', reduce 'second-hand assimilation' and put an end to the 'nation of imitators'" (Walsh, 2010:75). Nevertheless, Hyde believed in the restoration of Irish only in the parts where it was the regular language of communication, rather than in the whole country. In fact, he supported a policy of language maintenance, whilst acknowledging the fact that it could never replace English in its role as the main language of communication in the country. Mac Néill, however, believed that intergenerational transmission was the key to the revitalisation of Irish, while Father O'Growney strongly supported education through the medium of Irish (Ó Laoire, 1995).

3.2.5.1. Attempts to restore the Irish language by Irish language revivalists

In the years following its creation, progress made by the League went largely unnoticed, given that the number of Irish speakers fell dramatically. Census figures from 1851 (Punch, 2008) to 1901 show a significant fall in the number of monoglot Irish speakers. In 1851 there were 319,602 (4.9% of the

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later on it was compiled in a book. The success of this grammar book for beginners of Irish was such that by 1904 more than 400,000 copies had been sold. Later on he was appointed professor of Irish in Maynooth until 1896, when he was succeeded by Michael O'Hickey, who was a fervent defender of Irish as a requirement for matriculation in the university (Ó Cuív, 2010).

population), but by 1891 there were only 194,246 (5.6%). In 1901 this number had dropped to 20,953 (0.65%) (Hindley, 1990; Romaine, 2008) (Table 1- Appendix 3.3.[61]).

Other relevant data indicates that in 1891 there were only 700,000 Irish native speakers, of which 500,000 were concentrated in Irish-speaking areas or *Gaeltachtaí* (Ó Tuathaigh, 1990) and only 3.5% of the population under the age of 10 were Irish monoglots, whereas in 1851 this had been 12.6% (Ó Murchú, 2008). It should be noted that only in Donegal did the percentage of Irish-speakers increase from 1851 to 1891, from 28.7% to 33.4%.

The work done by the League in the area of education was very substantial, however, continuing from the advances made by the Society. After 1900 Irish became an optional subject included in the school hours provided that there was a demand for it on the part of the students and that none of the other school subjects were neglected. Statistical information from 1906 shows very positive results with regard to the presence of Irish in the national primary school system: nearly 600 schools were teaching Irish as an ordinary subject and over 1,000 schools as an optional subject. In secondary education, the percentage of students taking the Intermediate Examination in Irish notably increased following its inclusion in 1878. In 1890 only around 8% of the students sitting the examination also sat the Irish exam, but by 1910 this percentage had increased to almost 54% and by 1919 to over 72% (Ó Cuív, 2010). Nonetheless, most of the teachers were voluntary workers and received very poor training.

After 1903 this situation changed somewhat. On the one hand, a large number of adults and teachers began attending classes in Irish, organised by branches of the League, through summer courses. On the other, it was decided to provide intensive training courses for teachers by creating six state-run Teacher Training Colleges in different parts of the country (Mac Aodha, 1972; Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). Bilingual education in primary schools was approved in 1904 by the Government's Commissioners of National Education with a specific programme in English and Irish adapted to reflect the actual language situation prevailing in each region (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). This was the first time that Irish was used as a medium of instruction (Ó Fiaich, 1972; Comerford, 2003).

The first schools to follow this initiative after 1904 were all in Irish-speaking areas, in which bilingual programmes were introduced for the first time (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008; Ó Cuív, 2010); Irish and English could both be used on condition that the teacher had a good command of written and spoken Irish. In 1922, the Council of Education reported that Irish was part of the primary school curriculum in 1900

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[61] All tables related to the use of the Irish language in the period from 1851 to 2006 can be found within Appendix 3.3.

schools, to which 240 schools that were implementing the bilingual programme were added (Walsh, 2010). This overall increase in the number of schools teaching Irish throughout the country influenced the Government's decision to include Irish in the National School Curriculum, which was also supported by the Gaelic League (Ó Fiaich, 1972). Nonetheless, only 51% of all national schools were considered "efficient", with reports highlighting poor conditions in terms of staff and equipment in many schools (Hindley, 1990:24) as well as serious problems with students' attendance (56% average in national schools in 1904) (Walsh, 2010).

In 1913 a passing grade in Irish was made a necessary requirement for acceptance to all the colleges of the National University of Ireland (De Blaghd, 1972; Mac Aodha, 1972; Greene, 1972; Ó Fiaich, 1972; Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). The immediate effect of this policy was that as many as a quarter of primary schools and two-thirds of secondary schools were teaching Irish by 1921. The two universities that did not follow suit were Trinity College Dublin and Queen's University Belfast (Hindley, 1990). University College Cork and, especially, University College Galway received specific funding for the promotion of Irish; both were encouraged to hire staff that were competent in the language (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

The influence of the League on the new generation was unquestionable, as pointed out by the editor of the Thomas Davis Lectures: "The Gaelic League, since its foundation, has seen the restoration of the Irish language as fundamental to the preservation and development of our national identity" (Ó Tuama, 1972:7). In the assessment he makes on the influence of the League in promoting cultural change, Mac Aodha points out that "all during the first three decades of its existence the League exercised a great and growing influence over contemporary society" (Mac Aodha, 1972: 23). From a similar point of view, Ó Cuív makes the following statement:

> "While it is true that the primary aim of preserving Irish as the everyday language of the Gaeltacht areas was not achieved, it is an undoubted fact that through its activities the league was instrumental in spreading a new consciousness of national distinctiveness throughout the country, and this was reflected in the number of people, adults as well as children, learning the language".

(Ó Cuív, 2010: 403)

The immediate effect of the bilingual education programme was reflected in the census of 1911, which reported 13.3% of Irish-speakers (582,446) and only 16,873 monoglot Irish-speakers (Table 1[62]-

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[62] Tables 1-34 of this chapter can be found in Appendix 3.3.

Appendix 3.3.). This data shows that, whereas in 1891 the percentage of monoglot Irish-speakers in relation to the total number of Irish-speakers was 5.6%, in 1911 this had been reduced to 0.6%. Clearly, the number of monoglot Irish-speakers was greatly reduced in the twenty years between the two censuses but it is to be acknowledged that the number of people able to speak Irish throughout the country had increased, a fact that is largely attributable to the bilingual programme in education (Table 2) (Ó Cuív, 2010)[63].

It is known that in 1897 there were 43 branches of the League, however, by 1901 this number had increased to 227 and by 1905 the total was 550 across the country (Ruckenstein, 2004). The real effect of the League on Irish society and culture has, however, been questioned by some, although, as pointed out by many authors (e.g. Comerford, 1989; Ó Tuama, 1972), it greatly influenced Irish society by offering a whole range of cultural activities (language classes, concerts, poetry reading and even plays), thereby bringing "a new dimension to social life for many young men and women" (Comerford, 1989). Nonetheless, its three decades of activity failed to stem the decline in the number of Irish speakers. Mac Aodha (1972) highlights the fact that between the census of 1921 and that of 1926 there was a 16% drop in the number of registered Irish speakers. This followed three decades where the League had been in existence and was at a time when people were proud of their culture and of saying they spoke Irish, even if they could only put together a few sentences (Mac Aodha, 1972).

An achievement attributed to the Irish language movement was the difference organisations such as the Society and the League made to the number of people able to read and write in Irish. The creation of both organisations provided the opportunity to several generations to learn Irish grammar and reading. It is also true to say that many thousands of English speakers learned Irish to differing degrees. Additionally, the publication of the first periodicals, such as *Irisleabhar na Gaeilge*, which first came out in 1882, gave native speakers the motivation to become literate and, to writers, an opportunity to become known (Mac Aodha, 1972; Hindley, 1990).

> "But the establishment of a newspaper partly or wholly Irish would be the most rapid and sure way of serving the language. The Irish-speaking man would find, in his native tongue, the political news and general information he has now to seek in English; and the English-speaking man, having Irish frequently before him in so attractive a form, would be tempted to learn its characters, and by-and-by, its meaning".

> (Davis, *Our national language*, 2:106)

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[63] See map of Irish-speakers, 1911, by district electoral divisions, by Brian Ó Cuív in Appendix 3.4.

A number of Irish authors of modern Irish literature in English, such as Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge who "brought about a belated Romantic Revival of public interest in traditional Irish myth and legend" (Hindley, 1990:24) were inspired by the ideology of the romantic movement to profit by the cultural enrichment of the Gaelic League. The case of Padraig Pearse deserves special mention; educated by the Christian Brothers, he began his professional life as a poet, writing in the Irish language, and became a member of the League aged 16, publishing in the journal *An Claidheamh Soluis* and later becoming its editor. In 1908, Pearse set up St. Enda's College, where Irish was the medium of instruction, as well as English, and where special attention was given to a pedagogy based on Irish traditions and culture. His ideas were focused on the construction of a model school, as he believed it necessary to awaken the students' love for old Irish traditions. In his school, he took into account all of the elements he believed should be intrinsic to good-quality education, ranging from the preparation of teachers to the ethos of the school:

> "Well-trained and well-paid teachers, well-equipped and beautiful schools, and a fund at the disposal of each school to enable it to award prizes on its own tests based on its own programme. These would be among the characteristics of a new secondary system. Manual work, both indoor and outdoor, would, I hope, be part of the programme of every school. And the internal organisation might well follow the models of the little child-republics I have elsewhere described, with their own laws and leaders, their fostering of individualities yet never at the expense of the common wealth, their care for the body as well as for the mind, their nobly-ordered games, their spacious outdoor life, their intercourse with the wild things of the woods and wastes, their daily adventure face to face with elemental Life and Force, with its moral discipline, with its physical hardening".

> (Pearse, 1926:27)

In his eyes, education was the key to the restoration of Irish as the language of the people; this idea is illustrated in his renowned *The Murder Machine*, an essay written as a criticism of the Irish education system:

> "Ireland is six-sevenths English-speaking with an Irish-speaking seventh. (…) Irish nationalists would restore Irish as a vernacular to the English-speaking six-sevenths, and would establish Irish as the national language of a free Ireland. Irish should be made the language of instruction in districts where it is the home language, and English the "second language", taught as a school subject: I would not at any stage use English as a medium of instruction in such districts (…). Where English is the home language it must of necessity be the "first language" in the schools, but I would have a compulsory "second language" satisfied that this "second language" in five-sixths of the schools would be Irish. And I would see that the "second language" be utilised as a medium of instruction from the earliest stages. In this way, and in no other way that I can imagine, can Irish be restored as a vernacular to English-speaking Ireland".

> (Pearse, 1926:26)

The work of Pearse was not limited to education and journalism activities. He became a radical nationalist and part of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) who pursued the proclamation of Irish sovereignty and hence of an Irish Republic by means of a national military revolution. His involvement in this revolutionary group led him to be one of the main planners of the Easter Rising of 1916, where, after taking control of the General Post Office in Dublin together with a group of revolutionaries (among them his young brother Willie), he lost his life at the hands of Government forces.

All in all, despite the efforts made by the League to gaelicise Ireland, the results were very disappointing. In fact, there has been plenty of criticism throughout the years of the way in which the League conducted its language revolution. Specifically, criticism has been levelled at the fact that the education system was to be responsible for the language revival in the belief that teaching Irish to students would be sufficient to generate a language shift; however, it was not backed up with the necessary policy support. Additionally, the poor preparation of teachers and lack of attention given to the preparation of textbooks in Irish were other important issues. Father O'Growney was the main provider of simplified grammart texts books.His book *Simple Lessons in Irish* was the most used Irish book. A second book, Father Ulick Bourke's *Easy Lessons in Irish*, was published in New York in 1876 (Comerford, 1989; Ó Beirne, 1997).

Schools in the English-speaking areas were not provided with the psychological resources and guidance on how to pass on the Irish enthusiasts' love for the language. Consequently, some felt that it was being imposed upon them. There was also no connection between the language used in school (Irish) and that in the home and the community at large (English), as highlighted by Ó Laoire (1995:233): "the school-home link was never promoted assuming that language knowledge would simply lead to language use". In fact, criticism on the limited practical use of Irish in students' lives had resulted in the Government's decision to eliminate the teaching of Irish in schools in 1899, although pressure exerted by the League and Celtic scholars forced the reversal of this decision.

A greater in-depth analysis of the context within which the League and its members operated can also be used to explain its failure. Firstly, the decision of the League´s leadership to politicise the organisation was Hyde's main reason for leaving it in 1915 (De Blaghd, 1972), as he had conceived it to be non-political and non-sectarian (Lyons, 2010; Walsh, 2010). His primary idea had always been to focus on cultural revitalisation and to commence this through reviving the economic fortunes of the Irish-speaking areas: "few citizens of any nation have done more than Douglas Hyde to conquer apathy, revive true national pride, to turn the tide of affairs and set their people on a new course" (De Blaghd, 1972:40). Comerford (1989) clearly highlights two major consequences of the League's politicisation:

"First, it added the Irish language to the identification marks of Irish Catholic nationalism. Thus the language became politicised as it never had been in the nineteenth century. And as surely as it became identified with one of the island's political collectivities, so rejection of it became an automatic response of the other (…). The second major political consequence of the operation of the Gaelic League was to enable the alternative leadership of the Catholic nationalist collectivity to recruit, organize, to gain in confidence, and actually to lead in areas where the established leadership did not have the interest or the energy to operate".

(Comerford, 1989:3)

Secondly, the loss of many of its leaders in the Easter Rising and the War of Independence was also crucial, together with other subsequent events. As the League had declared itself in favour of the freedom of the country, after the Rising of 1916, the British Government ordered the detention and execution of many of its main representatives. Thirdly, when the country emerged from the Civil War and embarked on a new social and political era, there was a lack of clear and long-term policies on the part of the League and the State, which resulted in no clear foundation upon which to work: "while a voluntary body like the League could awaken the public to the need for cultural revival, only a State sincerely dedicated to the League's ideas could bring about the revival" (Mac Aodha, 1972:30).

At the start of the 20th century, despite all the efforts that had been made by the early language preservation movement, less than 15% of the population spoke Irish, compared to 45% in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and 25% who spoke the language in 1851 (Dudley, 1973):

"Despite the League's successes, notably in the sphere of education, by the early twentieth century Irish was spoken by less than one in five of the population (…). The efforts of the revivalists had not arrested the emigration outflow from the enclaves of native speakers or the continuing shift to English within these communities".

(Ó Tuathaigh, 2008:27)

Ó Cuív (2010:391) identifies four main reasons for the reduction in the numbers of Irish-speakers between the 1850s and the beginning of the New State: "This includes the attitude of the government to the use of the Irish language in various areas of public life, the altered status of the Catholic Church after 1829, the economic condition of the majority of the people, and the demographic changes that followed the great famine of the 1840s".

3.2.6. The Irish Free State.

Soon after the Easter Rising of 1916, Britain held a general election in 1918, in which Ireland was also represented. The popularity that the Irish political party Sinn Féin had gained during the Rising helped

them gain many votes and hence 73 of the 105 Irish seats in the House of Commons (Hopkinson, 2003). In view of their success, however, Sinn Fein leaders decided to refuse the imposition of the British Parliament and to create their own parliament, Dáil Éireann, whose first meeting took place in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 21 June 1919. On this occasion, the Declaration of Independence, in which Ireland declared itself as an independent and democratic republic, the Republic of Ireland, was signed: "We, the elected representatives of the ancient Irish people in national parliament assembled, do, in the name of the Irish nation, ratify the establishment of the Irish Republic" (Macardle, 1968 in Hopkinson, 2003). Coupled with this, a President of the Parliament was also appointed, Cathal Brugha[64] (Bardon and Keogh, 2003).

On the same day that the first meeting of Dáil Eireann took place, the War of Independence began, waged by the I.R.A (Irish Republican Army) against British forces. This war, which lasted from 1919 to 1921 with Eamon de Valera as the political leader, culminated in the Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed in December 1921, and the establishment of the Irish Free State on 6 December of 1922 with a new Provisional Government. Despite the opposition of the Nationalists and Catholics in the North of Ireland, the Irish Free State was formed with the partition of Ireland: 26 counties governed by a parliament in Dublin, and the Commonwealth, with a separate Parliament in Stormont consisting of six northern counties as part of the United Kingdom[65]. This new political arrangement caused conflict in Northern Ireland, with specific difficulties between Catholics and Protestants. As a Protestant dominated State, Catholics were not allowed their part in the democratic process. In the south, the pro-treaty Provisional Government, led by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith was confronted by the I.R.A., Éamon de Valera and his supporters: all of whom had previously been united in the War of Independence. The latter claimed the status of Ireland as a Republic and refused to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty, not wanting any dependence upon the British Government. This situation led to the Irish Civil War from 28 June 1922 to 24 May 1923, which was won by the Irish Free State forces, following the death of Michael Collins (Bardon and Keogh, 2003; Hopkinson, 2003)[66]. After that, W.T. Cosgrave, leader of *Cumann na nGaedheal*, succeeded Michael Collins as a political leader and became the first Prime Minister of the Irish Free State, remaining in office until 1932.

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[64] Éamon de Valera succeded Cathal Brugha after his death and was proclaimed President of the Republic in August 1921.

[65] See Beckett (1966) and Woody and Martin (1994) for further information on the conditions under which the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed.

[66] For a debate concerning the Irish Civil War (1922-23), see Hopkinson, M., *Civil War and aftermath, 1922-4* (Cornwall, 2003), pp. 31-61, in *A new history of Ireland* and Coogan, T.P., *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 2001).

The years from 1919 to 1922 were probably the most significant in the repositioning of Irish to a central role in Irish politics. The previous work undertaken by the League acquired a full sense once Irish was declared the official language of the State by the 1922 Constitution and began to be used by parliamentarians in the *Dáil* and in the Government's day-to-day business. In fact, the Constitution of the Irish Free State gave Irish people the freedom to choose their parliamentary representatives and, consequently, to have a democratically elected government (O'Halpin, 2003). It also issued the following statement regarding Irish: "The national language of the Irish Free State is the Irish language, but the English language shall be equally recognised as an official language". The first meeting of the *Dáil* was conducted through Irish and the new Government's programme was also written in Irish (as well as English) (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003). Equally, members of the Government and the public service were required to have knowledge of Irish. The education system, however, continued to carry the greatest responsibility for the revival of the language. Over subsequent years, the Department of Education was established (1924). Politics in Ireland however remained as complicated as before the inception of the Irish Free State. De Valera's strong political ideas brought him to split from his political party, Sinn Féin, and to create Fianna Fáil, in 1926, which was strongly committed to the abolition of the oath of allegiance agreed with the English Crown to gain independence for the 26 counties. In subsequent elections, while *Cumann na nGaedheal* was losing popularity, Republican parties were gaining appreciation among the population, especially Fianna Fáil, which finally came to power in 1932. After this defeat, *Cumann na nGaedheal* became Fine Gael. In 1937, a new Constitution replaced the Constitution of the Free State (1922), which ratified Irish as the official language and English as the second official language (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003). Ireland, thereafter, became a parliamentary democracy with a written Constitution adopted by referendum.

In the 1940s, life in Ireland was marked by a period of political instability and a rise in the cost of living, which the government tackled with the rationing of food and an increase in income tax. The declaration of the Irish Republic in 1949, just after the end of the Second World War, was the start of a new era of progress (Whyte, 2003). Nonetheless, it was not until the end of the fifties that economic growth in Ireland started to be significant and was reflected in public infrastructures, the provision of social services, housing, education, etc. Ireland was now as economically developed as many other European countries, becoming more open than ever and started to attract foreign investment and tourism. The modernisation of Ireland continued to take place during the 1970s; the entry of Ireland to the European

Economic Community, alongside the United Kingdom, in 1973 provided the country with a new framework in which to operate at international level (Whyte, 2003; Keogh, 2003)[67].

At this time, Mac Aodha made his own contribution to the analysis of the issues that were affecting the Gaeltacht. This work is presented in his essay of 1972 entitled *Was it a social revolution?*, which suggests possible plans of action in overseeing the continuous failure of the state in ensuring the future survival of Irish:

> "Firstly, and most urgently, a serious effort is needed to make the Gaeltacht prosper and grow; this implies planning and it implies investment. Secondly, an overall phased development plan covering the entire field of the revival is essential; in particular proper financial provisions will have to be made for higher education through Irish, for the publication of textbooks, a daily newspaper and general reading material, and for the production of television programmes and films. Thirdly, and most important of all, the insincerity and hypocrisy which have long characterised the political life and social attitudes of this State must be eliminated".

<div align="right">(Mac Aodha, 1972:29)</div>

As we will continue to see throughout this chapter, most of the issues identified by Mac Aodha in the early 1970s and which were already evident in times of the League and when the Irish New State was created, are current still today.

3.2.6.1. Education in the New State

The organisation of the Irish education system following the creation of the Irish Free State was marked by the new state policy of protection of the Irish language. In the conference organised by INTO in 1922, the Report of the Conference was followed by a series of measures aimed at giving the Irish language a much higher profile within the school curriculum: "in primary education the government had one distinctive aim, inherited from the old Sinn Féin agenda: to gaelicise the education system" (O'Halpin, 2003:116). As a consequence, it was decided that Irish would become a compulsory subject for at least one hour a day in all national schools where there was "a competent teacher to teach it" (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003:543) and that it would be used as the language of instruction as often as possible (Coolahan, 1981), especially at pre-school and primary level, where no English should be used. In secondary education, Irish became a compulsory subject in 1927 and an examination subject in the Leaving Certificate in 1934 (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

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[67] See Whyte (2003) for a review of the circumstances surrounding the entry of Ireland to the European Community.

The ultimate goal was for Irish to become the only language of instruction in all schools throughout Ireland, in accordance with which teachers would be given the responsibility of producing fluent Irish speakers. As acknowledged by Walsh (2010:43), the responsibility for the revival of Irish fell heavily on the education system:

> "The period following the foundation of the state was characterised by the assumption that a policy which leaned heavily on the teaching of Irish (primarily as a subject only) to all children would lead to the revival of Irish as a normal language of everyday communication in Ireland".

The new rule of things required that anyone applying for a post in the civil service was fluent in Irish. The reality however was that only 10% of all public servants in the *Gaeltacht* areas could speak Irish and only 4% were native speakers. As regards teachers, only 41% had a bilingual certificate and 32% had no qualifications to teach (Hindley, 1990). Also, the shortage of primary school teachers who were sufficiently proficient in Irish to use it as the language of instruction (around 10% of the total) prompted a second conference in 1926 with a view to undertaking a review of the educational approach in relation to both the Irish language and what were considered to be other relevant subjects. It was subsequently decided that teachers should be granted a period of time to acquire a competent level in Irish and that English could still be used until all schools had completed this transition process to be capable of functioning fully in Irish. In addition, by 1931 all teachers had to be in possession of a bilingual diploma. It became common for teachers to spend periods of time in the Gaeltacht areas to attend courses in Irish. The success of the teacher training project is illustrated by the fact that by 1932 only 32 of the 5,401 national schools were not teaching Irish (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

Additionally, seven Preparatory Colleges (*Na Coláistí Ullmhúcháin*) (six under the control of the Catholic Church and one controlled by the Church of Ireland) were established in 1926 around Gaeltacht regions to supply the Irish-speaking communities from both religious faiths with qualified school teachers who were also proficient in Irish. These colleges, which catered for students who had finished primary education and were preparing to access the teacher training colleges, offered second level education through the medium of Irish and allocated 50% of their places to Irish-native speakers and the other 50% to students who could prove a very extensive knowledge of oral Irish (Coolahan, 1981; Jones, 2006).

After 1924, the administration of the education system experienced noteworthy improvements. From 1926 onwards, attendance at school was made compulsory for children aged 6-14 through the School Attendance Act, and in 1930 the Vocational Education Act was passed, so that vocational training was introduced (O'Halpin, 2003). As indicated previously, in the model of education imposed in primary

education during this period, a great amount of curricular time was dedicated to the teaching and learning of Irish.

As Irish had become a compulsory subject with the introduction of the new language policy by the State, it was taught in all primary schools, but it was also required as a working language, particularly in the public service. At this time, however, second and third level education remained exclusively accessible to the wealthier classes (Coolahan, 1981; O'Halpin, 2003; Walsh, 2010).

The census of 1926 shows that the number of Irish speakers of school age had increased when compared to previous years, although, generally speaking, Irish had fallen into disuse within society. Thus, while the number of speakers under the age of 20 had increased by 103,680, those over 20 had decreased by 113,886 (Table 3) (Hindley, 1990; Romaine, 2008). In this regard, statistical data from the censuses between 1861 and 1926 displays an overall decrease in the number of speakers within the State of over 6% (Table 4). Incidentally, whilst looking at the situation in the four provinces of the Republic over that period we can see that Leinster enjoyed an increase in the number of speakers as did Ulster, whereas Munster and Connacht both suffered a steady decrease.

The appointment of a new Minister of Education in 1934 (Thomas Derrig) instigated a new period of education policy in which the main concern remained the attainment of proficiency in Irish among students. Priority was given to increasing the number of all-Irish primary schools and to implementing the programme outlined in 1926, giving special emphasis to full education through Irish in infant classes (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

The objective of better standards of education was first made clear in 1929 with the introduction of the Primary Certificate Examination on an optional basis, which evaluated written and oral skills in English and Irish, among other subjects. In the subsequent decade, this course of action was maintained and reinforced by making the examination compulsory from 1943 onwards for all students in sixth class. The main difference from previous years was, however, that a greater emphasis was placed on written rather than oral skills (Coolahan, 1981). This system of evaluation continued until 1967. In the 1950s various institutions were put in place by the Government to review, control and develop the position of the language in a number of regions. In this regard, a Commission to evaluate developments in the language restoration movement was introduced in 1958, issuing its first report in 1963.

Measures adopted in education had achieved successful results over the first two decades of the new State; 55% of primary and secondary schools taught (completely or partially) through the medium of Irish in 1940 (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). Not everyone agreed with the organisation of the education system for the teaching of Irish however; a survey study circulated among teachers in 1941 by INTO showed

that the majority disagreed with language policy regarding instruction in Irish in non-Gaeltacht areas, as too much time was being dedicated to the teaching of Irish, which was deleterious to other subjects (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003; Akenson et al. 2003). More specifically, the results showed that the approach used for teaching Irish was damaging the children as "they were both mentally and physically hurt by the strain of the linguistic code" (Akenson et al., 2003:731). By the 1950s, many of the schools teaching through Irish started to disappear. Increased criticism was levelled at the amount of curricular time dedicated to Irish rather than to other subjects. In the following years, the situation worsened to the point that by the 1960-61 school-year only 183 schools were teaching through Irish outside the Gaeltacht regions, although most of these were bordering those areas. To make matters worse, reports in the 1960s (Macnamara, 1966[68]) showed that the academic results of Irish children were lower than those obtained by children in the UK, which provoked a reaction among parents against compulsory Irish. In relation to the use of Irish at government level or by public servants, the language was hardly employed at this time (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

During the 1960s, changes in the education system in Ireland were significant. We need to remember that the country was going through a period of sound economic growth and that investment by the government in education was significant. Primary schools were modernised, one or two-teacher schools began to disappear and were replaced by new and bigger schools, meaning that children from all kinds of background could gain access to them (Akenson et al., 2003). Secondary education became free and the number of Colleges of Education was increased. A revised primary school curriculum was also introduced in the mid 1960s (Akenson et al., 2003).

In 1961, the Government closed the five training colleges for student teachers that were under the care of the Catholic Church, placing teacher training under the remit of the Department of Education. This decision was justified by the high cost of maintaining the Preparatory Colleges and by the fact that they were no longer necessary given that the standard of Irish at second level was better (Jones, 2006). Coláiste Moibhí, the only Protestant College, however, stayed open until 1995[69]. Until 1959, acceptance to the teacher training colleges was automatic for students from the Preparatory Colleges. After this year, however, an oral test in Irish and personal candidate interviews were introduced for all candidates with the aim of being more assertive in assessing the potential of future primary school teachers. This meant that students from ordinary second level schools had now the same opportunities as the students coming from Preparatory Colleges (Jones, 2006).

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[68] Macnamara's report of 1966 was subsequently contradicted by Cummins (1977).
[69] Jones, V. conducts a thorough analysis of the contribution that the Preparatory Colleges and Coláiste Moibhí in particular made to the preservation of the Irish language in "A Gaelic experiment" (Dublin, 2006).

In the 1970s, the training of school teachers became standardised throughout Ireland due, in part, to the increase in the number of students, especially at secondary level. In 1974, a three year Bachelor in Education university degree was introduced for primary school teachers whilst secondary school teachers were (as now) graduates who undertook a one year postgraduate course (currently the Professional Diploma in Education). Data provided by Coolahan (1981) indicates that the number of second level teachers increased from 6,800 in 1964 to 17,200 in 1979.

Given the decline that was taking place among the Irish population in terms of cultural identification with the Irish language, the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language was established by the Government to prepare the White Paper on The Restoration of the Irish Language, completed in 1964, which was aimed at restoring popular confidence in the language. The White Paper reiterates the position of the Irish language as the national and first official language of Ireland and English as the second official language. By this, it is accepted that both English and Irish can be used for official purposes within the State, although it is established as a national priority "to restore the Irish language as a general medium of communication" by requiring the Irish population "to share the responsibility of working for the realisation of this aim" (1965).

This White Paper represents a comprehensive study of the regulations that were considered to be of paramount importance for the implementation of Irish as a regular language of communication in all sectors of Irish society, from public administration to education, media and industry. Measures were to be taken to ensure a high quality education through Irish at all levels with a view to ensuring that all school-leavers possessed a strong command of the language. With this purpose in mind, the Paper recommended: the creation of Irish-medium schools; the improvement of the teaching methodologies in use (which, as pointed out in the White Paper, could be used to integrate modern languages in the Curriculum[70]); the publishing of appropriate school books in Irish; and, most importantly, the training of teachers with a good command of Irish (with specific emphasis on oral skills). Applicants to the Training Colleges who were non-native speakers of Irish would have to achieve Honours level in their Leaving Certificate results and regularly spend time in the *Gaeltacht* areas attending courses in Irish. Moreover, a general change of attitude towards Irish within society was envisaged, at a time when the values that had led to the creation of the New State and the Irish language movement (appreciation of the old Irish traditions and heritage, the recovery of national identity and the restoration of the Irish language as the symbol of the Irish nation) were diminishing (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003;

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[70] "The results of research into language teaching can also make it easier to learn continental languages, thus contributing to the desired renewal of closer contacts with Western Europe". Article 16 The Restoration of the Irish Language (1965).

Coolahan, 2003, Walsh, 2010). In contrast to these measures, another study into the education system, conducted by the Rev. Dr. John MacNamara in 1966, concluded that the standard of English-language and arithmetical skills in Irish children aged 12 years and over was significantly behind those of British children (about 17 months for the former and 11 months for the latter). Irish children from an English-speaking background, receiving all their education through Irish, were tested to assess their ability in problem solving and mechanical arithmetic. His findings showed that children working in their L2 were much slower than children working in their L1, which also brought with it a poorer performance in English. The reason suggested that the time spent on teaching Irish in primary education was 42% average, which was considered to be excessive (Ó hAiniféin, 2008; Comerford, 1989). This research study was later criticised by other relevant researchers in the field, i.e. Lambert and Tucker (1972) and Cummins (1977), as already mentioned[71].

The conclusions of this report were taken very seriously by stakeholders in education and resulted in a new primary school curriculum being introduced in 1971, which was child-centred and focused on a more pedagogical approach (Comerford, 1989). With this, Irish ceased to be the only language of instruction in teacher-training colleges (Akenson et al., 2003). In addition, after 1973, a pass in Irish was no longer necessary to obtain the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates and to access the public service (Fennell, 1983; Comerford, 2010). It did, however, remain as a requirement to access the National University of Ireland (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003). From this point, Irish became more a symbol of national sovereignty than a practical language, although language revivalists remained devoted to the cause of Irish. In fact, it is interesting to note that it was at this time (1973) that a group of parents who were interested in their children learning Irish set up the *Gaelscoileanna* movement to establish Irish-medium primary and secondary schools[72].

The 1980s was a general consolidation period for the structure of the education system. The Curriculum was extended and modified in a positive way, in-service and pre-service opportunities for teachers were increased, pupil/teacher ratios were reduced and school attendance became compulsory up to the age of 15 (Akenson et al., 2003).

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[71] See Cummins, J. (1977) Immersion education in Ireland: a critical review of Macnamara's findings. Working papers on bilingualism, 13 [online], available: http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED140666.pdf for Cummins' response to Macnamara on the latter's study. In his reply to Macnamara, Cummins argues that the findings presented by Macnamara are not reliable because of an important number of flaws in his research design. Consequently, Cummins claims, Macnamara is not accurate when stating that learning content subjects through an L2 in immersion education contexts leads to poor results in such subjects.

[72] The *Gaelscoileanna* movement is more extensively discussed in section 3.1.1. of this thesis.

3.2.6.2. Developments in the *Gaeltacht*

After 1922, at the end of the Civil War in Ireland, as has already been stated, the Government placed a great deal of emphasis on the maintenance and revitalisation of Irish. While, in the Irish-speaking areas, the State's policy was based on securing the position of Irish, in the rest of the State language initiatives were directed towards fostering bilingualism while, at the same time, conducting a progressive language shift from English to Irish.

> "In 1922, when Ireland became independent and its language policy was formally launched, a significant minority of the population, located mainly in the less developed, peripheral regions of the state, was Irish-speaking. Therefore, one key element of the strategy was to maintain Irish as the spoken language in those areas. However, as the *Gaeltacht* contained only 18% of the national population, the objective elsewhere was revival, for Irish speakers were only a tiny scattered proportion of an almost entirely English-speaking population".

> (Ó Riagáin, 1992:148)

Taking into account that only 17.6% of the population had declared themselves to be Irish speakers in the 1911 census (Romaine, 2008), it is questionable how such a small percentage of the community could revive the language without significant institutional support. The constant drain of emigration, which was particularly prevalent within Irish-speaking areas, required urgent reaction from the Government whereas, in fact, any action that was taken was mainly initiated by language revivalist organisations. In the words of Ó Tuathaigh: "state action fell far short of what was needed to stem the flow of emigration, or to arrest the language shift to English within the Gaeltacht in the immediate post-independence decades". Fennell, in his analysis of the events that characterised this decisive period in the history of the Irish language argues that the failure by the State to provide a political institution based in the Irish-speaking areas from the outset led to a lack of appropriate measures to tackle the rapid loss of speakers (Fennell, 1983):

> "If the language revival had been based, from the start, in the Gaeltacht rather than Dublin, the Gaeltacht people would probably have acquired the will to save, maintain and expand their language communities".

> (Fennell, 1983:120)

In 1924, Ernest Blythe, who was a senior member of the League as well as a politician, invited the Government to study the situation relating to Irish in the Irish-speaking areas to establish a plan of action to ensure the future preservation of the language. From this, a Commission of twelve members was established in 1925, the Gaeltacht Commission, to evaluate the socio-linguistic situation of Irish by identifying the areas in which it was spoken. The Commissioners travelled to the main Irish speaking

areas and met with teachers and priests with a view to drawing an accurate picture of the real dimension of Irish[73]. Subsequently, it was decided to classify the Irish speaking areas within two groups, according to the total percentage of speakers outlined in the 1926 census: *Fíor-Ghaeltacht* where more than 80% had "an ordinary conversational ability in Irish" and *Breac-Ghaeltacht*, where there was more than 25% but less than 80% (Ó Riagain, 1992; Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003; Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007; Walsh, 2010)[74]. The aims of the Gaeltacht Commission are explained, as follows:

> "To define those areas where Irish was still spoken; and to differentiate between predominantly Irish-speaking areas and areas which had undergone a full or partial language shift to English".

> (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007:8)

Subsequently, a new land commission was created, which invested a large number of resources to improving living conditions within the Gaeltacht areas and to bring in new settlers, who were already Irish speakers, to repopulate these Irish-speaking regions. In the same period, new roads and houses for landowners were built, and new government-funded schemes were implemented to encourage business growth in areas including agricultural and manufacturing business (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003).

Additionally, in the 1930s the government took the decision to provide Irish-speaking families from lower socio-economic backgrounds with the opportunity to move to Co. Meath, where there was much better land. This scheme moved around 500 families from Connemara, Mayo and Kerry, to three different locations, with the expectation that, in time, Irish would spread throughout the region. The problem was that the resettled people had to learn English in order to communicate with their neighbours and, consequently, the language shift never occurred. Today, it is only in Ráth Chairn that we can still find a small number of Irish-speakers (Ó Laoire, 1995).

In the 1950s, a new government policy for the *Gaeltacht* was specifically directed at the economic development of its regions, with an emphasis on agriculture. The reason for this was that, since Irish-

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[73] See *Díchoimisiúnú teanga: Coimisiún na Gaeltachta 1926*, Walsh, J. (2002) for an extensive review of the discussions conducted by the Gaeltacht Commission of 1925.

[74] The word "*Gaeltacht*" as we understand it today has a different meaning than in 1926, when the concept was first used and the Irish-speaking areas were geographically defined. After the creation of the *Gaeltacht*, the Department of the Gaeltacht (1956) also included areas where there was potential to extend the regular use of Irish with State support as part of the Gaeltacht districts. Nowadays, we can find many heterogeneous groups in the *Gaeltacht*. Given the fact that opportunities to speak the language are rare, different levels of ability and of exposure to the language can be found and hence combinations of language competence are the norm: people who can speak but not write; people who can understand but not speak, etc.

speaking communities were, in general, remote and marginalised areas, young people would not emigrate if they had job opportunities available to them within their own communities. With this thinking in mind, the *Dáil* created the Gaeltacht's first institutions (Walsh, 2010). Firstly, the Gaeltacht Areas Order redefined the geographical regions of the Gaeltacht. Subsequently, in 1956, the Department of the Gaeltacht was created, which was followed by the Gaeltacht Industries Act in 1957 and *Gaeltarra Éireann*, the first organisation aimed at fostering the creation of jobs as well as overseeing existing rural industries in the *Gaeltacht* (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007; Walsh, 2010). Local communities, however, felt that their interests were not represented by *Gaeltarra Éireann*, which was based in Dublin; this led to the start of a campaign to obtain more rights for the Irish-speaking areas and, consequently, the creation of the *Gaeltacht* civil rights movement (*Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta*) in 1969, based in the *Gaeltacht* and with a focus on the development of supports for the Irish-speaking community (Walsh, 2010).

Given that the Government's main policy objectives were the reconstruction of the nation and the economic development of the *Gaeltacht* as a means of stemming mass emigration and, as a consequence, fostering language maintenance, the responsibility of achieving language shift was passed on to the schools. Under nationalist ideals, it was believed that schools were somehow responsible for the abandonment of the transmission of Irish language and culture, but also, with the appropriate changes in education policy, they would be key in the maintenance/revival process. As observed by Coolahan (1981:38): "Many people held that the schools in the nineteenth century had been a prime cause of the decline of the Irish language; under a native Irish government the process would have to be reversed". Additionally, public servants, of whom only 10% were Irish speakers, were urged to speak Irish in their daily duties.

In the White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish language (1964), special attention was also given to the "preservation and strengthening" of Irish within the *Gaeltacht* areas in Ireland as "essential to its restoration" nationally. In article 11, the Government adopted the compromise of organising its policy around "strengthening the social and economic life of the Gaeltacht". In article 12 it stated that "in Gaeltacht areas, the survival of Irish as a vernacular is dependent on parents using it with their children".

Arising from recommendations made that the Government should support the use of Irish, starting with its own agencies and employees, other institutions were established, such as *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann* (*ITÉ*) in 1967, *Comhairle na Gaeilge* in 1969 (with the aim of advising the government on language policy), and the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (CILAR) in 1970 (Buttimer and Ní Annracháin, 2003; Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). Research conducted by the latter was in line with the

examination of "patterns of language use and abilities as well as attitudes" within Ireland (Ó Riagáin, 1992). The results of these studies have been praised for the degree in which they draw a very accurate picture of the language position of Irish in the 1970s in all Gaeltacht areas. A compilation of the results obtained was published in 1975 under the title The Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (Ó Riagáin, 1992).

In 1970, *Bord na Gaeilge* was established to encourage the use of Irish among the general population. The Department of State for Gaeltacht Affairs was put in charge of the "economical and social regeneration of the Gaeltacht" (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008). Since then, the Gaeltacht community has experienced a number of initiatives, generally directed by Government policy, aimed at reversing the negative position of the Irish language. One of these are the Irish Summer Colleges[75] in the Gaeltacht, which thousands of school-age children attend every year[76]. This is part funded by the Irish language learners scheme, in which households in the Gaeltacht, where Irish is the normal spoken language, receive grants to take on students that are attending recognised Irish language courses. There are also Government institutions such as the ones discussed in section 3.2 of this chapter; house planning directives such as the one integrated by the Planning Development Act of 2000; youth services to encourage the use of Irish; and countless state-funded voluntary organisations that operate both inside and outside Ireland. Many of these have been successful and made a significant contribution to the Irish language, but the lack of a clear, common and long-term strategy is always pointed to as the reason for the lack of success in making Irish more widely used.

More recently, the 2007 report of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs *Comprehensive linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht: principal findings and recommendations* was published. As highlighted in this study, the demographic situation of the Gaeltacht areas is becoming increasingly complicated as they have become more open to tourism and have higher levels of immigration of non-Irish speakers. The experts' conclusions indicate that, in order to ensure the sustainability of Irish within a particular area, more than 67% of the population need to be "active, integrated Irish speakers", which, as shown in the statistical results, it is not the case in the Gaeltacht areas. Nonetheless, given the different sociolinguistic realities in the Gaeltacht, the working group of the Study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht made their own classification of the Irish-speaking areas,

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[75] The first Irish Summer Colleges were established in 1904 by the League. Their aim was to give students an insight into the culture of the Gaeltacht and to experience the Irish language in situ.
[76] Carnie (1995) is very critical of the Irish Colleges in the Gaeltachtaí for having a negative effect on the sociolinguistic situation of Irish-speaking areas. The number of children, and adults, arriving in the Gaeltacht in the summer outnumbers the number of Irish-speakers to a point that English is the language mostly heard rather than Irish.

according to the number of speakers at present. As a result, the Gaeltacht districts were given three categories: A, B and C. In general terms, in Category A there are electoral divisions where more than 67% of the total population (3 years +) speak Irish daily. In Category B districts, English is the main language of communication and Irish is spoken by 44-46% of the total population (3 years +) as the daily language of communication. In category C there are electoral divisions where less than 44% of the total population are daily speakers of Irish. In fact, most of the *Gaeltacht* districts fall under this category (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007:25):

> "Irish is the main community language in Category A Gaeltacht communities, although it is clear that the threat of language shift is intensifying. In Category B and C Gaeltacht districts, the Irish-speaking community is based on limited social networks. The networks in some of these communities clearly include a greater proportion of the community than in others, and the type of network varies from community to community".

The report has advised the adoption of specific measures in each category of the Gaeltacht districts. Whereas the main goal in districts in Category A is the maintenance of the 67% of daily Irish-speakers, in districts in Categories B and C the goal is to strengthen the position of Irish (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007)[77]. The fact is that, as pointed out in the report, 46% of school-age children in the *Gaeltacht* have very little or no Irish when they start school, because they come from outside the *Gaeltacht* or, even if they live within the *Gaeltacht*, English is the home language. The education system is also failing to convert English speakers into Irish speakers, and native speakers of Irish are not performing as well as would be expected, given the presence of English both inside and outside the classroom.

The conclusion was that, even though the attitudes of young people in the *Gaeltacht* towards Irish are very positive, Irish has become a language used within the home context and with neighbors, rather than the language used when socialising among peers. It should also be borne in mind that, within the home, it is now more often the case that one of the parents is an English-speaker, which destabilises the natural intergenerational transmission of Irish. In this regard, experts estimate that, unless there is a radical change in "language-use patterns", in another two generations Irish will become relegated to only very small pockets of society, even in Category A districts, and hence, the opportunities to speak it will become too minimal to guarantee its vitality and survival to future generations (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007)[78]. This is in line with Crystal's claim that young generations are critical of the revival of minority languages and that for them to appreciate and use the language, it must be transmitted to them by their

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[77] Appendix 3.5. is a map of the classification of Gaeltacht districts according to the number of Irish-speakers.
[78] See Ó Murchú (2008) for a more extensive discussion of the findings and conclusions on the Comprehensive linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht, pp. 57-59.

parents: "we accept that a *sine qua non* of language maintenance is that inter-generational transmission must not be lost" (Crystal, 2005:9).

In relation to this, Ó Laoire's view of the lack of success achieved by the education system reinforces the idea that the revitalisation of a language cannot stem from education alone and that the home environment also has an important role to play.

> "While some shift to Irish has occurred as a result of a language-in-education policy and planning, it has not secured home bilingual reproduction and intergenerational transmission to any considerable extent. Favourable attitudes towards the language do not appear to translate into motivation for active use or for deliberate language shift in the home domain".

(Ó Laoire, 2007, 166-167)

3.3. Current situation of the Irish language

Irish is unique in being both a minority language and the first official language of a country, the Republic of Ireland, as specified by the 1937 Irish Constitution (DES, 2005; Ó Riagáin, 1988), with English being the second official language (Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland). Irish also received the status of official and working language of the European Union on 1 January 2007, as explained in the Literature Review Chapter (Chapter 2) and the Chapter on Catalonia (Chapter 4).

Even though Irish is the language of the home of only a small proportion of the Irish population who reside mainly in areas along the west coast, the health of the language is not only represented by its use in the home and in school, but also, by the numerous media sources that successfully operate in Irish. At present, the best known are *TG4*, which is the national Irish-language television channel; RTÉ *Raidió na Gaeltachta*[79], *Raidió Ri-Rá* and *Foinse*[80], a weekly newspaper which was replaced by *Seachtain* in 2013. These are all based in the Connemara region (Gaeltacht). The Irish Times also publishes columns in Irish every week and two other radio stations, *Raidió na Life* and *Raidió Fáilte*, operate on a part-time

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[79] RTÉ *Raidió na Gaeltachta* broadcasts since 1972 and has studios in the main Gaeltacht areas: Baile na nGall, (West Kerry), Doirí Beaga (Donegal), Dublin (RTÉ) and Castlebar, Co. Mayo as well as its headquarters in Casla, Connemara. The latest poll conducted by TNS mrbi on behalf of RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta among citizens of the Gaeltacht regions shows a listernership of 45% from 7a.m. to 7 p.m. in Gaeltacht regions (higher than in previous years) and a 91% total satisfaction rating for RnaG in these specific areas. Also, it showed that 53% of those surveyed listen to *RTÉ Raidío na Gaeltachta* every day and that 75% of respondents listen at least once a week.

[80] *Foinse* was distributed free of charge on Wednesdays with the Irish Independent until 2013. According to a survey conducted in 2011 by the Joint National Newspaper Readership (JNNR) 188,000 people read this newspaper every week (5.2% of the total number of readers of daily newspaper magazines).

basis due to the efforts of a group of voluntary workers. The oldest publications in the Irish-language are *An tUltach*, which was established in 1924 in Northern Ireland, *Feasta* (established in 1948), both of which report on cultural and political issues related to Irish and the *Gaeltacht* (Delap, 2008) and *Comhar* (established in 1942, it has published articles from the most prominent Irish writers). Nonetheless, in 2010 *Foras na Gaeilge* offered a €1.6 million contract to *Torann na dTonn Teoranta* for the publication of a new Irish-language newspaper, *Gaelscéal*, whose headquarters were also in Connemara (although it has been discontinued since 2013). The new publication covers a wide variety of up-to-date issues. Finally, *beo.ie* is an internet magazine for Irish-speakers that is published monthly. Similar to this are several web sites that provide on-line courses in Irish, such as *Gaeltalk.net* (Ní Ghallachair, 2008).

Ever since the foundation of the Irish Republic, the Irish Government has had the stated intention of increasing the use of Irish throughout the country, but whereas previously a language shift from English to Irish was sought, in more recent times the Government's aim has been to convert Ireland to a fully bilingual society (Ó Laoire, 1995; Romaine, 2008; Ó Riagáin, 2008). In the curriculum that was in place between 1922 and 1971, approximately 45% of total school time in primary schools was given over to teaching conversation, reading and writing in Irish. As policies have become more directed to the promotion of bilingualism in recent decades, Irish took up less teaching time with 20-25% allocated after the new curriculum was introduced in 1971, and about 16% in the current primary school Curriculum since 1999.

The situation relating to Irish has always been extremely delicate. Irish plays a limited part in people's lives, although polls show positive attitudes towards Irish. A relatively recent study on social attitudes towards Irish among the adult population in Ireland conducted in 2009 and based on previous studies from 1977 and 1996, *The Irish language and the Irish people* (Mac Gréil and Rhatigan, 2009), revealed very interesting findings. Firstly, it showed positive attitudes among 93% of the respondents, meaning that only over 6% of the surveyed population would like the Irish language to be "discarded and forgotten". However, while over 50% stated that they would like Irish to be preserved in the Gaeltacht areas and for cultural reasons, only just over 3% would like it to be the main language of communication in Ireland. In this regard, it is the 26-40 year-olds that are more in favour and positive about a possible revitalisation of the language (46% of the respondents on average), as well as those with higher levels of education (47.5% of those holding a third level education qualification). People of older age groups or with lower qualifications did not appear so positive about this option and seemed to be more inclined to support the preservation of Irish rather than its revitalisation. The rest of respondents were divided between those who would like a bilingual society with mainly English (32%) and mainly Irish (5%). Also relevant is the consistency of results between the three different surveys, which shows that Irish societal attitudes

towards the Irish language have not changed much in the last four decades despite the socio-economic changes which have occurred.

It is also worth noting the positive attitudinal changes among respondents when comparing their feelings towards the Irish language when they were attending school and those they have now. The results show a reduction in the percentage of people who were opposed to the language (21.9% "while in school" against 11.5% "now") and a 14% increase in the percentage of people who are in favour of it. The conclusions of this report, which highlight the high social status of Irish among the educated and younger groups, indicate the need to facilitate the regular use of the Irish language among all citizens and the lack of any important impediments to achieve this goal (Mac Gréil and Rhatigan, 2009).

The positioning of the respondents towards Irish as being central to Irish culture and identity was not very clear in this study, although in a similar study conducted by Hickey in 2006, *Language use and attitudes in Ireland*, revealed that 72.62% of the respondents responded positively to this question (Hickey, 2009).

If we analyse the general results of censuses conducted between 1926 and 2006 (Table 5) it would appear as though the position of Irish among the population has greatly improved since the creation of the New State and that Ireland has, at present, twice as many speakers of Irish as it did in the first third of the 20th century. The reality of the situation is however somewhat different. The lay-out of the questionnaires sent to Irish households since the first national census was conducted has changed significantly, especially in more recent times, as questions relating to the knowledge and use of Irish have been expanded and refined.

Up to 1996 citizens of Ireland were simply questioned on whether they were able to speak Irish, without any further clarification on the frequency of their usage or their level of competence. The results obtained for this question in the 19th century would have been fairly accurate, for, as pointed out by Walsh (2010), those who claimed to speak Irish were, almost certainly, fluent Irish speakers who used the language on a daily basis. As the years passed, however, the concept of being able to speak Irish changed and acquired a different meaning. Most of the population in Ireland have some knowledge of Irish at present, simply because it has been a compulsory subject at school over a long period of time. This, however, does not mean that it is used as regular language of communication or has been learned to a high standard.

Academics such as Hindley (1990), Carnie (1995), Comerford (2003) and Ó Murchú (2008) have argued that the number of Irish speakers highlighted in the different census results arise as a consequence of self-assessment: "These returns are, of course, self-reported and may be more indicative of attitude than of actual competence, or of degrees of competence" Ó Murchú (2008:37). Self-assessment samplings

are difficult to analyse and are unreliable as it is impossible to determine how each individual measures being, for example, *able to speak Irish*, or *capable of holding a conversation in Irish*. The consequence of this is often an unsubstantiated apparent recovery in the number of speakers in some areas of the country. In Walsh's opinion, the lack of accuracy in the definition of the concept "speaker" makes the results ambiguous, almost anecdotal:

> "The main census return on Irish is closer to an opinion poll on the language than an accurate illustration of a speech community in which Irish is dominant across all social domains and both within and between all age cohorts"

> (Walsh, 2010: 28)

For reasons such as these, and with a view to obtaining a more realistic picture of the number of speakers of Irish, a new question was added to the 1996 census relating to the frequency of use. Therefore, question 14 was "Can the person speak Irish?" To which the question that followed for those people answering "yes" was "If yes, does the person speak Irish... a) daily; b) weekly; c) less often; d) never".

In the 1996 census we can also look at data relating to the number of citizens (aged 3 and over) that declared themselves to be speakers (or non-speakers) of Irish, in Ireland (Tables 6 and 7). Table 6 is a breakdown of the population by Regional Authority areas and Table 7 is a breakdown by age group. We can observe that, by area, the highest percentage of speakers was in the West (51.9%) and Mid-West (50.1%) (Table 6), whereas, by age group, the greatest number of speakers was in the 10-14 and 15 -19 age groups (68% in both), followed by the 20-24 age group (51.7%) and the 5-9 age group (48.2%) (Table 7). Furthermore, despite covering the same question, Table 8 refers to the Counties and County Boroughs[81] in the Gaeltachtaí. In this table we can see that the highest percentage of speakers was in Waterford and Cork, followed by Kerry, Galway, Donegal and the Gaeltacht areas.

In the same census of 1996 question 14, related to frequency of speaking Irish, was posed for the first time. Two tables (Table 9 and Table 10) are representative of the data obtained. Table 9 refers to frequency of speaking Irish by age group. Table 10 refers to frequency of speaking Irish by Regional

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[81] Up to 2001, the country was divided into Counties and County Boroughs. At present, what was known as County Boroughs are now Cities. Areas known as Municipal Boroughs are now Boroughs. Ireland is currently divided into 29 Counties/administrative counties and five Cities.
The definitions of the concepts can be found in the following links from the 1991 Census and the 2011 Census, respectively:
http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1991results/volume1/V1_Appendices.pdf
http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011vol1andprofile1/Volume1%20%20Appendices.pdf

Authority throughout the country. The data shows that the total number of daily speakers in the country at that time was 353,663, or 24.73% (as shown in Table 11), with the highest number of speakers concentrated in Dublin and the South-West, although the highest percentage of daily speakers was in the Border and West regions (29.53% and 29.27%, respectively).

Further analysis of the census of 1996 also shows that at this time there was a high percentage of daily speakers of Irish concentrated in the 3-19 age group, which corresponds to the period of compulsory education, whereas there was a big drop in the subsequent years, from 37.11% to 5.62% (Table 12). If we look at the numbers (Table 9) or percentages (Table 11) of citizens who speak Irish "less often" or "never" a large increase in the 20-24 age group that remained constant up to the 45-54 age group may be observed.

From a different perspective, we can also study the frequency of Irish speaking in all counties and county boroughs within the Gaeltacht in the census of 1996 (Table 13- Appendix 3.3.). As observed in the last part of the table, which gives a general account, we can see that, in that year, 57.79% of people aged 3 and over spoke Irish daily, 8.96% weekly, and the rest, which accounts for a third of the population, less than weekly.

Although the supplementary question on the frequency of speaking Irish in the census of 1996 allowed for a better insight into the issue of real speakers of Irish, the realisation that many families included their children as daily speakers of Irish, since they learned and used Irish in school[82], brought about the introduction of another modification to the question in the census of 2002. The new question was, as follows (directed only to people over the age of 3): "Can you speak Irish?" and the available answers: "a) Daily within the education system; b) Daily, outside the education system; c) Weekly; d) Less often; e) Never".

In the 2002 census the highest percentage of speakers was in the West (50.15%) and South-West (47.9%). Table 14, which refers to the number of people who declared themselves to be speakers of Irish, is indicative of this. It is worth noting that the last section of the table is *Irish speakers as a percentage of total*, which gives the percentage of Irish speakers in relation to the total population. Hence, if we compare this information with that obtained in 1996 (Table 6 and Table 26) we notice a drop from 1996 to 2002 in the percentage of speakers in the three regions with the greatest number of Irish speakers:

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[82] The increase in the number of children who could speak Irish was nonetheless clear in all censuses carried out post 1922: compulsory teaching of Irish had educated generations of children in the knowledge of Irish, but it had not influenced any change in the percentage of pre-school age children able to speak the language. A steady 5% represented the situation in Irish homes in the years from 1922 until 2002.

1.75% in the West; 1.1% in the Mid-West, and 0.1% in the South-West. By age group, in the 2002 census the 10-14 age group has the highest percentage of speakers (68.7%), followed by the 15-19 age group, with 66.3% (Table 15). We can, however, compare the results between 1996 and 2002, which leads us to notice an overall decrease in the number of speakers nationwide of 0.7%, although there was a slight increase in the 5-9/10-14/25-34/45-54/55-64 and 65 and over age groups, and a significant decrease of 4.3% in the 35-44 age group (Table 16).

As for the percentage of speakers in each county and town within the Gaeltacht we can see that the highest percentage of speakers in 2002 was in County Cork, followed by County Galway and Waterford (Table 17). Additionally, we can also compare the evolution in the number of speakers in the Gaeltacht areas between 1996 and 2002 (Table 18). If we look at the total percentage for both years, we can see that there was a decrease in the number of speakers of 4.3% (from 76.3 to 76.2%). In fact, all counties experienced a decrease, except for Meath, where there was an increase of 0.6%. The reason for this may be that a significant number of Irish speakers moved there given the proximity of the Meath Gaeltacht to Dublin.

In relation to the same years, an analysis of the number of Irish speakers and frequency of speaking the language, in both numbers and percentages is also worthwhile (Table 19 and Table 20). Of the overall number of speakers in the State, 1,570,894, only 21.61% or 339,541 persons spoke the language daily, and 9.87% or 155,039, weekly. Hence, 66.52% spoke Irish less often than weekly, or never actively used it. In this regard, we can observe (Table 19) that the highest number of daily speakers of Irish was concentrated in Dublin (73,131), the South-West (56,616) and the West (46,332). Additional data (Table 20) however shows that the Border and West Regions possess the highest percentage of daily speakers. With regard to the percentage of people who spoke Irish *weekly*, *less often* and *never*, there was little variation among the Regions.

As in previous years, the census of 2002 provides information on the number of speakers (3 years and over) and frequency of speaking Irish according to age groups in numbers and percentages obtained (Tables 21 and 22). The highest percentage of daily speakers was to be found in the 5-9 age group (64.4%), followed by the 3-4 age group (57.33%) and the 10-14 age group (56.26%). The data also shows that the age groups with the highest number of people who never spoke Irish were the 25-34 (46.47%), the 20-24 (42.98%) and the 35-44 (39.03%). As was the case with the census of 1996, the highest number of daily speakers was found in the years corresponding to compulsory education. Indeed, a 28% drop in the numbers of speakers took place between the 15-19 age group and the 20-24 age group as indicated in the data shown in Table 22.

Finally, we can look at the frequency of Irish speaking, within the Gaeltacht areas, in 2002. The data (Table 23) shows that 54.36% of the population spoke the language *daily*; 10.78% *weekly*; 25.44% *less often* and 7.26% *never*. Compared with the data from the 1996 census (Table 24) we can see that although there were overall around 1,000 more speakers of Irish, there was a drop in the number of daily speakers of 3.43%, and, consequently, a greater number of people speaking only Irish weekly or less often[83].

Romaine (2008) and Walsh (2010) provide an accurate analysis of the figures presented by the latest censuses, corresponding to the years 2002 and 2006, in terms of separating speakers with a certain knowledge of Irish, from those reportedly able to speak it but who rarely or never used it to those who used it within the school context but not outside. A concise interpretation of the resulting percentages is essential in order to provide a comprehensive definition of the current situation relating to Irish usage in Ireland.

The census of 2002, although more accurate than any previous census in providing information on the number of people who, as well as being able to speak Irish, also used it as a means of communication, did not determine the actual number of people using it outside school time. This information was, however, provided in the 2006 census (Table 25): 41.9% of the Irish population, over 1,656,790 people, claimed to be able to speak Irish, with the largest concentration of speakers in the West (48.3%) and the Mid-West (47.3%), which has always been the case in previous censuses. When we compare the data on the percentage of Irish speakers in the last three censuses (1996, 2002 and 2006) we can see that there has been an overall reduction in the number of speakers (Table 26).

In terms of the classification of data according to age group we can see that the 10-14 age group has the highest number of Irish speakers, 72.5%, followed by the 15-19 age group, with 64.7% and the 5-9 age group, with 61.8% (Table 27). If we compare this information with that obtained in the years 1996 and 2002 (Table 16 and 28) there was an increase in speakers aged 3-14, but the most significant increase was in the 5-9 age group, from 48.2% in the year 1996 to 61.8% in 2006. For speakers aged 25 and over, there is a fluctuation in both directions of approximately 3% throughout the years in question; however, the age group 20-24 showed a decrease of circa 7% between 1996 and 2006.

With specific regard to the speakers within the Gaeltacht, data from 2006 (Table 29) clearly shows a progressive decrease in the number of speakers from 1996 in all counties and county boroughs, except

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[83] See also Ó Murchú (2008), pp. 39-40.

for County Meath, which is the only one where there was an increase of over 2%. This however does not affect the overall percentage of speakers, which was 5.5% lower in 2006 compared to 1996.

As previously explained, the 2006 census gave separate information on the existing number of speakers of Irish inside or outside the education system due to the way Question 12 was structured. Therefore, the data extracted from the respondents' answers indicates that only a very small proportion of the population who spoke Irish within the education system also used the language outside of school hours (as indicated in the percentages in brackets) (Table 30). Clearly, the percentage was higher in regions where the number of Irish native speakers is correspondingly greater (South-West and West); although the exception to this was in the Mid-East, where the general percentage of Irish speakers was not particularly high, just above 10% (Table 26). This incongruence is also visible in the Mid-West, where there was 47.3% of stated Irish speakers, although only 3.68% spoke it outside the education system (Table 30). Additionally, it is significant that of the 1,656,790 speakers of Irish nationwide, 763,739 people spoke it outside of the education system and that, of these, 182,165 used it weekly or more often. Also relevant is the fact that only 72,148 people were daily speakers of Irish (aged 3 and over) of whom 53,471 were daily speakers of Irish who were not involved in education (Table 30). Finally, information obtained from the 3-4 age group highlights the small percentage of children at this age who spoke Irish within the home. In other words, the transmission of the language at family level does not seem to be taking place as would be necessary for the language to survive in everyday use, which brings us to agree with Ó Murchú (2008:40) in that "the Gaeltacht community may, as is the case in the rest of the State, be moving towards a situation where younger speakers are school rather than home generated".

On a positive note, and specifically in relation to this point, in both the censuses of 2002 and 2006, there was a considerable increase shown in the number of pre-school children able to speak Irish. Therefore, the effect of total immersion education through Irish in *Naíonraí* or Irish-medium pre-schools apparently doubled the national average of children speaking the language (Romaine, 2006; see also Ó Murchú, 2008:42).

Overall, it can be said that only 1.77% of the Irish population spoke Irish on a daily basis outside of the education system in 2006 and that only 59.09% of those who used it within the education system used it daily outside of school hours (Table 31). It is however significant, as outlined by Ó Murchú (2008), that the percentage of non-Irish nationals increased from 5.8% in 2002 to 10% in 2006, which naturally would have resulted in a reduction of the average number of Irish speakers nationwide.

Returning to the analysis of the data available on the Gaeltacht areas, where the census of 2006 shows the decrease in the total number of speakers (61,035 in 1996; 62,157 in 2002 and 64,265 in 2006) (Table 32) the data also indicated that 6.71% (4,313) never spoke the language and that 10.21% (15,150) spoke

it less often than weekly. Furthermore, it can be observed that 29,327 people used Irish on a regular basis outside the education system (meaning weekly or more often), which is 45.63% of the total number of Irish speakers, i.e. people who had the ability to speak Irish (Tables 32 and 33). This information, which on its own may seem to be positive, is actually worrying when analysed together with the results from the *Comprehensive linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht: principal findings and recommendations* (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007). Firstly, the study is indicative of the positive attitudes of the young people of the Gaeltacht towards the Irish language: 80% would not be pleased if English became the language of the *Gaeltacht* in the future. Moreover, 94% of young people living in Category A areas, 92% living in Category B and 80% living in Category C areas stated that they were either strongly in favour of Irish or reasonably in favour. Secondly, data collected as part of the study showed that young people in the *Gaeltacht* areas had a good knowledge of Irish: 91% spoke fluent or good Irish in Category A, whereas in Categories B and C the percentages were 74% and 50%, respectively. Thirdly, the analysis of the language-use patterns among young people was indicative of the fact that, despite their positive attitude towards the Irish language, they used it mostly with their family and neighbours (60% of young people in Category A areas). Among peers, Irish was the language of communication of only 9% of the total young population of the Gaeltacht and 24% of young people in Categorgy A areas (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007).

This information brings to light the instability of the Irish language in the *Gaeltacht* and the need for important reforms to change the current sociolinguistic situation. The influence of English in the younger generations of the *Gaeltacht* is therefore a clear threat to the future inter-generational transmission of Irish and its status as a community language (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007).

It is equally relevant that, of the 13,982 people who spoke Irish within the education system in 2006, only 5,179 or 37.04%, continued to use it outside, although it also needs to be pointed out that the great majority of those who used it did so on a daily basis (Table 32 and 33).

The analysis of the overall data provided in the censuses of 1996, 2002 and 2006 allows for a general comparison of the number of speakers of Irish because, as indicated, prior to 2006 there was no possible way of identifying whether those who stated they were speakers of Irish (daily, weekly, less often, etc.) did so within or without the education system. In other words, when studying the demographic situation pertaining to Irish, as in the present research, it is important to understand the extent to which the language is used as a means of communication in social contexts. In addition, it is also important to identify the role of education, and, thus, policies that apply within Ireland aimed at fostering positive attitudes towards Irish, which would be expected to increase the overall number of speakers. Consequently, we are aware of the lack of accuracy in Table 34, not in terms of the data

presented for each individual year, as it is a compilation of the general number of speakers by age group, but regarding the definition of the concept "speaker of Irish". Nonetheless, it is worthwhile looking at each age group separately throughout the three census years to see the evolution in the number of speakers of Irish. Hence, even though there was a decrease between 1996 and 2006 in the number of speakers aged 5-19, an increase in the number of speakers among citizens aged 20 to 64 is evident[84].

Given the current socio-linguistic situation of Irish, various authors such as De Fréine (1978) and Romaine (2008) question the chances of survival for such a lesser used language as Irish with only a small percentage of native intergenerational transmission (Romaine 2008). That is to say, a language that, as in the case of Irish, has more second language speakers than native speakers, where few opportunities exist to use it and is not widely transmitted between generations. The need for communication, intrinsic in a language, is not present in most regions of the country; it is almost as if any use of the language (except for *Gaeltacht* areas in Category A, as described above) is reliant on the creation of artificial environments and situations specifically for its use; schooling through the medium of Irish in areas where there are no regular Irish-speakers is a clear example of this complicated situation (Romaine, 2008). Hindley assertively illustrates the idea of language as a need for communication:

> "Language as a means of communication is not just a general principle, and the maintenance of a language implies that it is needed to communicate with someone somewhere. The death of the last old Irish monoglots, assumed to have occurred since around 1960, means that Irish is no longer necessary to talk to anyone. Given that learning any language demands effort, this is a serious loss of natural incentive and is regarded by many as a fatal step towards language death. Complete bilingualism by speakers of a minority language is by this logic merely a transitional stage towards abandonment of that language, for it has thereby lost its communicative *raison d'etre*".

(Hindley, 1990:197)

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[84] The most current information available regarding the number of speakers of Irish at the time of printing is in the Census of 2011. This shows an increase in the population of Ireland and the number of speakers of Irish, although, in reality, the percentage rate of daily speakers of Irish has remained virtually the same (around 1.7% of the total population of Ireland) (Table 35). More specifically, Table 36 shows an increase in the number of speakers of Irish between 3-14 and 35 and older but a decrease in the number of speakers aged 15-35 years of age. Furthermore, Table 37 shows that the number of daily speakers outside the education system has increased in all aged groups except for the 15-25 age group. In terms of the Gaeltacht areas, in general terms we can see that, even though there has been a significant increase in the number of speakers of Irish (over 5,000), only 27% of the population speaks Irish as a daily language of communication (see Tables 38 and 39).

In this regard, the focus of current research is to define the role of the Irish language in communities where there are native speakers and in those where it is not spoken. In the latter, Romaine (2008) anticipates what the future position will be: "The main value for many small languages in the future may well be symbolic and cultural rather than practical. That is to say, many will not be widely used, if indeed at all, in everyday communication; they will cease being grounded in continuity of practice, and instead become primary vehicles for the articulation of identity" (Romaine, 2008:19).

3.3.1. Education in 21st century Ireland

In education, the Government's White Paper, Charting Our Education Future, published in 1995, contained a major statement on government policy relating to primary, post-primary and tertiary education. It also addressed the inclusion of European languages in the Primary School Curriculum and presented a European awareness programme tailored for children, in which students would be introduced to different European languages and cultures. In 1998, Article 31 of the Education Act was a call to the Minister of Education to create a body of professionals that supervised matters related to the teaching of Irish and Irish-medium schools, such as the specific development of education policies, the associated research as well as the creation and provision of textbooks and aids to both learning and teaching through Irish. Consequently, *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* was established and started working in 2002 under the guidance of parents, teachers and experts in the field, with the following mission statement: "To fulfil effectively, professionally and at a high standard the responsibilities of *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* for the development of the Gaeltacht and Irish-medium sector and the teaching of Irish in all schools" (COGG web site).

According to the preliminary figures of the 2011 census, the population of the Republic of Ireland consists of 4,581,269 persons, 8.1% more than in the previous census of 2006. Education continues to be compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen, or until the students have completed three years of post-primary education (DES, 2004). Primary education is administered by the Department of Education and Skills and The Education Act, 1998, which supports the "extension of bilingualism in Irish society, the achievement of a greater use of the Irish language at school and in the community, and the maintenance of Irish as the primary community language in Gaeltacht areas" (DES 2005-06:7), is currently the "legal instrument for the operation of primary schools" (Eurydice 2002). The Department of Education and Skills initiated, in conjunction with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA[85]), the implementation of the primary Curriculum in 1999, which had been

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[85] Henceforth NCCA.

developed by the Curriculum Unit of the Department of Education from 1979 to 1988 and evaluated by a special Review Body established by the Minister for Education in 1987.

In Ireland, where there is not a national system of pre-school education, the first-level of free education is offered to children from the age of four in primary schools. Children spend the first two years of school in junior and senior infants, between the ages of around 4 and 6, before they start first class. The primary school period ends after sixth class, around the age of 12. Teachers received in-career courses from 2000 to 2005 in order to ensure that the Curriculum is fully implemented in all schools. Of the total number of primary schools, around 3,200, only 68 are privately owned, the remainder being state-aided parish schools. There are also 109 primary schools which are special education schools (Eurydice, 2002)[86]. A management board made up of representatives of trustees, parents, teachers and the local community manages each school. The Catholic Primary Schools Managers' Association (CPSMA) represents the largest number of primary schools in Ireland.

3.3.1.1. Teaching of Irish within the Irish education system

The current education system in Ireland does not benefit from a national language education policy; however, as previously stated, Irish and English are compulsory subjects in primary school, as well as Junior Cycle, although only Irish is compulsory in the Senior Cycle. The number of hours in which Irish or English are taught and used as language of instruction and/or communication within the primary school depends on the type of school. In a mainstream school, English is the language of instruction whereas Irish is taught as a second language. In a school located in a *Gaeltacht* area or a *Gaelscoil* early total immersion in the language applies, that is, Irish is the medium of instruction and the language of communication within the school (DES, 2005-06; Ó Laoire, 2007; NCCA, 2012). It is worth noting however that instruction through Irish is also available at pre-school level through attendance in *Naíonraí*, which offer pre-school education across the country, except in official *Gaeltacht* areas, where *Naíonraí* are administered by *Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta Teoranta,* and Northern Ireland[87]. As for the teaching of Irish, it is compulsory for all students (except in some special cases) from the age of 4 to 18.

Gaelscoileanna is a national voluntary organisation that emerged in 1973 when a group of parents became interested in providing their children with the opportunity of being educated through Irish at a time when, as noted by Ó Tuathaigh (2008:37), "the state's position on Irish in these decades (1970s to

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[86] Appendix 3.8. shows the structure of the Irish education system (DES, 2004).
[87] Similar to *Gaelcoileanna, Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta*, which was founded in 2003, is an Irish voluntary organisation that gives support to the promotion of education in Irish for children from birth thanks to grants provided by *Foras na Gaeilge* and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

1990s) was essentially responsive rather than directive". In fact, data obtained by Cummins in 1974 indicated that 53% of the students attending these schools were from an English-speaking background and that for a quarter of students Irish was the language of the home (Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002). Interestingly, other data obtained by Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin in 1979 indicated that 51% of the students' fathers were State employees for whom Irish was needed in their place of work (Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002).

Gaelscoileanna operates with the aim of "developing, facilitating and encouraging Irish-medium education at primary and post primary level throughout the country". It aims to create "dual literate bilinguals, in Irish and English, before they leave the Gaelscoil" (Ó hAinféin, 2003); it is funded by Foras na Gaeilge but the Minister for Education supervises its activities. In September 2003 *Gaelscoileanna Teo.* reported that there were 149 gaelscoileanna at primary level and 33 post-primary level schools in counties outside the *Gaeltacht*, with approximately 30,000 students. This is a considerable increase from the 11 primary and 5 secondary schools that started teaching through the medium of Irish in 1972/1973[88]. The distribution of *Gaelscoileanna* as at September 2013 is hence as follows:

Primary schools: 144 in the 26 counties + 36 in the 6 counties = 180 in the 32 counties

Post-Primary: 36 in the 26 counties + 5 in the 6 counties = 41 in the 32 counties

The total number of children being educated through the medium of Irish outside of the *Gaeltacht* is over 45,000 (September 2013), a figure that highlights the success of the movement. The sociolinguistic situation affecting students in *Gaelscoileanna* is however different to when it was first established. According to a survey study conducted by Coady and Ó Laoire in 2000, based on a previous study by Cummins in 1974, in the year 2000 66% of the students attending Irish-medium schools were from an English-speaking background, 25% from homes where Irish was spoken now and again; 7% from homes where Irish was often spoken and 2% from homes where Irish was always spoken (Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002). In 1974 however, Cummins revealed that 53% of the students were from homes where English was the language spoken.

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[88] See Appendix 3.6. for a breakdown of the number of students, by year, in the period 1990-2011, attending Irish-medium education.

Figure 2 – Linguistic profile of students enrolled in Irish-medium schools

Linguistic profile of students enrolled in Irish-medium schools		
Students are from homes in which…	**1974**	**2000**
Irish is always spoken	8%	2%
Irish is often spoken	16%	7%
Irish is spoken now and again	23%	25%
English is always spoken	53%	66%

Source: Coady and Ó Laoire, 2002:472.

This statistical information has significant pedagogical implications for teachers and students, as the greater the difference in the linguistic background of the students the more difficult it is to find a suitable teaching approach that accommodates the learning needs of students and favours their cognitive development.

In terms of the strategy used to open new schools, the *Gaelscoileanna Teoranta* organisation encourages individuals from local communities who have an interest in having an Irish-medium school to gather together and set up a funding committee. There are also government grants available from time to time.

The work of *Gaelscoileanna Teoranta* is not limited to the setting up and co-ordination of Irish-medium schools. Every year since 2001, a national conference has taken place as a means of offering teachers in-service training, with the opportunity of sharing their own experiences, networking and discussing current topics of common interest (Gaelscoileanna, 2012).

Teachers in *Gaelscoileanna* are required to be fully bilingual but, often, the difficulty in finding fully competent teachers of Irish (Ní Ghallachair, 2008) forces school principals to hire a teacher with potential to master proficiency in the shortest period of time possible. This point will be reflected in the survey study of chapter 6.

Gaelscoileanna follow the principle of early total immersion education. Children attending Gaelscoileanna are generally monolingual speakers of English but in this type of schools Irish is the language of instruction and the working language of the school[89]. It is, however, noteworthy that the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999), which has been fully operational since 2003, sets different directives for the teaching of Irish for *Gaelscoileanna* and *Gaeltacht* schools, and English-medium schools. In Irish-medium schools, the aim is that "children can develop greater mastery of the language, in a way which enhances their intellectual, emotional and imaginative development", whereas in English-medium schools, it is "to enable children to develop communicative competence in Irish in an enjoyable way" (Primary School Curriculum 1999). Other than that, Irish-medium schools (*Gaeslcoileanna* and *Gaeltacht*) follow the standard curriculum as set by the Department of Educacion and Skills.

Another relevant voluntary organisation is *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge* (*CNMG*), which has been in existence since 1968, and under the auspices of *Foras na Gaeilge* since 1978. This organisation works with schools and educational institutions for the "promotion of the teaching of Irish and the development of Irish in the educational system". In this regard, and in co-ordination with the Department of Education and Skills, it provides teachers with seminars, professional development courses and teaching materials (*CNMG, 2012;* Ó Murchú, 2008).

From a different perspective, the Primary School Curriculum advises the dedication of the following time on a weekly basis to the teaching of languages as content subjects (NCCA, 2007; Ó Murchú, 2008):

In infant classes: L1- 3 hrs. L2- 2.5hrs.
1st-6th class: L1- 4hrs. L2 -3.5hrs.

Additionally, schools are advised not to start formal reading of the L2 until second class but, in the case of *Gaelscoileanna* and schools in the *Gaeltacht*, not to start formal reading of the two languages at the same time (Ó Murchú, 2008). Nonetheless, the lack of specific guidelines for the teaching of English language and literacy in Irish-medium schools has generated extensive debate, as it has caused schools to develop their own individual language policies according to what they believe is more appropriate for their students (NCCA, 2007).

Research conducted in recent years has tried to determine the most efficient strategy in accordance with the principles of immersion education. In line with this, there are two main issues to discuss:

1) The appropriate age for the introduction of English as a content subject in Irish-medium schools.

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[89] See chapter 2 of this thesis for a definition of the concept.

2) In which language, Irish (L2) or English (L1), reading should be introduced.

A study from *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta*: *Emergent Literacy in Gaeltacht and all-Irish Schools*, conducted in 2004, indicated that 58% of Irish-medium schools began reading in Irish first, whereas 36.4% started reading in English first, and 5.7% started with both languages at the same time. If we look at the arguments proposed, we can see that there are three different lines of thought.

1.- Based on the methodology used in Canadian immersion programmes and under the principles of the Interdependence Hypothesis[90], there is a tendency to support reading in Irish (L2), first because of the belief that transfer of language skills from the L2 to L1 is easier. The child has greater exposure to the L1 outside the school environment and hence a greater need to acquire it. But, if the L2 is introduced after the L1, the transfer of skills may not happen to the desired level, meaning that the child may never be fluent in the L2 (Cummins, 2000, cited in Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006).

2.- Previous research from Cummins (1976) argued that the delay in the start age of reading instruction in the L1 could be detrimental to the child's motivation for reading: the child, who already knows some words in English and who possesses the motivation to start reading is instead initiated in reading Irish, a language he/she does not understand as well and, therefore, he/she will make a much slower progress and not satisfy his/her cognitive needs.

3.- Both of the arguments above discussed are completely valid. The particular needs of each school, based on the typology of students attending as well as their socio-economic and linguistic background should be determining factors in defining the school policy and methodology that will be adopted[91].

In summary, it is acknowledged that empirical research in the context of Irish-medium schools is still needed and many questions in relation to the issue of the starting age of reading instruction also need to be answered (Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006). Nonetheless, the study of the Catalan education system will show that the immersion education programme followed in Catalonia is based on the first argument because, when it was first implemented, in the early 1980s, the L1 of a large number of students was Castilian and attempts were made to balance the contact time with the two languages by having Catalan as language of instruction.

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[90] See Chapter 2 for a concise definition of the Interdependence Hypothesis (first defined by Cummins in 1978).
[91] Harris and Cummins (2013) provide an updated discussion of this issue.

In Ireland, an important change was however introduced in 2008 by the then Deparment of Education and Science with regard to the age at which English is introduced in Gaelscoileanna. After a process of consultation commenced in 2006, Circular 0044/2007 was issued, requiring Irish-medium schools to introduce the teaching of English in the second term of Junior Infants for half an hour daily[92]. This decision was initially taken and applied but highly contested as it showed a lack of understanding in relation to the implications of bilingual education programmes, as acknowledged by Ó Murchú (2008:165):

> "The lack of understanding of the immersion approach and accompanying lack of clarity of policy is held by the Gaelscoil movement to be the prime cause for this official decision in the Republic. In addition, research in Ireland appears to rarely take into account the overall and connected literacy skills in two languages of children in immersion or bilingual schools".

In relation to this, and returning to the discussion on reading instruction in immersion education contexts, it is important to bear in mind, as already mentioned in section 2.2.2.1. of this thesis, that one of the main strategies of early total immersion programmes is to delay the introduction of the L1 (English in this case) generally to 1st year of primary education (as in Canada) to allow the student in immersion education time to acquire a good foundation in the L2 (Irish) before being introduced to formal learning of the L1 (English). The pursuit of this principle encouraged Irish language organisations to appeal Circular 0044/2007 to the Government on the basis that it would destroy immersion education in Ireland. The final decision arrived in 2010, when the then Minister of Education, Mr. O'Keefe, withdrew the circular, allowing schools to introduce English as L2 in the second term of senior infants subject to prior approval of the school board of management, but requiring them to offer English classes at an earlier stage should parents request it.

Furthermore, the performance of students attending Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht primary education has long been a matter of extensive discussion. Research conducted in the 70's and 80's highlighted the good levels of achievement in English and Irish literacy by students attending Gaelscoileanna. In addition to obtaining the best results in Irish, students were performing as well as children in English-medium schools in other subjects, including their first language (Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006; Mac Murchaidh, 2008). The standards achieved in Gaeltacht schools were never as good as in Gaelscoileanna but significantly higher than in mainstream schools.

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[92] At secondary level, Irish is taught daily in periods of 30-45 minutes.

One of the most recent relevant comprehensive nationwide research study on students' language skills in Irish is the 2006 Harris report. This study was conducted in 2002 on sixth-grade (primary education) students nationwide in mainstream, Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, and assessed their mastery in reading, listening and speaking Irish. Harris' conclusions were based on a previous study of a similar nature conducted in 1985, which allowed him to "examine long-term trends in achievements". A feature of this study was that it also studied social, educational and linguistic characteristics of the students' parents to determine whether they exert an influence on the children's level of achievement in the L2 (Irish) (Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006).

In terms of the results obtained in 2006, Gaelscoileanna students performed at the same level in general Irish listening and speaking tests as in 1985. It was seen that, although home-background variables such as the parents' ability to speak Irish, their attitude towards the language or even whether they speak it at home have a positive influence on the child's performance, they are not determinant in the high levels of performance of students in all-Irish schools. Even if these variables were not present, it was shown that children attending all-Irish education still performed better than children in mainstream schools whose social and economic background was highly positive (Harris, 2006; Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006). The conclusion was that the success of Irish medium schools stems from the fact that "they are Irish-medium, so that extensive and sustained in-school contact with the language is equally available to all pupils" (Ó Laoire and Harris, 2006:32). "There is also evidence that the use of Irish as the medium of instruction outside the language lesson proper is associated with increased proficiency" (Harris, 2006:12)

In *Gaeltacht* schools, it was found that the results were not as good as in Gaelscoileanna, but much higher than those in mainstream schools. Comparing the 2002 results with those of 1985, it was evident that the Irish listening ability of students was very much the same in general terms; however, there was a 10% decline in the Irish speaking tests. This is clearly indicative of the difficult situation that schools in the *Gaeltacht* are faced with given the mixed typology of students attending: the number of native speakers is decreasing progressively as is the number of households where Irish is the language regularly spoken (NCCA, 2007b). Whereas in *Gaelscoileanna* the students' background is similar in that most of the students learn Irish as a second language, in the *Gaeltacht* the number of Irish and English speakers varies from school to school. In this regard, it is important to remember that recent research shows that only 50% of children starting school in the Gaeltacht are native speakers (Mac Donnacha et al., 2005; NCCA, 2007); more than a quarter of students in the Gaeltacht were not born there and, therefore, have not been raised in an Irish-speaking environment; 9% live outside the Gaeltacht (Harris, 2006; Ó Murchú, 2008). Consequently, it is right to say, as has been pointed out in several research studies, i.e. NCCA (2007a), NCCA (2007:10) that "*Gaeltacht* schools with a high level of proficiency in the Irish language are declining in number; these schools now have to deal with both language maintenance and

language revitalisation. *Gaelscoileanna*, in the vast majority of cases, are dealing only with language revitalisation".

Returning to the results obtained in the Harris report, it was suggested that in schools where English is used as the language of instruction, acceptable standards in Irish are not being achieved. The main reason for this is that, in school, students are exposed to the language for only a very short period of time every day. Whereas the average weekly time spent teaching Irish during the mid 1980s was 5.1 hours, figures in 1999 analysed in the Harris report showed that "the core (minimum) time for Irish as a second language is specified as 3.5 hours" (Harris, 2006:168). It is also acknowledged in the same report that Irish is the language of the home for only a very small percentage of the population:

> "The opportunities for children outside the Gaeltacht to use Irish at home are
> fairly limited as can be seen from the results of a national survey on languages
> in Ireland in the early 1990s, the results of which suggested that Irish is never
> spoken in over two-thirds of Irish homes".

> (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin, 1994 in Harris, 2006:5)

Harris also reported a "dramatic" change between 1985 and 2002, with an overall decrease in the percentage of students who attain mastery of the language (Irish). Whereas in some aspects of Irish listening and speaking most students were shown to be making some "progress", in others such as "speaking vocabulary" and "control of the morphology of verbs", a majority of students were failing. Another example is the results for "general comprehension of speech", which was failed by 36.2% in 2002, compared with 11.8% in 1985. In relation to speaking, some of the objectives tested such as "fluency of oral description" and "communication", were around 20% inferior to those in 1985.

From analysing the results of the study on a bigger scale, the Harris report expresses serious concerns regarding students' and teachers' motivation in ordinary schools. The fact that students do not have a sufficient command of the language to enable them to communicate effectively affects their motivation to learn as well as their attitude towards the language. Similar to this is the situation relating to teachers: in Irish-medium schools, only 29.3% of teachers thought there was a decline in the achievement of Irish language proficiency of students when compared with 1985, whereas in English-medium schools this percentage was 76.6%, and in Gaeltacht schools, 68.1%. Teachers in the last two groups also claimed to be lacking appropriate teaching materials, enough time in the class for the teaching of Irish and enough support from the Department of Education and Skills to tackle existing problems. Additionally, around 25% of teachers in ordinary schools claimed to possess a "weak" level of Irish, which was never the case in *Gaelscoileanna* or *Gaeltacht* schools. The reason for this could be, according to Harris, that proficient

Irish teachers may prefer to work in Irish-medium schools, which in fact could also apply to students in that those with the potential of becoming proficient in Irish are attending Irish-medium schools.

> "The absence of high-Irish-potential pupils from ordinary schools could be having a negative multiplier effect by changing the dynamics of classrooms and teaching. [...]. It is clear that the absence of such high-Irish-achievement pupils, or their presence in smaller numbers, removes a certain kind of vitality, stimulus and resource from the Irish class in ordinary schools. Their absence also deprives the teacher, of course, of one distinctive kind of pedagogic achievement -the experience of helping pupils to develop high levels of proficiency in the language".

<div align="right">(Harris, 2006:172-173)</div>

These negative issues, according to Harris, are having an adverse effect on the maintenance and restoration of Irish at national level, given that the majority of Irish primary school students attend ordinary schools. Consequently, Harris supports the idea that *Gaelscoileanna* are positively contributing to creating pockets of Irish speaking communities outside of the *Gaeltacht*, given that they gather together Irish speaking parents who would normally find themselves isolated and children who have a proficient level of Irish. Attitudes towards the language in this kind of environment are definitely much more positive than in ordinary schools, which contributes significantly to higher levels of language usage. On the negative side, however, the fact that Gaelscoileanna are attracting the most motivated and better speakers among parents, students and teachers is generating an unbalanced situation when compared to English-medium schools, which possess the lowest standards in terms of teaching/student performance (Council of Europe, 2007).

In summary, the recommendations of the Harris report, which are in line with the initial hypotheses of this thesis, were twofold: a) to implement teaching through the medium of Irish in English-medium schools, by teaching one or two subjects through CLIL; b) to implement a form of intermediate immersion education in English-medium schools "less ambitious than the full-immersion approach of Irish-medium schools but more ambitious than a subject-only or extended programme". The range of possibilities covers early partial immersion, mid-partial immersion and late partial immersion.

> "Early immersion might consist of full Irish immersion up to, say, the end of third or fourth class, then reducing eventually to partial immersion (50% Irish medium) or perhaps to just the regular English medium programme by sixth grade. Mid or late immersion could consist of Irish as a subject only (or 50% Irish medium) up to third class, then changing to full Irish immersion for the remainder. Partial immersion involves 50% Irish medium instruction all the way through primary school".

<div align="right">(Harris, 2008:179)</div>

Subsequent to the Harris research study, the NCCA engaged in three major pieces of work to support education in *Gaelscoileanna* and *Gaeltacht* schools:

The first was a study of the literature available on language and literacy in Irish medium schools, conducted by two Irish scholars: Dr. Ó Laoire and Dr. Harris, also published in 2006. The second was a survey study consisting of a questionnaire distributed to teachers, principals, parents and students to identify emerging issues in the Irish-medium schools. Over 600 people completed the questionnaire with the results indicating that there was a general concern about the lack of clear policy guidelines for the implementation of immersion education, specifically relating to two different aspects:

a) Dealing with children with learning difficulties, for whom there were no specific learning materials in Irish.

b) The starting point of reading literacy, whether English or Irish, as the Curriculum only states that literacy should not be introduced in both languages at the same time, as already discussed. In fact, 9% of teachers recommended that reading commence in English and that Irish reading be delayed until the students had attained a good level of spoken Irish. Additionally, respondents indicated a need to have more pre-service and in-service professional development available to teachers so that they were able to work in all types of bilingual education contexts, as well as making available extra teaching support for the development of oral Irish among students in Irish-medium schools and more teaching and assessment tools in Irish, for Irish and mathematics (NCCA, 2007).

The third was a seminar attended by around 60 people from six different Irish-medium schools, where they discussed, firstly, the current issues affecting their schools. Their conclusions highlighted that the same emerging problems applied to all schools involved. These related to language planning, professional development, existing resources and assessment of learning, as had also been discussed in the survey study. The second point of discussion centered on five different models of education for the teaching of languages in Irish-medium schools at junior and senior infant level. Participants were asked to evaluate the pros and cons of each model in relation to the specific characteristics of their own schools. Subsequently, each school had to adopt a model of education and implement it. The intention of these three "projects" was to use the resulting outcomes in a future development of a national language policy for Irish-medium schools.

More recently, the Educational Research Centre conducted *The 2010 National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics in Irish-medium schools* with the aim of "establishing current English reading and mathematics standards of Second and Sixth class pupils in Irish-medium schools, and to compare these with overall national standards". This study involved fifty-four Gaelscoileanna and 51 Gaeltacht schools,

that is, 4,273 students completing the English reading tests and 4,288 students completing the mathematics tests. The results of these tests show that students in second and sixth class in Gaelscoileanna and in sixth class in Gaeltacht schools obtained significantly higher results on English reading than students who had previously participated in *The 2009 National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NA '09)* (involving 8,000 primary school students). More specifically, 17% of the students in second class and 15% in sixth class in Gaelscoileanna achieved the highest level (Level 4). In Gaeltacht schools, the results were 10% and 11%, respectively, whereas in the NA '09 the results were 10% and 10%. In terms of students performing poorly, in Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools 4-6% of the students scored below Level 1, whereas in NA '09 schools there was 10% of them (Gilleece et al., 2011).

In mathematics, the results showed that second class students in Gaelscoileanna and sixth class in Gaeltacht schools performed significantly better than their peers in the NA '09; however, although sixth class students in Gaelscoileanna and second class students in Gaeltacht schools also achieved better results than those reflected in the NA '09, the difference was not significant (Gilleece et al., 2011).

In summary, the high quality level of education provided by Irish-medium schools is demonstrated in the good results obtained by students from Irish-medium schools taking part in studies of this kind (although it is also worthnoting that they attract more middle-class students).

3.3.1.1.1 Teacher training in primary education

In Ireland, a three-year[93] Bachelor Degree in Education is the most widely chosen path towards becoming a primary school teacher. Alternatively, students who already hold an undergraduate degree can undertake an eighteen-month full-time postgraduate programme that qualifies them to teach at primary level. As at 2011, there are five Colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland: Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education (Dublin); Mary Immaculate College (Limerick); St. Patrick's College Drumcondra (Dublin); The Church of Ireland College of Education (Dublin) and Froebel College of Education (Dublin). Hibernia College also offers the opportunity to obtain the Professional Diploma in Education through an online course, as long as students satisfy a number of specific requirements.

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[93] The Teaching Council has determined that the Bachelor of Education will be a four-year programme from September 2012.

Among other requirements, students accessing Colleges of Education are also required to prove they possess a minimum knowledge of Irish[94]. Those coming from the Leaving Certificate examination need a C3 (55-59%) level or higher in the Higher level paper. Students accessing colleges from other routes are required to have a pass in First Year Arts Irish; the Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge from NUI Maynooth; the Diploma in Arts (Applied Irish) from UCC; the Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge Fheidhmeach from UCD; the Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge, Level C1 from NUIG; the Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge (An Ghaeilge sa Saol Comhaimseartha) from the University of Limerick, the Diploma in Irish from the University of Ulster or level B2 of the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG). At postgraduate level, students accessing the Higher Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching) also need to pass an interview and an oral test in Irish. Additionally, 10% of the places in Colleges of Education are reserved for mature students and students coming from the Gaeltacht. In order to improve the oral competence in Irish of primary teachers, it is compulsory (and state-funded) for each student teacher to undertake a 3-week course in the Gaeltacht at the end of their first year at college (Mary Immaculate College, 2012).

In the case of primary school teachers who qualify outside the Republic, a specific examination in Irish was introduced to give them the opportunity to teach in the country. This is the *Scrúdú Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge* (Qualifying Examination in Irish). Even though teachers are initially allowed to work in a primary school without the qualification in Irish, they are given five years to pass this exam, otherwise, they are paid as unqualified staff (Mac Murchaidh, 2008).

Despite this situation appearing to be a sound basis for preparing fully-competent primary school teachers to teach Irish, in reality, the poor competence of Irish teachers in this area is well documented, as discussed above. Student teachers, in fact, receive little or none of their preparation through the medium of Irish, which is identified as one of the major reasons for their lack of language competency; specifically oral competence. As for teaching methodologies, students undertake a small number of modules on teaching methodologies, although it is my belief that only one of the Colleges of Education in the Republic, Froebel College, has introduced specific preparation for a teaching position within a *Gaelscoil* (since the academic year 2003-04).

There are, however, a number of opportunities for teachers to undergo in-service training. These are generally offered by *Gaelscoileanna* and *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*, for primary school teachers, and *Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta* for teachers in *Naíonraí*, both inside and outside the *Gaeltacht* (Ó Murchú, 2008).

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[94] Appendix 3.7. shows the Irish national level of qualifications, as established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in 2009.

3.3.1.2. Teaching of modern languages in primary education

In Ireland, as in Scotland, there is neither obligation nor regulation covering the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary school (RIA 1990; DES 2005-2006). The "schools may decide whether it should be possible or compulsory for pupils to learn two languages" (Eurydice, 2005). In the same way, there is no specification in the Primary School Curriculum relating to the qualifications required by foreign language teachers (Primary School Curriculum 1999), which means that it is possible that they may not either hold a university qualification nor have specific training for the teaching of languages. In the case of secondary school teachers of modern languages, the situation is the same as for the teaching of Irish. Since the National University of Ireland requires a pass in a modern language (and Irish) in the Leaving Certificate Examination to access many university degree courses, a majority of students take a modern language at secondary school (DES 2005-2006:31). In addition to this, given that the great majority of undergraduates in Ireland specialise in two subjects (i.e. History and Spanish), it has been claimed that there is a lack of language proficiency and specialisation among graduates. It should also be borne in mind that more attention is given in university language departments to the teaching of literature rather than the teaching of language. In the Professional Diploma in Education, modules specifically related to language teaching are focused on pedagogy, making an assumption that the student is already highly competent in the language (Council of Europe, 2007; Ní Ghallachair, 2008). In this context, many foreign language teachers feel that they are not sufficiently prepared (Council of Europe, 2007).

The Irish Government has, however, conducted several studies to assess the viability of introducing modern languages at primary school level. The results of the first study were made public in 1987: the Report of the Board of Studies for Languages, which indicated that although further research should be undertaken before the introduction of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum, it was advisable to develop new policies to consider the teaching of other languages besides English and Irish. Subsequently, the Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (NCCA / Department of Education, 1990) reviewed the 1971 Primary School Curriculum and suggested some alterations. It was however finally decided that the teaching of modern languages should not be included in the new Curriculum. At the start of the 1990s, while the new Curriculum was being discussed, a nationwide survey on modern language provision in primary schools (conducted by the INTO in 1991) revealed that 23.8% of the 1,834 schools that responded were teaching a foreign language, usually French, after school hours and on a private basis.

Another discussion document was issued in 1993 by the NCCA: *Culture and Communication: Foreign Languages in the Primary School Curriculum*. This analysed the different arguments for and against the

introduction of teaching modern foreign languages in primary education. Aspects relating to European cultural awareness, language awareness and communicative awareness provided the focal point of discussion. This same year, 1993, a study carried out by the *Institiuíd Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITE)* revealed that 81% of the population supported the inclusion of modern foreign languages in the Primary School Curriculum. Additionally, in 1995, the White Paper on Education *Charting our Education System* indicated the positive contribution that modern languages can make to the child's primary education and made a commitment to offer Irish students the opportunity to begin the study of languages, life and cultures of different European countries.

Because of the commitment expressed in the 1995 White Paper on Education, Ireland introduced a new project in December 1997, the *Pilot Project on Modern Languages in the Primary School*, known since 2001 as the *Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI)*. The stated aim of the Initiative upon commencement, was as follows:

> "The Initiative aims to foster positive attitudes towards language learning, to encourage communication in the four target languages and to promote diversification in the range of languages taught. Further aims include the establishment of links between language teaching at first and second level. The Initiative also strives to enable a greater number of children in a wider range of school types to study Modern Languages in our primary schools"

> (DES Circular 45/97, in www.mlpsi.ie)

Also, four main objectives were stated:

1. To foster positive attitudes to language learning.
2. To establish co-ordination between language teaching at first and second level.
3. To encourage diversification in the range of languages taught.
4. To enable a greater number of children in a wider range of school types to study modern languages

Funded initially by the European Social Fund of the European Union and currently by the National Development Plan and the Department of Education and Science, a Project Management Group (PMG) was formed at the outset[95]. The PMG is comprised of representatives from the NCCA, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate, the DES Primary Administration; the Colleges of Education, the Post-Primary Languages Initiative and the Kildare Education Centre, which administers the Initiative.

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[95] The Project Management Group (PMG) meets on a biannual basis. Its chairperson is a representative of the DES Inspectorate.

This initiative was initially set up to last two years but at the end of this period the participating schools were asked to continue their involvement; seven Regional Project Leaders were also designated to co-ordinate the different languages taught as well as to provide support to the teachers: "Project Leaders design and deliver in-career development days on a regional basis and follow up this training with individual school visits. They evaluate language-teaching resources for the primary language class and develop materials specifically tailored for use in the Irish primary classroom" (MLPSI website).

The languages offered in the MLPSI are Spanish, French, German and Italian and are taught for 1.5 hours per week in 5th and 6th classes. The MLPSI organises three days of in-service training for teachers twice every year as well as an annual conference (National Training Conference), the latest being organised in April 2011 at the Marino Institute of Education. Also, the MLPSI website offers teachers and practitioners alike an opportunity to communicate with each other, keep up to date with the latest news and many teaching resources.

This project has been very successful across the country; and the number of participating schools has risen considerably since its foundation. Even though only 270 schools were initially selected, from over 1,300 applicant primary schools, there are over 400 participating schools with 3,654 teachers and 20,000 children involved as at 2012 (Kildare Education Centre web page), which accounts for approximately 15% of the total student population at primary school level (Flynn, 2011).

In 2002, the publication of *Modern Languages in Irish Primary Schools: An Evaluation of the National Pilot Project* (Harris and Conway, 2002) indicated very positive results in terms of the progress made by the students as well as the attitudes of both students and parents towards the languages and their speakers, but also noted difficulties in terms of curriculum space and the development of language awareness. In 2005, in a study of the compatibility of modern languages with the primary school curriculum, the NCCA considered the matter of time allocation for subjects within the Curriculum, establishing in its conclusion that "the current implementation of the Primary School Curriculum is already proving very challenging for teachers; the demands on time are great" (NCCA, 2005:35) and that it should be fully implemented, with more research conducted before further considering the inclusion of modern foreign languages other than English. It was consequently resolved that a final study in 2007 would decide whether a place should be given to languages in the Curriculum. Previous figures published by the Department of Education and Science in 2004 showed that there were 3,282 primary schools aided by the Department with 441,065 children enrolled (DES 2004:11), of which 10-12% of primary school students were officially learning a foreign language (DES 2005-06:34).

In 2006, experts from the Royal Irish Academy met to discuss the position of languages and of Irish in the country. They recommended the implementation of a national language policy that promoted

multilingualism and multiculturalism that would enable Ireland to become one of Europe's strongest economic powers. Their report acknowledged a worrying decrease in the number of students taking languages for their Leaving Certificate examination between 2001 and 2005, as well as identifying a need to prepare teachers to the highest standards of language proficiency to ensure success. In this regard, they recommended the creation of courses for teacher trainees that involved the learning of a foreign language in addition to Irish, as well as implementing new teaching methodologies such as immersion education and CLIL to enhance student attitudes towards languages (Ó Dochartaigh and Broderick, 2006).

The lack of curriculum time and adequate language proficiency on the part of teachers are not the only deficiencies that require attention before the teaching of modern languages is formalised in primary education. The Council of Europe Expert Group in Languages listed other emerging issues following meetings with Irish experts in 2006. Firstly, it is necessary to point out that 75% of language teachers in primary schools are not part of the school staff. They are contracted-in on a part-time basis and do not take part in normal school meetings nor have the same rights/duties as other school staff. The foreign language is consequently not part of the school curriculum and not afforded the same level of attention as the other languages of the school, which leads to "insecurity or dissatisfaction on behalf of teachers" (Council of Europe, 2007). Secondly, there are serious problems in ensuring continuity from primary to secondary education: it is very often the case that a child who has been studying a modern language in primary school cannot continue with it in secondary school because it is not available, so that he/she has to start another modern language. Alternatively, as there is no co-ordination between primary and secondary schools, the same modern language may be available but the student must start again from the very beginning.

In this regard, the Council of Europe made the following recommendations in order to achieve meaningful progress towards an "integrated, coherent, language in education policy":

1.- To integrate all languages in the curriculum and clearly define what their role is within the education system.
2.- To find a pedagogical approach (considering the inclusion of CLIL) for all languages that can lead to more positive attitudes towards multilingualism.
3.- To supply schools with appropriately trained language teachers.
4.- To provide teachers with continuing in-service training.

Any plans to extend the MLPSI nationwide or to introduce modern language learning as part of the Primary School Curriculum were discarded by the new Fine Gael and Labour Government. In fact, the Department of Education and Skills announced, as part of the Government's Budget 2012, that the

MLPSI would be terminated from June 2012, meaning that schools will lose 300 visiting teachers that are currently funded by this project and who are working in 500 schools throughout the country. This measure is justified primarily for the following reasons:

1.- Given the current economic situation of the country, and having identified the need to improve educational standards at all education levels, especially in numeracy and literacy, the Government has been forced to prioritise in its current budget and, hence, reallocate the €2.5 million of the MLPSI.

2.- The MLPSI is currently being implemented in 500 of the total 3,200 primary schools nationwide. However, given the nature of the project, it could never be expanded to the rest of schools.

3.- Due to Curriculum overload, in 2008, the NCCA recommended that modern languages should not be included in the Primary School Curriculum as an additional content subject.

4.- A wide range of modern languages is already on offer at second level in a small number of schools, where students have the opportunity to develop their language skills by learning a foreign language, namely Spanish, Japanese, Russian, Italian, French and German.

It is worth noting that the reaction of schools, teachers and everyone who is somewhat related to the project has been immediate by publication of numerous letters that express shock and discontent at this drastic measure.

Additionally, Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn, declared in recent times the Government's intention to make important changes to the language offerings at second level by reducing the number of languages on offer and placing a major emphasis on the learning of Russian and Chinese, for they are directly correlated to economic prosperity (Flynn, 2011). Also, the Government is considering relaxing the foreign language entry requirement for third-level in order to prioritise science and mathematics at second level (Mac Murchaidh, 2008; Flynn, 2011). At present, as already mentioned, in order to access the National University of Ireland a minimum of a grade C in a third language at Higher Level of the Leaving Certificate Examination is required.

3.3.2. Government agencies and policies for the support and promotion of languages in Ireland

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht funds two organisations, *Foras na Gaeilge* and *Údarás na Gaeltachta* to promote the Irish language and the development of the Gaeltacht areas respectively. The first one of these, *Foras na Gaeilge*, was established in 1998 in place of the State board *Bord na Gaeilge*. This not only operates in the Republic of Ireland, from where it gets 75% of its funding,

but also in Northern Ireland. Its main function is to promote the Irish language, but in doing so *Foras na Gaeilge* has the role of advising both governments on the best plan of action to undertake Irish teaching and education through the medium of Irish, through funding projects and conducting research (Walsh, 2011). The second institution, *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, established in 1980 as a continuation of the *Gaeltarra Éireann*, is focused on the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht by creating industries and assisting companies in the creation of jobs, as well as organising social and cultural activities that enhance the social use of the Irish language. In this regard, a large percentage of the existing companies in the Gaeltacht have been created or supported by the *Údaras*, employing more than 7,000 people working on a part-time or seasonal basis (Walsh, 2010). Nonetheless, there has been intense criticism on the part of external bodies and civil society of the work of *Údarás* over recent decades for being only centred on the industrial development of the Gaeltacht and not placing enough emphasis on promoting the Irish language. In fact, it is argued that, in the 1990s, the creation of new jobs attracted a large number of English speakers who undermined the already weak position of Irish in the Gaeltacht.

In order to tackle these issues, in more recent years, *Údarás* has undertaken a restructuring of its areas of work, as well as the allocation of its budget, to achieve a more sustainable and holistic approach between economic development and language-related initiatives.

Recent government policies have also made a significant contribution to the attempt to stabilise the use of Irish. In 2003, the Official Languages Act provided Irish speakers with the necessary government support to carry out their daily activities and business in Irish (Ó Laoire, 2007), if they so wish, by making it obligatory for certain public institutions and bodies to offer their services in Irish to the general public. As defined by Watson, the aim of the act is "to promote the use of the Irish language for official purposes in the state as well as in communicating with or providing services to the public" (Watson, 2008:73).

In 2006, the government launched the Statement on the Irish Language (*Ráiteas i leith na Gaeilge*) in which it maintained and guaranteed its full support for the preservation of the Irish language and the development of the Gaeltacht areas through all state agencies and areas of government. 13 policy goals were outlined with the purpose; these are related to and bring together the work being done by the previously mentioned government bodies, i.e. Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and state agencies i.e. *Fóras na Gaeilge*, *Údarás na Gaeltachta* and *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*. Accordingly, a working group of international experts in language planning, coordinated by *FIONTAR, DCU*, met, in 2009 to propose measures for action based on the objectives of the Statement on the Irish Language. In addition, other international experts were invited to contribute by sharing their own experiences and examples of best practice. It was the first time that a study of such dimension took place. Furthermore,

this investigation was not only based on international research but also on the recognition that the Irish language, which serves as the unifying essence of Irish society and connection between its past, present and future, requires specific action to foster its maintenance and revival.

> "... the Irish language represents stability and connection for residents and citizens of Ireland, for the descendents of Irish emigrants in all parts of the world and for countless individuals and organisations who admire and appreciate Irish culture. Irish takes its place in the communicative repertoire of the Irish people alongside English. The Irish language links both its speakers and supporters as a sophisticated cosmopolitan and globally oriented nation to a Europe forging closer interaction. Irish makes Ireland unique and remarkable. It provides a bond of social cohesion and social capital identified in recent research as a key advantage to Ireland's economy".

(FIONTAR, DCU, 2009:3)

While praising the previous work completed by the Government in support of the Irish language, the *FIONTAR, DCU* group sought to interconnect all old and new projects and policies in a sustainable long term plan that ameliorated the position of Irish both inside and outside the Gaeltacht. The biggest challenge identified was to "reduce the gap between those who claim ability to speak and write Irish, and those who actually use it" (FIONTAR, DCU, 2009). In this regard, three main issues specific to the case of Irish were recognised that need to be addressed in order to achieve language maintenance: linguistic capacity, creation of opportunities for the use of the target language and fostering of positive attitudes.

Given the intention of this strategy to enhance bilingualism in English and Irish among the Irish population, it was envisaged that the resulting policy could also be used for the integration of other languages: "Irish-English bilingualism can also be a productive platform for the acquisition of additional languages, constitute an investment in the human capital of its citizens, support social cohesion and solidarity among its people and provide conditions for a culturally rich and more harmonious society"(FIONTAR, DCU, 2009:3).

Arising from the propositions made by the *FIONTA R, DCU* expert group, the final draft of the *20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* was launched in 2010. This included the announcement of specific measures to be put into practice and to develop the goals further outlined in the Statement on the Irish language and the draft of the Strategy. Consequently, the Strategy seeks to attain four specific objectives over the next 20 years:

1) To increase the number of Irish daily speakers outside the education system from 83,000 to 250,000.

2) To raise the number of people who have knowledge of Irish from 1.66 million to 2 million.

3) To energise the Gaeltacht by increasing the numbers of daily speakers of Irish by 25%.

4) To foster the use of Irish within public services and the media.

On closer review of the Strategy, it is clear that a differentiation will be made between policies designed for the Gaeltacht and others to be applied to the rest of the island of Ireland: whereas the aim in the Gaeltacht is the maintenance of the language of "a distinctive language region" in the other regions the goal is bilingualism. In this regard, one of the priorities of the Strategy is to give special support to the Gaeltacht to strengthen and promote the Irish language in those communities.

> "While strengthening the position of the language within our education system is a key focus of this Strategy, the transmission of Irish as a living language within the family and between the generations is critically important".
>
> (Government of Ireland, 2010:3)

> "Particular importance is attached to the preservation and promotion of Irish in the Gaeltacht in relation to conserving and protecting the heritage, culture and richness of the language where it remains as a household and community language".
>
> (Government of Ireland, 2010:5)

The implementation of the Strategy has been planned in four different phases: establishment; implementation of long-term measures; expanding and deepening; and consolidation, which will tackle all areas of society: education, the Gaeltacht, media, dictionaries, economic life, etc. In this thesis, only those objectives that relate to education and language policy will be discussed.

In education, a major investment is to be made at all levels to provide students with a broader range of opportunities to learn and use Irish. While supporting the continuation of measures that are already in place at present, such as offering pre-school and primary school education through Irish through *Naionraí* and *Gaelscoileanna* in addition to ensuring Irish as a compulsory subject up to Leaving Certificate level, it is also envisaged that some reforms will be introduced. Specifically, measures relating to the inclusion of a) partial immersion education and the teaching of content subject through Irish in the infant classes and b) CLIL in Irish for the senior years of primary school, have both been specifically planned, (Government of Ireland, 2010).

The Strategy also reinforces the curriculum that has been developed for primary education in schools in the Gaeltacht and Gaelscoileanna because of the special requirements affecting students attending education through Irish. Through the Strategy, the Government continues to prioritise teaching through Irish in the Gaeltacht and proposes to review the immersion education programme and that of the Irish

Summer Colleges. Additionally, it acknowledges the need to develop comprehensive teaching resources for primary education in both English-medium schools and Gaelscoileanna.

All in all, the changes to be implemented are directed at reviewing the provision of education through Irish that operates at present at all levels of education in order to provide a more specialised and competent education through Irish. At pre-school level, new *naíonraí* are planned for areas where there is an Irish-medium primary school with parents and educators encouraged to become literate in Irish. At primary level, teachers are "encouraged to use Irish generally inside and outside the classroom". At secondary level, some changes are to be introduced to the Leaving Certificate Examination: a much stronger emphasis will be given to oral competency in Irish, where it is planned to increase the marks given to the oral assessment to 40% of the total (as explained further on in this section). Nonetheless, there will continue to be three levels in the Junior and Leaving Certificates. At third level, 20% of the places in the Colleges of Education are to be allocated to students who have pursued their education in Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium schools (Government of Ireland, 2010).

As for the preparation of teachers, a National Centre for Irish-medium Teacher Professional Development is to be put in place to work with the Colleges of Education in the training of teachers at all levels of Irish-medium education. A new specialisation in Irish-medium primary teaching for partial or total immersion is to be introduced. Also, teacher training colleges are expected to start offering Bachelor in Education courses through Irish in the near future, although the remainder of courses covering the preparation of teachers is also to be affected by new measures. Teachers will be required to undergo some degree modules through the medium of Irish; although in the case of post-graduate studies, a new Diploma in Irish-language Education for primary education to cater for the specific needs of Irish-medium schools is to be offered. For second level teachers, a new Professional Diploma in Education, offered by NUI Galway, delivered fully through the medium of Irish is to be introduced (Government of Ireland, 2010). Finally, some changes will take place with regard to the current requirement for student teachers to attend a three-week course in the Gaeltacht. In the first place, the Government will no longer fund this course, meaning that the students will have to cover the cost (around €750) themselves; in the second place a "defined programme of language teaching" will be developed (Seanad Éireann, 2012; Government of Ireland, 2010).

Despite all of these considerations, the Strategy makes an important remark on the future of Irish in that it very much depends on a change in attitude towards the language and the willingness to use it as a language of transmission as had been the case in previous policy documents addressing the question of Irish, such as that of 1969.

This Strategy is clearly an important step forward in the restoration of Irish; the inclusion of new and very specific changes in governance, particularly in the area of education, suggested a real commitment on the part of the Coalition Government of 2010 to ensure this 20-year plan is successful. The latest national elections, however, have brought about a change in government; the Fine Gael and Labour parties are now in government. Their government programme gives support to the 20-year Strategy and the delivery of "the achievable goals and targets proposed". It aims to review the teaching of Irish at primary and second level and reform the Curriculum to strenghthen oral and aural skills. In practical terms, the oral test for the Higher Level and the Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate Irish exam are now allocated 240 marks (40% of the total marks), as compared to the previous 150 marks (or 25% of the overall total of marks). As a result of this change, the marks for the aural test have been reduced (from 16.66% to 10% of the overall total of marks) and have been integrated into the written examination paper in both the Higher Level and the Ordinary Level (State Examinations Commission, 2010). Additionally, the current Government has expressed its intention of making Irish an optional rather than obligatory subject in the Leaving Certificate Examination in their election manifesto of 2011, although this has not yet been put into practice.

3.4. Chapter conclusions

The facts and events detailed in this chapter seek to enable the reader to understand comprehensively the developments in the use of the Irish language in society and education from its early history to the present day. It also describes how modern foreign languages that had slowly been gaining a position both in programmes of education and the minds of Irish people have now lost ground. Although Irish has historically been the language of Ireland, English has long held a strong position in Irish society, so much so that it has represented the greatest threat to the survival of Irish for over seven centuries.

In Ireland, Irish has lived in the shadow of English for centuries. Up to the 18th century, Penal Laws, plantations and charter schools were the main measures employed by the English Government to enforce English education upon Irish children. Despite the fact that Protestants owned most of the land, however, the Irish population remained predominantly Catholic and Irish-speaking until the mid 18th century. In fact, it was at this time that the greatest opportunity arose for Irish to recover its position, as the indigenous Irish population had doubled as a consequence of economic growth and Catholic emancipation was starting to take place. In this context, one must wonder what would have happened had the first Irish nationalist movement, The Society of the United Irishmen, achieved its aim of independence from the English Crown in its failed rebellion of 1798, instead of increasing animosity between the English and Irish.

The Great Famine (1845-1851), I have learned, had devastating effects in terms of the loss of a large number of Irish-speakers due to the sheer number of people who either died or emigrated. The number of Irish monoglots decreased dramatically to less than 40,000 and the Irish speaking population was reduced to half, being concentrated mainly in the western regions (as well as Ulster), whereas in the eastern areas the use of the Irish language was virtually non-existent. By 1891, only 1% of the population were monolingual speakers of Irish, 85% monolingual speakers of English and 14% bilingual (English/Irish).

The establishment of the Irish language revival movement at the end of the 19th century represented, however, the first step towards what would become a culture of protection and dissemination of everything related to Irish: folklore, language and literature, with the aim of removing English influence and control. The activities organised by the Gaelic League were very fruitful in that they increased awareness among the population of the symbolism that lay behind the Irish language as well as the number of people able to speak it. By studying the work conducted by the League, it has become obvious that the special emphasis placed on the restoration of Irish through education brought with it significant achievements: Irish was allowed to be taught again in schools after 1900 and bilingual education programmes in which Irish was the language of instruction began in Irish-speaking areas after 1904. Also, the fact that a pass in Irish was a condition *sine qua non* for gaining entry to the institutions of the National University of Ireland since 1913 gave the language the same academic status as other subjects. Over the next few years, Irish had a central role in the Government's plan of action. However, all the work of the language revival movement and the Government of the Free State was not enough to replace English by Irish as the language of regular use among the majority of the population. Consequently, the positioning of Irish as both a central part of Irish politics and a symbol of national identity from the declaration of the Irish Free State in 1922, in conjunction with the establishment of a new set of Government policies directed at converting Ireland to an Irish-speaking country by the 1960s, proved ultimately unsuccessful. In this regard, I agree with authors such as Mac Aodha that the lack of a clear and well co-ordinated approach to protecting and maintaining Irish-speaking communities or *Gaeltacht* within the country has been one of the main causes of this failure.

In the study of areas other than the *Gaeltacht* it became obvious that the policy of imposition of the Irish language in education and in some areas of public administration resulted in the development of negative attitudes in the 1950s and 1960s which, in turn, culminated in a dramatic reduction in the number of schools teaching through the medium of Irish. Moreover, at this time, another important factor that needed to be addressed was the lack of teachers who were fluent Irish speakers and of adequate training for those who were speakers. To tackle these issues, in the 1960s, the Government put all its effort into implementing measures to substitute English for Irish recommended in the White Paper on the

Restoration of the Irish Language by covering all areas, from education to private organisations. The centralisation of teacher training under the governance of the Department of Education was also intended to standarise teaching practice and the preparation of teachers with competence in spoken Irish, although, as seen by the data provided, by then the position of Irish had already been greatly undermined and its presence in Irish society was very limited. The negative reports presented on the 'excessive' presence of Irish in education and the concomitant poor academic results in other subjects clearly created more confusion among stakeholders in education: the majority of schools outside the Gaeltacht stopped using Irish as the language of instruction. It is nonetheless important to highlight that it was at this time that the work of the *Gaelscoileanna* group started, which demonstrates the continued presence of a sector of society desirous of seeing the revival of the Irish language. Gaelscoileanna cannot but be praised for its long-term work in implementing early immersion education in Irish and popularising the concept of bilingual education through a minority language as a sign of high quality education.

Key to my argument is, however, the fact that a language shift to Irish is no longer the objective of Irish Government policy but rather it is to increase the presence of Irish as the language of the home and of communication in a larger number of Irish homes, with the ultimate goal of creating a bilingual society. To me, this represents the acceptance that Irish cannot compete with English and therefore admits an irreversible defeat in the fight for the establishment of Irish as the language of the Irish people; also, it creates an ambiguous situation: the Government seeks to foster bilingualism with two languages of unequal status where English is the most universal language at present and Irish is a minority language at risk of extinction, but does not have a clear line of action and shows a lack of understanding of the sociolinguistic issues surrounding this matter. A further question this raises is whether it is possible to increase the number of daily speakers of Irish without provoking a language shift or a major change in the organisation of the education system. In relation to the latter, a significant part of this chapter has been dedicated to reviewing changes that have occurred in more recent times. The advances made by Irish society in terms of socio-economic development have forced modifications in the Irish education system in order to produce students who are more competitive in the job market. In this regard, while there is a focus on integration with other languages and cultures at second level (i.e. Russian, Japanese), at primary level foreign languages continue to have no place within the official school timetable and, until now, access to them has very much depended on the participation of schools in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative. The latest Government's decision to discontinue the MLPSI project at the end of the school year 2011-2012 put an end to this 14 year-old pilot project and to any hope of including modern languages in primary education in the coming years, not to say to any possibility of adding foreign language learning to a programme of immersion education. The learning of

modern foreign languages at primary level will now be limited to those schools that will include them in their teaching programmes as part of their individual initiative either within school or after school hours.

This decision, which has been influenced by the current economic climate, hence clarifies the positioning of the Government with regard to multilingualism in primary education: its value is not denied but it is not a priority. There is, therefore, a direct correlation between curriculum planning and the perceived economic or lack of economic value of the curricular subjects. English continues to be the language of prestige and the only one necessary to achieve a successful professional career.

Similarly to the case of foreign languages, there continues to be an ongoing debate regarding the teaching of Irish and its place within education and society. In my view, the primary education system, which offers different options depending on whether education takes place inside or outside the Gaeltacht and, in the latter, depending on the preferred language approach, either through immersion education in Irish or otherwise, is inappropriate and does not match the objectives stated in the Government's Strategy for the next twenty years. Despite the fact that Irish is a compulsory content subject across all educational levels, taking 16% of the Curriculum time in primary education (a reduction when compared to 45% in the curriculum in the period 1922-1971) and that the New Primary School Curriculum of 1999 has refocused the learning of English and Irish on a more communicative approach, Irish still has not sufficient presence in English-medium schools. Also, although it is difficult at present to evaluate the Government's plans with regard to the Irish language given its short time in power, it seems that the elimination of Irish as a compulsory subject from the Leaving Certificate Examination and as an entry requirement for third level education in universities and university departments across Ireland will clearly have a direct and negative impact on the status of Irish, its role in education and its future survival. It is therefore my hope that the proposed revision of the primary and second level sector with regard to the teaching of Irish will not just be limited to reviewing the curriculum that are in use at the moment, but that a broader analysis of the real issues with regard to the lack of oral and aural skills is also conducted, specifically the problems that arise from the lack of teacher preparation, appropriate teaching materials and clear and specific long-term objectives.

From a different perspective, analysis of the periodical census of population in Ireland from the first in 1851 up until the most recent in 2006 has enabled the drawing of an accurate picture of the evolution in the use of Irish and the extent to which Irish is present in society today. From this data, the continuous decline in the number of regular speakers of Irish inside and outside the Gaeltacht is obvious. In 2006, the greatest population of Irish speakers continued to be concentrated in the West and South-West. There were 1,656,790 people able to speak Irish (1.6% less than in 1996), of whom only 53,471 people spoke it daily outside the education system and 182,165 weekly or more often. The effects of education,

and more specifically education through Irish, are positive in that there has been a significant increase in the number of capable speakers of school age. This is clearly shown in the 3-5 and 5-9 age groups, which experienced an increase of 3.7% and 13.6%, respectively, in the period 1996-2006. Nonetheless, school leavers generally display very poor levels of language competence, albeit having received *circa* 1,500 hours of tuition in the Irish language, with continuous claims regarding the lack of language competency on the part of the teachers as well as of discouraging methodologies used in class being cited as reasons for this.

In the Gaeltacht, where there is the greatest concentration of native Irish speakers, the language situation has become more complex. Despite the existence of a number of Government agencies, whose work is strictly focused on invigorating language usage within these areas, the overall number of speakers was 5.5% lower in 2006 than in 1996 and only in a very small percentage of areas was Irish used as the regular language of communication outside school and in households by more than 67% of the population (which is considered to be the necessary percentage to enable language maintenance rather than survival, as previously noted). The presence of a greater number of outsiders in the community and of non-native children in school has resulted in the rapid replacement of Irish by English within these communities. In fact, data reveals that, in 2006, only 37.04% (5,179 of 19,161) of school attendees within the Gaeltacht used Irish outside of school hours. This indicates that, in the Gaeltacht, as is the case in the rest of the country, Irish speakers are increasingly becoming less a product of intergenerational transmission within the home, with Irish being relegated to a language of communication within the education system rather than within the community. Also, in relation to the present research questions, the mixed background of the children attending Gaeltacht schools is an indication that we are heading towards a more homogeneous student population all across Ireland, which would support the validity of a proposal of establishing a common universal education system.

Nevertheless, it is laudable to see that the Irish language has inspired the creation of many types of community-based organisations that work together to promote both the Irish language and culture to its full extent in the organisation of numerous events. Additionally, the success of professional media broadcasting in Irish is undoubtedly a sign that the language is still very much alive, even if this is predominately among a small percentage of the population. The Government's new plan of action for the period 2010-2030, the *20-year Strategy for the Irish Language*, which is expected to encourage positive attitudes towards Irish and, consequently, create a culture of bilingualism (English-Irish) within Irish society, should also be regarded as positive and necessary.

Chapter 4

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY IN CATALONIA

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with an account of the languages that are present in Catalan society and part of the education system in Catalonia and of the treatment that they receive within the region, whether native or foreign. Identifying the conditions behind the emergence of the region of Catalonia within Spain and Europe enables the reader to relate the Catalans of today to their ancestors, to understand the language as it is now and the people who speak it. This will also help to understand the underlying culture associated with the region and how this affects current language policy.

An analysis of the evolution of the language from a socio-linguistic point of view is crucial to gain an understanding of the role and status of Catalan at present and of the historical developments that have influenced its evolution throughout the centuries. In this regard, I will focus on explaining the events and measures adopted at government level throughout the second half of the 20th century and, more specifically, in the last ten years.

With regard to languages other than Catalan, this chapter is also concerned with the roles Castilian, as the official language of Spain, and English, as the most preferred foreign language, have acquired in recent times in Catalonia and examines their relationship with Catalan[96].

It is therefore my intention that the extensive analysis of successful Catalan language policy development conducted in this chapter will provide a number of lessons to be learned from the Catalan education system and that can serve as examples of good practice for Ireland.

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[96] All translations of quotations followed by ** have been provided by the researcher, unless otherwise stated.

4.2. Historical background

4.2.1. The arrival of Latin in Catalonia

The Spanish autonomous community of Catalonia is located in the north-east of Spain, where the Catalan language is said to have originated between the 8th and 10th centuries, in the Pyrenees region, in the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula and the south of today's France (Ferrando & Nicolás, 2005). The history of Catalonia and of its language regions has been largely determined by the Romanisation period, which took place between 218 BC and the end of the second century AD. During this time, there was a progressive language shift, from the various Indo-European languages that were spoken before the arrival of the Romans, to Vulgar Latin[97] (Lleal, 2003), the language of the Roman Empire.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the arrival of the Visigoth Monarchy in the 5th century and its subsequent presence in the Peninsula meant an evolution of the Latin language during the following three centuries, given its contact with the language of other cultures. This resulted in the development of the Romance languages, or variations of Vulgar Latin which grew independently in each territory in the form of vernacular languages (Vidal, 2007). With the arrival of the Arabs in the Peninsula in the year 711, and the subsequent expulsion of the last Visigoth king, the Peninsula was divided in two: the Al-Ándalus and the Christian territories in the North. In the Al-Ándalus, Mozarabic was spoken together with Berber and Arabic, while in the North the Romance languages continued to evolve. The domination of the Muslims in the Catalan territories however did not last very long so that it had very little influence on today's Catalan language, with only a few Arabic words being incorporated into the local language (Ferrando & Nicolás, 2005; Vidal, 2007).

4.2.2. Origin of Catalan and its relationship with Occitan

When considering the origin and evolution of Catalan, it is imperative to study the Occitan language[98], which is still spoken by a minority in the south of France, in the Aran Valley in Spain, the Occitan Valleys of Italy and also in Monaco. There is no doubt that "pre-Catalan" began as a development of Occitan circa two centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century. In fact, Catalan was considered to be a dialect of Occitan for many centuries; Catalan and Occitan were fundamentally the same language in the period covering the arrival of the Visigoths, then subsequently the Muslims and,

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[97] Name given to the Latin spoken by ordinary citizens in their daily life.
[98] Also known as Lenga d'òc or Provençal.

finally, Charlemagne (768-814) in the Peninsula. After the 10th century, however, Catalan had its own writing, differentiated from Occitan.

The closure of the border between France and Spain, following the defeat of Peter the Catholic by the French nobility at the Battle of Muret in 1213 (Figueres, 2003; Ferrando and Nicolás, 2005; Vidal, 2007), separated the two languages, determining their evolution in different directions from that point (Lleal, 2003; Vidal, 2007). This was when the first references were made to Catalan as a language in its own right (Vidal, 2007). In effect, Catalan was the first language in Europe to avail of its own feudal and maritime codes as well as being the first Romance language to be used in science and philosophy (May, 2008).

Nowadays, Occitan, or Aranès[99], as the dialect spoken in the Vall d'Aran is called, has official status in the valley since the early 1980s and is also an official language in Catalonia, as established by the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 2006 (Argenter, 2008). The Generalitat de Catalonia and the Catalan laws protect this language and ensure everything possible is done to promote its use. Consequently, Aranès is the language used in administration and at all levels of education. According to figures from 2001, 7,938 people lived in the Vall d'Aran, of which 89% could understand Occitan and 62% could speak it (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

4.2.3. Actions to promote the use of Catalan (12th - 15th centuries)

After the death of Peter the Catholic at the Battle of Muret, James the First, also known as The Conqueror, was proclaimed as the new monarch. Over the next years, the kingdoms of Catalonia and Aragon[100], together with the Catalan language, expanded to the south and west, with the conquest of Mallorca in the year 1229 and Muslim Valencia in 1238, Sicily in 1282 and Sardinia [101]in 1323 (Arenas, 1990; May, 2008). In fact, the earliest two known Catalan written texts are: a version of the *Forum iudiciorum*, a code of Visigoth laws translated into Catalan and *Les Homilies d'Organyà,* a collection of

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[99] The territory of the Vall d'Aran, a valley in the Pyrenees and today a county in the north-west of Catalonia, was added to the Autonomous Community in 1411.

[100] The kingdom of Catalonia and Aragon was born in the 12th century of the marriage of the Count of Barcelona and the daughter of the King of Aragon (Hall, 2001).

[101] Today, Alguerès, understood as being a variety of Catalan, influenced by Logudorese, Sassarese, Corsican, Genoese, Sicilian and Neapolitan, is still spoken in the city of Alguer (Sardinia). Recent studies indicate that, although about 8,000 are first-language speakers of Alguerès, a progressive language shift is taking place in the enclave. Despite the fact that Italian laws protect lesser-spoken languages, no real action is taken at government level. It is thanks to the initiative of local groups that some projects have been put in place to teach Alguerès to members of the community. Other initiatives have been promoted by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Argenter, 2008).

comments on a sermon in Latin from the twelfth century, currently preserved in the National Library of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

Ramon Llull (1232-1316) was the first European author who produced literary, theological, philosophical and scientific works in the vernacular, which, until that time, were only written in Latin (Lleal, 2003). He also brought Catalan to a much higher level of sophistication in terms of the use of grammar and syntax, publishing 256 texts in his life, most of them written in the language (Collins, 2004). Up to the 15th century, however, other relevant writers in Catalan emerged, thereby establishing its status as a language of prestige: Francesc Eiximenis, Anselm Turmeda, Bernat Metge, and Arnau de Vilanova. Between them all literary styles were developed to the highest level, from Troubadour poetry to books of chivalry. In Valencia, we can find Ausiàs Marc and Joanot Martorell, writer of *Tirant lo Blanch*, which, published in 1490, is regarded as the first novel of western literature (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001; Lleal, 2003; Hall, 2001).

All in all, the 13th and 14th centuries served to establish the basis of the Catalan we know today and promote its culture and literature internationally. This was possible because of a well established feudal nobility and a very successful commercial middle class that extended its power and influence across the Mediterranean, which also reinforced the status of the Catalan language (Pueyo, 2007).

4.2.4. First signs of political abandonment of Catalan

The expansion of Catalano-Aragonese power continued until the 15th century, under the leadership of the *Trastámara* dynasty[102]. The acquisition of Naples (1442) and parts of Greece (May, 2008) came during the reign of Alfonse the Magnanimous (1416-1458), second of the kings of this dynasty of Spanish origin (Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000). Although the *Trastámaras* used the Castilian language in their private lives, they respected Catalan as the official language of Catalonia, Valencia, Mallorca and Sardinia and used it at official events. Nonetheless, lack of desire on the part of the monarchy to cultivate the language and their increasing failure to use it led to the gradual abandonment of Catalan in national and international relations (Ferrando and Nicolas, 2000).

In 1469 the union between Isabel of Aragon and Fernando de Castile, the Catholic Kings, led to an expansion of Castile and the unification of the two big monarchies of the Peninsula, the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon (1479), resulting in the introduction of a centralised regime

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[102] The House of *Trastámara* was a dynasty of kings in the Iberian Peninsula that governed in Castile from 1369 to 1504, in Aragón and Sicily from 1412 to 1516, in Navarre from 1425 to 1479, and in Naples from 1442 to 1501.

(Arenas, 1990; Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000). Although much emphasis was put on creating a single system of administration, all customs from each region were maintained and respected as much as possible (Moreno, 2005; May, 2008), including the political institutions of each monarchy (Arenas, 1990). The appearance of the first Castilian grammar textbook in 1492, the Castilian Language Grammar[103], written by Antonio de Nebrija, is a clear example of the extent to which Castilian enjoyed high prestige. To this author is also attributed the first Latin-Spanish dictionary, completed around 1495 (Moreno, 2005). The use of Castilian became more widespread, as there was a reward in knowing and using the language of the King: namely, the possibility of both social and political promotion.

4.2.5. The *Decadència* or the decline of Catalan

The 16th century marked the beginning of a very lean period in terms of literature creation in Catalan that would last three centuries, known as the *Decadència*. Whereas the kingdom of Castile was becoming politically stronger after the coronation of Charles I of Castile and Aragon, and Valencia, who would later become Charles V of Germany, the crown of Catalonia and Aragon suffered a gradual loss of power and influence, first in the Principality of Catalonia and afterwards in the Kingdom of Valencia. Due to the centralisation of power in Castile, Castilian had become the preferred language of use for writers and intellectuals. The prestige of Castilian was international; this was its Golden Age. Even though the emergence of the Humanism movement in Europe had brought an interest in the restoration of the classics, and with it, of Latin (Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000), Spanish was seen as a more practical language. As a result, the normalisation of Castilian resulted in the appearance of various grammar books that would facilitate the work of writers (Moreno, 2005). Catalan, in contrast, fell into abeyance. It was considered to be out of favour.

In terms of literary production, some authors that retained popularity from the period before the start of the *Decadència*, known as the Golden Age of the Catalan Arts, are Ausiàs March, Joanot Martorell, Jaume Roig, Joan Roís de Corella and Isabel de Villena (Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000). In the period of the *Decadència* a small number of authors gained notoriety: Josep Vicenç Garcia and Francesc Fontanella in Catalonia, as well as Joan Ramis in Menorca, and Lluís Galiana in València (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

After the complete disappearance of the kingdom of Catalonia and Aragon there was no authority to continue the task of standardisation of Catalan, or to promote its literature. Despite the lack of literary production, however, Catalan continued to be the language of the people, used also in minor literature

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[103] *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana.*

and the administration (Lleal, 2003). Interestingly, even the Catholic Church ordained that religious services should be undertaken in Catalan, conscious of its popularity (Lleal, 2003; Moreno, 2005; Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000).

The rise of the printing press[104] in Europe was mirrored in Catalonia. In fact, Catalonia had printing presses before London. The first copy of the Bible was completed by Gutenberg in 1455 and the first Catalan book to be printed was as early as 1474 in Valencia. It was a collection of texts in praise of the Virgin Mary known as *Obres e trobes en lahors de la verge Maria*. Four years later the first copy of the Bible was printed in Catalan (Hall, 2001).

In the following years, while in European countries the use of the printing press was becoming commonplace (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001), Catalan literary texts were declining in number; the opposite, meanwhile, was happening with Castilian, which was acquiring greater recognition. Studies conducted by the historian Ricardo García Cárcel are indicative of this phenomenon: the production of books in Catalan was slightly lower than the production of books in Spanish after the 1560s: 27% compared to 32%. In the decade 1590 – 1600, however, the difference is more evident: 8% of books edited in Catalan compared with 76% in Castilian[105] (Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000).

In the following years, *La Guerra dels Segadors* (1640-1659) or rebellion of Catalonia against Philip IV in search of its independence, and its subsequent defeat, resulted in the loss of all northern territories to the French crown and of all political rights (May, 2008).

Despite this difficult period, the Catalan language remained alive and was never abandoned completely (Moreno, 2005). It was the language of instruction in schools until the 18th century, when the Bourbon dynasty arrived, with the defeat of Almansa (1707): Philip V, the first of the Bourbons to be in power, initiated a policy of centralisation, as indicated in the publication of the Decree of Nova Planta in 1715, which ordained that all Catalan institutions would be abolished, including the University of Barcelona[106]. In addition, for the first time in its history, Catalan, would no longer be the official language of Catalonia (Arenas, 1990; Figueres, 2003). From that moment on, Catalan was progressively relegated to a very low status, only used as a language for oral communication in the home and as the

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[104] The printing press was first developed in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440.

[105] See Appendix 4.1. for a breakdown of books published in Catalan, Spanish and Latin, in Valencia, in the period 1474-1564 (Ferrando and Nicolás, 2000).

[106] The closure of institutions in Catalonia in 1715 led to a serious lack of cultural activity and scientific research. Whereas institutions such as the Royal Library in Madrid and the Science Academy in France and England were being created, Catalonia did not have its own Faculty of Medicine, for example, until 1843 (Figueres, 2003).

language of the Church (May, 2008). Castilian, on the other hand, served as the symbol of a clear intention of the State to castilianise all areas of society. Aristocrats and writers changed their language to Castilian, now the official language of the Royal Court (Pueyo, 2007). This was, however, a very slow process that mainly affected the upper classes living in urban areas, whereas most of the popular classes were illiterate and only able to speak their home language, Catalan (Pueyo, 2007).

4.2.6. The *Renaixença* or the Catalan Renaissance

The Catalan *Decadència* period came to an end in the 19th century. The Catalan *Renaixença*[107] or Renaissance, characterised as a period of restoration of Catalan national identity and Catalan traditional values, was accompanied by the beginning of a political movement, *Catalanism*, which focused on the recovery of freedom of expression in both politics and culture (Arenas, 1990). Typified by the economic ascension of Catalonia, due to the arrival of industrialisation in the region, this period contributed to the rise of a high-status social class that adopted Catalan as its language to differentiate itself from the rest of the Catalan population. The Catalan bourgeoisie, the most educated and wealthy citizens, engaged in the cultural restoration and were also associated with a literary renaissance.

> "During the 19th century Catalan became the medium of a literary revival which raised its status from the language of dusty antiquity and the vernacular of the peasant to the accepted and respected language of the middle and upper classes and officialdom."
>
> (Collins, 2004:122)

The first studies of the language were undertaken and the first dictionaries were published, together with the first newspapers and magazines in Catalan (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008). Well known writers of this period are Jacint Verdaguer, Narcís Oller, Àngel Guimerà and Bonaventura Carles Aribau, whose book *La pàtria* in 1833 is considered to mark the beginning of the *Renaixença*. Many contemporary writers of this time sought to establish a unified model of language. Whereas one group was inclined to base it on medieval Catalan, that is, the language of the troubadours, another group was more sympathetic to the Catalan used after the 18th century. Further, modernisation of the orthography would allow its use in new domains. Finally, the magazine *Avens* appeared in 1881, involving the collaboration of the most prestigious Catalan writers. The major purpose of its contributors was to offer a rich language with a clear set of orthographic rules that was in accordance with the ideas of the modernism present in Europe (Lleal, 2003).

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[107] Figueres (2003) defines the term *Renaixença* as "the process of recovery of the Catalan language and literature, mainly focusing on the development of all literary styles and the increase in edition and social diffusion".

4.2.7. Catalan at the start of the 20th century

The following century started with the promulgation of Catalan as "the language of culture" (Vallverdú, 1979). This resulted from the first steps taken in the 19th century to position the Catalan movement as a political force to represent the interests of Catalonia.

The victory of Prat de la Riba and of his political party, la Lliga Regionalista, in 1901, marked the beginning of a period of high level of activity in the process of achieving the linguistic normalisation of Catalan. The same year, Father Antoni Maria Alcover invited all those involved in Catalan to meet in Manacor (Mallorca) to assist in the production of a dictionary. This was the first time that intellectuals of all hues met to discuss the different varieties of Catalan. The result of this meeting was the Catalan-Valencian-Balearic Dictionary[108] (Lleal, 2003), the first part of which was published in 1926.

After that first meeting of 1901 the First International Meeting of the Catalan Language** was organised in 1906, encouraged again by Father Alcover and the same Prat de la Riba. Although study of the language was the declared reason for the meeting, this congress was seen as a public proclamation of national identity and the culmination of the Catalan Renaissance period (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1978; Ferrando, 2008). Later, in 1907, the Institute of Catalan Studies**[109] was created with the intention of giving support to the institutionalisation of the Catalan language. Pompeu Fabra, a member of the organisation, published the Orthographic Standard**[110] in 1913, the Catalan Grammar[111] in 1918 and the General Dictionary of the Catalan language**[112] in 1932 (Vallverdú, 1979; Moreno, 2005). In Valencia, however, the Valencian Language Academy** [113] was only founded in 1998, with the aim of establishing a common standard for all the Valencian territories, as well as satisfying those who regard Catalan and Valencian as two distinct languages (Moreno, 2005).

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[108] *Diccionari Català-Valencià- Balear.*
[109] *Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC).*
[110] *Normativa Ortogràfica (1913).*
[111] *Gramàtica Catalana (1918).*
[112] *Diccionari General de la Llengua Catalana (1932).*
[113] *Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua.*

4.2.8. The effect of the Spanish Dictatorship on Catalonia

In 1931, the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, following a seven year-period under the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, led to the signing of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy**[114] in 1932 and, consequently, the restoration of the Generalitat and the official status of Catalan in Catalonia (signed in the also newly created Official Bulletin of the Generalitat**[115]) (Vallverdú, 1979; Arenas, 1990; Vilajoana and Pons, 2001; Roller, 2002; May, 2008), which declared official the use of Catalan as language of instruction in pre-school and primary school education. The Basque Country and Galicia signed their Statutes of Autonomy at the same time (Etxebarria, 2002).

Despite Catalan being recognised by the government of the Spanish Republic as official within Catalonia, Castilian was the language of the State and its presence was obligatory under the Spanish Constitution, meaning that any official publication as well as any notification made in Catalonia had to be produced in both languages. Citizens also had the right to choose which language they wanted to use in correspondence with any official body. This was specified in The Statute of Nuria**[116](approved by referendum on the 2nd August 1931) which states the following:

> "The Catalan language will be the official language in Catalonia, but in relations with the Government of the Republic the Castilian language will be official. The Internal Statute of Catalonia** will guarantee the rights of the citizens whose mother tongue is Castilian to use it before the courts of justice and before the organs of administration. In this respect, citizens whose mother tongue is Catalan will have the right to use it in their relations with the official organisations of the Republic in Catalonia."

(Article 5, *Estatut de Núria*, cited in Vallverdú, 1979:86)

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), however, ended in a dictatorship that lasted until 1975 with the death of General Franco, who had full control of Spain and with it Catalonia. The use of Catalan and any other regional languages was completely prohibited at all levels during his dictatorship, being perceived as a threat to the unification of the country, or "The Empire", as it was called by Franco, with the result that many people, intellectuals, politicians and artists, among others, were executed. Only the language of "The Empire" was permitted and supported, that is, Castilian.

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[114] *Estatuto de Autonomía (1932).*
[115] *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat*
[116] The Statute of Nuria or *Estatut de Núria* is the document in which the official status of Catalan was signed into law during the II Spanish Republic.

"The culture and language were stamped on and the promotion of nationalism, which in the eyes of the regime was synonymous with separatism, was rewarded with imprisonment and sometimes execution."

<div align="right">(Black, 2010:16)</div>

The publication of any magazine, newspaper, article, or book, as well as the transmission of telegrams and telephone conversations in any regional language was prohibited. Existing books published in Catalan were confiscated and burned (Figueres, 2003). Nonetheless, as noted by Hall (2001:67), this situation was not always consistent throughout the duration of the dictatorship:

"Gradually, to improve its image, the regime made a few exceptions though the stringent censorship was never lifted. Initially only books with archaic spelling were allowed; for twenty years no new Catalan translations of foreign works were authorized; and until the end of the dictatorship only topics of little appeal to the general public were permitted."

The Castilian language was the only language permitted in cinemas and theatres throughout the country. Cinemas, for example, were used as a propagandistic tool of the government, especially since the introduction in 1942 of a short news section that was played before each movie. Known as NO-DO (Noticiarios y Documentales), it "glorified the regime's progress" (Black, 2010). Equally, any kind of sign, e.g. road signs, shops names, had to be in Castilian (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

Catalan was once more in an endangered position. It was withdrawn from all spheres of society: education, mass media, official institutions, etc. The only publications in Catalan were from two sources: either writers in exile or clandestinely within the region. Needless to say, Castilian linguistic interference in Catalan was significant (Lleal, 2003; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008).

Despite the fact that children learned to read and write in Castilian in school, Catalan remained the language of the home for many families and of transmission within the family in all the territories where it had been spoken before the war. Catalonia was in a clear situation of diglossia[117] because of the political situation: Catalan, having been the dominant language until Franco's arrival in power, was

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[117] The term "diglossia" was first defined by Ferguson in 1959. In his definition Ferguson understood diglossia as the social phenomenon in which two varieties of the same language acquire different status within the society. One, the High variety or language A is used in formal conversations, in administration and as a language of instruction. The second one, the Low variety or language B is the language of communication of the community and the language of transmission between generations. The term was more extensively researched by Fishman in 1967, who studied the interaction between diglossia and bilingualism, differenciating four situations: diglossia and bilingualism, diglossia without bilingualism, bilingualism without diglossia and neither diglossia nor bilingualism (see García et al., 2006).

partially replaced by Castilian, which became the dominant language, leaving Catalan in second place. Each language acquired a different role at societal level.

> "The term diglossia (of a group or an entire society) designates exclusively situations in which there is a language substitution motivated by socio-cultural prestige, that is, when a language or variety A is reserved for literature, education, the culture called "superior", religion and any other formal language function, and a language or variety B is used within the family in daily life, by the popular culture and in general in the colloquial language (non-formal linguistic function)."

> (Vallverdú, 1979:27)

Nonetheless, the suggestion by May (2008:243) that in the years of Franco's dictatorship "the migrants who spoke Castilian Spanish were predominantly working class, while Catalan remained a language of prestige, closely associated with the economically prosperous middle class" and that "the ongoing association of Catalan with economic dominance, even during the years of its political marginalisation, is certainly a key factor in its survival" does not seem to be an accurate account of the situation. In fact, the highest proportion of Catalan speakers during Franco's regime did not come from the wealthy classes but from the lower socio-economic groups who lived outside the big cities and knew only Catalan. These adult speakers, with little or no literacy skills, lived in towns and villages in the countryside of the autonomous communities of Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands, so remote that they were untouched by language repression, continued to speak their language to their children and helped enormously in its maintenance. Therefore, although the new generations were literate in Spanish, their home language was Catalan. These are today's grandparents, who continue to speak the language to their grandchildren. Furthermore, May states that "the number of Catalan speakers in Catalonia fell from 90 per cent in 1939 to 60 per cent in 1975" (2008:243). Certainly, the "economically prosperous middle class" did not constitute 60 per cent of the population. In fact, as Black reminds us in the following extract regional languages were still widely used among the population during Franco's regime:

> "The Regime attempted to eliminate all traces of cultural identity in these regions (Basque Country and Catalonia). The language was prohibited, flags and emblems were banned, public signs, street-names and monuments were destroyed or Castilianised. In Catalonia, notices were erected exhorting the populace to "Speak Spanish" Speak the Language of the Empire!"

> (Black, 2010:16)

4.2.9. The end of the Franco period and the arrival of Democracy

The death of General Franco in 1975 brought about what is known as The Spanish Transition[118], a period of great instability at political level and confusion for the Spanish people. During this time, the democratic political forces, led by the Bourbon king Juan Carlos I[119] initiated a series of actions to reconcile the country and communicate the idea that national affairs were under control, thereby, avoiding any possibility of revolt. This was seen as crucial to avoid placing the country in a difficult situation that possibly could have led to another civil war.

In Catalonia, The Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association[120], the first movement of Catalan teachers, emerged in 1966, in Franco's last years (when it became possible to opt for education in Catalan for the first time). These teachers returned to the pedagogical principles of what was known as the Catalan School,[121] which existed prior to the Franco regime. Subsequently, the first democratic elections, held in 1977 prompted a number of schools (part of the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association**) to set up the School Association for Catalan Public Schools**[122], to support the creation of public schools where Catalan was the medium of instruction; and also, the approval of the 1978 Spanish Constitution[123], which recognises the multilingual situation of Spain and divides the country into the seventeen autonomous communities as we know them today[124] (Mercator, 2000; Etxebarria, 2002).

In 1979 Catalonia was given its second Statute of Autonomy[125] and, with it, the status of Catalan as an official language within the region by stating that Catalan is the language of Catalonia, its 'own language' (Roller, 2002). This action marked the beginning of a series of new policies leading towards the normalisation of the language. As will further be analysed in the next sections, the use of the Catalan language among the population in Catalonia has improved significantly since then.

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[118] *La Transición Española.*
[119] Juan Carlos I, current Kind of Spain, was the son of Juan de Borbón, who lived in exile in Portugal during the 2nd Republic and Franco's dictatorship and never ruled as the King of Spain. However, Franco wanted Juan Carlos to become King of Spain after his death, which was why he participated in his education and why Juan Carlos was sent from a very early age to live and receive his training in Madrid.
[120] *Associació de mestres Rosa Sensat.*
[121] *L'Escola Catalana.*
[122] *Col.lectiu d'Escoles per a l'Escola Pública Catalana.*
[123] *Constitución Española* (1978).
[124] See Ferrer 2000 for a more detailed description of the 1978 Spanish Constitution.
[125] *Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya* (1979).

4.3. Catalan in the 21st century

Catalonia is today a bilingual society, where Castilian and Catalan coexist without difficulty, and where preference for one language or another very much depends on the linguistic origin of each person or, in other words, what one's L1 is. Catalan is the official language of the region, as well as Castilian, the language of the Spanish nation.

> "Catalan is the official language of Catalonia. Castilian is also official, for it is the official language of Spain. Everyone has the right to use both official languages and the citizens of Catalonia have the right and duty to know them both. The public powers in Catalonia must establish the necessary measures to facilitate the use of these rights and the fulfilment of this duty. According to what is prescribed in Article 32, there cannot be discrimination for the use of either of the two languages".

> (Article 6, Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia**[126], 2006)

Although Castilian has a strong presence in all segments of society, since the introduction of the 1983 Catalan Language Planning Act**[127] and of subsequent laws, i.e. the 1998 Language Policy Law**[128], the Statute of Autonomy of 2006 and the 2010 Education Law of Catalonia[129], Catalonia has been provided with all the necessary legislation to protect Catalan and allow its full normalisation. The use and role of the Occitan/Aranès and Castilian languages is also carefully considered within Catalan legislation. In education, Catalan is the language of instruction at all levels. Pre-school traditionally represents a period of immersion in Catalan for those children coming from Castilian-speaking families. For children whose mother tongue is already Catalan, it simply means enrolment in the Catalan School model[130].

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[126] Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya (2006).
[127] Llei de Normalització Lingüística (1983).
[128] Llei de Política Lingüística (1998).
[129] Llei d'Educació de Catalunya (2010).
[130] The Catalan School model or *Escola Catalana* is the term used to define the teaching model in Catalonia introduced at the start of the 20th century based on the latest pedagogical innovations introduced not only in Spain but also at international level. The methodologies introduced by theorists such as Decroly, Freinet and Saussure were adopted by the Catalan pedagogues (i.e. Alexandre Galí, Artur Martorell, Rosa Sensat) to develop a set of teaching principles that had the freedom of the child as the main focus. As highlighted by Arenas (1994:15) cited in Johnstone (2002): "the *escola catalana* is a general, obligatory education model for all pre-university education in Catalonia. It is defined as the educational community which, while exercising its prerogatives as a school, and respecting the language rights of all the pupils, integrates the pupils by making Catalan and Catalan culture the language and culture of their education. It is therefore a process of integration, both socially and linguistically."

The area in which the Catalan language is spoken is 68,000 km2, in which there are 13,529,127 residents within four countries: Andorra, Spain, France and Italy, and seven regions: Valencia, Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the Franja de Ponent (in Aragon) (all of them in Spain); Northern Catalonia, in the Languedoc-Roussillon region, in France, and l'Alguer, in Sardinia (Vilajoana and Pons, 2001; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001) (Appendix 4.2). As well as this, data obtained in 2003[131] indicates that there are approximately 9,118,882 people over the age of 15 able to speak Catalan, and 11,011,168 who are able to understand it, as well as around 200,000 people spread over different Catalan communities around the world that maintain Catalan as the language spoken at home (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004; Pueyo, 2007; Idescat, 2013)[132].

Catalonia is not the only autonomous community in Spain with more than one official language, as there are five more: the Balearic Islands (Catalan), Valencia (Catalan), Galicia (Galician), the Basque Country (Basque or Euskera) and Navarre (Basque/ Euskera)[133]. There are, however, two more regions where, even though they do not have official recognition, other languages aside from Castilian are spoken: these are Aragon, where Aragonese and Catalan are spoken; and Asturias, where Balbe is spoken. Therefore, 41% of the total Spanish population lives in bilingual regions (Mercator, 2000; Vilajoana and Pons, 2001; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001; Hall, 2001)[134].

In terms of the migrant population, around 7% of the Spanish population are of foreign origin. As would be expected, large urban areas always have a higher concentration of migrants: Madrid, for example, has 20.05% of the total, whereas Valencia has 15.53% and Andalusia 10.7% (Hernández and Villalba, 2008)[135]. In Catalonia, the total population registered in the year 2012 was 7,570,908 inhabitants, of whom 1,186,779 are foreign nationals (15.68%) (Idescat, 2012).

Although Catalan is said to be a regional minority language because it is spoken in an area that belongs to a state where the majority language is different, and the population that speaks it is bilingual, its situation is very different to the other languages defined as regional or minority, especially within Europe (Pueyo, 2007). Catalan is the only one of the languages designated as "minority languages" in

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[131] See *Estadística d'usos lingüístics a Catalunya 2003*, for a full report, accessible in:
http://www.idescat.cat/cat/idescat/publicacions/cataleg/pdfdocs/eulc2003.pdf
[132] See Appendix 4.3. for the distribution of the territory in Catalonia and of the Catalan-speaking population.
[133] Appendix 4.4. is a map of the co-official languages in Spain.
[134]Appendix 4.5. is indicative of the distribution of the population in autonomous communities in Spain with more than one official language.
[135] See Hernández, M.T & Villalba, F. (2008) in Immigrants in Spain: sociolinguistic issues, for a more detailed analysis of data related to the presence of foreign nationals in Spain.

the European Union that is spoken by over 7,000,000 people (*Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, 2004). If it were to be declared an official language in the European Union it would be the seventh language in terms of the number of speakers (*Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, 2004). Furthermore, according to Ethnologue, Catalan ranks 88th of the most spoken languages in the world (Ethnologue).

Catalan has six geographical varieties, depending on the area where it is spoken within the borders of the so-called *Països Catalans* or Catalan countries: Nord-occidental, Valencian, Central, Northern or Rousillon and Balearic, as well as the variation spoken in the Alguer region in Sardinia (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1978; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001)[136]. In some areas, Catalan has a different name depending on the variety that is spoken. In the Balearic Islands, for instance, each variety is called after the name of the place where it is spoken. In Menorca: *menorquí*; in Mallorca: *mallorquí*; in Eivissa: *eivissenc*; in Formentera: *formenter*. In Valencia, the popular appellation is *valencià* (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

As highlighted by Hall (2001:40): "It is in effect the same language with variations no wider than those that separate the Spanish spoken in Spain from that of Latin America, British from American English, or Flemish from Dutch". Catalan is therefore the generic name of the language that is spoken in all the different territories mentioned above, as stated by the Institute of Catalan Studies in its Declaration on the denomination of the Catalan language**[137] of 28th February 2006.

Catalan speakers have never abandoned their language. It was the official language of an independent state in medieval times and it is now transmitted between generations as a matter of course. Catalan is also a very modern language that has had a written literature since the 12th century and has currently more than 1,200 active writers. It is, thus, a completely codified and normalised language (Generalitat de Catalunya 2007; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2001).

The presence of Catalan in the mass media is also very significant. In Catalonia, Catalan is the language used in two main television channels: *Televisió de Catalunya* and *Canal 33*, which offer a wide selection of programmes for all audiences in Catalan (either originally Catalan or dubbed into Catalan), and radio channels *(Catalunya Ràdio, COM Ràdio, RAC 105, RAC 1, Flaix FM)*. For example, *Super 3* is a very popular programme for children which is broadcast for about three hours on a daily basis. Also, viewers can find a vast selection of channels online, from sports channels (*Esport 3*) to the international Catalan channel (*TVCAT*). Additionally, the region also has newspapers (i.e. *El Punt*, *La Vanguardia*,

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[136] See Appendix 4.6. for a map of the geographical varieties of Catalan.
[137] *Declaració sobre la denominació de la llengua catalana*. Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, 28 de febrer de 2006.

Diari de Barcelona, El Periódico de Catalunya), magazines and publications in all fields. The publication of books continues to grow in number, and it is interesting to note that, according to a report from UNESCO, the Catalan language is the tenth most translated language in the world (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2010; Institut Ramon Llull).

Knowledge of Catalan[138] according to figures obtained by the Institute of Statistics of Catalonia[139] in the year 2007 was, as follows: there was a total of 7,049,900 inhabitants in Catalonia over the age of 2, of whom 93.7% could understand Catalan, 75.61% could speak it, 72.95% could write it and 6.23% did not understand it[140]. The general situation of the Catalan language in the remaining territories where it is spoken was quite variable depending on whether we look at the percentage of people able to understand it or to speak it, as indicated in the publication of 2007 of the Association of Sociolinguistics of the Catalan Language**[141]: *Sociolinguistic Situation in the Catalan Speaking Territories at the Start of the 21st century***[142][143].

The strength of the Catalan language can also be assessed by looking at 1) the percentage of people who regard it as their L1; 2) the percentage of population that use it as the language of the home (intergenerational linguistic transmission); 3) the number of people who, despite not having Catalan as their L1, have acquired it as regular language of use throughout time.

Regarding the first, in 2007, 32.2% of the population over the age of two living in Catalonia had Catalan as their first language, 50.2% had Castilian/Spanish and 7.4% had both, whereas 9.3% had a foreign language[144]. In relation to the second point, in the overall Catalan speaking territories, 46.9% of the population, this is, 5,788,935 people, had Catalan as the language of the home, or used it at the

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[138] The two most recent studies on the knowledge and usage of Catalan were published in 2007 and 2008. The main difference between them is that, the first one: *Enquesta demogràfica de Catalunya* (Demographic census of Catalonia), is based on the population aged 2 years and over and is more limited in terms of data obtained than the second one: *Enquesta d'usos lingüístics de la població* (Survey study on language usage among the population), which is based on the population living in Catalonia aged 15 years and over, and has specific data on attitudes towards Catalan and specific knowledge of foreign languages. Given that this research is focused on language education from an early age, we will be using the data from 2007 for all discussion on language knowledge as much as possible. However, we will be using the 2008 data where no data is available for 2007.

[139] *Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat)*.

[140] See Appendix 4.7. for a breakdown of the percentage of speakers of Catalan in each area of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

[141] *Associació de sociolingüistes de llengua catalana*. Henceforth *ASOLC*.

[142] *La situació sociolingüística als territoris de parla catalana a l'inici del segle XXI*.

[143] See Appendix 4.8. on the sociolinguistic situation in Catalan speaking territories (2007).

[144] See Appendix 4.9. for a summary of the population living in Catalonia 2 years and over, classified by their L1.

same rate as Castilian. In Catalonia alone, 49.6% of people born in Catalonia speak Catalan in the home, 4.7% more Catalan than Spanish, 10.2% both, 5.9% more Spanish than Catalan and 29% only Spanish (Idescat, 2008)[145].

Intergenerational linguistic transmission is without question a very important indicator of the state of a language. In five of the seven Catalan speaking territories (Andorra, Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Valencia and La Franja) the percentage of people who speak Catalan to their children is higher than those who speak it with their parents. In Catalonia, it has been found that intergenerational linguistic transmission keeps increasing, especially among children of migrants who have arrived in Catalonia from other parts of Spain in the third quarter of the last century. By looking at three generations, grandparents, parents and children, it was found that around 50% of parents speak Catalan to their children as preferred language and 60% speak either only Catalan or a mix of both.

Finally, with regard to the third point, data from 2008 indicates that 4% of the Catalan population who had as L1 a language other than Catalan have now switched to Catalan as their regular language of use; also, 9.07% of the population who had Spanish as their L1 admit it is not their regular language of use, a fact that can be explained by a) the increase in the use of Catalan; b) the fact that 8.11% of the population now use both Catalan and Spanish as regular languages of use, even though only 3.84% of people had both as mother tongues initially[146].

These results show a high level of vitality of the language and lead us to think that the percentage of native speakers of Catalan continues to increase in Catalan territories, which is very positive if we take into account Fishman's declaration "without intergenerational mother tongue transmission, no language maintenance is possible. That which is not transmitted cannot be maintained" (Fishman, 1991:113, cited in García et al. 2006). Unfortunately, in the territories of the North of Catalonia and the Alguer the percentage of Catalan speakers has diminished in recent years, a fact that leads us to think that language shift from Catalan in these territories will be irreversible unless immediate measures are taken (ASOLC, 2007).

The debate on the current sociolinguistic situation of Catalan deserves special attention. There is a general agreement by regional governments and persons involved in the development of language policy in Catalan territories (the *Generalitat de Catalunya*[147], the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, the *Institut*

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[145] See Appendix 4.10. for a summary of the language/s spoken at home in Catalonia (2008).
[146] See Appendix 4.11. for comparative results between L1 and the regular language of use in Catalonia in 2008.
[147] Government of Catalonia**.

d'Estudis Valencians and university departments of philology in Valencia, Catalonia and Balearic Islands, as well as in Andorra - although the situation of Catalan is considered to be different there, as it is the official language) on the progress made in the last thirty years with regard to the acquisition of rights for Catalan and all its regional varieties. It is important to note however that, although Catalonia, and with it the Catalan language, have come a long way since the political repression they suffered during the forty years of dictatorship in Spain, Catalan still suffers disadvantage in relation to Castilian today, a fact that is recognised (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2004). Incidentally, the current situation of Catalan, its future and its supposedly imminent death, are topics of debate that have generated a vast amount of literature. Thus, while there seems to be general support for the maintenance of strong policies that work towards the linguistic normalisation[148] of Catalan in all spheres of society, there are also continuous debates surrounding its survival.

The question of whether Catalan is at risk of becoming an extinct language in the near future seems however to have been resolved. Pronouncements by the most fervent defenders of the language, who are often also the most negative in their vision of what the future of Catalan could be, give us a somewhat bright perspective, in that, despite the presence of global languages such as English, which could be seen as a threat to the survival of the smaller languages, Catalan enjoys most of the necessary conditions to ensure its continuation: it is a native language for many speakers, it has been a normalised language for over a hundred years and there are a good number of well established institutions whose work is focused on the protection and promotion of Catalan at national and international level. In relation to this point, Pueyo reminds us of the three essential conditions for the perpetuation of a language:

> "The first one, that its speakers use it, transmit it to their children and make possible for their children to learn it and that newcomers speak it, and also those others who, although living outside of their linguistic area, are already speaking it or want to speak it; the second, that this language continues to be, for the country that speaks it, a recognised sign of identity and an efficient element of cohesion; the third one, that a political willingness exists and can act efficiently so as to ensure its continuity."

(Pueyo, 2007:114)

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[148] According to Vallverdú (1979:29) "A linguistic conflict appears where a language is dominated by another either politically or socially. Thus, there are two ways of solving the linguistic conflict: through substitution or pure extinction of the language dominated or through its linguistic normalisation. This occurs when restoration of the language dominated is started in a community, in all the aspects of normativisation (orthography, grammar, vocabulary) and the social extension of its use (the language) can gain new areas of use and new speakers".

The fact that there are more than 100 universities around the world (the great majority of them in partnership with the *Institut Ramon Llull*[149]) where Catalan is being taught is another indication of the interest that this language generates globally. Also, in Catalonia, where more than 271 languages are said to cohabit (Plataforma per la llengua, 2012), the Catalan government is making a large investment in resources that allow for the integration of new citizens of international origin. Notwithstanding this, the high percentage of migrants has posed new challenges recently. In the 1960s and 70s, Catalonia, one of the most industrialised regions in Spain, experienced a huge influx of population due to the arrival of many families from the south of Spain in search of employment. Given that these newcomers were not speakers of Catalan, the situation posed a threat to its survival.

This situation of predominance of Castilian over Catalan has prevailed for decades and it still constitutes a problem. Castilian is the language that everyone understands and it represents the easy option when it comes to communication between two people in the street. Catalan, however, has a weaker position within society: whereas almost everyone can understand it (as well as Castilian), 97.5% of the population in 2007, there is a much lower percentage of people who are literate in Catalan: 62.8% of the population could write the language in 2007[150].

Catalan speakers have no difficulty in switching between languages when they feel they are not going to be understood, even though they often misjudge the situation, thinking their interlocutor is either a person from another region of Spain or a foreign national who will not understand Catalan. As Catalans are bilingual and conscious that Castilian is the language in wider use, when trying to be welcoming it is often the case that two Catalan speakers communicate in Spanish (Hall, 2001). This situation, a common occurrence in daily life, relegates Catalan to an inferior level to Castilian, threatening its long-term survival. The 2008 Survey study on language usage among the population**[151] very clearly illustrates this situation. Interviewees were asked what language they continue to speak when they address somebody in Catalan and are answered in Castilian (knowing that the respondents can speak Catalan). The results show that only 12.2% continue to speak Catalan and that 76.7% continue the conversation in Castilian. However, people were also asked what their attitude was if they addressed somebody in Castilian and were answered in Catalan. Interestingly, only 10.1% admitted they would continue the conversation in Castilian, whereas 79.5% said they would continue in Catalan.

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[149] See page 184 for a description of the nature of this institution.
[150] See Appendix 4.12. on the level of knowledge of Catalan and Castilian of the population in Catalonia (2 years and older) of Spanish nationality.
[151] *Enquesta d'usos lingüístics de la población (2008).*

These results are very revealing, for they confirm that the majority of Catalan people change easily to Castilian but that, equally, if answered in Catalan, people have no problem in swapping from Castilian to Catalan.

The positive attitude towards Catalan is also reflected in the fact that, within the same survey study of 2008, only 9.9% of the respondents admitted they would like to speak only Spanish in the future, whereas 16.5% said they would want to speak only Catalan, 14.6% more Catalan than Castilian and 39.8% both.

In the 1980s, the main impediment to the spread of Catalan was the high percentage of Castilian speakers who had arrived in the decade before from other regions of Spain in search of work, but at the end of the 1990s Catalonia experienced a progressive change, sociologically and culturally, marked by a high influx of immigrants from outside of Spain, coming to work and receive an education. Consequently, the number of foreign national students increased gradually during the 1990s and during the first decade of the 21st century.

The Catalan Institute of Statistics keeps records of the level of knowledge of both Catalan and Castilian among foreign national citizens with a view to having an accurate picture of the sociolinguistic reality in Catalonia. Hence, recent data collected shows that the level of knowledge of Castilian is much higher than that of Catalan: data from 2007 reveals that whereas only 30.7% of the foreign national population can speak Catalan, 86.1% can speak Castilian. Similarly, 77.3% can read Castilian, but only 31.2% can read Catalan. It is also important to note, however, the large number of migrants coming from Central and South America, that is, of Castilian-speaking people[152]. Additionally, taking into account the overall population of Catalonia over the age of two, it is estimated that only 5.52% cannot understand Catalan, a figure that has greatly declined since the 1980s[153] thanks to the actions taken by the Government at policy level.

From an alternative perspective, there is a general understanding among the Catalan-speaking countries of the importance of multilingualism in our time. Catalan speakers are very conscious that the current professional market demands the knowledge of several languages as a condition *sine qua non* for achieving a successful professional career. In this regard, the battle for the maintenance of national identity clashes with an immediate need to position themselves as a nation of competent professionals

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[152] See Appendix 4.13. on the level of knowledge of Spanish and Catalan among the foreign national population in Catalonia (2 years and older).
[153] See Appendix 4.14. on the percentage of population in Catalonia over the age of 2 that cannot understand Catalan.

ready to travel beyond the frontiers of Catalan. This is how English has become an essential part of the education of children, teenagers and adults in Catalonia. Although, as will be explained below, great efforts are being made to educate trilingual citizens who are able to communicate in Castilian, Catalan and English, the fact remains that Catalan speakers are still well behind the European average when it comes to knowledge of English and foreign languages in general (Reichelt, 2006): an average of 40% of Europeans have a good command of English, but only around 20% of Catalans attain this level, while the average in the Netherlands and Germany is 72% and 88% in Sweden (Pueyo, 2007). Additionally, data from 2008 in Catalonia shows that the age group 15-24 is the strongest in terms of general competency in English, with an average of 47.5% of the population with a good mastery of the four language skills[154].

On a different note, recent data obtained in 2009 at European level shows that Spain has the second highest level of early school leavers[155] across the Union. With an average proportion of 31.2%, compared to the European average of 14.4%, Spain lies only behind Malta (36.8%) (European Commission, 2011; European Commission, 2010). In Catalonia, data from 2010 shows that the percentage of early school leavers (29%) is also far higher than the European average, as well as very far from the 2020 benchmark of 10% set by the European Union (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2012).

All in all, the Catalan language holds a strong position within the Catalan speaking territories, in society and in education, which facilitates the development of language policies that go beyond the achievement of bilingualism. While the most immediate priority with regard to the Catalan language is that all citizens are given the opportunity of learning and using Catalan, the society is moving towards a much bigger challenge, global multilingualism:

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[154] Appendix 4.15. gives accurate data on the knowledge of English among the Catalan population in general terms and by age groups.

[155] In this thesis, I take the European Commission's definition of "early school leavers", which is as follows: "ESL can be defined as a failure to complete upper secondary school, a failure to complete compulsory schooling or a failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates. At EU level ESL rates are defined by the proportion of the population aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training. Early school leavers are therefore those who have only achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary or a short upper secondary education of less than 2 years (ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short), and include those who have only a pre-vocational or vocational education which did not lead to an upper secondary certification". It is noteworthy that the OECD defines early school leavers as 20-24 year olds with education below upper secondary level (European Commission, 2011).

"That Catalan becomes a common language and a language of social cohesion, shared by all the citizens, at least functionally, and that all the citizens, regardless of what their usual language is, can participate in public life, exercise their rights in conditions of equality and maintain satisfactory intercultural relations."

(Pueyo, 2007:96)

4.3.1. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (2006)

In the year 2006, the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia was approved, replacing the former Statute of 1979. It was passed by public referendum after being approved by the Catalan Parliament**[156], the Spanish Senate**[157] and the Spanish Congress of Deputies**[158].

The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia is intended to reflect how Catalonia is seen and defined by the Catalans and their government; it presents Catalonia as an independent and ambitious region that wishes to be self-governing at the same time as being part of Spain and Europe. This Statute constitutes an upgrade of the Statute of Autonomy of 1979 by reflecting new realities such as the high levels of immigration recorded in the last few years, new labour market conditions and the new demands of the European Union (Parlament de Catalunya, 2007).

The transfer of powers from the State to the Catalan Government is also an important issue that needed to be addressed. At present, the Generalitat has competencies in most areas, i.e. immigration, education, trade, agriculture, work, town planning, family, housing, environment, health and safety. In practical terms, this means that Catalonia can legislate independently from Spain under its own criteria. In linguistic matters, the Statute represents a modification of the legal framework for Catalan, for which the number of regulations that refer to it have been increased. It ratifies Catalan as the official language of Catalonia which must be used normally and as a preference by public administration and the mass media. It also emphasises the need to develop policies that extend the knowledge of Catalan at European and international level and it gives exclusive competencies to the Generalitat in relation to the law that applies to Catalan (Estatut d'Autonomia de Catalunya, 2006).

In education, the Statute ratifies Catalan as the language of instruction in Article 6.1, which had already been stated in article 21.1 of the Catalan Language Policy Act of 1998. This legislation means that Catalan must be used at all levels of education from pre-school to third level. Notwithstanding this, it

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[156] *Parlament de Catalunya.*
[157] *Senado.*
[158] *Congreso de los Diputados.*

acknowledges the right and duty of citizens to have sufficient oral and written competency of Castilian as well as Catalan by the end of compulsory education, regardless of the person's regular language of communication (L1). Hence, Castilian and Catalan have to be comprehensively represented in official study programmes. Equally, article 35.3 establishes that students cannot be separated in different centres or classes because of their L1; article 35.4 gives students with difficulty in understanding the language of instruction the right to receive special linguistic support.

Finally, the learning of a third language is also referred to in the Statute of Autonomy, stipulating that public institutions should promote "sufficient knowledge of a third language by the end of compulsory education".

4.3.2. Language policy in Catalonia: the Catalan Language Planning Act (1983) and the Catalan Language Policy Act (1998)

As already mentioned, Catalonia is governed by the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and by the Catalan Statute of Autonomy of 2006. The Constitution affirms the official status of the Spanish language, which applies to all of the country, and the official condition of all the other languages of the country, which are official in their respective autonomous communities according to their Statutes. The 3rd article of the Constitution makes the following declaration:

> "1. Spanish is the official language of the Spanish State, and as such, Spaniards have the obligation to know it and the right to use it. 2. The other languages of Spain will also be official in their respective Autonomous Communities according to their Statutes. 3. The richness of the different linguistic varieties in Spain is a cultural heritage that will be the object of special respect and protection."

> (Arenas, 1990; Etxebarria, 2002)

With this legal framework in Spain, the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia of 1979 was the first official document after the long period of repression to re-state Catalan as the official language in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (together with Spanish):

> "1. The language of Catalonia is Catalan. 2. The Catalan language is official in Catalonia, as is Spanish, official in the entire Spanish nation. 3. The Generalitat will guarantee the normal and official use of both languages, it will take the necessary measures to ensure knowledge of them and it will create the conditions that will allow the attainment of full equality with regard to the rights and obligations of the citizens of Catalonia."

> (Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 1979)

It is hence the entitlement of the Generalitat, or Catalan Government, to take any necessary measures to ensure that all citizens know both languages. Citizens have the right to use either of the two languages and are obliged to know them (Article 6, Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 9 August 2006).

All these measures were, however, first introduced in the 1983 Law of Linguistic Normalisation or Catalan Language Planning Act, which was significant in the history of the Catalan language for representing the inception of a program for an extensive use of the language. After recognising the poor representation of the Catalan language in all official institutions, education and the mass media, it was decided by the Catalan Government to make a first attempt to define the rights and obligations of citizens and institutions in Catalonia in relation to Catalan to achieve a situation in which Catalan and Castilian would be used equally. As illustrated by the law itself the objectives were:

1. To give support to and enhance the use of Catalan among all citizens
2. Promote the official use of Catalan
3. Normalise the use of Catalan in all social mass media
4. Ensure the extension of the knowledge of Catalan.

(Llei de Normalització Lingüística, 1983:2)

Consequently, this law gave citizens the right to decide which language to use (Castilian or Catalan) when addressing public institutions, as well as establishing the obligation to publish all official documents in both languages. In the area of public administration, all employees would be required from that moment to possess a competent knowledge of Catalan, as well as Castilian, to access public positions. The law also required all social mass media, press, radio and television, to use Catalan as the main language of communication and to assign part of the official budget to the promotion of cultural activities through Catalan, i.e. theatre, dubbing of foreign films into Catalan and the production of Catalan films. Equally, a two-year period was established as a sufficient timescale to change all the signs on roads and in cities or villages, as well as those in retail, to Catalan.

In the other autonomous communities of Spain where a minority language is spoken the respective Language Planning Acts, all similar in structure and content, were approved as follows (Etxebarria, 2002; Moreno, 2005; Huguet, 2006):

- Basque Country[159] – Basque Act** (1982).
- Galicia[160] - Galician Act** (1983).

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[159] *Ley de Normalización del Uso del Euskera* (November, 1982).

- Valencia[161] – Valentian Act** (1983).
- Balearic Islands[162]– Catalan Language Planning Act** (1986).
- Navarre[163] – Law pertaining to Basque** (1986).

Huguet (2006:150) reminds us that "the different issues, such as the name and character of the community language, its official status together with Castilian, the right to know it and to use it in any circumstances, and the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of language spoken are ratified and extended in the Language Planning Acts". Equally, all the laws of linguistic normalisation cover three basic areas: administration, education and the mass media (Etxebarria, 2002; Huguet, 2006).

All the sociolinguistic changes which occurred in Catalan society from the time of the Catalan Language Planning Act necessitated updating the existing Llei de Normalització Lingüística for a new law that was representative of the new reality. Therefore, in 1998, the Catalan Language Policy Act was introduced with the aim of reinforcing and updating the principles introduced in 1983, in line with changes in society. As explained by May (2008:249):

> "While the (1993) Law of Linguistic Normalisation was concerned principally with the extension of the knowledge of Catalan within Catalonia, particularly within education and the wider civil service, the (1998) Catalan Language Policy Act is thus concerned primarily with the further extension of its legal status and institutional reach."

The Catalan Language Policy Act[164] is currently in force in all of Catalonia and provides a framework for the use of Catalan in public administration, education, the mass media and the economic world. An extract of the most relevant points of the two language Acts can be found in Appendix 4.16.

The General Secretariat of Catalan Policy**[165], created in 1986 as the highest authority with regard to language policy in Catalonia (in relation to Catalan and Occitan/Aranès), serves as an executive organ for all the legal regulations in the area of language policy. Its functions are many but, in general terms, they involve the planning, direction and co-ordination of the language policy designed by the Generalitat and that apply to all government departments, as well as the design and implementation of policies that enhance the use of Catalan in all sectors of society.

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[160] *Ley de Normalización lingüística de Galicia* (June, 1983).
[161] *Ley Sobre Uso y Enseñza del Valenciano* (November, 1986).
[162] *Ley de Normalización lingüística de las Islas Baleares* (June, 1986).
[163]*Ley Foral del Vascuence de Navarra* (December, 1986) and *Decreto de Uso del Vascuence en las Administraciones Públicas de Navarra* (2001).
[164] See Roller (2002) for a more in depth-analysis of this Act.
[165] *Secretaria de Política Lingüística.*

Today, Catalan avails of a regulatory framework thanks to a network of institutions that work exclusively on matters that relate to the Catalan language. The following list highlights these:

1. General Secretariat of Catalan Policy**

2. Language Policy Technical Commission and Language Policy Network**[166]– in charge of the implementation of language policy across all government departments and in all sections of each department.

3. Generalitat House in Perpignan**[167] – it co-ordinates and collaborates in the promotion of language and cultural activities in Northern Catalonia, where, we must remember, Catalan is also spoken.

4. Linguamon – House of Languages**[168] – it promulgates awareness of multilingualism among the population.

5. Consortium for Linguistic Normalisation**[169] – works on the promotion of Catalan among the adult population. It organises courses and official exams for individual adults or groups by targeting companies and organisations. It works in conjunction with city councils and has offices spread all around Catalonia.

6. *Terminology of Catalonia***[170] – it works on the creation and normalisation of new terms in Catalan, especially technical and scientific terms.

7. Social Council of the Catalan Language**[171] – it assesses the results and outcomes of the established objectives of the Catalan government in language policy.

8. Toponymy Commission**[172] – it provides assessment and advice on the creation of new toponyms in Catalunya.

9. Institute of Catalan Studies**[173] – it conducts high level research on Catalan culture and language.

10. Ramon Llull Institute**[174] – works for the promotion of Catalan language and culture in universities around the world. It selects and co-ordinates a network of teachers, and provides official Catalan certificates outside Catalonia.

(*Informe de Política Lingüística de Catalunya*, 2010)

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[166] *Comissió Tècnica de Política Lingüística i Xarxa de Política Lingüística.*
[167] *Casa de la Generalitat a Perpinyà.*
[168] *Linguamón – Casa de les Llengües.*
[169] *Consorci per a la Normalització Lingüística.*
[170] *TERMCAT.*
[171] *Consell Social de la Llengua Catalana.*
[172] *Comissió de Toponímia.*
[173] *Institut d'Estudis Catalans.*
[174] *Institut Ramon Llull.*

In order to understand the importance of the promotion of Catalan for the Catalan government, it is imperative to look at the annual budget allocated to activities that relate to it. In 2010, the General Secretariat for Catalan Policy received a total amount of €30,711,446, which is 51.02% more than the amount that was allocated in the year 2000. Other government departments, however, also dedicate part of their annual budget to enhancing the social use of Catalan, which means that the total amount invested in activities in relation to language policy was €158,336,539 in 2010.

As would be expected, given the large amount of money dedicated to language policy, there are numerous language-related projects working in conjunction with the government departments, from local to international. Among others, public campaigns that engage native citizens to meet on a regular basis with newly arrived people to help them to improve their command of Catalan and to raise awareness of the importance of using Catalan in all contexts of life, i.e. *Voluntaris per la llengua*, *Encomana el català*[175].

Another initiative of relevance is the on-line Catalan language course, *parla.cat*. Launched in 2008, it includes a vast number of learning activities organised by level (from A1 to C1 of CEFRL) and is accessible to everyone free of charge, although there is the option of a tutorial service at a very low cost.

4.3.2.1. Implications of language policy for education

Although the Catalan Language Planning Act was the first official document to provide a legal framework for the use of Catalan within Catalonia, in education the first steps to permit the inclusion of Catalan as the language of instruction were taken a few years before its signature. Firstly, the 1092 Decree of 23 June 1978**[176], together with the Order of 18 September**[177], established the compulsory inclusion of Catalan in primary and secondary education, as well as in vocational education. This meant that educational institutions had the authority to use Catalan as the language of instruction. At the same time, the first Chairs of Catalan were created in universities. Also, in 1981, the 2089 Decree of 3 October**[178] affected the devolution of powers in education from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science**[179] to the Generalitat (Amorós, 2005). Additionally, in 1982 it was decreed that at least two school subjects had to be taught in Catalan and that school books and

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[175] Volunteers for the language: Spread Catalan**.
[176] *Decret 1092 de 23 de juny de 1978.*
[177] *Ordre de 18 de setembre de 1978.*
[178] *Decret 2089 de 3 d'octubre de 1981.*
[179] *Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.*

materials used in class for the teaching of these subjects would also need to be published in the language (Arenas, 1990). In accordance with this, in 1986, the first curricular framework, which specified curriculum content for all levels of education, was published. In it, it was envisaged that education was to be provided partly in Catalan and partly in Castilian at all levels, except for third level. The options at primary level were to either offer a bilingual program in which both languages carried the same weight in the curriculum or an education through Catalan with Castilian as a second language. The main objective was that students would have good competency in both languages by the end of compulsory education. It was however advised that in all higher education institutions, although lecturers could decide which language to use (either Castilian or Catalan), both lecturers and students should be offered language classes to ensure their understanding and complete mastery of Catalan (see Huguet, 2006; Muñoz, 2000).

This curriculum hence marked the first steps towards the inclusion of immersion programmes in Catalan education and of the PIL, or Catalan Project of Linguistic Immersion**[180].

Consequently, the implications for education in both laws can be summarised in four main points:

a) Catalan, as the language of Catalonia, is the language of instruction at all educational levels, as well as the language for use in education administration

b) Children have the right to receive their first education in their own language, either Catalan or Castilian, if required by the parents. Under this mandate, parents of children whose first language is Castilian can require their children to be educated mostly in their mother tongue until they reach second year of primary schooling.

c) The obligation on teachers to have competency in Castilian and Catalan that enables them to use either or both in their teaching practice.

d) The banning of segregation of students according to their mother tongue (Castilian or Catalan), establishing a model of linguistic inclusion that guaranteed the knowledge of the two languages by the end of compulsory schooling.

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[180] *Projecte d'Immersió Lingüística (PIL).*

4.3.3. The role of the Catalan Government in the maintenance of Catalan

At the time of the development of the first language policies for Catalan, the Catalan Government was led by a fervent promulgator and supporter of Catalan: Jordi Pujol, who was the President of Catalonia (President de la Generalitat de Catalunya) for 23 years (1980-2003) and is considered one of the most important representatives of Catalan at international level, mainly from a political point of view but also as an ideologist of Catalan identity. Although he had graduated as a Doctor of Medicine, the fact that he came from an established Catalan family and saw Catalonia destroyed by the Civil War provided him with the motivation to become involved in what would later on become a lifetime objective: "the reconstruction of Catalonia, the restoration of democracy, the Catalan language and culture, and the national identity, so oppressed by the Dictatorship" (Jordi Pujol, 2009). He established contact with the great Catalan writers and thinkers of the time and organised many pro-Catalan campaigns, which brought about his arrest and imprisonment for seven years under Franco's forces (Black, 2011).

From the moment Pujol regained his freedom he resumed his fight against the political oppression of Catalan by the Spanish Central Government. In 1974, he created his own political party, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya*, of which he is still the President. Throughout the years of his mandate, Pujol developed a policy for Catalonia where the concept of nationalism was understood more as a recovery of rights for Catalans than secession from the rest of Spain. By this means, language has become a pillar in Pujol's campaign to create a 'nation' where everyone living in the territory is and feels Catalan, regardless of their place of origin. The Catalan language is seen as the unifying tool for all the community: it provides citizens with a common framework of reference. It gives a sense of identity and belonging. Roller (2002:275) assertively defines the Catalan nationalist movement as both "a wish to protect a minority language/culture within the Spanish state and to use it (language) as a powerful symbol of differentiation".

In this regard, the development of a language policy in Catalonia has traditionally been closely linked with education policy. The reason is that it is in school where this sense of identity is formed. By sharing a common language, Catalan, all children are integrated into the Catalan culture and values through the education system. Although the language immersion method will be explained in detail in further sections, the reason for its application in education has been to provide all children with the same opportunities but, especially, to normalise the use of a language that, although vastly spoken within the Catalan territories, lives in the constant fear of being replaced by Spanish.

"First, the policy has attempted to absorb the substantial Spanish immigrant population residing in Catalonia into Catalan society to avoid social or political polarisation between 'native' and 'immigrant' Catalans. Second, the emphasis has been to protect and encourage the use of the Catalan language in all spheres of Catalan society. These underlying reasons are not mutually exclusive in that the process of assimilation of certain sectors of Catalan society is seen as preventing the disappearance by non-political means (i.e. demographic changes) of the Catalan language"

(Roller, 2002: 277)

In the period 2007-2010 the Government worked on an action plan to support the Catalan language, the 2004 *Plan for the language and social cohesion***[181], developed by the Catalan Department of Education[182]. Closely related to the PIL, which had been introduced in 1983, this plan aimed to tackle the emerging needs of the education system, to improve the quality of education and to adapt the linguistic immersion programme to the new sociolinguistic reality (Departament d'Educació, 2007). In this regard, different guidelines were designed for each typology of school: schools with a majority of Spanish-speaking students with a number of students coming from South America; schools with a high level of linguistic diversity; or schools with a majority of Catalan-speaking students, which also include students whose first language is not Catalan (Departament d'Educació, 2007).

In 2006, the *Report on Language Policy***[183], created by the Directorate General for Language Policy was a reaffirmation of the principles defined by the Catalan Language Policy Act and brought about the *Plan to Enhance the Learning of Languages***[184] with the aim of reinforcing those policies relating to the acquisition of Catalan, Spanish and English. More specifically, the 2005-2006 *Plan of Action in Relation to Language Policy***[185], implemented by the Directorate General of Language Policy is a brief of all actions that were undertaken in this period to promote Catalan at national and international level (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006). In budgetary terms, the General Secretariat of Catalan Policy had €119,652,564 to spend in the year 2006.

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[181] *Pla per a la llengua i la cohesió social.*
[182] *Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya.*
[183] *Informe de Política Lingüística* (2006).
[184] *Pla d'impuls a l'aprenentatge de llengües.*
[185] *Pla d'acció de política lingüística.*

4.3.4. Official status of Catalan within the European Union

Despite all the unique traits of the Catalan language, as is the case for all the other co-official languages of Spain (Galician and Basque), it is still not an official language of the European Union. This is a fact that has led to ongoing confrontation over many years between the Catalan language institutions and the Spanish Central Government, as well as the relevant European Institutions responsible.

The argument against granting Spain's co-official languages official status within the European Union is that it would be necessary to publish all official documents in these languages, which would incur vast costs in translation and interpretation. In reality, the Spanish Government would have to subsidise these costs, since none of the four co-official languages would be working languages of the EU.

In the case of Catalan, the first campaign to raise the status of the Catalan language in Europe was conducted between 1987 and 1989 under the name of *Crida* (Shout). The Catalan Parliament presented a petition to the European Parliament in 1988 to review the position of Catalan within the European Union. The Parliament of the Balearic Islands echoed this petition in 1989. Despite recognising the value of Catalan at regional, national and European level, the European Parliament highlighted in its Resolution that "it is not possible fully to respect the principle of equality for all the languages spoken in the countries of the Community". Nonetheless, through *Resolution 1235 of the European Parliament on 11 December 1990* the European Council and the European Commission were required to put in place the necessary measures to fulfil the following objectives:

> "1. The publication in Catalan of the Community's treaties and basics texts;
> 2. The use of Catalan for disseminating public information concerning the European institutions in all the media;
> 3. The inclusion of Catalan in the programmes set up by the Commission for learning European languages;
> 4. The use of Catalan by the Commission's offices in its written and oral dealings with the public in the Autonomous Communities in question."
>
> (European Parliament Resolution on Languages of the Community and the Situation of Catalan, 11 December 1990)

By 2002, however, some of these recommendations had not yet been implemented and the Catalan language was still not part of the European Lingua programme (Strubell, 2008). The situation was undermined further by the lack of support provided by the Spanish Government, under the mandate of José María Aznar (Strubell, 2008).

On this matter, there is an obvious contradiction between working towards achieving the objective of the institutions of the European Union in providing "a new comprehensive strategy for multilingualism" and the lack of flexibility to accommodate the languages of the new accession States. It is also interesting to note the analysis conducted by Strubell et al. (2011) of the linguistic situation within the EU; in connection with the impracticality of increasing the number of official languages of the EU, they identify the need to make a distinction between official and working languages. If this measure were to be applied, all languages of the Member States of the Union could be admitted as official languages of the EU, whereas only a small number of languages would be classified as working languages (Strubell et al., 2011).

The Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC), as the section of the Generalitat de Catalunya in charge of all related linguistic matters, has a very clear position on this matter. In its publication of 8th April 2002, *The Catalan Language in the European Union*[**186], this institution states its disappointment at the lack of effort made by the Spanish Government to support the official status of the languages of the State other than Spanish: "The IEC considers appalling the attitude of the Spanish Government in not seeking official status for the Catalan language in the EU" (IEC, 2004a). The IEC also considers the criteria required to obtain the official status of languages within the EU to be "unfair and obsolete". It therefore urges the Spanish Government to "remove the obstacles that obstruct the recognition of Catalan as an official language of the EU" (IEC, 2004a).

More significantly for supporters of Catalan's official status is the comparison between Catalan and Irish in relation to this issue. Irish was not made either an official or a working language of the EU when Ireland joined in 1973 as it was not requested by the Irish Government. Nonetheless, as Irish is defined as the first official language of Ireland within the Irish Constitution, the Treaty was written in Irish. As a consequence, Irish became a "Treaty language", meaning that all new treaties of the EU would be translated into Irish. Also, Irish, as any other treaty language, could be used to write or to make a petition to the European Parliament, to which the answer would also be written in the same language. In addition to this, Irish was also included in the Regulations of this institution (Ó Laighin, 2004; Strubell, 2008).

Nonetheless, in 2004, when the Accession Treaty to include ten new Member States in the European Union (and nine new official languages) was signed, Ireland saw an opportunity to request the recognition of Irish as an official and working language. Hence, the first Irish campaign to make Irish an official language of the EU was initiated in the same year using the name of *Stádas* (status) (See Ó

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[186] *La llengua catalana a la Unió Europea.*

Caollaí, 2004) based on Article 8 of *Regulation Number 1 of the Council of April 1958*, which states the following:

> "If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law".
>
> Regulation Number 1 of the Council of April 15, 1958, determining the languages to be used by the Europan Economic Community (IO 17 6/10/1958).

The promoters of the Irish campaign were hence seeking an amendment of *Regulation Number 1* so as to include Irish, an official and constitutional language of Ireland, in the list of official and working languages of the European Union. It was envisaged that, firstly, such an achievement would put Irish at the same status level as all other official European languages. Secondly, it would help create job opportunities for Irish citizens in terms of translation of official documents of the different European bodies, but also, Irish applicants for posts in the Union could present themselves as having two official languages. Finally, it was believed that attitudes of Irish citizens towards the role and use of the Irish language within society could benefit from this action (Ó Laighin, 2004:13):

> "When a language achieves a particular international status, not only does that have a favourable effect on the economy, but it helps to sustain the language itself by generating a more favourable attitude towards it among its speakers. This can be especially important for languages which are deemed to be under threat".

In 2005, coinciding with Ireland's Presidency of the European Union, Irish was unanimously accepted by the European Council as an official language of the Union, taking effect from 1st January 2007 (Sweeney, 2005). Once this was approved, Irish was declared a working language and considered in EU job applications as such (Ó Laighin, 2004).

In Spain, after the General Election of 2004, a change to the Head of Government brought hope for Spanish minority languages. The new Spanish President, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, adopted a compromise position by making Catalan a Treaty language, as was the case of Irish, with the idea that citizens could write to the European Institutions in Catalan and receive a reply in the same language (CIEMEN, 2009; Strubell, 2009). Accordingly, the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, expressed the desire of the Spanish Government that Catalan, Valencian, Basque and Galician be recognised as official languages in Europe (Strubell, 2008). An official petition followed a few months later. In response to this, the *European Council's conclusion of 13 June 2005* on the official use of additional languages within the Council and possibly other institutions and bodies of the European Union presented amendments to *Regulation No 1 of 1958*. Languages recognised as national languages in all or part of one of the Member States of the European Union, under petition of their corresponding

Government, can since be used in personal correspondence with the institutions of the EU. The costs related to this are however covered by the corresponding Member State (European Council, 2005). Consequently, since July 2005, Catalan, Valencian, Basque and Galician speakers can send written communications to any of the European Union institutions in their own language and receive a response in the same language.

> "1. These conclusions relate to languages other than the languages referred to in Council Regulation No 1/1958 whose status is recognised by the Constitution of a Member State on all or part of its territory or the use of which as a national language is authorised by law.
>
> 4. The official use of the languages referred to in paragraph 1 will be authorised at the Council on the basis of an administrative arrangement concluded between the latter and the requesting Member State, and possibly by another Union Institution or body on the basis of a similar administrative arrangement.
>
> 5. [...] The direct or indirect costs associated with implementation of these administrative arrangements by the Union's Institutions and bodies will be borne by the requesting Member State".

(Council Conclusion of 13 June 2005)

In spite of this, any further developments in the recognition of Catalan (as well as the other three co-official languages of Spain) as official language of the European Union will continue to encounter severe difficulties as long as they do not hold official status within the Spanish Constitution.

Following Spain's footsteps, in the year 2008, the UK Government engaged in talks with the EU that resulted in the recognition of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic also as co-official languages within the institutions of the European Union (Council of Europe, European Commission and the EU's Committee of the Regions) (The Times, 2009; Reuters, 2008).

4.4. Recent developments in education in Catalonia

4.4.1. The Catalan education system

4.4.1.1. Recent figures in education in Catalonia

According to data published by the Catalan Department of Education in 2011, the Catalan Government spends 5% of its Gross National Product on education, which translates into $37,771per inhabitant (Ireland spends 4.6%, although the breakdown per capita is higher: $44,381 per inhabitant).

As stated above, the number of students in Catalonia is around 1,214,633 at present, distributed over pre-primary, primary and secondary education in, public, semi-private and private schools[187].

In Catalonia, education is compulsory for children aged 6-16. Pre-school education is divided in two cycles: the first one comprising children aged 0-3 and the second one children aged 3-6. 100% of children aged 3-5 (324,843) attend second cycle pre-primary education, for which a pre-school curriculum has been fully developed. In primary education (ages 6-12), the student population (428,845 students) has increased significantly since the school year 2003, by over 18%. Second level education is from 12-16 years. After, *Batxillerat* comprises two years of education in preparation for the *Selectivitat*, the Catalan equivalent to the Leaving Certificate Examination in Ireland[188].

In terms of the education profile, there is a much higher number of students attending state schools than private schools. Secondly, 12.83% of the student population are foreign nationals (10.1% of these in primary education). Thirdly, a comparison between the student population and the number of foreign national students in the last twenty years can help us to understand the current challenges in terms of educational and language policy in Catalonia, especially for state schools, given that they host 83.9% of the foreign national student population (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2011). In the academic year 1991-1992 there were 1,218,879 students in Catalonia, 0.8% of whom (9,868 students) were foreign nationals; in the academic year 2000-2001 2.5% of the students were foreign nationals. And in the academic year 2009-2010 there was a total student population of 1,214,633, 11.7% of whom (155,845 students) were foreign nationals[189][190]. For primary education alone, I only have access to data published in 2010, which indicates that 14.7% of the student population were foreign nationals (*Ministerio de Educación*, 2010).

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[187] Public schools are built by the *Generalitat* and are state schools. What is known as "private schools" belong to different types of organisations, such as parents' co-operatives or the Catholic Church. The great majority of these schools, which represent around 40% of the total number, are co-funded by the Catalan Government, which is why we call them here "semi-private". In public or state schools, children are not required to pay fees, whereas in "semi-private" there is a fee (around €60 per month). Fully independent private schools also exist, but they are very small in number. International schools are included in this latter group.

[188] Appendix 4.17. is the distribution of the Catalan education system according to the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education)(UNESCO, 2011).

[189] Appendix 4.18. shows the increase in the number of foreign national students in Catalonia between 2000 and 2010.

[190] Data from 2009 shows that the population of Catalonia was 7,475,000 inhabitants, of which 15.9% were foreign nationals.

Figure 3 - Student population in Catalonia according to the typology of schools (2011)

Student population in Catalonia according to the typology of schools (2011)			
Typology of students	Typology of schools		Total
	Public	Semi-private /Private	
Foreign national	130,792	25,053	155,845
Native	651,208	407,580	1,058,788
Total	782,000	432,633	1,214,633

Source: *Departament d'Ensenyament*, 2011.

The provenance of foreign national students has also been subject to variation throughout the years. Although in the academic year 1998-1999 there was a predominance of students coming from North Africa, in 2001-2002 there was a higher number of students from Central America and South America. In 2011, the majority of the foreign national student population came from Central and South America (40.3%) and North Africa (27.5%)[191].

As would be expected, this new sociolinguistic situation has had a considerable effect on Catalan society and the Catalan language: the presence of a high percentage of foreign national students in the school system has led to the development of integrative policies and action programmes to provide them with the opportunity to learn the two official languages, Castilian and Catalan, thus avoiding future discrimination.

From a different perspective, the Catalan Department of Education**[192], through the Assessment Board of Education System**[193], assesses the academic competence of students in primary and second level of education on an annual basis. At primary level, it assesses the basic competences of sixth-year students (11-12 year olds) in all languages (Catalan, Castilian and English), as well as mathematics through the Assessment test for 6th year of Primary Education**[194], which has been carried out for the last five years. The results are then used by the Department of Education and the schools to assess the quality of education.

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[191] Appendix 4.19. shows the origin of foreign national students in Catalonia in 2011.

[192] *Departament d'Ensenyament.Generalitat de Catalunya.*

[193] *Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu.*

[194] *Prova d'avaluació de sisè curs d'educació primària.*

Similar to this are the Tests for a diagnostic evaluation of primary and lower-secondary education**[195] which are conducted in 5th class (10-11 year olds) in primary education and 3rd year (14-15 year olds) in secondary level. The aim of these tests is to assess the efficiency of teaching and the achievement of basic levels in schools in language and mathematics, as established by the Department of Education.

The results obtained by Catalan institutions with regard to the evaluation of the quality of education are analised in conjunction with those obtained at international level through the PISA[196] (Programme for International Student Assessment) test, conducted by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and known for its rigorous methodology.

Equally, the results of studies conducted by the Spanish Department of Education**[197] across all Autonomous Communities are an important reference point for Catalonia, especially because they allow to compare the performance of Catalan students, attending total immersion education, with that of other students in Spain not being educated through bilingual education. In this regard, the Diagnostic Evaluation**[198] is carried out by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation**[199] at primary and secondary level, separately [200].

In terms of the latest PISA test, conducted in 2009, it is clear that the quality of education in Catalonia is, in general terms, above the Spanish average and close to results obtained by countries part of the OECD with highest results, i.e. Shanghai (China), Korea, Finland, Japan, Canada, Holland (The Netherlands), Belgium, Norway, USA, and Switzerland. Catalonia holds the 15th position in the overall ranking and is above the Spanish average in all three tests on reading, mathematics and science, although student performance as regards the OECD average is lower in science, as shown in the table below (*Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu*, 2010; *Fundació Jaume Bofill[201],* 2010):

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[195] *Proves d'avaluació diagnòstica d'educació primària i d'ESO.*

[196] The PISA study takes place every three years. It evaluates the skills and knowledge of 15-year old students in three main areas: reading, mathematics and science. Even though the 2012 PISA study has now been finalised, the results are not available yet. For this reason, we will discuss the results from the 2009 PISA study, which included 65 countries worldwide and several Autonomous Communities as well as regions.

[197] *Ministerio de Educación, cultura y deporte.*

[198] *Evaluación General de Diagnóstico.*

[199] *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE).* Henceforth INEE.

[200] The most recent studies on *Evaluación General de Diagnóstico* available have taken place in 2010 at secondary level and 2009 at primary level. Given the subject of this thesis, we will only discuss those related to primary education.

[201] Jaume Bofill Foundation**.

Figure 4 – Generals results of PISA 2009 in Catalonia, Spain and OECD

PISA 2009	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Catalonia	498	496	497
Spain	481	496	488
OECD	493	483	501

Source: PISA 2009.

The PISA 2009 test also shows that Catalonia is one of the places with the highest percentage of students from a low socio-economic background who obtain high academic results. This information has been identified as significant by the OECD because it is a sign of the capacity of an education system to adapt and contribute to the reduction of inequality in education. Hence, Catalonia has 13% of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Shanghai, with the highest – 24%; Spain- 11%; Ireland- 9%) (*Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu*, 2010; *Fundació Jaume Bofill*, 2010).

In relation to data available on the language competency of the students, this varies among different reports and institutions. In the study conducted in 2009 by the INEE on 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old), Catalan students performed similarly to the Spanish average in reading comprehension, with only 27% of the students performing at the highest levels (Level 4 and 5). Below is a table showing the results obtained by the Autonomous Community with the best results, Catalonia and the average in Spain[202].

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[202] The results are presented in percentages. Also, the table classifies the results obtained in Levels <1 -5. Level 5 is the percentage of student population with the highest performance.

Figure 5 - Results on reading comprehension tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain

Results on reading comprehension tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain.						
	Level <1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Asturias (best results)	1%	7%	22%	31%	26%	13%
Catalonia	3%	13%	28%	29%	18%	9%
Spain (average)	4%	13%	27%	29%	19%	8%

Source: *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)* (2009).

In mathematics, Catalonia was in 9th position in the ranking of Autonomous Communities with a higher percentage of students performing at Level 5. Also, as seen in the table below, 15% of the student population performed at a very low level. Overall, the results are similar to the average obtained in Spain, which indicates that Catalan students' performance is not at its most desirable level.

Figure 6 - Results from mathematics tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain

Results from mathematics tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain. *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)* (2009)						
	Level <1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
La Rioja (best	1%	8%	21%	30%	25%	15%

results)						
Catalonia	2%	13%	31%	31%	16%	7%
Spain(average)	3%	14%	30%	28%	17%	8%

Source: *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)* (2009)

In the area of "Competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical environment**[203]", Catalan students performed slightly better than the Spanish average, although it is significant that only 3% performed very well and around 20% performed poorly (Levels 1 and 2). Consequently, Catalonia was ranked in 14th position (out of 18 countries) in this test.

Figure 7 - Results from Competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical environment tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain

Results from Competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical environment tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain.						
	Level <1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Asturias (best results)	2%	6%	18%	30%	29%	15%
Catalonia	4%	15%	32%	31%	15%	3%
Spain(average)	4%	13%	26%	29%	20%	8%

Source: *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)* (2009).

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[203] *Competencia en el conocimiento y la interacción con el mundo físico.*

Finally, the last test conducted was on the area of "Citizenship and social competency**[204]". Here Catalonia is ranked in 8th position (out of 18), with results very similar to the average in Spain.

Figure 8 - Results from Citizenship and social competency tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain

Results from Citizenship and social competency tests among 4th class primary school students (11-12 years old) by Autonomous Communities in Spain.						
	Level <1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Asturias	2%	8%	18%	30%	28%	14%
Catalonia	4%	12%	25%	30%	21%	8%
Spain(average)	5%	12%	24%	30%	21%	8%

Source: *Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)* (2009).

With regard to results obtained in studies carried out within Catalonia, the most recent Assessment test for 6th year of primary education for which the results are available is that conducted in 2012. Hence, the assessment of the basic competences acquired among 6th class students shows the following results (*Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu*, 2012a):

In Catalan language, the overall students' level of competence has improved when compared to results obtained from 2009, by 3.3% and the percentage of students performing at a low level has been reduced by 8.4% from 2011.

In Castilian language, there has also been a general improvement from previous years, similar to that with Catalan, and, also, the percentage of students performing at a low level has decreased by 3.2% from 2011.

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[204] *Competencia social y ciudadana.*

In the English language, data is only available from 2010; however, as shown in the table below, the results have worsened from 2011. This could be due to the fact that the listening test has been changed significantly.

In mathematics, the overall results for 2012 are virtually the same as for 2011 but show an improvement on previous years. The level of students performing at a low level has also decreased significantly from 2009-2010.

Figure 9 - Results on basic competences acquired among 6th class students in primary education in Catalonia (Catalan, Castilian, English, Mathematics)

Results on basic competences acquired among 6th class students in primary education in Catalonia (Catalan, Castilian, English, Mathematics)					
		2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Catalan	Average result among students	76.9%	73.7%	77.2%	79.6%
	% of students performing at a low level	24.2%	28.4%	22.6%	15.8%
Castilian	Average result among students	75.1%	71.2%	73.6%	76.6%
	% of students performing at a low level	27.4%	29.8%	22.2%	19%
English	Average result among students	N.A.	71.4%	80.6%	74.3%
	% of students performing at a low level	N.A.	35.5%	21.8%	27.4%

Mathematics	Average result among students	78%	78.2%	80.9%	80.2%
	% of students performing at a low level	24.2%	23.4%	18.5%	18.2%

Source: Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2012.

When looking at these results, an improvement in the level of competence among the student population in primary education becomes apparent in the period 2009-2012. There is a very clear reduction in the percentage of students achieving low results and an increase of the average results, which in turn means that the failure rate has been reduced.

Additionally, it is significant that there is a smiliar level of competence in Catalan and Castilian among students. This is important, especially for non-Catalan students: research shows that, in general, an average of six years of schooling through Catalan are needed to acquire fluency in Catalan but that, after this time, the student has the same level of Castilian and Catalan (Arnau, 2013). These results, consequently, are proof that immersion education in Catalonia works reasonably well and with generally satisfactory outcomes.

Catalan students hence perform above the OECD and Spanish average in assessments conducted at secondary school level. This shows that, by the end of compulsory education, the Catalan education system reaches international standards in education in spite of its focus on language immersion. Nonetheless, as discussed above, the levels of competence reached in the higher levels of primary education indicate that Catalan students are generally performing just above the Spanish average and that the percentage of students achieving very high results is generally relatively low. Nonetheless, it is obvious that Catalan students (including those non-native speakers of Catalan) perform better than many of their peers attending monolingual education programmes in other Autonomous communities in Spain and, also, other countries[205].

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[205] See Strubell et al. (2011) for an in-depth discussion on this matter.

4.4.1.2. The Education Law in Catalonia**[206]

Following the approval of the Statute of Autonomy in 2006, the bill for the first education law for Catalonia was presented in November 2007 and finally approved in June 2009. The basis for this law is to meet the requirements of the current Catalan society, where the percentage of the immigrant population within the education system has quadrupled between 2001 and 2007; the percentage of early school leavers (29%) is far higher than the European average, as already mentioned, and the results obtained by students by the end of compulsory education do not meet Government expectations.

This law also sets out to establish a system of education that attends to the particular needs of Catalan society. The philosophy behind this is to improve the quality of teaching provided and hence the academic results of students (Vilaweb, 2008) by providing flexibility to schools to attend individually to diversity. In his own words, Maragall, Catalan "Counsellor" of Education at the time of the approval of the law, stated that the new education system is "ambitious, demanding and will allow the education system to achieve goals of equality and excellence" (El Periódico, 2008).

By these means, state primary schools now have the power to select their own teachers and to administer themselves. Schools will also be periodically evaluated by a team of quality reviewers, selected by the Catalan Department of Education.

In terms of linguistic issues, the Education Law of Catalonia, based on the principles of the Statute of Autonomy (2006), for which the Catalan government has full competence to legislate in the area of languages, reinforces the use of Catalan as the language of Catalonia and of social inclusion, protects linguistic immersion in Catalan and imposes the teaching of Spanish for two hours a week, compared to the three hours required by the Spanish Government. Additionally, through curricular development, it enhances multilingualism: the learning of at least one foreign language is stipulated by law, but the introduction of a second foreign language is also recommended.

It is important however to emphasise the fact that the Catalan Education Law does not make any changes in the organisation of the education system, but rather, establishes a framework that makes possible the development of the current regulations in education and fosters good practices (Llei d'Educació, 2009:24).

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[206] *Llei 12/2009, del 10 de juliol, d'Educació.*

It is intended that the Education Law will be adopted completely by all schools in Catalonia within eight years and that by the end of this time the Catalan Government will have made the necessary provisions to invest 6% of the Gross National Product in education (from €6 billion euro to €13 billion) (gencat.cat, 2012) .

The Primary School Curriculum that is currently in use is therefore a compendium of all aims, objectives and regulations that affect students, teachers and the whole school community in general. It establishes basic competencies to be complied with in all curricular subjects, the allocation of school time to each subject and specific guidelines for the development of the two most important documents in a school: the School Educational Project**[207] and the School Language Plan**[208].

While the Primary School Curriculum gives general instructions, each school is free to adapt it to its own needs, according to the typology of students. Hence, the Educational Project allows the redistribution of school resources to better tackle issues such as a high percentage of foreign national students; the School Language Plan regulates the language regime of each school, specifying what criteria to follow for the teaching of all languages, including foreign languages (Primary School Curriculum, 2007).

4.4.1.3. Immersion education in Catalonia

As already mentioned above, in Catalonia, where the *Generalitat* has control of education, students receive their education in Catalan, as dictated by the Catalan Language Policy Act (1998). Thus, early total immersion education applies to all schools in Catalonia.

This approach within the Catalan education system originates from the beginning of the twentieth century, when, in times of the Second Spanish Republic, the Generalitat became involved in the creation of an education model that characterised Catalonia. The Council of the Unified New School**[209] was the body that promoted this model, based on contributions made by Catalan pedagogues in the previous century, where Catalan was the language of normal use among teachers and students in the school. However, although some initial advances were made before the start of

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[207] *Projecte Educatiu de Centre*. The School Educational Project is the document where the identity and objectives of the school are explained. It also serves as a guideline for all the actions taken within the school and to foster the collaboration of all the stakeholders (i.e. parents, community, etc.).
[208] *Projecte Lingüístic de Centre (PLC)*. The School Language Plan defines the approach that the school takes in relation to the learning of languages. Moreover, it dictates how languages are integrated in the different curricular areas to enable the students to become plurilingual and competent in the basic skills.
[209] *Consell d'Escola Nova Unificada (CENU)*.

the Spanish Civil War in 1936, during the Franco era any actions of this kind were basically halted. Nonetheless, in 1940 the first voices spoke out to demand that the Government offer Catalan as a content subject and in the 1950s some schools took the risk of teaching through Catalan, despite possible negative repercussions. In the 1960s, institutions such as the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association and the *Omnium Cultural* (for the promotion of the use of Catalan) took important steps towards the restitution of Catalan in education, by promoting education through Catalan. They, therefore, played a key role in the subsequent order of 1978, the Royal Decree 2092, in which Catalan was integrated with the curriculum of non-university studies and as part of the preparation courses for student-teachers (Arenas & Muset, 2008).

A few years later, the Plan for the Linguistic Normalisation of the Catalan School, which also included a Language Immersion programme for primary school students, was designed and first put into practice. Designed to run in parallel with the Catalan Language Planning Act, this programme emerged from the realisation that teaching Catalan for a few hours each week or the inclusion of Catalan as the language of instruction of two content subjects was insufficient to change the students' language of regular use (Arenas, 1990). Knowledge of Catalan in Catalonia at the time was especially worrying: statistics from 1975 show that 38% of the population were coming from other regions of Spain or from outside the country; in the province of Barcelona, where 75% of the total population of the region was concentrated, 62% were unable to speak Catalan, 24% could not understand it, 21% could understand it but not speak it, 39% could speak it and only 15% could understand it, write it and speak it (Arenas & Muset, 2008). Among teachers, the situation was equally negative: all of them had received their education in Spanish and many of them were coming from outside Catalonia, which explains why their capacity to use Catalan was much reduced and in many cases non-existent. Thus, in the same year (1975), 58% of teachers were Catalan speakers, 32% could understand it and 10% could not understand it (Arenas & Muset, 2008).

In the academic year of 1983-1984, the Programme of Language Immersion**[210] or PIL was introduced in areas where Spanish was the predominant language. The idea was to involve communities and schools (on a voluntary basis) that possessed a willingness to adapt their teaching strategies and methodologies to the ideology of the Catalan model or *Escola catalana*. In the first instance, this programme was only implemented in a reduced number of schools located in small towns outside Barcelona where the proportion of non-Catalan speakers was over 70-75% of the student population, for which reason extra teacher support (language assistants) was given to classes

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[210] *Programa d'Immersió Lingüística (PIL).*

with over 20 students (Mercator, 2000). The programme was rapidly extended to hundreds of schools in Catalonia, Valencia, Northern Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, so that by the school year 1995-1996 there were 1,280 schools involved (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007). Hence, children were involved in a 4-year immersion programme since the start of school, at the age of 4, with the aim of accomplishing different objectives each year:

First year (4 years of age): To understand the language.

Second year (5 years of age): To reproduce the language.

Third year (6 years of age): To learn to read and write.

Fourth year (7 years of age): To consolidated this basic learning.

Based on the experiences of the French-speaking community in Canada and on the results of studies by researchers such as Lambert, Fishman and Cummins, the PIL programme was seen as key to establishing clear advances in the normalisation of the use of Catalan in both the school system and society at large[211]. For this reason, the Catalan Department of Education dedicated a significant number of resources to the preparation of teachers who did not possess a high degree of competence in Catalan (such as seminars and workshops), to train them in the methodology of immersion. As a consequence, in 1994 there were 130,000 children part of the PIL programme (Mercator, 2000).

Today, the Immersion Programme in Catalan has been extended; it commences when children attend school for the first time, at the age of three (when pre-school education currently starts), and it lasts until the end of primary education, at the age of 12. Early total immersion means that children receive all their instruction through the medium of Catalan, and that Castilian is not part of the curriculum until the first year of primary education, and then only as a content subject.

In 2007, the Catalan Department of Education put in place the Plan to Update the Methodology of Immersion[212], due to be implemented between 2007 and 2013. This five-year plan aims to reactivate the original immersion plan from the 1980s, although adapted to cater for the current sociolinguistic context, where the immigrant student population represents almost 13% of the total number of students (Ustec-Stes, 2010). The main objective is to provide access to Catalan to all students from outside Catalonia and to create a "more egalitarian system" for everyone by training a small number of specialists in immersion, who will provide teacher seminars in schools throughout Catalonia.

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[211] See also Ferrer (2000).

[212] *Pla per a l'actualització de la metodologia d'immersió*.

Additionally, inspectors in education have been given the task of evaluating the specific needs in relation to the use of languages in each school.

This plan is specifically directed at those schools with greater linguistic diversity and where the standards of attainment are poor. With a total investment of €2,358,000 it is expected that by the year 2013 around 3,000 teachers from 500 primary and secondary state schools in Catalonia will be trained in immersion methodologies. Eligible schools are being identified by assessing the academic results of their students and are then included in a three-year programme (Departament d'Educació, 2007).

It must be admitted that the Catalan immersion programme has not always received the support of all sectors of society. For years, there have been a number of parents who argued that, as Spanish citizens, they should be able to avail of education through Castilian for their children. This debate has taken a step forward more recently, when an instruction from the Spanish High Court dictated that Castilian should not be just another language in the curriculum but also a language of instruction. The Generalitat appealed the decision to the Catalan Supreme Court, arguing that the implementation of such a decision could end 30 years of successful immersion education in Catalonia and therefore further threaten the survival of Catalan. On 8th March of 2012, the Catalan Supreme Court resolved that the Catalan education system must provide education through Castilian to the three families that made the request in the first place, although it endorses Catalan as language of instruction in the region.

This decision is only applicable to these families, but the fact that it has created jurisprudence is definitely not a good sign for the future application of the language immersion model.

More recently, this controversy has moved to a different level since the Spanish Government signed the new education law at the end of the year 2012. Known as Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education**[213], it enforces a much more centralised education system by giving more power to the central government to decide on assessment issues, and distribution and planning of curricular time. Also, it requires the Autonomous Communities to offer instruction at all levels in Castilian. In the case of those who have a co-official language, they are required to accommodate students whose parents may decide they want their children to be educated through Castilian and not Catalan. The controversy created by this instruction has brought the Catalan Government to refuse the implementation of the law; this matter has not yet been resolved and is part of an ongoing debate.

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[213] *Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE).*

4.4.1.3.1. Training of primary school teachers in Catalonia for immersion programmes

Undoubtedly, the general competency of teachers to speak Catalan and to use it as a language of instruction has improved radically since immersion education was first introduced. Data obtained in the course year 1974-75 on the language competence of teachers show that 36% of teachers could speak and write Catalan; 23% could speak it, 32% could only understand it and 9% did not understand it, even though 65% of the teachers had been born in Catalonia, 30% in the Catalan speaking territories and only 5% in the rest of Spain. Clearly, the design of the first plan of action to provide teachers with language and pedagogy skills was extremely challenging at institutional level.

Under the Catalan Retraining plan**[214], the Education Departments of the three Catalan universities that existed at the time were given the task of organising courses to ensure that the 50,000 existing teachers had a high level of competence in Catalan in all skills. The goal was to reverse the language situation in primary schools, where 1.51% of the schools used Catalan as language of instruction, 2.01% where in the process of changing to Catalan and 96.48% were using Castilian as the language of instruction. In the first course, organised in 1978, 7,000 teachers registered. In total, 923 courses were organised and a total of 18,150 teachers had attended in 70 different locations by the academic year 1981-82. Once the training was completed, two different types of qualifications were awarded:

1. A Certificate to teach Catalan up to fifth class[215] in primary education and any content subject throughout the primary level.

2. A University Diploma as "Catalan teacher", allowing the teacher to teach any content subject at primary level.

In both courses, the student teachers attended modules of Catalan language, didactics, history and geography, and literature, although heavy subject content proved to have negative consequences for the acquisition of linguistic competence of the teachers. This is why during the second stage of the course three different levels were established, which the student teachers could join depending on their level of knowledge of the Catalan language and culture. At the first level, the course focused mainly on the acquisition of oral competency by the student teacher. At the second level, the course concentrated on the introduction of the student teacher to the written and spoken language. Additionally, it offered

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[214] *Pla de Reciclatge de Català*.
[215] See Appendix 4.17. for a classification of the levels of education in Catalonia.

some elements of didactics and general knowledge of Catalonia. At the third level, the aim was that the student teacher consolidated his/her knowledge of the language and culture of the region (Arenas, 1990). In addition to these courses, other types of teacher training were offered:

-Permanent Institutional Formation** or FOPI[216] required the teachers to attend eight-hour sessions once a week, while being replaced by a substitute teacher provided by the Catalan Department of Education.

-The Immersion Programme for Teachers**[217] was offered to 105 teachers to help them enhance their competency in spoken Catalan.

-Conversation courses twice a week in sessions of 1.5 hours' duration for teachers whose first language was Spanish**.

(Arenas, 1990)

Parallel to the emphasis placed by the Catalan Government on the preparation of teachers, the organisation of a working group of professionals who were prepared to advise both schools and the teachers on issues such as the arrival of students late in the school year, children with special needs, or the linguistic immersion programme itself, was seen as necessary (Arenas, 1990).

The Catalanisation of schools in Catalonia was the result of a firm decision made by the Catalan government to change the linguistic profile of schools across the region. All possible resources were put in place to achieve this transformation, but especially, the preparation of teachers, which was seen, from the outset, as the key factor to success. Also, it was imperative to establish a balance between the number of teachers whose first language was Castilian and those whose first language was Catalan, for which two main actions were taken:

- ✓ It was decided that all teachers would have to pass a Catalan proficiency test. For this purpose a number of courses were offered to new and existing teachers. In 1989, the Department of Education examination for new teachers included a test in Catalan. Teachers who failed this would be rejected immediately.

- ✓ The Department of Education created two different lists of teachers applying for teaching jobs: one related to general teachers; the second one covered teachers "with Catalan" who were qualified to teach Catalan. The objective was to distribute those teachers whose first language was Catalan throughout the

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[216] *Formació Permanent Institucional (FOPI).*

[217] *Programma d'Immersió per a Professors (PIP).*

schools within the region, so that the presence of Catalan–speaking teachers would be gradually increased.

(Arenas, 1990)

The level of co-ordination between the different institutions was outstanding given the fact that the language normalisation project in the school was protected by law and that a specific budget was allocated to this mission. A commission was set up to look after the co-ordination of people and actions, as well as to conduct a follow-up review and evaluate the results: the SEDEC or Service for the Teaching of Catalan** was allocated the task of establishing a close relationship between the County Councils, Local Authorities and the schools, as well as organising information sessions in geographical points throughout the region that were conducted by school inspectors and other professionals and directed at teachers, parents, school coordinators and principals[218].

At present, in Catalonia, all primary school teachers are assumed to have knowledge of both languages and level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment in Catalan, as well as having a degree in general teaching. Moreover, primary school teachers in Catalonia must complete a certain number of annual hours of in-service preparation in order to receive salary increments or what is called *trienis[219]*. Institutions entirely dedicated to the preparation of teachers, such as those mentioned earlier in this chapter, i.e. *Fundació Pere Tarrés* and *Associació de mestres Rosa Sensat* organise courses in all subjects and related areas of the curriculum. Teachers decide how they want to distribute these mandatory hours and which courses they will undertake.

4.4.1.4. Languages in the Catalan primary school curriculum

As well as the competencies acquired by the Generalitat in relation to languages, the Tinell Agreement coordinates and regulates the use and promotion of languages, e.g. Catalan, Castilian and English. In accordance with this agreement, the *142/2007* Decree of the Catalan Government**[220] lays down the objectives to be achieved at the end of the different cycles in education (from pre-school to the end of secondary school) for Catalan, Castilian and the foreign language/s. It is thus a general objective:

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[218] Appendix 4.21. – Evolution in the language competence of teachers in Catalonia in the period 1974 – 1986.
[219] Pay rise obtained every three years from the Department of Education.
[220] *Decret 142/2007 Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya, número 4915.*

"To prepare the students of Catalonia to be able to develop as human beings and to communicate and so be able to face the challenges of a plural, multilingual and multicultural society in the 21st century. This means educating the boys and girls to develop those communicative competences that make it possible for them to act and excel in their enviornment, as well as constructing the basis of citizenship, of knowledge of the human condition, of the understanding of others."

(Decree, 142/2007 DOGC núm. 4915:1)

Consequently, Castilian and Catalan language, as content subjects, together with Catalan and Castilian literature are allocated a total of 1,085 hours at primary level (Catalan language and literature: 420 hours, Castilian language and literature: 420 hours and common linguistic structures: 245 hours). The foreign language or L3 is assigned a total of 420 hours (Decree, 142/2007 DOGC núm. 4915).

The distribution of hours per cycle is as follows[221]:

- In the Elementary Cycle**[222], 1st and 2nd class (ages 6 to 8), Catalan and Castilian are taught for a total of 385 hours, 140 for the teaching of Catalan language and literature; and 140 hours for the teaching of Castilian language and literature. The remaining 105 hours are allocated for the teaching of common content and linguistic structures. The foreign language receives a total of 70 hours in this cycle.

- In the Intermediate Cycle**[223], 3rd and 4th class (ages 8 to 10), 140 hours are allocated to the teaching of Catalan language and literature, which is the same for the teaching of Castilian language and literature. However, the number of hours for common linguistic structures is 70.The foreign language receives a total of 105 hours in this cycle.

- In the Upper Cycle**[224], the distribution of hours for the acquisition of Castilian and Catalan is as for the Intermediate Cycle. However, the foreign language receives a higher number of hours than in the other cycles: 140.

Additionally, the Generalitat gives primary schools the option of using part of the 140 free hours at their disposal between the Intermediate and the Upper Cycle to increase the number of contact hours in the foreign language by one hour per week. There is also the possibility that this extra hour could be used for the reinforcement of oral skills (Decree, 142/2007 DOGC núm. 4915:1). It is worth noting

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[221] See Appendix 4.17.
[222] *Cicle Inicial.*
[223] *Cicle Mitjà.*
[224] *Cicle Superior.*

that, in primary education, the teaching of one foreign language has moved from grade 3 to grade 1 with the approval of the LOCE and that, with the aim of following the recommendations of the Council of Europe, three levels of proficiency in languages have been established: basic, intermediate and advanced. Additionally, it is important to remember the requirement that all schools design their School Language Plan** according to their sociolinguistic reality. It is in this regard advised in the guidelines given in the Primary School Curriculum to use a communicative approach for the teaching and learning of languages, creating situations that resemble real life as much as possible. The aim is to educate children to respect other languages, extending their vision to a wider world beyond that of the academic school environment (Decree, 142/2007 DOGC núm.4915).

4.4.1.4.1. English, first foreign language in education in Catalonia

In Catalonia, as in the rest of Spain, English is the language chosen as first foreign language in education. The region is working towards a system that, as well as supporting the acquisition of the two official languages of the community, takes into account the importance of openness to other countries and cultures, for reasons such as tourism and trade. Fundamental to this ideology, the learning of third languages and the construction of a multilingual society is seen as a cornerstone for economic growth in the region. For this reason, the Catalan Government is determined to produce trilinguals with Spanish, Catalan and English by the end of the compulsory education period, although there are some new initiatives that promote the learning of a fourth language, such as French (some primary schools have already included the learning of French in the two last years of primary education) (Avui, 2007).

The teaching of English in Catalonia, as in the rest of Spain, has traditionally posed a great deal of difficulty due to the lack of qualified English teachers and native speakers. During the 1980s and 1990s, although primary and secondary students were already receiving instruction in English for a number of hours a week, the competency of teachers in English was very poor, especially their oral competency. This contributed to the use of the grammar-translation method in the majority of schools around the region and country. English was not spoken in class. There were no oral or listening activities. All instruction was based on the learning of grammatical structures and the subsequent practice of "fill the gap" types of exercises.

During the 1990s, students and parents, realised the importance of knowing English at international level. Aware of the poor results attained at school, students began attending after-school private English schools, where the communicative approach was used and there was a very strong presence of native speakers. The popularity of these schools increased very quickly, so much so that the British Council began offering support for the teaching of English in Spain in the form of a wide variety of

materials. Its examination system (Cambridge ESOL) was regarded (and still is) as having a very good reputation worldwide (Reichelt, 2006).

At present, however, pre-service and in-service preparation of foreign language teachers[225] has greatly improved. University degrees are designed in the use of the most up to date teaching methodologies and future language teachers are encouraged to spend time in the country of the target foreign language before qualifying, even though this is not mandatory.

Furthermore, the Catalan Department of Education has introduced several in-service schemes to help language teachers attain language proficiency and to train a significantly large number of teachers to teach content subjects in a third language, given the current tendency to implement CLIL in schools (see section below).

The instruction of English in Catalonia is mandatory in first year of primary education (6 years of age) under the Organic Law of Quality of Education of 2002**[226] but due to the popularity that English enjoys in Catalonia, as in the rest of Spain, and the benefits associated with it, the majority of schools offer it from the age of three. This has created a public debate among parents and educationalists. Some people see the benefits of an early introduction to English for they believe in the rule "the earlier the better". Others, especially teachers, question the possible negative effects that learning two new languages (for those children who do not have Catalan as L1 and are of course attending immersion education) may have on language development of children, as will be seen in the Findings chapter.

All in all, English is, in Catalonia, as in Spain and in today's world, the language to know to be part of the knowledge society and of a globalised world. Mobility of workers and increased trade depend on the creation of a workforce of people with a high standard of English. This is in accordance with the declaration made by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans on 21st October 2004 *Social use of the Catalan language***[227]. In this document, two main points are argued regarding the role of English within Catalan society. Firstly, it predicts that the new linguistic order of the future will imply the extinction of a good number of small languages, especially the weaker ones and those that have not adapted to modern times and are not in receipt of institutional support. Secondly, it anticipates that English will be a global language, used especially in international communications and research. These observations

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[225] In Catalonia, the Bachelor in Education provides the preparation for student teachers to be class teachers in all subjects except for physical education, English, music, special needs and pre-school, which require specialisation. In order to be specialised, student teachers need to take a specific number of modules in their Bachelor degree.

[226] *Ley orgánica 10/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de Calidad de la Educación.*

[227] *L'ús social de la llengua catalana. Declaració de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans.* Approved on 21st October 2004.

bring experts in the field to the conclusion that, in order to survive such an imminent reality, Catalan needs to position itself as a strong language in all territories where it is currently spoken, and popular support is mandatory to maintain it as a normalised language.

4.4.1.4.2 Current projects for the promotion of foreign language learning/ multilingualism

The number of projects on language teaching and learning has increased in recent years. Congruent with the philosophy of the Catalan Government for the promotion of multilingualism, the CRLE[228] or Foreign Languages Resource Centre**, recently absorbed by the new CIREL[229] or Support Centre for Innovation and Educational Research in Languages** launched a new project in October 2005, namely the Foreign Languages Project (FLP)**[230]. This project commenced with 70 primary schools and 30 secondary schools in an initial three-year cycle.

The idea is rooted in another project in which some Catalan schools had previously been involved: the Orator project. This project, which was implemented between 1999 and 2004 under the initiative of the Catalan Department of Education, introduced a foreign language through the teaching of a content subject (CLIL). In 2001 there were eight primary schools participating in the Orator project, with a total of 650 pupils (Muñoz, 2001:66).

The Foreign Languages Project has been a very ambitious project, designed to give a new direction to the teaching and learning of languages within the school. With the aim of encouraging schools to participate in the project, a donation of €2000 is made to every school involved, to be used for the acquisition of some of the materials suggested by the project leaders. Some schools are also granted "half a teaching post". Also, although the project areas have been slightly changed from the beginning they are, at present, as follows (Servei de Llengües, 2010):

At primary level:

Introduction of English during the second year of pre-school education, at the age of four, and for 2 hours/week.

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[228] *Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres.*
[229] *Centre de Suport a la Innovació i la Recerca Educativa en Llengües.*
[230] *Pla Experimental de Llengües Estrangeres.*

Implementation of the foreign language (English or French) for 3 hours/week in primary school. One of the sessions at all levels will take only half of the class and will focus on oral skills.

Teaching and learning of content subjects in the Upper Cycle through English, involving a minimum of 1 hour/week.

Introduction of a second foreign language in the Upper Cycle, with a minimum allocation of 1.5 hours/week.

At second level:

Teaching and learning of all or part of the content of one subject of the curriculum through the foreign language.

Work on projects that involve the use of the foreign language.

Improvement of the students' oral competence.

In the school year 2010-2011 this project was in its fifth phase, with 208 primary and 95 secondary schools taking part in it. Given the success of the project (a total of 1345 schools have been involved since 2005) it is the intention of the Government to extend it to all schools in Catalonia by 2015, which will have an impact on future language policy.

Given the magnitude of the FLP project, participating teachers now avail of the opportunity to receive specific training in CLIL methodologies through the AICLE[231] (Teaching and learning of non-linguistic Curriculum subjects in a foreign language**). Organised in 8 sessions of 2 hours' duration and 9 hours of personal work, teachers receive a certificate after completion of such training.

More recently, with the aim of complementing the Foreign Languages Project, the Plan to Promote Third Languages (PTL)**[232] and the Plan for Promoting the Learning of English (PPL)**[233] were also introduced. It has been decided, in response to the PTL, to train teachers so that they are able to teach third languages; not only English, as has been the practice until now, but also French, German and Italian. Although it is clear that the preference is still for the teaching and learning of English, it is intended to offer a wider range of languages.

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[231] *Ensenyament i aprenentatge de continguts d'una àrea no lingüística del currículum en llengua estrangera.*
[232] *Pla d'impuls de les terceres llengües.*
[233] *Pla d'impuls de l'aprenentatge de l'anglès.*

The PPL, carried out from 2006-2010 initially and with a budget of €221.3 million euros, was mainly focused on improving teachers' competency in the English language (particularly their oral skills) and knowledge of teaching methodologies, especially for teaching content subjects through English. A total of 4,500 primary school teachers have been trained so far. Actions include in-service training courses for teachers in their local education centres; two-week courses in England or other English-speaking countries; participation in the Comenius programme and attendance at courses of the Official Language Schools**[234], as well as agreements for joint co-operation between universities (Servei de Llengües, 2010). Through the Plan to promote English learning**[235], *2007-2015* it is expected that by 2015 a total of 12,200 primary school teachers will be capable of teaching content in English. At second level, 3,000 teachers have taken part in this training. Since the starting age for learning English is expected to be lowered to three, the intention is to reduce the student teacher ratio by 50%. A considerable number of language assistants have also been included in the plan (Servei de Llengües, 2010). In total, it is expected that, by 2015:

a) Students finishing their studies at Catalan Leaving Certificate level or Vocational Education will have acquired the knowledge level equivalent to 4th year of the Official Language School (equivalent to B2 level of CEFR).

b) A total of 15,000 primary and secondary school teachers will be trained to teach English.

c) There will be 4,500 teachers trained to teach their content subject through English.

<div align="right">(Departament d'Educació, 2007)</div>

It is estimated that between 2008 and 2010 there was an increase of 27.2% in the number of teachers adequately trained for the teaching of content in English or in another third language (from 6,758 to 8,595) (See Appendix 4.20).

In addition to the emphasis placed by the Government on investment in the training of highly-skilled teachers and the promotion of English within the school context, a number of additional activities have been proposed for students outside of school hours, i.e. participation in the *The Fonix*, which is privately sponsored and open to all primary school students from 5th and 6th class and consists of a writing competition in English with prices including summer camps in Catalan locations or in English-speaking countries, textbooks, etc.

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[234] *Escola Oficial d'Idiomes (EOI).*
[235] *Pla d'impuls de l'aprenentatge de l'anglès .*

Another similar project is the Linguapax Project, which was introduced in 1991 by the Catalan Department of Education in collaboration with UNESCO. It works for the promotion of linguistic diversity in regions all over the world, protecting endangered languages and conducting research in multiculturalism and multilingualism, as well as focusing on the preparation of teachers and the development of teaching materials. Since it was created, Linguapax has been extended to all five continents of the world; establishing collaboration agreements with a large number of organisations that share the same ideas (Linguapax, 2010).

Finally, the Integrated Foreign Languages Plan**[236] was launched in the academic year 2012. It is open to a total of 170 schools, including primary schools, as well as secondary and vocational schools. It offers funding (€3,000) for 2-year projects associated with increasing the time of exposure of the students to first and second foreign languages within the school curriculum, with a view to encouraging the development of innovative cross-curricular activities thus allowing for greater use of the spoken language.

4.5. Chapter conclusions

The Catalonia of today can be defined as a vibrant region of socially and politically involved citizens who, in principle, have fully recovered their rights, notwithstanding some disagreements with the Spanish central government, which remain to be resolved.

Catalonia is nowadays recognised for its unique character, that of a Mediterranean province that has been shaped through centuries of invasions and the arrival of people from many different origins. It is therefore not new for the Catalan people to mix with other cultures. Seen as a positive contribution to its multicultural nature, the region continues to improve its policy towards newcomers so as to integrate them into Catalan customs, culture and language.

Undoubtedly, there exists a tradition among Catalans of differentiating themselves from the rest of Spain because of their traditions and language. If each region in Spain praises itself for having its own traditions, and this is one of the most attractive points of Spanish culture, regional languages are only present in part of the territory and this is something that causes many different reactions, inside and outside these regions, among speakers and non-speakers of minority languages, protectors and detractors of a multilingual Spain.

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[236] *Pla Integrat de Llengües Estrangeres* or (PILE).

Whereas all regions in Spain where regional languages are spoken have put a great deal of effort into writing their Statutes of Autonomy and in developing policies that foster the use of these languages, the Basque country and Catalonia are especially known in the international sphere for their approach to the matter. Catalans are known for using dialogue and the power of their strong economy as the two main weapons for success. Also, the charismatic figure of Jordi Pujol and his almost twenty-five years as a leader of the region have defined Catalan politics and society in a very particular way, highly influenced by ideas related to the restoration of civil rights, construction of national identity and use of Catalan as a sign of personal identification. Pujol's strong views of Catalan, not "only as a means of communication but as a deep sign of identity that guarantees the continuity of a culture and of the sense of collectiveness" have consequently inspired all language policies developed in Catalonia since the re-introduction of Democracy. In this regard, the introduction of early total immersion in all schools in Catalonia was conducted under the principle of inclusion and preservation: inclusion, as a synonym of integration of all children of non-Catalan origin into Catalan culture and society and with the aim of providing them with equal opportunities in their future; preservation, as related to the protection and maintenance of the Catalan language and the pursuit of its linguistic *normalisation.*

Strong and consistent institutional support, as described in this chapter, has been crucial for the implementation of the language immersion programme in all schools throughout the region. Pujol's vision of the language, in line with that of many pedagogues and educationalists, was fundamental in developing a discourse that has reached and inspired many other contexts in similar circumstances, based on maintaining strong policies that protect the language at all levels, from administration to education and that guarantee its continuation as a language of transmission within the family. Equally, individuals and language support groups interested in the cause of Catalan proclaim the value of enhancing self-esteem and cultural identity.

Since the implementation of the language immersion programme in schools and the application of language policies, i.e. Language Policy Law, the number of Catalan speakers has greatly increased and is extraordinarily healthy when compared to figures from the 1970s. Despite difficulties posed by the high percentage of newcomers in the region, Catalan is today a language of prestige inside and outside Catalonia. Also positive are the attitudes towards the Catalan language and Catalan speakers, with an important number of Catalans who support language maintenance and bilingualism.

Analysis of the measures adopted by the Catalan Government directed towards the normalisation of the language and of their effect within society have thus been pivotal in this chapter. However, as has become evident, there is also a strong emphasis on the education of multilingual citizens, with a special focus on the learning of English, given its current position as *lingua franca.* For this reason, I have

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provided a detailed account of the actions taken to adapt the school Curriculum, especially at primary level, so as to maximise the time of exposure of students to third and even a fourth foreign language from an early age. With this, a high level of innovation in language teacher training and language teaching methodologies has also emerged as fundamental to the achievement of multilingualism among students. Furthermore, I have identified a large number of ongoing new language projects, and the associated substantial funding allocated by the Catalan Department of Education to language learning.

Additionally, I have given evidence of the quality of the Catalan model of education. As discussed in the chapter, Spain is ranked quite low in international education tests such as PISA, with the overall results showing lower results than the OECD average. Catalonia, however, has been shown to perform at a higher level than Spain and the OECD average, an indication of the high quality of the education system and of the bilingual model of education. Nonetheless, on closer inspection of the results, Catalan students still perform at a much lower level than countries renowned for the quality of their education by the end of compulsory education. At primary level, national and regional studies have also positioned Catalonia above the Spanish average and have shown the advances made in education in recent years, despite poor student performance at a high level, as well as considerably high numbers of students performing at the lowest levels.

Notwithstanding this evidence and the challenge associated with the results discussed above, the Catalan model of education, based on early total immersion in Catalan and currently with an orientation towards integrating foreign languages through non-language content subjects, has progressed enormously in the last thirty years. It is a clear example of the success of a Government in protecting its language against the threat of diglossia or a complete substitution by a more powerful language, without forgetting the benefits of globalisation and multilingualism. Nonetheless, recent attemps made by the Spanish central government to impose new rules and laws in education that jeopardise the Catalan model of education and the continuation of the immersion programme have raised the alarm among all sections of society with the fear that its intention is the annihilation of the Catalan language.

In summary, I have found that there are seven aspects of the Catalan model of education or *escola catalana* that serve as examples of good practice for Ireland. These relate to the main areas listed below:

a.- Language policy for social integration

b.- Implementation of language policy linked to institutional support

c.- Total early immersion education in Catalan and partial immersion education in an L3 for social inclusion and language preservation

d.- Specific training programmes for teachers and language teachers

e.- Development of adequate resources for language teaching

f.- In-service training of teachers through the minority language

g.- Regular evaluation of educational programmes at regional and national level

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY FOR THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is a description of the methodologies used to generate data in relation to second and third language acquisition in European countries and, more specifically, Ireland and Catalonia. As explained in the introduction of this thesis, the central point of this research is to compare language policy developments in Catalonia and Ireland with a view to developing a primary education system in the latter that integrated Irish and foreign languages and that is in line with the actions of the European Union. The interdisciplinary nature of this research, which revolves around different themes, i.e. education, national and European language policy and language history, has made difficult the task of designing a research methodology that links all these areas in an effective way that contributed to building bridges among them. Nonetheless, globalisation has caused comparative studies to be widely used in recent times. There is now the need to learn how other countries operate and to identify examples of good practice that can be adapted and used elsewhere. The exchange of goods, labour force and the internationalisation of markets have influenced this desire to establish patterns of use and practice that can help improve existing models. While the standardisation of practices across the world is almost a necessity at present, it is also imperative that each society preserves its own character. This is pointed out by Oyen (1992:1), who, based on Sztompka, explains the positives and negatives of comparing different cultural settings: "While some cultural differences are diminishing, others are becoming more salient. Comparative research may have to shift its emphasis from seeking uniformity among variety to studying the preservation of enclaves of uniqueness among growing homogeneity and uniformity".

Given the benefits associated with comparative studies, a study of this nature could help to explain how the education systems in Ireland and Catalonia differ and whether the current policy is appropriate.

Therefore, Catalonia was chosen for being internationally recognised as a long-term successful case in the implementation of language policy that works in the maintenance of a minoritised language as well

as in the inclusion of third (and even fourth) languages in the Pre and Primary School Curriculum. The similarity between Catalonia and Ireland lies in the fact that in both countries a minority and a majority language cohabit as official languages at present and that in both cases the need to develop a multilingual society, where languages other than the official languages are mastered, has been identified. Additionally, despite the fact that the history of both Catalonia and Ireland would appear to be different at first sight, on closer inspection there are many historical events relating to policy and politics that, although they took place at different times, have influenced the evolution of the languages in similar ways.

Singleton and Straits (2005:220) consider comparative, cross-cultural or cross-national studies as "equivalent surveys that are conducted in different countries". Bryman (2001:51) employs the concept of comparative design as:

> "…the study using more or less identical methods of two contrasting cases. It embodies the logic of comparison in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations […] One of the more obvious forms of such research is in cross-cultural or cross-national research".

On the basis of this, this thesis can be considered to be a cross-cultural or cross-national study. Firstly, it seeks to raise awareness of the latest developments in research on second language acquisition and language policy at European level; secondly, it seeks to elicit information and gain awareness of the similarities and differences in the primary sector in Ireland and Catalonia regarding bilingual education and third language instruction. Thirdly, I seek to assess the effectiveness of further developing the Primary School Curriculum in Ireland in order to integrate early third language learning through immersion education based on the experience of Catalonia.

The study gave special consideration to the aims generally associated with bilingual language immersion schools (Bostwick, 2004:2):

1. To achieve competency in the foreign language (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
2. To acquire the same L1 language art skills as students in regular schools
3. To master content area skills and concepts
4. To gain a greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

The conditions that the Ottawa Board of Education (O.B.E) (1996) established to facilitate second language learning were also taken into account:

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1. An early start, during children's *optimal age* for language learning
2. Intensive exposure to the language over an extended period
3. Use of the language for (non trivial) communication.

(Ottawa Board of Education, 1996:6)

Finally, the definition of immersion that Genesee gives in his book *Learning through two languages: studies in immersion and bilingual education*, published in 1987, was also relevant in the study:

"At least 50 percent of instruction during a given academic year must be provided through the second language for the program to be regarded as immersion. Programs in which one subject and language arts are taught through the second language are generally identified as enriched second language programmes".

(Genesee, 1987:1, in Bostwick, 2004)

It is very important in comparative research to establish validity, to ensure that the meanings of the different results from the processes followed in the study do not lead to any kind of misjudgement, which normally originates from the use of a single method (Le Compte et al., 1992; Hardy and Bryman, 2004; Fink, 2010). In general terms, every research method can generate a particular type of data, which can have some advantages but also limitations. "Each technique addresses a different aspect of the phenomenon. The use of complementary methods also reveals discrepancies that a single technique might not" (Kane and O'Reilly, 2001:108). The use of a single method can bring a lack of quality to the results in an investigation. For this reason, social researchers normally adopt different methods of investigation to analyse possible misunderstandings and as a way of improving the quality of the research. This is known as triangulation (Neuman, 2003; Fink 2010)[237].

Triangulation involves the use of different sources of data collection to "test hypotheses and measure variables" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000:189). Triangulation is also used to observe the consistency of the results obtained in all the different data collection methods used in a study (see Schensul et al., 1999:5-6).

"Methodological triangulation is when you use more than one technique to get the same information. Interviewing, administering a questionnaire, observing, and examining documents on the same phenomenon provide stronger information than using a single technique".

(Kane and O'Reilly, 2001:108)

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[237] For an extensive discussion on the types of triangulation, see Cohen and Manion (1994), pp. 233-251.

To ensure that the data collected in this study would produce findings with a high level of validity different data collection strategies were utilised. The results from the different methods would have to show similar conclusions in order to establish that the research had not been biased (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Bryman (2001:447) explains that, normally, "quantitative research is reinforced by the use of qualitative research, or vice versa".

In this regard, the critical issues affecting Ireland and Catalonia were going to be explored from two different perspectives. We must remember that these issues are related to the following main areas of research:

a.- Factors involved in first and second language learning

b.- Benefits of early/late second language learning

c.- Benefits associated with immersion education

d.- Teacher pre/in-service training

e.- Curriculum development (time allocation)

f. - Language policy development

g.- Institutional support

h.- Role of languages in the community

In the first instance, this thesis looks at language history and policy in Ireland and Catalonia and conducts an analysis of them (Chapters 3 and 4). Secondly, by conducting a survey study consisting of qualitative and quantitative data it provides new empirical research on the issues highlighted in the literature review. This empirical work captures the attitudes of teachers on language teaching and multilingual education contexts. Given the theoretical approach of the historical analysis, a study of teacher opinion would provide the researcher with an inside view of current issues and therefore be a very useful complementary research method of triangulation. Consequently, two different sets of personal interviews were used in Ireland and Catalonia with principals and primary foreign language teachers. The main focus of these was to elicit principals' and teachers' views on the issues involved in the introduction and implementation of third language learning in schools with early total immersion education (Gaelscoileanna and Catalan primary schools). Secondly, two sets of questionnaires were also issued; one to Gaelscoileanna and schools participating in the Modern Languages in the Primary School Initiative in Ireland; the other set of questionnaires was sent to schools participating in the Foreign Languages Project (Phase I) (2005-2008) in Catalonia. The questionnaires allowed access to a large number of teachers who were involved in immersion education and foreign language teaching and

whose experience would provide data to support the viability or otherwise of introducing a third language at primary level in Ireland from an early age.

5.2. Survey study in Ireland and Catalonia. Research framework

As this research is based on the comparison of two different education systems, the results obtained in a survey conducted in both settings (Ireland and Catalonia) would allow the researcher to cross-check the opinions on early implementation of trilingual education of the respondents (teachers and principals). As indicated by Babbie (1998:256): "Surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population". Also, the use of the same instruments of data collection in both countries facilitated a better understanding and comparison of the current situation (Hardy and Bryman, 2004).

In the design of the survey, Bryman's approach (2001) was followed:

> "Social survey research comprises a cross-sectional design in relation to which data are collected predominantly by questionnaire or by structured interview in more than one case (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect patterns of association".

(Bryman, 2001: 42)

Consequently, a survey study consisting of quantitative and qualitative research was conducted in both contexts, in the form of both closed and open questions.

> "The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured, in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. […] Quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes".

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:4)

In survey research, there are three main methods usually used in the collection of data. These are: personal interviews, telephone interviews and direct mail survey. While interviews provide qualitative data, direct mail survey provides quantitative data. Nonetheless, they both allow for the collection of data quickly and effectively (Babbie, 1998; Hardy and Bryman, 2004).

The research methods used for the collection of data in both Ireland and Catalonia were personal and group-focused interviewing, and direct mail survey. These methods were chosen because of the advantages of using different approaches in survey research by means of triangulation, as explained above. In the case of the personal interview, this research technique is known for having considerable advantages and disadvantages: on the positive side, it "provides the most complete contact with respondents because face-to-face interaction permits both audible and visual communication with respondents" (Alreck and Settle, 1995: 33) and allows for greater exploration of survey findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). On the negative side, interviews can only be conducted on a small scale. Also, according to Cohen and Manion (1994), "it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer". In this regard, the interviewee may feel, at some points of the interview, threatened by, for instance, the attitude of the interviewer, or could also give conditioned answers depending on the form of questions asked (See Judd et al., 1991:216; Le Compte et al., 1992).

> "The use of a mail questionnaire reduces biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers and variability in their skills. Personal interview situations are fraught with possibilities for bias because of the nature of the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent".

> (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000:207)

In the present study, it was only possible to reach a limited number of people through personal interviewing, in a specific geographical area, i.e. in the South-West of Ireland, which meant that not all of the subjects appointed for the survey study would be able to participate. The use of questionnaires therefore helped to gather valid information on a larger scale, as mail survey allows access to a wide range of participants (Alreck, 1995; Babbie, 1998). Additionally, the use of a questionnaire was identified as appropriate for reasons of anonymity in order to find an answer to the research questions underlined in the literature and to gain knowledge of the attitudes of a geographically dispersed population of teachers (Borg and Gall, 1983).

Cohen and Manion (1994:283) give us a list of advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires over interviews:

Advantages:

1. It tends to be more reliable.

2. Because it is anonymous, it encourages greater honesty.

3. It is more economical than the interview in terms of time and money.

4. There is the possibility that it may be mailed.

Limitations:

1. There is often too low a percentage of returns.

2. The interviewer is able to answer questions concerning both the purpose of the interview and any misunderstandings experienced by the interviewee, for it sometimes happens in the case of the latter that the same questions have different meanings for different people.

3. If only closed items are used, the questionnaire will be subject to the weaknesses already discussed.

4. If only open items are used, respondents may be unwilling to write their answers for one reason or another.

5. Questionnaires present problems to people of limited literacy.

6. An interview can be conducted at an appropriate speed whereas questionnaires are often filled in hurriedly.

Self-administered questionnaires, also known as self-completion questionnaires, were hence used in both cases: the respondents would have to complete them individually in their own time.

Self-administered questionnaires provide the person completing them with the advantage of remaining anonymous, as they do not have to face the interviewer and can feel less restricted in expressing more sincere opinions. As well as this, respondents can complete the questionnaire in their own time, and can take more time in answering those questions that require further elaboration. "Responses to attitude questions may also benefit if the subject takes ample time to consider each question carefully rather than giving the response that springs immediately to mind" (Judd et al., 1991:216).

Despite the main advantages that mail questionnaires offer (see Bryman 2001:128) there are also some disadvantages. The first one is the low rate of response (or percentage of respondents) involved. "The typical response rate for a personal interview is about 95 percent, whereas the response rate for a mail survey without follow-up is between 20 and 40 percent" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000:208). For reasons that will be explained later in this chapter, there was not going to be follow-up on the questionnaires.

The second biggest disadvantage relating to mail questionnaires that concerned the researcher was the quality of data obtained, which is normally influenced by the level of motivation of the respondent. Motivation will determine the number of questionnaires that will be fully completed. Moreover, in the case of open questions, it will influence the respondent so that he/she does not provide one-word answers. "Data quality has another aspect besides response rate: the accuracy and completeness of responses to questions. Here the key issue is the motivation of the respondent, and there are problems in creating and maintaining motivation with a written questionnaire" (Judd et al., 1991:216). When considering the possibility of a low response rate, the researcher decided to use a large sample of the

population, as explained later in this chapter. With regard to the motivation of the respondents, it was concluded that, in Ireland, the sample would involve teachers who were working in schools where foreign languages were being taught, teachers who were teaching foreign languages themselves or who were working in Gaelscoileanna. In Catalonia, the sample would involve schools that were part of the Foreign Languages Project (Phase I), conducted by the Department of Education.

As explained in the following sections of this chapter, a set of personal interviews was planned in Ireland and Catalonia as part of the qualitative analysis. These interviews were to be used to highlight the relevant issues surrounding trilingual education and would consequently precede the distribution of questionnaires. Once the information obtained in the personal interviews was analysed a questionnaire was then designed as part of the quantitative analysis, based on the outcomes obtained in the interviews.

5.2.1. Interviews

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000:213) define personal interviews as "a face-to-face, interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypothesis". Personal interviews were considered to be crucial for the type of research questions and hypotheses that this thesis had defined. As outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1998:98) in Berg (2004:83):

> "The interview is an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions and for addressing certain types of assumptions. Particularly when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events, interviewing provides a useful means of access".

To gain a greater understanding of the type of interviews that were conducted, it is first necessary to study the classification of personal interviews. According to their structure, interviews can be classified as: *schedule-structure interviews* or *focused interviews* in one group and *non-schedule-structured* or *non-directive interviews* in another group. The type of interview chosen for this research study was the *focused interview*, characterised as such because "it focuses on a respondent's subjective responses to a known situation in which she has been involved and which has been analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview. She is thereby able to use the data from the interview to substantiate or reject previously formulated hypotheses" (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

> "1. It takes place with respondents known to have been involved in a particular experience
> 2. It refers to situations that have been analyzed prior to the interview

3. It proceeds on the basis of an interview guide specifying topics related to the research hypothesis

4. It is focused on the subjects' experiences regarding the situations under study".

(Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000:215)

Following this definition of *focused interviews*, I informed the interviewees of the topic of research and of the main aspects of the study prior to their meeting. Although the interview had been structured by means of the questions that were going to be asked and the order that was going to be followed, respondents were given freedom to express their views on the topic that was being discussed. Some questions were reordered during the actual interview according to the answers that were likely to be given.

The wording of the questions was flexible, so the interviewer could formulate the question one way or another depending on the knowledge and understanding of the topic that the respondents possessed. Also, clarification on the questions was given by the interviewer when required, as a question may have different meanings for different interviewees. For example, one factor that influenced the interpretation of questions was the socio-economic background of the school/area where the interview was conducted. In those instances, the interviewer may have put one or more extra questions to the interviewees to elicit additional information (Le Compte et al., 1992; Kane and O'Reilly-De Brún, 2001).

5.2.1.1. Interviews in Ireland

In Ireland, the researcher was seeking to meet with a number of principals of Irish-medium schools to gather information on the perceptions of the school principals, firstly, on the current situation of Irish-medium primary schools with regard to the teaching of the two official languages of the country, Irish and English; and secondly, on the advantages and difficulties implied by the introduction of a third language in primary schools nation-wide. Also, it was intended to gain an understanding of any emerging issues relating to the learning of languages in the schools. Personal interviews allowed me to obtain more accurate and complete points of view. Additionally, the interviews provided information on aspects related to the schools and their principals, i.e. background, interest in the learning and preservation of Irish. There was also the possibility to develop new questions for research following some of the answers given by the respondents. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000) make an accurate observation on the advantages implied in using personal interviewing:

"An interviewer can collect supplementary information about respondents. This may include background information about the respondents' personal characteristics and their environment that can aid the researcher in interpreting the results. Moreover, an interview situation often yields spontaneous reactions that the interviewer can record and that might be useful at the data analysis stage".

(Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000:218)

5.2.1.1.1. Sampling

Berg (2004), together with authors such as Babbie (1998) and Mutchnick and Berg (1996), defines non-probability samples of population that are selected for the convenience of the researcher as convenience samples. He also establishes that "under certain circumstances, this strategy is an excellent means of obtaining preliminary information about some research question quickly and inexpensively" (Berg, 2004:36). Fink (2010), however, reminds us that this type of sampling is generally considered to be biased and not representative of the target population. In my case, as well as being used as a means of triangulation, the results obtained from the interviewing process were to be used for a more accurate design of the questionnaire that was later to be sent to a substantially larger population sample. The interviewing process was going to consist of a small-scale set of interviews, which is why it was not feasible to interview principals of schools that were located far away. Consequently, it was decided that the interviewing process would only be conducted in schools that were within easy access. Convenience sampling was hence used: a set of personal interviews would be conducted in all the Gaelscoileanna of County Limerick and in one Gaelscoil located in Ennis, Co. Clare, given the principal's involvement in the Department of Education and Skills and his vast knowledge in the field of immersion education and foreign language learning in primary education.

The reason why only Gaelscoileanna and not English medium schools were chosen is because these schools are following a program in bilingual education aimed at producing bilinguals through immersion education and are naturally interested in promoting the learning of Irish and subsequently of other languages among their staff, students and the community. Also, the model of education followed by Gaelscoileanna is very close to that proposed in this thesis for trilingual education.

5.2.1.1.2. Instruments for data collection

In September 2006 a letter was sent to seven Gaelscoileanna in Co. Limerick and to a Gaelscoil in Ennis, Co. Clare. The letter explained the researcher's background, current involvement in the topic of research and my wish to meet with the principal of the particular school for approximately 20 minutes to discuss aspects related to the teaching of languages within the schools[238].

The schools were contacted 10-15 days after the letter was sent to confirm receipt and to arrange a meeting. All except two schools were very accommodating from the outset. The researcher met with the principals of these schools over three weeks. She had prepared a series of questions that were organised in three sections: *The school*; *The principal* and *The learning of foreign languages* [239].

The interviews took place in the principals' offices during school hours. The time used for the interviews varied depending on the level of engagement of the principals, although they had been planned to last for about twenty minutes, as already mentioned above. Nevertheless, the shortest interview was of approximately forty-five minutes' duration, and the longest one and a half hours. This last interview was extended to after school hours.

Regarding the interview process, the literature shows the different names that various authors have given to the same theoretical perspective and defines the implications of the concept. Although we refer to it in this thesis as personal interviews*,* Berg (2004) reminds us of the other names also used, which are as follows: creative interviewing, defined by Douglas (1985); performance interviews*,* name used by Butler (1997) and Mienczakowski (1995, 2000); dramaturgical orientation, used by Berg himself (2004); and finally, Holstein and Gubrium presented it as active interviewing (1997). The fact is that this approach is considered to give the best results in terms of obtaining the maximum amount of information from an interview.

Once the different meanings have been clarified, it is important to define the concept (Le Compte et al., 1992). All these authors described the atmosphere and the conditions in which the interview occurs. Since the personal interview is a one-to-one encounter between the interviewer and the interviewee, the former performs as a dramaturgical interviewer with the aim of creating an appropriate, relaxed environment that encourages the exchange of information and a discussion between the two people

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[238] See Appendix 5.9. for a copy of the letter sent to principals in Gaelscoileanna and schools part of the MLPSI to take part in a personal interview.
[239] See Appendix 5.10. for a list of the questions put to principals in Gaelscoileanna as part of the personal interviews conducted in Ireland.

involved in the interview. It is important therefore that both interviewer and respondent are engaged in the interview and, consequently, in the topic being discussed.

With the objective of conducting active interviews, I used a digital Dictaphone, which allowed me to focus on the interview and on any change or adjustment of the order or wording of the questions that needed to be made as the interviews proceeded.

5.2.1.2. Interviews in Catalonia

The intention of the interview process in Catalonia was to gain an understanding of the well-functioning or otherwise of the Catalan model of education and so to elicit any relevant issues. Consequently, personal interviewing would provide the researcher with the opportunity to be on site with the teachers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) inform us that:

> "Naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological caseworkers seek to see what is natural in happenings, in settings, in expressions of value. What the researchers are unable to see for themselves is obtained by interviewing people who did see or by finding documents recording it".

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:242)

5.2.1.2.1. Sampling

The interviews conducted in Catalonia were planned under the same conditions as those undertaken in Ireland. On this occasion, however, it was decided that the interviewees would not be the principals of the schools, but specialised primary school teachers who were working in foreign language teaching.

In the Irish situation, it is not possible for teachers to specialise in foreign language teaching at primary level as this option is not on offer in the Colleges of Education[240]. As previously discussed, this leads to a situation in which any teacher, whether a class teacher, visiting teacher or any other type, who is teaching foreign languages as L3 in Irish schools, has not received any specific preparation at pre-service level for the teaching of foreign languages to primery school children. Nonetheless, those teachers who are involved in specific programs, such as the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, receive in-service training days that provide them with the opportunity to improve their teaching skills as well as an update on the latest innovations in language teaching.

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[240] In some institutions, however, such as Mary Immaculate College (Limerick), French Studies can be taken to degree level as part of the Bachelor in Education.

It was therefore considered to be more beneficial, for research purposes, to interview principals of Gaelscoileanna, who were potentially better informed and had a greater knowledge of the situation of Irish and English in the Irish-medium primary school system and the effect of the inclusion of foreign languages than, perhaps, visiting teachers.

In Catalonia, convenience sampling was chosen to decide which schools would be asked for an interview with the foreign language teacher/s. As had previously occurred in the interviews in Ireland, it was not feasible for the researcher to travel around the province of Catalonia to conduct interviews. Also, the personal interviews were the preamble of a more extensive survey study using quantitative data. For this reason, 20 schools located in the area of Barcelona were selected randomly.

5.2.1.2.2. Instruments for data collection

The interviews in Catalonia were carried out in October 2006. An explanatory letter had been sent at the end of September of the same year to 20 schools in the province of Barcelona[241]. Some of the schools were state primary schools and some were semi-private. In Ireland, schools were contacted for the first time by phone 10-15 days after initial contact was made by post.

It was noticed from the beginning that it could prove difficult to talk to either the principals of the schools or the foreign language teachers, given their heavy workload. Indeed, in most cases, I had to make several attempts before talking to someone other than the secretary of the school. Having overcome all the difficulties in the pre-interview phase, the interviewer went to the Catalan region without a clear idea of the people to be interviewed, although eventually twelve teachers from seven schools took part in the interviews, which were carried out in the Catalan language and recorded on dictaphone. Each one of the interviews was conducted in the schools themselves, generally within the school hours, even though some of them were conducted in the teachers' lunch-time. Also, all of the interviews were of different durations, probably because different groups were involved; however, the shortest interview lasted about forty-five minutes and the longest over one hour (Le Compte et al., 1992)[242].

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[241] See Appendix 5.11. for a copy of the letter (in Catalan) sent to principals in schools in Catalonia inviting foreign language teachers to be part of the personal interview process.
[242] See Appendix 5.12. for a copy of the questions put to foreign language teachers in schools in Catalonia as part of the personal interviewing process.

5.2.1.3. Limitations of the interviews

Most of the seven interviews conducted in Catalonia followed different patterns. In Ireland, however, it was much easier to follow the same interviewing model: the interviewer met one principal at a time and recorded the interview. In Catalonia, teachers were interviewed individually in only three schools. In another two schools there were two teachers, both fully qualified and working in foreign language teaching in primary education and willing to be interviewed. In a sixth school there were four teachers, all of whom had to be interviewed together due to time constraints. In this last case, I felt a bit anxious as she had not prepared for this kind of meeting with the teachers, but soon realised the benefits of having the opportunity to talk to four foreign language teachers at the same time, and came to understand that it was more like a focus group than a personal interview, as defined by Berg: "an interview style designed for small groups" (Berg, 2004:123).

Continuing with this approach, I adopted the role of moderator, for, as described by Berg (2004:123): "the moderator's job, like the standard interviewer's, is to draw out information from the participants regarding topics of importance to a given research investigation". I used the questions that had been prepared for the individual interviews to generate a debate among the teachers on multilingualism in primary schools, although specifically focused on their experiences in teaching English as a foreign language in a bilingual context. I also tried at all times to generate a relaxing atmosphere that allowed the teachers to speak openly, according to Berg's consideration of how focus group interviews need to be conducted: "the informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure is intended to encourage subjects to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes, and opinions they possess" (Berg, 2004:123).

In the last school, the person interviewed was the principal, due to confusion at internal level, who very kindly answered all the questions and was extremely co-operative in providing very valuable information for this research.

It should be pointed out that, in general, teachers did not seem to be very comfortable nor confident at the start of the interviewing process. Even though there may be many possible reasons for this discomfort, I believe that this may have happened because the majority of teachers were very conscious that I was undertaking a project in a foreign country (Ireland) and, as some of them mentioned, they were not sure how much they could contribute to the research. Nevertheless, the teachers were soon at ease and the interviews were conducted without difficulties

5.2.1.4. Ethical considerations

It was very important for me that the interviewee did not feel under pressure at any moment or that the questions intruded on their activities in the schools or in their personal lives (Borg and Gall, 1983; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994): "Ethical research requires balancing the value of advancing knowledge against the value of non-interference in the lives of others" (Neuman, 2003:119). For this reason it was made clear at the beginning of the interviews that the interviewee did not have to answer any question which he/she did not feel comfortable with. Also, the interviewees were informed that the interview was going to be recorded to facilitate *a posteriori* analysis and that the information would only be used for research purposes. In this regard, none of the people interviewed had any problem answering any of the questions that were posed to them.

5.2.1.5. Data analysis

In any research study it is said that the researcher can take two different approaches: an inductive approach or a deductive approach (Kane and O' Reilly, 2001; Neuman: 2003). In the latter, the researcher must have a very clear idea of the outcomes he/she is looking for in the investigation before the process is started. This implies that the questions for research have been clearly defined from the very beginning and that any data that does not fit into the initial research design will be rejected. It also means that the data gathered throughout the research is used to validate or discard initial hypotheses.

> "If you took a deductive approach to your research, […] you chose the problem you were going to study, and you determined exactly what you wanted to know about it. This then gave you the categories of information to be collected, and you created the questions for your survey or the treatments in your experiment. You ignored material that did not fall into these categories".

> (Kane and O'Reilly, 2001:288)

In the inductive approach, used for example in personal interviewing, the researcher is clear on the topic of research and has defined some categories, but is open to any new type of information that the interviewee could provide. For this reason, in inductive interviewing the respondent is allowed to speak more openly. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000) define the two concepts:

> "When using a deductive approach, the researcher begins with a conceptual definition, specifies indicators of the behaviour to be observed, and then standardizes and validates the resulting instrument. When implementing this approach during the course of the research, the observer assigns the observations to predefined categories at the time the observation is recorded. Conversely, the inductive approach requires the researcher to select indicators at

the first stage of data collection and to postpone the construction of conceptual definitions until a pattern is identified".

(Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias: 2000:195)

Following these definitions and taking into consideration that, as already explained in this chapter, the personal interviews were conducted as a means of extracting information from the principals in Ireland and the foreign language primary school teachers in Catalonia, it is clear that the present study followed an inductive approach: the interviews were used to generate results that could later be confirmed or refuted by comparison with the results of the quantitative data gathered (see Judd et al., 1991:25, 310).

As for the process of analysis of the data collected, this is generally divided into three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusions, and verifications (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Berg (2004:39) outlines the "need to reduce and transform qualitative data in order to make them more readily accessible, understandable and to draw out various themes and patterns". With this objective, the interviews were, firstly, recorded and stored in Annotape, a computer software designed for this purpose. The main advantage of this program is the possibility of transferring the parts of audio that have been transcribed into a word-processing program, i.e. Microsoft Word. Henceforth, through the use of Annotape all the interviews were classified and organised by indices. By this means, every interview contained several indices or named sections with the relevant data transcribed into word-text (see Kane and O'Reilly, 2001:292).

After the quantity of data had been reduced, the next step was to find consistent features in the data or patterns that were being repeated in all the interviews. "Displays may involve tables of data; tally sheets of themes; summaries or proportions of various statements, phrases, or terms; and similarly reduced and transformed grouping of data" (Berg, 2004:39). It was intended that the conclusions obtained from the interviews in Ireland could be used later when establishing comparisons with the data obtained from the interviews conducted in Catalonia. This would be accomplished by creating cross-references of key moments across the two sets of audio records and word-processed data.

Finally, the conclusions obtained after reducing and displaying the data led to the definition of hypothesis that would later be verified by establishing cross-references with the results of the questionnaires.

5.2.2. Questionnaires

5.2.2.1. Questionnaires in Ireland

5.2.2.1.1. Sampling

It was decided in the first instance that the survey study would be administered in Gaelscoileanna and schools participating in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) in the Munster region, given that the personal interviews had been conducted within this region: 50 questionnaires would be sent to Gaelscoileanna and 50 to schools which were part of the MLPSI. There were, however, only 45 Gaelscoileanna in Munster, and allowing for the fact that the percentage of responses in mail surveys is on average 30% of the total, the data obtained would not have been representative. Consequently, the survey was undertaken on a national basis, so that one hundred questionnaires were sent to each group; 200 questionnaires in total.

When selecting the sample, probability sampling and, more specifically, simple random sampling was used in order to give all sections of the population the same chance of being chosen. Under this method of sampling, "every member of the target population has a known probability of being included in the sample" (Fink, 2010). For the present research, the researcher obtained a list of all schools participating in the MLPSI and a list of all the Gaelscoileanna in Ireland[243]. Also, as a representation from all counties nationwide was intended, a proportional number of schools in each county was chosen based on percentages. For example, County Dublin received more questionnaires than County Waterford due to their greater population. Consequently, all elements of the population were given an equal and independent probability of being sampled (See Judd et al., 1991:204). In addition to this, it was preferable for the questionnaires to be answered by foreign language teachers, for they would show more expertise in the topic, although where schools did not have one, the principal would also be suitable.

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[243] It should be noted that, although 100 questionnaires were sent to Gaelscoileanna and 100 to schools randomly chosen from the list of schools participating in the MLPSI available on the Kildare Education Centre website, a number of schools sent as part of the list Gaelscoileanna were also part of the MLPSI.

5.2.2.1.2. Drafting and design of the questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire to be distributed in Ireland began in April 2006, and a first draft was issued a month later with some basic questions on foreign language learning. It was intended that the questions would cover the following issues, directly related to the thesis' research questions:

1. Points of view of stakeholders in education on the learning of foreign languages at primary level and more specifically on third language learning.
2. Emerging issues associated with the teaching of English and Irish in Irish primary schools.
3. Advantages and disadvantages of introducing a foreign language in the early years of primary education in schools in Ireland.
4. Level of achievement of those schools participating in initiatives that introduce a third language at primary school level.

The revision of the first draft of the questionnaire was conducted by asking three class teachers in a primary school in Limerick to go through the questionnaire and give their opinion on 1) its layout and 2) the typology of questions. The comments received made clear that the questionnaire had to contain a larger number of questions specifically related to each one of the research questions and that different sections had to be included. The questionnaire was then laid out in four sections: a) *The school*; b) *The foreign language teacher*; c) *Views on learning a third language* and d) *Views on early introduction of foreign language teaching*.

It was also decided that the second section of the questionnaire, *Foreign language teaching and learning in the school* would only need to be answered by the foreign language teachers, as the section contained questions related to their preparation and expertise in the teaching of foreign languages. Conditional branching was therefore used for this section, where "the branch in the flow of questions is made on condition that a certain answer is given to the preceding question" (Alreck and Settle, 1995:156).

The subsequent second draft was rather more extensive than the first draft. It contained 65 questions on 11 pages. After consulting teachers on this draft it was clear that it contained a number of irrelevant questions and that the response rate would be very small if it were not shortened.

The third draft of the questionnaire was produced in October 2006, when the interviewing process was finished and the researcher had obtained the first results from the interviews. The data already gathered in the interviews with the principals of Gaelscoileanna was hence greatly taken into account. This was quite significant in relation to the emerging issues that schools were encountering on a daily basis, especially those related to Irish, English and the potential introduction of a foreign language. In this

way, it was possible to focus the questions and to reduce the questionnaire to a more appropriate length. A final fourth draft was produced at the end of October 2006.

The final number of questions was 42 for the questionnaires sent to Gaelscoileanna[244] and 44 for schools belonging to the MLPSI[245]. The new questionnaire lay-out meant that all the questions could be printed on two double-sided pages. The questionnaires, together with a cover letter[246], were sent out to the 200 schools in the first week of November 2006.

5.2.2.1.3. Design of the questions

As already mentioned, the questionnaire issued in Ireland was organised in four sections, organised by topic. The first section, *The school*, comprised ten questions which referred to the type of school, its size and involvement in the teaching of foreign languages. These questions applied to all respondents. The second section, *The foreign language teacher*, contained 16 questions related to the experience and level of professional preparation of the person in the school teaching foreign languages, where applicable. There were also a few questions concerning the type of materials/resources available for use in the classroom.

The first two sections formed the introductory part of the questionnaire. Almost all the questions used in these first two sections, except for two, were closed questions, whereas the following two sections of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions[247]. The reasoning behind the use of open-ended questions is because, as pointed by Cohen and Manion (1994:277) they have some significant advantages:

> "They are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge; they encourage co-operation and help establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes".

The layout of the questionnaire had been planned this way because closed questions would place the respondent in one specific category, which would provide the researcher with a specific idea as to the

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[244] See Appendix 5.1. for a sample of the Questionnaire on the learning of foreign languages in primary schools in Ireland, sent to Gaelscoileanna.

[245] See Appendix 5.2. for a sample of the Questionnaire on the learning of foreign languages in primary schools in Ireland, sent to schools part of the MLPSI.

[246] Appendix 5.13. contains the cover letter sent to Gaelscoileanna and schools part of the MLPSI.

[247] See Appendix 5.4. for a list of research questions on the open questions in questionnaires in Gaelscoileanna and schools part of the MLPSI.

nature of the respondent. Open-ended questions would give freedom to the respondent to explain his/her attitudes.

> "A mailed questionnaire usually yields the most reliable information when closed questions are used, when the order in which questions are answered is unimportant, and when the questions and format are simple and straightforward".

> (Singleton and Straits, 2005:243)

The closed questions were multiple-choice questions with single response. Alreck and Settle (1995:115) describe these two types of questioning:

> "Multiple-choice questions are very common because they are simple and versatile. They can be used to obtain either a single response or several. In the multiple-response case, the respondents can indicate one or more alternatives, and they are instructed to check any within the question, itself. (…) However, when only one alternative is to be singled out from among several by the respondent, the item is a multiple-choice, but a single-response item. No "ties" are allowed and the respondent is supposed to pick only one".

The third section of the questionnaire, *The learning of a third language*, included a total of seven questions, some of them open-ended, and some multiple choice of the single-response type. These questions required responses and perceptions on attitudes and the predisposition of students and parents towards the learning of a third language.

The last section, *Early introduction of foreign language teaching*, incorporated five questions. All of these were open-ended and specifically focused on the topic of research. It was expected that the respondents would have sufficient space to express their opinions on the early learning of foreign languages without the need to choose from specified answers, but with the freedom to use their own words to answer spontaneously.

> "The greatest advantage of the open question is the freedom the respondent has in answering. The resulting material may be a veritable gold mine of information, revealing respondents' logic or thought processes, the amount of information they possess, and the strength of their opinions and feelings".

> (Singleton and Straits, 2005:267)

It is also to be noted that all the questions were direct questions, as it was the goal of the researcher that the respondent have a clear idea of what they were being asked. For the same reason, it was intended that the items (questions) be as short as possible in all questionnaires (Irish and Catalan), so that they would be easy to understand.

5.2.2.2. Questionnaires in Catalonia

5.2.2.2.1. Sampling

The type of respondents targeted for the completion of the questionnaire in Catalonia was schools in the region that were part of the Foreign Languages Project (Phase I), conducted by the Catalan Department of Education. In 2006, when this survey study was being conducted, there were already two groups of schools. The first group, with 78 schools in total, commenced the project in 2005 and was part of the Phase I of the project, which was planned to last for three years. The second group started a year later, in 2006 and comprised Phase II of the project, which would also be subject to review at the end of the third school year.

Prior to acceptance on the Foreign Language Project, the schools involved prepared a detailed proposal of the type of project they were going to conduct and went through an in-depth process of selection by the Department of Education in Catalonia, which eventually selected a total of 78 schools for Phase I of the project. For our investigation, only schools in Phase I were selected given the fact that they had been already participating in the project for a full school year[248]. It was therefore understood that these teachers would have a greater level of expertise on the topic of foreign language teaching in immersion education contexts. Consequently, schools in Phase II would not be surveyed due to their inexperience of the project. It was decided that the sample design would include the entire population involved: the questionnaires were going to be sent to all the schools participating in Phase I. Therefore, there was no sampling involved.

5.2.2.2.2. Drafting and design of the questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire in Catalonia was started in May 2006 with a draft containing those questions related to the research questions that had arisen in the first stages of research, such as:

1. Level and nature of pre-service training of primary foreign language teachers in Catalonia.
2. Opportunities to engage in in-service courses.
3. Level of achievement of trilingual education in Catalonia. Identification of advantages and disadvantages.

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[248] The questionnaires in Catalonia were also sent to the seven schools that had participated in the interviewing process.

4. Opinions on the early introduction of third language acquisition based on the teachers' own experiences.

5. Role of the foreign language in the curriculum with regard to Catalan and Spanish. Benefits and disadvantages of teaching three languages in the primary education years. Role of the Department of Education.

The first draft of the questionnaire was issued in June 2006 and included five sections: a) *School profile*; b) *Foreign language teaching and learning in the school*; c) *Views on bilingual education*; d) *Views on the learning of a third language* and e) *Views on early introduction of foreign language teaching.*

The questionnaire sent to primary schools in Catalonia was as similar as possible in structure to those questionnaires used in Ireland, specifically in relation to the division in sections and the type of questions that were asked. This was done in order to allow the researcher to make an accurate comparison between the education systems in both countries and to extract examples of best practice from Catalonia that could be transferred to the Irish context.

As the total draft contained too many questions on nine pages, it was clear that few teachers would answer all of it, which is why it was then decided to reduce the length and to reorganise the questions. After making some changes, a second draft was produced two months later, including a new section: *Bilingual education*, which included a new set of questions. However, given the length of the resulting questionnaire it was believed that there were too many sections and that it would be more convenient to include the questions of the *Bilingual education* section with those of the *The learning of a third language* section.

The third and final draft was produced in November 2006, after the personal interviews had been conducted in Catalonia and the first results had been obtained. It included a new section: *The foreign languages project*, with questions related to the project carried out in the region (Catalonia) on the introduction of English as a third language under four different headings[249].

5.2.2.2.3. Design of the questions

In describing the construction of the questionnaire, it is important to explain the distribution of the questions. In the first section, *The school*, there were four questions, which aimed to define the person who was answering the questionnaire and the type of school he/she was representing. The second

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[249] See Appendix 5.3. for a sample of the Questionnaire on the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools in Catalonia.

section, *Foreign language teaching and learning in the school*, contained fifteen questions aimed at providing information on aspects that involved the foreign language teacher's daily practice. Other questions relating to the students and the school were also included. The third section, *Views on the foreign language project*, comprised nine questions exclusively aimed at gaining knowledge on the outcome of this fairly new project, especially in relation to the benefits teachers and students are gaining from it. The eleven questions of the third section were more orientated towards bilingual education and the question of third language learning. The fourth and last section, however, *Views on early introduction of foreign language learning*, had five very specific questions on the teachers' views on early foreign language learning.

The questionnaire in Catalonia had a combination of open-ended questions and closed questions. As in the case of Ireland, the first three sections contained a majority of closed and direct questions, whereas in the last two sections there were a number of indirect questions, most of them being open-ended[250]. Some of the closed questions were multiple-choice with single response, and some, multiple-choice with multiple response, where the respondent could choose more than one answer.

5.2.2.3. Instruments for data collection

Given that the main instrument used for the collection of quantitative data was a questionnaire, factors such as the length of the questionnaire, the type of mailing or the style used had to be taken into consideration as part of the design process. It was also important that the questions were laid out in a way that attracted the maximum possible number of respondents who completed the response task. Ancillary instrumentation, i.e. a cover letter, was also used. The cover letter relating to the questionnaire was one page long, containing information on my background, the topic of research and the need to undertake research in the field. It explained the type of respondent that was required and gave some instructions for completing the questionnaire and sending it back. It also provided contact details in case any clarification was required.

With regard to the language used in both, the cover letter and the questionnaire, although it was understood that the teachers and principals could be more or less familiar with the teaching of foreign languages, it was more than likely that most of them would not be familiar with the theoretical approach and with specific concepts that were implied. For this reason, the questions were composed using simple grammatical sentences in general and simple core vocabulary, so all the respondents could understand the meaning of the questions.

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[250] See Appendix 5.7. for a list of research questions on the open questions in questionnaires in Catalonia.

In Catalonia, the cover letter explained the reasons why the Catalan education system was used for the comparative study. Also, the questionnaire was given in English because it was sent to specialist English teachers, but it was explained to the teachers that it could be answered in English, Castilian or Catalan. As regards the language used in both the cover letter and the questionnaire and, despite the fact that the cover letter was in Catalan and the questionnaire was in English, they both used core language and in general the questions asked were written in grammatically simple sentences[251].

5.2.2.4. Limitations of the questionnaires

The first limitation that was encountered in the design of the questionnaires had to do with their length. As there was the fear that a very long questionnaire would produce a very low response rate, the number of questions was reduced as much as possible. For this reason, some of the questions were amalgamated. Attempts were made to avoid questions that "required the subject to respond to two separate ideas with a single answer" (Borg and Gall, 1983:421). Nevertheless, the purpose of constructing the questions was that the second question clarified the first question, but that both questions were asking the same thing.

The second main limitation in the questionnaires related to the sample size. In Ireland, as the sample was quite large, with 200 questionnaires, and given the high cost involved in photocopying the cover letter and the questionnaires, purchasing the envelopes, and stamps, I decided that there was not going to be a follow-up of the respondent. It was simply not feasible for me to send a second round of questionnaires to those schools that had not yet completed and returned the questionnaire. Consequently, the data analysis was carried out on the 98[252] of the 200 questionnaires that were returned, which represents a response rate of 47%.

In Catalonia, it was also decided that there would not be a follow-up phase in the survey due to the high cost involved. Sending new copies of the questionnaires to those schools that had not returned them would have implied the use of two more envelopes and another two international stamps, which was not feasible for the researcher. Consequently, 44 questionnaires were received from the 85 schools that had been used in the sampling. The response rate is therefore 51.76%.

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[251] Appendix 5.13. contains the cover letters of the questionnaires sent to Catalan schools.
[252] Although there were 98 questionnaires returned to the researcher, 3 were duplicated and therefore discarded and 2 were only partially answered.

5.2.2.5. Data analysis

The results obtained from the questionnaires were in two different forms: numerical and non-numerical. The latter resulted from the open-questions and the numerical results came from the closed questions.

To analyse all the numerical data, a computer program specially designed for the analysis of data in surveys in the social sciences was used, SPSS (version 13.0 up to 17.0). With the intention of facilitating the loading of data to the computer, the questionnaires were pre-coded prior to their distribution by giving every question and every possible answer a number. Direct data entry was thus utilized: "A pre-coded questionnaire would contain indications of the columns and the codes to be assigned to questions and responses, and data could be entered directly" (Babbie, 1998:364).

As already stated above, every question was sub-numbered, so every possible answer in a given question was given a number. For example, in question number five of the questionnaire for Gaelscoileanna, *What's the total number of children in the school?* there were three possible answers: (1) - Less than 230; (2) - Between 230-450 and (3) - More than 450. It is however worth noting that when introducing data with SPSS every variable or question has to be given values. In our example, there were three values given, as there were three answers, but two more values needed to be added. Value 4 was for *non-applicable (n/a)* answers, in case a respondent thought his/her school could not be included in the parameters given for any reason; and value 99 was *no-answer (N/A),* in case some of the respondents did not answer the question.

Once all the data had been introduced in SPSS it gave statistical results that could be analysed numerically (Chapter 6).

As regards the analysis of the open questions, these were manually scrutinised without the use of any computer program. Instead, all results were classified into word-sheets[253][254]. Different categories were then defined by analysing all the answers given for a particular question individually. For example, in question 34 of the questionnaire for Gaelscoileanna*: Do you think the teaching of foreign languages in primary education should be compulsory in Ireland? Why?* the two main categories were *Yes* or *No.* Then, the reasons why one or the other was chosen were also categorised and it was decided which arguments fell into which category.

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[253] See Appendix 5.5. for a classification of the answers obtained from the open questions in questionnaires in Gaelscoileanna.
[254] See Appendix 5.6. for a classification of the answers obtained from the open questions in questionnaires in schools part of the MLPSI.

This strategy used for analysing the open questions allowed the researcher to quantify the answers obtained and to convert them into measurable data that will be expressed in percentages later in this thesis.

The data obtained from the questionnaires sent to schools in Catalonia was analysed using the same procedures as with the questionnaires in Ireland. Consequently, the group of closed-questions were analysed with SPSS 13.0 and 17.0 and the group of open questions were manually studied[255]. The main difference on this occasion was that, as teachers had been given the possibility of answering the questionnaire in Catalan, Castilian/Spanish or English, some of the questionnaires were completed in Catalan and some in English. It is worth noting that none was answered in Castilian/Spanish and that the great majority of teachers used English in their answers, which showed their language proficiency.

5.3. Chapter conclusions

This chapter explains the research methods employed in this thesis to conduct a comparative study on language teaching and multilingual acquisition in Ireland and Catalonia. As explained above, this research consists of a theoretical as well as an empirical analysis; while the first one has been based on the study and analysis of historical developments surrounding Irish, Catalan and modern foreign languages in education and society, the use of qualitative and quantitative research techniques in the survey study enabled a comprehensive analysis of the situation that school principals and teachers in Ireland and Catalonia are faced with in dealing with the teaching of languages and their role within the Curriculum. This is not to say that the fact that this study was a comparative study of two education systems in two different countries did not add difficulty to the research in itself and to the design of the survey study in that the personal interviews and questionnaires had to be carefully planned and adjusted to be as similar as possible in the two countries to allow meaningful results.

With regard to the interviewing process and, more specifically, its organisation, it is clear that the process was easier in Ireland than in Catalonia. Schools were more open to receiving a visitor and the principals were very welcoming, whereas in Catalonia it proved rather difficult to establish a first contact with them. Nonetheless, it should be aknowledged that the experience of meeting with principals and teachers in both countries was very enjoyable and that everyone was very helpful and interested in the research being conducted. In fact, some of the participants were even willing to participate in any further stages of the research. Also, the use of a dictaphone was a great advantage. Using this tool, I was

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[255] See Appendix 5.8. for a classification of the answers obtained from the open questions in questionnaires in schools in Catalonia.

able to focus on the interviews more than on taking notes while listening to the interviewee. It also facilitated the transfer of the data to a computer for analysis. The use of the Annotape software was equally useful, allowing a fairly easy comparison of the data obtained from all the interviewees.

The interviewing process was, consequently, very useful for the design of the mail questionnaires, providing very significant information on the issues encountered in the primary sector in both Ireland and Catalonia with regard to bilingual and multilingual language education in immersion education contexts.

Furthermore, the survey study conducted in the two countries, although complex in its organisation and posterior analysis, provided a significant amount of data, relevant to the research questions that had been highlighted *a priori* and that are the basis for this thesis. The empirical evidence obtained through this cross-national study highlighted issues concerning teaching practice, curriculum organisation, language policy and student language learning. The direct mail survey, which included open and closed questions, served to eliminate any possibility of biasing errors that could emerge from the interviewing process and therefore established reliability in the gathering of data, which, consequently, also helped in the process of triangulation and validation. Additionally, the use of the SPSS software facilitated the organisation and presentation of the data gathered in the questionnaires.

I am also satisfied with the questionnaire response rate in both countries, 47% in Ireland and 51.76% in Catalonia. These response rates, although not fully satisfactory, provide valid, representative information for this thesis, especially because, following the triangulation approach used, the survey study was only one of the methods of investigation used and was meant to provide additional data to support the theoretical analysis. Nevertheless, I however regret the impossibility of carrying out a follow-up questionnaire, given that this was a survey study designed by an individual student that was not supported by any institution.

Chapter 6

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY STUDY

6.1. Findings from the personal interviews undertaken in Ireland and Catalonia

6.1.1. Introduction

Personal interviews were conducted in both Ireland and Catalonia to gain a greater understanding of both education systems from teachers and principals with a genuine interest and expertise in the instruction and learning of languages. As explained in the Methodology Chapter (chapter 5), there were two sets of interviews between the researcher and a number of principals in Gaelscoileanna and mainly foreign language teachers in state and semi-private schools in Barcelona (Catalonia). In Ireland, the interviewees chosen were exclusively principals of Gaelscoileanna, and not foreign language teachers (as was the case in Catalonia), firstly, because this position does not exist as such within primary education; secondly, educationalists working in Gaelscoileanna are naturally more experienced in language education.The results of these interviews were used as the primary basis to design the questionnaires subsequently sent to primary schools in both Ireland and Catalonia. The outcome from this part of the research will be analysed in this section, prior to presenting the results of the survey study distributed in both countries.

6.1.2. Findings from the personal interviews conducted in Ireland

6.1.2.1. Introduction

The experience of meeting with principals working in a bilingual context such as Gaelscoileanna was extremely rewarding for the researcher and highly informative, much more so than had been expected at the outset. This was due to the unexpected openness of the interviewees and the high level of honesty displayed in their answers. In addition, although all were Irish-medium schools, they possessed very different features, such as their geographical location or the typology of students attending. This, in turn, provided a great opportunity to gain information on the different challenges being faced and how these are influenced by factors such as location or socio-economic background of the families, as well as

allowing a better insight into the ethos of Irish-medium schools and their individual approach to language learning. To enable an easier analysis of the information, the intention was to initially organise the data gathered throughout the interviews in main topics relevant to this research and subsequently under subheadings as a means of examining the different issues in greater detail.

6.1.2.2. The teaching of Irish in primary schools

The results of the personal interviews conducted in Ireland revealed a significant amount of concern in relation to the teaching of Irish in both Irish and English-medium schools in Ireland. The main issues related to this that have a direct impact on teachers' performance and that are correlated to our research questions are as follows:

A) Time allocated to the learning of Irish

This is how two of the interviewees reacted to this question:

Interviewee 1- …and our current system for teaching Irish as a language for a half an hour a day where the only exposure that the children have to that language is the half an hour in the school, it doesn't work. No matter how hard we try, no matter how much investment we put in …it won't work, because the time on task and the time involved with the language is not sufficient to gain proficiency in the language.
Interviewee 4- In English-medium schools you have 3 hours a week to teach Irish at school, but you don't have enough time. You have to work really really hard if you want to get a good level of Irish. So I think they really need more time. It is very difficult to get everything done and to get the children to speak the language. It is very frustrating for the children, because sometimes they don't have the opportunities to speak the language when they start to speak it; they want to say something but they can't, whereas if they had more opportunities, you would get over that.

All the interviewees agreed that, as pointed out by the 2006 Harris report, discussed in chapter 3, the time currently allocated to the learning of Irish in English-medium schools is insufficient to acquire a satisfactory level of competence in the language. They asserted however that Irish-medium schools do not face such difficulties. As Irish is both the main language of instruction and of communication between staff and children in Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools[256], students receive complete immersion for several hours each day (between 4.5 and 5.5 hours). Consequently, children acquire competence in the minority language in a natural way with much less effort.

Interviewee 1- The Irish model doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, where we get to use two languages simultaneously from the first day of schooling and one of those languages is a minority language, Gaeilge, to which the children are not exposed at all in the society outside the school.

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[256] See *Staid Reatha na Scoileanna Gaeltachta. A Study of Gaeltacht Schools 2004*, Mac Donnacha, S. et al. (2005).

The use of the minority language as a medium of instruction, therefore, is seen as having positive outcomes due to the number of hours that students spend in contact with it. Early total immersion in the minority language is regarded as a successful model that allows the achievement of high levels of proficiency in Irish, which is in agreement with international research that shows that it does not have a negative impact in acquiring the majority language or on the results achieved in other subjects i.e. Science, Mathematics, etc. (see Baker, 2006).

Interviewee 1- That's why the Gaelscoileanna model works, because it happens with Catalan, Basque, Welsh, ...it's total complete immersion and the children, the majority language they come to the school with does not suffer in the early years.

Interviewee 2- The immersion system of language is definitely one of the most effective as long as the child is immersed into a language into a fun situation that is based on communicative language competency. That's not just a methodology, that's a theory. It's the theory of communicative language methodology. What does it mean? It means that people are immersed in such a way that language becomes natural.

Interviewee 4 – If they come to school without a single word of Irish, they need a big percentage of input in the language. They can do their maths, their nature through Irish. That is why we have complete immersion in Irish.

It is worthwhile noting the observation made by several experts in language learning regarding the factors that enable successful language acquisition:

> "Time contact with the language in a school programme has long been known to be a key factor in determining achievement of proficiency in a second language. Other related factors such as intensity (e.g. number of classes per week) and engaged time (time actually used in teaching and learning) are also important".

(Bloom, 1974; Collins, Halter, Lightbrown & Spada, 1999; Curtain, 2000; Johnstone, 2002, in Harris 2006:168).

B) Teachers' competence to teach Irish

Teachers' level of preparation to teach Irish was revealed to be another important issue for the interviewees, as highlighted in the literature review on Ireland. To gain a better understanding of this matter, we, firstly, need to look at the preparation student teachers receive from Colleges of Education around the country and, secondly, at their competency in the classroom. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, an individual requires Grade C3 (55% - 60%) in Irish on the Higher Level Paper of the Leaving Certificate Examination to access the Bachelor of Education degree at any College of Education in Ireland. During the four-year duration of this course, students are obliged to study *Gaeilge* as a subject during their first year. In the second year, it becomes an optional subject. Students who do not take it in second or third year, however, are required to undertake a course in *Gaeilge Ghairmiúil* (Professional Irish). It is also a requirement of the Department of Education that students achieve a

pass in this subject before being fully recognised as primary school teachers (Mary Immaculate College, 2011).

New primary school teachers are expected to possess sufficient competence in the four basic skills of Irish to provide their students with high quality education. Nevertheless, the general low level of competence among teachers of Irish is well documented, although this is less prevalent in Irish-medium schools (see Harris, 2006 and Ó Dochartaigh and Broderick, 2006).

Interviewee 1- We do not have a dedicated pre-service Bachelor of Education degree through the medium of Irish, so teachers can get their university degree through the medium of the national language and get out and teach through the medium of Irish.

Interviewee 2- At pre-service level, I ask a question: Are all pre-service teachers being prepared in an integrated way in an immersed environment of Irish language to prepare them for language learning in Irish, as the Curriculum says: teaching Irish through other subjects in the Curriculum? I ask: is that being done? If the Colleges of Education and the colleges where the graduate diploma in primary education are being done are not doing this, then how can we expect teachers to change? If the confidence of the teachers is not strong enough, how can we expect them to be the leaders in the schools? And if so many teachers out there do not believe in their own abilities...

The general opinion of those interviewed highlighted a need to change the required standard in the Leaving Certificate examination which, they argue, is very low at present. In Colleges of Education, it was suggested that offering the opportunity to study some subjects or even the whole Bachelor Degree in Irish would provide prospective teachers with a higher level of competence in the language and, as a consequence, greater confidence.

Interviewee 4- A lot of them (teachers) would come from either Gaelscoils or ordinary schools, and in secondary schools, some of these could end up with a B in their Leaving Cert. in Irish, but they just don't feel confident to speak Irish, so in third level, in teacher training courses there needs to be more level, more time and more effort (…)I am not too sure if teacher students do Irish as an important subject, but when they start teaching they don't have the level of competence to teach Irish. There has to be a course in third level, where students know, well this course is there and I'm going to be proficient in the use of Irish and in writing it.

C) Lack of books and materials for the teaching of Irish

It was also suggested that there is a lack of books and materials for the teaching of Irish in general, especially for Gaelscoileanna, and that more emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the books available are not only English to Irish translations of those used in ordinary primary schools. Some interviewees made specific reference to this:

Interviewee 4- There is also a problem with the textbooks in Gaelscoilanna. There is a wider range of books for ordinary schools, and a lot of textbooks have actually been translated. When the curriculum was introduced the textbooks were put together very quickly; everybody ended up writing together, there wasn't a plan to know what would be the contents in every textbook, and that's creating many difficulties at the moment.

Interviewee 3- It is very difficult in coming across resources in Irish. Irish as a subject itself is fine. There is about one Irish book, sorry, one maths book through Irish in the country. That means that everybody has to buy that one. It has been translated from the English version. With subjects like History and Geography being taught from Junior Infants up to 6th class...it's only this year that there are some history books; just one is available in the Irish version. There is nothing in Geography, and if I was teaching in an English-medium school, I would have a choice. You could just teach away. You go to the internet, it's all in English, go to the Encyclopedia, all in English......but there is one geography book that was written in the 60s! Sometimes I feel there is more work involved in a Gaelscoil, because the resources aren't there yet.

By analysing these opinions, we can determine that the level of teacher involvement in the preparation of materials in Irish-medium schools needs to be very high in order to obtain better results. The frustration felt by the interviewees is also evident with regard to the lack of resources available for teaching Irish, which adds further difficulty to the challenge faced by Irish teachers. Even though it was understood and accepted that, at the outset, when teaching through Irish was first introduced there would be a shortage of appropriate teaching materials, it was felt that there was a general lack of comprehension that, after several decades, this situation is still the same today.

6.1.2.3. Necessary considerations for the introduction of a third language in the primary education system in Ireland

During the interviewing process, participants were also asked to identify, in their opinion, the impediments to the inclusion of foreign language learning as part of the Primary School Curriculum since it is a central research question in this thesis, and any measures that could be introduced in the short to medium term to change this situation.

The general opinion is that the difficulties associated with the teaching of Irish in ordinary English-speaking schools are preventing stakeholders in education from formally introducing the learning of a third language. These issues represent a major obstacle to any change in the Irish Primary School Curriculum and, hence, need to be addressed prior to any implementation of foreign languages at national level. There is also a general fear that a third language would reduce the time currently committed to teaching English and Irish, resulting in a potential worsening of the current situation.

Interviewee 3-The old argument has always been: the Irish will suffer, or the English will suffer and also that we are not good at teaching foreign languages in Ireland because we spend so much time teaching Irish language. I kind of come from the other point of view that if a child can learn one language they can learn two, they can learn three. I mean, it's the same skill, which is listening.

In this regard, it was the opinion of the interviewees that some schools are afraid of introducing an additional language because they associate teaching languages with the historical failure experienced with the compulsory teaching of Irish (see Chapter 3). A feeling of stigmatisation has arisen in that identical

problems may arise in teaching a foreign language, i.e. lack of teachers preparation and, therefore, confidence, and difficulty in finding the right teaching methodology.

Interviewee 1- …but people still feel (…) that …oh the English language, there might be a danger and the children's standard of the English cannot possibly be as high if they are taught through the medium of Irish. Well, yes, their standards of English will be just as high and their standard of the 3rd language will be as high as for children who were just learning a second language.

Interviewee 4- A lot of teachers have very negative attitudes towards the teaching of Irish. They frustrate themselves. The setting is not there, the system is not there to help them. They don't see Irish as a very important subject, so that is impacting teachers in a negative way.

Regardless of the lack of confidence inspired by the failures in the teaching of Irish, there was general consent in relation to the main elements that need to be in place to allow the introduction of a third language at primary level. These are detailed below:

1. Time allocation
2. Teaching materials
3. Provision of teachers
4. Teaching methodology
5. Age of introduction

    1.   Time allocation

Firstly, all interviewees expressed their concerns that the Irish Primary School Curriculum is currently overloaded. They believe that there is already too much content within the Curriculum without enough time allocated to cover it in sufficient depth. The inclusion of a third language would increase the volume of subject matter, which was viewed, as Interviewee 5 indicated, as something that needs to be carefully considered: the inclusion of too many subjects would make it very hard to afford them all the attention they deserve.

Interviewee 5- I tried to introduce it as a subject some years ago and did some research and what I got is: if you think all the areas in the Curriculum are working, then introduce it.
Someone will always say, the time you are spending on Spanish you could do maths, or writing skills,…you can never disprove it negative, it could always be better. So if I am doing an hour a week on Spanish and they say, you could have done more English, it may still not be better.
I have to stand over every class, every teacher and say: I have done everything perfect, we don't have pupils walking out of the school, we have Curriculums!
When it comes to the 3rd language, all I'm doing here is giving them a flavour.
I would agree with the 3rd language, we have two. It can be done.

From this, we can determine that finding time to devote to third language learning within the Primary School Curriculum would have implications within the education system that go far beyond reducing the time currently allocated to other subjects or activities within the class. It would probably necessitate

a complete restructure of the primary school system, including an expansion of school hours, an increase in the number of staff employed, and hence, a revision of the content of the Primary School Curriculum and of the structure of the school day. Additionally, courses on offer for prospective primary school teachers would have to be modified to ensure competency of teachers for the teaching of a foreign language, new teaching materials would be required and new working groups within the Department of Education and Skills would need to be created to manage the smooth running of the new system.

2. Teaching materials

The need to provide resources that enable teachers to offer a variety of learning environments was also highlighted, especially as the foreign language will rarely be spoken outside of the classroom. One of the interviewees, Interviewee 2, referred to the concept of the "natural learning environment" as a teaching approach used to expose children to the language in a natural way by creating real situations within the classroom. It was also remarked that students who are offered the possibility of using different materials and resources display greater motivation for learning.

Although all interviewees shared these observations, they referred again to the necessity of receiving the support of the Government and that appropriate decisions be made at that level and applied accordingly to schools nationwide.

3. Provision of teachers

As previously outlined, teachers' level of competence in Irish is currently a matter of concern among educationalists when examining the main factors that influence the learning of Irish within primary schools. All respondents noted this. Because of their position as principals, they interview new teachers on a regular basis and have noticed the poor level of command of Irish displayed by new graduates from Colleges of Education. Principals in *Gaelscoileanna* are often forced to recruit teachers who do not comply with the required standards of work relating to Irish-medium schools. Instead, they have taken the risk of hiring a potentially good teacher, who they hope will put greater effort into learning Irish. Consequently, interviewees demanded that it become mandatory for foreign language teachers to receive sufficient preparation at pre-service level to be highly competent in the language, as an initial step towards satisfactorily including a third language in the Curriculum. It was also suggested that all foreign language teachers should receive training to teach a foreign language, regardless of whether this is their native language. At in-service level, for example, foreign language teachers could undertake courses on a regular basis to:

1. Maintain and improve their level of competence in the language;

2. Acquire new teaching strategies;

3. Exchange experiences with other colleagues to share ideas and increase their awareness of available resources[257].

Another possibility considered by the respondents as part of the in-service and pre-service preparation is to spend a certain period of time abroad. Teachers would acquire a better accent and improve their pronunciation, as well as gaining a fuller understanding of the culture of the country. This would result in an improvement in both their competence and confidence.

Interviewee 2- Unless Colleges of Education prepare pre-service teachers in a manner where they understand, not only the theories behind language but practically understand how to create language learning environments in consultation with the Department and Europe, which is our family, then it will fail. [...] We need to have an open European policy with all the European countries to bring in qualified primary school teachers to become expert language teachers in our schools.

The availability of qualified foreign language teachers has been identified as an added problem that would require a solution. It is important to remember that a primary school foreign language teacher in Ireland may be any of the following: a class teacher within the school; a native speaker, irrespective of whether they are a qualified primary school teacher; someone who has either completed a language course or can prove they have some knowledge of the target language. In fact, it is the principal in each school who is responsible for assessing each case individually and making appropriate appointments.

Principals expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that qualified native teachers, who normally access the education system through initiatives at European level, such as the Comenius programme (see Appendix 1.4), rarely work in primary schools. As they are a very scarce resource, they are normally allocated to second level, as was pointed out by one intervewee. This explains the perceived necessity of creating courses at pre-service level to provide training to Irish teachers in the teaching of foreign languages. The need for bringing in teachers from overseas would be reduced and a network of qualified teachers would be set up across the country.

Interviewee 2- I would get three or even four if you gave them to me. It is impossible to get a German teacher from France or Germany, because they only go to secondary schools. So that's another problem. Why are the authentic speakers only sent to secondary schools?

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[257] See p. 287 to learn about the nature of in-service training for foreign language teachers part of the MLPSI.

4. Teaching methodology

As is the case for all specific subject teachers, good foreign language teachers need to be not only competent in the language they teach but also in teaching methodologies. It was highlighted by principals in Ireland that different strategies should be considered and tested in small pilot projects, whose results could be later applied to national projects.

Interviewee 2- they look upon them as an extra subject, instead of looking upon them as a subject they can teach through music, dance and drama, art, and of course, what we consider physical education (...) There are four main subjects. There is no extra work on the Curriculum […].

The possibility of offering Content and Language Integrated Learning programs seems to be gaining popularity among teachers. It is seen as a solution to the lack of time in the school curriculum available to foreign languages. It was suggested that, as in other European countries, children in Ireland could learn music, drama, sports or art, or even maths and science modules at primary level through the medium of a foreign language. As outlined in the chapter on bilingualism (Chapter 2), there are many benefits associated with the CLIL methodology, i.e. it improves language competence and oral communication skills while teaching content.

All respondents were very keen to make use of this learning methodology in the near future and highlighted the current demand for teachers with a good knowledge of language teaching methodologies who are able to transfer them from one language to another.

Interviewee 2- If teachers believe they can't teach Irish, how are they going to use the methodologies to allow international students to assimilate, and acquire, and learn English? Methodologies are cross-curricular. Effective methodologies work with any language. If our confidence is not strong in teaching Irish, as it would be in the Basque Country,......, if teachers do not feel confident in creating learning environments for a language which is not their primary spoken language, how can they transfer that into the learning of a second, a third, and a fourth[b] ?

Interviewee 4- The experience children have in ordinary schools with Irish brings them to have a fear, to think it is so hard a new language and it's really just because the job hasn't been done properly. Teachers in Gaelscoileanna don't really know what they should be doing in every class, in third, in fourth,… there isn't a good program. There is a good curriculum with very good ideas as to how to teach Irish, very good methodologies and that, an excellent curriculum, but not a programme.

5. Age

The observations made by principals regarding the age they believed to be beneficial for introducing a third language were valuable, although they were highly influenced by their personal experience. For instance, one of the principals worked in a school that has achieved high levels of competence in Irish and English where the children came from a middle-class background. Another principal had a large number of foreign national students attending his school and, therefore, a mix of pupils with good skills in both Irish and English and those who were struggling to achieve the minimum required levels. Nevertheless, all of the principals agreed that it is important that children acquire a good basis in

English and Irish prior to being introduced to a new language. They also made a distinction between Irish-medium schools and English-medium schools.

Interviewee 1- Exposing children at a younger age (4-8 years) would be extremely interesting because you would be exposing the children at an age when their language acquisition ability is still very alive. And you'd be utilising their natural language acquisition ability at that age when they are being exposed to the 3rd language.

Certainly my understanding is that the pronunciation and the attitude towards the language would be much more favorable by children who are exposed to that language at a lower age. And children, when they are exposed to the language at a later age cannot match the pronunciation proficiency of younger children. We should probably be looking at doing some pilot projects in Gaelscoileanna, and in ordinary schools and teaching some subjects again through the medium of the third language. But to do that we need to be looking at what we are doing first with the two languages that we have and what is our national policy.

Interviewee 2- Early start of L3? Surely it's at the youngest stage that the children assimilate and acquire the language. I mean, come on, that's proven by all the research around the world. But most of the secondary schools take them for their Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate.

Initially, one of the principals confidently argued that third language learning in bilingual contexts should be integrated at the age of 13 (first year of secondary school). Subsequently, when asked to clarify his position, however, he indicated that he would advocate an earlier start if it was proven to be more beneficial.

Interviewee 1 (a) - As far as teaching foreign languages in Irish schools, as far as Gaelscoileanna are concerned… I think that, at second level, some contents, or parts of some subjects should be taught through the medium of the foreign language.

And the secondary schools where children continue their education through the medium of Irish would be the perfect place to pilot schemes like this, because children already have acquired both languages, they have an experience of learning through Irish and they would feel confident about their language ability and much more open to a third language, etc. And I suppose learning a third language would be easier when they have already mastered a second language.

Interviewee 1 (b) - Do the results show that it is worthwhile and that those children do better in that language, in those examinations or in the use of that language than children who don't begin to study that language until they are 13?

I don't know what the data will show there but it's my question.

Consequently, in response to one of the main research questions of this thesis, the best age to introduce a foreign language in primary eduation, there is a tendency among the interviewees (principals) to believe that: 1) it is more feasible at present to introduce a third language in Gaelscoileanna than in ordinary English-medium schools, where there is less difficulty in the acquisition of Irish or English; 2) early inclusion of third language learning could be positive as long as a strategic plan of action for language learning was clearly devised covering not only the third language but also English and Irish.

6.1.3. Findings from the personal interviews conducted in Catalonia.

6.1.3.1. Introduction.

As previously stated, the personal interviews conducted in the region of Catalonia included several schools in the province of Barcelona. There were seven schools that participated in the survey with twelve teachers interviewed.

As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, the interview process in Catalonia differed to that in Ireland. Whereas all five principals in *Gaelscoileanna* were met individually, in Catalonia although most of the teachers were interviewed on an individual basis, in some schools, two, three or even five teachers were interviwed at the same time and in one school only the principal was interviewed, as she insisted on attending the interview alone. As a result of this, it was decided to present the majority of the teachers' opinions in this section in the form of general comments (the exceptions to this have been highlighted), given the difficulty of selecting individual opinions.

6.1.3.2. Teaching of languages in primary schools in Catalonia.

In Catalonia, foreign language primary school teachers were asked questions relating to the latest changes to the law concerning the learning of foreign languages, the age factor, the materials and resources they use or are provided with, pre-service and in-service preparation and the time allocated to teach foreign languages. It should be noted that, although the answers obtained were quite broad at times, teachers generally transmitted the idea that there are no major difficulties or barriers to their daily teaching practice and that they are part of a well-structured education system.

6.1.3.3. Pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

The interviewees were shown to possess a great interest in the English language and its teaching, as well as having a high level of competence in the language; they all started learning English at an early age and continued their study of the language throughout their lives. At pre-service level, all of the teachers had undertaken specialised training to teach English as a foreign language at university, either as part of their degree in teaching or as a postgraduate course. When asked to evaluate the preparation they received, in terms of both the quality and usefulness of courses, the answers were quite positive. It was nevertheless

significant that all teachers agreed that pre-service preparation should offer greater practical resources for daily usage in place of theoretical contexts that cannot be used in the classroom.

Regarding the in-service training that is on offer in Catalonia, all teachers were both aware and making use of the wide variety of courses available to them either during the school year and/or in the summer (generally in the month of July) in all Colleges of Education and other relevant institutions. Indeed, it became obvious through the interview process that all foreign language teachers undertake new courses on an ongoing basis because of personal motivation to do so.

6.1.3.4. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

On the topic of CLIL, the researcher discovered a real difference between the interviewees, as some teachers had barely heard of the concept and had very little understanding of it, whereas others were much more aware and had even attended seminars on the topic. Although at the time these interviews were conducted (2006-2007) the concept of CLIL was still relatively new, and despite some initial apprehension, all teachers responded positively to the possibility of adding CLIL to the Primary School Curriculum. They expressed three main concerns in relation to this point, however, which are:

1- Lack of available training on CLIL for foreign language teachers in Catalonia, who are not trained to teach a content subject through the foreign language.
2- Children will not have the language foundation to follow classes in the foreign language.
3- The lack of teaching and learning materials for CLIL.

Despite a somewhat negative initial reaction to the issues mentioned above, teachers expressed a genuine hope that they would receive the necessary training and that the appropriate methodology be introduced to ensure that no child would be disadvantaged. In addition, teachers would also like to see CLIL introduced to senior classes, when students have acquired greater vocabulary in the foreign language. Nevertheless, they expressed a preference for more hours to be allocated to the teaching of English as a content subject rather than teaching one subject through the medium of the foreign language, so that greater time could be allocated to the development of basic foreign language skills.

In relation to their level of confidence to teach subjects through CLIL, teachers, in general, regarded themselves as competent enough in the language, although they admitted that, more than likely, they would face a number of difficulties in the lexicon related to some topics. In parallel with this, teachers also referred to the difficulties some children already face when learning concepts in the current language of instruction, Catalan. There was a fear that students could learn new concepts in the foreign language but would not know them in Catalan or Spanish.

It was finally suggested that it would be more appropriate to work or, rather, reinforce through CLIL only those areas of the curriculum that have already been covered in the classroom using the regular language of instruction.

6.1.3.5. Resources and materials

The introduction of the so-called Sixth Hour or the addition of a sixth hour in the school day for state schools (as semi-private and private schools already taught six hours) was another highlighted topic (even though at the time of the completion of this thesis it had already been eliminated by the Department of Education)[258]. Hence, in relation to this topic it was argued that, instead of lengthening the school day by adding an extra hour, which would require more staff, it would be of greater benefit to maintain the same number of hours but allocate any extra staff to work with smaller groups. This would enable the reinforcement of some of the areas of the Curriculum such as language subjects and mathematics, as well as help newcomers integrate, given that, in Catalonia, it is very common for a foreign national student (with no knowledge of Catalan and Castilian/Spanish) to join school at any time during the school year. In fact, one of the interviewees explained that her school is dedicating all of its extra resources, in relation to staff and time, to addressing diversity and to helping students to achieve minimum levels in the core subjects.

On the subject of segregating students by their level of competence in the foreign language, teachers were very clear in their answers in this regard. The overall reaction was negative, as it is regarded as the same as streaming students by their level of ability. This option would not be compatible with the schools' ethos, which aims for an equal treatment of all children in relation to their integration with the school community. Moreover, it was also highlighted that heterogeneous groups advance faster than homogeneous groups, because all the children learn from each other and nobody is seen as different or excluded. This is in line with research conducted as part of the PISA 2009 test. An in-depth analysis of the results obtained in Catalonia showed that academic failure is directly related to a high concentration of students performing at a low level in the same classroom. Hence, available data indicate that students performing at a low level have, on average, 24% of their peers who are also performing poorly and only 2% performing at a high level. On the contrary, the student population performing in the higher levels only has 8% of its peers performing at a low level and 7% of peers also achieving excellence in their studies (Fundació Jaume Bofill, 2010). This demonstrates the possible negative impact of segregation.

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[258] This measure was adopted in all state schools in Catalonia in the school year 2006-2007 and was eliminated in September 2011.

Another type of resource mentioned was a dedicated foreign languages classroom. In Catalonia, schools tend to dedicate a room to music and one room to English, or the foreign language. This hugely assists the specialist teachers' work, as they can have all their materials in these rooms and decorate it with the students' project work or other selected materials. Unfortunately, the allocation of these rooms is not always possible. Foreign language teachers sometimes these have to walk around the school carrying stereo systems, posters, flashcards, books, etc. from room to room, which is complicated when this happens every hour. For this reason, those teachers interviewed who did not have a room allocated placed a lot of emphasis on this issue.

Regarding the use of a coursebook, the researcher found that only half of the schools were using one. Other schools, because of their methodology, provide children with handouts that their teachers prepare drawing on material obtained from different sources. In pre-school education, most interviewees indicated that they would not consider it appropriate to use a coursebook with children at such an early age (3). These teachers believe that the short time they have with the children is for playing games, singing songs, etc. to utilise the language in an active and fun way. Other teachers who use books in pre-school stated that they only used them as a complementary activity.

6.1.3.6. Appropriate age for the introduction of foreign languages

Prior to discussing the opinion teachers have on the most appropriate age for the introduction of foreign languages, it is worth noting that this issue relates very closely to the bilingual situation prevailing in Catalonia.

Teachers were asked how they believe bilingualism influences the learning of other languages and the status Catalan, Castilian and English enjoy among children. Language teachers see bilingualism as creating openness to other languages and cultures. Children become more open to different ways of speaking and doing.

Those teachers working in schools where there is a high percentage of foreign national children used their own students as an example when talking about multilingualism within the classroom. They were working in classes where at least 50% of the population were born abroad. In some classes, it was also the case that, of the remaining 50% of students, some were second or even third generations of families who had inmigrated a number of years ago from other countries. Interestingly, for some of the students of African origin, English was their fifth or sixth language, although it cannot be said that they could speak English fluently.

In relation to the status of the three languages (Castilian, Catalan and English) among students, this very much depends on their geographical area and socio-economic background. Although all schools are required by law to use Catalan as the main language of instruction, in some areas there is a greater percentage of Castilian/Spanish-speaking families who originate from other parts of Spain or Latin American countries, where Castilian/Spanish are the native languages. The family origin is, therefore, a factor that determines the first language of the children: Castilian/Spanish or Catalan, and hence, how each language is regarded. As would be expected, in those areas where Castilian/Spanish are the main languages of the community, Catalan plays a very small role in the students' lives outside the school context, which means that they do not relate as well to it. This situation, which can be found in many pockets of society, is highly detrimental to the maintenance of Catalan, but is only more common in Barcelona city and not as much in the rest of Catalonia. Nonetheless, Catalan was said to enjoy considerable status among the student population in general terms; the immersion education model is also well regarded and the use of Catalan as a medium of instruction is not questioned.

What it is most important to understand, at this point is that, to a greater or lesser degree, Castilian and Catalan are spoken and heard in everyday life in Catalonia. They both have a large presence in society: at school, in the media, in the press, and in official bodies. They also share a number of similarities in their syntax and phonetics. English however is at a completely different level. It is not the language of the country and has no real presence other than in the classroom.

Reverting to the age factor issue in foreign language learning, it is the general understanding of teachers that there are greater benefits to an early start: the phonetics of the language are better acquired in the early years and the foreign language is learned in a more dynamic and natural way. In the context of Catalonia, however, this matter was viewed differently because of the model of immersion education. In my survey, a number of foreign language teachers schooling children in English from the age of three did not agree with early foreign language learning from the age of 3 as they believe that many children at this age are already overwhelmed with coping with the novelty of starting school and following immersion in Catalan when it is not their L1. Teachers highlighted the fact that one or two years later, P4 or P5, would be more appropriate for the introduction of a third language: children at this age have already acquired Catalan as the first language of instruction and have settled into school routines.

Some interviewees mentioned the fact that they had not received training to teach pre-school classes since they are primary school teachers specialised in the teaching of English and therefore were finding it hard to deal with children of that level pedagogically.

6.1.3.7. Time allocation and age of start

Although primary schools in Catalonia are required by law to initiate their students in one foreign language in first class, it is common practice to lower the starting age to pre-school education, at the age of three, as already discussed above. As this is an option that schools undertake themselves, the School Language Plan of each school determines whether foreign languages will be introduced at an earlier stage and the number of hours that will be allocated. Consequently, at primary level, some schools provide one extra hour for the foreign language in addition to the minimum requirements established by law.

6.1.4. Conclusions from the personal interviews undertaken in Ireland and Catalonia

Findings from the personal interviews carried out in Ireland and Catalonia revealed that, although schools in Catalonia and Ireland face different challenges at the present time, there are many similarities between them. In Ireland, where the information gathered was a lot more substantial than in Catalonia, it was learned that there is a combination of factors that would hinder the inclusion of a third language as part of the Primary School Curriculum. This includes the lack of qualified foreign language teachers and of materials in the foreign language. Other important issues that arose are the poor results obtained in Irish in English-medium schools and the lack of available curricular time. It was claimed that Irish teachers in primary schools, especially in English-medium schools, do not possess the necessary confidence in Irish. This is reflected both in their teaching and the resultant poor performance achieved by students in the State examinations later on. In Catalonia, however, the oral and written language competence of teachers in either Catalan or Castilian was not seen as an issue, as Colleges of Education have Catalan as the language of instruction and students are obliged to undertake Catalan language classes throughout their degree, i.e., one module per semester, even though by the time these student teachers access third level education they already have full oral competence in Catalan and Castilian, as well as a proficient written competence. Catalan language classes at university are thus a means of reinforcing the student teachers' proficiency in the language. In Ireland, even though student teachers also have Irish language classes, the lack of teachers' competency in Irish is an ongoing topic of debate which, in the opinion of the interviewees, can only be resolved if Irish becomes the language of instruction at pre-service level in Colleges of Education.

In Catalonia, teachers believe that Catalan and Castilian are generally taught without major difficulties, except for schools with a high number of foreign nationals. In this case immersion education in Catalan

poses a real challenge for teachers. In general, however, Catalan enjoys a high status in society and the importance of both learning and knowing the language is unquestioned by teachers.

Additionally, all teachers interviewed were aware of the need for both openness and integration with Europe, understanding that the mobility of people has become more common in recent times and that knowledge of other languages is necessary to communicate with other Europeans. It is accepted that English has acquired the role of *lingua franca*, and as a consequence, there is a genuine need to learn the language. In this regard, there was a call in Catalonia to dedicate more curricular time to the teaching of English and it was even suggested that it could be taken from the time currently dedicated to Catalan. This outcome, as well as being unexpected, suggests that, in some schools and areas, Catalan is seen as having its place secured and that no threat is identified with it.

In Ireland, the presence of a high number of foreign nationals means that multilingualism is a fact in schools, which is something that the school community has been dealing with for a number of years now. Principals interviewed showed themselves as being very open to recognising the benefits of language learning and of multilingualism and to acknowledging the limitations of the education system to accommodate multilingual education. Through the interviewing process it however became evident that they have overcome this challenge in numerous ways, making early foreign language education a reality in some Irish-medium schools.

In relation to the appropriate age to introduce foreign languages, there was a lack of agreement on whether to opt for an early or late start. Principals and teachers found it difficult to express a clear opinion on the matter due to a lack of broader knowledge of the area of psycholinguistics. In Catalonia, however, there was a certain level of disagreement on the introduction of English in pre-school level, especially because immersion education in Catalan is already in operation. For this reason, it was believed the age of 5 onwards would be more appropriate. The question of who should be the foreign language teacher if the school decides to introduce the L3 at pre-school level was also raised. At present, the English foreign language teacher is a primary school teacher and not a pre-school teacher. Interviewees wondered whether the pre-school class teacher, who knows the children and has the pedagogical training, should receive the additional training as foreign language teacher.

Regarding the development of a model of best practice for third language acquisition, in Ireland it was asserted that research should be encouraged into other models of education in Europe, and even in other countries where similar circumstances prevail, with a view to selecting examples of best practice for inclusion. In Catalonia, teachers did not report any major difficulties in terms of the methodologies that are currently employed in the teaching of languages, although they had reservations in relation to the plans of the Government for implementing CLIL. Nonetheless, in both Ireland and Catalonia the

teaching of foreign languages through content subjects is seen as a means of achieving better results, as well as a methodology to allow greater contact time with the language. It was also agreed that CLIL provides a justification for the learning of a new language in that students can clearly see the use of the language outside the typical language class.

In summary, the analysis of the personal interviews establishes that Irish principals were very much aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the education system and demonstrated a high level of involvement in the topic of research. They were all very clear in listing the main issues surrounding the teaching of languages at primary level and the lack of presence of modern/foreign languages in the Curriculum. Outlined below is a compilation of the issues that the Irish interviewees believed should be solved prior to early foreign language learning being introduced at primary level:

1. Confirmation that early starting age is more beneficial
2. Qualified and well-trained teachers as well as resources must be guaranteed
3. A best-practice model for the teaching of foreign languages in bilingual education contexts
4. Proof that proficiency in English and Irish will not suffer as a result
5. The difficulties of teaching Irish in English-medium schools are overcome

Principals in Ireland did not appear to show any kind of rejection of the inclusion of a third language in the Curriculum, were the necessary changes to be made. On the contrary, they showed interest, and support, for the view that bilingualism and multilingualism are beneficial.

In Catalonia, a certain lack of analytical thinking was identified among the teachers which may stem from the fact that they operate in a well functioning and very structured system and under very clear guidelines. Despite working in different types of schools, all of them had very similar backgrounds with regard to pre-service training and had followed the same path to become foreign language teachers. English is also part of the Curriculum and receives complete support at all levels, i.e. Department of Education, Colleges of Education, schools, etc. This, consequently, may be the reason why the teachers interviewed seemed to be more aware of issues concerning their daily practice, rather than structural problems.

6.2. Findings from mail questionnaires in Ireland and Catalonia

6.2.1. Introduction

Despite the initial difficulty that the researcher faced in terms of sending questionnaires to schools in Catalonia and Ireland, the data obtained in this study is especially significant because of the timeframe in which the survey was conducted. In Ireland, eight years had passed since the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative had started, which suggested that an evaluation of the results of this project was necessary, with a view to opening it out to all schools in the country. Furthermore, the new Primary School Curriculum had been fully implemented and the first reports had been published regarding the teaching of Irish and the possible inclusion of foreign languages in primary schools.

In Catalonia, the first phase of the Foreign Languages Project was coming to an end and the Government was getting ready to introduce a second group of schools to the project. Also, the first steps towards the introduction of the CLIL methodology had been taken in both state and private schools with more and more teachers becoming familiar with it.

After interviewing the principals and teachers in Catalonia and Ireland, the questionnaires sent to Irish and Catalan primary schools enabled the researcher to draw a clear picture of the situation as teachers see it from inside the schools.

6.2.2. Findings from questionnaires in Ireland

6.2.2.1. Introduction

Despite a response rate for the questionnaires in Ireland no higher than 50%, the fact that they were sent to Irish-medium schools and schools that were involved in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (including English-medium schools or Irish-medium schools) was an advantage in procuring a wide range of opinions from the teachers. As already noted in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 5), respondents were also provided with a number of open questions so that they could explain their own experiences to enable them to draw to the attention of the researcher topics/issues that may have not been covered by the questionnaire.

6.2.2.2. General characteristics of the schools

This section comprises information on the types of primary schools that took part in the survey of 200 schools conducted in *Gaelscoileanna* and schools part of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI).[259] In fact, the total number of answered questionnaires was 98, as noted in the previous chapter. Of these, 42 schools were English-medium schools part of the MLPSI; 11 Gaelscoileanna part of the MLPSI; 23 Gaelscoileanna teaching foreign languages outside the MLPSI and 19 *Gaelscoileanna* not teaching foreign languages.

As shown in Figure 1 (Appendix 6.1.[260]), the majority of the participating schools were mainstream schools (69.62%), although 27.85% had been given DEIS status[261]. As for the other 2.53%, some of them were schools that had applied to become part of the DEIS scheme. Additionally, 67.78% of the participating schools were urban schools, whereas 28.89% were rural (Figure 2). Therefore, the majority of schools participating in the questionnaire survey were mainstream urban schools.

The questionnaires also provided data regarding the size of the schools. Figures 3 and 4 show the number of students and the number of class-groups per grade. The percentage of schools which had one class-group per grade was 47.78%; 22.22% of the schools had two class-groups per grade; 4.44% had three class-groups per grade; 10% had mixed-age classes and 15.55% had different numbers of class-groups depending on the grade. These results are reinforced in Figure 3, which shows the percentages of schools that had:

- Fewer than 230 students, which represents schools with an average of one classroom per grade from 1st to 6th class
- Between 230-450 students, with an average of two classes per grade
- More than 450 students, meaning where there were more than two classes in some or all the grades.

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[259] Henceforth MLPSI.
[260] Figures 1 to 32. can be found in Appendix 6.1.
[261] Primary schools in disadvantaged areas in Ireland are generally given the DEIS status. Under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools scheme, schools are granted a School Support Programme (SPP) which includes a number of interverntions aimed at addressing disadvantage, i.e. lower student ratio per class (Department of Education and Science, 2005).

6.2.2.3. Typology of respondents

This section provides information relating to the location of the respondents that participated in the questionnaires, whether they were working in a Gaelscoil or an English-medium school, and whether they were part or not of the MLPSI. There is also detailed information on the position of the respondents within the school, i.e. principal, class teacher, etc. At first glance, we might assume that the majority of the respondents were principals of the schools (Figure 5); however, on closer inspection it was noted that this classification could be narrowed. In a number of questionnaires, it was clear that the principal of the school began answering the first section of the questionnaire which referred to general information on the school, but then passed it on to the foreign language teacher. Therefore, omitting the 11 Gaelscoileanna which were also part of the MLPSI and only considering the other 42 schools from the MLPSI group, 7 (16.66%) questionnaires were answered by principals, and they were not passed on to the foreign language teachers, even though there was at least one in each school. In 6 (14.28%) of the questionnaires, the person answering was the principal of the school, although in this case it seems that he/she was also the person teaching foreign languages; 22 (52.38%) were answered by visiting language teachers and seven (16.66%) were answered by class teachers (one of whom was also principal of the school) (Figure 6).

If we now include the 11 Gaelscoileanna involved in the MLPSI project, we can see that in six of them the principal answered the questionnaire, so this was not passed on to the foreign language teacher; two of the respondents were visiting language teachers; two were class teachers who were also teaching the foreign language and, finally, one respondent, who could not be classified because he did not tick any of the available boxes.

Looking at the general distribution of respondents for the total group of 53 schools participating in the MLPSI (highlighted in Figure 7), the results show that:

- The number of visiting language teachers was 24
- The number of class teachers was 9
- 6 were principals who were also foreign language teachers
- 13 were principals who answered the questionnaire even though there was a foreign language teacher who could have answered the questionnaire
- 1 respondent who could not be classified.

For those Gaelscoileanna teaching foreign languages, 23 schools, 12 (52.17%) of the respondents were the principals of the schools, who, again, did not pass on the questionnaire to the person teaching the foreign language. It also appears that for 6 (26.09%) of the questionnaires the respondents were

principals also teaching the foreign language; 2 (13.04%) were visiting language teachers and 3 (8.7%) were class teachers also teaching the foreign language (Figure 8).

If we now consider the total number of schools where foreign languages are being taught: 53 MLPSI schools and 23 Gaelscoileanna, 76 in total, we note that: 34.21% of the respondents were visiting language teachers; 32.89% of the respondents were principals who answered the questionnaire without giving it to the foreign language teacher; 15.78% were principals who also answered the section exclusively designed for the foreign language teacher (Section B), from which the researcher assumed that they were also teaching the foreign language; 15.78% were class teachers who taught the foreign language, and 1.31% who could not be classified (Figure 9).

There is a possibility that those principals who answered Section B of the questionnaire were not foreign language teachers, but that they either did not read the instructions properly or decided to answer it themselves. If this hypothesis were to be considered and this group of 12 respondents were studied together with the group of principals who answered the questionnaire even though there was a foreign language teacher in the school, the results would be as expressed in Figure 10.

6.2.2.4. Foreign languages in the schools

This section provides information on the presence of foreign languages in the primary schools covered by the survey and their categorisation. The number of questionnaires received from Gaelscoileanna is 53, and 42 from the list of MLPSI schools. We must however remember that 11 Gaelscoileanna were also part of the MLPSI. Therefore, a total of 53 questionnaires were part of the MLPSI (55.78%), against 42 (44.21%), which were not (Figure 11).

It was also considered to be important to relate the learning of foreign languages to participation in any other project related to the learning of languages, either at national or at European level, as well as national projects like the afore-mentioned MLPSI. Following this, only a very small percentage of schools, 4.21%, were participating in any language project other than the MLSPI (Figure 12).

The number of Gaelscoileanna not participating in the MLPSI but which were teaching foreign languages in their school was 23. Therefore, the total number of Gaelscoileanna with foreign languages was 34 (23 + 11), which means that 64.15% of Gaelscoileanna were teaching foreign languages in their schools (Figure 13): 20.75% of them as part of the MLSPI and 43.39% on their own initiative. Consequently, 19 Gaelscoileanna, 35.85% of the total number, had no foreign language teaching (Figure 14).

The total number of schools teaching foreign languages, between Gaelscoileanna and MLPSI schools, was 76, which represents 80% of the questionnaires received. The total number of schools with no foreign languages (all of them Gaelscoileanna) is 19 20% of the total number of questionnaires received. These questionnaires from schools with foreign languages were all answered by principals of the schools (Figure 15).

Of the 53 MLPSI schools, 40 were English-medium schools (75.47%), 11 were Gaelscoileanna (20.75%) and two were multi-denominational (3.77%) state schools (Figure 16).

A total of 10 schools were teaching two foreign languages at the same time. This represents 10.52% of the total number of questionnaires (Figure 17), but also means that, of the 76 schools teaching foreign languages, 13.15% were teaching two foreign languages. Furthermore, 7 were Gaelscoileanna which were part of the MLPSI. Of these, 4 schools were teaching French and German, and 3 schools were teaching French and Spanish. One Gaelscoil, also part of the MLPSI, was teaching French and German; and of the remaining two schools, which were part of the MLPSI, one was teaching French and Spanish, and the other was teaching Italian and Spanish.

In relation to the languages taught in the participating schools, the results (Figure 18) show that French was the most popular foreign language chosen by students, taught in 41.9% of the total number of 95 schools. German was taught in 15.1% of the schools, followed by Spanish in 14% of the schools, and Italian in 6.5%.

6.2.2.5. Foreign language teachers

This section summarises the results obtained from those questions in the questionnaire focused on the foreign language teachers' experience, training, and daily practice. Thus, the first question required the respondents to specify the number of years they had been teaching foreign languages. Of the 56 foreign language teachers who answered this question, 21.42% had been teaching for less than 2 years; 17.85% between 2-5 years and 60.71% for more than 5 years (Figure 19). These results show that the majority of teachers had a good level of experience in the area of foreign language teaching. The fact that 34 respondents gave no answer to this question is however significant and poses some doubts/questions.

Information was elicited on the pre-service training that foreign language teachers had received and the corresponding level of usefulness this provided in their daily practice. The respondents were allowed to choose between four categories: *Very useful, Useful, Neutral* and *Not very useful*. Of the 53 respondents, 35.84% considered it to be *Very useful*; 54.71% thought that it was *Useful* and 9.4% believed it to be *Neutral* (Figure 20). There were no respondents who chose the *Not very useful* category. As a matter of

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fact, the results show that over 90% of the respondents found pre-service training *Useful* or *Very useful*; there was however room for improvement, as only 35.84% thought of it as *Very useful* and over 64% classified it in the range of *Useful-Neutral.*

The respondents were also asked about in-service training courses in which they were participating, whether during the school year, the summer, or at both times of the year. Of the 57 respondents, there was a significant percentage of foreign language teachers who received some kind of in-service training (75.37%), although almost 25% did not (Figure 21). This high level comes as a result of teachers in all those schools who were part of the MLPSI taking part in in-service training organised by the Kildare Education Centre during the school year, i.e. one-day workshops for language teachers; 4 day-long courses organised by the MLPSI and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), Annual National Training Conference, with keynote speakers and workshops; and 5-week part-time language courses, organised by the Education Centre Network. Nonetheless, schools not part of this language project would not have the opportunity to join this type of in-service training.

In addition to learning about the in-service training courses teachers follow, it was intended to carry out an in-depth exploration of the qualifications that foreign language teachers from three main groups held:

1. English-medium schools part of the MLPSI
2. Gaelscoilenna part of the MLPSI
3. Gaelscoileanna teaching foreign languages (not part of the MLPSI).

The outcomes of this analysis were not as clear as had been expected; firstly, because, as mentioned before, there were many principals who completed the questionnaire despite the school having an appointed foreign language teacher. When this was the case, all the information relating to the teacher's qualifications and experience was left blank, providing incomplete data. Consequently, it was observed that the strongest correlation between teachers and training was among schools which were part of the MLPSI, where, although the great majority of foreign language teachers came from different backgrounds (class teachers, visiting class teachers or principals with an evening course or diploma; native speakers with or without a Bachelor in Education as visiting language teachers) they had attended in-service training under the auspices of the Kildare Education Centre.

Schools which were not part of any project demonstrated the greatest disparity in terms of preparation of teachers (none in some cases) and allocation of curricular time for the teaching of foreign languages[262].

Furthermore, teachers were asked to express their level of satisfaction with the in-service training courses by classifying them in four different categories: *Extremely useful*, *Very useful*, *Useful* and *Not very useful*. The results show that a great majority of participants considered the in-service courses to be extremely useful. A total of 54.53% of the respondents classified the courses either *Extremely useful* (15.9%) or *Very useful* (38.63%). For 38.63%, the in-service courses were *Useful* and only 6.8% of them thought they were *Not very useful*. This leads us to the conclusion that teachers in Ireland are quite content with the quality of the in-service preparation they receive, as 93.16% of the 44 respondents classified the courses in a positive way (Figure 22). In addition to this, teachers were asked how in-service training could be improved, to which the most common suggestion was to provide teachers with teaching resources.

Finally in this section, teachers were given one open question: *Main difficulties that foreign language teachers encounter in their daily teaching*, which provided a wide range of answers. The total number of respondents from Gaelscoileanna for this question was 15, and 35 from MLPSI schools; this latter group offering the biggest variety of answers. The responses obtained can be classified in five main groups, explained as follows:

A) Coordination with the Curriculum

Teachers, especially visiting language teachers, found it difficult to coordinate the foreign language with the Curriculum and therefore the planning of their lessons. This was explicitly noted by 37.14% of the respondents in Gaelscoileanna and 26.6% of the respondents in MLPSI.

B) Time availability

86.6% of the respondents in Gaelscoileanna and 22.85% in MLPSI were of the opinion that there is insufficient time allocated to the teaching of foreign languages in an overloaded Curriculum with many other important core subjects.

C) Materials/resources

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[262] See Appendix 6.3. on the pre-service and in-service preparation of interviewees.

The third main aspect that teachers referred to was the lack of materials and resources available in the schools in relation to the learning of modern languages. This represented the opinion of 13.3% of the respondents from Gaelscoileanna and 20% from MLPSI schools.

D) Students' attitudes

Although mentioned by only a few respondents, 8.57% (16 respondents) from MLPSI schools, teachers explained how their students do not take the foreign language seriously: because it is not a compulsory subject they do not dedicate time to study it.

E) Age of start

16 respondents of MLPSI (8.57%) believed that the foreign language should be implemented at an earlier age (second-third class onwards).

Other aspects also appeared to have an important influence on teachers' classroom practice, such as the lack of guidelines in relation to the level of language proficiency pupils should acquire and the lack of coordination with local secondary schools that may not teach the same foreign languages as the primary schools in the area.

6.2.2.6. Attitudes towards foreign language learning (L3) and early language acquisition

This section summarises the respondents' views on different linguistic, pedagogical and language policy aspects of language teaching and learning, based on their years of experience in teaching. Their opinions were regarded as highly valuable for two different reasons: firstly, as a way of assessing their knowledge of the language learning process (although this was expected to be basic, it was hoped that teachers would be familiar with fundamental concepts and theories/theorists in psycholinguistics) and, secondly, because of what could be learned from their real-life daily experiences.

Teachers were also questioned on their opinions of parents' attitudes. The reason for this is that the support given by all the stakeholders in education, i.e. principals, teachers and parents, is considered in this investigation as pivotal for a future change in the Curriculum. Consequently, teachers were provided with some open questions, the results of which are synthesised below.

Q1. The influence, if any, a good mastery of the first/s language/s may have on the learning of a third language.

The total number of responses to this question was 85, from both Gaelscoileanna and MLPSI schools, of which only 9 (10.5%) either did not think there was a correlation between the command of a first language and the acquisition of a foreign language, or were not sure of their opinions.

The great majority of respondents, however, from both the MLPSI schools and Gaelscoileanna agreed that children who possess a good understanding and ability in the first language(s) have a definite advantage in learning subsequent languages: *"because there is a transfer of skills from the L1 to the new language; good ability in a first language enhances and facilitates the learning of a foreign language"*.

It is, nevertheless, worth pointing out other less generalised points that were mentioned by the teachers, such as the importance of motivation and attitude, meaning the influence that peers may have over a child learning a foreign language, or the willingness to learn the language the child might develop from what he knows of the culture and the country of the target language. Finally, it was also noted that the methodology used by the teacher is key in determining the motivation and attitude of the learner towards the language.

Q2. Opinion of teachers about the need for making the learning of foreign languages in primary schools in Ireland compulsory.

The responses obtained in this question were quite divided, with varied answers and percentages from the MLPSI or Gaelscoileanna. Consequently, of the 33 responses from MLPSI schools, 24 (72.72%) were affirmative, whereas 8 (24.24%) answers were negative. In the case of Gaelscoileanna, of the 55 responses 30 (54.54%) were affirmative and 18 (32.72%) were negative. The other 7 (12.72 %) respondents were unclear in their answer, which meant that the researcher was unable to classify them.

These results show a tendency among the respondents to think of compulsion as the most beneficial option, although as already highlighted, the reasons given on both sides were many and equally valid. Below is a summary of the most common answers.

On the *No* side:

- The curriculum is very crowded as it is. Any addition would mean that other subjects would lose allocated time.
- There is an enormous lack of trained foreign language teachers and adequate teaching materials.
- Compulsory acquisition of the Irish language fostered very negative attitudes. Gaelscoileanna are voluntary and work very well.
- Children who have language-learning difficulties are already struggling with two languages.

On the *Yes* side:

- It would give equal opportunities to children in disadvantage areas.
- European children learn several languages. Irish children are behind when it comes to knowledge of languages.
- We live in a multicultural and multilingual society. It would foster positive attitudes towards people from other nationalities.
- It is necessary to prepare Irish children to compete in a globalised Europe. It is good for job opportunities, international relations and travel.
- Children in primary school are more motivated than in secondary school; it is seen as more fun and appealing. In secondary school it is part of a timetable, with homework and exams involved. They would have more time to explore the language, especially from an early age, when they can learn the language more easily.

Q3. Appropriate age for children in Irish primary schools to start learning a foreign language.

The answers to this question show very clearly that there is a tendency to consider that an early start is the best option in primary schools. Therefore, the most suitable ages to start acquiring a foreign language seem to be between 6-8 years of age according to the teachers asked.

The figures are as follows:

Figure 10 – Breakdown of respondents on preferred age of start for foreign language learning in Irish primary schools (according to school type and grade)

Breakdown of respondents according to school type and grade			
	MLPSI	**Gaelscoileanna**	**Total**
Pre-school	9 respondents	11 respondents	20 respondents
1st/2nd class	10 "	23 "	33 "
3rd/4th class	10 "	3 "	13 "
5th/6th class	3 "	7 "	10 "
N/A-not clear	None "	9 "	9 "
TOTAL	32 "	53 "	85 "

Q.4.- Necessary resources for the implementation of early foreign language learning in primary education.

With regard to the most needed resources for the implementation of early foreign language learning in the schools these can be classified in two different groups. The first group relates to different educational areas, such as:

1. Age appropriate materials
2. Extra time allocation
3. Teaching through CLIL
4. Finance/grants and resources
5. Adapted Curriculum
6. Government support
7. Teachers' and Principals' support

The second classification relates to the foreign language teachers, with aspects such as:

1. In-service training
2. Pre-service training available in all Colleges of Education
3. Fluency of teachers in the language
4. Support language teachers
5. Adequate training for visiting language teachers
6. Strong network of support

Q5. What teachers think is the parents' attitude towards the learning of a foreign language from the early years.

This question was presented in the questionnaire through two different questions. The first one: *Do you think parents have a positive attitude to their children learning a foreign language?* was a closed question with three possible answers: *Yes*, *No* or *I don't know*. The results showed that 89.25% of teachers thought that parents have a very positive attitude towards the introduction of a foreign language in the schools. Some teachers (10.75%), however, indicated that they were unaware of parents' attitudes (Figure 6.24).

The second question focused on the opinion of parents regarding the learning of a foreign language from an early age. This was an open question.

In the Gaelscoileanna group, of the 47 answers obtained, the number of teachers who thought that parents had or would have a positive/encouraging attitude towards their children learning a foreign language from the early years was 40 (78.43%). No teacher thought that parents would not agree with it. The remaining answers correspond to teachers who were unsure of their opinions.

In the group of MLPSI schools, of the 30 answers received, 20 (66.66%) were of the opinion that parents are supportive and encouraging. Varied opinions, however, were obtained from the other 10 (33.33%). Some teachers stated that parents see their children as having enough subjects but also that the Curriculum is too crowded already, meaning that they already have too much to do. Some of the parents also thought that an additional language is confusing for the child. Significantly, some teachers outlined the importance of considering the families' background when analysing the level of interest and support they may show towards foreign language learning. In general terms, it was noted that families from disadvantaged areas are less interested in their children learning an additional language, whereas middle-class and upper-class families have a greater interest in their children learning additional languages. These families seem to be more aware of the benefits related to the knowledge of languages in the long term.

Considering all of the answers, I have noted that 77.92% of all respondents believed there was parental support and, although no more than two answers were negative, there were a few teachers who were unaware of the parents' position.

Q6. Reasons why teachers do not agree with the introduction of foreign language learning in the early years of primary education.

The response rate from MLPSI schools was 27. 13 (48.14%) of these teachers did not see any difficulties in the implementation of early foreign language learning. However, 14 (51.85%) respondents certainly believed that there are several issues that need to be addressed before any further consideration.

Of the 47 Gaelscoileanna respondents, 27 (57.44%) did not see any obstacles either, whereas 20 (42.55%), as in the case of MLPSI, did not consider an early introduction to foreign languages to be appropriate. Additionally, teachers were asked whether they thought that children would enjoy learning a third language. The answers were radical: 98.91% of the respondents said *Yes* and only 1% opted for the *I don't know* answer (Figure 25).

Another question posed to teachers was their opinion on the compatibility of a third language with the learning of English and Irish in primary schools. The results show that 92.31% believed it to be

compatible, whereas 5.49% of the teachers did not agree. There was also a very small percentage of respondents who did not know, 2.2% (Figure 26).

The last question seeking teachers' personal opinions was in relation to the language of instruction that is normally used by children in the learning of the L3. Although half of the respondents said it was English, there was a significant percentage (24.14%) who said it was Irish (Figure 27).

6.2.2.7. Resources and materials for the foreign language class

The results obtained in relation to the resources available to teachers within the school and in classes are detailed. Even though it can be said that teachers' experience and training determine their teaching approach, available resources can make a class more or less dynamic, therefore influencing the motivation and attitude of teachers and students upon the language.

To the general question put to teachers: *Do you think you have enough resources for planning your class?* 64.15% of respondents answered *Yes*, whereas 35.84% answered *No* (Figure 28).

Foreign language teachers were required to evaluate the available teaching materials for the foreign language classroom. For this purpose they were given a table with four categories: *Quality*, *Quantity*, *Variety* and *Availability*. And four descriptors: *High*, *Medium*, *Poor* and *Very poor*. Figures 29, 30, 31, 32 show the results obtained.

With regard to the quality of materials that foreign language teachers had at their disposal, we can see that teachers enjoyed quite a sizeable range of quality materials. While there was a tendency to grade them as of medium quality (66.04%), 22.6% of the respondents chose the *High* category and over 10% graded them as being of poor or very poor quality (Figure 29).

The results are different when analysing the quantity of materials available. Here the percentage of respondents who thought that the amount of materials available was satisfactory (35.85%) was more equal to those who thought that they were scarce (32.08%). Also, over 24% of the respondents enjoyed high quantity materials, while over 7% said they had very few resources for their teaching (Figure 630). Following this was the question on the variety of materials for the classroom, closely linked to the question of the amount of materials available. Again, there was a tendency among the respondents to think that the variety was medium-poor, 41.51% and 37.74% respectively. Finally, this trend is shown again in the analysis of the availability of materials, with 37.74% of respondents who chose the "medium" answer and 35.85% who chose the "poor" answer.

Finally, information was elicited as to which additional resources teachers would like. Most mentioned workbooks or textbooks; DVDs; CDs or tapes with songs; the availability of a computer with software in the target language; a library. Other desirable materials were posters, flashcards, newspapers/magazines, photographs, labels in the target language for the different parts of the school, resource packs by topic and an overhead projector.

Although the results detailed above are highly significant, they do not provide detailed information regarding pre-service training, in-service training or the availability of a variety of materials in the different types of schools. This is the reason why the researcher wished to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the respondents by dividing the total number of questionnaires into four different groups:

1. English-medium primary schools participating in the MLPSI.
2. Gaelscoileanna participating in the MLPSI.
3. Gaelscoileanna teaching foreign languages, but not as part of the MLPSI.
4. Gaelscoileanna not teaching foreign languages.

Even though the group of English-medium primary schools participating in the MLPSI consisted of 42 schools, only data obtained from 37 questionnaires was taken into account for this research. Five of the questionnaires were disregarded for being completed by the principals of the schools.

Looking first at the training the respondents had received for the teaching of foreign languages in primary school, only one teacher responded that she had not received any training. The others stated they had received pre-service training in the form a range of courses from degrees to diplomas and in-service courses. In the evaluation of the pre-service preparation, 34.37% of the 32 respondents to this question said it was *Very useful*; 59.37% defined it as *Useful* and 6.25% thought it was *Neutral*.

Regarding in-service training, the results show that, of the 37 respondents, 78.37% took part in one or two courses during the school year; 13.51% joined more than two courses during the school year and two joined courses during the summer or at both times. Furthermore, 12.5% defined in-service training courses as *Extremely useful*; 46.87% as *Very useful* and 40.62% as *Useful*. None of the respondents thought the courses were not useful.

The availability of resources was similarly evaluated. Of the 31 respondents, 64.51% believed they had a good variety of materials, whereas 35.48% thought they did not have enough resources to plan their lessons, which suggests that 1/3 of the teachers were not satisfied with their teaching materials.

In the group of 11 Gaelscoileanna also participating in the MLPSI, six of the questionnaires were answered by the principals, so only five of the questionnaires were answered by the foreign language

teachers. Consequently, Section B of the questionnaire only had five respondents. The results show that all five teachers have received in-service training and two of them had been awarded some form of third level certification. The in-service training courses were seen by the teachers as *Useful* or *Very useful*, which indicates that the students were benefiting from them.

In relation to the variety of resources available, four out of the five teachers claimed to be satisfied. However, the materials available were considered to be of medium quality, with a tendency to see them as medium-low.

With regard to the group of Gaelscoileanna teaching foreign languages, but not as part of the MLPSI, the results show that, of the 23 schools in this group, only 11 schools completed this section. Of these, only five teachers had, reportedly, received some type of pre-service training. Also, only one teacher said he/she was participating in one or two in-service courses during the school year. As for the availability of resources, six out of the 11 teachers responded they were not happy. Finally, all teachers in this group classified the materials as being of medium-low quality on average.

In general, the information provided by the survey participants denotes a significant level of dissatisfaction and even, frustration, in the language teacher population, associated with the non-integration of the L3 in the Primary School Curriculum and the implications of this. First and more importantly, there was no clear pattern of the profile of the language teacher, given that some were part of the school staff and others visiting language teachers. Also, while some were native speakers with little or no pre-service training in foreign language teaching, others were English native speakers who had learned the foreign language in a number of contexts, but who also lacked adequate pre-service training. Admittedly, the main issues concerning teaching practice, i.e. lack of available resources, teaching guidelines and in-service training, were highlighted in schools not part of the MLPSI. On the contrary, schools part of the MLPSI showed evidence of a very well designed programme by the Kildare Education Centre which caters for all aspects related to the teaching of the L3. In our opinion, however, efforts should be made to train language teachers among the staff, who are already part of the education system and could more easily find ways of integrating the L3 in the school life, and hence avoid the presence of visiting teachers.

In summary, the issues and concerns elicited by teachers in relation to the possible implementation of early foreign language learning in primary schools highlight a general high level of awareness among teachers of the exisiting reality in the primary sector in Ireland. Even though the data shows broad support from parents and teachers, there was also a palpable sense of caution about whether the education system is ready for the addition, compulsory or not, of a third language in the primary school prior to making necessary changes. I hence appreciate the level of engagement of the questionnaire

participants and their sincerity, for it has provided me with the necessary insight into the practicalities surrounding my research questions.

6.2.3. Findings from the questionnaires in Catalonia

6.2.3.1. Introduction

The questionnaires sent to primary schools in Catalonia, that is, to schools participating in Phase I of the Foreign Languages Project, elicited the most recent developments in the region regarding the setting up of projects in state schools for the teaching of English in primary education. The level of expertise of the foreign language teachers in this region was outstanding. As well as being in possession of a Bachelor degree in teaching and a specialisation in foreign language teaching in one specific language (English), by being part of this project these teachers had undergone special in-service courses and participated in seminars organised by the *Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres***[263] unit.

6.2.3.2. General characteristics of the schools

This section provides a description of the 44 schools in Catalonia taking part in the survey study, that is, 51.76% of the initial 85 to which the questionnaires had been sent. Schools have been classified according to their size, location and status, among others parameters. The results obtained from the questionnaires in Catalonia show that the majority of schools participating in the survey study were state schools (81.82%), although a number of schools were semi-private (Figure 33[264] - Appendix 6.2.).

As outlined in the methodology chapter, this survey study was designed to focus on those state schools participating in Phase I of the Foreign Languages Project; however, the questionnaires were also sent to the semi-private schools that had participated in the personal interviews, which represented 13.64% of the total. It is believed that the 2.27% reflected in Figure 33 as *private schools* were in fact semi-private schools, but the respondents chose the wrong answers. If this were the case, the real percentage of semi-private schools would be 15.91% of the 44 surveyed schools.

With regard to the geographical location of the schools, except for one rural school, all were urban schools; one other school could not be classified (Figure 34). The total number of students in the

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[263] Resource Center for Foreign Languages.
[264] Figures 33 to 55 can be found in Appendix 6.2.

schools and the distribution of the students per class were also relevant aspects (Figures 35 and 36). The categories were defined in the following way:

- Fewer than 230: schools that had one class-group per grade from pre-schools up to 6th class
- Between 230-450: represents schools with two class-groups per grade
- More than 450: represents schools with three class-groups per grade in all grades or only in some.

The results show that 26.19% of the participating schools had a small population of students, whereas the remainder, over 74%, corresponds to schools with two or three class-groups per grade. Also, primary schools with two class-groups per grade were the most common type of school in Catalonia (Figure 36). Schools with three class-groups per grade are found in urban areas with a high population density and are normally semi-private. It is worth noting that, for years, state schools had two class-groups per grade and always operated to maximum capacity, but nowadays there is a tendency in some areas to only have one class-group due to a smaller schoolgoing population and for reasons such as lower birth rates and a preference for private/semi-private schools[265].

6.2.3.3. Foreign language teachers

The majority of the respondents were foreign language teachers (75%), although in 18.18% of schools the person who completed the questionnaire was either a class teacher or a specialist language teacher in the school. In only two schools (4.55%) did the principals complete the questionnaire (Figure 37). Additionally, it was observed that 25% of the respondents had been working as language teachers for 2-5 years and over 60% for over five years (Figure 38).

In order to define the profile of the respondents more accurately, however, they were asked whether they had passed the *oposicions*[266] (Figure 39) and were working as civil servants (Figure 40). Given that 81.82% of the participating schools were state schools (as shown in Figure 33), it was expected that almost the same percentage of teachers would be civil servants and thus, have passed the *oposicions*.

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[265] See section 4.1.1. of this thesis for absolute figures on percentage of students attending state and private/semi-private schools.
[266] The *oposicions* is the compulsory examination to become a civil servant for any profession in Spain.

However, only 56.82% gave a *Yes* answer. This indicates that about half the teachers in state schools did not have permanent positions and were thus *interins*[267], which is quite an unexpected result.

In parallel to this, it is significant that 40.91% of respondents provided only a moderate response in relation to the quality of pre-service training and that, in total, 59.1% thought it was between *Not very useful* and *Useful*, whereas 34.09% thought it was *Very useful* and 4.55% *Extremely useful* (Figure 41). These results clearly show that the preparation offered in Colleges of Education with regard to practical skills is not regarded as sufficient and/or appropriate by the teachers themselves, which indicates a need to re-evaluate the programmes' structure at third level.

In Catalonia, the contents of the Bachelor Degree in Education for primary teaching are exactly the same as for any other region in Spain, except for the subject on Catalan didactics. Despite the fact that Catalonia is a bilingual region, student teachers do not receive any specific training in how to approach bilingual education. Consequently, it was in the interest of the research to ask teachers to consider this matter, specifically whether they thought initial training of teachers in monolingual and bilingual communities in Spain should be different.

The answers to this question were very different and, in some cases, confused. The majority thought that teachers in bilingual communities should not receive any special or different training to those teachers in monolingual communities. Only 18.18% thought the initial training should be different. Two of the answers are especially worth noting:

- "It should be different because in the monolingual communities children have only one pattern of linguistic structures, pronunciation,… and the learning of a 2nd language will be more difficult for them".

- "I think so because they face some moments of "linguistic confusion" which require specific training. At the moment I follow my intuition but I am not sure it is the best way for the child".

Some respondents (11.36%) however, said they did not know or that they had never thought about it. Furthermore, two of the respondents observed that it is necessary for teachers in bilingual communities to have a good command of both languages.

As well as asking foreign language teachers to evaluate their pre-service training, they were questioned on the in-service training in which they participated and its value in meeting their daily needs. Firstly, the

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[267] *Interins* are qualified teachers who cover permanent positions on a temporary basis. In general, *interins* are contracted to cover maternity leave, leave of absence or permanent positions that have not yet been filled. The length of the contract/service can vary from months to years. These teachers could hold this status of *interins* (working for the State without having passed the *oposicions)* for years. Teachers in this situation are also obliged to change schools quite often, which has a negative impact on the students.

question asked was whether it was common for teachers to join in-service courses in their subject area. In this regard, less than three quarters of foreign language teachers were regularly taking part (Figure 42). Of these, only about 34% of teachers classified them in the range of *Extremely useful* or *Very useful*, whereas 54.55% thought of them as *Useful* and 4.55% *Not very useful* (Figure 43).

Finally in this section, the participants were asked how difficult they felt it was to succeed as a teacher in a foreign language class. The question was posed in a very simple way (Figure 44), so that teachers could easily express their opinions as they wished. Interestingly, the results are very balanced, in that 20.51% of respondents thought it was *Difficult*, 58.97% said it was *Neutral* and 20.51%, again, thought it was *Easy*. The conclusion we can draw from this is that, in general terms, teachers were happy with the relation between work and achievement of results. Nevertheless, approximately 60% of the teachers stated that the most challenging task for them is implementation in the classroom. Three main reasons were given:

- Children's attitudes

- Class sizes

- Different levels of competence in the foreign language

Teachers had problems in maintaining children's attention due to the difficulty in accommodating the needs of every student. The existence of different levels as well as the great diversity of students, together with the problem of the arrival of new students in the middle of the school year are barriers to the implementation of the Curriculum content; as well as the fact that, in most cases, the foreign language is only a content subject that is not used as a medium of instruction in any other context.

Teachers therefore regretted that the foreign language (English) was not used outside the school, or as a language of instruction. The size of the groups, 25 students at a time, also appeared to make it difficult to work on improving students' oral skills. Additionally, some teachers mentioned that they would need more time to prepare a varied programme of activities and others expressed their concern over not having their own dedicated classroom, an "English classroom", where they could store their materials for lessons which would be a space to immerse in both the language and culture related to the target language.

6.2.3.4. Issues relating to foreign languages and foreign language learning

As has been already noted, in Catalonia, as in the rest of Spain, the great majority of schools (approximately 90%) choose English as the foreign language to teach in primary education. Figure 45

reflects this situation, although one of the 44 schools was shown to be teaching French to its Senior Cycle students, as well as English. This was in one of the semi-private schools that had been interviewed.

Information was elicited on the age of introduction of third language learning in the schools. It is important to remember that, in Catalonia, it is mandatory to start foreign language learning in first grade, at the age of six. The results show, however, that a majority of schools opted for the pre-school period as a time to commence exposure to the new language. Only 20.45% of schools began this learning process at the later stage, as dictated by the law (Figure 46).

Of the 77.27% of schools that introduced learning of the L3 in pre-school education, it was observed (Figure 47) that the majority of schools opted for an early start, between the ages of 3 and 4. In this respect, 38.1% of answers correspond to P3; 33.33% to P4 and 14.29% represents the percentage of schools that introduce the L3 in P5. These results clearly show the preference for a very early start.

Despite the information provided in relation to the preferred age for introducing children to foreign languages, teachers' experienced-based opinions were also valuable. Therefore, they were asked at what age they considered it to be appropriate to introduce a third language in a bilingual context such as Catalonia. Of the 43 respondents to this question, 38 (86.36%) clearly agreed that the introduction of the foreign language should occur as early as possible. With regard to the exact age, opinions were divided. The age range for starting was between three years of age and the first cycle of primary education (ages 6-8). There were a considerable number of teachers who supported a start at pre-school level (47.36% of the 38). Teachers who suggested the age of three as the most suitable believed that a very young child is able to absorb new information very easily. Teachers who chose the age of 4 or 5, although recognising the benefits of an early start, considered the age of three as a time for children to focus on acquiring their mother tongue.

23.68% of the 38 respondents approved the introduction of foreign language learning in pre-school education and considered the age of six, corresponding to the first year of primary school, as the most appropriate. The general belief among these teachers was that children need to have acquired a good command of their first language/s before being introduced to a new language. The remaining 28.96% of respondents agreed with an introduction as early as possible, but added that it had to be considered alongside a good methodology. It is however significant that two of the respondents believed that the age between 10 and 12 would be the most adequate.

The next question was a statement used as argument by many theorists: *"the earlier a child learns a language the better"*. Of the 42 respondents, 29 (69.04%) agreed with this statement, although there was a wide

range of reasons given. Among those respondents who answered *No*, 13 out of 42, (30.95%), different reasons were noted:

1. Children should speak and understand their mother language/s correctly before starting a new language
2. It would be more beneficial to "start at a later stage but more intensively".
3. It depends on the type of programme designed by the school, that is, on the methodologies applied and activities provided.

Furthermore, teachers were asked what they thought was the parents' attitude towards the learning of a foreign language from the early years. 100% of teachers confirmed the parents' agreement and enthusiasm regarding their children being in constant contact with the foreign language, especially from an early stage.

From a different perspective, it was also considered useful to ask foreign language teachers to evaluate students' proficiency in the foreign language by the end of primary education; this is to say, after six-nine years of instruction. The question was asked in two different ways: as both a closed question and an open question. The results obtained for both questions are very similar, which would seem to confirm the validity of the information obtained. The answers given were however unexpected, especially coming from the language teachers themselves. In the first question, only a small percentage of the 42 respondents, 9.09%, believed it to be high, whereas 38.64% thought it was moderate and 47.73% thought it was low (Figure 48). In the second question, the open answers were converted into quantifiable data. Therefore*,* the majority of answers described children's level of English at the end of primary education as *Moderate* or *Low*, with only a small percentage of teachers who believed it was *High*. The percentages obtained are as follows:

High – 11.36%.
Moderate- 34.09%.
Low- 45.45%.
Very low- 4.5%.

According to the foreign language teachers, the poor level of achievement of Catalan students in the foreign language is reportedly for three main reasons:

1. Teachers' lack of English
2. Lack of opportunities to use the foreign language outside the school
3. Not enough time allocated for the acquisition of high levels of proficiency in the foreign language.

With these results to hand, it is made clear that foreign language teachers in Catalonia identify a mismatch between the years students spend receiving instruction in the L3 and the proficiency they acquire. This is very similar to the argument in Ireland on the poor levels of Irish achieved by Irish students, although the intervening factors are arguably different in both cases. In theory, Catalan children enjoy higher levels of motivation to learn English than Irish children[268] do to learn Irish given the status of English as global language and its presence in the media, popular culture, etc. and the status of Irish as endangered minority language In my opinion, however, it appears that at primary level students' lack of knowledge of the wider world keeps them unaware of this status of *lingua franca* that English enjoys worldwide. This would also seem to be the case with secondary school students (aged 12-18), given that, as mentioned above, English is not commonly used in their daily life or even heard often in the media but rather a necessary language to open up to the world. I conclude that, in Catalonia, except for special cases, motivation does not have a direct impact in achievement levels in the foreign language within compulsory education. With this, I can say that, generally, English is learned and viewed in Catalonia similarly to how Irish is in non-Gaeltacht areas in Ireland.

This section was concluded with a final question, where teachers were asked to consider whether - children will acquire a higher level of proficiency by the end of primary education by starting the L3 at the age of six instead of nine as a result of the new regulations in education. The results showed a high percentage of respondents who answered *Yes* to this question (83.33%), who thought an earlier start would be beneficial in terms of acquiring oral skills and better pronunciation in the long run. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that other factors such as: the methodologies employed, the number of sessions per week, the frequency of sessions, as well as the time allocated, will also have an influence on the results.

The remainder of respondents thought that an earlier start does not necessarily mean a higher level of achievement among the students. In any case, this new practice has only been implemented recently and the first data will not be available in the short term.

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[268] We refer here to children in non-Gaeltacht areas and understand that motivational factors within the Gaeltacht are different and of a much higher level than in non-Gaeltacht areas. This is the reason why we do not consider this case.

6.2.3.5. Multilingualism and the learning of languages

In some of the questions included in this section the researcher sought to gain knowledge of the awareness of teachers of some aspects related to language learning, such as bilingual/multilingualism in early childhood, language transfer in 2nd language acquisition, immersion education issues, etc. The first question was: *Influence that the mastery of several languages has on the acquisition of a new language* (Figure 49). The great majority of teachers, 77.27%, believed bilingualism to have a positive influence on the learning of an additional language; 2.27% thought it would have a negative effect and 18.18% thought it would not have any influence.

Still related to the topic of language skills transfer but in a slightly different manner, teachers were put in a more compromising situation by being asked through a closed question whether they thought it was easier for bilingual children (the children they had as students) to learn new languages. The reply obtained showed that 86.36% gave a *Yes* answer; 4.55% said *No* and 4.55% answered *Don't know* (Figure 50).

The next question was focused on learning Castilian and Catalan and the curriculum time that is allocated to them. Teachers were asked whether they thought the Primary School Curriculum in Catalonia provides enough opportunities for acquiring the two languages proficiently, despite also being exposed to a foreign language. This generated an equal number of answers on both sides. The importance of taking into account the fact that children who live in rural areas in the province of Catalonia often have Catalan as their first language was included. Castilian is then the second language, because children do not have as many opportunities to listen to it and speak it as children living in urban areas. Therefore, children living in urban areas tend to possess a good command of both Castilian and Catalan, as both languages are heard and used on a daily basis. Nonetheless, it was agreed that because Catalan is the general language of instruction in all schools, it is also the language used in the teaching of the foreign language and, therefore, by the students in their cognitive learning process (except for foreign national children).

A large majority of teachers, 72.73%, confirmed that, in their opinion, the three languages, Catalan, English and Castilian are given enough curricular time. Of the other 27.27% of teachers who considered that time is not being evenly distributed in the Curriculum, surprisingly, the majority would like more time given to the teaching of English. The main argument is that English is not used outside school. Some of the teachers said that Catalan is getting too many curricular hours, and that English and Castilian should be given more time. It was also pointed out that, in general, more time should be allocated to language learning. Furthermore, it was suggested that English could be allocated greater time if play times were organised in the foreign language or other subjects were taught through this

medium, using teaching methodologies like CLIL. Nevertheless, the results also showed that 68.18% of the teachers clearly stated that, in their opinion, English does not negatively affect the acquisition of Catalan and Castilian.

Moreover, all teachers agreed with the compulsory inclusion of a foreign language in the Catalan Primary School Curriculum. One opinion which was most significant for the purpose of this research came from a teacher who related the concept "compulsory " with "necessity", as if making the subject compulsory was a way of giving more importance or bringing the foreign language to the same status as the other core subjects in the Curriculum. In this way, teachers acknowledged the importance of learning foreign languages in primary school.

Two other important aspects were also considered. The first one was that the time allocation would be much reduced if there was no compulsion, as other subjects would be given more time and, as a result, the same levels could not be achieved. The second one, was in relation to the topic of the right of equal opportunities in education, although raised by only one teacher: *"If it was a choice, we would end up with middle-class trilingual education and working class bilingual, which would lead to social inequality. I agree with it being compulsory"*.

6.2.3.6. The Foreign Languages Project

Since the start of the Foreign Languages Project, in the school year 2005, the main goal has been to extend it to all the primary schools in the region within a few years. For this reason, the researcher sought to ascertain teachers' opinions on the health of the project. Therefore, two questions were designed on the subject. The first one, focused on the advantages that had been gained by the participating schools from the project.

One of the main advantages of the Foreign Languages Project is that participating schools are supplied with one extra teacher, which allows for the division of classes into smaller groups. Teachers also receive special training and attend meetings where they can exchange their experiences with other teachers.

From the students' perspective, they are provided with more hours of exposure to the foreign language and, depending on the area of the project chosen by the school, some children will be introduced to the foreign language from the age of four. Some will focus on the development of their oral skills whilst others will have the chance to experiment with the latest innovations in ICT and language learning.

In general terms, the majority of teachers praised the extra support they were receiving from the Government, and with that, the extra resources, such as budget increase, extra provision of teachers and

in-service training. Nonetheless, only 26.92% of the respondents involved in the Foreign Languages Project were allegedly working on the implementation of CLIL in their schools, which was taking place in senior classes. The subjects involved were Maths, Science and Arts and Crafts.

In the second question: *Do you think the Foreign Languages Project should be established in all the other schools?* 51.28% of respondents answered *Yes*; 2.56% said *No*; 25.64% said they did not know and 20.51% preferred not to answer (Figure 51).

In the evaluation of the teaching of L3 through Content and Language Integrated Learning, the majority (61.36%) of teachers agreed with the implementation of this teaching methodology in their schools, as they thought it would be a positive experience for both teachers and students and the best way to use the foreign language as a means of communication. The teachers' main concern, however, related to, primarily, the need to prepare and train teachers in terms of oral skills and methodologies to be used. Secondly, they raised the possibility that children would not be able to follow the lessons due to their poor command of the foreign language.

Teachers also remarked on the necessity to maintain the learning of the foreign language as a content subject and coordinating this well with the use of the CLIL methodology.

6.2.3.7. Resources and materials for the foreign language class

Finally, it was imperative that teachers be questioned on the materials they use for the foreign language class. As in the questionnaires for Ireland, there were questions relating to the quality, quantity, variety and availability of materials.

The percentages shown in all four answers demonstrate a high level of satisfaction on the part of teachers, with only a small percentage of them demanding that quantity and availability be improved (Figures 53, 54, 55). In relation to the quality of materials (Figure 52), almost 90% of the respondents regarded them as of good-very good quality.

Similarly, teachers' were asked to express their views on the resources available for planning their lessons. Of the 44 respondents 75% believed they had enough resources for planning their lessons, whereas 13.63% thought they did not have enough. The other 11.36% belongs to a group of teachers whose answers could not be classified in one group or the other. For instance, one teacher indicated "*I would like to split groups to practise expression*". We understand this to mean that the teacher was calling for more staff in the school, so she would be able to take one part of the class to conduct oral activities while another teacher taught the remainder of the class.

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When questioned on the additional resources teachers would like to be provided with, the answers included: the acquisition of a language laboratory, reading books and games, software to allow for the learning of the foreign language through ICT and materials for the teaching of the foreign language through CLIL. Also a large number of teachers asked for a dedicated L3 classroom. One of the teachers also mentioned the lack of time to prepare lessons, especially oral activities and to coordinate with other language teachers. A small percentage of respondents would also like to have the opportunity to exchange experiences with other teachers or even to get the chance to listen and speak in English outside the school context.

6.2.4. Conclusions to the findings of the questionnaires in Ireland and Catalonia

This survey study involved the participation of schools with students from different types of backgrounds in both Ireland and Catalonia. As had been expected, in Ireland, the presence of urban schools was greater than that of rural schools (the latter represented one third of the final results). Furthermore, schools with one class-group on average per grade were in the majority, although it was interesting to see that one tenth of the schools surveyed had mixed class-groups.

In summarising the findings of the questionnaire survey in Ireland there are a number of points that are of particular relevance to the research questions of this thesis which are:

a. Conducting an analysis of the feasibility of incorporating Irish and a modern language in the Irish Primary School Curriculum, from an early age, using partial or total immersion in Irish and the L3.

b. Defining the most appropriate model of education for Ireland that would offer trilingual education in English, Irish and a L3.

c. Identifying the changes to be made in the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers so as to ensure a successful implementation of the model of trilingual education mentioned above.

Hence, the findings arising from the research can be summarised as follows:

1.- Inclusion of an L3 in the Primary School Curriculum

There was a clear desire on the part of primary schools to teach foreign languages and to find time within their timetable to include a 3rd language within the Curriculum, even if only at a very basic level. In particular, it is worth noting the situation of the Gaelscoileanna group, with 11 schools part of the MLPSI and 23 teaching foreign languages on their own initiative, which implies that 43.4% of

Gaelscoileanna surveyed were working with no additional funding or provision of extra teachers. The most likely reason why these schools were operating on their own is that they had been refused access to the MLPSI, for reasons such as lack of available teachers or funding. On the other hand, some of the schools were waiting for approval to participate in the MLPSI. Nevertheless, it was of particular relevance that approximately 64% of Galescoileanna surveyed were teaching foreign languages, especially with only one project of this kind being operated in the country.

2.- Learning of third and fourth languages at primary level

10% of the students participating in the survey were learning two foreign languages, with French by far the most popular modern language chosen in the overall survey, German and Spanish following in equal percentages and Italian in last place. These results show the positive attitude towards implementing trilingual education in primary education on the part of Irish schools and are an indication of the feasibility of this objective by making some changes to the current Primary School Curriculum.

3.- Qualifications of foreign language teachers

A large number of visiting language teachers in both MLPSI schools and Gaelscoileanna were not permanent staff. Data provided by the interviewees highlighted the different backgrounds of language teachers and also the fact that there was a significant percentage of language teachers who did not hold any relevant qualification at pre-service level.

Nonetheless, a high level of expertise and qualifications among many other teachers also became evident, as well as a high level of participation in the in-service training organised by the Kildare Education centre for those language teachers part of the MLPSI. Additionally, we learned about the high level of satisfaction among language teachers with regard to this in-service preparation, athough there was a call to increase the number of courses available.

These results, added to the fact that teachers operate under different schemes (some of them under the guidance of the Kildare Education Centre and others on their own), suggest the need to formalise the teaching of foreign languages at primary level in Ireland. Also, they highlight the benefits of regulating the pre-service and in-service training of teachers towards common objectives and allowing equal access to all foreign language teachers.

4.- Age of introduction of foreign languages at primary level

A keen interest on the part of teachers in the teaching of foreign languages from an early age also emerged, as expressed by 75% of respondents from MLPSI schools and 67.27% from Gaelscoileanna.

These figures show that 89.23% of the total number of respondents to this question believed in an early start, which is in agreement with the initial hypothesis of this thesis. More specifically, on the most appropriate age for introducing a third language in Irish primary schools, 23.52% of the total number of respondents believed it to be the pre-school years[269]; 38.82% thought it was from first-second class, 15.29% from third-fourth class and 9.19% from fifth-sixth class. Therefore, although 23.52% of respondents thought that pre-school education was the time to introduce the third language, 62.61% determined some level of primary education as more beneficial. In summary, 54.11% of answers supported a start in the early years of primary schooling, this is, from first class to third-fourth class.

From these results it can be inferred that, when saying "early years", teachers referred more to the ages 6-8 than 3-6. This idea is supported by the fact that about 85% of the respondents considered mastery of the first language/s as crucial before being introduced to a new language. That is to say, English and Irish need to be ensured the necessary teaching time to guarantee a sound basic competence in both languages after the first years of schooling.

These results do not match my initial proposal with regard to the appropriate age of introduction of the L3 in bilingual/immersion contexts, which we had established to be at the beginning of pre-education.

Several teachers indicated, however, that it is not only an early introduction to the foreign language that determines achievement but that it is also important to take into account the level of motivation of teachers alongside the methodology used. His/her ability to motivate the children will also greatly influence the competence of the child in the third language. Consequently, it is fundamental that all the important aspects related to the implementation of the third language are considered, i.e. teacher preparation, educational policies and government support.

5.- Compulsion in third language teaching at primary level

There was a need to explore the issues surrounding the compulsory introduction of an L3 at primary level. From the opinions obtained in the initial personal interviews, it had been expected that there would be a majority of teachers who would not agree to compulsory foreign language learning. The results of the questionnaire in this matter indicated that the number of supporters of compulsory foreign language learning was greater than the number of opponents and that the reasons given for not supporting compulsory learning of a third language exactly match the list of necessary supports given in

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[269] For "pre-school years" we understand the education received between the ages of 3-6, before starting primary education.

the personal interview process, i.e. qualified teachers; appropriate materials; re-consideration of how Irish is learned; re-evaluation of the Primary School Curriculum.

As a way of concluding the examination of the outcomes in the Irish survey study, we sought to find out the proportion of participants who would support the inclusion of a third language in the Primary School Curriculum. The results obtained indicated 92.31% of *Yes* answers, which leads to the conclusion that despite recognising some weaknesses in the education system, schools and teachers appreciate the benefits of language learning and are open to the introduction of a third language in the early years of primary education.

In Catalonia, the results have highlighted a different situation with regard to language teaching practices. Looking firstly at the profile of the respondents, the majority of them were qualified primary foreign language teachers with over five years' experience working in, mainly, urban schools with two class-groups per grade, on average. Interestingly and as already stated, even though over 80% of the schools were state schools, not all the teachers held the civil servant status, which would be understood to be the norm in state schools in Catalonia. The fact that half of the teachers were temporary shows instability, not only because they could be moved to another school in the short term, but also because the students are not assured continuation. Nevertheless, it was significant that virtually all teachers in Catalonia teaching foreign languages held the relevant university qualification. They had all followed the same programme of studies and received training *in situ*, unlike teachers in Ireland. This is not to say that, as reflected in the opinions of Catalan teachers, there was not a certain lack of satisfaction with regard to the effectiveness of the pre-service courses, mostly in terms of teaching methodologies for the very young learners and the teaching of content through the foreign language.

As in the case of Ireland, the issues discussed in the survey study conducted in Catalonia can be summarised as follows:

1. Availability of resources and level of satisfaction among foreign language teachers

With regard to the resources teachers have at their disposal to conduct their lessons and the level of satisfaction, the results show that the vast majority of teachers are quite content with the materials they have at their disposal, although they would like access to a wider range of them, i.e. books, games, etc. There was also a call for the acquisition of a language classroom and more permanent staff, as teachers see the size of their groups as the biggest challenge they are facing at the moment.

2. Distribution of curricular time for the teaching of languages

I was interested in determining whether teachers thought that the foreign language was taking time that they thought should be dedicated to Castilian and Catalan. Firstly, 72.73% of the foreign language teachers confirmed that they are happy with the time that is being allocated to the three languages. Moreover, of the 27.27% of foreign language teachers who claimed that some languages were not being given enough time, the majority expressed the desire that English be allocated more hours. This was an unforeseen result. The argument was that Catalan is allocated too many hours: it is the language of instruction, of regular use in the school and it is also present everywhere outside the school. Teachers believed that English should be allocated more contact hours in school, as there is no context outside the school where it can be used. Therefore, the use of English should be reinforced in the school. Furthermore, almost 70% of teachers did not think English was affecting the learning of the other two languages in a negative way. On the contrary, although a number of teachers had reservations about the implementation of CLIL in primary education, 61.36% of them considered the introduction of CLIL as a positive solution to the lack of contact time students have with the foreign language (English).

Moreover, 100% of Catalan teachers supported a) early total immersion for its clear benefits in achieving bilingualism when a minority language is involved and b) compulsory teaching of foreign languages as necessary to provide all students with equal opportunies and to ensure that the foreign language has the same status in the Curriculum as other subjects do.

3. Age of introduction of the L3

Regarding the appropriate age for the introduction of third language learning, although circa half of the respondents gave pre-school level as their answer, the majority of teachers were inclined to recommend the age of five as the most appropriate, when children have a good command of their L1 and L2 and are settled in school. This is slightly different from the results obtained from Irish teachers (54% considered 1st-4th class (6-10 years old) as more adequate). Again, in Catalonia all the teachers expressed the belief that a good level of knowledge of the first language/s will ease the path to the learning of a foreign language. Once again, we did not expect Catalan teachers to see the teaching of an L3 at pre-school level as detrimental to the implementation of the immersion education programme in Catalonia and as causing confusion for the children.

Consequently, the findings from the Irish and Catalan respondents indicate that I need to rethink our initial proposal and reconsider the appropriateness of supporting the early implementation (3-5 years) of an L3 in an early total immersion programme.

Chapter 7

GENERAL DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF STUDY

This study was initiated on the basis that multilingualism, including minority and majority languages, is a highly valuable skill to have in today's dynamic environment. Within the European Union, language diversity is a common phenomenon that becomes more apparent as the EU expands: the 24 official and working languages along with the circa 150 minority languages spoken throughout its territories are proof of this. Within this context, the European member states, aware of the cultural wealth associated with the variety of European languages, have in recent times committed to work towards their protection, maintenance and development, especially in the case of minority languages. In this regard, it is generally accepted that, on the one hand, widely spoken languages facilitate communication among citizens of different origin and enhance both economic and geographical mobility and career development, hence contributing to social integration and cohesion; on the other hand, minority languages are a big part of the nations' heritage and their use promotes unique personal and social identity. In addition to this, the benefits associated with multilingualism have promoted, in the last two decades, much work focused on the creation of policies aimed at offering citizens the possibility of mastering languages other than their mother tongue/s. In light of this, the goal set by the Barcelona European Council of 2002 to construct a knowledge-based society, highly skilled in at least two foreign languages from an early age, motivated my research. Given the unusual linguistic situation of Ireland, where the first official language of the country is an endangered minority language and there is no language education policy for the learning of foreign languages, I sought to explore the feasibility of adapting the current Primary School Curriculum to integrate early trilingual education.

7.1. Psycholinguistics and language education policy for the introduction of bilingual education through immersion education programmes

In order to assess the different options enlisted in my two initial proposals, I sought to answer the research questions that derived from them. Consequently, in setting out to explore the main advantages and limitations of introducing a third language from an early age in bilingual education contexts and the most appropriate age for doing so, I established that it would be necessary to conduct an examination of the scientific research surrounding the psychology of language learning in first and second language acquisition. In relation to this, the need to review any existing language and education policy at European and national level also became apparent. This analysis, which has taken place throughout Chapter 2, has highlighted the controversy existing with regard to the cognitive processes involved in first and second language acquisition, with more agreement among linguists on the former than the latter. That is, while there is a clear consensus about the existence of a critical age period for the achievement of the first language, there are a variety of arguments in relation to the cognitive learning process and the age factor in second language acquisition; while some support the Critical Period Hypothesis of Lenneberg and the principle that language learning is restricted by the maturation of the brain (given the right amount of language input), others (such as Long, Birdsong, Bialystok and Hakuta and Bongaerts et al.) question the empirical evidence in support of this theory. These critics suggest that adult learners can reach high levels of language proficiency under the right circumstances; however, they tend to perform at a lower level than younger learners because of social and environmental factors, rather than biological constraints.

Directly related to the Critical Period Hypothesis is Chomsky's concept of Universal Grammar, which explains that first language acquisition occurs by means of a process that takes place intuitively and that is innate in all human beings. However, it is unknown whether this Universal Grammar is still active in the acquisition of the L2 and, if it is not, the extent to which the L1 (and the grammar system gained with it) intervenes in the learning process; that is, whether multilinguals are many monolinguals in one person and therefore each language is learned as part of a separate process based on UG, as suggested by De Houwer, or if, on the contrary, the L2 is constructed by using the grammar structures of the L1 already in place because of language transfer, as suggested by the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis proposed by Vroman. Therefore, under the FDH literacy in the L1 has been proven to facilitate the L2 acquisition process, especially when the two languages belong to the same language family.

It is nevertheless obvious that were the Critical Period Hypothesis to be valid for second language learning there would be no opportunity for adult learners to achieve high levels of language proficiency. The opposite has been demonstrated: adult learners are faster learners than younger learners and can reach high levels of language proficiency under the right circumstances. Metalinguistic awareness and motivation for learning are additional factors present in adult learners but not necessarily among children of a young age. However, it is in relation to the acquisition of a native-like accent that the former seem to have a lower performance, as discussed by Ellis. Also, the cognitive ability in the adult learner has been determined to decline due to age and, although this cannot be measured, it has an impact on the final level of achievement.

Nevertheless, despite the advantages associated with adult learners, early language acquisition has been found to be far more beneficial for the learner, especially when thinking in long-term results: the language is acquired naturally, it provides cultural enrichment from an early age and the opportunity of making language learning a lifelong experience.

Overall, despite the lack of consensus over the optimal age for second language learning, international research is nowadays very much orientated towards supporting the promotion of early multilingualism in local, national and foreign languages. In fact, the age at which foreign language learning is introduced has been significantly lowered in all European countries, even in those where lesser-spoken languages are part of the Primary School Curriculum, i.e. Estonia, Spain. Also, although most countries offer one foreign language (English being the most common one), the inclusion of two foreign languages is becoming increasing popular (more than 10% of the student population in countries such as Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Iceland and 80% in Luxembourg). This is indicative of the value given to multilingualism and language education policy, which shows that Ireland, being the European country with the lowest percentage of foreign languages studied per school year at primary level, is well behind its counterparts.

Furthermore, my research has highlighted that, at a European level, support for the learning of foreign languages is not detrimental to the protection of lesser-used languages, which labour under the constant threat of majority languages in a globalised world. Lesser-used languages enjoy, in general, strong state support and are part of awareness-raising campaigns that emphasise the sense of cultural identity and belonging that come with them. This principle has consequently generated documents such as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992) and related intensive work aimed at protecting the right of a citizen to speak his/her own local language and of a community to preserve one of its main identification markers. In this regard, I have learned of several examples of best practice where lesser-spoken languages and majority languages are combined at primary education level

successfully, i.e. Luxembourg, Finland, Estonia, Sweden, the Basque Country, Catalonia, etc. thus making an impact on social change. These findings, together with those obtained on cognitive development indicate that early total immersion education is the most appropriate teaching methodology when the aim is maintenance or even revival of a lesser-used language.

This educational approach has also been found to be beneficial for building meta-linguistic awareness and contributing to literacy in the L1, although when total immersion is not an option other models of immersion education are also available. For example, Content and Language Integrated Learning has become common in some countries in the last ten years and it has proven to be very effective where curricular constraints do not allow for the inclusion of extra teaching hours in languages. Whether introduced at primary or secondary level, it provides intensive exposure to the language (either a regional or lesser-used language or a foreign language) while learning a different curricular subject. Nonetheless, its success very much depends on the language teachers' competencies. In fact, this matter has probably been the most challenging aspect of the inclusion of CLIL programmes which, in European countries, are usually focused on the teaching of English as a second language. The lack of teachers holding specific qualifications for the provision of CLIL and the lack of training programmes have forced the development of several strategies for the retraining of teachers. In European countries with a large number of English language speakers this task has not been as problematic as in countries such as Spain (Catalonia), where teachers are generally qualified in only one content subject and English is not a strong subject unless specific training has been followed. Also, the lack of appropriate teaching material is a factor that contributes to low levels of confidence among teachers.

7.2. Comparative study between Ireland and Catalonia on language policy issues and multilingual education

Two of the most significant cases of education systems using early total immersion are Canada and Catalonia. Whilst the Canadian experience has provided a reference for projects based on immersion education including a majority and a lesser-used language within the community, the study of the case of Catalan has proven to be very suitable for comparison with the Irish context given their shared contemporary issues, such as their membership of the E.U., albeit with some significant differences.

The comparative study between Ireland and Catalonia has not only provided a historical insight into the developments that occurred in Irish and Catalan society around the issue of language use but, also, by conducting a survey study on language attitudes in the school context, I have gained a real understanding of the way in which languages interact in education according to their social and legal status. Given my initial proposals, which involve different forms of immersion education for the

implementation of trilingual education at primary level in Ireland, part of the comparative study has been focused on interconnecting political, social and educational events in both contexts in order to make a well-informed assessment of the feasibility of including Irish and one modern language in the Irish Primary School Curriculum using partial or total immersion in Irish and teaching the L3 as a content subject or through Content and Language Integrated Learning. In this regard, the study of the historical sociolinguistic background of the Irish and Catalan languages and the advances made in education and language policy conducted in Chapters 3 and 4 have provided a framework for analysis and understanding of their social position today. My study shows that, in Catalonia, important steps have been taken in the education system to integrate a third and even a fourth language as part of a system of early total immersion education in primary school. In Ireland, the poor levels achieved in education and the weak sociolinguistic position of Irish in society at some points in history have been found to be one of the main reasons for the lack of interest in developing an integrative language policy for the learning of foreign languages in primary education. Also, lack of time to implement the 11 subjects of the current Primary School Curriculum has been identified as another main reason.

This analysis has shown, firstly, the natural evolution of two languages (Irish and Catalan) that, at several points in history, have enjoyed full recognition as languages of regular use and prestige. In Ireland, Irish had a privileged position until the advent of the English Reformation in the 16th century. The English campaign against the Irish language was highly successful in that, within two centuries, Irish was relegated to being the language of the low social classes and the uneducated. Under the Penal Laws, education and culture in the Irish language was prohibited, giving rise to alternative methods of education, i.e. hedge schools, for those who did not want to lose their traditions. Nonetheless, opportunities to progress without knowledge of English were few and Irish speakers felt the need to adopt the language of power and commerce. As indicated in the analysis of all statistical data from annual censuses since 1851, the decline in the number of Irish speakers in Ireland has been constant ever since, with only some pockets of daily speakers surviving mainly in western areas of the country. Notwithstanding this, the constant arrival of outsiders has caused a language shift in the Gaeltacht areas, meaning that among young people English is more and more the language of use in social relations and Irish the language of the home. This is because, according to data from 2006, only 37% of school attendees within the *Gaeltacht* use Irish outside of school hours. In spite of this, Irish continues to be the language of the home and of intergenerational transmission for a small percentage of the Irish population both in the *Gaeltacht* and outside.

The case of Catalonia is different. For centuries, Catalan was the language of a prosperous nation that had expanded its power all along the Mediterranean. Catalan literary production reached its peak in the 15th century and was so fruitful that this period represents the Golden Century of Catalan literature. In

contrast to Ireland, the decline of Catalan was not marked by political persecution, at least not in the first instance, but by the loss in prestige that came with the consolidation of the Crown of Castile at the end of the 15th century and the subsequent disappearance of the Catalano-Aragonese kingdom, which resulted in the centralisation of power in Castile. At this time, Catalan stopped being the language of the upper classes but continued to be the normal language of use among the middle and lower classes. In fact, it was not until the 18th century that Catalan suffered political persecution and was officially banned from education and the public sphere, subsequently becoming a language of low social status. The decline in the number of speakers of Catalan was however never as dramatic as in the case of Irish, partly because of the high status it had enjoyed for so long and partly because, contrary to the case of Ireland, the measures taken to establish Castilian as the language of the nation were not as radical. In Ireland, the repercussions of failed rebellions such as that of 1641, which resulted in the dispossession of the land of Irish Catholics, and that of 1798, which resulted in the Act of Union, brought about an irreparable language shift. Also, as is well known, the large death toll and emigration caused by the Great Famine of the mid 19th century brought with it a dramatic reduction in the number of Irish native speakers. Only in the western provinces (Munster, Connacht) and County Donegal was 50% of the population Irish-speaking; in the rest of the country, an average of 5% of the population could speak Irish.

The 19th century, marked by the Romantic movement in Europe, was a period of revitalisation for Catalan and Irish. In Catalonia, this artistic trend gave birth to the Catalanism movement, which concluded with the restoration of Catalan national identity and traditional values. This was a very rich period in literature but, most importantly, the first steps to standardise the language were taken. In Ireland, the Irish language revival movement conducted very significant work to restore the presence of Irish in society, by offering courses in the language and associating the language with Irish cultural heritage and national identity. The inclusion of Irish in the school Curriculum, initially as an optional subject, and its use as language of instruction after 1904 (through bilingual education programmes) was the start of a series of actions that concluded with the official inclusion of Irish in the National School Curriculum. Also, a good command of Irish became a condition *sine qua non* for access to third level education within the National University of Ireland. It is significant however that all these measures, although contributing greatly to an increase in the number of people literate in Irish, did not help to maintain the number of monoglots in Irish. I argue that this period, between the creation of the Gaelic League in 1893 and the Easter Rising in 1916 was key for the revival of the Irish language, when the number of Irish speakers was falling rapidly. This was probably the optimal time to transform the revolution of a group of middle-class idealists into a national cause, implementing a) the inclusion of Irish as a compulsory subject in primary education rather than giving schools the opportunity to decide

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individually whether to use it as language of instruction; b) guidelines for education through Irish and of specific teacher training and c) new teaching resources. In this regard, the lack of connection between government legislation and the actions taken by the Gaelic League created a difficult situation with conflicting interests and no real advances for the long-term.

Government policy after the declaration of Irish as the first official language of Ireland with the declaration of the Irish Free State was aimed at protecting and enhancing the use of Irish; it was the start of a new era in politics aimed at re-Gaelicising the country. By making Irish compulsory in education and in government administration it was believed that a radical change would occur with the repositioning of the language in society. This was not a realistic goal however as the position of Irish within society and as the daily language of communication was already very weak. Consequently, the central position given to Irish in the education system was more detrimental than otherwise in the long term, for it was felt that, as well as not provoking a language shift in society, in education other more relevant curricular subjects were not receiving enough attention. This, coupled with negative claims made by teachers that early instruction in Irish for English speakers was delaying their proficiency in the L1 resulted in the progressive discontinuation of Irish as the language of instruction outside of the Gaeltacht areas at the start of the 1960s and as a compulsory subject for the Leaving Certificate Examination in the early 1970s.

The events which occurred with regard to the Irish language are proof of the lack of confidence of the different governments with regard to policy development. On the one hand, the stated intention of restoring Irish as the language of communication among Irish citizens inspired the implementation of those measures that had not been realised in the years before, i.e. compulsory education through Irish, publication of school books in Irish, creation of Colleges of Education for teachers and of Irish-medium schools. On the other, the negative results of the Macnamara report claiming Irish children performed at an inferior level in arithmetic to English children were enough to displace Irish to a second position in all levels of education in the 1970s and to dismantle much of the progress made to that date. Also, in the Gaeltacht, the action taken at government level to give these areas special treatment by means of improving their local economy and hence maintain Irish native speakers proved insufficient to stop the flow of emigration. In this regard, the argument is made that the decades-long failure of the Government to introduce an appropriate system of assessment of the bilingual programmes between 1921 and 1950 was the main reason for their abandonment.

7.2.1. The Irish language in society and education in today's Ireland

Irish is today an endangered minority language spoken by less than 2% of the overall population as a daily language of communication (although in the Gaeltacht areas the average is 27%). Through close inspection of the data obtained in the most recent censuses I have detected that, firstly, there has been a significant increase in the number of speakers among pre-school children and also the 5-9 year-olds, believed to be due to Naíonraí attendance. Secondly, the data also shows that, of the just over 31,000 people who speak Irish daily within the education system, only 18,677 continue to use it outside, that is 59% of the overall student population use Irish daily outside of the education system. Thirdly, the situation in the Gaeltacht is not much better: only 37% of the school population speaks Irish on a daily basis outside of school hours; 46% of school children have very little or no Irish when they start school; in many families there is now one parent who is an English speaker and one who is an Irish speaker.

This situation threatens the survival of Irish as a language of intergenerational transmission in the Gaeltacht, key for the survival of any language. With these available results the conclusion I must reach is that Irish is learned and used as a second language among the vast majority of young people in Ireland, mostly within the education system, with the exception of Gaeltacht areas classified as Category A, where Irish is used by more than 67% of the population on a daily basis.

As regards education, it is significant that, in Ireland, there are two different curricular guidelines at primary level for Irish depending on whether we refer to national schools or Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools. As for the availability of teachers, at present there is a shortage of teachers who are proficient speakers of Irish in all levels of education and a shortage of resources for the teaching of Irish. The training that teachers receive in Colleges of Education has been traditionally in English. While Irish is learned by student teachers as a content subject, the level they acquire at the end of their teacher training and subsequently by attending courses in Irish in the Gaeltacht at different times of the year, is far from acceptable.

Additionally, in Gaeltacht schools, the mixed typology of students, some coming from Irish-speaking backgrounds and some from English-speaking homes, does not allow for a methodology of language maintenance nor a primary school curriculum that makes the assumption that Irish is the L1 of the student population.

On a different note, education through the medium of Irish has gained much popularity since Gaelscoileanna first started operating in the 1970s. The over 45,000 children (10% coming from an Irish speaking background) attending at present, the existing demand for the construction of new schools and

the good results in Irish and other content subjects in Gaelscoileanna prove the success of early total immersion education. By contrast, the outcomes of national studies on the teaching of Irish in English-medium primary education have shown poor levels of proficiency achieved in national schools, where Irish is taught as a content subject. Also, as has been found in my survey study, which will be discussed below, a high percentage of Gaelscoileanna include foreign languages in their curricular programme.

7.2.2. Foreign language learning in the Irish context

The teaching of foreign languages in primary education is not regulated in Ireland. Equally, there are no specific requirements for foreign language teachers. Recently, the unexpected termination of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative has put an end to a highly regarded project which was never mainstreamed but which, despite some important structural deficiencies, was producing very good results at a very low cost. From the school year 2012-2013, foreign languages have no presence in the Primary School Curriculum in Ireland unless schools decide to cover the cost of including them within the school hours or to offer them as an extra-curricular activity. Obviously, this option represents a significant turnaround in national educational policy and a step back from European policy, bringing about a number of negative implications: no common curricular guidelines, no standardisation of contents taught across the board, no regulation of teacher training, etc.

7.2.3. Presence of Catalan in education and society today

In Catalonia, the extraordinary recovery of Catalan as a language of use in society since the transition to democracy in 1978 has been demonstrated through the analysis of recent statistical publications and studies. Indeed, it can be said that the major achievement of the Catalan government over the last thirty years has been the repositioning of Catalan as the language of the Catalans and as a symbol of cultural identity. Understanding that language is one of the keys to achieving social cohesion and equity, Catalan has become a factor for social integration in a region where multiculturalism has become the norm. The strength of Catalan in Catalonia at present becomes obvious when we examine recent data published by the Catalan Central Statistics Office: Catalan is the language of the home for almost 50% of the population within the region. But even more important is that: a) Catalan is the language of transmission in half of Catalan families; b) a language shift from Castilian to Catalan has been taking place in recent years, with around 4-5% of people making a conscious decision to switch languages, as they aim to integrate better into Catalan society. These facts are an indication of the high status that Catalan enjoys at present, although this does not mean that the survival of Catalan in the long term is guaranteed.

The extraordinary support that Catalan has received from the regional government for over three decades has enabled the construction of a solid legislative framework that acts as an umbrella for its

application in all sectors of society. Without doubt, the network of institutions and people dedicated to promoting Catalan inside and outside of Catalonia is to be praised. Castilian, however, continues to be the stronger and more widely used language, especially in urban areas and among foreign nationals resident in Catalonia.

Certainly, the Catalan education system plays a crucial role in the dissemination of Catalan language and culture among the younger generations. The use of Catalan as the vehicular language in all levels of education except in third level institutions (where its use is more flexible), protected and encouraged by law, aims at achieving linguistic normalisation. This has been the case since the first language immersion project was introduced in the 1980s, mirroring the work done in Canadian schools. At the time, after 40 years of dictatorship and of prohibition, Catalan was in serious danger of being completely overtaken by Castilian. Statistical figures from that time (1975) are quite illustrative of the difficult situation: 62% of the population of Barcelona were not able to speak Catalan; 24% not able to understand it; 21% could understand it but not speak it, 39% could actually speak it and only 15% could understand it, write it and speak it. As might be expected, finding competent Catalan speakers among teachers was a real challenge: 58% were non-Catalan speakers, 32% could only understand it and 10% could not understand it.

Given this situation, the introduction of the Programme of Linguistic Immersion (PIL) in schools located in mainly Castilian speaking areas was a drastic measure to ensure the eventual expansion of Catalan to the rest of the region. From this, we can see that the plan of the Catalan government took a different approach to that of the Irish Government. In Ireland, most work to expand the use of Irish in education throughout the country was done in the period between the Declaration of the Irish New State and the 1950s. Also, the emphasis put on the language training of all school teachers in Catalonia was undoubtedly crucial for the success of the programme when it was finally extended to all Catalan speaking regions.

It is important to highlight new actions being taken in recent times to adapt to new sociolinguistic realities. A clear example is the recent introduction of the Plan to Update the Methodology of Immersion (2007-2013), aimed at training a large number of teachers in Catalonia in immersion methodologies. This plan has been prompted by a growing number of foreign national students, many from a Spanish-speaking background from Central and South America, which now represent 13% of the total student population.

In Colleges of Education, Catalan is the language of instruction, as well as a content subject in the four years of the B.A. in Education. Qualified primary school teachers are awarded the equivalent of the C1

level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in Catalan upon termination of their studies.

7.2.4. Foreign language learning within the Catalan education system

Catalonia, which aims to maintain its traditional openness to the world, has progressively integrated the learning of third and even fourth languages in all levels of education. English is the language studied in 90% of schools and the language in which most language teachers are trained: French is usually the fourth language chosen in primary education. In general terms, English is taught as a content subject from the age of three up until 6th class. This is not to say that there now a number of projects such as the Foreign Languages Project that use CLIL for the teaching of the L3. Nonetheless, foreign language learning at primary education level, as we have seen, is universally offered and regulated by the Department of Education as is the pre and in-service training of foreign language teachers. At pre-service level, student language teachers take the four year bachelor degree in education and receive extensive training in foreign language teaching, through the medium of the foreign language itself. Additionally, qualified foreign language teachers have undergone several periods of training in situ.

This, together with the fact that prospective university students are strongly advised to have a B2 level (CEFR) by second year, allows for the achievement of a good standard of language proficiency by the end of the university degree. Moreover, I have learned of a number of opportunities to participate in projects, competitions and stays abroad aimed at practising and improving teachers' and primary school students' skills in the foreign language.

In terms of the level of achievement of trilingual education in Catalonia, evidence has been provided of the good level of performance achieved by Catalan students in tests conducted at regional, national and international level on education standards: the overall results are always above average. However, the low percentage of students achieving top results and therefore the existence of a very high number of students performing just above average warrants attention, for this would not be expected to happen in what is one of the richest communities in Spain. Although a more in-depth investigation should be conducted on this matter, this may be related to the high number of foreign national students attending bilingual education. Nevertheless, what is significant for our research is that the Catalan system of trilingual education reaches international standards in spite of its focus on total immersion and that no negative effects are directly related to it.

7.3. Survey study on attitudes towards trilingual education in primary schools in Ireland and Catalonia

Together with the analysis of the historical development of language policies, this thesis sought to gain firsthand knowledge of the attitudes of language teachers towards second and third language acquisition in Ireland and Catalonia, as already mentioned.

The survey study conducted in Gaelscoileanna and schools which were part of the MLPSI in Ireland and in primary schools in Catalonia, whose results are presented in Chapter 6, has enabled a more in-depth understanding of how primary schools operate language teaching in both contexts, in order to then determine what would be the best model of primary education in Ireland for trilingual education. As explained above, Catalonia was chosen as a comparator country because of the advances made in language policy development. The information gathered through the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods was quite significant and revealing, given the fact that I received a 47% response rate in Ireland and 51% in Catalonia.

In Catalonia, teachers gave evidence of the success of trilingual education at primary level. The pre-service and in-service training they receive in Colleges of Education give them a solid background for the teaching of Catalan, Castilian and English. Whether permanent or temporary staff, they are part of a well structured programme that is applied equally in all schools of the region. From the information they provided in the survey study, it is clear that they support early total immersion education in Catalan and the early introduction of foreign languages in the Primary School Curriculum as they have witnessed the positive outcomes of such curricular models. Also, compulsion in the learning of languages was regarded as appropriate and necessary to offer equal opportunities to all.

Catalan foreign language teachers, however, pointed out some issues that negatively affect students' performance, such as the student/teacher ratio in foreign language classrooms. Additionally, two different issues were raised that were both unexpected and relevant: firstly, there was a general consensus on the need to dedicate more time to the teaching of English, given that it is the language that students have the least opportunities to practise outside the classroom. Catalan was said to receive too much curriculum time, for it is already the language of instruction and is actively used in the community and the media. As it is the case in Ireland, there are also time constraints in the Catalan Primary School Curriculum. This is the reason why introducing Content and Language Integrated learning for the teaching of the L3 at primary level is seen as the most practical solution to this problem at government level; nonetheless, Catalan foreign language teachers were concerned about the existing lack of expertise and of available resources to put this intro practice.

Secondly, there was a call to introduce foreign languages at a later stage than is presently done. Their introduction at pre-school level (3-4 years) is not supported by a large number of teachers and is therefore not seen as being compatible with an early total immersion programme in Catalan. There were claims that children at such an early age should only concentrate on their L1 and the language of immersion and that a third language interferes negatively in the acquisition process. This is why it was suggested that English could be introduced at the age of 5-6, that is, at the end of pre-school education or in the first year of primary education.

In Ireland, contrary to my expectations at the start of this research, the findings of the survey study were indicative of the desire of a great majority of teachers (in Gaelscoileanna and MLPSI schools) that Irish and a third language be part of the Primary School Curriculum. By analysing the questionnaires sent to Gaelscoileanna and MLPSI schools, I learned of a large community of schools that have adapted the school curriculum in order to introduce foreign language learning successfully. More specifically, I realised that a high percentage of Gaelscoileanna were already teaching one or even two foreign languages on their own initiative, that is, without any kind of support from the Department of Education and skills or the Kildare Education Centre through the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative.

Through close inspection of the information provided in the Irish questionnaires I also learned of the different backgrounds of those teaching foreign languages: a high percentage of them did not hold any relevant qualification at pre-service level. Also, it was common practice to hire visiting language teachers, especially in the case of schools part of the MLPSI; in other words, there was no certainty whether they held any qualifications to work in a school. This finding is in stark contrast with the Catalan context and brought to light issues regarding teacher training and curriculum planning, but even, health and safety, which, in turn, suggest the need for standardisation nationwide.

Additionally, the Irish survey study provided me with data regarding the most suitable age for introducing a foreign language according to the participating teachers, which proved to contradict my initial proposal once again. In this regard, over 20% of the participants supported the introduction at pre-school level, whereas almost 54% believed that beginning in first-third class would be more beneficial, when the foundations of the L1 and L2 have already been established.

Finally, there was overall support for the inclusion of compulsory foreign language learning at primary level, although the need for more government support, teacher training and the development of more teaching resources before any steps are taken was emphasised.

7.4. Final conclusions

The findings from the research conducted in this thesis reinforce my initial hypothesis that trilingual education through different types of immersion programmes such as early immersion education and enrichment bilingual education can be achieved in the context of Ireland and contribute very positively to the education of Irish students.

The study conducted on Catalonia has shown the extent of the measures taken to ensure the use of Catalan as a regular language of communication; in education more particularly, the development of teacher training programmes has been crucial to preventing a decline in the teachers' command of language and, subsequently, in the general use of the language. Furthermore, by establishing a strong programme of bilingual education, the Catalan Government has facilitated the way for the successful introduction of foreign language learning at primary level.

In Ireland, the Government has recently developed a national policy of language revitalisation for Irish. The 20-year Strategy for the Irish language (2010-2030) aims to increase the overall number of daily speakers of Irish outside the education system to 250,000; the number of daily speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht by 25% and the number of people with knowledge of Irish from 1.66 million to 2 million. As a result, the Government has taken an important step towards creating a comprehensive framework for the protection and promotion of the Irish language that includes measures to be taken in all areas of government.

It is however our fear that the Irish Government may be going in the same direction as in the past, by placing too much emphasis on actions taken in the Gaeltacht and education. As we have learned from Catalonia, government policies on language maintenance and revitalisation need to be accompanied by a strong global campaign to foster language awareness and build positive attitudes towards the language. Additionally, as shown in Catalonia, a reversal of the current low number of speakers can only take place in a context where the majority of the population supports language revitalisation and restoration. In the case of Ireland, reports on language attitudes from 2009 show little change in attitudes towards the Irish language despite all actions taken in recent times. In spite of showing positive attitudes towards Irish among 93% of the respondents, the reality is that there continues to be a very small percentage of people, 3%, who wish Irish was the language most spoken in the country, against 50% who relegate its revitalisation to cultural purposes and only in the Gaeltacht. Furthermore, there is clearly a preference for an Irish society where bilingualism with English as the main language of use, as stated by 32% of the participants, while only 5% would prefer bilingualism with Irish as the main language. This data is in contrast with current attitudes towards the Catalan language which, in our view,

are strengthened by government policy. In Catalonia, over 16% of the population would like to see Catalan as the only language spoken within the region but, more significantly, almost 15% would like Catalan to have a stronger presence than Spanish and over 39% would be content with a situation of balanced bilingualism. In addition to this, the large increase in the number of speakers in the last thirty years among national and foreign national citizens is another clear indication of the positive effects of language policy and education.

The results from Ireland on language attitudes, I argue, cannot be seen as positive and are not compatible with the creation of a multilingual society that protects and promotes the use of Irish. Also, they raise the question of the role of Irish in education: if it is the case that Irish is defined as the first language of the country and is therefore to be known and used in all spheres of society, then The 20-year Strategy and early total immersion education (with all its implications) may prove to be the right instruments to achieve bilingualism. If, on the contrary, it is decided that Irish should be kept for cultural purposes and as a symbol of national heritage, a different plan of action would need to be devised. In this regard, it would be agreed that Irish is no longer the first language of the country, only of a minority on the brink of extinction and, consequently, it would not be wise to formulate educational programmes aimed at bilingualism and, subsequently, trilingualism. In this case, Irish could probably be offered as an optional/non-compulsory subject within primary and/or second level education.

Nonetheless, based on international research and taking Catalonia as an example of best practice, I believe that the Irish education system requires a unique, integrative and integrated national primary school curriculum, starting at junior infants level, that is common to all regions of the country and for all languages and which uses a common pedagogical approach to language teaching. As is the case in Catalonia, where a high percentage of the population is now of foreign origin, Ireland has experienced an important change in the typology of the student population. The curriculum guidelines designed for the *Gaeltacht* have been designed on the premise that Irish is the L1 of the students, which is not always the case anymore. This situation suggests the need for a change of approach. On the one hand, the recommendations provided by the recent study conducted by the NCCA for an integrated language curriculum would be highly valuable. On the other, the example of Catalonia suggests that it is not beneficial to make a distinction between regions and school types for curriculum planning in Ireland, especially given the position of Irish in education and society in general at present. In this regard, my study does not support my first proposal, that is, the feasibility of maintaining the division between Irish-medium, English-medium and Gaeltacht schools and of adopting different forms of immersion education with the aim of achieving trilingual education in all schools of the country. Taking the directives of the Catalan Government, the use of a common language policy is justified because it

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implies social equity; immersion education however is related to social integration and language protection. Additionally, I have not found any examples of best practice within the European Union or any suggestion in the available literature that may suggest the use of different models of education in parallel within the same country to achieve bilingualism involving minority and majority languages.

A common primary school curriculum for all the schools in the country has been found to be the most suitable approach in Ireland, with Irish used as a language of instruction through early total immersion education. With regard to the age of start of English, this is an issue that could be further analysed, even though it seems appropriate to suggest that reading in English should be delayed until 1st or 2nd class, as is the case with Castilian in Catalonia. Correspondingly, specific requirements for general teachers should be outlined. Starting with teacher training, the current requirement of a C3 level in the Leaving Certificate in Irish to access teacher training programmes seems adequate. This, however, may only be a pre-requirement to access a comprehensive third-level training programme where Irish would be the language of instruction. I understand that at present, this aim could prove almost impossible but that a time-frame could be allowed for the retraining of university lecturers. Under these parameters, on the one hand, qualified primary school teachers should be expected to have a proficient level in Irish, equivalent to C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and all measures should be taken by Colleges of Education to achieve this. On the other hand, competence in the target language will give teachers the empowerment to actively engage students in the language and to extend knowledge of the language beyond literacy. In order to achieve this, a plan similar to the Catalan PIL programme from the 1980s for mass teacher training could be implemented straight away, followed by a follow-up programe with characteristics similar to the current Catalan Plan to Update the Methodology of Immersion. Although it may seem to be a drastic measure, we need to remember the conditions in which the PIL programme was implemented in Catalonia: at a time when society was still getting used to not longer being part of a dictatorship and Catalans, more particularly, had just recovered the right to use their language. But, also, we cannot forget that the supporters of the *Escola Catalana* were a minority, albeit with full support from the Catalan Government.

In addition to this, in light of what I have learned from the Catalan context, absence of differentiation of types of schools in Ireland would mean that teachers and students who are proficient in Irish would not be concentrated in specific areas and types of school, but that they would be present in schools all around the country. This, in turn, would also mean that cultural values related to Irish L1 speakers would have a presence across the board, which would help improve general attitudes towards Irish language and culture.

Once a universal programme of early immersion education was established, the Primary School Curriculum could integrate modern languages. In this regard, I suggest that a re-distribution of the curricular time in primary education could leave enough weekly time for the teaching of a 3rd language from 1st -6th class. More specifically, the L3 could be taught as a content subject from 1st-4th class, given that the children would have no prior knowledge or experience of the L3, and through an enrichment bilingual education programme or, in other words, content-based second language instruction or CLIL in 5th-6th class. As analysed throughout this thesis, there are many advantages related to this teaching approach, especially in terms of efficiency of the curricular time. Consequently, if Irish was used as language of instruction through total immersion education there would be no need to allocate as much time to it as a content subject within the Primary School Curriculum which, in turn, would leave space for the L3.

This model proposed already exists in the case of Gaelscoileanna which teach foreign languages but, as explained throughout this thesis, is unsupported at Government level. However, the increasing popularity of Gaelscoileanna would suggest eventual popular acceptance of this model.

Finally, with regard to the number of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum, I suggest that further research assesses the appropriateness of offering one single language or more. Of course, it would be paramount to ensure continuation at second level.

Additionally, given the lack of qualified primary school teachers as language teachers, it would be advisable to integrate specific training in the Colleges of Education that offered an extra qualification in foreign language teaching. Meanwhile, qualified secondary school teachers could be employed for such work and even offered the opportunity to obtain a diploma as foreign language teachers that would allow them to work in primary education. Additionally, teacher exchanges with EU countries could be pursued.

As for the most appropriate pedagogical approach, a module on language teaching methodologies for first and second language teaching could become part of the Bachelor in Education in Colleges of Education. Also, the Primary School Curriculum guidelines for the two languages could include a cultural component as a way of raising awareness of folklore and general traditions associated with the three languages which were part of it.

By way of conclusion, the work conducted in this thesis has provided theoretical and empirical evidence that support the development of an education system in Ireland where English, Irish and foreign languages can be acquired successfully within the Primary School Curriculum. My research has also highlighted the impact that Government support has had in Catalonia and, consequently, the need for it

in Ireland. Notwithstanding this, it has also brought to light a number of issues that lie beyond the scope of the present study. Firstly, in order to put our proposal into practice, this research could be complemented with intensive work on three main areas: a) pre-service training of teachers; b) creation of additional teaching resources and c) curriculum planning for the inclusion of total and partial immersion education as suggested in this thesis.

Secondly, our study would benefit from supplementary research that undertook to investigate the course of action necessary in order to establish a similar education programme at secondary level and that carefully considered progression between the two levels of education nationwide.

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