Identity, place and legitimate language: a comparative study of language attitudes among teenagers in two Irish-medium schools



Eileen Coughlan

University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity 2020

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Abstract

This thesis explores how teenagers in two Irish-medium secondary schools see their relationship with Irish. It is based on research conducted in the school year 2017-2018, involving both participant observation and focus groups.

Ireland's language policy has long distinguished between 'Gaeltacht' areas, where Irish remains the main community language, and the rest of the country, where English is the community language. Research suggests a sharp decline in the level of use of Irish among young people in Gaeltacht areas (young 'Gaeltacht speakers') and there has been an increasing focus in research and policy on the role of Irish-speakers outside the Gaeltacht ('new speakers'). 'New speakers' in many contexts have historically been neglected in both policy and research, but have become increasingly prominent in both in recent years. They are more likely to be socioeconomically and culturally advantaged than 'traditional speakers'.

This is the first comparative qualitative study of language attitudes among new Irish-speakers and Gaeltacht Irish-speakers. It illustrates both the gap between the two groups in terms of attitudes and practices and how they are affected differently by policy. For Gaeltacht

participants, the language is integral to local identity and family relationships, meaning that even those who want to cannot avoid the language entirely. In contrast, for most new speaker participants, Irish is confined to school. Both groups prize authenticity but define it very differently. This difference is reflected in their language practices, which means interactions between new and Gaeltacht speakers, in the accounts of participants, can be fraught. The fact that policy does not differentiate between the two groups adds to these tensions, particularly for Gaeltacht participants, who are torn between their local dialect and the standard variety valued in the education system.

Unlike much research on language revitalisation this study focuses on the views of young people as stakeholders. Education is the focus of many language revitalisation movements and consequently young people, as future speakers, are cast either as saviours of the language or, more often, as obstacles to its revitalisation, with little opportunity to shape the policy that affects them. The research reported here shows how they struggle with the moral weight attached to their language practices and with the contradictory ideologies passed down to them by those who shape language policy.

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Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine
('We live in each other's shadow')

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1. Introduction

The idea for this thesis arose from my attempts to make sense of my own experience as someone who can communicate fluently in Irish but nonetheless feels it is not quite 'my' language. More and more speakers of minority[1] languages fit this profile and it is still not clear exactly what that means for languages like Irish. I hope this thesis will contribute to our understanding of this question, and that it will illustrate the challenges faced by young people growing up with a minority language in this context.

I attended an Irish-medium primary school in Galway city in the 1990s. The vast majority of pupils spoke English at home, and it made sense to us that we would speak Irish with pretty much the same accent as we spoke English. The teachers spoke differently. It's hard to know at this stage whether most of them actually came from Gaeltacht (traditionally Irish-speaking) areas, but that was certainly my understanding at the time. I don't remember making fun of them, though it's possible I did, but we were conscious of the difference. Teachers spoke one way and children spoke another. The way we spoke was more traditional than the corresponding group in the study reported in this thesis, but we ignored teachers' attempts to teach us to differentiate between palatalised and non-palatalised phonemes: the distinction didn't make sense to us and we didn't want to sound like teachers.

[1] The subordinate status of such languages is not necessarily related to numbers: some 'minority' languages might be spoken by the majority of a given community, for example, in (post-) colonial contexts. The Irish language is in an unusual position because of its prominence in national life in Ireland, as discussed in Chapter 3.

I say ‘we’ here, but it’s not that simple. While the majority of pupils held views similar to mine, there was a handful of students whose parents came from Gaeltacht areas and some of them spoke Irish at home. One particular incident stands out. The teacher of the class below us was absent one day, so her pupils were sent in small groups to other classrooms to do work she had assigned them, which was the usual procedure in cases like this. One of the boys sent to my class finished his work early and decided to participate in our lesson. He raised his hand to answer a question and almost as soon as he began talking, we burst out laughing. He was talking like a teacher, in a way we never heard children speaking, with a strong Gaeltacht accent. The teacher quickly shushed us, but it stuck in my mind long afterwards, initially as a hilarious incident and later as a puzzling, even troubling, one. Why was it so funny for him to speak like that? Why didn’t we speak like our teachers, after nine years of being taught by mostly Gaeltacht speakers? Why does the idea of trying to speak that way even now seem impossible, for both practical and social reasons, even though I make every effort to speak German, the language I studied at university, with as close to a native accent as I can manage?

As with many minority languages, more people now speak Irish outside of the contexts where it was traditionally spoken than speak it within these contexts. This requires a huge change in mindset. We used to talk about ‘native speakers’ and ‘learners’ as though the distinction were clear, but it is becoming more obvious that it is not, if it ever was. How do we categorise someone who speaks Irish at home, but whose parents learnt it at school? They are native speakers by some definitions of the term, but they are not generally considered so in Ireland, where the definition of a native speaker requires being raised in a Gaeltacht area, as discussed in Chapter 3. The way they speak is also usually closer to their peers who learnt it at school than to Gaeltacht Irish-speakers.

The stage is set for a redefinition of legitimacy, in the sense that the term is used by Pierre Bourdieu (1977, discussed further in Chapter 2). Previously it was almost unquestioned that Gaeltacht areas were the heart of the Irish language. The varieties spoken in these areas were held to be somehow more authentic than other varieties. This idea is difficult to maintain as the number of people who speak these varieties shrinks. It is clear that we need to find a way to let 'new speakers' in, to give them a sense that they are a full part of the Irish-speaking community and that the way they speak is not somehow deficient or unnatural. Much has been written on this and it is an important issue. It is especially important when it comes to majority languages, where a lack of acceptance of certain ways of speaking means that certain groups are excluded from power or social progression. But it also has a reality for those who learn a minority language. These languages are rarely avenues for career progression, but they can be extremely important to an individual's sense of identity. In the case of indigenous languages in post-colonial contexts, young people who speak these languages with the influence of the majority language, often mixing the two together, may find the attitude of their elders that they simply cannot speak the language 'properly' to be devastating, a statement that they do not belong to their own community.

In the case of Irish, the situation is a little different. As the national language, Irish is seen to belong to all Irish citizens, almost regardless of how well they can speak it. Equally, it is not necessary to speak, or even be interested in speaking, Irish to be considered Irish. However, in the Irish context, as in several other minority language contexts (see, for example, James Costa (2015) on Provence and Susan E. Frekko (2009) on Catalonia, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), those who acquire and speak the language outside of traditional contexts, 'new speakers', are generally more powerful than traditional speakers in other ways. They are more likely to be urban, better educated and middle class. They also tend to speak varieties that are

close to the written standard, which, though seen as less authentic, are valued more highly in education and professional contexts than traditional dialects. Helping them to feel the language belongs to them runs the risk of creating a situation like the one I experienced at primary school, where the new speaker is the norm and traditional speakers feel out of place.

This thesis explores the experiences of students in two Irish-medium schools, one in the Gaeltacht and one outside it, illustrating the complexity of their relationship to the language and the intricate power dynamics at play. Traditional speakers, for example, may be gatekeepers in some arenas, but dismissed as 'old-fashioned' or 'boggers' in another. This leads to conflicts about ownership of the language and uncertainty among almost all participants about what exactly their relationship to the language is or should be.

Previous research on speakers of Irish has generally focused on either Gaeltacht or non-Gaeltacht speakers. While there has been comparative research on educational achievement and linguistic competence among these groups (e.g. Harris et al. 2006; Ó Duibhir 2009), there have been only two comparative empirical studies of language attitudes among Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers. Both Bernadette O'Rourke (2011) and Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha and Tina Hickey (2018) use interviews to investigate language attitudes among university students and their work is discussed in Chapter 3. This thesis reports on the first in-depth comparative study of Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers conducted in schools using qualitative methods, including periods of on-site observation as well as focus group discussions, with younger adolescents. It is hoped that a comparative approach will help illuminate the differences and similarities between these two groups. While there is a wealth of research on each group separately, focusing on one group at a time can make it difficult to relate the position of different speakers and communities to each other. This is necessary for

the formulation of policy, but also for our understanding of both groups: the interaction between these groups and the various power imbalances between them at different levels of society are an integral part of Irish-speaking life.

The most common setting for new speakers to speak the language is institutional, whereas for traditional speakers it tends to be in the home or local community. That is why schools, the settings investigated in this thesis, are a good site for comparison: they are institutions, but they are also closely linked to the home and community. They are also the place where young people spend much of their lives. These young people are at the coalface of language change. Research has shown they initiate it, and they are also keenly observed for any changes in language, often blamed for changes initiated by previous generations. Part of the role of schools, especially in minority language contexts, is to manage the language use of young people, helping them to acquire varieties valued for academic and professional success and discouraging varieties deemed less desirable. Schools are also called on to deliver policies and objectives conceived by actors above them (politicians, civil servants and various expert groups). They are, therefore, the place where the general aspirations of the nation for its young people, as expressed in policy, have to be turned into concrete and specific practices which may be blocked or resisted.

Minority languages face a great deal of prejudice, with commentators arguing that they are a barrier to communication and that their disappearance will help their speakers integrate with mainstream society and thus raise their social status. This ignores the important social and identity function of such languages among speakers (as well as the questionable merits of integration into mainstream society). This stigma is deep and long-lasting: while much overt rhetoric about minority languages is now positive, many speakers retain the memory (whether

direct or inherited) of past discrimination (e.g. McEwan-Fujita 2010; Whiteside 2009). This may make them reluctant to speak the language with outsiders or outside of their community. But where overt rhetoric about the language is positive, a reluctance to speak the language is often interpreted as an unwillingness to share the language with outsiders.

Alongside continuing discrimination against minority languages and their speakers, there is a discourse of language endangerment according to which all language shift is bad and must be stopped at all costs. This has been criticised by many, including the contributors to Alexandre Duchêne and Monica Heller's (2007) edited volume, as discussed in Chapter 2. The main criticism levelled at this discourse is that it elevates the language above the needs of its speakers and neglects the causes of language endangerment, which are often social and political. Instead, it uses very general arguments about the importance of diversity, often drawn from discussions of natural diversity. There is a significant body of literature that draws on this discourse, focusing on how to assess the vitality of a language and how best to revitalise languages, e.g. Joshua Fishman's (1991, 2001) Reversing Language Shift framework. Research in this vein generally proceeds from the premise that language shift is bad. Fishman posits that clear boundaries between the minority and the dominant group are the only means to ensure the survival of the language in question, which has led to much criticism of his model for failing to acknowledge the more nuanced reality of group membership, as discussed in Chapter 2.

In contrast to research that takes as its goal the successful revitalisation of minority languages, James Costa and Médéric Gasquet-Cyrus suggest that sociolinguistic research should view conflict as an inherent part of language revitalisation movements (2013: 221-4). Instead of trying to eliminate (or, more likely, gloss over) such conflict, researchers should try to

illuminate it, showing what is at stake for the various actors, in the hopes of encouraging wider participation in such debates. This is the approach I take in this thesis. My goal is not to analyse whether efforts to revitalise the Irish language are 'succeeding' or 'failing' among young people, but rather to discover and describe how they impact young people. Only by leaving aside the question of whether minority languages *should* be revitalised can we get a real insight into how efforts to achieve this goal affect young people.

Research on minority languages tends to focus on preserving the languages themselves, rather than on the social issues involved in language minoritisation. For this reason, research on young people tends to focus on language-learning and how to increase their participation in language revitalisation movements, rather than how they experience language shift and revitalisation. Their experiences are likely to be more nuanced than many think – too often the mere existence of immersion programmes is cited as evidence that a language has been successfully revitalised, while the gap between young people's positive attitudes to the language and their actual use of it in many contexts is seen as evidence that they simply are not motivated enough. There are exceptions to this rule, many of which are discussed in Chapter 2. Costa, in particular, has argued that children are in a difficult position with respect to language revitalisation, being considered at the same time both the saviours and the destroyers of the language. They are often criticised for not speaking the language, then criticised for speaking it incorrectly if they do, and are encouraged to imagine themselves to be part of a community that may not yet exist or that may not be interested in accepting them, for whatever reason (Costa 2014). Objections to or rebellion against language policy are often seen as disobedience – if language revitalisation is part of the education system, then children are expected to follow the rules just as in other aspects of education. There is little interest in listening to their objections or complaints, since it is assumed that language revitalisation is

the right thing to do.

I have chosen to use ethnographic methods[2] in collecting data for this study because they are particularly suited to investigating such a complex situation. Such methods, as used by Kathryn Woolard (2016), Charlotte Selleck (2013) and Monica Heller (2006), among others, can shift the focus of research from 'success' or 'failure' to the messy reality of how language revitalisation impacts the lives of the young people who are often most affected by it. Such methods enable analysis of 'local and immediate actions' alongside the 'wider social contexts and structures' in which they are embedded (Copland, Creese, Rock and Shaw 2015). The combination of observation and focus groups (with audio recordings of both) means that I was able both to listen to how participants described their experiences and attitudes and to see how they behaved on a daily basis. Participants offered a wide range of views, sometimes contradicting themselves within the span of a sentence. However, the fact that their views contradict themselves does not make them any less relevant for our understanding than the more cogently thought-out arguments of activists, politicians and other actors who take a public stance in favour of or against the revitalisation of minority languages. The truth about language revitalisation and shift is that it is a messy, self-contradictory process and efforts to put a coherent narrative on it often say more about the particular ideologies favoured by the narrator in question than they do about their lived experience. This is also true of research and the tendency in Ireland for researchers to focus on either 'new' or 'traditional' speakers but rarely both has tended to reproduce polarised (and thereby simplified) narratives.

[2] By "ethnographic methods" I mean an approach in which the researcher positions themselves as a participant-observer and immerses themselves in the context under study, observing everyday activities and interactions over a period of time. I discuss the way this approach was implemented in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical questions that come into play here. Revitalisation raises many questions about legitimacy and authenticity, about which variety of a language is supposed to be revitalised and what kind of person should speak it. In particular, this chapter outlines the ideologies involved in language revitalisation and how they manifest in schooling. Ironically, efforts to revive a language often end up resorting to the same mechanisms as those used by the dominant (often colonial) culture to repress that language and enforce another one.

Chapter 3 outlines how these issues play out in the Irish context specifically, giving an overview of Irish language policy since independence. There are two conflicting ideologies at the heart of efforts to revive the language: an attempt to make Irish a powerful language, along the lines of English, and an insistence that the language retains its connection to traditional culture. The first requires standardisation and the use of the language in formal contexts, while the second requires the continued existence of traditionally Irish-speaking communities with their own dialects. One of the strategies for maintaining this paradox is the spatialisation of the language: certain areas were designated Irish-speaking and these Gaeltacht areas are where authenticity is supposed to reside. They are still seen as a resource for the nation, leading to tensions when their inhabitants object to this or fail to fulfil what those who travel to the area to learn Irish see as their duty. These paradoxes have become particularly difficult to sustain as the number of new speakers increases and language shift accelerates in Gaeltacht areas.

Chapter 4 outlines the methods used in this thesis and introduces the two schools in which research took place: Coláiste Bhríde (CB), a Gaeltacht secondary school located in an area where Irish remains the community language, and Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair (GCI), a Gaelcholáiste or immersion school, which is located in an English-speaking area.

Chapter 5 looks at attitudes to school language policy among students in the two schools. GCI imposes a strict language policy, which is widely accepted by students, who see it as just another school rule. Although they rarely challenge it overtly, they generally obey it in a superficial sense: Irish has little relevance to most beyond school and is rarely spoken in the absence of teachers. In CB, the policy is more relaxed and it is regularly challenged by students, meaning it is constantly being renegotiated. The outward acceptance of school language policy in GCI may stem from the fact that participants usually speak the language only in school or, for some, in limited contexts, where all present have chosen to engage with the language, usually with a similar language policy to that imposed in the school. For CB participants, in contrast, language shift is something that is relevant to every area of their lives, meaning that the conflict that arises in school will also arise at home or in the community.

Chapters 6 and 7 outline how students in the two schools see their own variety of Irish. Both appeal to ideas of authenticity, but they do so in different ways. Students in CB prize a traditional form of authenticity. They argue for the value of their dialect because it is old and it is linked to the area. In GCI, on the other hand, they are proud to speak Irish 'normally', i.e. in the same accent with which they speak English. For them, attempting to speak like Gaeltacht speakers would be inauthentic, as it would not reflect their own identity. Students in both schools resist pressure on them to speak differently: CB students reject the standard, while GI students distance themselves from Gaeltacht varieties.

Chapter 8 discusses how Irish functions as a boundary marker in both schools. Students in both groups see themselves as different from non-speakers of Irish, making fun of peers who don't speak Irish and using Irish as a secret code when surrounded by non-speakers. However, this division is mirrored by that between Gaeltacht participants and non-Gaeltacht participants,

in a process of fractal recursion (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38). Gaeltacht speakers are perceived by non-Gaeltacht participants to have a gate-keeping role, by choosing to accept or reject the attempts of non-locals to speak Irish to them. This leads to resentment among some non-Gaeltacht participants, while Gaeltacht participants portray themselves as accommodating outsiders by not forcing them to speak a language they are not comfortable in.

Finally, Chapter 9 offers some conclusions and possible directions for future research.

2. Identity, authenticity and minority language schools

This chapter investigates the ideological foundations of language revitalisation across the world, in preparation for the next chapter's introduction of the Irish language revitalisation context. Section 2.1 introduces some of the major ideologies involved in revitalisation, particularly in terms of authenticity and legitimacy. Section 2.2 discusses the role of education in language revitalisation and the particular difficulties faced by young people in situations of language shift. Finally, Section 2.3 explores how notions of speakerhood can be contentious in the case of minority languages, as ideas about legitimacy are challenged by the presence of 'new speakers' who acquire the language outside of traditional contexts and who in many cases now outnumber 'traditional' speakers.

2.1 Ideologies of revitalisation

Debates on language policy are sometimes brushed off as insignificant distractions from the 'real issues' (e.g. Stead 2019; Bradshaw 2017), but they are in fact 'important political questions that may affect the social and economic position of the social groups of a given territory' (Pujolar 2007: 144). This section examines some of the major ideologies involved in debates on language revitalisation policy globally, before they are discussed in the Irish context in the next chapter. The first seems almost a truism nowadays: the idea that endangered languages must be saved. However, this discourse has emerged in a specific sociopolitical context and involves certain assumptions that are highly consequential. The second is the concept of 'legitimate language', as introduced by Bourdieu, which becomes particularly complex in contexts of language shift because often there is no consensus as to which variety of the language is legitimate. Third are the twin concepts of authenticity and anonymity, which are significant particularly in minority and majority contexts, respectively.

Before going into detail, it is important to note that not all the ideologies examined below are discussed openly in contexts of language revitalisation. Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin points to the critical importance of covert language ideologies in cases of language shift (2015: 33). While speakers may overtly claim to value their own dialect more than another that is gaining ground, it is often the case in situations of language shift that analysis of their speech will reveal it to be highly influenced by the variety they claim to reject (ibid.). Ó hIfearnáin argues that such 'hidden' attitudes 'are the real driving force of language shift or retention, and they represent the true challenge for language policy-makers' (ibid.). Such discrepancies between 'overt' and 'covert' language ideologies mean that communities often only notice that language shift is happening long after it has taken hold, when they realise that young people cannot 'communicate fluently in the ancestral language' (2015: 33).

2.1.1 Language endangerment discourse

While the depth of prejudice against minority languages and their speakers in numerous contexts around the world is undeniable, the overt rhetoric about endangered languages *in general* is overwhelmingly positive. In the British context it seems impossible to write a newspaper article about Welsh without observing it has 'too many consonants' (e.g. Dyckhoff 2017, May 2004) and Scottish Gaelic is often considered a laughable waste of money (e.g. Jack 2010), but few would argue against the idea that linguistic diversity is worth preserving, as evidenced by the wealth of articles that begin with a variation on 'There are X languages in the world, Y of which will survive to the next century' (e.g. Townsend 2018; Martinez 2019; Griffiths 2019). This means that a general attitude that languages should be saved does not exclude a negative attitude to specific minority languages.

The use of language endangerment discourse has increased in recent decades, which Heller

and Duchêne attribute to ‘attempts to maintain the language-culture-nation ideological nexus’ in the face of globalisation and increased social and geographical mobility (2007: 7). They observe that ‘protecting’ a language implies a level of ‘purity’ and ‘boundedness’ that does not sit well with multiculturalism and which is more familiar from its role in ‘nationalist ideologies of language’ since the 19th century (Heller and Duchêne 2007: 8). [shortened]

A strong, exclusive idea of what a language is, or should be, may alienate many speakers. Purism in minority languages is often based on the idea ‘that there was an original pure, pre-contact language’ (Makihara 2009: 255). Purist ideology draws on the ‘ideal of the whole, bounded, fixed language, spoken within the boundaries of a specific territory by prototypically monolingual speakers’ (Heller and McElhinny 2017: 105), which has formed the basis of many national language movements since Johann Gottfried Herder introduced the idea that nations are defined by language. This form of language is supposedly ‘found in the knowledge of monolingual native speakers, but contaminated by the knowledge of other languages’ (Makihara 2009: 255). Such beliefs are linked to a fear of cultural contamination, with any change in the language seen as signifying loss of culture and identity in the community (ibid.). This focus on the past may prevent engagement with the language among younger people: Julia Sallabank and Yan Marquis argue that ‘static’ language ideologies in Guernsey, where Guernesiais is strongly associated with the past, alienate young people who might otherwise engage with the language (2018: 73). Strongly purist attitudes may restrict people’s view of the language so much that even those who speak it as a first language deny they are proficient in it because of perceived flaws in their use of it, particularly influence from the dominant language, as observed by Anne Whiteside among Maya-speaking immigrants in the United States (2009: 228).

Language disputes are often a proxy for social or political disputes. James Costa argues there is a tendency in the study of language revitalisation to 'fall into the trap of identity' and thus 'ethnicise what are fundamentally social issues of alienation, domination and resistance' (2013: 326). While using discourses that emphasise languages over people may help minority groups access mainstream attention and enable governments to integrate minority culture into the national image, ultimately this 'downplays the social processes that lead to situations of minoritisation in the first place' (2013: 327). The focus on the concept of global linguistic diversity rather than on the specifics of individual contexts of language shift may let those in positions of power off the hook: rather than engaging with the causes and consequences of language shift, which are often socioeconomic and thus difficult or impossible to 'solve', an emphasis on diversity allows people to focus on 'easy wins'. While language learning apps or evening classes in the minority language are undeniably positive developments, on their own they will not undo the negative impacts of language shift. Suzanne Romaine argues that sociolinguists have largely failed to address the 'social, political and economic structures' that are much more important than state language policies in determining the status of a language (2006: 456-7).

An emphasis on preserving linguistic diversity has also meant that shift is now often seen as inherently bad, while revitalising languages is seen as good because it preserves diversity (Costa 2013: 320-1). 'Endangered languages' are analogous to endangered species: if one 'dies', it is indisputably bad. Deborah Cameron points out that this discourse is often used alongside a seemingly contradictory one: the idea that the language of a people represents their entire history and culture, which will be lost along with the language if revitalisation efforts are unsuccessful (2007: 274). What these discourses have in common is the moral weight attached to preserving languages: there is no 'good' language shift. While on one hand this

may help to counterbalance the pressure on speakers of minority languages to accept the dominance of majority languages, it also puts moral pressure on such speakers, who are often socioeconomically disadvantaged, to 'save' the language. Doing so would require complex socioeconomic support, but this dimension is generally ignored. They are thus expected to achieve the impossible and often criticised by speakers of majority languages (sometimes even by sociolinguists) if they fail, or refuse, to do so. In addition, those who wish to revitalise a minority language will often have to turn to the very state that is the cause of socioeconomic disadvantage in order to get help with language revitalisation (Costa 2013: 321) and there are likely to be conditions attached to this help. In some cases, this has led to situations where groups can only assert certain rights or receive certain benefits if they speak a particular language or practise certain traditions in a way that is assessed by the state to be legitimate (Costa 2013: 321; Patrick 2005). Heller and Duchêne suggest that we should investigate the power dynamics involved in language disputes, rather than 'assuming we must save languages' (2007: 11).

The process of language revitalisation and the endangerment discourse associated with it may itself have a negative impact on speakers of the language. Miki Makihara (2009: 255) argues that endangerment discourse objectifies speakers and languages and may result in the separation of languages 'from language use and users in general, potentially hampering the very objective of language revitalization that they seek to promote'. Similarly, Jane H. Hill criticises a tendency among linguistic experts to alienate speakers of endangered languages by describing these languages as 'treasures' belonging to the world as a whole and by categorising languages and speakers in a way that does not correspond to speakers' view of their language (2002: 127–128). While it may be useful to delineate the dwindling number of speakers of a particular language (especially when applying for research funding), the community's ideas

about who counts as a speaker may not coincide with researchers' findings, which may cause deep distress (Hill 2002: 128). Such mismatches between researchers and the communities they study may lead to the community feeling it is losing control of the language, given that researchers are usually more powerful than the communities they study.

One of the most influential frameworks for language revitalisation is Fishman's (2001; 1991) Reversing Language Shift framework. This eight-stage framework outlines steps a minority language community should take to protect its language, from very basic re-familiarisation with a lost language to ensuring its use at the highest levels of government. The core tenet of Fishman's approach is an emphasis on intergenerational transmission and the maintenance of clear boundaries between the minority community and the dominant community.

Fishman's model relies on the idea that 'Xmen are not Ymen and that Xish culture […] is not Yish culture' (1991: 394), a statement that is problematic in any context given the difficulties involved in deciding where 'culture' comes from, but is particularly so in contexts where, as in Ireland, there is no accepted ethnic difference between speakers of 'Xish' and 'Yish'. Many researchers, including Heller (2006, 2011), Jaffe (2007) and Romaine (2006), have criticised this aspect of his framework. Stuart Dunmore (2018) discusses how the ethnonym 'Gael', a potential 'Xian' label in the context of Scottish Gaelic revitalisation efforts, is rejected by new speakers of Gaelic who are quite confident in their self-identification as 'Scottish', a label that includes both speakers and non-speakers of Gaelic and thus does not fit into Fishman's schema. It is risky for a minority community to isolate itself from a dominant one, even if clear boundaries can be drawn, as this is likely to cut that community off from power. In addition, the idea that any convergence with the dominant language community is intrinsically dangerous to the minority language is likely to encourage cultural and linguistic purism, which

may alienate speakers and stop a community dealing with the situation as it is, rather than harking back to an idealised past.

Fishman's emphasis on intergenerational transmission is also controversial. Bernadette O'Rourke, Joan Pujolar and Ferdinand Ramallo describe Fishman's model as 'a process of reconstruction of the community of native speakers', an impossible task, and lament its influence on language revitalisation efforts in many contexts (2015: 11). Romaine argues that an exclusive focus on intergenerational transmission in the family as the measure of success risks devaluing revitalisation efforts that may not achieve this goal but are nonetheless meaningful to the communities involved (2006: 455). However, she acknowledges that the tendency for language revitalisation movements to ignore Fishman's advice to focus on informal domains such as the home before trying to introduce the language into education, politics, etc., may lead to a situation where the language ends up being spoken less at home and more in education and other formal domains, as it is required to compete with the majority language in all domains (2006: 451).

Disputes about language shift are often treated as obstacles to revitalisation, but they could also be seen as the essence of it. Fishman (1991) proposed that 'ideological clarification' was a crucial step in the beginning of any revitalisation movement. That is, a community that wishes to revive its language must agree on their goals, in terms of what the language will sound and look like, but also, more importantly, where and when it will be spoken and by whom (cf. Jaffe 2007; Kroskrity 2009). This process is rarely, if ever, successful in terms of achieving consensus and there is usually contestation on various grounds. The process of revitalisation means making conscious decisions about what a language means to a community and, more fundamentally, about the identity of that community. This process will never be

finished or uncontentious. Costa argues that an excessive focus on consensus may exacerbate the tendency discussed above to see revitalisation as indisputably positive, and thus to construe any disagreement or debate simply as obstacles to be overcome (2013: 323). Costa and Gasquet-Cyrus argue that '[c]onflict is [...] central to revitalisation movements' and suggest that the aim of sociolinguistic research in such contexts should not be to eliminate it, but to illuminate it, with the aim of enabling wider participation in such debates (2013: 221-4). They argue that 'maximal efficiency' in restoring a language to use is not the aim of language revitalisation movements (2013: 213), which are primarily social movements, concerned with the identity and positioning of one group vis-à-vis a dominant group (Costa 2013). Another issue to be considered in the context of language revitalisation is the extent to which the linguistic majority will 'buy in' to the process or, conversely, regard policies aimed at promoting the language as unwelcome and unjustifiable intrusions on their freedom. May (2000) and de Bres (2008) have termed this the issue of 'tolerability'.

This section has discussed the impact discourses of endangerment and the approaches of endangered languages research can have on speakers of endangered languages. My study will contribute to knowledge on the ideology of endangerment and the role this plays in an Irish context and specifically among young Irish people. It will examine the prevalence and impact of purist attitudes among this group. While ethnic identity *per se* is rarely discussed in the context of Irish language revitalisation (though there is some discussion in the following chapter), I will investigate the extent to which separating in-group from out-group is important to young Irish-speakers. This will add to the discussion around Fishman's approach to revitalisation, which is still very relevant in the Irish context, as in many others. It will demonstrate that, as observed by the researchers cited above, the framework he proposes is inadequate for most, if not all, language revitalisation contexts. However, it will also show

that there is merit to looking at boundaries as important in language revitalisation processes, and also that the role of intergenerational transmission should not be neglected.

My approach to this research sees debates and disagreement about language as a core part of revitalisation. I will seek to examine the social and emotional dynamics around language-related issues among my participants and avoid seeing the 'saving' of Irish as the key issue here. Instead, I will look at the impact of the revitalisation of Irish on participants, thus contributing to our knowledge of how the processes of language revitalisation affects individuals. This will offer a different perspective, giving an extra dimension to debates in the literature about what is the most 'effective' means of revitalisation. I take the approach suggested by Costa of 'illuminating' disputes, as they highlight the issues that are important to those involved in language revitalisation. It is through these disputes that we see the boundaries that are important to them and the competing interests and needs of the various stakeholders.

2.1.2 Legitimacy

When attempting to revitalise a language, questions arise about what variety of the language is to be preserved and promoted and which speakers are to be considered 'native' or authoritative. A rigid view of what form of the language is correct is likely to lead to people being excluded from the language community. Fundamentally, the question is one of legitimacy: what language (variety) is regarded as the most appropriate one in a particular context, and who is regarded as an appropriate speaker of this language? I am interested in who is regarded as a legitimate speaker, in different contexts, and what this legitimacy allows them to do.

Bourdieu defines legitimate language as that used by 'the appropriate person, as opposed to the impostor' in the appropriate context and 'addressed to legitimate receivers'. The legitimate speaker must have the right to speak, as well as 'the power to impose reception' (1977: 648). Legitimate language is particularly important in formal markets, which are consequently dominated by 'the holders of the legitimate competence, authorized to speak with authority' (Bourdieu 1991: 69). Those known to be legitimate speakers of legitimate language may use the dominated language in such contexts without damaging their standing, but it may be risky for others, especially if they are seen as doing so because they have no other option (ibid.).

It only becomes possible to impose one language (or variety) as the only legitimate one when the formation of the state creates 'a unified linguistic market', i.e. the existence of an official, standardised language is inseparable from the existence of a state (Bourdieu 1991: 45). In a linguistic market, individuals are evaluated by the language they use (Costa 2015). Standardisation functions as a means of creating this ideal homogeneous group from what is actually a diverse speech community (Lane, Costa and De Korne 2017: 7). However, by codifying one legitimate form of a language, standardisation will inevitably marginalise some speakers and privilege others (cf. Doerr 2009a: 29; Pennycook 1994: 110).

Legitimacy is always contingent on various societal factors. In the case of language shift, previously accepted norms are upended as traditional speakers disappear, making the redefinition of legitimacy a central question for the minority language community (Costa 2015: 129), even if, as discussed above, there is unlikely to be a conclusive answer. Woolard has underlined the irony in the fact that movements to save minority languages are often structured around the same monoglossic ideologies involved in their oppression in the first place (1989: 17). As discussed above, research often plays into this.

Language revitalisation tends to 'recreate the same type of power struggles between speakers that [it] is supposed to eliminate' (Boudreau and Dubois 2007: 99). Penelope Eckert (1983) gives a detailed account of 'the paradox of national language movements' in the context of Gascon, a dialect of Occitan. She argues that the actions needed to enable a regional or minority language to compete with a dominant language like French inevitably conflict with those needed to maintain a connection to how people in that region actually speak (1983: 296). In the case of Gascon, efforts to create a standard that could compete with French and would be accessible to francophone town-dwellers alienated those in more rural areas who still had a connection to the living language, whether or not they could speak it themselves (1983: 295-299). These remaining speakers (or understanders) needed support and targeted efforts to destigmatise the language they spoke in order to benefit from the revitalisation movement, but the need to compete with French and to include urban, educated elites, who are an important part of any nationalist movement, won out (1983: 299). Thus, the effect of these tensions between the desire for a standard, modern language and for a language that connects the nation or community to its past and a unique national identity is to distance the standard language from authenticity, while distancing traditional varieties from authority.

Ó hIfearnáin argues that the imposition of a standard variety of a minority language may reinforce diglossic language attitudes in a minority language community, potentially restricting the domains in which the local variety is used even further (2014: 34–35). However, he argues there is evidence in the context of Breton that 'the linguistic and ideological gulf between traditional native speakers and language activists is not as great as that previously characterized in much of the sociolinguistic literature on Breton' (ibid.). He therefore suggests that conflict between local and standard varieties 'may represent a stage in development rather

than a permanent situation, and that the coexistence of traditional varieties and an overtly planned variety may have various potential outcomes' (2014: 35).

This section points to a number of important questions to be answered in the Irish context: how is legitimacy defined and how does this affect various speakers (or types thereof), what role does standardisation play in this, and is there evidence of this lessening of tensions that Ó hIfearnáin suggests may happen? My research will contribute to these questions by asking who the main speakers of Irish are, who the targets of revitalisation are and how this plays into existing power dynamics. It will also examine whether the gap between new and Gaeltacht speakers is decreasing, as Ó hIfearnáin suggests may be the case in Brittany

2.1.3 Authenticity and anonymity

One of the key questions in debates over legitimate language is 'who speaks the language of reason, and who the language of the heart of the nation?' (Heller and McElhinny, 2017: 107). While power is associated with each, the balance of power varies depending on context and the tensions over this question will have different outcomes at different times and in different communities. Woolard (2016; 2008) describes this tension in terms of two competing ideologies: 'the ideology of anonymity', which is primarily important in the context of dominant languages, and 'the ideology of authenticity', which mostly affects minority languages.

'Anonymous' languages seem to have inherent power and rationality. There is a perception that such varieties do not belong to any particular group and are therefore 'open and available to all in a society': anything said in such a neutral variety will not carry with it connotations related to the speaker's identity or how they speak (Woolard 2016: 25-6). Woolard likens her concept of anonymity to Bourdieu's (1991) concept of 'misrecognition' (*méconnaisance*)

(2016: 29). Under this ideology, while listeners recognise a language as dominant, they do not 'recognize the historical developments and the material power difference between social groups that underpin that authority' and '[t]his ideological erasure of historical roots […] allows dominance to become hegemony' (ibid.). Through media and schools, the language is portrayed as being powerful in and of itself, rather than because of its history and social correlations (ibid.). English is an obvious example of a language becoming anonymous, as it is commonly used by non-native speakers around the world (Ammon 2010: 117) and is now more likely to be referred to as 'the language of development and freedom' than 'the language of the oppressor' (Romaine 2006: 446), despite the means by which it became so widespread.

While majority languages tend to draw power from their anonymous nature, a sense of 'authenticity' is more important for minority languages. Woolard observes that '[t]he primary significance of the authentic voice is what it signals about *who* one is, rather than *what* one has to say' (ibid.) and that in order '[t]o profit from linguistic authenticity, one must sound like that kind of person who is valued as natural and authentic' (2016: 23). To be considered authentic, 'a speech variety must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory'. This may apply to varieties as diverse as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Corsican (Woolard 2016: 22).

An emphasis on authenticity can shut people out from learning a language. While in the Romantic era, notions of authenticity were important for all languages, 'authenticity has become the special preserve of minority languages and speakers' (Woolard 2016: 23). This ideology can protect a language by endowing it with value in a local context, but it may also hinder efforts to encourage people to learn the language, since '[i]f local linguistic varieties index authentic local identities, by the same logic they are off-limits to outsiders' (2016: 24).

For example, Woolard argues that Catalan's 'status as a signifier of a valued Catalan identity made it difficult for nonnative speakers to assume as their own' (2016: 67). While in some contexts, such as Hawai'i (Snyder-Frey 2013: 237), making an effort to learn a minority language is seen as praiseworthy, in most European contexts learning an 'authentic' language by study 'is a contradiction in terms, marking the learner as inauthentic' (Woolard 2016: 24) as documented by O'Rourke and Ramallo (2015: 294) in Galicia and Alexandra Jaffe (1993) in Corsica.

One of the biggest risks of relying on a discourse of authenticity is that it relies on an often idealised notion of the past, which will be impossible for the community to recreate, and which may make it difficult for a community to participate in the modern world without 'being branded as sellouts, traitors or separated from their culture' (Romaine 2006: 446), as observed by Sallabank (2019) in Guernsey. It also encourages the rejection of any form of cultural 'contamination', particularly in the form of language-mixing, thus feeding into the linguistic purism discussed above (Woolard 2016: 32).

The idea of an *a priori* link between language and identity or place has been criticised by Duchêne and Heller (2007) and Blommaert (2010: 45), among others. However, such links are important motivating factors in language revitalisation (Sallabank, 2019: 99; Snyder-Frey, 2013: 236; Ó hIfearnáin 2018: 155). We must also acknowledge that 'essentialist' ideologies about the links between language and place may constitute important cultural values for minority groups. The drive to avoid essentialism must not lead to the neglect of those in areas where traditional varieties are spoken (Ó hIfearnáin, 2018: 155).

Woolard (2016) shows how Catalan has moved since the 1970s from relying on the ideology of authenticity, with the language being linked strongly to Catalan ethnicity and political nationalism, to the ideology of anonymity, being seen instead as a common language for all in Catalonia, almost without regard to their language background. Joan Pujolar and Isaac Gonzàlez argue that this change means that language choice is now seen as relating to 'specific personal life trajectories rather than ethnic affiliations' (Pujolar and Gonzàlez 2013: 140). They observe that 'accents and interference phenomena' no longer necessarily trigger switches to Castilian, as in the past, both because most Castilian speakers now also speak fluent Catalan and because the speech of native speakers of Catalan often contains 'linguistic features formerly constructed as L2 interference' (2013: 141). However, an emerging tendency to speak Castilian to non-Spanish immigrants suggests that the link between language and identity remains salient, even if its form has changed (ibid.).

The ideology of authenticity becomes particularly problematic when the majority of speakers have not acquired the language in traditional contexts and may have quite low competence in it. Jeffrey Shandler's concept of 'postvernacular' language offers an alternative for such cases. A postvernacular language is one for which the fact of its use is 'is at least as meaningful as the meaning of the words being uttered— if not more so' (2005: 22). He argues that the concept of postvernacularity can be 'liberating' since it suggests 'possibilities of language use other than the vernacular model of full fluency in an indigenous mother tongue' (ibid.): the language may be divorced from the ideology of authenticity and speakers accepted on their own terms. Shandler also notes that it 'has important implications for the interrelation of language, culture, and identity [and] for the notion of what might constitute a "speech community"', since this will not be based on the old certainties of inheritance and geographical location (2005: 22). He argues that postvernacular engagement with language should not be

regarded as ‘any less valid than vernacular engagement with language’ (ibid.). Indeed, he argues in the case of Yiddish that its postvernacular use differs from vernacular language in that almost everyone who uses it does so because they want to, rather than because they have to (ibid.).

This study will show how the relative value of authenticity and anonymity varies and how these qualities are defined differently across the two groups of young Irish-speakers involved. In particular, I examine the role of language-place connection among the two groups in my study, showing how it can have both a positive role, in supporting a strong sense of allegiance to Irish among some participants, and a negative one, with some feeling they should not have to behave in a particular way because of where they live or were born. In researching young people, I contribute to the discussion of these questions in Ireland, by showing whether and how the situation differs among the youngest generation of Irish-speakers.

2.2 Young people and language revitalisation through education

The role of young people in language revitalisation is both significant and fraught, particularly as they do not generally have a voice in the shaping of language policy. Young people, by definition, represent the future. This makes them the prime target of language revitalisation policy, usually through the medium of formal education, and they are often the focus of concern about language shift (Costa 2014: 195; Pujolar and Puigdevall 2014: 170; Woolard 2016: 258; Heller 1996: 145). Where language shift has been rapid, generational differences in language practices may make co-ordinated revitalisation efforts impossible: attempts to revitalise the variety used by older speakers fail to engage younger speakers, while older generations may reject the variety spoken by younger speakers (Dorian 1994: 482–483; Schmidt 1985: 38–40; Hill and Hill 1986). Even in less extreme situations, young people are

often seen as obstacles to revitalisation, since they are the main agents of language change and, particularly in the case of teenagers, often rebel against authority in general. This combination of extreme focus on their behaviour, combined with a lack of discussion of the impact of language revitalisation on young people as individuals, is why I have chosen to focus on them in my study. I hope my work will add to knowledge of how young people experience language revitalisation in a school environment.

2.2.1 Young people as the instruments of language revitalisation

When it comes to research on young people and language revitalisation, the emphasis tends to be on figuring out how to increase their participation in language revitalisation movements, or improve their competence in the language, rather than looking at the impact language revitalisation policy has on them as individuals. Notable research with the latter focus includes Woolard (2011, 2016), Selleck (2012, 2013), Costa (2014) and Heller (2006). This relative neglect is an extension of the concern in research on endangered languages with the preservation of languages, rather than the social issues involved with language minoritisation.

Children and teenagers are, surely, some of the most important stakeholders in language revitalisation, and yet they are rarely consulted in any meaningful sense. Although children are often taken as figureheads of language revitalisation, this only happens when they follow the rules set down for them by the movement. A decision not to participate will, after all, be seen as disobedience, rather than a reasoned choice, leaving little space for children and teenagers to articulate how language revitalisation affects them.

Costa argues that in revitalisation programmes, 'the often unclear views of adults, be it on language, community, or any other matter, are projected onto the children without any further

consideration' (2014: 211). He suggests this is of particular concern because schools are sometimes 'ground zero' for the creation of the minority language community a revitalisation movement has imagined. This means that children are expected through their education in the minority language either to become part of a group that may not actually exist yet or to integrate into existing communities that may not have space for the new kinds of language and speaker that emanate from minority language schools (2014: 211).

Selleck observes that there is a general lack of investigation of how language policy plays out on the ground and argues that in the Welsh context a strong emphasis on the importance of individual choice and inclusivity in language policy does not correspond with the experience of teenagers in the schools she studied, one of which was mostly Welsh-medium and the other of which was mostly English-medium. She suggests that the overt emphasis on inclusivity may smooth 'over deep-seated and persisting ideological conflicts in Wales' (2013: 21). Selleck argues that school language policy in 'the Welsh school', which focused on supporting the maintenance and revitalisation of Welsh, 'draws students into ideological stances and obligations that [...] they are not always comfortable with' (2013: 34).

However, while Selleck's investigation of how students are affected by school language policy is important and often sensitive, she does not consider the power imbalance between the two languages and often seems biased in favour of English and even to regard Welsh as unnecessarily divisive (e.g. 2013: 38). She gives little consideration to the various factors that militate against participants being free to choose to speak Welsh, which mean that giving both languages equal status within a school is likely to lead to the dominance of English. For example, she describes as evidence of purist and exclusionary attitudes the fact that students at the 'Welsh school' remark that some of their counterparts in the 'English school' only study

Welsh as a subject and cannot speak it (2012: 115). In contrast, when more English-oriented students at the 'Welsh school' mock classmates for 'stuttering' when speaking English and ridicule the school's 'Improve your English' club, she depicts the existence of such a club as evidence that the school's language policy is failing some students (2012: 112). She does not discuss negative attitudes towards Welsh-dominant students, despite the fact that the direction of language shift suggests that such attitudes are powerful and widespread.

Studying the 'narratives of revitalisation' offered by young people gives an insight into language ideologies more broadly, since it tells us which ideologies were deemed important enough to transmit to them and what simplifications were considered necessary (Costa 2014: 197). Costa's interviews with primary school pupils in an Occitan immersion school show the influence of the language endangerment discourse discussed above. In his words, the children have absorbed the key message that saving Provençal 'like saving the whales, is [...] a natural and obvious thing to do', but there is little consensus about what 'saving' the language would look like, or even who constitutes the community that is supposed to speak it (2014: 206).

Much of the emphasis on education derives from the belief that the language practices of teenagers and children reflect the future of the language and it is sometimes forgotten that life stage plays an important role in language practices. The practices of teenagers in particular are likely to reflect 'age-graded processes specific to a particular life stage' rather than being only illustrative of community-wide language change (Woolard 2016: 258). Similarly, Eckert argues that the primary linguistic models for children are not adults, but older children, meaning that variation among children may have a social meaning that is specific to them rather than simply reflecting adult practices (1997: 162). She suggests that secondary school in particular is 'a hothouse for the construction of identities', a process in which 'linguistic

innovation' plays a key role (1997: 163). Pujolar and Puigdevall also find that issues of language and identity are engaged with in secondary school, along with many other issues of identity, gender, ethnicity, etc. (2015: 175).

Language practices may change after school. Woolard's 1987 study of young people in Catalonia showed that young people could 'remake [themselves] linguistically' at the transition to secondary school, changing from Castilian speakers to Catalan speakers (2016: 260). When she followed up with these students almost 20 years on, Woolard found some had made similar changes after secondary school (2016: 260). Pujolar and Gonzàlez (2013: 142) use the Catalan term *muda* to describe such changes in language use, which are associated 'with specific events and conditions that are intimately connected to age […] and which have an important effect on different aspects of social identity' (Pujolar and Puigdevall 2015: 169).

The Castilian-speaking teenagers Woolard re-interviewed as adults explicitly attributed this *muda* to age: they could only begin to speak Catalan enthusiastically after outgrowing the 'closed-minded' attitudes of youth and the shame they had felt when their Catalan was mocked or criticised in school (2016: 268-70). Even within school, Pujolar and Puigdevall found that resistance to the use of Catalan in the classroom was rarer among older students than younger students (2015: 176), something also observed by Selleck (2012: 57). The participants Woolard re-interviewed felt no need to disavow Castilian, but rather embraced a bilingual or multilingual identity (2016: 295). Rather than associating identity with linguistic origins, in line with the ideology of authenticity, those who now identified as Catalan speakers embraced something closer to the ideology of anonymity (Woolard 2016: 296). They saw language choice not as political but as personal and saw Catalan as being available to all, rather than being restricted to 'authentic' speakers (ibid.). While this maturity may allow adults 'to take

up new linguistic practices and broaden their identities' (ibid.), both she (2016: 294) and Eckert (1997: 160) observe that there are limitations to people's ability to acquire certain linguistic patterns after a certain age.

In relation to this area of discussion, my research will contribute by showing how young people in two schools with different language policies and different demographic profiles experience language revitalisation as individuals and whether they feel they have a stake in debates about revitalisation. It will also investigate the narratives of revitalisation participants have picked up in school or in their communities and how these narratives impact their personal feelings about specific incidents or individuals. By involving two age groups, it will also give an insight into the role age plays in participants' language practices.

2.2.2 Minority language education

The purpose of schools is to ratify legitimate forms of knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). This extends to language: schools are 'bastions of standard language norms' (Eckert 1997: 159), which engage in a process of 'language laundering' (Woolard 2016: 29). As well as enforcing these norms, schools can construct them: they are the gatekeepers of knowledge and the credentials needed for success (Heller 1996: 148).

Minority language schools are often even more overtly involved in the process of language laundering than mainstream schools. Heller describes how a francophone school in Ontario, while theoretically there to support and maintain the use of French among the francophone population there, actually promoted standard, even metropolitan, varieties of French (1996: 149). Students were corrected if they used forms associated either with second-language learners of French or with regional Canadian varieties (ibid.). Even without such explicit

discouragement of non-standard forms, the use of a standardised variety of a minority language in schools may reinforce the idea that local varieties are unacceptable in this context, as discussed in Section 2.1.2.

Models of bilingual education are highly specific to the cultural and sociopolitical context, but Edwards (2009: 257) lists four 'strong' forms: 'dual language' programmes where children from the majority and minority group are in the same classroom and both languages are used; 'heritage-language maintenance' education, where minority-group speakers are taught in their native language, while the mainstream variety is introduced gradually; 'mainstream bilingual' provision, where majority-group children are taught in two major languages; and, finally, 'immersion' education, where majority-group children are taught through a second language. The latter term was first introduced to describe anglophone children in Montreal learning through French in the 1960s, but has since spread worldwide (ibid.). Edwards contrasts immersion education, where a child is 'dipped into a new linguistic pool' but does not lose their original linguistic capacities with 'submersion' education, where minority-group children are taught through the majority language, with little or no attention paid to their native language (2009: 258). Pupils in immersion schools are there by (their parents') choice and their main language is generally the majority one, which is not under threat in society more generally (ibid.).

Although access to schools in one's native language is indisputably of benefit to speakers of minority languages (UNESCO 1953: 11), the efficacy of schools as a means of *creating* speakers is doubtful. There is little evidence that immersion education in a minority language leads to long-term changes in linguistic behaviour among children who speak the dominant language in the home (Edwards 2009; Dunmore 2018). Dunmore observes that there is a

general lack of studies on long-term outcomes of bilingual education, but that what evidence there is suggests it has a limited effect on language practices after school (2018: 28), while Edwards observes that sociopolitical factors are often more relevant in such research than pedagogical ones (2009: 259). In Catalonia, there is strong evidence that Catalan-medium education has encouraged use of the language among past pupils who did not speak it at home (Woolard 2016). However, it has been shown in Wales (Hodges 2009[3], cited by Dunmore 2018) and Scotland (Dunmore 2018: 27) to have had a limited effect, despite considerable focus on education in state language policy. In Montreal, although former students of French immersion programmes have greater competence in French than those who merely studied it as a subject, they are otherwise more similar to their peers who learn French as a subject than might be expected, making little attempt to seek out opportunities to speak or read it and citing instrumental rather than integrative motivations for its use (Genesee 1981). Despite the availability of opportunities to speak French in Montreal, Patricia Lamarre (2007: 120–122) observes that both anglophone and francophone parents who want their children to be able to function effectively in the other language often choose to send their children to schools designated for the other community, because of the failure of immersion models to produce competent speakers of the other language.

However, even where their efficacy in transmitting the language as a means of communication is disputed, schools may give students enough competence in the language to take it as part of their identity (Romaine 2006: 467). In addition, for many communities, they may be the main or only institutional locus for community identity, and the inclusion of the minority language

[3] Hodges, R. (2009). Welsh Language Use Among Young People in the Rhymney Valley. Contemporary Wales, 22(1), 16–35.

in a context from which it was historically banned may be an important boost to the prestige of the language.

Costa questions the purpose of immersion education in cases where a language is unlikely to be used as a primary means of communication (2015: 207). He observes that the speech community experienced by pupils in a Provençal immersion school is limited mainly to classroom interaction within the school, leading them to conceive of 'an imagined and rather mythical language community' (ibid.). He argues that this jars with the fact that Provençal language revitalisation is presented 'as a way to restore a broken link between the language of the people, and the children, who are said to have lost the language' (ibid.).

Many minority language schools encourage pupils to use the minority language by discouraging use of the majority language. Heller describes the French-medium school in Ontario that she studied as 'a monolingual zone, in order to produce bilinguals' (2006: 17). The school restricted the types of language used within its walls in order to produce speakers 'who can act like monolingual francophones as well as monolingual anglophones' (ibid.). Students were allowed to speak English among themselves, but not to teachers or other adults (1996: 151). Heller (1996: 146) observed that a strict language policy led to English, the dominant language, being used as a means of challenging school authority in a way that immigrant languages were not (1996: 146), presumably because they were not seen as a threat. Selleck's (2012, 2013) comparative ethnographic study of two Welsh secondary schools is the closest parallel in the literature to the study described here. One of these schools ('the Welsh school') pursued an ideal of 'separate' bilingualism, as in the school Heller studied. The other (the 'English school') promoted 'flexible' bilingualism, whereby both Welsh and English were used by students and teachers. In 'the Welsh school', as in Heller's francophone school,

there was a stark contrast between the importance placed on the survival of the minority language, portrayed as crucial to Welsh/francophone identity, and an implicit acknowledgement that most students preferred to speak English (Heller 1996: 145; Selleck 2012: 150).

In Catalonia, school language policy tends to be very open, aided by the fact that Catalan and Castilian are closely related. Woolard observed that the use of Castilian was quite acceptable in a Catalan-medium school (2016: 215). Except in Catalan classes, all teachers accepted communication in Castilian 'without comment or interactional disruption' and many switched to Castilian to answer questions posed in Castilian (2016: 244). Woolard remarks that 'the most striking effect of Catalan immersion education' was that it made Castilian speakers so familiar and comfortable with the language (2016: 254). There was little resistance to Catalan among Castilian-speaking students and students 'presented their own language practices as a personal choice about comfort and self-image that bore no relation to education, language policy or political allegiance' (2016: 244). However, she observes that rates of actual language use are much lower than the level of ability might suggest (Woolard 2016: 212). Pujolar and Puigdevall note that regardless of the language of instruction, in Catalonia language use among peers outside class generally reflects language patterns in the area around the school (2015: 173).

Woolard observes that the introduction of universal Catalan immersion education reduced the influence of social class on students' use of Castilian and/or Catalan (2016: 255). However, just as new speakers in general are more likely to be middle-class, minority language schools tend to attract middle-class students whose parents see bilingualism as a 'valuable resource', as observed by Heller (2006) in Ontario, Nance (2015: 559) in Scotland and Costa in the south

of France (2015: 134). Similarly, Joan Pujolar and Maite Puigdevall remark that where a person changes their language practices on establishing a family, speaking Catalan to their children, the main motivation is often 'an investment in bilingualism' rather than 'a nativisation of and assimilation into Catalan' (2015: 181).

My research will contribute to our understanding of the impact of minority language schools by investigating students' views on 'language laundering' in their schools. I am interested in whether participants have strong opinions on school language policy, both explicit and implicit, and whether it affects how they speak or how they feel about the way they speak. The comparative nature of the study means it will provide an insight into how the same policies may provoke different reactions among students with different linguistic backgrounds, or how participants might have different views on what level of 'language laundering' is acceptable. This means it will also provide insight into the dynamics that ensue when a language is spoken by both vernacular and postvernacular speakers.

Schools can be an important part of a minority language community, as discussed above. This research will contribute to knowledge of the relationship between schools and community by investigating whether participants see themselves as part of a wider Irish-speaking community and what role the school plays in this. As a school-based study, information on whether students speak Irish outside school can only come from their own reports, but nonetheless this will provide an insight into how minority language schooling relates to language use beyond the school.

2.3 Types of speaker

In situations of language shift, there are, by definition, a wide range of speaker profiles, with varying levels of competence in the language. This section discusses various systems proposed

by researchers to categorise these types of speaker, and also the tensions that may arise in interactions between speakers who have different relationships to the language.

Historically, the native speaker, particularly the monolingual speaker, has been regarded as the most legitimate speaker (Costa 2015: 143). However, this primacy is being challenged and particularly in contexts of language shift, it may no longer even be clear who is a native speaker. Researchers have proposed several different typologies for categorising speakers in language shift contexts, but these have been criticised for being too rigid or too negative. The concept of the 'new speaker' has been proposed as an alternative to rigid categories that compare all speakers to (an idealised version of) the native speaker.

2.3.1 Types of speakers and communities

Various typologies of speakers in minority language contexts have been proposed. The most familiar speaker category is that of the 'native speaker', but its definition is not always clear. The common definition is that everyone is a native speaker of their 'mother tongue' (Doerr 2009b: 185), but 'mother tongue' may be taken to mean the first language learned; a speaker's 'best' language; the most used language; or the language with which the speaker most identifies (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1989). Although the concept of the native speaker as innately competent has been challenged by many, it is still heavily relied upon in various branches of academic research, including second language acquisition and English language teaching (Doerr 2009c: 1–4) and is widespread in popular culture.

Neriko Musha Doerr argues that '[d]efining what one's "first language" is, is itself a political act' (2009a: 39). It has been observed in the context of Irish in Northern Ireland (Nic Craith 1999: 498) and Hawaiian (Snyder-Frey 2013: 232-233) that many claim a language as their

native language because they see it as part of their heritage, i.e. because they identify with it, even if they do not speak it. O'Rourke et al. (2015: 7) argue that the 'fuzziness of the "native speaker" concept reveals the multiple ways in which linguistics as a discipline has drawn, albeit implicitly, on the ideals of 19th century linguistic ethnonationalism' and particularly the Herderian ideal that the relationship between language and nation is one-to-one, meaning groups must be culturally and linguistically homogenous (Doerr 2009a: 18–20). As discussed above, this idea is especially problematic when applied to contexts of language shift, as the language practices of speakers diversify under the influence of the dominant language.

O'Rourke and Ramallo (2011: 140) observe that '[a]djectives such as "authentic," "pure" and "innate" are often associated with the traits of 'native speakers', while non-native speakers' use of language tends to be described as "artificial," "contaminated" and "acquired."' Sallabank (2019) describes 'native speakerism' in the context of Guernsey as a 'static language ideology', which entails a conception of the language only in relation to its past, rejecting change either linguistically or in terms of who can speak it, thus cutting the language off from younger speakers and modern purposes (2019: 98). She argues that it thus restricts the population that is 'allowed' to participate in language revitalisation.

The term 'native speaker' and related terms such as 'mother tongue' may also imply that this status is somehow biological in nature, which may accidentally speed shift. Ben Rampton argues that such concepts 'spuriously emphasize the biological at the expense of the social', treating them as inherited features and neglecting the social context (1990: 98). This attitude may also result in unintentional language shift, as parents assume their children will pick up the minority language without parents making any effort to speak it to them (Makihara 2009: 268; House 2002: 53).

The ‘native speaker’ is not the only type of speaker mentioned in the literature, and several systems have been proposed for the categorisation of speakers in language shift situations in particular, where there are likely to be many different levels of fluency and identification with the language (e.g. Grinevald and Bert 2011, Dorian 1981, 1977). Although Grinevald and Bert stress that their typology is intended to help sensitise those working on endangered language to the diversity of speakers (2011: 60), they acknowledge that the terms used in the literature on language shift ‘are all oriented toward a clinical diagnosis of loss, limitation and deviance, with a touch of doom’ (2011: 61). O’Rourke et al. argue that such terms ‘represent a symptomatology of language shift’, with changing language practices described as ‘tainted, corrupted or otherwise pathologic’ versions of idealised native speakers and their language practices (2015: 9). Ó hIfearnáin argues that such typologies categorise speakers ‘by applying a form of authenticity quotient [...] rather than understanding a minority language’s speakers as having a range of practices within communities of practice’ (2015: 51).

In the foreword to the 2015 special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* focusing on new speakers, O’Rourke et al. reject typologies and instead propose the concept of ‘the new speaker’, which they define as ‘individuals with little or no home or community exposure to a minority language but who instead acquire it through immersion or bilingual educational programs, revitalization projects or as adult language learners’ (2015: 1). They propose that ‘the “new speaker” concept [should] be framed as a social category which would be subject to social negotiation and variation, and delineated largely by “new speakers” themselves’ (2015: 6). Cassie Smith-Christmas, Michael Hornsby, Máiréad Moriarty and Noel Ó Murchadha (2018) propose a broader definition: ‘social actors who use and claim ownership of a language that is not typically perceived as belonging to them, or to

"people like them" for whatever reason'. This definition has the advantage of including children raised by new speaker parents, who tend also to be classed as new speakers despite having acquired the language in the home, and draws attention to the fact that the 'new speaker' category has more to do with a person's social identity than the means by which they acquired the language.

How new an approach this term marks is a matter of debate. O'Rourke et al. suggest this definition gives such speakers 'recognition as linguistic models in and of themselves' rather than comparing them with native speakers (2015: 10). Jaffe argues the 'new speaker' is 'an inherently more hopeful reading' of language shift, compared to the 'semi-speaker', with its implications of the 'decline' and 'decay' of the minority language and its community (Jaffe 2015: 23). As well as suggesting hope for the future, she argues that it may allow questions to arise about whether the 'native speaker' should be regarded as 'authoritative' or as a target for new speakers (2015: 23). However, Costa (2015: 128) argues that the term 'new speaker' can never be purely descriptive 'and often serves to generate norms as to what a legitimate speaker of legitimate language is or should be.' He also observes that the term is already used by some 'to disqualify those who speak [...] languages that do not index traditional aspects of language use' (2015: 134), an observation also made by O'Rourke et al. (2015: 4).

Features characteristic of new speakers may sometimes be attributed to lack of competence in the target language when, in fact, they are markers of a distinct new speaker linguistic identity that is not acknowledged in systems that see only native speaker models as valid (Nance, McLeod, O'Rourke and Dunmore 2016: 179). However, new speakers vary widely in their competence in the language in question, as may traditional speakers in contexts of language

shift. Some may speak it fluently, while others may be very limited in their productive capacity.

The linguistic competence of new speakers may vary widely by domain. Jaffe observed that some of the Corsican new speakers she studied were limited to formal, written language, while others were only comfortable in very casual conversation (2015: 27). This diversity raised questions about how such speakers were assessed by the broader Corsican-speaking communities. Jaffe noted that 'informal social interaction' was regarded as the most 'authentic' and thus the most important (ibid.). While, as discussed above, the emphasis on authenticity in minority language contexts can have an exclusionary effect, it is also important to acknowledge the differences in values between majority and minority language communities. Literacy and formal language skills are very much prized in majority language settings, meaning that a new speaker is likely to be quite secure in their status in the wider francophone Corsican society, while a speaker who is comfortable chatting to neighbours and family in Corsican but cannot write it may be disadvantaged in their lives outside Corsican-speaking contexts. Arguably, there is no harm in speakers of majority languages feeling a certain amount of linguistic insecurity when operating in a minority language, since this is a feeling experienced by many speakers of minority languages (including larger world languages in an immigrant context) on a daily basis.

New speakers may not even aim for a high level of competence in the minority language or to use it beyond the classroom. Jaffe observes that the low number of highly competent traditional speakers of Corsican means it is not possible to judge learners' success with reference to such 'authentic speakers', as is often the target in minority language classrooms (2015: 41). She argues that minority language classes should not be regarded as stepping

stones to ‘real’ interactions with such speakers, but rather as ‘“real” social interactions and contexts in and of themselves’ (ibid.). The classroom was the only chance many of the learners she observed had to be part of a Corsican-speaking space, as they found it difficult to speak Corsican with native speakers (2015: 35). There was a ‘strong emphasis on creating and maintaining community’ in such classes and some students bonded over the very fact of their failure to learn the language (2015: 38). Similarly, Sallabank (2019: 99) observes that in many language revitalisation activities, ‘outcomes are less salient for participants than the enactment of the activity’, underlining the argument that a focus on linguistic outcomes obscures or even erases the fundamentally social motivations of language revitalisation.

Ó hIfearnáin cautions that the concept of the speech community and its relation to authenticity and community are too often treated as self-evident in sociolinguistic research. Researchers often consider it to be ‘an existing structure that provides the definitions of a boundary that can be used as the setting for sociolinguistic research among a targeted group of speakers’ (2018: 157). He observes that the divide between ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ speakers relies on the idea of ‘the speech community as demography’, i.e. that everyone fitting a certain demographic group is automatically part of a community (ibid.). He observes that this standard is more often applied to traditional speakers than new speakers, who often have quite diverse demographic traits. However, Ó hIfearnáin argues that ‘assuming that a group of people who speak alike form a fundamental unit of social behaviour’ is not always justified or useful, since even small traditional speech communities may contain a lot of variation (2018: 158). Similarly, Costa (2013: 323) argues that revitalisation discourse encourages this conception of speech communities as homogenous entities.

Although communities of new speakers may be defined by their competence in and positive

attitudes to the minority language, language may not play a decisive role in how a community of traditional speakers defines its collective identity (Ó hIfearnáin 2015: 59). Such communities often contain a wide range of linguistic competence, from 'the authentic poster-boys of the dialectologists' to others who can speak very little, despite having acquired the language in the home (2015: 59). Membership in the community does not necessarily require competence in or positive attitudes towards the language, meaning it may be easier for someone who does not speak the language, or speaks it only to a limited extent, to be part of this community 'because of their complex of family and neighbourly connections to the traditional speakers, than it is for a highly competent "new speaker" to move easily amongst them' (ibid.).

My research contributes to this area of debate by focusing on young Irish-speakers who (mostly) acquire the language in two distinct contexts (i.e. home and school) and for whom the role of the language in their life beyond the school varies greatly. While I do not seek to classify them by type, investigating the differences and similarities between them will contribute to our understanding of young speakers of minority languages in general. This research will also contribute to knowledge by investigating what roles the concept of the 'native speaker' and the 'new speaker' (however they are expressed in participants' discourse) play in participants' understanding of their own identity as Irish-speakers.

2.3.2 Tensions and ambivalence

The aim of language revitalisation is to increase the level of use of a language. This is uncontentious, but any success in revitalisation will mean the language is spoken in new contexts and in new ways. It will also be spoken by different people, who have acquired the language in these new contexts. Although it seems self-evident that new speakers are the

desired outcome of language revitalisation, they are not always accepted as core members of minority language communities. For example, Fishman explicitly warns against relying on 'outsiders' for language revitalisation, emphasising the need for minority language communities to be self-sufficient (2001: 465).

Revitalisation generally involves an increase in the number of 'postvernacular' speakers of the language. Although in some minority language contexts native speakers may be in a minority or may be disappearing entirely, minority languages are unlikely to 'become spaces of freedom where artistic experiments can be conducted without judgement' (Costa 2015: 143-4). Where a language is 'postvernacular' for some speakers and vernacular for others, tensions may arise over questions of 'legitimacy and authority' as notions of speakerhood change rapidly (2015: 143). Traditional speakers may feel their language is being taken from them, while new speakers feel they are being unfairly rejected for being born 'in the "wrong" place or to the "wrong" parents' (Hornsby 2015: 120–121).

Because the native speaker is regarded, particularly in a classroom context, as the ideal speaker, native speakers are often seen as having a great deal of power relative to new speakers. Many new speakers feel they are denied access to traditional language communities because native speakers do not want to engage with them, particularly where new speakers speak a form of the minority language that is strongly influenced by the dominant language.

However, speakers of many minority languages have experienced stigmatisation, whether direct or indirect, in the past because they speak this language, and new speakers of minority languages are often more advantaged as a whole. This complicates the question of how far a community should widen its concept of who can be a speaker of 'their' language. Costa

observes that the development of the 'new speaker' concept and its appropriation 'by young, often middle class learners', at a time when many minority languages are declining, 'is likely to lead to a period of tensions on linguistic markets as authenticity, authority and legitimacy get redefined' (2015: 143).

Smith-Christmas and Ó Murchadha (2018: 286) emphasise that the new speaker paradigm 'is not meant to create schisms within minority language communities nor is it intended to privilege new speakers' issues over other pressing matters in minority language communities' but rather is 'a means to uncovering how certain realities affect language revitalisation'. However, there has been criticism of the recent surge in research focused on new speakers, which has largely been prompted by COST Action IS1306 on New Speakers, a major EU research project launched in 2013[4]. Conchúr Ó Giollagáin and Tamás Péterváry (2016a) argue that the impact of 'new speaker discourse' on minority language policy has led to the neglect of the needs of traditional speakers. Rather than focusing on the needs of communities, they claim, such research takes an individualised approach to minority language provision and supports the belief that 'a marginal linguistic culture can flourish' without receiving specific socio-economic supports (2016: n.p.). They contrast new speaker discourse's 'relativistic view of minority ethnolinguistic ascription' with its lack of critical scrutiny of how majority identity is formed 'in the subordinating culture' and how this dominant culture may have a 'disempowering dynamic among the subordinated group' (ibid.). They also criticise the qualitative methods used in much new speaker research, suggesting they are not rigorous enough and avoid the question of how language planning can support both new and traditional speakers 'in a manner which is mutually beneficial' (ibid.).

[4] http: //www.nspk.org.uk

Much ambivalence towards new speakers centres on the variety of the minority language they speak, which will inevitably differ from the varieties spoken by traditional speakers who acquired them under different circumstances. The ideology of authenticity requires that speakers of minority languages sound as if they come from particular geographical places, often rural ones, in order to be considered legitimate, as discussed above. However, many new speakers either try to acquire a standard variety, in line with the ideology of anonymity common in dominant languages, and do not try to align themselves with a particular traditional dialect, or they use the phonology of the the majority language. This may be alienating for traditional speakers, who often value 'the lack of standardization and pronounced regional variation' characteristic of traditional varieties (Hornsby 2015: 119). In the context of Breton, several researchers have argued that the new speaker variety is so different from traditional varieties as to alienate traditional speakers, who consider it a different language (Timm 2001: 452; Pentecouteau, 2002b: 53, cited by Hornsby 2015: 118). New speakers of Guernesiais are often demotivated by comments from older speakers about how they speak the language, which Marquis and Sallabank argue 'imply that the traditional-speaker model and accent are impossible to replicate, yet are essential for authentic speech' (2018: 80).

There may also be concerns where new speakers are dominant that the varieties they speak, which are often heavily influenced by the dominant language and which may be limited in grammatical or expressive accuracy depending on competence, will impact the language of native speakers. Ó Curnáin terms this a 'lowest common denominator effect' (2007: 59). Efforts to combat this by separating pupils in minority-language schools based on their language background can be controversial (Hickey 2002; Jones 1998: 199; Mougeon and Beniak 1994). Hornsby also notes that the Welsh school inspection service, Estyn, has

criticised some Welsh schools for teaching native speakers as though they were new speakers, thereby boosting examination results but failing to challenge the students adequately (Estyn 2002: 7, cited by Hornsby 2015: 120). In such situations, Hornsby argues, the needs of native speakers 'seem to come second […] to the overall goal of producing "new" speakers of the languages in question' (2015: 120).

There is a general tendency in minority language communities to address anyone who is not known to speak the minority language in the dominant language, which Woolard (1989) has termed the 'etiquette of accommodation'. In the context of Uist: 'It is rude to speak Gaelic to, or in the presence of, or within earshot of, a person who is not known to be a mother-tongue Gaelic speaker' (McEwan-Fujita 2010: 46). A similar norm operates in Wales, as discussed by Lynda Pritchard Newcombe (2007: 4), and is described as the 'ethic of politeness' by Carol S. Trosset (1986: 170–171).

New speakers often perceive this as a form of rejection (e.g. Hornsby and Vigers 2018). O'Rourke et al. note that in Ireland, Brittany and Occitania, traditional speakers often 'challenge the legitimacy of new speakers as members of the community' (2015: 12). In Scotland, Emily McEwan-Fujita found that while Gaelic speakers encouraged her and another new speaker to speak the language to each other, they did not speak it with the new speakers (2010: 29), while Konstanze Glaser observes that although such traditional speakers are tolerant of non-speakers, they are uncomfortable with learners from outside their community (2007: 258–260).

However, many traditional speakers ascribe this behaviour to politeness and a desire not to exclude people by speaking a language they do not (fully) understand. Traditional speakers of

minority languages may bear deep scars from past (and sometimes current) stigmatisation of the language, which may affect their willingness, and even ability, to use the language outside of 'safe' contexts. Whiteside observes that the Maya language is so stigmatised that it is rarely used in public or with non-speakers and high school students joke that they do not speak Maya because they are civilised (2009: 221–222). Some deny that they have any connection with the language (ibid.). In Scotland, McEwan-Fujita documents how a deep fear of exposure or ridicule may lead Gaelic speakers to use accommodation as a defensive mechanism (2010: 47-48).

Some new speakers attempt to challenge this dynamic and insist on speaking the minority language with traditional speakers. Jaffe describes how one Corsican language teacher 'presented becoming a new speaker as an act of imposing one's will to create/activate the conditions in which one could learn', even where this involved 'violating sociolinguistic norms' and 'forcing' native speakers to interact with new speakers through Corsican (2015: 36). She saw this as part of an approach aimed at changing attitudes to new speakers. They were cast as agents, 'participating actively in defining the sociolinguistic landscape' rather than depending on the approval of traditional speakers (2015: 38). She also observed that this approach demonstrated how the more formal linguistic skills of the new speakers could help native speakers who lacked competence in particular domains (2015: 40).

In Catalonia, the movement of Catalan to the status of common language can be seen in the lessening in force of the accommodation norm. Some Catalan speakers now expect Castilian speakers to accommodate to them. Non-accommodation strategies, whereby speakers may continue a conversation in Catalan on one side and Castilian on the other, are also increasingly common (Woolard, 2016: 249-253; Pujolar and Gonzàlez 2013: 149).

Marquis and Sallabank remark that language policy in Guernsey is so focused on the needs of traditional speakers that some learners and (potential) new speakers feel disenfranchised and as though no one is listening (2014: 162). However, while traditional speakers are powerful within the minority language context, they are often less so in the broader societal context, with less education and less access to networks of power (O'Rourke et al., 2015: 12). Traditional speakers are generally rural and located in declining areas, while new speakers are more often 'middle-class urban dwellers' (O'Rourke et al. 2015: 12). The tendency for new speakers to have more social and cultural capital than traditional speakers has been observed in Occitania (Costa 2015: 131–132), Galicia (O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011: 149), Brittany (Timm 2009: 42–43) and in Catalonia (Pujolar and Gonzàlez 2013: 149), although the situation in Catalonia is more complex, as discussed by Woolard (2016). O'Rourke and Ramallo (2011) observe that when language policy increases the prestige of a minority language, this often benefits non-native speakers more than native speakers, who continue to suffer socioeconomic disadvantage.

While native speakers are often seen as the gatekeepers of a minority language, deciding who is worthy of being considered a member of the language community, their authority may be undermined as the number of new speakers increases. These speakers may be more proficient in terms of 'accuracy, fluency and vocabulary' than native speakers (Hornsby 2015: 117). This is especially true with regard to standard language, which is often associated more with new speakers, who learn it as their primary form of the language, than traditional speakers, who often speak a local variety.

The tendency of new speakers to master standard language may give them an advantage in the workplace and in educational contexts. Frekko documents how, in an adult Catalan language class new speakers 'were consistently able to claim more authority over the language' than native speakers who had no formal education in Catalan (2009: 161). New speakers, who tended to be middle class, claimed expert status based on their familiarity with the rules of standard Catalan, despite a lack of fluency in speaking the language. Native speakers, who were more likely to be working class or lower middle class, expressed 'linguistic insecurity' and some seemed to feel 'inauthenticated' by their experience of the class (2009: 165, 170). By and large, native speakers ceded authority to new speakers and did not challenge the methods or content of the course (2009: 166). Similarly, Heller observed in a French-medium school in Ontario that the emphasis on standard French meant that students from middle class backgrounds were advantaged. Even students who found it difficult to speak French in a social context were prized above those who spoke vernacular Canadian forms of French, who 'were either struggling with the stigmatisation of their language, or had given up on it entirely, and were waiting […] to get parental permission to transfer to an English school' (1996: 149).

It is important to acknowledge broader social dynamics when talking about power in the context of minority languages, rather than seeing people only as 'new' or 'traditional' speakers. Woolard (2016) contrasts three cases of new speakers being shamed in the media for inadequate control of the language they were speaking. Two of these were powerful political figures who spoke the dominant language fluently and were attempting to speak a minority language to address (some of) the people they represented. They were criticised for not seeming to make an effort to speak these languages 'properly'. The third was an indigenous Brazilian activist who had only acquired Portuguese as an adult and was advocating for his community in national media. While all three were technically new speakers, the power

dynamics were very different. The two politicians may have been disadvantaged and ridiculed on this occasion, but the privilege they enjoy as native speakers of major world languages mean it is unlikely to have a major effect on their lives. The activist, in contrast, cannot use his own language on the world stage.

While new speakers usually support attempts to revitalise a minority language, native speakers may be alienated by such revitalisation movements. In some cases, native speakers are seen by activists as an obstacle to revitalisation efforts, as observed by Hugues Pentecouteau (2002a, cited by Hornsby 2015: 119) in the Breton language movement. Marquis and Sallabank (2014: 164) argue that 'it is likely that, as in the Isle of Man, language revitalization may not be possible until covert negative attitudes have disappeared—unfortunately along with the last "native" speakers'. This sentiment was also expressed to me by an Irish language activist while conducting previous research in Northern Ireland (Coughlan 2014). Although in the latter case it was said jokingly, it is clear that the gap in opinions, demographics, language and many other aspects, between traditional and new speakers is a significant obstacle to revitalisation, as noted by Glaser (2007: 260) in the Scottish context. This may lead some involved in language revitalisation to turn to one side or the other. In such situations, new speakers are often seen as the easier community to deal with, since they are defined partly by their conscious choice to speak the language (cf. Hornsby 2015).

Should we respect a rejection of revitalisation efforts? Marquis and Sallabank criticise an assumption in Guernsey that 'the indigenous language belongs to "native" and "traditional" speakers, who see themselves as its "guardians" but who in most cases did not pass it on to their children and are using it less and less' (2018: 75). They observe that the focus on traditional forms of Guernesiais in the promotion of the language reflects a fear that traditional

speakers of the language will lose ownership of it to new speakers and learners (2018: 75). It is clear the authors disagree with the idea that traditional speakers have a right to reject efforts at revitalisation. This attitude seems to stem from the idea that all language shift is negative, as discussed above. However, it is at least theoretically possible for a community to decide not to reverse language shift, even if there are always complicating factors that mean this is not a 'free' decision. The vast majority of sociolinguists recognise that language is a social practice rather than a living thing, as suggested by ecological discourses on language shift. On these grounds, surely we should respect the decision of those who represent the traditional speech community of the language, even if they themselves no longer speak it, to decline to facilitate revitalisation efforts that are likely to change the language beyond anything they would recognise from their own experience.

Participants in my study use Irish in different ways, both vernacular and postvernacular, and my study will contribute to knowledge of how questions of authority and legitimacy arise when people who use the language in these different ways are treated in policy as a homogeneous group. My research will take account of socioeconomic differences between participants and examining how this influences how they relate to the Irish language and their perceptions of other speakers. For example, do those from traditionally Irish-speaking communities see 'new speakers' as being more socioeconomically advantaged than them? Do those from largely English-speaking areas see Irish-speaking areas as backward? Does either group see members of the other has having more or less ownership of the language? My research will also provide evidence of how young speakers approach the question of accommodation: do they view it as politeness or as a form of boundary maintenance, and how does their own linguistic and social background influence this perception? The nature of the study means that this evidence will be from participants' own accounts, meaning that it may

not represent an accurate depiction of exactly what happens in situations like this, but the way they perceive these incidents is just as important as how they actually unfold.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the complexity of language revitalisation. It has examined some of the major ideologies involved, showing that these ideologies are heavily contested in contexts of language shift and revitalisation. It has also examined how these ideologies play out in the context of minority language education and how young people experience the contradictions involved and rebel against policies instituted by adults to make them into agents of revitalisation. Finally, it has discussed the types of speaker involved in language revitalisation. While typologies are widely criticised and I will not construct one in this study, this attention to who the stakeholders are and how differently power is distributed in different contexts is crucial to any useful study of how language revitalisation impacts individuals and societies.

In the next chapter, therefore, I will provide a more detailed account of the historical and political factors that have produced the current situation and consider how the conflicts identified by researchers of language revitalisation in many other contexts play out in the specific conditions of Ireland, before outlining the questions that will be investigated in depth in this study.

The case of Irish is both distinctive and complicated. Although designated legally as a national language, Irish is de facto a minority language, spoken only by a small minority of the population on a regular basis outside of the education system. The minority of the population who do speak it do not constitute a separable ethnic group and although certain areas are

designated in policy as Irish-speaking, this territorially-based language policy is at odds with the language's national status and increasingly contested as the number of largely urban new speakers beyond these areas increases. These factors make questions of legitimacy and authenticity particularly complicated.

3. Language ideologies in the Irish context

This chapter examines the ideological construction of the Irish language in Ireland. Irish is in an unusual position, being a national and a minority language of the same country at the same time. The fundamental tension in Irish language policy is between the idea of Irish as a national language, belonging to all Irish people, and the designation of certain areas as Irish-speaking. While the language nominally belongs to all citizens, people from these areas are regarded to have a more authentic connection to it than those who acquire the language at school or at home outside these areas. At the same time, standard language ideology means the traditional dialects spoken in these areas may not be valued in domains like education. In addition, rapid language shift in traditionally Irish-speaking areas means young Gaeltacht Irish-speakers are growing up in linguistically complex communities and are increasingly outnumbered by young new speakers, who tend to value Gaeltacht dialects less highly than older generations. Despite the evidence suggesting that the situations and needs of these groups differ in important respects, raising questions about existing policies that treat them as essentially the same, there has been little research that directly attempts to investigate similarities and differences between them, or to elucidate their views of one another.

Section 3.1 gives an outline of Irish language policy, particularly since independence from the United Kingdom. Section 3.2 focuses on the role of the Gaeltacht and territorialisation in Irish language policy. Section 3.3 outlines the profile of 'new speakers' in Ireland. Section 3.4 discusses the role of the education system in Irish language revitalisation.

3.1 History of Irish language policy

Bilingualism has been the linguistic reality in Ireland for centuries, due to the importance of English in the colonial administration. While space does not allow a detailed discussion of the history of Irish language policy prior to independence, I will give a brief overview. More detailed accounts can be found in Mac Giolla Chriost (2005) and Crowley (2005). Although colonial laws against the use of Irish were issued as early as the 14th century, it was the collapse of the indigenous elite by the early 17th century that resulted in the loss of the literary standard, with the result that Irish became a largely oral language with marked regional variation, and English became the language of power. The legacy of colonial policies that forced Irish people off more valuable land in favour of British settlers can be seen in the concentration of Irish-speaking communities along the west coast even now.

Language only became a central part of the nationalist movement in the late 19th century. Until then, Irish nationalist mobilisation was centred mostly on religion, particularly during the time of the Penal Laws against Catholics, which were repealed in 1829. While language shift had already taken hold, population collapse in the wake of the Great Famine (1845-48), due both to death and emigration, affected Irish-speaking areas particularly strongly. By the late 19th century, when the language revival movement took shape among the middle and upper classes, 80% of Irish-speakers lived in just six counties and even within these counties intergenerational transmission was only occurring in limited areas (Ó Riagáin 1997: 5). Although the revival movement started off relatively apolitical and non-sectarian, it soon became bound up with the movement for political independence, with the result that the revival of the Irish language became a central goal of the newly independent Irish state.

The linguistic nationalism of the late 19th- and early 20th-century revival movement required a language that was, ideally, spoken in a uniform manner by monolingual speakers across a specific geographical territory, as discussed in Section 2.1.1. Although traditional, rural Irish-speakers were idealised by the revival movement, the movement was led mostly by (lower) middle-class town or city inhabitants (Ó Riagáin 1997: 9-10) and was somewhat out of touch with traditional Irish-speakers. The focus on an idealised version of Irish rendered bilingual practices and dialectal variation problematic.

The formation of an independent Irish state led to Irish being named as the legitimate language. Upon independence, Irish was constitutionally designated the 'national language' of Ireland, with English relegated to the status of 'a second official language' (Ireland 2015), despite being the main language of the vast majority of citizens.

Certain areas were designated as Irish-speaking and seen as a resource from which the position of Irish could be strengthened. At the foundation of the Irish state, the Irish language only remained as a community language in scattered districts, mostly along the western seaboard (Ó Riagáin 1997: 17). As well as being geographically peripheral, these districts suffered severe deprivation and high levels of out-migration. Language policy was combined with policies to improve the economic status of these areas, which were designated 'Gaeltacht' areas in 1925 (ibid.). These areas are still treated differently to the rest of the country in state language policy. Commins described the government's vision of such areas as 'the reservoir from which Irish language learners would draw inspiration and the supply source of highly competent Irish users' (1988: 14).

The main mechanism for increasing knowledge of Irish beyond Gaeltacht areas was the transmission of a standardised language through the education system. Although this has been responsible for maintaining relatively stable rates of bilingualism in Ireland overall (Ó Riagáin 2001: 204), the process of creating a standard language, for use in education, government, and other formal domains, created a distinction between the variety spoken in Irish-speaking communities, whose inhabitants should theoretically have been empowered by the newfound high status of their native language, and that used in official contexts.

Ó Murchadha observes that traditional Gaeltacht dialects have been regarded as prestige spoken varieties since the late 19th century, when they were chosen as a target over earlier, more uniform varieties of the language (2013: 79). This meant Gaeltacht Irish-speakers, many of whom had little education or material wealth, were regarded as experts, rather than academics in the capital (Ó Conchubhair 2009: 208, cited by Ó Murchadha, 2013: 79). A discourse of linguistic purism, according to which such dialects are the only legitimate spoken form of Irish remains strong. For example, Steve Coleman (2004: 390) cites the poet Seán Ó Ríordáin's argument that anyone who wants to learn Irish must spend a year in a Gaeltacht area and be 'reborn' as they acquire the local dialect as an example of 'discourse of linguistic purity', which, he argues, is rooted in 'an urban standpoint' that requires Gaeltacht life to remain static. Although Ó Ríordáin made this argument in the 1950s, it remains a strong current of thought, as seen in the popularity of intensive immersion language courses in Gaeltacht areas, which will be discussed in Section 3.2.4. Coleman observes that under such discourse:

> Irish emerges as a very unusual example of an "official national language," where urban elites gain more credibility by achieving native-like proficiency in the speech of a single poor rural townland than they do by becoming exemplars of a new, "modern," "dialect-free" national standard. (2004: 390)

This ideal of Gaeltacht dialects as representing the authentic and most legitimate form of the language conflicts with the international dominance of standard language ideology, whereby only one variety of a language can be seen as authoritative and its authority derives from a perception that the relationship between form and meaning in this variety is one-to-one. The standard variety of Irish (An Caighdeán Oifigiúil) was first published in 1958 by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, the Translation Section of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament), with the aim of standardising the written Irish used in official documents (Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey 2018: 40). Officially, the standard only holds for the written language, and dialectal variations are allowed for. However, it has formed the basis for the variety of Irish taught in schools and thus that spoken by most Irish-speakers outside these areas (Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011) as well as being the only acceptable written form in most domains (Ó hIfearnáin 2008). Gaeltacht speakers are also expected to master the standard, as the language of textbooks and exams, with 'negligible' recognition given to Gaeltacht dialects in these contexts (Ó hIfearnáin 2008: 124). The standard is thus the most legitimate variety of Irish on the national linguistic market. In this way, the increased presence of Irish in state institutions gave 'more control over the process of language reproduction to the very state agencies which have worked in the past to marginalize these languages and their speakers' (Romaine 2006: 456). This reproduced many of the disadvantages experienced by Irish-speakers under colonial rule, similar to the situation described by Eckert (1983) in Gascony. Ó hIfearnáin suggests in general that expanding the role of a minority language risks 'undermining the practices of the remaining speakers and the communities of language activists', even where they have campaigned for this expanded role (2014: 29).

One of the major differences between the case of Irish and other minority languages is the fact that Irish is designated as 'the national language' of Ireland. This status was granted as a

statement of intent: Irish would be revived because of its importance to the nation as a whole. However, although its institutional strength has no doubt protected it, its 'national' status also militates against some of the strategies commonly used to protect minority languages. For example, Irish is not protected in the Republic of Ireland under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The Irish government argued that it could not hold minority status because it was a national language (Nic Craith 1999: 502). The national status of the language also makes a Fishmanian approach particularly unsuitable: any attempt to build up the boundaries between Irish-speakers and monolingual English-speakers would be unacceptable to many, since both groups are seen as having equal rights to Irish culture, including the language.

As a consequence of this focus on institutionalisation, Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry argue, state language policy has paid little attention to the social needs of those who acquire the language outside of institutions, i.e. in the home and community (2016b: 23). They suggest such communities are expected to conform to the requirements of these institutions, with little effort made to ensure the institutions serve their needs (2016b: 24).

State Irish language policy since 2000 has been strongly influenced by neoliberal ideology (Ó hIfearnáin 2014; Ó Ceallaigh 2019). Ó hIfearnáin argues that the impetus for policy to be 'more "democratic"' has led to an expectation that communities 'take responsibility for their linguistic futures' (2014: 35). However, their success in doing so is measured according to centrally-designated criteria (ibid.). For example, under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, Gaeltacht communities wanting to maintain or revitalise the language in their area must form a voluntary committee to carry out a survey of the status of the language in the area and draw up a plan (Government of Ireland 2012).

Recent legislation maintains the territoriality of earlier policy, but also acknowledges the possibility of recognition for 'networks' of speakers, located outside Gaeltacht areas. The 2012 Gaeltacht Act is the first major piece of legislation that refers to non-geographically based 'Irish language networks'. This is praised by Bernadette O'Rourke and John Walsh (2015), who see it as a necessary acknowledgement of the existence of Irish-speakers beyond the Gaeltacht, while Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry reject the idea that a language can survive without being spoken in communities defined by geographical proximity (2016b: 26).

This section has shown that both the ideologies of authenticity and anonymity play important roles in the Irish context. The standard variety and regional dialects are both valued highly and it may not always be clear which is the 'legitimate' variety in a given context, though the standard variety is certainly valued more highly in the realm of education. Although language policy is territorial in that certain areas are designated as 'officially' Irish-speaking and their inhabitants are held responsible for the maintenance of the language in these areas, Irish has been designated 'the' national language, meaning that it is seen to belong equally to all citizens.

3.2 The Gaeltacht

There is a tension between the idea of Gaeltacht areas as the heart of the Irish language and the desire for Irish to be a 'national language', fit for use at all levels of government and education. The status of Irish as the national language draws its legitimacy from an idea of continuity and authenticity that can only be satisfied by the existence of 'native speakers' who speak the language both in the home and community, in a way that is tightly bound with traditional, rural culture. Gaeltacht areas are where the language and the lifestyle are

combined: elsewhere the language is spoken mostly (though by no means exclusively) by middle-class urbanites who learned it at school. These areas represent a sort of purity and authenticity absent from urban life (cf. Brennan and O'Rourke 2019). Of course, the boundaries imposed by Gaeltacht designation were artificial, with some based more on political expediency than linguistic practices. Even where these boundaries did reflect local language practices, they did not allow for inevitable 'social and geographical mobility' (O'Rourke and Walsh 2015: 67).

3.2.1 Gaeltacht dialects

Traditional Irish has three main dialect groups, corresponding to the three main Gaeltacht regions: Donegal (north-western), Connacht (western) and Munster (southern). The Connacht dialect is strongest in terms of speaker numbers and representation in broadcast media, since the national Irish-language radio and television stations have studios in the region. Both schools in this study are located in this region. All the dialects are more or less mutually intelligible, though the Donegal dialect is considered the most difficult for speakers from outside the area to understand, possibly because of its under-representation in broadcast media, and it is often mocked on this basis. There is evidence of levelling across the dialects, as discussed by Ó Curnáin (2007) in Conamara in Connacht and in Corca Dhuibhne in Munster by Ó Sé (2000). Conservative local varieties are now found mostly in speakers born before the 1960s (Ó Curnáin 2007; Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011).

The varieties of Irish spoken in Gaeltacht areas bear traces of the reality of life in an English-dominant country, which urban-based language planners have tried to eliminate from the variety of Irish visible and audible in official contexts, such as education and national media. Mary O'Malley Madec (2007) has demonstrated that codemixing with English is now

characteristic of Gaeltacht Irish, among native speakers of all ages. Many items of modern technology arrived into Gaeltacht areas under their English names, which are still used by Gaeltacht speakers, who often reject the new terms produced by language planners (Ní Ghearáin 2011). In addition to the presence of English words, the grammar of the varieties spoken in Gaeltacht areas has changed over time, diverging from the standard.

Although the standard was based on traditional dialects, it has tended to take precedence over them, particularly in written Irish, but also to a lesser extent in spoken Irish, especially in formal registers. This means speakers of Gaeltacht Irish often have to adjust the way they speak for formal or official occasions, maintaining their own dialect while following grammatical rules codified in the standard that are generally not followed in Gaeltacht dialects. They must also avoid codeswitching, since the avoidance of influence from the dominant language is regarded as a key element of formal style, as in many minority language contexts (O'Malley Madec 2007a; Deuchar 2005: 615; McEwan-Fujita 2008). Thus they face a difficult task: to maintain an air of authenticity by speaking a Gaeltacht dialect, but to do so while also following the rules of the standard. Gaeltacht speakers may also have to adjust their speech when talking to new speakers, who often have difficulty understanding Gaeltacht dialects.

The standard may be dominant on the national linguistic market, but 'niche markets' may exist alongside the national linguistic market, where non-standard varieties may be valued more highly as they 'index a sense of community, solidarity or authenticity' (Costa, 2015: 129). Ó hIfearnáin (2008) documents ill feeling towards the standard in one Gaeltacht area, also arguing that the promotion of the standard as part of national language policy has contributed to the speed of language shift in Gaeltacht areas and the disenfranchisement of younger speakers. Despite overt rejection of standard or non-traditional varieties as 'inauthentic', Ó

hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha show that covert attitudes among young Gaeltacht Irish-speakers show the opposite tendency, associating the varieties they describe as inauthentic with modernity and positive personal traits, and their own dialect with the past (2018: 463).

Both standard and Gaeltacht dialects can be seen as strongly influenced by English, though in different ways. The Irish state's desire for Irish to be exactly translatable into English often results in the standard variety becoming 'a calque of its English equivalent', justifying a view of it as 'an Irish-language mask covering English-language thought' (Coleman 2004: 386). Advocates of the standard may see Gaeltacht dialects in a similar way because of the influence from English they perceive in them (ibid.). Coleman suggests that the power of urban elites is attributed to the inherent qualities of the standardised variety, thus 'elid[ing] issues of domination of the peripheries by the center' (2004: 388). He suggests this motivates Gaeltacht speakers to discuss the standard 'in terms of power and symbolic domination' (ibid.).

This section has illustrated that the standard is gaining in prestige relative to Gaeltacht dialects, which are now less widely spoken and undergoing a process of levelling. Attitudes to this among Gaeltacht Irish-speakers are complex, with negative overt attitudes to the standard contrasting with covert positive attitudes. Both standardised and Gaeltacht varieties are criticised for being overly influenced by English and the question of what variety of Irish is most legitimate varies by context.

3.2.2 Language shift in the Gaeltacht

There is increasing concern about the speed of language shift in Gaeltacht areas, particularly among young people. One loose group of researchers has conducted a great deal of research

on this issue and has been strongly critical of the approach both of the Irish government and other researchers to what they term ‘subtractive bilingualism’.

Recent census results indicate that Gaeltacht inhabitants make up a decreasing proportion of Irish-speakers nationwide: only 28% of those recorded in the 2016 census as speaking Irish daily outside the education system live in Gaeltacht areas and the Gaeltacht population makes up just 2% of the Irish population as a whole (Central Statistics Office, Ireland 2017: 68). A majority (66.3%) of those living in the Gaeltacht said they could speak Irish, but only 21.4% spoke Irish daily outside the education system, which represents an 11.2% fall in the figure since 2011 (ibid.). In addition, Ó Giollagáin, Seosamh Mac Donnacha, Fiona Ní Chualáin, Aoife Ní Shéaghdha and Mary O’Brien warn based on wide-ranging quantitative and qualitative research that Irish will only last another 15-20 years as a home and community language in the strongest Gaeltacht areas (2007: 516). Ó Giollagáin and Charlton revise this estimate downwards, to ten years (2015: 6). Language shift among younger generations is particularly rapid, as discussed in Section 3.4.

Ó Curnáin, in his comprehensive study of the dialect of Iorras Aithneach, in Conamara, argues that ‘the future of native Irish in Iorras Aithneach and all of the Conamara Gaeltacht seems bleak and Irish is undoubtedly a dying language’ (2007: 36). He contrasts ‘traditional’ with ‘nontraditional’ varieties of the dialect, the latter being characteristic of a ‘rapidly changing, endangered, in fact dying, language’ (2007: 46). He considers that no ‘fully traditional speakers’ will be left alive by 2050, since those born after 1960 ‘generally show nontraditional traits’ and even within families older siblings tend to have older variants than younger siblings (2007: 58, 59). He attributes the shift to ‘nontraditional’ speech to ‘reduced or impoverished input for acquisition’ due to ‘[r]apid social change and the omnipresence of modern media’

rendering traditional adult speech irrelevant to children, as well as reducing it in quantity as a proportion of the speech they hear overall (ibid.). He argues, citing Schmidt (1985) that while there is a process of 'norm-enforcement' within traditional dialects, there is a 'lowest common denominator' effect among speakers of this 'nontraditional' variety, whereby 'the most extreme instances of reduction or nontraditional usage become prominent' (2007: 59).

Many researchers have argued that a simplified version of Irish, much influenced by English and characteristic of urban new speakers, is becoming more prominent than older, more complex varieties (e.g. de Bhaldraithe 1993; Mac Mathúna 1997; Ó hIfearnáin 2003). Ó Murchadha (2013) differentiates between post-Gaeltacht Irish, as spoken by Irish-speakers outside the Gaeltacht, Gaeltacht youth speech and traditional Gaeltacht speech in describing young Gaeltacht speakers' attitudes to these varieties. This allows for the fact that, while Gaeltacht youth speech has a number of features in common with post-Gaeltacht speech, and youth varieties spoken in some areas may be closer to post-Gaeltacht speech than to the traditional dialects of those areas, there is usually a marked difference between the speech of young Irish-speakers who acquire the language in Gaeltacht areas and young new speakers who acquire the language outside such areas. This difference is not acknowledged in Ó Curnáin's distinction between 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' speakers, which only describes Gaeltacht speakers in relation to traditional Gaeltacht norms.

Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin, along with several other researchers, including Péterváry and Mac Donnacha, have been strongly critical of both policymakers and other researchers. Researchers from this group have been responsible for a number of major surveys aimed at providing a comprehensive picture of the situation of the Irish language in Gaeltacht areas, particularly Conamara (Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007; Ó Giollagáin and Charlton 2015) and much

of their criticism of policymakers relates to their failure to act on the findings of this research. Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin (2016: 8) argue that the Gaeltacht is not sustainable in its current form and there are no longer the social and linguistic resources to create new generations of Irish-speakers. They are highly critical of many stakeholders and most academics who research Irish, arguing that they use anecdotal evidence to support a positive view of the situation and thereby let politicians and others with the power to change the situation off the hook (ibid.).

Ó Giollagáin and Charlton criticise Gaeltacht legislation as being vague and confused. In particular, they argue that planning for a minority language necessitates protecting the geographical closeness of speakers of that language (2015: 11). They argue that policy aims to 'promote the language as an optional consumer good on a competitive market', competing against English (my translation, 2015: 11). Ó Giollagáin (2014: 102) goes so far as to claim that the policy is that Irish 'be tolerated as a secondary identity or a cultural hobby for a small section of the national population, but the apparatus and mechanism of institutional and state power are not to be deployed in support of fostering Irish as a living social identity in either its regional (i.e. Gaeltacht) or national contexts'. However, Ó Giollagáin and Charlton argue, the survival of the language is intrinsically linked to its sociocultural function within geographically-based Irish-speaking communities and therefore such communities must be supported (2015: 11). The problems in designing and implementing effective language policy do not only come from above: Péterváry, Ó Curnáin, Ó Giollagáin and Sheahan argue that '[m]inority language communities often manifest a strong propensity to shirk or even deny negative facts or trends pertaining to them or to avoid their implications', which, they argue, presents an obstacle to effective leadership (2014: 240).

These researchers distinguish between ‘additive bilingualism’, where neither language is disadvantaged either in the individual or in society, and ‘subtractive bilingualism’, where the minority language is disadvantaged (Péterváry et al. 2014: 21). They observe that subtractive bilingualism may be seen as ‘additive and advantageous’ from the perspective of the majority language but argue that ‘it is bilingualism, either individual or societal, which most often leads to language death’ (ibid.). Consequently, they see codeswitching as part of the process of decline, observing that it tends not to occur as often in the majority language and may impede acquisition of the minority language (Péterváry et al. 2014: 22). Subtractive bilingualism is ‘unidirectional’ – speakers of the majority language are not expected to acquire the minority language, while speakers of the minority language will acquire the majority language at a young age, simultaneously with the minority language (2014: 22). Ó Giollagáin and Charlton observe that although English-language networks, both within and beyond the Gaeltacht, are largely monolingual, Irish-language networks in the Gaeltacht are ‘bilingualised’ and English is stronger than Irish even in those areas in which Irish is strongest (2015: 17, 11).

This group of researchers is critical of other researchers as well as policymakers. A prominent complaint is that ‘some sociolinguists tend to focus more on the positive aspects and advantages of additive bilingualism, while disregarding evidence from linguists regarding subtractive contexts’ (Péterváry et al. 2014: 247). Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin term this ‘the discourse of creative interlingualism’ (my translation, 2016: 8). In addition, Péterváry et al. criticise research that focuses on ‘optional and individual identities’ and neglects the negative aspects of globalisation and the dominance of the majority language (2014: 240).

This section has illustrated the wealth of research on the speed of language shift in Gaeltacht areas. However, this research does not investigate in any depth the impact of language shift

and revitalisation on individuals, criticising communities for 'shirk[ing]' responsibility rather than asking why they may not wish to engage with what the researchers view as the reality of language shift. Its primary focus is the maintenance and revitalisation of traditional Gaeltacht Irish (regarded by these researchers as the only legitimate variety). In contrast to research discussed later, that discussed above views the link between language and place as essential to language maintenance and sees bilingualism and the influence of English as a solely negative factor in the case of Irish.

3.2.3 Gaeltacht Irish-speakers as a cultural minority

Ó Giollagáin, Péterváry and colleagues emphasise the link between language and culture, to the extent that Péterváry et al. describe their research as providing evidence of 'language shift and the associated demise of the Gaelic people' (2014: 245). While the term 'Gaelach' is often used in Irish to describe music and other aspects of traditional culture, 'Gaelic' is rarely used in English (with the exception of the Gaelic Athletic Association) and its use as an ethnonym is very unusual. The phrasing of this statement is (probably intentionally) provocative: whatever one thinks about discussion of languages 'dying', to use such rhetoric about 'the Gaelic people' denies any possibility of cultural change as a neutral or even positive phenomenon and reduces the identity of those he regards as members of 'the Gaelic people' to the aspects of culture he and his peers value. In the same vein, Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry (2016) dismiss English as a colonial language, claiming 'the sociolinguistic heritage of the settlers is now the basis of Ireland's functional culture (among English-speakers and Irish-speakers) in almost every area of public and social life' (my translation, 2016b: 36). Again, this strips any possibility of agency from those living in a complex postcolonial context. Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry echo the point made in Section 2.1 of the previous chapter that language revitalisation movements often rely on the same institutional architecture that was

originally used to suppress the minority language and argue on this basis that the relationship between the Irish state and 'the Gaels' is 'neo-colonial' (2016b: 16, 36). There is truth to this and it is important to acknowledge the wider structural issues that make free choice of language impossible.

Although the idea that Gaeltacht inhabitants can be regarded as a distinct cultural group is unusual in Ireland, the researchers discussed above are not alone in proposing this. Ó hIfearnáin argues that the ideological basis for making Irish the national language was that there are no linguistic minorities in Ireland, 'rather, there are varying degrees of linguistic ability and practice with regard to Irish' (2014: 30). The English-speaking majority are 'a post-language-shift population' but are not seen as being culturally different from the Irish-speaking minority (ibid.). The implication is that all Irish citizens have a stake in the future of the language. As evidence of how widely accepted this is, Ó hIfearnáin cites the number of people who identify Irish as their mother tongue despite not speaking it regularly and the high levels of support for policy designed to support and increase the role of the language in society as a whole, as distinct from measures focused on intergenerational transmission and community use in Gaeltacht areas (2014: 30-1). He argues that the dominant ideology which holds that Irish-speakers and monolingual English-speakers are not 'distinct groups' has led to failures in language policy in Gaeltacht areas, particularly through a failure to acknowledge (and research) the impact of non-Irish-speakers in these areas (2014: 41). In contrast to Ó Giollagáin, Péterváry and colleagues, he suggests the 'national minority' identity he argues for also encompasses Irish-speakers outside the Gaeltacht, based on survey evidence suggesting solidarity between Gaeltacht Irish-speakers and Irish-speakers beyond the Gaeltacht (2014: 47-8).

Ó hIfearnáin's main evidence for monolingual English-speakers constituting a distinct group in Gaeltacht areas comes from attitudinal surveys showing strong differences between them and habitual Irish-speakers in the same areas (2014: 46). For example, he observes that although support among monolingual English-speakers for Irish language promotion appears relatively high (74%) in the Gaeilge 2010 attitudinal survey of Gaeltacht areas, it is significantly lower than among Irish-speakers in the same survey (95%) and also lower than the 90% support found nationally by Mac Gréil and Rhatigan (2009) (Ó hIfearnáin, 2014: 43). Ó hIfearnáin attributes negative attitudes to the language found among monolingual English-speakers in this survey in large part to resentment of the 'special status' given to Irish in Gaeltacht areas (2014: 46). However, he suggests that the fact that only 40% of Gaeltacht non-Irish-speakers wanted to learn to speak the language, despite its continuing institutional and cultural presence even in less strongly Irish-speaking Gaeltacht areas, indicates that they expect Irish-speakers to speak English to them (ibid.).

Ó hIfearnáin also cites evidence from a survey conducted in the marginal Gaeltacht area of Múscraí where over 75% of respondents agreed with the proposition that Gaeltacht people 'formed a distinct cultural minority' (2014: 47). He argues '[t]his language-centred identity in the Gaeltacht has gone unnoticed in discourse on language policy in Ireland because it runs against a fundamental element of national language ideology', and attributes the lack of research on it to 'English-medium research' failing to consider linguistic differences among Gaeltacht residents (2014: 67).

The proposition that Irish-speakers in Gaeltacht areas constitute a linguistic minority has important implications for the neoliberal turn in language policy described above. Ó hIfearnáin argues that it renders the expectation that Irish-speaking communities in Gaeltacht language-

planning areas take responsibility for reviving the language in the area obviously unfair. This minority group will then be held responsible for dealing with the negative attitudes of English-speakers in their area to the Irish language. This may reawaken 'hidden inferiority complexes in Irish-speakers' stemming from past stigmatisation of Irish, as well as insecurity about their competence in English (2014: 36).

Proposals to strip such areas of Gaeltacht status if they do not reverse language shift put 'unreasonable demands on a marginalized Irish linguistic minority that is unlikely to be able to sustain its language' and 'increases the power of the already dominant minority of monolingual English speakers' (Ó hIfearnáin 2014: 49). Ó hIfearnáin argues that Irish-speakers in marginal Gaeltacht areas 'feel they are being punished by the state for not being in the majority, for which they believe the state is largely responsible' (2014: 49). On this basis, the tendency of Gaeltacht schools to accommodate the linguistic composition of the community by teaching partly in English, as documented by Seosamh Mac Donnacha, Fiona Ní Chualáin, Aoife Ní Shéaghdha and Treasa Ní Mhainnín (2005a), can be seen as denying the Irish-speaking community access to Irish-medium education on the basis of their minority status, which is out of keeping with the treatment of indigenous linguistic minorities in other European countries (Ó hIfearnáin 2014: 38). Gaeltacht parents interviewed by Mac Donnacha et al. expressed the view that their rights were not being respected, with one group even expressing a desire for an English-medium school to be established in their area, so that Irish-speaking children would not be in a linguistic minority in the local (Irish-medium) secondary school (2005b: 5).

This section has illustrated the ambivalent status of Gaeltacht Irish-speakers as an ethnic or cultural minority. The anticolonial rhetoric of Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry is emotive and not

representative of mainstream discourse on the topic, but it is an important strand of ideology in the Irish language revitalisation movement. In contrast, Ó hIfearnáin's approach is more nuanced, while still pointing to significant failings in Irish language policy because of its failure to accept the status of Irish-speakers as a cultural minority. His finding that this group includes those outside Gaeltacht areas contrasts with Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry and suggests that a Fishmanian approach would be inappropriate here. Importantly, Ó hIfearnáin also identifies the existence of an English-speaking population in the Gaeltacht whose practices may have a disproportionate impact on their Irish-speaking neighbours even where the latter are in the majority, because of the dominant status of English in the country as a whole.

3.2.4 The Gaeltacht as a 'natural resource'

Gaeltacht areas are often referred to as 'tobar na Gaeilge' (the 'source' or 'well' of Irish), illustrating the widespread view that they are a national resource. Sara Brennan and Bernadette O'Rourke offer a critical view of new speaker perceptions of Gaeltacht communities 'as a resource for immersion in the authentic language' (2019: 24). They show how this vision of the purpose of Gaeltacht areas generates unrealistic expectations among non-Gaeltacht inhabitants about how Gaeltacht people should behave and inhibits engagement with Gaeltacht inhabitants as peers, as some who visit Gaeltacht areas view them almost as service providers.

O'Rourke and Walsh suggest that new speakers may become disillusioned when they realise that the Gaeltacht they have been encouraged to believe in, a monolingual zone where traditional Irish is spoken, no longer exists, if it ever did (2015: 78-9). They suggest that '[t]he spread of Irish outside of traditional Irish-speaking strongholds and into spaces previously dominated by English [...] unsettles the traditional ideology of sociolinguistic authenticity' (2015: 8).

This idea of Irish as a resource figures prominently in political rhetoric about the language, particularly since 2010. For example, a large section of the speech given annually in the Seanad (Upper House) of the Irish Oireachtas (Parliament) by the minister responsible for the Irish language was repeated almost word for word from 2014 onwards (Coughlan 2019). Both ministers in this timeframe stated 'go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ar cheann de na hacmhainní nádúrtha is luachmhaire atá againn' ('that the Irish language is one of the most valuable natural resources we have'). Until 2019, this was followed by a warning that although the government will do its best to promote the language 'tá todhchaí na teanga ag brath go príomha ar an bpobal' ('the future of the language depends mostly on the community'), echoing the language policy discussed above. Members of the House also often refer to Irish as 'acmhainn nádúrtha' ('a natural resource'), 'seoid' ('a jewel') or 'taisce chultúir' ('a cultural treasure').

The Gaeltacht is referred to in these debates as a resource for young people in particular to learn the language. This is combined with an attitude that Irish is the native language of all Irish people, regardless of whether they speak it. Consequently, Irish is depicted both as something that should not be politicised, because it belongs to all citizens, and as something that those who already speak it must share with other citizens. This means speeches in such debates often focus on general platitudes about the importance of the language, as seen above, with less focus on concrete policy, since this can be construed by rivals as politicising the language.

The most explicit framing of the Gaeltacht as a resource is in the context of intensive Irish-language courses held in such areas. These courses are intended as an immersive experience where learners, usually secondary school students, speak and hear no English (Petit Cahill

2019). New speakers of Irish who learned the language as a subject in English-medium schools often cite these courses as turning points in their relationship with the language, giving them the motivation to make it part of their everyday lives (Puigdevall, Walsh, Amorrortu and Ortega 2018). Their function is both to link the learner to a Gaeltacht community and to improve their linguistic competence, usually in preparation for some form of academic assessment. The first aim requires contact with local people and a sense of immersion in local culture, so that the learner gains a measure of the authenticity associated with Gaeltacht areas. However, the second requires that the learner pick up no bad habits: they must not mix languages or use non-standard grammar.

Many Irish people who do not come from a Gaeltacht area spend at least one three-week period in the Gaeltacht during secondary school, and it is compulsory for trainee primary teachers to spend at least two two-week periods there. Adults who take an interest in the language are also likely to spend time there. Learners stay with local families, generally with 6-10 learners in each household. They attend Irish-language classes for much of the day and participate in sports and cultural activities in the afternoons and evenings. Courses for secondary school students are big business, taking over Gaeltacht school buildings for the duration of the summer holidays. The organisations that run such courses are called coláistí samhraidh (‘summer colleges’).

Teachers and other staff on these courses mostly are not local (Ní Ghallachair and Lyddy 2013) and the high number of students per household limits the interaction each student has with their host family. This means they interact mostly with fellow learners and staff (usually teachers or secondary or post-secondary students) from outside the Gaeltacht. These courses

also generally impose strict rules about the use of English, with the threat of being sent home early for speaking English made regularly (and followed through on).

Although learners spend a significant period of time in the Gaeltacht and speak a great deal of Irish while there, their actual interactions with Gaeltacht people are limited. Most of those who attend such courses are doing so to obtain or improve the linguistic skills needed for success in the field of education (whether as students or teachers) and the courses facilitate this. Thus, while they are embedded in an Irish-speaking community, their aim is to perfect a variety of monolingual and grammatically standard Irish that is not spoken in that community.

The framing of Gaeltacht areas as a resource for the nation illustrates the tension between the territorial nature of Irish language policy and its insistence on Irish as a national language. Gaeltacht Irish-speakers must bear a disproportionate burden under policies that place responsibility for maintaining the language in Gaeltacht areas on local inhabitants. They must facilitate language courses and the expectations of those who have been told Gaeltacht areas are a resource for all Irish people. Even with the significant economic benefits brought to rural Gaeltacht areas by language courses, this is likely to lead to some level of tension or ambivalence.

3.3 New and Gaeltacht speakers

This section describes the profiles of new speakers and traditional speakers in the Irish context and the paucity of comparative research on these types of speakers. Particular attention is paid to outlining the characteristics of new speakers in Ireland, since Section 3.2 has provided some information on traditional speakers.

As in many contexts, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between different 'types' of speaker. For this reason, different researchers have used labels in different ways, even within the Irish context. This thesis does not propose a redefinition of terms, but rather uses them in the way that makes most sense in relation to the issues discussed here, i.e. differences and similarities between young Irish-speakers inside and outside the Gaeltacht.

3.3.1 Gaeltacht speakers

A number of different terms could be used to describe participants in my study who attend CB, a Gaeltacht secondary school. The most obvious is 'native speaker'. I avoid this term because of there is a lack of clarity about what it means in Ireland, as in other contexts (cf. Section 2.3). For some, it refers only to people raised with Irish at home, while for others it refers only to those who acquire the language in a Gaeltacht area. The recently-introduced Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 requires both: a native speaker under this policy is 'a child who is raised through Irish in an Irish-language community and whose parents speak Irish as the main language of communication in the home' (Department of Education and Skills 2017: 11). For most, the term refers to traditional speakers from the Gaeltacht, with those raised by parents who speak Irish as a second language generally excluded even if Irish is a household language. However, it is also common for Irish people to refer to Irish as their 'native language' regardless of their ability to speak it, as mentioned in Section 3.2 (e.g. Kenny 2005; Kennedy 2019).

Another option is 'heritage speaker'. This is rarely used in Ireland and it is similarly ambiguous because of the 'national' status of the language (cf. Ó Laoire 2017). In addition, some participants who speak a Gaeltacht dialect did not acquire it at home, generally the defining characteristic of a heritage speaker.

They could also be called ‘traditional speakers’. However, as discussed above, this term has been used by several researchers to distinguish older Gaeltacht speakers, who speak a more conservative form of the dialect, from younger ones (e.g. Ó Curnáin 2007). This thesis does not compare young Gaeltacht speakers to older speakers: the relevant contrast is that between young Gaeltacht and new speakers. Distinctions between ‘traditional’ and ‘post-traditional’ or ‘youth’ varieties of Gaeltacht dialects are therefore beyond its scope. For this reason, I use ‘Gaeltacht speaker’ for those who speak a dialect from a Gaeltacht area, having acquired it at home or in the community in that area. Although they differ from older speakers in some aspects of their language use, and some do not speak Irish at home, they would all be regarded as more traditional in their speech than the non-Gaeltacht speakers. Much of their experience as speakers of a variety associated with authenticity but whose position is threatened by an ‘anonymous’ standard variety are likely to be shared by those described as ‘traditional speakers’ in other contexts.

3.3.2 New speakers

It can be difficult to define the new speaker in the Irish context since, as pointed out by O’Rourke and Walsh, most people educated in the Republic of Ireland ‘have been exposed to the language and could be defined as new speakers’ (2015: 64). They restrict their use of the term to ‘those individuals who acquired the language outside of the home and who report that they use Irish with fluency, regularity and commitment’, drawing on similar concepts in the Catalan and Galician contexts (ibid.). Similarly, O’Rourke and Ramallo note the difficulty in categorising ‘fluent Irish speakers whose parents are not native speakers of the language but who send their children to a Gaelscoil (Irish-medium school) in an urban [largely English-speaking] context such as Dublin’ (2011: 153): by some definitions these speakers will be

regarded as native speakers, but many regard membership of a Gaeltacht community as a defining feature of native speakers of Irish.

O'Rourke and Walsh (2015: 68) found that the new speakers they interviewed 'considered themselves part of a distinct group placed between traditional Gaeltacht speakers and weaker learners either unable or unwilling to speak Irish'. However, there is no commonly accepted term for such speakers in Ireland. Some use the term 'Gaeilgeoir', meaning 'Irish-speaker', but in Gaeltacht areas this term has negative connotations, referring mostly to learners with relatively low competence who attend language courses in the Gaeltacht (O'Rourke 2011: 336), so new speakers who are aware of this may avoid it. There is generally no clear new speaker identity. There are strong Irish-speaking networks in urban areas, particularly Dublin and Belfast, often heavily populated by former pupils of Irish-medium schools, but in most cases these revolve around schools, sports clubs and other institutions, rather than neighbourhoods, with the exception of the Shaw's Road Gaeltacht in Belfast.

I use 'new speaker' to denote participants who acquired Irish outside Gaeltacht areas, whether at school or from parents who themselves acquired it through education. Since they attend an Irish-medium school, they must use the language regularly and have some degree of fluency, even if they have not integrated it into their lives beyond the school, as those discussed by O'Rourke and Walsh had. These participants share more linguistic and social characteristics with Irish-speaking peers who acquired the language at school than they do with those who acquired Irish in the Gaeltacht, even where Gaeltacht participants do not speak Irish at home. This corresponds with the definition of 'new speaker' offered by Smith-Christmas et al. (2018: 201): 'social actors who use and claim ownership of a language that is not typically perceived as belonging to them, or to "people like them" for whatever reason'.

Such speakers are increasing in importance as they make up an increasing majority of regular speakers of Irish, as discussed in Section 3.2. As discussed in Section 3.1, they have also been recognised in recent legislation. New speakers of Irish have become more prominent in the media and politics in recent years. One particularly prominent new speaker of Irish is Joe McHugh, who was Minister of State with responsibility for the Gaeltacht from 2014 to 2016 and again in 2017-2018. When appointed to the role, McHugh spoke little Irish, despite coming from a Gaeltacht area, and his appointment was criticised by many Irish language activists. However, he embraced his new speaker identity and encouraged other learners to join him on his 'aistear teanga' ('language journey').

Irish language national media are dominated by traditional speakers from Gaeltacht areas. News and current events programmes are presented exclusively by traditional speakers, suggesting that only such speakers are considered authoritative. New speakers are much more prominent in youth-focused media. The presence of new speakers in such contexts provides alternative role models for Irish-speakers who may not identify with Gaeltacht dialects (cf. Moriarty 2011: 550). There is, however, some hostility to the prominence of new speakers in the media. Atkinson and Kelly-Holmes discuss a radio parody of a new speaker media personality in which 'a variety of paralinguistic vocal features' mark his use of Irish as 'different from the language of "ordinary" communication' (2011: 255). They argue that this reinforces the idea that he is not a legitimate speaker of Irish (2011: 259).

Most Irish used in youth-orientated media, such as regional youth-focused radio stations, is heavily mixed with English. This type of Irish may pop up on programmes that are advertised as being in English, though the bilingual nature of the programme may also be part of its

branding. In many cases, the use of Irish is emblematic rather than functional (cf. Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson 2017). Some presenters using Irish in this way have low competence in the language and give the impression that they do not understand the words they are saying. It is, therefore, clearly being used in a postvernacular context: it is the fact the language is being used that is important, rather than the meaning of those words.

In formal and educational contexts, there is an expectation that speakers stick to the grammatical rules codified in the standard and do not codeswitch. A historic tendency for speakers from outside the Gaeltacht who continue to speak Irish after secondary school to align with a Gaeltacht dialect may be weakening as the balance of numbers shifts towards non-Gaeltacht speakers (Mac Mathúna 2008; O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011; Ó Murchadha and Ó hIfearnáin 2018). Ó Murchadha suggests the emergence of non-Gaeltacht varieties of Irish 'challenges the established position of the Gaeltacht as the target model for language use', meaning that a person can be considered to speak Irish well without becoming a legitimate speaker of a Gaeltacht dialect (2013: 77), a task that seems impossible to many. Where such speakers do choose a dialect to emulate, for most this influence will be superficial, since they have learnt standard Irish at school. They are especially unlikely to emulate the language-mixing or non-standard grammar of Gaeltacht speech, as both these characteristics are considered undesirable in the academic and bureaucratic contexts in which they are likely to speak Irish most.

As in other contexts, new speakers of Irish vary greatly in their levels of competence in Irish, with few claiming 'native speaker ability' (O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011: 150). While most align themselves to varying degrees with one of the regional dialects, the variety they speak is generally closest to standard Irish. O'Rourke and Ramallo (2011: 150) suggest the refusal by

some native speakers to 'accept learners as equals and insiders within their group' may be the reason non-native speakers who continue using Irish after secondary school are sometimes told to pick a Gaeltacht dialect rather than 'the artificial norms of the standard' (Garland 2008: 111). Cotter (2001: 303) observes that 'while [standard Irish] is used and ratified by Irish society's institutions, the prestige targets for speakers remain the various dialects of the Gaeltacht', a finding echoed by Ó Murchadha and Flynn's (2018) investigation of attitudes among new speaker teachers. In general, non-Gaeltacht Irish is regarded as inauthentic (Ó Murchadha 2013: 87; Hindley 1990: 60), with Gaeltacht speakers often labelling it 'book Irish' (O'Rourke and Ramallo 2011: 150).

Although new speaker varieties were seen as lacking authenticity, participants in Ó Murchadha and Flynn's (2018) study suggested they had an important function, 'allow[ing] new speakers to participate in the revitalisation enterprise without fundamentally altering their own place identity' (2018: 17). The participants saw it as 'inappropriate' for new speakers to try to emulate Gaeltacht ways of speaking since this might be seen as denying 'the identity indexed by the variety of English that they practise, and appropriating Gaeltacht norms in a way that is disingenuous' (2018: 18). This puts them in an awkward position if Gaeltacht varieties are seen as the only authentic ones. However, Ó Murchadha and Flynn found there was an emergent association between non-Gaeltacht speech and Dublin city, which they suggest may 'provide [it] with a degree of authenticity, although this is still a contested authenticity' (2018: 11).

In the case of most major world languages, the majority of speakers acquire the language in the home or community and there is a range of highly competent 'role models' for learners. However, in the case of some minority languages like Irish, the majority of speakers are now

learners or new speakers. They often do not see traditional speakers as role models because of the issues discussed above, but it is not always clear who they can 'look up to', since they are surrounded by other new speakers of varying levels of competence. In the Irish context, there is still a strong emphasis on grammar in academic assessment of Irish language competence, but pronunciation is regarded as taboo: new speakers cannot produce all the same phonemes as traditional speakers and many feel it would be inauthentic to do so, as it would seem to be a claim to a different local identity. This means that while those learning foreign languages in school are expected to devote considerable attention to the phonology of the language, this is left to one side in the case of Irish because of a sense that students are already Irish and, therefore, do not need to change their accents to speak 'their' language.

Detailed discussion of the characteristics of new speaker varieties of Irish is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, one of the key characteristics of such varieties is that speakers use phonemes from the English system as they lack 'the traditional phonological system for Irish' (Ó Murchadha, 2013: 77-8, drawing on Maguire 1991: 199). Syntax is often also heavily influenced by the English system and features such as initial mutation, a characteristic morphological feature of Celtic languages, are often omitted. Overgeneralisation of irregular verbs is common (2013: 78).

In recent years, a strong web-based Irish-speaking community has emerged, especially on Twitter. Most appear to be new speakers, often based in Dublin and Belfast. There is a strong emphasis on inclusivity in this online community, to the extent that one of the most prominent accounts, 'The Irish For...' actually tweets mainly in English about Irish and the man behind the account has published two books in English about the language. The 'Pop-Up Gaeltacht' movement also emerged from this online community. Two friends, Osgur Ó Ciardha and

Peadar Ó Caomhánaigh, who had grown up speaking Irish at home in Dublin and had attended Irish-medium schools there, started organising events in Dublin pubs in order to create a space for people to speak Irish and show that Irish could also be an urban language, after feeling frustrated that media seemed to ignore the existence of urban Irish-speakers like them (Davidson 2017). They specifically avoided venues linked to Irish, with the idea that this would help normalise the language everywhere in the city (ibid.).

The name of the event challenges the idea of the Gaeltacht as a static entity. The emphasis is on inclusivity and encouraging people to speak whatever Irish they have, with the idea that such an attitude may help to undo the damage done by purist attitudes in the past, particularly in the education system. Ó Ciardha and Ó Caomhánaigh explicitly reject labels such as native speaker, new speaker or English-speaker, arguing that the Irish language is a core part of Irish national identity, and thus belongs to all Irish people (ibid.). Seoighe describes the Pop-Up Gaeltacht as 'a safe space for certain new speakers' which helps to legitimise urban Irish-speakers (my translation, Seoighe 2018: 4, 8). Although new speaker networks do not rely on geographical closeness in the same way as Gaeltacht communities, because of their use of the internet and emphasis on organised activities, territoriality is clearly important, though fraught. The Pop-Up Gaeltacht reshapes traditional ideas of the territoriality of Irish by moving the language away from designated Irish-speaking spaces, but continues to promote a broader sense of territoriality: the idea that Irish belongs to a person because they live on this island, rather than because they have learned or use the language themselves.

Therefore, although the number and prominence of 'new speakers' of Irish are increasing, there is still no defined 'new speaker' identity and the question of how to reconcile one's English-speaking identity with the idea that Gaeltacht varieties are more authentic can pose

dilemmas for new speakers. While the internet enables the success of non-geographically based Irish-speaking networks, a broader language-place connection persists in the idea that Irish belongs to everyone on the island of Ireland.

3.3.3 Young new and Gaeltacht speakers

As non-Gaeltacht speakers increase in number and the Gaeltacht shrinks, 'the question of […] who [is] a legitimate speaker becomes more contested' (O'Rourke 2011: 330). However, it is notable in this context that research has tended to focus either Gaeltacht or non-Gaeltacht speakers, with a paucity of comparative research. Some research has compared the educational achievement and/or linguistic competence of young people in Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht schools, as discussed below. There has also been research on grey areas, such as communities which are officially designated as Irish-speaking but in which Irish plays little to no role in everyday life for a majority of inhabitants, such as Ní Dhúda (2017) and O'Malley Madec (2007). In addition, some researchers have conducted attitudes research among both new and Gaeltacht speakers at different times (e.g. Ó Murchadha 2013; Ó Murchadha and Flynn 2018). However, O'Rourke (2011) and Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018), both of which investigate issues of language ownership and legitimacy among university-age Irish-speakers, are the only comparative empirical studies of language attitudes among these groups.

O'Rourke (2011) uses interviews to investigate tensions between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht students in a university Irish language course. While she argues that streaming these students based on whether they were raised in the Gaeltacht is problematic because of varying ability in both groups, this distinction is clearly salient to students: she finds evidence of significant tensions between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht students, some of whom may have been encountering members of the other group for the first time (2011: 337).

New speakers were intimidated by the high standard of Irish spoken by the Gaeltacht speakers and claimed Gaeltacht speakers rebuffed their attempts to converse in Irish (2011: 334-5). O'Rourke argues that for new speakers, engaging with Gaeltacht speakers meant losing the 'expert' status they may have among their non-Irish-speaking friends, which may be an important part of their identity (2011: 339). Some Gaeltacht students claimed in turn that non-Gaeltacht students were either unwilling or unable to speak Irish comfortably with Gaeltacht students, thus casting the switch to English more as a favour to non-Gaeltacht students than as any sort of insult (2011: 340). They also criticised non-Gaeltacht students' linguistic abilities, suggesting that while their grammatical skills were good, they were uncomfortable with spontaneous conversation in Irish (ibid.).

O'Rourke argues that although the Gaeltacht speakers in this study could seem to have been accommodating the new speakers, the Gaeltacht speakers' decision to switch to English may have been influenced by their 'recognition of the value of Irish as a linguistic commodity and as a valuable resource' they may not want to share (2011: 342). There was a clear 'us' and 'them' dynamic among the students, but the term 'cainteoir dúchais' (native speaker) was not used by either group and Gaeltacht students did not use the term 'Gaeilgeoir' to describe their classmates, though they did use it for attendees of coláistí samhraidh (O'Rourke 2011: 334, 336).

Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018) interviewed new and Gaeltacht speakers of Irish at a Dublin university. They found that both Gaeltacht and new speakers derived a 'sense of being special' from their competence in Irish (2018: 43-4). For Gaeltacht speakers, this was associated with a perception that they were more authentic in their use of the language, which

came to them ‘naturally’. For new speakers it related to being regarded as experts by peers who did not speak Irish, mirroring O’Rourke’s (2011) findings. Thus, for Gaeltacht speakers this status was associated with membership of a community, whereas for new speakers it was associated with individual status.

A majority of participants in both groups (70-80%) regarded positive attitude and willingness to speak Irish as more important than accurate grammar (Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey 2018: 44). However, both groups were insecure about the grammatical accuracy of their Irish and the breadth of their vocabulary (2018: 45). Gaeltacht speakers felt they were at a disadvantage relative to proficient new speakers, who were more expert in their command of the standard and more accurate in terms of grammar (ibid.). They perceived that the standard had a higher status than Gaeltacht dialects, since their exams were judged on the basis of the standard rather than dialects (ibid.). Gaeltacht participants reported that their accent induced others to see them as proficient speakers, suggesting that it led them to overlook their grammatical errors (2018: 46). This caused a kind of ‘imposter syndrome’ in some, who ‘struggled to reconcile their authentic accent and fluency with their lack of confidence in their grammar compared to some highly proficient new speakers’ (2018: 47).

Although Gaeltacht speakers reported a sense that their own variety was more authentic and natural than new speaker varieties, and many new speakers agreed, new speakers had no desire to sound like Gaeltacht speakers (ibid.). New speakers described their variety as ‘neutral’ and ‘ordinary’, which Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey argue suggests they do not see a need to be seen as Gaeltacht speakers: ‘they can claim equal legitimacy as Irish speakers without’ doing so because of the dominance of new speakers in Irish-speaking networks in Dublin in particular (ibid.). Gaeltacht participants also did not claim authority or ownership of the

language on the basis of their perception of their own varieties as more authentic (2018: 51). They seemed conscious of differences in power and status beyond language, such as the stigmatisation of rural identity. While proud of their dialects, they were 'wary of difficulties or embarrassment' associated with speaking them among new speakers (ibid.).

Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey observed 'a notable consensus among both native and new speaker participants of a need to share, given that *everyone owns the language*', with a sense that new and Gaeltacht speakers have an equal right to the language and may both play an important role in maintaining it (2018: 48). Both new and Gaeltacht speakers were aware of reluctance among some Gaeltacht speakers to speak Irish with new speakers, but all rejected such behaviour. However, there was some evidence of tension between the two groups. Some Gaeltacht speakers expressed frustration that new speakers and learners questioned their use of Irish, seeing the standard as more authoritative than Gaeltacht dialects (2018: 47). At the same time, some new speakers complained that their Irish was dismissed as 'book Irish', which they felt delegitimised them as speakers of Irish (ibid.).

Half the new speakers and three quarters of the Gaeltacht speakers cited the standard as the main arbiter of correctness in Irish (2018: 48). In the case of this finding, as in that of the general inclination of Gaeltacht participants to suggest new speaker varieties are equally legitimate, it must be borne in mind that the sample in question is of those who chose to attend university in Dublin and may not be representative of peers who remained in (or even nearer to) a Gaeltacht area (2018: 51). There was a sense that 'authentic native-like Irish is increasingly being seen as less valuable or advantageous than the proficient new speaker variety', even if the latter is still regarded as less 'authentic' (2018: 48). Several associated Gaeltacht dialects with the past, seeing new speaker varieties as the future of the language,

corresponding with the increasing use of Irish in urban areas (2018: 49). There was a general suggestion that Gaeltacht speakers would in future act ‘as curators of the variety’ (ibid.)

Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey’s study shows, like O’Rourke (2011), that young adult Irish-speakers are conscious of the existence of two groups of speakers. Moreover, it gives evidence that new speaker varieties are increasingly regarded as more desirable than traditional Gaeltacht dialects. Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey point to ‘a growing gap between authenticity and authority in the language among young adults: those who have authenticity lack confidence while those who lack authenticity are seen as having authority stemming from preferential access to a variety more like the Standard’ (2018: 50). They observe that while some, including Ó Murchadha (2013), have argued that it is unrealistic to attempt to ‘resurrect’ older forms of the language, a focus on communicative competence over linguistic competence could also have negative implications, given the concerns discussed below regarding decreasing proficiency in Irish among Gaeltacht children.

The two comparative studies of young new and Gaeltacht speakers of Irish suggest that encounters between these groups raise questions among young Irish-speakers about the relative value of authenticity and accuracy, and about the future of the language. Both studies are limited, providing only a snapshot of the issues involved, and suggest the need for further investigation. While these studies were conducted at university and involved young people who had chosen to pursue higher education, my study will show how secondary school students perceive these issues when they are still ‘on their home turf’.

3.4 Irish language revitalisation through education

Education has played a very significant role in Irish language revitalisation, as in many other contexts, as discussed in Chapter 2. The decline of the language among young people is an issue of particular concern among both researchers and the wider public.

3.4.1 Irish in the education system

As in many other contexts, the education system was the main mechanism used to revitalise Irish after independence. Ó Duibhir argues that the state 'has made unreasonable demands on the education system which operates in a vacuum' (2018: 159). In the years following independence, the new state rushed to ensure provision of teaching in Irish outside the Gaeltacht. Ó Duibhir (2018: 15) suggests that following independence, '[t]he vision for the revival of Irish was compartmentalised to the education system alone', leading to '[t]he relative neglect of native speakers of Irish in Gaeltacht areas'. Hastily-arranged initiatives to retrain teachers to teach in Irish resulted in a poor standard of instruction in most schools and parents and teachers objected, resulting in the gradual reversal of the policy by the 1960s, though Irish was retained as a subject (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 31; see also Kelly 2002).

Irish remains a compulsory subject in all schools from the beginning of primary school (age five) to the end of secondary school (age 17/18). Exemptions from this requirement may be granted if a child comes to Ireland after the age of 11 or if they have special educational needs. The number of exemptions granted has risen exponentially in recent years, raising suspicion about abuse of the system (O'Brien 2019). A recent consultation on the future of Irish as a compulsory subject in the educational system received a record number of submissions (Tuairisc.ie 2019a), but a recent poll conducted for Conradh na Gaeilge found support for compulsory status was high (Conradh na Gaeilge 2019). Students can obtain up to 10% extra

marks in their Leaving Certificate for sitting an exam (in subjects other than Irish) through Irish.

A pass in Irish in the Leaving Certificate (school leaving examination) is required for entry to most universities. As well as its benefits in terms of accessing university education, now the first step to most careers in Ireland, competence in Irish is an asset on the labour market. Because Irish is compulsory in the education system, competence in Irish is required for entry into teacher training and there is a shortage of teachers with competence in Irish. There are also (limited) bursaries available for entry into Irish-language teacher training which are not available for English-language training. Students applying to teacher training colleges face lower entry requirements if they come from a Gaeltacht area and speak Irish at home. This is one of the few areas in which a distinction is made between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers. Although the Irish language requirement for promotion in the civil service was abolished in 1975, bonus points were given to civil servants completing entrance exams in Irish until 2013 and competence in Irish may be an asset for civil servants in many areas.

Recent reform of the Junior Certificate syllabus (studied in the first three years of secondary school, at ages 12-15) has introduced two streams of Irish: one for students studying it as a first language (L1) and one for students studying it as a second language (L2) (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna 2017a; An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna 2017b). This is the first time such a distinction has been made at school level and there is controversy about extending it to Leaving Certificate, on the basis that L1 students will have to work harder but will not get any reward for this (e.g. Tuairisc.ie 2019b). Although the L1 curriculum is designed on the basis that those undertaking it are native speakers, the same curriculum is used

in both Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium immersion schools outside the Gaeltacht, where most pupils do not speak Irish outside school.

The fact that Irish is a compulsory subject for all students in primary and secondary education supports the idea of Irish as a national language, since it means almost everyone educated in Ireland has at least *cúpla focal* ('a few words'). Harris, writing on Irish teaching in English-medium primary schools observed that '[p]upils theoretically learn Irish at school to use it in their own lives, but actually have little need or opportunity to use it outside school, especially with peers (2005: 974). However, he noted, the central role of the language in the primary and secondary education system 'preserves at least the possibility of restoration of a more fundamental kind at some future date' (2009: 55). Hickey and Stenson (2016: 310) make the same point in reporting negative attitudes towards and lack of interest in Irish among both pupils and teachers in English-medium schools in Ireland. Very few become competent in Irish through learning it as a subject and so Irish-medium education is the main means of generating competent speakers. Murtagh (2007) and Murtagh and van der Slik (2004) found that those who attend Irish-medium schools are significantly more competent and more likely to use the language 18 months after leaving school than their peers who attend English-medium schools, though they note that even these students seem to perceive Irish as being of more instrumental than integrative benefit.

While Irish is a compulsory subject in schools, this has little impact in terms of creating Irish-speakers. There is some limited evidence that students who attend Irish-medium schools, both within and beyond the Gaeltacht, show higher competence and use of the language in the first years after leaving school. Until recently, all students had to complete the same curriculum in Irish as a subject. The differentiation that has recently been introduced treats all students in

Irish-medium schools as ‘L1’ speakers, despite the official definition of ‘L1’ referring to children who speak Irish both at home and in their local community. Even this differentiation is controversial and only affects the early stages of secondary school.

3.4.2 Gaeltacht schools

Schools in the Gaeltacht are expected to teach in Irish, but otherwise operate as local schools. Gaeltacht school designation has historically been geographical, with little monitoring of actual language use in the school, and based on a delineation of Gaeltacht areas that no longer corresponds to actual language use (Ó hIfearnáin 2008: 114–116). Some designated Gaeltacht schools do not actually teach in Irish, with others using a mix of English and Irish, depending on the availability of teachers and the needs of students (Mac Donnacha et al. 2005a). However, the Gaeltacht Education Policy launched in 2016 obliges schools that wish to retain Gaeltacht status and the extra funding and support that comes with this to teach all subjects in Irish (Department of Education and Skills 2016). This has resulted in some schools choosing to lose their Gaeltacht designation, while others make changes to conform with the policy.

Since there is often no English-medium alternative nearby, Gaeltacht schools are obliged to accept students without linguistic preconditions (though individual schools may operate informal policies). This means they may have to accept students with no commitment to the language and/or little knowledge of the language. They generally do not operate strict language policies, though students are encouraged to speak Irish. Many are officially designated disadvantaged schools, given their location in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, and receive extra supports on this basis.

Mac Donnacha et al.'s (2005a) survey of Gaeltacht schools, using questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, identified significant problems. Some, such as a lack of suitable materials and difficulty recruiting qualified teachers, are also common in Irish-medium schools beyond the Gaeltacht. Others related to the complex language patterns in the area as a result of the ongoing process of language shift. For example, use of Irish by pupils in the environs of the school was lower at secondary than primary level, even though pupils' language skills were higher at secondary level (Mac Donnacha et al. 2005a: 97). English was so dominant in peer interactions in secondary schools that they argued it seemed 'that the Gaeltacht education system is having more success in promoting the use of English among native speakers of Irish than in promoting the use of Irish among English-speakers' (my translation, 2005a: 124). Many parents thought their children's command of Irish had actually deteriorated since starting school (2005b: 5). Interestingly, many parents praised Irish-medium schools outside Gaeltacht areas for integrating students with little Irish and providing high-quality notes in Irish for students, questioning why Gaeltacht secondary schools could not reach these standards (2005b: 4).

Hickey (2001; 2007) has presented considerable evidence that the language needs of very young Irish-speakers in Gaeltacht areas are not being adequately supported in the education system. Many who research language shift and revitalisation have focused on intergenerational transmission, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, Hickey argues that even where intergenerational transmission is occurring, additional support is required from the educational system to ensure that children develop their skills in the minority language, given the relatively limited access they have to input in this language beyond the home. She has shown, as has been demonstrated in many other contexts, that the presence of even a minority of English-dominant children is enough to induce Irish-dominant children to turn to English (Hickey 2001). In addition, educators' focus on helping English-dominant children attain basic Irish

language skills means that pre-school-age Irish-speakers are not getting sufficient input in Irish from educators to develop their language skills, leading her to compare Irish-medium preschools in Gaeltacht areas to unofficial English submersion (Hickey 2007: 3). Among primary schools, Péterváry et al. find that pupils in schools with higher proportion of English-speakers have lower achievement in Irish, while achievement in English is unaffected, with English scores high even in schools with high numbers of Irish-speakers (2014: 219).

Ó Giollagáin and Charlton argue that Irish is particularly weak as a social language among younger generations (2015: 9), despite the fact that Ó Giollagáin et al. found that 71% of Gaeltacht teenagers (aged 16+) expressed a desire to raise their children in Irish, rising to 89% in the most Irish-speaking areas (2007: 358). Péterváry et al. (2014: 236) analysed language acquisition and competence among young Gaeltacht children who spoke Irish at home, finding that although these children would generally be considered native speakers, their ability in Irish was lower than their ability in English. Ó Curnáin also observes that many teenagers in Iorras Aithneach are more competent in English than Irish (2007: 36), while Ó Giollagáin et al. found that even in the most strongly Irish-speaking Gaeltacht areas only 10% of young people were more confident in their ability to converse in Irish than English, compared with 29% who were more confident in their ability to converse in English than Irish (2007: 311

Ó hIfearnáin observes that some young Gaeltacht speakers are proficient in both the local dialect and the written standard, while others have little Irish (2006: 25), but overall there is rapid movement away from local varieties to a levelled one (Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011: 102). Péterváry et al. attribute these changes to both the influence of English and incomplete acquisition (2014: 241). They warn that if speakers have a lower level of competence in the minority language (Irish), they will communicate in their stronger language

(English) (ibid.). They list a range of causes for this process of reduced language acquisition in the Gaeltacht, including 'the acceptance of the dominance of English-language culture' and 'the continuing erosion of the social density of Irish speakers in traditionally Irish-speaking areas', as well as more specifically linguistic causes such as limited input in Irish and English influence on the Irish young people hear (2014: 240). Ó Murchadha (2013: 75) points out that young Gaeltacht speakers lack sufficient access to what Milroy (2002: 566) calls the 'intensive input required to master complex, localized linguistic structures which lack the support of institutional models', and are exposed to a wide range of alternative linguistic models through education, media and increased social and geographical mobility. Some accuse 'Gaeltacht youth speech' of 'detraditionalising local dialectal speech' (Ó Murchadha 2013: 80).

Ó hIfearnáin (2008) observes that younger speakers in the Múscraí Gaeltacht in Munster have more difficulty understanding dialects other than their own than older speakers, as a consequence of language shift. Older speakers have a strong understanding of both oral and written varieties, because the language was used much more widely in the area in their youth and the curriculum of their schooling was much more focused on literature. In contrast, younger speakers 'have to make a conscious effort to acquire either the local variety or the standard, or both' and this limits their ability to understand other varieties (2008: 126-128). Péterváry et al. (2014) suggest that John Harris, Patrick Forde, Peter Archer, Siobhán Nic Fhearaile and Mary O'Gorman's (2006) finding that Gaelscoil pupils outscored Gaeltacht school pupils in literacy tests might 'provide indirect evidence of reduced Irish with regard to literacy in the Gaeltacht' (2014: 242), while Ó Giollagáin et al. identify particular difficulties with spelling, grammar and vocabulary (2007: 306).

Ó Murchadha (2013) points to the discrepancy between overt and covert attitudes to varieties of Irish among Gaeltacht teenagers. His matched guise study showed that while traditional Gaeltacht Irish has higher levels of overt prestige among teenagers in the Munster dialect area, less traditional varieties of Irish have higher covert prestige among this group. He argues these results 'point to a fundamental mismatch between ideology and practice in the Gaeltacht' as '[t]he valorisation of traditional Gaeltacht speech in openly-offered evaluations of linguistic variation is far removed from the direction of language change in the Gaeltacht' (2013: 87). When Gaeltacht secondary school students were asked explicitly about the standard of language used by speakers in a series of audio recordings, their responses reproduced 'the established and accepted pecking order for the varieties of Irish listed', with traditional varieties evaluated more positively than Gaeltacht youth and new speaker varieties (2013: 84). However, before students were told the purpose of the survey they were asked about the personality traits of each speaker (e.g. how conservative or fashionable they were). In this stage of the study, the ranking was reversed, with Gaeltacht youth and non-Gaeltacht varieties more strongly associated with positive personality traits than traditional varieties (2013: 85). Ó Murchadha suggests this indicates '[non]-Gaeltacht speech and, to a lesser extent, Gaeltacht youth speech, have been indexically linked with desirable personality attributes and social meanings' (2013: 87). He argues that the results of this study 'point to a fundamental mismatch between ideology and practice in the Gaeltacht' (ibid.).

No matter how traditional their background, young Gaeltacht speakers are moving towards a form of Irish that is more influenced by English and new speaker varieties of Irish than their traditional local dialect (Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Murchadha 2011: 102). Pádraig Ó Riagáin (2007), among others, has pointed out that the distance between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas in

terms of language practices is decreasing, both in terms of the variety spoken and the contexts of use.

This section has shown that rapid language shift is occurring among younger generations in Gaeltacht areas and the educational system is playing a significant role in this. Positive overt attitudes to local varieties of Irish and expressed intention to speak Irish in future contrast with actual practices and suggest more ambivalent or negative covert attitudes.

3.4.3 Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht

In 1972, Gaelscoileanna (combining the ethnonym 'Gael' with 'scoileanna', meaning 'schools') was founded by parents in Dublin who wanted their children to be educated in Irish (Ó Duibhir 2009: 14). As the capital, Dublin is the centre of the civil service, which was another arena in which the state attempted to make Irish the 'national language' in practice as well as in theory. This is likely to have been a motivating factor for the parents who set up Gaelscoileanna: the fathers of many children attending the first Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium primary schools) were higher-ranking civil servants who needed the language for their jobs (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin 1979). Almost a quarter of the children in such schools at the time came from homes where Irish was reported to be spoken either 'often' or 'always', as compared to 9% in 2000 (Coady and Ó Laoire 2002: 150). The number of such schools has increased significantly since then: in September 2017, there were 145 Irish-medium primary schools outside the Gaeltacht (known as Gaelscoileanna) and 125 in the Gaeltacht (www.gaelscoileanna.ie). There are 44 Irish-medium post-primary schools (Gaelcholáistí) and Irish-medium units outside the Gaeltacht and 22 within the Gaeltacht (ibid.). This means 8.7% of primary and 9.2% of secondary schools are Irish-medium, with the majority of these located outside the Gaeltacht (www.education.ie).

The vast majority of Gaelscoil pupils do not speak Irish outside school to any significant degree (Ó Duibhir 2018: 18). Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) found this sometimes caused tension at home, as parents reported that they struggled to help their children, or just engage with the school, due to low proficiency in Irish. Some children objected to their parents speaking Irish to them, remarking that they had 'had that all day' (Kavanagh and Hickey 2013: 441). Strickland and Hickey suggest that a perception of speaking Irish in school as an added burden may contribute to slightly lower levels of enthusiasm for school in general among Gaelscoil pupils than peers in English-medium schools (2016: 25). Ó Duibhir argues that the lack of opportunities to speak Irish outside the school means Gaelscoil pupils have little 'integrative' motivation for learning the language (Ó Duibhir 2018: 37). Their contact with Gaeltacht areas is very limited and Gaeltacht Irish-speakers generally speak English to a native standard, in contrast with much lower levels of competence in Irish among pupils in Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí. This means when interactions between these groups do occur, English is generally the lingua franca (Ó Duibhir 2018: 35). It is difficult to identify a stable community of new speakers that Gaelscoil pupils might join, unlike with major world languages like English (2018: 41). Consequently, Ó Duibhir found that many teachers in Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht 'recognised the artificiality of the immersion context where the children are asked to suspend reality and speak and learn in their weaker language' (2018: 166).

Ó Duibhir (2018: 1) observes that although Gaelscoil pupils outperform peers in English-medium schools in Irish (Murtagh 2007), there has been significant concern about the quality of Irish spoken by pupils in Gaelscoileanna. For example, Nic Pháidín (2003) suggests the language of such pupils has become a creole that is closer to English than Irish in its syntax.

Ó Duibhir finds that grammatical accuracy among Gaelscoil pupils is significantly lower than peers in Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoil pupils also use more English words when speaking Irish than Gaeltacht peers (2018: 84). He suggests this results from their low contact with Gaeltacht speakers, who would not consider their language use acceptable, meaning that their only concern is making themselves understood among peers in the classroom (2018: 20, 37). Ó Duibhir argues that the ethos of immersion education contributes to their lack of grammatical accuracy and reliance on English, as it puts 'pressure on pupils to express ideas and concepts that are sometimes ahead of their L2 ability' (2018: 30). Interestingly, he found that Gaelscoil pupils only corrected each other for using English words rather than Irish alternatives – never for grammatical or other errors (2018: 86). He suggests this indicates that the school norm of avoiding English had a strong impact on them, but that there was no pressure on them to speak Irish accurately (2018: 111). Correspondingly, the same errors that are most prominent among Gaelscoil pupils have also been shown to be present in the Irish of students in their final year of secondary school at Gaelcholáistí (2018: 114). Ó Duibhir (2018: 3) argues that if children who attend Irish-medium schools are to go on to raise families in Irish and to be part of Irish-speaking networks, 'a high standard of Irish is critical'. He suggests they should approximate native speaker norms for proficiency because the small remaining population of Irish-speakers means that new and native speakers must be integrated to ensure the language survives (2018: 184).

Immersion schooling often becomes a mechanism of class differentiation, as discussed in Section 2.2.1. There is controversy about whether Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí are elitist institutions and anecdotal evidence of parents choosing such schools to avoid the presence of children from immigrant or Traveller backgrounds is often presented (e.g. Holmquist 2008; O'Brien 2017). Advocates deny such charges, pointing out that they are non-fee-paying and

open to all (Ní Mhóráin 2008). However Kavanagh (2013: 79) found that while cultural affiliation with Irish and a desire for their child to be bilingual (whether as a general principle or specifically in Irish) were the most commonly cited reasons for parents to choose a Gaelscoil, other motivations included small class sizes and a perception that Gaelscoileanna tended to attract fewer children with additional language or educational needs.

Even leaving such charges aside, entrance policies requiring parents to demonstrate commitment to the language and the relatively sparse distribution of schools, requiring some pupils to commute significant distances, means that parents who choose these schools have given more time and thought to the decision than the average (Strickland and Hickey 2016: 22). While they may not set out to be exclusive, such schools are likely to attract parents who are especially committed to their children's education. Parents are more likely to be middle-class and university-educated (Mack 2013) and pupils are more likely to continue to university (Ó Caollaí 2018) than in Gaeltacht and English-medium schools. They are, therefore, more socially filtered than Gaeltacht schools, and also generally operate stricter language policies, with the use of English outside English lessons considered a disciplinary issue. It is sometimes said that Gaelcholáistí and Gaelscoileanna offer many of the benefits of private schools without the fees (e.g. Mack 2013: 427). A 2019 *Sunday Times* supplement giving school rankings based on progression to university was advertised on national radio as listing 'the top fee-paying schools and Gaelcholáistí' in the country. Some parents in Gaeltacht areas will even choose to send their children to a Gaelscoil or Gaelcholáiste over a local Irish-medium school.

There is clear evidence that immersion schools in Ireland are associated with socioeconomic advantage, as illustrated in other contexts in the previous chapter. The question of linguistic

competence among pupils of such schools is complex: on one hand, is it helpful to judge them according to native speaker norms? On the other, Ó Duibhir's comments recall Costa's criticism of such schools as expecting children to integrate into communities that either do not exist (yet) or that do not have space for the new forms of language and speaker emanating from such schools.

3.5 Research questions

Based on the discussion in this chapter and the previous one, I will now outline the main research questions of this study:

1. (How) are intergroup boundaries important in participants' use of and attitudes to Irish?

This question is particularly important given the ambiguity in Ireland about how boundaries are drawn with respect to Irish. My research will contribute to knowledge by showing to what extent participants see themselves as part of a national Irish-speaking community and/or what other 'types' of Irish-speaker they perceive. This will add to the contributions made by Ó hIfearnáin and Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry on this topic and show how the next generation is likely to perceive the identity of Irish-speakers as a group – will they be more tolerant of variation between new speakers and traditional speakers, as Ó hIfearnáin suggests, or will the Fishmanian vision endorsed by Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry have more traction with them than among older speakers? While the nature of the study means I will not be able to observe encounters between participants from the two schools, their narratives of what happens (particularly in terms of accommodation) when they encounter Irish-speakers from outside their school or community will give an insight into the boundaries they consider important.

The most obvious boundary among Irish-speakers is that between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers. Gaeltacht areas are constructed as a resource from which people from all over Ireland can draw in order to support their use of Irish. This study will ask what importance the role of the Gaeltacht as a resource has for participants and how or whether their view of this role varies depending on whether they attend a Gaeltacht or non-Gaeltacht school. Do new speaker participants see Gaeltacht areas as a facility for them to improve their Irish, like the new speakers discussed by Brennan and O'Rourke, or do they see them more as museums that are less relevant to the future of the language, like the university students interviewed by Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey? How do Gaeltacht participants feel about either view?

2. Who is a legitimate Irish-speaker and what form of Irish is considered legitimate? What forms of 'language-laundering' take place in the schools and how do participants feel about this?

In a school context, questions of legitimate language will arise on a daily basis, but they may be dealt with differently in each school and perceived differently by participants. My research will shed further light on how competing definitions of legitimacy in national language policy affect young Irish-speakers, and how they may be implemented or discussed differently in different types of Irish-medium school. As shown above, Gaeltacht dialects, standardised varieties and new speaker varieties are all criticised for being influenced by English, among other factors, but each also has its own form of prestige, in different contexts and among different people. This study will contribute to knowledge by illustrating the particular balance in each school, showing whether and how national educational policy, which praises dialects but requires fluency in the standardised variety, impacts students in each school differently and how students perceive their own variety. This will add a deeper perspective on Ó Murchadha (2013)'s findings regarding covert and overt prestige among young Gaeltacht speakers.

3. How important is authenticity and/or language-place connection to participants?

The relationship between language and place is clearly central to the importance of Irish on both a national and a local level. While efforts have been made to support non-geographically based new speaker networks, some researchers insist that only geographical closeness can support Irish-speaking communities. This study will show how important young Irish-speakers consider geographical closeness to be and what levels of language-place connection (local or national) are most important to participants in each school.

The question of linking national/local identity to language also brings up the question of politics: is Irish seen as a political topic? It is clear that some researchers in the Irish context see the promotion and maintenance of Irish as a decolonising enterprise, while in parliamentary debates anyone seen to 'politicise' the language is castigated. This study will show which viewpoint is more prevalent among participants and what factors might influence this.

This study will also contribute by investigating whether the 'anonymity' of English is something that the young new speaker participants want to retain in their Irish or whether, as suggested by Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018), the form of authenticity they prize is one that cannot be indexed through speaking a dialect that is not their own, thus potentially clashing with national educational policy that values dialects particularly in spoken Irish.

4. Do participants feel that they, as young people, have a stake and a say in debates about language revitalisation? Do participants feel they are part of a minority language community?

Young people are the future of the language, but often they are talked *about* rather than engaged in meaningful discussion about how policy aimed at language revitalisation should be designed. This study will examine whether students in either school feel they have a say in the future of the language and, perhaps more importantly, whether they feel a responsibility for the future of the language. Evidence from other contexts, discussed in the previous chapter, suggests that the majority of students of immersion schools do not engage much with the language beyond the school. This study will contribute by showing whether this is also true here, or whether participants from either group feel any stake in the future of the language.

Costa suggests that immersion schools put children in a difficult position because they are expected to become part of a language community that may not want members who speak the language in a different way or are in other ways different from traditional speakers of the language. However, the speed of language shift in Gaeltacht areas means that even young people from these areas speak in a way that may be very different from older generations. This means the question of whether participants from either school feel part of a minority language community, whether a more traditional geographically close one, a national one, or a network-based one based on postvernacular norms, where people come together specifically with the aim of speaking the language, is especially important and the answers to these questions are far from clear. The role of the school with regard to this community is also important: does the language policy of the school accord with that of the community or communities participants feel part of? Is the school itself seen as part of this community?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the influence of age will be considered throughout, as will socioeconomic factors.

As seen above, many questions about Irish language policy are hotly contested among researchers and this contribution will focus on the impact of language shift and policy aimed at revitalisation on individual young people in a way that has not been investigated in Ireland before. In addition, although the purpose of this thesis is not to make policy recommendations, research addressing the questions listed will inevitably touch on issues of educational policy and may have implications for future policy discussions. In particular, this comparative study raises the question of whether it is justified for national education policy to treat students in Irish-medium schools as a homogeneous category—a question I will return to in the conclusion in the light of the findings presented in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

3.6 Conclusion

There is clear tension in research on the Irish language between some who criticise excessive focus on Gaeltacht speakers (e.g. O'Rourke and Walsh 2014, O'Rourke 2011) and others who criticise excessive focus on new speakers (e.g. Ó Giollagáin 2014; Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin 2016). This mirrors wider tensions about the role of the Irish language in Irish society, as illustrated in this chapter. This study aims to bring these two strands of research together, offering a critical sociolinguistic approach to the issue (Heller 2011), taking into account historic and structural imbalances in power relating to the Irish language. By looking at the attitudes and experiences of both new and Gaeltacht speakers side by side, this thesis aims to avoid the polarisation that sometimes occurs when research on new and traditional speakers is done and discussed separately.

In addition, I follow Costa's approach of treating conflict as an integral part of language revitalisation, rather than an accidental by-product or an inexplicable barrier to its success. By examining where conflict occurs, we get a particular insight into what boundaries and issues

are most important to participants. My focus is on teenagers, who are often perceived as a problem in the context of language revitalisation. This group is particularly likely to have complex and contradictory attitudes to language shift and revitalisation, thus highlighting the conflict at the heart of language revitalisation and their youth means their opinions are often not taken into account, as highlighted also by Costa.

4. The School Study: Settings and Methods

This study is based on fieldwork conducted from August 2017 to March 2018 in two secondary schools in the west of Ireland. This chapter introduces the schools and the participants involved in the study. It then discusses ethnographic methods, with regard in particular to the position of the researcher. Finally, it describes the methods used to gather data, including the ethical considerations involved. This study has been reviewed by, and received 1a ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) (R52019/RE001) (the relevant documents can be found in Appendices A-D).

4.1 Research sites

Each Irish-medium school is likely to contain students with a variety of language backgrounds, so there will be a wide range of language practices and attitudes within any one school. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, there are also significant differences between Irish-speakers based in Gaeltacht areas and those based outside such areas. For this reason, this is a comparative study: fieldwork was conducted in two schools, both in the same dialect region and within 50km (about an hour's drive) of one another, but one in a Gaeltacht area and one in a non-Gaeltacht area. The names of the schools, participants and most place names have been changed to protect the privacy of participants. Initial contact was made with the schools through their principals. I was lucky to be introduced to the principal of Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair through a family member. He was enthusiastic about the project from the outset, and offered to contact the principal of Coláiste Bhríde on my behalf. He was also eager for his school to participate in the project.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I will use the terms ‘Gaeltacht speaker’ and ‘new speaker’ to distinguish between students at the two schools. This is not intended to suggest that either school is linguistically homogenous, but it reflects the general distinction students at each school perceive between themselves and students at the other school, as will be seen in later chapters.

4.1.1 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair

Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair (GCI) is situated in a small town about half an hour’s drive from Galway city. The town is not located in a Gaeltacht area but is close to an area that is officially designated part of the Gaeltacht. This area’s Gaeltacht status is controversial and the use of Irish there is very low, with the percentage of daily speakers of Irish ranging from just above 10% to 22% in different parts (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton 2015: 217). Although a language plan is being prepared for the area under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, many people living in this area may not be aware it is a Gaeltacht area or may not have been aware of this until recently. Only a handful of students at GCI speak Irish at home, mostly with one parent. None of the students I encountered who spoke Irish at home lived in the Gaeltacht and their parents also did not come from Gaeltacht areas.

Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair is a Gaelcholáiste that was founded just over ten years ago and has around 200 pupils. Its catchment area is very wide, with some students commuting almost two hours a day, and mostly rural. Its pupils come from a mix of educational backgrounds. Many previously attended Gaelscoileanna, but the school is proud of its ability to integrate students who have been educated through English at primary level. The school is oversubscribed and thus may be selective in who it admits. It implements a strict language policy, with detention imposed on students caught speaking English on school premises. Disciplinary policy is

generally strict – phones are banned, uniform rules are enforced and detention is common. Its admission policy states that students are accepted on the basis that their Irish is of a sufficient standard and their attitude to the language is positive. Irish is the medium of instruction and students are officially expected to speak Irish at all times on the school premises, even outside of class. Although great emphasis is placed on the speaking of Irish within the school, it is also acknowledged that the surrounding community is largely not Irish-speaking and much of the school website is in English, to facilitate parents who do not speak Irish. Despite the heavy punishment for speaking English, staff tacitly accept that students almost universally speak English when not under direct supervision: their hope is that the language policy means students speak more Irish than they would otherwise. It is, thus, what Heller (2006: 17) describes as 'a monolingual zone, in order to produce bilinguals'. Due to the difficulty of recruiting staff with adequate Irish language skills, some school administrative staff and classroom assistants speak little Irish.

Academic standards are high and there is a strong emphasis on exam results, as well as extra-curricular activities. For example, a poster in a hallway gave the proportion of students who get high grades in state exams relative to the average across the country. In one of the classes I observed, the teacher regularly referred to his expectation that they would get high grades in state examinations.

4.1.2 Coláiste Bhríde

Coláiste Bhríde is situated in a small Gaeltacht village about half an hour's drive from Galway city. It is located in a strongly Irish-speaking area which is classed as a Category A Gaeltacht by Ó Giollagáin and Charlton (2015: 26), meaning over 67% of its population speak Irish on a daily basis. The percentage of daily speakers in the electoral division in which the school is

located is 74.9% (2015: 209). The school has almost 300 pupils, but numbers have fallen dramatically in recent years.

The school is much older than GCI and the majority of pupils speak Irish with at least one parent. It is designated as disadvantaged and historically placed more emphasis on vocational training than progression to university. It now has a high rate of progression to third level, but traces of its history remain in that students may give up studying a foreign language early in secondary school. Even in First Year some planned to give up French and claimed to have been given encouragement in this by some teachers. This reflects an expectation that such students will not go on to university (for which a foreign language is often a requirement), an expectation reinforced in the streaming of classes by ability where numbers permit.

CB's location in a Gaeltacht area means there are no alternative English-medium schools within easy reach, so parents have not necessarily chosen an Irish-medium school for their children. Some who have moved to Ireland from abroad come to the school with no knowledge of Irish. The school cannot refuse potential students who lack Irish language skills, especially given falling student numbers. This has an impact on language policy, with the principal stating that every effort is made to cater to the wishes of parents. All teaching is done through Irish, but where parents request it, students may hand up work done in English, which leads to a certain level of confusion and controversy among both staff and students. Students are encouraged to speak Irish to each other, but there is no rule that they must and there is a range of attitudes to the language among students. Being located in an Irish-speaking area, there is less emphasis on accommodating non-Irish speaking parents through the website, which is exclusively in Irish. Administrative and ancillary staff all speak Irish, as do classroom assistants, but some teachers are less comfortable speaking Irish, as is the case in GCI.

4.2 Participants

I observed one group in each school from First Year (age 12-13) and Fifth Year (usually aged 16-17). I was interested, among other things, in how young people's relationships with Irish might differ at different stages of their lives and school careers, and observing First and Fifth Years allowed the greatest possible age range among participants without including students in exam years (whose preparation schools were understandably reluctant to disrupt). A total of 60 students participated, split roughly evenly across the four groups. Younger students, having come straight from primary school and still a little intimidated by the secondary school environment, are likely to be more obedient, while older students are likely to be more concerned with demonstrating their independence from parents and other sources of authority.

My time in the schools was split equally between the two age groups in terms of classroom observation. I tried to keep the same balance with observation outside of class, but this was not always possible, since it was important to respect the private spaces students had constructed for themselves within the grounds of the school. For example, initially I spent a lot of time with the First Years at CB and very little with the Fifth Years, who saw no reason for an adult to spend time in the small part of the corridor they had claimed for themselves. However, as the Fifth Years got to know me better, they tended to demand my presence and intervention in various debates, while the First Years got more interested in gossip as the year went on, which they were not always comfortable talking to me about.

I found the Fifth Year group in GCI the hardest to get to know. This was partly a result of the geography of their school: the First and Fifth Years ate lunch in separate halls. While I had little problem imposing on the First Years, who were curious about me from the start of the

research period, I noticed the Fifth Years were less comfortable with my presence and felt that entering 'their space' at lunchtime without being invited would be unfair on them and potentially damaging to my relationship with them. In contrast, the Fifth Years in CB spent their lunchtimes in a section of corridor that I regularly passed through. As I got more familiar with them, they began to stop me on my way through and so I knew I was welcome in that space.

In addition to targeting these class groups, I attended school-wide events, such as musicals, concerts, and open evenings. Such events gave me the opportunity to observe how students behave in some liminal situations, such as when attending an event out of school hours and out of their uniforms but either on or near school grounds.

While more detail will be given in the context of discussion in later chapters of language ideologies and attitudes among participants, I will now give a brief overview of the students who chose to take part in my study. All names mentioned (including those of the schools and local placenames) are pseudonyms, to protect the privacy of participants.

4.2.1 First Year Coláiste Bhríde

The First Year group at CB was very small, with just 16 students in total, 15 of whom participated. Twelve, who all lived close to the school, had attended the same local primary school, while the other three attended other Gaeltacht primary schools. This cohort always spoke to teachers in Irish and was generally very obedient. The common language among peers was generally Irish, though English was used more as the year went on. The table below gives an overview of First Year (and one Second Year) participants. Language preferences are discussed in more detail below and in later chapters. The description in Table 4.1 (and other

similar tables below) is, of necessity, somewhat simplistic and relies on participants' own descriptions of their language use at home. More detail is given in subsequent chapters.

Table 4.1: First/Second Year CB participants

Name	**Gender**	**Peer language**	**Home language**
Lee	M	Irish	Irish
Conor	M	Irish	Irish
Michael	M	Irish/English	Irish
Aisling	F	Irish/English	Irish
Ruairí	M	English/Irish	English/Irish
Éanna	M	English	English
Ailbhe	F	Irish/English	Irish/English
Sadhbh	F	English/Irish	English
Órlaith	F	English/Irish	Irish
Jane	F	English/Irish	English
Charlotte	F	English	English
Natasha	F	Irish	Irish
Clara	F	English/Irish	English (Irish with father at weekends)
Molly	F	English/Irish	English/Irish
Muireann	F	English/Irish	Irish/English
Ciarán (Second Year)	M	English/Irish	English/Irish

The most stable friendship group in the year spoke mostly Irish together and all spoke Irish at home. Two boys, Lee and Conor, almost never spoke English and seemed uncomfortable when they had to do so in class. The third boy, Michael, spoke more English as the year went on. He was very much the ringleader of the group and his use of English may have been connected to a desire to be cool. Aisling, the only girl in this group, also spoke a lot of English outside the group. After Christmas, a fourth boy, Ruairí, gradually joined the group. He was a habitual English-speaker (though he spoke Irish with one parent) but spoke Irish to accommodate the others. He and Michael were becoming especially close towards the end of my fieldwork. It seemed that Ruairí was gaining a measure of coolness by hanging out with this group, while Michael was getting the chance to speak more English.

Before joining this group, Ruairí had spent lunchtimes mostly with Éanna, the only other boy in the year, and a group of Second Years. Éanna also preferred to speak English; indeed, he rarely spoke Irish, which was unusual among the First Years. He was also very interested in drag and internet culture, which set him apart from both boys and girls in his year group. Éanna and Ruairí both seemed to feel a little out of place at the start of the year, and, as a result, were very eager to talk to me. One of the Second Years in this group, Ciarán, also participated in the research, somewhat accidentally. I had got to know him through Éanna and Ruairí, but later in the year he became friends with some of First Year girls as well and asked if he could participate in a focus group.

The friendship groups among the girls in the year were more fluid. At the beginning of the year, the two leaders were Ailbhe and Sadhbh. Both were academically engaged, involved in a range of extra-curricular activities, and were social leaders, which may have contributed to them growing apart as the year went on. Ailbhe in particular was seen as a model Irish-speaker and was heavily involved in Irish-language drama. She spoke mostly Irish at home, while Sadhbh spoke only English. Both spoke a mix of Irish and English in school, with Sadhbh leaning more towards English.

Órlaith and Jane were inseparable. Órlaith was seen as the star student in the class and was often singled out by teachers for her high results in tests. Jane was quite shy and rarely spoke in class. Both spoke a mix of Irish and English in school. Órlaith spoke Irish at home, while Jane spoke English, although both parents had Irish. Towards the end of the research period, they became especially close to Ailbhe.

Charlotte was less engaged with school than the other students in the year and was often absent. Within the year group she was the most interested in discos and dating. Although both parents had Irish, she spoke only English in school and at home. At the start of the year, she was close to Natasha, who spoke only Irish. Passive bilingualism was quite common in this year group, and neither accommodated the other. Natasha was often shy and lacked confidence in her English. She was also uninterested in make-up, discos, etc. Later in the year, Charlotte became closer friends with Clara and Molly, who shared her interests. Both spoke mostly English at home and only English in school. Clara only joined the year a few weeks before the end of my research period, but was keen to participate. Like Natasha, Muireann was somewhat out of place in the year group. She spoke a mix of Irish and English in school, leaning towards Irish.

4.2.2 Fifth Year Coláiste Bhríde

The Fifth Year group was much bigger, with 36 students. They had been streamed from the beginning, with a female-dominated A-stream and a much smaller male-dominated B-stream. This group was much more mixed in terms of age and location than the First Year group: some had skipped an optional 'Transition Year'[5] and were therefore younger than most, while others were older as they had lived abroad and had had to repeat years, and some students had chosen to attend this school over nearer ones. English was the common language and they often spoke English to teachers.

[5] Irish secondary schools are split into two 'cycles', with the first three years dedicated to preparation for the Junior Certificate and the last two to preparation for the Leaving Certificate. Most schools now offer Transition year in-between these cycles and it is optional in some. Students participate in a range of extracurricular activities and work experience alongside a lower course load than in other years.

Table 4.2: Fifth Year CB participants

Name	**Gender**	**Peer language**	**Home language**
Darragh	M	English	English
Brian	M	English	English
Tomás	M	English	Irish
Cathal	M	English	Irish
Patrick	M	English	Irish
Megan	F	English	Irish
Áine	F	English	English (some Irish with father)
Shane	M	English	Irish/English
Mary	F	English	English (some Irish with grandmother)
Evan	M	English	English/Irish (he speaks English, rest of family speaks at least some Irish)
Fionnuala	F	English	Irish/English
Ruby	F	English	English/Irish (mother and siblings prefer English, father prefers Irish)
Caoimhe	F	English	English/Irish (she prefers English but parents speak Irish)
Maria	F	English	English/Irish (she prefers English but parents speak Irish)
Éabha	F	English	English

I was first allocated to the Irish teacher of the 'B' group, so got to know this group first. Seven of the 11 students in this Irish class chose to participate, along with two students who were in a different Irish class but the same Basic French and Agricultural Science classes as most of the students from the Irish B-stream. While there was speculation about exactly why they had been placed in the B-stream (one theory was that it related to participation in the school play), they often referred to their class as 'the dumb class' and resented the fact that they had fewer opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, like plays, than the other stream, which they called 'the smart class'. Most of them had given up French in favour of Agricultural Science, hence they only participated in the weekly Basic French class, which was the minimum requirement, and several were taking the lower level of English. They were generally less engaged with school than the other stream, with high levels of absenteeism.

Darragh was very much the class clown. He spoke English at home and strongly resisted speaking Irish at all in school, even in Irish class. He was probably the most disruptive in the group. He complained that the Irish teacher 'thinks I'm disabled' as he had some literacy issues and sometimes refused to take down notes because 'I'm not going to be able to read this anyway'.

Brian also spoke English at home and rarely spoke Irish in class, though this seemed to be more an issue with confidence or competence than a conscious act of rebellion, as it seemed to be in Darragh's case.

Tomás was probably the most engaged of the boys in the Irish class in terms of answering questions and speaking Irish, but was often absent. He spoke Irish at home. Cathal and Patrick were also quite engaged. Both spoke Irish at home, but Patrick had spent several years living in the United States. Tomás, Cathal and Patrick studied French as a subject, so were not in the Basic French class. All the B-stream boys other than Patrick hung out together.

The two girls in this group, Megan and Áine were quiet in class, especially Megan. Both paid attention and were more likely to do homework and be able to answer questions from the teacher than any of the boys. Áine was a capable student, though lacking in confidence. She spoke English at home and avoided speaking Irish. She was in the Basic French class, while Megan took French as a subject, despite having no interest in attending university. Megan spoke Irish at home and was quite willing to speak it to teachers, though she spoke English to peers.

Shane was in the A-class for Irish, but took Basic French. He spoke a mix of languages at home and mostly English in school. Like Darragh, he was a joker, though he was less likely to challenge the teacher's authority openly, tending more to mimicry.

I got to know students from the A-stream through observing Biology classes. The year group tended to spend lunchtimes in gendered groups, with most of the boys staying outside, while most of the girls clustered in a corridor, as mentioned above. I got to know the girls much better than the boys, partly because of this gender difference, but also because the group that hung out outside smoked and generally did not welcome my presence.

Mary was the star student of their year group and was involved in many extra-curricular activities, as well as leading the student Irish-language committee. She had come to Ireland late in primary school and her mother, who had also been raised overseas, spoke no Irish, though Mary spoke Irish with her grandmother. She was close friends with Evan, who was much quieter and who avoided speaking Irish, despite his family speaking it at home. Mary was also very close to Fionnuala, who asked to participate in the study despite not being in any of the classes I observed. Like Mary, she was very engaged with school activities and particularly prominent in the promotion of Irish. Ailbhe in First Year was her sister. Ruby spoke a mix of languages at home and was also very engaged with the school.

While Ruby was initially very close to Caoimhe, they grew apart as the year went on, with Caoimhe spending more time with Megan and Maria. Maria and Caoimhe both avoided speaking Irish in school where possible and reported they did so at home as well. They were much less academically focused than Mary, Fionnuala and Ruby.

Finally, Éabha had skipped Transition Year and mostly spent time with other girls in the year who had done the same, though she was friendly with the girls above.

4.2.3 First Year Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair

Students in First Year at GCI were fairly homogenous linguistically. None spoke Irish at home or with friends and most had attended a Gaelscoil, so they were used to the language policy in place at GCI, though they considered it stricter than those they had encountered in primary school. None spoke English to teachers. They had come from a mix of primary schools. There was a total of about 40 students in their year group, split into two randomly-assigned forms with an even gender balance. The principal assigned me to one form and 17 of the 20 students chose to participate.

Table 4.3: First Year GCI participants

Name	**Gender**	**Peer language**	**Home language**
Cillian	M	English	English
Marc	M	English	English
Paul	M	English	English
Liam	M	English	English
Eibhlín	F	English	English
Mia	F	English	English
Anna	F	English	English
Lorraine	F	English	English
Shauna	F	English	English
Gráinne	F	English	English
Sarah	F	English	English
Jenny	F	English	English
Amanda	F	English	English
Cormac	M	English	English
Iarlaith	M	English	English
Ian	M	English	English
David	M	English	English

This group was dominated by a group of boys who, without causing any serious trouble, did their best to disrupt class as much as possible. Cillian, Marc and Paul, along with a friend who did not participate, were the main instigators of mischief, though Liam often played along. Liam was the only participant who had not attended a Gaelscoil, but he did not have major difficulties settling into GCI. In a focus group conversation about groups in their year, Liam described himself, Cillian, Marc and Paul as 'the guys who don't do anything' (contrasted with 'emos', 'nerds' and 'teachers' pets').

Eibhlín was the most boisterous girl in the class, but was significantly less so than the boys. She, along with Mia and sometimes Anna, was often rebuked for whispering and giggling during class. Lorraine and Shauna were particularly interested in internet culture. They were rarely noisy in class, and Lorraine was quite academically focused.

Gráinne, Sarah, Jenny and Amanda were all engaged but relatively quiet in class. Sarah and Jenny were particularly competent academically.

Cormac was very interested in internet culture and very quiet during class. His mother was from an Asian country, making him one of only two participants in this study who had a parent who spoke a language other than Irish or English (though neither child spoke that other language). Ian was the other – his father came from an eastern European country. He was also fairly quiet in class. Finally, Iarlaith was quiet and not very academically engaged, but hung around with David. David was the most academically-engaged boy and was particularly keen to engage with teachers, which made him a target for teasing from other students.

4.2.4 Fifth Year Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair

There were about 35 in the year in total, four of whom spoke Irish with one parent, which was very unusual in the school as a whole. Three of those who spoke Irish at home participated in the study. All Fifth Year students spoke English to peers most of the time, but none spoke English to teachers in my observation.

Table 4.4: Fifth Year GCI participants

Name	**Gender**	**Peer language**	**Home language**
Aoife	F	English	Irish/English
Neasa	F	English	Irish/English
Rebecca	F	English	English
Zoë	F	English	English
Emily	F	English	English
Doireann	F	English	English
Senan	F	English	English
John	M	English	English
Tadhg	M	English	Irish/English
Laura	F	English	English
Chloe	F	English	English
Róisín	F	English	English
Cian	M	English	English

One female-dominated friendship group was especially prominent in classroom discussions and extracurricular activities, particularly relating to the Irish language. At one point, I asked a teacher for permission to take some of them out of a PE class and was told I had picked some of the best students in the school. Aoife and Neasa were the core of the group. They both spoke Irish with one parent and were particularly involved in Irish language activities outside school, along with Rebecca, Zoë and Emily. Rebecca was also heavily involved with Irish language activities beyond the school, while Zoë and Emily participated in the student Irish language committee along with the rest of their friendship group. Peripheral members of this group included Doireann, who was slightly less involved with extracurricular school activities than

the others, and Senan, who expressed relatively little interest in the promotion of Irish, but was friendly with other members and almost equally involved in extracurricular activities.

A male friendship group in the year was also very enthusiastic about the Irish language. They were not very engaged with extracurricular activities other than sport, and had a more overtly political interest in the language. Two members of this group participated in the study. John strongly identified as a republican, that is, he supported the use of force in order to reunite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, and saw the revival of the language as part of a broader decolonisation of Irish culture. Tadhg was not explicitly political in his attitude to Irish. He spoke Irish with one parent.

Understandably, students with a strong interest in Irish were more likely to participate and most students in the year were much less enthusiastic about the Irish language than those discussed above. Three such girls (Laura, Chloe and Róisín) and one boy (Cian) participated. The three girls were quite engaged academically but felt their efforts often did not pay off in terms of grades or positive feedback from teachers. Cian was uninterested in school, and more interested in his rock band, but tended to get good marks.

4.3 Linguistic ethnography

This study uses ethnographic methods, which James Clifford describes as 'look[ing] obliquely at all collective arrangements, distant or nearby', approaching familiar events or structures as though they were new to the observer and 'exotic' ones as though they were quite ordinary (1986: 2–3). The defining feature of ethnography is a reliance on 'participant observation' as the main method of data collection, that is, making observations while also participating in the activity or community one is studying. The researcher will never be either a full participant,

since they have entered the field specifically to observe it, nor an objective observer, since their presence in the field alters what happens there, as well as involving the researcher in the very structures they are supposed to be observing (ibid.). For this reason, reflexivity is central. As Dell Hymes argues, '[s]ince partiality cannot be avoided, the only solution is to face up to it, to compensate for it as much as possible, to allow for it in interpretation' (1978: 19).

Although ethnography must be open to the subjective nature of individual interpretations of the world, this does not mean accepting participants' view of their world without question: every individual only has a partial understanding of their world (Hymes 1978: 16). The meanings the researcher is looking for might lie 'in connections that can only gradually be discerned' or may be 'so fully taken for granted' that they are not discussed explicitly at all (Hymes 1978: 17).

One of the distinguishing features of ethnography that sets it apart from mere observation is its systematic nature – researchers try to be comprehensive in their descriptions, aiming to provide a detailed picture of the whole of a practice or community (Hymes 1978: 14). However, while they might set out to answer particular questions, researchers using ethnographic methods must remain open to new directions, meaning that these questions may change in the course of the research (ibid.). For this reason, it is advisable to use 'sensitizing concepts' to 'suggest directions along which to look', rather than a closed set of research questions, which may prescribe what to see (Blumer 1969: 148). I originally set out to examine tensions within each school resulting from the different relationships students had with Irish. While these tensions were present, they were far less prominent than I had expected and so I adjusted my focus to the more significant divide I could see: between the two schools, or

rather, between the groups represented by the two schools: ‘new speakers’ and ‘Gaeltacht speakers’.

Through examining apparently minor incidents in seemingly insignificant contexts, ethnography can offer insights into what Clifford Geertz refers to as ‘mega-concepts’, such as legitimacy, conflict and integration (1973: 23). While in the abstract such concepts are difficult to discuss in a meaningful way, looking at how they manifest in specific contexts makes it possible ‘to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them’ (ibid.). However, Geertz warns against the temptation to over-theorise, arguing that the generalisations achieved by ethnography arise from ‘the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions’ (1973: 25).

Although anthropologists have long been interested in language (e.g. Sapir 1921), two in particular have shaped how researchers approach linguistic ethnography. Dell Hymes was the first to propose ‘[a] theory of language and social life’ (Copland, Creese, Rock and Shaw 2015: 16). He argued that contemporary linguistics had focused entirely on idealised language, intentionally ignoring the messy reality that language exists in society and is thus affected by (and affects) sociocultural factors (Hymes 1972: 272–3). He proposed an ‘ethnography of communication’ to investigate how language and social meaning were related (Hymes 1974: 31). John Gumperz (1982) developed the approach of ‘interactional sociolinguistics’, ‘focus[ing] on everyday talk in social contexts’ (Copland et al. 2015: 18). Gumperz (1999) remarks that the simplest interactions rely on shared social and linguistic knowledge. While many researchers continue to see ‘[s]ocial and linguistic features [as] members of separate categories, between which stable and linear correlations [can] be established’, Jan Blommaert points to Gumperz and Hymes (1972) as having destabilised this paradigm, ‘defin[ing] social

and linguistic features not as separate-but-connected, but as *dialectic*, i.e. co-constructive and, hence, *dynamic*' (2012: 11).

While traditional anthropological research endeavours to understand a particular culture in its entirety, linguistic ethnography focuses on particular institutions and practices and try to understand 'how they are embedded in wider social contexts and structures' (Shaw, Copland and Snell 2015: 7). Linguistic ethnography has been particularly fruitful in researching language ideologies in schools, as in the work of Heller (2006; 1996), who belongs to the North American tradition of linguistic anthropology and Rampton (1995; 2006), a key figure in the UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum, which has strong connections to applied linguistics and education (Rampton, Maybin and Roberts 2015: 22). The focus is no longer on studying 'exotic' and unfamiliar cultures, but rather on understanding the hidden structures and ideologies behind practices and organisations that seem so banal as to be almost invisible (ibid., drawing on Heller 2011). This requires a move away from efforts to generate comprehensive descriptions of particular groups, in favour of an approach that focuses on complexity and questions how such groups are constructed (Rampton 2007: 591). The need to pay attention to different layers of structure is particularly clear in research on and in institutions. Ben Rampton, Janet Maybin and Celia Roberts (2014: 2–3) refer to this as 'cultural ecologies': examining different levels of an organisation or process at the same time, and investigating how 'the meaning and significance of a form or practice involves an interaction between these (and other) levels/dimensions'.

Overall, the aim of linguistic ethnography is to make 'both academic and political generalisations about social life accountable to the kinds of small-scale everyday activity which we can observe, record and transcribe' (Rampton et al. 2015: 36). This makes it

especially important in the context of post-modernity as it 'investigates the construction and robustness of groups, social categories and categorisation processes' (Copland et al. 2015: 26). Blommaert argues that changes in mobility and communications since the late 20th century have complicated the categories of 'we' and 'other', meaning that 'the Other is now a category in constant flux, a moving target about whom very little can be presupposed' while 'We' no longer fit into the templates that might have been appropriate in the past (2012: 10).

In a context where it is no longer possible to draw simple correlations between social and linguistic features, ethnographic methods become a vital tool in understanding the complex links between them (2012: 11). Blommaert cites the concept of 'fractal recursivity' proposed by Irvine and Gal (2000), where 'phenomena occurring on one scale-level also resonate at different scale-levels' (2012: 17). He argues, in short, that rather than reducing complexity, 'the task of analysis is [...] to demonstrate' it, exploring the various layers and resonances involved in each momentary event or process (2012: 19).

The settings in which I conducted my research are rural and hence not the first places that would come to mind on considering the word 'superdiversity'. Nonetheless, smartphones mean students are connected to peers both on the other side of the classroom and on the other side of the world, and are constantly plugged into global trends via Instagram and other social networks. They are less affected by immigration than more urban areas, but emigration has played a major role in shaping the community of Coláiste Bhríde in particular. One of the most interesting implications of superdiversity for this study is the increased number of people who are not 'full members' of speech communities and thus may not have the knowledge needed to follow any 'rules' in such communities even if they want to (Blommaert 2012: 11). As discussed in the previous chapter, linguistic change in Irish-speaking areas has moved rapidly

since the late 20th century, so that while most participants are ethnically as well as culturally Irish, the gap in intergenerational transmission of language norms means they experience some of the alienation and tensions more commonly associated with heritage speakers in immigrant communities.

Ó Giollagáin and Péterváry (2016a) have criticised qualitative research on language shift in Ireland for failing to take account of inequalities and for putting an unduly positive spin on what they regard as evidence of language death. However, the main criticism Ó Giollagáin and various colleagues level at research on language shift in Ireland relates to a lack of engagement with broader societal structures. They argue that some researchers treat language as though it can be separated from the social context and fail to account for existing power dynamics (Lenoach, Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin 2012). As discussed above, ethnographic methods are particularly well-suited to engaging with the micro and the macro and thus, while it is quite possible that some researchers use them to avoid talking about societal power structures, this reflects more on those researchers than the methods themselves. In the context of language revitalisation, ethnographic methods can be particularly useful because they encourage the acknowledgement of complexity and require reflexivity. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, much research on language revitalisation focuses on its success or failure in terms of the language itself, rather than seeing it as a social movement with a range of impacts on various stakeholders (Costa 2013). In particular, young people's subjective experiences of language revitalisation are often neglected in favour of a focus on assessing the impact of revitalisation on language use. Ethnographic methods, as used by Woolard (2016), Selleck (2013), Heller (2006), and Petit Cahill (2019), among others, shift the focus of research from 'success' or 'failure' to the more complex reality of how language revitalisation impacts the lives of the young people who are often most affected by it. My main motivation in choosing

to use some of the tools of linguistic ethnography is to allow for this complexity and to ensure that the voices of my participants are given as much prominence as possible, something that is not possible in the frame of more limited, survey-based or solely interview-based research.

4.3.1 The position of researcher in linguistic ethnography

As discussed above, the position of the researcher requires careful consideration. While this reflexivity will be involved in my analysis throughout this thesis, I will now give a brief overview of my position in the two research sites.

For me, both schools were much more 'familiar' than 'strange'. This is a significant advantage in linguistic ethnography, since there is a risk that entering a field site that is completely unfamiliar will make it difficult for a researcher to provide complex analysis, since so much time is required simply to understand how things work (Rampton et al. 2004: 8). I am local to the county in which both schools are located, but not to the immediate community of either school, and I have experience of Irish-medium schooling, though at primary rather than secondary level. My linguistic background is closer to the GCI students, since I was raised by English-speaking parents outside the Gaeltacht and attended a Gaelscoil. However, my spoken Irish is closer to the dialect spoken in CB than is the case for any student from GCI. This meant I did not quite fit into either context. This affected how students reacted to me and hence the data I gathered, as will be discussed later. This was particularly the case in Coláiste Bhríde, which is located in a tight-knit rural community, as discussed below.

Being relatively local helped participants feel at ease with me, since I had, for example, attended the same discos as them when I was in my teens. Since my parents live relatively close to both schools, I am quite likely to run into participants in years to come, meaning I

will continue to have a stake in the community well after the research has run its course. However, I also was not 'too' local: I did not have an established position in either community that could be jeopardised by my taking on the additional role of researcher, and participants might in some cases have been willing to share information with me that they would not tell an 'insider'.

As a researcher in an institution, I was inevitably in a liminal position – not a figure of authority, but not under the control of the school authorities either. This necessitated careful management of relationships with students and teachers, so that I was seen neither as a bad influence nor as a good example. The strict language policy in place in Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair made this especially important, since, while I was unlikely to be caught smoking on school grounds or violating other such typical school rules, I inevitably spoke English to students. I also had to be careful to ensure teachers understood my position: although I am an adult, I could not supervise a class or act with authority in the school. This was rarely a problem, though on occasion I checked in with teachers to be sure they understood my position if, for example, a class left unattended became unruly while I was present.

There are a number of approaches to dealing with one's position as a researcher in schools in particular. Eckert advocates remaining completely aloof from teachers in order to be perceived by students as part of their world, avoiding the classroom entirely (1999: 73). I took a different approach, since classroom observation was a key part of my study, and my first interactions with students tended to be through classroom presentations, to ensure all students knew what I was doing. It was not practical to avoid spending time in the staffroom in either school as both had a shortage of space and problems with heating, so the staffroom was often the only free space warm enough to sit in. However, spending time in the staffroom had the advantage

of ensuring teachers were familiar with me and had ample opportunity to ask me about my work. On one or two occasions, participants remarked that teachers were more lenient when I was present, suggesting that my presence in the classroom impacted how they taught. This underlines the need to ensure that teachers were comfortable with me observing their classes.

One of the issues I faced in the particular context of Irish-medium schools was being seen as someone who was interested primarily in the promotion of the Irish language. For this reason, I tried to emphasise that use of English, French and German were also of interest to me. Some teachers regularly reminded students, especially in CB, that I was there to observe them and that they should be on their best (linguistic) behaviour around me. To counter this, I emphasised both in presentations to classes and in casual conversation that I was interested in all language. I took care to speak to students in the language they preferred, which often necessitated careful codeswitching where people with different language preferences were involved in the same conversation. I also tried to explain directly to students that teachers were busy and might have misunderstood my work, which actually helped to build solidarity with them, since they felt they knew more about what I was doing than the teachers. However, this did not always work, particularly in GCI. Several First Years spoke only Irish to me until the focus groups, while many Fifth Years spoke only Irish to me throughout my time in the school, as discussed below.

During the research period, I spent two days per week at each school. While working at Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair, I stayed with relatives about 20 minutes' drive from the school. While working at Coláiste Bhríde, I stayed in a rented room close to the school. Having two bases enabled me to observe life in the community more generally, though in the end I found

that writing field notes took more time than anticipated, meaning I had little time for research beyond the school.

4.4 Research methods

4.4.1 Speaker recruitment and ethics

The school principals allocated me to particular teachers and hence, class groups, within the year groups I targeted. I gave presentations to their classes explaining the purpose of the study and what would happen to any data I obtained during the study. All students in these class groups were invited to participate. While some students in the target groups were above the age of 16 and thus capable of consenting as adults under Oxford University's 'competent youth' provisions, the majority were not. For this reason, consent to participate was sought from their parents at the beginning of the school year. Parents and guardians were also provided with an information sheet in both Irish and English, informing them of the nature of the project and the intended use of the data their children might provide. They had the option of consenting to some, all or no aspects of the project and of withdrawing from the study at any time. Copies of information sheets and consent forms are provided in Appendices A-D.

Beyond fulfilling basic institutional requirements for ethical research, this project was designed with the aim of empowering its subjects, rather than objectifying them (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson 1992: 22ff). This meant, firstly, listening to participants and being open with them about the aims of the research. For this reason, I did not make any recordings until December 2017, as by that stage I knew students well enough to sense when they were uncomfortable and they were also able to tell me when, for example, they did not want to participate in a focus group with someone they did not get along with. An important part of empowering research, as described by Cameron et al., is acknowledging that

research participants, too, have their own agendas, and trying to address these insofar as this is possible. This meant, for example, making space during focus groups for students to ask me questions about university life. I will also provide each school with a report on my findings, which may be of use to staff and management in assessing their language policies, and I hope to speak to students in both schools about the findings of my study.

4.4.2 Focus groups

I conducted focus group interviews with students after four to five months of observation. The main motivation for this method was to elicit overt opinions on language-related topics, having spent several months observing their language practices. As it happened, some participants' language practices changed when they were explicitly given a choice as to which language to speak, with several who had previously addressed me only in Irish choosing to speak English. This gave a further insight into the complexity of their language practices which would not have been possible using ethnographic methods alone.

Each group consisted of three to five students and lasted for one class period (30-35 minutes after allowing for set-up). As far as possible, I selected existing friendship groups, though logistical issues meant this was not always possible. A list of focus groups is provided in Table 4.5. In total, 28 focus groups were conducted, with most participants taking part in two. This amounted to 16 hours of audio recordings, which were transcribed in full using ELAN (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive 2017; Sloetjes and Wittenburg 2008). While I had originally planned for focus groups to last an hour each, it soon became clear that this would be difficult to organise, as classes in both schools lasted 40 minutes and lunchtimes 45 minutes. I therefore decided to hold two rounds of focus groups with each group, each lasting approximately 30 minutes, to allow for difficulties in finding a room to

hold them in, which often meant searching for a free room with participants in tow. While in many ways this was less than ideal, the short time allotted meant students did not get bored and generally seemed to find the sessions enjoyable, often encouraging their friends to participate. These sessions also gave me a chance to get to know some students better, meaning I could build on that relationship in the weeks between the first and second rounds. As discussed below, these interviews were quite relaxed and so each took a different path, depending on the participants, but the first-round interviews focused more on questions about language policy, while the second round focused more on issues like preferred types of language and speaker types. Protocols are included in Appendix E.

Table 4.5: Focus groups

	Participants	**Code**	**Date**	**Language**
Coláiste Bhríde				
First Year				
Round 1	Charlotte, Ruairí, Éanna	CB1.FG.136	Dec. 2017	English
	Sadhbh, Ailbhe, Jane	CB1.FG.139	Dec. 2017	Irish
	Muireann, Molly, Natasha, Órlaith	CB1.FG.143	Dec. 2017	Irish
	Michael, Lee, Conor, Aisling	CB1.FG.145	Dec. 2017	Irish
Round 2	Michael, Lee, Conor, Aisling, Ruairí	CB1.FG.198	Feb. 2018	Irish
	Ailbhe, Jane, Órlaith, Éanna, Ciarán	CB1.FG.212	Feb. 2018	English/Irish
	Sadhbh, Muireann, Clara	CB1.FG.215	Feb. 2018	English
Fifth Year				
Round 1	Mary, Evan, Ruby, Caoimhe	CB5.FG.132	Dec. 2017	English
	Maria, Megan, Áine	CB5.FG.133	Dec. 2017	English
	Darragh, Cathal, Tomás, Patrick	CB5.FG.155	Jan. 2018	English
Round 2	Darragh, Cathal, Tomás, Patrick, Brian	CB5.FG.204	Feb. 2018	English
	Maria, Megan, Caoimhe	CB5.FG.232	Feb. 2018	English
	Mary, Evan, Ruby, Fionnuala	CB5.FG.233	Feb. 2018	English
	Darragh, Brian, Áine, Shane, Éabha	CB5.FG.245	Mar. 2018	English
Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair				
First Year				
Round 1	Amanda, Gráinne, Sarah, Mia, Jenny	GCI1.FG.164	Jan. 2018	English
	Paul, Cillian, Marc, Liam	GCI1.FG.171	Jan. 2018	English
	Shauna, Lorraine, Eibhlín, Anna	GCI1.FG.188	Feb. 2018	English
	David, Ian, Iarlaith, Cormac	GCI1.FG.196	Feb. 2018	English
Round 2	Paul, Cillian, Marc, Liam	GCI1.FG.200	Feb. 2018	English
	Amanda, Gráinne, Sarah, Mia, Jenny	GCI1.FG.213	Feb. 2018	English
	David, Ian, Iarlaith, Cormac	GCI1.FG.227	Mar. 2018	English
	Shauna, Lorraine, Eibhlín, Anna	GCI1.FG.232	Mar. 2018	English
Fifth Year				
Round 1	Chloe, Cian, Laura, Róisín	GCI5.FG.204	Feb. 2018	Irish
	Aoife, Neasa, Rebecca, Emily	GCI5.FG.205	Feb. 2018	Irish
	Senan, Doireann, Tadhg	GCI5.FG.219	Mar. 2018	English
Round 2	Aoife, Neasa, Zoë	GCI5.FG.226	Mar. 2018	Irish
	Senan, Doireann, John	GCI5.FG.236	Mar. 2018	Irish
	Chloe, Cian, Laura, Róisín	GCI5.FG.242	Mar. 2018	Irish

When I faced a choice between getting an answer to a particular question and ensuring that interviewees enjoyed the focus group, I chose the latter. This corresponds to my aim of conducting 'empowering' research and also means a wider range of speech styles were recorded in the focus groups than would be the case with a more traditional interview approach. However, as a consequence of this more relaxed approach to the structure of the interview, several groups of participants took it upon themselves to impose order, by suggesting they respond to questions in a given order or raise their hands when they wanted to speak. One participant (Éanna in CB1) framed both interviews as podcast recordings. At the end of the second-round focus group, he grabbed the microphone and the following exchange ensued, as he held it up to me and another participant to allow us to offer closing remarks:

Extract 4.1 - CB1.FG.212

2227	Éanna	((grabs mic:)) thank you for joining us on this fine summer day
		(0.6)
2228		#peace #out
		(2.7)
2229	Interviewer	but thank you so much for speaking to me and taking time out of yeer ((Éanna holds up mic to me)) busy schedule
2230	Ailbhe	thanks so much for the #
2231	Interviewer	really appreciate it
		(0.2)
2232	Ailbhe	((has mic:)) I really appreciate it
		(0.7)
[...]		
2234	Éanna	((holding mic:)) well thank you for joining us and tune in next week
		(0.2)
2235		to see what interesting things we have to say

In other cases, participants requested that certain statements they had made be 'censored' or, conversely, expressed a desire to put certain things (usually grievances against teachers or classmates) 'on the record'. Although the latter situation in particular often required careful

management, to guard against seeming to agree (or disagree) with participants' grudges, it reflects a sense of ownership of and, perhaps, enjoyment of the unusual situation they were in, where an adult was asking them for their opinions and listening to them.

Participants were given a free choice of language and all quotes are given in the original language. All participants in First Year of GCI and Fifth Year of CB chose to speak English. All bar one group in Fifth Year at GCI chose to speak Irish, as did the majority of First Year participants at CB, though they mixed languages more than other cohorts. CB participants' choice of language generally reflected their usual school language, though some habitual English-speakers in First Year accommodated habitual Irish-speakers. The strict language policy in GCI made the choice of language especially salient. First Years were pleased to hear that they did not have to speak in Irish and uniformly chose to speak in English, their usual choice of language among friends. GCI Fifth Years, on the other hand, were generally much more formal with me than other groups, and this was reflected in their use of Irish with me in almost all interactions, despite speaking English to peers when they thought I was out of earshot. This may have limited their range of expression but it reflects their attitudes towards the language and the way they wished to be portrayed.

While I made every effort to ensure participants were comfortable, my presence, and that of the recorder, obviously influenced their behaviour. Interviews are never 'transparent windows into the workings of intentionality' but rather demonstrate 'what a certain kind of person tells another certain kind of person, in certain ways, under certain conditions' (Heller 2011: 42-3). The data presented here represents what participants wanted me to hear and how they wanted to portray themselves to the outside world through the lens of my research.

4.4.3 *Participant observation*

As mentioned above, I spent two days a week in each school, splitting my time roughly evenly between the two year groups. I observed classes in English, French/German and Irish with all groups, though class groups varied by subject in the older groups, meaning I observed different students in different lessons. I also observed one science/practical subject for each group. In CB I observed science classes with First Years and biology and agricultural science classes with Fifth Years. In GCI, I observed art classes with both year groups.

Classes from a range of subjects were observed, since, as Heller (2006: 20) observed in the francophone Canadian context, different subjects provide different insights into language use. For example, language classes foreground language as an object, with little reference to the 'real world', while science classes, which focus on 'real-world' knowledge, often have to turn to English since in the Canadian context, as in the Irish one, 'real-world knowledge tends to be conveyed in the majority language' (ibid.). Similarly, the vocabulary required in art classes was quite technical and rarely used in Irish, and teachers and students had to grapple with a lack of written materials for the subject in Irish. The choice of observing art classes in one school and science in another was for logistical reasons.

In addition to observing classes, I spent time with students at lunchtime, before school and during free periods or sports, though I spent much more 'free' time with some participants than others, for the reasons outlined above.

4.4.4 *Classroom recordings*

Although I attended multiple classes per week in each school, I recorded only a handful, focusing on classes where conflicts tended to arise relating to the choice of language, particularly in Coláiste Bhríde. These recordings were made mostly towards the end of the

research period and where possible at least two lessons in each subject with each year group were recorded. A total of 16 hours and 48 minutes of classroom recordings were made, of which 9 hours and 48 minutes were in CB and 7 hours in GCI.

Such recordings clearly had an impact on teachers, as evidenced by some teachers' insistence on changing their lesson plan to something they felt was more suited to my aims (despite my protestations that I did not want to disturb their lesson plan). Some explained my work to students at the start of recordings (often incorrectly, which participants remarked on to me afterwards) and others reminded students of the presence of the recorder, as below:

Extract 4.2 – CB5.CR.241

0017	Tomás	did I do really bad ##
0018	Teacher	((pointing at mic:)) céard a ~Thomáis
0019	Tomás	an ndearna mé really go dona mar tá tú ag breathnú orm ##
		(0.5)
0020	Teacher	oh sorry
		(0.3)
0021		tá brón orm
		(0.9)
0017	Tomás	*did I do really bad ##*
0018	Teacher	((pointing at mic:)) what ~Tomás
0019	Tomás	did I do *really* badly because you're looking at me##
		(0.5)
0020	Teacher	oh *sorry*
		(0.3)
0021		I'm sorry
		(0.9)

4.4.5 Self-recordings

I had initially planned for self-recordings to be a significant part of the data gathered. Recordings made by participants in the absence of researchers provide an insight into participants' lives that is often not available to the researcher through other means. However, significant ethical issues arise, since participants often record people who have not signed

forms affirming their consent and may attempt to record people who do not wish to be recorded, leading to conflict in which the researcher may be implicated.

Logistical barriers (including the University and College Union strike of spring 2018) meant that I did not obtain equipment for self-recording until very close to the end of the research period. It was only possible to make a handful of recordings, because organising such recordings requires a considerable amount of preparation and discussion with school authorities in particular. These recordings have not been analysed.

4.5 Data and transcription

In general, I took notes in a paper notebook during participant observation, as this fit best with the classroom environment. At lunchtimes or during non-classroom activities, I took notes on my smartphone. Audio recordings of focus groups were made using a Marantz PMD661 audio recorder and cardioid microphone and these were orthographically transcribed using ELAN (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive 2017; Sloetjes and Wittenburg 2008). Interviewees' names and other information that might identify the school or individual participants were replaced with culturally appropriate pseudonyms[6]. I did all transcription myself since the transcription of the data constitutes the first step in its analysis (Copland et al., 2015: Chapter 2).

All files were transferred via USB to my personal computer, which is encrypted, and was backed up to the university's back-up service and an encrypted hard drive. On completion of the research, anonymised versions of audio recordings and transcripts will be deposited in the

[6] This means that where a speaker has an Irish name, their pseudonym will be Irish, and so on.

Irish Qualitative Data Archive at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Storing the data in an archive will ensure it is accessible to future researchers and is preserved in the long term. Choosing an archive in Ireland means the data will remain in its country of origin, so that it is easily accessible for those most concerned with the area of research and has the added benefit of ensuring that it will be covered by European Union data regulations in the long term.

Each recording and field note has been given a code, with the following format:

[School and year group].[type of data].[item number].

Data types are field notes (FN), focus group recording (FG), classroom recording (CR), self-recording (SR). For example, the code GCI1.FG.164 refers to a focus group recording with First Years at GCI.

The transcription of dialogue is fairly broad, since the main focus of this thesis is on the content of utterances. In both translations and transcripts of English language conversation, standard orthography is used except in the case of 'ye' and 'yeer', the most common way of marking the second person plural in Irish English (Raymond Hickey 2007: 238). Pauses of over 0.2 milliseconds between utterances are recorded. The transcription conventions are based on John W. Du Bois's (2006) conventions, with the most important symbols given below:

comment	((WORDS))
truncated word	wor-
unintelligible	###
pseudograph	~Jill
laugh pulse	@
timed pause	(1.2)
voice of another (mimicking)	"words"

Speech in Irish is transcribed orthographically, following the guidelines set out for Corpas na Gaeilge Labhartha (Corpus of Spoken Irish) 2011-2012, as discussed in Uí Dhonnchadha, Frenda and Vaughan (2012). These guidelines allow for the recording of a limited set of non-standard forms, but generally use the standard spelling. However, although non-standard syntax will be left unaltered, non-standard morphology will be standardised, unlike in Corpas na Gaeilge Labhartha. This is partly because it is not essential to the analysis pursued here. While the variability in the Irish spoken by almost all participants is notable and worthy of research in itself, particularly in light of research by Ó Curnáin and others discussed in the previous chapter, it has relatively little bearing on my research questions and the time it would take to transcribe this in detail would be excessive. In addition, many participants in GCI never pronounced certain phonemes even where they appear lexically. They seemed unaware of this, to the extent that one participant (Zoë, GCI5) who placed great importance on grammatical accuracy used /k/ instead of /x/ in all cases where 'ch' appeared lexically, but used /x/ where it was required grammatically due to initial mutation[7]. GCI participants almost always pronounced 'ch' as /k/ and it would make little sense to transcribe it differently based on whether it was lexical or grammatical.

Translations are provided for all utterances in Irish. Where English was used in the context of Irish speech, it is italicised in the English translation. Translations generally do not replicate grammatical or other errors in Irish speech, unless this is relevant to the analysis or to the conversation in which they occur.

[7] In Irish, as in other Celtic languages, certain phonemes will alternate under particular grammatical conditions. For further details, see Fife and King (2017: 478–483).

5. ‘It’ll keep the Irish going, like’: attitudes to language policy among teenagers in Coláiste Bhríde and Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair

The major conflict in the design of language revitalisation policy is how to preserve or promote a language, which is an inherently social activity, requiring buy-in from a range of individuals, without infringing upon those individuals’ right to choose what language they speak. Language and identity are tightly bound, so pressure to speak a certain language in a certain way at a particular time and place can be seen as an unacceptable impingement on individual freedom. However, revitalising a minority language in particular requires that the language be spoken in contexts from which it has hitherto been absent and that new people acquire and speak it. The question of how to attain this without being seen to violate the freedom of those who do not wish to participate in language revitalisation has been termed the issue of ‘tolerability’ by May (2000) and de Bres (2008).

The education system is the primary focus of language revitalisation activities in Ireland, as in many other contexts. It is, therefore, especially important to understand teenagers’ attitudes to language revitalisation efforts, since they are more affected by language revitalisation policy than adults and are more concerned than younger students with language as a means of identity construction and resistance to adult authority.

Language patterns among students at the two schools will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but the key difference between them, as outlined briefly in Chapter 4, is that the majority of Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair students do not speak Irish outside the school, while the majority of Coláiste Bhríde students do so regularly, even if a minority speaks only English at home. These differing relationships to the language are reflected in attitudes to

language policy in the two schools: CB students are more interested than GCI students in broader questions of language policy, since it is embedded in every part of their lives, while Irish for most GCI students is restricted to school and is something they can opt out of. CB students are also more concerned with the issue of tolerability and individual freedom than GCI students, who see a robust language policy as the only way to ensure the survival of the language.

Section 5.1 explore how language policy is implemented in each school. Section 5.2 discusses legitimate language at the two schools. Section 5.3 investigates how participants in each school view the relationship between language and maturity, demonstrating that in both schools, speaking Irish is associated with obedience and fear of teachers, while English is associated with increased independence and maturity. Section 5.4 discusses how English is used to challenge authority in CB but not in GCI. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 discuss attitudes to language policy within and beyond the school, showing again that CB students are more engaged with shaping language policy while CI students generally accept it as it is.

5.1 School language policy

An overview of national language policy has been given in Chapter 3. The two schools in this study operate very different language policies, though both experienced problems due to a lack of resources for Irish-medium education. This meant students often had to work from English-language textbooks because Irish-language equivalents, if available at all, were regarded as unsuitable, whether in terms of content or language, and both schools had difficulty recruiting teachers with adequate language skills. These problems are common among Irish-medium schools, as discussed in Section 3.4.1.

5.1.1 School language policy at Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair

Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair is an immersion school, as described in Edwards (2009: 257). Students (or their parents) choose the school specifically in order to be educated through Irish. The vast majority speak only English at home, though a handful speak Irish, usually only with one parent. Most have attended a Gaelscoil. There is an Irish-medium primary school nearby, many of whose pupils go on to attend Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair, but many students also come from Gaelscoileanna across the county and even beyond, meaning that the move to secondary school involves significant changes in friendship groups. As discussed in Chapter 6, Irish is only a school language for most students.

At the time of fieldwork, the school's admission policy specified that students from English-medium primary schools were welcome as long as they demonstrated competence in Irish and a positive attitude to it. The school takes care to help such students integrate, running a special homework club for them, and there was pride in how fast students like this caught up with their peers. The vice-principal attributing it to the fact that they focused on improving their Irish, while their peers from Irish-medium primary schools might be satisfied with a lower level of accuracy and range of expression, since this had sufficed thus far. Liam (GCI1), the only participant who had attended an English-medium primary school, commented that teachers treated him differently from other students, giving him higher marks than his work merited (e.g. 100% in a test in which he had got five questions wrong) and essentially doing his homework for him in the homework club. While it is likely that this leniency was a temporary measure to ease his transition to Irish-medium education, it reflects the school's focus on ensuring students from English-medium primary schools do not feel out of place.

School language policy in Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair is stricter than that described in other contexts by Heller (2006), Selleck (2012) and Woolard (2016), though in line with that in most Gaelcholáistí. The school's language policy states that Irish is the language of teaching and communication within the school. In practice this means, as I observed during my fieldwork and was informed by teachers, students are not permitted to speak English at any time on school premises, except in language classes or other exceptional circumstances, as discussed below. Violations of this rule were usually punished with detention ('géibheann') after school or at lunchtime, depending on how grave the violation was or on the student's previous record. Disciplinary policy was generally strict in my observation, with detention regularly administered for relatively minor infractions like forgetting homework or wearing the wrong trousers, and suspensions were also relatively common. Students rarely spoke English in front of teachers and almost never to them.

The connection between Irish and politics was often made at GCI. For example, the school organised an annual political forum, where Fourth and Fifth Year students had the opportunity to ask local politicians and language activists questions, generally relating to funding and support for the Irish language and Gaeltacht areas.

5.1.2 School language policy at Coláiste Bhríde

Coláiste Bhríde, on the other hand, is closer to the model of heritage maintenance described in Edwards (2009: 257). In this case, the heritage variety is specifically the Conamara dialect, while the mainstream variety is the standard variety. This situation is more complex than those discussed by Edwards in that English also plays an important role. At nearby primary schools, which all follow the regulations for Gaeltacht primary schools, teaching is entirely in Irish to begin with and English is gradually introduced from the second year of primary school

onwards, though its use is restricted to English language lessons. The bulk of teaching is in the local dialect of Irish, where teachers who speak this dialect are available. By the time they enter secondary school, students at CB are expected to have a high level of competence in English and no additional support is provided to those who may have difficulties with it. I learned this during fieldwork, where I found the bigger concern was to support students whose competence in Irish is low. Again, this reflects national policy for Gaeltacht secondary schools. At primary level there is a clear template for when English should be introduced, based on immersion education policies worldwide, even if there may be variance in implementation. At secondary level, however, there is little guidance for schools on how to navigate the challenges posed by differences between the standard and local dialects in Gaeltacht areas. This is unsurprising given the general focus on the standard in the education system and the tendency for policy to focus on institutional use rather than supporting home and community use, as discussed in Section 3.1. The 50-page guidance document giving details on the national policy on Gaeltacht education does not contain a single reference to differences between dialect and standard. Consequently, approaches to this may vary between schools and from teacher to teacher within schools. First Years had less experience than older students in CB or their peers in GCI of dialects other than the local one and were not very conscious of the existence of the standard, though their Irish teacher (Máistir Ó Ceallaigh) was gradually raising their awareness of differences between written Irish (generally standard) and spoken Irish (generally dialect), urging them to retain their dialect in speech while following the rules of the standard in their written work. Fifth Years, in contrast, had had to become familiar with the standard in preparation for the Junior Certificate exam taken in Third Year.

The complex linguistic context of the school, meant that language policy was quite fluid in my observation. The school's policy states that Irish is the language of the school and that

every effort is made to encourage and support students to speak Irish. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the school must serve the whole local community and that support is provided for those in the community who speak little Irish. In practice, some staff at the school observed that this could cause confusion. For example if one student handed in work in English because their competence in Irish was low, other students might ask to do the same. Of the cases discussed in Chapter 2, CB in my observation was closest to the situation described in Catalonia, in that students often responded in English to questions put in Irish and teachers often accepted this without remark. Irish was the official language of the school and students were encouraged to speak it. Students who spoke English on occasions when they were expected to speak Irish (e.g. when coming into the staffroom or making an announcement in another classroom) were treated as though they had been a bit cheeky. However, speaking English was generally not regarded as a disciplinary issue. In general, from what I witnessed or was told, attitudes to discipline within the school were fairly relaxed. The school's disciplinary policy does not mention the possibility of detention, for example.

CB students had the option of taking exams in either Irish or English (this was not mentioned in policy documents, but was widely accepted among staff in practice). There was some confusion about how this affected schoolwork – some teachers accepted work in English and some did not – but in practice many Fifth Year students seemed to work through English, especially for science subjects. For example, Caoimhe said she used both languages because she found some subjects easier in Irish, but she generally preferred to speak English. She did all exams in Irish 'for extra points'. The regulations are that students should be given exam papers in both English and Irish, but in order to get all the extra points for Irish, no English should appear on the answer booklet. Caoimhe took advantage of this: she read the English paper and answered in Irish, an approach taken by several students in both schools.

5.1.3 Gaelbhratach

Both schools took part in the 'Gaelbhratach' ('Gaelic flag') programme, an initiative whereby schools are awarded a flag after achieving a number of targets regarding the use of Irish in the school. The Gaelbhratach scheme is intended to be student-led.[8] A student committee is appointed, and one staff member attends meetings. The committee organises events to promote Irish within the school. Irish-medium schools are also partnered with English-medium ones, to increase contact between students in the two systems. Time constraints, and a desire not to be seen as only interested in the promotion of Irish, meant I did not have much contact with the Gaelbhratach committee in either school, though several participants were members. In both schools, the staff member involved was generally very active in the promotion of Irish more widely in the school, and clearly had a strong influence on the actions of the committee.

The students on these committees generally appeared to be highly motivated academically and were generally seen by staff as 'good students'. Perhaps as a result, most representatives from First and Fifth Year in both schools participated in my study:

Table 5.1: Gaelbhratach committee members among participants

School	Year Group	Students
Coláiste Bhríde	1	Ailbhe, Muireann
	5	Mary
Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair	1	Cormac, Eibhlín, Sorcha
	5	Aoife, Neasa, Emily, Zoë, Rebecca

The CI Gaelbhratach committee was dominated by members of one friendship group, centred on Aoife and Neasa (GCI5). They identified themselves as speaking more Irish than others in

[8] https://gaelbhratach.ie/en/cur-sios/

their year, which they attributed to a general sense of 'respect' for the language. However, Aoife also commented that being on the committee motivated them to speak more Irish:

Extract 5.1 – GCI5.FG.205

cabhraíonn sin leis an méid Gaeilge a labhraíonn muid mar saghas tá orainn mar tá muidne like tá muidne ar an gcoiste Gaeilge

that helps with the amount of Irish we speak because kind of we have to because we *like* we are on the Irish language committee

The CB Gaelbhratach committee created posters that were displayed in school corridors. These posters took a very direct approach to urging students to speak Irish, using slogans like 'Níl mise chun deireadh a chur leis an nGaeilge, an bhfuil tusa?' ('I'm not going to put an end to the Irish language, are you?'). These posters are discussed in the extract below. Mary's tone here is a little exasperated: she seems to feel that as head of the Gaelbhratach committee she has to defend the posters, but she also does not go beyond stating that she understands the reasoning behind them (0632). It is possible that the posters do not reflect her own views on the topic but she feels she cannot criticise them because of her role on the committee.

Extract 5.2 – CB5.FG.132

0627	Interviewer	what do ye think about like say you know in the corridors there's a tonne of posters th-
0628	Ruby	oh they're so annoying
0629	Mary	we've made a lot of those like we're (0.2)
0630	Interviewer	is it a bit intense
0631	Ruby	yeah it's okay I don't say
0632	Mary	I get why we're doing it because I'm in charge of the Gaelbhratach which means I know why we're doing it and like I get it
0633	Ruby	I get it as well but like

Mary and the GCI Fifth Year girls were very engaged with the Gaelbhratach committee and the GCI girls in particular were very enthusiastic about its function. Ailbhe (CB1) was, of course, new to the committee at the time I conducted fieldwork, and was somewhat ambivalent

about how it worked. She complained that a Gaelbhratach event she had attended in Galway city had focused too much on plans and had not taken enough account of the fact that speaking Irish is a choice and should be fun.

Although theoretically these committees give students an opportunity to engage with and influence school language policy, their aim is to promote Irish. This means that arguments for less restrictive language policy, or even arguments against the promotion of Irish, are unlikely to be considered appropriate. They are, therefore, a forum for students interested in questions of language policy, but not one in which they are likely to be able to make radical change. Even suggesting such change might be risky, since they are still in a school context, so students (particularly the most academically engaged students, who were more likely to be represented on the committee in my observation) might fear being seen as cheeky or rebellious. This is reminiscent of Costa's argument that young people in language revitalisation contexts are expected to accept and promote the ideologies passed down to them by older generations without questioning them (2014). In GCI, the Gaelbhratach blog the committee was supposed to produce had foundered because although students drafted the entries, they had to be proofread and approved by the principal, which took too long, so students made posters instead. The school's desire to maintain a high standard of Irish in the blog is understandable – students have a high standard of Irish relative to peers in English-medium schools, but are still likely to make mistakes – but is likely to have heightened the sense that the Gaelbhratach committee did not have full agency.

5.2 Legitimate language

The question of what variety is considered legitimate was more complex at CB than GCI, since the role of Irish at GCI was limited mainly to the school. Students at CB also had strong ties

to the local dialect, which meant that they had more and stronger objections to 'language laundering' in the education system than GCI students.

5.2.1 Coláiste Bhríde: contested legitimacy

Although school language policy was generally flexible, Irish was the legitimate language at CB. Rebukes to students for speaking English were generally fairly friendly. For example, when a teacher overheard Éanna (CB1) speaking English while on a walk the following exchange ensued:

Extract 5.3 – CB1.FN.21

Teacher: Bhfuil do chuid Gaeilge caillte agat?
Éanna: Rúinín beag caillte
Teacher: Rúinín mór

Teacher: Have you lost your Irish?
Éanna: A little bitteen[9]
Teacher: A big bitteen

The tone used by the teacher was wry rather than angry and the conversation ended there. Éanna resumed speaking English as soon as she was out of earshot. While GCI participants tended to take such rebukes in their stride, as long as there were no major consequences attached, CB participants usually resented them. Éanna was particularly aggrieved, as discussed in Section 5.5.1. Fifth Years were less likely to be reprimanded for speaking English, but the principal often encouraged them to speak Irish in my presence. For example, at lunchtime one day Fionnuala was talking about a podcast about a serial rapist who hid under people's beds – quite a shocking topic. A teacher walked past and asked 'An bhfuil mé ag cloisteáil Fionnuala ag labhairt Béarla?' ('Am I hearing Fionnuala speaking English?'). While

[9] '-een' is a diminutive particle common in Irish English and equivalent to '-ín' in Irish.

Fionnuala quickly denied that she had been, the others remarked, after he left, that he had not commented on the content of what she was saying, just the language.

In CB, language laundering was generally restricted to Irish lessons. Outside of these, as long as the basic structure of a sentence was Irish, no comment was made about non-standard vocabulary or syntax and language-mixing was mostly tolerated, in line with local norms. In the example below, from a Fifth Year Irish class, Darragh repeatedly refuses to respond in Irish when the teacher has called on him to read out his answer to a question they were given for homework, a pattern discussed below. When he eventually does respond in Irish, it is grammatically inaccurate and the teacher expresses her disapproval by making a disapproving noise, leading Darragh to correct himself immediately.

Extract 5.4 – CB5.FN.180

Darragh: I didn't do it
Teacher: Céard?
Darragh: I didn't do it
Teacher: Céard?
Darragh: I didn't do it
Teacher: Céard? Bhfuil tú in ann é sin a rá i nGaeilge?
Darragh: Ní rinne mé é
Teacher: ((disapproving noise))
Darragh: Ní dhearna

Darragh: *I didn't do it*
Teacher: What?
Darragh: *I didn't do it*
Teacher: What?
Darragh: *I didn't do it*
Teacher: What? Can you say that in Irish?
Darragh: ((grammatically incorrect:)) I didn't do it
Teacher: ((disapproving noise))
Darragh: ((correcting himself:)) didn't do

Although the local dialect was the only legitimate spoken language, as discussed in Chapter 6, preparation for state exams required fluency in the standard variety, which CB students

referred to as ‘Gaeilge na leabhar’ or ‘book Irish’. While the use of the standard in textbooks and exams suggests it is the ‘correct’ and neutral form of the language, i.e. it is ‘anonymous’ in Woolard’s terms, CB students rejected it as inauthentic, a common attitude among Gaeltacht speakers, as discussed in Chapter 3. Interestingly, one of the charges they levelled at it was that it was difficult to understand, which undermines the notion of ‘anonymous’ standard varieties as enabling clear, rational communication.

First Years were gradually being familiarised with the Caighdeán (standard variety) in their first few months of secondary school and did not express any strong views on ‘book Irish’ when I asked them about it. Although the textbooks used at primary level were written in standard varieties, the transition to secondary school meant they needed to be able to write in the standard variety and learn new technical vocabulary. The state examinations they would sit in a few years’ time would be marked by external assessors who might not be familiar with the dialectal expressions that were considered appropriate for use in the local area. Their Irish and science teachers in particular often drew attention to differences between their dialect and the standard. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, the Irish teacher encouraged them to speak the local dialect but use standard written forms, and also warned them to avoid anglicisms. Their science teacher offered familiar dialectal alternatives to the standard Irish used in their textbooks, which they struggled with. While I did not observe any explicit discussion of ‘book Irish’ among First Years, they were often confused by the language of their textbooks. They also rejected the attempts of the French teacher to teach them the Irish words for various fruit and vegetables, rolling their eyes at unfamiliar words like ‘ológa’ (‘olives’) and translating the French into English instead.

Older CB students were very aware of the emphasis placed on the standard in the education system, though their stances towards it varied. Less academically-oriented students were confused by the 'book Irish' they had to master for school, while the most academically-motivated were frustrated at the devaluation of their own variety in favour of one they considered to be inauthentic and to be just as influenced by English as their own dialect. Fifth Years also found scientific terminology difficult in English, so there was some frustration at the fact that they had to learn it in both languages. They often used English textbooks and teachers explained particularly complex material in English. On one occasion, the biology teacher asked the class what language they were doing a particular question in. Ruby responded 'I'm doing it in English because I can't be bothered translating', while Mary said she was doing it in Irish but had written the English words in brackets where she didn't know the Irish ones. These comments suggest they saw the language as an additional layer of difficulty on top of learning the material itself, despite the fact that both intended to sit the exam in Irish.

Fifth Year classes were streamed on the basis of academic ability and I observed Irish classes only in the B-stream. The teacher of this group often drew students' attention to differences between their dialect and the language they were expected to use and understand in exams, acknowledging that it might be a little unfair on them. Tomás remarked that, while the standard had been 'weird in First Year [...] now we know it'. However, the boys in this group still expressed some confusion with regard to 'book Irish' and other varieties of Irish, as discussed in Chapter 6. In a focus group they dismissed the idea that someone could be 'fluent' in book Irish. They did not consider it suitable for casual conversation – 'book Irish is more for speeches'.

The more academically-focused participants were mostly in another Irish class, which I didn't observe and where, it seemed, much emphasis was laid on using standard Irish rather than dialectal alternatives. In the second round of focus groups, Caoimhe argued that much of the vocabulary they were expected to learn were just 'English words pronounced in an Irish kind of [way]', that is, they failed the standards of legitimate language set by their teachers just as much as phrases like 'mo bhicycle', as discussed below. This echoes Coleman's (2004: 386) description of perceptions of the standard among Gaeltacht speakers as 'an Irish language mask covering English-language thought', as discussed in Section 3.2.1.

Mary and Ruby were particularly academically engaged. This meant the requirement to use standard language in exams was more important to them than to others, since the loss of a handful of marks might cause them to miss out on the courses they wished to do at university. They were, therefore, especially frustrated by what they saw as the devaluation of their dialect. For example, Ruby complained that, according to an account she followed on Snapchat, which gave advice to students on how to get the highest marks in Irish, more marks would be given for the word 'gluaisteán' than the word 'carr' ('car'). 'Gluaisteán' is not used in Gaeltacht dialects, having been coined by language planners who wanted to avoid perceived anglicisms. As seen below, she, Mary and Caoimhe rejected the idea that the variety of Irish they felt was expected of them in exams had any relevance to the language they spoke.

Extract 5.5 – CB5.FG.132

0607	Mary	the Irish we have to put down on our tests and that we have to learn is not the Irish that we speak but they're like "but keep your spoken language alive" it's like then test me on it
0608	Ruby	that we speak
0609	Caoimhe	then you're teaching me two different Irishes
0610	Ruby	yeah test me on my actual spoken language

In particular, Mary draws attention to the hypocrisy she perceives in the fact that 'they' expect her and her peers to maintain their local dialect while refusing to acknowledge its value in the educational system she and her peers must go through in order to reach their career goals (0607). The preservation of the 'authentic' variety is regarded as important to Irish culture, but the 'anonymous' variety is what counts for academic and professional success, meaning Gaeltacht speakers are expected to master both. As discussed in Section 3.4.2, Ó hIfearnáin suggests this is more difficult for young speakers than it was for previous generations. The neglect of their dialect was combined with a syllabus that Mary and Ruby considered to be so easy that it was 'not engaging' for them, suggesting, as discussed in Section 3.4.1, that the curriculum is designed with new speakers in mind.

In the extract below, the phrase 'mo bhicycle' ('my bicycle') is portrayed as iconic of the local dialect:

Extract 5.6 – CB5.FG.132

0618	Mary	it's kind of the thing of (0.5)
0619	Mary	there's a difference between they're like "but it shows you don't know the word" like no there's a difference between I know the word rothar ['bicycle'] but I choose to say mo bhicycle ['my *bicycle'*] 'cause that's our canúint [dialect/accent][10]
0620	Caoimhe	they're making up Irish ##### (0.6)
0621	Mary	and there's a difference between I don't know how to say bicycle in Irish (0.2)
0622	Ruby	well like everyone know you don't go "ar mo bicycle" you go "ar mo bhicycle" ['on my

[10] The term 'dialect' is rarely used in Irish English and participants usually referred to dialects of Irish as 'accents'. The equivalent Irish term 'canúint' can be translated either as 'dialect' or 'accent'.

```
                    bicycle']
                    (0.3)
0623 Mary           that that séimhiú ['lenition'] itself is
                    just explaining you do have the language
```

While 'bicycle'(sometimes spelt 'baidhsicil') is obviously a borrowing from English, it has a long history of use in the area and is generally preferred to the alternative Irish word 'rothar', which tends to be used by non-Gaeltacht speakers. Although 'carr' is generally accepted as an alternative to 'gluaisteán' and is probably more common, the word 'bicycle' is not and is often treated as contamination from English. They regarded this as a completely valid part of their local dialect, on the basis that it was used by older local speakers, as discussed in Section 6.3.1. In Extract 5.6, Ruby and Mary argue that the fact that it can be lenited is clear evidence that it is a real Irish word (0622, 0623). They thus reject what they feel is a crude distinction between Irish and English. Caoimhe also observes that the same authorities on language that condemn 'mo bhicycle' also 'mak[e] up' words that have no history (0620), and by implication no legitimacy.

In CB, therefore, legitimate language was contested. Irish was clearly more legitimate than English, though the latter was often acceptable in situations where it would not be in GCI. The variety of Irish in question, however, determined its legitimacy in particular contexts: only the local dialect was acceptable in spoken, informal Irish, while only the written standard was acceptable in writing. Participants challenged the legitimacy of the 'anonymous' standard, arguing instead for the authenticity of their local dialect.

5.2.2 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair: Irish as the legitimate language

In GCI, Irish was the only legitimate language, except in English, French and German classes and a limited number of clearly delineated exceptional circumstances, such as when someone

who did not speak Irish visited the school. English was spoken by all students in the absence of teachers, but many teachers immediately imposed detention on anyone heard speaking even a word of English, meaning the cost of speaking it openly was too high for most to risk it. Many students parodied the attitudes of stricter teachers, so that shouts of 'Béarla' or 'Gaeilge' were regularly to be heard among students at lunchtimes or between classes. Older students were generally given more leeway and reproaches to them for speaking English were similar to those directed to students at CB. For example, during a Fifth Year class the teacher asked a student 'An bhfuil mé ag cloisteáil Béarla uait?' ('Am I hearing English from you?') and made a vague reference to detention, whereas if the same situation happened with a First Year (which it did not in my experience, since they were so cautious), detention would likely have been imposed immediately.

The strict language policy meant that students were sometimes uncertain about which contexts they were allowed to speak English in. For example, on one occasion, very early in the fieldwork period, a group from Argentina visited the school. They were introduced in Irish first but the group themselves spoke in English. Students had the opportunity to ask them questions. The first student to be picked to ask a question hesitated and clarified with the principal that she was allowed to speak in English in this context before doing so. While from a practical point of view, the use of English was clearly necessary in this context, the student probably sought explicit permission to ensure teachers knew she wanted to follow the rules.

Similarly, the French teacher spoke very little Irish, especially at the start of the year, but was so concerned not to violate school language policy that she tended to speak French or German in the staffroom, sensing that either of these options were more acceptable than English in this context. While I did not come across any students who spoke a language other than English

or Irish at home, it seems likely, given this, that any language other than English would have been regarded as acceptable, just as Heller (1996: 146) notes that the use of Somali was not regarded as a violation of school language policy in the French-medium school she studied.

Some teachers in the school, particularly those who taught English, had relatively low competence in Irish. This was generally not a problem in English class, where English was the legitimate language, but presented difficulties when it came to imposing discipline in the school more broadly. Students generally seemed to help teachers who struggled to formulate sentences in Irish, even where that sentence was a rebuke. However, there was often a sense of satisfaction among younger students in these situations that they were more competent than the teacher and they often took advantage of these opportunities to speak English with no consequences.

There was some contestation of language norms at GCI, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, but the clear preference of CB students for their 'authentic' variety over the 'anonymous' standard was absent. GCI participants occasionally challenged the relevance of both the standard and Gaeltacht dialects and argued for the value of their own 'normal' variety, but for most GCI participants, Irish was only a school language. This meant the school was the only context in which the definition of legitimate language was contested. Students did not generally have a connection to Irish-speaking communities beyond the school and for those who did, this connection was with communities of new speakers who had mostly acquired Irish through the education system themselves. They saw no conflict between the Irish they read in their textbooks and the Irish they spoke. Books were the obvious way to acquire Irish and they were unaware of the term 'book Irish'/'Gaeilge na leabhar'. Laura, Róisín, Cian and Chloe (GCI5) were bemused when I asked if they ever found people had difficulty

understanding them when they spoke Irish outside school because they had learned their Irish from books. Firstly, Laura remarked, they did not have opportunities to speak Irish outside school. Secondly, Cian observed, even if they did, most people in Galway would have learned their Irish from books too.

The role of Irish was compartmentalised for GCI students, some of whom did not see its relevance outside of school or even outside of classes taught through Irish. On one occasion a student in a Fifth Year English class jokingly used an Irish phrase ('idir dhá chomhairle' or 'in two minds') to describe a character in the literature they were discussing. There was laughter and incredulity among other students when the teacher said this phrase would be entirely appropriate for use in exams. She had a poster on the wall with phrases from various languages, to be used in English essays. This did not contain any Irish, but she suggested she should add some. The fact that the poster did not contain any Irish phrases, along with the amused reaction of the students suggests a perception of Irish as being valuable only in specific contexts, something Nance also observed in Gaelic-medium education (2013: 88).

In GCI, the legitimate language was, therefore, Irish, except in a limited number of contexts, such as English or French classes. There was some contestation of what variety was appropriate, but relatively little compared to CB.

5.3 Irish and maturity

First Years have a particularly interesting perspective on school language policy since they are new to the school and language policy at primary level is often quite different to that at secondary. Not wanting to bias their responses, I asked them about differences between primary and secondary school, expecting language issues to come up, even if mixed among

other concerns. However, they mostly did not, in either school. Instead, students talked about getting more homework, having different teachers and new subjects, and being allowed to stay inside at lunchtime. When asked about differences in terms of language, many spoke about learning French and/or German. It seems, therefore, that the Irish language was not a major part of the confusion associated with moving from primary to secondary school. However, when asked explicitly about differences relating to Irish, they identified quite a few.

5.3.1 Coláiste Bhríde: secondary school brings more freedom and more English

CB First Years saw the more relaxed language policy implemented at CB as part of a general relaxation of the rules at secondary school because they were now older and more independent. In the extract below, Sadhbh and Ailbhe identify speaking Irish as a free choice and argue that pressuring people to speak Irish often turns people away from it. Their description of their experience at primary level was repeated by almost all CB First Years. The key difference they see between primary and secondary is 'freedom'.

Extract 5.7 – CB1.FG.139

0059	Interviewer	so bhfuil mórán difríochtaí ann idir an bunscoil agus an meánscoil
0060	Sadhbh	yeah
0061		yeah tá sé i bhfad níos fearr anseo
0062	Jane	yeah
0063	Ailbhe	i bhfad níos fearr anseo
0064	Jane	#tá #sé i bhfad níos fearr (0.2)
0065	Interviewer	yeah deireann chuile dhuine é sin (0.2)
0066	Sadhbh	yeah bhí [primary school] chomh dona
0067	Ailbhe	tá like
0068		like ní raibh aon freedom againn (0.6)
0069		like bhí muid like
0070	Sadhbh	not even about freedom just like like ní raibh aon activities ann ##
0071	Ailbhe	yeah
0072	Jane	yeah

0059	Interviewer	*so* are there many differences between primary school and secondary school
0060	Sadhbh	*yeah*
0061		*yeah* it's much better here
0062	Jane	*yeah*
0063	Ailbhe	much better here
0064	Jane	#it's much better (0.2)
0065	Interviewer	*yeah* everyone says that (0.2)
0066	Sadhbh	*yeah* [primary school] was so bad
0067	Ailbhe	tá *like*
0068		*like* we had no freedom (0.6)
0069		*like* we were *like*
0070	Sadhbh	*not even about freedom just like like* there weren't any *activities* there ##
0071	Ailbhe	*yeah*
0072	Jane	*yeah*

They use the English words for 'freedom' and 'activities' here (0068, 0070), while later in the conversation they used the Irish term for schoolwork ('obair scoile') and described the disciplinary system at primary school in Irish. This probably reflects the fact that school rules were outlined and administered in Irish, but may also suggest an association between fun activities and 'freedom' and English, accentuated by that fact that Sadhbh also mentioned that they had often heard from friends about the range of activities at other, possibly English-medium, primary schools.

While Éanna, who had attended a different primary school than most in his year, thought fondly of his time there, everyone else was damning of their primary school experience. Jane, Órlaith and Ailbhe described their primary school's language policy as 'so scary':

Extract 5.8 – CB1.FG.212

0448	Jane	yeah fiú nuair a bheadh tú like oh and (0.5)
0449		as sin (0.5)
0450		if you just say like one word bheadh sé like (1.0)
0451	Éanna	slán

0452 Órlaith é that's the that's the only word that they would hear
0453 Ailbhe ballistic
(0.1)
0454 Órlaith like
0455 Jane yeah
(0.2)
0456 Órlaith just chloisfeadh siad an Béarla and then like
0457 Jane yeah
0458 Ailbhe yeah like ní # they wouldn't like
(0.4)
0459 they were just like our rules like
(0.2)
0460 ár rialachaí agus sin é

0448 Jane *yeah* even if you were *like oh and*
(0.5)
0449 from then
(0.5)
0450 *if you just say like one word* it would be *like*
(1.0)
0451 Éanna bye
0452 Órlaith it *that's the that's the only word that they would hear*
0453 Ailbhe *ballistic*
(0.1)
0454 Órlaith *like*
0455 Jane *yeah*
(0.2)
0456 Órlaith *just* they'd hear the English *and then like*
0457 Jane *yeah*
0458 Ailbhe *yeah like* they wouldn't # *they wouldn't like*
(0.4)
0459 *they were just like our rules like*
(0.2)
0460 our rules and that's it

Muireann and Sadhbh claimed almost everyone at primary had spoken Irish, though they complained about a handful who had insisted on speaking English. Ailbhe also commented 'tá níos mó Béarla anseo' ('there's more English here'). She portrayed this increase in the use of English in a positive manner, suggesting 'tá na múinteoirí like "bhuel is do choice atá ann tá sibhse níos maturer"' ('the teachers are *like* 'well it's your *choice* ye're more *maturer*').

Jane and Sadhbh corroborated this, though they were more hesitant than Ailbhe. Below, Sadhbh argues that this policy made them afraid to speak English (0110) but that the more relaxed policy in CB meant they made an active choice to speak Irish because they were not being 'pressured into it' (0113):

Extract 5.9 – CB1.FG.139

0110	Sadhbh	yeah like bhíodh faitíos ort like Béarla a labhairt but anseo you'd actually like bheadh tú níos kind of I don't know
0111	Jane	mhmm (1.0)
0112	Ailbhe	like
0113	Sadhbh	bheadh tú ag iarraidh Gaeilge a labhairt mar gheall níl tú pressured into it
0114	Jane	yeah
0115	Ailbhe	yeah
0116	Jane	yeah

0110	Sadhbh	*yeah like* you used to be afraid *like* to speak English *but* here *you'd actually like* you'd be more *kind of I don't know*
0111	Jane	mhmm (1.0)
0112	Ailbhe	*like*
0113	Sadhbh	you'd want to speak Irish because you aren't *pressured into it*
0114	Jane	*yeah*
0115	Ailbhe	*yeah*
0116	Jane	*yeah*

The idea that speaking English is associated with maturity also came up in the focus group with Mary, Ruby, Caoimhe and Evan when I asked why First Years spoke more Irish than older year groups. Ruby associated it with the incentives, such as stickers and days off homework, offered at local primary schools. However, the main reason she, Mary and Caoimhe (and all participants in their year) offered was that younger students were too scared to speak English (0503, 0504). Consequently, they argue, the fact that they speak less Irish now does not reflect a lack of love for the language, but rather increased independence (0507, 0508).

Extract 5.10 – CB5.FG.132

0503 Mary yeah but like it's a thing in their school as well you get told off if you don't speak enough Irish
(0.7)
0504 and like teachers are very very scary
(0.3)
0505 the older you get you realise teachers are just people
(0.2)
[...]
0507 Mary and you become more independent and that's why it would happen in secondary school not because we don't like the language but because we're no longer afraid of teachers
(0.2)
0508 Ruby and we don't feel like we'll speak it when we want to b- it's when you feel the pressure that it puts you off wanting to speak it

Ruby blamed strict school language policies at primary level for putting her siblings off speaking Irish. Below, she explains her frustration at her siblings' refusal to speak Irish, though in fact she rarely spoke Irish in school and was insecure about the standard of her own Irish, as discussed in Section 6.3.4. This discrepancy in language use even between siblings echoes Ó Curnáin's finding that older siblings spoke more conservatively than younger ones (2007: 58).

Extract 5.11 – CB5.FG.132

at home like I'll tell my brother and sister I'm like "oh my God why do you have to speak English" I'm like "speak Irish" (0.3) 'cause like it's not like my mom doesn't understand she was raised in ~Ballybeg and ~Cladach she just doesn't speak it that often (0.7) 'cause like my sister my sister's catchphrase for years was like "we're not at school" and I'm like (0.5) so she kinda like it felt to her as if it was something that you only do at school and you only have to do at school kinda like work kinda thing so she didn't like do it at home

The association of English with maturity and independence at CB echoes Mac Donnacha et al.'s (2005a: 97) finding that Gaeltacht teenagers spoke less Irish even as their competence increased with age, as discussed in Section 3.4.2.

5.3.2 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair: secondary school brings increased surveillance

At CB, entering secondary school is associated with greater freedom and greater freedom is associated with more English. The reverse was true at GCI. While most enjoyed the greater range of subjects and other advantages of secondary, the disciplinary regime was much stricter. There was a lot of anxiety about school rules in general, particularly among more academically-focused students, and the language policy was part of this. This anxiety is illustrated in Extract 5.12:

Extract 5.12 – GCI1.FG.164

0316	Jenny	they're like all watching you
0317	Gráinne	yeah
0318	Amanda	yeah
0319	Jenny	and you don't know what to do (0.1)
0320	Gráinne	yeah
0321	Mia	like they sneak out of anywhere (0.4)
0322		like
0323	Amanda	@@
0324	Gráinne	@@
0325	Jenny	@@
0326	Sarah	@@
0327	Mia	down in the hall I start speaking English and then I turn around and [teacher] was there behind me I'm like (0.6)
0328		ohh
0329	Gráinne	yeah they just like walk around and they just look at you
0330	Mia	like you never actually see them (0.1)
0331	Sarah	but like some teachers don't hear you (0.6)
0332	Mia	yeah the French teacher like you're all right with her because she doesn't understand Irish.
0333	Sarah	or they pretend not to

```
0334 Amanda         @@
0335 Gráinne        @@
0336 Jenny          @@
0337 Sarah          @@
```

These girls were generally quiet and well-behaved in school. With the exception of Mia, they were rarely in trouble even for minor things like whispering during class. However, they were all afraid of getting detention, with Amanda observing that ‘you get detention for everything here’ (a sentiment also expressed by Marc in a different focus group).

The fact that even Jenny, who was often mentioned by teachers as an excellent student, felt under surveillance (0319) and at risk of punishment shows one effect of the school’s strict language policy: these students were unlikely to get in trouble for non-linguistic infractions, but speaking only Irish simply was not an option for them, so even the most diligent risked detention on a daily basis. Some teachers are not seen as part of this regime (0331, 0332). In the case of the French teacher, the reason for this is uncontroversial: she does not speak Irish. However, Sarah’s statement that some teachers might ‘pretend not to’ hear students speaking English (0333) suggests an awareness that not all teachers actively enforce the school language policy.

The tone of the girls’ objections to the school’s detention policy is more one of worry than defiance: they want to follow the rules and are afraid that they will not quite manage to. This was mirrored in the attitudes of other First Years. For example, Cormac remarked that he sometimes had to speak English to friends who had come from English-medium primary schools because of their lacking language skills. This worried him as ‘there’s a chance that you’ll get géibheann for telling them how to not get géibheann’.

Cillian, Marc, Paul and Liam, who were the most likely in the class to get in trouble, were not overly concerned about the school language policy, though Paul considered it a bit harsh. Interestingly, they thought that older students spoke more Irish than they did (0834-0836):

Extract 5.13 – GCI1.FG.171

0830	Interviewer	in terms of like language do they speak more Irish say like fifth or sixth year
		(1.1)
0831	Cillian	yeah yeah I think I think the older
0832	Liam	yeah
0833	Paul	yeah yeah
		(0.4)
0834	Cillian	like fifth and sixth would speak a lot more Irish than we do
0835	Marc	yeah like it'd become like natural to them
0836	Liam	definitely
0837	Interviewer	do ye think
0838	Cillian	yeah
		(0.2)
0839		yeah
0840	Paul	because like when I was going on the [match] like th- the fifth years
		(0.5)
0841		on the bus when they came with us they were actually speaking Irish to each other
		(0.2)
0842		instead of using English
0843	Cillian	yeah
0844	Liam	yeah
0845	Cillian	I mean it is
0846	Interviewer	is that kind of weird for ye
0847	Cillian	a little bit
0848	Paul	yeah I was just like
		(0.4)
0849	Marc	no I I like
0850	Paul	you're free
		(0.4)
0851		what are you doing
		(0.1)
0852	Marc	((weird noise))
0853	Liam	((quiet:)) yeah
		(0.1)
0854	Cillian	but there is li- it's not just the older ones like there is like people in every year though
		(0.1)
0855	Liam	yeah
0856	Cillian	that would just speak Irish on their own
0857	Liam	~David
0858	Paul	yeah

```
0859 Cillian        like all the time
0860 Liam           ((stage whisper:)) ##
0861 Paul           who are like really proud of it
0862 Cillian        ((in response to Liam:)) no ~David speaks
                    English everyone speaks English
0863 Liam           I suppose
```

It is likely that the students they mention are a group in Fifth Year, including John and Tadhg, who decided to speak only Irish to each other for a month, as discussed in Section 7.2.1 (this group travelled to the match along with Paul and Cillian). While Marc sees this as understandable (0849), or at least wants to give me the impression that he does, Paul expresses shock that anyone would choose to speak Irish when they are not being forced to (0850-0851).

Towards the end of this excerpt Cillian suggests that there are people in every year group who speak Irish all the time (0854-0859). However, the only example given from their year group is David (0857). David was often the butt of jokes among peers as he was very academically motivated and also very anxious about breaking rules. In my observation he spoke no more Irish than anyone in his class, but he was mentioned more than once as someone who spoke Irish when teachers were not nearby. This means of singling him out is likely to reflect his general character as someone who goes out of his way to obey the rules. Cillian's rebuke to Liam for naming David (0862) suggests he is aware of this and does not want to be seen to be picking on him. Even the more academic girls were not keen on the idea of someone who wanted to speak Irish at school. Amanda, Mia and Sarah said this would be 'weird', while Jenny and Gráinne were unenthusiastic about the idea, though they said it would not bother them.

Fifth Years generally spoke as much English as First Years, but were not bothered by the school language policy: they knew they only had to show the minimum level of compliance in order not to get in trouble. Participants in both year groups agreed that the rules were

enforced much less strictly among older students, in terms of language policy as well as other forms of discipline, with the result that, in their account, they spoke less Irish at lunchtimes than they had when they were younger, associating this with a lack of fear. Whether this is accurate or not as a depiction of their practices, it shows the strong ideological link between speaking Irish and being obedient. Róisín explained that while they were told to speak Irish, there were no consequences if they did not:

Extract 5.14 – GCI5.FG.204

> agus sin é like ní thosaíonn muid ag labhairt Gaeilge ansin just fanaimid go dtí go siúlann siad (0.3) so like (0.4) ní really déanann sé difríocht
>
> and that's it *like* we don't start speaking Irish then we *just* wait until they walk (0.3) so *like* (0.4) it doesn't *really* make a difference

Laura had started using a code-phrase ('agus thosaigh mé ag caoineadh'- 'and I started crying') to alert other students to the presence of a teacher, though this was more of a joke than a serious warning since they were not really afraid of being caught. They said they only spoke a few words of Irish, 'ag messáil' ('messing') when teachers weren't around and they had a sense that most teachers didn't care, a sentiment echoed by participants in the other two focus groups in their year. Senan suggested that this laid-back approach was due to teachers being 'lazy', while Tadhg attributed it to greater 'respect' between teachers and students.

The link between English and maturity and independence was, therefore, as clear at GCI as it at CB.

5.4 English as a means of resisting teacher's authority

English was often used as a means of challenging authority at CB, particularly among Fifth Years. At GCI, it was rarely used in this way.

5.4.1 Coláiste Bhríde: English as an easy way to signify resistance to authority

First Years at CB did what was expected of them; they spoke only Irish to teachers and largely Irish around teachers. This corresponded with their general behaviour: they rarely broke any school rules, even minor ones like wearing non-uniform hoodies or chewing gum in class. Some participants were especially vehement about their desire to respect the school's language policy and their frustration with peers who did not. In Extract 5.15, I ask a group about people speaking either Irish or English at a time when it was not expected of them and when it seemed inappropriate.

Extract 5.15 – CB1.FG.212

2072	Interviewer	do people ever like (0.6)
2073		speak Irish in a place where they should be speaking English or speak English in a place where they should be speaking Irish and it just makes the whole thing really weird
2074	Órlaith	oh yes
2075		oh my God it's so annoying
2076	Ailbhe	yeah yeah oh my God no
2077	Interviewer	#######
2078	Ciarán	yeah
2079	Ailbhe	when people speak English in like an Irish
2080	Órlaith	no it's so awkward when we're #supposed #to #be #speaking #Irish
2081	Jane	my
2082	Interviewer	we can go around like this because ye all have stuff to say
2083	Ailbhe	yeah
2084	Órlaith	yeah (0.1)
2085	Ailbhe	when people speak like (0.6)
2086		English in like school I'm like (0.3)

2087 but we do
2088 Órlaith so awkward
2089 Jane we do
2090 Ailbhe no but when everyone's speaking Irish they just go on speaking English and then we d-
(0.3)
2091 we're like ((quiet:)) okay
(0.2)
2092 and then we like keep on speaking Irish then they're like
(0.5)
2093 an-
(0.3)
2094 answer back in English and we're like
(0.3)
2095 Órlaith yeah you're
(0.1)
2096 it's just kind of like
2097 Ailbhe awkward
(0.3)
2098 Órlaith yeah because you want to be speaking Irish or say if you're supposed to be speaking Irish and then someone starts speaking English you're like ((whispers:)) you're going to get us in trouble
2099 Jane mm
2100 Ailbhe yeah
(0.1)
2101 and then they like they're like oh I don't care
2102 Jane but like
(0.2)
2103 Órlaith yeah they they like ruin it for everyone
2104 Éanna but in English class
(0.4)
2105 if English class was the last class we had
(0.7)
2106 I'm like so used to speaking Irish all day
(0.1)
2107 that I just start speaking Irish in that class
(0.3)
2108 Jane yeah
(0.1)
2109 Ciarán I
(0.3)
2110 rarely speak Ir- Ir- English to a teacher even in English class I always speak Irish
2111 Órlaith same
2112 Éanna when students come over to learn Irish
2113 Órlaith yeah same
2114 oh always Irish yeah
2115 Ciarán never English to a teacher
2116 Ailbhe no always #English
2117 Ciarán when you're in places where all the other people like

2118	Jane	I remember the first day I was with [English teacher] (0.3)
2119	Ciarán	just no English (0.2)
2120		## (0.1)
2121	Jane	yeah first day when I was with [English teacher]) I was like oh bhfuil cead agam dul go dtí an leithreas ['oh can I go to the toilet']
		(0.1)
2122		ahm what's that in English and I was like (0.3)
2123		oh @@@ because I was just #
2124	Éanna	bathroom

Órlaith and Ailbhe immediately respond by complaining about people speaking English in school (2073-2103). Although Jane observes that they do that too (2089), Ailbhe elaborates, saying she means people who refuse to accommodate others who are speaking Irish (2090-2094). While she talks about this being 'awkward', which suggests the use of English in this context is just socially inappropriate, Órlaith also talks about how it makes her worry it would 'get us in trouble' (2098), i.e. English in this context might be viewed as disobedience and punished as such. Ailbhe supports this and then Órlaith makes quite a damning remark: people who speak English in school 'ruin it for everyone' (2103). It seems like she is still referring to this in terms of misbehaviour: people who speak English in school risk the whole class getting in trouble. It is unlikely that any actual punishment would ensue, but it would have in primary, which was still quite a recent memory. In addition, for students who were generally extremely obedient and highly praised by their teachers, any level of disapproval was difficult to bear.

It is interesting how vehement both Órlaith and Ailbhe are, given that Éanna, the most likely of their classmates to behave like this, is in the focus group with them. He does not challenge them, but rather introduces the topic of occasions where people speak Irish when English is expected of them. He had previously complained privately to me about people in his class

being ‘uptight’ about speaking Irish and in this focus group he also alleged that no one in their class really wanted to speak Irish. Instead of responding to the girls’ veiled criticism of his language practices, he brings up occasions where he, someone who never speaks Irish by choice, accidentally speaks Irish in English class (2104-2107). He claims it is just force of habit after having to speak Irish all day. Interestingly, in my observation he was the most likely in the class to do this. Éanna provides the English word ‘bathroom’ (2124) when Jane recounts how she could not think of how to ask to go to the bathroom in English in the incident in question (2121-2122), possibly in an attempt to demonstrate his proficiency in the language, with the corresponding implication that her English might not be up to scratch.

The conversation then moved to which teachers they liked and disliked, but Éanna brought it back to the question by bringing up the idea that overseas students who come to Ireland to learn Irish then speak Irish when they go back home:

Extract 5.16 – CB1.FG.212

2145	Éanna	when there's students who ahm come over to learn Irish
		(0.1)
2146	Interviewer	mhmm
		(0.2)
2147	Éanna	and then
		(0.4)
2148	Ailbhe	yeah and then everyone speak-
2149	Éanna	then when they fly home
		(0.4)
2150	Órlaith	oh God I'm ## again
2151	Éanna	ahm they're just speaking Irish for the next week because they're so used to it
2152	Ciarán	you know who's the best Irish
2153	Ailbhe	that's the most random
2154	Órlaith	your mom
		(0.4)
2155	Jane	yeah she's so good
2156	Ailbhe	thing I've ever heard in my life guys
2157	Ciarán	########
		(0.4)
2158	Ailbhe	dúirt ~Éanna [‘Éanna said’] if a student comes

```
                    (0.4)
2159                and speaks Irish
                    (0.2)
2160                when they go home
                    (0.1)
2161                they speak Irish for a @week
                    (0.2)
2162 Éanna          they do though
                    (0.2)
```

It is not entirely clear why he does this after a few minutes' interlude, but perhaps he wants to (very indirectly) retaliate against the complaints made by Ailbhe and Órlaith that relate (much more directly) to his own behaviour. Again, he may not want to suggest directly that they should not be speaking Irish, but rather to illustrate that Irish can be inappropriate in some situations, especially given how uncontroversial it is to suggest Irish is inappropriate abroad.

In spite of this display of devotion to Irish by the girls, even they were amused and impressed on one occasion when Shane from Fifth Year addressed the teacher in English, having been sent on an errand to their science class. The girls, along with other students, giggled and expressed their astonishment at his daring after he left the room, having received only the mildest of reprimands. The class later tested their boundaries slightly with a trainee teacher they had for Irish. This mostly consisted of chatting in class, being 'cheeky' in their responses to his questions and, for some, including the girls, making less effort than usual to conceal the fact that their own conversations were in English. However, both Michael and Éanna addressed the teacher in English, a particularly daring feat for this group. In Éanna's case, this is less surprising, since he only spoke Irish under duress. However, Michael's use of English with the teacher during groupwork was clearly a conscious decision: the other members of the group, Lee, Conor and Éabha, rarely spoke English and his usual language with them was Irish. At this time, Michael seemed to be building a rapport with older boys with whom he played football at lunchtime, often greeting or joking with them in the corridors. These boys,

including some of the Fifth Year B-stream boys, commonly spoke English to teachers, as discussed below, so he may have been emulating them.

In addition, when discussing the most effective form of language policy (a conversation reproduced in Extract 5.25), Ailbhe and Jane suggested that the main motivation for their use of English rather than Irish was that they were 'rebellious'. In fact, Jane said 'tá muid kind of ag iarraidh a bheith rebellious but then again not too', suggesting that they also saw the use of English as a form of resistance to adult authority, even if they were less daring in the use of this strategy than older students.

In contrast, Fifth Years were much more likely to challenge the authority of teachers and break school rules, from minor infractions like using phones in class to more significant ones, like smoking or openly challenging the authority of a teacher. Correspondingly, they were more likely to use English as another form of resistance to the authority of the school, in contrast to the observations of Pujolar and Puigdevall (2015: 176) and Selleck (2012: 57), who found that older students were less likely to use Castilian and Welsh, respectively, to express resistance to the authority of the school. Even those who were especially committed to the language, like Mary, often spoke English to and in the presence of teachers. Although this was generally frowned upon within the school, in practice many teachers did not react to it and students did not expect them to. It was, therefore, equivalent to other minor infractions, such as wearing a jacket over the school uniform in class and was used as a statement of resistance in much the same way: most students did it when they knew they would get away with it (e.g. where the teacher was generally relaxed about it), but some would do it consistently after being rebuked for it by a particular teacher. Thus, not every use of English constituted a challenge to the teacher's authority, but using English did signify some level of assertion of independence.

And while the teacher could order a student to remove their jacket (leaving them cold in often-draughty classrooms) or to spit out their chewing gum, the punishment for speaking English was usually just some cross words, which had varying degrees of impact on the students, depending on their mood and/or orientation to the school.

In biology, for example, language was a big issue, as mentioned above. Mary was generally the most active participant in this class, often helping others when they struggled to answer a question posed by the teacher. She was also the most likely to speak Irish. However, although she planned to take the exam in Irish, she generally spoke in English, leading to slightly paradoxical situations such as when she asked 'A mháistir [sir], do you know the proper labels for this in Irish?' She was also sometimes outspoken on the linguistic difficulties of this class. On one occasion she responded to the teacher's request that they recap what they had done the previous week, claiming they had been taught 'lots of things we can't say' and 'a lot of very technical stuff that made no sense'.

For some students, annoying teachers was an incentive to speak English in class. This was especially clear in the B-stream Irish class, in which most students spoke in English unless explicitly requested to speak Irish. The boys, in particular, seemed to consider the teacher's insistence on them speaking Irish to be more of an opportunity to challenge teachers' authority than an inconvenience: when I asked why they refused to speak Irish to teachers, Tomás responded that it was 'just to bother them, like'. For them, language was a convenient way to express resistance, as discussed by Heller (2006), since they would not suffer any real consequences for speaking English but it would 'bother' their teachers.

Darragh was the most likely in the class to refuse to speak Irish. In many instances he seemed to intentionally reply using as much English as possible. For example, if the teacher asked 'An bhfuil sé déanta', he would reply 'I don't have it done'. Usually, he would eventually speak in Irish, but it often took several turns and he generally would not pick up on the cues used by the teacher, such as pauses, asking 'céard' ('what') or saying 'ní thuigim' ('I don't understand'), only switching to Irish when asked explicitly to do so, as seen below:

Extract 5.17 – CB5.FN.113

Teacher: Céard atá siad ag caint faoi?
Darragh: I dunno
Teacher: ((silence))
Darragh: heroin
Teacher: ((silence))
Darragh: When he went home late
Teacher: Bhfuil aon Ghaeilge agat?
Darragh: No ((pause)) Nuair a tháinig sé abhaile deireanach

Teacher: What are they talking about?
Darragh: *I dunno*
Teacher: ((silence))
Darragh: *heroin*
Teacher: ((silence))
Darragh: *When he went home late*
Teacher: Have you any Irish?
Darragh: *No* ((pause)) When he came home late

On other occasions, he would refuse to speak Irish at all. For example, in one class Darragh had been disengaged and had already been rebuked for not taking notes and responding in English to the teacher's reprimand. Later, the teacher asked again 'an bhfuil tú ag scríobh?' ('are you writing?') and he responded in English that he had no pen. When the teacher said 'seo rang Gaeilge' ('this is an Irish class'), he responded 'I'm not going to be able to read this anyway'. Because of the nature of this study, I had a relatively small window into students' lives. Even in a more comprehensive study, the researcher will be limited in their understanding of the full context of participants' lives. It was, therefore, difficult to say exactly

what motivated their behaviour on each occasion. In this case, Darragh and other classmates had been supposed to miss this class for a football match and he was generally aggrieved because he felt this teacher 'thinks I'm disabled'. Sometimes other students would try to help Darragh out by telling him to stop when they could see the teacher was getting annoyed. This was not done with any sense of frustration: there was a general sense of camaraderie among the class and it seemed they simply did not want him to get himself in trouble, as he had a tendency to provoke the teacher, sometimes accidentally.

Shane joined B-stream students for Basic French and took on the role of class clown, though he generally stayed on the right side of the teacher. While he generally co-operated with the teacher's requests to speak Irish, he often spoke in English. For example, when she mentioned Netflix, in the context of asking them what television they watched, he remarked 'That's alright, a mháistreás ['miss'], we're not all as cool as you'. He also used language to subvert power dynamics in the classroom. For example, he sometimes rebuked other students, taking on the persona of the teacher by speaking in Irish. He also answered questions in Irish when French was requested. Other students found this hilarious, presumably since they are generally expected to speak Irish but in this case doing so was actually a (very mild) form of disobedience.

Language (and specifically English) was, thus, a favoured means of resisting authority in CB, since it enabled students to annoy teachers without suffering any disciplinary consequences. Although younger participants did not tend to use it in this way, this probably reflects their general obedience: their amusement at Shane's use of English and Michael's use of English with the trainee teacher suggest they recognised the power of speaking English in this context and might use it later.

5.4.2 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair: English is too risky

In GCI, speaking English was not used as a means of openly challenging teachers' authority. The strict disciplinary policy may have made this too great a risk. Those who were regarded as troublesome never did anything dramatically wrong in my presence, other than being a bit cheeky or disruptive, always through Irish. The availability of numerous English-medium schools in the vicinity meant that it was an active choice to attend an Irish-medium one. Resistance to school language policy was thus both less likely and more difficult to justify.

During the school open day, a teacher was on lunchtime duty who spoke little Irish. In the First and Second Year lunch hall, English was to be heard clearly, with no comment from him. However, later in the day, I and two trainee teachers who spoke Irish were in the hall along with two boys from Second Year, who had been kept back from a class trip. Although the boys were jumping on tables, accusing each other of having weed (brandishing packets of herbs), and boasting of how often they got suspended, they spoke Irish throughout. This illustrates the suspension of disbelief in play in the school. Everyone knew students spoke English when they could, so some teachers would overlook it, particularly if they did not speak Irish well. However, speaking English openly in a context where there was no plausible deniability was too risky for almost all. The strong support among students for school language policy suggests that peer pressure may have been a disincentive to challenging a teacher in this way: several Fifth Years complained about students in their year who they felt had been disrespectful in the way they'd spoken English in class, as seen in Extract 5.22.

English was acceptable, however, in foreign language classes. The motivation for this was obvious in the case of the French teacher, who spoke little Irish, but it was also the case in

other classes, where terms in the foreign language were routinely translated to English and students' contributions in English went unremarked. In one French class, Paul (GCI1) responded to the teacher calling the roll by saying 'present' in English rather than answering in French. He immediately sniggered and looked pleased with what he clearly saw as an act of resistance, albeit minor. Speaking aloud in French or German outside French or German lessons was also a 'safe' means of resistance for First Years, e.g. telling a peer to 'levez les mains'. It attracted no comment where doing this in English would have been viewed as overt disobedience.

Strict language policy at GCI meant English was not a 'safe' means of resistance to authority for even the most daring students. However, First Years experimented with the use of English in French classes and French and German outside these lessons as a means of challenging the teacher's authority (in their own minds, at least) without consequences, just as students in CB used English.

5.5 Opinions on school language policy

Students in both schools tended to support their own school's language policy, by and large. GCI participants generally regarded the school's strict language policy as an inconvenience, but did not question its justification. CB participants generally supported the relaxed language policy in place and resented teachers they considered to be unreasonable in their demands that students speak Irish at all times.

5.5.1 Coláiste Bhríde: school language policy as 'a friendly suggestion'

Language policy in CB was generally less obtrusive and more fluid: different teachers enforced different language norms. This meant students were likely to discuss the behaviour of individual teachers, rather than school language policy as a whole.

Órlaith (CB1) suggested that in CB ‘cuireann siad comhairle ort Gaeilge a labhairt but ní bhíonn siad á enforce-áil’ (‘they advise you to speak Irish *but* they don’t *enforce* it’). Similarly, the Fifth Year B-Stream boys agreed it was ‘a friendly suggestion more than telling you to speak Irish’. Although one teacher took Mary and Fionnuala aside once or twice to ask them why they were speaking English to me, in general, they said, ‘he just kind of remind[ed]’ them to speak Irish.

While most First Years regarded the language policy in CB as very relaxed, for Éanna it was still too focused on Irish. He resented having to speak Irish in school, saying he did so grudgingly ‘but at home I’m free!’. For Éanna, having to speak Irish was just another burden on top of schoolwork, echoing Strickland and Hickey’s suggestion that lower levels of enthusiasm for school among Gaelscoil pupils could be attributed to a perception of speaking Irish in school as an added burden (2016: 23).

Extract 5.18 – CB1.FG.212

tá go leor (0.2) [pressure] (0.4)[...] orainn mar gheall like (0.2) tá (0.2) obair scoil (0.2) sin obair baile agus ansin (0.1) tá orm labhairt Gaeilge

there’s a lot of (0.2) [pressure] (0.4)[...] on us because *like* (0.2) there’s (0.2) schoolwork (0.2) then homework and then (0.1) I have to speak Irish

Ailbhe and Jane burst out laughing in response to this statement, clearly regarding it as unreasonable. Éanna was one of the only First Years to regularly be reprimanded for speaking English but even he did not see speaking English to teachers as an option in most circumstances. He complained bitterly about teachers who rebuked him for speaking English

to peers. On one occasion a teacher who was new to the school and, possibly as a result, stricter on the use of Irish than others, got very cross with him for speaking to me in English when I had addressed him in Irish (because I knew she was watching and did not want to get him in trouble). While he did not object verbally, Éanna was clearly very annoyed. He made no response whatsoever and avoided eye contact with the teacher. Later, he told me that he now hated two teachers: this one and another who had also corrected him for speaking English.

Sadhbh and Ailbhe praised the school for offering the opportunity to participate in plays and other activities, which they considered more effective means of encouraging them to speak Irish than the strict language policies they'd experienced at primary level. Ruby also cited Máistir Ó Ceallaigh's approach to encouraging students to speak Irish, by appealing to their family and community connections to the language ('it's yeer language'), as a good example of how to encourage the use of Irish. She contrasted his approach with that taken by other teachers who simply order them to speak Irish ('Oh for God's sake, speak Irish'). She, Mary, Caoimhe and Evan all complained vehemently about teachers who interrupted their conversations to tell them to speak Irish. In general, Mary and Ruby spoke on behalf of the group, with fewer contributions from Caoimhe and Evan, but this was a topic that they were all very angry about. Evan was particularly aggrieved because he had been 'caught' a few times before this focus group. He saw himself as having bad Irish and being simply incapable of fulfilling these demands.

Students from the B-stream expressed less anger about teachers' attempts to make them speak Irish than the more academically-oriented students, possibly because they were less invested in academic success. However, they certainly found it annoying, with Áine commenting that

such teachers would 'probably give out to[11] you for speaking [...] English in an English class', which Megan and Maria agreed with. Shane remarked in another focus group that he spoke 'exclusively English' in Irish classes as an act of protest against one teacher's approach.

Darragh and Shane argued that one teacher could be 'condescending' in the way she spoke to them, which Áine and Brian agreed with. When I asked them to elaborate on what they meant, Áine responded 'well, like, she she has good Irish but, like, she's a different accent to all of us', implying that her accent and geographical origin has a bearing on her authority. Thus although the school is enmeshed in an education system that values standard Irish as the means of academic success, and the teacher herself must promote the standard to ensure her students achieve the marks they need in exams, the primacy of the 'authentic' local dialect is such that not having it diminishes her authority. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

While school language policy at CB was generally regarded as acceptable, therefore, teachers who were seen to be too extreme in their promotion of Irish were resented.

5.5.2 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair: overt support for Irish-only policy, but English is the peer language

Very few students challenged the legitimacy of the language policy at GCI. If they criticised it, they generally emphasised their love of the language as they did so. For example, a student from a different year group who had been sent out of a classroom for misbehaving commented to me that the school language policy got on his nerves because 'Irish is a great language but I don't always want to speak it all day'. A teacher also mentioned that they had had students in the past whom he described as 'frith-Ghaelach' ('anti-Gaelic'), though they had none at that

[11] i.e. reprimand

moment. Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the school. Cormac (GCI1) remarked that there weren't many Irish-medium secondary schools in the area, especially 'not as good as this'.

Although GCI First Years generally found school language policy very difficult to cope with, they did not suggest that it should be changed. The (generally) unspoken consensus among teachers (as explained to me by a teacher) was that students would not speak Irish at all times, but the effort to appear to do so would lead them to speak much more Irish than they would otherwise. Lorraine made this point, arguing that she had 'become a lot better at Irish then because of [the strict school language policy] because we didn't care very much about it last year', though Anna and Shauna dismissed this idea. Sarah, Jenny, Gráinne and Amanda also disagreed, as seen in Extract 5.19. As obedient students, who followed the rules about keeping their phones in their lockers and so on, speaking English was the one area in which they were at risk of punishment and they disliked appearing 'suspicious' (0435).

Extract 5.19 – GCI1.FG.164

0429	Interviewer	do ye think it helps when ye have to speak Irish or do ye think it's more
0430	Gráinne	no
0431	Jenny	no you're kind of really hiding when you spe-
0432	Gráinne	no I don't like it
0433		because you're forced to speak it like I don't like that (1.6)
0434	Amanda	then you're hi- like (0.3)
0435		whispering when teachers go by and like that's very like suspicious like and they're watching you
[...]		
0452	Gráinne	I just speak Irish when I'm forced to (0.2)
0453		that's all (1.5)

While Shauna described the school language policy as a 'human rights' violation, Paul, Marc, Liam and Cillian rejected any such notion. The real human rights violation, in their eyes, was that they were not allowed to go to the toilet during class, a topic on which the boys spoke at length. Despite the fear of getting caught, English was the only language used among peers when teachers weren't around, as Mia described:

Extract 5.20 – GCI1.FG.213

> we're all like just in a circle right and we're all just talking English and then a teacher comes in and we all just go like (0.1) change to Irish and then like @ (0.5) the sentence changes all the time and then the teachers are just like (1.1) hmm and then they walk off and then you're just like (0.4) okay let's go back to English now

Cian (GCI5) complained that some teachers did not take the school language policy seriously enough, criticising the prevalence of codeswitching among teachers and pupils. One teacher had a policy of speaking absolutely no English in class, even avoiding Irish words he felt were too close to their English equivalents. First Years often complained about this, arguing that it meant it took twice as long to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. I asked John, Doireann and Senan how they felt about this approach:

Extract 5.21 – GCI5.FG.236

0666	Interviewer	agus céard a cheapann sibhse (0.5)
0667		an gceapann sibh go bhfuil an ceart aige nó (0.6)
0668	John	yeah scoil Ghaeilge é (0.3)
0669		like íocann muid a lán airgid don scoil seo like i gcomhar leabharaí agus turasaí agus gach rud so (0.6)
0670		bheadh sé cur amu airgid muna labhair muid Gaeilge leis nó le na múinteoirí eile (0.4)
0671		just cur amú am (0.2)

0672 Senan just uaireanta
[...]
0676 ní má cuireann tú ceist air like cad a chiallaíonn an focal seo ahm tugann sé an míniú duit i Gaeilge
(0.5)
0677 agus tá sé sin ceart go leor tá sé sin like go maith do múinteoir a dhéanamh ach uaireanta fós ní thuigeann tú é
0678 Doireann yeah
0679 Interviewer mhmm
0680 Senan agus uaireanta tá tú just ag iarraidh an focal Béarla just chun níos mó tuiscint

0666 Interviewer and what do ye think
(0.5)
0667 do ye think he's right or
(0.6)
0668 John *yeah* it's an Irish-language school
(0.3)
0669 *like* we pay a lot of money for this school *like* for books and tours and everything *so*
(0.6)
0670 it would be a waste of money if we didn't speak Irish with him or the other teachers
(0.4)
0671 *just* a waste of time
(0.2)
0672 Senan *just* sometimes
[...]
0676 if you ask him a question *like* what does this word mean ahm he gives you an explanation in Irish
(0.5)
0677 and that's okay that's *like* good for a teacher to do but sometimes you still don't understand it
0678 Doireann *yeah*
0679 Interviewer mhmm
0680 Senan and sometimes you *just* want the English word *just* to understand more

John is strident in his defence of it. He associates speaking English in school with a 'waste of money' (0670), even though the school is a state one and thus there are no significant fees. While his argument does not entirely stack up, since the same costs would arise if they attended an English-medium school, the real costs associated with attending an Irish-medium school are, perhaps, more difficult to pin down. They include the commute many students had to

undertake, which probably alienated them somewhat from friends in their neighbourhood and certainly took up precious free time, and the difficulties inherent in studying through Irish, as discussed in Section 7.5.2. Senan frames his disagreement with John in terms that emphasise his commitment to the language (0680): he only wants to hear the English equivalent to increase his understanding of the Irish.

Zoë, Aoife and Neasa remarked that they personally rarely got in trouble for speaking English, or for anything else, but teachers could be too strict on other students. However, they were very disapproving of classmates they considered to be openly disrespectful in their use of English by using it to a teacher (Eoin):

Extract 5.22 – GCI5.FG.226

1002	Aoife	ach like
1003		~Richie
		(0.2)
1004		((whisper:)) téann ~Richie suas go dtí
		(0.5)
1005		~Eoin agus bhí sé mar
		(0.3)
1006		"oh actually I don't have my boots today"
		(0.1)
1007		it was like
		(0.5)
1008		cén fáth an ndúirt tú é sin as Béarla like
		(0.4)
1009	Zoë	ar dúirt ~Eoin ##
1010	Neasa	bhí
1011	Aoife	dúirt ~Eoin "b'fhearr liom mura labhraíonn tú as Béarla" ##
1012	Neasa	oh is cuimhin liom uair amháin bhí #
1013		tharla an rud céanna le ~Matthew ##
		(0.2)
1014		"what are we doing today a mháistir"
		(1.0)
1015		just like ##
1016	Zoë	ach sílim tá siad ró
		(0.6)
1017		like
		(0.4)
1018	Neasa	oh I'm just going to # the rules like
1019	Aoife	#jump

(0.7)
1020 Zoë ach sin just níl sé sin ag taispeáint like meas do you know
1021 Neasa no
1022 #####
1023 Zoë do na múinteoirí #
1024 Aoife mar níl cead acu
(0.4)
1025 Béarla a labhairt linn agus ansin má téann tú suas dóibh agus labhrann tú as Béarla
1026 Neasa agus bhí sin ###
1027 bhí ~Eoin mar "oh ~Richie an bhfuil tú ag dul go dtí an cluiche amárach" agus ~Richie mar
(0.8)
1028 "actually I don't know if I have any boots so I'm going to go home and check"
(0.3)
1029 and bhí ~Eoin mar
(0.9)
1030 Aoife just saghas léiríonn sé easpa meas agus ## like
1031 Zoë yeah
(0.2)
1032 Neasa oh bhí sé just ## amaideach

1002 Aoife but *like*
1003 ~Richie
(0.2)
1004 ((whisper:)) ~Richie goes up to
(0.5)
1005 ~Eoin and he was like
(0.3)
1006 *"oh actually I don't have my boots today"*
(0.1)
1007 *it was like*
(0.5)
1008 why did you say that in English *like*
(0.4)
1009 Zoë did ~Eoin say##
1010 Neasa [he] was
1011 Aoife ~Eoin "I'd prefer if you don't speak in English" ##
1012 Neasa oh I remember one time #
1013 the same thing happened with ~Matthew ##
(0.2)
1014 *"what are we doing today* sir"
(1.0)
1015 *just like* ##
1016 Zoë but I think they're too
(0.6)
1017 *like*
(0.4)
1018 Neasa *oh I'm just going to # the rules like*

1019 Aoife #*jump*
(0.7)
1020 Zoë but then *just* that's not showing *like* respect *do you know*
1021 Neasa *no*
1022 #####
1023 Zoë to the teachers #
1024 Aoife because they're not allowed
(0.4)
1025 to speak English to us and then if you go up to them and you speak in English
1026 Neasa and that was ###
1027 ~Eoin was like "oh ~Richie are you going to the match tomorrow" and ~Richie was like
(0.8)
1028 "*actually I don't know if I have any boots so I'm going to go home and check*"
(0.3)
1029 *and* ~Eoin was like
(0.9)
1030 Aoife *just* it kind of shows a lack of respect and ## *like*
1031 Zoë *yeah*
(0.2)
1032 Neasa oh it was *just* ## stupid

This reaction suggests a high level of investment in school language policy. This makes sense: almost everyone in Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair has made some level of sacrifice to attend the school.

5.6 Opinions on language policy beyond the school

CB students had strong opinions on language policy beyond the school, whether in other schools or in the community more broadly. GCI students, on the other hand, were less interested in this, though where they did express opinions they were more strongly in favour of restrictive language policies than was the case in CB. For them, tolerability was not an important consideration.

5.6.1 Coláiste Bhríde: the primacy of individual choice

CB students often discussed the stricter language policies in place in other schools. They were generally critical of them, as they were of most language policies that could be seen as restricting the right of individuals to speak whatever language they wanted. This was partly because they felt it was unacceptable to force people to speak Irish or to treat them differently on the basis of their competence in the language, i.e. they were concerned about the tolerability of such proposals. Most regarded strict language policy as counterproductive, though there was some ambivalence on this point.

CB participants spoke about the language policies in place in Gaelscoileanna in particular as a sort of horror story. Mary and Ruby were quite certain that such policies would make students 'resent' the language, so that they would have no motivation to speak it after school. Mary also criticised the language policy in place in Ballybeg, which she felt prioritised Irish too highly. She remarked that her 16-year-old cousins lacked simple vocabulary in English, which caused 'a lot of problems'.

The Fifth Year B-stream boys were more ambivalent. In the extract below, they speak about Ballybeg, which Cathal describing as being 'just like primary school' in terms of its language policy:

Extract 5.23 – CB5.FG.155

0203	Cathal	but o- over in ~Ballybeg they (0.5)
0204		always speak Irish it's just like primary school over there
0205	Tomás	yeah (0.3)
0206	Interviewer	and is it is it because they have to or is it
0207	Cathal	yeah you have to (0.7)

0208 Interviewer and do they like
(0.5)
0209 I mean are they okay with that or is it
(0.4)
0210 Cathal #
(0.6)
0211 ## you adapt around it like
0212 Darragh well I mean it's more strict
(0.8)
0213 Interviewer so it's sort of like if you choose to go there you you sort of
0214 Darragh it's a more stricter sort of a school there as well because like ahm
(0.3)
0215 it's pretty much like primary school with the Irish thing
(0.3)
0216 Tomás yeah
(0.5)
0217 Interviewer okay so
(0.4)
0218 Tomás it should be like that here though
(0.4)
0219 Interviewer do you think
0220 Tomás yeah just to keep the Irish going like
0221 Patrick yeah
(0.5)
0222 Interviewer so you think that needs to be like enforced just to give ye like the incentive
0223 Tomás yeah
0224 yeah
(0.2)
0225 because I'm not going to speak it like unless they tell @me @
(0.1)
0226 Patrick @yeah
0227 Tomás I speak it at home like but
(0.1)
0228 Interviewer but not in school
0229 Tomás no

It seems the boys do not know of any major resistance to this policy (0211) and Darragh's observation that it is generally a stricter school (0212) may imply that those who go there opt in to such a system, which he has chosen to avoid by commuting past Ballybeg to CB. Tomás seems here to be very much in favour of this policy as a means of maintaining the language, suggesting it would be the only way to make him speak Irish in school (0218-0225). However,

in Extract 5.24 from later in the same session, there is a sense that Tomás and Patrick in particular are thinking the matter through as they talk about it:

Extract 5.24 – CB5.FG.155

0404	Interviewer	because the other school I'm going to they get detention if they get caught speaking a word of Ir- of English
0405	Tomás	gasp
0406		yeah
		(0.5)
0407	Interviewer	mhmm
0408	Patrick	what's th- is that in ~Mullagh
0409	Tomás	sounds good
		(0.4)
0410	Interviewer	no no it's in town or it's it's out that way
0411	Darragh	that's how it should be
0412	Tomás	that's how it should be well maybe not that bad at first
0413	Interviewer	##
0414	Patrick	yeah not that bad
0415	Darragh	## it should be that bad that's how you keep it alive
0416	Tomás	okay that @bad
0417		it's true
0418	Patrick	@@@
		(0.3)
0419	Interviewer	lots and lots of detention ye don't even have detention here right
		(0.6)
0420	Darragh	I don't think so no
		(0.1)
0421	Patrick	then if you speak Irish it feels more like a punishment since you're like forcing on #
		(0.1)
0422	Interviewer	okay so it makes it like a bad thing to do
0423	Patrick	yeah
		(0.5)
0424	Tomás	see the thing is if you spea- if you if you do it that way I think you'll be speaking Irish at school but you won't be speaking Irish at home
		(0.8)
0425	Interviewer	okay
0426	Tomás	if you force them to do it at school they won't do it at home
0427	Patrick	because it'll feel more like a job
		(0.5)
0428	Interviewer	right that's interesting
		(0.4)
0429	Cathal	then again with ~Ballybeg they're forced

		to do it at school ## everywhere
0430	Tomás	yeah that's because their parents speak it like
		(0.2)
0431		oh that's true actually
		(0.4)
0432		I dunno
		(0.1)
0433	Cathal	they don't speak it just at home they speak it everywhere
0434	Tomás	in town though if they did it in town I don't think they'd speak it outside of ##

Darragh's intervention to suggest a stricter language policy (0411) is noteworthy because he was the least likely of the Fifth Years to speak Irish. It is likely that he is joking here and there is some element of trying to mislead me or subvert the interview process, as seen in Tomás's laughter and wavering over whether to support Darragh's statements (0412, 0416). Patrick suggests, like Mary and Ruby, that such a regime would make speaking Irish feel like a punishment rather than a positive choice (0421). Tomás then suggests that making Irish a compulsory language at school would specifically stop students speaking Irish at home (0424, 0426), mirroring Ruby's explanation of her younger siblings' refusal to speak Irish at home.

Cathal then brings up Ballybeg again, observing that this has not happened there (0429). Given the argument Tomás has just made about people not speaking Irish at home if they are forced to do so in school, one might expect Cathal to emphasise the fact that Ballybeg students do speak Irish at home, but instead he stresses the fact that they 'don't speak it just at home, they speak it everywhere' (0433). The contrast here is probably with their own behaviour: many CB students only speak Irish at home. Tomás attempts to argue that Ballybeg is different (0430), but soon acknowledges this counterexample to his argument that strict language policy would put students off speaking Irish at home (0431), although he reckons it would not work for students 'in town' (0434).

There had recently been controversy about language policy in a creche in the region, where some parents objected to children being separated on the basis of the language they spoke at home. When I raised this with the CB5 boys, Tomás and Cathal were strongly in favour of children learning only Irish for this first few years. Darragh felt they should learn both while they are young, but Tomás insisted 'it's Irish first and then you can learn English when you're older, like, because everyone speaks English'. Caoimhe and Maria, on the other hand, were very aware of this dispute (which I had had to explain to the boys) and objected to the idea of children so young being separated on the basis of language. They argued that people would inevitably have different levels of competence in Irish and English and they should not be treated differently because of this.

In the second-round focus group, Ciarán and Ailbhe were vocal in their disapproval of the many language plans that had been discussed and implemented in their area recently, arguing that speaking Irish should be 'níos nádúrthaí' ('more natural') and 'fun'. Ailbhe argued there was no need for language plans since 'is ár choice atá ann ag deireadh an lae' ('it's our *choice* at the end of the day'). Instead, the group suggested various positive measures to increase people's use of Irish, such as helping people use their phones in Irish, something many students struggled with. However, Extract 5.25 shows the conflict they felt about the matter. This group was a little chaotic at times, so I have edited out parallel conversations for clarity. Earlier in the focus group, Éanna had mispronounced 'pressure', which they mimic throughout.

Extract 5.25 – CB1.FG.212

```
0547 Interviewer   an mbeadh sé ceart go leor then
[...]
0552 Interviewer   mura labhródh sibhse
[...]
0554 Interviewer   Gaeilge agus ansin
```

[...]
0557 Interviewer like
[...]
0559 Interviewer an mbeadh se kind of nádúrtha nach mbeadh an Ghaeilge ann faoi cheann fiche bliain
0560 Ailbhe yeah like tá sé
(0.1)
0561 yeah tá sé like tá #
[...]
0563 Interviewer like is ceist is ceist é sin níl mé ag iarraidh a bheith sarcastic nó aon rud
[...]
0565 Ailbhe yeah
0566 no yeah
0567 ach like tá faitíos orm
(0.3)
0568 m- like gan an pwessuwe @@@ go mbeadh sé like imithe
(0.5)
0569 Interviewer yeah agus tá sé cineál casta ansin ta kind of contradiction
[...]
0572 Éanna ach ansin
(0.1)
0573 Jane ######
0574 Éanna ní bheidh aon rud le taispeáint dúinn mar tír má tá Gaeilge imithe
[...]
0576 Ailbhe yeah
(0.1)
0577 Éanna ní bheidh againn ach na fataí
[...]
0583 Ciarán caithfidh sé a bheith
0584 like
0585 caithfidh na scéimeanna a bheith ann ach caithfidh siad a bheith níos spraiúla agus mar sin
0586 Éanna caithfidh rud
0587 yeah
(0.9)
0588 like caithfidh an Ghaeilge a bheith agat le taispeáint do thíortha eile
0589 Ailbhe agus
0590 Ciarán like tá siad i bhfad
(0.2)
0591 Éanna ach
(0.4)
0592 ní cheaptha go mbeidh an méid pressure
(0.3)
0593 pwessuwe
0594 Órlaith pwessuwe
(0.2)
0595 Éanna sin curtha orainn
0596 Jane @@@@
(0.2)
0597 Ailbhe yeah like i-

0598 Jane @so @bad
0599 Ailbhe just
(0.7)
0600 Éanna níos nádúrtha agus níos spraiúla
0601 Ciarán #####
0602 Órlaith ######## Gaeilge #
0603 Ailbhe agus ceap ceapaimse
0604 Ciarán hm
0605 Ailbhe go gcaithfidh
0606 Órlaith bhuel like mura raibh an pressure ar fad ## an mbeadh muid really ag caint Gaeilge
[...]
0610 Ailbhe yeah
0611 Órlaith it's like mura mbeadh like
0612 Jane yeah
0613 Ciarán #taispeáin
0614 Órlaith gníomhaíochtaí trí Ghaeilge
0615 Jane ow
0616 Ailbhe agus ceapaim
0617 Jane yeah
0618 Ciarán #
(0.3)
0619 Ailbhe caithfidh na
0620 Jane no ~Ciarán
(0.1)
0621 Ailbhe an chéad ghlúin eile
(0.3)
0622 muide
(0.7)
0623 like níos mó iarracht a dhéanamh leis an Gaeilge
0624 Ciarán ##
(0.4)
0625 Órlaith sea
(0.2)
0626 Éanna yeah ach fós caithfidh sé a bheith an-
(0.9)
0627 spraiúil like
(0.1)
0628 ní cheaptha go mbeidh an méid pressure like
0629 Ailbhe ach #
0630 th- like níl an Béarla
(0.3)
0631 chomh spraiúil sin ach fós labhraímid é I think go bhfuil muid re- rebellious
0632 Órlaith oh I love an Béarla
(0.1)
0633 Jane yeah
(0.5)
0634 Interviewer yeah tá sibh ag iarraidh kind of showing off
[...]
0639 Jane tá muid kind of ahm
(0.2)
0640 tá muid kind of ag iarraidh a bheith rebellious but then again not too

0547 Interviewer would it be okay *then*
[...]
0552 Interviewer if ye didn't speak
[...]
0554 Interviewer Irish and then
[...]
0557 Interviewer *like*
[...]
0559 Interviewer would it be *kind of* natural that Irish wouldn't be there in twenty years
0560 Ailbhe *yeah like* it's
(0.1)
0561 *yeah* it's *like* it #
[...]
0563 Interviewer *like* that's a question I'm not trying to be *sarcastic* or anything
[...]
0565 Ailbhe *yeah*
0566 *no yeah*
0567 but *like* I'm afraid
(0.3)
0568 m- *like* without the *pwessuwe* @@@ that it would be *like* gone
(0.5)
0569 Interviewer *yeah* and it's kind of complicated then there's *kind of* a *contradiction*
[...]
0572 Éanna but then
(0.1)
0573 Jane ######
0574 Éanna there won't be anything to show us as a country if Irish is gone
[...]
0576 Ailbhe yeah
(0.1)
0577 Éanna we'll only have the potatoes
[...]
0583 Ciarán it has to be
0584 *like*
0585 the schemes have to be there but they have to be more fun and so on
0586 Éanna something has
0587 *yeah*
(0.9)
0588 *like* you have to have Irish to show other countries
0589 Ailbhe and
0590 Ciarán *like* they're way
(0.2)
0591 Éanna but
(0.4)
0592 there's shouldn't be so much *pressure*
(0.3)
0593 *pwessuwe*
0594 Órlaith *pwessuwe*

(0.2)
0595 Éanna on us
0596 Jane @@@@
(0.2)
0597 Ailbhe *yeah like* i-
0598 Jane *@so @bad*
0599 Ailbhe *just*
(0.7)
0600 Éanna more natural and more fun
0601 Ciarán #####
0602 Órlaith ######## Irish #
0603 Ailbhe and I think
0604 Ciarán hm
0605 Ailbhe we have to
0606 Órlaith well *like* if there wasn't all the *pressure*
would we *really* be speaking Irish
[...]
0610 Ailbhe *yeah*
0611 Órlaith *it's like* if there weren't *like*
0612 Jane *yeah*
0613 Ciarán #show
0614 Órlaith activities through Irish
0615 Jane ow
0616 Ailbhe and I think
0617 Jane *yeah*
0618 Ciarán #
(0.3)
0619 Ailbhe they have to
0620 Jane *no* ~Ciarán
(0.1)
0621 Ailbhe the next generation
(0.3)
0622 us
(0.7)
0623 *like* make more effort with Irish
0624 Ciarán ##
(0.4)
0625 Órlaith yeah
(0.2)
0626 Éanna *yeah* but still it has to be very
(0.9)
0627 fun *like*
(0.1)
0628 there shouldn't be this much *pressure*
like
0629 Ailbhe but #
0630 th- *like* English isn't
(0.3)
0631 that fun but we still speak it *I*
think we're *re- rebellious*
0632 Órlaith oh *I love* English
(0.1)
0633 Jane *yeah*
(0.5)
0634 Interviewer *yeah* ye want to *kind of showing off*
[...]

0639 Jane we're *kind of* ahm
(0.2)
0640 we *kind of* want to be *rebellious but then again not too*

Both Ailbhe and Órlaith express a fear that without pressure, they might not speak Irish at all (0568, 0606). Even Éanna regards the loss of Irish as a bad thing, though he sees the risk as being to national identity rather than any more personal or local issues (0574, 0588). He suggests that without Irish, all that would remain as a mark of national distinctiveness is potatoes (0577). This association between potatoes and Irish identity is much more salient in an international context than the Irish one and Éanna's mention of it (both here and at other times during the focus group) probably reflect his investment in American culture, through television and YouTube. Both Éanna (0592-600) and Ciarán (0583-0585) continue to insist that pressure is counterproductive and that plans to support Irish must be 'spraiúil' ('fun') in the face of doubts expressed by Ailbhe and Órlaith about this approach. Ailbhe then makes the point that English is not particularly fun but they still speak it (0630-0631), a statement supported by Órlaith's remark that she 'love[s] an Béarla' (0632). Ailbhe and Jane associate their use of English with rebellion (0631, 0640), which is very much in line with their discussion in Extract 5.7 about how they feel much freer at secondary school. Jane's remark that they want to be slightly rebellious, but not too much so reflects the understanding of English as an instrument of resistance expressed by the Fifth Year boys. The First Years may not use this instrument as openly as older students, but simply speaking English to each other gives them an opportunity to signal their independence without running the risks inherent in more open challenges to the authority of teachers and other adults.

Another First Year group also had strong feelings about local language policy. Michael and Conor expressed support for it because 'coinneoidh sé an Ghaeilge ag imeacht' ('it'll keep

Irish going'), in Michael's words. Aisling had some reservations, suggesting some of those involved were snobbish, as discussed in Chapter 6. Lee, who was more competent in Irish than English, expressed strongly negative feelings towards the language and those who sought to promote it, arguing that they were profiting financially from Irish in a way that ordinary Irish-speakers were not. This is not an uncommon complaint in the area, and reflects the historical links between language and local economic policy mentioned in Chapter 3. The others dismissed his comments with laughter, but Lee insisted that Irish was useless anywhere east of Mullagh (the next town over) and that policy was driven by the financial concerns of a minority who were benefiting from it. The fact that Lee, who was among the most strongly Irish-dominant of participants (along with Conor and Natasha), was so negative about the value of Irish and sceptical of the motivations of those involved in promoting the language suggests a disconnect between policy and language practices in Gaeltacht communities. While counterintuitive, it makes sense that someone who is more comfortable in Irish than English would be acutely aware of the disadvantages of Irish. Lee was quite competent in English, but he was less competent than many of his peers and older generations of his family may have been still less so. They are thus likely to be conscious of this disadvantage and wary of policy that is designed for those who speak English more fluently than Irish.

In CB, therefore, there is a reflexive rejection of strict language policy as counter-productive and unjustifiable. However, this is underlain by a suspicion among many that some level of 'pressure' is necessary to maintain the language.

5.6.2 Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair: support for strict language policy beyond the school

Several GCI Fifth Years expressed concern that the way Irish was taught in other schools – English-medium ones in particular, but also some Irish-medium primary schools – made

people hate the language. For example, Tadhg claimed his friends in English-medium schools almost all did the lower-level course, which he blamed on teachers who didn't 'actually want to teach it or [...] like the language', which made students in turn 'end up hating it because it's taught wrong'. However, Róisín and Chloe remarked that since they found the higher-level Irish course difficult, 'níl seans ag na daoine sa scoileanna Béarla' ('people in English-medium schools don't have a chance').

While Zoë, Aoife and Neasa had some reservations about their own school's language policy, when I explained to them that CB did not impose 'riail na Gaeilge' because of the need to cater to students who arrived at the school with little Irish, among other reasons, Aoife mentioned a boy in her primary school who had spoken no Irish whatsoever when he joined her primary school at the age of nine. However, after three years there, he had achieved fluency. He now had 'Gaeilge iontach' ('great Irish') and had worked at an Irish-language summer college (see Chapter 8). By citing this example, she seemed to imply that 'riail na Gaeilge' could help those with less competence in Irish and that this motivation for a flexible language policy was not sufficient.

The political forum was an annual event at GCI, where older students had the opportunity to ask questions of local politicians and Irish-language activists. Questions related mostly to the Irish language and included the provision of jobs and services in the language and support for Gaeltacht areas. The main issue students seemed to care about was the provision of a new building for the school, which had been in temporary accommodation since its foundation. They argued that English-medium schools in the vicinity were being catered to first (although these schools were all older and much larger than GCI) and linked this to the general under-provision of resources for Irish-medium education. The suggestion by a Fourth Year that all

schools should be made Irish-medium was rejected immediately by all speakers, on the grounds of both the lack of competent teachers and the need to avoid forcing people to speak Irish. As discussed in Chapter 3, the State's post-independence attempt to make all schools Irish-medium had failed for exactly these reasons, so the response to this proposal was obvious even to those panellists most dedicated to the promotion of the Irish language. However, there was some surprise among students at the unanimous response.

Neasa also proposed this during a focus group, when she brought up the possibility that language requirements might be brought in for enrolment in some Irish-medium schools. This had been requested by the schools themselves as they wanted a way to ensure that where they were oversubscribed, the priority would be to provide places for students who already spoke Irish at home (Ó Drisceoil 2018). Although Neasa's suggestion that English schools be got rid of to make space for Irish-medium ones was made in a joking tone, she, Aoife, Rebecca and Emily were worried that this policy would decrease the number of people in Irish-medium education. Aoife also suggested it would be great if the country could force people to speak Irish in the same way the English had forced them to speak English in the past. She acknowledged this would be impossible and the others laughed at the suggestion, while Neasa observed that such policies were already implemented in intensive Irish-language summer courses (see Chapter 8). However, although facetious, both suggestions make a lot of sense when viewed in the context of the language policy they are most familiar with, both in the context of GCI and that of intensive summer language courses, as discussed in Chapter 8.

There was less interest in discussing broader language policy in GCI, probably because of the extent to which Irish is compartmentalised in the lives of students, along with the fact that it is not a 'live' issue in their communities in the same way it is for CB participants. However,

where they did express opinions on it, there was more support for very strict language policy than in CB, with no consideration of the tolerability of such policies. With no connection to areas in which Irish is spoken by a large proportion of the population on an everyday basis, the only contexts in which they heard Irish are those in which strict penalties are imposed for the use of English. They might not have considered the fact that these contexts are populated by people who have chosen to speak the language and who have, directly or indirectly, consented to the imposition of strict language policy.

5.7 Conclusion

Language policy is more of a 'live' issue in CB than in GCI. In CB, the school's flexible policy, and the fact that students are embedded in a context of language shift means questions about how policy should be designed and implemented were always relevant. Everyday life requires them to negotiate a range of questions about what language, and what variety of the language, iss appropriate in different contexts, as discussed in the following chapter. This means that even those least engaged with school had an opinion on it. In GCI, in contrast, Irish is confined to the school for most and those who engage with it beyond the school generally do so in a limited range of contexts, where they and other interlocutors have chosen to speak Irish. For many, Irish language policy only concerns them insofar as punishments for speaking English are an inconvenience, while for those who were engaged with the fate of the language, strict language policies seem completely reasonable, based on their experience. Tolerability is, therefore, a crucial consideration for CB students, who have firsthand experience of the tensions in the wider community caused by language policy, but it has little relevance to GCI students, who generally only encounter the language in contexts where all present have chosen to engage with it.

Similarly, in CB the tension between ‘authenticity’ and ‘anonymity’ is very prominent. The importance of authenticity to CB students will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, but this chapter has illustrated that students resent the ‘anonymous’ standard promoted through the education system, preferring the ‘authentic’ local dialect. In GCI, this tension is less evident, though it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. The question of what variety of language is legitimate is, hence, more complex in CB, where the dialect and standard are valued differently according to context and the stakeholders involved and where English is often accepted, though dispreferred. In GCI, Irish is the only legitimate language outside of certain lessons and a limited set of exceptional circumstances and English is almost always regarded as illegitimate. This clarity is enabled by the fact that students have opted into this language policy and most speak the language only in the context of such a policy.

6. ‘I speak the old Irish’: authenticity, time and place in Coláiste Bhríde students’ perceptions of Irish

For CB students, the reality of language shift is omnipresent. It is something they must deal with both at home and in school. This chapter deals first with how language shift manifests in the daily lives of students at CB and then with how they conceptualise the language, with regard in particular to notions of authenticity. The previous chapter showed that many CB participants are confused by or resent the standard variety their teachers encourage them to acquire for academic success. This chapter explores how and why authenticity is so important to CB students.

Section 6.1 explores language patterns within the school and in the local community, with regard in particular to the impact of long-established patterns of emigration and return. Section 6.2 discusses the strong local identity in the area and the connection participants perceive between language and place. Participants’ attitudes to varieties of Irish and their perceptions of what it means to be a ‘good speaker’ of Irish are discussed in Section 6.3. Finally, Section 6.4 explores participants’ attitudes to how useful competence in Irish is and to the likely future of the language.

6.1 Language shift as a daily reality

Language shift permeates every aspect of life for many CB students. Both within and beyond the school, Irish is losing ground to English, but even those who have no desire to engage with the language generally have to speak it at least sometimes because of its important role in local identity.

6.1.1 Language patterns within the school

An overview of general language patterns within both year groups has been given in Section 4.2. In this section, I focus on those participants whose practices are particularly telling. By and large, the language spoken by students among themselves was English, but Irish was also to be heard in corridors and elsewhere. Within most year groups, it seemed to be localised to particular friendship groups and even individual relationships within those friendship groups. However, it was the main 'public' language of First Years.

CB participants tended to codeswitch regularly when speaking Irish, and English discourse-markers were very common (this is a common feature of Gaeltacht Irish, as noted in O'Malley-Madec (2007: 505). Overall, the Irish they spoke clearly identified them as speakers of the Conamara dialect, though it showed more influence from English than that of older local speakers.

The First Year cohort was characterised within the school by being very well behaved and was generally beloved of teachers. Most had come from a primary school with a strict language policy and at the start of the school year Irish was the main language heard even when no teacher was present. Some teachers regularly encouraged students to speak Irish in my presence and First Years would have been particularly susceptible to this. However, the fact that three participants (Éanna, Charlotte and Ruairí) addressed me in English from the very beginning suggests that they, at least, were not unduly influenced by this. While Irish remained the main language used by this group in public interactions throughout the year and was the only language spoken to teachers, English became increasingly prominent as the year went on.

Éanna rarely spoke Irish other than to teachers and often spoke about how he felt ‘free’ at home because he did not have to speak Irish. He suggested to me that others felt the same but were just unwilling to admit it. In a focus group with Ailbhe and Órlaith, he undermined their assertions about the vitality of Irish in the area and its importance in their lives, claiming that Irish was only a school language for CB students and that the Irish spoken in Conamara was so mixed with English that it barely counted as Irish. This caused some tension with others in the focus group, especially Ailbhe and Órlaith, as seen below. Éanna suggests that as soon as the bell rings for lunch, people start speaking English (0238), but Órlaith and Ailbhe reject this, pointing out that they speak Irish at home (0240-0243).

Extract 6.1 – CB1.FG.212

0238	Éanna	say má tá tú sa rang bíonn tú ag caint Gaeilge ach ansin nuair a bhuaileanns an clog le lón
0239	Órlaith	I think you're great
0240	Ailbhe	no like sa mbaile bíonn mise ag caint Gaeilge (0.2)
0241		le mo thuismitheoirí
0242	Órlaith	yeah same
0243	Ailbhe	agus le mo dheirfiúrachaí

0238	Éanna	*say* if you’re in class you’re speaking Irish but then when the bell rings for lunch
0239	Órlaith	*I think you're great*
0240	Ailbhe	*no like* at home I speak Irish (0.2)
0241		with my parents
0242	Órlaith	*yeah same*
0243	Ailbhe	and my sisters

This focus group was a rare instance where I heard Éanna speak Irish to peers. While his Irish was less fluent than most in his year group, he was quite capable of making a point in the language. He once told me, teasingly, that the way I spoke Irish was ‘weird’, thus suggesting a certain level of identification with the language: if I spoke it weirdly, he must speak it

normally, or at least know how it should be spoken. Éanna often spoke Irish accidentally in English class and claimed to be confused by the need to switch languages for this class. He tended to hang out with some boys from the year above rather than peers from First Year. He spoke English with a slight American accent, despite having no connection to the country other than through television and YouTube.

Ruairí was Éanna's closest friend in the cohort. He also avoided speaking Irish in school, though he did not express as strong an antipathy toward it as Éanna and Charlotte. In fact, he often asserted his fluency in the language by correcting others and reported with some pride that he had not spoken English until he was six. Nonetheless, like Éanna, he requested an English-language textbook for science. While they were quite close in the first term, Ruairí gradually drifted towards Michael and, to a lesser extent, Lee and Conor. This group contained the only other three boys in the class. The fourth member, Aisling, was slightly peripheral, spending lunchtimes with girls in older year groups, and she and Ruairí did not get on. In gravitating towards the boys, Ruairí may have been seeking some of their 'cool' status: Éanna revelled in his outsider status and explicitly rejected many aspects of masculinity, including participating in sport. He was more interested in pop culture and took female-dominated subjects like home economics in preference to male-dominated ones like woodwork or metalwork. Michael, Lee and Conor, on the other hand played football with older boys and took woodwork, metalwork, and so on. They communicated with each other through Irish.

As he spent more time with them, Ruairí began to speak more Irish. However, Michael also spoke more English. Lee and Conor continued to prefer Irish and seldom spoke full sentences in English outside of English class. Michael was very much the ringleader of this group and seemed especially keen to include Ruairí, which may have been motivated at least partly by a

desire to speak more English, like most of the older boys in the school. Michael generally spoke more English as the year went on, and had also posted videos on YouTube in English, so having a friend he could speak to in English, without excluding his two close friends who preferred Irish, was an obvious asset.

In contrast to First Years, all Fifth Year participants, and almost everyone in their year group, spoke only English with friends in school in my observation (and, by extension, in the focus groups), though some spoke Irish at home. They often spoke English to teachers, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Mary and Fionnuala were particularly prominent in the school as being enthusiastic about the promotion of Irish and were involved in a range of extra-curricular activities. I never heard them and their friendship group, which included some other students who were equally prominent as Irish-speakers, speak Irish other than with teachers or with Fionnuala's younger sister, Ailbhe, though in focus groups they mentioned doing so. Part of the reason for this may have been their friend Evan, who avoided speaking Irish and who was especially close to Mary. Although as a group they rarely spoke Irish, Fionnuala was especially keen to encourage others to speak Irish. For example, when Evan lamented his low competence in Irish in a focus group, Fionnuala was quick to reassure him:

Extract 6.2 – CB5.FG.233

you actually have good Irish ~Evan tá Gaeilge iontach agatsa just caithfidh tú níos mó muinín a bheith agat

you actually have good Irish ~Evan you have great Irish *just* you have to have more confidence

Fionnuala's father was a strong motivating force. He was so committed to speaking Irish, Fionnuala said, that he would intervene in her arguments with her sister, Ailbhe (CB1), to tell them to fight in Irish. Fionnuala also remarked that she 'can't speak English to anyone because everyone's like "I know your dad"', but she was strongly committed to the language, as seen below. She always spoke Irish to Ailbhe when they spoke to each other at school, as did other members of the group, like Ruby, who rarely spoke Irish to peers. Both Fionnuala and Ailbhe were markedly positive about the future of the Irish language.

The boys from the B-stream who participated in this study almost never spoke Irish amongst themselves in my hearing and reported in focus groups that English was the main language they spoke with friends at school, though several of them spoke Irish at home. As discussed in the previous chapter, they often spoke English to teachers.

Darragh was the most actively opposed to Irish in the year group. He rarely spoke in Irish without being explicitly requested to do so and most Irish classes involved an altercation like those discussed in the previous chapter. In spite of this, the variety of English he spoke had several features characteristic of contact with Irish, as discussed in Section 6.4.1. In addition, in the final focus group, which was the third he had participated in, he expressed regret that he did not speak more Irish, as discussed in Section 6.4.2.

Some of the most interesting students with respect to language choice chose not to participate in the study and thus will not be discussed here. However, it is important to note that a handful in the year group spoke Irish to peers. This was limited to particular friendships. For example, participants in the B-stream spoke English to students in their class who spoke Irish to each

other. The students who spoke Irish to each other also rarely spoke Irish to teachers without encouragement.

6.1.2 Irish in the family and neighbourhood

The biggest difference between students at GCI and CB was in the extent to which involvement with the Irish language beyond school was a choice. For most CB students, it was not, as the Irish language was a fundamental part of their relationship with (at least some) family and neighbours, if not, for the most part, with peers. As mentioned in Section 4.1.2, almost 75% of residents in the electoral division in which the school is located speak Irish on a daily basis (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton 2015: 26).

Some results of a survey conducted by the Gaelbhratach committee are given in Table 6.1. These results were presented in Irish, but I have translated them. They were displayed on a noticeboard in the entrance hallway. I do not have the raw data from this survey and do not know the participation rate. The results of questions 5 and 6 have been omitted because of a lack of clarity in how they were formulated. However, despite these reservations, and the inevitable bias caused by students knowing the survey was being conducted by the Irish language committee, the results highlight a number of features of the school community.

Table 6.1 – CB school survey results

1. Where were you raised?	In local area: 87% Elsewhere in Ireland: 4% Outside of Ireland: 9%
2. What spoken competence do you have in Irish and in other languages?	Native speaker from the Gaeltacht: 71% Fluent speaker not raised in the Gaeltacht: 11% Fair speaker but not fluent: 16% A few words or little Irish: 1% Very little Irish: 1% Fluent in languages other than English: 1%
3. a) What language do you speak with your father?	Only Irish: 36% Mostly Irish: 24% Mostly English: 23% Only English: 16% Other languages: 1%
3. b) What language do you speak with your mother?	Only Irish: 34% Mostly Irish: 26% Mostly English: 23% Only English: 16% Other languages: 1%
4. What language do you speak with friends?	Only Irish: 10% Mostly Irish: 34% Mostly English: 43% Only English: 13% Other languages: 0%
7. How well do you understand spoken Irish?	Without difficulty: 79% All right: 20% I find it difficult: 1%
8. How good are you at writing in Irish?	Without difficulty: 30% All right: 62% I find it difficult: 8%
9. How good are you at reading in Irish?	Without difficulty: 36% All right: 56% I find it difficult: 8%
10. How often do you read in Irish?	Often: 13% Rarely: 52% Never: 35%
11. It is said that the Gaeltacht may not survive. How important is it to you that this area will be a Gaeltacht in the future?	Very important: 64% Important: 30% Not very important: 5% Not important to me: 1%

Emigration and return is a major feature of life in Conamara and many participants came from families with a history of emigration. The responses to Question 1 show that twice as many students had been raised abroad as had been raised anywhere in Ireland beyond the local area. Ó hIfearnáin (2015: 59) observes that it may be easier for someone who does not speak the language but who is otherwise a member of the minority language community to participate

in that linguistic community, due to their other ties to it. Similarly, it may be easier for someone who was born and raised overseas but who has family ties to integrate into the local community than it is for someone from a few kilometres down the road. Many of those who were raised abroad are likely to have parents or grandparents from the local area. Only one participant, Molly, had been raised (partly) elsewhere in Ireland and this was discussed several times by other participants in focus groups, as seen in Section 6.2.2. All bar one participant (Sadhbh) had at least one parent from Conamara. Several Fifth Year participants had been raised partly in England or the United States, or had parents or grandparents who had been.

Among First Years, Éanna described his mother as being English and Charlotte said her grandmother was. Clara's father worked in England, returning at weekends. Among Fifth Years, Maria's parents were 'from England' and Áine and Darragh each had an English mother. Brian had been born in the United States and Mary and Patrick had been raised partly there. Mary identified herself and her mother as American. It was generally not entirely clear what participants meant when they described their parents or grandparents as American or English: some may have been born in Ireland but raised mostly overseas and thus have a strong English or American accent, while others may have no family connection to the area but may have moved there after marrying a local. Where one or both parents were identified as being English or American, the language of the home was generally English.

The distinction in Question 2 between 'native speaker from the Gaeltacht' ('cainteoir dúchais ón nGaeltacht') and 'fluent speaker not raised in the Gaeltacht' ('cainteoir líofa nár tógadh sa nGaeltacht') reflects the importance of being raised in the Gaeltacht to be considered a 'native speaker'. This may have been chosen to reflect a belief on the part of the survey designer that someone raised outside the Gaeltacht could not be considered a native speaker or in order to

encourage those who held this belief to categorise themselves as having a high level of competence even if they did not consider themselves native speakers. In either case, it suggests the prevalence of the idea that 'native speaker' status relies on having been raised in the Gaeltacht.

The answers to Questions 3 and 4 show the pattern observed by Ó Giollagáin and Charlton (2015), among others: while Irish has an important role in their relationship with their parents, for most students English is the main language spoken with peers. The answers to Questions 7, 8 and 9 show that students are much more comfortable speaking Irish than they are reading or writing it.

Finally, Question 10 suggests that 64% consider the future of the Gaeltacht an important issue for them, with only 6% saying it was not very important or not important. Again, this is in line with other research in Gaeltacht areas, such as Ó Giollagáin et al. (2007) but is also likely to be influenced by the fact that the survey was conducted by the Irish language committee.

Although, as discussed below, there was a strong relationship between language and place, participants also often listed people they would find it weird to speak Irish or English with when I asked them about places, suggesting parents or grandparents as people it would be strange to speak English to, supporting the evidence in the survey (and in Ó Giollagáin and Charlton 2015) that Irish is stronger among older generations. They rarely mentioned people it would be strange to speak Irish to, but the fact that most, especially Fifth Year participants, rarely spoke Irish to peers in school, suggests that this is less because they do not find it weird to speak Irish to some people and more because this is a more sensitive issue and they may not be willing to discuss it. Several students observed that they spoke more Irish with peers

outside school than they did in school, suggesting that schools may indeed have an anglicising influence, as suggested by Mac Donnacha et al. (2005a: 124).

According to accounts in focus groups, Irish was the main language most participants used to communicate with grandparents. Almost all CB participants referred to their grandparents as 'daideo' (granddad) and 'mamó' (granny). Most had at least one grandparent they felt was uncomfortable speaking English. This was complicated by the local history of emigration and return. For example, Maria claimed she 'can't speak English to my granny at all' because 'she just doesn't understand', even though both her parents were 'from England'. Similarly, although her maternal grandmother was English, Charlotte described her maternal grandfather as follows:

Extract 6.3 – CB1.FG.136

> he's fluent Irish like he'll be there for like ten minutes trying to put together a sentence in English he'll be there like "ahm ah"

Several students who spoke only English to everyone else (Maria, Áine, Charlotte) described having to speak Irish to at least one grandparent who 'wouldn't know any English at all'. They could not avoid Irish entirely if they wanted to maintain a relationship with their grandparents. Brian also avoided speaking Irish and his family did not speak it. However, he played rugby and although the club was located on the other side of the city, one of the coaches was 'from here' and spoke Irish to 'the Gaeltacht lads'. Thus, Brian was identified as an in-group member and addressed through Irish because of it, even though he preferred not to speak Irish. Other students mentioned neighbours or family friends they had to speak to in Irish, even if they preferred English. It is unlikely that any of the grandparents or neighbours mentioned could not understand English – bilingualism has been widespread in the area for generations – but

these accounts show that most participants felt that Irish was an integral part of their relationships with at least some people, most often from older generations.

6.2 Sense of place

6.2.1 A strong sense of local identity

There is a strong sense of local identity in Conamara. Students in CB mostly lived very close to the school, and all within the broader Conamara area. Teachers, too, mostly came from the local area, so there was a strong sense of community within the school. For example, teachers knew which students played for which local sports clubs and where they attended after-school music lessons. The names of local townlands were regularly to be heard in the schoolyard at CB during football games and were a common choice of team name in classroom activities. Ruby (CB5) remarked that some of her friends from Galway city were surprised to hear there was more than one school in the whole area of Conamara. As discussed in Chapter 7, GCI participants also tended to think of the area as a monolith. However, within Conamara, many of the same divisions seen between Conamara and other parts of County Galway are reproduced, in a process of fractal recursion (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38).

The First Years' Irish teacher (Máistír Ó Ceallaigh) in particular regularly drew attention to their identity as 'muintir na Gaeltachta' ('Gaeltacht people') and encouraged them to take pride in their Irish as a core part of this identity. Molly, Órlaith, Muireann and Natasha described his enthusiasm as 'motivating'. Molly was a little concerned that he did not like English, but Órlaith suggested that he just wanted them to speak Irish 'cause muide an t-aon áit sa tír atá Gaeilge acub' ('we're the only place in the country that have Irish'), which they all agreed was important. The girls were particularly eager to please teachers, which makes their positive reactions to this teacher's approach to promoting Irish unsurprising, but Ruby in

Fifth Year, who was more forthright in her opinions on teachers' failings, also singled him out for praise, as discussed in Chapter 5, suggesting his approach was popular among many students.

There was a strong emphasis on traditional local culture in the school, mostly in terms of music and dance, but also literature and local history. First Years often commented while out on walks in the local area, for example, that a particular local writer had lived in a house we passed. Students were regularly recruited to perform at events in the local community and some often missed class for rehearsals. The school entered plays into a national Irish-language drama competition and also had several prize-winners at Oireachtas na Samhna, a national Irish-language festival that hosts competitions in various traditional artforms. The Oireachtas is an important event in the Gaeltacht calendar, and there was a great deal of discussion of it in the staffroom at CB and, to a lesser extent, among students. Only a handful of participants had attended, but winning prizes there carried great status. It could also generate resentment: Aisling (CB1) complained that the kind of people who won prizes at the Oireachtas, whom she described as 'na Gaeilgeoirí[12] móra' ('the big Irish-speakers') thought they were 'níos fearr ná 'chuile dhuine eile' ('better than everyone else'). There was also some ambivalence in the attitudes of Fifth Year participants towards those in their year they considered 'good speakers' of Irish, both of whom had won prizes at the Oireachtas, as discussed in Section 6.3.4.

In October, participants from First and Fifth Year at CB travelled to an English-medium school in Galway city to perform in a joint concert. The two schools were partners in the Gaelbhratach

[12] This term was generally used by CB students to refer to learners of Irish, but in this case it has only its literal meaning.

scheme and the event aimed to encourage friendship and interaction between students at the two schools through the medium of Irish. The teacher organising the visit emphasised the need for CB students to be a good example to the other school, showing their students that Gaeltacht people really did live their lives through Irish. Great effort had gone into the 12 or so CB performances, which varied in standard from near-professional to a bit shaky. The important thing was clearly that all of the approximately 30 students who had travelled participated. Almost all the music was traditional. Only three students from the partner school performed, all very accomplished performers.

There was little interaction between students at the two schools, despite the teachers' best efforts and some organised céilí dances. Teenage awkwardness and a mismatch in age (the majority of CB attendees were in First and Fifth Year, while those from the other school were in Third or Fourth Year) played a role, and attitudes to performance clearly differed across the two schools. In CB, the norm was that everyone did something, and by and large respect was shown to performers, while in the partner school performances were left to a small number of talented students, with most chatting among themselves rather than listening intently. This can be attributed to specific characteristics of the partner school, which had a high proportion of students from immigrant and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, which militates against organising large numbers of students to participate in the kind of performance teachers might consider appropriate to an Irish-language event. However, the focus on traditional music and dance in CB would distinguish them from most urban schools and, indeed, some other Conamara schools.

Farming was another important feature of many CB students' lives, as small-scale sheep and cattle farming is common in the area. Many CB students, even in First Year, could drive a tractor. While by no means all students were interested or involved in farming, conversations

about tractors, cattle and various farm tasks were common. Agricultural science was scheduled against French for Fifth Year students. This is not uncommon in Ireland, as some schools see agricultural science as an easier option for students who do not 'need' a foreign language, often because they are not expected to progress to university. Mary, Ruby and other academically-focused students made fun of agricultural science, because 'you grow potatoes and herd cattle'. They claimed the school only offered it because so many students lived on farms. This suggests a general disregard for farming, as a way of life associated with people who are a bit backward, and an assumption that the subject must therefore be 'easy', although it actually contains a significant scientific element.

While one might expect CB students to spend significant amounts of time in Galway city, which is less than an hour's drive away, public transport is limited and expensive. Night-time socialising in particular tended to take place in Ballybeg, a village almost as far away as the city, but in the opposite direction. First Years attended discos in Ballybeg rather than Galway. Fifth Years were mostly not old enough to drink alcohol legally, but many went to a pub/nightclub in Ballybeg at weekends. It was a little closer than town and less strict on underage drinking, but had the disadvantage that it was frequented by many teachers as well as students. The latter enjoyed gossiping about teachers they'd seen there, while teachers kept an eye out for underage students. Orientation to this pub over the multiple options available 'in town' signified orientation to local identity, in participants' accounts. For example, CB participants often criticised the inhabitants of Mullagh, the next village east of CB, i.e. in the direction of Galway city, for not speaking Irish or associating with other Conamara people, as discussed in Section 6.2.2. Cathal explained that, as was the case with their language preferences, the inhabitants of Mullagh were 'half and half' in terms of whether they socialised in town or in Ballybeg. He attributed this to the fact that 'half of Mullagh doesn't want to be associated with back the way and the other half would be'. 'Back the way' here means western

Conamara.

Although there was a tendency to orientate towards Conamara in their socialising, many CB participants did not see their future in the area, or at least expressed a desire to spend some time away. This was by and large the same for academically-oriented and less academically-oriented students. None expressed a specific desire to have a career with or through Irish, but several (Ailbhe, Sadhbh, Fionnuala) hoped to continue being involved with the language.

The majority of students went into Galway city at least sometimes. Some in Fifth Year had jobs or hobbies that regularly brought them into town and many had friends from town. They were used to being made fun of as 'boggers' or farmers, reflecting the stigmatisation of rural identity. Participants described this as just 'messing' and said they responded by calling their more urban friends 'townies' and 'posh'. They were somewhat bemused at the ignorance of friends from town, who knew little about the geography of Conamara. Charlotte and Ruairí (CB1) complained that many people thought that being able to speak Irish fluently meant you were a 'bogger', without reference to the actual place in Conamara you lived, ignoring the distinctions that were so important to participants.

Irish was an important element of local identity and several students mentioned that if they heard Irish outside of Conamara, most often in Galway, they immediately assumed they must know the speaker:

Extract 6.4 – CB5.FG.132

0301	Ruby	but also the other thing is if you hear someone else speaking Irish in town you're literally like
0302	Mary	yeah (0.3)

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0303 Ruby          are we related
                   (0.4)
0304               so are you ###"
0305 Mary          do I know you
                   (0.1)
0306 Ruby          are you my neighbour like
                  usually you do
0307 Mary          and you sometimes you do
                   (0.3)
0308 Ruby          usually you do
```

Órlaith, Muireann and Molly in First Year made similar remarks, though Órlaith added 'má tá, like, accent acub' ('if they have, *like*, an accent'). Caoimhe in Fifth Year commented that hearing Irish in town made her 'happier' and Molly claimed 'tosaíonn mise ag labhairt Gaeilge ansin like oh yeah tá a fhios agamsa Gaeilge freisin.' ('I start speaking Irish then, *like* "oh *yeah*, I know Irish too"'). Thus, speaking or hearing Irish in town (though presumably only the Conamara dialect) seemed to appeal to the sense of solidarity CB participants had with other Conamara people.

6.2.2 Language and place: how you speak depends on where you're from

It was clear to CB students that where you came from and where you lived determined how you spoke. For example, when I asked if she noticed differences in how people spoke, Ailbhe (CB1) responded 'tuigim nach bhfuil like chuile dhuine as an áit seo' ('I understand not *like* everyone is from this place'), while Sadhbh emphasised that they did not see me as different from them, even though I spoke differently. Although they made fun of how new speakers cannot pronounce the palatalised R, they reassured me that it was not my fault that I also cannot pronounce this sound properly, since it was something one picked up from being raised with the language. Charlotte, Éanna and Ruairí agreed that I spoke differently to them, and the reason was obvious:

Extract 6.5 – CB1.FG.136

1107	Éanna	you grew up somewhere else
1108	Ruairí	you can't unless you've grown
1109	Charlotte	like unless you've actually come from here and gone to somewhere else in Ireland
1110	Éanna	if you've grown up here
[...]		
1120	Charlotte	if you have (0.9)
1121		done like lived here and been (0.1)
1122		in our fluent language which is Irish

However, Charlotte and Éanna explicitly rejected the idea that they had a particular responsibility to save the Irish language because they were from Conamara. In the extract below, they argue that they should not be expected to 'save' Irish (0944, 0948, 0950), since there is plenty of interest in Irish internationally, as evidenced by apps and attendance at local language schools (0946, 0947).

Extract 6.6 – CB1.FG.136

0938	Éanna	I feel like (0.2)
0939		there's more and more students coming over to learn Irish each year (0.1)
0940		and I feel like they're just trying to add pressure (0.5)
0941		on (1.0)
0942		but like (0.1)
0943		there's more and more students coming to learn Irish every year (0.1)
0944		so there's no real pressure like (0.1)
0945	Interviewer	so ye don't have to basically
0946	Charlotte	there could be people abroad right now on that whatever it's called Babel app learning Irish
0947	Éanna	ah yeah on a course ~Coláiste na Trá (0.8)
0948	Charlotte	so like it doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be in Ireland to be able to learn Irish and speak Irish

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0949 Éanna          yeah
                    (0.7)
0950 Charlotte      so I find it stupid that they're putting
                    all the pressure on us to make sure that
                    we don't let it die out when there's
                    plenty of people still learning and still
                    perfecting the language
0951 Éanna          ((applause))
```

On one hand, this illustrates the unintended consequences of coverage of minority languages: interest among non-traditional groups, particularly overseas. Such coverage often suggests that the existence of any level of interest is conclusive evidence that the language is thriving, even where these 'new speakers' live far from other speakers and infrastructure in the language, meaning that their use of the language is likely to be restricted to particular events or institutions. As discussed in Chapter 2, we often look at decoupling language from place as a way of letting people who would not traditionally belong 'into' a language (e.g. Hornsby 2015: 120–121), but it can also let people 'out'. Given the difficulty of defining a minority language community, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, it is clear that not everyone who is considered part of such a community will want to be. Ó hIfearnáin (2014: 49) observes that English-speaking minorities in Gaeltacht areas may already be dominant, as discussed in Section 3.2.3. Initiatives that lay the responsibility for 'saving' a language on a community as a whole are unfair to Irish-speaking majorities in such areas who face many structural disadvantages, but they must also seem unfair to those, like Éanna and Charlotte, who do not want to speak the language and who, in that classic teenage complaint, did not choose to be born there.

The division between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, discussed in Chapter 3, is visible on a smaller scale within the Conamara Gaeltacht by a process of fractal recursion (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38). CB students had a clear idea of where people spoke Irish and where they did not. Within Conamara, there is a perception that the further east you go, the more English is

spoken, while the western edge of the area (‘back the way’) is associated with Irish. Some areas are considered exceptions to this rule, but this was certainly the general understanding in CB. It corresponds roughly to the findings of researchers such as Ó Giollagáin et al. (2007) regarding language practices in the area. Participants generally described the eastern edge of the strongly Irish-speaking area as lying in the next village east of the school, Mullagh. Cathal (CB5) described the area around the school as ‘a neutral zone’ where it was ‘fifty-fifty’ between Irish and English, whereas ‘the further you go back [i.e. west] you have to speak Irish’. Mullagh was ‘more like 75% English, 25% Irish, according to Cathal. Lee (CB1) regularly complained there was no point speaking Irish anywhere east of Mullagh because ‘níl aon Ghaeilge ann níos mó, Béarla atá ann’ (‘there’s no Irish there anymore, it’s English that’s there’). Ailbhe (CB1) described ‘na gasúir i Mullach’ (‘the children in Mullagh’) as ‘townies’ who think they’re ‘too cool for Gaeilge’. This corresponded with a general sense that Mullagh was the true border of the Irish-speaking area, with inhabitants split between those who orientated westward towards Conamara and those who were more interested in Galway city.

If Mullagh was the edge of the Gaeltacht, Ballybeg was regarded by many as its heart, though there was also strong rivalry with the village. Much of this centred on the secondary school there. Cathal observed ‘they always speak Irish; it’s just like primary school over there’. Ruby (CB5) suggested that the pride Ballybeg residents had in their Irish led them to assert their identity as a Gaeltacht area and demand that residents could, at least, understand Irish, something that people in most areas of Conamara would be reluctant to do for fear of causing upset. Mary described them as ‘snobbish’ about their status as the ‘heart of the Gaeltacht’, which Ruby agreed with, remarking that her mother, who had grown up in Ballybeg, had found it ‘very strict’ and ‘hated it so much she moved really far away’. ‘Far away’ referred to Mullagh: around half an hour’s drive away, but about as far from Ballybeg as it was possible

to get while remaining within the mainly Irish-speaking part of Conamara.

Just as a tendency not to speak Irish was attributed to people from Mullagh, there was an assumption that people from Ballybeg and other townlands west of the school would speak 'good Irish'. Early in the year, Ruby and Fionnuala took part in a debating competition against teams from the secondary school in Ballybeg and from Gaelcholáiste an Aird. Gaelcholáiste an Aird had a good reputation in the area for academic achievement, but Ruby dismissed the idea that they had any chance: she explained that their 'caighdeán Gaeilge' ('standard of Irish') simply would not be as high as that of Ballybeg, which had people from strongly Irish-speaking areas west of Ballybeg. Similarly, in a focus group discussion, Clara (CB1) remarked that 'my mamó is from Ballybeg, so she'd have, like, the real' Irish. However, she, Sadhbh and Muireann did not accept that Ballybeg people in general spoke better Irish, suggesting it was more that they spoke it more. This suggests admiration for language practices in Ballybeg, coupled with a reluctance to portray their own practices as inferior.

Although they set out with clarity and certainty exactly where people spoke Irish and where they did not, thus delineating new boundaries to the active Gaeltacht, CB participants' own linguistic practices showed that these boundaries said more about language ideologies than practices. For example, Ruby (CB5) and Ciarán (CB2), each of whom spoke Irish at home with one parent, lived in Mullagh, where some suggested little Irish was spoken. Darragh, Evan and Mary (CB5) came from Ballybeg and the townlands west of it where, in Darragh's words, 'it's all about the Irish'. Mary was regarded in many ways as a role model, given that she had been raised abroad and was now active in the promotion of Irish in the school. However, she rejected the prevailing Irish-first ideology she perceived in Ballybeg, as discussed above, and spoke English with her mother. Neither Evan nor Darragh regularly

spoke Irish, despite coming from this area, and both had occasionally received ‘looks’ or snide remarks from people in their local area for speaking English. For Evan, who regarded himself as ‘bad at Irish’ and seemed almost unable to make himself speak it, this caused anxiety, particularly since the rest of his family spoke Irish.

The supposed linguistic boundaries discussed above are very local and would be unfamiliar to even many Irish-speakers who are not familiar with Conamara. Students in CB were less likely to bring up the relationship between the Irish language and national identity than their counterparts in GCI, but it was salient. Several participants argued that Irish was crucial to national distinctiveness in a global context. For example, Fionnuala (CB5) said:

Extract 6.7 – CB5.FG.233

> but like the thing is no matter where I go in the world [...] I'll always have a link to my country [...] a link to my family that nobody around me will be able to understand because I have this language

In the same focus group, Evan expressed regret that he felt unable to speak Irish, saying he thought it was ‘interesting to have a second language from your country’, like friends from various countries he had met online. Despite his remarks in Extract 6.6, Éanna (CB1) argued several times during the second-round focus group (e.g. Extract 5.25) that the Irish language was essential to national distinctiveness, even as he continued to argue there shouldn’t be ‘pressure’ on them to speak it.

When I asked if they could think of a place where it would be weird to speak Irish, Órlaith (CB1) immediately suggested two towns between Mullagh and Galway, thus replicating the most common boundary suggested by participants. However, although she had previously described Mullagh as a place where little Irish was spoken, Ailbhe objected to the idea that it

would be weird to speak Irish anywhere, saying 'bíonn mise i gcónaí ag labhairt Gaeilge' ('I'm always speaking Irish'), while Jane agreed 'níl sé aisteach in aon áit in Éirinn Gaeilge a labhairt' ('it's not strange anywhere in Ireland to speak Irish'). They thus followed the national ideology of Irish belonging to all Irish people, as discussed in Chapter 3. In response to the same question in a different focus group, Ruairí (CB1) suggested 'aon áit amuigh as an nGaeltacht' ('anywhere outside the Gaeltacht'), suggesting the parallel, contradictory national ideology of Irish as being territorially limited to the Gaeltacht.

Students in CB have clear ideas of where Irish is (or should be) spoken, while themselves not conforming to these ideas. In general, the linguistic boundaries they describe are very local in nature, with less attention to the twin, contradictory national ideologies of Irish as belonging to all and Irish as being limited to the Gaeltacht.

6.3 Attitudes to different varieties of Irish

CB participants were very proud of their dialect of Irish. Many were ambivalent about the value of other varieties, often expressing somewhat contradictory views, e.g. saying all varieties were equal, but then making fun of particular varieties, especially when a particular speaker was the topic of conversation. This is not an unusual position to hold among speakers of any language, but it points to the complexity of determining language attitudes and to their inherent fluidity. This ambiguity was particularly evident with regard to new speakers, whose way of speaking many participants mimicked and made fun of, while also expressing support for them. The way Fifth Years in particular identified 'good' speakers of Irish suggests the relevance of many factors other than linguistic competence.

6.3.1 Conamara Irish: 'the best Irish'

CB participants all expressed a clear preference for the Conamara dialect. There were many different ways of referring to this type of Irish. Mary (CB5), speaking in English, referred to 'our canúint' ('*our* accent/dialect'), while Órlaith (CB1), speaking in Irish referred to an 'accent'. Megan (CB5), who spoke Irish at home and whose English was strongly marked by Irish, described herself as having 'the really Conamara-ish accent', i.e. her Irish was more conservative than many at the school. Áine agreed, calling it 'boggery Irish' and Maria called it 'farmer Irish'. The terms 'boggery' and 'farmer' negatively associate this dialect with rural areas. Even the context of Órlaith's remark, that she checks whether she knows people speaking Irish in town 'má tá accent acub' ('if they have an *accent'*) suggests some people speak without an accent. The next chapter shows that this is exactly how GCI students perceive the 'normal' Irish they speak, in contrast with 'accenty' Irish. This tendency to describe their dialect in negative terms, or to imply new speaker varieties are the default, contrasts with their overt statements about its value and authenticity. For example, when I asked the Fifth Year boys what 'good Irish' was, the immediate answer was the Conamara dialect, with Darragh specifying the Irish spoken in his townland. Tomás was certain that 'Conamara has the best Irish'. This contrast suggests their attitudes may be more ambivalent than they admit, as Ó Murchadha (2013) and Ó Murchadha and Ó hIfearnáin (2018) found was the case with Munster Gaeltacht teenagers.

Most teachers were from the local area and spoke the local dialect. Not doing so seemed to diminish a teacher's authority somewhat in the eyes of students. This was usually expressed through eye-rolling and attempts to correct the teacher's Irish. Áine, Maria and Megan (CB5) were particularly vocal about this in the first-round focus group. Áine complained that 'some of the teachers don't even have, like, the Conamara accent', which Megan agreed was

‘annoying’. It is unsurprising that Megan would feel strongly about non-local Irish, since she spoke the local dialect at home and was alienated by ‘book Irish’, but the vehement rejection by Áine and Maria is less expected, given that neither spoke Irish at home.

Students in CB tended to describe the Conamara dialect as ‘old’. They drew on notions of authenticity based on age when arguing for the validity of their own dialect, which they felt was undervalued in the education system. In the extract below, Caoimhe, Mary and Ruby justify the use of the phrase ‘mo bhicycle’, discussed in Section 5.2.1, on the basis of its use by older generations. Ruby cites her grandfather as an authority, citing his inability to swim and cycle as well as his late acquisition of English as evidence of this (0611-0617). It is clear that linguistic authority for these participants depends not just on a person’s linguistic ability but their rootedness in the area, i.e. their authenticity. They reject the hypocrisy they see in a system that encourages them to maintain their traditional local dialect, while requiring them to use a standardised variety to achieve academic success (0602-0610).

Extract 6.8 – CB5.FG.132

0599	Caoimhe	because I speak the old language like you know “mo bhicycle” like
0600	Mary	we speak an older (0.3)
0601	Ruby	yeah and that's the other thing
0602	Caoimhe	# my daideo and like [teacher] says all these new words and you have to use these and like I but I I don't say those words ## Irish is natural
0603	Mary	here's the th-
0604		yeah
0605	Ruby	yeah
0606		it's not
0607	Mary	the Irish we have to put down on our tests and that we have to learn is not the Irish that we speak but they're like “but keep your spoken language alive” it's like then test me on it
0608	Ruby	that we speak
0609	Caoimhe	then you're teaching me two different Irishes

0610	Ruby	yeah test me on my actual spoken language (0.4)
0611		but then I think people are afraid as well because like I have my grandad who didn't have English until he was like the man can't even swim he can't even properly cycle he didn't have English until he was like fifty (0.6)
0612	Caoimhe	you're talking about my daideo (0.4)
0613	Ruby	I'm talking about my daideo but they're the same age (0.4)
0614		ahm and like he would say bicycle he would be like "oh chuaigh mé amach ar mo bhicycle"
0615	Mary	oh mo bhicycle
0616	Caoimhe	mo bhicycle
0617	Ruby	but he wouldn't say rothar in a million years

In the second round of focus groups, Caoimhe and Megan identified themselves as speaking 'old' Irish. This seems a more positive term than those Áine and Maria used to describe Megan's variety in the first-round focus group. Megan remarked that 'people who have new Irish [...] wouldn't understand' some of the 'weird Irish words' people would have known 'back in the day'.

For CB participants, Irish had an association with childhood and family. In the extract below, Ruby, Mary and Fionnuala have just complained that being forced to speak Irish (particularly 'book Irish') puts them off and are explaining why this is upsetting. As discussed in Section 6.1.2, many participants had grandparents who spoke only Irish and for some, their relationship with their grandparents may have been the only context in which they regularly spoke Irish outside school. Many others claimed to have spoken no English until they were six or seven and now spoke Irish mostly at home rather than with peers, thus strengthening the association of English with independence and youth culture. While it is clear that this association with older relatives and early childhood is important to participants in this extract,

it has negative implications for the future of the language and reflects the tendency among CB students to speak more English as they get older, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Extract 6.9 – CB5.FG.233

1317		whereas like it's a really nice language I love the sound of it it's got such a long history
1318	Mary	it's like
1319	Fionnuala	it reminds me of y- like your your granny and your grandad and like
1320	Ruby	yeah it's so nice but it's just
1321	Mary	ah yes
		(0.2)
1322	Fionnuala	awesome
1323	Ruby	people feel like they're forced
1324	Mary	I remember my childhood full of Irish

In general, CB participants described being old as a positive quality of the language. The extract below shows a rare instance where a participant (Charlotte, CB1) objected to learning certain vocabulary because it was outdated:

Extract 6.10 – CB1.FG.136

> he's like you need this specific word to get through like no I don't you're literally talking about cattle how do I need to know how to say that

Here we can see a clear negative association between Irish and traditional rural life.

6.3.2 Other Gaeltacht dialects: 'you can fill in the blanks'

Dialects of Irish other than the local one were often depicted by CB students as inconvenient oddities. Although, as discussed in the previous chapter, the education system rewards the use of the standard, it also requires that students be familiar with traditional dialects, particularly in listening comprehensions. CB students complained about having to deal with other dialects in spoken Irish in particular, whereas the words they did not understand in written material

were generally attributed to ‘book Irish’ rather than any particular dialect. At one point I overheard a teacher making fun of students for thinking ‘Gaeilge Chonamara’ was the only kind, mimicking them asking during listening comprehensions ‘Céard é an funny Gaeilge sin? Céard atá mícheart leo?’ (‘What’s that *funny* Irish? What’s wrong with them?’).

Fifth Years often mimicked Donegal or Ulster Irish in particular, since it is the less comprehensible of the two other dialects for CB participants. Even Maria and Caoimhe (CB5), who said they liked it, admitted that they couldn’t understand it. It was often singled out as the worst of the dialects they might be exposed to through schoolwork and Patrick (CB5) described his father listening to Raidió na Gaeltachta just to make fun of Ulster speakers on it. Both Áine and Brian (CB5) complained that Ulster Irish always came up on listening comprehensions, suggesting other people should learn their dialect instead. There is a clear element of exaggeration for comic effect in these complaints, but participants had genuine difficulty understanding this dialect, which could, in one account, even affect the choice of language in family relationships. Jane (CB1) claimed her family did not speak Irish at home because her father was from Donegal and ‘níl muid in ann [é] a thuiscint because bíonn sé just like “bla bla bla” and we’re like “oh yeah”’ (‘we can’t understand him *because* he’s *just like “bla bla bla” and we’re like “oh yeah”’)*. She also claimed not to understand her grandfather, mimicking him making incomprehensible noises and herself pretending she understood him – ‘I’m like “oh yeah, you too, Grandad”’. Although there are differences between the two dialects that could make communication difficult, this account probably reflects an ideological difficulty with dealing with different dialects: there might be initial difficulties in cross-dialect communication, but it is far from impossible.

The Munster dialect was discussed less than the Ulster one, being more easily comprehensible to Conamara speakers and often conflated with 'book Irish'. However, it was almost equally unpopular with Áine, Maria and Megan (CB5) commenting that they 'hate[d]' this dialect. Caoimhe (CB5) claimed she spoke more Irish when visiting family in Munster than she did at home in Conamara, complaining that friends made fun of her for picking up elements of Munster Irish. Even as she was demonstrating the characteristic stress patterns she tended to pick up, Maria remarked 'oh, I hate that'. Tomás (CB5) said he found some Munster words 'hard to understand'. He disagreed vociferously with Patrick's suggestion that 'Kerry and Conamara are the same, just different kind of accents', arguing that both the Munster and Ulster dialects were 'completely different' from their own dialect.

In general, the Fifth Year boys and the First Years found it difficult to distinguish between different varieties of non-local Irish and did not differentiate between Gaeltacht dialects and non-Gaeltacht varieties. For example, Tomás remarked that 'you can fill in the blanks' in 'all the Irish that isn't Conamara'. In the case of the Fifth Year boys who participated, this probably reflects a general lack of engagement with the material they were presented with in Irish class: some of the boys from the A-stream might have been able to give a more detailed analysis of different varieties, and their female peers in both streams definitely could, as seen above. First Years had less experience of non-local Irish, since the emphasis in primary school had been on their own dialect. In contrast to most Fifth Years, they tended to argue that accent reflected geographical origin, which corresponds with their views on the strong links between language and place. On this basis, none was any better than any other. The attitudes of Fifth Years and Jane's account of not being able to understand the Ulster dialect suggest the same trend Ó hIfearnáin (2008: 126-128) saw in Munster, whereby younger speakers have more difficulty dealing with non-local dialects than older speakers.

6.3.3 *New speakers: 'they don't sound natural'*

In discussions of new speakers, CB participants often referred to the importance of 'making an effort', distinguishing those they felt did make an effort to speak and improve their Irish from those they felt did not. The latter were fair game for criticism, but the former were not, at least in principle. Mary and Fionnuala (CB5) were particularly engaged with Irish language promotion and Mary had a particular interest in new speakers, having worked at a coláiste. However, they and their friend Ruby also enjoyed making fun of mistakes made by people learning Irish at summer courses in the local area, as discussed in Chapter 8. In Extract 6.11, I ask this group whether they believe that the kind of new speakers they tend to make fun of could ever be accepted as Irish-speakers in the local area. Their immediate reaction is to say it is definitely possible, but only if they are 'dedicated' (0394-0396).

Extract 6.11 – CB5.FG.233

0386	Interviewer	and
		(0.2)
0387		do ye think ye could be like
		(1.5)
0388		like you like the people that were like
		(0.5)
0389		the way ye were imitating the Gaeilgeoirí
		(0.3)
0390	Ruby	oh yeah
		(0.1)
0391	Interviewer	and all of that
		(0.4)
0392		do ye think they can ever get like
		(0.3)
0393		to this level where they're going to be able to integrate here or
0394	Mary	yeah
0395	Ruby	people who are dedicated yes
		(0.1)
0396	Fionnuala	yeah no some
0397	Interviewer	would they have to work really hard
0398	Mary	yeah
0399	Fionnuala	like okay I know I know people I know people
0400	Mary	the people from the coláiste speak just as well as I do

0401 Ruby perfect example
(0.3)
0402 perfect example
(0.4)
0403 ahm ~Séamus's dad is from America
(0.2)
0404 and he had zero Irish no he had zero Irish until he came here
0405 Mary oh no no
0406 his
(0.7)
0407 Fionnuala yeah
0408 Ruby because he's friends with my parents
0409 Mary I'm what you calls it I'm fluent in a year
(0.8)
0410 Interviewer yeah
(0.1)
0411 Fionnuala yeah
0412 Mary and I
0413 Ruby if you're dedicated
(0.2)
0414 like
0415 Fionnuala also yeah there's so many people there's so many people that come
0416 Ruby he'd be one of those
(0.2)
[...]
0441 Ruby ahm yeah but ~Séamus's dad he'd be the kind of person like
0442 Mary ahm
0443 Ruby there's people who are dedicated to learning Irish and then there's people who are like oh I want to learn Irish but they don't try
0444 Interviewer do ye think
0445 Mary living in there is so much more helpful
0446 Ruby but ~Séamus's dad would be the person
0447 Fionnuala yeah
(0.2)
0448 Mary I you know [name]
(0.3)
0449 Fionnuala yeah
0450 Mary I know this lad from Monaghan who's been to the Gaeltacht ahm
(0.4)
0451 since
(0.9)
0452 we would have been
(0.8)
0453 since he was in second year he's the same age as us
0454 Interviewer mhmm
(0.3)
0455 Mary and he's
(0.2)

0456 like
(1.1)
0457 just as fluent as I am nearly

Ruby cites the father of the boy (Séamus) named in the following section as the 'best' Irish-speaker in their year group (0403). While she calls him a 'perfect example' (0401) it is clear from the discussion below that Irish is a defining part of the family's identity, and thus he would have significantly more motivation and support in learning the language than most new speakers. Fionnuala also later cited the example of an American linguist and an Irish-American comedian, both of whom had acquired a relatively high standard of Irish after spending time in nearby Gaeltacht areas. Both had had significant professional incentives to learn the language (the comedian, Des Bishop, had made a television programme about his efforts to do so) and, as Americans, would not have had to deal with the complex questions of identity involved for Irish people in taking on the accent of an area other than their own.

Interestingly, Mary does not discuss her own case at length, even though she was, as she puts it, 'fluent in a year' (0409). Since she lives in Ballybeg and her grandmother used to host 'Gaeilgeoirí' (students of Irish language summer schools), her circumstances are quite different from most new speakers. Consequently, it seems, she focuses on the examples she knows from working at the coláiste (0400). There is a touch of frustration in her voice when she remarks, after Ruby mentions people who claim to speak Irish 'but they don't try', that living in the area is 'helpful' (0445). She cites a more realistic example of a successful new speaker: a boy that Fionnuala also knows, who comes from Monaghan (a county in the northeast of Ireland that borders Northern Ireland and has no Gaeltacht areas) and has attended the coláiste for several years. This boy is 'just as fluent as I am, nearly' (0448-0457).

In response to Mary's use of this example, Fionnuala remarks that the key issue that might hinder integration is that people from the 'Galltacht' (a term for non-Irish-speaking areas), as Fionnuala puts it, do not sound the same as Gaeltacht Irish-speakers:

Extract 6.12 – CB5.FG.233

0459	Fionnuala	i- it's just I think people kind of look down on it on like
0460	Mary	close to it
		(0.4)
0461	Fionnuala	maybe like
		(0.5)
0462		people from the Gaeltacht
		(0.5)
0463		will look down on people outsi- from the Galltacht they're like
		(0.5)
0464		they don't have kind of the
		(0.2)
0465	Mary	your Irish
0466	Fionnuala	yeah no not n- they're fluent but they don't have kind of
		(1.0)
0467	Mary	the mannerisms the
0468	Fionnuala	yeah
		(0.3)
0469		they don't
0470	Mary	the way we speak it's more like
		(0.1)
0471		from the book
		(0.2)
0472	Fionnuala	yeah
		(0.1)
0473	Mary	caighdeán
		(0.4)
0474	Fionnuala	yeah
		(0.5)
0475	Mary	if they speak with the caighdeán then you've got problems because they don't sound natural they sound like
0476	Fionnuala	and
		(0.6)
0477		and they they kind of don't have
0478	Mary	repeating stuff even if they
0479	Fionnuala	like the natural Irish kind of like they don't have the natural [x] and the natural kind of
0480	Mary	this is naturally how they speak
0481		yeah it sounds like they're reading from a book even if they're completely fluent
0482	Fionnuala	the way they speak it

		(0.2)
0483	Interviewer	so it'd be hard like
		(0.9)
0484		I guess
		(0.5)
0485		for them then to be ##
0486	Mary	they'd be as fluent but you sound completely different
		(0.1)
0487	Fionnuala	yeah
0488	Mary	and there's more chance that they like ~Séamus and ~Deirbhile would look down on them
0489	Fionnuala	it it sounds it sounds more English though
0490	Mary	like people
		(0.2)
0491		that have such
0492	Fionnuala	they they they they it's it's more of a like English type Irish

Mary distances herself slightly from the question when she suggests they do not have 'your Irish' (0465) – she seems to be portraying herself as a new speaker here. While she agrees that this 'book Irish' or 'caighdeán' sounds stilted (0475-0482), Mary focuses more on the perspective of new speakers who, she argues, may be more fluent than they seem and are looked down on (0481, 0486), perhaps unfairly. Fionnuala, on the other hand, stresses the fact they do not sound 'natural' and speak a highly English-influenced form of Irish (0479, 0489).

Ruairí in First Year mentioned cousins of his who lived in Cavan (which borders Monaghan and is equally far from any Gaeltacht area):

Extract 6.13 - CB1.FG.136

they speak Irish and I like (0.3) helping them because (0.2) they have (0.6) decently good Irish from where they live (0.7) because like when I went over there other people were trying to speak in Irish and like (0.8) just don't (0.5) but they were like decently good they were like "cén chaoi a bhfuil tú" ['how are you'] like not as fluent as I was but they were like (0.7) kind of trying to piece it together as best they could kind of like

While he said he enjoyed speaking Irish to them, he was less tolerant of other people he met there speaking Irish, thinking (or possibly saying) 'just don't'. His cousins, on the other hand, he considers acceptable speakers of Irish, considering they do not live in an area that would allow them to develop their language skills further. His description of them as 'trying to piece it together as best they could' suggests that he values the effort they have gone to.

There was also ambivalence among First Years about new speaker varieties. Most expressed positive attitudes to new speakers in general and attributed differences in pronunciation or accent to geographical origin, for which individuals obviously could not be blamed. However, some had strong feelings about pronunciation. For example, when I asked in a focus group what constituted good Irish, Ailbhe (CB1) immediately responded 'Gaeilge Chonamara – not, like, Gaeilge Bhaile Átha Cliath' ('Conamara Irish – *not, like* Dublin Irish'). The term 'Dublin Irish' is often used as a shorthand for new speaker varieties. The others in the group argued that accent depended on geographical origin and none was superior to others. Jane observed that her cousins from Dublin 'think go bhfuil mo Ghaeilge like really go dona' ('*think* that my Irish is *like, really* bad') while she thinks their Irish is 'really go dona' ('*really* bad'). Ailbhe, however, stuck to her guns, observing that 'seod an Ghaeltacht, so, I mean, we, we say it right' ('this is the Gaeltacht, *so, I mean, we say it right')*. She conceded, in response to Ciarán, that other Gaeltacht dialects also have legitimacy, but did not think this undermined her arguments against Dublin Irish. She argued that 'i nGaeilge you just don't say [kad]' ('in Irish *you just don't say "cod"'*). The word 'cad' means 'what' but is not used in the Conamara dialect, where 'céard' is preferred. Ailbhe's pronunciation of the word is an imitation of how non-Gaeltacht people would say it: she would pronounce it [kad̪ʲ][13], making a distinction between

[13] Dentalisation of alveolar stops is a salient contrast in Irish English. The distinction would be clear even to non-Irish-speakers.

it and the English word ‘cod’, which, she suggests, is not present in the speech of non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers. For her, this word and this pronunciation were clearly iconic of the speech of learners.

Ailbhe acknowledged that the ability to pronounce certain phonemes was related to opportunities to acquire them at home or in the community. However, she and the others, who had defended new speaker varieties, could not understand why people from outside the Gaeltacht could not pronounce their names, many of which contained such phonemes, the same way they did. This suggests a gap between the awareness that they should be accepting of outsiders who learn Irish (maybe especially when speaking to me) and should respect other ways of speaking Irish, and the reality that they have difficulty accepting non-traditional Irish as a legitimate variety.

As with other Gaeltacht dialects, the Fifth Year boys mostly did not have strong feelings about (or awareness of) new speaker varieties. As discussed in Section 8.2.2, some mimicked new speakers, but overall they expressed positive or neutral feelings about new speakers of Irish and the way they spoke. Caoimhe, Maria, Megan and Áine, on the other hand, were very disparaging of new speaker varieties, despite the fact that Caoimhe, Maria and Áine preferred not to speak Irish. Like Ailbhe, Caoimhe (CB5) mocked how ‘townies’ pronounce the word ‘cad’. She, Megan and Maria acknowledged that learners were ‘trying’ and that they weren’t being fair. However, as Caoimhe said, ‘it’s just weird to us’. Maria said she ‘hate[d] townie Irish’. Just as the use of words like ‘bogger’ and ‘farmer’ to describe Conamara Irish associates the dialect negatively with rural people, the word ‘townie’ associates non-Gaeltacht dialects negatively with urban people.

Many CB participants expressed positive attitudes to learners, but they also demonstrated ambivalent or negative attitudes to particular pronunciations they regarded as characteristic of new speakers, which may suggest their attitudes are less open than they might admit. It is also important to note that my presence, as a new speaker of Irish, inevitably influenced these accounts. Discussion of the importance of 'making an effort' may be a way of justifying this inconsistency to themselves and others. Just as GCI students regard acquiring the Conamara dialect as unnatural, as discussed in the following chapter, CB students see speaking Irish with an accent shaped by the English language as unnatural and, hence, less valuable.

6.3.4 Good Irish: saibhreas, cruinneas and linguistic insecurity

The question of who speaks a language 'well' reveals a great deal about what is valued in a particular community. Some Fifth Year boys offered very broad characteristics, such as someone who could 'keep good conversation going, like, fluently enough' (Shane) or anyone who can 'have the craic while you're saying it' (Darragh), suggesting a very open attitude, but in discussion about specific individuals they considered to have good Irish, they named a range of factors. In CB, being a native speaker of Irish was a necessary but not a sufficient condition to be considered to have 'good Irish'. In fact, linguistic competence was only part of what characterised a good speaker of Irish for them: involvement in traditional culture also played an important role.

Although the First Years' Irish teacher regularly referred to them as 'cainteoirí dúchais' ('native speakers'), this seemed to refer to the fact that they were raised in the Gaeltacht rather than the language of the home. The term did not come up in focus groups except when I raised it explicitly, asking one group of Fifth Years (Áine, Brian, Shane, Darragh, Éabha) if they considered themselves to be cainteoirí dúchais. Áine and Brian said they were not, while Shane

described himself as ‘kind of in-between’ because ‘obviously I’m not great at Irish, like, but I’d be able to hold a conversation’. Shane’s comment suggests an understanding of ‘cainteoir dúchais’ as referring to someone who is ‘good at’ Irish, rather than how they acquired the language, given that he reported that he spoke Irish at home.

However, although the term itself was not used, many participants referred to learning English only at the age of six or seven. In the case of Fifth Years, this was often juxtaposed with how lacking they now considered their skills to be, or how little they spoke Irish. In addition, in a conversation about the differences between the Irish spoken in Conamara and that spoken in non-Gaeltacht areas, Ailbhe, Jane and Órlaith (CB1) suggested that you could tell when someone did not speak Irish at home even if they were from Conamara because they had ‘canúint difriúil’ (‘a different accent/dialect’). They cited Molly, in their class, as an example, although, as mentioned in Section 6.1.2, Molly had also spent time living outside Conamara. Ailbhe claimed she didn’t always understand Molly because of the way she spoke, which wasn’t ‘chomh, like, milis’ (‘as, *like*, sweet’). She was, however, quick to add that although ‘níl an saibhreas céanna aici is atá againne [...] tá Gaeilge fós, like, iontach aici’ (‘she doesn’t have the same saibhreas as we do [...] she still has, *like*, great Irish’).

‘Saibhreas’ literally means ‘wealth’ but refers to a way of speaking Irish that is regarded as particularly authentic. Tomás (CB5) observed that saibhreas was ‘not something that you say you have yourself – someone has to give you it’, suggesting the extent to which this quality relies on your status in the community. Although this term often came up, there was ambiguity about what exactly it meant, especially among First Years. Ciarán seemed to have a clear idea of what it meant, saying it was ‘logainmneacha agus rudaí mar sin’ (‘placenames and things like that’), thus relating it to local knowledge. He also emphasised the importance of

‘foghraíocht’ and also ‘focla nach n-úsáideann go leor daoine’ (‘words not many people use’), while Órlaith and Ailbhe were a bit vaguer, saying it was ‘in general á labhairt’ (‘speaking it in general’) and ‘cé chomh [...] nádúrtha atá sé’ (‘how natural it is’), while also mentioning ‘gramadach and rudaí’ (‘grammar and things’). Sadhbh, Clara and Muireann (CB1) were initially confused when I used the term, with Sadhbh then suggesting the alternative terms ‘blas’ (literally ‘taste’ but referring to traditional dialectal pronunciation) or ‘líofa’ (‘fluent’). For many participants, therefore, it simply related to fluency, although Sadhbh’s mention of ‘blas’ suggests the relevance of pronunciation. However, Patrick (CB5) suggested it referred to ‘olden-style Irish’ which, along with Ciarán’s emphasis on local knowledge, suggests its status as a measure of authenticity.

Everyone in CB was aware of the importance of ‘cruinneas’, or grammatical accuracy, to their teachers, but they were less certain that it was necessary in order to have ‘good Irish’. Several suggested it was necessary in certain jobs, like ‘foreign affairs’, as some First Years suggested, or teaching. Cruinneas was not as important for speaking Irish in the local area, however. Ciarán (CB2) and others in his focus group suggested ‘it’s mostly just foghraíocht anseo’ (‘*it’s mostly just* pronunciation here’). Sadhbh (CB1) thought it might be more important for people ‘in a place where there isn’t a lot of Irish’ because one wouldn’t pick up grammar by ear. She was more concerned with this aspect of competence than her classmates because of her frustration with her mother’s poor command of Irish. Grammatical accuracy is important for ‘anonymous’ language, since such language is supposed to be clear and logical with minimal regional or individual variation. CB students’ tendency to minimise its importance parallels their ambivalence towards or rejection of the standard, despite their teachers’ efforts to encourage them to focus on it for academic success.

Among First Years there was no consensus as to who was a good speaker of Irish: students suggested several potential candidates, based on both family use of Irish and academic achievement. However, in Fifth Year, there was consensus about the two 'best' speakers of Irish in their year, and particularly about one, Séamus. While in the other three cohorts students hesitated when asked if they could name someone in their year with good Irish, and generally focused on exam results, there was no question about Séamus's status and that he had saibhreas. Unfortunately he did not participate in this study, but the way other students described the characteristics that made him and Deirbhile, another girl who did not participate, such 'good' speakers reveals much about how they conceptualise being a speaker of Irish. Tomás described Séamus as 'the king' while Brian said he was 'the Irish boss'. Their explanation of why he was such a good speaker is seen below:

Extract 6.14 – CB5.FG.204

0621	Darragh	I think it's because he sings in Irish like #
0622	Tomás	and hi- his mom is really into Irish
0623	Darragh	does loads of stuff in Irish
0624	Patrick	he has like a really good (0.4)
0625		accent for Irish that's the kind of thing (0.1)
0626	Cathal	it's just the way he was raised about it really
0627	Brian	yeah it is strict enough at home like (0.8)
0628		####
0629	Cathal	they're not allowed to speak English at home like (0.1)
0630	Tomás	yeah (0.4)
0631	Interviewer	okay
0632	Tomás	it's strictly Irish at home and all that (0.6)
0633		and they do all the singing down the Oireachtas and all that (0.6)
0634	Interviewer	okay (0.5)

0635 so they're the kind of
0636 Cathal their television's just stuck on TG4[14] all day long

Singing sean nós[15] and participating in the Oireachtas are clearly important factors in singling Séamus out as a good speaker (0621, 0623). His family, too, participates in these events (0633), and is perceived as having quite a 'strict' language policy (0626-0632, 0636). Only Patrick mentions Séamus's actual use of language (0624-0625).

Similarly, Ruby, Mary and Fionnuala described Deirbhile's family as being very engaged with the Irish language, mentioning her father's success in the Oireachtas and involvement in Irish-language media. In fact, when I asked what made Séamus and Deirbhile such model speakers, Fionnuala, Ruby and Mary were clear that it was 'their parents' and their family history, emphasising their parents' involvement in Irish-language media and the fact that they 'only speak Irish at home'.

Caoimhe, Maria and Megan also did not hesitate in naming Séamus when asked for the person in their year with 'the best Irish'. Caoimhe attributed this to his family's involvement in traditional singing and Irish-language media, while Megan commented 'I'd say they all just speak Irish when they go home'. When I pointed out that she did too, she said 'yeah, but I put a few English words in there, like, you know', suggesting the impact of purist ideologies on her evaluation of her own Irish. Caoimhe also remarked that Seámus 'comes out with words that I've never heard of before' in Irish class.

Despite the overt pride in their local dialect, linguistic insecurity resulting from purist

[14] The Irish-language TV channel.
[15] An unaccompanied and highly-ornamented traditional style of singing (the name literally means 'old style').

ideologies was also prevalent among CB students, much of it centring on codeswitching. There was much discussion of ways in which Conamara people needed to try harder, given the area's Gaeltacht status. When it came to the future of Irish, Sadhbh (CB1) suggested as they were 'kind of the most really active Gaeltacht' they had a responsibility to 'put in the effort', which Muireann and Clara agreed with. This 'effort' was seen mostly in terms of avoiding English: Clara pointed out that 'loads of people come here [to learn Irish] and if they hear us saying "tá mé ag dul ag cycleáil" ["I'm going *cycl*ing"] and stuff they're going to pick that up'. The verbal suffix '-áil' is particularly productive (Ó Murchadha 2018: 83) and was often used by participants in both schools to make new hybrid verbs.

Ailbhe was very certain they all had good Irish, observing that there were 'daoine, like, amuigh ansin agus níl like barely focal acub, like, tá muide líofa' ('people, *like*, out there and they barely have a word, *like*, we're fluent'). She argued that they knew 'na focla ar fad, but we're just lazy' ('all the words, *but we're just lazy'*). However, Órlaith gave the examples of 'shop-áil' and 'drive-áil' as evidence that their Irish was 'bad'. Jane and Ailbhe disputed this, but eventually admitted they might occasionally use such forms, though Órlaith, in turn, conceded their Irish was generally good. Éanna, who rarely spoke Irish, disagreed on the basis that they only spoke Irish in class and spoke English at lunchtimes, as seen in Extract 6.1. He even suggested people in Conamara don't actually speak Irish, they just use 'rúinín beag Gaeilge agus ansin Béarla measctha' ('a little bit of Irish and then English mixed') with it 'ar nós chips le salann' ('like *chips* with salt'). Ailbhe and Órlaith firmly denied this. There is clear ambivalence about the quality of their Irish, which is understandable in the context of rapid language shift in the area: CB participants were all quite capable of having a conversation in Irish, but they increasingly preferred to use English and their competence in Irish compared unfavourably with older relatives, even if they were still much more competent than peers

from other areas. What is clear is that codeswitching was seen as a mark of 'bad' Irish.

In everyday life, CB students often commented on the use of particular words or phrases they considered to be too influenced by English, like those mentioned above. This emphasis on avoiding influence from English recalls Ó Duibhir's (2018: 86) finding that Gaelscoil pupils correct each other for using English words but not other grammatical errors. In the focus groups, Mary and Ruby (CB5) complained that those they named as 'good speakers' sometimes corrected other people's use of Irish. Ruairí (CB1) also tended to correct teachers and peers, though this was not limited to linguistic matters. While I usually spoke to him in English, his preferred language, if he heard me speaking Irish, he occasionally corrected me or offered suggestions as to vocabulary. He also corrected Sadhbh one day when she said 'fuair mé stuck sa doras' ('I got *stuck* in the door'), an English calque. Ruairí told her to 'labhair Gaeilge cheart' ('speak proper Irish') and offered a 'correct' alternative. Sadhbh looked annoyed by this, but did not engage with him.

The question of what counts as 'good Irish' is thus fraught in CB. Understandably, there was a lot of prevaricating when I asked participants if they thought they had good Irish. Muireann challenged the concept, remarking that she didn't 'think go bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith ann, like, I just think [...] Gaeilge is Gaeilge' ('*think* there is good Irish, *like, I just think* [...] Irish *is* Irish'). Although Mary pointed out that 'it's not that any of us have horrendous Irish', Ruby and Evan both claimed that their Irish was not very good. Evan was particularly negative, stating that he didn't 'speak Irish to anybody really because I just kind of suck at it', though his friends reassured him that it was just a matter of confidence and his Irish was fine.

Ruby alternated between saying she was ‘fluent’, a tentative statement that Mary and Fionnuala supported vociferously and lamenting the fact that her grandmother in particular criticised her Irish. She said that people told her ‘your Irish is crap’ but ‘it was my first language’ and she hadn’t learnt English till she was six. There was general agreement that older people had better Irish and Caoimhe had also experienced criticism of her Irish from older relatives. In the extract below, Ruby describes how her grandmother criticised her Irish when Ruby went to her for help with schoolwork, an incident she mentioned in both focus groups. She stammers as she tries to describe her own level of Irish and it is clear that she needs the reassurance given by her friends that her Irish is not ‘crap’.

Extract 6.15 – CB5.FG.233

1204	Ruby	so I went to my granny and my granny literally sat me down and gave me
		(0.3)
1205		the longest
		(0.3)
1206		lecture because her level of Irish is so high
		(0.5)
1207		and like
		(0.4)
1208		I'd be considered fluent by som- like mo- like an-
1209	Fionnuala	yeah you're fluent you're fluent
1210	Mary	you are
1211	Ruby	I can speak
		(0.6)
1212	Mary	you're fluent and you can say exactly what you mean and what you want to write
1213	Ruby	yeah

So, while there are a range of factors involved in having ‘good Irish’, the importance of ‘authenticity’ in the form of personal or family involvement in traditional culture is striking, as is the desire to avoid English. There is a great deal of linguistic insecurity, with many participants suggesting their Irish is below the standard of older relatives.

6.4 Future and Utility of Irish

Although most CB participants were aware of significant benefits to speaking Irish, both in terms of academic and professional success and its function in their community, English was regarded as essential for all. Most expressed concern for the future of the Irish language.

6.4.1 Irish is useful but English is essential

Almost all participants cited competence in Irish as something that would benefit them academically and/or professionally. Some mentioned specific entrance requirements for university, while others expressed a more general sense that it is of benefit on the job market, as in Tomás's (CB5) statement that 'it's good to have the Irish, like, just to sweeten the pot'. Some also cited the advantages of bilingualism in general terms.

As well as the professional and academic rewards associated with competence in Irish, several students remarked that Irish was necessary for life in the local area. This was particularly true when it came to interacting with older people, but it also applied in local shops and so on, where some students had experienced negative comments or 'looks' for speaking English.

Most participants said they would like to raise their children through Irish, echoing Ó Giollagáin et al.'s (2007: 339) finding that 71% planned to do this. This desire often contrasted with their current linguistic practices. For example, Ruby (CB5) raised the topic herself in the first focus group, saying she would raise her children through Irish, since they would inevitably acquire English. However, she spoke English to her current boyfriend. Mary also hoped to raise children with Irish, but it was obvious to her that to speak to anyone, especially a partner, in a language they are not comfortable with was unacceptable. Shane (CB5) and

Sadhbh, Ailbhe and Jane (CB1) were also very certain that they wanted to raise their children with Irish when I asked them.

Most surprisingly, Caoimhe, Áine and Darragh (CB5) also said they would like to raise their children with Irish. Darragh regretted not having been raised with Irish, which he attributed to the fact that his mother was English:

Extract 6.16 – CB5.FG.245

> I was growing up without speaking Irish and (0.2) I I would have liked to [...] have more Irish (0.6) [...] growing up

Like Ruby, Caoimhe (CB5) raised the topic herself, mentioning as an aside that 'obviously I'll still speak it and [...] if I ever have a family they'll grow up with it', but she also complained 'I don't know why I get super-stressed out when [my parents] speak to me in Irish'. The only context in which Caoimhe said she felt comfortable speaking Irish was when people around her did not understand it, as discussed in Chapter 8. However, she later mentioned a friend who did not speak English, as mentioned below, suggesting that at least some of her social networks were mediated through Irish. Her certainty that she would speak Irish once she has her own children suggests that she was not drawing a connection between her current and future language practices, possibly seeing Irish as something that is 'in the blood' as discussed in Section 2.3.1.

Despite the benefits cited above, many students complained about the difficulties inherent in studying through Irish, particularly the need to master the standard variety, as discussed in Chapter 5. Órlaith and Jane (CB1) worried about having to study maths and science through English at university because they found their cousins' English-language textbooks difficult to understand. Ailbhe attempted to convince them that the extra points awarded in Leaving

Certificate exams for answering through Irish would make it worthwhile, but Órlaith dismissed this ,since once they got to university they would have to cope with learning through English.

In the extract below, from the same focus group, when faced with the incontrovertible point that English is more useful than Irish on a global scale, Ailbhe turns to an argument that seems to contradict her general positive attitude towards the strength of the language: the idea that Irish is worth learning *because* of its impending obsolescence (0783-0784). This echoes the core tenets of endangerment discourse, in its emphasis on the preservation of diversity for its own sake, and her description of Irish as more 'authentic' than English emphasises the cultural importance of the language. Their competence in English is taken for granted (0781) – Irish is certainly not a replacement for it, but rather complements it.

Extract 6.17 – CB1.FG.212

0759	Ailbhe	I mean like
		(0.1)
0760		cea- ceapann mise go gcaithfidh muidne an Gaeilge a embraceáil because tá sé againn
0761	Órlaith	yeah
		(0.1)
0762	Ailbhe	so like why just wasteáil é
		(0.2)
0763		agus i nG- i #nGaillimh tá siad ag déanamh like mata trí Bhéarla and stuff like tá sé sin go maith
0764	Órlaith	mm
0765	Jane	yeah
		(0.1)
0766	Ailbhe	but like tá sé níos fearr é a bheith agat i nGaeilge ná i Béarla
		(0.1)
0767	Éanna	ach smaoinigh air
0768	Ailbhe	####
		(0.2)
0769	Éanna	má bhogann tú go tír eile
		(0.4)
0770		seo an t-aon tír a úsáideann tú
0771	Ailbhe	I know but like #why
0772	Jane	I know but

0773 Éanna Gaeilge
(0.3)
0774 Jane it is our
(0.4)
0775 theanga like
0776 Ailbhe yeah but like tá tú in ann é sin a rá faoin mBéarla ~Éanna
(0.3)
0777 Órlaith but I just think we should like
0778 Jane yeah
0779 Éanna well no almost everywhere uses English
0780 Ailbhe agus tá sé againn
(0.3)
0781 I know but like tá an Béarla againn so ach tá an Ghaeilge níos like
0782 Jane but same as Fraincis
(0.6)
0783 Ailbhe authentic agus tá sé go deas a bheith agat
(0.2)
0784 because tá sé ag fáil bháis
0785 Órlaith yeah

0759 Ailbhe *I mean like*
(0.1)
0760 I think we have to *embrace* Irish *because* we have it
0761 Órlaith *yeah*
(0.1)
0762 Ailbhe *so like why just waste* it
(0.2)
0763 and in Galway they're doing *like* maths in English *and stuff like* that's good
0764 Órlaith mm
0765 Jane *yeah*
(0.1)
0766 Ailbhe *but like* it's better to have it in Irish than English
(0.1)
0767 Éanna but think about it
0768 Ailbhe ####
(0.2)
0769 Éanna if you move to another country
(0.4)
0770 this is the only country you use
0771 Ailbhe *I know but like #why*
0772 Jane *I know but*
0773 Éanna Irish
(0.3)
0774 Jane *it is our*
(0.4)
0775 language *like*
0776 Ailbhe *yeah but like* you can say that about English ~Éanna
(0.3)
0777 Órlaith *but I just think we should like*

0778 Jane *yeah*
0779 Éanna *well no almost everywhere uses English*
0780 Ailbhe and we have it
(0.3)
0781 *I know but like* we have English *so* but Irish is more *like*
0782 Jane *but same as* French
(0.6)
0783 Ailbhe *authentic* and it's nice to have it
(0.2)
0784 *because* it's dying
0785 Órlaith *yeah*

Fluency in English was essential, however much participants valued Irish. Mary (CB5) expressed concern about cousins of hers in Ballybeg who she felt lacked competence in English, as discussed in Section 5.6.1. Caoimhe also worried about a friend of hers from Ballybeg 'who full-on can't speak English' (suggesting that she had at least some friends with whom she interacted in Irish, despite her negative feelings about her parents speaking Irish to her). Many participants who discussed their grandparents' lack of competence in English mimicked the strong Conamara accents that marked their grandparents as second-language speakers of English. Ailbhe also claimed her father spoke like this in English. In the extract below, from the second-round focus group, Órlaith (0260) and Ailbhe (0257) mimic their grandfathers' discomfort when speaking English.

Extract 6.18 – CB1.FG.212

0247 Órlaith my grandad doesn't have any English it's so funny
(0.3)
0248 well he does but he just doesn't speak it like
0249 Interviewer really
0250 Ciarán grandpoppy
(0.1)
0251 Órlaith má bhíonn muid like ag caint Béarla leis # he just gets this like #
(0.1)
0252 and then when he speaks English it's so weird because he speaks he knows how to speak it but it's just so weird ##
[...]

0255 Ailbhe yeah
0256 yeah mo dhaideo bíonn sé like
(0.6)
0257 bíonn sé like "how are you doing?" @@@@
0258 Órlaith yeah and then bíonn sé like bíonn sé like
0259 Jane yeah
(0.1)
0260 Órlaith "and I went to the #"
and I'm like
0261 Ailbhe @@@@
(0.1)
0262 Órlaith he just it's just so weird hearing them ag caint Béarla
0263 Ailbhe yeah
(0.1)
0264 Órlaith after like
(0.3)
0265 # siad i gcónaí ag caint Gaeilge

0247 Órlaith my grandad doesn't have any English it's so funny
(0.3)
0248 well he does but he just doesn't speak it like
0249 Interviewer really
0250 Ciarán grandpoppy
(0.1)
0251 Órlaith if we *like* speak Irish to him #
he just gets this like #
(0.1)
0252 *and then when he speaks English it's so weird because he speaks he knows how to speak it but it's just so weird* ##
[...]
0255 Ailbhe *yeah*
0256 *yeah* my grandad he's *like*
(0.6)
0257 he's *like "how are you doing"* @@@@
0258 Órlaith *yeah and then* he's *like* he's *like*
0259 Jane *yeah*
(0.1)
0260 Órlaith *"and I went to the #"*
and I'm like
0261 Ailbhe @@@@
(0.1)
0262 Órlaith *he just it's just so weird hearing them* speaking English
0263 Ailbhe *yeah*
(0.1)
0264 Órlaith *after like*
(0.3)
0265 # they're always speaking Irish

Participants described the variety of English mimicked here as 'bogger', 'farmer' or 'culchie'[16], suggesting a strong connection between such an accent and rurality or backwardness. In addition, when I asked how to recognise this way of speaking, Caoimhe and Maria (CB5) suggested it was when someone didn't 'talk very well in English', i.e. it was the result of limited proficiency. In the extract below, Caoimhe, Maria and Megan have just discussed their belief that older generations speak better Irish (even though they themselves have no desire to speak in that way):

Extract 6.19 – CB5.FG.232

0872	Interviewer	ahm like so with when the way old people speak in Irish
		(0.5)
0873		is kind of good in some ways like because ((hesitates)) from what ye're saying it's kind of like
		(0.5)
0874		ye mightn't necessarily want to speak like that but it's like
		(0.3)
0875	Caoimhe	it's really int- like nice to hear that
		(0.1)
0876	Interviewer	yeah but the way
		(0.6)
0877		they might speak in English
		(0.4)
0878	Maria	it's it's ##
0879	Caoimhe	it's because they like
		(0.6)
0880		f- like grew up with like
0881	Megan	didn't have English
		(0.5)
0882	Caoimhe	the whole their whole lifetime and they didn't know much English
0883	Maria	Irish was the only thing like
		(0.5)
0884	Interviewer	mhmm
		(0.8)
0885		so it's not as much of a kind of a good thing
		(1.2)
0886	Caoimhe	well
		(0.5)

[16] Similar to bogger, though more commonly used in Dublin.

0887 I think it's a good thing
(0.3)
0888 Interviewer mhmm
(0.7)
0889 Caoimhe but then again they don't know English
(0.6)
0890 Interviewer you don't what
(0.2)
0891 Caoimhe they don't know English well
(0.3)
0892 Interviewer yeah
(0.8)
0893 Megan see like back then it was grand for them not to have English
(0.2)
0894 Interviewer mhmm
(0.1)
0895 Megan well now you kind of need it more
0896 Maria it's Irish is fading away and you need more English
(0.4)
0897 Megan ###
0898 Interviewer and do ye ever come across people still like who are young and who
(0.8)
0899 are better at Irish than English
(0.2)
0900 Caoimhe yeah there's loads of people in the school
0901 Megan yeah
(0.1)
0902 Interviewer yeah
(0.6)
0903 Caoimhe sixth year really

They attribute the Conamara accent to the fact that older generations ‘didn’t have English’ (0881), again illustrating their view of this way of speaking more as a marker of deficiency than one of local identity. No Fifth Years identified fellow participants as speaking in this manner (though Megan and Darragh had at least some traits of it). Clara and Sadhbh (CB1) identified Conor and Lee in their year as speaking like this, mimicking their pronunciation of ‘bus’ as [bʸʊsʸ]. While both lived near the school, Clara associated it with their family background, remarking that Lee had relatives from an area west of Ballybeg and his family were ‘all very culchie’. Even within his tight-knit and mostly Irish-speaking group of friends, Lee was often made fun of for having a particularly conservative accent.

Conor and Lee generally avoided speaking English when possible. They were somewhat difficult to interview, being slightly hyperactive and easily distracted, so it was not possible to discuss this issue in detail with them, but their response to my question about their competence in English is interesting:

Extract 6.20 – CB1.FG.198

0756	Interviewer	céard faoin mBéarla though
		(0.5)
0757		an bhfuil sibh go maith sa G- sa Bhéarla
0758	Lee	oh iontach
0759	Aisling	I am very
0760	Lee	lovely
		(0.2)
0761	Conor	I am very interested ###
0762	Ruairí	"níl mé go maith ag Béarla ar chor ar bith"
0763	Aisling	I excel at the English vocabulary
0764	Michael	nuair a labhraíonn mise Béarla sa mbaile #dúirt #siad #liom labhair Gaeilge
		(0.3)
0765	Lee	@ @@@
0766	Conor	#séard a #ráann #siad #liomsa "tá scail ort a mhac"
0767	Aisling	@@@@@@@@
		(1.6)
0768	Lee	((omnomnom sound))
0769	Michael	###
0770	Conor	howya now top of the morning to you
0771	Aisling	#########
0772	Ruairí	yeah ahm
0773	Lee	top of the morning to @you
		(0.1)

0756	Interviewer	what about English *though*
		(0.5)
0757		are ye good at I- at English
0758	Lee	oh great
0759	Aisling	*I am very*
0760	Lee	*lovely*
		(0.2)
0761	Conor	*I am very interested* ###
0762	Ruairí	"I'm not good at English at all"
0763	Aisling	*I excel at the English vocabulary*
0764	Michael	when I speak English at home #they #told #me to speak Irish
		(0.3)

```
0765 Lee            @ @@@
0766 Conor          #what #they #tell #me "you're mad, son"
0767 Aisling        @@@@@@@@
                    (1.6)
0768 Lee            ((omnomnom sound))
0769 Michael        ###
0770 Conor          howya now top of the morning to you
0771 Aisling        #########
0772 Ruairí         yeah ahm
0773 Lee            top of the morning to @you
                    (0.1)
```

They take my question as a prompt to speak English and produce a variety of phrases. Aisling, Lee and Conor's utterances in lines 0759-0763 are carefully enunciated, suggesting they are, jokingly, trying to show how good at English they are by speaking in a 'posh' manner. Ruairí's contribution (0762) shows awareness of what I might be interested in: the relationship people who are more comfortable in Irish have with English, though he also produces this as a joke, mimicking an old person complaining about their lack of competence in English and emphasising the palatalisation and velarisation characteristic of more conservative local speakers. Michael and Conor switch to Irish to make substantive contributions (0764, 0766), before Conor and Lee return to some stock phrases they had previously used to make fun of 'townies' (0770, 0773). In this extract, therefore, English is used only in a tokenistic manner. Michael spoke some English later in this focus group, and Ruairí and Aisling were generally comfortable in English, but for Conor and Lee, English was used more for messing around than for communication, at least in school, though Lee said he communicated in English with friends online or in town.

CB participants' awareness of the benefits of Irish, and their intentions to speak Irish with the next generation, did not challenge the primacy of English. Within one friendship group, English was only for messing around, and groups like this also seemed to exist within other year groups. However, for most the idea of not speaking English was out of the question and

appearing to be more competent in Irish than English was undesirable. Even Lee, who spoke little to no English in school, often expressed pessimism about the value of the language beyond the local area and claimed to use only English online or outside Conamara.

6.4.2 The future of Irish: a shared sense of responsibility and concern

CB participants' opinions on the likely future of Irish were also varied, though most seemed to have a personal interest in the question. CB First Years had particularly disparate views. Most acknowledged that it is endangered and accepted some level of responsibility for its preservation. Órlaith and Muireann agreed that keeping Irish alive is important because, in Muireann's words, 'bheadh sé brónach nuair a bhfuil muid like caoga agus níl aon Ghaeilge ag aon duine' ('It would be sad when we're *like* 50 and nobody has any Irish'). Sadhbh, Clara and Muireann associated the fact that they lived in 'the most really active Gaeltacht' with a responsibility to protect the language, in terms of both speaking it more often and avoiding codeswitching, as discussed in Section 6.3.4. However, they regarded individual freedom as crucial and rejected any 'pressure' to speak Irish, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Ailbhe was generally very positive about both the value and the strength of Irish, as was her sister Fionnuala (CB5). For example, Ailbhe said 'bíonn daoine like "tá an Ghaeilge ag fáil bás" but I think go bhfuil sé actually just ag fás' ('people are *like* "Irish is dying" *but I think* it's *actually just* growing'). Sadhbh was less positive, as seen in the extract below:

Extract 6.21 – CB1.FG.139

0831	Sadhbh	I feel go cheap- go gceapann daoine
		(0.4)
0832		like ar fud na tíre go bhfuil brú ach
		(0.5)
0833		and therefore they try to
		(0.4)
0834		go away from it
0835	Ailbhe	yeah

0836 Jane yeah
0837 Sadhbh because ceapann siad gur
(0.5)
0838 Gaeilge #é gur
(0.4)
0839 rud weird atá ann agus is only like daoine as an
0840 Ailbhe as #é #### as an Gaeltacht
0841 Sadhbh tuath nach mbíonn like ag siopadóireacht agus like
0842 Jane mm
(0.3)
0843 yeah
0844 Sadhbh daoine weird like
0845 yeah
(0.3)
0846 country daoine
0847 a labhraíonns Gaeilge
0848 yeah
0849 Ailbhe but #is only like is
(0.2)
0850 is teanga atá ann ag deireadh an lae agus
(0.1)
0851 Sadhbh mm
(0.1)
0852 Ailbhe is ár
(0.1)
0853 kind of
(0.2)
0854 Sadhbh decision
0855 Ailbhe rogha atá ann a labhairt
0856 Sadhbh yeah yeah
(1.1)

0831 Sadhbh *I feel* that people *like* all over the
(0.4)
0832 country think there's pressure but
(0.5)
0833 *and therefore they try to*
(0.4)
0834 *go away from it*
0835 Ailbhe *yeah*
0836 Jane *yeah*
0837 Sadhbh *because* they think that
(0.5)
0838 Irish #it that
(0.4)
0839 it's a *weird* thing and it's *only like* people from the
0840 Ailbhe from #it #### from the Gaeltacht
0841 Sadhbh country that don't go *like* shopping and *like*
0842 Jane mm
(0.3)

0843 *yeah*
0844 Sadhbh *weird* people *like*
0845 *yeah*
(0.3)
0846 *country* people
0847 who speak Irish
0848 *yeah*
0849 Ailbhe *but* #it's *only like* it's
(0.2)
0850 it's a language at the end of the day
(0.1)
0851 Sadhbh mm
(0.1)
0852 Ailbhe it's our
(0.1)
0853 *kind of*
(0.2)
0854 Sadhbh *decision*
0855 Ailbhe choice to speak
0856 Sadhbh *yeah yeah*
(1.1)

Sadhbh suggests that people outside of Gaeltacht areas are unlikely to speak the language, partly as a reaction to pressure and partly because they associate it with backward rural areas (0831-0847). Although Ailbhe was generally very positive about the benefits of speaking Irish, she rejected the idea of putting pressure on individuals to speak Irish, arguing it should be their choice (0850-0855):

Although Ailbhe generally expressed hope for the future of Irish, in the second-round focus group she gave the very fact that Irish was 'ag fáil bháis' ('dying') as reason for speaking it, as discussed above. In the same session, Jane suggested that the prevalence of codeswitching was a sign that Irish was 'dying', to which Éanna responded 'I'll be at the funeral'. In Extract 6.6, he and Charlotte dismiss the idea that they should be concerned about the future of Irish. In the extract below, Charlotte describes rhetoric about 'saving' the language as 'needy'. She argues that 'no language has really died out'. While this is untrue if one takes 'dying' to mean a language no longer being spoken widely in communities in which it was formerly used, she may be arguing that languages do not disappear entirely in the way that living beings do,

because there will generally be at least some people left with knowledge of a language, and/or there will be written records of the language. While there are languages of which this is not true, it is true of Irish. For Charlotte, this means that it is unfair to pressure individuals to speak Irish, since even if no one chose to speak it, the knowledge of the language would remain.

Extract 6.22 – CB1.FG.136

> I feel like it's very needy (0.5)because like it's the language won't die (0.4) Ireland's been around for years and Irish is pretty much anywhere you turn in Ireland it's hardly gonna die (0.5) so like if there's like let's say fifty students in a school speaking English a few times a day doesn't mean that the language is gonna die at all it's just somebody that prefers this language than the other (0.9) I do- I just think it's stupid for them to be going around saying oh yeah the language will die out and nobody will be able to speak Irish (0.4) no language has really died out at least there's gonna be there's gonna be still a bunch of people left in Ireland speaking Irish

CB Fifth Years generally agreed on the need to preserve Irish. The only person to openly disagree was Áine: in the first focus group she said 'who cares' if the languages dies out, while in the later one she immediately responded 'it'll die down' (line 0174 of Extract 6.23) when I asked about the group's views on the likely future of the language. However, Áine's views were more ambivalent than this might suggest. Despite her overtly-expressed apathy toward the future of the language, she regularly attended a weekly lunchtime Irish language conversation club, though she claimed it was just for the sake of the biscuits provided. She also said she planned to raise her children with Irish, despite also saying she wished she attended an English-medium school. Later in the extract below, she also expressed (very guarded) hope for the future of the language (0180). While it is not a ringing endorsement, she seems more invested in the future of the language in the area than her dismissal of my question in the first focus group might suggest.

Extract 6.23 – CB5.FG.245

0171	Interviewer	wha- what would ye say is
		(0.6)
0172		like
		(0.9)
0173		the future of the language and I know that like some of ye have answered all these questions before so if ye have any more thoughts ye can just jump in
		(1.0)
0174	Áine	I feel like it'll die down
		(0.3)
0175	Interviewer	you what
		(0.1)
0176	Áine	I feel like it'll die down
		(0.4)
0177	Shane	ah no there'll always be
		(0.3)
0178		a place for it around here anyway
		(0.3)
0179	Brian	yeah
		(2.0)
0180	Áine	hopefully
		(0.8)
0181		I don't know
0182	Shane	because you'll see I know there's not as many people speaking it as there used to be like but
		(0.4)
0183		you still see a lot of
		(0.3)
0184		young people speaking it like
		(0.4)
0185		especially around here

The B-stream boys acknowledged the truth of the warnings they regularly got from teachers about the future of the language. As Tomás said, ‘it’s true, like, it will it will die if we don’t [...] keep speaking it’, though Patrick observed that they tended to ‘just brush it off’. However, Tomás and Patrick expressed concern that the loss of the language would entail the loss of the culture that surrounded it. Tomás cited the Oireachtas in particular, though he had never been. He planned to go that year, but ‘just for drinking’.

Mary, Ruby and Fionnuala were generally more engaged with the question of the future of Irish:

Extract 6.24 – CB5.FG.233

1169	Interviewer	do ye ever worry about the future of Irish
1170	Ruby	yeah
		(0.2)
1171	Fionnuala	not really
1172	Mary	yeah
		(0.6)
1173		I
1174	Fionnuala	it was dying it's been dying s-
		(0.6)
1175		forever
		(0.6)
1176		and there's athbheochan Gaeilge ['the revival of Irish'] in
		(0.3)
1177		Béal Feirste ['Belfast']
		(0.3)
1178		and like
		(0.1)
1179		in the midlands and they still speak it in Waterford and like
		(0.3)
1180		it's a huge thing #
1181	Ruby	it's just kind of sad
1182	Fionnuala	in Dublin
		(0.2)
1183		and like I didn't even really notice till my sister she was doing the play and they went to Dublin
		(0.3)
1184		and like people
		(0.1)
1185		they were in Galway and we went to the Peacock in Dublin
		(0.3)
1186		and people went to see it every single night
		(0.8)
1187	Mary	yeah
1188	Fionnuala	and it was a heavy play like it was a heavy one
		(0.2)
1189		and they were also planning on going to Belfast with it but then they couldn't but
1190	Ruby	like there is
1191	Fionnuala	but like if if they went to Belfast there'd still be an audience they went to Dublin there was an audience they went to Galway there was an audience in Galway like
1192	Mary	yeah
		(0.1)
1193	Ruby	there were there's communities of Irish and there's people who do speak Irish in

		most counties
1194	Mary	it's kind of
		(0.2)
1195	Ruby	but it's just kind of sad how we went from a country that
		(0.8)
1196		was mainly Irish and also the level of Irish that I have compared to the level of Irish my grandparents have is completely different

Fionnuala is quite forceful in expressing her hope for the language (1171, 1174-1181, 1182-1191) over Ruby's more measured contributions (1170, 1181, 1193-1196). There is a sense of impatience in her response that 'it's been dying [...] forever' (1174-1175): she clearly does not want to engage in negative discussion about the language. Later in this focus group, she expressed the view that 'Gaeilge is growing' because of its strength in networks outside of Gaeltacht areas, citing the example of a German Irish-speaker she had met at a family wedding. This remark was slightly disconnected from the previous topic of conversation and was very similar to those made by Ailbhe, suggesting a family influence. Ruby's remark that her level of Irish is much lower than that of her grandparents (1196) suggests how much this particular aspect of language shift has impacted her confidence in her ability to speak the language, as discussed in Section 6.3.4.

By and large, therefore, CB participants were quite worried about the future of Irish. Some claimed not to be concerned, either because they were confident of its survival or because they did not care if it survived. However some of these participants, notably Ailbhe and Áine, expressed contradictory opinions, suggesting that they found it difficult to know what to think given the instability of the linguistic context.

6.5 Conclusion

As suggested in the previous chapter, authenticity is very important to CB participants. They perceive strong ties between language and place, even if their own language use does not follow the patterns they identify. Their pride in their own dialect, and awareness of the benefits of Irish for professional and academic success, contrasts with their uncertainty or even pessimism about its future and their acceptance of the fact that English is essential. The association of Irish with older people and early childhood also contrasts with the certainty of many participants that they will speak Irish with their children. The ambivalence and contradictory statements made by many suggest the toll of living in a situation of language shift: they may have overtly positive attitudes towards Irish and want it to survive, but they cannot reconcile that with their everyday actions, which show the impact of broader social forces pushing them towards English. Although there are hints that their overt pride in their local dialect belies a sense that new speaker varieties that more closely resemble the standard are the default variety of Irish, this overt pride in Conamara Irish is strong. It can also be seen in ambivalent and disparaging attitudes towards new speaker varieties, despite a broad welcome for new speakers in general.

The next chapter will show how in some ways GCI participants are a mirror image of CB participants, preferring their variety over all others (though also showing signs of linguistic insecurity) and presenting the way they speak Irish as a reflection of their authentic selves, though authenticity for them has a different meaning.

7. ‘We can speak it normally’: the authenticity paradox for Gaelcholáiste an Iarthair students

For GCI participants, authenticity in the sense of close ties to particular areas or a long personal or family history with the language, is not as important as it is for CB participants. However, they do not want to speak as though they are ‘from nowhere’ (Woolard 2008: 307) nor do they see the rules of the standard as incontrovertible, although some do perceive traditional dialects as a hindrance to communication. They therefore conform neither to the ideology of authenticity that is so dominant among CB students nor to the ideology of anonymity, as promulgated through the prioritisation of the standard in academic assessment.

Section 7.1 explores language patterns within the school. Less attention is paid to those in the local community than in the previous chapter, since Irish for most participants is largely confined to school. Section 7.2 discusses how GCI participants see the relationship between language and place, with national identity playing a larger role than in CB. Attitudes to Gaeltacht and new speaker varieties are discussed in Section 7.3, while Section 7.4 discusses how GCI students evaluate what counts as ‘good’ Irish. Finally, Section 7.5 explores participants’ attitudes to the utility and likely future of Irish.

7.1 Language patterns within the school

GCI participants’ language patterns were more homogeneous than CB participants because their linguistic backgrounds were more homogeneous, despite the fact that they came from a wider geographical area than their peers at CB. Only three came from homes where Irish was spoken. Although two had parents who spoke another language, that language was not spoken

within the home. This meant that English was the only language most participants spoke on a daily basis outside school.

First Years at GCI were especially homogeneous, as none of them spoke Irish at home. Peer interactions were exclusively in English (in their own accounts and in my observation) except where a teacher was present, although Irish was sometimes used in mimicking various teachers. The only First Year cited as speaking Irish in the absence of a teacher was David, but, as discussed in Section 5.3.2, this may result from his reputation as a rule-follower rather than his actual language practices.

The extract below illustrates the normal procedure when in the presence of a teacher: the boys had been speaking in English before I switched on the recorder but had switched to Irish when a teacher entered the room. As soon as he left, they switched back to English (0013).

Extract 7.1 GCI1.FG.200

0001	Marc	ní raibh siad bróga reatha bhí siad just like
0002	Interviewer	cén saghas
		(0.4)
0003	Marc	like
0004	Interviewer	oh like brogues b'fhéidir
		(0.1)
0005	Marc	yeah bhí siad like bróga an-deas
0006	Interviewer	like not mar seo
		(0.1)
0007	Cillian	no
		(0.1)
0008	Paul	no like
0009	Marc	no bhí siad like flats Adidas ######
0010	Cillian	slán a mháistir
0011	Marc	slán
		(0.5)
0012	Paul	like
		(0.4)
0013		brógaí atá an-deas agus tá tusa agus do chara mar oh my God
0014	Marc	((whispering))
0015	Cillian	I thought you were talk

0016 Marc he gave me a lecture on Wednesday
0017 Cillian thought you were talking about ##
0018 Marc I'll be getting a lecture on Monday going like "bhí siad ag caint faoi ~David agus brógaí agus"

0001 Marc they weren't trainers they were *just like*
0002 Interviewer what kind
(0.4)
0003 Marc *like*
0004 Interviewer oh *like brogues* maybe
(0.1)
0005 Marc *yeah* they were *like* very nice shoes
0006 Interviewer *like not* like this
(0.1)
0007 Cillian *no*
(0.1)
0008 Paul *no like*
0009 Marc *no* they were *like Adidas flats* ######
0010 Cillian bye sir
0011 Marc bye
(0.5)
0012 Paul *like*
(0.4)
0013 shoes that are really nice and you and your friends are like *oh my God*
0014 Marc ((whispering))
0015 Cillian *I thought you were talk*
0016 Marc *he gave me a lecture on Wednesday*
0017 Cillian *thought you were talking about* ##
0018 Marc *I'll be getting a lecture on Monday going like* "they were talking about ~David and shoes and"

Although they spoke English to peers, many First Years were initially reluctant to speak English to me. However they all chose to speak English in focus groups and many began to address me in English after this.

There was an unusually high number of students who spoke Irish at home in Fifth Year, with four in a year group of about 35. All spoke Irish with just one parent and none had Gaeltacht links. However, English was the main language of communication with peers, as for First Years. As discussed in Section 5.3.2, school language policy was not enforced as strictly

among this group as with First Years, which meant they did not always switch to Irish in the presence of a teacher, but they were generally discreet about speaking English in school.

As discussed in Section 4.2.4, this was the group with which I had most difficulty creating rapport. Initially I spoke to them in English, but I soon realised that this made them uncomfortable and began to speak to them in Irish. There are several possible explanations for this and I am not sure which, if any, was the main one. It may have been motivated by a genuine desire to speak to someone who is not a teacher in Irish, an opportunity that many of them do not often have. It may have been a mechanism to retain a level of distance and formality from someone they regarded as a stranger, who might report on them to school authorities. It may also have related to a desire to protect the school from negative portrayals, since their usual linguistic behaviour contradicted the stated ethos of the school as an Irish-speaking environment. These explanations are, of course, not mutually exclusive, and may all have played a role. When I attended the school musical, held off school premises and outside school hours, I found the dynamic was reversed. At the interval, I spoke to some Fifth Year participants who were helping out with the musical, which they had participated in the previous year. I began by speaking Irish because these students had never addressed me in English before, but quickly realised that this was not appropriate – they were speaking English quite openly to each other. They visibly relaxed when I switched to English.

The only students who did not follow the pattern described above were the three Fifth Years who spoke Irish at home, Aoife, Neasa and Tadhg. All three seemed quite comfortable speaking to me in English. In Tadhg's case, this may have been influenced by the fact that he had only heard me speak in English, as he was in a different Irish class to many of the other participants and I introduced myself to his English class. Again, there are several potential

explanations for this dynamic: they may not have the same strict divisions in their minds between the kind of person one speaks English to and the kind of person one speaks Irish to, since they spoke Irish outside of school. They may also have regarded me as not motivated enough to speak Irish, since I had addressed them in English and the choice to speak English to me may have been a means of distancing themselves, just as the choice to speak Irish was for their peers. It is also possible that they felt they had nothing to prove: they spoke Irish at home anyway, so their dedication to the language was not in question, while others may have felt they needed to demonstrate it.

Although all the younger students had chosen to speak in English in focus groups, almost all Fifth Years chose to speak Irish. One student, Emily, seemed to be taken by surprise when others in her group chose this – she hesitated and suggested that they could switch to English if necessary, though this did not happen. It is possible that she and other students would have preferred to speak in English but felt that saying so would be inappropriate, because it would suggest either that their Irish language competence was not high enough or that they were not committed enough to the language (and maybe, by extension, the school). The most interesting focus groups in terms of language choice were those with Senan and Doireann, who were paired with Tadhg for the first round and John for the second. In the first round, Doireann expressed a preference for English but Tadhg suggested they speak Irish. I had the sense this was more out of a sense of duty than a real desire to do it in Irish and after a few turns, he switched to English; the others followed. In the second round, therefore, I asked Senan, Doireann and John if they wanted to speak in English again. They agreed, but after a few minutes, John began responding in Irish, as seen in Extract 7.2. The other two followed. Between the point at which I asked them what language they wanted to speak and when I switched the recorder on, the teacher whose room we were using briefly came in to get

something from his desk. He was particularly engaged with the promotion of Irish, so this is likely to have motivated John to switch to Irish (0079), even though this occurred after the teacher left.

Extract 7.2 – GCI5.FG.236

0074	Interviewer	ahm so ~John
		(0.3)
0075		the last day we just started by saying like
		(1.0)
0076		oh I can't even remember what schools ye went to I should remember
		(0.4)
0077	Doireann	[primary school] and then ~Tadhg went to [primary school]
		(0.2)
0078	Interviewer	excellent
0079	John	[primary school] freisin
		(0.5)
0080	Interviewer	oh that's really easy
		(0.4)
0081		ahm and do ye speak Irish at home
		(0.4)
0082	John	ahm
		(0.3)
0083		bhuel tá Gaeilge ag mo deartháireacha ach tá níl aon Gaeilge ag mo mhuintir

0074	Interviewer	ahm so ~John
		(0.3)
0075		the last day we just started by saying like
		(1.0)
0076		oh I can't even remember what schools ye went to I should remember
		(0.4)
0077	Doireann	[primary school] and then ~Tadhg went to [primary school]
		(0.2)
0078	Interviewer	excellent
0079	John	[primary school] too
		(0.5)
0080	Interviewer	*oh that's really easy*
		(0.4)
0081		*ahm and do ye speak Irish at home*
		(0.4)
0082	John	ahm
		(0.3)
0083		well my brothers have Irish but my parents don't have any Irish

It seems likely that the choice to speak Irish restricted some participants' ability to discuss certain topics, but, as mentioned in Section 4.4.2, it reflected how they wanted to position themselves in the focus group.

7.2 Irish as a national rather than a local language

Commuting was a way of life for many GCI students, some of whom even lived in a different county. The end of the school day was co-ordinated with public transport schedules, while a number of private minibuses lined up outside the school to bring students home to areas up to an hour away in peak traffic and other students were driven to school by their parents. Many students also participated in after-school study until 6pm. This greatly reduced the time available for meeting up with friends in their neighbourhood or participating in local sports clubs, etc. There was, therefore, less sense of the school being intertwined with the local community, both near students' homes and near the school itself, than at CB. The school's management made great efforts to engage with the town in which it was located, which entailed careful codeswitching at parents' evenings and other events, since Irish was not generally spoken in the community.

Local identity was not mentioned by any participants as being important to their relationship with the Irish language. There are designated Gaeltacht areas nearby, but actual use of Irish in these areas is low and I heard little mention of this in my time in the school. That this fact was not mentioned by students suggests that either they were unaware (although some lived in these areas) or they did not see this as relevant to their own relationship to the language. Instead, participants spoke about Irish in the context of national identity. Their view of the relationship between the Irish language and Gaeltacht areas was somewhat ambivalent; there

was a contrast between the emphasis their teachers put on it and their own lack of familiarity with such areas.

7.2.1 Irish and nationalism

Most First Year students were not very engaged with politics and many were apathetic about the fate of the language. Some spoke about its importance in national terms when I asked about the future of Irish, but many did not. As discussed in Chapter 5, Irish was frequently discussed as a political issue within the school, so they are likely all to have thought about it to some extent.

Of the four First Year focus groups, two of which were all-male and two all-female, only the two all-male groups raised national identity in the context of a question about whether they worried about the future of the language. In one session, Ian lamented the decline of the Irish language, though his understanding of how this had happened was somewhat skewed, suggesting that partition (i.e. the division of the island into two jurisdictions following the War of Independence) was the cause of the language's decline, rather than a result of the same colonising processes:

Extract 7.3 – GCI1.FG.196

> yeah because it's it's it's such a shame that (0.2) [...] we don't have our own language because [...] of the (0.6) six counties that were taken from us [...] and like I can't believe that just a small segment was taken and now the whole country speaks English (0.9) it's kind of (1.2) it's sad to think that a whole [...] language was almost completely wiped from the face of the earth

Cormac and David agreed (though there was general confusion about the accuracy of what Ian had said) and both said it was essential that Irish be maintained 'because it's our own language and we should be speaking it' in Cormac's words, though Iarlaith was not convinced of this.

In another group, Paul said he worried about the future of Irish because 'it's our native language', so 'you should be a bit proud of it'. This is noteworthy because Paul was generally the most flippant in this group, which comprised some of the most unruly boys in the class. Marc and Cillian brushed off this concern, but Cillian later remarked that everyone in Ireland should speak Irish as well as they did because 'we're in Ireland'.

Fifth Years had had more time to engage with the issue, meaning the level of engagement with the topic was much higher, though views also varied. While the national importance of Irish arose in the context of several topics, I also asked some groups explicitly about the relationship between Irish and politics, because I was aware it was a salient topic in their year group, unlike with the First Years. Some Fifth Years had remarked to me in casual conversation that the boys in their year were particularly 'political' about the language. Fewer boys than girls participated, so it was difficult to assess how accurate this was, though the perception is noteworthy in itself. Of the four boys who did participate, two (Cian and Senan) had been named, alongside another boy, as exceptions to this rule. John was regarded as having particularly strong republican views. He, Tadhg and another friend had made an effort to speak only Irish for a month. Rebecca described them as being 'paiseanta' ('passionate') about Irish, especially John. Aoife said of John 'tagann a ghrá agus a mheas don Ghaeilge ón ón ngrá agus meas do na Sé Chontae' ('his love and his respect for Irish comes from [his] love and respect for the Six Counties [i.e. Northern Ireland]'), while Tadhg associated John's desire to speak more Irish with the fact that he's 'kind of anti-English'. He and Rebecca observed that John generally did not speak much Irish.

John was very open about his views and cited his father's republicanism as the primary

motivation for sending him to a Gaelcholáiste. The link between language and politics had been impressed upon John from an early age and he saw Irish as an inherently political language because the only reason Irish people spoke English was ‘mar gheall ar na Sasanaigh agus an rialú a bheith acu ar Éire’ (‘because of the English and their rule over Ireland’): if this had not happened, he argued, everyone would be speaking Irish and people in English-medium schools would not hate Irish. His vision was not limited to the language itself, but also the drama, poetry and ‘an sórt saol sóisialta a bhí aige roimh .. réim an .. the English’ (‘the sort of social life it had before the rule of *the English’*). John generally went out of his way, even more than other participants in his year group, to avoid codeswitching during focus groups, so this switch is likely to have been a disappointment to him. It is likely to have been motivated by a desire to avoid using the genitive plural form (‘na Sasanach’). The genitive case (‘tuiseal ginideach’) is widely used as a byword for the intricacies of Irish grammar and few students in either school were comfortable with it. Speaking Irish, for John, was a political statement and part of a continuing process of decolonisation. He saw Brexit as a major opportunity, as seen below, though he acknowledged it was unlikely that Irish people would start speaking Irish again in the next 100 years.

Extract 7.4 – GCI5.FG.236

158	John	argóint eile le ~Senan just maidir le po- like an (0.4)
159		seo like political point ach like le Brexit (0.4)
160	Interviewer	political points all good ##
161	Doireann	@@
162	John	@ le Brexit ahm tá seans níos fearr ag an tuaisceart chun bheith like Éire aontaithe (0.1)
163	Interviewer	mhmm
164	John	agus (0.2)
165		tugfaidh sé sin seans níos fearr don tír ar fad teacht le chéile agus an Gaeilge a bhí ann roimh tháinig na Sasanaigh a tabhairt

ar ais agus beidh Gaeilge líofa ag gach duine

158 John another argument to ~Senan regarding po- *like* the
(0.4)
159 this is *like* a *political point* but *like* with *Brexit*
(0.4)
160 Interviewer *political points all good* ##
161 Doireann @@
162 John @ le *Brexit* ahm the north has a better choice to be *like* a united Ireland
(0.1)
163 Interviewer mhmm
164 John and
(0.2)
165 that will give a better chance to the whole country to come together and bring back the Irish that was there before the English came and everyone will have fluent Irish

John's friend Tadhg spoke Irish with one parent. He did not express strong political views about the language but said he regretted the fact that he only spoke it at home. He cited this sense that he and his friends were not showing how much they liked the language as the primary motivation for their attempt to speak only Irish. He added, however, that 'it'll also help for the Leaving Cert'. The latter motivation makes sense, given the heavy emphasis on academic success in the school, though Tadhg also claimed to have little interest in school and planned to join the army. Tadhg made no mention whatsoever of nationalist motivations for this endeavour on his own part, or of the importance of the Irish language in a national context, despite his desire to join the army and the prevalence among his peers of arguments relating the preservation of Irish to national identity. He may not have held any such motivations, but it is also possible that he was simply more discreet about them than John, particularly given that the other two participants in the focus group were avowedly apolitical, as discussed below. Interviews are, as discussed in Section 4.4.2, largely a reflection of how participants want to portray themselves to the individual conducting the interview at a given time. I had least

contact with Tadhg and John outside of focus groups and so can add little to what they and others told me. In addition, each was only able to participate in one focus group. What is clear is that Tadhg did not want to be seen as a zealot, whereas John was proud of his political motivations.

Like John, Aoife and Neasa had a parent with strong republican views, which they too seemed to hold, though not to the same level as John. They had been raised speaking Irish to this parent, meaning that the link between language and nationalism had also been salient to them from an early age. They did not discuss their political beliefs in as explicit a manner as John during focus groups. However, they did hold republican beliefs: for example, Neasa had dedicated a woodwork project to the republican hunger strikers, whom she described as 'freedom fighters'.

Their friendship group (of which Rebecca, Zoë and Emily were members) generally had strong views on the importance of Irish as the national language. Rebecca and Aoife related in the first-round focus group how appalled they were when they heard of students in another school professing to be better at French than Irish, with Aoife describing it as 'ait' ('strange') to be better in a foreign language than in 'teanga dúchais na tíre' ('the native language of the country'). For them, being Irish was intrinsically linked to speaking the language and any Irish person who did not speak the language was, by implication, somewhat lacking. Foreign languages should only be a secondary interest.

Emily related with indignation an anecdote about a time she had corrected an error made by an acquaintance in Irish. The girl had objected to Emily correcting her, suggesting that Emily thought she was better than her because she attended a Gaelcholáiste. Emily attributed this to

jealousy and responded ‘tá just éad ort mar tá an Ghaeilge agam agus níl sé agat’ (‘you’re just jealous because I have Irish and you don’t’). For Emily, this was ridiculous since Irish was ‘just teanga an tír’ (‘*just* the language of the country’). Again, speaking Irish is seen as the duty of Irish citizens and Emily cannot understand how anyone could object to her helping them do this. The reaction of the other girl, accusing Emily of being arrogant because of the school she attended, illustrates the association of Irish-medium schools with elitism, as discussed in Section 3.4.3.

A small group from Fifth Year, including Zoë, Rebecca, Tadhg and Emily, won a poetry competition and were invited to perform their poems, which had been written in Irish, in front of the American ambassador to Ireland at an event in Dublin (which I did not attend, but which was widely discussed among teachers in the school). They refused a request to read English translations of the poems. Instead they provided a summary of each poem in English, but recited the original version, despite the fact that many people at the event had little Irish. While not explicitly political, again this highlights their commitment to the language and desire to make a symbolic statement about its value, even if those listening could not understand them. Emily reported, when presenting at a meeting of the Gaelbhratach committee, that the audience had appreciated that they were ‘ag labhairt ár dteanga’ (‘speaking our language’).

Senan and Doireann, in the same focus group as John, disagreed with his political views on Irish. Senan insisted that politicisation of the language could be counterproductive. While John hoped that Brexit would bring about reunification, which would end what he saw as the ‘dictatorship’ in Northern Ireland, whereby the DUP stopped any progress for the language, Senan felt this would not help the position of the language. He argued that unionist antipathy to Catholics and, consequently, to the Irish language was too strong and that the only way to

make Irish acceptable to them would be to depoliticise it. He expressed support for incremental measures, like the presence of Irish on road signs, but felt the only way Irish could be the official language of a united Ireland would be through achieving a situation like that he perceived in Wales, where people speak both Welsh and English and 'níl aon, like, coimhlint idir an dá theanga' ('there's no, *like*, conflict between the two languages'). In some ways this echoes the political rhetoric about avoiding the politicisation of Irish, as discussed in Section 3.2.4. Doireann agreed they should 'lig dó fás air féin' ('let it grow on its own').

Chloe, Laura, Róisín and Cian agreed that language was personal rather than political. However, the three girls regularly cited broadly nationalist motives for speaking the language, though without any reference to Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom. For example, when I asked about the benefits of having Irish, Laura cited extra marks in exams and Cian suggested its function as a secret language, as discussed in Chapter 8. However, Róisín said 'is ár teanga é so, like, tá sé chomh tábhachtach go mbeidh sé ag gach duine sa tír' ('it's our language, *so, like*, it's so important that everyone in the country has it') and Chloe argued that the Irish language was 'an rud a dhéanaimid Éireannach' ('the thing that makes us Irish'). Cian did not express any views on this and seemed uninterested, but it is clear that the others did not see the nationalist motivation for speaking Irish as political.

Although only John embraced the idea that Irish was political, and some rejected this, all Fifth Years other than Tadhg, Senan and Cian spoke about the importance of the language to national identity, suggesting this was seen as a neutral stance within the school.

7.2.2 Lack of connection to Gaeltacht areas

Gaeltacht areas were regularly mentioned in Irish classes at GCI, particularly with Fifth

Years. Listening and reading comprehensions in state exams generally relate to Gaeltacht areas, as do most poems and literature, especially for Leaving Certificate. For this reason, the Fifth Year Irish teacher whose class I observed, who was very exam-focused, made an effort to familiarise students with the names of Gaeltacht areas. He also observed that it was important for them as Gaelcholáiste students to have some idea of the Gaeltacht. Thus, although CB students objected to the education system's emphasis on the 'anonymous' standard, the parallel insistence that students have some familiarity with 'authentic' dialects was more problematic for GCI students.

Some GCI students had family ties to the Gaeltacht. The only two participants to mention such a tie were Iarlaith, whose grandmother came from an area in Conamara that is part of the Gaeltacht but in which Irish is no longer widely spoken and Mia, whose mother was from Mullagh. Despite this close family connection to the Conamara Gaeltacht, Mia did not feel a strong bond with the area. Her relations in Mullagh 'don't talk English to you, so, like, you've no choice but to talk Irish back', which was problematic because, she said, she couldn't 'understand half the words they say'. Neither Iarlaith nor Mia felt themselves to be part of a Gaeltacht community, though both described regular trips to these areas and were close to family there.

The school organised trips to Gaeltacht areas and sports or other extracurricular activities also sometimes involved visits to such areas, but the majority of students in GCI rarely visited the Conamara Gaeltacht. Although the school was located less than an hour's drive from CB, they generally expressed no awareness of any differentiation within the broader geographical area of Conamara. This contrasts with the careful distinctions made by CB students and resembles the attitudes they described friends from town as holding. For example, Róisín (GCI5)

described how surprised she was when some girls she met while playing a match in Conamara told her that while their parents and grandparents spoke Irish, their own Irish was not 'iontach' ('great'). She had expected everyone in Conamara to speak fluent Irish and was unaware that the town in question has never been designated part of the Gaeltacht. Gráinne (GCI1) expressed concern when Mia and Sarah told her of a child who lived in the Gaeltacht and spoke no English, at the age of three, because 'if she wants to, like, go to the shop, then she won't understand what they're saying', suggesting she did not quite believe that some people in Gaeltacht areas really spoke Irish all the time.

The lack of connection with Conamara and other Gaeltacht areas, coupled with their teachers' insistence that it was important led to ambivalent feelings about the area among students. In one Irish class, the First Years were shown a video of a boy around their age speaking Irish. The teacher received a variety of answers when she asked where the boy was from, as the class was generally flummoxed. Paul jokingly suggested he was from 'darkest Conamara', a term reminiscent of colonial discourse about Africa and carrying implications of a lack of 'civilisation'. When the teacher revealed the boy was from the Kerry Gaeltacht, in the Munster dialect area, Paul responded 'má théann tú i deepest darkest Kerry is language eile atá ann' ('if you go in *deepest darkest Kerry* it's a different *language'),* again suggesting this idea of Gaeltacht areas as primitive and distancing the language they spoke in school from that spoken in Kerry in particular. The teacher then suggested the class might find it easier to recognise a Conamara accent, which the students agreed with, though the ease with which Paul switched from Kerry to Conamara using the same imagery suggests that his views on the two areas are similar. GCI First Years also found Conamara Irish nearly unintelligible, as discussed in Section 7.3.1.

Teachers were the main Gaeltacht speakers GCI participants came across on a regular basis, and First Years drew a clear distinction between teachers who came from Gaeltacht areas (generally in Conamara) and the majority who did not. The policy in GCI was to call teachers by their first names. Liam, Conor, Marc and Cillian (GCI1), explained in a focus group that they were careful to address Gaeltacht teachers properly, as 'Máistir/Máistreás [first name]' whereas with other teachers they often used first names alone. Marc said 'whoever's like a real Gaeltacht, like, accent, like, they're kind of scary so you have to pay them the highest amount of respect'. There were exceptions to this rule: they regarded their main Irish teacher, who was not from a Gaeltacht area but who spoke in the Ulster dialect, as 'scary' too (though some thought he was from a Gaeltacht area), while the trainee teacher who taught the majority of their Irish lessons in the second term was always referred to by her first name, despite coming from a Munster Gaeltacht area. In the main, though, they saw Conamara teachers in particular as different, noting that you could recognise them by their 'really thick accents'. Liam observed 'they're never really as nice'.

There is an echo of CB students' rejection of the education system's promotion of the ideology of anonymity in GCI students' resistance to teachers' efforts to encourage them to show interest in Gaeltacht areas. CB students may feel the education system neglects the language-place connection they feel so strongly about, but for GCI students, who do not consider Gaeltacht areas important to their relationship to the language, the system's requirement that they demonstrate awareness and knowledge of these areas seems irrelevant. Their feelings on the matter are, however, less strong than those of their peers in CB, probably because Irish is a school language for them and, therefore, intrinsically linked to the range of unreasonable demands made by the education system.

7.3 Gaeltacht dialects versus 'normal' Irish

While some GCI participants, particularly Fifth Years, expressed an aesthetic appreciation for Gaeltacht dialects, none wanted to acquire one and many, especially in First Year, regarded them as undesirable: they were difficult to understand and associated with backward rural areas. They saw the way they spoke Irish as neutral and 'normal'. For them, it would be inauthentic to speak differently in Irish than in English.

7.3.1 Gaeltacht dialects as old-fashioned and difficult to understand

Like CB students, GCI First Years were fascinated, amused and frustrated by teachers who spoke dialects other than their own. Such dialects were regarded as odd, incomprehensible and, largely, undesirable. Fifth Years were more measured, but expressed similar sentiments, depicting the Conamara dialect in particular (the one most familiar to them) as outdated.

First Years were generally quite clear about their feelings about the Conamara dialect. While Marc said it was 'class' to speak with a Conamara accent because it meant Irish is your 'first language', Paul described it as 'kind of a weird accent, like'. Marc also later described Conamara Irish as 'impossible' and mimicked it by making incoherent guttural sounds. In another group, Cormac, Ian, Iarlaith and David said they liked the fact that their French teacher was actually French. However, they did not think it was so beneficial to have a Gaeltacht Irish teacher since Gaeltacht accents were difficult to understand and, as Ian put it, they were already 'pretty much fluent' in Irish, unlike French. This reflects the paradox discussed in Chapter 3: since Irish belongs to all Irish people, the expectation that people acquire a particular accent or forge a connection with certain geographical areas seems unreasonable to many who would regard this as a normal part of learning a foreign language like French. This lack of interest in acquiring a Gaeltacht accent is noted by Nic

Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018: 47) and Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018: 17). Their Irish teacher discussed this explicitly in class one day, observing that so far no student had picked up the Ulster dialect from him, and contrasting his expectations with those of the foreign-language teachers, who expect students to change their accent when speaking the language. While there was some acknowledgement of the value of Gaeltacht dialects, and, by extension, an 'authentic' relationship with the language, in the sense valued by CB participants, for GCI participants, attempting to emulate this accent would be inauthentic, as it would imply a claim to an identity they do not have.

First Years generally agreed that Conamara Irish was incomprehensible. Mia mentioned a girl who used to be in her class in primary school but now lived in Conamara and mimicked her 'trying to say "Caitríona"'. That is, the girl was saying the name Caitríona but was pronouncing it with a Conamara accent (i.e. [kɪtʲɾʲiːn̪ˠə] rather than [kat̪iːna]) even though 'she used to talk normal'. It is as though this girl had acquired a speech impediment. Mia's Gaeltacht links make it interesting that she is so appalled by the change in her former classmate's accent. When I asked, in relation to her mimicking a Conamara teacher, if her mother spoke like that, she simply said 'no' and continued mimicking the teacher: her mother's speech was not up for discussion.

The First Years were in the unusual position of having two Irish teachers who came from different dialect areas. This led to a great deal of discussion and mimicking of their accents. Their main teacher spoke the Ulster dialect and they often mimicked his accent, though they did not focus on only one phrase, as with Conamara teachers. Eibhlín, Shauna, Lorraine and Anna were the most boisterous of the First Year GCI focus groups and both focus group

sessions were punctuated with regular imitations of their Irish teacher, particularly the words ‘teanglann’ (referring to an online dictionary) and ‘géibheann’ (‘detention’). First Years claimed to have difficulty understanding him, with Mia attributing this to the fact that he spoke ‘kind of accenty Irish’, again suggesting that she and other GCI First Years perceive dialects as an additional layer of complication on top of standard Irish, rather than seeing them as varieties of the language in themselves.

The accents of the Conamara teachers in the school were particularly amusing to First Years. A common catchphrase among First Years was ‘céard atá tú ag déanamh?’ (‘what are you doing?’), pronounced in the best Conamara accent they could muster. Paul and Liam had even chosen this as their ‘favourite quote’ in their yearbook. This originated in an incident during a practical class where Marc had done something dangerous and the teacher (who was from Conamara) had got cross with him and asked him what he was doing. However, it had become iconic (Irvine and Gal 2000) of Conamara speakers and was used to make fun of other Conamara teachers in the school. CB students also sometimes mimicked teachers, but no other group did this as much as the GCI First Years.

While in CB there was a clear understanding of what counted as Conamara Irish, GCI students often made errors in their attempts to mimic Conamara Irish, just as the CB students might err in mimicking Ulster Irish. For example, when students mimicked this phrase they often used ‘cad’ instead of ‘céard’. As discussed in Section 6.3.3, this has the same meaning as ‘céard’ but is not used in Conamara and for CB students it is iconic of learners. This lack of familiarity with the Conamara dialect is illustrated in the extract below, in which Mia helps Gráinne mimic the accent of a particular teacher.

Extract 7.5 – GCI1.FG.213

0736 Interviewer what what things like are there particular sounds that they make
[...]
0740 Gráinne ((Conamara:)) cad atá tú [t̪uː] ag déanamh [ɛ jeːnə]
(0.1)
0741 Mia @@
0742 Gráinne I can't do the accent I can't do ~Bríd's accent
0743 Mia it's like
0744 cad atá tú [t̪ʸuː] ag déanamh [ɛ jeˌːn̪ʸə]
(0.1)
0745 Gráinne cad atá tú ag déanamh [ɛ jeˌːna]
(0.5)
[...]
0759 Mia it's like
(0.2)
0760 it's like cad atá tú [t̪ʸuː] ag déanamh [ɛ jeˌːn̪ʸə]
(0.2)
0761 like that
(0.2)
0762 Interviewer yeah that was pretty good
0763 Mia to us though we're just like déanamh [jeˌːna]
(0.1)
0764 Sarah ag déanamh [ɛg jeːnəv]
0765 Gráinne yeah we're just like [dʒeˌːna]
0766 Jenny I feel like we don't even bother to put the séimhiú ##### half the time we just

Although they use ‘cad’, both say [ɛ jeːnə], the usual Conamara pronunciation of ‘ag déanamh’, rather than the pronunciation they and other GCI students would usually use, [ɛg dʒeːnəv]. In her first attempt (0740), Gráinne does not velarise the /n/, which leads her to complain that she cannot mimic the teacher properly (0742). Mia then offers a better impression, velarising both ‘tú’ and ‘déanamh’ (0744). Gráinne cannot reproduce this, instead changing the quality of the /e/ slightly and using [a] at the end of the word, rather than [ə] (0745). This is likely to be the result of her focusing on the first syllable of the word: [a] is the usual realisation of word-final unstressed vowels in Irish by students at GCI and

her use of [ə] in her first utterance of the phrase is part of her impression of the teacher. Jenny's remark that they don't even 'put in the séimhiús [lenition] half the time' (0766) may indicate that she is not aware that the use of /j/ rather than /dʒ/ in 'ag déanamh' is dialectal rather than grammatical – there is variation in this feature even within the dialect. For most participating students at GCI, initial mutation (both lenition and eclipse) is a bit of a mystery: they have a vague idea of the rules and know certain common phrases, but overall it can be a bit bewildering.

Fifth Years had more experience with Conamara Irish beyond the school, but were also ambivalent about it. Senan had recently attended a school event in Conamara where he had come into contact with students from a Conamara school. He described the way they spoke as 'i bhfad difriúil' ('way different'), citing the distinction between palatalised and non-palatalised consonants as an example. John agreed, describing them as having 'very strong culchie accents'.

As in CB, Conamara Irish was seen as old, though here this was seen as negative. Cian contrasted the way they spoke, which he described as 'nua-aimseartha' ('modern') with Conamara Irish, which he described as 'sean-aimseartha' ('old-fashioned') and 'fós coinnithe beo' ('still kept alive'): Conamara Irish, to him, was essentially on life support. In another focus group, Senan said he felt it was good that the variety they spoke was 'an-difriúil le Gaeilge ó duine, like, i gConamara' ('very different to Irish from someone, *like*, in Conamara'). He attributed this to the fact that they had learned the language in the classroom. While he acknowledged that Conamara people knew many words they would not, the language would have to change if it was to grow. He saw the differences in how they spoke compared to Conamara people as the language 'ag fáil níos modern' ('getting more *modern*'). For him,

it was out of the question for people outside of Conamara to speak that dialect and the fact that he and his peers spoke it differently, even if they did not have the same vocabulary as someone from Conamara, was a sign of the language growing. This idea is repeated by John in the extract below, from the same focus group (0911-0922):

Extract 7.6 – GCI5.FG.236

0905	Senan	tá like
		(0.5)
0906		fós an like sean kind of
		(0.8)
0907		Gaeilge acu
		(0.9)
0908	Interviewer	but níl sibhse really ag iarraidh go mbeadh an saghas Gaeilge sin agaibh
		(0.4)
0909	John	bhuel ní bheadh sé go dona ach
0910	Doireann	ceapaim like ceapaim it sounds really cool I love their Irish
		(0.1)
0911	John	yeah tá sé tá sé go maith le cloisteáil ach just tá an Gaeilge ag athrú
0912	Doireann	#can't #understand #it
		(0.3)
0913	John	ó thaobh an uirbeach
0914	Interviewer	mhmm
		(0.5)
0915	John	taobh de like tá s- tá an
		(0.6)
0916		tá an Gaeltachtaí ag sórt
		(0.2)
0917		tá an Gaeilge acu tá níl sé ag athrú ró-mhéid
		(0.1)
0918		ach ansin sna c-
		(0.4)
0919		cathracha agus na bailte beaga mar seo
		(0.3)
0920		tá sé sórt
		(1.2)
0921		ag athrú
		(0.4)
0922		like nu- nua-aoiseach agus is
0923	Interviewer	yeah
		(0.5)
0924	John	just ag bogadh leis an am
0925	Interviewer	mhmm
0926	John	#dá #mbeadh #siad just ag fanacht
		(0.62)
0927		san áit chéanna

(1.38)

0905 Senan they *like*
(0.5)
0906 still have the *like* old *kind of*
(0.8)
0907 Irish
(0.9)
0908 Interviewer *but* ye don't *really* want to have that kind of Irish
(0.4)
0909 John *well* it wouldn't be bad but
0910 Doireann I think *like* I think *it sounds really cool I love their Irish*
(0.1)
0911 John *yeah* it's it's good to hear but *just* Irish is changing
0912 Doireann *#can't #understand #it*
(0.3)
0913 John [in terms of] the urban
0914 Interviewer mhmm
(0.5)
0915 John side of it *like* the s- the
(0.6)
0916 the Gaeltacht areas are sort of
(0.2)
0917 the Irish they have it's not changing too much
(0.1)
0918 but then in the c-
(0.4)
0919 cities and small towns like this
(0.3)
0920 it's sort of
(1.2)
0921 changing
(0.4)
0922 *like* m- modern and it's
0923 Interviewer *yeah*
(0.5)
0924 John *just* moving with the time
(0.2)
0925 Interviewer mhmm
0926 John #if #they #were *just* staying
(0.62)
0927 in the same place
(1.38)

Doireann emphasises the aesthetic value of Conamara Irish (0910), which John acknowledges, but it seems that they see it more as a piece of the past that should be conserved than a living dialect with relevance to their own lives: Gaeltacht areas are 'ag fanacht san áit chéanna'

(‘staying in the same place’) (927) while they and their peers are ‘ag bogadh leis an am’ (‘moving with the time’) (924). Earlier in this focus group session, both John and Doireann emphasised that this change was happening ‘go nádúrtha’ (‘naturally’) and should not be forced. John attributed it partly to the mixing of traditional dialects, which was inevitable if the language was to grow. They and Senan observed that this happened to every language, including English, thus rejecting the idea that changes in Irish reflected its weakness.

Some Fifth Years criticised Gaeltacht varieties as being overly influenced by English or for perceived grammatical inaccuracies, though CB participants criticised the Irish of new speakers more than GCI Fifth Years criticised Gaeltacht varieties. Tadhg argued the Conamara dialect was ‘incorrect’, implying that the grammatical rules of the standard were beyond dispute, even if, as discussed below, many students struggled with them. Aoife, Neasa and Zoë also made fun of Gaeltacht speakers for codeswitching or using words heavily influenced by English. They acknowledged such linguistic practices were the norm in Gaeltacht areas, but did not think non-Gaeltacht speakers should emulate them, as discussed in Section 8.2.1.

Many GCI students, especially First Years, were unsure how many dialects of Irish there were. In Extract 7.7, a group of First Year boys respond to my request to list the different types of Irish.

Extract 7.7 – GCI1.FG.200

```
0694 Marc          oh there's oh it's Conamara is impossible
                   ((choking noise)) @@@
0695 Cillian       I think it's
0696               accent only
0697               really I think that's the only different
```

```
                  type
0698 Paul         @@ yeah that's right
0699 Liam         no but there's like the Munster Irish
0700 Marc         ((mimicks guttural Conamara Irish)) @@@
0701 Liam         and there's the Leinster one
0702 Cillian      there is actually
0703 Liam         yeah like tuistí and tuismitheoir
0704 Paul         "conas atá tú a stór"
                 ['how are you dear']
0705 Marc         @@@
0706 Cillian      there is like daichead and ceathracha
                  (0.1)
0707 Liam         yeah
0708 Paul         oh yeah
0709 Cillian      yeah
                  (0.1)
```

Conamara is the first one they think of, and Marc repeats the ideas discussed above: that it is guttural and difficult to understand (0694, 0700), which Paul supports (0698). Cillian initially suggests that Conamara might be 'the only different type' (0697), but Liam corrects him (0699, 0701). While Liam attended an English-medium primary school, he was very quick to pick up competence in Irish and seemed particularly attuned to different varieties of the language, producing more accurate imitations of the Conamara dialect than others and also, as here, demonstrating awareness of dialects beyond Conamara. Here, the Leinster dialect is characterised by words such as 'tuistí' ('parents') and 'daichead' ('forty') (0703, 0706), which are not used in the Conamara dialect and are also absent from the variety spoken by students, who prefer 'tuismitheoirí' and 'ceathracha', respectively. Although the Irish spoken by GCI students is very much based on the standard written variety, it is closer to the Conamara dialect than to any other. Liam also suggested later that speakers from the midlands speak Irish 'without much of an accent', which may reflect an accurate perception of teachers coming from this area as being new speakers or may simply be an inference from the fact that people from this area are located midway between the four dialects the boys identify.

There is no living traditional Leinster dialect, since the language stopped being spoken in the

province relatively early, due to its status as the centre of the colonial apparatus in Ireland. However, First Years in GCI often referred to 'east', 'Leinster' or 'Dublin' Irish. While 'Dublin Irish' is often mocked by Gaeltacht speakers, as shown in the previous chapter, it was not always clear whether GCI students knew that this fourth dialect was any different in its age or origins than the others. Ian, for example, professed to be 'better at Leinster Irish than Connacht' because he had attended primary school in Leinster. He suggested the difference was relatively small and mostly to do with pronunciation, though Gráinne considered 'Dublin Irish' to be incomprehensible. John (GCI5) also referred to 'Gaeilge Laighean' ('Leinster Irish') alongside the three traditional provincial dialects. Again, it was not clear whether he thought there was a traditional dialect in the province or whether he considered the new speaker varieties spoken there to have equal validity to Gaeltacht dialects. Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018) and Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018) have noted that new speaker varieties are developing a form of authenticity based on their association with Dublin.

7.3.2 'Normal' Irish

Although, as discussed in Section 7.4, they were uncertain whether their Irish could be considered to be 'good' or 'fluent', GCI participants were relatively comfortable with the type of Irish they spoke. First Years were particularly confident in their preference for their own way of speaking over other varieties. When I asked what made their Irish different from that of the teachers, Gráinne responded 'we can speak it normally'. In the extract below, Sarah, Gráinne, Mia and Amanda, identify comprehensibility as the most important quality to them in Irish:

Extract 7.8 – GCI1.FG.213

```
0592 Interviewer   so what's yeer favourite type of Irish
                    then
                    (1.0)
0593 Sarah         normal #
0594 Gráinne       the one you can understand
0595 Sarah         yeah
0596 Mia           yeah
0597 Amanda        so true
```

This description of their variety as 'normal' was the most common one offered in GCI, although Anna suggested it was 'Galway Irish', while Eibhlín called it 'townie Irish', a term also used by Caoimhe in Fifth Year at CB.

Many of the First Years attributed the fact that they spoke like this to the fact that they had teachers from various different places. Staff in GCI came from around the country. There was a sizeable contingent from the Conamara Gaeltacht, but they were by no means in the majority, and a range of varieties of Irish, from learner to new speaker to traditional Gaeltacht dialects, were to be heard in the staff-room, as was probably the case in the primary schools GCI students had attended. Consequently, GCI students generally did not strongly identify with one dialect. Liam (GCI1) described the way they spoke as 'in-between' because of the mix of dialects they'd been exposed to, while Cillian observed that did not 'know the difference' between dialects so 'probably [spoke] all of them'. David (GCI1) complained about this lack of consistency. He was generally a high achiever academically and a perfectionist, so it is not that surprising that he would aim for consistency in his Irish, but it is noteworthy that most seemed not to worry about this, though Shauna (GCI1) also mentioned it. John (GCI5) saw it as positive, marking the development of a new variety of Irish, as discussed in the previous section. This contrasts with the CB emphasis on speaking the Conamara dialect only.

Although Fifth Years were more aware of the importance of traditional dialects in Irish, they

also had no desire to emulate them or change the way they spoke, echoing the arguments made by new speaker teachers in Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018: 18). Most professed to like the sound of traditional dialects (particularly Conamara) but, as Neasa put it, 'is maith liom mo ghuth féin' ('I like my own voice'). Róisín felt that changing the way one speaks would not be 'nádúrtha' ('natural'). This applied to both pronunciation and lexical items: she felt changing the words you learnt at primary school would be 'mínádúrtha' ('unnatural') since 'níl aon cheann a bhfuil ceart nó mícheart' ('there's none that's right or wrong'). Similarly, Doireann rejected the idea that her Irish was inferior to Gaeltacht Irish or that any regional variety was better than any other. She argued that the variety someone spoke reflected their geographical background and not their competence. For her, communication was the language's most important function. While there was some appreciation of the authenticity of Gaeltacht dialects, it followed that imitating them would be inauthentic, meaning that even those who said they valued them highly had no desire to acquire them. In addition, Doireann's argument that accent reflects geographical origin and not the quality of one's Irish echoes similar arguments made at CB.

Cian said he did not like Conamara Irish, preferring 'Gaeilge le accent normálta' ('Irish with a normal *accent'*) like theirs, which he described as 'nua-aimseartha', in contrast with Conamara Irish, as discussed in the previous section. He complained that the way speakers in recordings for aural comprehensions spoke was 'so fake'.[17] In contrast, he described the way GCI students spoke as 'just [...] ag abair na focail sa chaoi a deirimid gach focal Béarla' ('*just* [...] saying the words in the way we say every English word'), a sentiment also

[17] Excerpts in some dialects are artificially slowed down in these aural exams, so this criticism may relate to this rather than the variety itself.

expressed by one of the young Gaelic-speakers interviewed by Nance (2018: 224). They are not pretending to come from Gaeltacht areas or concealing the fact that English is their first language and are thus being authentic by rejecting the 'fake' authenticity Cian perceives in the promotion of Gaeltacht dialects in the education system.

While older students generally acknowledged the value of Gaeltacht dialects, therefore, GCI participants did not see them as superior to their own way of speaking. In fact, many saw their variety as superior, both because it was easier to understand than Gaeltacht dialects and because it was modern. The use of the term 'normal' echoes Órlaith's (CB1) description of Conamara speakers as having an 'accent': standard, English-influenced Irish is the default. Aiming for authenticity in the sense of speaking a dialect linked to a particular geographical area would be inauthentic because it would belie their actual geographical origin and the fact they are native speakers of English.

7.4 Good Irish: little consensus except on the need to avoid codeswitching

While there was no consensus among GCI participants in either year group about 'good' speakers, there were strong opinions on how the standard of one's Irish could be assessed. The tendency to regard academic high-achievers as 'good speakers' seen in CB was more prominent in GCI and the extra-linguistic factors that were so important to CB participants, such as involvement in traditional culture and the role of Irish in the family, were not relevant in their accounts.

Some First Years sought objective benchmarks of linguistic ability. Breadth of vocabulary and spelling ability were both suggested as potential measures in several focus groups and

rejected on the basis that they were too narrow. Cormac had been awarded a golden 'fáinne' ('ring') badge in primary school after an interview to assess his standard of Irish. Ian pointed to this badge, which is intended to identify the wearer as speaking Irish to the level of a native speaker, as evidence that Cormac, at least, had attained this standard. However, Cormac conceded that although he and the others were 'pretty much fluent' they still had 'a lot to learn'. Others offered more functional definitions of fluency: Marc suggested it meant a speaker could 'have a full conversation', like teachers. They were not at that level yet, but Marc hoped they'd be there 'by Leaving Cert'. Paul also suggested that fluency in Irish would mean 'you'd be able to go out to Conamara and, say, live there for a week and not struggle at all'. This provoked a joke by Cillian about how 'there's no one there anyway'. Gráinne, Amanda and Jenny related fluency to understanding and speaking the language on a basic level, with Jenny suggesting that since 'the grammar can be terribly hard', having 'good Irish' must be about understanding rather than being able to speak or write it with complete accuracy. There was a general tendency, therefore, to see spoken Irish as more important in determining a speaker's competence than written Irish, a common tendency in minority languages, as discussed in Section 2.3.1.

When I asked who in their year group spoke good Irish, First Years tended to suggest the most academically able students in their class, usually David, but sometimes also Jenny and another girl in their year who had attended an English-medium primary school. Liam and Marc mentioned as supporting evidence the fact that David had read much more of the novel they were reading for English class than anyone else had, underlining the extent to which command of Irish was synonymous with overall academic achievement within this year group, a tendency noted also by Selleck (2013: 28-9). For them, even more so than Fifth Years, Irish was purely a school language. Being good at Irish meant being good at school,

so the reverse was also assumed to be true.

Fifth Years tended not to name specific criteria by which the standard of one's Irish could be measured, though they often referred to the fact that students in English-medium schools had much worse Irish-language skills than them. They also did not name any peers they considered to speak Irish well. In fact, several challenged the idea that one's Irish could be good or bad, though, as in the other cohorts, most considered the most important criterion in assessing one's Irish to be fluency in spoken Irish.

Chloe (GCI5) explicitly rejected the idea that test results indicated one's standard of Irish, since you could just have learned things off by heart. This remark reflects a dilemma faced by students at GCI: their peers in English-medium schools tend to learn off essays for Irish exams because of their low competence in Irish. This was frowned upon by teachers at GCI, since it was an easy way out, which would not bring the benefits of writing their own essays and responding creatively to exam questions. However, for students aiming for the top grades, their level of competence might not be high enough to outperform their peers, even in oral exams, without employing such tactics.

First Years had mixed opinions on whether they themselves could be considered to be 'fluent', as seen in Cormac's statement that they were 'fluent' but still had 'a lot to learn'. Marc and Cillian, for example, boasted that they were 'class at Irish', but admitted almost immediately that there were gaps in their knowledge, despite knowing 'most of the words'. Sarah, Jenny, Gráinne, Amanda and Mia were split on the matter:

Extract 7.9 – GCI1.FG.213

```
0286 Sarah          I think
                    (0.2)
0287                like we are fluent
0288 Amanda         I don't know
0289 Gráinne        I think I'm fluent
0290 Amanda         loads of people would ask like oh yeah you
                    must be fluent in Irish and you're kinda
                    like
0291 Sarah          yeah
                    (0.1)
0292 Amanda         I don't think I really am but
0293 Gráinne        no sometimes I think I'm fluent in irish
                    but f- but then when I think about it
                    there's so many words in Irish that I
                    (0.3)
0294                know in English that I don't know what are
                    in Irish
0295 Jenny          I think you'd have to like grow up with
                    the language
                    (0.2)
0296                to like know it's
                    (0.2)
0297                ###
0298 Gráinne        get to know it properly
0299 Jenny          and like speak it like every day
                    (0.7)
[...]
0312 Amanda         I'd say that we're like fluent in English
                    then and then in Irish it's just what we'd
                    learn
```

Amanda's observation above that others consider her to be fluent in Irish (0290) suggests the ambiguity inherent to Irish-medium schooling: people outside the system will generally have a much weaker command of the language, meaning students in Irish-medium schools are sometimes venerated as 'fluent', or castigated for being snobs, but they are also aware of how much they still have to learn. This is likely also to be the reason for the ambivalence discussed below in students' attitudes to their own fluency: their Irish is better than that of peers outside the Irish-medium system, but falls short of the level expected for academic success or for communicating with Gaeltacht people. This sense of conflict is likely to be intensified at the transition to secondary school, since GCI students have come from various schools and have different levels of competence in, and attitudes to, the language.

Three students in this class group had come from English-medium primary schools. The school put a great deal of effort into helping such students, as discussed in Section 5.1.1. Two had quickly caught up with the rest of the class, one of whom, Liam, participated in this study. Liam felt he was still 'a bit less fluent' but took solace from good test results. Students in other focus groups occasionally brought up the achievements of Liam and his peers in a tone that suggested it was slightly worrying, as seen in Extract 7.15. The ease with which such students caught up with those who had spent eight years being educated entirely through Irish suggested the advantage the latter had achieved in this manner was not as concrete as they had thought. This may have undermined their perception of themselves as 'experts', suggesting that the boundary between them and the non-Irish-speakers they might make fun of was actually quite permeable, in contrast to that between them and Gaeltacht Irish-speakers, as illustrated in Chapter 8 and in the discussion of Conamara Irish in Section 7.3.1

Fifth Years generally expressed satisfaction with the standard of their own Irish, though many emphasised that they could improve their vocabulary. Cian, for example, thought his Irish was as good as his English, except that he had a greater vocabulary in English, which Laura thought made sense since they heard much more English than Irish on a daily basis. As in CB, Fifth Years saw the avoidance of English words as a mark of 'good Irish'. This was not as important to First Years, who enjoyed constructing hybrid forms. Róisín suggested that having a high standard of Irish meant being able to say things 'as Gaeilge go hiomlán' ('entirely in Irish'), while Cian thought the standard of Irish in the school was low 'because bíonn beagnach gach múinteoir agus dalta ag labhairt leath agus leath' ('almost every teacher and pupil speaks half and half'). Most tried to avoid codeswitching during focus groups. Zoë stated she did not see codeswitching as a bad thing in itself, remarking 'céard é an dochar'

(‘what’s the harm’), but she qualified her assessment of her own Irish as good with the fact that sometimes ‘bíonn orm caitheamh isteach cúpla focal Béarla’ (‘I have to throw in a few words in English’), suggesting she did regard it as undesirable. She, Neasa and Aoife also expressed disapproval of the codeswitching they had heard from Gaeltacht speakers while working at an Irish language summer course, as discussed in Chapter 8.

However, despite a general disapproval of codeswitching, John likened trying to avoid using any English words while speaking Irish to ‘troid an devil’ (‘fighting the *devil*’), quickly translating to ‘it’s like fighting the devil’, thus demonstrating the difficulty he faced in expressing himself without using English. Cian and Senan argued that Irish lacked certain words such as ‘like’ and ‘so’ that were essential to their speech in English, meaning they had to use the English forms. Róisín commented that attempts to speak without using these words in their Irish sounded ‘mínádúrtha’ (‘unnatural’), though it would be better if they avoided them. As with the issue of pronunciation there is a paradox here: the purist ideology common among GCI5 (and visible also in CB) means that they see English influence on their Irish as undesirable contamination. However, English is their most natural mode of communication, so that avoiding it entirely when speaking Irish seems unnatural and, therefore, inauthentic.

Although the term ‘cainteoir dúchais’ was not mentioned by First Years except when I used it, the concept was clearly relevant in terms of assessing ‘good Irish’. They often mentioned being raised either in the Gaeltacht or in an Irish-speaking home as qualifications in this context, though sometimes their references to this were less clear. For example, Sarah suggested that having ‘good Irish’ related more to it being ‘your own language’ than to understanding or grammatical competence. Although she did not use the term, this does

suggest that the only way to be regarded as fully fluent in a language is to be a native speaker. Mia also remarked that her mother had good Irish, despite struggling to explain grammar.

Extract 7.10 – GCI1.FG.213

> she's from ~Mullagh like but she doesn't know (1.5) if I asked her to help with my homework she'd be like I can't understand that (0.7) [...] go ask somebody else

Mia presents as evidence of the standard of her mother's Irish the fact that she's from Mullagh, thus implying that the competence of a native speaker is beyond dispute, regardless of whether they have mastered the grammatical rules required for academic success in the language.

While students sometimes referred to Irish as 'our native language', there was confusion among First Years about what the term meant, as seen in the extract below. It was particularly confusing for First Years because their Irish teacher, whom they considered a model speaker (he was 'class at Irish', in Marc's words) did not come from a Gaeltacht area. In another focus group, Iarlaith, Ian, Cormac and David agreed that Conamara people are generally better at Irish because 'they speak [it] like every day' and Irish is 'their natural language'.

Extract 7.11 – GCI1.FG.200

0261	Interviewer	and what does it mean to be a native speaker (0.5)
0262	Marc	what does native mean
0263	Liam	like (0.2)
0264	Cillian	like you speak your language
[...]		
0274	Liam	if you're from Conamara (0.6)
0275	Cillian	no it's like

```
0276 Liam          you speak Irish
0277 Cillian       you speak your own language like this
                   country
0278 Liam          oh I know what you mean
0279 Marc          well our country
0280 Paul          it's like some of the teachers
0281 Marc          Ireland definitely needs more like Irish
                   people speaking Irish definitely
0282 Cillian       how does it feel to be # like
0283 Paul          yeah
                   (0.1)
0284 Liam          yeah no it does yeah
0285 Paul          there was like a
                   (0.9)
0286               i- a few of the teachers like
                   (1.4)
0287               they're native speakers because Irish was
                   their first language out in Co- so like
```

Fifth Years also had varying and unclear views on what constitutes a native speaker. There was a general sense that those who acquire their Irish in the Gaeltacht are more competent than others, but the status of those who acquire Irish at home outside the Gaeltacht was unclear. A handful of Fifth Years spoke Irish at home with one parent, three of whom (Tadhg, Neasa and Aoife) participated in the study. In all three cases, their parents were not Gaeltacht speakers and they were raised outside the Gaeltacht. This meant their status as native speakers was not as clear-cut as might be the case if they were coming from homes where a Gaeltacht dialect was spoken. There was no significant difference between their Irish and that spoken by other students in their year in my observation, though they were more comfortable speaking it.

Aoife and Neasa clearly identified themselves as native speakers, responding to a question about what it meant to be a native speaker (which was intentionally ambiguous) by speaking about their ‘bród’ (‘pride’) in being native speakers, which they described as a ‘privilege’. Aoife thought it was ‘rud sa bhreis [...] nach bhfuil ag go leor den tír’ (‘something extra [...] that a lot of the country doesn’t have’). When I asked if they could recognise others as native

speakers, Neasa immediately mentioned the poor standard of Irish spoken on a local radio station (line 0398 in the extract below). Mary, Ruby and Fionnuala from CB also made fun of the very tokenistic use of Irish on this station (Spin SouthWest), raising many of the same points.

Presenters at the station tend to use Irish during their weekly chart show. Their pronunciation is highly influenced by English and sometimes gives the impression that they do not understand the words they are saying. In the extract below, Aoife tries to defend it, pointing out that it could be (slightly) worse (0406), but she also gives in to the temptation to mock it (0415):

Extract 7.12 – GCI5.FG.226

0398	Neasa	like ar Spin South West oh my God
		(0.5)
0399		an bhean sin
[...]		
0404	Zoë	oh God
0405	Neasa	oh yeah ((sings:)) "top forty oifigiúil na hÉireann"
0406	Aoife	ach ar a laghad "oifigiúil na hÉireann" níl sé like "oifigiúil"
		(0.4)
0407	Neasa	"Éireann"
0408	Aoife	((babbles)) yeah
0409	Zoë	@
0410	Interviewer	##
0411	Aoife	ar a laghad tá s-
0412	Zoë	an an bean sin ###
0413	Neasa	tá sí like "yeah so ahm
		(0.2)
0414		we're going to use our ((shouts:)) cúpla focal"
0415	Aoife	"so inniu"
		(0.6)
0416	Interviewer	sssshhhh
0417	Zoë	yeah
		(0.5)
0418	Neasa	tá sí like oh God tá sí chomh annoying
		(0.7)
0419	Aoife	ach like taitníonn

0420 Interviewer ######
0421 Zoë no ní éistim le Spin South West ach tá aithne agam ar an like
(0.7)
0422 just ag caitheamh isteach you know agus like
(0.6)
0423 Neasa agus like yeah tá sé go maith go bhfuil siad ag cur isteach ### ach tá sé just plain annoying nuair atá siad just cack aige

0398 Neasa *like* on *Spin South West oh my God*
(0.5)
0399 that woman
[...]
0404 Zoë *oh God*
0405 Neasa *oh yeah* ((sings:)) "official Irish *top forty*"
0406 Aoife but at least "official Irish" it's not *like* "official"
(0.4)
0407 Neasa "of Ireland"
0408 Aoife ((babbles)) *yeah*
0409 Zoë @
0410 Interviewer ##
0411 Aoife at least sh-
0412 Zoë that that woman ###
0413 Neasa she's *like* "yeah so ahm
(0.2)
0414 *we're going to use our* ((shouts:)) few words"
0415 Aoife "*so* today"
(0.6)
0416 Interviewer sssshhhh
0417 Zoë *yeah*
(0.5)
0418 Neasa she's *like oh God* she's so *annoying*
(0.7)
0419 Aoife but *like* I like
0420 Interviewer ######
0421 Zoë *no* I don't listen to *Spin South West* but I know the *like*
(0.7)
0422 *just* throwing in *you know* and *like*
(0.6)
0423 Neasa and *like yeah* it's good that they're putting in ### but it's *just plain annoying* when they're *just cack* at it

Neasa is damning in her assessment of the standard of Irish spoken on the chart programme

in question, describing it as 'cack'[18] (0423) though she concedes that the fact that they are using Irish at all on the station is a good thing. Like Mary, Aoife and Neasa were generally keen to avoid appearing to exclude people from Irish, praising effort above all, but even they could not resist making fun of the level of Irish spoken by some. The fact that Zoë recognises the style of Irish spoken by the presenter of this programme despite not having listened to it (0421-0422) illustrates the ubiquity of a relatively recent phenomenon whereby it is fashionable to use certain words and phrases in Irish in otherwise English speech. This is particularly common in youth radio, as discussed in Section 3.3.2. The phrase 'cúpla focal' has also long been used to indicate someone with a small amount of Irish, which is often used in a tokenistic way.

Neasa and Aoife may have been wary of appearing to insult their peers by suggesting there was a difference between their own level of Irish and that of their peers. Turning to the topic of people whose Irish was worse than anyone at GCI saved face: it reinforced the idea that everyone at GCI was equally entitled to identify themselves as an Irish-speaker and emphasised the importance of the boundary between Irish-speaker and non-Irish-speaker, rather than the fuzzier boundary between native speaker and non-native speaker. The distinction they make between themselves and peers educated in English-medium schools mirrors the distinction CB students perceive themselves and anyone from outside Conamara in a process of fractal recursion.

Aoife also remarked that by marrying an Irish-speaker 'laghdaíonn tú na Gaeilgeoirs ach má

[18] i.e. 'terrible'

cuireann tú Gaeilgeoir le Béarlóir agus athraigh an Béarlóir ina Ghaeilgeoir ansin tá dúbailt an méid Gaeilgeoirs' ('you reduce the Gaeilgeoirs but if you put a Gaeilgeoir with an English-speaker then there are double the number of Gaeilgeoirs'). While obviously a joke, this is typical of the opinions expressed by Neasa and Aoife in terms of the importance of increasing the number of speakers of Irish, without putting undue emphasis on how 'good' a speaker is. The use of the English plural marker '-s' rather than the Irish form '-í' here is surprising and suggests Aoife might use this term more regularly in English.

The terms 'native speaker' or 'cainteoir dúchais' was not mentioned in the other two Fifth Year focus groups, but instead we discussed whether people spoke Irish at home. Tadhg regarded it as a mixed blessing, since he admitted he was a bit lazy in terms of improving his Irish and remarked that many others in his year group spoke better Irish than him. Chloe, Laura and Róisín considered people who spoke Irish at home to speak it more naturally and fluently, as well as having very different pronunciation. However, they did not think anyone in their school spoke like that, though they thought Tadhg pronounced a few words in that manner. Róisín contrasted the way GCI students mixed Irish and English with the students they had met on a class trip to the Aran Islands, who spoke Irish that was 'chomh foirfe' ('so perfect'). She did not think it was realistic for them to reach the standard of the Aran students, however, since the latter spoke Irish 'an t-am ar fad' ('all the time'). Thus, while Chloe, Cian, Róisín and Laura agreed with the idea of native speakers as being inherently more competent, they did not place their peers who spoke Irish at home in this category, possibly because they do not speak Irish like Gaeltacht speakers.

As in CB, grammatical accuracy was prized much more by teachers than by students. There was a general sense among students in GCI that grammar was not very important once you

were able to communicate in the language, as suggested by Ó Duibhir (2018). As Sarah (GCI1) put it, 'grammar matters when you're writing it down, rather than speaking it' and many First Years in particular saw little value in accurate written Irish. Liam said he would 'rather just talk' because 'you might need to speak it if you go to Conamara but you're never going to be writing a letter'. This prioritisation of spoken over written Irish among GCI participants is noteworthy given that most rarely spoke Irish outside school and written Irish is more highly valued in the education system.

Among First Years, the word 'cruinneas' provoked imitations of their teacher, who laid great emphasis on the importance of grammatical accuracy, with some joking that he would give them 'géibheann' for making grammatical errors or suggesting the teacher would complain 'for like three weeks' if they made a minor error. Some more academically-focused students got stressed about what they felt were impossible standards expected of them in terms of grammatical accuracy, as seen in the extract below:

Extract 7.13 – GCI1.FG.196

0871	David	the thing with Irish I noticed it's if you try to write an essay and get everything perfect you're
0872	Cormac	yeah
		(0.2)
0873		you're not going to get it
0874	Ian	it's like walking on boiling it's
0875	David	you're really good you're really good at Irish because
0876	Ian	it's like walking on burning hot nails
		(0.2)
0877	David	not really
		(0.1)
0878	Cormac	no like you have to you have to go through you have to # every single word for like five minutes and then you just like check it and you're like
0879	Ian	like to get every single thing right
		(0.4)

0880		you have you have to read it over like three times
0881	Iarlaith	or like "oh there's a h there"
0882	Cormac	and then you add another word and then you're like wait I added that word so I have to go back to that word and see what changes it does
0883	David	and it's still not right
0884	Ian	yeah

There was a general consensus among Fifth Years, too, that grammar was not that important. John described himself as speaking 'Gaeilge líofa' ('fluent Irish'), despite admitting he knew little about grammar. He, Senan and Doireann argued that people would not focus on your mistakes, so the only issue was ensuring they understood you. John argued that everyone in the school had 'Gaeilge iontach' ('great Irish') even if they hadn't entirely mastered the genitive case or the past tense. For him, 'Gaeilge lofa' ('rotten Irish') was when a person was just throwing out words and hoping the other person understood, while if a person was able to say their name and address and have a conversation, even if it was only a short one, then they had 'Gaeilge líofa'. Similarly, Aoife regarded 'good Irish' as being when one is able to speak in Irish without coming across like 'amadán ceart' ('a right fool') and Neasa pointed out that many people she knew from attending Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht had 'Gaeilge iontach' but still made mistakes. There is a strong similarity here with the attitudes expressed by Darragh and Shane in CB5, as discussed in Section 6.3.4.

However, Aoife and Neasa did think that grammar was important, since you would sound 'saghas amaideach' ('kind of stupid') if you didn't know the genitive case. They and their friends made an effort to speak grammatically correct Irish, often correcting each other or themselves mid-sentence. This contrasts with Ó Duibhir's observation that Gaelscoil pupils only corrected each other for the use of English, not for grammatical accuracy (2018: 114).

Zoë, one of their closest friends, along with Rebecca, was particularly conscious of trying to speak 'good Irish'. She said she accepted the inevitability that she would make mistakes in Irish, since it was her second language and would never be as fluent as her English. However, she often corrected herself and was so careful about being grammatically accurate that she made sure always to pronounce /x/ when it was required grammatically, despite the fact that she did not pronounce it when it was lexical.

Aoife and Neasa seemed to be role models for her in relation to Irish: she often asked them for translations of particular words and they had taught her some points of grammar that had not been covered in her Irish class. It was clear she felt a little insecure about her Irish: when Aoife, Neasa and Rebecca told her during a conversation in a free class period I observed that she probably would not be allowed to volunteer on an Irish-language stand with them at a music festival, her face fell. She was greatly relieved when they explained that they had only been allowed to do so because their parents were involved with the organisation, admitting that she had thought they were going to say her Irish was not good enough. Zoë was less involved with the Irish language beyond the school than Aoife, Neasa or Rebecca, and her motivation to speak Irish was somewhat more measured – she did not express a desire to raise her children with Irish or to study it at university – but it was clear that speaking Irish well was very important to her.

Some participants considered Irish to be inherently more difficult than other languages. For example, Marc (GCI1) often complained about aspects of the language he considered illogical, such as the fact that the names of languages are preceded by a definite article. Even older students suggested that certain characteristics of the language made it harder to learn,

as in Cian and Senan's complaints about the absence of certain discourse markers. Aoife argued that Irish was more grammatically complex than English, rendering mistakes inevitable, though Neasa pointed out that English was also difficult to speakers of other languages.

While 'saibhreas' was a crucial quality of good Irish as defined by CB students, it was less prominent in GCI and participants' knowledge of it came mainly from their teachers. It was completely unfamiliar to First Years in GCI – they did not understand the word when I mentioned it to them – but Fifth Years were aware of it. Róisín, Chloe, Laura and Cian were very familiar with the term 'saibhreas', as their Irish teacher often warned them that they would not get top marks in the Leaving Certificate unless they demonstrated it. Students had appropriated the term, jokingly, to refer to the way they spoke Irish, responding to teachers' objections to particular words or phrases with 'oh, sin saibhreas na Gaeilge' ('oh, that's "saibhreas na Gaeilge"'), according to Róisín. Examples included 'písín', a diminutive form of 'píosa' ('piece') which would not be out of place in Conamara Irish, though Chloe regarded it as obviously incorrect, and 'neata', a Gaelicised pronunication of the English word 'net', which is more idiosyncratic. Such words were combined with a Donegal accent. As discussed above, this was the least familiar Gaeltacht dialect, so its use in this context was probably a form of crossing (Rampton 1995), parodying the unrealistic expectations of school language policy, and perhaps the curriculum more generally, by pretending to take on a completely different persona. Laura described how one boy in another year had committed so much to this style of speaking Irish, that it had become his default way of speaking, leading him to get in trouble with a teacher who thought he was making fun of another teacher. Cian claimed to put on a Donegal accent when he spoke Irish at home, though I did not observe him doing so in school.

The definition of 'good Irish' for GCI students was vague: some proposed very relaxed standards, under which all GCI students qualify, but others raised their inability to avoid using English words as evidence that their Irish is not good enough. Interestingly, several cited Gaeltacht speakers as examples of excellent speakers, despite their general reluctance to acknowledge Gaeltacht dialects or Gaeltacht areas as being as important as their teachers might suggest. Older participants' rejection of test scores and grammatical accuracy as measures of fluency, and the emphasis some younger participants put on spoken over written Irish, suggest that they do not embrace the ideology of anonymity. These attitudes are all quite similar to those expressed by CB participants in the previous chapter. However, the authenticity that is so important to CB participants and which GCI teachers also encouraged GCI students to value, though to a lesser degree, is not accessible to them, since speaking 'authentic' Irish would require them to be inauthentic in seeking to conceal their true geographical and linguistic background.

7.5 Future and utility of Irish

As at CB, GCI students had a range of views on both the likely future of Irish and how useful it was to them. By and large, participants were less engaged on the question of the future of the language than their peers at CB, but their views on its usefulness were similar.

7.5.1 Irish is a valuable skill, but studying through Irish has disadvantages

The advantages and disadvantages of Irish mentioned by GCI students were broadly in line with those mentioned by CB students, though GCI Fifth Years were more likely to mention difficulties studying through Irish at university and difficulties in getting private tutoring or finding revision aids in Irish. This is likely to result partly from the fact that CB students

experienced a more flexible language policy, so they did learn terminology in English, but it may also be related to the strong emphasis on academic success at GCI.

As at CB, participants offered a wide range of reasons it was good to have Irish:

Extract 7.14 – GCI5.FG.242

0007	Interviewer	so an chéad cheist (1.3)
0008		ahm cén buntáiste a cheapann sibhse is mó a bhaineanns leis an nGaeilge (0.9)
0009		so cén fáth go bhfuil sé go maith Gaeilge a bheith agat (3.1)
0010	Laura	don Ardteist like níos mó pointí (0.1)
0011	Interviewer	mhmm
0012	Laura	as freagairt as Gaeilge (0.4)
0013		ahm (2.3)
0014	Róisín	agus is ár teanga é so like tá sé chomh tábhachtach go mbeidh
0015	Laura	yeah (0.4)
0016	Róisín	sé ag gach duine sa tír (0.2)
0017	Interviewer	mhmm
0018	Róisín	a bhfuil # ba cheart go mbeadh Gaeilge ag gach duine Éireannach # (1.6)
0019	Mark	ceapaim tá sé cool chun bheith ábalta Gaeilge a labhairt like (0.4)
0020		go poiblí nuair nach dtuigeann an formhór de na daoine é

0007	Interviewer	*so* the first question (1.3)
0008		ahm what do ye think is the biggest advantage of Irish (0.9)
0009		*so* why is it good to have Irish (3.1)
0010	Laura	for the Leaving Certificate *like* more points (0.1)
0011	Interviewer	mhmm

0012 Laura for answering in Irish
(0.4)
0013 ahm
(2.3)
0014 Róisín and it's our language *so like* it's so important that
0015 Laura *yeah*
(0.4)
0016 Róisín everyone in the country has it
(0.2)
0017 Interviewer mhmm
0018 Róisín that's # every Irish person should have Irish #
(1.6)
0019 Mark I think it's *cool* to be able to speak Irish *like*
(0.4)
0020 in public when most people don't understand it

The importance of nationalism at GCI has been discussed in Section 7.2.1, while the function of Irish as a 'secret code' is discussed in Chapter 8. The first response, however, was common: everyone in both year groups was aware of the extra points available for answering through Irish in the Leaving Certificate. Marc (GCI1) even claimed 'I only like Irish because it's ten percent more in your Leaving Cert'.

Although Liam (GCI1) suggested it was easy to get jobs in the European Union with Irish (a surprisingly informed insight from a First Year), Róisín (GCI5) observed that the range of jobs with Irish was limited, e.g. someone who wanted to become a nurse would have to train through English. Cian said he would prefer to learn through English because of this. He thought it would be more useful to do subjects they might need later in their lives through English, since otherwise they would be 'ag tosú arís ón mbun' ('starting again from the bottom') at university, a concern also expressed by some of the CB First Years in Section 6.4.1. The other girls in his focus group agreed, though Chloe mentioned the advantage of the extra points they would get in the exam. This group was generally very conscious of the disadvantages of attending an Irish-medium school. Chloe, Laura and Róisín complained that

they could not understand exam questions in English and could not access private tutoring or revision aids in Irish. Doireann and John had similar concerns. Laura, Róisín, Chloe and Cian also rejected the idea that Irish helped with learning other languages. Laura observed that Irish was ‘i bhfad difriúil ó gach teanga eile’ (‘way different from every other language’), while the others remarked that they found the use of Irish in German or French classes confusing and preferred to learn other languages through English.

First Years generally did not mention how Irish might help or hinder their future career plans, although when I asked if they saw themselves speaking Irish after school, Gráinne and Amanda said they did not, while Sarah was unsure and Jenny wanted to. Mia remarked that she had to because her mother was from Mullagh and had told her ‘you’re not giving up something you’ve already started’, suggesting a view of Irish as a skill to be maintained, rather than an integrated part of her family life.

Many Fifth Years expressed a desire to continue using Irish after they left school. In fact the only two who did not were Cian and Senan. Chloe, Róisín and Laura all wanted to become teachers in Irish-medium primary schools, since they felt this would be much easier than having to teach through English. Tadhg wanted to join the army, specifically the Galway barracks, where Irish had a more important role than in other barracks, and possibly to teach Irish in the army. Doireann wanted to continue study Irish alongside whatever course she ended up doing ‘because I don’t want to just lose it because I've spend so much of my life speaking it’. She and Senan observed that people who acquire Irish in school had to make a conscious effort to maintain their language skills.

Aoife, Neasa, Emily, Rebecca and Zoë all expressed a desire to continue with Irish, with Aoife and Neasa fairly certain they wanted to study Irish, while Rebecca was still choosing between a range of options including Irish. Emily expressed a desire to study through Irish and was frustrated because she was not aware of many options, though Rebecca, Aoife and Neasa were quick to inform her of a range of options she seemingly had not been aware of. It is possible that expressing a desire to study through Irish was a way of increasing her status within the group: Emily generally seemed a little outside the core of the group and while she was vehement about wanting Irish to be a major part of her life, it was not always clear that she had taken action on this. Finally, Zoë was considering studying English, which Aoife teased her about. She was interested in journalism and publishing and did not see a major function for Irish in this industry.

More broadly, Cian suggested that Irish was useless outside Ireland and that increased globalisation meant that everyone would need to be able to speak English, meaning 'níl Gaeilge really chun bheith ábalta forbairt' ('Irish isn't *really* going to be able to develop'). While Cian was generally very outspoken and courted controversy, the girls in his group seemed to agree with the broad thrust of his argument, and even Zoë seemed to regard English as significantly more useful in her proposed career than Irish. As in CB, many Fifth Years wanted to move away from the area after school.

7.5.2 Future of the language

First Years had a particularly wide range of views on the topic, but relatively little interest in discussing it. This probably reflects the fact that they had thought less about it than other groups, since CB students had been exposed to debates in their immediate community about preserving the language, while older GCI students had to engage with the topic in the context

of essays and school debates. GCI participants were more likely to think of the future of the language in national terms than their peers at CB.

Cormac, Ian and David agreed with teachers' warnings about the Irish language being in danger and that they should be speaking it, though, as discussed in Section 7.2.1, their interpretation of why this was the case was somewhat confused. They were unanimous on the need to preserve the language and more focused on the question than other First Year groups. Extract 7.15 is a typical example of how GCI First Years engaged with the topic when I raised it in focus groups. There is disagreement about how endangered Irish is, as Jenny points to census figures as a cause for alarm (0849, 0852-0854), while Gráinne is dismissive (0848). The other girls seem less interested in the question, and conversation quickly moves on to a topic of more relevance: the academic success of peers who had not attended Irish-medium primary schools (0855-0859), as discussed in Section 7.4.

Extract 7.15 – GCI1.FG.164

0847	Interviewer	so do ye be worried about the Irish language that it's going to die
0848	Gráinne	no I don't mind if it dies you know it wouldn't bother my life
0849	Jenny	well the numbers have gone really low @
0850	Sarah	((hesitation:)) mm (0.2)
0851	Interviewer	@@ what about ~Jenny ~Jenny has statistics on her side
0852	Jenny	I know I saw one it was like people that only speak it at school, people that speak it full-time and people that don't know it at all and the people that don't know it at all was like up here (0.4)
0853	Amanda	yeah I seen # like that
0854	Jenny	and then the people that speak it full-time was like the tiniest bit
0855	Mia	~Jade came from an English school and she's like really go- and so's ~Liam they're both so # now
0856	Sarah	yeah and they're
0857	Amanda	yeah they're getting like a hundred percent

in all their Irish tests and stuff and we're just there with like seventy something like yeah that's good

0858 Mia yeah

0859 Sarah yeah

Eibhlín, Shauna, Anna and Lorraine were similarly less engaged with the question. Initially, Eibhlín responded to my question about how they felt about people saying the language was dying with 'yes, it's already died', while the others were distracted by Anna touching the microphone. When I brought the conversation back to the question, Anna said it was sad, but she and Lorraine argued things actually were not that bad, since many people on the Aran Islands and in the Gaeltacht spoke Irish. Shauna objected that warning them about the language dying out was 'a lot of pressure to put on children', though the others were more interested in a parallel discussion about their Irish teacher. In the remaining group, Paul said he was a bit concerned about the fall in the number of speakers, but Cillian said he was not. Again, the conversation quickly moved on, to the topic of exemptions from Irish given to some students in English-medium schools.

So, while some First Years expressed concern about the fate of Irish, others were uninterested in the question and more focused on issues that affected them personally. The fact that in most of the groups, conversation on this topic was diverted to other issues relating to Irish suggest the participants in question wanted to continue with the main business of the focus groups, rather than just chatting about unrelated topics (as happened frequently), but they feel these issues are more relevant than the somewhat abstract question of the future and importance of the Irish language.

Fifth Years had much more to say on the future of Irish. This makes sense, given that they had had more time to think about the topic. In addition, a few weeks before the focus groups, the

Irish class I observed had prepared a debate on the topic 'Is deacair a bheith dóchasach faoi thodhchaí na Gaeilge' ('It is difficult to be hopeful about the future of Irish') and it is likely that they used some of the arguments prepared for this assignment in the focus groups. Most expressed hope in focus groups that the language would survive. However, almost all dismissed the idea of Irish being widely spoken in Ireland again as unrealistic.

Even Aoife and Neasa and their friends who were among the most enthusiastic participants in terms of their commitment to the language, were measured in their expectations for the future of Irish, predicting that it would survive but would never overtake English. Aoife argued that Irish would always be here 'mar tá go leor daoine an-phaiseanta faoi' ('a lot of people are very passionate about it'), while Neasa pointed to intensive summer language courses held in Gaeltacht areas (discussed in the following chapter) as a source of work for young Irish-speakers, which would inspire more people to speak Irish. Aoife and Neasa joked about the possibility of introducing policies under which people would be compelled to speak Irish, drawing parallels with the policies against Irish introduced by the English. Emily said that Irish was 'ag dul an bóthar ceart ach tá fós rudaí le déanamh' ('going [down] the right road but there are still things to do'), with all agreeing that the education system as it stood was often more of a hindrance than a help to the survival of the language.

In Extract 7.16, from a focus group with Senan, Tadhg and Doireann, there is clear conflict between participants' desire to remain positive and the reality of their experience. The three participants have very different attitudes to the question.

Extract 7.16 – GCI5.FG.219

0869 Interviewer ahm so do ye ever worry about like the future of Irish sorry to bring down the tone

0870 Doireann that's true
(0.1)
0871 Senan @
(1.0)
0872 Tadhg uh yeah
(0.3)
0873 Doireann yes and no
0874 Senan hard not to I suppose
(0.3)
0875 because like I don't there's not much respect for it
0876 Doireann yeah
(0.6)
0877 Senan like and even just I wouldn't be comfortable really speaking Irish to someone else
(1.0)
0878 b- it's not that I wouldn't be comfortable but it just it it's kinda it's almost strange if you're speaking Irish in like an English kind of area or like
(0.6)
0879 it's just I dunno tsk I don't really see how ahm like it's gonna grow that much if people aren't really or are kinda like afraid to use it
(1.2)
0880 Doireann yeah
0881 Tadhg I think people just don't see the point in using it like what benefit do they have from learning Irish
0882 Senan yeah yeah
(0.8)
0883 Tadhg but ahm I'm gonna try and speak it like if I have kids I'm gonna teach them Irish
(0.4)
0884 Doireann yeah same
(0.4)
0885 I think also I'm not worried about it as well because the population of the Gaelscoileanna has gone up over the years so like that's gonna continue to multiply
0886 Tadhg yeah
(0.3)
0887 like the Irish figure is increasing every year ###
0888 Doireann and
0889 yeah
0890 yeah
0891 Interviewer do ye think it carries through though after school like ~Senan was saying?
(0.1)
0892 do people go through the system and then
0893 Doireann I don't think I don't think Ireland will be speaking Irish again because that's not really like that's not gonna happen

		(0.2)
0894		but ahm I think more and more people are gonna @@
0895	Interviewer	don't tell ##
0896	Senan	@@
0897	Tadhg	@@
		(0.3)
0898	Doireann	I think that more and more people are gonna wake u- like grow up with Irish and even though they're not speaking it it's still there
		(0.3)
0899	Interviewer	mhmm
0900	Doireann	and it's not gonna be dead because people are still gonna be able to speak it if they want to like
0901	Tadhg	they'll have their like cúpla focal
0902	Senan	yeah yeah
0903	Doireann	yeah
		(0.2)
0904		yeah
		(0.4)
0905	Tadhg	because there was a survey done and the people who like have Irish like there's loads of people who like leave school and they still have their Irish
		(0.6)
0906		and if they meet someone with Irish they'll be like oh you know they'll be able to talk to them like have a small conversation
		(0.5)
0907		but then
		(0.9)
0908		like a lot of those people wouldn't continue it when they're older
		(0.3)
0909	Interviewer	mm
0910	Tadhg	and
		(0.5)
0911		that's a bad thing
		(0.1)
0912	Doireann	yeah
0913	Tadhg	because
		(0.3)
0914		it's like the Irish is increasing with the Gaelscoileanna but they're not all continuing with the Irish afterwards do you know
0915	Senan	yeah
		(1.0)

Senan appears less optimistic about the future of Irish (0874-0879). He does not spell out the implication of his observation that he does not feel comfortable speaking the language with

others – that even 13 years of Irish-medium education has not equipped him to speak the language outside of school – and remains passive throughout the rest of the discussion. This may suggest a reluctance to be too negative in the face of Doireann's optimism.

Doireann does not engage with Senan's statement and argues that the future of the language is secure (though she also dismisses the possibility of an Irish-speaking Ireland) because of the increase in the number of people attending Irish-medium schools (0893-0900). Her attitude that the preservation of the knowledge of the language is enough even without a high level of active use is similar to that expressed by Charlotte (CB1), suggesting she also feels compulsion is unnecessary in this context and that the language can thrive based on the efforts of a minority who want to speak it.

Tadhg's view on the situation is ambivalent: he supports Doireann's claims that the number of people with knowledge of Irish is increasing (0901, 0905-0906), but does not seem to think this is enough if no one is speaking it (0881, 0908, 0914). He also plans to raise children with Irish (0883), but has experience of this, since he speaks Irish at home. Thus, he is more conscious than Doireann of how difficult it is to make it a part of his life, particularly given the failure of his attempt to speak Irish with similarly motivated friends in school.

Doireann does not acknowledge a contrast in Extract 7.16 between her plans to raise her children with Irish (0884) and the fact that that she does not speak the language outside school, suggesting either that this plan is not realistic for her or that it might mean raising her children *with knowledge of* Irish rather than speaking Irish to them all the time. Several Fifth Years said they would like to raise their children through Irish, though fewer than in CB. No First Years wanted to. Along with Doireann and Tadhg, Rebecca, Emily, Aoife and Neasa all

expressed a wish to raise their children with Irish. Aoife and Neasa had a rather strategic approach to the matter, aiming to increase the number of Irish-speakers by marrying someone who did not already speak Irish, as mentioned in Section 7.4. They also joked about finding a partner who spoke French, so they could have four languages in the family (since they studied German).

The ease with which Doireann, Emily and Rebecca claimed they planned to raise their children with Irish despite not being raised with Irish or otherwise speaking the language outside school raises the possibility that they might feel it necessary to make this claim in order to demonstrate their commitment to the language, especially, as here, in the context of a discussion about threats to its continued existence. This is especially likely for Emily and Rebecca, whose friendship group was particularly committed to Irish. Zoë did not want to raise her children through Irish because she believed 'gur athraíonn do phearsanta agus tú ag athrú teanga agus is é an Béarla mo chéad teanga so sin, like, mo fíorphearsantacht, you know' ('that your personality changes when you change languages and English is my first language so that's, *like*, my real personality, *you know'*). She worried that if she raised children through Irish and then 'agus iad ina bhfichidí tosaím ag labhairt Béarla arís agus bíonn siad like "oh tá tú go hiomlán difriúil"' ('and when they're in their twenties I start speaking English again and they're *like* "oh, you're completely different"'). Although she acknowledged this was an exaggeration, she wanted to avoid any 'barriers teanga' ('language *barriers*') between her and her children. Aoife and Neasa remarked that their mother had also chosen not to speak Irish to them because her competence in the language was not high enough and 'ní raibh sí ag iarraidh go gceapfaimid gur amadán í' ('she didn't want us to think she was an idiot'). Again, this suggests a potential conflict between speaking Irish and being true to one's authentic, English-speaking self. Although the other GCI students had a relatively high level of Irish,

unlike Aoife and Neasa's mother, they still felt restricted in their level of expression, particularly since they saw codeswitching as a mark of low competence.

Rather than trying to increase the population of Gaeltacht areas, Doireann suggested it 'would be better [...] to make more Gaelscoileanna throughout the country' so 'that you don't have to come from a place like Conamara to be able to speak Irish'. This makes sense given that she comes from an area where Irish is not spoken and attends a school where students come from a range of places where Irish is not spoken. It contrasts with the importance placed by CB participants on the relationship between language and place: Doireann is suggesting that this link might actually be a problem that should be solved by increasing access to Irish-medium education. There is also a parallel with Charlotte and Éanna's (CB1) argument that they should not have to speak Irish just because they come from Conamara. In the second-round focus group, Senan and Doireann were grouped with John, whose take on the future of the language was more hopeful and also political, as discussed in Section 7.2.1. He was the only participant to suggest the possibility that Ireland as a whole might become Irish-speaking again.

Finally, Róisín, Laura and Chloe expressed annoyance about some teachers spending too much time talking about the future of Irish, suggesting that this time that would be better spent on the subject they were supposed to be teaching. They considered it unnecessary since it was unrealistic to expect the situation of the language to improve, and they were confident it would survive at its current level. Cian was even more damning, suggesting 'go mbeidh sé i gcónaí, like, a little joke teanga in a way' ('that it'll always be, *like, a little joke* language *in a way*') and that its situation would never improve because 'níl aon úsáid leis taobh amuigh de Éire' ('it's useless outside Ireland'). The others may not have gone quite so far, but agreed that Irish

could not compete with English. The future of Irish was not something they worried about personally. They were more interested in achieving their academic goals, and discussion about the language itself got in the way of that.

In general, therefore, GCI participants were not worried about the language disappearing from use, but neither did they expect its situation to improve. The level of apathy about its survival was higher than at CB, but Fifth Years who expressed concern about its survival seemed particularly eager to demonstrate their commitment to the language by stating that they planned to raise their children with Irish.

7.6 Conclusion

Like CB participants, GCI participants profess to like the way they speak Irish, but also show insecurity about whether they speak it 'well', particularly in relation to the amount of English they use. They are less strongly opposed to the way their teachers encouraged them to speak Irish, but are still ambivalent about the importance both of standard grammar and of Gaeltacht dialects. While they are less engaged on the topic of the future of Irish, their views on the usefulness (and disadvantages) of the language are similar to those of CB participants. Like CB participants, they criticise those they se as having very low competence in Irish, particularly peers who attend English-medium schools.

The major contrast with CB is that GCI participants do not see their relationship to the Irish language as being determined by their geographical location or family history. They assert their own legitimacy as 'modern' speakers of Irish, though many still see being a 'native speaker' (generally of a Gaeltacht dialect) to be important. They find dialectal Irish confusing and, for First Years, even comical and do not accept the portrayal of the Gaeltacht as the source

of the Irish language, generally seeing it as rural and backward. Irish is a national language to them and, while most do not espouse an explicitly political approach to the language, its relationship to national identity is uncontroversial and far more significant than its relationship to local identity. For many, competence in Irish is a skill they have acquired and which they want to maintain, but most do not report speaking Irish outside school.

The kind of authenticity treasured by CB students and promoted, though to a much lesser extent, in the education system is inaccessible to GCI participants, as non-Gaeltacht inhabitants, as Marquis and Sallabank observe of new speakers in Guernsey (2018: 80). Trying to emulate the language practices of those considered authentic would jar with their own sense of personal authenticity and even their teachers do not ask it of them. However, they also do not subscribe fully to the ideology of anonymity, which prioritises accurate, non-idiosyncratic language practices and written communication. Instead, they put forward their own 'normal' variety of Irish as a reflection of their identity.

8. Boundaries between new and Gaeltacht speakers

Fishman argues that ethnic identity requires boundaries and even 'opposition across boundaries' in order 'to be most fully articulated' (1989: 33), while Giles suggests strong boundaries are 'optimal' as they enable minority groups 'to differentiate between own and outgroup more clearly' (1979: 276-7). Language is often used as a means of creating and maintaining these boundaries, as evidenced by the proliferation of mutually intelligible languages in the Balkan states since the break-up of Yugoslavia (cf. Greenberg 2008). Michael Clyne argues that boundary-marking is the most important function of a minority language, as speakers can use the language to exclude the dominant group, thus becoming the in-group, in contrast to their status in wider society (1998: 309). These arguments are based on the idea that the division between one ethnic group and another is, or should be, clear. Much of the literature cited in Chapter 2 illustrates that this is very often not the case and attempts to make it so, by 'purifying' a language or imposing rules about where it should be spoken and who should speak it, are often counterproductive. In addition, much negative feeling about the use of minority languages in the public sphere is based on the idea that they are being used to exclude others.

However, language is often used as a form of boundary maintenance. This is why Costa (2013) argues that disputes about boundaries and identity are a core part of language policy debates. Examining these disputes, however minor, can show us what is important to stakeholders: they happen when people have different expectations and understandings of how the language should be used and by whom. Even small arguments or awkward moments can point to the bigger principles around which a language revitalisation revolves and the varying meanings they have for different stakeholders. The existence of these disputes and tensions is not

evidence that language revitalisation is a negative process or doomed to failure, but rather shows that it is not a teleological process with a defined endpoint: it is a social movement that has diverse and often paradoxical outcomes.

This chapter shows how students in both GCI and CB use Irish to create and maintain boundaries in various ways. In doing so, it demonstrates how the two conflicting ideologies of legitimate language in Ireland discussed in Chapter 3 may alienate new and traditional speakers from each other and the language. These ideologies construe the Gaeltacht as a resource for the nation, generating unrealistic expectations from new speakers that can lead to tensions in encounters with Gaeltacht peers. The analysis in this chapter is based on narratives presented in the context of focus groups by participants from GCI and CB, who often have very different perspectives on similar incidents. Thus, the narratives presented are not objective renderings of what happened in a given situation, but illustrate how participants experienced them and how they wish to portray them in the context of an interview with an interested outsider.

Section 8.1 discusses the very different perceptions GCI and CB participants have of incidents in which Gaeltacht speakers exclude new speakers of Irish from the language, whether accidentally or intentionally, with particular attention to how the 'etiquette of accommodation' (Woolard 1989) operates in contexts where new speakers and Gaeltacht speakers come into contact with each other. Section 8.2 discusses participants' experiences of intensive summer language courses held in Gaeltacht areas. These are the main context in which non-Gaeltacht teenagers visit Gaeltacht areas and are intended to strengthen links between new speakers of Irish and Gaeltacht areas. Section 8.3 discusses how students in both schools use Irish to communicate privately secretly in the presence of (presumed) non-Irish-speakers.

8.1 Accommodation or rejection?

As might be expected given the range of researcher perspectives on the 'etiquette of accommodation' discussed in Section 2.3.2, the data discussed below illustrates how participants from GCI and CB may have different perspectives on the same interactions.

8.1.1 GCI student experiences of difficulties in speaking Irish with Gaeltacht speakers

School trips to Gaeltacht areas were an opportunity to speak Irish beyond the school. In one focus group, Róisín and Chloe (GCI5), described the positive experiences they had had while visiting Gaeltacht areas, saying they had enjoyed the sense that they could speak to anyone in Irish without that being strange. In particular, they mentioned a school trip the previous year to a Gaeltacht area, which included joint activities with students from a local school. Cian interjected that he had not spoken Irish to any students from the Gaeltacht school on this trip 'because [...] bhí siad always, like, ag labhairt Béarla linn' ('*because* [...] they were *always, like*, speaking English to us'). Róisín agreed that this had been the case with some students. John, in the same year but a different focus group, remarked there had been 'fadhb mhór' ('a big problem') on this visit, complaining that while most people replied in Irish if spoken to in Irish, a handful insisted on speaking English. The language of everyday interaction for all GCI students was English. However, on visits to Conamara, they expected to speak Irish and were disappointed when some interlocutors declined to reply to them in Irish.

Tadhg (GCI5) was particularly resentful of such instances and questioned the role of the Gaeltacht in the preservation and revitalisation of Irish. He spoke Irish with his mother, who came from an Irish-speaking family with no Gaeltacht links. He described how a teacher who

was not a Gaeltacht speaker had spoken Irish to a shop assistant on the visit described above. The shop assistant had been 'really rude' and refused to reply in Irish. The teacher attributed this to the way he spoke Irish, which he thought Conamara people might consider incorrect. Tadhg found this amusing because 'Conamara Irish is, like, grammatically incorrect compared to the rest of Irish'. He also remarked, in response to Senan's statement that Gaeltacht areas were diminishing, that Conamara people were 'not really helping' the situation, complaining that he had 'met a lot of people from like Conamara and stuff like that and they're really hostile [...] and they do- sometimes don't want to speak Irish to you'. Tadhg's statement may reflect general frustration with the disconnect between supporting language revitalisation in principle and actually speaking it, but it may also reflect a sense that Gaeltacht inhabitants have a responsibility to share the language with outsiders as a condition of the special status and support these areas receive. The support given to Gaeltacht areas is thus cast almost as a reward for facilitating people in other parts of the country who want to learn or speak the language, rather than being necessary to support Irish-speaking communities for their own sake, an attitude also seen among the adult new speakers discussed in O'Rourke and Brennan (2019).

First Years at GCI had little experience of spending time in Conamara. They regarded Conamara Irish as difficult to understand and often mimicked teachers from the area, as discussed in Section 7.3.1. Fifth Years were less openly mocking of the dialect and had little trouble understanding Conamara teachers, but they had difficulties understanding the Irish they heard when visiting Conamara. Both Tadhg and Senan had expected to have an advantage when visiting Conamara for sports fixtures outside of school, thinking they would be able to eavesdrop on coaches or conversations between players. However, both found it 'impossible to understand'. Given that older students at GCI generally regarded themselves

as speaking Irish well, it must have been disappointing to find their Irish language skills did not suffice in one of the few contexts in which they encountered Irish outside school. O'Rourke (2011) observed similar discomfort among students who had learned Irish at school when placed in a class with Gaeltacht speakers at university, noting that competence in Irish was an important part of the new speaker students' identity, distinguishing them from non-Irish-speaking peers, but engaging with Gaeltacht speakers meant losing their expert status and being reduced to 'novices'.

While most GCI participants acknowledged Conamara Irish had value, they had difficulty speaking or understanding it when they visited the area, or even with understanding teachers from the area, in the case of First Years. There was also a sense of frustration among some Fifth Years that Gaeltacht inhabitants sometimes did not to respond in Irish to them. This mirrors the experiences of new speakers discussed by researchers in other contexts (e.g. Hornsby and Vigers 2018; O'Rourke, Pujolar and Ramallo 2015; McEwan-Fujita 2010; Glaser 2007). Such rejection may suggest to them that the national community of Irish-speakers they believe themselves to be part of does not actually exist and the Gaeltacht communities they visit on school trips or for language courses, as discussed below, may not have space for people with their linguistic and social profile, a common situation for immersion students (Costa 2014). The frustration expressed by Tadhg in particular suggests anger at the failure of Gaeltacht inhabitants to live up to GCI students' expectations of the Gaeltacht as a linguistic resource, as well as the absence of this Irish-speaking community.

8.1.2 Attitudes to non-traditional speakers at CB

Students at CB showed varying degrees of awareness of this pattern of replying in English to outsiders who are trying to interact with locals in Irish, and generally framed it as

accommodation rather than rejection. It was not uncommon for CB students, particularly among First Years, to respond in English when their interlocutor spoke Irish, or vice versa, while it was rare at GCI, where Irish was generally only spoken in situations where English was not acceptable. This may have made such behaviour less remarkable to CB participants and more so to GCI participants. Several CB students had stories about outsiders whose Irish was so poor it was not comprehensible. For example, on one occasion Darragh (CB5) had been flummoxed to be greeted with 'Conas a tú tá?' rather than 'Conas atá tú?' ('How are you?'). In the majority of cases it is likely that any initial confusion about what an interlocutor is trying to say could be cleared up relatively quickly without resorting to English. This generally did not seem to have happened in such cases. It is possible that CB students were reluctant to engage in conversations like this in Irish because their interlocutors were choosing to speak Irish despite the constraints it placed on conversation, rather than resorting to English, which would result in a quicker resolution to the situation. GCI students, like many new speakers, are used to the suspension of disbelief involved in learning and interacting through a language in which they are not comfortable, whereas CB students are not. This illustrates the tensions involved when some speakers of a language use it in a postvernacular way, whereby the fact of its use is more importance than the efficacy of communication, while for others it is still a vernacular language (Costa 2015: 143)

In the extract below, Shane describes seeing an adult 'Gaeilgeoir' at a local pub struggling to order a drink in Irish:

Extract 8.1 – CB5.FG.245

0700	Shane	well I was talking to one of them
		(0.2)
0701		last year I was out and ahm
		(0.6)
0702		they were up at the bar like and

(0.3)
0703 I sh- she was trying to order a drink or something
(0.1)
0704 and I I don't think she th-
(0.1)
0705 I don't think the person at the bar understood what she was saying
(0.4)
0706 she was like
(0.6)
0707 “an bhfuil cead agam (0.4) deoch”
(1.4)
0708 and she was like
(0.8)
0709 “what”
(0.4)
0710 #
(0.3)
0711 “an bhfuil cead agam deoch fíon”
(0.4)
0712 or something I don't know what
(0.3)
[...]
0717 and uh
(0.3)
0718 then she got
(0.4)
0719 she your one said because she doesn't have
(0.4)
0720 that much Irish like she was just like
(0.8)
0721 “what”
(1.5)
0722 and the the
(1.0)
0723 I went u- I went up then is it wine you want
(0.5)
0724 she goes
(0.3)
0725 “sea sea (0.36) fíon”
(0.6)
0726 ####
0727 Áine @ was she speaking Irish back to you
(0.2)
0728 correcting you like
(0.8)
0729 Shane yeah yeah
(0.6)
0730 and uh
(0.2)
0731 @ I said to
(0.1)
0732 I said to the owner of the bar then oh it's a glass of wine she wants ##

(1.0)
0733 and she goes "oh go raibh maith agat ach
(0.2)
0734 is breá liom an Ghaeilge ach
(0.8)
0735 níl go leor daoine anseo a bhfuil bíonns ag a labhairt"
(0.7)
0736 Áine oh Jesus
(0.7)

0706 Shane *she was like*
(0.6)
0707 "can I have (0.4) a drink"
(1.4)
0708 *and she was like*
(0.8)
0709 "*what*"
(0.4)
0710 #
(0.3)
0711 "can I have a drink of wine"
(0.4)
0712 *or something I don't know what*
(0.3)
[...]
0717 *and uh*
(0.3)
0718 *then she got*
(0.4)
0719 *she your one said because she doesn't have*
(0.4)
0720 *that much Irish like she was just like*
(0.8)
0721 *what*
(1.5)
0722 *and the the*
(1.0)
0723 *I went u- I went up then is it wine you want*
(0.5)
0724 *she goes*
(0.3)
0725 "yes yes (0.36) wine"
(0.6)
0726 ####
0727 Áine @ *was she speaking Irish back to you*
(0.2)
0728 *correcting you like*
(0.8)
0729 Shane *yeah yeah*
(0.6)
0730 *and uh*

(0.2)
0731 @ I said to
(0.1)
0732 *I said to the owner of the bar then oh it's a glass of wine she wants ##*
(1.0)
0733 *and she goes* "oh thank you but
(0.2)
0734 I love Irish but
(0.8)
0735 there aren't many people here who speak it [regularly]"
(0.7)
0736 Áine oh Jesus
(0.7)

In Shane's version of events, the woman violates social norms by insisting on speaking Irish even after it was clear the bartender did not understand (0719-0725), when both could speak English. Such behaviour can be perceived as an attack on the way Irish is spoken in the Gaeltacht or as indicative of a sense of superiority among people who have learnt Irish in a formal context, as implied in Áine's interjection (0727-0728). I can only speak about Shane's narrative of the incident, and it is not possible to know what exactly happened, but his depiction is familiar from my own interactions with adult learners and new speakers of Irish spending time in Gaeltacht areas. There is a tendency among new speakers to avoid mixing languages, which is linked to purist ideologies that are also common among CB participants, who consider language-mixing to be inevitable though undesirable. It is also linked to the perception of the Gaeltacht as a resource: people who come to the Gaeltacht to improve their Irish expect to be able to speak it everywhere.

Some in CB from Irish-speaking families had been on the opposite side of this experience. Below, Órlaith describes how 'creepy' the atmosphere was (1502) when people in a shop elsewhere in Conamara switched to English when she and her family came in.

Extract 8.2 – CB1.FG.212

1492 Órlaith agus chuaigh muid isteach i siopa and then cheap siad like
(0.3)
1493 bhí muid uilig ag caint Gaeilge ach cheap siad gur like foreigners muid nó rud éicint because bhí muid just ar ais ó holidays
[...]
1495 Interviewer oh bhí sibh ar fad tanned nó rud éicint
[...]
1497 Órlaith and then thosaigh siad ar fad ag caint Béarla
[...]
1499 Órlaith because bhí siad ag caint Gaeilge like nuair a shiúil muide isteach ## ar fad ag caint Béarla bhí sé like
(0.1)
1500 "how are you doing today Máire" @ @and @then we were just like chuaigh muid suas and he was like "cén chaoi a bhfuil sibh" and they're like "oh"
(0.1)
1501 @ "oh" as in we're not like ó #tír #difriúil bhí sé really weird
(0.4)
1502 like bhí an atmosphere chomh creepy

1492 Órlaith and we went into a shop *and then* they thought *like*
(0.3)
1493 we were all speaking Irish but they thought we were *like foreigners* or something *because* we were *just* back from *holidays*
[...]
1495 Interviewer oh ye were all *tanned* or something
[...]
1497 Órlaith *and then* they all started speaking English
[...]
1499 Órlaith *because* they were speaking Irish *like* when we walked in ## all speaking English it was *like*
(0.1)
1500 "*how are you doing today Máire*" @ @*and @then we were just like* we went up *and he was like* "how are ye" *and they're like* "oh"
(0.1)
1501 @ "oh" *as in we're not like* from a #different #country it was *really weird*
(0.4)
1502 *like* the *atmosphere* was so *creepy*

She portrays these people as speaking careful, slow English with a strong Conamara accent

(1500) – just like the grandparents she and other participants described as being uncomfortable speaking English, as discussed in Section 6.1.2. Órlaith assumes they thought her family was not from Ireland (1493), suggesting a lack of awareness that this often happens to Irish people from outside the Gaeltacht. Sadhbh (CB1) regularly experienced this because neither of her parents were from Conamara. While her mother had tried to learn Irish, she found it hard. Sadhbh herself had little difficulty and identified herself as someone who spoke Irish with friends, but she was aware that 'you are kind of judged if you don't have Conamara Irish'. Despite living in the area for 27 years, her mother let Sadhbh speak on her behalf in the shop since 'the locals would know us but, like, they still wouldn't ta- speak Irish to Mom'. Sadhbh joked that 'we are kind of snobs, really' (here identifying herself as a local), though she, and the others in her focus group, said they would not do that. Sadhbh reckoned it was 'more the older generation; they're just like Conamara only', while others were more open-minded. Sadhbh's profile was relatively unusual within the school, since neither parent had a family connection to the local community. She moved schools after her first year, moving to a Gaelcholáiste in the city that had a reputation for high academic standards and implemented strict language policies, as in GCI.

In the extract below, which followed a critical discussion of new speaker varieties of Irish, as discussed in Section 6.3.3, Caoimhe describes her experience of speaking Irish to (or even in the presence of) peers from non-Gaeltacht schools.

Extract 8.3 – CB5.FG.232

0531	Caoimhe	schools come out here and we go in to them they speak in Irish and then (0.7)
0532		we'll be having full-on conversations and they're like we hear them like ((whisper:)) "what is that"
0533	Megan	yeah

		(0.4)
[...]		
0541	Caoimhe	I I have friends in town and I'll be like speaking to them and they'll be like "what are you saying"
		(0.8)
0542	Interviewer	and like would you continue the conversation with them or would it just be too awkward
0543	Caoimhe	it's
		(0.2)
0544		they won't know what you're saying
0545	Megan	yeah
		(0.2)
0546	Caoimhe	because you're going too fast and
		(0.4)
0547		full-on Irish
		(0.3)
0548	Megan	mm
		(0.3)
0549	Caoimhe	and they're like "what" it's like I'll have to dumb it down
		(0.2)
0550	Interviewer	wow
0551	Megan	yeah
		(0.3)

Like many in Fifth Year, Caoimhe has friends 'in town' and also interacts with peers from outside Conamara in organised school activities, where students from other schools come 'out' to CB or CB students go 'in' to town (0531). It is not clear whether these schools are English-medium or Irish-medium, but their students do 'speak in Irish'. Despite this, Caoimhe portrays the other students as being completely confused by the variety of Irish spoken in CB (0532). Similarly, she complains that she has to 'dumb it down' when speaking Irish to her friends from town (0549), because she speaks 'too fast and full-on Irish' (0546-0547).

It is uncomfortable for most to speak a language in which they are very comfortable slowly in order to accommodate someone who does not understand them, particularly when another shared language is available. English is also, presumably the default language in Caoimhe's relationship with her friends in town, so that presents an additional disincentive to speak Irish. While she and Megan consider the way non-Gaeltacht people speak Irish to be undesirable,

the terms ‘too fast’ and ‘full-on’ also have negative implications. Thus, the reluctance she describes to ‘dumb down’ the way she talks may be mixed with sensitivity to the reactions of others. The Conamara dialect, like all Gaeltacht dialects, is a rural one and rural speech varieties are stereotyped across the world as ‘backward’ or ‘unsophisticated’. In particular, the phrase ‘full-on Irish’ may be linked to the perceptions discussed in Section 6.3.1 of more conservative varieties of Irish as being backward and spoken by ‘farmers’ or ‘boggers’. The reaction Caoimhe describes, with non-Gaeltacht students asking ‘what is that?’ when they hear Gaeltacht students speak Irish (0532) may, of course, be an exaggeration and may reflect her own sense of unease in the situation as much as anything else. However, it corresponds with the perceptions of Gaeltacht Irish among GCI students, as discussed above and in Section 7.3.1. Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018: 51) also found that young Gaeltacht speakers were ‘wary of difficulties or embarrassment’ associated with speaking them.

CB participants did not seem to distinguish between students of non-Gaeltacht Irish-medium schools and students of English-medium schools in general. While GCI participants spoke a variety of Irish that was in many ways similar to that mocked by students in CB, participants in both schools made similar criticisms of the standard of Irish spoken by students at English-medium schools. The sense of a shared identity as Irish-speakers was particularly strong in the case of the friendship groups around Mary and Fionnuala in CB and around Aoife and Neasa in GCI. These participants were particularly engaged with school and with a range of extracurricular activities, often involving Irish, which meant they may have had friends in common and Mary and Rebecca knew each other. Participants from both friendship groups told similar stories about students from English-medium schools having low competence in Irish. For example, Mary made fun of peers she had met after a state exam who had understood the word ‘féileacán’ (‘butterfly’) to mean ‘pelican’, something Aoife and Neasa had also

mentioned. They also mocked a local radio station for its tokenistic use of Irish, as discussed in Section 7.4. In fact, Ruby complained that her brother criticised the standard of Irish spoken on the programme even though he rarely spoke Irish himself, suggesting that he did not have the right to do so purely on the basis of his status as a Gaeltacht speaker.

Speaking Irish in public could draw attention, which CB participants generally did not say they had a problem with, particularly since this attention was generally positive. Caoimhe, Mary, Ruby and Evan (CB5) regarded the 'looks' they said they got when they spoke Irish in town as not a big deal, but Ciarán (CB2) complained that 'na daoine a labhraíonn just, ahm, Béarla tá siad always like "oh my God, wow, bí ag caint níos mó Gaeilge liom" agus rudaí mar sin' ('the people who speak *just*, ahm, English, they're always like "*oh my God*, wow, speak more Irish to me" and things like that'). Ailbhe (CB1) agreed this was 'chomh annoying' ('so *annoying*'). They and the rest of their focus group regarded this as a nuisance: there was no point speaking Irish to someone who did not understand it. Ciarán may well be exaggerating the frequency with which this happens – again, this is only his perception of events – but clearly he and Ailbhe, in particular, considered such interactions to be undesirable.

CB students portrayed the tendency for locals to speak to outsiders in English as a form of accommodation, helping people who may not be able to continue a conversation in Irish. It is clear that there is more to it. It is easier to accommodate outsiders by speaking to them in the language that both parties have in common, where there is relatively little difference between regional dialects, than to navigate the range of subtle differences between the local variety of Irish and those spoken by outsiders. In particular, by choosing not to speak Irish to non-Gaeltacht interlocutors, it is possible to avoid the mockery and general bemusement expressed by the students Caoimhe describes, and by GCI participants in the section above. CB

participants often make fun of new speaker varieties, but this does not mean they are secure enough in their own variety to withstand such treatment themselves.

There is also some ambivalence about the fact that non-Gaeltacht people feel entitled to participate in Gaeltacht communities on terms that jar with local norms. People do not have to speak a lot of Irish in order to signify belonging to the local community, meaning there is an acceptance of people who are local, unlike Sadhbh's mother, but who, like her, may struggle to have a long conversation in the language. This arrangement is flexible enough to allow for the complex linguistic mix in the area, due partly to its history of emigration. If non-locals speaking non-local Irish were accepted, they might bring with them their own conceptions of what variety is legitimate in the area, further integrating the local linguistic market with the national one and disenfranchising Gaeltacht speakers who cannot or do not want to speak the monolingual, standard variety preferred in the national linguistic market.

8.2 Experiences of Gaeltacht summer courses

An important part of learning Irish, as a non-Gaeltacht speaker, is spending time in the Gaeltacht, which is perceived 'as a resource for immersion in the authentic language' (O'Rourke and Brennan 2019: 24). These visits tend to be in the context of intensive language courses held at coláistí samhraidh, as discussed in Section 3.2.4. New speakers of Irish who acquire the language in the education system often describe such courses as pivotal, but there is a fundamental paradox: while attendees are embedded in an Irish-speaking community, their aim is to perfect a variety of grammatically standard Irish, free of the influence of English, which is not actually spoken in that community. As discussed in Section 3.2.4, many or most staff on such courses are not local, meaning learners' interaction with locals may be limited. The use of English is usually strictly forbidden.

8.2.1 GCI experiences of coláistí

While the term 'Gaeltacht' was used in CB to refer to areas where Irish is spoken, as discussed in Chapter 3, GCI students generally used it to refer to coláistí samhraidh. For example, in the context of a conversation in a focus group about hearing or speaking Irish while visiting Gaeltacht areas, I asked a group of First Year girls at GCI, whether they thought the Gaeltacht was important, meaning whether the geographical area and its inhabitants were important to the future of the language, but Gráinne and Amanda replied that it was 'like a holiday'. They had interpreted 'Gaeltacht' as meaning Gaeltacht Irish-language colleges. Since I asked similar questions in both schools, I often got completely different answers to the same questions in GCI, where 'Gaeltacht' referred mainly to coláistí samhraidh, than in CB, where it retained its official meaning.

This understanding of the term 'Gaeltacht' reflects the relative unimportance of Gaeltacht areas in the lives of GCI students, despite their proximity. Their interaction with the language comes mostly through organised activities, in conjunction with school or coláistí. The school emphasised the importance of Gaeltacht areas, offering scholarships to attend coláistí, and several teachers came from Gaeltacht areas, but students did not generally build personal links with these areas.

GCI offered a number of scholarships for First Years to attend summer courses in the Gaeltacht. All students in the year were encouraged to apply, by writing an essay about why they wanted to go, meaning they had all done some thinking on the topic, though only three students, Shauna, Cormac, and Ian, had previously attended a course. All three had enjoyed

the experience immensely, though Shauna complained about some fellow attendees ‘snitching’ on peers for speaking English. Some of the First Year boys who described themselves as ‘messers’ expressed interest in going, though their desire was tempered by wariness about experiences their parents had portrayed to them as ‘fun’ (such as sneaking out to the beach at night-time) or concern about the cost of the courses (which are often close to €1000 for three weeks). They were more interested in coláistí ‘for the craic’ than for any language learning that might take place there.

While few First Years had attended a coláiste, just under half of the Fifth Year participants had (a higher proportion than in their year group overall). The majority of attendees at such courses were students from English-medium schools, whose competence in Irish was lower than most GCI students, which was a cause of concern for some. Overall, the rate of attendance of Gaeltacht courses was lower than would be expected in an English-medium secondary school with a similar socioeconomic profile. Chloe, in Fifth Year, remarked that while she had enjoyed the experience overall, the standard of Irish spoken by students and cinnirí (student leaders) was a ‘joke’: while those with no Irish might learn something, it was of no use to her.

Members of one Fifth Year friendship group were particularly enthusiastic about the Irish language and coláistí samhraidh. Aoife, Neasa, Rebecca and Zoë had all worked as cinnirí at coláistí run by the same organisation. All were heavily involved in extra-curricular school activities and the student Irish-language committee. While Rebecca sometimes spent time in Gaeltacht areas as part of her involvement with Irish-language drama, Aoife and Neasa only did so in connection with a coláiste (whether attending, working or visiting family members

who were working or attending). As with the First Year girls above, when I asked whether they thought it was important to have a connection to the Gaeltacht, this group assumed I meant Gaeltacht summer courses. Neasa responded ‘is aoibhinn liom an Gaeltacht agus, like, an cúrsa go rinne muid’ (‘I love the Gaeltacht and, *like*, the course we did’).

Aoife and Neasa, who spoke Irish with one parent, had attended six courses over the years. They often mentioned how much they loved attending these courses and saw them as a key part of the maintenance and revitalisation of Irish. Aoife argued that the success of coláistí would ensure the future of the Irish language because young people could get jobs working there until they were around twenty and ‘faoin am sin tá Gaeilge maith agat agus tá meas agat don Ghaeilge, so, like, spreagann sé daoine’ (‘by that time you have good Irish and you have respect for Irish, *so*, *like*, it motivates people’). They only had two significant complaints: they felt some students only attended courses for the sake of their exam results and lacked respect for the language, and they worried about picking up the Dublin accents of many attendees.

Like Mary in CB5, Aoife and Neasa were generally very positive about other students at the college and often cited them as examples of people who had acquired the language with relatively little exposure. However, Neasa complained about a minority of the students, who she considered to lack motivation: they had been sent from Dublin by their parents to ensure a good performance in their exams. She complained ‘ní raibh meas acu ar an Ghaeilge’ (‘they didn’t have respect for Irish’) and described how they could not understand why she and her siblings attended courses when they already spoke Irish, especially her brother, who had already finished his Leaving Certificate. She had explained that he was doing it ‘le haghaidh

an craic le haghaidh an Ghaeilge' ('for the craic, for the Irish language'). She mimicked their reaction to this: 'no, ew, yuck'.

Like Chloe, Neasa remarked that many people attending courses have 'Gaeilge cack [...] mar tá siad ar fad ag tosú amach' ('*cack* Irish [...] because they're all starting out'), but she did not consider this a major problem. A more pressing concern was the risk of picking up a Dublin accent from other people at the coláiste. The girls spoke at length about this – Zoë had been corrected by a teacher and Aoife had been mistaken for a Dubliner after attending a course, and neither was happy about it. Rebecca worried that picking up a Dublin accent in her Irish might negatively impact her mark in the Leaving Certificate oral exam.

Some of the 'drochnósanna' ('bad habits') the girls admitted to having picked up came from the strict language policy of the particular coláiste they had attended, which forbade the use of any English, even in brand names or in explaining new words. The limited vocabulary of many learners made this difficult. For example, the girls had resorted to using 'ciorcal uisce speisialta' ('special water circle') to mean bubble. The strict language policy of this coláiste jarred with local norms. At a barbecue with a local family a student had asked someone to pass him 'ceann de na madraí te sin' ('one of those hot dogs'). The host father, aghast, had told the boy to call them 'hot dogs'. Aoife said they had had to go along with the host father, but in general they translated even brand names, so that a 'Twister' icecream became a 'casadóir' ('turner') and Smarties sweets became 'clistíní' (from 'cliste', meaning 'clever', with a diminutive plural ending).

In the first-round focus group, Aoife and Neasa were somewhat bemused when I asked if there was a sense in which the coláiste was something of a bubble, since no one in it was

from the Gaeltacht. They responded that at least half the teachers came from the Gaeltacht and rejected the idea that there was any incompatibility between the language practices and ideologies of Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht staff. However, in the second-round focus group, when the hot dog incident described above came up, they described how the strict attitudes of cinnirí, almost all of whom were from outside the Gaeltacht, led to clashes with teachers from the Gaeltacht. Cinnirí, who were generally secondary school students, corrected these teachers, generally secondary school teachers, for mixing languages, telling them not to use forms like 'chipíní' ('*chip'* with a diminutive plural ending) or 'treabhsar agus belt' ('trousers and *belt'*) because students would get in trouble for using them. While they acknowledged that such forms were acceptable 'sa chanúint' ('in the dialect'), Aoife and Neasa suggested there were less anglicised alternatives and that it was unfair for Gaeltacht teachers to use words forbidden to students. The fact that they initially rejected the idea of any sort of culture clash between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht staff suggests that this was not a significant part of their experience at the coláiste. However, in the second focus group they spoke at length about issues arising from differing ideologies and practices among Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht staff, which suggests this might not be the full picture.

The coláiste discussed above is an extreme example, but the insistence on speaking Irish with a minimum of English influence and the focus on the type of Irish valued in the education system is common to all such courses. This can add a layer of tension to interactions with Gaeltacht people, since their variety of Irish can be seen as a bad influence. Here we see the clash of ideologies discussed by O'Rourke and Brennan (2019): these courses have to be held in the Gaeltacht because that is where the language is supposed to be maintained for the benefit of the rest of the country, but the reality of Gaeltacht life and language use does not fit with the aims of learners who wish to acquire the variety of Irish most useful to them.

8.2.2 CB experiences of coláistí

Students at CB were aware of coláistí samhraidh, but most had little interaction with their students, whom they called 'Gaeilgeoirí'. As with 'Gaeltacht' in GCI, 'Gaeilgeoir' ('Irish-speaker') has a different meaning in Gaeltacht areas, referring to learners of Irish and with a slightly derogatory undertone, as discussed in Section 3.3.2.

As well as making students wary of picking up 'bad habits', the strict rules imposed on students attending these courses may increase the barrier to interaction with locals, who see them as being 'forced' to speak Irish:

Extract 8.4 – CB5.FG.155

0769	Interviewer	and do they speak to ye in Irish (0.3)
0770	Cathal	oh yeah they're forced they're forced to say "cén chaoi a bhfuil tú" and like "dia dhuit" and
0771	Tomás	"di- dia duit"
0772		yeah (0.1)
0773	Interviewer	can they say it do they say it right (0.1)
0774	Tomás	no well
0775	Cathal	"dia dhuit"
0776	Tomás	the first week no the third week maybe

Tomás (0771) and Cathal (0775) mimic the way Gaeilgeoirí pronounce 'Dia dhuit', a formal greeting in Irish that is avoided by traditional speakers (who prefer 'cén chaoi a bhfuil tú' – 'how are you') but is common among learners and new speakers. In Conamara, this greeting is particularly associated with 'Gaeilgeoirí'. Both said they'd consider working at a coláiste as, in Tomás's words, it was 'bit of craic and, sure, y- y- cuirfidh tú slacht ar do Ghaeilge ('you'll tidy up your Irish') so [...] it helps you and it helps them'. Thus, unlike the GCI Fifth Years, Tomás and Cathal saw coláistí as a place where they might actually improve their Irish,

though they also made fun of ‘Gaeilgeoir’ accents. Neither had worked at a coláiste or reported any significant contact with ‘Gaeilgeoirí’ other than greeting them in passing. Tomás’s switch to Irish is notable, since he rarely spoke Irish in school. Both spoke Irish at home and English in school and were in the B-stream. The only other instances in focus groups where they or others in the B-stream spoke Irish were where they may not have known the English word or were mimicking people. This was consistent with their general behaviour in school, where they spoke Irish only under duress or as a kind of performance, in this case of the type of person that would be employed by a coláiste.

Students from CB generally expressed positive attitudes towards learners or new speakers. Mary (CB5) had worked at a local coláiste for the previous two summers and often talked about her experiences there. She claimed ‘the people from the coláiste speak just as well as I do’ and often praised their abilities, though she also observed that some who ‘don’t have much Irish’ thought ‘[she] was God’ because she could pronounce certain phonemes. She also enjoyed making fun of the more amusing errors she’d heard, as seen below.

Like the Fifth Year students at GCI, Mary worried about picking up bad habits (in terms of both accent and grammar) from the ‘Gaeilgeoirí’. She enjoyed mimicking some of the most notably ‘wrong’ sentences she had heard, as seen below. In the first example she discusses, ‘washáil mo handáils’ (072), the student has used a common tactic to Gaelicise an English verb, adding the verb ending ‘-áil’. However, they have added the same ending to the noun ‘hand’, resulting in nonsense. In the second, at line 080, the student has looked up the Irish for ‘flat’ and come up with árasán, which means ‘flat’ in the sense of ‘apartment’. It’s clear that the mistakes of ‘Gaeilgeoirí’ are a common topic of conversation in this friendship group:

while neither Ruby nor Caoimhe had worked at the coláiste, and thus had not met the student in question, they have heard these stories before and encourage Mary to recount them.

Extract 8.5 – CB5.FG.132

0070	Mary	oh I've got I've gotten the stupidest sentences
		(0.7)
0071		if someone has t- I was like "gabh go dtí an rang" he was like
		(0.1)
0072		"tá mé just washáil mo handáils" [intended to mean 'I'm just washing my hands']
		(0.2)
0073	Interviewer	well
0074	Mary	I was like "tá tú wash"
0075	Caoimhe	handáils
0076	Ruby	oh no sorry
		(0.7)
0077		"tá" what was it "tá an pá- tá poll san árasán ['there's a hole in the apartment']
		(0.5)
0078	Mary	oh no tá tá
[...]		
0080	Mary	no "tá an liathróid seo árasán" ['this ball is apartment'] he wanted to say it was flat

Most First Years had little experience of coláistí, with the exception of Ailbhe, who spent much of her summer at a coláiste, visiting a family member and helping out in the shop, and Sadhbh, whose sister had worked at one. Like Neasa in GCI, Ailbhe described some learners being astonished that she spoke Irish every day, and she enjoyed mimicking the Dublin accents of many students. She and Sadhbh were fascinated by how rich the families who send their children there must be 'because, like, tá na cúrsaí like ocht gcéad euro' ('*because, like,* the courses are *like* eight hundred euro). Ailbhe associated being 'rich' with having a dismissive attitude towards Irish, and, again like Neasa, she described the learners who were 'rich' as being disgusted by people speaking Irish to them ('bíonn siad like, ew' – 'they're *like*, ew').

She stressed, however, that ‘na daoine, like, deas bíonn siad like, “oh hi, cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?”’ (the, *like*, nice people they’re *like*, ‘oh hi, how are you?’), offering the greeting most commonly used by locals.

One CB student appeared to question the distinction between ‘Gaeilgeoirí’ and Gaeltacht people. Ruairí (CB1) responded as follows to a question about whether his family hosted ‘Gaeilgeoirí’:

Extract 8.6 – CB1.FG.136

> my cousins keep ahm (0.2) them as well (0.5) studen- I dunno what you call them (0.1) my cous- (0.2) I've cousins that are (0.4) ones

While he does not explicitly reject the term, Ruairí seems aware that it has negative connotations and declines to use it, possibly challenging the distinction between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht Irish-speakers and -learners. He said he liked ‘helping [his cousins] because they have decently good Irish’ considering they were not from the Gaeltacht. However, he was scathing about their friends, who were less competent in Irish. When these people spoke Irish, he found himself thinking (or possibly saying) ‘just don’t!’, whereas he felt his cousins were ‘trying to piece it together as best they could’.

There is a suggestion that his cousins’ friends simply are not trying their best to speak Irish, which might justify Ruairí’s dismissal of their efforts. Ruairí also claimed to have spoken no English until he was six, but now spoke English with his father, who was not a Gaeltacht speaker. In school he spoke mostly English, but he was quick to correct errors he perceived in the speech of other students. It seems, therefore, that while he was uncomfortable with the

term ‘Gaeilgeoir’, he also felt there was a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Irish. He makes allowances for his cousins because they are not from the Gaeltacht, again suggesting this idea of linguistic competence as being linked to geographic origins. However, he rejects out of hand their friends’ attempts to speak Irish.

In contrast to these positive attitudes, Shane (CB5) said he went to great effort not to talk to ‘Gaeilgeoirí’ while helping his aunt, who hosted them, because ‘they never have good Irish’. Áine remonstrated jokingly with him, pointing out that that was why they were there, but Shane reckoned ‘they’re not going to learn from me anyway’. This could be interpreted as an expression of linguistic insecurity or it could be a rejection of the expectations of Gaeilgeoirí that Gaeltacht inhabitants are there to facilitate their language-learning needs (or possibly both).

By and large, students in CB had neutral or positive attitudes to Gaeilgeoirí, while still making fun of the way they spoke. Many students in CB had little to do with coláistí and the learners who attend them and some went out of their way to avoid ‘Gaeilgeoirí’. However, others, especially those who had experience of coláistí, either directly or through family, were positively inclined. Those with experience of coláistí were also among the most engaged with school overall. They were the most likely to be able to operate in the monolingual, standard variety promoted through the coláistí, and to see the benefits of the Irish language on the national linguistic market, beyond the local area. Other than Shane, the Fifth Year boys were also very positive, despite mostly being quite disengaged from school.

Mary’s complaints about picking up mistakes from learners while working at the coláiste echo Chloe’s from GCI, while Tomás’s comment about improving one’s Irish through working

there may indicate an acceptance of the value of the Irish language regime in place there. Another area of similarity with GCI is resentment of people from outside the region who do not respect the language or social norms regarding speaking it, as seen in complaints about learners who are 'rich' and/or from Dublin. Their negative attitudes may to some extent be explained by the fact that they are both from somewhere beyond the region and are more privileged than the students in GCI and CB, by being wealthier or coming from the capital.

8.3 Irish as a secret code

While I was aware that many Irish people used Irish as a secret code when travelling abroad, even when their competence in the language was quite low, this was not originally something I intended to investigate in this study. However, it came up repeatedly during focus group sessions, particularly in response to questions about when participants spoke Irish outside of school (especially in GCI), or unusual contexts in which they spoke the language (especially in CB). It became clear that this was an important theme in the data and was particularly relevant to the question of language ownership and boundaries.

8.3.1 Contexts for using Irish as a secret code

The most common context for using Irish as a secret code was when abroad, usually on holiday, and generally with the aim of communicating without being understood by overhearers. Sadhbh (CB1) remarked that Irish was 'like a secret language' abroad, a statement echoed by Doireann (GCI5). However, only a handful of GCI participants mentioned using Irish this way: Doireann and Tadhg (GCI5) said they had done so themselves, while Amanda (GCI1) reported she had seen her father do it. CB students were much more likely to admit to (or boast of) using Irish like this when abroad. I only observed participants

in a school context, where they were surrounded by others who spoke Irish, so did not have the opportunity to observe this myself except on a few occasions when First Years at GCI used Irish to make fun of school staff who did not speak Irish. This means that I cannot verify participants' accounts.

In their accounts, speaking Irish while abroad enabled participants to speak 'freely agus openly', as Sadhbh put it, without worry about others overhearing. Ruby described her mother, for example, telling her younger siblings 'stopaigí anois' ('stop now') if they were messing at the dinner table, 'and she'll be like so angry but like she's doing it in such a calm voice that everyone's like "she's just saying something nice"'. Mary commented 'she's essentially screaming without the volume'. Irish in this context (in Ruby's telling) enabled Ruby's mother to save face: she was able to berate her children without anyone around them knowing she was annoyed. She said it also enabled the family to talk about people nearby without their knowledge. Cathal said his family had instituted a policy whereby 'on holiday like you're not allowed to speak English just because if you're saying something bad about someone you have to say it in Irish so they don't know'.

Cathal's family did speak mostly Irish at home, according to him, so this was not a major change in language policy, but maybe just a formalisation of existing arrangements. Sadhbh, on the other hand, said she had used Irish as a secret code on a recent holiday with her mother and sisters, even though her mother barely spoke Irish. Presumably this meant her mother did not understand much of the conversation, but apparently the benefits of being able to discuss things without those around them understanding outweighed the disadvantages of having to accommodate her mother's low competence in Irish.

While the chances of being understood when speaking Irish abroad are relatively low, many students, particularly in CB, also used Irish as a secret code within Ireland or in the presence of Irish people. This involves making a calculation as to who is likely to speak Irish. Ruby said she had used Irish in this manner on a family holiday when talking about an Irish family because 'we knew well they didn't have Irish just by the way they were, like, speaking'. She did not elaborate on exactly what this meant: their accent may have suggested they were from Dublin, or from another part of the country where Irish is not widely spoken, such as the midlands. Either way, this statement suggests that only a particular 'type' of Irish person is likely to speak Irish.

Using Irish as a secret language in a country where everyone must (at least theoretically) achieve a basic standard of fluency in the language is, however, a risky tactic, and judgements about who speaks Irish may not always be accurate: Molly's (CB1) mother had once been exposed, when a man she and her friends were making fun of in Irish turned around and spoke to them in Irish. Although Ailbhe, Sadhbh and Jane (CB1) claimed they always spoke Irish in town to avoid being overheard, Sadhbh remarked

Extract 8.7 – CB1.FG.139

> ach caithfidh tú bheith cúramach uaireantaí[...] just ceapfadh tú oh muide na t-aon daoine atá Gaeilge acub i town [...] and then casfadh tú timpeall is bheadh daoine ag caint Gaeilge bheadh tú like oh my God céard a dúirt @muid
>
> but you have to be careful sometimes [...] *just* you'd think oh we're the only people with Irish in *town* [...] *and then* you'd turn around and people would be speaking Irish you'd be *like oh my God* what did we say

Ailbhe and Jane agreed, with Ailbhe observing that 'déanann tú dearmad go bhfuil actually like Gaeilge ag daoine eile' (*like*, you forget that other people, *like*, *actually* have Irish) when

they're saying 'na rudaí is weird le chéile' ('the *weird*est things together'). Róisín (GCI5) expressed similar sentiments.

Some CB students preferred to conceal what they were talking about simply as a matter of general privacy: Ruby (CB5) explained that she spoke exclusively Irish with her father when in town because they 'did not 'want everyone to listen to our conversations', though she said it was also the main language they spoke together in general. Many participants, including Maria, Caoimhe and Tomás (CB5) and Róisín (GCI5) admitted using it to 'gossip' or talk about someone in their presence.

Irish could also be an asset in the context of sporting competition. Clara, Muireann and Sadhbh (CB1) described how, although Irish was nominally the working language of the local football club they played for, sessions were generally conducted through English. Irish was used 'so they won't understand what we're saying' when playing matches 'on the other side of Galway'. Sadhbh gave the example of playing against a rough team, in which case the coach might tell a player to 'fan síos' ('stay down') after being pushed, so that the referee, many of whom also did not speak Irish, might think they were hurt and award a free.

Cillian (GCI1) said he and his sister had spoken Irish around his English cousins who had 'no idea what we're saying', which he found 'so funny'. Marc was inspired by this anecdote, enthusing about how useful this tactic could be when, for example, someone wanted you to visit them and you wanted to communicate with your parents that you did not want to go.

GCI participants generally did not mention using Irish as a secret code around Irish people, presumably because the variety they spoke was not difficult for outsiders to understand in the

way that the Conamara dialect spoken by CB participants was, even for people who spoke some Irish. However, although some students in CB had a parent or parents who did not speak Irish, it was only in GCI that students reported using Irish as a secret code within the home. Amanda (GCI1) reported she had used it to communicate with her father without her younger brother understanding, while Jenny (GCI1), Róisín (GCI5) and Laura (GCI5) said they spoke Irish with siblings in order to avoid their parents overhearing.

While in the examples discussed above the benefit of using Irish in this manner is to ensure privacy where being overheard could lead to face-threatening encounters, or to gain an advantage in competition, Irish was also used very publicly by some participants in contexts where it was not understood. In the extract below, describing a hypothetical situation, Fionnuala focuses on how Irish links her to her family and her home, seeing part of its value as lying in the fact that no one around her would be able to understand it:

Extract 8.8 – CB5.FG.233

1333	Fionnuala	but like the thing is no matter where I go in the world I could be in China Korea
1334	Mary	as in like
1335	Ruby	which is really sad
1336	Mary	###
		(0.3)
1337	Fionnuala	getting beheaded in North Korea
		(0.2)
1338		God knows where
		(0.4)
1339	Mary	you'd probably find someone
1340	Fionnuala	I'll always have a link to my country
1341	Interviewer	###
1342		dedication
1343	Fionnuala	a link to my family that nobody around me will be able to understand because I have this language and also
1344	Mary	yeah
		(0.3)
1345	Fionnuala	the other thing about like
		(0.2)
1346		Gaeilge ##
1347	Mary	great

```
1348 Interviewer   I think you're leaning towards the
                   microphone ###
1349 Mary          it's great fun in foreign countries
```

Fionnuala focuses on how the language could support her distinct sense of identity as an Irish person by creating a boundary between herself and those around her, in this hypothetical situation, while also strengthening the bond she has with her country and her family (1333, 1340, 1343). Mary interrupts to suggest that even somewhere as far away as that, it would be possible to 'find someone' (1339), presumably to speak Irish with, thus suggesting the language could help Fionnuala forge new bonds with people around her. The obvious assumption is that anyone she might come across in that context would be Irish, but in fact following this extract, the conversation moved on to a German Fionnuala had met at a family wedding who had such good Irish that they thought he was from 'back the way', but who had in fact learned the language from a French woman. Fionnuala had been so delighted to meet a non-Irish person who spoke Irish that she had schemed to bring him and her aunt together, to no avail.

Some of the Fifth Year CB boys said they had used Irish to show off while abroad. Patrick, who had lived in the U.S., claimed that people in 'England and America' often asked him to speak Irish to them. Cathal agreed, observing that it had 'worked for [him] in Spain', i.e. he had successfully used it to impress a romantic interest when on holidays. Both Patrick and Cathal spoke Irish at home, meaning this was a very easy way of impressing people. Brian, who did not and generally was not comfortable speaking Irish, suggested that you could impress 'someone from a foreign country' by 'tell[ing] them you have a rake [lots] of Irish and they wouldn't have a clue, like' if you just said 'a rake of random words'. Thus, while in Ireland Brian might have struggled with Irish, he saw potential for it in contexts where others would not be able to assess his competence. In the contexts discussed by the boys here, part

of the value of Irish lies in its incomprehensibility, as with the examples above, but in this case, it is being used to bring people together, even if this is being done with particular goals in mind and, in Brian's proposition, involves an element of deception of the interlocutor.

Other participants had used Irish specifically to annoy people and expose their ignorance of Irish, thus underlining their own 'expert' status as Irish-speakers. Cian spoke Irish with his father with the intention of annoying his mother, who was not Irish. He described himself taunting her: 'hah, ní thuigeann sí!' ('Hah, she doesn't understand!'). He said he behaved similarly with friends, claiming he sometimes spoke more Irish with friends outside school. While I initially took this at face value, he quickly clarified that 'níl Gaeilge ag leath de mo chairde so tá sé kind of just like "ha ha is féidir liom labhairt Gaeilge agus ní féidir leat"' ('half my friends don't have Irish, *so* it's *kind of just like* "ha ha I can speak Irish and you can't"'). Laura and Chloe (GCI5), in the same focus group, described this, laughingly, as 'chomh mean' ('so *mean'*) and said they did not do it. Cian claimed to speak in Irish for up to an hour at a time even when in the company of just one friend, who did not speak Irish. Caoimhe and Megan (CB5) expressed similar feelings of superiority, though they said they did not verbalise them to friends in the way Cian had. When I told them about Cian's claims, they found it hilarious and Caoimhe remarked that she also found it 'so funny' to talk 'to them in Irish so they don't know what's happening'. Thus, while she expressed frustration with the idea of speaking to non-Gaeltacht interlocutors in Irish if communication was the main goal, she did seem to enjoy using Irish as a means of teasing friends who did not understand it.

It is unlikely that Cian's or Caoimhe's friends actually could not speak Irish, since presumably they were around the same age and thus most likely studied (or had recently studied) the language in school, but participants in both schools clearly perceived a dichotomy between

people who have Irish and people who do not. Ruby also evoked this dichotomy in describing how she spoke Irish to her boyfriend purely to annoy him:

Extract 8.9 – CB5.FG.132

> he has no Irish and I sometimes like if we're Facetiming or whatever I will just like take the mick out of him and I'll just say something he's like I have no idea what that means

Eibhlín (GCI1) initially claimed that the only time she spoke Irish outside school was 'in front of my British friend and he gets really peed off', but then Shauna reminded her that they both used it in a group on Snapchat 'because there's people from English schools so we always talk in Irish'. Eibhlín responded 'oh yeah, and then, like, switch to French'. Thus, while Eibhlín might actually use Irish with friends more than she initially suggested, the aim of this interaction is not so much to communicate with each other as to exclude friends who do not have the same linguistic capital. French may be as useful in this endeavour as Irish, despite the fact that at the time she and Shauna had only been learning French for a matter of months, compared with eight years of learning Irish.

8.3.2 Importance of the secret code function

The data discussed above shows that the function as a 'secret code' is important among participants in GCI and CB, though the relative importance of this and other motivations for speaking Irish varies greatly between individuals. Mary (CB5) went so far as to claim that 'the best thing about being bilingual is being somewhere that doesn't speak your language', though this was said jokingly and Mary was generally very involved in Irish language activities and promotion within the school. While others in his focus group mentioned academic benefits and national pride when I asked why it was important to speak Irish, (GCI5) Cian thought it was 'cool chun bheith ábalta Gaeilge a labhairt like go poiblí nuair nach dtuigeann an formhór

de na daoine é' (*cool* to be able to speak Irish *like* publicly when most people don't understand it'). This was particularly satisfying in the case of 'daoine ó na tíortha eile because bíonn siad ag labhairt like Gearmáinis agus cibé cén rud like and then just tosaigh ag labhairt rud nach dtuigeann siad ach an oiread' ('people from the other countries *because* they speak *like* German and whatever *like and then just* start speaking something they don't understand either'). Cian enjoyed making dramatic and controversial statements, but this is very much in line with his general attitude to Irish as something he had to tolerate on a daily basis but which enabled him to annoy others or demonstrate his superiority to them.

Although they generally used Irish as a secret code much less than CB participants, many in GCI suggested this function was the only possible reason for speaking Irish outside school. Liam (GCI1), for example, suggested 'you speak more Irish around people who don't speak Irish than you do with people who actually do' and Cian's description of how he taunts his friends by speaking Irish suggests he would agree with this statement. In First Year, only Lorraine claimed to speak Irish outside school, but she said she spoke Irish with Anna, who, in the same focus group session, said she never spoke Irish outside school. Either participant could be intentionally or accidentally misrepresenting their language practices here, but it is likely that the truth lies somewhere in-between: maybe they did occasionally speak Irish together, but for Anna this level of use was not high enough to justify answering my question in the affirmative, whereas for Lorraine it was. Lorraine was generally the most academically-focused of this group, so it is possible that she was more eager to position herself as speaking Irish regularly than Anna, who was less interested in school, as evidenced by her reluctance to participate in classroom discussions to which Lorraine often contributed. Eibhlín and Shauna (GCI1) reported in the same session that they only spoke Irish to annoy others, as discussed above.

The importance of this function to many GCI students is such that Jenny and Amanda both reported that they had stopped speaking Irish at home once the sibling or parent they had been trying to conceal their communications from learned Irish. Thus, rather than being a catalyst for a broader use of Irish within the home, it seems that their family members' increased competence removed the boundary-marking function that was their only motivation to speak the language outside of school. In Jenny's words, 'there [was] no point' in speaking Irish with her sister if her mother could understand.

However, for many of the more fluent speakers among participants discussed here, the fact that Irish is not understood by many may be an incidental benefit of continuing their normal language practices when outside of their usual environment. For example, Ruby (CB5) said that she generally spoke Irish with her father, so being in a largely non-Irish-speaking context may not actually have changed their language practices, but may have changed what they talked about – they would be unlikely to gossip about people within earshot if they knew they understood. Similarly, Cathal (CB5) said he spoke Irish at home, so the change to speaking only Irish on holidays is likely to be more of degree than a complete change in practices. Megan (CB5), and Conor and Michael (CB1) all said they spoke only Irish at home, and I never heard Conor speak English voluntarily, so the fact that they said they used Irish as a secret code in town or elsewhere in Ireland also seems likely to reflect a change in the content rather than the language of communication. Tomás, on the other hand, claimed to speak 'Irish in Galway always always', despite rarely speaking it in school without prompting, though he said he spoke it at home. In his case, this is more likely to reflect a change in language practices, since at least some of the time he is in town he is likely to be in the company of friends from school with whom he usually speaks English. Of the three GCI participants who

said they spoke Irish at home, Tadhg did say he used it in this manner, while Aoife and Neasa did not mention doing so, though I did not ask them explicitly about it.

Caoimhe and Maria (CB5) had a particularly complex relationship with Irish. They felt uncomfortable speaking Irish at home, as discussed in Section 6.4.1. However, Caoimhe claimed to 'feel comfortable speaking Irish anywhere it's kind of a secret because not many people have it' and Maria agreed. Both reported they often used Irish to speak secretly about people, in town or on holidays. Caoimhe also described how she and her mother had switched to Irish when they met a mother and daughter at a university open day who, they felt, were not comfortable speaking English. Their main motivation in doing so, in Caoimhe's telling, was to express solidarity with fellow Gaeltacht people who seemed uncomfortable in an English-speaking context.

CB students were more likely overall to claim to use Irish as a secret code, which is unsurprising given that they generally had a higher level of competence in Irish. GCI students were more likely to use Irish in this way within the home. This may be related to heightened sensitivity about the relationship between language and identity in Gaeltacht areas: excluding people on the basis of language is a controversial topic even when it comes to the organisation of pre-school education, so doing so within the home might be far more hurtful than it is for the families of GCI participants. CB participants' families were also often more complex in terms of language than those of GCI participants, because of the history of emigration in the area, as discussed in Section 6.1.2.

In both schools, this 'secret code' function was an important part of at least some students' relationship with the language. For many GCI students, it was the main or even only reason

to speak Irish outside school, while for some CB students the usefulness of this function overrode their inclination not to speak Irish. That is, some participants only saw (or acknowledged) Irish as valuable in the presence of others who were not able to speak it. As emphasised throughout this section, this analysis is based on participants' own accounts rather than behaviour I observed, so may not be an accurate depiction of their practices.

There is a lack of research on the topic of minority languages being used as 'secret codes', though it is mentioned in the Irish context in Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018: 42), Kavanagh and Hickey (2013: 441), Murtagh and van der Slik (2004: 291, 300) and Fleming and Debski (2007: 97, 98); in Scotland by Nance (2015: 571); in Finland by Vesterbacka (1991: 39); and in Australia by Rubino (2019: 9-14), which suggests it is a widespread phenomenon in a range of contexts. There are obvious motivations for avoiding the topic, since it plays into monolingual suspicions about speakers of minority languages and may be seen to diminish the importance attached to such languages by suggesting that speakers only use them to exclude others. I am not suggesting the data presented above is representative of all Irish-speakers and Ó hIfearnáin suggests that this phenomenon may be less common among more fluent speakers (p.c.), while Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018: 42) noted that of the university-age Gaeltacht new speakers of Irish they interviewed, only new speakers mentioned Irish's usefulness as a 'secret language'. However, this function clearly plays an important role in at least some participants' relationship with the language.

Irish here plays both a unifying role and a divisive one. It unifies those who speak the language, though sometimes only those who do so in a particular way. This illustrates the complex nature of the national role of the language: there is tension between the idea that it belongs to every Irish person and the reality that levels of competence vary widely among Irish people,

rendering it an ideal tool for group-making within the country. The messy reality of language revitalisation is that it is a process of group-making (Costa 2013), where social and political factors are likely to play a larger role than linguistic or supposedly apolitical 'cultural' factors.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the contrast between how CB participants and GCI participants perceive interactions with non-Gaeltacht and Gaeltacht people, respectively, providing further evidence that the 'etiquette of accommodation' is neither a matter of straightforward rejection of new speakers, nor the result only of inherited shame about being an Irish-speaker, but rather something more complex.

GCI participants are in an awkward position: their experience of the language in school suggests that it is a shared national language, but they find when they go to Gaeltacht areas that they are not always welcomed as members of this national Irish-language community. Their expectation that these areas can be resources for the improvement of their language skills, through casual visits and language courses, are disappointed by the bilingual reality of Gaeltacht life. This contrasts with the suggestion in Puigdevall et al. (2018) that visits to the Gaeltacht are often cited by new speakers as motivational. Part of the reason for this may be the heightened expectations of GCI participants, who are used to speaking Irish in school: the very fact of speaking Irish all day is nothing new to them, but they are disappointed on one hand by the low competence of many fellow attendees and on the other by staff from the Gaeltacht mixing languages in a way that they consider to be incorrect or inappropriate for an educational environment. New speakers with less experience of spending time in immersive Irish-speaking environments might not notice these factors. GCI students' visits to the area were also more likely to be outside the frame of Gaeltacht courses, meaning they were more

likely to encounter Gaeltacht speakers who had not ‘opted in’ to welcoming learners and new speakers and so were more likely to follow the accommodation norms of the area.

CB participants, and other Gaeltacht inhabitants, may be discomfited by the presence of incomers who seem to want to enforce the language norms of Irish-speaking institutions beyond the Gaeltacht on the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of Gaeltacht areas. Along with understandable resentment of what they may consider to be unreasonable expectations, CB participants are conscious that their status as Gaeltacht speakers differentiates them from other Irish people. While many of them would not be identifiable through their English as coming from Conamara, their Irish is distinctive and may draw attention or ridicule.

The use of Irish as a secret code is important in both schools. While this may reflect a change among the younger generation of Gaeltacht Irish-speakers, it certainly reflects the important function of minority languages as boundary-markers and tools of group-making. For many, this function is far less significant than the language’s role in their relationship with family and friends, but for others, particularly at GCI, it may be one of the most important functions, or even the most important function of the language in their lives. Therefore, despite the fact that Irish is designated ‘the’ national language it is used within Ireland as a means of setting out, drawing attention to or challenging boundaries between Irish people in a process of fractal recursion.

9. Conclusion

This thesis has explored how teenagers in two Irish-medium secondary schools see their relationship with Irish, illustrating the similarities and differences between two groups of young 'new speakers' and 'Gaeltacht speakers' of Irish.

Chapter 2 introduced the key theoretical issues in language revitalisation movements worldwide and showed how some of the major ideologies involved in language revitalisation, particularly the ideologies of authenticity and legitimacy, are heavily contested. It examined how these ideologies play out in the context of minority language education, how young people experience the contradictions involved and how they may resist policies adults introduce with the aim of making them into agents of revitalisation. This chapter also outlined the idea, proposed by Costa and Gasquet-Cyrus (2013), that conflict should be treated as an integral part of language revitalisation because by examining where conflict occurs, we get an insight into what boundaries and issues are most important to participants.

Chapter 3 explored how the ideologies discussed in Chapter 2 play out in the Irish context. It also discussed the fundamentally contradictory ideologies that permeate discussions of Irish language policy. On the one hand, Irish is a national language that belongs equally to all Irish citizens and, through standardisation, must be able to compete with other modern languages. On the other, the legitimacy of Irish as a national language derives from the decreasing pool of native speakers of traditional dialects living in Gaeltacht areas. This paradox feeds into tensions between young new and Gaeltacht speakers of Irish at a time when urban, largely postvernacular use is becoming more important and vernacular use in Gaeltacht areas is decreasing. It also feeds into academic research on Irish, in which two clear trends are visible, with adherents to each criticising the legitimacy of the other's work.

Following the discussion of the research methods adopted for this study in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 showed that the complexity of language patterns in the community surrounding CB are reflected in a flexible school language policy and strong feelings among students about how language policy is implemented. In contrast, Irish is a school-only language for most GCI students and there is little contestation of language policy. For those who do engage with the topic, the school's language policy seems like a reasonable template for policy in the community more broadly: they do not worry about tolerability in the way that their peers at CB do. In both schools, speaking Irish is associated with younger students and English is associated with maturity and independence. This pattern is clearer among CB students, who have more varied language practices. In addition, CB students are often frustrated by the contrast between local language practices and those for which they are rewarded in the education system.

Chapter 6 showed that CB students prize authenticity and acknowledge only their own dialect as legitimate, at least in overt discussion. There are some hints that they see new speaker varieties as 'neutral', but some reject their validity and many complain if they have to listen to them or to the traditional dialects of other Gaeltacht areas. Authenticity is key to their understanding of what constitutes a good speaker, which relies on family background or involvement in traditional culture as much as on actual language practices. They express pride in their own dialect and easily recite the benefits of Irish on the job market. Many take for granted that they will speak Irish to their own children. However, these statements jar with a less overt association between Irish and older people or early childhood. They also contrast with their own language practices, suggesting the conflict many of them feel about these practices.

Chapter 7 showed that while GCI students resemble their peers at CB in several respects, particularly their insecurity about whether they speak 'good' Irish and their ambivalence about the importance of grammatical accuracy, there are also a number of significant differences. The most important is that GCI participants do not see their relationship to the Irish language as being determined by their geographical location or family history. Authenticity in the sense that it is valued in CB is not accessible to them, since they mostly come from English-speaking families and live outside the Gaeltacht, so they have no desire to emulate Gaeltacht dialects, which many of them find difficult to understand and even undesirable in some respects. They also do not subscribe fully to the ideology of anonymity, which prioritises accurate, non-idiosyncratic language practices and written communication. Instead, they put forward their own 'normal' variety of Irish as a reflection of their identity.

Chapter 8 illustrated the contrast between how CB participants and GCI participants perceive interactions with non-Gaeltacht and Gaeltacht people, respectively. It showed that GCI participants may be somewhat disappointed to find when they go to Gaeltacht areas that they are not always welcomed as members of a national Irish-speaking community and that Gaeltacht Irish-speakers may speak the language in a way they consider to be incorrect or unsuitable for their purposes. It also showed how CB participants, and other Gaeltacht inhabitants, may be discomfited by the presence of incomers who do not follow local sociolinguistic norms and may also feel insecure about outsiders' perceptions of how they speak. Participants from both schools use Irish as a 'secret code', a way of communicating with each other in the presence of (presumed) non-Irish speakers. For some, especially in GCI, this is one of the most important reasons for them to speak the language outside school.

9.1 Research questions

1. (How) are intergroup boundaries important in participants' use of and attitudes towards Irish?

Boundaries between Irish-speakers and non-Irish-speakers are important to participants in both schools. It is important to note that some whom participants (especially in CB) perceived as 'non-Irish-speakers' are likely to have had some competence in Irish, because its national status means everyone (other than those with exemptions) must learn Irish from the age of five to the end of secondary school. However, some participants in both schools criticised English-medium schools for teaching Irish badly and made fun of peers who attended such schools for making what they saw as silly mistakes. Participants in both schools used Irish as a 'secret code', i.e. used the language to communicate information that they did not want bystanders to understand.

While this was a common use of the language, emphasising links with fellow Irish-speakers, the contexts in which it happened varied. Most participants had used Irish in this way on holiday or in the presence of non-Irish people. CB students did so in the presence of non-Gaeltacht Irish people, whom they assumed not to be able to speak Irish, suggesting the importance of Gaeltacht identity, as discussed below. GCI students seemed to use this strategy with Irish people mostly where they knew these bystanders did not speak Irish, particularly with friends and family. This suggests that they might see the boundary between Irish-speakers and non-Irish-speakers as being less obvious than it is to CB participants, and also that they are willing to use the language among friends and family in a way that would be perceived as rude or divisive by CB participants, some of whom expressed strong feelings about 'forcing' the language on others.

When CB participants hear someone speaking the Conamara dialect of Irish, some report immediately checking whether they know them – there seems to be an automatic sense of affinity. In contrast, although they praised the efforts of new speakers, they also tended to make fun of the way they speak and there is some resentment of the behaviour of some Irish-learners and new speakers who do not respect local language norms, similar to the new speakers discussed in Brennan and O'Rourke (2019). They also generally assume non-Gaeltacht Irish people will not understand them when they speak Irish, as discussed above.

Most CB participants did not mention significant contact with people from other Gaeltacht areas. Those who did – Jane in CB1 and Caoimhe in CB5 – had very different experiences of this: Jane claimed not to be able to understand family members who spoke Donegal Irish, while Caoimhe said she spoke more Irish while visiting family in Munster than she did at home in Conamara. The fact that many participants claimed to have difficulty understanding Gaeltacht dialects other than their own suggests that they may not feel a strong affinity with people from other Gaeltacht areas and thus the boundary between Conamara people and non-Conamara people may be more relevant to them than that between Gaeltacht people more generally and non-Gaeltacht people. Ó hIfearnáin's (2008) observation that younger Gaeltacht speakers lack the linguistic grounding to enable them to understand other dialects (and the written standard) also plays a role here.

GCI participants have an ambivalent relationship with Gaeltacht areas: many express aesthetic admiration for Gaeltacht dialects and say they consider the existence of Gaeltacht areas to be important. However, younger participants almost unanimously consider Gaeltacht dialects, particularly the Conamara dialect, to be too difficult to understand and even somewhat comical. Older participants are more likely to express admiration, but they have no desire to

speak that way, preferring their own ‘normal’ way of speaking Irish. On visits to Gaeltacht areas, some enjoy the sense that they can speak to anyone in Irish, some have difficulty understanding the way Irish is spoken in such areas and some may even disapprove of the way it is spoken, considering it to be grammatically incorrect or overly influenced by English. Some had also found that certain interlocutors in Gaeltacht areas were unwilling to speak Irish to them. For most, therefore, the boundary between Gaeltacht and new speakers of Irish seems to be quite difficult to cross. The anxiety expressed by some First Years about peers who had attended English-medium primary schools and were now catching up to those who had attended Gaeilscoileanna suggests that the boundary between themselves, as new speakers, and peers who attend English-medium schools, whom they generally consider to have much lower language skills, is more permeable.

While these boundaries can be seen as negative, the prevalence of the use of Irish as a ‘secret code’ suggests that they can have some positive effects, even if these effects are limited. More importantly, acknowledging and working with existing boundaries will lead to more realistic language policy, since language revitalisation is a social process. It is worth noting that the particular circumstances of each school means that a Fishmanian approach, based on building up boundaries around a defined minority language community is unlikely to work. While the strong local identity around CB may seem to bode well for this approach, the emphasis on individual choice there means any policies that could be seen as dividing local people by language would generate ill will. Although attitudes to strict language policy at GCI are much more positive, the geographic dispersal of students means it would be difficult to build the strong boundaries advised in the RLS framework.

2. Who is a legitimate Irish-speaker and what form of Irish is considered legitimate? What forms of 'language-laundering' take place in the schools and how do participants feel about this?

There is no clear answer as to what variety of Irish is considered legitimate and participants' overt statements often contrasted with their behaviour or with less overt implications in what they said.

CB students were forthright about their preference for their own dialect of Irish, often suggesting it was the 'best' or most legitimate variety. However, they also used somewhat negative terms to refer to it, such as 'bogger' or 'farmer Irish' and often expressed disapproval of the codeswitching that is ubiquitous in the area. They were also ambivalent about the quality of their own Irish. Most were confident speaking it conversationally, but they were aware that they had lower competence in the language than older relatives. Those they did consider to speak 'good Irish' had to fulfil a range of criteria, including involvement in traditional culture, and family background as well as linguistic factors. Varieties other than the local one were treated with suspicion: speaking a different dialect of Irish, particularly a new speaker variety, undermined the authority of teachers in the eyes of some CB5 participants.

While CB participants expressed positive overt attitudes to new speakers in general, they tended to make fun of how individual new speakers spoke and some criticised new speakers they perceived as violating local language norms. This contrasts with the evidence presented by Ó Murchadha (2013) regarding Munster Gaeltacht teenagers' positive covert attitudes to 'post-Gaeltacht' Irish. However, as well as the possibility of differences between Gaeltacht teenagers in different regions, it is likely to reflect the complexity of the situation: Gaeltacht teenagers may see Gaeltacht areas (which are predominantly rural) as less attractive than non-Gaeltacht areas, but this does not rule out reluctance to include non-Gaeltacht speakers of Irish

in their communities. The fact that they may consider their community boring does not entail that they would welcome incomers. They may, in fact, be more defensive of it because they see it as vulnerable.

GCI students had mixed feelings on the importance of Gaeltacht dialects, as discussed above, and certainly did not want to acquire them. First Years considered them incomprehensible, while Fifth Years described them as old-fashioned (and also had difficulty understanding them when in Gaeltacht areas). Both year groups considered their own variety of Irish to be 'normal' or 'modern', in contrast. However, when discussing people who spoke 'good Irish', many suggested that those who acquire their Irish at home in the Gaeltacht are more competent than others, again suggesting that their views on what variety of Irish is legitimate are complex.

Like CB students, GCI participants are comfortable with the type of Irish they spoke, but somewhat uncertain about whether it could be considered to be 'good' Irish. There was no consensus among GCI participants in either year group about who was a 'good' speaker, or how this could be assessed. The tendency to see academic achievement as relevant is more prominent in GCI and the extra-linguistic factors that were so important to CB participants, such as involvement in traditional culture and the role of Irish in the family, were not mentioned. Many Fifth Years mentioned the need to improve their vocabulary or reduce their use of English words.

As regards language laundering, it takes place to some extent in both schools and is contested to some extent by older students in each school. However, the depth of feeling on the topic is greater in CB than GCI.

In CB, ‘language laundering’ mostly takes place in Irish lessons – the local dialect is dominant among students and, to a lesser extent, staff in the school and the language-mixing and non-standard grammar that is common in the area is widely accepted. Command of the standard variety is, however, necessary for academic success. This variety is commonly referred to as ‘book Irish’. Some participants have a neutral attitude to it: they regard it as inconvenient and difficult to understand, but do not express strong feelings about its legitimacy. More academically engaged students were frustrated at the devaluation of their own variety in favour of one they considered to be inauthentic and to be just as influenced by English as their own dialect.

There was some contestation of language norms at GCI, but it was less pronounced than at CB. For most GCI participants, Irish was only a school language and where they did have contact with Irish-speakers beyond the school, this was usually with new speakers who had mostly acquired Irish through the education system themselves. GCI participants saw no conflict between the Irish they read in their textbooks and the Irish they spoke, though, as in CB, they did not place the same emphasis on grammatical accuracy as their teachers did, focusing instead on general communicative ability. They did, however, challenge language-laundering within the school by subverting the term ‘saibhreas’. While they were urged by teachers to use particular phrases to demonstrate ‘saibhreas’ or richness of language, they used the term themselves to defend idiosyncratic uses of language that were common in the school.

3. How important is authenticity and/or language-place connection to participants?

Irish has been designated the national language and has a distinct role because of this, as outlined in Section 3.2. On this basis, Irish belongs to all Irish people, maybe regardless of their competence in the language. This was very important to GCI students, who often cited

national identity as a motivation for speaking Irish, and somewhat less so for CB students, who were more likely to cite local identity and personal relationships.

For GCI students, Irish is a national language. While most do not espouse an explicitly political approach to the language, some Fifth Year participants expressed sentiments very similar to those expressed by Ó Giollagáin and Peterváry, seeing the promotion and maintenance of Irish as a decolonising enterprise, while others expressed similar views to those seen in parliamentary debates, with the 'politicisation' of Irish seen as dangerous. Most GCI students, however, see the language's relationship to national identity as uncontroversial and regard this as one of the most important motivations for speaking the language.

While some CB students also spoke about the importance of Irish in a national context, none expressed explicitly political views on this or linked it to the aftermath of colonialism. Its role in local identity came up much more often: it is necessary to interact with at least some relations or neighbours, it is intertwined with local history and traditions, and the way they speak Irish identifies them as coming from Conamara in a way that their English generally does not. Although pride in the local dialect is high and often expressed, participants also associated speaking Irish with grandparents and with their own childhood, and observed that fluency in English was crucial (Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey 2018). This suggests a disadvantage of the ideology of authenticity discussed in Section 2.1.3: it can place too much emphasis on the past and thus make it more difficult to see a minority language as part of modern life.

GCI participants did not identify local identity as being important in their relationship with Irish. They had little experience of geographically close Irish-speaking communities and those

few who did speak Irish outside school did so in designated Irish-speaking institutions in largely English-speaking areas. 'Authenticity' for them was more important in the sense of being true to themselves: any attempt to emulate Gaeltacht accents would be a claim to a geographical and cultural identity they do not possess and thus inherently inauthentic. They also do not follow the ideology of anonymity, but instead see their own 'normal' variety of Irish as a reflection of their identity. This resembles Ó Murchadha and Flynn (2018)'s findings.

GCI students had mixed views on the importance of Gaeltacht areas. On one hand, they saw them as a place they could speak Irish everywhere, unlike in daily life, where it was largely confined to school and, for some, extracurricular Irish clubs. They thus followed the view of the Gaeltacht as a resource, like the new speakers discussed by Brennan and O'Rourke (2019), and some were disappointed to find when they go to Gaeltacht areas that they are not always welcomed as members of this national Irish-language community. However, there was an even stronger trend towards portraying Gaeltacht areas and varieties as relevant more to the past than the future of the language, like the university students interviewed by Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018).

Participants in both schools suggested that the way you speak is linked to where you are from. On the one hand, this supports the idea of authenticity that was so prevalent among CB participants, but on the other it opens the door for the form of authenticity valued by GCI students: they will speak Irish in the accent of their local area.

4. Do participants feel that they, as young people, have a stake and a say in debates about language revitalisation? Do participants feel they are part of a minority language community?

Both schools have a student Irish language committee, which offers students a chance to participate in school language policy. Both committees are led by a staff member who is particularly engaged with the promotion of Irish in the respective school. Participants who were members of these committees were particularly engaged with school, suggesting a strong correlation between involvement in this policy committee and promotion of school ideologies and language policy. However, these committees were not a focus of this study, so it was not possible to fully assess the extent to which students could have an impact on school language policy through them, though it seems likely that any impact would have been limited, as Costa (2014) suggests.

The flexible language policy in place in CB leaves more space for students to shape it through their daily behaviour, and also to use English as a means of contesting and reshaping it. In GCI, in contrast, language policy is enforced strictly, particularly among younger students. It is seen in the same context as other school rules, which are also enforced strictly, and students do not challenge it as openly as in CB.

Feelings about language policy are stronger among CB participants than among GCI participants. For them, individual choice is sacrosanct, but there is also uncertainty about whether policies that respect individual choice can actually facilitate the maintenance and revitalisation of the language.

Younger GCI participants expressed little interest in the future of Irish, in contrast with their peers in CB, who mostly seemed to have given the matter a lot of thought. Older participants in GCI have much stronger views than their counterparts in First Year. They did not cite individual choice as an important principle and tolerability was not something they express

concern about, probably because they only encounter the language in contexts where all present have chosen to engage with it.

On an individual level, many participants in both schools, said they intended to raise their children through Irish. In CB, this was the case in both First and Fifth Year, while only Fifth Years did so in GCI. For many of those who expressed this wish, it contrasted with their current language practices, particularly those in GCI who had not been raised with Irish and who did not currently speak it outside school.

Attitudes to policy in general will be affected by the extent to which participants feel they are part of an Irish-speaking community beyond the school. As this study was limited to the schools, any account of the use of Irish outside school is based on what participants told me and may, therefore, not be an accurate depiction of their practices, but it does give a picture of the extent to which they felt they were part of a wider Irish-speaking community.

Only a few GCI participants reported speaking Irish outside school. For one friendship group, participation in Irish language activities was an important part of their lives; they were generally very engaged with the promotion of Irish and some were part of Irish-speaking networks beyond the school. However, for most, competence in Irish is a skill they have acquired and which they want to maintain and the only context in which they reported using Irish outside school was in the 'secret code' function. Combined with the issues they faced with speaking Irish in Gaeltacht communities, as discussed above, this seems to support, at least to some extent, the concern expressed by Costa (2014) that immersion schools prepare children for a language community that may not yet exist (or be accessible to all GCI students) or that may not have room for them.

For CB students, in contrast, Irish is generally a part of at least some family or neighbourhood relationships and most speak it outside school at least occasionally. Some even said they speak it more outside school than in school. There is a lot of linguistic insecurity and many participants mentioned that older generations spoke the language better. However, Irish seems to remain an important part of life in the area, even if less so than in previous decades.

The language policy of each school was designed around the needs of the community it catered to. CB's flexible language policy reflects the fact that it caters to a local community. While this community is largely Irish-speaking, it is not defined by this, so the school must accommodate the different language needs in the area and respect local language ideologies and practices. GCI caters to students from a relatively wide geographical area who are united by their (or their parents') desire for an Irish-medium education, which means it is not controversial to expect students to speak Irish at all times.

9.2 Limitations and directions for further research

Through its comparative approach, this thesis has examined how teenage Irish-speakers, who represent the future of the language, think about these differences and the issues that arise because of them. Much of the research discussed in Chapter 3 deals sensitively with complex questions about the impact of language shift on Gaeltacht Irish-speakers and the difficulties faced by new speakers in integrating into Irish-speaking communities. However, the vast majority of it, with the exception of Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey (2018) and O'Rourke (2011) deals *either* with issues relating to new speakers *or* with issues relating to Gaeltacht speakers. Other than these two studies, no empirical comparative research has been carried

out into language attitudes among new and Gaeltacht speakers. The study reported here is the first in-depth comparative qualitative study on this topic.

There are plenty of logistical reasons for the lack of comparative research: comparative studies are time-consuming and difficult to organise, particularly when they involve long periods of observation. If I had chosen to focus on just one of the two schools I would have been able to go into more depth and might have been able to do things I did not have time for in this study, such as investigating students' use of social media or getting them to make more self-recordings. It was not possible to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles involved in both of these tasks while managing contact with two schools, 60 participants and many other teachers and students who did not participate but with whom I formed important working relationships during fieldwork.

There were many areas I would have liked to cover in more detail. In particular, students at CB often mentioned speaking Irish to peers outside school, suggesting that they were involved in Irish-speaking networks beyond the school. Investigating these might give more insight into why most tended to speak English in school.

While Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin and Cassie Smith-Christmas have conducted research into family language policy in Gaeltacht areas, there is a lack of research into family language policy in English-speaking homes where the children attend immersion schools. Much educational research on immersion schools in Ireland uses self-reported data on language use on the home (e.g. Ó Duibhir 2018), but this is unlikely to provide an accurate picture of how Irish and English are used in the home. Kavanagh (2013: 201) suggests that tensions may arise where English-speaking families have to support children attending Irish-medium schools and it

would be worth finding out more about this, as it is likely to give a fuller picture of the impact of immersion education.

Social media use was originally part of my research plan, but unfortunately this was not feasible given the logistical demands of my fieldwork. Social media are now an integral part of life for teenagers and, despite much excitement about the possibilities for minority language use in social media, they are a largely English-only zone for many who speak Irish on a daily basis, whether because of practical barriers to the use of Irish on phones in particular or because Irish is just seen as inappropriate on social media apps that are by default framed in English. Many CB students complained that autocorrect made it difficult to use their phones in Irish at all, although some mentioned texting friends in Irish. In GCI, some participants mentioned using Irish on social media in groups that included peers from English-medium schools, with the express intention of annoying these people.

Longitudinal research is essential to understanding how language practices change over time. In CB in particular, there were clear differences between the language practices of older and younger students. If academia were a sustainable career path at present, I would like to follow up with the First Years in CB and conduct a similar study of them as they enter Fifth Year, to see to what extent their practices now resemble those of the Fifth Years described here. My impression from informal visits to the school since completing fieldwork is that they speak more English now. However, with such small class sizes language practices varied greatly within the school and at the time of the study Sixth Years spoke much more Irish than Fifth Years. Follow-up interviews with the Fifth Years in both schools who are now in university or working, to investigate the role Irish now plays in their lives, would also be a useful

contribution to the limited body of evidence on how students of Irish-medium schools carry on their relationship with the language after leaving school.

9.3 Conclusions and implications

While this thesis, as I explained in Chapter 1, deliberately did not set out to advance any particular position on the revitalisation question itself, on a personal level, I believe the Irish language should be maintained and that every support should be given to Irish-speaking communities within and beyond the Gaeltacht to ensure this.

I have some sympathy with the critique offered by Ó Giollagáin, Ó Curnáin and Péterváry of state inaction and a preoccupation among some researchers and activists with showing the positive over the negative. The fact that increasing numbers of people speak Irish in designated Irish-speaking institutions or at designated Irish-speaking events does not compensate for the disappearance of Irish as an everyday community language in certain geographical areas. It is important to differentiate between vernacular and postvernacular use of the language. However, portraying the use of English as a sign of acquiescence to British colonialism denies the complexity of the situation. While there is an argument for regarding Gaeltacht Irish-speakers as a cultural minority within Ireland, applying a Fishmanian approach to revitalisation, by separating them from the English-speaking majority, denies the complexity of Gaeltacht demographics and language ideologies, as illustrated in this thesis, as well as ignoring the increasing number of new speakers entirely.

Recent research on new speakers, many of whom use minority languages in a postvernacular way rather than a vernacular way, is crucial to understanding how these languages function in the modern world. However, it is all too easy to focus on the good news story of increasing

postvernacular engagement with Irish and with other minority languages, while glossing over the relatively limited role of the language in the lives of these speakers. Vernacular use is more complex and filled with contradictions: those who say they love Irish rarely speak it, while some who say they hate speaking it have friendships and family relationships mediated entirely through Irish. A lack of support for the language where it still has a vernacular role may mean grandparents are unable to communicate comfortably with their grandchildren. Language is bound up in the intimacies of family and neighbourhood life in a way that is rarely true of contexts in which the language has a postvernacular function. At the same time, the range of questions about language and identity that may arise in contexts where a minority language is postvernacular are also present in contexts in which it retains a vernacular function. The differences in these contexts must be acknowledged and explored, even as efforts continue to bring new and Gaeltacht speakers together

Immersion education is often put forward as a relatively easy way of 'saving' a language. Pupils are exposed to the language on a daily basis and have to engage with a range of subjects through the medium of this language. They have the opportunity to be part of an alternate reality, where the minority language is dominant. However, as shown here and in the research available on other immersion contexts, this does not seem to be sufficient to overcome the dominance of English in their lives beyond the school. A minority of students may choose to engage with the language outside school and these students may go on to make Irish a part of their lives after school. Many such students become prominent in Irish language activism. Even those who do not engage with the language beyond the school will be more familiar with and more competent in the language than their peers in English-medium schools. However, although GCI students generally expressed a fondness for the language and saw it as part of

their identity as Irish people, for the vast majority it was not an integral part of their lives but rather a valuable skill.

Throughout this thesis it has been emphasised that in Ireland as elsewhere, language revitalisation is a complex and paradoxical process. However, in Ireland this complexity has arguably been under-explored because of the separation that has developed between research on new and Gaeltacht speakers, which has sometimes led to polarisation: research on new speakers is often accused of being overly individualistic and uncritical, while research on Gaeltacht speakers is accused of being essentialist and overly negative. This hinders research that acknowledges the complexity of the issue, encouraging the notion that this is a question to which there is a right answer. This is a problem because it hampers open discussion and the acknowledgement of the paradoxes and conflict inherent to language revitalisation. In doing so, it contributes to reproducing the polarised state of the larger policy debate.

There is no easy solution to this and I do not aim to propose policies that will 'fix' it. However, this thesis raises the question of whether it makes sense for national education policy to treat students in Irish-medium schools as a homogeneous category. The evidence presented above suggests it does not. While there are many similarities between participants in both schools, the basis of their relationship with the language is different: for most GCI participants, Irish is spoken only in school and has little to do with family life, while for CB participants it is intertwined with their family life and local identity. This fundamental difference has to be acknowledged. The national curriculum should also pay more attention to dialectal differences, rather than expecting Gaeltacht students to master both their local dialect and the written standard while rewarding them only for the latter, at a time when language shift is occurring faster than ever before and teenagers are all too conscious of the gaps in their

competence relative to older generations.

The differing attitudes of participants at GCI and CB to the type of language promoted through the education system and to the type of policy that should be pursued in the community beyond the school requires acknowledgement in educational policy that is still lacking, despite progress in acknowledging the needs of Gaeltacht speakers in recent years.

As Costa (2013) argues, language revitalisation is a social process. Whether or not the restoration of a language to use among a particular community is in itself a good thing is a separate question from that of how the process of revitalisation impacts on stakeholders. Although the questions are interrelated, it is important that a commitment to supporting speakers of a language and encouraging the use of the language does not prevent policymakers or researchers from asking the second question and listening to the answers, rather than seeking to explain away any inconvenience or hurt caused by these processes. This is particularly important in respect of stakeholders like children and teenagers, who are deeply affected by language revitalisation but who often do not have a say in how it is carried out, or are only allowed express their opinions within restricted parameters.

The research presented in this thesis illustrates the complexity of just one context of language shift and highlights the importance of consultation with the communities in which minoritised languages are most spoken when developing national language policy, as observed by Ó hIfearnáin (2008). The tensions that arise in the Irish case are particularly obvious because of the way the Gaeltacht has been constructed in national mythology and policy by the state since its foundation, in contrast to the way many minoritised indigenous languages have struggled for national support and attention even in post-colonial contexts. However, the same issues

exist in many contemporary contexts, as language revitalisation generally results in new people speaking the language in new contexts and in different ways. This often generates tension with those who spoke the language most prior to revitalisation, who may feel the language is being taken from them and may, therefore, resist the attempts of new speakers to engage with their communities. The success of initiatives by and for new speakers makes this kind of conflict more salient, which calls for more focus on such tensions in sociolinguistic research.

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Appendices

Appendix A Parent/guardian information and consent form (English)

[Leagan Gaeilge ar fáil]

Language attitudes and practices among students in Irish-medium secondary schools

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Ethics Approval Reference: R52019/RE001

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's school has agreed to take part in a study looking at use of and attitudes to language among students in Irish-medium secondary schools and I am writing to invite your child to participate in this study.

I very much hope you would like your child to take part, but before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. I've included the answers to some of the questions you might have below, but if there's anything else you'd like to know, please get in contact on 0871121399 or eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk. I'm happy to discuss the study with you in English or Irish.

Regards,
Eileen Coughlan

What am I trying to find out?
I want to show students' views on language (English, Irish, and any other languages spoken in the school) in their own words. I want to get an insight into how students use Irish, English and other languages, and how they see the role of these languages in their own lives and communities, and in the country more widely. As part of this, I am interested more broadly in everyday life for students in Irish-medium secondary schools, including how they use social media and participation in extra-curricular activities. This study is not about language competence and their ability will not be assessed in any way.

Why has my child been invited to take part?
I am inviting your child to take part because they are a young person attending [insert school name here]. I am inviting about 100 young people to take part.

Does my child have to take part?
No. The decision is entirely up to you. You are welcome to ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not your child will participate. If you do agree for your child to participate and

later change your mind, please let me know. You may withdraw your child and their data from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty. Your child will also be asked whether he/she agrees to take part in the study and will also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen if my child takes part?
I'll be in the school, during classes, at break-times and during activities like sports training, drama rehearsals or committee meetings, observing what's going on and what life is like for students. I might also ask students questions about how they use social media, what television programmes they watch, etc. I'll be in the school for two days most weeks and the study is likely to last from September 2017 to February 2018.

As well as observing, I would like to make some audio and video recordings and photographs of students in class and at break-times and so on. Students will always know if they are being recorded or photographed and will have the option of changing their mind about this at any time. Only those whose parents have consented for them to be recorded will be and no recordings or photographs will be made or taken unknown to them. I might also ask students to audio-record themselves, either on their phones or using a recording device I give them. Students making such recordings will be made aware that only those who have consented to participate in the study can be recorded and that recordings must always be made openly. A briefing document that will be given to students undertaking self-recordings is attached.

Towards the end of the research period, in January or February, I'd like to do some focus groups with students. This will involve a group of students discussing all sorts of things to do with being a student in an Irish-medium school and will last about half an hour.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?
There will be no direct benefit to students from taking part in this study, but I hope this research will give an insight into the attitudes of students to both Irish and English, as well as any other languages that are present in the school. After I've completed the research, I'd like to return to the school to tell students, teachers and parents/guardians, if interested, about my findings and to hear what they think of them.

What happens to the data provided?
After your child has taken part, I will use the recordings as part of the study detailed above. If (and only if) you and your child agree, anonymised versions of the recording and associated documents (e.g transcriptions) will be stored in the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (www.iqda.ie), so that they can be used by researchers other than me for other research purposes. All names mentioned in these recordings and associated documents will be replaced by false names and any information that might identify participants (like local placenames or names of local clubs) will be removed before they are archived. Photographs and videos will not be archived and are mostly for my own use (e.g. to remind me how equipment was set up). If shown to other researchers, they will be anonymised, so that your child is not identifiable in them. All information disclosed by your child during the research will be kept confidential unless your child discloses that they or someone else is being harmed, in which case I will have to inform the principal, in accordance with the school's child protection policy.

The recordings and all personal data (e.g. names and identifying details) will be stored securely on my personal computer, a secure back-up device and the university's secure online back-up system. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the personal data and non-

anonymised recordings and associated documents. Third parties may be given access to research data for monitoring and/or audit of the study, or for data storage purposes. In order to comply with the university's research data policy, the data will be retained and stored securely by me for a minimum of three years.

Will the research be published?
If you agree for your child to participate in this project, the research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited online in the Oxford Research Archive, so that it can be used in future research. The thesis will be published with open access, so that it is available to all internet users after an initial embargo period. I also aim to publish my findings in scientific journals, possibly also with open access, but this may be two to three years from the end of the study.

Who is conducting this research?
The research project is organized by Eileen Coughlan of Oxford University, who is a PhD student. The research is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and Oxford University. This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (R52019/RE001).

What if there is a problem?
If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to Eileen Coughlan or her supervisor (deborah.cameron@worc.ox.ac.uk) who will do his/her best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how she intends to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a timely manner.

Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;
Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk;
Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

What should I do next?
Please fill in the enclosed form and return it to your child's class teacher if you would like your child to take part in this study. Please remember that you may withdraw your child at any time, without penalty and without giving a reason, by notifying the researcher. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Eileen Coughlan,
Phone: 0871121399
Email: eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk
Post: Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford, Clarendon Institute,
Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HG, United Kingdom

[Leagan Gaeilge ar fáil]

Language attitudes and practices among students in Irish-medium secondary schools

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Ethics Approval Reference: R52019/RE001

- Your child's school has agreed to take part in a study run by Oxford University looking at language attitudes and practices among students in Irish-medium secondary schools
- If your child takes part, I will make observations about their language behaviour and/or the opinions they express about language during classes and other activities in school.
- If you are <u>happy</u> for your child to take part, please fill in the form below and return it to your child's class teacher as soon as possible.
- To find out more about the study, please read the attached information sheet. You can also e-mail me at eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk or call me on 0871121399 if you have any questions.

- - - -

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of researcher: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B Parent/guardian information and consent form (Irish)

[English version available]

Dearcthaí agus cleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge

BILEOG EOLAIS DO THUISMITHEOIRÍ/CHAOMHNÓIRÍ

Cead Eiticiúil: R52019/RE001

A Thuismitheoir/Chaomhnóir, a chara,

Tá scoil do pháiste ag glacadh páirte i staidéar ar dhearcthaí agus ar chleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus tá cuireadh ag do ghasúr páirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar.

Tá súil agam go mbeidh tú sásta go nglacfaidh do ghasúr páirt ach sula ndéanfaidh tú cinneadh maidir leis seo, tá sé tábhachtach go dtuigeann tú cén fáth go bhfuil an staidéar seo á dhéanamh agus céard a bheas i gceist leis. Tabharfaidh an bhileog seo eolas duit maidir leis seo. Má tá tuilleadh eolais uait, is féidir dul i dteangmháil liom ar 0871121399 nó eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk. Táim lánsásta an staidéar a phlé leat, as Gaeilge nó as Béarla.

Le beannacht,
Eileen Coughlan

Céard í aidhm an staidéir?
Táim ag iarraidh tuairimí na scoláirí maidir leis an nGaeilge, leis an mBéarla agus le haon teangacha eile a labhraítear sa scoil a léiriú ina mbriathra féin. Táim ag iarraidh léargas a fháil ar an mbealach a úsáideann siad na teangacha seo agus cén chaoi a thuigeann siad ról na dteangacha sin ina saoil agus ina bpobail féin, agus in Éirinn trí chéile. Mar chuid de seo, tá suim agam i ngnáthshaol scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge trí chéile, m.sh. an chaoi a bhaineann siad úsáid as na meáin shóisialta agus na himeachtaí seach-churaclam ina nglacann siad páirt. **Ní** bhaineann an staidéar seo le cumas teanga agus ní mheasfar a gcumas in aon slí.

Cén fáth gur roghnaíodh mo ghasúr?
Táim ag tabhairt cuireadh dod' ghasúr páirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar mar go bhfuil sé/sí ag freastail ar [ainm na scoile]. Táim ag tabhairt cuireadh do thart ar 100 scoláire páirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar.

An gá do mo pháiste páirt a ghlacadh sa tionscnamh seo?
Ní gá. Is féidir leat ceisteanna a chur maidir leis an staidéar sula socróidh tú an nglacfaidh do pháiste páirt ann. Má athraíonn tú d'intinn théis cead a thabhairt dod' pháiste páirt a ghlacadh, is féidir leat iad a tharraingt as an taighde ag am ar bith gan fáth a thabhairt agus gan argóint. Ní gá ach é a rá liom. Mar an gcéanna, beidh do pháiste in ann shocrú dó/di féin má tá sé/sí ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh agus beidh sé/sí in ann éirí as an staidéar ag aon am gan aon fhadhb.

Céard a tharlóidh má ghlacann mo pháiste páirt?
Beidh mé i láthair sa scoil i rith ranganna, ag am lóin agus i rith imeachtaí ar nós cleachtaí spóirt nó dráma agus cruinnithe coiste, ag breathnú ar céard atá ar siúl sa scoil agus ar ghnáthshaol na scoláirí. B'fhéidir go gcuirfidh mé ceisteanna ar na scoláirí faoin gcaoi a úsáideann siad na meáin shóisialta, na cláir teilifíse is fearr leo, srl. Beidh mé sa scoil dhá lá sa tseachtain agus tá súil agam go leanfaidh an staidéar ó Mheán Fómhair 2017 go Feabhra 2018.

Chomh maith le bheith ag breathnú ar chúrsaí sa scoil, ba mhaith liom roinnt taifeadadh fuaime, fístaifeadadh agus grianghraif a dhéanamh de scoláirí sa seomra ranga, ag am lóin, srl. Beidh a fhios ag na scoláirí i gcónaí má tá taifead á dhéanamh díobh agus beidh siad in ann a rá ag aon am nach bhfuil siad ag iarraidh go dtaifeadfar iad. Ní thaifeadfar aon scoláire nach bhfuil foirm toilithe faighte agam óna t(h)uismitheoirí/c(h)aomhnóirí agus ní dhéanfar aon taifeadadh nó aon ghrianghraf go rúnda. B'fhéidir go n-iarrfaidh mé freisin ar scoláirí taifead fuaime a dhéanamh díobh féin, ar a bhfóin féin nó ar thaifeadán fuaime a thugaimse dóibh. Déarfaidh mé leis na scoláirí a bhfuil sé seo ar bun acu nach féidir taifead a dhéanamh de aon duine nach bhfuil cead tugtha ag a t(h)uismitheoirÍ/c(h)aomhnóirÍ go nglacfadh sé/sí páirt sa staidéar agus go gcaithfidh siad taifeadadh a dhéanamh go hoscailte i gcónaí. Tá bileog threorach a thabharfar do scoláirí a dhéanfaidh taifeadadh mar seo iniata leis an mbileog eolais seo.

Ag tarraingt ar dheireadh an tréimhse taighde, in Eanáir nó i bhFeabhra, ba mhaith liom roinnt fócasghrúpa a eagrú leis na scoláirí. Mairfidh siad seo ar feadh leathuair nó uair a chloig agus labhróimid faoi rudaí éagsúla a bhaineann le saol an scoláire i meánscoil lán-Ghaeilge.

An bhfuil aon bhuntáiste nó aon mhíbhuntáiste trí pháirt a ghlacadh?
Níl leas díreach dod' pháiste trí pháirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar, ach tá súil agam go dtabharfaidh an taighde seo léargas ar dhearcthaí na scoláirí i leith na Gaeilge agus an Bhéarla, chomh maith le haon teanga eile a labhraítear sa scoil. Nuair atá an anailís déanta agam, ba mhaith liom filleadh ar an scoil chun torthaí an taighde a phlé leis na scoláirí, leis na daltaí agus le tuismitheoirí/caomhnóirí.

Céard a tharlóidh leis an eolas a bhaileofar?
Úsáidfidh mé na taifeadtaí a dhéanfaidh mé de na scoláirí mar chuid den staidéar seo. Má tá tú féin agus do pháiste sásta, cuirfear cóipeanna de na taifeadtaí agus cáipéisí eile a bhaineann leo (m.sh. tras-scríbhinní) i gCartlann Fhaisnéise Cáilíochtúla na hÉireann (www.iqda.ie) sa chaoi go mbeidh taighdeoirí eile in ann úsáid a bhaint astu. Ní luafar aon tréithe pearsanta sna taifeadtaí agus doiciméid seo. Cuirfear ainmneacha bréige in áit aon ainmneacha a luafar iontu agus bainfear aon eolas eile a d'fhéadfadh leid a thabhairt faoi cé hiad na rannpháirtithe (m.sh. logainmneacha áitiúla nó ainmneacha clubanna áitiúla) as na taifeadtaí agus na doiciméid sula gcuirfear sa chartlann iad. Ní chuirfear na grianghraif nó na físeáin sa chartlann agus déanfar iad seo den chuid is mó chun meabhrú domsa conas a leag mé trealamh amach. Má thaispeánfar na físeáin nó na grianghraif seo do thaighdeoirí eile, athrófar iad sa chaoi nach féidir do pháiste a aithint iontu. Coinneofar an t-eolas ar fad a thugann do pháiste dom i rith an taighde faoi rún ach amháin má thugann do pháiste le fios go bhfuil dochar á dhéanamh dó/di féin nó do dhuine eile.

Sa chás sin, beidh orm é a insint don phríomhoide, de réir pholasaí na scoile maidir le cosaint leanaí.

Stórálfar na taifeadtaí agus an t-eolas pearsanta (m.sh. ainmneacha) go slán ar mo ríomhaire pearsanta, ar dhiosca crua agus ar sheirbhís chúltaca na hollscoile. Ní bheidh rochtain ar an eolas pearsanta agus ar na taifeadtaí agus doiciméid eile ach amháin agamsa agus ag mo mhaoirseoir sula mbainfear na sonraí pearsanta astu. B'fhéidir go dtabharfar rochtain ag daoine eile ar an eolas anaithnidithe chun monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar an staidéar, nó chun críche stóráil sonraí. Chun cloí le polasaí shonraí taighde na hollscoile, coinneoidh mé an t-eolas go sábháilte ar feadh trí bliana ar a laghad.

An foilseofar an taighde?
Scríobhfaidh mé faoin taighde mar chuid de mo thráchtas PhD. Nuair a chríochnóidh mé an tráchtas, cuirfear san Oxford Research Archive é, ionas go mbeidh taighdeoirí eile in ann teacht air. Beidh rochtain oscailte air, sa chaoi go mbeidh sé ar fáil do 'chuile úsáideoir idirlín théis tréimhse áirithe. Tá súil agam torthaí an staidéir a fhoilsiú in irisí scolártha (b'fhéidir le rochtain oscailte freisin) ach d'fhéadfadh sé seo a tharlú den chéad uair cúpla bliain théis deireadh an staidéir.

Cé atá ag eagrú an taighde seo?
Tá an tionscadal seo á eagrú ag Eileen Coughlan ó Ollscoil Oxford, atá ina mac léinn PhD. Tá an taighde maoinithe ag an Economic and Social Research Council (UK) agus ag Ollscoil Oxford. Rinne an Central University Research Ethics Committee léirmheas ar an taighde seo agus tá cead eiticiúil tugtha acu (R52019/RE001).

Céard a dhéanfaidh mé má tá fadhb agam leis an staidéar?
Má tá aon imní ort faoin staidéar seo, is féidir labhairt le hEileen Coughlan nó lena maoirseoir (deborah.cameron@worc.ox.ac.uk) agus déanfaidh sí a dícheall do cheist a fhreagairt. Ba cheart don taighdeoir do cheist a admháil taobh istigh de deich lá oibre agus fios a thabhairt duit cén chaoi a bhfuil sé ar intinn aici dul i ngleic léi. Má tá tú míshásta fós, nó má tá tú ag iarraidh gearán foirmeálta a dhéanamh, is féidir dul i dteangmháil le cathaoirleach an Choiste Eitic Taighde in Ollscoil Oxford agus déanfaidh seisean iarracht an scéal a réiteach ar bhealach réasúnta sciobtha.

Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;
Ríomhphost: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk;
Seoladh: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

Céard ba chóir dom a dhéanamh anois?
Líon isteach an fhoirm toilithe atá iniata leis seo, más é do thoil é, agus tabhair do mhúinteoir do pháiste é má tá tú sásta go nglacfaidh do pháiste páirt sa staidéar seo. Ná déan dearmad gur féidir leat do ghasúir a tharraingt amach as an staidéar ag aon am, gan phionós agus gan aon chúis a thabhairt, trí labhairt leis an taighdeoir. Má tá tú ag iarraidh an taighde a phlé roimh ré (nó má tá ceisteanna agat i ndiaidh an taighde), is féidir dul i dteangmháil le:

Eileen Coughlan,
Fón: 0871121399
Ríomhphost: eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk
Seoladh: Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford, Clarendon Institute,
Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HG, United Kingdom

[English version available]

Dearcthaí agus cleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge

FOIRM TOILITHE DO THUISMITHEOIRÍ/CHAOMHNÓIRÍ

Cead Eiticiúil: R52019/RE001

- Tá scoil do pháiste ag glacadh páirte i staidéar le Oxford University ar dhearcthaí agus ar chleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge.
- Má ghlacann do pháiste páirt, breathnóidh mé ar a c(h)leachtas teanga agus/nó na tuairimí a chuireann sé/sí in iúl maidir le cúrsaí teanga i rith ranganna agus imeachtaí eile sa scoil.
- Má tá tú sásta go nglacfaidh do pháiste páirt, líon isteach an fhoirm seo agus tabhair do mhúinteoir ranga do pháiste é chomh luath agus is féidir.
- Tá níos mó eolais maidir leis an staidéar ar fáil sa bhileog eolas atá iniata leis seo, agus is féidir dul i dteangmháil liom ar eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk nó 0871121399 má tá aon cheist agat.

- - - -

An dtoilíonn tú go ndéanfaidh do pháiste taifeadadh fuaime de scoláirí eile a bhfuil cead tugtha acu féin agus ag a dtuismitheoirí go nglacfadh siad páirt?	Toilím		Ní thoilím
An dtuigeann tú cén chaoi go mbainfear úsáid as taifeadadh fuaime/fístaifeadadh/grianghraif in aschur an taighde?	Tuigim		Ní thuigim

Tugaim cead do mo pháiste páirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar seo.

Ainm an tuismitheora/chaomhnóra:

Síniú: _____ **Dáta:** _____

Ainm an taighdeora:

Síniú: _____ **Dáta:** _____

Appendix C Student information and consent form (English)

[Leagan Gaeilge ar fáil]

Language attitudes and practices among students in Irish-medium secondary schools

INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Ethics Approval Reference: R52019/RE001

My name is Eileen Coughlan and I'm a PhD student at the Faculty of Linguistics at Oxford University. I'm inviting you, along with the rest of your class, to take part in my research project because you're a student at an Irish-medium secondary school.

Before you decide if you would like to join in, it's important to understand what the study is about, why we're doing it and what it would involve for you. Please read and think about this leaflet carefully. Please feel free to talk to your family, friends, or the researchers about it if you want.

If anything isn't clear or you have more questions you can ask your parents/carer to give me a call and I can discuss it with you and your parents/carer.

Why are you doing this research?
I'm interested in what life is like for teenagers in Irish-medium schools in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht. I'm especially interested in the way you use language (whether Irish, English, Polish, or any other languages) and your opinions on things to do with language, but I'm also interested in things like how you use social media and what extra-curricular activities you do (like sports or being on the student council).

Why have I been invited to take part?
I'm inviting you to take part because you are a young person, aged between 12 and 17. I'm inviting about 100 young people to take part.

Do I have to take part?
No - It is up to you. I will ask you to sign a form to say that you agree to take part (an assent form) and your parent/guardian will have to sign a form too. I will give you a copy of this information sheet and your signed form to keep. You're free to stop taking part at any time during the research without giving a reason, by telling me. If you decide to stop, I will not use the information I've already collected from you.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Most of what I'll be doing will be hanging around in the school, during classes, at break-times and during activities like sports training, drama rehearsals or committee meetings, seeing

what's going on and what life is like for you. I'll be in your school for two days most weeks from September 2017 to February 2018.

After a while, I'll start making sound recordings in the school. I'll only record people who have agreed to be recorded and whose parents agreed to them being recorded. You'll always know if you're being recorded – I won't do it in a sneaky way – and even if you've said earlier that you're OK with being recorded, you can change your mind at any time. I might also ask you to make a recording yourself of you chatting with your friends.

In addition, I might take photos or record videos to help remind me what was going on when I made a particular recording or took notes on something. I will only take a photo or video of you if you and your parents agree to you being photographed and you can change your mind at any time. These photos are mostly for my own records and will only be shown to other researchers in a way that makes sure you can't be recognised (e.g. very blurry).

In January or February, I'd like to do some focus groups with students. These will last about half an hour to an hour and we'll talk about all sorts of things to do with being a student in an Irish-medium school.

What happens to the results of the study?
All recordings and observations will be anonymised. That means that I'll change the names of all students (and of the school itself), as well as any other details that might give clues about where or who you are, so that anyone reading any report or article on this research or listening to the recordings won't be able to tell who you are. I'll store information that identifies you or the school securely using an encrypted computer, hard-drive and the university's back-up system and only I and my supervisor will have access to this.

After the research is over, I'd like to store the anonymised recordings and the transcripts (where I write down what was said in the recordings) in an archive in Ireland (www.iqda.ie). Only researchers will be able to access this data, by asking the archive for permission. It's up to you and your parents/guardians to decide whether you want your data to be stored this way or not.

I will write about this research in my PhD thesis and I might also write some articles in academic journals and make some presentations at academic conferences about it. Again, your name and the name of your school will never be mentioned in any of these things. My thesis will be published 'open access' in the university's online archive (www.ora.ox.ac.uk), which means that after a certain period (probably a few years), they'll be available for anyone to read online.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?
There won't be a direct benefit to you from taking part, but I hope the study will help us understand better what life is like for you as a student in an Irish-medium secondary school and what you think about things like the Irish language and the English language (or any other languages!). This might

be useful to teachers or politicians who help to plan how schools like this work, and it might be interesting to you too.

After the research is finished and with the school's permission, I would like to come back to the school to talk to you and your classmates about what I found out during the research and to listen to what you think about it. You can also contact me by phone or email if you have any questions, even after the research is finished.

Will you tell other people what I say to you?
If you're in a focus group or talking to me with a group of people, I can't guarantee that no one will else will hear what you say, so it won't be 'private' in that sense, although I will ask everyone taking part in focus groups not to mention what was discussed in them afterwards. But I won't tell your peers, teachers or others what you say to me, unless you told me that you were being harmed or that you knew someone else was being harmed. Then I'd have to tell the principal or the person in charge of child protection in your school.

Will I get in trouble if you catch me speaking English?
No. I'm not a teacher and I'm not here to enforce school rules.

What if I don't want to take part in the research anymore?
Just tell your parents/carer and me that you don't want to take part. You don't have to give a reason and no one will be annoyed with you. It is YOUR choice.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is organised by Eileen Coughlan of Oxford University, who is a PhD student. She is funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and Oxford University.

Who has reviewed the study?
Before any research involving people can start, it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee to make sure that it is OK for the research to go ahead. This study has been approved by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem or something goes wrong?
Please tell me if you are worried about any part of this study, by contacting me (eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk). You may also talk to your teacher/parent/carer who will let me know. If you are still unhappy or wish to make a complaint, either you or your teacher/parent(s)/carer(s) can contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;

Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk/ethics@medsci.ox.ac.uk;
Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD).

Contact details

If you would like to discuss the research with me beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact me:

Eileen Coughlan, Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford
Tel: 0871121399
Email: eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

Thanks for reading this – please ask any questions if you need to!

[Leagan Gaeilge ar fáil]

Language attitudes and practices among students in Irish-medium secondary schools

ASSENT FORM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Ethics Approval Reference: R52019/RE001

Circle what you agree with:

- Has somebody explained this project to you?

  Yes/No
- Do you understand what this project is about?

  Yes/No
- Have you asked all the questions you want?

  Yes/No
- Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?

  Yes/No
- Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time?

  Yes/No
- Are you happy to take part?

  Yes/No
- Are you happy for your voice to be recorded?

  Yes/No
- Are you happy to be on video?

  Yes/No
- Are you happy to have photographs taken?

  Yes/No
- Are you happy to make audio recordings of yourself and your friends?

  Yes/No

If <u>any</u> answers are "no" or you don't want to take part, that's OK! No one will be cross with you.

If you <u>do</u> want to take part, please write your name below

Your name ___

Signature ___

Date ___

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name ___

Sign _____

Date _____

Thank you!

Appendix D Student information and consent form (Irish)

[English version available]

Dearcthaí agus cleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge

BILEOG EOLAIS DO SCOLÁIRÍ

Cead Eiticiúil: R52019/RE001

Is mise Eileen Coughlan agus is mac léinn PhD mé sa Roinn Teangeolaíochta in Ollscoil Oxford. Táim ag tabhairt cuireadh duit, mar aon leis na scoláirí eile i do rangsa, páirt a ghlacadh i mo thionscadal taighde mar is scoláire tú i meánscoil lán-Ghaeilge.

Sula socróidh tú má tá tú ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh, tá sé tábhachtach go dtuigfidh tú céard leis a bhaineann an staidéar, cén fáth go bhfuil mé á dhéanamh agus céard a bheadh i gceist leis. Léigh an bhileog seo go cúramach agus déan machnamh ar a bhfuil ann. Ar ndóigh, is féidir labhairt le do mhuintir, le do chairde, nó liomsa faoi. Má tá aon rud sa bhileog seo míshoiléir nó má tá níos mó ceisteanna agat, is féidir iarraidh ar do thuismitheoir/chaomhnóir glaoch a chur ormsa agus is féidir liom é a phlé leatsa agus leosan.

Cén fáth go bhfuil tú ag déanamh an taighde seo?
Tá suim agam i saol an déagóra i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus taobh amuigh di. Tá suim ar leith agam sa chaoi a úsáideann sibh teangacha (is cuma cé acu Gaeilge, Béarla, Polainnis, nó aon teanga eile) agus bhur dtuairimí ar chúrsaí teanga, ach tá suim agam freisin i rudaí ar nós an chaoi a úsáideann sibh na meáin shóisialta agus na himeachtaí seach-churaclaim (m.sh. spórt nó comhairle na ndaltaí) a bhíonn ar siúl agaibh.

Cén fáth gur tugadh cuireadh domsa páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde?
Táim ag tabhairt cuireadh duit mar is duine óg tú, idir dhá bhliain déag agus seacht mbliana déag d'aois. Táim ag tabhairt cuireadh do thart ar 100 duine óga páirt a ghlacadh ann.

An gcaithfidh mé páirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar?
Ní chaithfidh – fút féin atá sé. Má tá tú ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh, iarrfaidh mé ort foirm a shíniú chun a rá go bhfuil tú sásta páirt a ghlacadh (foirm toilithe) agus beidh ar do thuismitheoir/chaomhnóir foirm a shíniú freisin. Beidh tú in ann an bhileog seo a choinneáil agus tabharfaidh mé cóip den fhoirm toilithe atá sínithe agat duit freisin. Is féidir éirí as an staidéar ag aon am i rith an taighde gan aon mhíniú a thabhairt ach é a rá liom. Má shocraíonn tú éirí as an taighde, ní úsáidfidh mé an t-eolas a bhí bailithe agam uait roimhe sin don tionscadal.

Céard a tharlóidh dom má ghlacfaidh mé páirt?
Den chuid is mó, beidh mé ag crochadh thart sa scoil, i rith ranganna, ag am lóin, agus i rith imeachtaí ar nós traenáil spóirt, cleachtaí drámaíochta agus cruinnithe coiste, ag breathnú ar a bhfuil ar siúl agus ar bhur ngnáthshaol. Beidh mé sa scoil dhá lá sa tseachtain ó Mheán Fómhair 2017 go Feabhra 2018.

Tar éis tamaill, tosóidh mé ag déanamh taifeadadh fuaime sa scoil. Ní thaifeadfaidh mé éinne ach amháin na scoláirí atá foirmeacha curtha isteach acusan agus ag a dtuismitheoirí le rá go bhfuil siad sásta go dtaifeadfar iad agus go bhfuil cead acu páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde. Beidh a fhios agat i gcónaí má tá tú á thaifeadadh – ní dhéanfaidh mé go rúnda é – agus fiú má dúirt tú liom cheana go raibh tú sásta go dtaifeadfar tú, is féidir leat d'intinn a athrú ag aon am. B'fhéidir go n-iarrfaidh mé ort freisin taifeadadh a dhéanamh díot féin ag labhairt le do chairde.

B'fhéidir go ndéanfaidh mé grianghraif nó físTaifeadadh chun meabhrú dom féin céard a bhí ar siúl nuair a rinne mé taifeadadh eicínt nó nuair a bhreac mé síos nóta eicínt. Ní dhéanfaidh mé físTaifeadadh nó ní thógfaidh mé grianghraf ach má tá tú féin agus do thuismitheoir/chaomhnóir sásta leis seo agus is féidir leat d'intinn a athrú ag aon am. Is dom féin atá an físTaifeadadh agus na grianghraif seo den chuid is mó agus ní thaispeánfar iad le taighdeoirí eile ach le hathruithe a chinnteoidh nach mbeifear in ann tú a aithint (m.sh. an-doiléir nó *blurry*)

In Eanáir nó i bhFeabhra ba mhaith liom fócasghrúpaí a dhéanamh le scoláirí. Mairfidh siad leathuair nó uair a chloig agus pléifimid rudaí éagsúla a bhaineann le bheith i do scoláire i scoil lán-Ghaeilge.

Céard a tharlóidh le torthaí an staidéir?

Athróidh mé ainmneacha na scoláirí ar fad a ghlacann páirt (chomh maith le hainm na scoile), agus aon sonra eile a d'fhéadfadh leid a thabhairt cá bhfuil tú nó cé thú féin sa chaoi nach mbeidh a fhios ag éinne a léann aon tuairisc nó aon alt maidir leis an taighde seo cé thú féin. Stórálfaidh mé eolas a thugann d'ainm nó ainm na scoile le fios go slán ar mo ríomhaire pearsanta, ar dhiosca crua agus ar sheirbhís chúltaca na hollscoile agus ní bheidh rochtain ach agam féin agus ag mo mhaoirseoir air seo.

Nuair atá an taighde thart, ba mhaith liom cóipeanna de na taifeadtaí agus tras-scríbhinní (leaganacha scríofa de na taifeadtaí) a chur i gCartlann Fhaisnéise Cáilíochtúla na hÉireann (www.iqda.ie). Ní bheidh rochtain ach ag taighdeoirí orthu, tar éis cead a fháil ón gcartlann. Is fút féin agus faoi do thuismitheoirí/chaomhnóirí atá sé má tá sibh ag iarraidh go stórálfar d'eolas mar seo. Scríobhfaidh mé faoin taighde seo i mo thráchtas PhD agus b'fhéidir go scríobhfaidh mé ailt in irisí scolártha agus go ndéanfaidh mé cuir i láthair ag comhdhála acadúla faoi. Ní luafar d'ainm nó ainm na scoile in aon cheann de na rudaí seo. Foilseofar mo thráchtas le rochtain oscailte (open access) i gcartlann digiteach na hollscoile (www.ora.ox.ac.uk), rud a chiallaíonn go mbeidh éinne in ann é a léamh ar líne tar éis tréimhse áirithe (cúpla bliain de ghnáth).

Cé hiad na buntáistí agus míbhuntáistí má ghlacaim páirt?

Ní bheidh leas díreach duit trí pháirt a ghlacadh sa staidéar, ach tá súil agam go gcúnóidh an staidéar seo linn tuiscint níos fearr a fháil ar ghnáthshaol an scoláire i meánscoil lán-Ghaeilge agus ar bhur dtuairimí faoin nGaeilge, faoin mBéarla agus faoi teangacha eile. D'fhéadfadh sé sin a bheith úsáideach do mhúinteoirí nó do na polaiteoirí a bhíonn baint acu le polasaí oideachais, srl., agus b'fhéidir go mbeidh sé suimiúil duitse freisin.

Nuair atá an taighde críochnaithe, agus le cead ón scoil, ba mhaith liom teacht ar ais chun labhairt libh faoi thorthaí an taighde, agus chun éisteacht le bhur smaointí faoi. Is féidir leat dul i dteangmháil liom freisin ar an bhfón nó ar ríomhphost má tá aon cheisteanna agat, fiú nuair atá an taighde thart.

An inseoidh tú le daoine eile na rudaí a deirim leatsa?
Má tá tú i bhfócasghrúpa nó ag labhairt liom le grúpa daoine, ní féidir liom gealltanas a thabhairt nach gcloisfidh éinne céard a deir tú agus mar sin ní bheidh sé 'príobháideach', cé go n-iarrfaidh mé ar 'chuile dhuine a ghlacann páirt i bhfócasghrúpa gan labhairt faoin méid a dúradh sa ghrúpa ina dhiaidh an seisiúin. Ach ní inseoidh mé le do chomhghleacaithe a bhfuil ráite agat liom, ach amháin má deir tú liom go bhfuil dochar á dhéanamh duitse nó do dhuine eile. Ansin bheadh orm é a rá leis an bpríomhoide nó leis an duine atá i gceannas ar chosaint leanaí sa scoil.

An mbeidh mé i dtrioblóid má bheireann tú orm ag labhairt Béarla?
Ní bheidh. Ní múinteoir mé agus nílim anseo chun rialacha na scoile a chur i bhfeidhm.

Céard a dhéanfaidh mé mura bhfuil mé ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde níos mó?
Níl ort ach a rá le do thuismitheoirí/chaomhnóirí agus liomsa nach bhfuil tú ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh níos mó. Níl ort fáth a thabhairt agus ní bheidh éinne crosta leat – is fút féin atá sé.

Cé atá ag eagrú agus ag maoiniú an taighde?
Tá Eileen Coughlan, mac léinn PhD in Ollscoil Oxford, ag eagrú an taighde seo. Tá sí maoinithe ag an Economic and Social Research Council (UK) agus ag Ollscoil Oxford.

An bhfuil léirmheas déanta ag éinne ar an staidéar?
Sula gcuirfear tús le aon taighde ina bhfuil daoine páirteach, caithfidh coiste taighde eiticiúla déanamh cinnte go bhfuil sé ceart go leor go rachaidh sé ar aghaidh. Tá cead faighte ag an staidéar seo ón Central University Research Ethics Committee in Ollscoil Oxford.

Céard a dhéanfaidh mé má tá fadhb agam?
Inis dom má tá imní ort faoi aon chuid den staidéar, nó is féidir labhairt le do mhúinteoir/thuismitheoir/chaomhnóir agus labhróidh siadsan liom. Má tá tú míshásta fós nó má tá tú ag iarraidh gearán a dhéanamh, is féidir leatsa nó le do mhúinteoir/thuismitheoir/chaomhnóir dul i dteangmháil le cathaoirleach an Choiste Eitic Taighde in Ollscoil Oxford:

> Chair, University of Oxford Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee;
> **Ríomhphost:** ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk;
> **Seoladh:** Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD).

Sonraí teagmhála
Má tá tú ag iarraidh an taighde a phlé liom roimh ré (nó má tá ceisteanna agat ina dhiaidh), is féidir dul i dteangmháil liom:

> Eileen Coughlan, Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford
> **Fón:** 0871121399
> **Ríomhphoist:** eileen.coughlan@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

Go raibh maith agat as é seo a léamh. Tá fáilte roimh aon cheist atá agat!

[English version available]

Dearcthaí agus cleachtas teanga i measc scoláirí i meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge

FOIRM TOILITHE DO DHAOINE ÓGA

Cead Eiticiúil: R52019/RE001

Cur ciorcal timpeall ar na freagraí a n-aontaíonn tú leo:

• Ar mhínigh duine eicínt an staidéar duit?	Mhínigh/Níor mhínigh
• An dtuigeann tú céard leis a bhaineann an staidéar?	Tuigim/Ní thuigim
• An bhfuil do cheisteanna ar fad curtha agat?	Tá/Níl
• Ar freagraíodh na ceisteanna go léir ar bhealach a thuig tú?	Freagraíodh/Níor fhreagraíodh
• An dtuigeann tú gur féidir leat éirí as ag aon am?	Tuigim/Ní thuigim
• An bhfuil tú sásta páirt a ghlacadh?	Tá/Níl
• An bhfuil tú sásta go dtaifeadfar do ghuth?	Tá/Níl
• An bhfuil tú sásta go ndéanfar fístaifeadadh díot?	Tá/Níl
• An bhfuil tú sásta go ndéanfar grianghraif díot?	Tá/Níl
• An bhfuil tú sásta taifeadadh fuaime a dhéanamh díot féin agus de do chairde?	Tá/Níl

Ná bí buartha má fhreagair tú aon cheist le 'níl' srl. ná mura bhfuil tú ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh. Tá sé sin ceart go leor agus ní bheidh éinne crosta leat!

Má <u>tá</u> tú ag iarraidh páirt a ghlacadh, scríobh d'ainm anseo:

Ainm ___

Síniú _____

Dáta _____

Caithfidh an taighdeoir a mhínigh é seo duit síniú anseo freisin:

Ainm ___

Síniú _____

Dáta _____

Go raibh maith agat!

Appendix E Focus group protocols

Round 1 Focus Group Protocol	
Theme	**Questions**
Age differences	Where are all of you from?
	What primary school did you go to?
	Are there differences between primary and secondary?
	Are there differences in your language use since first year? (5th years)
	Are the current 1st years different to how you were in 1st year? (5th years)
	Do older students behave differently? (1st years)
	Do you see yourself speaking Irish after school – in college/work? (5th years)
Irish at home	Do you speak Irish at home?
	Do you speak Irish with specific family members? (mother/father/grandparents/siblings/cousins)
	Do you speak Irish with neighbours?
Irish outside school/home	Do you speak Irish with friends?
	Do you speak Irish in sports/other after-school activities?
	Do you use Irish on social media?
	Do you watch/listen to TV/radio/other media in Irish?
Other languages	What do you think of learning German and/or French?
	Do you speak any other languages?
	Do you think it's important to speak more than one language?
Future of the language	Is this something you think about?
	What do you think?
	Do teachers ever talk about it?
School language policy	Can you describe it?
	What do you think of it?
	What do you think of the Gaeltacht Education Policy?
Role of the Gaeltacht (CI only)	Have you gone?
	What was it like?
	Would you like to go?
	Do you think it's important to go?

Round 2 Focus Group Protocol	
Theme	**Questions**
Types of speaker	Who has the best Irish in the class?/who's good at Irish?
	Would you say you're fluent in Irish? What does it mean to be fluent in a language?
	What's a native speaker?
	Other types of speaker?
Types of Irish	Are there different types of Irish?
	What's good/bad Irish?
	Do I speak differently than you?
	Dialects? What shows you're 'from here'?
	Saibhreas (richness)
	Cruinneas
	Are there differences between how older and younger people speak Irish?
	Do you speak Irish differently at home than in school?
Language choice	Who do you speak Irish to? (boyfriends and girlfriends?)
	Where would it be weird to speak Irish/English?
	Do you mind what language other people speak? Do people ever pick one language in a way that's rude or just weird?
	Would you like to go to an English school?
	Do you think it's fair that there's going to be a separate Irish curriculum for schools like this?
Language mixing	Do you ever mix languages?
	Do you think mixing languages is normal or good/bad?
	How do you make an English word into Irish? (-áil)
Types of English?	Are there differences in how you speak compared with town (Galway)?
	How are Irish and English different?
	What's good/bad English?
	Is there a Conamara accent?
Misc.	What did you think of *Trumptaí Dumptaí*/*Gafa*? [texts they had read in Irish class]