

reimagining  
ireland

VOLUME 15

John Walsh

# CONTESTS AND CONTEXTS

THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND IRELAND'S  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Despite being Ireland's national and first official language, Irish is marginalised and threatened as a community language. The dominant discourse has long dismissed the Irish language as irrelevant or even an obstacle to Ireland's progress. This book critiques that discourse and contends that the promotion of Irish and sustainable socio-economic development are not mutually exclusive aims.

The author surveys historical and contemporary sources, particularly those used by the Irish historian J.J. Lee, and argues that the Irish language contributes positively to socio-economic development. He grounds this argument in theoretical perspectives from sociolinguistics, political economy and development theory, and suggests a new theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between language and development. The link between the Irish language and Ireland's socio-economic development is examined in a number of case studies, both within the traditional Irish-speaking Gaeltacht communities and in urban areas.

Following the spectacular collapse of the Irish economy in 2008, this critical challenge to the dominant discourse on development is a timely and thought-provoking study.

John Walsh is a Lecturer in Irish at the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, National University of Ireland, Galway. He has previously worked as a lecturer at Dublin City University, with the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, and as a journalist with the Irish state broadcaster RTÉ and the Irish-language television channel TG4. In 2009 he was appointed Fulbright Irish Language Scholar and spent six months teaching and researching at the University of California, Santa Cruz.



## Contests and Contexts

# Reimagining Ireland

Volume 15

Edited by Dr Eamon Maher  
Institute of Technology, Tallaght



PETER LANG

Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

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Socio-Economic Development



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Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at  
<http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Walsh, John, 1971-

Contests and contexts : the Irish language and Ireland's  
socio-economic development / John Walsh.

p. cm. -- (Reimagining Ireland; v. 15)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-3-0353-0071-0 (alk. paper)

1. Irish language--Social aspects. 2. Irish language--Political  
aspects. 3. Irish language--Revival. 4. Gaeltacht (Ireland) 5.

Ireland--Languages. I. Title.

P115.5.I73.W35 2010

491.6'2--dc22

2010036975

ISSN 1662-9094

ISBN 978-3-0353-0071-0

Cover image: 'Contested terrain': border of the Gaeltacht near Baile Chláir,  
Galway (photo by John Walsh).

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Printed in Germany

This publication was grant-aided by the  
Publications Fund of the National University of Ireland,  
Galway.





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## Preface: A Personal Journey

In however complex and convoluted a way, it is quite possible that the manner in which the language was lost has damaged Irish potential for self-respect, with all the psychological consequences for behaviour patterns that flow from that, even in the purely material sphere.

— J.J. LEE, *Ireland 1912–1985: Politics and Society*, p. 669.

[I]n our time, languages have been dying at a rate never before seen in human history, and much of linguistics has become as a result a kind of desperate scramble to record a few scraps of the languages that remain. That this is happening is surely remarkable. From some perspectives at least, it is also very disturbing. But almost as remarkable and almost as disturbing, is the fact that this profound change has been taking place (until very recently at least) virtually without notice, comment or debate.

— JAMES MCCLOSKEY, *Voices Silenced: Has Irish a Future?*, p. 12.

There are many reasons why I wrote this book, but the two extracts above were particularly influential. The first, written by a leading Irish historian at the end of the twentieth century, raises profound questions about the psychological and socio-economic implications of the decline of the Irish language. The second, written at the dawn of the new millennium by an Irish linguist based in California, is a rallying call for all those who care about the ongoing and seemingly relentless destruction of the world's linguistic diversity. These two perspectives, the local and the global, reflect my personal values as an Irish speaker who became fluent in the language as a teenager and has come to care deeply about the world's diversity, in both environment and language.

I learned Irish first due to a mixture of curiosity, enthusiasm and stubbornness: curiosity and longing to find out about an element of my heritage which had been hidden from me, through no fault of my family; enthusiasm to master a second language and pure stubbornness to learn

Irish despite the disinterest and occasional hostility of my peers. I was also lucky enough to have the support of excellent teachers, in particular Bríd Ní Annracháin (Pobalscoil Neasáin) without whom I would probably never have become bilingual. Encouraged by them, and through the good services of the Irish language radio service, Raidió na Gaeltachta, I began to learn the language of West Munster. Thanks to government scholarships, I spent time in the Co. Cork Gaeltacht of Múscraí during those years, learning traditional Irish from local fluent speakers. Although there were many excellent speakers of Irish in Múscraí then, I can still remember my deep shock at discovering that many people there could not speak Irish at all, or spoke it only haltingly and reluctantly. As a teenager raised in Dublin far from the Gaeltacht, I was devastated to discover that some people living in the language's heartland, as I thought of it, had a very negative view of Irish. It was also a revelation that much of the very formal and antiquated Irish which I had taught myself from the classical literature was not entirely intelligible to even the best Irish speakers in Múscraí. I learned more about the Irish language and its use that summer than in all my years of school and, although I did not understand it in such terms at the time, had my first taste of concepts such as bilingualism, register, domains of language use and, most importantly, language politics and ideology.

As an undergraduate in Irish and Welsh at University College Dublin, my awareness of the politics of language and of the threat to linguistic diversity continued to grow. Student politics in Ireland at the time provided no platform to protest about such esoteric issues. However, I encountered many Gaeltacht students and others in the Irish Department who cared about how the Gaeltacht and Irish in general were faring in broader society. Several long visits to Wales introduced me to another variety of language activism and an enthusiasm for confrontational methods which I embraced enthusiastically for a time. Through my later work as a broadcast journalist with the Irish state broadcaster, RTÉ, I became fascinated by international news, partly in response to what I perceived as Ireland's insularity. I followed closely the efforts by minority peoples throughout the world to defend their languages, scanning the Reuters and Agence France-Presse news wires daily in a pre-Internet age. When such news was reported at all, the wire services usually adopted a rather paternalistic tone, despite their claims to



objectivity. Under the veneer of balanced journalism lurked the views that such campaigns were occasionally exotic and more often anachronistic or pointless. This merely whetted my appetite for further knowledge, and I scoured libraries for more academic and sympathetic accounts. In 1996, I was privileged to be employed by the new Irish language television station, TnaG (now TG4) for two years, during which time I reported on language politics in Scotland and Wales. Journalism was never satisfying enough for me, however, because I could rarely do anything more than scratch the surface of a story and comply with the tyranny of word counts and time restrictions.

Still engaged by world affairs, I left journalism and returned to education to study International Relations, a mixture of international law, political economy, development studies and political science at Dublin City University. Development studies and political economy in particular opened my eyes to academic study of the dynamics of inequality and poverty, both in Ireland and throughout the world, and to the links between development and identity politics. It was during this time that I was introduced to J.J. Lee's seminal work of Irish history. His argument that the rapid decline of Irish could have psychological and socio-economic results sowed the seeds of this book. I became convinced of the need to begin thinking about language in social and economic terms, rather than resorting to the tired discourses of language and culture or language and nationalism, which I felt were extremely limiting. Following graduation, I enrolled for a PhD to investigate Lee's arguments further, but was distracted by an opportunity to work at the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages in Brussels, a non-governmental body promoting the minority languages of Europe. This was a fascinating experience which introduced me to speakers of minority languages from throughout the European Union. These insights allowed me to move beyond the simplicities and comforts of protest politics and gain a real understanding of linguistic diversity in Europe, which has become an underlying theme of this book.

In later years, I have become convinced of the importance of the green movement and the parallels between the threats to biodiversity and linguistic diversity. I was extremely lucky to be given the opportunity to write much of this manuscript at the University of California, Santa Cruz – itself

a green campus, both politically and in its stunning natural beauty – as Fulbright Irish Language Scholar in late 2009 and early 2010. One of my hosts and colleagues was James McCloskey, author of the book from which the second extract above is taken. Working in one of the most linguistically diverse parts of the United States provided a fascinating academic and cultural setting for this work. The fact that almost all of California's indigenous languages are threatened with extinction, while Spanish enjoys quasi-official status in much of the state, added another challenging dimension to the research setting.

While the main purpose of this book is to address the intersections between the promotion of Irish and Ireland's socio-economic development, a secondary aim relates to this international dimension, the context of the opposing forces of language endangerment and revitalisation. The challenges facing language policy in Ireland are shared by thousands of other language communities throughout the world, a fact overlooked in English-language discourse in Ireland. Speaking the world's most powerful and prestigious language has blinded Irish people to the fact that many thousands of languages, many of them in a far weaker position than Irish, are struggling with issues of cultural assimilation and language death, often intertwined with socio-economic dislocation. We have much to learn from these languages, as they have much to learn from us. For far too long, the discourse on language policy in Ireland has been deeply unaware of what is happening elsewhere, so it is in our interest to deepen our understanding of international perspectives on language. It is my hope that this book will contribute to greater awareness of what is unquestionably a global challenge.

## Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support of many people. I would like to thank Prof. Peadar Kirby of the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Limerick (formerly of the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University) who supervised the PhD dissertation on which this study is based. During the defence of my PhD, the panel of examiners made useful suggestions which have helped me improve the final manuscript; I am very grateful to Prof. Joe Lee, New York University, Prof. Colin Williams, Cardiff University and Dr Barbara O'Connor, Dublin City University, for their suggestions. Former and current staff at Peter Lang are also due my gratitude, in particular Joe Armstrong in Ireland and Hannah Godfrey in Oxford, as are the two anonymous peer reviewers who read a draft of this work. I am very grateful to the series editor of *Reimagining Ireland*, Dr Eamon Maher, for his advice and support.

I wish to acknowledge financial support from a number of sources. A research grant from the Millennium Fund, NUI Galway, was used to defray the costs of completing the book and to employ Hugh Rowland in 2009 as Research Assistant. This fund was also used to employ Ken Ó Donnchú to compile the index. I am most grateful to Hugh and Ken for their diligence and precision. I also wish to thank the Fulbright Commission in Dublin (supported by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the National Lottery) which appointed me Fulbright Irish Language Scholar in 2009–10 at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where much of this book was written. I am also indebted to the Irish–Scottish intercultural body, Colmcille, in particular its former director, Diarmaid Breathnach, for a research grant in 2004–5 to assist me with field work.

I could not have written this book without the co-operation of the participants in my research throughout Ireland. A full list of interviewees is provided in the references, but I would also like to thank others who did

not wish to be identified. Every effort has been made to contact participants to get their permission to be quoted. I would like in particular to thank the Chief Executive of Údarás na Gaeltachta, Pádraig Ó hAoláin, for making himself so readily available for interview. I am grateful to my former colleagues at Dublin City University for their help: Dr Emer Ní Bhrádaigh, Dr Peadar Ó Flatharta, Dr Eithne O'Connell and Prof. Gary Murphy. My thanks also to colleagues and friends in the Department of Irish at the National University of Ireland, Galway, especially Dr Lillis Ó Laoire who gave detailed feedback on drafts and Prof. Nollaig Mac Congáil who offered generous support and expert advice over many years. I would also like to thank Prof. Mícheál Mac Craith, Prof. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Prof. Mícheál Ó Cinnéide, Dr Niall Ó Ciosáin and Seosamh Mac Donnacha, all of NUI Galway. I am grateful to Prof. James McCloskey of the University of California, Santa Cruz, who supported my application to Fulbright to spend a period at University of California, Santa Cruz. Staff in the libraries of the National University of Ireland, Galway and Dublin City University assisted with references and sources. I am grateful to Seán Mac Mathúna, former General-Secretary of Conradh na Gaeilge, for allowing me access to the Conradh's archives.

Sincerest thanks are due also to the following colleagues in other universities who offered assistance along the way: Prof. Angela Bourke, formerly of University College, Dublin; Prof. Linda Cardinal, University of Ottawa; Dr Stephen McCarron, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Dr Bryan McGregor, University of Aberdeen; Dr Wilson McLeod, University of Edinburgh; Prof. Máire Ní Annracháin, University College, Dublin; Máire Ní Neachtain, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; Prof. Máirín Nic Eoin, St Patrick's College, Dublin; Prof. Tom Moring, University of Helsinki; Dr Tadhg Ó hÍfearnáin, University of Limerick; and Miquel Strubell i Trueta, Open University of Catalonia, Barcelona. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Rob Dunbar of the University of Aberdeen for his thought-provoking comments. Thanks are due also to Gráinne Ní Lúbaigh, An Rinn and Róisín Ní Chéilleachair, Belfast for reading earlier drafts of sections of this work and to Aodán Mac Póilín, Gordon McCoy and Mícheál Ó Duibh for assistance with the chapter on Belfast. I also wish to thank Mícheál Ó Cearúil for publishing part of this work in the series

*An Aimsir Óg* and the Coimisinéir Teanga (language commissioner), Seán Ó Cuirreáin, for his many stimulating comments during the course of this project. The knowledge, advice and support of Helen Ó Murchú has been particularly important over the past twenty-five years.

I would not be writing this today without the support of my family, particularly my sister, Clare Walsh, who endured a gruelling research project in parallel to my own. I owe my greatest gratitude to my partner, Declan Coogan, whose unswerving belief in my ability to complete this project helped me through frequent periods of doubt, and who tolerated the growing domestic chaos with his characteristic good humour and charm. Mo bhuíochas ó chroí libh ar fad.

Finally, my parents Anne and Peter are avid genealogists and have conducted extensive research on our family tree. A few months before leaving for California, my mother showed me returns from the 1901 and 1911 Censuses of Population for the townland of Skeanavart (Sciath na bhFeart) in Co. Roscommon, where her great-grandfather, my great great-grandfather Patrick Hanglow was returned as a speaker of Irish and English. He was an old man at the time, 74 in 1911, and was listed as bilingual in both censuses. Therefore, he most probably grew up speaking Irish, rather than learning it at Gaelic League classes at the turn of the century. We do not know if he was a native speaker in the traditional sense of growing up in an Irish-dominant household in an Irish-dominant area. That would be highly unlikely given the rapid retreat of Irish in Roscommon during the nineteenth century. However, he is the last known speaker of Irish on either side of the family at a time when it was not yet possible to acquire Irish as a second language through the education system. The same returns illustrate that neither of his children present at the time of the census, John and Maggie, knew any Irish, nor did his grand-daughter, Cissy. We know nothing else about Patrick Hanglow's knowledge of Irish, but his language story is the story of many millions of Irish people over the past century. I dedicate this book to his memory.



## Abbreviations and Terminology

ADM	Area Development Management
BCI	Broadcasting Commission of Ireland
BMW	Border-Midlands-West (administrative region of NDP)
CILAR	Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research
CnaG	Conradh na Gaeilge (Gaelic League), national voluntary Irish language body
CNnaG	Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, umbrella body for Irish language voluntary sector (Republic of Ireland)
CSO	Central Statistics Office
Dáil Éireann	Lower house of Irish parliament (Oireachtas)
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Northern Ireland)
DCEGA	Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCRGA	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry (Northern Ireland)
DRD	Department of Regional Development (Northern Ireland)
DSD	Department of Social Development (Northern Ireland)
EBLUL	European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages
ED	Electoral Division
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FnaG	Foras na Gaeilge, cross-border implementation body for Irish language

FOI	Freedom of Information (legislation)
<i>Foinse</i>	Weekly Irish language newspaper
Forbairt Feirste	Economic body for promotion of Irish in West Belfast
Gaillimh le Gaeilge	Body to promote use of Irish among businesses in Galway City
GCDB	Galway County Development Board
GÉ	Gaeltarra Éireann (Gaeltacht development body, 1957–1979)
GSTF	Greater Shankill Task Force
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IDF	Integrated Development Fund for supporting deprived areas of Northern Ireland
ITÉ	Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (Linguistics Institute of Ireland)
<i>Lá / Lá Nua</i>	Daily Irish language newspaper (defunct since 2008)
LDSIP	Local Government Social Inclusion Programme (NDP)
LHRs	Linguistic human rights
MFG	Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht community development structure)
NDP	National Development Plan
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
POBAL	Umbrella body for voluntary Irish language sector in Northern Ireland
RLS	Reversing language shift
RTÉ RnaG	RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, Irish language radio channel
S&E	Southern and Eastern Region (administrative region of NDP)
Seanad Éireann	Upper house of Irish parliament (Oireachtas)



SLG	Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge (scheme administered by DCRGA/DCEGA under which parents of fluent Gaeltacht schoolchildren are awarded a grant for speaking Irish)
SPI	Screen Producers Ireland (association of independent television and film producers)
TG4	Irish language television channel
ÚnaG	Údarás na Gaeltachta, economic development agency for Gaeltacht (since 1979)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WBPB	West Belfast Partnership Board
WBTF	West Belfast Task Force



## CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction

In 1960, Seán de Fréine pointed to the paucity of discussion in historiography and cultural commentary on the language shift in nineteenth-century Ireland. While the intervening years have seen some research in this area, the observation still holds considerable truth. This is particularly the case when the extraordinary speed and scale of the shift is taken into account.

— NIALL Ó CIOSAÍN, 'Gaelic Culture and Language Shift', p. 136.

Some of the most productive critics working in the field of Irish Studies at the moment are critics who accept the importance of the postcolonial paradigm. However, if we examine closely the published work of most of these critics, we see that the history, culture and literature of Irish has a very limited place in it. In their work, the most noteworthy aspect of the neglect of the Irish language question as a cultural question is their indifference to the modern state of the language and its contemporary literature.

— MÁIRÍN NIC EOIN, *Trén bhFearann Breac: an diláithriú cultúir i litríocht na Gaeilge*, p. 26 (translation).

Another enduring legacy of suppression shared by most middle-aged Native Americans is the memory of being punished physically and psychologically for speaking their Native language in school. These negative associations can be painful. One Tlingit man commented, 'Whenever I speak Tlingit, I can still taste the soap.' Most elders have similar stories of humiliation and physical punishment. It is not easy to overcome this pain.

— NORA MARKS DAUENHAUER & RICHARD DAUENHAUER, 'Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska', pp. 64–5.

## 1. Rationale and Objectives

This book investigates the relationship between the Irish language and Ireland's socio-economic development. Its rationale is provided both by the gap of knowledge in Irish scholarship on the implications of language shift in the case of Irish<sup>1</sup> and by the international context of the threat to linguistic diversity. Despite the decline in the social status of Irish from the late sixteenth century onwards, and the dramatic decrease in the percentage of speakers in the nineteenth century (see, for instance, Wall, 1969: 81–2; Ó Murchú, M., 1985: 25–8; Ó Huallacháin, 1994: 18–26; Ó hÁinle, 1994: 746), scholarly investigation in general has either ignored or marginalised the language question. Consequently, this lack of attention has failed to consider the socio-cultural and socio-economic implications of rapid language shift and subsequent attempts to reverse language shift in Ireland. Therefore, no body of research provides an insight into how the virtual replacement of Irish by English, and the subsequent attempts at gaelicisation or establishing some form of societal bilingualism or diglossia,<sup>2</sup> have influenced broader social, cultural and economic factors in Ireland. The principal purpose of this study is to address this gap in understanding.

- 1 'Language shift' is a term coined by sociolinguist Joshua Fishman (1991 & 2000b) to describe the process whereby speakers of a threatened language ('Xish', as described by Fishman), begin to abandon that language in favour of another language of greater socio-economic prestige ('Yish'). Fishman explains the change in terms of the social functions for which each language is used (1991: 1–2). 'Language displacement' is another term with similar meaning (Brenzinger, 1998: 282).
- 2 Bilingualism refers to the ability of individuals to use two or more languages (for a detailed discussion, see Wei, 2000). Diglossia refers to the co-existence of two or more varieties of a single language, or two distinct languages, in the one society. The two varieties, or languages, are often ranked in a form of hierarchy: for instance, a highly valued language (H) may be used in government, education or religion, while a less valued language (L) may be used in home, family or informal work settings (Schiffman, 1998; see also Fishman, 2000b and Ó Murchú, M., 1970).

*International context*

Another rationale for this study is its relationship to the broader global context of the threat posed to linguistic diversity. Estimates of the precise number of world languages vary considerably, but recent scholarship indicates that there are between 6,000 and 7,000. The vast majority of these languages are in a very fragile state, and will likely become extinct or moribund within the next 100 years. In California alone, one of the most linguistically diverse areas of the United States, around 50 indigenous languages are still spoken, but none are being acquired naturally by children and some are spoken only by a handful of elderly people, as few as two or three in some cases (Hinton, 1996: 21–33). It is difficult to imagine that these languages can be saved as living means of communication at this very late state. Harrowing stories of shame, guilt, anger and hostility abound from indigenous language communities throughout the world. As two leading experts on Alaskan languages put it: ‘Working with Native American languages can be sad and depressing, stressful and full of grief. One is always dealing with death and dying, not only of the individual elders, but cumulatively of the language itself’ (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998: 94). The decline of such languages is happening at a greater intensity than at any other time in recorded history and yet, in comparison with other international issues such as poverty or environmental degradation, has received relatively little attention. However, there is evidence in recent years that both scholarly<sup>3</sup> and political<sup>4</sup> interest in this topic is increasing.

3 For discussion of a variety of languages, see Abley, 2003; Benton R. & Benton, N., 2000; Brenzinger, 2007; Choi, 2004; Crystal, 2000; Gorter, 2000; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998 & 2006; Hibbert, 2004; Hinton, 1996; Hinton & Hale, 2008; Hornberger & King, 2000; King et al., 2008; McCarty, 2002 & 2005; McCloskey, 2001; McLeod, 2006; Nettle & Romaine, 2000. For a discussion of the marginalisation of language in the social sciences, see Strubell, 2000: 260.

4 There are many non-governmental organisations which support endangered languages, for instance Ethnologue (<<http://www.ethnologue.com>>), the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (<<http://www.eblul.org>>; defunct since 2010), the Federation for Endangered Languages (<<http://www.ogmios.org>>) and Terralingua

It is not a primary objective of this work to examine the relationship between Irish and development in a comparative or global context or to consider in detail other situations of language shift. However, the possibility that Irish is at risk of joining the expanding ranks of moribund and extinct languages cannot be ignored. Indeed, I would never have written this book had the future of Irish been guaranteed. The title refers to both ‘contests’ and ‘contexts’: contests that revolve around competing definitions of development and of the value of linguistic diversity itself, and contexts that are broader than Ireland, both European and international. Therefore, the wider context of language endangerment and its implications for humanity is a constant backdrop to this book. It will contribute to a growing international body of literature which concerns itself with the maintenance or revitalisation of threatened languages.

Notwithstanding the rather exceptional case of Irish – simultaneously a national, official and minority language – this study is replicable in other situations of language endangerment and language shift. In Europe, obvious examples are languages with relatively large numbers of speakers but which are under pressure from neighbouring dominant languages, such as Welsh in Wales, Gaelic in Scotland, Basque and Galician in France and Spain and Frisian in the Netherlands. The study is also relevant to some of the minority French language communities in Canada and some of the larger indigenous languages both there and in the United States.

### *History*

As stated in the Introduction, the inspiration for the study was a short section of less than twenty pages’ length in J.J. Lee’s *Ireland 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (1989). The entry entitled ‘Identity’ (pages 658–74) raised probing questions about the influence of the decline of Irish on

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(<http://www.terralingua.org>). UNESCO also has a division devoted to cultural and linguistic diversity (<http://www.unesco.org/en/languages>).

Ireland's poor developmental performance in the period under study. The following extract is one such example:

There seems sufficient evidence to indicate that the loss of the Irish language carries a host of psychological consequences, which do not necessarily apply in other situations of language shift. (Lee, J.J., 1989a: 669)

Other questions included the following: was superior economic performance linked to a broader process of national renewal based on identity and language? How did small European countries such as Finland and Denmark manage to link cultural and linguistic revival with national development? Could economic performance be divorced from national identity and language? It seemed to me that an investigation of these questions had the potential to provide a powerful philosophical base for ongoing efforts to revive Irish.

I discuss Lee's comments in detail in Chapter Three. However, an indicative survey of recent works of Irish history written in English illustrates that few historians engage in a critical way with the implications of the decline and revival of Irish. Similarly, the Irish language is by and large neglected by other disciplines where it is reasonable to expect treatment of language: cultural studies and postcolonial studies. To the extent that the Irish language is discussed at all, its treatment is largely inadequate in providing answers to the types of questions raised in the above extract. This is because the Irish language is either neglected entirely or treatment of it is limited to largely factual description, avoiding an investigation of the implications of language shift.

The following review of contemporary historians is not exhaustive but I present it as an indicative sample of how the Irish language has been treated by this discipline over the past three decades.<sup>5</sup>

Although Lyons's *Ireland Since the Famine* (1971) contains several references to the decline of Irish, only 10 pages (out of almost 800) are dedicated to a more detailed discussion (635–45). However, this discussion

5 For a more detailed survey of historiography and cultural commentary on language shift, see Ó Ciosáin, N., 2005.

is limited largely to a description of revival efforts. There is no analysis of the effects of the language's rapid decline in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Daly's *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity, 1922–1939* (1992) is of interest because it would be reasonable to expect – given the book's title and the language's elevated official position in the period in question (see Chapter Two) – that the Irish language would feature in the discussion. However, the book contains only a handful of references to Irish, among them a description of the 'confused baggage of ideals' associated with the revival of the late nineteenth century (9–11), and a half-page on economic policies on the Gaeltacht (110–11). It is significant that this major historical work that purports to be about Irish national identity treats only very inadequately the question of language.

Foster's *Modern Ireland: 1600–1972* (1988) similarly contains few references to Irish, although one of the defining features of the period in question was the almost total replacement of Irish by English as the dominant vernacular in Ireland. His treatment of the question is limited largely to a criticism of the Gaelic League (for an example, see pp. 448–9). However, Foster does not deal systematically with the implications of the language shift which occurred in Ireland during this period.

Lydon's *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (1998) makes very few references to Irish, although the work deals ostensibly with the history of Ireland from early times to the present. Similarly, Keogh's *Twentieth Century Ireland: Nation and State* (1994) contains only cursory references to Irish, and there is no systematic treatment of the language question. Ferriter's *The Transformation of Ireland: 1900–2000* (2004) contains several references to Irish, but only in 12 of over 750 pages are aspects of it (education policy, Gaeltacht policy) discussed in more detail (98–100, 349–53, 430, 599–601). There is no treatment of the wider social or economic impacts of the revival policy.

Brown is one of the few contemporary historians to grant Irish more than a few cursory references. In *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–2002*, an entire chapter is devoted to the efforts to promote Irish in the years following independence. Brown attributes the failure to re-establish



Irish as the common vernacular to the failure of the new government to link language revival with revolutionary social and economic change:

[H]ad the efforts to revive Irish in the 1920s been conducted primarily on the basis of the kinds of humanism which generated the original enthusiasm of the Gaelic League together with a committed sense in the country as a whole of the need for genuine social as well as linguistic renewal, the policy might have met with real success ... As it was, in the absence of a revolutionary social policy attending the efforts for linguistic revival and making it possible ... conservative and authoritarian tendencies in the language movement quickly began to cloud the radical humanism which for many had been the most attractive aspect of its ideology. (2004: 49)

Brown's contribution focusses on Irish to a greater extent than the other historians mentioned above (there are almost 100 references to Irish, the Gaeltacht and the Gaelic revival). However, apart from the discussion of language policy in the years following independence, he does not investigate the social or economic implications of either language shift or its reversal.

The central thesis of Garvin's *Preventing the Future: Why Was Ireland Poor for so Long* is that the 'veto groups' (2004: 4) of the Catholic Church and the Irish language lobby were responsible for perpetuating Ireland's underdevelopment in the twentieth century. Using often colourful and emotive language, Garvin harshly criticises the Gaelic League and the Irish language policies of subsequent independent governments. Language revivalists were 'extremists who wished to kill the English language in Ireland' (23); they believed that 'by teaching Irish to everyone, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought in Ireland in the English language was blotted out of the culture' (55) and, by preventing 'access to modern philosophical, social and scientific thought, the linguistic revival prevented the evolution of an intellectual culture capable of being critical of fascist, communist and romantic-pagan rhetorics' (56). Garvin asserts that '[t]he smothering capabilities of Irish as a revived language were great, its creative capabilities relatively limited' (56). He argues that both the Church and the language movement were 'highly organised lobbies' who 'had members and political clout behind them', each of which was 'dedicated to changing the moral and cultural character of the Irish people, rather than being

interested in the material development of society' (70). Although Garvin does not share the tendency of other historians to ignore the Irish language almost entirely, there are several problems with his approach. Firstly, he presents the Irish language movement as a monolithic, conservative force with immense influence on government. This is an inaccurate and selective view, as I will illustrate in Chapter Three, and exaggerates wildly the influence of the movement. Secondly, in his discussion of Irish, Garvin relies heavily on aggressive assertions rather than consideration of historical evidence: what, for instance, is the basis for his claim that the Irish language revival prevented the development of a critical intellectual culture, or that the movement did not care about material development? Why were the 'smothering capabilities' of the Irish language so great? Thirdly, Garvin – along with most other historians discussed in this brief survey – ignores Irish language sources entirely. This undermines further the credibility of his already questionable assertions. Garvin differs from other historians in one regard – for him, the Irish language is of central importance to recent Irish history, and is a cause of Ireland's underdevelopment – but as he rules out the possibility that Irish has anything positive to contribute to development, his work is of limited use for this study.<sup>6</sup>

Recent published history, therefore, offers few answers to the kinds of questions posed by Lee.

### *Cultural studies*

A similar neglect of the implications of the decline of the Irish language is apparent in the contributions of commentators writing in English on aspects of Ireland's cultural identity. Once again, the following list is not exhaustive, but represents an indicative sample.

Fintan O'Toole is arguably Ireland's best-known political and cultural commentator, having published four volumes in the 1990s on aspects of social and cultural change (*The Lie of the Land: Irish Identities* (1998);

6 For a sharp critique of Garvin, see Kirby, 2006.

*Black Hole, Green Card: The Disappearance of Ireland* (1994); *The Ex-Isle of Erin: Images of a Global Ireland* (1997); *A Mass for Jesse James: A Journey through 1980s Ireland* (1990)). There are few references to Irish, although the question of identity in general is a constant underlying theme (see, for instance, 1994: 14 and 1998: 3). Nowhere, however, does the author deal systematically with the role of language in identity, nor with broader questions about the influence of the language's decline or revival on other factors. There is a rare reference to Irish in *The Ex-Isle of Erin*, but the language is mentioned only very cursorily and is described as a 'small, and often esoteric, corner of Irish culture' (1997: 143). O'Toole's treatment of Irish, to the extent that he deals with it at all, gives the impression that he views it at most as a cultural relic which may be preserved for its historical value, but not as a resource to solve the cultural uncertainty to which he addresses himself.

Other contributions to the debate on Irish cultural identity are similar. There are practically no references to Irish in two key publications by Kearney on Irish culture and identity: *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions* (1985) and *Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s* (1988). In a later volume, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (1996), Gibbons criticises the marginalisation of culture in academic investigation of Irish society:

Though much valuable work has been done on Irish society from the point of view of economic development, political mobilization, and administrative structures, very little has focussed on culture as a set of material practices informing and constituting the social environment. Culture, for the most part, is limited to 'artistic' works, and refined out of existence, while historians and social scientists get on with the business of studying the facts, and determining how society really works. (1996: 11)

Yet Gibbons does not refer to the Irish language in this volume. He expresses concern that historians and political commentators marginalise culture in their work, although he himself ignores a key component of that culture, the Irish language.

Fallon's *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930–1960* contains a short chapter about Irish (14 of 295 pages). He claims in the chapter's opening sentence that the two great tragedies of contemporary Ireland were emigration and the failure of the state to revive Irish (1998: 159). However, he

does not consider the wider implications of such a 'failure', emphasising only the cultural importance of the Irish language: 'Its social and political importance scarcely matters here; its cultural role, however, can hardly be exaggerated' (159). Given this belief, it is unsurprising that the bulk of Fallon's treatment of Irish is in the realm of literature alone.

The volume edited by MacLachlan and O'Connell, *Cultivating Pluralism: Psychological, Social and Cultural Perspectives on a Changing Ireland* (2000) is an example of work on increasing cultural diversity in Ireland due to immigration during the economic boom. It discusses various aspects of identity, in the context of refugees and asylum-seekers who have been coming to Ireland, in the main, since the early 1990s. The discussion covers racism, refugees in schools, multiculturalism and travellers but there is no reference to the Irish language.

A series of essays on the links between economy, society and culture (Kirby, Cronin & Gibbons, 2002) contains a handful of references to Irish, including one which emphasises that there have been positive developments in relation to the language in recent years, despite the common tendency to have it 'consigned along with Faith and Fatherland to the trash-can of late modernity' (2002: 14). In contrast to its treatment of other aspects of culture and society, such as broadcasting, cinema, education and religion, this volume does not engage with the language systematically. As a result of my research in this field, I was invited to contribute an essay on the Irish language and socio-economic development to a subsequent volume on Irish society and economy (Walsh, 2009).

### *Postcolonial studies*

Given the influence of the colonisation of Ireland on the Irish language (see, for instance, Crowley, 2000), postcolonial theory might well be expected to treat the question of Irish in detail, but the opposite is the case. For instance, Kenny does not mention Irish at all in his typology of characteristics of the 'postcolonial personality' in Ireland (1985). In her psychological analysis of colonialism in Ireland, Moane (1994) acknowledges that 'the psychological effects ... of the loss of the Irish language, have rarely been

discussed' (256). She refers to a sense of 'inferiority and self-hatred' which is amplified 'by the erasure of indigenous culture and language' (257) and argues that recovering the Irish language and an associated identity is central to the process of 'decolonisation' (261). However, despite her stated concerns about the paucity of discussion of Irish, Moane herself does little to fill the gap, and her use of terms such as 'erasure' and 'loss' overstates the decline of Irish and depicts it as extinct. Similarly, in a later article, Moane laments the 'loss of the native language' and its 'implications for consciousness, creativity and identity' (2002: 117), without examining such implications in detail.

Nic Eoin, in a ground-breaking study of the cultural dislocation of contemporary literature in Irish, argues that the paradigm of post colonial studies in Ireland has failed to engage constructively with the Irish language.<sup>7</sup> Most authors who write in English have ignored Irish completely:

Is criticeoirí a ghlacann le tábhacht na paraidíme iarchoilíní iad cuid de na criticeoirí is bisiúla atá ag saothrú i ngort an Léinn Éireannaigh faoi láthair. Nuair a fhéachaimid go grinn ar shaothar foilsithe fhormhór na gcriticeoirí seo, áfach, feicimid go bhfuil ionad an-teoranta ag stair, ag cultúr agus ag litríocht na Gaeilge ann. Is í an ghné is suntasaí ar fad den fhaillí a dhéantar i gceist na Gaeilge mar cheist chultúrtha ina saothar ná an neamhshuim a dhéantar de staid nua-aoiseach agus de litríocht chomhaimseartha na teanga. (2005: 26)<sup>8</sup>

While contributions such as those of Carroll (2003) and Deane (2003) have discussed elements of the Irish language question, Nic Eoin criticises them on the basis that they have failed to provide a critical perspective based

7 For an earlier critique of the failure of English language literary scholarship to acknowledge the existence of a contemporary Irish language literature, see Ó Buachalla, 1996.

8 Some of the most productive critics working in the field of Irish Studies at the moment are critics who accept the importance of the postcolonial paradigm. However, if we examine closely the published work of most of these critics, we see that the history, culture and literature of Irish has a very limited place in it. In their work, the most noteworthy aspect of the neglect of the Irish language question as a cultural question is their indifference to the modern state of the language and its contemporary literature.

on the literary sources of Irish itself (the same criticism can be directed at history and cultural studies for failing to draw upon existing sources in the Irish language). The great irony of this failure to engage with language, Nic Eoin argues, is that it could help the post colonial paradigm to defend itself more robustly against those who dismiss its validity:

Is é an mhórfóirín a bhaineann leis an mbearna sa dioscúrsa iarchoilíneach atá pléite agam thuas ná go bhféadfadh peirspeictíocht na Gaeilge a bheith ina taca do chriticeoirí agus iad ag iarraidh bailíocht an chur chuige iarchoilínigh i gcás na hÉireann a chosaint ó lucht a cháinte. Ba dhoiligh don chriticeoir ba sceiptí nó don staraí ba reibhisíní amuigh an gaol idir an próiseas coilíneach agus cúlú is cailleadh na teanga a bhréagnú, mar shampla. Ba dhoiligh a shéanadh go raibh gaol idir dán na teanga agus próiseas an chomhshamhlaithe chultúrtha agus ba rídhoiligh, cheapfaí, ceist sin an chomhshamhlaithe chultúrtha a dhealú ón gcaidreamh stairiúil ar leibhéal polaitiúil, eacnamaíoch agus sóisialta idir an tír seo agus an Bhreatain, go háirithe ón seachtú haois déag ar aghaidh. (40–1)<sup>9</sup>

This brief indicative review of contributions from cultural studies and postcolonial studies indicates that Irish, at most, is treated as marginal to the discussion. Although there are exceptions, its decline is most often accepted as an inevitable consequence of modernisation, and the language is portrayed as dead and buried, as belonging firmly to history only. There is neither systematic engagement with the social, cultural and economic implications of the language's decline, nor with Irish as a contemporary living language, with real speakers in real communities throughout Ireland (see Chapter Two). Although there may be many reasons for this, I conclude

- 9 The great irony of the gap in postcolonial discourse which I have discussed is that the perspective of Irish could be a support for critics attempting to defend the validity of the postcolonial approach in Ireland against those who condemn it. It would be difficult for the most sceptical critic or the most revisionist historian to refute the link between the colonial process and the retreat and loss of Irish, for instance. It would be difficult to deny that there was a link between the fate of the language and the process of cultural assimilation and it might be thought extremely difficult to separate that question of cultural assimilation from the historical relationship on a political, economic and social level between this country and Britain, especially since the seventeenth century.

that the inadequate treatment of the Irish language is linked to the failure or inability of the majority of the English-speaking authors discussed to draw extensively upon both historical and contemporary sources in the Irish language.

Chapter Three contains a separate discussion of historical authors who do engage in detail with the implications of language shift in the case of Irish. There is a clear distinction between the two groups of literature. The survey above is of authors who are not concerned solely (or at all) with Irish, have published exclusively in English and who by and large neglect Irish language sources. In Chapter Three, I survey authors who are concerned in particular with Irish. Although some of their contributions are in English, most of these latter authors are themselves bilingual and, therefore, have access to a wider range of sources in both Irish and English than their monolingual peers.

## 2. Research Objectives

The principal objective of this study is to investigate and answer the following question: does the promotion of Irish positively influence Ireland's socio-economic development? This question is based on a tradition of understanding of the link between the Irish language and Ireland's socio-economic development, stretching back at least 150 years. Numerous authors during this period, writing mostly in Irish, have posited that promoting Irish is not solely about re-establishing the language as a means of communication, but that it has broader social, cultural and economic benefits for Irish society as a whole. In their view, the promotion of Irish has influenced positively a range of factors such as identity, self-confidence, national self-sufficiency, strength of character, participative citizenship, cohesion, innovation and social and economic success. According to these writers, the decline of Irish, and the failure to promote it effectively, has had a negative effect on such factors. I consider these contributions in detail in Chapter

Three. My principal objective, therefore, is to interrogate this tradition and to provide answers to the research question which arise from it.

Several secondary objectives emerge from the principal one, and I express them by a series of further questions: what are the various theoretical approaches to the link between language and development? How does the Irish language influence the political economy of development in the Gaeltacht and in other areas where Irish is weaker? Is there a difference between the link in both cases? I answer these questions in the chapters which follow.

### 3. Theoretical Approach

This study is located within the social sciences and is interdisciplinary in its approach. This is necessary because of the broad nature of the field of research and reflects my interdisciplinary background. A monodisciplinary approach would be inappropriate and inadequate to investigate the research question, because it covers two distinct variables of language and socio-economic development, and the relationships between them. Therefore, it is necessary to draw upon a combination of theories in order better to understand the relationship between the two variables. I do not profess to be neutral or value-free: this study adopts a critical stance towards dominant approaches to socio-economic development and is supportive of the theory and practice of consolidating threatened or minoritised languages such as Irish, while acknowledging the challenges associated with this position.<sup>10</sup>

10 The nomenclature of languages is extremely contentious, as certain terms are deemed to be offensive or defeatist. 'Minority language' is the common and generic term to describe a language which is either numerically weak or not normalised in most domains (see, for instance, Cormack & Hourigan, 2007). However, this term is not accepted universally. As Irish is constitutionally the 'national' language and 'first official language' of the Republic of Ireland, some reject the label of 'minority language' (Ó Murchú, H., 2001). Furthermore, in June 2005, Irish was recognised



The principal role of theory in this study is analogous to that of a map: it guides investigation of the research question. It also guides the case-studies, through the elaboration of a theoretical framework which identifies distinct approaches to the relationship between language and development. In this section, I outline briefly the bodies of theory drawn upon in this study, and explain what they offer an investigation of the research question. As they comprise a central part of the study's methodology, the theoretical framework and typology of approaches to language and development are explained in the next section (see below).

Studying the relationship between the Irish language and society involves consideration of the discipline of macro-sociolinguistics,<sup>11</sup> which includes, among others, theories on the links between language and culture, and between language and cognition; theories of minority language rights and of language policy, language management and language planning.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on macro-sociolinguistics contributes to realising the principal

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as an official working language of the European Union (Ó Muirí, 2005), a status not granted to other languages commonly referred to as 'minority'. The term 'lesser-used' was first used by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages due to the preference of some speakers of Irish and of Catalan, which with over seven million speakers is numerically superior to state languages such as Danish or Finnish (EBLUL, 2000). 'Minoritised' is also used, a term which is perceived as more dynamic and less defeatist than 'minority' (see, for instance, Ó hÍfearnáin, 2006: 9). See also the useful discussion by Grenoble & Whaley, 2006: 13–16. Despite its limitations, I have chosen 'minority language' in this work as it is already widely used.

11 'Sociolinguistics' is the study of the relationship between language and society. It has roots in both sociology and linguistics, and is a very broad discipline. 'Macro-sociolinguistics' and 'micro-sociolinguistics' are two main categories into which sociolinguistics may be divided. 'Micro-sociolinguistics' examines the changes under which languages go in relation to a number of social variables (for instance, social class or education). These changes are tracked in elements such as grammar, syntax, phonology or vocabulary. This part of sociolinguistics is not the concern of the present study. 'Macro-sociolinguistics' covers broader issues relating to the state or status of a language or languages in a society: language policy and language planning are the most obvious manifestations of this, and they are of central concern to this study (Coulmas, 1998).

12 These concepts are discussed in Chapter Four.

objective, i.e. investigating and ultimately answering the research question, because it guides an examination of one of the two variables, the Irish language. By drawing attention to the links between language and cultural identity, macro-sociolinguistics provides guidance to understanding the claim that promoting Irish can have positive psychological results, through the affirmation of cultural and linguistic rights, through the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, or through revitalising the language in a range of social domains through language management. Turning to theories of macro-sociolinguistics in the case of Irish also highlights the broader failure of scholarship in general to engage with the social, economic and cultural implications of language shift in the Irish context.

The study also considers the theoretical basis of the other variable contained in the research question, socio-economic development. Development as an academic discipline has traditionally been associated with economic growth, modernisation and industrialisation of the 'Third World'. It has been challenged by a variety of perspectives and is now generally accepted to be broader than merely boosting national growth rates (Dutt, 2002: xii). However, what else the concept involves is far from universally accepted, as 'development' means very different things to different people. Martinussen (1997) analyses it through the triad of state, society and market. Others have argued that development comprises a more complex mix including issues as varied as poverty, empowerment, civil society, gender, environment, globalisation and, more recently, culture (Kingsbury, 2004; Remenyi, 2004). There is little consensus, however, about what precisely constitutes 'development' or which elements should be prioritised in this mix, and it remains a highly contested concept. The contested nature of development is a central theme of this book, as reflected in its title, and I discuss it in more detail in Chapter Four.

As the 'theoretical heritage' of contemporary development theory lies in other areas of the social sciences – predominantly economics and sociology (Martinussen, 1997: 18) – I also investigate the underlying assumptions about language and development contained in these founding disciplines. The contribution of political economy is also considered. 'Political economy' has been described as 'the interaction between economics and politics' (Lane & Ersson, 1997: 1, cited in Kirby, 2002: 118). However, as Kirby points

out, it is a broad term which encompasses various schools of political economy. Dutt concurs with this view, and presents a concept which ‘includes within it a range of approaches to the subject, rather than confining its attention to the single, unified, monolithic methodological approach of neoclassical economics’ (2002: xi). Wilber (1996: xvi) emphasises non-economic elements such as social structures and cultural values while Strange (1994: 25) stresses the concept of power. Drawing upon political economy, therefore, facilitates a broader consideration of the dynamic interrelationship between economic, social and political forces and the influence of such a nexus on development. The next section explains the study’s methodology and the relationship between theory and method throughout.

#### 4. Methodology

This study is predominantly qualitative in its perspective, because most of the data gathered is not amenable to quantification or statistical analysis (some statistical evidence is presented but this quantitative element is fairly small). The focus is more firmly on meanings and contexts and on an attempt to explain a phenomenon, i.e. the influence of the promotion of the Irish language on Ireland’s socio-economic development. There are two principal aspects to the methodology: elaboration of a theoretical framework and the use of case-studies.

##### *Elaboration of theoretical framework*

A central part of this study’s methodology is the elaboration of a typology of approaches to language and development based on a variety of theoretical foundations. Attention to several bodies of theory is necessary because of the diverse theoretical foundations of both development studies and of the study of language and the broad variety of ways in which one variable could

influence the other. Therefore, contributions from economics, sociology, development studies, political economy and sociolinguistics are considered. In the case of each body of theory, I seek to uncover key assumptions about the interrelationship between language and development. Based on the findings, I elaborate a typology of three over-arching approaches to language and development:

1. The minority language promotion approach;
2. The socio-cultural development approach;
3. The economic growth and modernisationist approach.

The study goes on to investigate the adequacy of each of the three approaches in explaining the link between language and development. Concluding that none of the three approaches alone could explain adequately the relationship, I present the concept of a linguistic political economy of development, in order to facilitate an analysis of the influence of language on the political economy of development, that is, the ways in which civil society, state and market interact to achieve developmental goals.<sup>13</sup> Drawing on sociolinguistics ensures that the social functions and meanings of language are kept in focus. The insights from political economy ensure that the relationships between market, state and civil society are examined and their implications for development considered. The contributions from development studies allow consideration of issues of wider social transformation and change. The theoretical approach of the linguistic political economy of development guides the remainder of the study and represents the integration of theory, practice and method. It is a key methodological tool and facilitates an investigation of how – in a number of settings – social, political, economic and linguistic actors interact in order to achieve developmental outcomes. Such a framework has never before been elaborated and used in the Irish case and as such, it is an original contribution, both to the theoretical literature and to an analysis of the Irish language.

13 The concept of 'civil society' is considered in Chapter Four.

*Case-studies*

The role of case-studies in the study as a whole is to investigate the research question by comparing contrasting cases of understandings of the relationship between language and development in practice. The case-studies also illustrate the utility of the linguistic political economy of development concept, as it helps to draw out the tensions between the various approaches to language and development which exist in a variety of settings in Ireland.

I have compiled the case-studies through a combination of interviews with key participants and document analysis (see below). Maximum variation sampling was employed to ensure that data was gathered from the broadest selection of participants possible. The case-studies were also influenced by an emergent design or 'snowball' approach to sampling, where one research participant or setting leads to another (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 56–62). The participants can be classified as follows: employees of language promotion organisations, local and national; employees of local authorities; community representatives; representatives from business, local and national; employees of developmental organisations.

*Methods of data collection*

Two principal methods were used to gather data: interviews and document analysis. The interviews<sup>14</sup> followed a semi-structured format, with questions based on themes associated with the research question and theoretical framework. Therefore, each interview attempted to elucidate the participant's views on the language-development link and to situate them in the typology of approaches to language and development. The interviews

14 Most of the interviews were conducted personally with the participants in their natural setting. Some were conducted by email or telephone due to restrictions of access. This latter category is indicated as 'personal communications' in the text and references. Interviews conducted anonymously are not listed. Interviewees whose identities are not revealed have been given false names; these are in block capitals, for instance SEÁN.

also provided empirical evidence of how the influence of Irish on socio-economic development was viewed in a variety of settings, thereby contributing to the investigation of the research question.

In addition to interviews, several types of primary and secondary documents were analysed in this study.<sup>15</sup> The primary sources included: statistical information about speakers of Irish; legislation relevant to the Irish language and the Gaeltacht; state language policy documents; policy documents from the Irish language voluntary sector; surveys of public attitudes to Irish; policy documents on local development; statistics on the socio-economic development profile of each area; policy documents of local authorities; policy documents of state development organisations for the Gaeltacht; state policy documents on national development; and journalistic sources from print and broadcast media. The primary sources contributed in a variety of ways to the investigation of the research question. They provided a great deal of empirical data about aspects of the two variables of language and socio-economic development (for instance, in the case of census returns on Irish or local socio-economic development indices). However, they also illustrated assumptions about the language-development link which could then be considered in terms of the typology of approaches (for instance, in central or local government documents).

The principal secondary sources consulted were reports of government-appointed commissions on national language policy; historical contributions by Irish authors to the debate on the Irish language and Ireland's development; theoretical material from macro-sociolinguistics, sociology, economics, political economy, cultural studies and development studies; and general histories of Ireland. Other sources included historical accounts of the status of Irish and policy towards it, analyses of Irish in education and local histories of case-study areas. The secondary sources also contributed in a variety of ways to the study's principal objective of investigating the extent to which the Irish language positively influences Ireland's development. For instance, the historical contributions by Irish authors provided

15 Primary and secondary sources are distinguished according to the recommendations of UC Berkeley, 2005.

the basis for the research question itself, while the theoretical material, as stated at above, facilitated the elaboration of a typology of approaches to language and development and the theoretical framework of the linguistic political economy of development.

### *Data analysis and presentation of results*

Following transcription of interviews, I classified participants' answers according to a number of categories: general information about geographical area; background/historical perspective; institutional information; reflection of triad of civil society, market and state; reflection of three theoretical approaches to language and development. The data was interpreted in the light of both the research question and the theoretical approaches, and the results presented in narrative text. I employed a similar approach while analysing documents. The document was classified according to the same categories as above, with the additional category of statistical information (particularly relevant in the case of census returns and information about the industrial operations of *Údarás na Gaeltachta*). Once again, the data was interpreted in the light of the research question and theoretical approaches, and presented in narrative text form or, in the case of statistics, in tables.

## 5. Use of Irish and Other Languages in Text

Of the interviews undertaken for this research, most were conducted in Irish, as this was the normal everyday language of many of the informants. I was acquainted with many of the participants through my work as a researcher on Irish language policy, and to speak English to them would have been perceived as rude and inappropriate. Much of the secondary source material is also in Irish only, and there is a small amount of material

in other languages. In the text, extracts from interviews and source material are given in their original language, and a translation to English is provided in a footnote. The translation is my own unless otherwise indicated. In the case of bilingual (Irish-English) publications, the English version is used in the text.

There have long been tensions between the types of Irish spoken in everyday life and the written, standardised language. It is not relevant to this research to discuss these tensions in detail, but a brief explanation is required because many of the Irish language extracts in this book are not written in the standardised form. In some cases, this is simply because they date from before 1945 when the written standard was agreed (Ó Murchú, M., 1985: 66). However, in the case of contemporary interviews with Gaeltacht participants, I attempt to reproduce the speech as authentically as possible in writing. Therefore, the main features of the local dialects are reproduced, and where English lexical borrowings or grammatical structures occur, they are left unamended. Because Irish is a threatened language which is not used widely in public domains, it is to be expected that there would be considerable divergence between the written and spoken standards, and that linguistic borrowings, interference and code-switching would occur (for a further discussion, see Ó Dónaill, 2000; Nic Pháidín, 2003; Nic Eoin, 2005: 50–92).<sup>16</sup> Where it is not necessary to reveal a participant's geographical location and dialect of spoken Irish, anonymised interviews are standardised.

Finally, a note about the use of Gaeltacht placenames. In 2004, the then Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív, signed the Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order into law, which gave legal status for the first time to the original Irish version of each placename. The Order stems from the Official Languages Act, 2003 (see Chapter Two). For certain official purposes, English translations of Gaeltacht placenames

16 The terms 'borrowing', 'interference' and code-switching' are closely related and all refer to situations where elements from one language are inserted into the grammatical frame of another language (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 228; Mackey, 2000: 40–1). All are common in spoken Irish, particularly in the forms of the language used in the Gaeltacht.



no longer have any legal standing. This does not interfere with the right of individuals, for instance, private business, to use the English names in signage, etc. (DCRGA, 2004a). However, as these are the original historical names used in the Gaeltacht, they are the only versions used in this text. When I coined geographical terms for the sake of convenience for this research (for instance, ‘South Conamara Gaeltacht’), they are in English because no common Irish equivalent is used in the Gaeltacht.

## 6. Outline of Study

Chapter Two examines the current state of the Irish language, in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, in particular in terms of its legal status and communities of speakers. It is necessary to provide a context for the following chapters, in particular the case-studies of the Gaeltacht, Galway City and West Belfast.

As stated above, Chapter Three surveys the historical arguments that Irish has had a broader role to play in society than as a code of communication alone, but that it effects social, cultural and economic change in a variety of ways. In so doing, it provides the basis for the research question, the investigation of which is the central objective of this study. Chapter Four’s main purpose is to elaborate a theoretical framework through which the link between language and development can be understood, by developing a typology of approaches to language and development. This framework and typology guide the remainder of the study.

Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight are case-studies. Their role in the study is to provide empirical evidence which can be used to provide answers to the research question. The first three deal with the Gaeltacht, examined in detail because it comprises the only remaining geographical areas where Irish has some dominance as a community language (although this position is threatened). Chapter Five examines linguistic vitality and socio-economic development in the Gaeltacht. Because of the internal

variations from one area to the next, in linguistic as well as in socio-economic terms, it is important that the Gaeltacht is not presented as a monolingual, peripheral territory. Chapter Six examines three areas in detail: Na Déise (County Waterford), Múscraí (County Cork) and South Conamara (County Galway). In each case, the research question is investigated by examining the ways in which the language–development link is played out, and the ways in which it is understood by key local participants (in terms of the approaches to language and development outlined in Chapter Four). Chapter Seven examines Údarás na Gaeltachta in detail, as an example of a state institution for the Gaeltacht. The changing nature of Údarás na Gaeltachta is considered, as are its links with the other state institutions for Irish and the Gaeltacht. This case-study examines how the language-development link is understood and operationalised by Údarás and how it contributes to the investigation of the research question.

Chapter Eight examines the links between Irish and development in the urban contexts of West Belfast and Galway City. As the research question suggests a link between promoting Irish and the country's socio-economic development, it is important to consider how it is operationalised in areas where Irish is no longer the dominant language. Finally, Chapter Nine draws further on both the case-studies and the theoretical framework and highlights the findings of the research, future research directions and implications for policy.