

Attitudes Toward Bilingualism in Ireland

Maria R. Coady
University of Colorado

Abstract

The Irish Republic has developed and implemented language maintenance and language revival policies since gaining independence from British rule in 1922. At that time, the new Irish government envisioned a bilingual state in which both Irish and English would be used (Ó Riagáin, 1997), and language policies were created to support that goal. Such policies were implemented using schools as the primary vehicle to maintain and revive the Irish language. As a result, two distinct forms of schooling were differentiated for language majority, English-speaking students. The first involves schools in which English is used as the primary medium of instruction, with Irish taught as a compulsory subject in school. Second are immersion schools, known as *Gaelscoileanna*, in which Irish is used as the medium of instruction apart from the teaching of English.

This paper explores students' and parents' attitudes toward bilingualism in Ireland among students who participate in these two different types of schools. The study utilized an adapted questionnaire from Cazabon, Lambert, and Hall (1993). Qualitative research findings from focus group interviews with students supplement findings from the questionnaire. Findings suggest that qualitative data provide important insight to understanding the complexity of attitudes toward bilingualism.

Introduction

In 1922 the Republic of Ireland¹ was established after 26 counties of Ireland gained independence from British rule. In the Irish Constitution, the people of the newly formed Republic recognized the two languages that formed their society: Irish² and English. Despite the fact that Irish was in a dismal state, being spoken by only 18%³ of the population located principally in the western periphery called the *Gaeltacht*, Irish was granted status as the first official national language (Ó Riagáin, 1997).

The government generated Irish language policies and programs to support the Irish language using the schools as a primary vehicle for policy implementation. By definition, schools located within the Gaeltacht areas were already Irish medium schools. Therefore, government policies directed toward Irish language use in the Republic were differentiated between first language “maintenance” efforts in the Gaeltacht region and second language “revival” efforts in the *Galltacht* or English-speaking areas (Ó Riagáin, 1997). For native English-speaking students, Irish was to be taught, at a minimum, as a subject in school set forth by the curriculum established by the centralized Department of Education and Science.

Thus, two models of schooling emerged through which to teach the Irish language to English-speaking students. The first model of schooling was to teach through the medium of English, with Irish as a compulsory school subject. The majority of schools (regular schools) taught Irish under this model. The second model used Irish as the medium of instruction in schools either partially or fully. Such schools offered an immersion⁴ education through Irish for these children. As added incentive for all Irish schools (AIS), the government offered extra funds in the form of a “capitation grant” for those pupils who were taught through the medium of Irish (Hindley, 1990; Ó Riagáin, 1997), and teachers who taught through Irish were paid an additional stipend. In short, language policies were created to foster bilingualism through the education system; students were to become competent in both Irish and English.

Growth in Irish Medium Schools

By the early 1940s, the number of AIS outside of the Gaeltacht reached a high of more than 250, representing approximately 4% of total primary level national schools. While the intent of the schools was on language revival, the methods used to teach were viewed as traditional and rigid (Ó Riagáin, 1997). Teachers focused on Irish grammar, for example, and placed less emphasis on oral ability. Teachers’ competence was based almost exclusively on how well they could teach Irish (Cummins, 1978), as opposed to their teaching ability and competence in other subject areas. Consequently, public support for these schools and for the Irish language in general began to lessen (Coolahan, 1981; Cummins, 1978; Ó Riagáin, 1997). A dramatic decline of AIS began, then, in the 1950s and continued through to the 1970s. Table 1 displays this decrease in number of AIS from 1940 to 1970.

Table 1

Number of all Irish Primary Schools 1940-70 (adapted from Ó Riagáin, 1997)

School year	Number of all Irish medium primary schools in English-speaking areas	Irish medium primary schools in English-speaking areas as % of total primary schools in Ireland
1940-41	255	4.9
1950-51	200	4.2
1960-61	183	3.9
1970-71	24	0.6

With public attitudes toward the language and language policy discouraging, the government began a series of policy realignments in the early 1970s. First, the government recognized that schools alone would be unable to meet the revival goals originally put forth. Consequently, various government bodies were established to promote and expand the Irish language beyond the school setting. One such institution was the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (CILAR), which was created to gauge the extent of public support for Irish and Irish language policy. CILAR conducted its first comprehensive survey in 1973. The committee's report confirmed that a large portion of the population was dissatisfied with the way Irish was taught in the schools. A second policy shift occurred with the government's elimination of the requirement of passing the compulsory Irish language paper in order to pass the secondary school Leaving Certificate examination. Thus, the role of the education system was de-emphasized, and language policy became increasingly decentralized.

The future for Irish medium schools, however, was not entirely bleak. Concurrent with this shift away from compulsory Irish examinations and decline in Irish medium schools, a growing number of "new" Irish medium schools, or *Gaelscoileanna*, began. Such schools were distinct from the existing AIS that focused on Irish language revival. Ó Riagáin (1997) explained:

The new generation of all Irish schools were founded in response to parent groups rather than state pressure and they are, by and large, additions to the school system rather than reconversions of the existing schools to bilingual teaching. Thus, any suggestion that they represent a reversal of trends needs considerable qualification. They are more accurately seen as the start of a substantially new trend. (p. 24)

The number of Irish medium schools began a gradual increase in the early 1970s until their substantial growth throughout the 1980s. Ó Laoire (1995) attributed the growth in the 1980s to parents witnessing the advantages of immersion schools, which were not necessarily linguistic. He noted smaller classes and more equipment. Table 2 displays the increase in number of new Irish medium schools (or *Gaelscoileanna*), beginning in the early 1970s. Currently, 125 primary level non-Gaeltacht Irish medium schools exist throughout the Republic of Ireland (Gaelscoileanna, 2001) with continued growth expected for the future.

Table 2

Number of Primary Level Irish Medium Schools in the English-Speaking Areas of Ireland (Republic only) 1975–2000

School year	Number of Gaelscoileanna	Total number of national primary (ordinary) schools	Gaelscoileanna as percentage of total schools
1975-76	14	3,497	0.4
1980-81	20	3,295	0.6
1985-86	46	3,270	1.4
1990-91	64	3,235	2.0
1995-96	91	3,201	2.8
1999-00	114	3,172	3.6

Sources: Department of Education and Science, 2001; Gaelscoileanna, 2001

Cummins (1978) also described these new Irish medium schools as qualitatively different from their predecessors. He noted that the new wave of schools consisted of a large degree of parental participation and support, as well as participation in national Irish cultural events. Cummins noted further that the new Irish medium teachers were greatly concerned with being associated with the “sound educational principles” of immersion education and that those principles were incorporated into the school curriculum. Those sound educational principles included more research-informed instructional strategies for teaching through the medium of Irish to English-speaking children.

In 1973 a voluntary, national organization, also known as Gaelscoileanna, was established to support the development of Irish medium schools. The purpose of Gaelscoileanna was to disseminate information and to support parents who wished to establish a new Irish medium school. The scope of the organization remains broad, ranging from acting as an intermediary between the schools and the Department of Education and Science to organizing in-

service courses for teachers of Irish medium schools. Gaelscoileanna also tracks the growth or decline in the number of Irish immersion programs.

Despite the growth in Irish medium schools, the teaching of Irish as a compulsory school subject in English-medium schools continues to be debated by both teachers and parents alike (“In Touch,” 1997a; “In Touch,” 1997b). Many teachers who teach Irish as a subject in school believe that the amount of time dedicated to the language should be reduced in favor of more time spent on computers and science, subjects considered to be more useful. In fact, the Department of Education and Science’s new primary school curriculum introduced in 1999 reflects a new emphasis on science in the primary schools (Department of Education and Science, 1999).

Attitudes and Language

As a theoretical construct, attitudes are said to contain various dimensions. The dimensions of attitudes are grounded in the area of social psychology, which have been identified by researchers as cognition, affect, and behavior (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Shaw & Wright, 1967). Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) developed a model of attitude, depicted below. According to the researchers, the cognitive element of attitude concerns perceptions, concepts, and beliefs regarding the attitude object. For example, a stated belief about the importance of Irish, its value in transmitting Irish culture, and its use in immersion education may all contribute to a favorable attitude.

Three component models of attitude:

1. Measurable Independent Variables
2. Intervening Variables
3. Measurable Dependent Variables

The second affective component includes feelings toward the object of the attitude, such as the Irish language itself. Affect may include love or dislike of the language or anxiety over learning the language. Cognition and affect are not necessarily in harmony with one another. That is, a person may express a positive attitude toward bilingual education, but may covertly have negative feelings toward it. The third factor is the action or behavior component. This aspect of attitude concerns a predisposition or intention to behave in a certain way. For example, a person with a positive attitude toward the Irish language may send their child to an Irish immersion school or may take evening language classes to advance his or her knowledge of the language. The researchers suggest that evaluation of the affective component has been central to the understanding of attitude.

In Rosenberg and Hovland’s model, the three dimensions or intervening variables of attitude are displayed along the same plane. Shaw (1967), however, argues that the nature of the three dimensions of attitude is not arranged as Rosenberg and Hovland suggest. Rather, Shaw defines attitude as, “A set of

affective reactions toward the attitude object, derived from the concepts or beliefs that the individual has concerning the object, and predisposing the individual to behave in a certain manner toward the attitude object” (p. 13).

While Shaw’s theory supports the three dimensions of attitude described by Rosenberg and Hovland, he rejects the notion that all three components work on the same plane and converge into an overall attitude. Shaw has found that neither the beliefs that the individual accepts about the object nor the action are a part of the attitude itself. Shaw suggests that the overriding dimension of attitude is affect. He further asserts that affective responses more accurately constitute the attitude, while the cognitive element underlies an evaluation of the attitude. Finally, Shaw suggests that it is the attitude itself that predisposes an individual to behave or act in a certain way toward the attitude object.

More recently, researchers such as Gardner and Baker have teased out the various dimensions of attitude. Gardner’s (1985) work in the area of social psychology specifically explores attitude toward second language acquisition. He suggests that measuring attitude is more straightforward for attitude objects or referents than it is for abstract ideas. Using Gardner’s example, attitudes toward French-speaking people are more specific than attitudes toward ethnocentrism, for example, as the referent is more concrete.

According to Gardner, attitude is only one component of motivation, where motivation is also comprised of effort and desire to learn. In itself, motivation entails a behavioral aspect, which in turn may prompt an action. Gardner’s theory of attitude is more closely aligned with that of Shaw, where affect is the major dimension of attitude, and behavior or motivation to learn is viewed as a result of positive affect and attitude.

Similarly, Baker (1992) differentiates the various facets of attitudes that are related to language. For example, Baker suggests that attitudes can be measured as attitudes toward a particular language itself (as with Irish); toward language groups (Irish speakers); toward language use, features, cultural associations, or learning; and toward bilingual education, either as process or product. Each of these distinct components can yield a different dimension of an overall attitude.

Language attitude can be measured using a variety of techniques, either quantitative or qualitative in nature (Baker, 1992; Fowler, 1993; Henerson, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987). These techniques may include surveys, document analyses, interviews, case studies, and autobiographies. Among the most common measures of attitude are surveys. Surveys can employ a variety of measures including Likert, Guttman, or Semantic Differential Technique. A person’s expressed attitude may not match his or her covert attitude. Attitude surveys, which tend to measure surface-level feelings, do not always capture that incongruity. Some of the other research techniques, such as interviews and autobiographies, may reveal deeper level attitudes

and actual behaviors. Thus, the presence of an object evokes either a favorable or unfavorable response or attitude to an object.

Irish Language Attitude Surveys

Created in 1970 to research the extent of public support for Irish language policy, CILAR conducted its first national survey in 1973. The study revealed public dissatisfaction over language policy directed toward Irish being taught in the schools. As a result of that study, Irish was removed as a compulsory subject for leaving certificate examinations, and the language ceased to be a requirement for entry into public service in 1973 (Benton, 1986; Ó Riagáin, 1997). Similar surveys were subsequently conducted in 1983 and 1993 by the Linguistics Institute of Ireland (ITÉ), which sought to ascertain changes in attitude over time.

In addition to attitudinal data, each of the surveys conducted by CILAR and the ITÉ included other language-related items, such as self-reported ability to speak and read Irish. The three surveys also contained a section on attitudes toward the use of Irish, as well as attitudes toward Irish as an ethnic symbol, toward the future of the language, and toward public support of the language. The 1993 survey was expanded to explore other attitudinal questions, including the perceptions of parents' attitude to their children learning Irish at school.

Of relevance to the present study, the CILAR and ITÉ studies specifically addressed various aspects of attitudes toward bilingualism. In particular, two questions regarding attitudes toward bilingualism were explored in the CILAR and ITÉ studies. The first question explored the personal inclination to speak Irish in an ideal, fully bilingual country. The question was presented as "if everyone in Ireland could speak Irish and English equally well, which would you prefer to speak?" Table 3 shows those findings from each of the three surveys.

Table 3

Personal Inclination to Speak Irish in a Fully Bilingual Country

If everyone in Ireland could speak Irish and English equally well, which would you prefer to speak?	1973	1983	1993
English only (%)	25	18	25
Less Irish than English (%)	17	17	14
Irish and English equally (%)	38	44	39
More Irish than English (%)	11	9	11
Irish only (%)	9	12	9

Source: Ó Riagáin (1997)

As seen in Table 3, there were five possible responses to the introduction question. Combining both the “English only” and “Irish only” responses, approximately one-third of the population would not support a bilingual country in each of the survey years. Approximately two-thirds of those surveyed would support a bilingual Ireland to varying degrees (less Irish than English, Irish and English equally, and more Irish than English).

A second measure of language use and bilingualism was attitudes toward the interpersonal use of the language. Statements regarding interpersonal use of Irish were introduced by the question, “Which of the following would apply to you?” Respondents were asked to answer either “yes” or “no” to each of the six statements. Findings of the percentage of respondents in agreement with each statement are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Attitudes Toward Interpersonal Use of Irish

Statement	1973	1983	1993
I am committed to using Irish as much as I can. (%)	11	13	19
I will always speak Irish if spoken to in Irish. (%)	34	40	39
I wish I could use the Irish I know more often. (%)	41	43	45
I do not like to speak Irish with people who may know it better than I do. (%)	45	59	45
I do not like to begin a conversation in Irish. (%)	51	69	57
I do not like people speaking Irish when others are present who do not know Irish. (%)	59	72	60

Source: Ó Riagáin (1997)

As Ó Riagáin has noted, the items that relate to personal initiation of Irish evoked nearly identical responses in the years 1973 and 1993, thus reversing negative trends that appeared in the 1983 survey. However, he found that there were no statistically significant differences, among the three other statements that explored willingness to use Irish more often, commitment to respond in Irish, and commitment to use as much Irish as one can.

While these two questions explored various dimensions of attitudes toward bilingualism, the three surveys were large in scale, targeted to the general public, and did not include specific subpopulations. The present study, then, sought to explore attitudes toward bilingualism in Ireland targeting students of various educational programs (Gaelscoileanna or English-medium schools) and their parents.

Attitudes Toward Bilingualism Among Students and Their Parents

The present study consisted of adapting an attitudinal survey developed by Cazabon et al. (1993), whose survey explored attitudes toward bilingualism among two different groups of school children. In Cazabon et al.'s survey, primary school students enrolled in the Amigos program, a dual language program located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, were administered the survey, along with a control group of students who were not enrolled in any formal language learning environment. In the dual language Amigos program, half of the students were limited English proficient (LEP) Hispanics, and half were non-Hispanic English-speaking students. The students enrolled in this dual language program were taught with Spanish as the medium of instruction for 50% of the time, while English was used as the medium of instruction for the other 50% of the time. The goal, then, of the program is for all students to complete their primary education as bilingual in both Spanish and English.

In total, three groups of students participated in the Cazabon study: (a) English-speaking students in the Amigos program, (b) Spanish-speaking students in the Amigos program, and (c) English-speaking students (controls for Spanish-speaking students were not available). Students were administered the survey at the end of Grade 3 and were approximately 9 years old.

The Cazabon et al. survey consisted of eight questions that measured attitudes toward bilingualism (Appendix 1). Included in the survey were statements such as, "It is important to know another language to learn about other people." Students were asked to answer either no/never/I disagree, seldom/not very often/once in a while, usually/most of the time, or yes/always/I agree. Each of these responses was analyzed using a four-step scale ranging from 1 for "no/disagree" to 4 for "yes/I agree." The mean score was calculated for each response and group and *F* ratios were calculated.

The results of Cazabon et al.'s survey indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among the control English-speaking groups' responses and the Amigos English-speaking group of students. Based on the mean scores calculated for each question of the survey, it appeared that the English-speaking students in the Amigos program had a more positive attitude toward being bilingual than did those in the English control group. However, Spanish-speaking Amigos students had the strongest overall attitude toward bilingualism among the three groups. With respect to language use, both English-speaking groups indicated that they used English outside of school. However, Spanish-speaking Amigos students indicated that they use both languages outside of school. It was not clear from the Cazabon study in which language the survey was distributed to the three groups of students.

The present study, administered in English to students in Ireland, adapted Cazabon et al.'s survey instrument in several ways. First, the adapted survey was adapted for relevance in the Irish context. The minority language in the

survey was changed from Spanish to Irish. For example, “learning Spanish is important” was changed to “learning Irish is important.” Second, instructions and terminology were developed to reflect the use of Irish English instead of American English. For example, in the instructions, Irish students were asked to “tick” the appropriate box. Also, “learning two languages will help you get better grades” was changed to “learning two languages will help you get better marks” for Irish students. There was one oversight in this regard that became evident during the focus group interviewing. The statement “learning two languages will make you smarter than learning only one language” would have been more appropriate in the Irish context if the word “smarter” had been changed to “brighter.” As a result, this question was excluded from further analysis for being potentially unreliable. Third, the section on language usage in the Cazabon et al. survey was expanded to include a total of four statements for the Irish students. The original Cazabon et al. survey explored language use by asking only two questions. The adapted survey was changed as follows:

Table 5

Adaptation of Cazabon et al.’s Survey to the Present Study

Amigos survey	Irish survey (adapted)
Do you speak mostly English with other kids outside of school?	I speak mostly English with other children outside of school.
	I speak mostly English with other children in school.
Do you speak mostly Spanish with other kids outside of school?	I speak mostly Irish with other children outside of school.
	I speak mostly Irish with other children in school.

The change from questions in the original to statements in the present study made the Irish survey more consistent, containing exclusively statements. The adapted survey also asked students about habitual language usage while in school.

Finally, the survey sample was expanded to include parents of the groups of students who participated in this study. The surveys distributed to parents, however, only contained the first eight questions regarding social value of bilingualism and personal value of bilingualism. The parental surveys did not ask questions about language use in or outside of school.

Sample Sites

The Irish surveys were administered to three different groups of students and their parents. The sample consisted of students in fourth class (equivalent to fifth grade students in the United States) from three different schools. All of the schools were located in the same town located in the southwest of Ireland and approximately 30 miles away from a Gaeltacht area. The town was located near the ocean and within close proximity to a seaside resort. School A was a co-educational Irish immersion school and is relatively new within the community, having been established approximately six years prior. Irish was the primary language spoken in the school and used as the medium of instruction, with the exception of English. School B was an all-girls national school located just outside of the town. The girls in the fourth class at School B not only took Irish as a compulsory school subject, but were also participants in a pilot study on learning French as an additional school subject. School C was an all-boys national school located in the town and close to School A. The boys in School C also took compulsory classes of Irish as a school subject.

Methodology

Teachers distributed the surveys to the students. Students were asked to return the completed surveys early the following week, and follow up focus group interviews were conducted with the students at that time. Due to limitations of time and ongoing school testing, focus group interviews were not conducted with students from School C. As part of the data collection, interviews were also conducted with the teacher from School B and the principal of School A. Fieldnotes were taken during all interviews.

Quantitative Findings

Data from the three groups were analyzed from the survey using ANOVA. The level of significance was set at $p = .05$. The data below displays the results of the ANOVA for the 12 statements in the student survey.

As Table 6 reveals, the students from School A had the highest mean response for each of the questions in the areas of social value of bilingualism. However, the same students did not have the highest mean response to statements regarding the personal value of bilingualism. The only items that showed a statistically significant difference among the three groups were three items in the habitual use section of the survey, statements 9, 10, and 12. Question 11 was not statistically significant, indicating that, even for students enrolled in an Irish medium school, Irish was not the language used most widely outside of school.

Table 6

ANOVA for Students

	School A Immersion	School B All Girls	School C All Boys	F Ratio	Sig.
SOCIAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM					
1. It is important to know another language to learn about other people.	3.6923 (13)	3.5000 (12)	3.0000 (13)	2.661	.084
2. I enjoy meeting and listening to other people who speak another language.	3.6154 (13)	3.1667 (12)	3.0769 (13)	1.465	.245
3. Learning Irish is important so that I can talk with Irish-speaking people.	3.8462 (13)	3.5000 (12)	3.1538 (13)	2.965	.065
4. Learning Irish is important so that I can meet and talk with different kinds of people.	3.5385 (13)	3.0000 (12)	3.0000 (13)	1.485	.241
PERSONAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM					
5. Learning two languages will make you smarter than learning only one language	—	—	—	—	—
6. Learning two languages will help you do better in school.	3.5385 (13)	3.9091 (11)	3.5000 (11)	1.122	.338
7. Learning two languages will help you get better marks.	3.2308 (13)	3.5000 (12)	3.4545 (11)	.268	.766
8. Knowing two languages will help you get a better job when you grow up.	3.3077 (13)	3.0909 (11)	3.7273 (11)	1.327	.279
HABITUAL USAGE					
9. I speak mostly English with other children <i>outside</i> of school.	3.3846 (13)	3.7500 (12)	4.0000 (13)	3.268	.050*
10. I speak mostly English with other children <i>in</i> school.	1.1538 (13)	3.9167 (12)	3.6923 (13)	92.590	.000*
11. I speak mostly Irish with other children <i>outside</i> of school.	1.5385 (13)	1.2500 (12)	1.0769 (13)	1.992	.152
12. I speak mostly Irish with other children <i>in</i> school.	4.0000 (13)	1.2500 (12)	1.0769 (13)	131.9	.000*

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of students responding to this statement.

The second series of analyses was conducted for the parents of the students whose children were enrolled in each of the three schools. Again, parents were not asked questions of usage. Their responses were therefore limited to social and personal values of bilingualism. The ANOVA for parents is displayed in Table 7.

In general, the parents of students who attended School A, the Irish medium school, had the highest mean scores in responses to both social and personal values of bilingualism. The only statement that indicated a statistically significant difference among the three groups was statement number 4. That statement revealed that parents of children enrolled in an Irish medium school felt most strongly that learning Irish would permit communication with different kinds of people.

Table 7

ANOVA for Parents

	School A Immersion	School B All Girls	School C All Boys	<i>F</i> Ratio	Sig.
SOCIAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM					
1. It is important to know another language to learn about other people.	3.5385 (13)	3.2500 (12)	3.2500 (13)	.430	.654
2. I enjoy meeting and listening to other people who speak another language.	3.0000 (13)	3.2500 (12)	3.1818 (11)	.348	.709
3. Learning Irish is important so that I can talk with Irish-speaking people.	3.4615 (13)	3.0909 (11)	2.8333 (12)	1.383	.265
4. Learning Irish is important so that I can meet and talk with different kinds of people.	3.3846 (13)	3.0000 (12)	2.0833 (12)	5.863	.006*
PERSONAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM					
5. Learning two languages will make you smarter than learning only one language.	—	—	—	—	—
6. Learning two languages will help you do better in school.	3.6154 (13)	3.3636 (11)	3.0909 (11)	1.070	.355
7. Learning two languages will help you get better marks.	3.3077 (13)	3.4167 (12)	2.8889 (9)	.973	.389
8. Knowing two languages will help you get a better job when you grow up.	3.3846 (13)	3.2500 (12)	3.3636 (11)	.066	.396

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of parents responding to this statement.

Like the Cazabon et al. study, which was conducted among students participating in the Amigos dual language program, the present study found no statistically significant differences among groups of school children with respect to either social value or personal value of bilingualism. The present study did, however, find some important difference is habitual use of the language—namely in the area of language use within school. This is an expected finding; language use among students enrolled in a full immersion program would differ from language use in a school setting in which the minority language was taught only as a school subject.

While the three groups all had positive attitudes toward bilingualism, the students participating in the Irish medium school generally had the highest mean scores for the statements regarding societal value of bilingualism. This would indicate that these students, as with the students in Cazabon et al.'s study, might be most conscious of the benefits of being bilingual. On the other hand, according to Gardner (1985) it is more difficult to measure abstract items than concrete referents in an attitudinal survey. Measuring attitudes toward being bilingual, then, is more complex than measuring, for example, attitudes toward the language or speakers of the language. Therefore, follow-up focus group interviews were conducted with the students of the survey in two out of the three schools. Findings from the qualitative data are presented below.

Qualitative Findings

Follow-up focus group interviews were conducted in the classrooms at two out of the three schools. The schools that participated were School A (Irish medium school) and School B (all girls national school). Students were asked their views of language use and the benefits of bilingualism. A list of questions posed to participants is found in Appendix 2.

The all girls national school, School B, consisted of 28 students in fourth class, roughly equivalent to fifth grade students in the United States. These students took Irish as a compulsory school subject and were also participants in a pilot study of French language learning. While the girls were learning two languages, their views of bilingualism and their views of Irish language learning in particular were strong. During the course of the focus group interview it became clear that the majority of the girls were interested in and enjoyed learning French (along with some other European majority languages) more than Irish. Their words were marked carefully in field notes:

Several of the girls brought up the point that they'd rather learn French, Italian, Spanish, and German (no other languages were mentioned). One girl said, "Because when you go to France, people speak French; In Spain people speak Spanish; in Italy people speak Italian, and in Germany, they speak German. But here in Ireland, people speak mostly English, and Irish is *useless*." (field notes, 1999, May 17)

This girl's words were echoed by many of her classmates. When asked the girls what they liked most about learning French, one girl who sat in the middle section of the class was most vocal. "We can use French," she began. "When we go to France we can speak French to people. When they come here we can talk to them also." When asked about using Irish in the Gaeltacht with Irish-speaking people, another girl replied, "Oh, in the shops you say 'hello' and 'how are you' and a few words about the weather, that's all."

In the teachers' room, the teachers of School B expressed their own opinions about why the students prefer French to Irish. One of the teachers stated, "I'd say they [the students] don't like Irish at all. But they love French." When asked why this might be the case, the teachers gave a variety of responses, including the students being able to use French and responding to the methods used to teach French. Specifically, the teachers felt that the girls enjoyed French more because the teacher who came to the school to teach French used videos and other engaging instructional aids. In addition, the focus of French classes was on conversation, as opposed to the grammar and writing/reading emphasis of Irish language learning. This appeared to impact the attitude of the girls in School B, who related bilingualism to French (Spanish, Italian, and German) and not to Irish.

In contrast, the students in the Irish medium school did not share the same views of language use with the girls in School B. School A was co-educational, and students were immersed in the Irish language throughout the school day; English was used only when taught as a school subject. The students of School A did not question the practicality of "using" Irish because the language was used every day in school as a medium of instruction. In the focus group interview, I spoke with a combined class of third- and fourth-year students, four of whom had been in the school since it first opened.

The class was asked about the benefits of bilingualism. Four of the students suggested that knowing two languages would be useful to talk to tourists; one suggested talking with people in the Gaeltacht, while another pointed out that knowing two languages is good so that others "can talk to us." The students in School B associated being bilingual with speaking Irish, in addition to other languages. They understood the relevance and benefits of bilingualism.

Both groups of students (Schools A and B) gave similar responses to the question of what they wanted to be when they grew up. Their answers included being a veterinarian, accountant, teacher, and solicitor. In addition, both groups of students unhesitatingly responded that being bilingual would be useful in any of these professions. Where they differed was in their association of bilingualism to specific languages. For the students of School A, being bilingual included Irish, which they observed as a useful medium of instruction in school. They also viewed the language as useful for communication with native Irish speakers. However, for the students of School B, Irish had little practical use, and they did not believe that being bilingual in Irish was either relevant or beneficial.

Discussion and Conclusion

Quantitative analysis of the survey instrument revealed no statistically significant differences among the three groups of students with respect to either personal value or social value of bilingualism. The only statistically significant difference was found in language use (habitual use) of Irish, which was expected, given the difference in mediums of instruction among the participating schools. Focus group interviewing elicited a difference among the groups in terms of attitudes toward being bilingual and use of Irish.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggest that both instrumental and integrative orientations affect language learning and motivation. The orientation is integrative when the student has a genuine interest in a specific cultural community and the intention of eventually being accepted into that group. Included are the appropriate behaviors that accompany acceptance into that language community. Instrumental orientation is characterized by the utility of the language and the potential to gain economic advantages and/or an increase social position through acquisition of that language.

Scholars of language motivation have suggested that integration orientation may be more important in successful second language acquisition than is instrumental orientation (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). However, in this study the students of School B, an English medium school, emphasized instrumental orientation and indicated that there was little need to use the language either in school, in the broader society, or for future job opportunities. Those students also did not align use of the language with native Irish speakers, despite the fact that the Gaeltacht was located within 30 miles of their town. Nor did they recognize the use of Irish on television, radio, and written on street signs and on the fronts of stores, schools, and public buildings. For students of School A, however, the language was immediately useful, specifically for communication and learning in school. Those students were able to connect ability in Irish to speaking with different people, including native Irish speakers, and to future job opportunities.

The small sample sizes among the groups preclude making inferences about attitudes toward bilingualism in the larger population. Notwithstanding, the findings are important for two reasons. First, the survey instrument, though limited in its scope, did not reveal significant differences that were evident in the follow up interviewing. Similarly, in the Cazabon et al. study, the instrument did not reveal statistically significant differences among groups for the same questions posed. Qualitative data therefore supplemented data obtained from survey instruments in the exploration of attitudes toward bilingualism.

Secondly, measuring attitudes toward bilingualism is a complex endeavor. As such, a wider array of methods and instruments that explore the complexities of bilingualism may be necessary. In the present study, for students learning Irish as a school subject, some degree of instrumental orientation appeared

absent with regard to their overall attitude toward bilingualism. On the other hand, students enrolled in the Irish immersion program related language use to the native Irish speaking communities.

Harris and Murtagh (1999) have found that Irish language learners who have integrative orientation toward learning the language and a positive attitude toward the language itself were more likely to be successful second language learners. MacMathuana (1996) supports the view that “the affective motivation whereby learners have a greater or lesser wish to be assimilated into the community of the target language is essentially lacking with regard to Irish” (p. 179). For linguists whose work it is to assess a language’s prospect for revival or even survival, creating opportunities for both instrumental and integrative orientation may be a useful area in which to dedicate language planning efforts.

Finally, because policy makers in Ireland had originally envisioned a bilingual state, assessing attitudes toward bilingualism is an endeavor worth continuing. This research supplements other aspects of attitude assessments, which includes attitudes toward learning Irish and toward the Irish language itself.

References

- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Benton, R. (1986). Schools as agents for language revitalisation in Ireland and New Zealand. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *Language and education in multilingual settings*. San Diego: College Hill.
- Cazabon, M., Lambert W., & Hall, G. (1993). *Two-way bilingual education: A progress report on the Amigos program. Research Report:7*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- Coolahan, J. (1981). *Irish education: Its history and structure*. Dublin: Mount Salus Press Limited.
- Cummins, J. (1978). Immersion programs: The Irish experience. *International Review of Education* 24 (3), 273–282.
- Department of Education and Science. (1999). *Primary school curriculum: Introduction*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Department of Education and Science. (2001). Primary level, national school data. Dublin, Ireland: Department of Statistics.
- Fowler, F. J. (1993). *Survey research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gaelscoileanna. (2001). [On-line]. Available: www.iol.ie/gaelscoileanna
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. Bungay, Suffolk: Edward Arnold.

- Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Harris, J., & Murtagh, L. (1999). *Teaching and learning Irish in primary school: A review of research and development*. Dublin: Linguistics Institute of Ireland (ITÉ).
- Henerson, M. E., Morris, L. L., & Fitz-Gibbon, C. T. (1987). *How to measure attitudes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hindley, R. (1990). *Death of the Irish language*. New York: Routledge.
- In Touch. (1997a, October). Irish in the curriculum. *Irish National Teachers' Organization*, 20–21. Dublin.
- In Touch. (1997b, December). Irish in the curriculum: A response. *Irish National Teachers' Organization*, 22–26. Dublin.
- MacMathuna, L. (1996). Integrating Language and Cultural Awareness Components in Irish-Language Teaching Programs. In T. Hickey & J. Williams (Eds.), *Language, education and society in a changing world*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Laoire, M. (1995). An historical perspective of the revival of Irish outside the Gaeltacht, 1880–1930, with reference to the revitalization of Hebrew. *Current Issues in Language & Society*, 2, 223–235.
- Ó Riagáin, P. (1997). *Language policy and social reproduction: Ireland 1893–1993*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenberg, M. J., & Hovland, C. I. (1960). Cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of attitudes. In C. I. Hovland & M. J. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Attitude organization and change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shaw, M., & Wright, J. (1967). *Scales for the measurement of attitudes*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Endnotes

¹ Throughout this paper the Republic of Ireland is referred to as Ireland. This does not include the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland.

² Irish is a Gaelic language in the Celtic group of languages. Speakers of the language in Ireland often refer to the language as *Gaeilge*, the Irish word for Gaelic. When reference is made to the language in English the word “Irish” is most commonly used. Thus, in the present article I refer to the language as Irish, reflecting local practice.

³ Ó Riagáin (1997) speculates that this figure may be inflated, as it was based on existing Gaeltacht boundaries. The boundaries have since been revised several times.

⁴ These are programs in which principally language majority students are educated through a minority language with the goal of additive bilingualism. These are distinct from Structured English Immersion in the United States in which language minority students are educated in English with the goal of English monolingualism.

Appendix A: Cazabon et al. (1993) survey

	No/Never/ I disagree	Seldom/ Not often/ Once in a while	Usually/ Most of the time	Yes/ Always/ I agree
SOCIAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM				
1. It is important to know another language to learn about other people.				
2. You enjoy meeting and listening to other people who speak another language.				
3. Learning Spanish is important so that you can talk with Spanish-speaking people.				
4. Learning Spanish is important so that you can meet and talk with different kinds of people.				
PERSONAL VALUE OF BILINGUALISM				
5. Learning two languages will make you smarter than learning only one language.				
6. Learning two languages will help you do better in school.				
7. Learning two languages will help you get better grades.				
8. Knowing two languages will help you get a better job when you grow up.				
HABITUAL USAGE				
9. Do you speak mostly English with other kids outside of school?				
10. Do you speak mostly Spanish with other kids outside of school?				

Appendix B: Follow up questions for students

1. Do you like school? What are your favorite subjects? What do you like the least?
2. Do you like learning Irish in school? Why or why not?
3. What do you want to be when you grow up?
4. Do you think it's important to know two languages? Why or why not?
5. Do you speak Irish outside of school?