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Irish Language as a Factor of National Identity?

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Abstract

Together with the process of globalisation, which has already deeply rooted within the sphere of international relations and political science, the movement of devolution and national self-determination is gaining importance at the same time.

Thus, I believe the role of national identity should be devoted the same amount of our attention since both the causes of globalization and national revival are mutually interconnected.

Language as a strong instrument in the sphere of national rebirth re-finding and rethinking will be the main focus of my bachelor thesis. I will devote my research to Irish/Gaelic language seen from the cultural, social and mainly political perspective. My concentration will lead both towards Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and I will try to find out the impact of using Irish as a political utensil. The institution of *Gaeltachtaí* as well as the phenomenon of "Irishness" and the role of Irish Government will be examined. Besides this, Scottish Gaelic and Gaelic languages in general will be mentioned, too, in order to achieve a complex mosaic of the problem. And, since the geographical aspect is important concerning this topic, several maps will be included in the thesis. In conclusion, future gravitation of the process and possible development of the language policy touching Irish will be searched.

Key words

Abstrakt

Spolu s globalizací, která je ve sféře mezinárodních vztahů a politologie již zakořeněna, získává současně na důležitosti také proces devoluce a národního sebeurčení.

Domnívám se proto, že roli národní identity by měla být věnována podobná pozornost jako otázce globalizace, neboť oba jevy spolu vzájemně souvisí.

Jazyk, coby silný nástroj v rámci znovunalézání, tvoření a přetváření národní identity bude mojí hlavní oblastí zájmu v této práci. Budu sledovat irštinu/gaelštinu z kulturního, sociálního, ale především z politického hlediska. Zaměřím se jak na Severní Irsko, tak na Irskou republiku; budu zjišťovat dopad používání irštiny jako politického nástroje. Pozornost bude též věnována instituci *Gaeltachtaí*, stejně jako fenoménu "irskosti" a roli irské vlády. Kromě toho bude v obecné rovině též zmíněna role skotské gaelštiny a dalších původem keltských jazyků za účelem dosažení komplexního pohledu na celou problematiku. V práci bude pro ilustraci tezí obsaženo též několik mapek, neboť geografický aspekt celé problematiky nelze opominout. V závěru se pokusím lehce načrtnout budoucí vývoj celého procesu a další možná vyústění jazykové politiky.

Klíčová slova

Irština/gaelština, Irská republika, Severní Irsko, jazyková politika, Gaeltachtaí, irskost, rodilý mluvčí

Note: Italics are used just for the terms in Irish (or other specific terms in foreign languages), not for all the proper names

Declaration

I declare the thesis was written by myself and all sources which have been used are cited in the bibliography section.

I agree that this thesis will be available for public in order to conduct scientific research.

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracovala samostatně a všechny použité zdroje jsou uvedeny v bibliografické části.

Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna veřejnosti pro účely výzkumu a studia.

V Praze dne

Dagmar Zadražilová

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

As the title of this thesis stands, my research tries to cover exactly that —
whether (and if yes, to which extent) is the Irish in Ireland a factor of
national identity. An inseparable part of this problematic is also the
question whether and how is Irish used as a political tool both in Northern
Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, I will try to response the
question and, after that, I will try to outline possible development in the
future. My hypothesis stands Irish is a part of national identity but not the
only and crucial one. It is assumed the process of language revival will
continue probably more intensively than in 1980s and 1990s because of the
general fears that particular traditional and cultural (and thus political)
heritage of the nations will melt within the process of globalization.

Methodology

The research method here is mostly analytical. Concerning the primary
sources, the official websites of Irish and NorthernIrish executives as well
as governmental and non-governmental bodies, key newspapers and other
relevant pages were used.

As for secondary sources, the books of the most prominent authors
and researchers dealing with Irish were a second main pillar, including
several studies of censuses which have been held during the last decades.

Since the geographical aspect of this entire theme is also important,
there are several maps and tables included in the enclosure. They support
the propositions written in the text.

The main aim of this thesis is to produce an overview analysis covering
briefly the historical development of Irish within the society, both in the
Republic of Ireland and in the Northern Ireland, the study of contemporary
conditions and recent activities as well as the outline of possible steps in
the future. In all these sections, focus is on Irish as a (possible) tool within
the policy-making process.

Literature Analysis

Surveying the literature available, it must be stated that the range of publications covering Irish from the non-anthropological point of view is scarce, so much the more within the non-Anglo-Saxon world. A majority of studies which have been published about Irish was conducted by anthropologists, ethnologists, linguists or experts on cultural traditions. Therefore, their main aim was to analyze the historical development of the language in comparison with contemporary revival in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The outputs from such studies form a useful part of the research which is focused on Irish as a political tool but cannot be instrumental as a main source of information because of the lack of the political aspect of the problem. However, together with the process of so called Gaelic Revival some crucial books of competent authors have appeared. Among them, Diarmait MacGiolla Chríost's article *Language Planning in Northern Ireland* as well as the book *The Irish Language in Ireland* are worth a mention indeed. Camille O'Reilly's *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity* provides an indepth study of Irish within the NorthernIrish region. John Ardagh's 1994 publication called *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society* is a bit older but it offers a fresh and honest insight into Ireland and Irish how they seemed in the middle of the 1990s. *The Encyclopaedia of Ireland*, an exceptional piece written by Brian Lalor offers an extensive range of topics from all spheres related to Ireland as a whole. It is probably the best encyclopaedia of Ireland ever published. Reference publications such as Roland Breton's atlas of the languages, Yves Lacoste's geopolitics or the Oxford dictionary of Irish language put the finishing touches to non-periodical information sources.

As for the periodical sources, *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, *New Hibernia Review* or the *British Journal of Sociology* contained several articles dealing with the specific topics within the frame of Irish problematics, such as the influence of Irish television, the economic condition of *Gaeltachtaí* or the comparison with the situation in

Scotland (concerning Scottish Gaelic) or in Wales (concerning Welsh). However, the entire occurrence of articles concerning Irish as a political tool was rare indeed. Other papers concerning Irish from various views were used as a supplementary source of information.

1. Irish Language in Ireland. A General Observation

Irish has somehow ambiguous position – according to Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*),[1] Irish is the first official language of the Republic whereas English is the second official one. Thus, the position of Irish is constitutionally legitimised, it means at the highest national level. However, paradoxically it is English which is the commonly spoken language on the whole island. This implies that both the role and position of Irish as a national language is distinct from other national languages such as French, Dutch or Czech because they are commonly spoken by the vast majority of population within the each of the states. But that is not the case of Irish. It is an ancient language which is probably not so convenient for speedy modern high-tech era; it has been dying out for decades, although there have been some signs of revival which will be mentioned later in detail. These steps to assure Irish more respect from the public are taken mainly by the Government, be it directly on indirectly, although some volunteer associations promoting Irish do also exist. It is interesting that the support for this antique language could be found rather in cities, where many pro-Irish activities are flourishing, while in the rural areas, where Irish has always been quite a natural mode of communication, the knowledge of Irish is slowly vanishing. There should be approximately 260,000 fluent or native speakers of Irish language, whilst the anticipated number of all native speakers worldwide is about 355,000.[2] According to another official source, there are about 1,570,000 people able to speak Irish within the Republic (census of 2002) and about 10.4% in Northern Ireland have some knowledge of Irish.[3] As mentioned above, there has been some

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[1] http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Constitution%20of%20Ireland.pdf.

[2] http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=gle.

[3] http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/language/default.asp?catid=16. Here do we get to the number of native speakers. It must be said at the beginning that there are several problems concerning the question of how many people are able to speak Irish. Firstly, it is important how the questions in the questionnaires, which are used during the censuses, are set up. Some questions are just asking whether the person has some knowledge of Irish but they do not specify the level. Therefore, the census presents higher number of "fluent" speakers than in the reality. Secondly, Northern Ireland is sometimes treated as one unit albeit the niveau of knowledge differs according to county (i will refer to it in a special chapter).

revival of Irish language and Irish/Gaelic culture in general. It has become even chic for artists to use Irish instead of English[4] and a good deal of children is now being sent by their parents to special schools (state or private) where the medium of education is Irish. In order to satisfy this demand, a notable amount of Irish courses are being established, both for children and for adults. There is a quest for lectors of Irish and new textbooks for autodidacts are being published. Even abroad there could be seen certain affection for Irish or, at least, for Irish culture which goes hand in hand with the broad favour of everything of Celtic origin. However, to speak Irish means also to be somehow distinct – distinct from other nations and notably from Englishmen.[5]

The role of Government (and Government bodies or organizations supported by the state) in promoting Irish is indisputable. Be it Official Language Act inaugurated in 2003 or *Foras na Gaeilge*, the official body for promoting Irish language within the island[6], the so called Gaelic Revival (or second Gaelic Revival movement if we would consider the upheaval in the second half of 19th century as a first one) would not be so dynamic without these authorities as it is now. Today, Irish is more or less connected to statecraft and this could be seen also among Irish citizens as they - more or less sincerely - state that Irish is an important part of statecraft and national traditions.[7] Attentive observer from the outside also soon discovers that the names of supreme positions within the sphere of governance are strictly in Irish. Always. That is a symbol, too. Those politicians who are used to start their speeches with a few Irish sentences, usually gain a sort of good reputation, be it from media or from voters. For example, Mary Robinson speaks Irish quite often, and not just a few

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[4] In 2007, the 30th anniversary of Bob Quinn's film *Poitín*, which was the first movie entirely in Irish, was a notable opportunity for celebrations in the name of Irish within the field of arts. See www.conamara.org

[5] Ardagh, John, 1994. *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society. Hamish Hamilton*, p. 290

[6] http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/foras/default.asp?catid=13

[7] Ardagh, John, 1994. *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society*. Hamish Hamilton, p. 289

words.[8] This problematic gains its importance considering the competition among the parties, too. Especially Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féinn are keen on promoting Irish as a national language number one, preferably without any compromise. There have appeared even suggestions about introducing bilingualism – the sooner the better. I will come to it later.

The institution of *Gaeltachtaí* deserves to be mentioned here, too. The Gaeltacht (*An Ghaeltacht* in singular) is a geographic region within the Republic of Ireland where the Irish speaking population is – or should be – predominant. During the process of establishment of these areas, Northern Ireland did not demonstrate any will to participate. Thus, they have been established by three special commissions (in successive steps) just in the South and there were no Gaeltacht in Northern Ireland until the very recent time. However, the borders of *Gaeltachtaí* did not change much since 1950s and the number of speakers (especially more the number of native speakers) has fallen down dramatically. Nevertheless, *Gaeltachtaí* continue to exist and, in particular during the last decade or two, have become a favourite vacation destination both for Irish citizens and for tourists from abroad. All the areas are being administrated by The Gaeltacht Authority (*Údarás na Gaeltachta*).

Significant role within the promoting of Irish plays also the media. The foundation of *Raidió na Gaeltachta* in 1972 and *Teilifís na Gaeilge* (*TG4*) in 1996, both under the custody of *Radio Telefís na Éireann* (*RTÉ*), which is a public authority providing television, radio and Internet broadcasting, have offered a broad space for leaders of the movement to present their ideals as well as for ordinary listeners who could profit from their understanding of Irish. Several changes have occurred also in the field of newspapers. *Lá Nua* (founded in 1984 and headquartered in Belfast) and *Foinse* (founded in 1996 and headquartered in Connemara) are entirely Irish whilst The Irish Times and The Irish News contain regularly a number of articles or even pages in Irish (in the former case the half-page

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[8] Ardagh, John, 1994. *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society.* Hamish Hamilton, p. 290

is called *Tuarascáil*[9]).[10] All this has had an essential impact which served as a basis for contemporary Gaelic Revival.

As for Northern Ireland, the question of using Irish has been surprisingly vivid there during the recent couple of years. In this region, the issue is getting another extent because of the strong existence of Catholic-Protestant cleavage. Naturally, those who are able to speak at least some Irish are mostly Catholics and most of them live in West Belfast. This quarter used to be infamous because of many riots which had taken place there. Nowadays it seems like the question of Irish is getting its breath again. Several associations as well as courses of Irish have occurred. However, whether this movement will be as successful as the bravest optimists believe, remains for judgement in at least ten years horizon.

Notwithstanding, the fact that Irish has been one of the official languages of the European Union has been noted probably even by people who do not pursue this issue. It was a great success of governmental policy. On the other hand, it was a rather controversial step because there always exists a possibility that e.g. speakers (or primarily their political representatives) of Catalan, Basque, Welsh or any other regional language with a substantial number of speakers would act accordingly to secure similar status for their language. On one hand, it would be a confirmation of so much proclaimed "unity in diversity", on the other hand – how far could this come? No wonder this process has provoked many to present critical remarks. Besides that, the amount of money which EU has to invest in the translation services is huge, no matter the fact that EU representatives tend to claim it is just a few per cents of the entire EU budget.

Now I slowly get to what I have stated at the very beginning, in the abstract. One of the strongest reasons why national identity together with all their components such as language, history and national interests are

[9] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544
[10] http://www.nuacht.com/index.tvt?%5Fticket=9
http://www.foinse.ie/baile.php?&lang=en

found within the dynamic procedure of rethinking, revaluation and why are they backed up by the state itself is the sense of vulnerability on the world scene where dominates globalization. It is a question of high importance which must be treated on political, economic, technological, educational and cultural level. In this thesis I am going to investigate which role plays Irish within the Irish society and mainly in the field of politics and national identity. In my opinion, the goal of the Government of the Republic of Ireland corresponds on the whole to what is mentioned above. Thus, as for the possible future development, the impact of governmental language policy could be to a certain extent ambivalent. On one hand, the language (and the national identity as a whole) will be heavily supported by governments in order not to be melted within the global village, on the other hand it will be vital for a state to dispose of strong and credible national identity to be able do defend national interests at global level.

Last but not least, the difference between the terms 'Irish' and 'Gaelic' will be mentioned. These words are often treated as synonyms, not unfrequently in scholarly articles about Irish or Gealic languages in general. However, even if it is generally not extremely confusing, it is better to distinguish between these words. The term 'Gaelic' refers to one subgroup of languages which have developed from the old primitive Celtic language[11] (for detailed information please see the next chapter). This subgroup contains above all Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Irish and is also described as a *Goidelic* subgroup (and Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Irish are described as *Goidelic* languages). Therefore, Irish forms a part of what is being called Gaelic. In other words, Irish is the language spoken on the island of Ireland (and also in particular areas worldwide where the Irishmen have settled in the past; see the next chapter). To stress the distinction, Irish is sometimes called Irish Gaelic.

Naturally, the dichotomy between 'Irish' and 'Gaelic' can be found not only within the linguistic sphere. Thus, 'Gaelic' is used for description of something specifically of Gaelic or, broader, Celtic origin (e.g. Gaelic

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[11] http://www.ibiblio.org/gaelic/canan.html

sports, Gaelic traditions), as well as Irish (e.g. Irish music, Irish whiskey etc.). Here, the term 'Irish' is naturally preferred since Irish is the focus of this thesis. However, where the context requires, the term 'Gaelic' is also used (in addition, there are some fixed names, where 'Gaelic' is used rather than Irish, e.g. the Gaelic Revival).

2. Language Policy. Language as a Tool for Strengthening National Identity

Language policy is a term for a group of instruments which enable to use language to certain political (or also economic and cultural) aims. In most cases, language policy is usually used by governments to support national or regional language(s) in accordance with the entire national policy of the state. Naturally, this concept could be implemented not only in countries where there is just one national language (usually so called nation-states) but also in states which pursue the politics of multilingual society. There are many approaches within the language policy. The official status of the language could be guaranteed by the constitution but that is not necessary (e.g. in Mexico or in many states in the US federation there is no official language set up) – the official documents are simply being published in the language which is spoken by the vast majority of people. However, in the former case government dispose of many possibilities how to support the language concretely, whether to take in account special needs of certain regions or not, whether to back up the speakers of the language and whether to try to concentrate them in special regions or which official bodies to set up in order to facilitate the promotion of the language. All these steps then form the part of language planning.

As it is clear from the previous sentence, the question of language as an important tool within politics, economics and culture has three main levels – regional, national and an international one[1] whereas this discourse goes across the continents. With the national level is connected not only the case of Irish, but also e.g. that one of Hebrew as an inseparable part of Israeli national identity and then several languages which are considered to be rather artificial and which have helped in promoting national identity, such as Luxembourgish (official language in Luxembourg since 1984, however, in fact it is rather a type of German dialect; it does not figure among the official languages of the EU) or Maltese (a special dialect of Maghrebi Arabic language which had been developing probably in Sicily

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[1] Hnízdo, Bořivoj, 2004. "K úloze jazyků v současné mezinárodní politice," *Politologický časopis*, Vol. 11, No.1, Masaryk University, p. 72

where it has been notably penetrated by Italian[2]; it was granted the full status within the EU on 30th April 2007[3], after a transitional period of three years, i.e. the capacity for translation of all the documents was ensured after the period of three years). Outside Europe, an example of such a language could be the Malay language (in Indonesia and East Timor it is being called *Bahasa Indonesia* which in fact means Indonesian language, so the dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia plus East Timor occurs).[4] The efforts to invent and to bring to common usage completely artificial languages such as Esperanto, Interlingua or Novial are another special issue. However, in this thesis there is not enough space to devote to this issue a more in-depth investigation in order to get a complex mosaic of the problem.

If we stay in Europe, in particular in the European Union, we can see that the movement towards bigger independence of regional languages is appearing. It is also connected to the process of decentralization and – in particular – the process of devolution which has taken place in several states whereas the mostly cited cases are Spain and the United Kingdom with its Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Wales (the situation in Northern Ireland was a bit more complicated and it is often not considered as a case of devolution[5], however the Northern Ireland Assembly was re-established on 8th May 2007[6]). Devolution offers to government a convenient compromise – the regions gain more extensive right in political, economic, cultural and educational sphere whereas these rights do not intersect the rights of the supreme state, the more at the international level.

Together with devolution, the phenomenon of so called new regionalism has been devoted significant attention both in the field of academia and on

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[2] http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=mlt
[3] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004R0930:CS:NOT
[4] Hnízdo, Bořivoj, 2004. "K úloze jazyků v současné mezinárodní politice," *Politologický časopis*, Vol. 11, No.1, Masaryk University, p. 75
[5] Fiala, Vlastimil; Říchová, Blanka, 2002. *Úloha politických aktérů v procesu decentralizace*. Olomouc-Praha, p. 248
[6] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/

the scene of practical politics. New regionalism could be perceived as a clear reaction to globalization; it is a way how to express own identity and even exclusivity. Concept of new regionalism[7] could be found on both on intrastate and international level[8] and at the same across political, economic, culture and other spheres. This phenomenon has been booming especially since the 1990s and the primary cause were the conditions within the world economics (problems brought by liberalism and diminishing competitive strength). However, the aim of new regionalism is not to promote isolation within the boundaries of a particular region, it is rather an effort to profit of regional exclusivity and cross-border cooperation in order not to be lost within the sphere of globalised economics and politics. Naturally, there is a lot of space for language policy within the frame of new regionalism. One of the examples could be Swedish on the Åland Islands where the local executive supports a certain exclusivity of that region (and Swedish distinguishes Ålanders from Finns and, to a lesser extent, from Swedes) which goes hand in hand with flourishing economy which is broadly based on tourism.

Another example could be Welsh (*Cymraeg*) in Wales. This language has been guaranteed some rights by the Welsh Language Act 1967 and, recently, it has been given the same status as English by the Welsh Language Act 1993[9]. Under the latter document, the Welsh Language Board (*Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg*) has been established with the main aim of facilitating the daily use of Welsh[10]. In this mission it is very helpful also the BBC Radio Cymru which was founded in 1977[11] (besides this, there is also the BBC Radio Wales, founded in 1978, but this station broadcasts in English[12]). Next to these official bodies, which naturally gain a broad

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[7] There should be stressed that there is a difference between the terms 'Regionalism' and 'Regionalization'. Whilst the former refers to a bottom-up process by which means are promoted the regional specificity and one of the aims is to establish a local government, the latter term refers to a process which is steered by government and not uncommonly the economic questions stand in the background. See Fiala, Vlastimil; Říchová, Blanka, 2002. *Úloha politických aktérů v procesu decentralizace.* Olomouc-Praha

[8] Hnízdo, Bořivoj, 2004. "K úloze jazyků v současné mezinárodní politice," *Politologický časopis*, Vol. 11, No.1, Masaryk University, p. 72

[9] http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1993/Ukpga_19930038_en_1.htm

[10] http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/cynnwys.php?pID=1&langID=2

[11] http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/

[12] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/radiowales/

support from the National Assembly for Wales, there operate also voluntarily organized associations and even lobbyists. *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (The Welsh Language Society) is one of the strongest organizations[13] within this field. However, the support of the Welsh language was also in the programme of *Plaid Cymru*, the strongest political party with the 'Welsh' programme, and to a lesser extent this is the case even nowadays.[14] All in all, the language policy in Wales is quite often cited as an example of successful endeavour.

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[13] http://cymdeithas.org/english/

[14] Plaid Cymru focused on the language stronger in the past than nowadays because the Welsh language was something what was common to all Welsh people. Nevertheless, it should be said that there were more native speakers in northern Wales and, therefore, the party concentrated a bit more on the northern voters. See:
Říchová, Blanka, 2002. "Proměny velšského nacionalismu", *Politologická revue*, Vol. 8, No. 1

3. Celtic Languages

Celtic languages have developed from a previously united proto-Celtic language of Indo-European origin (therefore, they belong in the Indo-European language family). There are several branches into which the proto-language had developed. One of them is so called Brythonic (or British or Brittonic[1]) which consists of Breton, Cornish (extinct in 18th century), Welsh and very probably of Pictish. The other important branch (concerning this thesis) is the Goidelic (sometimes also Gaelic) one which consists of Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Irish. The remaining significant branches are the Gaulish and Celtiberian[2]. Practically all types of primitive Celtic language had been previously spoken within much bigger area than today (including the territories of where is now Turkey, Italy, Switzerland or the surroundings of the Black Sea)[3]. Those Celtic languages which are being spoken and used as live languages today form rather a small group of all the languages spoken on the European continent.

3.1. Manx

Manx (or *Gaelg* or *Gailck* or Manx Gaelic) is a descendant of Goidelic branch of Celtic languages. When Manx people are speaking about their native language, they refer to it as to *Gailck*. The language was in its heyday during 18th century. It has been declining since 19th century and according to 1991 census there were only 650 persons declaring the knowledge of Manx out of 71,000 inhabitants of the Isle of Man.[4] Last native speaker of Manx is believed to had died in 1974.[5] During 20th century there have been some attempts to re-establish Manx as a second language on the island next to English, nowadays it is being taught at schools as an optional subject but the revival was not as successful as the

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[1] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 223
[2] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 224
[3] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 223
[4] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 288
[5] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 288

revival of Irish. One of the main obstacles toward more effective usage of the language is the lack of a satisfactory and comprehensive grammar.[6]

3.2. Scottish Gaelic

The origin and place within the system of language families is the same as covering Manx. Scottish Gaelic (*Gàidhlig* or Scots Gaelic) was (and to a certain extend still is) a mother tongue of people inhabiting the northwest Scotland and the region of Highlands and Islands. It had been brought to these areas by the settlers from Ireland approximately in 5[th]century AD but a lot of literary works considered now as Irish had been written in Scotland (e.g. on the famous Iona island). The grammar was drawn up in 19th century. However, the process of Anglicization has eroded the position of Scottish Gaelic, mainly because of the Industrial Revolution and subsequent economic development. During 1960s, there has been a shift concerning the usage because on the mainland the number of speakers declined and they have virtually "moved" to the Highlands. At present, the most coherent groups of speakers can be found on Outer Hebrides, on the Isle of Skye and in some parts of Inner Hebrides. In the rest of Highlands, some more or less isolated islets of speakers do also exist. It is appropriate to mention here that on the Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia and to a lesser extent also on Prince Edward Island and on the south-western part of Newfoundland, Canada, there have been quite lively enclaves of settlers whose medium of communication has been Scottish Gaelic. The decline of usage within these settlements has been occurring only in recent times.

An analogy with *Gaeltachtaí* is the system of *Gàidhealtachd*, regions with a notable number of Scottish Gaelic speakers. However, they are not as easily administratively determinable as are *Gaeltachtaí*. *Gàidhealtachd* are often loosely used as a synonym to Highlands and Islands because just these regions were the main centres of Scottish Gaelic speaking communities. The official support of Scottish Gaelic is not as

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[6] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 288

institutionalized as in the case of Irish. The language is only recognized as a minority language by the EU and it is receiving some support from Scottish Executive (previously by Scottish Office). There is broadcasting in Scottish Gaelic provided by BBC Radio nan Gàidheal[7] (in addition, BBC Radio Scotland[8] could be also tuned but its programme is in English; it is divided into branch offices of BBC Radio Shetland and BBC Radio Orkney). Various associations promoting the revival of the language do also exist. Notwithstanding, the situation in the field of press is not so favourable and the language is in general declining, albeit it is being taught at some schools as an optional language.

The relationship between Scottish Gaelic and the revival of Scottish nationalism as such should be mentioned, too. This relationship is not as straight as it could seem. Firstly, there is at least one other language spoken within the area of Scotland – it is Scots (see the paragraph below). Therefore, is would not be easy to build up the Scottish consciousness just on Scottish Gaelic. Secondly, Scottish Gaelic is by and large related to Celtic tradition. Albeit this moment was stressed during the 19th century revival, if it was used today as the only (or, at least, the main) base of Scottish nationalism or consciousness, it would not sound well because of the connotations with racial (or maybe ethnic) theories. Contemporary Scottish revival and the boom of Scottishness did not need to emphasize any indigenous languages because English has already firmly rooted within both Scotland and Scottish traditions[9]. Hence, the Scottish revival shows us the national consciousness can be re-established also without the indigenous language.

Scottish Gaelic should not be confused with Scots which is a language mostly spoken in the Scottish Lowlands and thus being called also *Lallans* and, in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland (where it is also partly spoken) is called *Ullans*. Scots is mostly related to English and it is a descendant of old Angles' proto-English from early Northumbria. It spread

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[7] http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/alba/radio/
[8] http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/radioscotland/
[9] Interview with Blanka Říchová, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Political Studies at Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague; 21st September 2007

to Northern Ireland during 17th century and it was blossoming under the House of Stewards. Today it is mostly used as a ceremonial language with a strong symbolic value. It is complicated to distinguish precisely between the speakers and non-speakers as Scots has heavily penetrated English and vice versa. However, the language cannot be considered as totally extinct at all since its limited usage still maintains.

3.3. Irish

As Irish has developed from Goidelic (or Gaelic), these two terms are often treated as synonyms although these terms should not be mismatched (please see the previous chapter). Irish has been the main language on the whole island since 5th century and from this point onward, many distinguished literary works in Irish have been written; they form an inseparable part of European cultural heritage. During the further centuries, English was gaining more importance and it had been established step by step as the only suitable language for administrative and juridical affairs (the Irish term for English was *Béarla*[10]). As a consequence, Irish had become almost a sign of the poorest class. At the end of 18th century, there were approximately 2 million Irish speakers, 1.5 million bilingual speakers and the same amount of people having just the knowledge of English.[11] However, the massive emigration caused by the Great Famine had helped to change the statistics. According to 1851 census when the question about language was included for the first time, the entire number of Irish speakers had fallen to only 25%. In 1891, the percentage of the same group had shrunk to mere 3.5% and Irish was facing the risk of extinction.[12] 20th century has brought a positive change; within the Irish Free State Irish had been legally recognized as the official language and corresponding curricula had been implemented at schools.

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[10] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 260
[11] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 160
[12] Price, Glanville et al., 1998. *Encyklopedie jazyků Evropy*, p. 160

Irish has begun its way to rebirth along with growing number of people using Irish as a medium of communication. At present, the position of Irish is much better than anybody at the end of 19th century could believe. The historical development during 19th and 20th century as well as specific arrangements undertaken by the Government will be examined in special chapters.

Three main dialects of Irish could be distinguished: Munster (spoken by isolated communities in the southern and southwestern part of the country), Connacht (practically the counties of Galway and Mayo) and Ulster (Donegal). In 1940s and 1950s, ortographical and grammatical standards (*Caighdeán*) have come into effect and they are still in use. Later on, notable measures in the field of broadcasting and press have been taken and all of this, together with the ongoing existence of *Gaeltachtaí* is a part of an advanced form of promotion of Irish as a part of national identity.[13]

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[13] The main source of the whole chapter 2 was the book of Glanville Price, cited just above. Where there have been used other additional sources, the footnote has been used as usually

4. Irish in Northern Ireland

As was mentioned in the introduction part, the question of Irish in Northern Ireland has acquired another dimension because of the strong Catholic-Protestant cleavage which exists in the region in its sharpest form since the foundation of the southern Republic in 1922 (at that time the Irish Free State). It is important to note at the beginning of this chapter that this problematic is complex and any deeper analysis of the historical development, crisis, background for the revival and possible way for the future would deserve more space than this mere chapter. However, I will try to mention all the most important aspects which I consider as vital within this issue.

The question of interpretation of anything concerning Northern Ireland could be another extra issue because a lot of academic writings and books published about Irish in Northern Ireland were written by anthropologists who tended to see Irish mainly from the cultural and linguistic point of view. Besides this, most of the research was focused on the Republic of Ireland. What was also characteristic was the fact that the majority of works was dealing with the situation in countryside, in small villages and towns and so basically leaving out (although not absolutely) the situation in cities.[1] In case of works written with the aim of stressing the political dimension of using Irish, they were often written by experts able to speak Irish (as for example Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost) or with a strong English/Anglo-Saxon background (political, economic and cultural). Therefore, if this issue is being elaborated by an author from neither of these two groups (as is the case of this thesis), it could bear both rather positive factors (a view "from the outside") as well as rather negative factors (not being an inhabitant of the island, one probably cannot gain the deepest understanding of the entire background despite having read numerous literature about it). However, it is believed these papers also bear a certain value.

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[1] O'Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 12

Who are the speakers in Northern Ireland and what were the main causes of Irish revival within this region? The emerging of the revival could be traced back to 1980s. It was growing during the 1990s and nowadays the situation is much better than some thirty, fourty years ago. When capturing this question, one should always keep in mind how important for this region was history. Since the island had been settled by the first newcomers, several migration waves had blown over the territory, bringing various sets of linguistic, cultural and lately political traditions. For most of the time, it used to be Irish as a natural mode of communication on the island (and to a certain extent also in some parts of Scotland – see the previous chapter). However, the economic and political stress of English has been stronger and Irish has remained a language of poor and, at the same time, was at the process of decline. However, there were no extreme struggles between the English speaking and the Irish speaking communities until 1920s. Both groupments were existing side by side, although not always without smaller problems. However, the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 signified an important shift. Hence, the dichotomy was confirmed legally, when two separated entities appeared on the map. For the inhabitants of Northern Irealand, this meant notional victory for English whereas Irish was declining as a means of communication even among Catholics. Until 1973, when the parliament at Stormont was dissolved, the UUP (Ulster Unionist Party) as a virtual sovereign on the NorthernIrish political scene maintained considerably anti-Irish policy. Even the BBC did not have the possibility of broadcasting in Irish, although the programmes in Scottish Gaelic and Welsh were accessible since 1920s.[2] Despite the fact that there have occured some signs of Irish language revival during 1950s and 1960s[3], it was not until 1980s when the situation began to change.

The Gaelic Revival in Northern Ireland is almost entirely promoted by Catholics. The percentage of Protestants among Irish speakers and learners

[2] O'Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 20
[3] O'Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 20

(*Gaeilgeoirí*) is extremely low. It evokes a vicious circle: the courses where it is possible to learn Irish are usually maintained by Catholics and, therefore, are being held in the regions or city quarters where the predominant inhabitants are Catholics. For most of the Protestants it is difficult even to appear in these areas, the more to practice language whose speakers were main enemies of Protestants during the last centuries. Obviously, the psychological barrier plays a significant role here. In addition, a notable number of Protestants do not admit the knowledge of Irish when being asked, be it because of various reasons. The Protestants' antipathy towards Irish was strong particularly during the Troubles. That is, at the very beginning of Irish/Gaelic Revival at the end of 19th century a lot of Protestants and even 'orthodox' Unionists were keen on supporting Irish because they perceived it as a cultural heritage of all the inhabitants of the island. Similarly, the Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*), founded in 1893, was at the beginning a neutral body supporting everything connected to Irish language. Nevertheless, it was gradually achieving more and more pro-Republican position and in 1915 it was finally overtaken by the Republicans[4]. The Gaelic League continued to function in Northern Ireland as *Comhaltas Uladh*[5], a branch office of the Gaelic League. Protestants also claim that even if they learn Irish, it is hard to be accepted as a truly Irish speaker by the Catholics who see themselves closer to the language. Besides that, Catholics have usually better chances to practice in the areas where Irish is commonly spoken, i.e. not just in classes. In addition, Catholics do not believe that Protestants could achieve the right accent (albeit there is an ongoing discussion about which accent is the right one and what in fact is an accent and what is not – there is a difference between *blas* [accent], *canúint* [dialect] and *foghraíocht* [pronunciation][6]): the most prestigious accent is probably the Donegal dialect combined with the correct Donegal Irish pronunciation. However, some speakers appreciate

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[4] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity.* Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 24
[5] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity.* Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 21
[6] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity.* Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 27

also the Belfast accent (*blas Bhéal Feirste*)[7]. All in all, Protestants have to face more difficulties than Catholics when trying to learn Irish.[8]

When studying or promoting a language, the shape of school curricula and the existence of supporting bodies is crucial. Some two hundreds years ago, Northern Ireland (and notably Belfast) was a hotbed of Irish-related activities. The Linnenhall Library in Belfast started to collect books and manuscripts in Irish, the Hapers's Festival served as an important event in the city and Irish was taught in the Belfast Academy for the first time. Besides that, the *Bolg an tSolair*, the first newspaper in Irish, was firstly published in Belfast, too.[9] Notwithstanding, the educational policy in following two centuries was not so favourable. Albeit Irish was recognized as a medium of schooling on the whole island in 1904[10], it did not have any visible impact in the area of present-day Northern Ireland due to a low number of Irish speakers. Afterwards, the British Ministry of Education was not keen on supporting Irish within the United Kingdom and in 1933, all grants dedicated previously to that support were abolished[11]. In later decades, the position of Westminster toward this question was not clearly designated and was more or less hostile, probably more hostile than in the cases of Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. However, after the fall of Stormont in 1973 the situation seemed to be a bit more optimistic[12]. The first primary school of Irish medium under the name of *Bunscoil Phobal Feirste* was opened in 1971[13]. Later on, other schools began to appear although they had to fight with the lack of finance because they did not receive the government fundings. In 1988, Irish was incorporated in the National

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[7] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 27
[8] This is a mere fact, regardless of a handful of organisations helping Protestants to get into the 'world of Irish' such as the Ultach Trust which was founded in 1989. See: http://www.ultach.dsl.pipex.com/english/index_en.htm
[9] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 19
[10] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 21
[11] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 21
[12] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 21
[13] O´Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 22

Curriculum[14] and in 1991, the first Irish medium secondary school, *Meánscoil Feirste*, was opened in Belfast[15]. The process of Gaelicization (albeit in certain periods substantially weak) was thus a gradual one. In general, all this means an important step toward creating a basic school system covering the education of pupils grown up in Irish from the very young age (in *naoínraí* – kindergatens) up to secondary schools and universities, where Irish studies were taught. Thus, the Irish speaking elites in Northern Ireland have gained a basis for raising their membership and educating their children in Irish. Naturally, the language of schooling really matters and, therefore, this was a crucial political achievement.

As for the policy concerning the official bodies, the late 1980s and 1990s saw a positive change in the activity of the executives. In 1989, the Ultach Trust was founded. Its aim was to widen the use of Irish in Northern Ireland for which it was given significant funding. However, there were differences among the counties and Local Government Districs (LGD). For example, the Belfast City Council posed quite a negative attitude toward promoting the language whilst Newry and Mourne District Council started to employing special officials and Derry city Council established a special cultural sub-committee[16]. In general, there was a lot of criticism because of the chaotic manner of implementation of the policy and of the unclear design of planning[17]. Notwithstanding, the signing of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in March 2000 by the British Government could be considered as an improvement[18]. Despite the fact that the Charter was issued by the Council of Europe in 1992, it should not be forgotten that as long as the security situation in Northern Ireland had not been resolved, the language policy was not considered as a feature[19]. (A relevant turning point was also the signing of the Good Friday

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[14] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 136
[15] O'Reilly, Camille C., 1999. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The Politics of Culture and Identity*. Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 23
[16] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 137
[17] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 137
[18] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 309
[19] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 309

in 1998, which included several paragraphs concerning the language use, albeit some of them were de facto unrealistic.)

Dealing with Irish speakers in Northern Ireland, the question of economic status and other social related aspects of the speakers is of a high significance. According to recent surveys, the entire community of Irish speakers within Northern Ireland has been weakly yet continuously flourishing but the structure of the community remains small and geographically fragmented[20]. The presumption of many ethnolinguists that the amount of people who acquire the knowledge of language thanks to inter-generational transmission has not been proved true. On the contrary, the majority of the Irish speakers gain the knowledge at school or at special courses. Hence, the Irish speaking population is notably young, with 48% aged 24 or less[21]. In general terms, out of 1.6 million people in Northern Ireland, almost 132,000 (i.e. 8.8%) are able to speak Irish according to 1991 census[22]. The number of Irish monoglots is not available due to the lack of appropriate questions in the censuses. However, it is believed their number is extremely low and some researchers even doubt about their existence[23]. Only 3% of Irish speakers admitted Irish as their first language[24]. It has also come out that the members of Irish speaking community are more or less mutually interconnected due to marriages, kinship, friendship and employment relationships. It is also characteristic that Irish speaking parents send their children to Irish medium schools, preferably from kindergarten to any institution of tertiary education. What has been also proved by the censuses (especially by that one held in 1991) is the fact that among the Irish speakers the most represented social-economic classes were the lowest one and the highest one. What about the former, it is probably caused by the historical conditions when the lowest

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[20] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 170
[21] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 270
[22] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 269
[23] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 269
[24] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 278

classes were mostly peasants and they carried the knowledge of Irish during difficult times. Concerning the latter group, it consists of well-educated wealthy intelligentsia settled in towns. They are aware of the value of cultural heritage and they believe Irish forms a part of that heritage. Thus, for them it is partly an act of morality and class status to send their children to Irish medium schools. However, these people believe less in bilingualism than the former group. From the gender perspective, women tend to believe stronger in the future possibility of bilingual Northern Ireland than men do[25].

The question of Irish related to identity and power should be examined, too. As mentioned above, the cleavages among Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland play a significant role when analyzing Irish language as a political tool. The censuses and the surveys made by scholars indicate that the question of language is a strong politic issue within the six counties of Ireland. Catholics usually perceive Irish as a part of being Irish, or as a part of Irishness albeit according to censuses, not all of them firmly believe that Irish knowledge is a necessary condition of being Irish. On the contrary, the inhabitants of Northern Ireland who see themselves as British, Ulster or Unionist (and are mostly Protestant) feel Irish language as a possible threat to the constitutional structure of Northern Ireland although the moderate subgroup perceive Irish language as a part of the cultural heritage of the whole island. Nevertheless, the feeling of cleavage and dichotomy was very strong indeed, especially during the time when the UUP was virtually controlling Stormont. Nowadays, the antipathy of the group is probably slightly weaker but the solid barrier between Catholics and Protestants (and logically between Irish-identifiers and Non-Irish-Identifiers) remains.

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[25] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2006. "Language Planning in Northern Ireland", *Language Planning and Policy in Europe*, Vol. 2, p. 290

4.1. West Belfast

West Belfast has been an infamous area during the Troubles because of many riots and many lost lives there. In this quarter originated the strongest tensions between Catholics and Protestants, between Republicans (or Nationalists) and Unionists (or Royalists)[26] because of the immediate neighbourhood of two main streets inhabited of each of the group. Shankill Road was (and still is) predominantly Protestant with houses covered by murals whereas the Falls Road was (and still is) inhabited by Catholics. There had to be installed heavy peace line road blocks in order to prevent dangerous attacks. At present, the situation is better than some twenty years ago although much remains to be bettered.

Irish language problematics is markedly related to West Belfast because it was here where a lot of the Irish courses have been opened and spontaneous street festivals were held. Indisputably the most famous of all the events is the West Belfast Festival (*Féile an Phobail*[27]) which was founded in 1988. Since then, it has developed into a respected cultural happening which attracts thousands of visitors every summer and whose main focus is on Irish language and Irish cultural heritage. It includes various performances extending from drama, concerts, unconventional productions as well as to activities for children. Naturally, the impact (both cultural and political) of such a huge action is more than obvious.

The Irish speaking community in West Belfast is compact and the members are mutually interconnected thanks to various kinds of relationships. The question of whether to speak or not to speak Irish within this area contained a highly political aspect. Even nowadays, this aspect is being perceived more intensively here than in the other parts of Belfast or

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[26] The usage of the labelling of these political clusters is not steady even in the use of media or articles dealing with NorthernIrish problematics. The term 'Nationalist' is usually used for those activists who campaign for the incorporation of Northern Ireland under the Republic but who are in general prepared to solve the problem peacefully. On the contrary, the term 'Republican' is used to label the activists fighting for the same aim but not being afraid of using arms. Concerning the Unionists and the Loyalists, the division is similar because the Loyalists are more radical in their campaign than the Unionists and this stands both for their political proclamations and for the mode of action.
See also: Šlosarčík, Ivo, 2007. *Politický systém Irska*. Slon Praha, p. 219
[27] http://www.feilebelfast.com/

Northern Ireland. Thus, using Irish in West Belfast is a notable token of political views.

5. Irish in the Republic of Ireland

5.1. A Brief Historical Overview. Modern Era, the Latest Histories and Contemporary Situation

Having already mentioned the situation of Irish in the medieval times and onwards, this chapter starts with the romantic era of restoration of Irish.

The romantic period was crucially important to the revival of Irish language which came much later. The first signs of that restoration appeared as soon as at the end of the 18th century. However, the movement was booming in the next century when various associations promoting Irish and Irish culture or traditions were being established. Among the most important ones was the Iberno-Celtic Society and the Ossian Society (founded in 1853). In 1876, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was set up[1]. In between, the emigration from Ireland because of the Great Famine had reduced the number of Irish native speakers. However, the knowledge of Irish did not vanish automatically abroad and for example the Fenians' relationship toward Irish had been reflected even in numerous vernacular songs and sayings which had been collected in journals such as *The Irishman* or *The Irish People.*[2] Nevertheless, the census of 1891 had proved that there were less than 4 % children under 10 years who were able to speak Irish[3]. This had two main reasons: firstly, thanks to the National School System, which was introduced during the 1830s and which was based purely on English[4], and secondly because of the ongoing process of urbanization and industrialization when Irish started to be unpractical and there used to be even a saying that 'Irish does not sell the cow'[5].

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[1] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland.* Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 547
[2] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 101
[3] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 102
[4] Ó Croinín, Breandán, (ed.), 1999. *Pocket Oxford Irish Dictionary.* Oxford University Press, p. 594
[5] Ardagh, John, 1994. *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society.* Hamish Hamilton, p. 291

Notwithstanding, the language did not die out and today we know it was largely thanks to a handful of initiatives which manifested themselves to be of high importance. In 1892, the Irish Literary Society came into being and in 1893, the Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*) was established[6]. The latter one has succeeded in its mission probably to a greater extend than Douglas Hyde, the first president of the League, had expected. According to his initial speech, the main aim of the League was to de-anglicize Ireland. The structure of the organization resulted from mass support among the middle and lower class, whose representatives constituted the core of the membership of the League. During the first decade of the 20th century, there were functioning already more than 600 branches of the Gaelic League and the results and planning of the activities were discussed and settled at *Ard Fheis*, an equivalent to an annual conference[7]. Its membership counted more than 50,000.[8] The League was sometimes criticized because of the tendency to romanticize the rural life[9] although it was a public secret that all the peasants and handicraftsmen had to work hard to maintain the livelihood. On the other hand, the Gaelic League genuinely tried to provide as much service as it could. Its branch office in London was opened as early as in 1881 and the Irish language was taught even within the branch offices in Britain, e.g. in Clapham, Chelsea or Bermondsey[10]. *An claidheamh Soluis*, founded in 1899, was the first newspaper in Irish, at those times the flagship of the Gaelic League with the aim of facilitating its mission (during the periods of 1918-1919 and 1922-1930 it was called *Fáinne an Lae* and during 1919-1922 it was called *Misneach*; after that, it returned to its original title).[11] In 1948, another official journal of the Gaelic League, *Feasta*, was introduced.[12]

Since 1913, Irish language was made mandatory at secondary schools and it became an unavoidable condition when matriculating in the

[6] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 102
[7] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 103
[8] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 545
[9] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 545
[10] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 546
[11] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544
[12] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544

National University in Ireland (*Ollscoil na hÉireann*).[13] The University was established under the 1908 Irish Universities Act[14] and under the Universities Act 1997.[15] It is the largest institution of tertiary education in the Republic and it is based on four Constituent Universities, five Recognised Colleges and on one College of a Constituent University[16]. Its mission is to provide a supportive framework within the university field in Ireland.

Since 1922, together with the establishment of the Irish Free State (*Soarstát Éireann*), a new era for Irish had begun. From this point onwards, the position of Irish was somehow institutionalized, the more with the introduction of the Constitution in 1937 when Irish was classified as the first language of the Republic and English as a second one. The times when the Irish language had to, as it were, fight for its existence, were over and now it could profit from the state protection. The relationship between Irish and the interventions from the Government's side could be divided into three periods. The first of them was the cycle of institutionalisation (1922-1927), followed by de-institutionalisation (1950 onwards) and the last era was that one of re-institutionalisation (1975 onwards).[17]

The founders of the Irish Free State were very optimistic indeed about the resuscitation of Irish because they saw it as the spiritual base of the Irishness. However, within the wave of universal enthusiasm, even the false premises were supported by the governmental policies (e.g. the number of the Irish speakers was often exaggerated)[18] – clearly, this was happening because of the political reasons. In 1926, the institution of *Gaeltacht* was formally introduced (please see the special chapter which is devoted to *Gaeltachtaí*). However, in some two decades it had been proved that the policy maintained by the Government was almost totally unsuccessful. In 1939, there were approximately 100,000 fewer native

[13] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 547
[14] http://www.nuigalway.ie/chem/Mike/siptu/conflict_resolution_statute.pdf
[15] http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/act_universitiesI_1997.htm
[16] http://www.nui.ie/about/
[17] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 111
[18] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 111

speakers than in 1922.[19] Since 1928, it was impossible to pass the Intermediate Certificate without the knowledge of Irish and in 1934, Irish became a compulsory part of the Leaving Certificate.[20] What was even worse, the idea of promoting Irish autocratically by means of the curricula at schools turned out to be completely false. Despite the fact that a huge amount of purely Irish schools had been keenly opened, the problems soon emerged. There were not enough Irish teachers and both children and parents perceived the idea of Irish-medium education as an outmoded and impractical one. Thus, the process of mandatory Gaelicization was collapsing.[21] In parallel, *Gaeltachtaí* also did not flourish as well as their creators had hoped and, therefore, special commissions were set up in order to redefine their boundaries.

On the other hand, Irish more or less spontaneously prospered thanks to activities which were not under the direct supervision of the state. In 1926, the publishing house *An Gúm* was opened, in 1935 the Irish Folklore Commission was established and in 1952 *Bord Leabhar na Gaeilge* (the Irish Language Books Board) began to work. Drama and theatre also played an important role both on the cultural and political scene. In 1928, *An Taidhbhearc na Gaillimhe*, the first independent professional dramatic group came into being;[22] it was in Galway, which was always somewhat like a hotbed of all kinds of industry connected with Irish and traditional Irish culture. As for film, this field maintained surprisingly good position, too. In 1935, *Oidhche Sheanchais*, the first movie completely in Irish, was launched into the market.[23] Concerning music, *Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann* was opened in 1951 and, up to present times, it is the biggest non-profit body devoted to the preservation of the traditional Irish music.[24] In the same year, *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* (the Arts Council) was established with the aim of looking after the well-being of arts; this mission is the

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[19] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 117
[20] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 117
[21] Ardagh, John, 1994. *Ireland and the Irish. Portrait of a Changing Society*. Hamish Hamilton, p. 291
[22] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544
[23] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544
[24] http://comhaltas.ie/about/

same till nowadays.[25] Together with music and drama, journalism could profit from the wide popularity, too, and had even broader platform for presenting political – typically nationalist – positions. *Inniu* (literally 'Today'), the Irish newspapers with the longest history, ceased to exist as far as in 1984.[26] Naturally, the literature in Irish did not lag behind with a growing number of poets and authors writing in Irish. It is true that the occurrence of such a phenomenon was not massive, however, the only existence of it showed evidence of something. In addition, the new spelling norm was adopted in 1945 and revised in 1947[27], with morphological form adopted in 1953 and revised in 1958.[28] The process of formation of the standardized Irish (*An Caighdeán Oifigiúil*) was de facto finished together with the 1958 publication *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil* (Irish Grammar and Orthography: Official Standard) by Tomás de Bhaldraithe.[29] The old form of the script was left for the historical and romantic writings and step by step was being abandoned both within the curricula and in the institutions. It should be also mentioned that despite the fact that the number of Irish native speakers was continuously declining, it did not mean that the dialects were wanishing automatically. They were still widely spoken albeit, naturally, not so vividly as some two centuries ago. When Ó Cuív published his seminal work 'Irish Dialects and Irish-speaking Districts' in 1951, it was a good reflection about what was happening both in the *Gaeltachtaí* and within the society.[30] The creation of *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* in 1943 should serve as an umbrella organisation for all the groups of volunteers which were devoted to the maintanance of the Irish language.[31] This echoed in 1953 creation of *Gael Linn*, a media company, partly subsidized by the state, whose most famous activity is running the *Gael Linn Records*, a subdivision for producing recordings of traditional and

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[25] http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/who_we_are.aspx
[26] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 544
[27] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 119
[28] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 122
[29] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 122
[30] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 123
[31] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 121

Celtic music.[32] Along with the development on the cultural field, the Government tried to adjust the situation in the *Gaeltachtaí* to the reality. Therefore, the Department of the Gaeltacht (*Roinn na Gaeltachta*) was opened in 1956.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, the governmental attitude toward Irish has become somewhat more realistic. In 1969,[33] *Comhairle na Gaeilge* (Irish Language Council) was established in order to define the main challenges and to outline corresponding solutions. The public officials had realized that preparing long-term strategies was the most effective way within the field of language policy.[34] One of the steps undertaken by this authority was the creation of the Committee on Irish Language Attitude Research (CILAR) in 1970 which was greatly responsible for the national censuses concerning Irish language.[35] Another natural step was the opening of the *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann – ITÉ* (The Linguistics Institute of Ireland) in 1972.[36] It works as an independent research body under the Ministry of Education and Science.[37] In 1973 it was materialized the withdrawal of Irish as an inseparable part of the Leaving Certificate which was partly influenced by the fact that the Republic of Ireland joined the European structures the same year.[38] (At that time, Irish did not become one of the official languages of the European institutions. For further details, please see the special chapter). Since 1974, the knowledge of Irish was no more required as compulsory for examinations within the field of civil service.[39] In 1978, *Bord na Gaeilge* (Irish Language Board) under the Bord na Gaeilge Bill was created in order to coordinate various activities

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[32] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 121
[33] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 127
[34] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 128
[35] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 128
[36] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 128
[37] http://www.eurfedling.org/ire/ire.htm
[38] However, Irish is still required compulsory within certain spheres, above all within advocacy and teaching. Clearly, it is a political and symbolical step which can, on the other hand, provoke controversies. One of them was e.g. the case Groener vs. Minister for Education (C-397/87) when a teacher from the Netherlands refused to pass an oral exam in Irish. She appealed to the law but the European Court of Justice defended the rights of the State to maintain such a policy in order to preserve national heritage and values. See: Šlosarčík, Ivo, 2007. *Politický systém Irska*. Slon Praha, p. 195
[39] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 126

of other sub-bodies at different levels.[40] One of the most important changes within the Irish language policy was the shift from the emphasis on pure Irish usage toward the coexistence of both Irish and English side by side, i.e. de facto bilingualism. Irish Language Board, too, has implemented the policy which was focused rather on building a steady and functional partnership between Irish and English than to just try to save Irish as the only language within the Republic. In addition, most of the citizens used naturally English as a mode of communication and Irish was perceived as an important, but somewhat old fashioned part of Irishness. Step by step, the Irish Language Board has developed into an advisory and monitoring capacity instead of being under the strict control of the Government, maintaining the interventionist approach.[41] Although the three national surveys on language being held in 1973, 1983 and in 1993 showed that the support of Irish among the citizens did not grow as much as was the Government's goal, the language was enjoying quite a wide passive backing even among the non-Irish citizens. Moreover, the problem which appeared in the surveys was probably the inability of transforming one's enthusiasm for the language into the willingness to learn it.[42] Nevertheless, the number of native speakers was not so dramatically low as has shown the 1981 census when there were more than 1 million of native speakers, representing some 32% of the population of the Republic of Ireland.[43] According to the 1996 census, there were more than 1.43 million native speakers, representing 43.5% of the population.[44] It seems there is a trend of growing number of native speakers because the 2006 census says there are over 1.66 million inhabitants of the Republic, being able to speak Irish.[45] However, as was mentioned before, a big deal of critical approach is needed when considering the data from the surveys (i.e. a notable part of people answered they were able to speak Irish despite the fact they were able just to communicate using *cúpla focal* – just a few phrases in Irish). As for Irish-medium education, in 2001 there were 174 schools (both

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[40] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 131
[41] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 132
[42] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 133
[43] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 547
[44] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 545
[45] http://www.udaras.ie/index.php/corporate_menu/an_ghaeltacht/irish_language/866

primary and secondary) in comparison with just 16 in 1972 and during the 1990-2001 period, the amount of pupils has risen from 16,000 to more than 28,000.[46] The umbrella organisation, more or less on a voluntary base, is called *Gaelscoileanna* in the Republic of Ireland and *Gaeloiliúint* in Northern Ireland.[47] There is also a special governmental body, *An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta,* with the aim of facilitating and monitoring the use of Irish at primary and post-primary schools (e.g. providing teachers, outlining strategies etc.).[48] However, there are also activities which are not directly connected to school but which have a strong impact within the field of Irish learning. As an example could serve the famous summer camps for children aged approximately 4 to even 18 which focus on the direct method of learning (one of them is e.g. *Campa Saoire Chois Fharraige* which is probably known also outside Ireland)[49]. They are being held usually during summer holidays and what is unique, children usually must not speak any single word in English. It is almost a public secret that some of the camps use physical punishments in order to force children to think and speak in Irish. Therefore, a notable part of pupils do not consider their stay in those summer camps as an ideal way how to spend holidays.[50]

Since the 1990s, the measures undertaken by the Government were more realistic, trying to reflect the situation carefully when offering support at the same time. Probably the biggest step forward was the signing of the Good Friady Agreement (also Belfast Agreement, in Irish *Comhaontú Bhéal Feirste*) in April 1998. Besides the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly and a range of important political arrangements, the North-South

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[46] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 545
[47] Lalor, Brian (ed.), 2003. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland*. Gill & Macmillan Ltd., p. 548
[48] http://www.cogg.ie/english/about.asp

[49] http://www.campasaoire.com/

[50] Personal correspondence (8th April 2008) with Thomas Reidy, native Irish speaker and student of History and Political Science at University College Dublin who has participated in those summer camp as a young boy and, thus, has gained some experience about it. However, this remark is not to blame that all the summer camps with Irish lessons use physical punishments. It has been just said that these things have happened but there is quite a small chance that national newspapers would write about it in some extent manner. Obviously, it is not the topic of the day.

Ministerial Council (NSMC, in Irish *An Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh/Theas*) was also established. The Council is responsible for a range of fields, among them also for promoting Irish and Ulster Scots as languages which have the same status as English. For this purpose, the North/South Language Body was created. It is a single body functioning under the NSMC, implementing its policies. It consists practically from two separate sub-bodies, which are *Foras na Gaeilge* (Irish Language Agency) in the Republic (and supporting the promotion of Irish language) and *Tha Boord O Ulstér-Scotch* (Ulster-Scots Agency) in Northern Ireland (and supporting the promotion of Ulster Scots).[51]

Concerning the Republic of Ireland, the next great change was brought by the Official (Equality) Languages Bill (*Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla*) in 2002 which stated that Irish and English are equal in use, in particular within the Acts of the Oireachtas and in the administration of Justice.[52] However, the idea of language equality was worked out in the greater detail by the Official Languages Act (*Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla*) in 2003. This document sets conditions for the usage of Irish within the public sphere, i.e. by the institutions, and it also constitutes the new status of the place names: outside *Gaeltachtaí*, both the Irish and English version of the name have the same status while inside *Gaeltachtaí*, the legal status has only the Irish form.[53] This act also created a new body, *An Coimisinéir Teanga*, which is appointed by the President of Ireland on the advice of the Government.[54] Its mission is to control how the Official Languages Act is implemented within the public institutions. Therefore, the chief commissioner of this body has to monitor the situation across the country and, if necessary, to investigate the complaints. In case when the other side deliberately violates the measures of the Act, the commissioner has the right to impose a fine up to 2,000 euros or six months of imprisonment. However, his main aim is to serve as a coordinator and

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[51] http://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org/index/north-south-bodies/language_body.htm
[52] http://www.irlgov.ie/bills28/bills/2002/2402/default.htm
[53] http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2003/a3203.pdf
[54] http://www.coimisineir.ie/index.php?page=baile&tid=1&lang=english

advisor.[55] The Language Rights Charter is a list of elementary rights which were agreed by the Official Languages Act 2003. The most practical of them are the rights to communicate with the public authorities in Irish (and, naturally, to receive the answer in Irish), to use Irish in any Court and before the Houses of the Oireachtas and the right to expect the Acts of the Oireachtas being published both in Irish and in English.[56]

Currently, the Official Languages Act is the main basis on which the subsequent frameworks are being built. Under this Act, the Irish Language Scheme has been prepared and, later on, confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.[57] One of the bodies focused on the daily use of Irish within the public authorities could be for example *Gaeleagras* which was established by the Department of Finance in 1971 in order to facilitate the business with the state through Irish.[58]

5.2. The Role of the Government. Summary of the Bodies Related to the Government

This section just summarizes what has been said in the previous chapters. Thus, the main aim of the state within the field of the language policy is to play the role of the patron, conservator and supporter of the Irish language which is, according to the 1937 Constitution, the first official language in the Republic of Ireland.

Therefore, there are several bodies related to the Government:[59]

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[55] http://www.coimisineir.ie/index.php?page=cumhachtai_an_choimisineara_teanga&tid=9&lang=english

[56] http://www.coimisineir.ie/downloads/language-rights-charter.pdf

[57] http://www.oic.gov.ie/en/AboutUs/IrishLanguageScheme/

[58] http://www.finance.gov.ie/gaeleagras/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/gaeleagras/documents/BackgroundandRole.htm&CatID=2&m=c

[59] http://www.irlgov.ie/topics/display.asp?Key=Irish+Language
This list of bodies could be found at the official webpage of the Irish Government and as such outlines the official policy of the Government toward the language by means of those

- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

- *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* (the Irish Language Books Board)

- *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann* (the Linguistics Institute of Ireland)

- *Radió na Gaeltachta*

- *An Coimisinéir Teanga*

- *Foras na Gailge*

- *Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann*

- *TG4 – Teilifís na Gaeilge* (the Irish Language Television Service)

- *Gaeleagras*

- *Údarás na Gaeltachta*[60]

- *An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta*

5.3. *Gaeltachtaí*. The Geographical Aspect of Irish Usage

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special bodies. The order of the agencies in this thesis follows the order as was set in the official source. Some of the agencies are commonly named with the English equivalent, some are not – therefore, the English translation is given only where the English form is normally used and officially presented.

[60] It is often referred to as Údarás na Gaeltachta as to a 'quango', it means a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation. However, this term is not infrequently used in relation to other authorities working under the governmental control, i.e. the term itself is quite loosely used to describe bodies which were at least founded by the Government. For more see:
Šlosarčík, Ivo, 2007. *Politický systém Irska*. Slon Praha, p. 109

The term *an Ghaeltacht* (the plural is *Gaeltachtaí*) or simply 'the Gaeltacht' in English[61] is used to describe the areas within the Republic of Ireland with a notable number of Irish residents.[62] Therefore, in these areas the Irish cultural heritage is being carefully preserved (e.g. the Irish place names are de facto a rule), including the Irish-medium school system. According to 2006 census, the population of the Gaeltacht is around 90,000 and, out of this number, about 12,000 residents live within the greater Galway.[63] Naturally, it is not meant that within the Gaeltacht, the only spoken language is Irish; the inhabitants of the Gaeltacht are normally able to communicate in English but Irish is a language of daily use, i.e. it is spoken in homes, in the streets, in institutions etc.

The demarcation of the Gaeltacht took place in 1926 for the first time, i.e. a short time after the establishment of the Irish Free State and, thus, referring to the state policy of promoting the language throughout the country. A special commission was introduced in order to gain the accurate delimitation. Only those areas were eligible to be included, where there was at least 80% of the resident population speaking Irish whereas the data were taken from the 1911 census.[64] These areas were the 'truly' ones, called *Fíor-Gaeltachtaí*, in contrast to *Breac-Gaeltachtaí* with approximately 25-79% of inhabitants able to speak Irish. It was believed that the adjacent areas would be step by step incorporated in the proper ones. However, it was rather an ambitious idea given the fact that the *Fíor-Gaeltachtaí* covered just 16% of the Irish population and, what was even worse, they were located in quite distant and isolated geographical areas.[65] Albeit the governmental support was fairly high, the economic

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[61] As the note in the very introductory section says, italics are used within this thesis strictly for terms in Irish. Thus, *an Ghaeltacht* or its plural *Gaeltachtaí* is in italics whereas the term '(the) Gaeltacht' (perceived as a singular form) is commonly used in English and therefore is written using the normal font

[62] As was already mentioned in the chapter about the Celtic languages, similar areas exist in Scotland, they are called Gàidhealtachd and they are delimited also in regions with predominantly Scottish Gaelic speaking population

[63] http://www.udaras.ie/index.php/corpo Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p.

[64] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 113
[65] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 114

problems occurred in a short time. The small farms and firms could not compete with the strong rivals based mainly in the cities and, in particular, were English speaking. The crisis culminated in the 1940s, when a number of farms had to be closed. However, the Government was not able to act correspondingly no sooner than in 1956 when the boundaries of the Gaeltacht were delimited once more. After that measure, the extension of the Gaeltacht was much smaller.[66] Nevertheless, the number of native speakers was declining anyway. Later on, several reports covering this topic were published and, concerning the delimitation of the boundaries, a couple of minor changes have taken place up to present day. Together with re-drawing of the boundaries in 1956, which was held under the Gaeltacht Areas Order and whose aim was to better reflect the everyday realities, the first governmental body, *Roinn na Gaeltachta*, was established with the focus on outlining the main strategic lines of development within the Gaeltacht.[67] Another authority dealing with the question, *An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge* (the Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language) came into being in 1958 and it presented its report in 1963.[68] Nevertheless, the practical problematics of economic sustainability was still painful and, thus, a special agency focused on this was heavily needed. *Gaeltarra Éireann* (under the Gaeltacht Industries Act, 1957) pretended to be one of that type but its mission was also criticized because it indirectly contributed to the Anglicisation of the Gaeltacht.[69] However, a range of other controversies occurred. Since the Gaeltacht areas were in geographically remote locations, they were not destroyed by the omnipresent technical achievements, city bustle and all the civilization disadvantages. Because of that, they have become a favourite holiday destination for wealthy English speaking families and businessmen. Naturally, they are not often welcomed by the natives, the more that they bring with themselves a significant stress on the usage of English. Their showy new residences are not infrequently being built at the best places with spectacular views over the countryside, expressing who is the mister

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[66] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 117
[67] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 123
[68] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 123
[69] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland.* Routledge., p. 123

in particular village or town. Connected to this process is the raising of prices which badly affects the local people.[70] Another point of criticism is the peculiar policy of promoting the institutions of higher education in the Gaeltacht areas. A coherent approach is obviously missing whereas the bureaucrats sitting in their offices cannot reflect the real needs and problems of the education within the Gaeltacht as well as professors who are (almost) always too far away to truly understand the situation.[71] Moreover, the private sector is not involved in financing of the schools or research centres although e.g. in Scotland it has recorded notable success.[72] All in all, the result is that a considerable amount of native speakers is leaving the Gaeltacht for cities where they have a range of (not only) work and living possibilities and, thus, all the happening around the Gaeltacht is often perceived by the general public as somewhat hypocritical.[73]

However, not to be only pessimistic, good faith is not totally extinct. *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, a governmental body established in 1980 under the *Údarás na Gaeltachta Act*, 1979 instead of the malfunctioning *Gaeltarra Éireann*, is responsible for the economic, cultural and social development in the Gaeltacht. The governing board of this authority has 20 members while 17 out of them are elected.[74] One of the core missions of the *Údarás* is to help small companies and start up firms whereto the EU funding is also used.

To conclude, the existence of *Gaeltachtaí* brings some painful problems to solve but its goal – to promote the Irish language and Irish traditions – is an inseparable part of the national thinking and, as such, *Gaeltachtaí* are rather positively perceived. Naturally, the whole process

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[70] Blake, James, J., 2003. "University Extension Centers for the Gaeltachtaí", New Hibernia Review, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 136

[71] Blake, James, J., 2003. "University Extension Centers for the Gaeltachtaí", New Hibernia Review, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 134
Some universities in Ireland have started special initiatives in the Gaeltacht in order to conduct quite a broad sphere of programmes. One of them was for instance the *Cúrsa Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge* at the National University of Ireland, Galway. See:
http://www.ucd.ie/gaeilge/focheim/dioploma/dioploma.html

[72] Blake, James, J., 2003. "University Extension Centers for the Gaeltachtaí", New Hibernia Review, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 134

[73] Blake, James, J., 2003. "University Extension Centers for the Gaeltachtaí", New Hibernia Review, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 134

[74] http://www.udaras.ie/index.php?item_id=1097

has to reflect the changes on the economical and political sphere as well as within the society and act correspondingly.

As for the geographical distribution of the Irish speakers within the whole island in general, the opening statement is that it is steadily shrinking. As was mentioned in the chapter about the Celtic languages, the island was almost totally Irish speaking prior to the various waves of invasion, be it Normans or Englishmen. Finally, English gained the victory because it was a language of power, money and practice. The regions which were closer to the British Isles were Anglicized sooner and Irish was rolled back to what are now counties Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Clare and Donegal and these areas are up to present day the cores of Irish language community (see the map of the current extension of the Gaeltacht in the enclosure) with Galway being probably the city where the Irishness is flourishing to the greatest extent. In Northern Ireland, the concentration of Irish speakers can be found mainly within the city areas, such as Belfast and Derry. Besides this, there are smaller islets where Irish is still maintained, such as Newry and Mourne districts or small communities in Downpatrick.[75]

5.4. Irish in the EU

On 1st January 2007, the European Union witnessed notable changes in its development. However, it was mainly the EU enlargement of Bulgaria and Romania what has attracted the interest of media, not so the fact that Irish has become an official language of the EU, multiplying the number of all the official languages to 23. However, the process was launched by the Government already in 2005.[76]

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[75] On Rathlin Island, there used to be a special dialect of Irish which was heavily influenced by the Scottish Gaelic (or it could be said it was a mixture of Irish and Scottish Gaelic), but nowadays it would be very difficult indeed to find someone from the islanders who would be able to speak it.
[76]
http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/76&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

When the Republic of Ireland joined the European structures in 1973, the Government did not require Irish to be the official language (usually, the new country proposes its language to obtain the official status already in the accession treaty). One of the most important reasons of that step was the fact that English was widely spoken in the country and, in addition, together with the United Kingdom joining the EU at the same time, English started to gain a more important position at the expense of French.[77] The other language which did not require the official status was Luxembourgish but, unlike the case of Ireland, the Luxembourg Government decided not to change this policy up to present day. Concerning this question, the case of Maltese should be briefly mentioned. This language has become the official language on 1st May 2004 but a special period of three years was constituted in order to provide enough time so that all the measures regarding the problems of translations could be solved. This period ended on 30th April 2007.

Together with the ongoing process of enlargement and with the growing number of member states – and, thus, of the official languages - the Irish Government wanted to ensure equal rights for Irish. This proposal was supported more or less by all the important political parties in the Republic. Nevertheless, it was obvious that this measure had first of all political background. It was a symbolic step which should strengthen national consciousness and facilitate the governmental gravitation toward bilingualism when both English and Irish are used equally.[78]

The Council of the EU decided unanimously and there were no distinct disputes about it. However, certain fears have appeared that regional languages such as Welsh or Breton and mainly Catalan, Basque

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[77] Hnízdo, Bořivoj, 2007. "Plurilingualism and European Identity", *The Annual of Language & Politics and Politics of Identity*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 9

[78] Nevertheless, there are also somewhat ironic opinions about that measure. One of them is the presumption that quite a notable amount of alumni who have graduated from Irish language and Irish studies should find appropriate working positions – and the best ones could be found within the EU structures. Thus, it could be perceived as an action directed by a strong lobby which did not have any general support among citizens. Therefore, it could be seen as an unfit measure with the biggest fault made by the EU because ideally the EU should not have permitted the happening of this. (Interview with Brigid Laffan, Principal Dean of the College of Human Sciences, University College Dublin and Jean Monnet Professor of European Politics of the School of Politics and International Relations, UCD; 27th October 2007)

and Galician could start to advocate the same policy as Ireland did. Naturally, these languages do not have the status of a national language but during the recent decades, they have built up national consciousness and facilitate the governmental gravitation toward bilingualism when both English and Irish are used equally.[79]

The Council of the EU decided unanimously and there were no distinct disputes about it. However, certain fears have appeared that regional languages such as Welsh or Breton and mainly Catalan, Basque and Galician could start to advocate the same policy as Ireland did. Naturally, these languages do not have the status of a national language but during recent decades, they have built up notably strong position full of respect. In December 2005, the agreement between the Spanish Government and the EU was reached, ensuring that some official texts and documents would be available also in Basque, Catalan and Galician. This was based on the decision of the Council from June 2005 about the possibility of using the regional languages within the EU structures if those languages maintained the official status within the territory of a member state.[80] The expenses of translation should bear Spain.[81]

After all, the question of the official languages continues to be of a relatively high importance and, as such, could be perceived as a proof that the national consciousness, and in a broad sense the national interests, still make a difference, even within the integrated European space.[82]

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[79] Personal correspondence with Markéta Pitrová, Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno (15th April 2008)
[80] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/76&type=HTML& aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[81] Personal correspondence with Markéta Pitrová, Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno (15th April 2008)
[82] For instance, if Turkey joins the EU, the presence of Turkish language within the EU structure will bear a highly important message, too. However, this situation could become a reality much sooner – if the integration process on Cyprus achieves the victory, the question of Turkish as one of the official languages within the EU could eventually cause an earthquake among the European politicians (personal correspondence with Markéta Pitrová, Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno; 15th April 2008)

Conclusion. Possible Future Development and Challenges

Although the question of national and regional languages is a many-sided problem which requires interdisciplinary approach and is dependent on the ever changing milieu, some presumptive lines of development could be traced.

One of the most important changes is the fact that Irish is nowadays perceived not as a rigid language of ancestors which deserves to be rigorously protected but as a vital and vivid part of the national consciousness and heritage which is an inseparable segment of the changing world. At present, Irish pretends to be rather a 'glue' within the society than a praised victim of the last centuries (therefore, Irish is nowadays more open to immigrants and, as such, is being used as a soft tool of the immigrants' integration).

If the development outlined in the previous paragraph should be feasible, a new and more progressive type of cooperation between the governmental and nongovernmental organisations and the community must be implemented. However, there are already signs that the situation is getting better. In the outlook, the authorities will try to better understand the needs of native speakers within the local community (e.g. it is remarkable that the governmental bodies are opening their branch offices throughout the country in order to be a part of the local life; *Foras na Gaeilge* has its office also in Belfast which is a token of willingness to see the promoting of Irish in a complexity). Naturally, the local-based type of coordination will be more effective than the central one.

Since the 1990s and onwards, a new phenomenon has occurred - Irish in the cities. The times when there were quite a strong border between the rural areas and the cities are away now. The number of Irish speakers is growing together with the openings of new Irish-medium schools and

courses and with setting up of new cultural events. The Irish speaking community within the cities is step by step gaining self-confidence and, thus, it will be a motivation for – sometimes rigid – *Gaeltachtaí* to take a second breath. This feature is apparent not only in Dublin and Galway but also in Belfast, Derry or Newry and Mourne, in Limerick, Cork and Waterford.[1] According to the 2002 census, there are even more native Irish speakers within the greater Dublin area than in all *Gaeltachtaí* virtually taken together.[2] Surprisingly, there is not much research done about this trend, so a wide field for would-be studies is open.

The impact of the so called Celtic Tiger economy should not be left out. Along with the influx of new technologies, capital, cultural habits and newcomers, Irish will have to take a stand of an attractive language which offers much more than a mere sentimentality and which is worth of learning (probably even for people outside Europe). That is to say, Irish could be a unifying element (at least a cultural one) within the Irish society which is less and less homogenous. And this is the role which cannot play English because it is the language of the globalised world.

It is likely that the politicisation of the language will grow together with the lobby fighting for the rights of the particular language and its speakers. To conclude, Irish should – and probably also would – find a new position toward the space in which it exists. The social and spatial divisions are dependent on the conditions which are constantly changing. That is why the relationship between the language and space should be based on the changing conditions yet it should not loose its roots.

To conclude, the answer to the question in the title is – yes, Irish is a political tool and not only within the Republic of Ireland. However, it is not its only aspect. Irish remains a significant part of national cultural heritage and, together with the ongoing process of globalisation, it will

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[1] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 203
[2] Chríost, Diarmait MacGiolla, 2005. *Irish Language in Ireland*. Routledge., p. 203

play a role of a soft political instrument within the policy of national interests which will be advocated with stronger enthusiasm as an answer to the threat of the unification of the world.
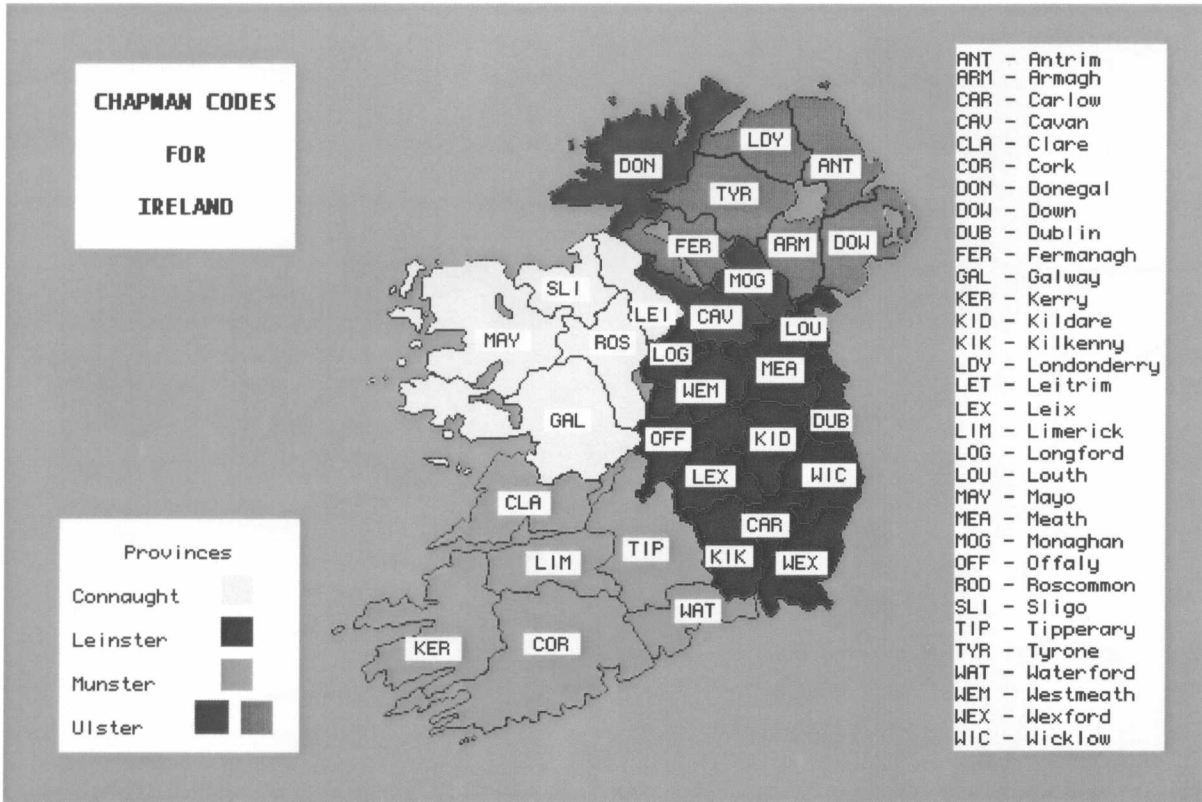
Summary

This thesis is dealing with the Irish language from the political point of view. The main question here is whether the language can be used as a tool of policy-making process, as an instrument for strengthening the national identity and, consequently, as a kind of social glue. The answer is that language (in this case the Irish language) can be really perceived as a medium toward all the purposes mentioned above, however, it is not the main function of the language. Politicians dispose of a range of more convenient instruments which help them to implement certain policies. Notwithstanding, the Irish language in Ireland remains a strong token of Irishness and probably this will not change in the foreseeable future due to the ongoing process of globalization when the risk of unification is spreading and, thus, when the consciousness of own roots is, step by step, becoming stronger.
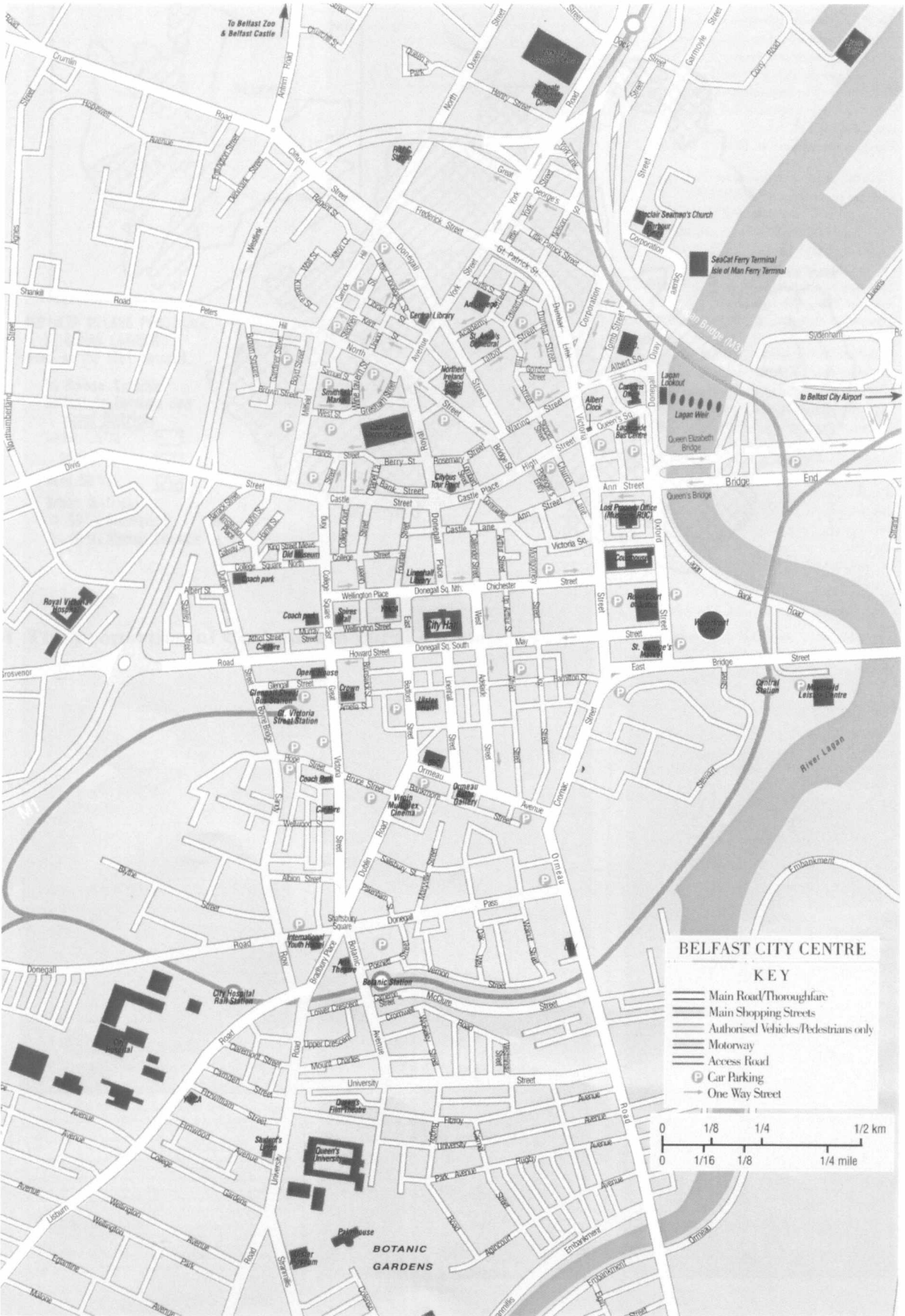
Enclosure: Maps

1 Map of Ireland[1]

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[1] http://media.maps.com/magellan/Images/IRELAN-W1.gif

CHAPMAN CODES FOR IRELAND

Provinces
- Connaught
- Leinster
- Munster
- Ulster

Code	County
ANT	Antrim
ARM	Armagh
CAR	Carlow
CAV	Cavan
CLA	Clare
COR	Cork
DON	Donegal
DOW	Down
DUB	Dublin
FER	Fermanagh
GAL	Galway
KER	Kerry
KID	Kildare
KIK	Kilkenny
LDY	Londonderry
LET	Leitrim
LEX	Leix
LIM	Limerick
LOG	Longford
LOU	Louth
MAY	Mayo
MEA	Meath
MOG	Monaghan
OFF	Offaly
ROD	Roscommon
SLI	Sligo
TIP	Tipperary
TYR	Tyrone
WAT	Waterford
WEM	Westmeath
WEX	Wexford
WIC	Wicklow

2 Map of counties in Ireland[2]

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[2] http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Ireland.html

3 Map of Belfast (the West Belfast is also visible)[3]

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[3] http://www.belfast.net/mo/belmap.jpg

Map legend (left side):

NORTHERN IRELAND PERCENTAGE
OF ROMAN CATHOLICS
(based on the 1961 census)

% Roman Catholic
Belfast Co Borough and
Rural Districts
under 25 %
25 - 49 %
over 50 %

Urban Districts
> 50 % Protestant ▲
> 50 % Roman Catholic △

Map labels: BELFAST, see inset, B

Scales: 3 Km, 0 20 Km
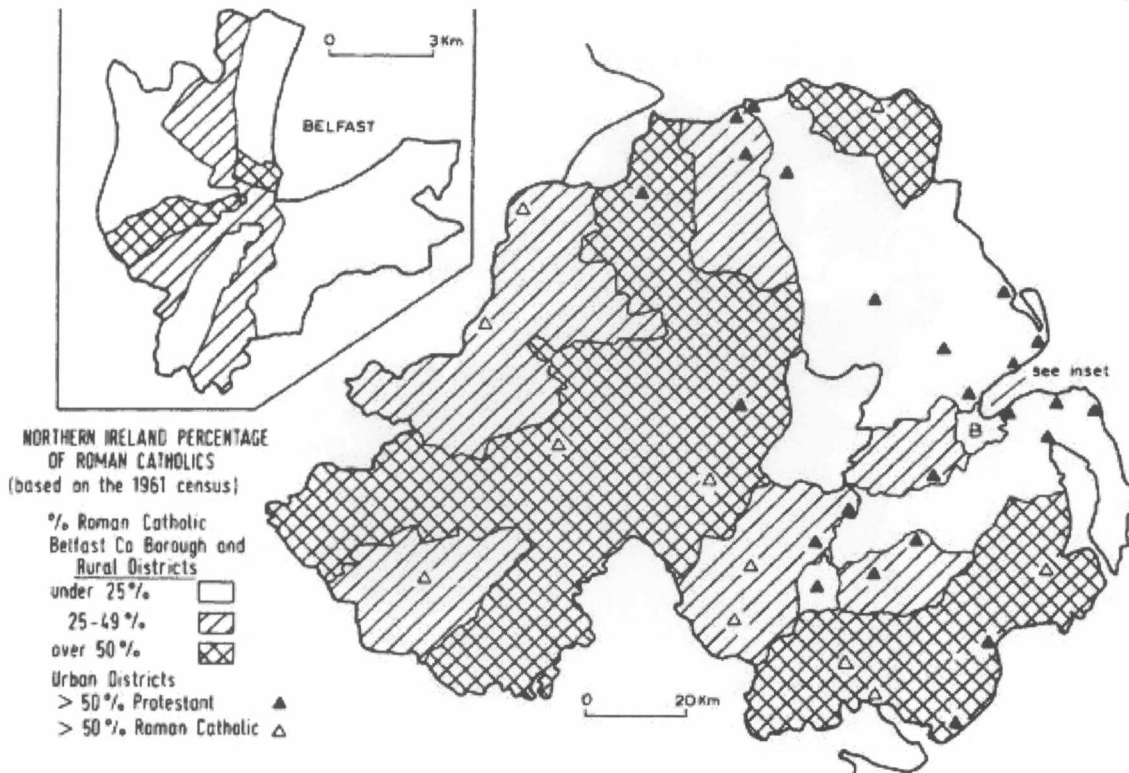
4 The proportion of Catholics in rural districts, 1961[4]

[4] http://www.jstor.org/stable/view/621760?seq=10

Population Fall in Ireland 1841-1851

Over 30%
20 to 30%
10 to 20%
0 to 10%
Population Rise

Source: Edwards, RD,
Williams, TD; "The Great
Famine: Studies in Irish History
1845-1852"; Lilliput Press, 1956.
Reprinted 1997. Figure 20, p260
Produced for www.irelandtheisland.com
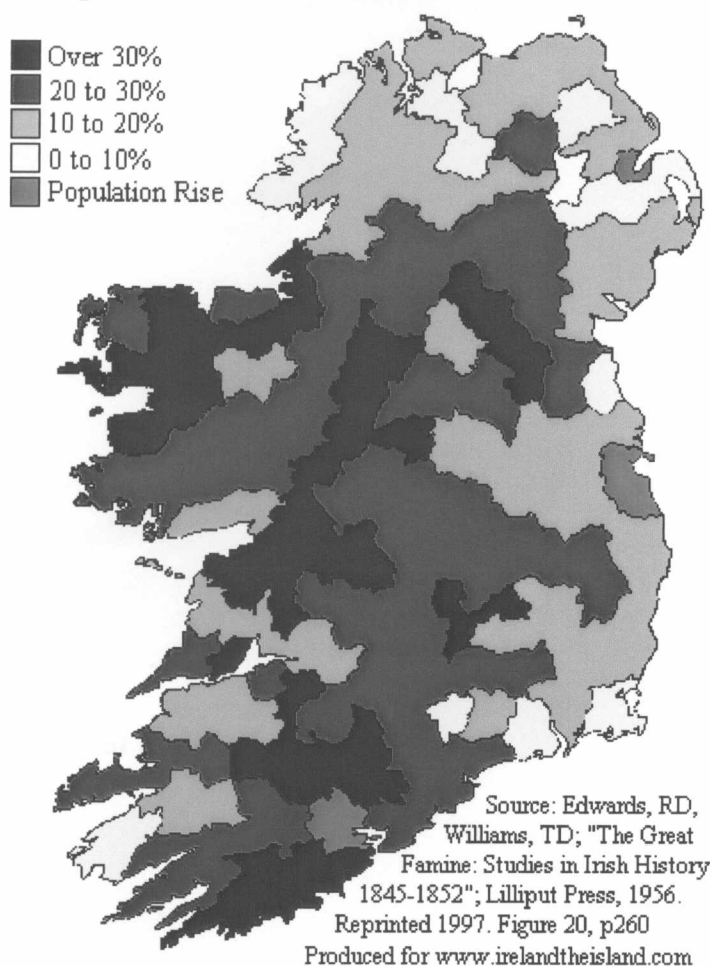
Unlike the rest of this site, this map is declared to be in the public domain.

5 Map population fall in Ireland 1841-1851[5]

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[5] http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/map_index.html

6 The current extension of the Gaeltacht[6]

6

http://www.udaras.ie/index.php/corporate_menu/an_ghaeltacht/gaeltacht_maps/ireland/86
8

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Charles University in Prague

Institute of Political Science

Spring semester 2007

Supervisor: Doc. PhDr. Bořivoj Hnízdo

Bachelor Thesis Proposal

Language Policy in Ireland

History, Present and Future Challenges

Dagmar Zadražilová

Introduction

Together with the process of globalization, which has already deeply rooted within the sphere of international relations and political science, the movement of devolution and national self-determination is gaining importance at the same time.

Thus, I believe the role of national identity should be devoted the same amount of our attention since both the causes of globalization and national revival are mutually interconnected.

Language, as a strong instrument in the sphere of national rebirth's re-finding and rethinking, will be the main focus of my bachelor thesis. I will devote my research to Irish/Gaelic language seen from the political perspective. My concentration will lead both towards Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and I will try to find out the impact of using Irish as a political utensil. Besides this, Scottish Gaelic and Gaelic languages in general will be mentioned, too, in order to achieve a complex mosaic of the problem. In conclusion, future gravitation of the process will be searched.

Main aims and structure of the research

▪ in the introduction passage I will shortly reflect language as a *politicum*; then, I will outline the historical connections of Gaelic languages` spreading in the region of present-day United Kingdom and Ireland

▪ I will sketch out the position of Irish how it was developing in the 20th century both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland; most aspects of language usage impact will be outlined, such as the influence in the educational system, cultural background or partisan struggles

▪ the role of Scottish Gaelic and probably other minor languages will be compared with the role of Irish; the appearance of other groups of speakers, such as various immigrant clusters, will be added

▪ geographical aspect is very important within this research paper since certain areas both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland are of key importance within this research problem;

several maps will be set in the paper so that complete approach could be reached (historical maps of the development, 20th century maps as well as present-day area sketches and tables)

• functions and purposes of *Gaeltachtaí* will be examined since these demarcated regions with special rights and particularities were established by state authorities in order to facilitate and support maintaining of Irish native speakers; therefore, I believe they play an important role while the Government of Ireland is trying to appoint Irish as one of the core pillars of Irish national awareness

• connected to the previous point, the phenomenon of "being Irish" or "Irishness" could not be neglected; such questions as citizenship and ethnicity in relation to Irish revival will be searched

• the most recent development will be analyzed, while using official documents of the Government of Ireland and other authorities

• finally, I will try to describe and analyze possible challenges and potential progressive development of contemporary language policy in Ireland

Conclusion

The rediscovered role of Irish language is still a live process which is continuously changing according to actual political situation and external suggestion. Furthermore, while searching after this topic, this could bring understanding to similar agendas. Language as an instrument of politics has been always an important theme and this will probably not change, at least not within the run of the 21st century. In my bachelor thesis I will try to find a proof of this.

(subsequent resources will be found when doing research within the process of the thesis` originating)

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Note: under the supervision of the Tutor, the title of the thesis has been changed as well as – to a lesser extent – the contents.