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## Teachers and Language Learning in Primary Schools: the Acquisition of Additional Languages in the Early Years

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*Technological University Dublin*

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# Teachers and Language Learning in Primary Schools: The Acquisition of Additional Languages in the Early Years

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Submitted for the award of PhD to Dublin Institute of Technology

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September 2011

## ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore teachers' attitudes towards home language maintenance among children acquiring English and Irish as additional languages in the early years of primary school and to explore the experiences of mainstream teachers who are working with these children. The study includes a consideration of the pedagogical issues involved in teaching young English and Irish language learners and an examination of the support that the whole school community provides for the teachers and the children. Data were gathered using a mixed methods approach, bearing in mind the rights of children to use their home languages and learn additional languages in an age-appropriate manner and the complex linguistic ecologies that form part of the environment of these children.

Phase I of the research involved four focus group interviews carried out with teachers of Junior and Senior Infant classes. This served to inform parts of Phase II of the research, a nationwide postal questionnaire administered to teachers of Junior Infants. It was found that teachers do have positive attitudes towards the maintenance of home languages among these newcomer children, and that while attitudes inform practice, practical application of home language inclusion was rare. It was also found that while documents exist to support teachers in this endeavour, they are most often not consulted due to lack of training and lack of awareness.

Classroom observation which focussed on teacher interaction with three newcomer children in one Junior Infant classroom was carried out during Phase III. This observation highlighted not only a variety of strategies for interactional scaffolding appropriate to facilitating newcomer children in the mainstream classroom but also the importance of environmental scaffolding. Positive results regarding children's English and Irish language skills were found during all phases of the research.

Overall the study has shown many positive aspects of an education system that advocates for children speaking home languages other than English in the early years of primary school. However, this system requires a more consistent approach to support and training for the mainstream class teacher who is ultimately responsible for implementing policies and practices at the micro level.

## DECLARATION PAGE

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of PhD is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any Institute.

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As the youngest of a large family I have always been inspired by my brothers and sisters Antoinette, Pauline, Patrick and David to continue my education as far as possible. They supported me in many ways through the early years at college and all through this research. My mother Marie and father Joe always valued education and I know my father would have been very proud of my achievement.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive/ Academic Language Proficiency
CEF	Common European Framework (of Reference for Languages)
CLBT	Content and Language Based Teaching
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
DES	Department of Education and Science (pre 2009)
DES	Department of Education and Skills (post 2009)
DICE	Development and Intercultural Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELL	Early Language Learner
ELP	European Language Portfolio
ESL	English as a Second Language
FCPMN	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
FL	Foreign Language
HL	Home language/ Heritage language (used interchangeably)
HLOTE	Home Languages Other Than English
IILT	Integrate Ireland Learning and Training
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LHRs	Linguistic Human Rights
LM	Language Maintenance
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
LS	Language Shift
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Service
RLSU	Refugee Language Support Unit
SCMP	Schools Cultural Mediation Project
SEVQ	Subject Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire
SDPS	School Development Planning Service
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SUP	Separate Underlying Proficiency
TL	Target Language
TP	Teaching Practice
TPR	Total Physical Response
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Language learning in early childhood has been recognised internationally as an area of great interest for researchers such as Cummins, Baker, Wray and Gass. The processes involved in acquiring a first language as well as additional languages are of relevance to this study in the plurilingual Irish situation. Children speaking a home language other than English who have recently immigrated into the Republic of Ireland are expected upon entry to primary school to engage with the curriculum in an L2 (English) with which they may or may not be familiar as well as learning an additional L2 (Irish) as a beginner. This study set out to explore issues around the language learning experiences of these young children in Ireland from the perspective of mainstream class teachers. The review of literature in this area highlighted a particular concern with areas such as the effect of educational language policy at the macro and micro levels on the school experiences of such children and the importance of first language (L1) maintenance to support identity formation and the acquisition of additional languages.

### **1.2 Aim of this Study**

The study is concerned with teachers' attitudes towards and experiences of teaching children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and with pedagogical issues around these experiences. Underpinning this is a concern with how the whole school community engages with supporting teachers and children in this undertaking, in particular the policies and practices that are in place. A variety of methodological approaches were used to endeavour to understand these issues including focus group interviews, a postal questionnaire and classroom observation. The specific research questions posed at the outset of the project were:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the importance of L1 maintenance among children with EAL?

- To what extent is L1 maintenance among children with EAL being supported by the whole school community?
- What are teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?
- What are teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?
- What types of scaffolding are evident in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL?

The research questions emerged from the author's work as a teaching principal in a primary school and subsequently as a lecturer in education in a college of education, which led to a consideration of the support systems that are in place for all children and in particular newcomer children. The realization quickly emerged that support for newcomer children was primarily aimed at the support teachers rather than mainstream class teachers and a concern for this grew as the challenges for the mainstream teacher, who spends the majority of time with children with English as an Additional Language and is ultimately responsible for their educational well-being, became apparent to the author in her professional capacity. Furthermore, the personal interest of the author in plurilingual language acquisition as a learner, teacher and researcher led to the interest in the area. The aspects of language addressed in NCCA documents pertinent to the area were explored and literature was drawn initially from the author's Master's thesis in formulating a research proposal. The research questions were altered and added to over the initial research period as originally, the intention had been to explore the language acquisition skills of children with EAL in English and Irish. However, it became apparent that in order to do this effectively and meaningfully it would be important to acknowledge and explore the issue of L1 maintenance among the children in question and to look at the broader picture including support from the Whole School Community. The personal motivation of the author in choosing this area of study and the particular research questions as outlined above are explored in more detail relating to the literature referred to throughout this chapter.

### 1.3 Rationale for the Study

Language is the principal means of human communication (Chomsky, 2006). Language has a central role to play in the *Primary School Curriculum*, and is noted as one of the key principles thereof (1999, 8-9). Language helps the child to clarify and interpret his or her experiences, to acquire new concepts, and to add depth to and consolidate concepts already known. Morrison reminds us that

Language is a social instrument for the induction of the child into society. Socialization of children would be difficult without language; thus, parents and schools have a great responsibility to provide optimum opportunities for language acquisition (1984: 320).

According to Lazenby Simpson (2002: 4), “an inadequate linguistic repertoire in the language of the host society is the greatest barrier to the full development of the individual’s potential within that society.” It is therefore essential that all children are afforded the opportunity to develop their language skills to the fullest extent possible, in order to gain maximum access to education and the structures and norms that constitute the society of their new community. The Council of Europe considers the primary school to be the keystone of language learning in the education system (2008: 52). It is acknowledged that in an Irish context “One of the main challenges facing teachers and schools is supporting learners from a wide range of diverse backgrounds whose first language is not the language of instruction” (NCCA, 2005b: 162). As mentioned above, the plurilingual nature of education for children speaking languages other than English as L1 is a particularly recent Irish phenomenon. This study explores some of the challenges faced by teachers in this regard, as well as some of the attitudes teachers have towards linguistic diversity in their classrooms.

The advent of newcomers to Ireland is a relatively new situation. The main influx of children has come within the last ten years, and the Republic of Ireland has hosted high numbers of immigrants within this timeframe, relative to other countries experiencing a high level of immigration<sup>1</sup>. Out of 195 independent states in the world, a total of 188

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<sup>1</sup> [www.migrationinformation.net](http://www.migrationinformation.net) Accessed 03.11.07.

nationalities were represented in Irish society as a whole at the time of the last census in 2006<sup>2</sup>. These nationalities are now present in primary schools and secondary schools. Non-Irish nationals made up almost 10% of the population in 2006, compared with 5.8% in 2002<sup>3</sup>. The Polish diaspora may now be the largest ethnolinguistic minority community in Ireland as of 2007, with Debaene (2008) reporting a number of up to 400,000 Polish nationals in 2008, 26% of all migrants in Ireland.

This increased migration has contributed significantly to the “broadening of cultural diversity spanning traditions and languages from around the world”, according to the DES<sup>4</sup> (Department of Education and Science). The Council of Europe acknowledges that while this increases the language resources on which Ireland can capitalise, the new demand for English as an Additional Language is transforming many mainstream schools to plurilingual micro-communities (2008: 11-12). The migrant workers and students that have been attracted to Ireland in increasing numbers have made a “unique contribution to our community” (DES Press Release, 2005). With reference to linguistic profiles from the questionnaire data and my observations of classroom practice, important aspects of the experiences of these newcomer children will be identified and thoroughly critiqued.

The years 1999-2000 were very important in terms of language education provision from the Department of Education and Science (DES). Firstly, the *Primary School Curriculum* was introduced in 1999. This replaced the curriculum of 1971, and has been in a process of implementation over the last number of years through the provision of in-service training and in-school facilitation on the part of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and School Development Planning Service (SDPS)<sup>5</sup>. In 1999, the service of Language Support teachers was introduced with a view to providing children whose native language was not English with specific classes. Reports commissioned by the Refugee Agency and the DES in 1995 and 1996 resulted in the establishment of the

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) Accessed 03.11.07.

<sup>3</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) Accessed 03.11.07.

<sup>4</sup> The acronym DES now represents the Department of Education and Skills (post March 2010). This quotation has been extracted from a press release of 17.05.05 outlined in the bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Both of these organizations have since been merged with other support services to form the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS).

Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU) in 1999. The RLSU in turn was re-established by the DES as Integrate Ireland Learning and Training (IILT), with the purposes of devising curricula, developing teaching and learning materials for use in schools, and organising twice-yearly in-service seminars for Language Support teachers. This marked a very positive move for a country which had experienced so much out-migration and was unprepared for the levels of immigration which would occur over a short space of time.

When the RLSU published their first occasional paper in 2000, entitled *Meeting the language needs of refugees in Ireland*, a number of recommendations were made. These included a suggestion that a profile of each group of incoming refugees should be profiled according to age, gender and family relationships in order to begin establishing an ethos of learner autonomy (Little, 2000: 21). Other considerations included analysing the learning targets for each sub-group of refugees, and considering the organization of language teaching and learning in order to foster communication at an appropriate level. The development of language teaching materials specifically for the needs of the refugee groups in question was also recommended. IILT published a wide variety of materials for use by Language Support teachers on their website, which culminated with the publication of *Up and Away* (2006), a resource book for English Language Support in primary schools. They also collaborated with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in devising *English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers* (2006 – hereafter referred to as the *EAL Guidelines*) and succeeded in implementing the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) as a method of assessing the language development of newcomer children. *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (2005b - hereafter referred to as the *Intercultural Guidelines*) was published in 2005, reflecting an awareness on the part of the DES of the changes in Irish society and the need for teachers to develop a more inclusive classroom environment (Dillon and O’Shea, 2009: 7).

While the *Intercultural Guidelines* provide guidelines for mainstream teachers, the resource book provided by IILT focuses primarily on the work of the Language Support teacher. *Up and Away* includes general information for schools, the Language Support programme, the curriculum for Language Support, resources for pupils, examples of classroom activities and literacy development. IILT recognises that on its own, Language Support can rarely be enough because teachers have limited time with their Language Support teachers. Therefore, “Language Support must focus principally on the language required by the curriculum and on the language necessary for a child’s socialization in the school” (IILT, 2006: 19). Collaboration with mainstream teachers enables a link to be made with the English language developed by the child in both settings. According to IILT (2006, 20), “the principal objective of Language Support is to integrate the pupil as quickly as possible into all mainstream learning and activities of the school”. This particular handbook has been distributed to over 4000 schools, while their guidelines for teaching English to very young learners has been distributed to around 2000 schools.

IILT won the European Award for Languages in 2006, for their in-service programme for Language Support teachers in primary schools throughout Ireland. Some of the strengths of the programme include the fact that teachers were afforded the opportunity to have their suggestions and opinions incorporated into the programme, and that it contributes to building citizenship (Léargas, 2006: 14). IILT was closed in 2008 due to funding restrictions and the documents they produced are now hosted online by the NCCA. Many of these documents will be explored throughout the study in terms of their use by teachers and the appropriateness of advice and suggestions given regarding inclusion and linguistic development.

There has been great fluctuation in the number of Language Support teachers available to schools over the last number of years. In May 2005, over 600 Language Support teachers were being provided to primary schools. By February 2007, that number had increased to 1450. According to the DES, “primary schools which have fourteen or more non-national pupils with significant English language deficits will be automatically entitled to an

additional temporary teacher for a period of up to two years”<sup>6</sup> Mary Hanafin TD, Minister for Education at the time, promised to provide a further 350 Language Support teachers between 2008 and 2009, as part of the government’s commitment in Towards 2016. A circular has also been made available to the managerial authorities of all school sectors in the country, in order to assist schools “in providing an inclusive school environment to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language and outline the resources that are available to assist schools in this task” (DES, 2007: 1). Reference is made within the circular to creating an inclusive school environment, the role of the Language Support teacher, assessment of pupils’ level of language proficiency, allocation of additional teacher support, materials and resources and availability of support.

However, with the worsening economic situation, the promised teachers have not been appointed<sup>7</sup>. The recent Budget for 2011 has recommended that 500 Language Support teachers be phased out over the next four years and warned that allocation rules may change over that period<sup>8</sup>. The DES has stated that “the EAL pupil remains the responsibility of the mainstream class teacher at primary level” (Circular 0015/ 2009; Circular 0053/ 2007) and it is indisputable that the child with EAL spends most of his or her time under the tutelage of the mainstream class teacher rather than the Language Support teacher. It is therefore imperative that the role of the mainstream teacher in facilitating children with EAL is given due recognition and support. This study aims to play some role in doing just that.

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<sup>6</sup> This is stated on a grant application form. Accessed 10.02.08

[www.into.ie/.../InformationforTeachers/.../EnglishLanguageSupportTeachers/EAL\\_GrantForm.doc](http://www.into.ie/.../InformationforTeachers/.../EnglishLanguageSupportTeachers/EAL_GrantForm.doc) Schools had been capped at two Language Support teachers regardless of the number of eligible pupils enrolled until 2007, but the cap was lifted to enable a maximum of six Language Support teachers within a school. Where the number of eligible pupils is under fourteen within a school, a grant was available to provide a part-time teacher.

<sup>7</sup> In fact, the generous allocation of up to six Language Support teachers was rescinded in Circular 0015/ 2009, replacing the number of teachers with two, as had been the case prior to 2007, albeit with some room for manoeuvre in cases with “significant concentration of pupils learning English as an additional language as a proportion of the overall enrolment” (DES, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.into.ie/ROI/Downloads/Education%20Measures%202011.pdf> Accessed 11.12.10.

#### 1.4 Plurilingual Language Learners

Holmes states that bilingualism and multilingualism, sometimes used interchangeably with plurilingualism, are normal for most of the world (2001: 67). The use of the word 'plurilingual' bears in mind Hamel's opinion that the word "perceives linguistic heterogeneity in an enrichment perspective" (2003: 136). The Council of Europe differentiates between multilingualism and plurilingualism by looking at multilingualism as the presence of multiple languages in a geographical area, whereas plurilingualism refers to an individual who is able to use languages for communication and intercultural interaction; the full linguistic repertoire of the individual rather than a group of people (Council of Europe, 2001: 168). Plurilingualism is a fundamental principle of Council of Europe language education policies (2007: 17) and the term also recognizes that it does not necessarily involve teaching as many languages as possible at the same time, but rather focuses on developing "plurilingual competence and intercultural education, as a way of living together" (Council of Europe, 2007: 18). The change in terminology highlights the fact that terms and indeed meanings change over time.

It is worth exploring some of the terminology used in the literature regarding the children in question in this study and pointing out that children in Irish primary schools who speak languages other than English as their first language are commonly known as 'EAL children' or 'newcomer children'. The definition of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the Irish context is presented as follows:

The phrase 'English as an additional language' recognises that English is the language used in teaching the child and that, where possible, the child will also learn Irish. The teaching of English will build on the language and literacy skills which the child has attained in his/her home language to the greatest extent possible (NCCA, 2006: 5).

It is also of relevance to look at the Heritage Language (HL) learner within the context of this study. Weiyun He (2006: 1) defines the Chinese HL learner as a language student who "... is raised in a home where Chinese is spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in Chinese and in English". This definition may be applied similarly to speakers of HLs such as Polish HL learners



and Slovakian HL learners, depending on the HL in question. Weiyun He also proposes that HL learners' needs are particular to them as although they have a family background in the language and culture, they may have insufficient exposure to this. This may in turn have an effect on their identity and linguistic needs (2006: 2).

It is important to look at English as an Additional language (EAL) specifically, as opposed to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) (Carter and Nunan, 2001: 1). ESL is often used to refer to situations where English is learned and used as the predominant language of communication with the wider community by the majority of people. Countries such as Australia, Canada, England and the U.S. are typical of countries where a high level of immigration leads to many immigrants using their L1 at home, but English outside the home. The use of English in the sense of EAL is becoming more common as a term in Ireland and Britain. EFL, conversely, is widely used as a term where English is learned but not widely used for communication e.g. Thailand, Malaysia and Mexico. Carter and Nunan (2001) also recognise that the context in which teaching takes place varies widely between EFL/ ESL/ EAL settings. These contexts require different resources, pedagogies and syllabi. The learner who is learning EFL will have a limited exposure to the language in everyday life, and therefore limited opportunity to use it whereas children learning EAL should have everyday opportunities to practice language in real-life contexts. This applies in a very particular way to children in this study.

The Primary National Strategy (PNS) in Britain published a booklet on how best to support children learning EAL in the Foundation Stage (0-5). The term 'EAL' is defined by the PNS (2007: 3) as follows: "The term EAL recognises the fact that many children learning English in settings in this country are already developing one or more other languages and are adding English to that repertoire." The PNS also notes that when supporting children learning EAL, it is highly important to build on their existing knowledge of language, and that attitudes towards their ethnicity and culture will impact on their learning.

'Newcomer children' come from a diverse range of language backgrounds. They may have been born in Ireland, yet have neither English nor Irish as mother tongue; they may have lived in Ireland for some time, but not yet have developed the language and literacy proficiency necessary to enable full engagement with the Primary School Curriculum; they may have oral, reading or writing skills in their first or other languages; they may come from homes where their parents or guardians may or may not have literacy skills in the home language or the language medium of the school (NCCA, 2006). Some children may have Irish as a first language, having been raised in a Gaeltacht area (NCCA, 2005b: 164). These children were not of concern to the present study however and the focus remains throughout on children who have been raised speaking languages other than English and Irish as the home language.

Indeed, there is much debate around the word 'newcomer' among practitioners and researchers. The outlook has moved on from terminology such as 'non-national', which deprives an individual of any recognition of a nationality, to 'foreign nationals' to 'new Irish', which is still assimilationist rather than inclusive according to Kenner and Hickey in their discussion of the struggle over terminology in Ireland (2008: 4). The term 'newcomer' is the term currently in use by the NCCA in the *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b) and *EAL Guidelines* (2006) as well as in resource material provided by IILT. However, this does not take into account the "significant number of children born in Ireland of immigrant parents" (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007: 10). The *Dublin 7 Schools' Cultural Mediation Project* (SCMP), which provided schools in the Dublin 7 School Completion Programme with a translation, interpretation and cultural mediation service, to facilitate communication between minority language parents and schools has used the term 'ethnic minority language children' (Yacef, 2008), which does seem more representative. McGorman and Sugrue make a similar point regarding drawing attention to the significance of terminology such as this

The point of this discussion is to draw attention to the significance of language and how it contributes to shaping attitudes and discourses that may have positive and/ or negative consequences for those who have chosen to make something of a future for themselves and their children in this country, regardless of how short or long-term that future might be (2007: 10).

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002: xi) note their struggle with the term LEP or *limited English proficient* (their italics). The most current term in the United States is English language learners (ELL), but the afore-mentioned authors decided to refer to the students in question as “language minority students” (ibid.). The use of the term ‘second language’ or ‘English as a second language learners’ infers that “... although they are learning in an all English school environment, they bring to the school experience language competencies in a language other than English” (ibid.). Carrasquillo and Rodriguez see the alternate terminology used in the UK and Ireland where LEP students are referred to as ‘pupils for whom English is an additional language’ as neutral or even positive towards language minority students.

Lotherington refers to LOTE, the acronym for Languages other than English, which came into use in the mid-70’s in Australia. She refers to Clyne when outlining the later designation of “community languages” which refers not only to LOTEs but also aboriginal languages, therefore “identifying post-colonial languages together with pre-colonial languages at home in Australia” (2003: 201).

Throughout this study a variety of the terms mentioned above will be used to refer to the children in question where appropriate but the most common terms will be children with EAL or children speaking LOTE. Children with EAL will be used as it is the term most commonly recognised in Ireland but children speaking LOTE does indicate the preference of the researcher to place the emphasis on the fact that the child speaks other languages as a primary concern. While EAL does recognise the fact that the child speaks other languages, the emphasis on the L1 within the term LOTE seems to be more inclusive and descriptive of the cases in question.

## **1.5 Outline of Study**

Chapter Two is focused on more theoretical considerations and presents a review of the literature underpinning educational language policy in terms of the Irish context and

international rights-based research. The phenomena of Language Maintenance and Language Shift are also explored with a view to highlighting further the benefits of plurilingualism. Ecological linguistics is also explored as a way of conceptualising the language experiences of children in this study.

Chapter Three presents a review of the literature pertaining to theories of language acquisition among children. Sociocultural theory and input and interaction are of particular relevance here. Furthermore, pedagogical issues around scaffolding and teacher modification of language are presented.

Chapter Four provides an insight into the research process. The chapter commences with an outline of the mixed methods approach taken to exploring the research questions and the ethical issues arising and outlines in turn each of the methods used: focus group interviews, a postal questionnaire and classroom observation with reference to such areas as rationale, administration, sampling, reliability and analysis. .

Chapter Five presents the findings from the focus group data. Firstly the comments made by teachers are presented using the themes which emerged from analysis. They are then summarised in terms of their relevance to the research questions. This provides a foundation for exploring the questionnaire in the following chapter.

Chapter Six presents the findings from the questionnaire data. This includes background information on schools surveyed and an insight into teachers' attitudes towards and experiences of the language development of children in Junior Infant classes, including the HL. Data gathered regarding children's competence levels in English and Irish, based on the ELP benchmarks and achievement of curricular objectives, are also presented.

Chapter Seven presents the findings from the classroom observation data. Background information regarding the school is presented along with detailed insights into the types of interactional and environmental scaffolding observed over a period of ten weeks. The English and Irish language development of three speakers of LOTE is also explored.

Chapter Eight involves analysis and discussion of the findings presented in the previous three chapters in light of the literature reviewed. The themes which have emerged from the research are highlighted and discussed with reference to the research questions that this study addresses.

Chapter Nine presents the conclusions from this study and highlights issues for future consideration. Implications arising from the findings are analysed and recommendations made. Conclusions and recommendations are made with regard to the main themes which emerged from the findings as outlined above.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW - THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter educational language policy is explored in terms of the Irish context and rights-based approaches to language education. Following on from this, the concept of plurilingualism is examined in terms of the importance of this phenomenon to society and to bilinguals. The issues of Language Maintenance (LM) and Language Shift (LS) are also of relevance to the present study and so international examples are presented in order to examine the relatively recent Irish situations where LM and LS may occur. The focus is then turned to the relationship between language and identity and is teased out in the context of language forming an intrinsic part of one's culture. The chapter finishes with a consideration of ecological linguistics and its relevance to this study.

#### **2.2 Educational Language Policy**

According to Toolan "There has to be a positive argument for linguistic diversity and indeed there is a quite straightforward one. The positive arguments must be rooted in principles of self-determination, and the right to freedom of expression" (2003: 60). Linguistic diversity in the educational arena can only be maintained and achieved in the context of appropriate educational language policy. Schlyter refers to the notion of language policy as language being viewed as an object to be acted upon "in terms of different aspects of language planning" (2003: 163). According to Pennycook, language policy involves far more than choosing which language to use in, for example, education as it also involves the use of language "for purposes of cultural governance", which reflect and produce "constructions of the Other" (2002: 91). He refers to Foucault's notion of governmentality which focuses on "how power operates at the micro level of diverse practices, rather than macro regulations of the state" (ibid.); in essence, he holds that while a language policy might be present at state level, the recommendations may or may not be implemented by those at ground level working in schools.

Saville-Troike notes that linguistic social control occurs where official or unofficial policies and practices regulate which language is to be used in particular situations (2006: 123). Hamel points to the importance of counteracting the idea of monolingualism and de facto multilingualism (i.e. multilingualism which has simply developed but with a lack of awareness and/ or planning) through appropriate language planning. He says that de facto multilingualism “has proven extremely harmful for cultural diversity, massive bilingualism and minority languages” (2003: 136). According to the Council of Europe “If languages are to be a real means of communication and openness to the Other, this must become one of the essential goals of education policies” (2007: 30), leading to true plurilingualism.

### **2.2.1 Neocolonialism**

While not a simple theory to define or limit, postcolonial theory, which is most often applied to literary theory, may find a place in this research. Writers in the postcolonial tradition such as Fanon, Said and Ashcroft have opened up the question which inspired the research from the outset; as a postcolonial nation, which has had to fight for recognition and promotion of Gaeilge, the original mother tongue of Ireland, should the state be more empathetic to the cultural and linguistic needs and wants of newcomers? Perhaps newcomers are being colonised linguistically at the expense of their own language in the neocolonial sense. Newcomers may be in the process of being colonised in a more additive sense of promoting Gaeilge among those communities.

The Irish were the first modern people to decolonise in the 1900s after centuries of British rule but Kiberd makes the point that Irish minds were colonised by the British long after the territory was handed back politically (1997: 6). Murray (2005: 18) similarly believes that “much of what has resulted from centuries of domination lives on in our shared ideologies of progress and development today”. Kiberd asserts that within a colonised nation “the struggle for self-definition is conducted within language” (1997: 11), which leads to an important message to be drawn from postcolonial theory for this study: colonisation in Ireland and in many other countries has gone much deeper than

political rule. It has led not only to the loss of economic and political power, but also the decline of the native language and culture (ibid.) despite many attempts to revive the language since then, beginning with the Free State government undertaking an expensive and expansive programme of training primary school teachers in Irish<sup>9</sup>. Douglas Hyde delivered the following argument for de-anglicisation (the elimination of English influence, language, customs, etc.) following the inevitable English imposition of the English language during colonisation:

When we speak of 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising the Irish Nation', we mean it, not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English<sup>10</sup>.

Gibbons (1996) maintains that despite differences between the types of oppression in Ireland and in other British colonies, the Irish national consciousness has long seen itself as oppressed. Of particular relevance to this study is Murray's elucidation of one of Fanon's greatest insights – "that the damaged psyche of the colonized people mirrors the desires of the coloniser" (2005: 20), which offers one perspective on the possibility of current language colonisation in practice in schools today. It must however be acknowledged that linguistic colonisation can also be seen as enriching the lives of newcomers through communication with multicultural communities afforded by the use of English (Canaragajah, 1999), an important issue which will be referred to again in Section 2.2.3. Moane (2002: 112) echoes and elucidates the original idea behind the research as well as the point made by Murray (2005) above when he says that:

the pressure to re-enact dominator patterns of history come from both our own historical legacy and from contemporary global forces which combine to push us towards a path in which we recreate the patterns of domination reminiscent of colonial domination. However, such a path is not inevitable and indeed legacies of history may also provide the very resources needed to create a society characterised by greater equality, vision and social justice.

This means that the Irish consciousness could lean towards either oppressing newcomers or allowing them freedom to be newcomers in Irish society and raises issues around a type of neocolonialism which warrants further exploration in this study.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland\\_culture\\_religion\\_1912-49#4RevivingtheIrishlanguage](http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_culture_religion_1912-49#4RevivingtheIrishlanguage) Accessed 07.07.11. Further clarification regarding current Initial Teacher Education is available in Section 3.3.6.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gaeilge.org/deanglicising.html> Accessed 07.07.11.



As Viruru states “postcolonial theory is not limited to the study of how nations have recovered from colonisation but is more concerned with the adopting of an activist position, seeking social transformation” (2005: 9). She also says that new experiences of colonisation can be found in society today, for example ghettos, reservations in the USA and sometimes, schools. Bredella warns that we cannot understand others, and that when we try to understand others our motivation comes from a will to dominate them (2003: 36). She makes the important point that we are prisoners of our own culture and we cannot help but serve the interests of our own culture (2003: 37). Said’s evaluation of trying to understand the Other is summed up as follows: “In short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (1978: 3). This certainly has implications for the current study as the study strives to explore experiences of the Other and so the limitations of the researcher’s speaking lens that dominates the study must be taken into consideration, as highlighted by Garcia (2009: xiv). This will also be explored further as a methodological consideration in Chapter Four.

According to Altbach (1971) neocolonialism is difficult to describe and analyze but often is about how advanced nations maintain their influence in developing countries. In this study, neocolonialism refers to the more dominant group imposing their practices and policies on the minority group. Of importance to the current study is therefore Viruru’s reference to the “connections between colonial ideologies of distinction and superiority to the debate over bilingual education in the United States and the world wide clash between education based on Western heritage and multicultural ideas” (Viruru, 2005: 10). Mac Naughton refers to ways in which to address postcolonialism so that teachers may “consider how to engage with young children in order to challenge colonialism” (2006: 51). One way in which teachers may challenge colonialism is through recognising the importance of the child’s first language and acting upon this. Therefore, in the following section issues around educational language policy at the macro and micro level will be examined. It is of interest to map where Ireland currently lies in this regard - as a state and as teachers as part of school communities.

### 2.2.2 Language Policy

There is currently no formal languages-in-education policy in place in the Republic of Ireland, although it is one of eleven countries which has availed of the opportunity to reflect on and consider recommendations regarding the drafting of a language policy (Council of Europe, 2008; Baetens Beardsmore, 2009). However, Irish and English are compulsory subjects for all pupils in primary school, excepting cases where an exemption from Irish may be requested. They both have constitutional rights and are the official languages of the country. Furthermore, the Official Languages Act which was passed in 2003<sup>11</sup> protects the rights of citizens to access materials bilingually or in Irish alone. The status of the Irish language within primary school education will be explored further in Section 2.2.4. There is an absence of policy surrounding languages other than English and Irish.

Therefore, two documents of note in this area are the *EAL Guidelines* (2006) and the *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b). The *EAL Guidelines* are aimed at providing information regarding language acquisition so that the whole school community may attain a greater understanding of language acquisition, and the implications this has on the learning needs of the child. They are also aimed at identifying how school and classroom planning contribute to the language and learning needs of the child. Guidelines for the use of appropriate methodologies, including the use of ICT, are at the core of the aims of the document, as is the identification of appropriate assessment strategies. The NCCA provides in the document a wide range of strategies for assisting the child with language development and engagement with the curriculum. Upon examining this document, Wiley's model of educational language policy (2002) would seem to place Ireland between expediency-oriented, which is not intended to expand the use of the minority language, tolerance-oriented, where there is a noticeable absence of state intervention in minority language usage, and null, where there is a significant absence of policy recognising minority languages. In the *EAL Guidelines*, one of the few references to the child's home language is as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> [http://coimisineir.ie/index.php?page=cearta\\_faoi\\_acht&tid=10&lang=english](http://coimisineir.ie/index.php?page=cearta_faoi_acht&tid=10&lang=english) Accessed 17.02.11.

Children who are literate in their home language should be encouraged to sustain the development of this literacy. It is important for the child to continue to develop his/her language and literacy skills in the home language (NCCA, 2006: 9).

The same document also acknowledges that the teaching of English should be based on the child's literacy and language skills in their home language (NCCA, 2006: 5) and that language awareness skills should be developed by drawing on the home language (p. 10). It is also referred to in two of the exemplars (Exemplar 2 – A guided reading exercise; Exemplar 7 – Moving to music) and as an area to be included as part of pupil portfolios for assessment purposes (p. 54). Teachers are urged to encourage parents to continue promoting literacy in the home language (p. 58). These examples are the extent of the suggestions regarding home language maintenance. As the definition of EAL in an Irish context includes recognition of the child's home language, more references to supporting home language maintenance would be expected in the main document regarding EAL in primary schools, which is why the above-mentioned aspects of Wiley's model (2002) seem to apply to the Irish situation.

Mac Naughton's model (2006) also provides issues for consideration in planning whole school policies regarding newcomer children. Ireland would appear to lie somewhere between the *laissez-faire* school of thought and the critical understandings school of thought. The '*laissez-faire*' or assimilationist approach wishes to promote equity. However, diversity is managed in favour of the dominant group and a culture of silence towards issues of diversity is promoted. The expectation is that children should be able to behave following group norms and values and children are not encouraged to share experiences that fall outside of this norm. With regard to policy, "By assuming that no specific initiatives are necessary to promote respect for diversity, the *laissez-faire* approach creates a policy vacuum" (Mac Naughton, 2006: 31). Tollefson refers to one definition of a policy of assimilation, which encourages minority groups to adopt the language of the dominant ethnolinguistic group as their own. He also says that these policies are often rationalized by a discourse of national unity and a discourse of equality (2002: 180). The terms that Mac Naughton uses to describe the approach are 'Colour

blind’, ‘Gender neutral’, ‘Business as usual’, ‘Conforming approach to equity’ and ‘Liberal multiculturalism’ (2006: 32).

The presence of documents such as the *Intercultural Guidelines* confirms Ireland’s commitment to intercultural education on one level by stating that this approach to interculturalism expresses

a belief that we all become personally enriched by coming in contact with and experiencing other cultures, and that people of different cultures can and should be able to engage with each other and learn from each other (NCCA, 2005b: 3).

One may argue therefore that classifying Ireland as lying on or near the spectrum of ‘laissez-faire’ may be unfair. However, the lack of in-service and pre-service training that has been provided to teachers in this area does not lend itself to the belief that intercultural education has been meaningfully promoted by the state. Harte (2009: 66) has found that undergraduate student teachers spoke of insufficient preparation in terms of intercultural education in one of the colleges of education in the Republic of Ireland, even when taking into consideration the initiatives of the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The DICE project means that Irish Aid (funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs) has provided resources for raising awareness of DICE in all five Colleges of Education. The DICE Core Project was concerned (2007-2009) with developing further the expertise present in all colleges so that all students would have opportunities to become skilled in planning and teaching global and justice perspectives in their work with children. It was also concerned with promoting, coordinating and undertaking research in the theory and practice of DICE within ITE and primary education in Ireland so that the delivery of courses and programmes within schools and colleges is well- informed<sup>12</sup>. Dillon and O’Shea found that the interest and commitment evident among the teachers consulted during a review of the impact of work undertaken during the first phase of the DICE Project (2004-2007) augurs well for the future of DE and ICE in the primary classroom (2009: 59).

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<sup>12</sup> [www.diceproject.org](http://www.diceproject.org) Accessed 14.10.10.

The distribution of the *Intercultural Guidelines* also coincided with other in-service the PCSP and SDPS were providing to schools at the time, meaning that “in practice, many practitioners did not attach adequate attention or priority to intercultural concerns in a very crowded, if not overloaded, professional renewal, school improvement agenda” (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007: 16). Furthermore, the findings of Smyth, Darmody, McGinnity and Byrne (2009: 172) show that the majority of teachers find that the curriculum and textbooks do not take adequate account of diversity and that pre-service and in-service training do not adequately prepare teachers for facing the challenges of teaching in multilingually diverse classrooms. Therefore the analysis of documents such as the *Intercultural Guidelines* and *EAL Guidelines* must be tempered by an awareness that many teachers may not have been and still may not be aware of the resources and advice available for facilitating newcomer children meaningfully in the classroom.

The *Intercultural Guidelines* (NCCA, 2005b) complements the *EAL Guidelines* (2006) in the area of language and interculturalism. The aims of this document are far-reaching, and include supporting the aims of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) in the context of a growing cultural and ethnic diversity in a way that will maximise and enrich learning for all children, as well as making the curriculum as accessible as possible for children from minority ethnic groups; addressing the curriculum needs of all children which arise in the context of growing cultural ethnic and cultural diversity; facilitating schools and teachers in creating an inclusive culture and environment; providing an overview of assessment in an intercultural context; and raising awareness within the educational community of issues that arise from increasing linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity.

The *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b) refers to the child’s first language a number of times. In the context of school planning, the idea of teachers knowing a few key words in the child’s L1 and a reminder to teachers that it is normal for people to be multilingual in certain countries (p. 35). With regard to classroom planning, teachers are encouraged to seat children who have the same L1 beside each other at the beginning of the year (p. 42). In terms of creating a supportive classroom environment, it is acknowledged that people generally find it easier to engage in higher-order thinking in their first language and

teachers are encouraged to communicate positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity (p. 45). In identifying intercultural education opportunities across the curriculum, reference is made to shared reading opportunities being available in English where a child who has reading abilities in a different L1 may share this with others, as well as parts of Oral Language, where children with EAL may teach some of their L1 phrases to children in the class (p. 105). Assessment is mentioned as an area which may present challenges, particularly written assessments which may not fully reflect the ability level of a child with EAL (p. 154). After this, there is a full chapter dedicated to Language and Interculturalism, where reference is made to sensitivity around introducing a child with EAL and being careful to refer to their language abilities in an additive sense and encouraging children speaking English as L1 to support their language learning peers (p. 163). All of these recommendations are relevant and useful in terms of the literature explored in Chapter Three. In offering suggestions for recognising the child's first language, five suggestions are given, including the inclusion of the languages of the school community on signage and text around the school, particularly at school events, and encouraging the use of languages of the school at intercultural events such as graduations.

Based on these final suggestions, what seems to be more common is the 'cultural understandings' or 'you're different from me' approach, which aims to create understanding among groups of children and is widespread and prevalent in many Western multicultural countries. Villegas and Lucas (2002) critique what according to Mac Naughton "may represent cultures in simplistic and stereotyped ways" (2006: 37). 'Soft' Intercultural education is often referred to as 'saris and samosas syndrome', a phrase coined by Uzma Shakir (Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Soft ICE is criticised for celebrating the differences between cultures at a surface level while avoiding challenging the root causes of racism and bigotry. Other terms used to describe the approach are 'Tourist approaches', 'Tokenistic approaches', 'Cultural additive approach', 'Multicultural' and 'Black awareness' (Mac Naughton, 2006: 38). Although the above categories are focussed mainly on culture, it is of course noteworthy that language and culture are inextricably linked (Tang, 1999). Therefore the discussion of these different

approaches to interculturalism above is of importance to an exploration of the support provided by the Whole School Community to children and families speaking HLOTE.

### **2.2.3 Linguistic Human Rights**

McGroarty (2002: 19) writes that discussions of language policy often connect with issues of globalization and effects on language learning and the definition of language rights as expressions of human rights. This is a more recent phenomenon as Phillipson, Rannut and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) wrote less than ten years before that language and human rights are topics which are seldom merged. It is clear that “human rights have become a major concern of the international community and governments worldwide” (Phillipson et al., 1995: 1). Human rights are often linked to North-South aid and the worldwide promotion of democracy, according to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995: 73). In order to promote the observance of human rights, one of the areas where one can start is in the promotion of language issues in the primary school. According to Phillipson et al. (1995: 1), linguistic rights should be considered basic human rights. Speakers of official languages within a country enjoy their Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs). Despite the drafting of many worthwhile international charters and documents, and the adoption of these by member states, many linguistic minorities do not enjoy these rights. Some of these documents will be outlined below. Since many of the linguistic minorities who do not enjoy LHRs are minority groups anyway, we can therefore observe an overlap between minority group rights and LHRs.

Observing LHRs can be done at an individual level and at a collective level. At the individual level, it implies that the mother tongue is respected by all and can be positively identified as such by speakers of that language. According to Phillipson et al. (2005), it means the right to learn the mother tongue, including at least basic education through the medium of the mother tongue. The same authors regard any restrictions on this as an infringement of fundamental LHRs. Phillipson et al. (1995: 2) regard the observation of LHRs at a collective level as the right of minority groups to exist, to be different. Toolan (2003: 60) notes that these arguments are positive and rights-based for minority-language

or minority-culture maintenance and protection, and are unrelated to the more “intangible plea concerning preservation of diversity”, which he says is simply a preference, albeit a valid preference. Tollefson (2002: 3) raises some questions around how language policies in schools marginalize some students and can create inequalities and says that these issues are “at the heart of fundamental debates about the role of schools in society, the links between education and employment, and conflicts between linguistic minorities and “mainstream” populations” (ibid.).

Wiley (2002: 40) refers to the UNESCO resolution of 1953 that every child should have a right to attain literacy in his or her mother tongue when discussing the idea of language rights. He probes the assumptions about language rights by referring to Macias’s distinction between two types of language rights (1979) – the right to protection and the right to expression (2002: 39-40) and also refers to Skutnabb-Kangas, who has put forward her own proposal for a declaration of children’s linguistic human rights based on the following three premises (1995: 45):

- (1) Every child should have the right to identify positively with her original mother tongue(s) and have her identification accepted and respected by others.
- (2) Every child should have the right to learn the mother tongue(s) fully.
- (3) Every child should have the right to choose when she wants to use the mother tongue(s) in all official situations.

This proposal for LHRs links in with both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948 – hereafter referred to as UDHR)<sup>13</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989 – hereafter referred to as CRC)<sup>14</sup>, which was ratified by Ireland in 1992. Article 26 of the UDHR is concerned with education while Article 15 is concerned with nationality.

- Article 15 (1): Everyone has the right to a nationality.  
Article 26 (2): Education shall [...] promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

These Articles are related to Articles 29 and 30 of the CRC, in terms of respect for cultural identity, language and values, and the use of ethnic minority languages.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml> Accessed 25.02.08.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm> Accessed 25.02.08.



Article 29 (1): [...] states Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.

Article 30: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

The following articles from the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe 1995 – hereafter referred to as FCPMN)<sup>15</sup>, which was ratified by Ireland in 1999, contain the following assertions which may be relevant to the protection of LHRs within any nation. However, upon detailed examination each article seems to have a ‘get-out’ clause, which makes the whole document seem as though it is simply paying lip-service to the notion of protecting minority rights.

**Article 5 (1):** The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

**Article 10 (2):** In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.

**Article 12 (1):** The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority.

**Article 12 (2):** 2 In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

**Article 14 (1):** The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.

**Article 14 (2):** In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.

According to page 22 of the same document Article 14 (1) “does not imply positive action, notably of a financial nature, on the part of the State”. Furthermore, with regard to

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[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1\\_AtGlance/PDF\\_H%281995%29010\\_FCNM\\_ExplnRep\\_ort\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H%281995%29010_FCNM_ExplnRep_ort_en.pdf) Accessed 25.02.08.

Article 14 (2), “this provision has been worded very flexibly, leaving Parties a wide measure of discretion”. It also states that it “imposes no obligation upon States to do both, its wording does not prevent the States Parties from implementing the teaching of the minority language as well as the instruction in the minority language”. It is clear that although recognition is being given to the need to protect minority group rights, this recognition does not appear to have a strong enough status which may force nation states to act. The Council of Europe recognizes that while preservation of their L1 is an issue for immigrants planning to stay in Ireland and that its maintenance may be “perceived as a right or a duty by members of the population concerned and as an advantage for the country in its international contacts”, it can also be seen by both the immigrants and a part of the Irish population “as an obstacle to integration or as a sign of non integration” (2008: 26). The issue of preserving the L1 will be explored in the later section on Language Maintenance in order to highlight the other views that can be taken on this.

According to Phillipson et al. (1995: 14) “there can be no beneficiary of a right unless there is a duty-holder”. The state and the individual both have duties in this matter regarding LHRs. The state has the duty to create conditions which lead to the enjoyment of human rights, and therefore to legislate accordingly. However, the individual also has a duty. People from ethnic linguistic minorities also have a duty to learn the official language to some extent e.g. that the rights “should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them” (Phillipson et al., 1995: 14, from the Preamble of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). This is reiterated by the FCPMN, where it is stated that the right to learn the minority language “...shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language”. Saville-Troike (2006: 122) acknowledges that when people cross linguistic boundaries in order to participate in another language community, learning that language is required, as well as being a necessary tool for communication.

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson point out (1995: 71) that

Ethnolinguistic minority children, indigenous and immigrant, often attend pre-schools and schools where no teachers understand their language and where it is not used, either as a subject or as a medium of instruction. The school has been and is still the key instrument, on all continents, for imposing assimilation (forced inclusion) into both the dominant language and the dominant culture [...] much of the recent focus on multiculturalism has in fact excluded multilingualism and thus excluded language from culture.

Language is one of the most important cultural markers. According to Bruner, language cannot be understood outside of its cultural setting (1983: 134). While the *Intercultural Guidelines* do make reference to multilingualism in an additive sense on a number of occasions, this multilingualism is still counted only as a relatively small part of the 176-page document and therefore does not feature strongly enough here, notwithstanding the fact that the lack of in-service training for this and the EAL Guidelines has made it extremely difficult for teachers to engage meaningfully with the guidelines at the micro level. The issue of pre-service and in-service training will be raised once again in Chapter Three and indeed throughout the study as a cause for concern in facilitating newcomer children in mainstream classes.

Returning to the earlier point where neocolonialism was raised, Donahue refers to the loss of Celtic language in America in the early part of the twentieth century, where two interviewees said that

Our ancestors came from Scotland and Ireland to escape the kind of repression that now seems the 'right way to do things.' ... They were forbidden to speak, read, or write in their native tongue and had to make English their 'official language' (2002: 147).

This is echoed by Wiley who compares current LHRs with "early 20<sup>th</sup> century restrictionism" (2002: 61). While he says that support for children's LHRs in the US are protected in principle, most of the efforts are outside the domain of federal education policy through community-based organizations and private efforts, for example. Pennycook refers to Phillipson's argument that "colonialism should be seen as the first phase in linguistic imperialism" (2002: 94) and also mentions that in the past, as in the present, while education has been seen as a means for effective governance of the people, language policy has acted as a mechanism for providing such governance (ibid.). According to Tollefson language can be central to social control and

An important issue in language policy research is the study of how policies are shaped by ideologies, and how discursive processes naturalize policies that are adopted in the interests of dominant ethnolinguistic groups (2002: 6).

Burnaby says that the lack of use of Cree in schools in Canada is a good example of “resistance to well-ingrained beliefs underlying most instances of colonial language imposition on minority language groups” (2002: 76). In an African context, Breton cites the high status of the former colonial languages, where they dominate in areas such as education, politics and science. He says that most states “have not gone beyond the level of political discourse” in safeguarding their African languages which have been celebrated regarding their richness, originality and essential “African-ness” (2003: 209). In a similar vein, Pennycook looks to Orientalism which has been understood as a central aspect of colonialism since Said’s (1978) classic study when examining “Language-in-education policies in British colonies” which he says were “directed toward the preservation of Orientalist understandings of local cultures and the promotion of vernacular education as a means of social regulation” (2002: 96). These examples clearly have implications for schools as most of the burden of implementation of language policies and practices lies on schools themselves.

While there is no wish to on the part of the researcher to suggest that there has been, knowingly, any underhand treatment of new immigrants to Ireland over the last number of years, it is worthwhile to view the importance of language policy in terms of the implications of decisions made by government organisations on the languages spoken by ‘newcomer children’. Tollefson refers to critical linguistics as entailing social activism; that linguists are responsible for ways to alter social hierarchies based on how dominant and minority groups use language (2002: 4). In essence, it is hoped to raise awareness of this important issue through this piece of research. The Council of Europe’s Language Education Policy Profile of Ireland recommends that in the case of developing a vision for the future of this evolving Ireland, the main challenge is to shift progressively from an

official but lame bilingualism (English/Irish) to the full recognition of differentiated plurilingual profiles (where Irish would have a special place and English a central

role, and where other languages would be acknowledged as part of the country's cultural and economic resources and assets as well as linked to individual identities and collective loyalties" (2008: 34).

Skilton-Sylvester sees that language teaching can be seen as language policymaking acknowledges the importance of looking at the way in which teachers create policies of their own within classrooms "while accepting and challenging the policies that are handed down to them" (2003: 10). The pedagogical issues and implications for language teaching will be examined in Chapter Three.

#### **2.2.4 The Irish Language in the Education System**

It is timely within the thesis to highlight the particular status the Irish language holds within the education system and specifically at primary school level. While a number of references have been already made to the compulsory nature of studying Irish and the possibility of having an exemption granted from the study of Irish, it is interesting to look at the historical context. Coolahan notes that "concern for the Irish language has dominated education debates in Ireland since independence" (1981: 223) but that despite this concern, many stakeholders have been disappointed with the results. Prior to 1960, the emphasis was on the written language. With the introduction of the oral examination at Leaving Certificate level in that year, the emphasis shifted to the oral language. This and the introduction of a revised primary school curriculum in 1971 led to new teaching methods being used such as the audio-lingual and audio-visual methods. The *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) continues in this vein to emphasise communicative competence as an aim for Irish language learning and promotes active learning and using a hands-on approach to teaching Irish which will help fluency to develop naturally.

It is of interest to note here that Harris (2005) maintains that the promotion of the Irish language by the Free State government and governments thereafter referred to earlier reached its peak in the 1940's, when the Irish language started to decline, until a new revival in the 1960's and 1970's, some of which was instrumental in re-evaluating curricula. Since then the number of Gaelscoileanna (Irish language immersion schools)

has risen rapidly and in 2009/ 2010 there were 128 Gaelscoileanna in operation<sup>16</sup> constituting just under 4% of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, while the resurgence of immersion education is of note, the importance of ordinary primary schools in promoting the Irish language must not be under-estimated.

While further reference will be made to Initial Teacher Education in Chapter Three, it is of significance to note that it is not possible to gain entry to any undergraduate or postgraduate programme of teacher education without having a minimum of C3 at Honours level in the Irish language to matriculate. This, along with the Irish Language Requirement to be eligible for registration with the Teaching Council, highlights the importance of the Irish language within primary education, not only traditionally but going into the future.

Natural intergenerational transmission of Irish is at a low level on most of the island of Ireland according to Harris (2005), and here the educational system plays an extremely important role in transmitting the language. A report from 1994 showed that Irish was never spoken in two thirds of homes in Ireland (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin) and census data from 2006 show that the proportion of people using Irish on a daily basis is much higher among the school-going population. Therefore, it is of interest to look at some results around motivation to learn Irish from Harris and Murtagh's *Twenty-Classes Study* (1999). It was found that pupils were reasonably well disposed towards the Irish language itself but often were not committed enough to learning Irish. It was also found that a substantial minority of pupils did not believe that they had the support and encouragement of their parents in the task of learning Irish (something which has an effect on achievement in Irish and attitudes and motivation to learn Irish). Pupils also tended to self-assess negatively in Irish in comparison with other subjects. Parents were found to be generally positive about Irish and supportive of the notion of their children being taught the language in school. Harris (2005: 969) says that in practice many parents did not actively and directly promote positive attitudes towards learning Irish and often took a hands-off approach to the practice of their children learning Irish.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.gaelscoileanna.ie](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie) Accessed 30.07.11.

All of the above leads to the point made by John Harris (2005: 964) that

primary schools have a particularly important role in reproducing competence in Irish, especially speaking proficiency, in each new generation and in maintaining the levels of bilingualism reported in the census in recent times.

This has implications for the discussion of Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Section 2.4 and some references will be made to the Irish context once again at that point. It also has particular relevance to the area of Language and Identity explored in Section 2.5 where the issue of newcomer children learning Irish is referred to.

### **2.3 Advantages of Plurilingualism**

Lambert (1974) was the first to differentiate between additive and subtractive forms of bilingualism. Briefly, additive bilingualism is a situation where the L1 is valued and is not replaced by the L2; indeed, they may support each other. Examples include the co-existence of English and Irish in Ireland currently, or the co-existence of English and Welsh in Wales. However, subtractive bilingualism is a situation where the L1 is a minority language and the sole purpose of learning the L2 is to replace L1. Examples include past histories of colonialism in African countries, whereby many African languages were suppressed in order to promote the language of the conquering country e.g. French in Morocco. The suppression of Scottish Gaelic in Scotland during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is also an example of a conquering nation promoting its native language, to the detriment of the indigenous language. “This variety of subtractive bilingualism has been associated with negative cognitive consequences, where the former has been associated with positive cognitive consequences” (Dillon, 2005: 40).

Baetens Beardsmore (2008) points to UNESCO’s findings of 2003 that learning through L1 is not the most usual model of learning throughout the world, and that there is no necessary handicap through bilingual education. He also states that being plurilingual brings intellectual benefits and that there has been much evidence in the past of the connection between plurilingualism (including bilingual education) and creative thinking, communicative sensitivity, metalinguistic skills, self-regulating mechanisms and spatial

skills. Gajo and Serra's study which investigated bilingualism and mathematics education found that when Maths is taught through the target language (TL), those children who have the TL as L2 do slightly better than those who have the TL as L1 (2002). The reason given is that bilingual and monolingual children use different strategies. Saxe's study (1988) found that monolingual children showed less understanding of the arbitrary nature of number symbols than their bilingual peers. Monolinguals were found to do better on informational knowledge, while bilinguals were found to do better on operational knowledge. Indeed, Baetens Beardsmore (2008) notes that much assessment is based on informational knowledge, or what he terms as 'knowing that', which poses a disadvantage for bilinguals, who have been found to do better on what he terms as 'knowing how'.

According to Cummins (2008), the proposal that bilingualism and indeed plurilingualism has cognitive and linguistic advantages applies to immigrant children just as much as it does to children who are from dominant linguistic groups. He also states that transfer of language skills and conceptual knowledge occurs across languages. This not only makes possible bilingual/ immersion programmes, but also highlights the potential relevance of immigrants' L1 as a cognitive tool within the classroom. Cummins (2008) refers to Bialystok when saying that bilingual brains stay sharper for longer, thereby offering benefits for older people such as a greater ability to focus amid distractions. However, he argued in an earlier paper that "a cognitively and academically beneficial form of bilingualism can be achieved only on the basis of adequately developed first language skills" (1979: 222). A wide range of studies have been carried out to show that maintenance of L1 skills (i.e. additive bilingualism) can lead to cognitive benefits for ethnolinguistic minority children. Fitzgerald and Amendum (2007: 294) found that

writing instruction in students' native language could be highly beneficial both for native language maintenance and growth and for learning the new language, including learning about writing in the new language.

Hawkins found that there is plenty of evidence that reading skills transfer across languages and that "the children's reading comprehension in English is affected by their



proficiency in English and by the levels of literacy in their first language, but not by the language of instruction” (2005: 34). In a study of LM classes in New Zealand, Shameem (2003: 230) cites a study by Zheng (1998), who found that students attending LM classes in Mandarin Chinese “were able to maintain and use their mother tongue at home more readily and with greater fluency”. According to the *EAL Guidelines* (NCCA, 2006) research illustrates that children who have literacy skills in their home language are able to transfer some of these skills to the learning of an additional language (e.g. Lindholm-Leary, 2005). Other primary language advocates include Thomas and Collier (1997), who say that the longer, more intensively and more effectively students learn CALP skills in their home language, the better their eventual attainment will be in English. Flynn (2007: 179) also makes reference to the fact that there is clear evidence of the benefit to children who learn more than one language. Weiyun He (2006: 8) states that

It is becoming a widely held view that heritage language knowledge is an immensely valuable resource both for the individual and for society. Heritage language development can lead to academic and economic benefits, be an important part of identity formation, and enable the heritage language speaker to benefit from deeper contact with family, community and the country of origin (Krashen et al. 1998; Peyton et al. 2001; Wong-Fillmore 1991).

Jeon (2008: 61) refers to the wishes of Korean parents and guardians in the US to have an English-only policy at home because of their belief that learning two or more languages confuses their children, an assumption that Shin (2005) characterizes as one of the many “myths surrounding bilingualism.” Grosjean (2010) acknowledges some of the other myths that perpetually surround bilingualism including that bilingualism delays language acquisition in young children, that children raised bilingually will always mix their languages and that bilingualism negatively affects the cognitive development of bilingual children. He maintains that in a European context society sets a high standard for bilingualism that may contribute to the lack of recognition of the positive aspects of developing bilingualism among young children (ibid.) including the development of interlanguage. Cummins distinguished in 1984 between the SUP (Separate Underlying Proficiency) and CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency) models of bilingual proficiency (in Baker and Hornberger, 2001: 130-131). He wrote that the SUP model, which involves the misconception that a bilingual’s two (or three or more) sets of linguistic abilities are

separate, has been believed by the educational hierarchy, despite research already pointing to the CUP model. The widely referenced dual-iceberg representation of bilingual proficiency illustrates the relevance of the CUP model which assumes that the CALP skills in L1 and L2 are interdependent<sup>17</sup>.

Burnaby (2002: 76) points to what he considers are widely held beliefs that English is best taught monolingually, that the earlier English is taught, the better the results and that the more English is taught, the better the results. Sook Lee and Oxelson echo this thought in their observation that “Well-intentioned teachers, counsellors and school administrators often advise parents to speak only English at home” (2006: 454). Again, this may be due to the popular assumptions that bilingualism may be confusing for young children while learning an additional language. Tabors also refers to the fact that some parents and educators worry about the possibility of language confusion where children are exposed to two languages from birth, but again points to research which shows that “the process of acquiring two languages from a very early age has cognitive as well as social benefits” (2008: 11). The NCCA (2005b, 2006) acknowledges the fact that children who are literate in their home language should be given opportunities for sustaining and developing this literacy. In terms of language awareness, it is accepted that whatever the child’s home language, the skills learnt already will be transferable to learning English. However, there may be great differences between the grammatical conventions, phonological system, script and directionality in English and the home language (NCCA, 2006: 10-11). The importance of home languages is emphasised by the Primary National Strategy (PNS) in the UK (2007: 4), where it is asserted that bilingualism is an asset and confers intellectual advantages.

Therefore, the first language has a significant role in the acquisition of additional languages, as well as a significant role in identity and maintaining positive family interactions. If an English-only approach is insisted upon, this will lead to the child

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<sup>17</sup> The terms BICS and CALP will be of relevance throughout the study. BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) refers to manifestations of language proficiency in communicative interpersonal situations, whereas CALP (cognitive/ academic language proficiency) refers to “the dimension of language proficiency that is related to literacy skills” (Cummins, 1984 in Baker and Hornberger, 2001: 112).

developing a fragmented knowledge of language, and will deny children the opportunity to become truly proficient in either language. The PNS (2007: 6) recognises the importance of bilingual support for newcomer children. Some of the reasons given are as follows: to deny children the opportunity to use their home language and to learn through it, is to disregard the importance of the home language in their education; support in home languages assists teachers in finding out information about a child's competency in that language, allowing teachers to inform their expectations of the child's learning outcomes.

Bialystok (2001: 153) however points to the reality that while children may have either formal or informal opportunities to learn or maintain written proficiency in their L1, "Children whose first language is the minority language [...] need to learn literacy skills in the majority language which they may or may not speak well" and that "The social and cultural pressures that define these situations are considerably more intense than they are for immersion education". Brisk (2005: 13) cites a ground-breaking study carried out by UNESCO which revealed that children educated in their second language experienced difficulties in school and that the home language is critical because it is the vehicle through "which a child absorbs the cultural environment" (UNESCO, 1953, p. 47). She also states that "When the native language is vulnerable, achieving literacy first in that language is essential" (2005: 18), and acknowledges that some parents and educators question the usefulness of native language instruction as counter-productive for literacy initiation. Tabors (2008: 4) notes the importance of the development of the L1 "as a necessary basis for later literacy and consequently later school success" and also that "young children are highly susceptible to losing their first language if the first language is not strongly maintained during the preschool years" (ibid.).

All of the evidence presented above provides substantive support for the benefits that bilingualism and indeed plurilingualism can bring but only if due recognition is given to the L1 as a valuable part, if not the most valuable part, of the child's repertoire of languages.

## 2.4 Language Maintenance and Language Shift

Children speaking LOTE at home in the Republic of Ireland are not denied the right to use their own languages. However, instead of simply not ‘denying’ children the right to use their home language, children should in fact be encouraged to actively use that language. If children from minority groups are encouraged to value their L1 within a dominant culture, this may not only enhance self-esteem and cultural identity, but may also lead to positive cognitive consequences as outlined above. McCarty warns when quoting a Navajo elder from Arizona that “If a child learns only English, you have lost your child” (2002: 285). Genesee (2008) affirms that additive bilingualism is critical for ELLs (Early Language Learners). This means that the acquisition of L2 or L3 should be at no cost to the home language or culture of the child.

Yagmur, de Bot and Korzilius (1999: 55) state that education has been reported as a very important variable in studies on Language Maintenance (LM) and Language Shift (LS). Fishman (1985: 158–66) proposed some measures for predicting the relative survival of community languages including the number of people speaking the community language according to age, the institutional resources for LM, religious and racial distance from the mainstream community, published periodicals, the number of ethnic mother-tongue schools and the period of major immigration. In a study of the language maintenance patterns of a Polish community in Australia, Janik states that the most frequently mentioned causes of LS are “migration, industrialisation, urbanisation, lack of prestige, and absence of the language at school” (1996: 4). Janik (1996: 4) also identifies some of the factors which have been identified as clearly promoting LM and those that can promote either LM or LS, as shown in the following quotation:

His clear-cut factors are early point of immigration, linguistic enclaves, membership in parochial, local-church-based school, and pre-emigration experience with LS. His ambivalent factors are the educational level of the migrants, numerical strength, linguistic and cultural similarity to the dominant group, the attitude of the majority, and interethnic differences.  
Kloss (1966, cited in Clyne, 1990)

Tonkin (2003: 324) says that “[...] language shift has been going on for as long as languages have competed, which is surely as long as the phenomenon of language has existed”. He also notes that minority languages have always suffered as a result of this LS. Holmes (2001: 56) agrees with Tonkin as he says that “it is almost always shift towards the language of the dominant powerful group”. According to Holmes, this is because the dominant group has little incentive to adopt the language of a minority and “the dominant language is associated with status, prestige and social success” (ibid.). Richards and Yamada-Yamamoto (1998: 143) state that issues of L1 loss and attrition are relatively recent concerns compared with the higher priority issue among policy makers of acquisition of the language of the host society.

According to Janik (1996: 8), it was Fishman who developed the concept of domain, and suggested that “[...] stable bilingualism depends on the domain separation of two languages”. A domain is an area of life in which one particular language is used in order to communicate. Clyne (1991: 91) points out that the L1 will only be maintained if it serves as a medium of communication with other speakers of that language. Holmes (2001: 52) says that where LS occurs, “the order of domains in which language shift occurs may differ for different individuals and different groups”. Pauwels’s study of 1995 attributed cross-gender and cross-community variation in LS to the differing ranges of domains in which the community language was used.

Mikhalchenko & Trushkova (2003) point out that the basis for the estimate of the vitality of a language is its functional power. In order to test their hypotheses that there is language attrition among first-generation speakers of Turkish, and that the level of attrition depends on background factors such as language contact/ use, level of education and length of residence, Yagmur et al. (1999: 55) constructed a Subject Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (SEVQ), as developed by Bourhis (1981). The model of ethnolinguistic vitality was proposed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) as a social-psychological approach developing a framework to investigate the relationship between language and identity. Factors such as status, education, institutional support combine to provide a classification of low, medium or high vitality. Low vitality groups go through

LS rapidly, whereas high vitality groups maintain their linguistic and cultural identity in a variety of settings or domains.

Holmes (2001) also makes the point that domains of language use often depend on the socio-economic position of the immigrants; lower-SES, less affluent immigrants tend to have more opportunities for L1 usage, whereas high-SES immigrants employed in white-collar positions tend to make the LS more rapidly. There are factors that affect SLA outcomes negatively, including dominance of one group over another, high levels of segregation among groups, and desire of the learner group to preserve its own lifestyle. These group factors, outlined by Saville-Troike (2006: 122), were proposed by Schumann's Acculturation model of 1978. Driessen, van der Silk and de Bot (2002), in a study of the language proficiency of 7-10 year olds in The Netherlands, found that those with an immigrant background (Turkish/ Moroccan) were lagging behind in Dutch proficiency skills compared with Dutch pupils. Driessen et al. (2002: 175) refer to Scheffer (2000), who concluded that despite all measures taken, "[...] unemployment, poverty, early-school-leaving and crime rates are increasing among ethnic minorities". According to Driessen et al. (2002: 176), a number of factors seem to impact their disadvantage when it comes to learning Dutch. These include the home language, which is not that spoken at school, and the fact that they grow up in an environment where Dutch is not spoken by their peers. Language education is of course only one factor among many in this complex area and it is clear that factors such as poverty and unemployment can also have a great influence on LS.

McKinnie and Priestly (2004: 24) conducted a study of the linguistic minority community in Carinthia, Austria. They note that the Slovene/ German bilingual community is in a similar sociolinguistic situation to many other minority groups. For example, they have been socially and politically marginalised; they tend to use the community language in limited domains, and tend to have a low appreciation of the status of their language. The SEVQ was also used by Gogonas (2009: 107) who found that Albanian children living in Greece tend to shift to Greek as their linguistic competence in Albanian is declining; he found that they wish to distance themselves from this stigmatised language and that their

parents, although holding LM as an ideal, did not take drastic measures to counteract this. Morris (2003: 148) notes that for Mexican-Americans, LS towards English has still occurred more slowly than for non-Hispanic migrant groups. Special factors favouring LM in this instance include a continuing influx of native Spanish-speakers from Mexico to the USA, geographical concentration of immigrants in tightly knit communities, most of which are close to the Mexican border and support received from the Mexican government in recent years. He states (2003: 152) that

Mexican-Americans, as the most numerous Hispanic group in the USA, are at the centre of a controversy over whether language shift to English will continue and even accelerate, whether measures should be taken to reinforce such language shift, or alternatively whether Spanish language maintenance measures are needed.

Yagmur, de Bot and Korzilius (1999: 53), in a study of language attrition rates among the Turkish community in Australia, point out that although Australian policies are in favour of language maintenance, “language attrition is a widespread phenomenon in many ethnolinguistic groups in Australia”. Holmes (1997: 19) says that while New Zealand has no explicit national policy in relation to community languages, the initiatives that have been endorsed (including Aotearoa, support for the Samoan language) indicate support for language maintenance for minority group children. Yagmur et al. (1999: 53) suggest that L1 attrition in an L2 environment is unavoidable and inevitable, based on a study of German immigrants to Sydney. On the other hand, De Bot and Clyne (1994: 17) report

that first-language attrition does not necessarily take place in an immigrant setting and that those immigrants who manage to maintain their language in the first years of their stay in the new environment are likely to remain fluent speakers of their first language.

It is suggested that there may be a threshold period for language attrition; unless L1 is maintained during the early years of immigration, LS will occur. This argument is closely related to the importance of age as a factor in language acquisition, which will be explored in Chapter Three, and also with the fact that the present study focuses on children whose families have recently immigrated. Yagmur et al. (1999: 54) show that although Italian is taught as a language in schools and as a community language in Australia, speakers of the language are undergoing LS. Kipp’s study of 1995 shows that

Dutch-born migrants are much more likely to undergo LS than, for example, Greek speakers, even over generations (Yagmur et al., 1999). Cummins (2008) cites the example of Toronto as a 'linguistic graveyard', due to the high proportion of immigrants who have lost their mother tongue since immigrating to Canada.

Clyne and Kipp (1997: 459) have discovered from analyses of census data in Australia that those first-generation immigrants from predominantly Eastern or Orthodox culture in Europe are more likely to maintain their home language than those from other parts of Europe, and that groups from northern Europe tend to shift to English the most. Those from Asian countries also tend to display fairly low LS. Those from South America, especially Chile, have undergone a much lower LS than those from other Spanish-speaking countries. With regard to second-generation immigrants, Clyne and Kipp (1997: 462) have shown a high inter-generational shift towards English among Italian-, Polish-, Hungarian- and Macedonian-Australians, A relatively low LS was detected among Spanish-, Turkish- and French-Australians, and those of Hong Kong, Korean, Taiwanese, and Japanese parentage. The second-generation shift was shown to be lower among the children of endogamous marriages (both parents speaking the same home/ community language).

Clyne and Kipp (1997: 464) note that the best maintained community language in Australia is Greek, and that in the case of Greek, the language is a core value in that culture, along with religion and historical consciousness. Clyne and Kipp (ibid.) also make reference to the fact that Greeks are renowned for their ethnolinguistic vitality, a term used by Giles (1977) "[...] to describe the role of language in ethnic group relations". Clyne and Kipp (ibid.) also note that there has been an increasing pattern of LS among the Greek communities, which suggests the inevitability of LS in the Australian context, regardless of efforts made to slow the LS by reinforcing cultural values and successfully implementing LM programmes. Macedonian is another language which stands out ethnolinguistically in Australia, according to Clyne and Kipp (1997: 465), as it is the language which has seen the most home users and the language which has had the lowest rate of LS among first- and second-generation immigrants. Holmes



(2001: 63) states that “Polish people have regarded language as very important for preserving their identity in the many countries they have migrated to, and they have consequently maintained Polish for three to four generations”. He also says that the same is true for Greek migrants in places like Australia, New Zealand and America.

Jeon (2008: 54) refers to the three-generational model of LS which has been observed in the United States; in general the first generation speaks the L1, the second generation speaks the L1 and L2, while the third generation usually shifts to the majority-language L2. However, the last phase sometimes happens during the second generation, which can cause problems for “... intergenerational communication as parents, grandparents and children do not understand each other” (ibid.). He refers to the Korean community in the US as having experienced this phenomenon, and seeks to explain it in terms of language ideologies. He refers to a continuum of language ideologies ranging from assimilationist to pluralist, and that his research in a variety of settings showed that the Korean people he worked with were somewhere in the middle of the continuum. As access to education may be limited for minority language speakers, this can lead to differences in multilingual competence among family members; “children who are learning the dominant language at school become translators and brokers for their parents in service encounters, inverting the power structure and undermining parental authority” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 123). Hawkins says that “the language and literacy practices and funds of knowledge from students’ homes need to be represented and validated in the school curriculum and pedagogical practices” (2005: 37).

In Ireland, with the recent wave of immigration, most newcomers are first generation while the children attending primary school are second generation. Holmes states that where studies have been conducted in New Zealand, they show that “[...] community language proficiency is highest where immigration is most recent”. Fishman (1991) has stated that in general LS from the mother tongue to the majority group language is generally all but complete within three generations. Holmes (2001: 52) notes that LS to English has been expected of migrants in predominantly monolingual countries such as England, the United States, Australia and New Zealand and has been traditionally viewed

as a sign of successful assimilation. This successful assimilation was assumed to mean abandoning the minority language. His research shows that most migrant families gradually shift from using Gujarati, or Italian, or Vietnamese to each other most of the time, to using English and that “this may take three or four generations but sometimes language shift is completed in just two generations” (ibid.). In fact, he states that “gradually over time the language of the wider society displaces the minority language mother tongue” (ibid.). It is worth mentioning that, as Holmes said, a community may shift to English voluntarily over a number of generations, and while this involves the loss of the language for those individuals and even for the community in that country, if the language is spoken by a large group in its homeland it will not be under threat of disappearing because of this LS (2001: 57). The Polish community in Ireland or the Turkish community in England are good examples of this case.

Holmes (2001) informs us that censuses in Canada, Australia and Wales have included at least one language question for a considerable period of time. Censuses in Scotland and Ireland have also included a language question for the last number of years, while New Zealand added a language question for the first time in 1996. Clyne’s research in Australia (1991) and Crowley’s work in Vanuatu (1995) have teased out language usage information from census data in those countries. However, census questions may not offer enough insight into the nuances of spoken language and according to Holmes (1997: 29), ethnographic work analysing conversational interaction between bilinguals needs a

theoretical model which can satisfactorily accommodate code-switching behaviour. It is patterns of code-switching at the micro-level in face-to-face interaction which will undoubtedly throw light on the macro-level process of language shift.

The area of code-switching, from the perspective of both the teacher’s role and the child’s role in this phenomenon, will be explored in Chapter Three.

The issue of global and national status of L1 and L2 have particular relevance to the area of L1 maintenance. One of the important symbolic functions of language is political

identification and cohesion. Saville-Troike (2006: 120) states that, in the context of the USA “Maintenance of indigenous and immigrant languages other than English is not widely encouraged and is often actively discouraged”. In the USA, it is noted, while the teaching of English as L2 to immigrants is encouraged, promoted and supported, state and federal support for learning other languages is generally rare and ineffectual (2006: 121). Furthermore, Saville-Troike says that “Where knowledge of a particular language confers few visible economic or social benefits, there will be little motivation for acquiring it as L2” (2006: 121). Regarding institutional forces and constraints, Saville-Troike (2006: 124) outlines some of the problems associated with the dominance of L1. Among these is the issue that acquisition of a dominant L2 may lead to loss or attrition of the minority L1, leading to potential alienation from the minority language community.

Clyne and Kipp (1997: 468) have noted that among pre-school and school age children, those speaking Dutch, Macedonian, German and Turkish undergo the weakest LS. In the second generation, children speaking Austrian, French, German, Hungarian and Dutch tend to shift to English either on entering school or soon after. Holmes (2001: 52) notes that in traditionally English-speaking monolingual countries one of the first domains in which children of migrant families meet English is the school. While they may have watched English TV programmes and heard English used in shops before starting school, they are expected to interact in English at school from the very beginning because it is the only means of communicating with the teacher and their peers. Lesemann and van Tuijl (2001: 310) point to the interest among practitioners and researchers in educational approaches which provide balanced bilingual contexts to young minority children. According to Hornberger “multiple languages and cultures are inherently valuable for society, [...] all groups in society have a right to participate equally in that society and [...] education must be available to all”. (xv). Bearing in mind Fishman’s argument (1985) that schools cannot bring about LM on their own, that there must be support from the home and community, we must also consider LM approaches that may be relatively easily achievable within the primary school in the context where balanced bilingual instruction simply is not currently an option. Some of these approaches will be addressed in Chapter Three. It is interesting to note that LM and LS are occurring in different ways

in Ireland. Firstly, the issue of LS of the Irish language over centuries has already been raised. Interestingly, however, this has not resulted in language death but the language has survived due to revitalization efforts alluded to earlier and the high status afforded to it in schools. Secondly, the new languages in Ireland are now in danger of undergoing LS unless real efforts are made to ensure their maintenance as outlined above.

## **2.5 Language and Identity**

According to the FCPMN “The use of the minority language represents one of the principal means by which such persons can assert and preserve their identity. It also enables them to exercise their freedom of expression” (Council of Europe, 1995: 19). Language is for most ethnic groups one of the most important cultural core values, according to Smolicz, in Phillipson et al. (1995: 7). Language is by no means simply a means of communication. According to Fishman (1995: 51), languages stand for or symbolize peoples. Alred is of the opinion that the process of identity formation takes place principally through language (2003: 22).

Mazrui (2002: 267) quotes Westermann as follows in a strong statement about the relationship between language and identity in the African context “By taking away a people’s language, we cripple or destroy its soul and kill its mental individuality” and also quotes Mwaura (1980: 27) on p. 268 when stating that “Speakers of different languages and cultures see the universe differently, evaluate it differently, and behave towards its reality differently” because language controls thought and action. These statements reinforce how strongly individuals feel about their language as an intrinsic part of culture. Bialystok notes that the language we speak can be instrumental in forming identity, and that “being required to speak a language that is not completely natural may interfere with the child’s construction of self” (2001: 5). This has more far-reaching implications when languages are distantly related to each other than those closely related to each other as languages belonging to distant families may be more likely to bring with them a larger cultural gap (Widdowson, 1989; Ogiermann, 2009).

Language has a more central role among certain ethnic groups in defining culture. Weiyun He refers to Lemke (2002) and Ochs (2003) when stating that the identity of the HL learner is to a large measure formed through her/ his speech (2006: 7). Smolicz and Secombe (1985) modified their core value theory in order to differentiate between negative evaluation of the community language, indifference, general positive evaluation and personal positive evaluation. The term core value refers to “those values that are regarded as forming the most fundamental components or heartland of a group’s culture, and act as identifying values which are symbolic of the group and its membership” (Smolicz & Secombe, 1985: 11).

Poles were found (Clyne, 1991: 92-3) to have a general positive evaluation of their native language. This means that they regarded the language as a vital element of ethnicity (Janik, 1996: 5). Their language is one of the core values of their Polishness. Polish settlers in Australia have pursued the goal of language and culture maintenance by creating organisations to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage. It should be noted that Australian policies are in favour of language maintenance (Yagmur et al., 1999: 53). Holmes (1997: 33) refers to Grin (1993), who suggests that the long-term survival of minority languages depends partly on whether or not the group makes the positive choice to use the language wherever possible for community language activities. The experience of Poles in Ireland seems to be in this regard similar to that of their experiences in Australia in the 1990’s. Janik (1996: 5) informs us that for example, Greeks, Poles and Latvians are portrayed in the literature as belonging to ‘language-centred cultures’. In Ireland, we can see many and varied examples of where this happens e.g. Polish schools in Dublin and Limerick, radio broadcast time in Polish, a Polish bank, the newspaper the Polish Herald, the TV station City Channel etc. (Debaene, 2008: 6-7). Furthermore, Polish culture maintenance is perceived as important and very important by respectively 58.6% and 36.8% of the 87 respondents to an online questionnaire administered to Polish nationals in Ireland, which Debaene says is “indicative of strong commitment on the part of Polish migrants to their mother country and culture” (2008: 8). Holmes (2001: 61) notes that “Language shift tends to be slower among communities where the minority

language is highly valued. When the language is seen as an important symbol of ethnic identity, it is generally maintained longer”.

Jeon’s references to language ideologies can be summarised as follows according to assimilationist language ideologies and pluralist ideologies (2008: 59). The former may include various strains of xenophobia, and may stem from a desire for newcomers to be ‘Americanised’, or may in fact come from the newcomers themselves, resulting from a personal desire to succeed socially and academically. Wong-Fillmore (2003) says that immigrants may choose to stop speaking their HL as they would prefer not to be seen as other or different. Shin’s study (2005) found that although parents may generally have favourable attitudes towards bilingual development, they tend not to act on those attitudes because of their wishes for their children to acquire English quickly. Furthermore, educational policies tend not to promote the use of the HL as explored earlier. Pluralist ideologies are best expressed by Schmid, and have already been explored in the section on educational language policy:

recognize and affirm the multilingual nature of the society, declare that multiple languages (and ethnolinguistic groups) are national resources to be nurtured as a collective asset, grant equal language rights to individuals and/or groups to retain their “mother’s tongue,” and stipulate a policy goal of facilitating native language retention and maintenance, most commonly through the educational system (2000: 62).

Ethnicity is also of concern to the present study. Ethnic category, according to Saville-Troike, influences learner SLA due to the “socially constructed categories from within native and target communities” (2006: 126). These attitudes are attributable to the nature of their interaction with other learners and native speakers of the TL. Saville-Troike states that “Members of ethnic groups who perceive themselves to have much in common are more likely to interact, and thus are more likely to learn the other’s language” (2006: 126). Reference is made to Miller’s study of 2000, where fair-haired Europeans who physically resembled their Australian peers assimilated more readily than did those from Asia, who appeared different to their peers. Another case mentioned by Saville-Troike is that of Finnish children attending school in Sweden and Finnish children attending school in Australia; the former, who were viewed negatively as a minority group, did less well than the latter, who were viewed positively as Scandinavians (2006: 125). Holmes (2001: 52) notes a similar phenomenon when he says that “Immigrants who look and sound

'different' are often regarded as threatening by majority group members. There is pressure to conform in all kinds of ways". Saville-Troike's own research of 1984 (cited in 2006: 127) found that children from South America, the Middle East and Europe appeared to establish friendships more easily with American children than children from China, Japan and Korea.

Other factors which may contribute to perceptions of social distance are religious background and cultural background including patterns of social behaviour (Saville-Troike, 2006: 127). Jeon found that many Koreans were motivated to raise their children bilingually so that they could develop "...healthy ethnic identities", as well as the recognition that as Korea grows into a more dominant global economic nation the knowledge of Korean would bring more practical benefits (2008: 62). According to Villarruel, Imig and Kostelnik (1995: 103), the term diversity has been used "to describe the racial and ethnic variation among children and the families in which they live". They also go on to state that when it comes to ethnicity

the maintenance of ethnic identification and solidarity ultimately rests on the ability of the family to socialize its member into the ethnic culture and thus to channel and develop future behavioural and interpersonal norms as well as family lifestyles (1995: 106).

They acknowledge the difficulties for practitioners to move from an appreciation of the significance and validity of the child's and family's language, culture and communication practices, to actions affirming these important considerations. It is noted that the transition to formal schooling is a critical period in the child's life, perhaps even more so for the culturally/ linguistically diverse children. This may be due to the fact that "the behavioural characteristics of one culture group can be markedly different from those of another" (1995: 107). Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003: 157) see that schooling is in most societies a "normal and pervasive feature of socialization". As such, school becomes one of the cultural meaning systems within which children's activities are embedded and socially organized. Of importance to the current study is the proposal that second language classrooms, or classrooms in which the child is being taught through the L2/ L3, exhibit and teach, either implicitly or explicitly "... a set of cultural and epistemological assumptions that may well differ from that of the L2 learner's native

culture” (Watson-Gegeo et al., 2003: 158). Furthermore, school ‘culture’ “... typically reflects the socio-politically dominant culture in a society, although much about school is not ‘native’ to any cultural group...” (ibid., p. 159). McCarty (2002: 289) refers to a conversation with a Navajo teacher where it was remarked that their language was second best in boarding school, which has resulted in “internalized ambivalence about the language, and often, the conscious socialization of children in English”.

Cummins (2008) comments on the phenomenon of newcomers staking a claim to belonging to Irish society by learning Irish (see also Section 2.2.4). He states that anecdotal evidence points to the fact that newcomer children may be achieving at a higher level in Irish than ethnically Irish children. He also asks what image of the child is being constructed through policies to promote Irish as a legitimate expectation. As Cummins point out, fluency in Irish may provide newcomers with a strong claim to belonging. He mentions the anecdotal phenomenon of pupils being withdrawn during Irish class for Language Support. However, where this is not happening he notes other anecdotal evidence of ethnically Irish children feeling jealous of newcomer children for sometimes doing better in Irish. He draws a parallel between this and a similar phenomenon in Canada, whereby bilingual newcomers are doing better at French than children who had started four years earlier. The Council of Europe (2008: 25) points to some emerging evidence that newcomers are learning Irish very well. An issue that arises here is – who has more claim to Irish identity? It is not just about teaching the language, but enabling children to do powerful things with language, such as exploring multiple identities. Furthermore, almost all Irish children learn Irish and as it is an integral part of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), it is wise that newcomer children are afforded the opportunity to study Irish at this early stage so that they are not discriminated against at a later stage in being able to understand the societal use of Irish for official purposes, e.g. naming of state or voluntary bodies such as *Iarnród Éireann* (state-owned train service) and *An Bord Pleanála* (state agency with responsibility for planning infrastructure). A lack of knowledge of the Irish language could prevent people from becoming a primary school teacher, for example, because of the matriculation requirement.



Interestingly, the NCCA also recognises the importance of multilingualism in the *Intercultural Guidelines* from the perspective of speakers of English as L1 rather than children with EAL. It is stated that learning Irish provides opportunities for the child to engage in being multilingual and to gain an understanding of multilingualism, thereby offering opportunities for them in “developing empathy with, and an appreciation for, those children who are required to learn through a language that is not their first language” (NCCA, 2005b: 163).

## 2.6 Ecological Linguistics

The term ‘language ecology’ is defined by Haugen as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (1972: 325). Creese and Martin acknowledge that this metaphor has been used in relation to “cognitive development and human interaction, the maintenance and survival of languages, the promotion of linguistic diversity, and language policy and planning” (2003: 2). Holmes (1997) and Edwards (2004) advocate taking an ecological approach to minority language research. Crowley explains very well the rationale for taking an ecological approach in the following quotation:

Linguistic ecologies are delicate things that can easily be disturbed, often without the realization of members of these communities until the change is irreversible. Urbanization, immigration, emigration, and education can all interact within the space of a single generation to cut the lines of linguistic transmission. (1995: 15)

Classroom tasks and activities may be seen as the ‘ecosystem’ (van Geert, 1998) in which the growth of language skills takes place. Children are mentally active learners who work hard to make sense of what teachers ask them to do and develop their own understanding of the expectations and purposes of adults (Cameron, 2001: 21). The four basic characteristics of what is termed ‘ecological linguistics’ are emergence, affordance, triadic interaction and quality, according to van Lier (2002: 146-148). Of particular relevance to the present study is the concept of affordance, explained as follows: “Language arises from affordances brought forth by active engagement rather than from processed input. These affordances then enable further action and interaction” (ibid.).

Jarvinen (2008) says that the ecological perspective is situated within a subjective reality and that although it is complex and multi-faceted, it offers a local approach to pedagogical decision-making. In a discussion on affordances, she refers to collaborative work as being possible for use within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of the child, a topic which is addressed in detail in Chapter Three.

By using the metaphor of ecology of language, according to John Edwards we have “a view of the world in which there is room for all languages, where the goodness of diversity is a given” (2004: 469). In the context of a rights-based approach to language education, the idea of ecological linguistics makes sense as the home languages of children with EAL are seen by the researcher as being endangered and in need of protection from the three-generational shift outlined above. Van Lier (2002: 144) defines ecology as “... the study of the relationships between all the various organisms and their physical environment”. He tells us that the context is always central, and should be the focal field of study. This has particular relevance for the present study as the main focus is not solely an examination of the linguistic competence of the children in question, but also an examination of how the children manage to survive linguistically in a situation where their L2 is being used for interaction and the support systems around this survival including their families, teachers and school communities. This study recognises the importance of the interplay of factors contributing to differences in language acquisition among ELLs such as the relationship between the child, classroom and school, the relationship between the family, community and school, and the relationship between the teacher, his/ her training and the child, and any combination of these.

Mühlhäusler (2002: 386) notes the fact that ecological linguistics is particularly applicable to a range of practical tasks including language planning, second language learning and environmentally appropriate language, all of which have relevance for the current study. He also notes that certain ecological conditions must be taken into consideration when examining any of the above tasks, for example the learners, the classrooms and the attitudes of both teachers and students (*ibid.*). His advice is particularly relevant to this study. On a final note, Mühlhäusler notes that “applied

ecological linguistics also aims at greater harmony between languages and their physical environment, rather than mere “greenspeaking” (ibid.), something which is closely related to the earlier reference to tourist multiculturalism and tokenism. This involves more focused action to be taken on language ecologies by policy makers, teachers, whole school communities and learners, leading me to draw a parallel between this and positive action regarding intercultural communication and understanding.

Ecological linguistics has a close relationship with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model, where the ecological environment is conceived of as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, “like a set of Russian dolls” (1979: 3). These are typically represented as a set of concentric circles with a child figure at the centre and this framework prioritises the importance of contextual factors in the process of investigation while enabling an exploration of individual settings and systems (Higgins, 2008: 23). Each aspect of this model can be applied to this study.

The microsystem is the layer closest to the developing child and can be understood as the home, school or community. Bearing in mind that the children referred to in this study have been attending school for a relatively short period, the influence of the home environment could well be prioritised. However, as it was not possible to study the home as part of this study, the school was explored in terms of the child’s linguistic development in a Junior Infant classroom, bearing in mind information gathered by teachers from home. The microsystem was also explored through focus group interviews and teacher questionnaires by teachers supplying very detailed information on the child’s experiences in the classroom. Therefore, the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings in school (Berk, 2000) were a major focus of the present study.

This leads on to the mesosystem which relates to the interconnections between systems i.e. the home, school and community (Higgins, 2008: 23). In this study an investigation of the mesosystem was facilitated through exploring the relationship between home/

school links and cultural issues using the methods of focus group interviews and questionnaires.

The exosystem refers to setting(s) which “do not involve the developing person as an active participant” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). However these can be conceptualised as the decision-making levels of the education system, for example. This system is explored through a discussion of issues around language policies and allocation of resources to newcomer children, as well as the exploration of the impact of teacher education on the ability of teachers to facilitate newcomer children meaningfully in education.

The macrosystem, which refers to the variables of the particular culture in which the child exists, is also considered in the present study. O’Kane states that “the priority that the macrosystem gives to children’s needs will affect the levels of support that children receive at the inner levels of the system” (2007: 42). In this case, the attitudes of classroom teachers towards L1 maintenance may well have an impact on pupils’ language development, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. According to Paquette and Ryan (2001) the effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the other layers and in particular, policy development may be seen as part of either the macrosystem or the exosystem.

The chronosystem encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child’s environment. This has implications for the present study as classroom observation which took place over a three month period highlights changes in the child’s English and Irish language development. Furthermore, the questionnaire provides a snapshot of the English and Irish language development of 99 children at the end of the academic year, whereas classroom observation provides an ongoing description of the linguistic progress of three children and a summative evaluation of that progress in the middle of the academic year.

Therefore the concept of ecological linguistics and the ecological systems model both have implications for conceptualising this study with language as an integral part of the

child's environment and in recognition of the importance of preserving home languages within a linguistic ecology while learning the languages of the host country.

## **2.7 Summary**

The above was an exploration of issues around educational language policy, language maintenance and shift, language and identity and teachers' attitudes towards the maintenance of the home language among children under their care. Some of the main findings are as follows:

- If a rights-based approach is taken to explore education, the issue of LHRs should find resonance with educators and policy-makers.
- Educational language policy may be present at the macro level but is often difficult to implement due to a lack of awareness and/ or training at the micro level.
- The benefits of being plurilingual are clearly evident from the literature available, for example in terms of acquiring subsequent languages and in developing higher-order thinking skills. Being plurilingual is noted as being of value to the society and the individual.
- Maintenance of the home language brings many benefits and advantages to the learner. Language shift entirely towards the language of the host society may however prove detrimental in terms of identity and language barriers among families and communities.
- Language is a marker of identity, although some cultures are more likely to hold it closer as a cultural core value. Polish people have been found in a variety of contexts to be language-centred.
- Ecological linguistics serves as a theoretical base for this study due to the examination of the fragile linguistic ecologies now present in Ireland. The links between this and the ecological systems model have applications for this study.

Creese and Martin highlight the need for more studies in multilingual classrooms looking at the use and learning of languages in the classroom and the factors needed for

languages used in education to thrive outside the classroom (2003: 3). This chapter has aimed to “link classroom environments with the wider socio-political environment” by taking into account “the ideologies that pervade language choice and language policy” (ibid.). An exploration of theories of language acquisition will follow in Chapter Three, as well as an examination of pedagogical issues around support for children with EAL and how teachers’ attitudes towards L1 maintenance may influence this.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW – LINGUISTIC ISSUES**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with presenting areas of language acquisition which have been identified as important to the development of an understanding of young learners with EAL. These include sociocultural theory, input and interaction, formulaic language, early language learning and interlanguage. In connection with these theories of language acquisition, pedagogical issues around supporting children with EAL will be explored, followed by an examination of the relevance of teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance to these pedagogical concerns.

#### **3.2 Language Acquisition**

According to Tabors, "Acquiring a first language is a monumental task" (2008: 7). She identifies the five interlocking pieces that fit together to form the language system: phonology (sounds of the language), vocabulary (words of the language), grammar (how words come together to make sentences), discourse (how sentences are put together to serve different functions) and pragmatics (the rules that govern appropriate use of the language). She makes the point that developing control of language forms a major part of the child's development for the first five years of life. Cameron says that meaning must come first in spoken language because if children do not understand, they cannot learn it (2001: 36) and that the use of first language "is driven by a socially-motivated search for understanding and a need to share understanding" (Cameron, 2001: 39).

It should be noted at this point that a distinction can be drawn between the first language (L1), second language (L2) and third language (L3), although these do not necessarily correspond with the order in which a learner acquires these languages. Usually the L3 refers to a language currently being learned by a learner who already has established knowledge of L1 and L2. Therefore in the current study it is more accurate to classify

English as L2 and Irish as an ‘additional L2’ (Hammarberg, 2001: 22) because in the case of most children involved in the study the L2 of English may not be well established. A person can acquire one or more L1s, L2s and L3s (ibid.). In the following discussion of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) the L2 refers to both English and Irish.

When children are put in a situation where they need to or want to share understanding with other people through L2, they will search through their language resources and their language experience for ways to act in the L2 (Cameron, 2001). Skehan (1996) called this tendency towards communication ‘communicative pressure’. Snow’s foreword to the first edition of Tabors (2008) highlights

... the double-bind that second-language learners face; that is, they cannot learn the new language unless they can engage in social interaction with those who speak the new language, but they have limited social access to those individuals until they learn the new language (2008: xvi).

Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003: 156) refer to the distinction made in applied linguistics between *acquisition* and *use* (emphasis is theirs). They maintain that cognition (related to acquisition) originates in social interaction, and that constructing new knowledge is both a cognitive and a social process. Therefore, there is a need for bearing the approach of language socialization in mind within L2 research. Furthermore, Bialystok defines language proficiency as the ability to function in situations which are defined by “specific cognitive and linguistic demands, to a level of performance indicated by either objective criteria or normative standards” (2001: 18). Language socialization is of particular relevance to the current study as issues of cultural identity are borne in mind, as outlined in Chapter Two. According to Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen, the basic premise of language socialization is “... that linguistic and cultural knowledge are constructed through each other, and that language-acquiring children or adults are active and selective agents in both processes” (2003: 157). It is interesting to note that the distinction between language acquisition and socialization originally made by Schieffelin and Ochs was based on Hymes’s distinction between linguistic and communicative competence (Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen, 2003: 158), which was further developed by Cummins to distinguish between BICS and CALP, as outlined in Chapter Two. In this study the focus



is on BICS due to the age of the children and the communication which is the focus of much of the analysis of language in this study.

### 3.2.1 Sociocultural Theory

Piaget was concerned with how young children function in their environment, and with how this functioning influences their mental development. His theories propose that it is through taking action that learning occurs (Elkind, 1976). The knowledge that occurs from the action is actively constructed by the child. Action is fundamental to cognitive development. Assimilation and accommodation are the two ways in which development can take place as a result of activity (Cameron, 2001: 3). They are initially “adaptive processes of behaviour, but they become processes of thinking” (ibid.). Accommodation is an idea that has been adopted by second language learning in terms of re-organising mental representations of a language i.e. ‘restructuring’ (McLaughlin, 1992). Donaldson showed that Piaget underestimated children’s cognitive ability and that children were capable of more advanced cognitive achievement when appropriate language, objects and tasks are used (1978). The classroom and classroom activities provide the environment which provides opportunities for development.

If the children are to be successful in a language task, there needs to be a balance between demands and support. Cameron applies what cognitive scientists call the ‘Goldilocks principle’:

a task that is going to help the learner learn more language is one that is *demanding but not too demanding*, that provides *support but not too much support*. The *difference between demands and support* creates the space for growth and provides opportunities for learning (2001: 26).

Norris and Ortega (2003: 724) state that sociocultural theories “...maintain that learning of any kind (including language learning) is an essentially social process rather than one generated within the individual”. Sociocultural theory offers an alternative view of the role of interaction in SLA. Vygotsky’s approach asserts that interaction is a causative force in language acquisition. Learner activity and involvement are emphasised over innate and universal mechanisms, while focussing on factors outside the learner, rather

than factors which are in the learner's head (Berk and Winsler, 1995). It also gives little attention to the structural patterns of L2 which are learned (Saville-Troike, 2006: 111). Norton and Toohey (2002: 115) state that "language learners are not only learning a linguistic system; they are learning a diverse set of sociocultural practices, often best understood in the context of wider relations of power". They also state that there has been "... a shift from seeing learners as individual language producers to seeing them as members of social and historical collectives" (ibid.: 119), which has meant that researchers have become more interested in observing the communities of learning, such as schools. This links back to the idea of exploring multilingual classroom ecologies as referred to in Chapter Two.

For Vygotsky, the child is an active learner in a world full of people (Cameron, 2001: 6). Vygotsky focussed mainly on the social aspect of life in providing opportunities for cognitive development. When a child starts to speak in their L1 in their second year of life, a whole new world opens up to them as they begin to use language as a tool for doing things and organising information. Vygotsky opined that intelligence could be better measured by what the child can do with skilled help, than by what the child can do alone. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is what the child can do with the help of an adult (Berk and Winsler, 1995; Cameron, 2001: 6), or "where new understandings are possible through collaborative interaction and inquiry" (Baker, 2006: 303). According to Saville-Troike (2006: 111), "learning occurs when simple innate mental activities are transformed into 'higher-order', more complex mental functions". This transformation involves symbolic mediation. One important context for symbolic mediation is interpersonal interaction between learners and experts (Saville-Troike, 2006: 112). Mediated learning in the ZPD is where future development is negotiated by the expert and the novice through various types of assistance (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2002). According to Lantolf (2002), L2 development moves through a number of stages, starting at the point where mediation needs to be quite explicit, until the point is reached where implicit assistance is sufficient for the learner to perform appropriately. Lantolf notes that research has shown how teachers engage learners in their ZPD through "*instructional conversations* that scaffold novices into an L2" (2002: 105). Swain (2000: 102) would

use the term ‘collaborative dialogue’ to describe a similar phenomenon, although this would imply peers working together rather than a teacher and child, both of which are important points of interaction for a child’s language development. Crucially for applying a sociocultural perspective to this piece of research, collaborative dialogue is language learning mediated by language, or “linguistic problem-solving through social interaction” (ibid.)

Bruner, who held that language is the most important tool for cognitive growth, investigated how adults use language to mediate the world for children and labelled this ‘scaffolding’ (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). The metaphor of scaffolding, according to Saville-Troike (2006: 112) refers to verbal guidance provided by an expert to a learner to help her perform a specific task, or the verbal collaboration of peers to perform a task which would be too difficult for any one of them to perform independently. Donato and Adair-Hauck (1992) are cited in Lantolf (2002: 105) as having compared the “*monologic instructional talk* of one language teacher with the *dialogic* moves of another”. Monologic instructional talk fails to encourage verbal interaction between teacher and students and fails to push their development forward. Dialogic teaching involves frequent use of interactional strategies which enable novices to undertake activities they are unable to perform unaided (Lantolf, 2002). Language learning may be seen as a process of repeatedly stretching resources beyond the current ZPD or space for growth, consolidation, and moving onto the next challenge (Cameron, 2001: 28). Cummins says that “language and content will be acquired most successfully when students are challenged cognitively but provided with the contextual and linguistic supports or scaffolds required for successful task completion” (2000: 71). This means that it is highly important for teachers to be aware of effective methods for scaffolding children’s learning.

Wood has identified three main principles of effective scaffolding which include teacher exploitation of the recognition-production gap, regulation of intervention contingent on the child’s activity, which is based on the adult’s effective analysis of the task, and the progressive relaxation of adult control as the child’s competence level grows (1999: 272-

273). This is an extension of his suggested strategies for scaffolding children's learning, which include suggesting, praising the significant, providing focusing activities, encouraging rehearsal, being explicit about organisation, reminding, modelling and providing part-whole activities (Wood, 1998). Further recommendations in relation to scaffolding will be discussed in the next section on input and interaction.

Bruner also put forward the notion of formats and routines as a useful idea in language teaching (1983). The adjustment of routines provides opportunities for language and therefore cognitive development. Similarly to Vygotsky's ZPD, classroom routines provide a 'space for growth' (Cameron, 2001: 9), by gradually increasing complexity of language and allowing the child to make sense of it and internalising it within their ZPD. According to Ohta, interactional routines serve important functions because their repetitive nature structures the interactive environment in predictable ways and therefore facilitates language acquisition by highlighting the relationship between language use and social meaning (2001: 6). An example of a formulaic routine is a greeting routine. Learners initially have only a superficial level of participation but as they participate repeatedly they become more able to anticipate and participate appropriately (*ibid.*).

When language teachers frequently exploit interactional routines in their teaching this provides a clear model for how new structures and vocabulary can be used in new contexts (Ohta, 2001: 8). Mhic Mhathúna found in a study of naíonraí (Irish-medium playgroups) with children of three or four years of age learning Irish as L2 that when one naíonra used the Lunch Ritual to teach a wide range of formulaic utterances, the children's familiarity with these formulas allowed them to start breaking down and analysing the construction of utterances (1995: 130). Although children work out very quickly what is expected of them and how to fit in with the schema of school, even the most motivated child may have problems in making sense of some of the activities in which they participate in class. Children are often very anxious to please and sometimes act as if they understand what is expected of them by employing these formulaic routines, therefore leading to a teacher not noticing their confusion (Cameron, 2001: 21). Although

formulaic routines can help the children to act as part of the group, this limitation must be borne in mind by practitioners.

Intrapersonal interaction is also viewed by Vygotsky as a sociocultural phenomenon (Saville-Troike, 2006: 113). This is communication which occurs within an individual's mind although it may take the form of mumbling to oneself or repeating words or phrases quietly. One type of intrapersonal interaction is private speech. According to Ohta, private speech shows that the learner who appears to be silent is "neither passive nor disengaged" and is involved in an "intrapersonal interactive process" (2001: 12). Vygotsky (1987) believed that it is through the process of privatising speech that we gain control over our ability to remember, think, attend, plan, evaluate, inhibit and learn (cited in Lantolf, 2002: 108). Lantolf points out that "words are first experienced by children through the mouths of others" (2006: 720) which means that the language we use to mediate our mental activity always originates in interactions with others.

Private speech can be seen as a precursor of inner speech, which ranges on a spiral continuum including external speech, fragmented external speech, whispered speech and abbreviated speech for oneself (Ohta, 2001: 19). Private speech or inner speech can take the form of language play, particularly among young children. Ohta identifies three types of language play; solitary play, social context play and social play, the first two of which are self-directed (2001: 15). With regard to language play as a form of self-mediated speech, Saville-Troike's 1998 research with L1 Chinese, Japanese and Korean children in a North American classroom shows that when the children were reluctant to engage in social speech in their L2, they privately continued to experiment with the language by playing with it. It is noteworthy that when the children later did begin to engage in social speech, many of the forms they had played with in their private speech reappeared. Broner and Tarone's study of L1 English immersion learners of Spanish also showed language play which consisted of lexical items introduced during discrete lessons being whispered and eventually forming part of social play (2000).

Vygotsky argues that play opens a ZPD in which children engage in activities beyond their daily behaviour (1978: 103). Furthermore, Lantolf notes that “learners at higher proficiency levels are less likely to play with the language than learners at lower levels” (2002: 109). It is acknowledged by the *EAL Guidelines* (2006) that many children go through a silent phase for a few months, but that they usually understand a lot more than they can verbalise. Understanding of the language always comes before the spoken language, and it is important that children do not feel under pressure from adults to speak before they are ready (ibid.). Burling notes that adults, teachers included, may not even notice “the great amount of learning that takes place silently before active production of language even begins” (2002: 298). This is evidenced by learners’ comprehension of instructions and participation in routines. This means that when undertaking research in a classroom with young children learning EAL it would be essential to look for non-verbal signs of comprehension among children and their ability to become a part of the group while not speaking the TL.

The characteristics of SLA explored above are of particular importance when analysing the types of scaffolding engaged in by teachers and children in classrooms with a significant number of children speaking HLOTE. The ‘Goldilocks principle’ forms a basis for understanding the processes involved and this, along with an understanding of the social nature of language learning, is essential for teachers to bear in mind in practice. Formulaic language and routines have been highlighted as providing a clear model to young children for the use of new structures and vocabulary in a variety of contexts. The following section will introduce the reader to the importance of the language that the learner is exposed to and opportunities to engage in conversations and will also expand on the practical application of aspects of the theories outlined above.

### **3.2.2 Input and Interaction**

Krashen put forward the idea that we acquire language by receiving comprehensible input; by understanding messages (1985: vii). According to Lightbown and Spada “If the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner’s current level of competence

in the language, then both comprehension and acquisition will occur” (1993: 28). Gass emphasises the importance of interaction in language learning, rather than the behaviourist views of input as central to an understanding of how either L1 or L2 is acquired (2002: 171). Gass also states that the interactionist hypothesis “... has as its main claim that one route to second language learning is through conversational interaction” (2002: 173). Chomsky’s Universal Grammar (UG), which “is taken to be a characterization of the child’s prelinguistic state” (1981: 7) is also taken into consideration by Gass within the interactionist perspective. Within the framework, “the input provides language-specific information which interacts with whatever innate structure an individual brings to the language learning situation” (Gass, 2003: 225) According to Mhic Mhathúna (2008: 300) “The interaction process is regarded as two-way with adults adjusting their input in line with the learners’ understanding and learners influencing the competent speakers’ input through the negotiation of meaning”. Cameron advises that learners need to use their language production resources and skills in addition to being exposed to comprehensible input if they are to develop linguistic knowledge and skills (2001: 41).

Saville-Troike (2006: 106) notes that social approaches to language learning consider the nature and role of interaction in acquisition, and states that “interaction is generally seen as an essential in providing learners with the quantity and quality of external linguistic input which is required for internal processing” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 106). Pica, Young and Doughty (1987) found that modifications in interaction led to higher levels of comprehension than modifications in input. The results of that study showed that the learners who had the opportunity to check comprehension while listening to instructions by asking clarification questions comprehended more than those learners who simply received a simplified set of instructions. Lightbown and Spada summarise the relationship between modified interaction and language acquisition as follows:

- Interactional modification makes input comprehensible;
- Comprehensible input promotes acquisition.
- Therefore, interactional modification promotes acquisition. (2006: 43)

One of the main components of the interactionist perspective is that of modified speech as a form of scaffolding. One purpose of modified speech may be to aid comprehension. Another purpose thereof is to help the learner to participate in a conversation as fully as possible. Gass recognises the importance of comprehensible input, by stating that when a learner is able to participate in a conversation "... she or he is ensured of receiving a greater quantity of input" (2002: 173). Language that is addressed by L1 speakers to L2 learners frequently differs in ways from language addressed to native or fluent speakers (Saville-Troike, 2006: 106; Baker, 2006: 308). This can be known as 'foreigner talk' and is similar in some ways to 'baby talk' (Saville-Troike, 2006; Mitchell and Myles, 2004). Saville-Troike (2006: 107) outlines some of the linguistic modifications which do seem to aid comprehension at very early stages of language learning: high frequency phrases, which may be memorised as chunks of speech to be processed automatically; pauses at appropriate grammatical junctures which can help listeners recognize relevant structures; a slower rate of speech, which allows more time for internalization and processing and topicalization, which helps in identifying the theme of the sentence. The commonly used practices of speaking louder to an L2 learner and of over-simplifying sentence structure may in fact impair comprehension.

Examples of conversational modifications to scaffold children's learning between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) when engaged in sustained conversation, are as follows: comprehension checks, clarification requests and self-repetition or paraphrasing (Lightbown and Spada, 2006: 44). Saville-Troike (2006: 109) adds to this repetition by the native speaker expansion and elaboration by the NS, sentence completion by the NS, provision of a frame for substitution by the NS and vertical constructions, which allow the non native speaker to construct discourse sentences beyond their current independent means. Mhic Mhathúna notes that in her study of naíonraí, teachers used a lot of repetition with children, for example when asking questions they would restate the question with minor changes to help negotiate meaning as an aid to acquisition (1995: 130).



Tabors (2008) offers a range of ideas for communicating with second-language-learning children in the classroom. Her ideas regarding interactional scaffolding include starting with what the children know, starting slowly, buttressing communication, repetition, talking about the here and now, expanding and extending, upping the ante, fine-tuning and combining techniques. Suggestions regarding environmental scaffolding include providing safe havens, classroom routines, small-group activities to ensure inclusion and social support i.e. getting help from the English-speaking children (Tabors, 2008: 89-101). Walsh's categories of interactional features are based on teacher talk and include scaffolding, direct repair, content feedback, extended wait-time, referential questions, seeking clarification, extended learner turn, teacher echo, teacher interruptions, extended teacher turn, turn completion, display questions and form-focused feedback (2006: 167). Walsh's category of extended wait time can be classified as part of Tabors's "starting slowly" while his categories of teacher echo and form-focused feedback fall under Tabors's umbrella of repetition. Aspects such as extended learner turn and turn completion, along with extended teacher turn come together to explain Tabors's categories of expanding and extending, fine-tuning and upping the ante. These categories will be discussed further during the detailed exploration of methodological issues in Chapter Four as they were employed as a model for analysing scaffolding during classroom observation.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) recognise that while these conversational adjustments can aid comprehension, it may not mean that comprehensible input causes acquisition. Saville-Troike (2006: 107) adds that while some oral modifications may make language acquisition easier, many L2 learners can succeed without them. Cross-cultural studies of interaction with young children have shown that styles of child-directed speech vary within societies and among others and it is noted by Mitchell and Myles (2004: 163) that the cross-cultural research which has been undertaken weakens the notion that "finely tuned child-directed speech is actually necessary". Bialystok also comments on modified speech when she says "The way in which adults respond to children's utterances, according to such measures as the frequency with which they repeat or elaborate on the

child's words, corresponds to the grammaticality of the child's utterance" (2001: 39).

According to Pica:

Schmidt's observations, along with findings on communicative, content-based classroom contexts considered rich in L2 input (Pica, 2002; Swain, 1985), have revealed that comprehensible input, however modified, might not be efficient, or even sufficient, for SLA (2005: 274).

Therefore, learners of EAL also need time to generate comprehensible output and negotiate meaning. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006: 44), the demands of producing comprehensible output push learners ahead in their linguistic development. Swain (2000: 99) maintains that output pushes learners to stretch their interlanguage to meet communicative goals because they are processing language more deeply. This has implications for the present study when exploring the early language produced by learners of additional languages and the types of interactions which result in comprehensible output.

### **3.2.3 Formulaic language**

Ullman (2008), in a discussion of the nature of the brain in SL learning, drew a distinction between declarative memory and procedural memory. This is similar to Baetens Beardsmore's (2008) 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' distinction mentioned in the discussion of plurilingualism. One of his findings is that females tend to do better at learning chunks of language, which is linked to declarative memory, and males tend to learn procedurally, involving more the theory of language.

According to Littlewood (1984: 47), "learners construct systems of rules from which they can create utterances". These systems may include learning grammatical morphemes, learning to form negatives, learning to form questions, and learning the basic sentence pattern. Another aspect of language learning is memorising unanalysed formulas and patterns. According to Wood, "multi-word sequences can be stored in the same way as individual lexical items" (2001: 579) These are sometimes known as 'routine formulas' and 'prefabricated frames' or 'patterns' or 'formulaic language units' (ibid.; Tabors,

2008; Wray, 2002a, 2002b). Tabors says that observers have noted that when young second-language learners begin to use their new language, they use telegraphic speech and formulaic speech (2008: 55). Telegraphic speech is explained as referring “to the use of a few content words as an entire utterance; this type of speech is also typical of a period of acquisition by very young children learning their first language” (Tabors, 2008: 56). In the case of a routine formula, the learner produces an utterance as “[...] a single, unanalysed unit, rather than creating it from underlying rules” (Littlewood, 1984: 47). Examples include “Don’t do that” or “Get out of here”. A prefabricated pattern is similar to a routine formula, but allows a certain degree of creativity. Hakuta (1976) studied a Japanese child who was able to use the pattern “I know how to...” with various items in the final slot and according to Tabors (2008), Wong-Fillmore (1976) found evidence in her unpublished PhD thesis for the breaking up of routine formulas and prefabricated patterns in the speech of a Spanish child. As the child’s knowledge of the L2 increases, so too does her flexibility and creativity and so formulaic phrases eventually interweave with newly constructed segments of language as fluency develops (Wood, 2001: 580; Wray, 2002b: 114). The formulaic phrases that were commonly used by the second-language learners in Tabors’ research early in the acquisition process were high utility words such as *yes*, *no*, *hi*, *bye-bye*, *excuse me* and *I don’t know* (2008: 58) and were found to be very useful in social situations in the classroom.

According to Wray (2002a: 4) “Words and word strings which appear to be processed without recourse to their lowest level of composition are termed formulaic”. She considers that formulaic language use is caused by the heavy mental demands of speaking. Speakers seem to rely on ‘chunks’ of language that come ready made as they are easier to formulate than sentences composed of fresh words and phrases. ‘Chunks’ can be useful in talk by providing a framework for speech, with ‘slots’ that can be filled. Vocabulary development is about learning words, formulaic phrases or chunks, finding words inside those chunks, and learning more about words. Infants, adults and children know and talk about words and think of a word as a discrete unit. Tabors noted that

The second-language learners were usually quite quick in their acquisition of at least a limited range of telegraphic and formulaic phrases that helped them socially in the classroom, and they were usually right about the situations in which the phrases could be used (1997: 64).

While these phrases were at first used most often by the children in communicating with other adults and speakers of EAL, they also provided opportunities for these children to begin interacting verbally with their English-speaking peers in the classroom.

Many course books for young learners choose conversational phrases as individual units of language to be taught. These phrases are taught through songs, rhymes, stories and indeed, normal classroom language (Cameron, 2001: 50). Mhic Mhathúna (2008) found in a study of Irish-language preschools that having learned words in the context of lunchtime routines, the 3 and 4 year old children were able to extend their knowledge of the words within a storytelling session. For the most part, the phrases remained as formulaic units (2008: 303). If children are listening to a story told from a 'big book' with pictures, rather than text, they may understand the general meaning of the story. However, they may not be able to explain the story in their L2, because their attention has been focused on the meaning, rather than vocabulary or syntax. Field (1998) reminds us that 'different types of listening activities are required to ensure a language-focus.' (Cameron, 2001: 40). However, Tabors says that as soon as children learning EAL have acquired a number of useful phrases and vocabulary items, they can begin building their own sentences resulting in productive language use, rather than relying on formulaic phrases (2008: 59). This will be explored further in Section 3.2.5.

### **3.2.4 Interlanguage**

There will be a natural interlanguage among children in the early stages of language learning according to Selinker (1972). Baker sees this halfway stage in language learning as "indicating the linguistic creativity of students" (2006: 309). Pica says that interlanguages follow "rules and patterns that change over the course of L2 development, but do so in patterned ways" (2005: 265). Interlanguage patterns, which are not language specific, can often be referred to as errors as in some of the literature outlined below but

in fact they reflect the learner's worthwhile attempts at communication (Pica, 2005: 266; Baker, 2006: 309; Deuchar and Quay, 2000).

Cross-linguistic transfer may be of assistance to children when learning a new language (Dillon, 2009). Linguistic distance also may have an effect on the methods of code-switching used by the learners of L3. According to Cenoz and Genesee, the linguistic distance between the language involved can affect the magnitude of transfer between language (1998: 21). Sigokukira (1993: 10) points out that there is general agreement among SLA researchers that transfer, both positive and negative, is more likely to take place from a language which is related to the new foreign language being learned. When first language habits are helpful to acquiring second language habits, this is "positive transfer" (Littlewood, 1984: 17). However, where L1 habits hinder the learner in learning L2, this is known as "negative transfer" (ibid., p.17). In common terminology, this is known as interference. "Differences between the two languages lead to interference, which is the cause of learning difficulties and errors" (Littlewood, 1984: 17).

Interference errors occur in tandem with developmental errors, which resemble "[...] the errors made by children who are learning English as their mother tongue" (Littlewood, 1984: 20). Transfer and overgeneralization are also factors in second language learning. Both processes "[...] result from the fact that the learner uses what he already knows about language, in order to make sense of the new experience" (Littlewood, 1984: 25). The learner uses her previous mother-tongue experience to organise L2 data, in the case of transfer. In the case of overgeneralization, the learner uses her previous knowledge of L2. Littlewood reminds us that "There are many instances when it is not possible to decide whether overgeneralization or transfer is the cause of a specific error" (1984: 27). "Where two languages make use of very different types of cues, the transfer of strategies from L1 to L2 may not be very fruitful" (Cameron, 2001: 15). She also points out that which cues need discrete attention will vary with learner L1 (ibid.) In English, the word order is a salient cue, as are word endings that show tense. Learners may need assistance in noticing and paying attention to the most salient cues. In studies of immersion language learning, younger children (7-8) seem to pay more attention to sound and

prosody than older children (12-14), who tend to be more attentive to cues of word order (Harley, Howard and Hart, 1995).

Sigokukira (1993: 112) makes a further point that needs to be taken into consideration. He says that although L2-L3 similarity is widely argued for in the literature as the cause for L2-L3 influence, it is of course not the only cause. The influence seems to be an interplay of a number of factors, including those such as recency. Recency simply refers to establishing which language was learned last or more recently. Furthermore, it may not be simply the native language, which assists the learner in learning a second or a third language. It may be that L2 influences L3, or L3 influences further learning of L2. Singh and Carroll (1979), referred to by Sigokukira (1993: 112) "...postulate a socio-cultural reason by suggesting that L3 learners may identify more strongly with an L2 than with their L1, which could result in L2 influencing their learning of an additional foreign language." This may certainly have implications for children who are not only learning EAL, but also learning Irish as an additional language concurrently, while bearing in mind that in most cases Irish is being learned by newcomer children as an additional L2 rather than L3.

Code-switching or code-mixing is a phenomenon that may be viewed as a part of interlanguage. Code-mixing is generally the term used when the language of one word or a few words in a sentence is changed whereas code-switching is generally classified as where one phrase is in one language, a second phrase in another language (Baker, 2006: 111), although they are used interchangeably in some of the literature. While such mixing of languages tends to be seen as interference or a lack of knowledge about languages, Baker says that in children as young as two years of age code-switching can be context-sensitive (2006: 113). Baker offers twelve purposes of code-switching, four of which will be mentioned here as most relevant to this study. Code-switching may be used when a person chooses to substitute a word or phrase in a language because they are not sure of the translation, which often happens because bilinguals use languages in different domains (Baker, 2006: 111). It may also be used by teachers to clarify a point because some teachers believe that repetition will add to children's comprehension (ibid.; Garcia,

2009). It may also be used to express identity in the sense of communicating friendship and common identity (Baker, 2006: 112). Furthermore, code-switching may be used to exclude people from a conversation when talking about private matters. Wong-Fillmore thinks that the separation of languages is beneficial to the learner as it helps him/ her to keep the two languages apart and predict which language is appropriate (1985: 34) and Mhic Mhathúna noted that children attending a naíonra were well aware of which language (English or Irish) was being used by the teacher in a given situation (1995: 129). Therefore there is a case to be made for keeping languages separate but also bearing in mind the benefits that responsible code-switching on the part of the teacher can bring. Garcia (2009: 299) points out that code-switching can be used as a scaffolding technique by making the TL more comprehensible and to clarify or reinforce lesson material, both of which have applications to the present study.

It is noteworthy that de Angelis and Selinker (2001: 44) acknowledge that language transfer theory has been limited in the past to principles based on two languages only. They recommend extending the theories to an examination of interlanguage transfer as involving at least three linguistic systems to allow for, as in the present study, multilingualism as a reality. In fact, it has been assumed that the native language would be most dominant in interlanguage production but the current study will open the door to considerations of the influence of L2 English on L2 Irish and vice versa.

### **3.2.5 Early Language Learning**

Child language research often carries with it the argument of nature versus nurture, which has been brought forward from the debates in Greek philosophy. The Platonic interpretation is that language is *phýsei* (originated from nature), while the opposing Aristotelian view is that language is *thései* (occurs because of man's determination). Stern and Stern put forward a 'convergence theory' which explored the extent to which "...inner tendencies and forces take an active part in the adoption, choice and processing of forms which are offered from the outside" (Stern and Stern, 1928: 128 in Oksaar, 1983: 8).

The language system used by adults is often taken as the measure and goal of child language acquisition (Oksaar, 1983: 51). However, it is not correct to judge the linguistic competence of the child against adult models. The features which child language acquisition has in common with the spoken language of adults cannot be clearly distinguished by comparing both models with each other. Therefore, researchers must be very careful in making normative comparisons between adult and child language. Children use words in speech long before they have a full understanding of what they are, and although children may use the same words as adults, they may not hold the same meanings for those words (Locke, 1993; Vygotsky 1978). The NCCA acknowledges that learning a first language is a complex and incremental process, and that language development is generally nurtured by primary caregivers (2006: 7).

Children come into L2 learning with differently developed skills and learning abilities in L1. According to Cameron:

By the age of five, individual differences in language domains will be established and so, for example, some children will find it easier to learn vocabulary than others, or children with more developed conversational skills may transfer these to the new language more easily than others' (2001: 12).

It is therefore likely that children will learn different things from the same language lesson and that different aspects of language will have different ZPDs for each child. Saville-Troike found that among three-and four-year-old Chinese learners, their L2 was largely something to play with (2006: 114). For slightly older children of five years of age, English was used more to comment about ongoing events e.g. a Japanese learner of English as L2 practised grammar drills privately. Her research showed that even when these children were not interacting with others, they were using intrapersonal interaction in "an active process of engagement with the input they heard, practicing to build up their competence" (Saville-Troike, 2006: 115), as outlined earlier in the discussion on language play.

Tabors (2008) outlines a consistent developmental sequence for young children in learning a second language. They may begin by continuing to use their L1 in the L2 situation. They then typically enter a nonverbal period during which time they collect



information about the L2 and engage in private speech. They then begin to go public with language by using individual words and phrases in the L2, typically telegraphic and formulaic phrases and finally begin to develop productive use of the L2 (2008: 37). She makes the point that children learning a second language do not move discretely from one period to the next but rather add skills to each level of language use (2008: 64). De Houwer notes in a discussion of emerging bilinguals that the milestones of L2 development tend to follow the same order as that for L1, with comprehension preceding production, followed by babbling, then single-word utterances, then two-word utterances, followed by multiword utterances and multiclausal ones (2006: 782).

Although much communicative competence is acquired in the L1 by the age of five, formal literacy skills are still in the early stages of development by the age of five or six (Cameron, 2001: 11). Relative clauses are one example of this according to Perera (1984). Discourse skills continue to develop in the L1 throughout the early school years. Much importance is attached to the use of story-telling in foreign language teaching and second language teaching. Therefore, teachers should remember that the use of pronouns, for example, may still be difficult to use in order to control reference to characters in children using that language in L1 and we should not demand unreasonable skills from children learning that language as L2. Burling makes a similar point when referring to children of 5, and even older, who have difficulty in interpreting passives and some relative clauses, as well as pronouns (2002: 304-305). Cameron says that native speakers of English have about four or five thousand word families by the age of five, and add a further thousand to their repertoire each year (2001: 75). Nation and Waring (1997) note that learners of EAL who attend English-speaking school have also been found to add about one thousand word families to their repertoire each year but the gap of four to five thousand still remains. In fact, it may take 5-7 years for L2 learners to 'approximate native speakers' norms' (Collier, 1989, cited in Grant, 1995: 4). The following quotation concurs with Cameron's observation: "Children may become conversationally fluent in a new language in two or three years but may take five or more years to catch up with monolingual peers in cognitive and academic language" (PNS, 2007: 5). Cummins (2008) also tells us that at least 5 years are typically required for newcomers to catch up

academically. This literature will have implications for Language Support received by newcomer children.

Due to the fact that young learners face many years of classroom learning, it is important that they 'feel, and are, successful from the start' (Cameron, 2001: 29). Too many demands may make the child fearful of the language, whereas too few challenges may make the language seem boring. Locke (1993) gives an account of 3 year old English speakers who were more than happy to respond to adults who spoke to them in Spanish, a language they didn't understand. This is due to the fact that children, as adults, seem to use the 'social context and intonation as guides to how to respond'. Young children inevitably have to operate with only a partial understanding of much of the language they hear every day. However, this does not stop them from interacting. Language use moves from "partial to more complete understandings" (Cameron, 2001: 38).

Pica has found that young learners often have strong L2 comprehension but "lack grammatical proficiency" (2005: 273). "It is widely recognised that children in the early years need lots of opportunities for speaking and listening in order to develop their vocabulary and their knowledge of grammar and syntax" (Flynn, 2007: 179). Nouns are used in L1 acquisition at an early stage, and there is a correlation to be found between the rapidity with which they start to acquire nouns and how much they point at items (Cameron, 2001: 73). Young speakers between five and ten years of age often lack awareness of how to cater for other participants, and in fact often blame themselves if they do not understand something that was said to them. Discourse in young learner classrooms should follow patterns children find familiar e.g. from their home or family, or from the classroom (Cameron, 2001: 53).

Age as a category has advantages and disadvantages as a social factor in L2 learning. According to Saville-Troike (2006: 125), young L2 learners are more likely than older learners to acquire the language in a naturalistic setting and they are more likely to use the L2 in 'real' conversational settings. However, young immigrant learners who are immersed in L2 dominant environments, such as school, are less likely to do as well in

L2 learning and content learning through the medium of L2 than children who immigrate after receiving basic education in their L1 and begin L2 learning at a later age (Saville-Troike, 2006: 125). One explanation for this is that the development of cognitive and academic competence in L1 may have a significant effect in promoting the transfer of skills into English and therefore enabling success in an English-medium school, as explored in Chapter Two.

The hypothesis that children learn a second language better than adults is long-standing (Singleton, 1995: 160; Cameron, 2001: 13). Lenneberg (1967) put forward the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) - the idea that young children can learn a second language in a particularly effective manner before the age of eleven because their brains are still able to use the mechanisms that assisted L1 acquisition (Birdsong, 1999). The same theory has been applied to the successful acquisition of accent after this stage. According to Tabors, young children are particularly sensitive to the sounds of language and “the only feature of second-language acquisition that has been shown to be age-sensitive is accent” (2008: 50). Smyth et al. have found in an Irish context that younger newcomer children are seen as acquiring language proficiency more quickly than their older counterparts (2009: 181). Genesee (2008) tells us that early L2 instruction is good, because early exposure takes advantage of natural language learning, because of their early socio-cultural openness where young children do not have the same biases as older children and because pedagogy and language learning styles are compatible in the early years in terms of play, interactivity, discovery learning and so on.

It is important to note that an early start does not guarantee higher levels of achievement than a delayed start. In fact, Genesee (2008) notes that sometimes delayed L2 exposure can be equally effective and that older students are better learners – perhaps not better acquirers of language, but better learners. According to Singleton and Ryan (2004), it is true that older students generally have well developed L1 literacy skills that can transfer to their L2 learning. Singleton argued in an earlier paper that the long-term benefits of an early start with SLA depend on continuing contact with the L2, a positive set of classroom experiences of the L2 and a meaningful connection between earlier and later

learning (1995: 161). Therefore we can conclude with reference to Singleton's remarks that "early exposure to an L2 increases one's chances of ultimately attaining high levels of proficiency in the language in question" (1995: 162) but the learners should experience appropriate input and be afforded opportunities to generate comprehensible output under the guidance of an expert facilitator who will be able to keep learning focused and meaningful.

### **3.3 Pedagogical Issues**

Teachers are pivotal in ensuring the success of EAL pupils. If children are to talk meaningfully in the classroom, they must have something they want to say (Cameron, 2001: 58). The teacher should take responsibility for varying tasks and approaches in order for them to relate to pupils' interests. Teachers need to "act on behalf of the child", in monitoring "how they talk to their pupils in terms of what and how their pupils can find meaning in that talk" (ibid.). Flynn and Stainthorpe (2006) cited in Flynn (2007) relate that teachers need subject knowledge relating to how literacy develops, partnered with a detailed understanding of the specific needs for pupils learning in another language. The focus in education has moved away from teaching, to that of learning – even the way in which curricular objectives are outlined throughout the *Primary School Curriculum* denotes this, as the focus is on what the child is enabled to do, rather than what the teacher will do. The skill of the teacher in facilitating an atmosphere conducive to learning is crucial.

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) identifies the three primary aims of primary education as enabling the child to "live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual [...], to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society" (NCCA, 1999a: 7) and to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning. It is a spiral curriculum, where themes are revisited at each of the four levels at developmentally appropriate stages. The curriculum is child-centred and encourages the teacher to act as a facilitator. To this end, a wide range of approaches to learning are articulated in the curriculum as

well as specific details regarding the content to be learned (NCCA, 1999a: 10). Some of these approaches and methodologies are referred to in the following sections.

Flynn (2007: 180) outlines some of the key features of pedagogy common to teachers in monolingual classrooms who engage their pupils in learning, and foster high levels in lessons as follows:

- Effective teachers of literacy were more likely to link the teaching of word and sentence-level objectives into meaningful text-based experiences;
- Lessons were conducted at a brisk pace and made use of extensive modelling and differentiation;
- Teachers were ‘assessment literate’;
- Teachers believed that creating meaning in literacy was crucial to success in teaching reading and writing;
- Teachers were unlikely to follow any one set of curriculum guidance, and used an eclectic collection of teaching methodologies.

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez in their discussion on whether or not the regular classroom provides an appropriate learning environment for children with EAL, state that “The mainstream classroom must offer the same rich, challenging, interesting curriculum to all students” (2002: 13). They also urge educators to engage LEP students in meaningful and interactive language activities in a classroom environment that is “... linguistically rich and success oriented, where all students are free to express themselves, to experiment, and to explore” (ibid.) They note that well-planned and practiced mainstream classroom interaction can be meaningful to LEP students, as it provides interaction with native speakers of English (ibid.). They recommend instruction that provides experiences where students’ strengths are used to improve self-concept and academic development for language minority students. According to Meier (2004: 111), English-language learners often rely on visual art to represent their feelings, experiences, objects and thoughts.

As the vast majority of newcomer children in Irish primary schools are in mainstream classes at least 95% of the time, it is worthwhile to look at the four principles which

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002) have identified as relevant to well-developed and planned mainstream programmes for LEP pupils:

1. Mainstreaming should provide a full range of educational opportunities to all students, eliminating social and racial barriers;
2. Mainstreaming should provide opportunities for English language learners to interact socially with English proficient peers;
3. Mainstreaming should provide opportunities for groups to function effectively once successful instructional strategies are employed;
4. Mainstreaming should provide opportunities for all teachers to consider the language demands of all the students in the classroom.

### **3.3.1 Integrated Instruction**

When looking at relevant research and pedagogical principles, Cummins (2008) advises that for learning, new information, skills and concepts should be integrated with prior knowledge. This concept of ‘integration’ or ‘linkage’ is also advocated in the *Primary School Curriculum* at each subject level and in the *Introduction* as one of the principles of learning (NCCA, 1999a: 16). We have already identified that newcomer pupils’ L1 is involved with their L2. According to Douglas (2005: 65), “integrated instruction aims to teach both a language and school content taught in that language”. This Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach is informed primarily by its usage in FL education.

There are six models of integrated instruction that range on a continuum from content-driven to language driven, according to Met (cited in Douglas, 2005: 65) as follows: total immersion, partial immersion, sheltered courses, adjunct courses, theme-based instruction and language classes with frequent use of content for language practice. Some features of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999a) that relate to CLIL are the key principles, which state that

- language is central in the learning process
- learning is most effective when it is integrated

- skills that facilitate the transfer of learning should be fostered (1999a: 8)

CLIL can be viewed as a natural extension and merging of two methodological approaches which are recommended in the *Draft Curriculum Guidelines for Modern Languages* (NCCA, 1999d), which are teaching through the target language and using a cross-curricular approach. However, as the primary school curriculum is a spiral one CLIL can be used for revisiting and consolidating knowledge, concepts and skills as well as transferring knowledge, concepts and skills learned in another subject area to a new context. Immersion education is in use in Ireland in the form of early partial (almost total) immersion in the Irish language.

A comparison can be drawn between the type of immersion education students who attend a Gaelscoil are involved in and the type of immersion EAL pupils experience may be found. However, it should be noted that while immersion in a Gaelscoil is usually the choice of the parent/ guardian, and usually facilitates the acquisition of Irish as L2 for pupils who attend the school, EAL pupils who attend an English-medium school often experience immersion without due recognition that English is their L2. LEP students are, according to Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, cognitively taxed on two levels – they not only have the cognitive demands of the subject content, but also the linguistic demands of processing in a language with which they are not fully comfortable (2002: 3-4). The high density CLIL approach is being used to immerse newcomer children in the English language in the majority of schools. The *Intercultural Guidelines* refer to CLIL by recommending that teachers provide an appropriate learning environment in which learners can learn new content and skills while at the same time developing their knowledge of the language of instruction (2005b: 165).

Robinson (2008) observed Content and Language Based Teaching (CLBT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in six countries, including England. Her observations of lessons showed that within teaching, integration wasn't well planned and that there was a focus on subject learning. Learning of language seemed to be incidental, even where ELLs were present, and there was an emphasis on BICS, not CALP.

Robinson makes the point that for incidental learning to happen, 95% of the language needs to be understood. According to national guidelines in England, the effective, non-threatening conditions in which CLIL and CLBT should thrive are where comprehensible input is encouraged and expected, where the articulation of pupils' meaning is valued and where there are opportunities for experimental and creative use. Robinson (2008) points to multimodal contextual support, where there is a 'language-conscious approach' to subject language development, and where teachers 'identify and exploit opportunities for language development in subject areas'. Robinson's own research (2008) has identified that repetition, explaining meaning, getting pupils to construct definitions and giving the form are successful teaching strategies for making key vocabulary prominent. Through observing Year 5 Geography lessons, Robinson found that often where a word was taught initially at the start of a unit, that word was seldom used. Rather, a different form of the word was used by the teacher. Thereafter during lessons, semantically correct but syntactically incorrect forms were often accepted by the teacher. The implications of this are that language should be a critical and not just an integrated component in CBLT, and that planned language work should include focus on form, not just focus on meaning (Robinson, 2008). According to Brisk, whereas some educators are of the opinion that teaching content through L2 facilitates acquisition of L2, others strictly separate languages for L2 development but he does state that explicit language objectives must be included in the content lessons if language learning is to occur (2005: 19).

When the child engages in language-using experiences across a variety of situations, their language resources can be used and transferred to an ever-increasing range of contexts. When the language is used repeatedly across a wide variety of physical and language contexts, the phrases and words are internalised and contextualised by the child (Cameron, 2001: 51). Genesee is of the opinion that CLIL is good for ELLs (2008). He says that it takes advantage of children's natural language learning abilities because of the learning environment that is created, because it promotes the acquisition of authentic language proficiency and because it is pedagogically efficient. He does urge caution, however, as solely content-based instruction (CBI) may not be optimal, and children do not always master the language. He also notes that immersion students have a significant



gap between their grammatical (CALP) and communicative competence (BICS). Corson (2001: 121) similarly warns that teachers can be over-optimistic about minority language students' ability because while they can often participate in a relaxed informal conversation (BICS), this ability may not match up with their academic language (CALP). As well as discrete language arts instruction, the CLIL approach can still be used to enhance language development during CBI, by focussing on form, balanced with a focus on function. Genesee (2008) recommends that teachers include language as a content objective if necessary, as well as other content. The Canadian system, similarly to the Irish system, discourages corrective feedback during the communicative phase of a lesson.

### **3.3.2 Instructional Practices**

In terms of instructional practices, many of the methodologies and practices that are used with first language learners may also be of benefit to language-minority students. The main methodology highlighted in the *EAL Guidelines* (NCCA, 2006) is collaborative learning, but there are also references to engaging with the writing process (including teacher modelling), and 'Do, Talk, Record', an approach which is particularly useful outside the classroom on field trips. Total Physical Response (TPR) is also highlighted as a strategy which is of particular use where children are going through the receptive phase of language learning. Newcomer children should also be given opportunities for greater engagement with the curriculum, by using the target language in realistic situations. This is the position adopted in the *Intercultural Guidelines*. Their recommendation is that

it is important that teachers would present material that is not only cognitively demanding but also context embedded. This includes ensuring that stories and instructions are accompanied by actions and visual aids that provide a context for understanding what is taught (2005b: 165).

Long (2002) supports this in saying that "teachers must give a clear context for their lessons in order to engage EAL pupils" (Flynn, 2007: 179).

According to Grant (1995), cooperative learning approaches are used widely in classroom setting with younger learners. Kirk describes it as follows: "Co-operative learning is the

instructional use of small groups so that students work together towards a group goal to maximise their own and each other's learning" (Kirk, 2005: 7). She goes on to say that

A co-operative group may be defined as two or more individuals in face-to-face interaction, each aware of his/ her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals" (ibid., 7).

According to Grant, cooperative grouping helps language minority students by

- allowing the students to hear and produce English in a nonthreatening secure environment;
- creating a supportive climate for children to develop friendships with other children who speak different languages;
- creating an atmosphere where children can better understand assignments and adjust to the culture of the school;
- helping students to raise their self-esteem because teachers create opportunities for them to assume authority in group situations and learn to be active participants who learn from their peers (1995: 13)

These guidelines are echoed in the NCCA curricular documents. For example, exemplars in the *EAL Guidelines* (NCCA, 2006) recommend the use of collaborative learning in similar-ability groups, mixed-ability groups and using the jigsaw technique. The *Primary School Curriculum* notes that working collaboratively "provides learning opportunities that have particular advantages" (1999a: 17). As well as cognitive benefits, the children gain an appreciation of working with others and in engaging in the conventions of group work such as turn taking and listening, and responding to others. According to Mercer (2000: 130), "newcomers to communities may need to be 'apprenticed' to experienced 'experts' to become able to speak the discourse". One way of doing this is by pairing students up to work together. According to Meier:

The small-group format can facilitate social, language, and literacy collaboration between English-language learners and native speakers of varied Englishes. These are often instances of peer-to-peer language and literacy scaffolding in which children themselves further one another's learning in developmentally and culturally responsive ways (2004: 110).

Meier gives the example of two children in kindergarten, one an English-language learner and the other a speaker of Standard English and African-American English, who enjoy working side-by-side and collaborating on writing, drawing and dictation. Meier says that this type of collaboration "builds social and intellectual bridges between English-language learners and speakers of varied Englishes" (2004: 111). This type of language apprenticeship may occur naturally or may need to be organised formally in the

classroom. Swain's examination of collaborative dialogue between experts and novices also highlights the importance of engaging students in collaborative work, where the language focus is on meaning and not on form (2000: 112).

According to the NCCA (2006: 9-10), the teacher can help to develop the child's L2 and engagement with the curriculum by:

- using gestures such as pointing and miming to illustrate actions and activities
- using visual cues such as photographs, posters and pictures to support oral interactions
- creating a text-rich environment by displaying flashcards with phrases commonly used by teachers and children
- providing the child with words and phrases that she can use to look for clarification
- differentiating texts that contain complex sentences and ideas
- enabling the child to use dictionary skills where appropriate, whether with commercially produced dictionaries or dictionaries created by themselves
- recording new words or word groups on flip charts and posters
- encouraging and designating time for independent and guided reading
- engaging with the child about the writing process, in particular the correction of errors.

Cummins (2008) urges practitioners not to simply aim for effectiveness in teaching, but to aim for inspirational teaching. Inspirational teaching according to him involves children who are academically engaged and intrinsically motivated, generating knowledge and producing literature and art and encouraged to share intellectual work. He makes the following suggestions for on a unit on social studies:

- Pin different colours on a world map to show where children or parents were born using Google Earth on Interactive Whiteboard
- Language surveys similar to the European Language Portfolio
- Class report on languages spoken within the class providing opportunities for dual language work

- Poster or presentation on various aspects of the country of origin without over-generalizing
- Looking at the orthographies of different languages
- Opportunities for multilingual web-publishing

One teacher in Skilton-Sylvester's study uses appropriate strategies such as asking the students with the most advanced English ability to translate for the rest of the class and alternating between pair work and large-group discussion to allow students more opportunities for participation, as well as incorporating the students' experiences in class work (2003: 15). Many of the strategies outlined could also be modified as appropriate and applied in the Junior Infant classroom by mainstream teachers to support their work.

### **3.3.3 Using the L1 as a resource**

Cummins (2008) refers to Lisa Leoni, a vice principal in a school in Toronto where approximately 80% of the students come from immigrant Pakistani families and speak Urdu at home, among other languages. According to Leoni "Teachers at schools with a lot of migrants could use the pupils' knowledge in their mother tongue far more often in order to integrate them". She sees their additional languages as a cognitive tool and as enrichment, just as Cummins recommends, rather than as a hindrance. Leoni's strategy is to create identity texts, which are often stories created by the children themselves in the L1 and translated into the L2 as a language awareness exercise. These help the students to learn English incidentally, and through the mother tongue. One child, Tomer, referred to beginning to learn through English as 'like beginning as a baby', but that the teacher had allowed him to work in his home language so that he wouldn't be sitting on his hands doing nothing! Another child reported that she had previously felt like the 'colouring person', and when she was allowed to use her home language to learn English in a communicative manner, she could show her real self and became 'not just a colouring person'. These dual language books are also referred to in Baker (2006: 336) and are a new concept in the Irish context although some extensive work has been done by McDaid in exploring their relevance to newcomer children.

White, Fletcher and Fletcher-Campbell (2006) collated a report on a pilot project in the UK, with the aim of increasing primary teachers' confidence and expertise in meeting the needs of bilingual learners. The work of this pilot programme focussed on advanced bilingual learners, defined by Ofsted (2005) as follows:

pupils who have had all or most of their school education in the UK and whose oral proficiency in English is usually indistinguishable from that of pupils with English as a first language but whose writing may still show distinctive features related to their language background. (cited in White, Lewis and Fletcher-Campbell, 2006: 2)

One of the methods proposed by the consultants assisting mainstream teachers was that of speaking frames and guided talk, and the report showed that teachers had become more aware of the need for modelling and scaffolding for EAL learners, while recognising the importance of using structured sentences and rephrasing where necessary to aid comprehension (White et al., 2006: 19). The pilot also enhanced teachers' understanding of the importance of using first languages to aid comprehension. In schools where the first language was being used successfully, teachers noticed an improvement in confidence and achievement among the pupils. However, many classroom teachers didn't feel comfortable using the first language unless their bilingual teaching assistants were present (White et al., 2006: 21). Some of the conditions which inhibited the use of the first language were teachers' lack of confidence in using L1, teachers' lack of understanding of the importance of L1, a lack of whole school commitment to the promotion of L1s, a lack of resources (for employing teaching assistants, for example), parental resistance to the use of L1 in school, and finding it difficult to prioritise, where a number of L1s were present in the classroom (White et al., 2006: 22).

In the area of developing home-school links, one example was that of nursery staff inviting parents in to read aloud to children in their L1 (Kenner, 2000). This would also be of relevance to children in Junior Infants in Irish primary schools. Hickey notes that "allowing children to work in same-language or same-ethnic groupings brings social and cognitive advantages, as well as self-empowerment", but that what often tends to happen

is that children speaking LOTE are spread out in order to provide diversity and serve as “cultural carriers” (2001: 467). Garcia also highlights the home language as a most important tool to contextualize instruction (2009: 332).

### **3.3.4 Aistear**

*Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was introduced in 2009 and therefore had not been implemented prior to or during data collection for the present study. However, as the new Irish curriculum framework for children from birth to six years it is intended for use in all early childhood settings in Ireland including the junior classes of primary schools and can complement the Primary School Curriculum in those situations. While recommendations are given for three age groups of babies, toddlers and young children, only the advice given for young children will be presented here. It is of note to see that with Communication and Language is one of its principles, the home language is referred to several times. Practitioners are advised to reassure parents that that it is important for children to maintain their home language and that children can learn English and/or Irish as well as keeping their home language (p. 12).

Within the theme of ‘Identity and belonging’ adults are advised to create a language environment that reflects the languages of all the children and adults in the setting by labelling objects and resources pictorially and using different languages (e.g. areas of the room, coat hangers etc.), by inviting children with EAL to teach their peers words in their L1 and by displaying these key words and phrases, and by using the correct spelling and pronunciation of children’s names (p. 31). These references to the child’s environment are also recommended in the *Primary School Curriculum* and form part of creating a print-rich environment.

Two of the learning goals within the theme of ‘Communicating’ are that children would become proficient users of at least one language and have an awareness and appreciation of other languages and that they would have positive attitudes towards their home language, and know that they can use different languages to communicate with different

people and in different situations (p.35). All of these point to developing language awareness among young children, something which is recommended in *Curaclam na Gaeilge* (1999).

It is recommended that the adult supports young children in developing their language by modelling good use of language while providing children with lots of opportunities for speaking and listening, which is considered especially important for children learning EAL or Irish as an additional language (p. 39) and therefore has particular relevance to the current study.

### **3.3.5 Assessment**

Tabors identifies three factors which have been proposed as making a difference in SLA – an aptitude factor, a social factor and a psychological factor, all of which must be taken into consideration when assessing the progress that an individual child is making (2008: 13). Bialystok notes that children’s experiences in two or more different languages would shape the emerging system in each language because of “different kinds of input, different conditions of learning and different communicative needs” (2001: 35).

The main tool provided to Language Support teachers and mainstream class teachers for assessing the language acquisition skills of children with EAL is the *European Language Portfolio Primary: Learning the language of the host community* (2004 – hereafter referred to as the ELP). It was designed by IILT for use in English language support in primary schools throughout Ireland and is intended for pupils from first class upwards<sup>18</sup>. The purpose of this particular ELP is to support children whose mother tongue is not English in order that they can meet the challenge of learning English to participate fully in mainstream education. It demonstrates and highlights individual achievement and success and, as a result, “helps promote self-confident and self-directed learners” (IILT, 2004b: 2). It has both a reporting and a pedagogical function, according to Little and

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<sup>18</sup> This is due to the fact that it involves basic literacy skills. However for the purposes of the current research in Junior Infants the literacy skills were omitted.

Lazenby Simpson (2004: 94), which means that it acts as “a cumulative record of language learning process and achievement” as well as encouraging learner autonomy and self-reflection among learners. This ELP follows the model outlined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001 – hereafter referred to as CEF). McNamara says that the influence of the CEF is being felt throughout all settings where language teaching is carried out in Europe and that this type of framework is necessary to unify the understanding of language proficiency in Europe (2004: 773). The CEF provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications and is being increasingly used in the reform of national curricula<sup>19</sup>. It is a most important tool across Europe in setting up systems of validation of language competences and is available in 35 different languages.

Each version of the ELP derived from the CEF, this version included, includes three parts: a language passport, where the child expresses his or her linguistic identity; a language biography, which contains themed checklists as simplified versions of the English language proficiency benchmarks; and the dossier, an unrestricted part of the ELP where the child can file and keep their work. The language biography contains statements that suggest a task or activity that the child should carry out so that he or she can then colour the relevant symbol to indicate that this has been achieved either with or without the help of the teacher (IILT, 2004b: 4). Language is self-assessed under five headings – Listening, Spoken Production, Spoken Interaction, Reading and Writing. Common reference levels are based on positive statements of what a learner can do at each level. This type of positive self-assessment is instrumental in helping all learners to see that they can attain language goals and is of particular importance to learners at the lowest level<sup>20</sup>. The global benchmarks of communicative proficiency are divided into six levels in the CEF, ranging from A1 as the lowest level to C2 as the highest level. The relevant benchmarks for this ELP at primary level are A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage) and B1 (Threshold). The authors of the ELP state that the reason for this is that the full range of six benchmarks cover the full trajectory of language learning ranging from basic

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp) Accessed 07.07.11

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/cef/cefguide.pdf> Accessed 07.07.11



survival skills to advanced proficiency, which was more than was needed to assess children in primary schools (Little and Lazenby Simpson, 2004: 93). Each benchmark is further subdivided into ‘with a lot of help’, ‘with a little help’ and ‘with no help’, to help the children self-assess more concretely. Baetens Beardsmore notes that the ELP has been received favourably by pupils and teachers, in particular younger children as they involved their families in drawing up their language passport (2009: 202). The CEF upon which the ELP is based is noted for being teacher-friendly and accessible as well as having a positive impact on stated learning outcomes and having a favourable influence on classroom assessment (Little, 2007). One criticism which has implications for the present study is that it can be difficult for teachers to determine and agree on which types of tasks are at, for example, B1 or B2 level and this can similarly present a difficulty for learners engaged in self-assessment (Alderson, 2007). Alderson (2007) also notes that while the CEF is based on extensive research in SLA and language testing, it needs to be validated further by verifying test data with test corpus data to ensure that a student’s progression from one level to another is being monitored effectively and appropriately.

### **3.3.6 Teacher Education**

In the United Kingdom, the main tool for teaching EAL to pupils since 1998 has been the *National Literacy Strategy’s Framework for Teaching* (Flynn, 2007: 177). Concerns have been voiced about the underachievement of pupils with EAL, according to Flynn (2007: 178). Among those cited by the author are; the “lack of specialist teachers with sufficient understanding of how to develop literacy skills in pupils with EAL”; poor teacher expectation of performance of pupils from all minority or disadvantaged social and ethnic backgrounds; too much variation of funding and type of instruction available for supporting EAL at schools nationwide. However, praise has also been given to some schools delivering EAL. For example, some schools with particularly high levels (over 50%) of EAL pupils have obtained better results than those schools in less challenging circumstances (Flynn, 2007: 178). She investigated and identified the core strengths in teachers for whom EAL pupils are the majority. They met the needs of their EAL pupils

by putting learning into context, providing opportunities for talk, and modelling English in spoken and written form.

Therefore, a pedagogical concern highlighted is the area of teacher education. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is of paramount importance, as is Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Grant (1995: 3) notes that teachers who have not received special training may ‘... mistake a lack of a language skill for low intellectual capacity’. Skilton-Sylvester points to the importance of “teacher professional development that brings together theory and practice in bilingual and English-language education to show the value of the native language in the classroom” (Skilton-Sylvester, 2003: 22). The following point again highlights the importance of recognising the role of the mainstream class teacher as the teacher with primary responsibility for the education of all children under his/ her care, rather than the Language Support teacher. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002: 3) refer to the fact that many LEP students in the United States are “... taught by regular classroom teachers who may or may not have the support of a language specialist”, and that many classroom teachers have little or no specialized training in the area. The same authors also mention that teachers are often unaware of LEP students’ “... linguistic levels, cultural diversity and learning styles” (ibid.). Grant refers to the fact that in 1980, 1 in 17 teachers in the US had any pre-service or in-service training in teaching second language learners, but that regardless of training or certification all teachers need to establish procedures for “...implementing frameworks of culture” into their classrooms (1995: 11).

Teacher education in Ireland takes the form of a Bachelor of Education degree course of three or four years duration. Currently as part of the B.Ed. ‘Education’ covers a major part of the degree whereas another academic subject is compulsory as a minor subject. In the five Colleges of Education, Irish is a compulsory subject for all undergraduate teachers either as an academic or professional area of study. French is offered as an academic subject as part of the B.Ed. in the two largest Colleges of Education while only one, Mary Immaculate College (MIC), offers students a choice between French and German. Other academic subjects offered in the two largest colleges include Philosophy,

Theology, Mathematics, English, Geography and History. It is also possible to become a primary school teacher by completing a Graduate Diploma in Education as a postgraduate student. In this case, the eighteen month long programme is focussed solely on Education Studies. Having completed either programme, a teacher is qualified to teach in any primary school in Ireland. A wide variety of postgraduate courses in Education are available as part of a teacher's CPD. In-service training is generally provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers, funded by the DES, although some in-service training is available privately. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in week-long summer courses approved by the DES to continue their CPD and the network of education centres provide a variety of courses for teachers to attend during the school year.

Areas studied in ITE in one particular college (Mary Immaculate College) include teaching methodologies of all subjects in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) along with Educational Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education and History of Education. Foundation studies including Education Methodology and Microteaching are included in the first semester and Teaching Practice forms a large component of the degree course. In the final semester of the degree programme students have the opportunity to take a specialist course as an elective module. In any given year in MIC, up to twenty electives are on offer, of which a student may choose one. Areas studied include SESE, Visual Art, Drama Education, DICE, Modern Language Pedagogy, Religious Education and Physical Education. These electives vary from year to year depending on numbers and staff availability. ITE follows a similar pattern in the other Colleges of Education although there are some differences between electives and other subjects.

Pre-service education and in-service education tailored to the inclusion of children with EAL does not need to be limited to language education or language teaching methodologies, although these would certainly be of benefit. An awareness of issues around DICE would also be of benefit to teachers, particularly in light of the recommendations in the *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b). The types of topics

recommended for teachers at pre-service level include information about multicultural education, information on issues in SLA and bilingual education, culturally responsive instruction, home-school collaboration, behaviour management and effective intervention strategies (Rhodes, Ochoa and Ortiz, 2005: 37). The NCCA's strategic plan 2009-2011 sees teachers as key agents of change. According to the NCCA, most models of CPD "place teachers at the receiving end of policy changes generated at national level", thereby placing them as those most responsible for implementing pre-existing policy changes rather than as those engaged with the process of engaging with policy changes. However, it is acknowledged in the discussion paper supporting the strategic plan that real educational change happens through the interactions and relationships between teachers and school management with the learner.

This will have implications for the Irish classroom context and the discussion of teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance in the final section of this chapter.

### **3.4 Teachers' Attitudes towards Home Language Maintenance**

Cummins (2008) asserts that the overt and implicit messages received by newcomer children from their teachers and whole school community affect the degree of academic engagement. In an Irish context, *Aistear* advises that "Positive messages about their families, backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and languages help children to develop pride in who they are" (2009: 25). Sook Lee and Oxelson argue that teachers' recognition of the importance of heritage language maintenance is crucial to the child's holistic development. However, their study shows that "in general teachers did not see a role for themselves and schools in the heritage language maintenance process of their students" (2006: 468). Among the main findings was that teachers with proficiency in a second language were more sensitive to issues around diversity. One consideration in this study is whether or not to consider Irish as a second language for teachers, as it could be argued that Irish is an additional L1 for teachers in Ireland. For the purposes of this study, it will be considered that additional languages of teachers are outside of English and Irish.

Nieto suggests that teachers should embrace multilingualism and multiculturalism in their personal lives because “if they remain monocultural in outlook, their words may sound hollow to their students” (2002: 218). She refers to Bill Dunn’s experience of formally learning Spanish as a teacher of a strong Puerto Rican population, and how he learned first-hand what his students were going through as learners (Nieto, 2002: 224). The NCCA also attests to strong research evidence the decision to join the teaching profession is often a very personal one, involving intentions to “contribute to the lives of children and young people, to ‘make a difference’ through the transformative power of education” (2009: 17) and highlights the essential connection between the personal and the professional in the lives of teachers. In a similar vein, Grant refers to Cazden’s recommendation of 1986 to encourage “... teachers to become sociolinguistically knowledgeable so that they will be more empathetic...” (1995: 11), and therefore not discouraging of the use of the pupils’ home languages. Willems regards the power of learning foreign languages as a process that “opens up the riches of other ways of looking at the world and human communication” (2002: 19). All of these point to the necessity for teachers who continually engage with children with EAL to embrace interculturalism through the learning of additional languages.

Nieto points to the importance of teachers adopting an additive perspective concerning bilingualism, and refers to the research of Fránquiz and de la luz Reyes (1998) which found that teachers do not have to be fluent in the HL of their students to support their use in the classroom, but simply need to encourage their knowledge as resources for learning (2002: 95). This has particular relevance to the Irish situation due to the presence of multiple languages in one classroom, as happens in many cases.

Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) also found that strong attitudes were present among teachers regarding the perception that HL maintenance is the responsibility of the parents, not of the school or the teacher, particularly among teachers with no training in ESL. Nieto (2002: 206) highlights the importance of teacher education programs in helping teachers to develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards their LEP students. Nieto (2002: 218) calls for teachers to build on the linguistic and cultural knowledge of their

students, and identify and include the perspectives and experiences of their students and families in the classroom in order to critically evaluate their biases and ideologies (ibid.). Most importantly, she advises that “Teaching language minority students successfully means above all changing one’s attitudes towards the students, their languages and cultures, and their communities” (Nieto, 2002: 93). The NCCA acknowledges that professional support for teachers in the process of change should attend not only to professional needs but also “those aspects of personal development that can have a spin-off professionally” (2009: 17). It has already been mentioned that teacher education can have a major impact on classroom practices and so teacher education must take changes into consideration.

Cummins (2008) and Nieto (2002: 219) also assert that it is unethical for educators to suggest to parents to speak English at home, as this deprives the child of opportunities to develop their bilingualism. According to Jeon (2008: 62) “The negative influence of English-only schooling on the maintenance of heritage languages is well documented among other language minority groups”. Skilton-Sylvester says that student LHRs are framed by teachers and cites examples of teachers making Khmer ‘illegal’ in their classrooms and even approaching immigrants in the streets to tell them to speak English (2003: 9). Of ten teachers interviewed, only one of them was unique in seeing the L1 as a potential resource for students. Another teacher discourages the use of Khmer, but in her words “not in an unfriendly way – that they’re all here to practice English and that it isn’t really polite to be using Cambodian because not everybody understands it (Skilton-Sylvester, 2003: 18). The teachers in the school see it as their job to prepare the students for success in mainstream classes and that they do not need Khmer at school (Skilton-Sylvester, 2003: 20).

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002: 10-11) have found that one factor that appears to be affected when LEP students are mainstreamed is their self-esteem. In an educational environment where English is the only language of instruction, Carrasquillo and Rodriguez find that “...teachers may ignore the students due to lack of ability on the part of the teacher to communicate with them” (2002: 10). If students feel that they are not

part of the instructional setting, as the anecdote about Tomer and the ‘colouring person’ in Section 3.3.3 illustrate, their self-image may be negatively affected. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez refer to a study by Carrasquillo and London (1993), where the following teachers’ behaviours were found to have significant effects on the self-esteem and social development of language minority students:

- the amount of respectful, accepting and concerned treatment students received from teachers;
- The provision for opportunities for the modification of experiences that accord with values and aspirations;
- The manner in which teachers respond to students’ queries or remarks (2002: 10-11)

Howard highlights culturally responsive teaching as critical to engaging with diverse student populations in schools (2006: 132). This involves the teacher employing a constructivist approach which uses the “students’ personal and cultural knowledge as the basis of inquiry in the classroom”. His achievement triangle links knowledge of self, knowledge of students and knowledge of practice and leads to a teacher’s passion for equity intersecting with cultural competence (2006: 133). While L1 is not identified by Howard as a part of this, I see language as an inherent part of culturally responsive teaching as language is such an inextricable part of culture. Barbour, Barbour and Scully also consider that teachers have a responsibility to develop the skills to navigate and communicate effectively across cultures (1997: 319) and also that children tend to internalise positive and negative attitudes transmitted by significant others in their environment, such as teachers. This can then result in a negative impact on the child’s attitudes and motivation (Higgins, 2008: 65).

Cummins contends that “...the power relations that exist within classrooms determine the extent to which students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program and constitute a significant predictor of academic success” (1986: 36). A lack of policies and practices in schools around the issue of HL maintenance were found by Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) to be hindering teachers in supporting the students, as well as the lack of time available to what was seen as something extra-curricular. Corson, in a discussion of teacher acceptance of non-standard language varieties, points to teacher

education as a location for more explicit discussions of power and social justice (2001: 97).

### **3.5 Summary**

The above was an exploration of issues around SLA including sociocultural theory, input and interaction, formulaic language, early language learning and interlanguage, as well as pedagogical issues around supporting children with EAL and an examination of the relevance of teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance to these pedagogical concerns.

- While bearing in mind the importance of providing comprehensible input and facilitating a child going through the silent period teachers also need to provide plenty of opportunities for L2 learners to experiment and play with language.
- Teachers need to consider carefully the best types of strategies for facilitating instructional conversations to develop language competence. These scaffolding techniques should consider not only interactional scaffolding but also environmental scaffolding.
- Many of the pedagogical strategies recommended for use including children with EAL in mainstream activities (e.g. pair work and TPR) are already an integral part of the curriculum but need to be included in thoughtful and relevant ways in order to include the child's L1 for the successful acquisition of L2s and as an inherent right. Language assessment is carried out with newcomer children by using a version of the ELP, particularly during Language Support sessions.
- Teachers have a huge influence on the way in which children think about and acquire language. It takes personal motivation to ensure that monocultural attitudes are left behind in favour of more progressive, plurilingual-oriented classroom practices. Many teachers find it difficult to see how they are responsible for the maintenance of their pupils' home languages.

Chapter Four will explore the research methods employed in this study.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

A mixed methods approach has been taken to examine the following research questions which look at a range of important issues around English as an Additional Language in the early years of the primary school.

- What are teachers' attitudes towards the importance of L1 maintenance among children with EAL?
- To what extent is L1 maintenance being supported by the whole school community?
- What are teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?
- What are teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?
- What types of scaffolding are evident in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL?

The methodology employed includes focus group interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation. Issues considered throughout the chapter for each of these methods include the purpose of and rationale for the use of each method, how each was administered and analysed, the sample and reliability and validity. Prior to the consideration of these issues, ethical issues in relation to the present study are addressed as well as describing in detail the overall research design and methodological approach taken.

#### **4.2 Approaches to Educational Research**

Byram and Feng (2004: 150) have categorized research in the 'sciences of education', including research into language acquisition, under three broad headings:

- Work which seeks to establish explanations in terms of cause and effect;
- Work which seeks to understand the experience of people involved in education;
- Work which attempts to create change.

It will be seen that the present research falls under the first two categories. Conclusions that will be drawn in Chapter Nine will outline possible attempts to create change but that is not the focus of the main body of this particular research.

As part of the present study aims to seek explanations in terms of cause and effect, it has been necessary to use a scientific approach in gathering some of the data. Oldroyd (1986) explains this scientific approach in terms of 'positivism'. Positivism refers to a belief held that all genuine knowledge is based on experience and can only be advanced by means of observation or experiment. Borg, Borg and Gall define positivism as "the epistemological doctrine that physical and social reality is independent of those who observe it, and that observations of this reality, if unbiased, constitute scientific knowledge" (1996: 766). It may be characterized "by its claim that science provides us with the clearest possible ideal of knowledge" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 9). Some of the key characteristics of science are as follows:

- Determinism – the belief that links between causes and events can be uncovered and understood, and that there is regularity about the way in which events are determined by circumstances;
- Empiricism – that the likelihood of a theory or hypothesis depends on the nature of the empirical evidence (data gathered) for its support;
- Parsimony – that principles and theories/ models should be explained in the most economical terms possible;
- Generality – that when observations of the particular are made, findings may be generalized to the world at large.

Positivism has been criticised by many, according to Cohen et al. (2000: 17), as reducing the perception of the world to that of a mechanism, and that of humans as determined and controlled. Naturalistic approaches may be employed as an alternative to positivistic

approaches, but these approaches conflict with those offered by positivism. Some of the distinguishing features of naturalistic approaches are as follows (Blumer, 1969; Cohen et al., 2000):

- People actively construct their social world, and are deliberate and creative in their actions;
- Situations are fluid and changing, rather than fixed and static;
- There can be many interpretations of events and situations;
- Reality is not easily quantified and contains many complex layers;
- Events and individuals are primarily non-generalisable.

While the views of both positivism and naturalism are conflicting, it is possible to apply some of the viewpoints of these opposing scientific stances to a piece of research. The positivistic approach lends itself to quantitative analysis, while the naturalistic approach lends itself to qualitative analysis. In some ways this piece of research is closer to the positivist paradigm as the use of the chosen methods brings with it an element of sampling and quantification (questionnaire), as well as the concept of immersing oneself in the setting for a sustained period and until the same features begin to emerge again and again, as with the focus group interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Holliday, 2007). While there is some reliance on the principles of positivism and postpositivism, the principles of naturalism hold sway in this study as some of the research (classroom observation) has been crafted to suit the particular setting at a particular time (Janesick, 2000).

There are limitations inherent to undertaking research about a diverse and multicultural population in my position as a product of European scholarship (Garcia, 2009) and as a 'White teacher' (Howard, 2006), in addition to all the cultural markers that go along with being an Irish citizen and English/ Irish bilingual. Throughout the research I have made every effort to act as a culturally competent professional and have sought to develop my own skills in the area of intercultural communication, bearing in mind that all research undertaken will be ideological and ethnocentric (Holliday, 2007). The challenge of empathising with teachers coming from a similar background as myself – products of

predominantly ‘White neighbourhoods’ and predominantly ‘White colleges of teacher education’ (Nieto, 1996) - yet at the same time probing their thoughts and critiquing traditional long-standing beliefs and values has been one that has led to some personal transformation (Howard, 2006). In order to do this, my actions have been approached on every occasion as a fresh phenomenon, trying to set aside my own judgements about the expected reality and holding up everything for scrutiny, as advised by Holliday (2007).

I therefore take the postmodern position that as a researcher, I bring ideological and cultural influences to the research process (Holliday, 2007: 19). There is also a place for powerful, personal authorship as a part of this postmodern break with post-positivism (Holliday, 2007: 120), something which will be embraced throughout the study where appropriate. There is no pretence to escape subjectivity, and this subjectivity will be accounted for wherever possible (Holliday, 2007: 139).

#### **4.2.1 Research Design**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been utilised in order to gather data for this piece of research. Quantitative research can involve descriptive, causal-comparative and correlational research designs, and often requires a statistical analysis (Borg et al., 1996: 371). The descriptive method has been used as a major part of this research in terms of describing characteristics of the particular sample of individual schools surveyed. Correlational research, that is, “a type of investigation that seeks to discover the direction and magnitude of the relationship among variables through the use of correlational statistics” (Borg et al., 1996: 756) has been employed as part of questionnaire analysis.

Edwards (2001: 117) reminds us that qualitative research methods give us “access to the web of interactions between, for example, child, family, early childhood services and the community”, which approximates the intentions for the present study.

The intention to use more than one method of research in gathering data is often referred to as triangulation. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, triangulation may be defined as the "...use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour." (2000: 112). Borg et al. define it as "the use of multiple data-collection methods, data sources, [...] as evidence of qualitative research findings". Denzin (1970) outlines several types of triangulation. Methodological triangulation applies to this research as there have been different methods used on the same object of study. Space triangulation has also been applied throughout the research, as all relevant school types across the country were included in the sample of the teacher questionnaire. However, this three-stage research design was not used as a method of triangulation "in the sense of using one part of the study simply to check the validity of the other part" (Mason, 1994: 104). More specifically, the three-stage design was intended to enhance the validity of the overall analysis by producing data on different aspects of child language acquisition in order to build up a "rounded and credible overall picture" (ibid.)

In seeking to embrace mixed methods as an approach to this piece of multi-strategy research (Bryman, 2004: 452), I also acknowledge the argument that is offered by some researchers that "research methods are ineluctably rooted in epistemological and ontological commitments". In my research different research methods are capable of being put to a use in a wide variety of tasks and this entails making decisions about "which kinds of research question are best answered using a quantitative method and which by a qualitative method and about how best to interweave the different elements" (Bryman, 2004: 462). In the case of the current research, the quantitative method of questionnaire is more suited to gaining a macro perspective on the research questions, while focus groups and classroom observation are more effective in elaborating on the micro perspective offered by individual teachers and the first-hand experience of observing children interacting and producing utterances.

By using multiple methods of research, the results yielded have enabled the researcher to gain a higher level of confidence regarding validity of the research as a whole, having ensured that each method is carried out to the best of my ability as a researcher. Babbie

also notes that “the best study design uses more than one research method” (2007: 110) while Bryman cautions that “poorly conducted research will yield suspect findings no matter how many methods employed” (2004: 464).

#### **4.2.2 Ethical Issues**

It must be remembered that the questionnaire, according to Cohen et al. (2000: 245), is an intrusion into the life, professional or otherwise, of the respondent. Indeed, participating in focus group interviews and agreeing to being observed are also an intrusion into the life of the respondent. By agreeing to engage with any of these research methods, the respondent or participant has done the researcher a great favour. An application was made to the Research Ethics Committee within DIT<sup>21</sup> to examine an interview schedule for focus group interviews, questionnaire items and an outline of the proposed observation in March 2008. The application was approved on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 after supplementary information regarding classroom observation (a letter for the principal of the school where any prospective observation would be carried out) had been requested by the committee and subsequently submitted in April 2008.

Christians identifies four guidelines used by institutional review boards in developing codes of ethics; informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality and accuracy (2000: 138-139). Certain things must be made clear to the proposed respondents. These include the following: the guarantee of confidentiality, non-traceability and anonymity in the research; the guarantee that the research will not harm them or their position in any way; their rights to withdraw from the research at any stage (Creswell, 2007: 44; Cohen et al, 2000: 245). Guidelines issued by the DIT similarly advise that “all research and scholarship involving children under 18 years of age must be of a design that minimises predictable risk to the researcher and to the research subjects”<sup>22</sup>. This means that individuals must be informed about all aspects of the proposed research, that their

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.dit.ie/researchandenterprise/ethicsindit/> Accessed 15.02.10.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.dit.ie/researchandenterprise/researchatdit/researchsupportoffice/ethicsindit/content/guidelines/respectforhumans/> Accessed 15.02.10.

voluntary consent to participate must be secured, that personal information should be handled and stored confidentially and that information gathered must be used exclusively for the purposes of the research. Each participant in the classroom observation was given a pseudonym which is used throughout the study; therefore the class teacher, principal and each child mentioned are not traceable back to the school. Confidentiality regarding the questionnaire was explained in letters to both the class teacher (Appendix C) and school principal (Appendix D) and each respondent was asked to sign the questionnaire. For the focus group interviews, these issues were explained to each participant by the researcher along with an information sheet and each participant was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix A).

Felzman, Sixsmith, O'Higgins, Ní Chonachtaigh, and Nic Gabhainn (2010: 2) highlight the need for ensuring that all research with children is carried out to the highest standards, particularly in light of the substantial increase in research into the lives of children in recent years. The same authors refer to the issue of informed consent as being a particularly problematic one when it comes to conducting research into children (2010: 47) as, in this case, gathering observational data. In fieldwork such as the present study, it was difficult if not impossible to receive truly informed consent from the three children observed due to their young age and their speaking LOTE as a mother tongue. I supplied the school principal with a letter for the children's parents explaining my research intentions (Appendix G) and he assured me that he was happy with their consent which was given personally to him through school administration, something which is mentioned by Felzman et al. (2010: 66) as being seen by parents as an effective way of ensuring research carried out had been vetted by the school. The language used in the letter was worded in an effort to avoid the pitfall of not taking the needs of the parents into consideration, especially as the parents in question are from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Felzman et al., 2010: 58). In an effort to ensure that the children had some understanding of my role in the classroom, the whole class group was informed by the class teacher that I was there to help them out where possible, but that I was also there to learn from them. I supplied each child with a pictorial permission form (Appendix H) similar to that used by Cregan in her 2007 study.

Another aspect, which should be taken into consideration, is the issue of methodological rigour and fairness (Cohen et al., 2000: 246) i.e., that bias will be avoided and the assurance that the data collected will be treated truthfully and reliably. The reactions of the respondent must also be taken into consideration. In the case of the questionnaire, this implies that the researcher should ensure that questionnaire items are not offensive, intrusive, biased or inconsiderate. Every effort was made during the piloting phase of the questionnaire to ensure that this was the case.

### **4.3 Phase I: Focus Group Interviews**

In order to begin addressing some of the research questions, it was decided to conduct some focus group interviews with Junior and Senior Infant teachers in order to gather some preliminary data on the topic within an Irish context. In the following discussion of best practice in focus group interview design pertaining to this research, the following areas are to be explored:

- Purpose/ Rationale;
- Administration;
- Sampling;
- Reliability;
- Analysis.

Williams and Katz (2001) define focus groups broadly as a “small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristic, assembled by a moderator, who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain information about a particular issue”. According to Berg (2004: 123), the focus group can be defined as “an interview style for small groups.” Focus group interviews are either guided or unguided discussions which address a particular theme of relevance to the group and the researcher (ibid.: 123). Thomas (2008: 78) notes that there is some debate over whether focus groups should be distinguished from other types of group interviews. Focus group discussions are different from other types of group interviews as participation is emphasised, and interaction between group members is encouraged as a key factor in generating depth of discussion



(Berg, 2004; Thomas, 2008). In fact, the accent of the method is upon the joint construction of meaning (Bryman, 2004: 346). Thomas (2008: 79) draws from the literature available when outlining the core characteristics of focus groups:

- They are a research method devoted to data collection.
- They are a group of individuals selected by the researcher.
- They explicitly locate the interaction within a group discussion as the source of the research data.
- They allow for the exploration of not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way.
- They acknowledge the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection.

#### **4.3.1 Purpose/ Rationale**

According to Williams and Katz (2001), focus groups have the potential to generate data that may not come to light in individual interviews or survey research. Furthermore, focus groups can be of great value if trying to generate new hypotheses or simply enriching the results from other methods of data collection. Bryman notes that the process of understanding social phenomena is something that occurs in interaction and discussion with others, something which is more possible within a focus group situation rather than individual interviews (2004: 348).

The purpose of using focus groups within this particular research is primarily with their use as a preliminary method to help develop the content of questionnaires (Babbie, 2007: 309; Morgan, 2006 cited in Thomas, 2008: 82).

A full list of guiding questions is attached as Appendix B. Issues considered during focus group interviews included the following:

- Teachers' observations on the acquisition of English by newcomer children in their classrooms

- Teachers' observations on the acquisition of Irish by newcomer children in their classrooms
- Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the active maintenance of L1 by newcomer children
- The extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular their parents and parental support of the schools in question.
- The extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular with regard to whole school and in-class planning.
- The extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular with regard to pre-service and in-service training offered to teachers, resources available from government bodies and other resources made available by the school.

#### **4.3.2 Administration**

Focus groups require careful planning, just like any other research method. Einsiedel, Brown and Ross (1996) provide a step-by-step guide to conducting a focus group. The following outlines some of the practical suggestions offered:

- Focus on the research purpose
- Select a skilled moderator
- Design an effective interview guide
- Select and recruit appropriate participants
- Analyse and use the results.

Usually, a focus group consists of a small number of participants who are guided by a facilitator, otherwise known as a moderator. In this case the facilitator was also the researcher. The primary task of the moderator is to draw out information from the participants concerning topics of importance or relevance to the research investigation. The researcher must allow the space and time for interaction to happen among

participants, in order to generate considered and articulate answers and ideas (Thomas, 2008: 80). Questions for focus groups were generated from findings in the literature, while bearing in mind the central research questions. While moderating the focus group discussions, 'if and when the discussion veered away from central questions, this was facilitated in so far as was feasible' (Cregan, 2007: 47). Babbie (2007: 309) notes the difficulties which may be faced by the moderator in controlling the dynamic within the group and in resisting the tendency to overdirect the interview, thus bringing one's own views into play.

Each session was recorded using a digital voice recorder and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. It is extremely difficult to take notes during a focus group interview (Bryman, 2004: 349) but by transcribing the interviews soon after recordings took place (i.e. later the same afternoon) it was easier to take account of who was talking during the session and to examine more thoroughly what people said (Bryman, 2004: 330).

It should be noted that the focus group interviews were conducted in School A and School B in June 2008, just before the summer holidays, while the interviews were conducted in School C and School D in September 2008, very soon after the school year had commenced. This was not ideal and was due to difficulties in arranging suitable times for the focus group interviews in School C and School D in June 2008. This will have had some impact on the teachers' opinions and reactions to various issues. However, the majority of teachers interviewed had been teaching children with EAL for a number of years and therefore would have been basing their opinions on the entirety of their experience.

### **4.3.3 Sampling**

The rationale for identifying and using the particular settings in question as a data collection site were as follows (adapted from Berg, 2004: 32):

- *Entry or access is possible.* Use was made of convenience sampling. The data from the focus groups will not allow definitive findings to be generated,

according to Bryman (2004: 284), but may provide a springboard for further research. This was guided by initial telephone calls and emails to schools in two urban areas near where the researcher was working at the time using her professional experience. Principals were asked whether or not they would be agreeable to allowing infant teachers to participate in a focus group during the school day, but after the children had been collected.

- *The appropriate people are likely to be available.* Schools with a large enrolment were chosen as they were the most likely to have more than two infant teachers available for the focus group. Smaller schools were also contacted by telephone but no teachers within the areas outlined were available to participate.
- *There is a high probability that the study's focuses, processes, people, programs, interactions and structures that are part of the research question(s) will be available to the investigator.* As all of the participants are mainstream teachers of Junior or Senior infant classes, and therefore have had experience of integrating newcomer children to their classes, their experiences are of paramount relevance to the research.
- *The research can be conducted effectively by an individual or individuals during the data collection phase of the study.* The research was conducted by the author.

#### **4.3.4 Reliability**

As the participants were not chosen through rigorous, probability sampling methods, the participants did not statistically represent any particular population. However, the purpose of the study was to “explore rather than to describe or explain in any definitive sense” (Babbie, 2007: 309). Williams and Katz (2001) consider focus groups as a useful way “for promoting an empowering, action-oriented form of research in education”. While Berg (1995), cited in Williams and Katz (2001) notes that focus groups have traditionally been dismissed as part of the “vulgar world of marketing research”, researchers such as Barbour and Kitzinger (1998) stress that focus groups are becoming

an “established part of the methodological tool kit” within the social sciences. They also (1998) note that focus groups are unique in their explicit use of group interaction to produce data. The method of utilising focus groups is based on two fundamental assumptions, according to Williams and Katz (2001), as follows:

1. Individuals can provide a rich source of information about a topic.
2. Collective and individual responses encouraged by the focus group setting will generate material that differs from other methods.

Krueger and Casey (2000) suggest that focus groups tap into the multiple realities of people’s experiences and often provide researchers with insights they would not normally experience. It has also been suggested that research subjects are empowered as part of the research process. According to Williams and Katz (2001), this sense of empowerment comes from three sources:

1. being valued as experts
2. having the opportunity to work collaboratively with researchers and interact with other participants
3. having the experience of being able to speak in public and articulate their views.

Bryman (2004: 350) states that there seems to be a tendency for researchers to conduct between 12 and 15 focus group discussions for the purposes of a study. However, he refers to Calder’s proposal (1977) that “when the moderator reaches the point that he or she is able to anticipate fairly accurately what the next group is going to say, then there are probably enough groups already” (Bryman, 2004: 349). Having conducted four focus groups with teachers who generated similar responses, it was decided to terminate this form of data collection as the issues explored were to be examined further in other data collection methods and four was then deemed by the researcher to be an appropriate number of focus group interviews.

Berg (2004) recommends that approximately seven participants should be recruited for each focus group session. Bryman (2004: 351) offers a range of figures from between three and ten per group, and refers to Morgan’s recommendation (1998) that smaller

groups be recruited when participants are likely to have a lot to say about the topic in question. In the current study, each focus group included between three and five teachers. All teachers interviewed were female. This was not by design; however it does reflect the tendency of infant teachers to be female (as in Nic Craith and Fay, 2007: 214). Table 4.1 shows the number of teachers interviewed per school and per class.

**Table 4.1 Focus Group Interviews**

	Date Interviewed	Junior teachers	Infant	Senior teachers	Infant	Total
School A	24.06.08	4		0		4
School B	25.06.08	2		1		3
School C	03.09.08	4		1		5
School D	04.09.08	1		2		3
						15

The transcripts were randomly checked by my thesis supervisor, Dr. Máire Mhic Mhathúna, and found to be very accurate.

#### **4.3.5 Analysis**

According to Babbie (2007: 384), “the key process in the analysis of qualitative social research is *coding*” (his italics/ emphasis in original). Bryman’s recommendations regarding qualitative data analysis (2004: 408-409) were taken into consideration when analysing the four focus group interviews. Initially, each interview was read through after transcription without taking any notes or considering an interpretation. Each interview was read and re-read four or five times without taking any notes other than general notes about what struck me as being particularly significant. Having completed all four interviews, I engaged in open coding and began to take marginal notes about significant remarks, resulting in roughly fifteen different categories. This long-hand method began to generate an index of terms to help me interpret and theorize in relation to the data. Once this initial coding was complete, I reviewed the codes in order to reduce the number of categories by identifying connections between the codes and aligning them more closely to categories in the existing literature, thereby resulting in axial coding to identify the core concepts in the study (Babbie, 2007: 386). I also ensured the anonymity of the

schools and teachers in question by using a code for their identification e.g. SAT1 indicating School A, Teacher One or SDT3 indicating School D Teacher Three. Microsoft Word 2003 was used to cut and paste quotations into various categories, while always ensuring that I was able to identify the origins of the chunk of text.

#### **4.4 Phase II: Questionnaires**

In order to collect some larger-scale data on the research questions, questionnaires were sent to a total of 500 Junior and Senior Infant teachers nationwide during May 2009 (Appendix E). In the following discussion of best practice in questionnaire design pertaining to this research, the following areas are to be explored:

- Purpose/ rationale;
- Administration of questionnaires;
- Layout and Types of questionnaire items;
- Reliability and validity;
- Piloting;
- The Sample;
- Analysis of data.

The postal questionnaire is the most prominent form of the self-completion questionnaire (Bryman, 2004: 132) and offers some advantages to the researcher, particularly when combined with other research methods, as it is difficult to gain a sense of social processes in their natural settings (Babbie, 2007: 281). The questionnaire makes large samples feasible, they are useful in describing the characteristics of a large population and are flexible in terms of analysis (Babbie, 2007: 276).

#### **4.4.1 Purpose/ Rationale**

The purpose of the questionnaire was as follows:

- To profile the types of classrooms newcomer children are being taught in in terms of nominal data such as size, number of newcomer children, languages spoken within the class and school ethos.
- To examine the attitudes held by teachers towards L1 maintenance among newcomer children.
- To gain a profile of individual children in terms of their English language ability by the end of Junior Infants.
- To gain a profile of individual children in terms of their Irish language ability by the end of Junior Infants.

#### **4.4.2 Layout of questionnaire/ Types of questionnaire items**

Cohen et al. (2000: 258) inform us that the layout of the questionnaire is vitally important. It is essential that it looks easy, attractive and interesting to the respondents. De Vaus (2002: 123) reminds us that a postal survey such as this should be easy to follow and self-explanatory. Where a compressed layout is uninviting, a larger questionnaire with plenty of space looks more encouraging to respondents. Respondents should be informed of how much time should be needed when completing a questionnaire. By piloting same, the author estimated that 20 minutes should be adequate and included this information on the cover letter (Appendix C). The typeface should also be clear and large enough to read without straining. Arial font was used as this seemed to be the clearest to respondents during the piloting phase when a number of typefaces were tried out (see below, Section 4.4.5). When planning the overall design of the questionnaire, their recommendations were taken into consideration.

Clarity and presentation have an impact on the numbering of questions. The questionnaire was broken into sub-sections as outlined in Table 4.2 to facilitate this. Clear instructions were also given at the top of each page as to how to respond to questions – in all cases, circling the number beneath the choice of response was



encouraged. Verma and Mallick (1999: 121) suggest the use of boldening to draw the respondent's attention to significant features; therefore this was also employed throughout the questionnaire. Cohen et al. (2000: 259) suggest including a brief note at the end of a questionnaire in order to thank respondents for their participation and co-operation. A thank you note was therefore included to this end.

Oppenheim (1992: 115) states that the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire will need to be. Due to the large number in the sample size, a highly structured questionnaire was therefore needed in order to facilitate coding and analysis. Highly structured, closed questions were used throughout the main body of the questionnaire. These types of questions are very useful in generating frequencies of response, which are suitable for statistical treatment. They have also enabled comparisons to be made across groups in the sample. Types of questions to be used were dichotomous questions, multiple-choice closed questions and rating scales. Nominal data were gathered using dichotomous questions. These 'yes/no', 'male/female' types of questions facilitate coding and are of value in their own right but did not lend any depth to the research. In order to introduce more complexity to the answers, nominal, categorical multiple-choice questions were of use in certain areas. The observations that can be made from these types of questions have no inherent order of importance.

One of the difficulties with multiple-choice questions as outlined by Cohen et al. (2000: 251) is that words are inherently ambiguous and different respondents may interpret the same words differently. There is no guarantee that respondents will interpret the intended meaning. The majority of the questionnaire was based on both multiple-choice questions and a semantic differential scale, similar to the Likert rating scale. In semantic differential scaling the respondent is not asked to decide whether he agrees or disagrees with an item, but rather to choose between several response categories, indicating various strengths of agreement and disagreement with an adjective, for example, valuable/valueless, good/bad, and so on (Cohen et al., 2000: 253). These scales have been of particular use in investigating teachers' attitudes towards the importance of L1 maintenance, for example. The wider the scale, the more allowance there is for subtlety

on behalf of respondents, but the more difficult it becomes to analyze the data. The table below outlines the types of questions asked in the questionnaire.

**Table 4.2**      *Layout of questionnaire - Types of Questionnaire Items*

<u>Section</u>	<i>Independent Variables</i>	<u>Question Type</u>
<b>Section A – Class, Teacher and Language Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school type (category, denomination if applicable, gender category)</li> <li>- teacher gender &amp; age</li> <li>- teaching qualification</li> <li>- length of service</li> <li>- number of children in class</li> <li>- pre-service/ in-service training for EAL</li> <li>- Home languages spoken by children in class</li> <li>- Resources used when planning for EAL</li> <li>- Teacher attitude statements</li> </ul>	Nominal scales leading to categorical data Likert scale for Question 15
<b>Section B – Individual Pupil Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child age and place of birth/ time living in Ireland</li> <li>- Home language of child and literacy experiences</li> <li>- Language support</li> <li>- European Language Portfolio checklist for English language (Listening and Speaking)</li> <li>- Achievement of content objectives for Gaelige (Listening and Speaking)</li> </ul>	Nominal scales leading to categorical data
<b>Section C – Teacher’s personal attitude towards language(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal reactions to listed and unlisted languages</li> </ul>	Nominal scales leading to categorical data

#### **4.4.3 Administration of questionnaires**

The questionnaire was administered by post. Although this proved to be costly, it was deemed to be the only viable way in which to include a large enough sample in the research. All questionnaires were posted on the same date and addresses were typed, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2000: 262). According to the same authors, Monday or Tuesday are considered to be the best days for mailing questionnaires to schools, and so they were mailed on a Tuesday in May. The covering letter also served to introduce the researcher along with contact details and an invitation to contact the researcher if

clarification of details was needed, as recommended by Cohen et al (2000: 259). An SAE was enclosed for ease of return and respondents were given a return-by date. The questionnaire (Appendix E) was posted to a random sample of 500 schools on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Two letters were enclosed; one to the school principal (Appendix D), and another to the relevant teacher (Appendix C), with the questionnaire attached. A stamped addressed envelope was also included. Teachers were asked to return the questionnaire by Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> June, allowing ten working days for schools to respond.

#### **4.4.4 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy of data-gathering tools, according to Cohen et al. (2000: 117). Fraas (1983: 64) reminds us of the distinction between validity and reliability. He informs us “reliability refers to how accurately the test measures whatever it measures. Reliability does not deal with whether the test measures what it purports to measure. It deals only with the consistency of scores.” In other words, while validity is concerned with measuring the most relevant data, reliability depends on the correct analysis of these data.

Litwin (1995: 5) states that there will be some measure of error in any set of data collected. There are two types of error; random error and measurement error. Random error is the unpredictable error that occurs in all research, and the chances of a random error occurring are lowered by selecting a larger sample. While a large possible sample was surveyed, random error will have occurred as the return rate has not included the entire population. Measurement error refers to how well or poorly a particular instrument performs in a population. No instrument (e.g. a questionnaire or a test) is perfect, so one can expect some error to occur during the measurement process. Further reference will be made to this during the discussion of using Likert ordinal scales.

162 questionnaires were returned by the requested date, 42 of which were completed and 120 which had not been completed. 52 of these had notes attached stating that the school did not have any children in Junior Infants with EAL. Remaining schools who had not returned the questionnaire by that date were contacted by email or by phone between

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June and Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June. A further 57 valid questionnaires were returned, with 54 more questionnaires returned having not been completed. In total, 273 questionnaires were returned, bringing the total response rate for the questionnaire to 54.6%. Of these, 99 (36.3%) were valid. This brings the total percentage of returned valid questionnaires to 19.8%.

Of the 174 invalid questionnaires returned, 8 schools indicated that they were too busy to complete the questionnaire at that time. 166 schools indicated that they did not have any children in Junior Infants with EAL. A number of school principals contacted the researcher by phone to explain that they had no children with EAL in Junior Infants, although they did have children with EAL in other classes. Bryman acknowledges that one of the limitations of surveys by postal questionnaire is that they typically result in low response rates. The significance of a responses rate is that “unless it can be proven that those who do not participate do not differ from those that do, there is likely to be the risk of bias” (2004: 135). Many published articles report the results of studies that are well below the 50% return rate level and Bryman (*ibid.*) and Babbie (2007: 262) urge researchers to recognise and acknowledge low response rates.

This rather low return rate was predicted by the following census information. The census of 2006<sup>23</sup> shows that 10.1% of the population is classified as ‘non-Irish’. Of this, 12.6% are between 0-14 years. Of children aged between 0-4, 26% are from the UK and US, leaving 74% from other countries including EU countries, Africa and Asia. Of children aged between five and nine, 35.4% are from the UK and US, leaving 64.6% from other countries that may have languages other than English. Smyth et al. (2009: 45) estimate that ‘... out of a total school population of 476,600, there were 45,700 newcomer students, making up around 10 per cent of the total primary school population in September 2007. At primary level, over three-quarters of newcomers are non-English speaking’. It is also noted that primary schools tend to have either a high proportion of newcomers or none at all. “Almost one in ten primary schools has over 20 per cent newcomers” (Smyth et al., 2009: 45). The same report also found that disadvantaged

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<sup>23</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) Accessed 10.02.08.

schools were almost twice as likely to have newcomer students, and that Catholic schools were slightly less likely than non-Catholic schools to have newcomer children.

311 out of 3284 (slightly less than 10%) of Irish primary schools are designated disadvantaged. The results for this questionnaire show that 26.3% (n=26) of schools were designated disadvantaged. This corresponds with results from Smyth et al. (2009: 49). 84.7% (n=83) of schools surveyed were of Catholic denomination. Considering that 92% of schools in the Republic of Ireland are managed by the Catholic Church, this number corresponds with the findings of Smyth et al. (2009: 49), who also found that Catholic schools were slightly less likely than non-Catholic schools to have newcomer children. Considering that the largest group of multi-/ inter-denominational schools, Educate Together schools, consists of only 0.1% (n=56) of schools, a relatively large proportion 5.1% (n=5) of questionnaires were returned from this cohort of schools.

It should be noted that Smyth et al.'s data (2009) was relating to the entire school, whereas the current questionnaire focuses only on Junior Infant classes.

Research questions were restated at the start of the chapter. Hypotheses were not put forward; as to accept or reject a hypothesis involves testing for statistical significance. When a test of statistical significance is carried out, this highly increases the measure of reliability. "When you statistically test a hypothesis, you assume that the null hypothesis correctly describes the state of affairs" (Norusis, 2000: 209). The aim of the questionnaire would then be either to accept or reject the null hypothesis. However, this was not the aim of this questionnaire. Teacher observations are valuable and worthwhile, but as many different teachers were involved with the observations, the whole population may not have interpreted questions in the same manner. The results gained from the questionnaire, therefore, may not be statistically reliable, but are certainly of interest in the area of language acquisition in Ireland.

Another point for consideration is that of the assessment teachers were asked to engage in when profiling one child linguistically in Section B. The ELP benchmarks, as outlined in

Chapter Three, were used as an assessment tool as part of the questionnaire and while bearing in mind that most teachers would not have received any training in the use of this tool it was decided not to use the benchmarks of A1, A2, B1 etc but rather to offer the textual description of language competencies at each level. This would have allowed teachers to use their professional judgement to base their profiling of the children on other assessment tools such as teacher observation and criterion-referenced tests.

#### **4.4.5 Piloting**

“One of the most important stages in the development of a new survey instrument involves trying it out on a small sample population” (Litwin, 1995: 60). The questionnaire was piloted on a group of postgraduate students in education during a lecture in research methodology given by the researcher. Two typographical mistakes were identified, which were amended immediately. One overlapping response set was identified which may have led to ambiguous data and this was duly corrected. The amended questionnaire was then piloted on a group of ten infant teachers during an in-service day. The structure of some questions was changed due to complicated word order and some questions were left out, on their recommendation. Suggestions on questionnaire layout and question order were given and the questionnaire was duly amended. The pilot ensured that the final version contained a range of questions that would be useful to the research, and also that the layout of the questionnaire would be attractive to those participating.

#### **4.4.6 The Sample**

At the time of administering the questionnaire, there were 3291 primary schools listed on the website of the DES ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). It was decided to undertake simple random sampling of the whole population. Had it been possible to infer from the categories and from CSO data which schools were more likely to have children with EAL in Junior Infants, use would have been made of stratified random sampling. However, the only criteria available from the DES included county, Gaeltacht type and denomination. Statistics available from the CSO include too broad of an age range to stratify as needed.

It was decided to administer questionnaires to a large sample of 500 (approximately 15% of the population). The absolute size of the sample, therefore, has been likely to decrease sampling error, according to Bryman (2004: 97) According to Cohen et al. (2007: 103), the larger the sample, the greater the chance of its being representative. Furthermore, it was decided to administer the questionnaire to a nationwide sample without distinguishing between urban and rural schools in order to avoid the possibility of focussing on a particular area which may have a higher or lower proportion of newcomer children than the average. The administration of a large nationwide sample was therefore an attempt to cast the net as wide as possible in the absence of data regarding the location of newcomer children in Junior Infants at that time.

#### **4.4.7 Analysis of data**

The data were analysed using the computer software SPSS Version 11. Therefore, before the questionnaire was posted, each question was assigned a numerical code for ease and speed of entering data. Value labels were assigned to each number within the software. Having entered the responses to questions in SPSS, most responses were counted by using frequency tables and crosstabulations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A frequency table shows how many cases selected each of the responses to a question. It contains the number and percentage of the people who gave each response, as well as the number of cases for whom responses were not available. Other responses were counted by using the crosstabs procedure. A crosstabulation shows the numbers of cases that have particular combinations of values for two or more variables.

## **4.5 Phase III: Classroom observation**

In order to address the research question relating to the interactional modifications made by teachers in the mainstream classroom for supporting children with EAL in their L2 and L3 learning, it was decided to conduct classroom observation in a Junior Infant classroom over a period of three months. In the following discussion of best practice in classroom observation pertaining to this research, the following areas are to be explored:

- Purpose/ Rationale;
- Administration;
- Sampling;
- Reliability;
- Analysis.

According to Edwards (2001: 126), ‘cases are often referred to as units of analysis, the bounded systems which we explore in our study’. Case study research focuses on a particular interest in individual cases (Stake, 1994; Cregan, 2007). A case study can often provide a detailed snapshot of a system in action. In the case of the present study, case studies have been selected as examples of the ‘phenomena occurring more widely’ (Edwards, 2001: 126). The interpretive design of this particular case study seeks to present analytical descriptions based on observation and reflection of particular cases (Faltis, 1997; Cregan, 2007).

### **4.5.1 Purpose/ Rationale**

The interpretive design of this particular case study seeks to present analytical descriptions based on observation and reflection of particular cases (Faltis, 1997; Cregan, 2007). As well as focussing on the interactional modifications made by the teacher in supporting the children with EAL, It was decided to observe in detail the three children speaking only LOTE only i.e. no English at all prior to starting school and to document their language acquisition skills over the three month period. It was decided to observe these children as these were the type of children who had been profiled in the



questionnaire, and the type of children who had prompted much of the conversation during focus group interviews.

Therefore the main focus of classroom observation was to observe the types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with a significant number of children speaking EAL in a single-stream Junior Infant classroom.

#### **4.5.2 Sampling**

The school was identified by the researcher while engaged with supervision of Teaching Practice (TP) in May 2009. Through her position supervising TP in a wide variety of schools in the south of Ireland over a number of years, it had become apparent to the researcher which types of schools would be most conducive to conducting classroom observation to investigate the research question under investigation. Therefore, use was made of purposive sampling. Bryman (2004: 333) acknowledges that such sampling is strategic and attempts to establish coherence between research questions and sampling. When such a school was identified an appointment was made with the principal to discuss the possibility of conducting research in a Junior Infant classroom. Some of the criteria were as follows:

- That the class teacher be at least probated and preferably have at least three years experience of teaching any class level.
- That the class teacher be agreeable to being observed from the beginning of the academic year.
- That parents would be informed of the research being conducted.
- That there would be a relatively high proportion of children speaking LOTE in the classroom and at least one child speaking no English at all upon commencing school
- That the class be either single stream Junior Infants or at most Junior and Senior Infants combined.
- That it take no longer than thirty minutes to travel by car to the observation site due to teaching commitments of the researcher.

Five such schools were identified between January and May 2009. The one chosen was deemed as the most appropriate school as it fulfilled all of the criteria. Mrs Smith (the class teacher – pseudonym) was enthusiastic about the research and also had the full support of Mr Potts (the school principal – pseudonym). The longitudinal research which was carried out over a period of three months meant that change and connections could be observed (Bryman, 2004) and in fact this research aims to examine the language skills of ELLs and the interactional modifications made by their teacher over a short but critical period of time.

#### **4.5.3 Administration**

As outlined in the above section, initial contact was made with the principal of the school during a routine visit by the researcher to monitor a student on Teaching Practice in May 2009. Upon entering the school the diverse population was noted and an informal discussion around the possibility of conducting classroom observation took place with the school principal and subsequently with Mrs Smith. A letter was then sent to the principal (Appendix I), who was about to retire from his position, to be presented to the Board of Management for their permission, which was granted. A formal letter was also written to Mrs Smith for her records (Appendix I).

The first visit to the classroom took place one week after term started on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September. At this point, one hour was spent in the classroom between 9.00 and 10.00 during Free Play and the Welcome Routine assisting the children in any way necessary. One week later on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, a further hour was spent assisting the children and teacher between 9.30 and 10.30 during Free Play and Letterland lesson. On the last introductory visit on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, where the intention was to digitally record the children, the newly appointed principal informed me that for a variety of reasons, it had been decided not to allow any recording to go ahead, although I would be welcome to observe formally in the classroom. Therefore, it was decided that observation would become less participatory and more structured to allow for field notes to be written, although participation was possible during Observation 5 and Observation 10. It was

decided that 40-60 minutes would be spent each week by the researcher observing, while a further 15-20 minutes would be spent assisting the children with EAL.

Formal observation took place on ten separate occasions between the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2009 and the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2009 for between sixty minutes and ninety minutes each time for a total of 690 minutes (eleven and a half hours). Table 4.3 outlines the time spent by the researcher in the classroom and the activities carried out by the teacher and children. Most of the classroom observation was done on Mondays as it suited the teacher and the researcher. According to Seedhouse (2004: 87) “classroom research [...] has considered between five and ten lessons a reasonable database”. A wide range of subject areas was observed including Mathematics, English, Irish, Science and Music as well as activities such as sand and water play, computer time, library time and play in the home corner. During observations detailed field notes were written. Any interactions between the class teacher and any of the three children with EAL were noted. All instructions given by the teacher to the class as a whole were noted, and any interactions between the children with EAL, each other and their classmates were noted along with any interactions between the researcher and the children. Each day almost immediately after observation had taken place, field notes were transcribed.

In order to carry out classroom observation, consideration was given to the use of an observation record including aspects of the ‘Initial interview assessment for new pupils’ in *Up and Away* (IILT, 2006: 21) and the ‘Checklist for observing progress during the Silent Period’ (IILT, 2006: 25). Further details in this regard are available in Section 4.5.5.

**Table 4.3 Classroom Observation Details**

	Date	Start/ End time	Time spent	Activities
Observation 1	28.09.09	9.00 – 10.00	60 minutes	Welcome Routine; Irish Lesson; English Lesson
Observation 2	05.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
Observation 3	12.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson
Observation 4	02.11.09	9.00 – 10.10	70 minutes	English Lesson; Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
Observation 5	03.11.09	9.00 – 10.30	90 minutes	'Activities morning'
Observation 6	09.11.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Music Lesson; Maths Lesson
Observation 7	16.11.09	9.00 - 10.00	60 minutes	Letterland; Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time
Observation 8	01.12.09	9.40 – 10.50	70 minutes	Religion/ English Lesson; Science Lesson
Observation 9	10.12.09	9.30 – 10.50	80 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time; Science Lesson
Observation 10	14.12.09	9.00 – 10.20	80 minutes	'Activities morning'
			690 minutes 11.5 hours	

#### **4.5.4 Reliability and Validity**

Edwards (2001) tells us that cases that are selected as exemplary “have the potential to tell us more about a wider population than might be gleaned in a survey”. However, similarly to focus group discussions, a case study approach does mean that results “may not be generalised beyond the immediate cases that are examined” (Cregan, 2007: 38). Bryman reminds us that it is not easy to achieve reliability in observation, especially because of the effects of factors such as “observer fatigue and lapses in attention” (2004: 174).

One procedure to be followed in doing the report is to have the draft report reviewed by the participants and informants, according to Yin (2009: 182). He advises that “From a methodological standpoint, the corrections made through this process will enhance the accuracy of the case study, hence increasing the *construct validity* of the study” (italics in original; 2009: 183). To this end, Mrs Smith and Mr Potts, the classroom teacher and

school principal of the target school were invited to review the final version of the draft, although they did not add any further comments or corrections.

#### **4.5.5 Analysis**

There are a number of approaches available for investigating interaction in the classroom including interaction analysis, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. It was decided to work within the interaction analysis framework in order to explore the interactional modifications made by teachers for supporting children with EAL in their L2 and L3 learning. A system-based approach such as FIAC (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories) or COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) may be employed by some researchers (Walsh, 2006: 42). Aspects of the *Irish Lesson Analysis System* (Harris and Murtagh, 1999) were considered when exploring the possibility of using a formal observation record as this does define lesson segments in terms of five main dimensions of analysis, some of which would be of relevance to this study. However for the purposes of the current study, it was decided to adopt an ad hoc or flexible approach to classroom observation, thereby allowing for less structured observation in order to cope with the "... constraints of a particular context" (Walsh, 2006: 44); in this case, the Junior Infant classroom. Most importantly in the context of this research "*ad hoc* interaction analysis allows attention to be devoted to the microcosms of interactions that might so easily be missed by the 'broad brush' descriptions provided by systems-based approaches" (Walsh, 2006: 44). Bryman identifies this as 'ad libitum' sampling, whereby the researcher records whatever is happening at the time (2004: 172). The transcriptions were analysed using the long-table approach in that each observation was combed through for emerging themes and approaches by the teacher.

To begin with, a note was taken of each ten-minute period during the observation period and field notes were transcribed as such. Upon rewriting the field notes, they were divided into lesson sections and rewritten so that the description of each lesson was separate from the individual interactions. While undertaking this detailed transcription, as

soon as possible after each session, notes were made in the margins about the types of language used by the teacher and children in an effort to start grouping interactions thematically arising from scaffolding categories derived from interactional features. Initially, these notes were based primarily on Walsh (2006) and Saville-Troike (2006). Walsh's categories of interactional features are based on teacher talk and include scaffolding, direct repair, content feedback, extended wait-time, referential questions, seeking clarification, extended learner turn, teacher echo, teacher interruptions, extended teacher turn, turn completion, display questions and form-focused feedback (2006: 167). These categories were very helpful to start off with but failed to take into account many of the children's turns and classroom events. Furthermore, scaffolding as a standalone category in Walsh's grid was deemed too general a category as many of the other features of teacher talk listed are types of scaffolding. As the intention was to look at interactions between the teacher and children, I decided to utilise Saville-Troike's types of interactional modifications, which certainly does not claim to be exhaustive. Her types include repetition, paraphrase, expansion and elaboration, sentence completion, frame for substitution, vertical construction and comprehension check and request for clarification (2006: 109). While these also proved to be most useful in conjunction with Walsh's categories, I found some of the categories to be too wide-ranging and some to be almost too detailed.

In order to take the most relevant of the categories for grouping interactions thematically, Tabors (2008) offers a range of ideas for communicating with second-language-learning children in the classroom. These ideas include advice for interactional scaffolding and environmental scaffolding including the following: starting with what the children know, starting slowly, buttressing communication, repetition, talking about the here and now, expanding and extending, upping the ante, fine-tuning, combining techniques, providing safe havens, classroom routines, small-group activities to ensure inclusion and social support i.e. getting help from the English-speaking children (Tabors, 2008: 89-101). My transcriptions were re-read using these ideas as a framework for analysis and in combination with Walsh and Saville-Troike, outlined above, a framework emerged

bearing in mind the literature on scaffolding as outlined in Chapter 2. Table 4.4 outlines the framework for analysis used.

**Table 4.4 Framework for Analysis – Classroom Observation**

Interactional scaffolding	Environmental scaffolding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Starting with what the children know; allowing use of L1</li> <li>- Starting slowly</li> <li>- Buttreassing communication</li> <li>- Repetition</li> <li>- Talking about the here and now</li> <li>- Expanding and extending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group</li> <li>- Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion</li> <li>- Social support: getting help from the English-speaking children.</li> </ul>

#### 4.6 Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology to be used in the collection and analysis of the data and the main issues that need to be considered in relation to examining issues around EAL in Junior Infants.

Focus groups were carried out with Junior and Senior Infant teachers in four schools in June and September 2008, as a way of gathering some preliminary qualitative data about this new area in Ireland and in order to inform parts of the questionnaire. The postal questionnaire was administered to teachers of Junior Infants in May 2009 and focussed on teachers’ attitudes towards EAL and HL maintenance as well as gathering a linguistic profile of individual children speaking LOTE in their classrooms. This was followed by classroom observation over a three month period between September and December 2010, looking in detail at the interactional and environmental scaffolding evident in one classroom and focussed on three children speaking LOTE as their HL at the start of the school year.

This mixed methods approach to the research will allow for applying the viewpoints of positivism and naturalism and conducting the research to a high standard has enabled me as a researcher to gain higher levels of confidence regarding the validity of the research as a whole. Ethical guidelines have been adhered to at all times in accordance with

recommendations from the Ethics Committee in the DIT and from the literature available on conducting research with young children. This approach also takes into consideration Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model as discussed in Chapter Two, by examining all the layers of systems at work which have an impact on the child's language development from the teachers' perspectives.

The following chapter will present findings from Phase I of the research; focus group interviews carried out with four groups of teachers of Junior and Senior Infants.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the themes that emerged from focus group interviews carried out with Junior and Senior Infant teachers in Irish primary schools in June and September 2008. Phase I of the research was carried out in order to refine the research questions and in order to inform the proposed questionnaire. Similar questions were asked of each group of teachers (c.f. Appendix B ‘Guiding Questions Focus Group Interviews’) and teachers were also invited to give their own input by suggesting issues for consideration in the thesis. The following research questions were explored and further refined during the interviews:

- What are teachers’ perceptions of the importance of L1 maintenance?
- To what extent are speakers of EAL being supported by the whole school community?
- What are teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?
- What are teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?

Teachers’ responses are presented in accordance with the themes which emerged from an analysis of interview transcriptions based on the guiding questions, as outlined in Chapter Four. These themes are then summarised in terms of their relationship to the research questions at the end of the chapter. The responses presented in this chapter, which are presented as direct quotations, comprise approximately 25% of the total material transcribed from the focus group interviews. It should be noted that many of the direct quotations are quite long and have not been shortened in order that the full sense of what the teachers are saying comes through in each instance.

## 5.2 The Interviewees

To start each interview, teachers were asked to identify themselves by stating which class they were teaching and how many children they had speaking EAL in the class. Some teachers explicitly stated how long they had been teaching Infant classes and how long they had been teaching for in general. With other teachers, this information was not explicitly stated but became apparent as the interview progressed and was mentioned informally before or after the interview was recorded.

Each teacher can be identified in Table 5.1 using the abbreviated form. For example, SAT1 denotes School A, Teacher 1 and SCT5 denotes School C, Teacher 5. It should also be noted that where a quotation from a teacher includes italicised text enclosed in square brackets, it is an explanatory addition from the author.

*Table 5.1 Focus Group Interviewees*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Children with EAL in class</b>
SAT1	3 from Poland; 1 with Indian parents born in Ireland
SAT2	2 from Poland
SAT3	2 from Poland; 1 from Philippines
SAT4	1 from Poland; 1 from Romania
SBT1	1 from Nigeria; 1 from Bangladesh; 1 whose mother is Irish and father is Moroccan
SBT2	None at present; 1 from Nigeria previous year
SBT3	1 from Nigeria; 1 from China; 1 whose mother is Thai and whose father is Irish; 1 from South Africa
SCT1	10 children out of 16 – various nationalities
SCT2	7 children out of 16 - various nationalities
SCT3	10 children out of 17 - various nationalities
SCT4	9 children out of 17 - various nationalities
SCT5	13 children out of 17 - various nationalities
SDT1	3 from Poland; 1 from Latvia
SDT2	2 children
SDT3	2 from Latvia; 1 from Albania; 1 from Thailand; 1 from Poland; 1 from Slovakia; 1 from Romania

## 5.3 Level of English

The purpose of this section is to explore the area of English language acquisition among speakers of EAL, as observed by their teachers.

Teachers' comments about the level of English acquired by children in their classes were generally positive. These comments were generally positive where the children had lived in Ireland for a period of time prior to starting school, or where they had been born in Ireland.

SAT4: My two now, there's one of them would have very good English and their parents speak very good English as well but they speak their native languages at home.

SBT1: They all spoke English coming into us.

SBT2: You know, there was none that didn't have a word, in my experience; they seem to have been in Ireland since they were infants themselves.

SBT1: I think many of them were born in Ireland as well because I remember asking the LS teacher about getting extra hours for one of my children who was having difficulty and the first question she asked me was were they born in the country; yes; so they don't qualify.

SBT3: There's a little Chinese girl in my class and [...] she came in in Junior infants able to write her name and her age and she seemed to be way ahead of the rest of them, in English and her English is fine.

Other teachers found that things were difficult for the children at the start, particularly when no English was spoken at home.

SAT1: At the start they didn't really have any English and it was very difficult for the teachers.

SAT3: No understanding at all – even if you're asking them if they're ok, they don't know, they just sit there, they don't know what to say back to you.

One teacher commented on the fact that some children who had received no Language Support found it difficult to catch up – this situation seemed to arise where a child had joined the school; in the middle of the school year.

SCT1: She got no language support last year and she's suffered as a result – her English didn't improve.

Some teachers found that the rate of acquisition was improving as a result of extra support.

SCT1: But I'm finding that their English is coming on, they're speaking already and it's only the end of October whereas normally it'd be after Christmas before

I'd hear any English out of them you know. So they're actually beginning very very slowly to...

SCT1: You see they're getting more Language Support this year as well because we didn't have as many Language teachers last year.

SCT1: But I think the Language Support is really helping them this year I'm really finding an awful difference anyway – the intensive – and you know there's a really good language programme in place with the language teachers. They're intensively teaching them themes every week and every month and that's integrated into our teaching as well so it's definitely making an awful difference.

One teacher commented that the basic vocabulary was coming along.

SDT1: We have a few – we have toilet and we have basics that they need to survive in the classroom – you know they know their pencils, they know their colours, they know whatever's coming up but like they're getting confused now – any Irish that they are exposed to they don't know how to differentiate between the two. But other than that they have survival skills at the moment.

One teacher thought that the speakers of EAL were good at phonics in particular.

SDT2: Yeah - well even in English too, they're good at the Jolly Phonics and the sounds and phonics side of things I find – they're very quick to...

However, one other teacher found phonics to be the main problem for speakers of EAL.

SBT3: No – phonics seems to be the problem. Because they're listening to a different accent I suppose speaking English, the phonics seem to be the place where difficulties arise – initial letter sounds.

Another reported that phonological awareness could be a problem at times, particularly when homework was being completed.

SBT1: [...] let's say the reading, when you send it home, they're coming in pronouncing it incorrectly and that they don't really have the phonological awareness whereas if I do it in class with them it's much easier, rather than sending something home and they're learning it incorrectly sometimes if it's sent home you know you do need to do a lot of one on one with those children to make sure they're at the same standard as the other kids.

## 5.4 Level of Irish

The purpose of this section is to explore the area of Irish language acquisition among speakers of EAL, as observed by their teachers.

Most of the comments made by teachers on the children's ability to acquire Irish were positive. In fact, many teachers commented that knowing more than one language helps you to learn another.

SAT4: They pick up the Irish, because at that age they're like sponges they pick up so much so quickly – they have words now, they can string words together in Irish.

SAT2: I think they pick it up just as quick [*as the Irish children*].

SAT1: Oh they do yes [*pick it up just as quick*].

SAT3: As Claire said, the younger you are, the easier it is to learn a language.

SCT3: I would've thought that as well some of mine the ones who had already learned English who already had another language, they seem to remember Irish a lot more – it's incidental you know little things that I remember. But just from what I can remember they seem to remember it more I don't know why.

SCT1: I don't know why either. Maybe it might be because their mission at school is to soak language up so you know this is yet another mission for them.

SCT4: I definitely think that's true if they've learned another language other than their own, they seem to pick up another one quicker.

SCT5: The only thing is though they say it's easier that if you're learning one it's easier to learn another.

SDT2: Well the non-nationals are very quick to learn a new language – especially Irish do you not find?

SDT1: yes

African and Polish children were mentioned as being particularly good at picking up the language. Pronunciation is one aspect where teachers noted the speakers of EAL excelled.

SBT1: I actually – Alice [*from Nigeria*] is very good at Irish.

SBT3: I've found that the African children seem to be very very good at the Irish.

SCT2: I think they notice it throughout the school that the Polish children pick up Irish very fast.

SCT1, 2, 3, 4, 5: Oh yes.

SCT3: Absolutely – and their pronunciation a lot of the time is very very good.

SCT5: yes [*agreeing with SCT3*].

SCT2: It's excellent [*Irish language pronunciation*].

SCT3: Oh no you'd see it [*at infant level*], yeah.

SCT1: But I would nearly think that the non-English speaking children certainly pronounce them better than the Irish children. But now I'm open to correction there.

SCT1: And even new arrivals in the school I saw it last year we entered this Féile competition every year and a child from Latvia I had her in 2<sup>nd</sup> class and she won the Gaeilge poem [*sic*] – like she learned a Gaeilge poem off by heart, you know she knew the words to emphasise etc, she knew the meaning of the poem basically, and she had only been in Ireland – like she didn't come in September, she came in like November or something, and Féile is February isn't it? And her English was not by any means good at the time but she was able to pronounce that poem perfectly and say it and she won the competition – and she was in 4<sup>th</sup> class last year and she won again you know because her diction and pronunciation was so excellent in the Gaeilge like and she'd only been in the country 3 months – so that's proof like. And they're all the same – you'll find the Polish will pronounce things and remember (emphasized) that it's an úll, oráiste, banana and all of this, more so than the Irish.

One teacher reports on a child who was teaching her parents Irish at home, indicating a certain level of motivation, either from the child or from home, or both.

SCT5: I actually had a child last year that whatever phrase we were doing in Irish, she'd gone home and her father came in and wanted to know 'An bhfuil cead agam dul amach más é do thoil é' – what did that mean! And you know when you're there going 'Oh my God – what else is she saying at home? – and like a haon, a dó, a trí, a ceathair – she used to do all that at home for them. They didn't know what she was saying but she was trying to tell then.

One teacher draws attention to the type of Irish taught to the infant classes, and the fact that it is taught in a fun and interactive manner to all children.

SBT2: Again in Infants the Irish is all Oral Irish, and there's never, you never really give much homework in Irish, so it's all oral, it's all words, and a lot of fun-based activities so they pick it up easily – I came down to Junior Infants last year and was surprised at how quickly Junior Infants pick up Irish – I was thinking at first 'How am I going to teach them, this is completely alien to them' so I was really surprised at how well they picked it up.

Other teachers mention the difficulty in covering the strand units for Irish at Level 1 for all children.

SCT1: Yeah – and you know the curriculum says that we should teach them sentences, but realistically speaking Junior Infants you’re teaching them words, teaching vocabulary like

SCT5: You’re trying to drag sentences out of them by the end of the year

SCT3: I mean even in first class they find it hard to construct a sentence in Irish

SCT1, 2, 4, 5 [*nodding in agreement*].

Some teachers would equate the achievement of the speakers of EAL with that of the native English speakers.

SAT1: I think they’d be on a par [*comparing test results with those of native English speakers*].

SAT3: Yeah I agree [*with SAT1*].

SBT2: In my experience I wouldn’t say they shone or outshone the Irish ones but they were well able for it, I couldn’t see that they were much weaker or anything, they were well able for the ability of the class – again it’s about starting them young.

Other teachers felt that speakers of EAL were better at Irish than the Irish children.

SCT3: They do seem to understand it better.

SDT2: They absorb it like I mean sometimes they’re nearly better than the Irish themselves – well I find that anyway

SDT1: In Irish

A number of teachers did note the type of confusion that can occur between Irish and English.

SCT3: I mean we’re expected to start teaching Irish in infants so I mean they don’t have English so one minute you’re saying this is your hand and then you’re saying lámh. I mean, trying to take in 2 languages completely unknown to them, it must be...

SCT1: So I think from that point of view they know because I suppose it depends on how much neamhfhoirmiúil Gaeilge [sic] we’re doing with them because like if it’s just at Gaeilge time and we’re pointing to things and saying that’s an úll then they know that’s the time to call it an úll and every other time it’s an apple so I think from that point of view they make the distinction but it’s hard to know when because it’s hard to know anything with them really.

SDT1: Like, I have one little boy going around and all he keeps saying is Oíche Shamhna, but he means to say Happy Hallowe’en but he doesn’t know the difference.

They also noted the fact that some children are able to distinguish between English and Irish.

SCT1: And I think they can distinguish between Irish and English eventually. Now at the start it is very difficult – today it's my lámh, tomorrow it's my hand.

SCT5: Some of them do call it the other English thought don't they?

SCT4: Oh I've never heard that before now.

SCT1: I don't know – well that means that they've made a distinction, because it's the other (emphasised) English you know.

SCT5: Yeah.

SCT2: I suppose, the amount of English that's spoken in class is a lot more than Irish

SCT1, 2, 3, 4, 5 [*nodding in agreement*].

SCT2: So even in that way that they'd be able to make the distinction that at certain times even in the day, you know that's Irish time.

A few negative comments were made about the rate of acquisition among speakers of EAL. These were primarily due to children joining late in the school year.

SBT1: Well Naomi would struggle a bit and so would Harry, purely because he only joined after Easter and he hadn't learned Irish before that, so what I find is that he wouldn't know as much as the others, but what I'm teaching he picks up on so all the new stuff I would've done, he would be as strong as the others but when I'm going back over the older stuff he's kind of like a rabbit in the headlights.

SBT2: Where they will have problems is as they go up the school, where they have more homework, I mean parents are the primary educators of their children at the end of the day, but they're not going to have the help at home as they go up the school, so they're going to start going downhill from here.

In one situation, the children had been withdrawn for English Language Support during Irish lessons all the way through Junior Infants and this teacher noted the difficulties that had arisen from this.

SDT3: Right well that's interesting because I know the children that I've got this year didn't do – I took them at Irish time last year (for language support) so they don't have that much Irish so what I did this year is I swapped around the timetable so that they weren't missing Irish the whole time so they are having Irish classes now – they're finding it difficult because they didn't have the Irish to start with. Now I know from Senior Infants of last year, they obviously had the Irish from the start – and their Irish was better than the Irish children. I know that. So the crowd I have are finding it difficult I would say.



## 5.5 Maintenance of L1

The purpose of this section is to explore the teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL, their willingness to actively promote the children's L1, as well as cultural factors related to this area.

A number of comments made by teachers indicated that they felt it was of most importance that the children continue to speak English at home and at school.

SAT2: If they have English, they could use it at home.

SAT1: At the parent-teacher meetings I did recommend that even if it's just at mealtimes twice a week or every day for a week, they use English, but I doubt very much if that's being done – but I've said it to them.

SAT1: Well I think they're always going to speak their own language - I just try and encourage them to speak English at school.

SAT2: If they were staying in Ireland it would be more important for them to be literate in English.

SBT2: Oh yeah we would well especially I know I hear the resource teacher always saying to the children who come to her saying 'You have to speak English' if they're going off on holidays to their home country or whatever 'Keep up your English' because she finds that if they go away for 2 or 3 weeks that they've kind of lost it all by the time they come back so she encourages them to keep it up by practising – so you would.

Some teachers felt that they did not need to encourage the speakers of EAL to maintain their home language actively.

SAT1: No I don't really see that it's [*promoting the home language*] our problem.

SAT4: If all day every day we're encouraging them to speak English, maybe we'd then be encouraging them to revert back to their own language.

SAT3: They don't need to be taught Polish – they know enough of it.

SCT1: When it comes to the kids I can't see any benefit in them having we'll say a Polish SNA or a Polish teacher because then they're not going to learn the language [*English*].

Indeed, some teachers thought it would be confusing for the children to promote the use of their home language in the classroom.

SAT1: To be honest I just think saturation [*in English*] is the way to go – I think that it's just more confusing – when they go out to the yard they speak their Polish despite the fact that I say “No we're speaking English” I just can't see that happening.

SCT1: But when the kids go home you know they don't hear any English and even when it comes to letter formation, letter sounds and things like that, they do things differently in Poland, and because those parents feel that some day their children will go back to Poland, you know, they try and teach them Polish sounds at home, and we're teaching them the way we teach them here you know when it comes to their letter sounds so I'm sure it must be very confusing for the children. We'll say the letter v, I'm telling them here that it's 'v', and when they go home it's 'w' – so you know, it's so confusing for them.

Others felt that although maintaining and encouraging the home language would be nice, it would be very difficult to do in reality.

SAT1: Yes I do – we can encourage it [*home language maintenance is the responsibility of the parents*] but we can't make it happen.

SAT1: I suppose from a holistic point of view it would be a lovely idea but I just can't see how it would work, you know.

SAT3: It probably is [*important that children become literate in their home language*].

SBT1: So I do think a lot of the main focus should be at home but I do think rather should be some effort made at some point throughout the year to have an inclusion of it.

SBT3: Yeah an inclusion is a good word.

SBT1: To have an inclusion built in then the main responsibility would be on the parents like if they want them to still maintain their own language well then obviously I think that's their responsibility but then that's would be my opinion.

This was seen as a concern by teachers particularly because of the many languages spoken within the classroom.

SBT1: It kind of all depends on what the language is like let's say of you have four different languages like Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish and South African [sic], for argument's sake, it would be exceptionally difficult to be focusing on all of them all of the time.

SBT3: Yeah I would agree – it would be very difficult to include all the countries and all the different languages.

SBT1: If it was just one country.

SBT3: Yeah if you had a predominant one like Nigerian [sic] or Polish would be the usual ones here.

A few teachers saw the overloaded curriculum as a prohibiting factor in actively maintaining the home language.

SBT3: Yeah – plus you’ve enough of the curriculum stuff to be getting though!

SCT1: So I just feel that, as Sally said, our day is so short anyway, that time spent in findings props, to mime what you’re doing you know is gone compared with what other teachers can do – go straight into the lesson. So like achieving curriculum objectives, you can just cut your time in half because of the time we have to spend miming and explaining and gesturing things

SDT1: We’ve enough to be flipping doing

SDT2: Between the English and our Irish alone, we’ve enough...

Other teachers could see both sides of the argument when it comes to maintaining the home language and promoting English as a language of communication, and again cited curriculum overload as a prohibiting factor.

SCT1: Well when they start talking Polish to each other at school, like they don’t understand what I’m saying but I say “No Polish at school – English at school, Polish at home” – because it’s important for them to keep their own language.

SCT1: Well I discourage the use of it in class because I don’t see it as a benefit to them when they’re trying to learn because I’m trying to encourage them to understand what I’m saying and I don’t speak Polish or Latvian or anything.

SDT3: It’s very important [*maintaining the home language*]. Obviously in class, you’re trying to get them to speak English because you’re trying to develop their language, but obviously that’s quite important.

A high proportion of comments were made regarding the active promotion of the home language and home culture in the classroom. Some teachers felt that it would help with their metalinguistic awareness and language development in general.

SAT4: If the structure is the same, as you say it would help with their skills.

SAT1: You know, that this is a word, and we’ve a space between words.

SBT1: And I think it’s brilliant because up until the age of three the child can basically adopt any language.

SBT3: They seem to be able to chop and change very easily [*between languages*].

SBT2: The younger you get them the better I think.

SDT1: No – sure children, they’re like sponges anyway, they’re going to absorb it no matter what you do.

SDT2: No no [*it wouldn’t adversely affect their English*].

SDT1: No not at all – they’re well able I think to grasp both and separate both – like those children who go home and speak Polish all evening know that when they come in here the next morning it’s all English like, and they’ll chat away to you in English and there’s no problem.

Some teachers felt that multilingualism will be valuable for the children in the future.

SAT1: It will help [*multilingualism in the children’s future*].

SAT4: It’ll probably help them down the line.

SAT1: It gives them more options for work, or if they decide to go to Europe – Europe is only going to get smaller with Lisbon and everything else – more options to travel.

SBT1: So I think that if they can maintain the same standard of their home language and English I’d say a lot of them will, I’d say they have a 50/ 50 split of speaking English at school and then their home language at home that I’d say they’ll be able to maintain both of them throughout their lives which I think is brilliant you know at this age.

Several teachers thought that the cultural aspect was of particular importance as it not only held benefits for the speakers of EAL, but also for the other children in the class from a cultural enrichment point of view.

SBT2: Of I think we should definitely encourage it [*home language*] – you know it’s part of their culture and everything.

SBT2: And you know you would never – obviously we want them to learn English but like but I’ve often has Christina – I’ve often had her come up to the class and dance, you know, show her native dance.

SBT1: Their culture yeah.

SBT2: And a few words – definitely yeah you have to encourage it as well, you know what I mean.

SBT1: Like a lot of ... like I know that I’d have my boy whose Dad’s Moroccan, he’s Muslim, and like there’s a big - all the kids want to know why he goes like this [*arms crossed*] when we’re saying our prayers and we explain you that that he has a different belief and he doesn’t really understand enough himself of the religious structures yet – I think it’s an education for them aswell even though we obviously have a Catholic ethos in the school I do think there’s a place for them to know you know “They’re right and everybody else is wrong” and that there is something else out there.

SBT3: The parents you know are kind of touched in a sense that you are making an big deal out of their culture and that you’re teaching you know like I did a little project on Africa and included the children from Africa in it and they brought in

traditional clothing and music and instruments and stuff and the parents I think feel accepted as well into our culture if you teach the rest of the children about it.

SBT3: For Junior infants it's very it's a good thing to show them different cultures and different languages – it's a respect thing as well it probably comes into the SPHE a bit aswell.

SAT2: No – the others are fascinated by it [*when children use their home language in class*].

SBT1: I think that it can enrich a classroom and that there are massive benefits to having a child who's a different religion or a different ethnicity to them.

Teachers could identify opportunities for formally integrating the diversity of cultural backgrounds and linguistic backgrounds as part of subjects such as SESE and SPHE.

SBT3: I think it's nice even for the children to learn a few phrases from the different languages in the class – say when we were doing the Africa project it was in conjunction with the Trócaire Lenten campaign and they learned a couple of Swahili words – Hello, Goodbye thank you that kind of thing and they thought it was great and they remembered it like – so it's no harm I think to teach an odd word to the other kids like.

SDT2: Well I suppose if you're doing like SESE with them it's no harm I suppose talking about where the other kids are from and celebrating that – so I'm saying doing a rhyme or something like that would be a nice way of doing that – saying that it's not always done here!

SDT3: Oh it can be transferred into school if you can fit it into a theme to make the children aware even I think you can do it in SESE, just making the children aware that there are people in this class from other places and that there are other places than Ireland – you know for some children it's home or maybe up the country or maybe Spain – but that's it nothing else exists outside of those places! So just to get them to say a little piece about their country, even what they like about it or food or just something that stands out even the colour of the flag.

SDT2: The only way you could bring in other vocabulary I'd maybe in PE and other subject areas do you know what I mean like by using if you had a few words.

Many teachers commented on their willingness to use some phrases in the children's HL for enrichment purposes.

SAT1, 2, 3, 4; Yes [*it would be helpful if teachers had some knowledge of the languages in the classroom*].

SAT1: My name is or ... [*helpful to be able to say it in the children's language*].

SDT1: The Latvian president is coming next week over there (meaning primary school next door, Focus Group 3), so there's some of our kids going over doing a

presentation so we've stuff translated into Latvian to teach them – it's Humpty Dumpty I think in Latvian that they're doing or something like that.

SDT1: Yeah I suppose I wouldn't be anti it anyway – if I could say a bit of it myself [*teaching Humpty Dumpty through Latvian*].

SDT2: Yeah I suppose a lot of it comes down to us maybe not having the confidence

SDT1: Yeah [*agreeing with SDT2*].

SDT2: If you I suppose feel you mightn't be pronouncing it right – if I suppose you knew what you were pronouncing relatively accurately it wouldn't be a bad thing to try and do with them

SDT2: I'm saying it wouldn't be a bad thing to with them like [*use phrases in the children's HL*].

SDT2: Well yeah you could read a story in – well I suppose like anything you're always trying to use visual aids and all of that to break it down and explain what the story's about – more so songs and rhymes 'cos I think they'd know and pick up on what the tune of it is do you know that type of way – a story I don't know if I – would you retain – when they're this young I don't know if you'd be able to retain their interest.

SDT1: Commands or whatever.

SDT3: Well I attempted to teach the Latvian sentences but it was just a little too hard. Now some of them have actually picked up a little bit of it – so what we're doing is the Irish children are saying it in English and the Latvian children are saying it directly after and then we're having the flags, just to celebrate that.

At times this was seen as a necessity for communicative purposes.

SAT3: I remember cutting out a piece of paper that came in one of the magazines, that said Hello and the basics in Polish, and it was there phonetically so you could sound it out – I said it to them one day and they just got the shock of their lives!

SAT1: It would probably be handy at the start of the year maybe [*knowing some of their languages*].

SAT3: To be able to welcome them.

SDT1: Yeah and I remember Barbara the Junior Infant teacher before me had non-nationals - that's 3 years ago - they came with no English so she found it very hard to communicate with the parents so she got a dictionary basically to be able to talk to them about the children's injections, about forms to be filled in so she was flaking through the dictionary trying to get this – so she picked up a good few words herself like trying to communicate with them.

Some teachers thought that when the children first start school it would be appropriate to allow some flexibility regarding the language they speak.

SCT5: I do think though that when a child first starts as a newcomer I think it does offer them some bit of consolation that there is somebody there who does speak their own language

SCT1: Yeah [*agreeing with SCT5*].

SCT5: So maybe for the first week or the first 2 weeks, I wouldn't be very strict on them not speaking their own language because at least they're communicating with somebody

SCT5: So I don't have any problem with the first week or two. Like I have somebody who started senior infants last February and never spoke to anyone. You'd hear her at playtime she'd be speaking Polish to the other children, and like she's repeating senior infants because she started so late and she was so young. It's only now that she's got the confidence to speak English and she's actually speaking now, whereas last year we never knew what – I mean they used to tell me 'She doesn't talk' or 'Don't mind asking her she doesn't talk'

SDT1: They do yeah – they'll talk away to you in Polish or whatever and they'll expect you to understand you know – I go yeah yeah and they could be telling me anything!

## 5.6 Home school links – issues for consideration

The purpose of this section is to explore the extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular their parents. It also looks at the issue of parental support of the schools in question. Cultural and linguistic differences are mentioned as factors for consideration, as well as the language spoken in the home.

Many of the teachers commented on the level of support being received from parents in terms of appreciation and helping their children with homework.

SAT3: Yes [*homework is being supported*].

SAT4: Very much so – more so than the Irish parents.

SAT1: Yeah – very attentive.

SBT2: One thing I can say – well I know this isn't the question! About parents that I've found – they are so appreciative. The Nigerian child I had – they were so thankful of the education they're getting and I know we're not here to be thanked all the time but it was so nice they were so thankful – maybe because they wouldn't have got that at home so that's one thing I'd say for them.

SDT1: Well what I've had is a few of sounds Jolly Phonics books translated into Polish by the parents. So I'm sending home sounds books and there's words and stuff in it (teacher goes to get an example) and they're coming back in with the words translated.

SDT1: And we've parents groups we have like on our Board of Management we have two Polish parents on it and like that's Yan's dad, he translates all the stuff that we want to send out if we've stuff to send out.

Sometimes, however, the parents' own confidence with English affected the type of support they were able to give their children.

SBT3: You do find as well if you've a suspicion that the parents' English isn't fluent, they do tend to not come into you so it can even be quite difficult to approach them because they're nearly backing off, physically backing off – I suppose they're just not confident speaking – but then it makes it more difficult for you to find out what they can and can't do.

SBT1: I found when I send stuff home as Rhona said if the parents don't speak English themselves or haven't very good English, let's say the reading, when you send it home, they're coming in pronouncing it incorrectly and that they don't really have the phonological awareness.

A number of teachers commented on language and cultural differences creating difficulties at times. Language differences created a problem particularly with communication around school events and out of the ordinary occasions.

SBT2: Or even communicating with them about progress can be quite difficult.

SBT3: Yeah exactly. And notes home I think I've heard can be difficult if the two parents don't speak English very well – if they can speak it fluently they can't read it fluently – that's come up at staff meetings before they can't understand notes.

SBT1: Yeah and you know even aswell there was a non-uniform day 2 or 3 weeks ago and saying it to Junior infants you might as well say it to the window but a couple of them would have come in wearing their uniform.

SBT3: And sometimes if we have a half day for a staff meeting and I don't mean this to sound racist but often it's the foreign nationals who haven't been picked up early – instead of being picked up at 1.30 they should have been picked up at 12.00 and I wonder is it because they didn't read the notes .

SBT1: Really stuff on a practical level [*are the issues with communication with parents*].

With regard to cultural differences, this sometimes depended on nationality. One teacher recognised her own lack of knowledge about, for example, Nigerian culture, and explained how this new knowledge helped her to understand why certain children might behave in certain ways.



SCT1: And you'll find aswell that there was even an article in InTouch this week about the mannerisms of the Nigerians – it was the Nigerians that they had focused on there – and I was reading it and I was thinking God that's an explanation for that you know. Like, the Nigerians keep calling us Auntie, and the article in InTouch said that they're not allowed to call adults by their first name and they're told to call them Auntie or Uncle [...] There were a load of other things – like a lot of them time the Nigerians don't look us in the eye and that was in it aswell, that they're not allowed, it's disrespectful to look adults in the eye when you're speaking to them. And it was funny to see like a lot of the mannerisms and the cultures and the traditions that they have are in direct opposition to what we do here – you know, if a child doesn't look at you here, they're considered cheeky [...] whereas if they do look at you in Nigeria, they're considered cheeky. So again, they mightn't have English problems, but they have cultural difficulties certainly when they come to school.

Contrasting with this, other teachers recognised the difficulties parents face when reaching an understanding of how school itself works.

SBT1: Well I would have I suppose cultural difference – from the point of view of the parents haven't gone to school in Ireland themselves and they sometimes don't understand the system even – homework and lunches – basically just how an Irish school in general works – that kind of way – things that you would just expect they would know, they don't know – it's hard to explain.

SBT3: If they were just given a little bit of explanation as to how the school day works or...

Another teacher said that her own lack of knowledge about food restrictions within certain cultures led to a misunderstanding that created intercultural difficulties.

SAT1: Well it is more difficult to communicate with ... we'll say school lunches now, I've one child who's a vegetarian, at the start of the year her father said no pork, she must not eat pork, she must not eat meat, and gave me a whole list of things and foolishly I suppose I didn't realise chicken is a big no-no – there was chicken tikka one of the days and I thought ' Oh she'll be able to eat this' – well he blew a gasket and we'd a meeting with the principal and he said I wasn't respecting the culture and – see it's very hard you know when you've a lot of children and if one child takes something that they shouldn't.

The fact that some cultures are more similar to Irish culture was recognised as a contributing factor to enhanced understanding and home-school links.

SCT1: But then there wouldn't be that much of a difference between the culture, the Polish and ourselves. I mean there's no real cultural problems there I mean it's quite similar I think – in that I think they'd be a little bit more strict in their education system than we would be- you know it seems that they would be but in terms of culture, I think we're pretty similar enough. Now, the Russians and that would be a bit different alright.

A number of teachers had noticed that children were being encouraged by their parents to focus on learning English in order to succeed at school.

SBT2: But I think most of the parents want them to succeed so much at school, that they are speaking English to them at home now – of course they want to keep their native culture and everything and their own native language, but I think they want them to succeed so much that they are speaking more English to them at home now as well.

SDT1: No – especially not the Irish and see with the Polish, or we'll say the non-nationals – they're being encouraged to learn English at school – I had the parents come in at the start of the year asking when will they be doing their own English classes, will they be taken out for their own English lessons and you know, we really want them to learn English and whatever.

At the same time, some teachers noticed that the home language was being maintained actively by some families, in conjunction with the English language.

SBT1: There's one that definitely does [*value the home language*], Naomi definitely does – one of my little girls she's from Bangladesh and her mother has virtually no English so when she comes up to me Naomi will speak for her – so the child translates.

SBT2: Well definitely, all of them speak their native language in the home but when they're speaking to their parents in the school situation they speak English to each other but not in the home.

SBT1: To have an inclusion built in then the main responsibility would be on the parents like if they want them to still maintain their own language well then obviously I think that's their responsibility but then that's would be my opinion.

SDT2: I suppose it's just the way that they're reinforcing it as you say in both languages for the child.

SDT1: Maybe that's the best opportunity going – let them learn the whole thing twice.

SDT2: As I say I haven't seen any story books being brought it that are in a different language but it wouldn't surprise me if at home that is what's being done.

SDT1: but I'd say they kind of it's part of family life too – and I'd say they don't want to lose it either – they don't want their own children to not know – like that little fella that was here has Polish and English and he has the same level of both but his mother speaks to him all in Polish and his father speaks to him all in English. His mother and father speak to each other in English and Polish – so they're keeping their own bit up all the time.

Many of the parents mentioned by the teachers seemed to have much less English than the children themselves.

SBT3: But her mother – I'm still not sure how much English she has – we don't really talk that much, she doesn't come to me... but I know they do speak Cantonese because I've seen them speak Cantonese in the morning to each other [...] I've asked the little Chinese girl to write her name in Cantonese but she won't – judging by the work that was put into her writing English before coming to school I'd be very surprised if she couldn't.

SDT2: Yeah but the parents are obviously going to be a huge influence as you said 'cos if the parents are making an effort I'm not saying the child's going to come on but like that the two Polish that I have, it's Polish as soon as they walk out that door – and obviously they would socialise with Polish children outside of school so whatever they're learning is just in school like.

SCT1: Well among the Polish children, things are much more difficult for them when they come into school – would ye agree?

SCT3: Yeah – a lot of the parents don't have any English.

In one school it was mentioned that classes were being provided for parents to learn English.

SDT2: There are classes being offered to the parents here for free to actually learn English so that's great. So I'm saying that's a great incentive you know it's free so any parent that's finding that their child is coming home and saying words in English that the parents don't understand it's a great incentive for them to want to learn English.

SDT1: And it's a great opportunity.

SDT2: Now I don't know about the classes and how many have taken up that offer but I'd love to know how many parents have taken up that offer.

One teacher was concerned about the fact that the parents could speak English quite fluently, but had not taught their children English before coming to school. This directly contrasts with the opinion of SCT1 and SCT3 that the Polish parents didn't seem to have much English.

SDT1: It takes a while for it to actually stick – and then once it does they're flying it – but what I've noticed here is there's 3 out of 4 of my parents with exceptionally good English and the children have nothing – their own children – the Polish people have very good English – they'll come in and chat away to me like how are you, how's he getting on and everything, blah, blah – the children haven't a word. They've never taught their children and of the words to use in English and they're living here like. So it seems very strange – you know and they'll – I don't know why they do that.

SDT1: Like I've said it to a few of them last year – like Yan's father has good English or whatever and I said you know try speaking English to him at home and he said but my wife has none he said so it is unfair – and I said could you not teach her at the same time aswell, could ye all have one big session –

The children of African heritage were mentioned as being likely to speak more English in the home than African languages.

SBT3: The little Nigerian boy – I'm not sure cos his little brother, a toddler was in today and he was speaking English, so I think they're teaching them through English.

SCT1: It's mixed languages, you know. There are 50 languages in Nigeria alone I think.

SCT5: They speak English too.

SCT1: You see sometimes [*they're speaking Nigerian languages at home*] – but they will never speak it at school – never.

SCT1: Yeah – and if you ask the parents [*of African heritage*] what language they speak at home., they will always say English – they will never accept – well we can hear the parents in the yard talking to each other in different languages.

## **5.7 Planning for inclusion of children with EAL**

The purpose of this section is to explore the extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular with regard to whole school and in-class planning.

Teachers from all the schools where interviews were conducted seemed to have similar concerns around the issue of planning for inclusion of children with EAL. The thing these teachers seemed to need most of was time. The issue of time came up for planning and for getting things covered in class.

SBT1: Obviously at infant level you've got so many different issues like you've got Irish children who'll be weak readers or writers who you'll need to give extra attention to and I suppose it's a case of there aren't enough hours in the day to do everything all the time.

SCT5: Yeah it just takes time like because then you're there trying to, say, find resources that will help you to teach things and you know I find that I need a lot more pictures and a lot more resources, a lot more – like even we were doing something on the squirrel the other day and I had a puppet of one so I used that and they actually knew what I was talking about rather than just sticking up a picture and saying this is a squirrel. They could actually see it and... You know it actually does it does take a bit more time; you've put more thought into it.

SCT3: And then there's time out of your teaching day when they do all go out for Language. You're only left with so many kids, so you're not going to do something major in that time. So like our day is quite short.

SCT1, 2, 4, 5 [*nodding in agreement*]

SCT3: And you're expected to do so much in it but like there's a good half hour gone out of it that you're only left with you know – like you're not going to go on and do Maths or another letter in English or anything while they're gone

SCT1, 2, 4, 5 [*nodding in agreement*]

Teachers also commented on the fact that planning for inclusion and indeed planning in general tended to take place after school and was initiated by the teachers themselves.

SCT1: [*referring to planning*] It's all after school really. I mean, things are initiated during DEIS meetings or staff meetings, but like it's all down to ourselves after that – after school and at night. We communicate by email in the school because there is such a big staff. Most of our communication is email-based so like I'd say 80% of us are sending emails at home at night and that's basically how information gets around but we have a lot of DEIS meetings, we have a lot of involvement in DEIS programmes and things like that so you know we'll say the DEIS planning requires that you have to have action plans and you have to plan different things. So you have to have an action plan in place and somebody's responsible for that and there's a group around every action plan. So for example, we had one in infants this year for Jolly Phonics and it was the responsibility of the Early Literacy Education post-holder in the school to co-ordinate that. So she co-ordinated it and we all helped her to write the plan and then we all sat down one evening after school and discussed how we were going to deliver it. So it's usually after school. This hour, we get a lot done in infants this hour.

SCT3: They go every day then for English lessons out to the Language Support teacher so usually I kind of tell her what I'm doing and she'll mirror that especially now with the phonics scheme that we're using – she uses that with them cos they need it. They don't seem to understand, so 'I' would be 'e' for them, things like that.

## 5.8 Training and Resources

The purpose of this section is to explore the extent to which child speakers of EAL are being supported by the whole school community, in particular with regard to pre-service and in-service training offered to teachers, resources available from government bodies and other resources made available by the school.

Many of the comments made by the teachers interviewed related to their lack of training in the area of EAL, regardless of where they had received their ITE.

SBT2: No not enough I don't think anyway I trained in [*ITE in Republic of Ireland*] - it would have been kind of integrated with things – it would have been mentioned as part of different subjects – and even through TP [*Teaching Practice*] like you'd be learning through your TP like because obviously in Limerick there would have been lots of foreign nationals in the classes so maybe that's what I remember learning – learning by doing if you know what I mean, being on TP.

SBT2: No there definitely wasn't enough.

SBT3: I did a post grad so there's a lot squashed into 18 months – saying that though we did a special module in special needs for 6 or 8 weeks – there would have been a tiny bit in that but not with a particular focus on children learning English as a second language.

SBT3: On this, no. That would definitely be a help [*in-service training*].

SDT1: No! Nothing [*training in college*].

SDT2: Nothing – and we're both relatively recently trained – both out 4 years

SDT2: We didn't at all [*when I trained in England*].

SDT1: Of course you could like [*have done with some training*]

SDT2: Yeah! Sure off we go on our own- so whatever way we decide to reinforce or try and overcome that barrier but you don't receive much training – I'd say now there's probably more lectures I'm sure but maybe more in relation to differentiation and special needs.

Some teachers did mention that it had been mentioned as part of modules in literacy, but often not explicitly.

SAT3: I remember it [*children with EAL*] being mentioned a lot in English lectures – and we actually had to work with an EAL child and monitor their progress over 9 weeks in the school - but I can never remember having any specific lectures - I do remember them being mentioned a lot, but I think that might be because there's so many in England – like I'd have a class of 27 on TP and maybe only 6 would be actually English.

SBT1: I did kind of one of my modules – it was second language acquisition and it was kind of based on Gaeilge but there was mention of children who have EAL [...] he would have done a lot of like just even English as a Second Language and would have given us a lot of techniques just for the teaching of English that would be quite useful with children acquiring it as a second language – just even like games and onset and rime and all that stuff to get the language but I don't think there's enough in college.

Two teachers thought that it needs to be included in the future as an aspect of ITE and offered suggestions for moving forward with that.

SBT3: Well I think now that Ireland has changed a lot in the last 5 years I do think that we're not equipped enough you know that it should really be part of training I mean we're trained now so you can't really say it should have been there but for future teachers, or even in-service days".

SDT1: Even in college would they not even have done a TEFL course you know, ran that or something.

Many of the teachers had not used any of the NCCA documents such as the *EAL Guidelines*, the *Intercultural Guidelines*, or *Up and Away*.

SAT1: I think we were given something into our cubby hole – I'm aware of them [*EAL Guidelines*] I'm aware they're there but I've never actually used them

SAT1, 2, 3, 4: No [never used the *Intercultural Guidelines*].

SAT1, 2, 3, 4: I don't know [about the *European Language Portfolio*].

SBT1: Well I know we studied it [*Intercultural Guidelines*] for a special education exam but that was like 3 years ago.

SBT2: A folder arrived but to be honest like not enough.

SBT1, 3: No [*Up and Away*].

SBT2: No – they're probably in the school somewhere [the ELP and UP and Away] you know but being perfectly honest no I haven't read them.

SDT2: Not really now to be honest about it. I know what they are, I know what they look like but I haven't really made much reference to them

SDT1, 2: No [not aware of the *EAL Guidelines*].

Other teachers mentioned the fact that while there may or may not be a policy dealing with multiculturalism or EAL within the school, they tended not to refer to them for guidance.

SAT1: We have – but we have so many policies! To be honest you go into your room and you close the door and don't think about policies – I don't know whether we have one or not.

SBT2: You should really [*know about the policies and resources*]. I mean between every policy that's in the school you know there's so many.

Some teachers were aware of these resources and mentioned that they were being used by the LS teacher. They also mentioned other resources used by themselves and the LS teachers.

SDT1: Oh there probably is like [*documents to support EAL*].

SDT2: Oh yeah [*Intercultural Guidelines*].

SCT1: Well they're doing the *Primary Assessment Kit* at the moment and they're using *Up and Away*, but they also write their own programme – we can give you a copy if you like – they write their own programme in that they do themes, so that we can tie those themes in with our SESE or our theme of the week or whatever we're doing – and they give us that so there's great communication there aswell.

One teacher mentioned the fact that certain documents are available to parents in various languages.

SDT1: We have our registration forms in Polish as well and in Latvian.

While in another school, the availability of a Polish speaker was seen to have a positive effect on the provision of services to parents.

SCT5: We're actually very lucky that there's a Polish girl working in the pre-school and she does after-school too so I know that's I had one parents whose child started who didn't have any English so I ended up taking him over to Katie and Katie translated the whole thing, which was perfect. I had 3 or 4 forms I needed him to sign, he signed every single one of them – whereas I'd spent the whole day before trying to explain to him what it was about and he didn't have a clue what was going on. So that was very good. We're lucky in that sense that we have Kasha but not every school has that facility.

SCT1: Like in terms of communicating I think every school should have access to some kind of a translator for communication with the parents.



## **5.9 Summary of findings from focus group interviews**

The findings from this chapter are best summarised in terms of their relationship to the research questions. Each one is addressed in turn.

### **5.9.1 What are teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL?**

A number of comments made by teachers indicated that they felt it was of utmost importance that the children continue to speak English at home and at school. A high proportion of comments were also made regarding the active promotion of the home language and home culture in the classroom. This was due to teachers' opinions that it would help with the children with their metalinguistic awareness and language development in general, that multilingualism would be valuable for them in the future and that from a cultural point of view it would also benefit the other children in the class. A number of teachers were willing to learn and use some phrases in the children's L1 and felt that when the children started school it would be appropriate to allow them to use their L1 when necessary. However, a number of teachers felt that although maintaining and encouraging the home language would be nice, it would be very difficult to do in reality, and that the overloaded curriculum certainly would not help them in this. Some teachers felt that they did not need to encourage the speakers of EAL to maintain their home language actively and in fact some thought it would be confusing for the children to promote the use of their home language in the classroom.

### **5.9.2 To what extent are speakers of EAL being supported by the Whole School Community?**

Many of the teachers commented on the fact that they had noticed how much the parents appreciate what is being done at school and commented on the level of support being received from parents. A number of teachers commented on language and cultural differences causing a breakdown in communication at times, and stated that cultural

differences often occurred depending on nationality due to a lack of understanding on the part of the teacher and sometimes, the parent. These misunderstandings were sometimes avoided where a translator or translated documents were available. Some teachers commented on the parents' wishes to have English promoted in school and out of school and the school providing English classes for parents of children with EAL. Many of the parents mentioned by the teachers seemed to have much less English than the children themselves although comments were made about the high levels of English some parents seemed to have in comparison with their children. Teachers were found to be spending time planning for inclusion after school and on a sporadic basis in conjunction with the LS teacher. Most of the teachers reported not having received any training in the area of EAL and many had not used any of the NCCA documents such as the EAL guidelines, the Intercultural Guidelines, or Up and Away, although some teachers had. Other in-school resources were mentioned by teachers but policies were referred to once or twice as being resources not referred to often.

### **5.9.3 What are teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?**

Teachers' comments about the level of English acquired by children in their classes were generally positive, although not as positive about their comments about the level of Irish acquired by that cohort. These comments were generally positive where the children had lived in Ireland for a period of time prior to starting school, or where they had been born in Ireland, whereas other teachers found that things were difficult for the children at the start, particularly when no English was spoken at home. Some teachers found that the rate of acquisition was improving as a result of extra support, and that those who were receiving little or no LS were finding things difficult. One teacher commented that the basic vocabulary was coming along and there were mixed feelings about how problematic phonics seemed to be for the children.

#### **5.9.4 What are teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants?**

Most of the comments made by teachers on the children's ability to acquire Irish were positive. In fact, many teachers commented on their opinions that knowing more than one language helps you to learn another. Pronunciation is one aspect where teachers noted the speakers of EAL excelled. Some teachers would equate the achievement in Gaeilge of the speakers of EAL with that of the native English speakers. A level of enjoyment of Gaeilge was noted, and related to the communicative approach to teaching Gaeilge at this level. A few negative comments were made about the rate of acquisition among speakers of EAL. These were primarily due to children joining late in the school year, and in one situation, the children having been withdrawn for Language Support during Irish lessons all the way through Junior Infants. One or two teachers did note the type of confusion that can occur between Irish and English, and the fact that the children distinguish between English and Irish, calling Gaeilge the 'other English'.

#### **5.10 Conclusion**

The comments made by teachers of Junior and Senior Infant classes during focus group interviews were presented in this chapter using the themes which emerged from analysis. A full discussion on these findings in relation to the research questions posed at the outset and implications for policy and practice is outlined in Chapters 8 and 9. The following chapter will present findings from the questionnaire administered to teachers of Junior Infants.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter findings from the questionnaire (c.f. Appendix E) sent to teachers of Junior Infants classes are presented. The responses of the teachers are presented under headings similar to those used in the questionnaire. As discussed in Chapter Four, the questionnaire was sent to a nationwide sample of 500 primary schools. The total response for the questionnaire was 54.6% (273 questionnaires). Of these, 99 (36.3%) were valid. This brings the total percentage of returned valid questionnaires to 19.8%.

The central aim of Phase II of the research was to gather some larger-scale data on the research questions to complement and build on data gathered during focus group interviews. Furthermore, the individual language profiles of children's English and Irish language ability sought to complement and provide a foundation for future work carried out during classroom observation.

#### **6.2 Findings from Section A Part 1**

In this section the responses of teachers regarding Questions 1-14 will be presented in order to detail background information about the teachers and schools who took part in the questionnaire, as well as the home languages spoken by children in the relevant Junior Infant classes and resources available to teachers to support them. Where graphs are not available in the main body of the text it is indicated that they are appended in Appendix F.

##### **6.2.1 The schools**

All teachers responded to the questions regarding school category and school gender category. 72.7% (n=72) of schools were found to be mainstream, while 26.3% (n=26)

were designated as DEIS<sup>25</sup> schools. One other type of school was recorded as a model school<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 1, Appendix F).

The majority of schools, 85.9% (n=85) were co-educational, while 6.1% (n=6) were single-sex (boys only) and 8.1% (n=8) were single-sex (girls only) (Fig. 2, Appendix F). Four of the schools recorded as co-educational noted that from Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class they are co-educational, branching into single sex from 3<sup>rd</sup> class onwards.

The majority of teachers had single-stream classes, with 66.7% (n=66) of respondents to Question 11 having Junior Infants only. The rest of the classes were multi-class situations. A quarter of teachers had Junior and Senior Infants, while 7.1% (n=7) of teachers had Junior and Senior Infants and 1<sup>st</sup> class, and only one teacher had Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class (Fig. 3, Appendix F).

The majority of teachers had relatively small classes in comparison with the DES class ratio of 27:1 at the start of that academic year (2008) as evidenced by responses to Question 12. 33.3% (n=33) of classes had between 16 and 20 children, while a further 30.3% (n=30) of classes fell within the 21-25 range. A quarter of classes had between 16 and 30 children, while 2% (n=2) of classes had 31 or more children. There was one class that had 10 or less children – upon further examination, this class was a special class within a mainstream school (Fig. 4, Appendix F).

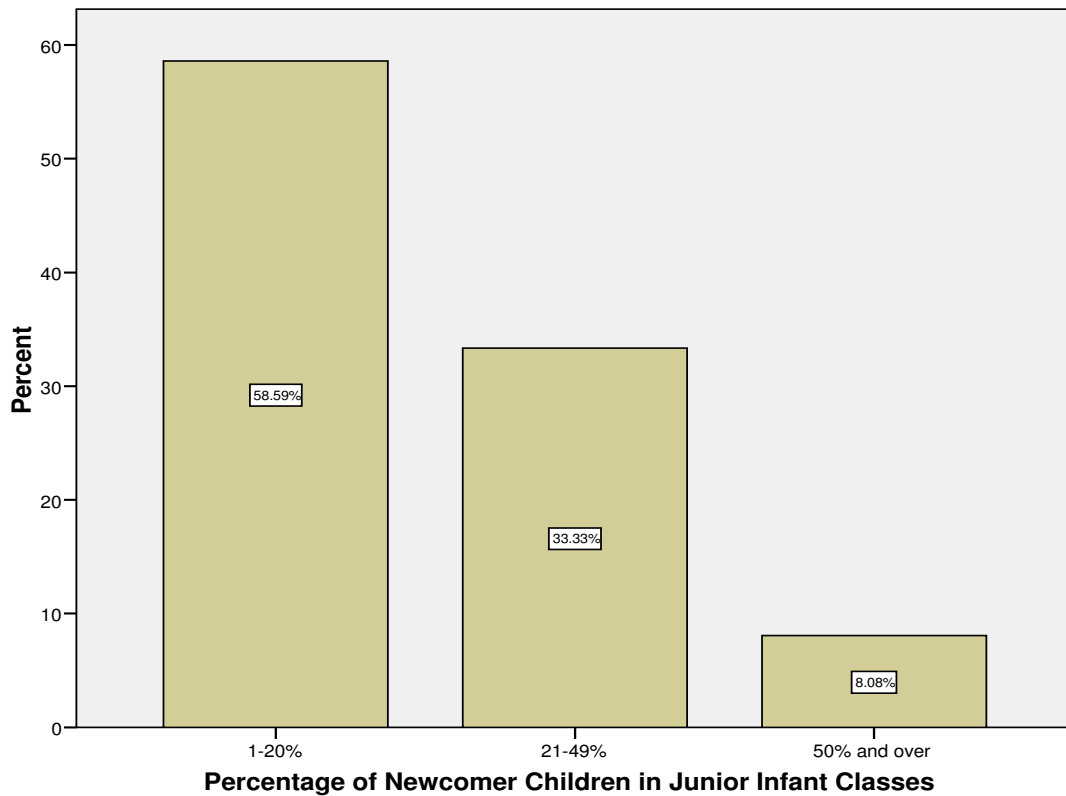
Numbers derived from Question 13 are of relevance here. 58.6% (n=58) of classes had between 1 and 20% of children who spoke home languages other than English (HLOTE) as a home language. 33.3% (n=33) of classes had between 21 and 49% of children who spoke HLOTE, and a further 8.1% (n=8) of classes had over 50% of children speaking HLOTE. In three cases this number ran to up to 76.9%; in fact one class which had 26-30 children had 76.9% of children speaking HLOTE (Fig. 1).

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<sup>25</sup> Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) provides a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme. 311 primary schools are under the DEIS action plan for educational inclusion.

<sup>26</sup> While the vast majority of schools in the Republic of Ireland are owned by the religious denominations, nine are model schools, meaning they are owned by the State and dating from before independence.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Newcomer children in Junior Infant classes**



Classes with a higher proportion of children speaking LOTE at home were much more likely to be in DEIS schools, and a Pearson correlation indicated this correlation to be significant at the 0.01 level. 62.5% (n=5) of classes with 50% newcomer children were in DEIS schools, compared with 37.5% (n=3) of mainstream schools, while 15.3% of classes with 1-20% newcomer children were in DEIS schools, compared with 84.7% (n=50) of mainstream schools.

### **6.2.2 The Teachers**

All teachers who responded were female. One respondent failed to respond to Question 6 regarding age. Of those who responded, the majority of teachers of Junior Infants were

relatively young – 27.6% (n=27) of teachers were between 18 and 25, while 19.2% (n=19) were between 26 and 30 years old. The next largest categories were of teachers aged between 31-35 and 46-50, with 15.3% (n=15) and 11.2% (n=11) of the responses respectively.

All respondents answered Question 7, regarding teaching qualification. It was found that the most common qualification among the respondents was a Bachelor of Education, with 67.7% (n=67) of the total population having this as their highest qualification (Fig. 5, Appendix F). 11.1% (n=11) of respondents reported having the Graduate Diploma in Education. A total of 7.1% (n=7) of respondents reported having the Postgraduate Certificate in Education, thereby indicating that their qualification came from the United Kingdom, while 8.1% (n=8) of respondents had a Master's Degree in Education. 2% (n=2) of respondents had no teaching qualification, although one respondent did indicate that she had a BA in International Studies, while 3% (n=3) reported having an 'other' qualification – in each case, the qualification of NT was specified<sup>27</sup>.

With regard to Question 8, indicating length of service, the majority of teachers had less than 10 years of experience (Fig. 6, Appendix F). 40.4% (n=40) of respondents indicated having 5 years or less of teaching experience, while 21.2% (n=21) of teachers indicated having between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience. At the other end of the scale, quite a large number of respondents had over 20 years of teaching experience, with 28.3% (n=28) of teachers choosing this category.

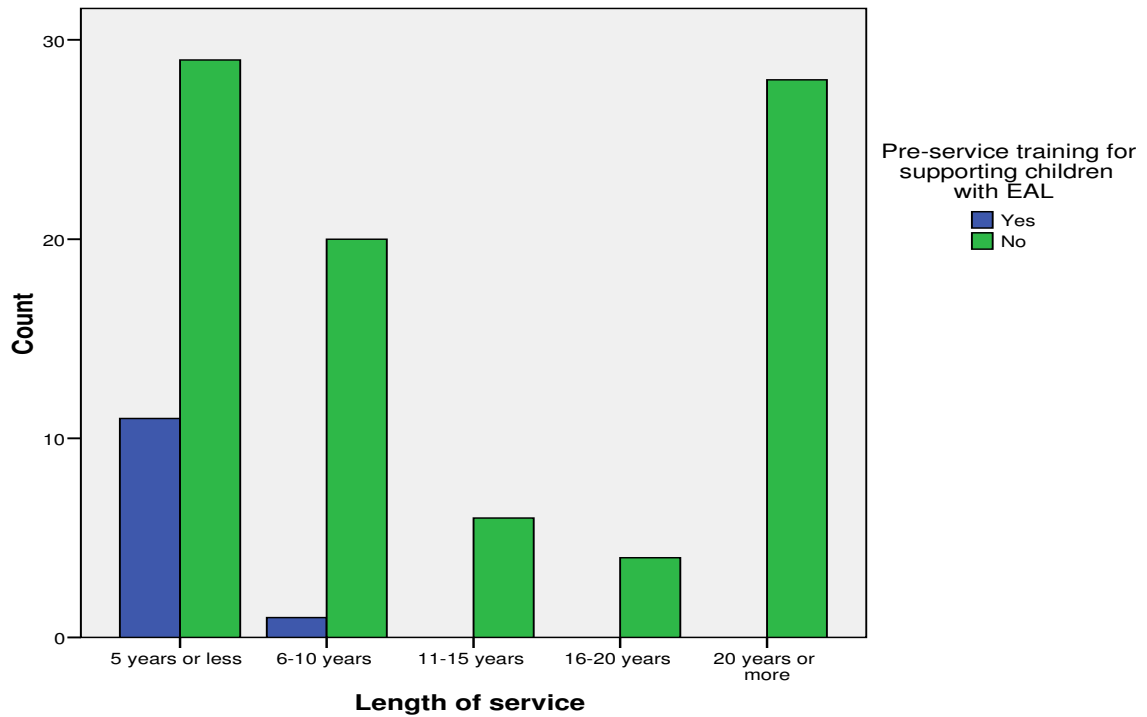
The vast majority of teachers indicated receiving no pre-service training for facilitating children with EAL, with 87.9% (n=87) of respondents indicating this response. A similar response was indicated for teachers receiving in-service training, with 90.9% (n=90) of teachers stating that they had received no in-service training. Of those who responded positively to this question, 9.1% (n=9), 3 respondents stated that they had engaged in CPD through online DES-approved summer courses.

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<sup>27</sup> NT stands for National Teacher and was the standard qualification achieved by primary school teachers prior to the introduction on the Bachelor of Education degree in 1979.

All of the teachers who had received pre-service training had been teaching for 10 years or less, while 91.7% (n=11) of the teachers who responded positively to this question had been teaching for 5 years or less (Fig. 2).

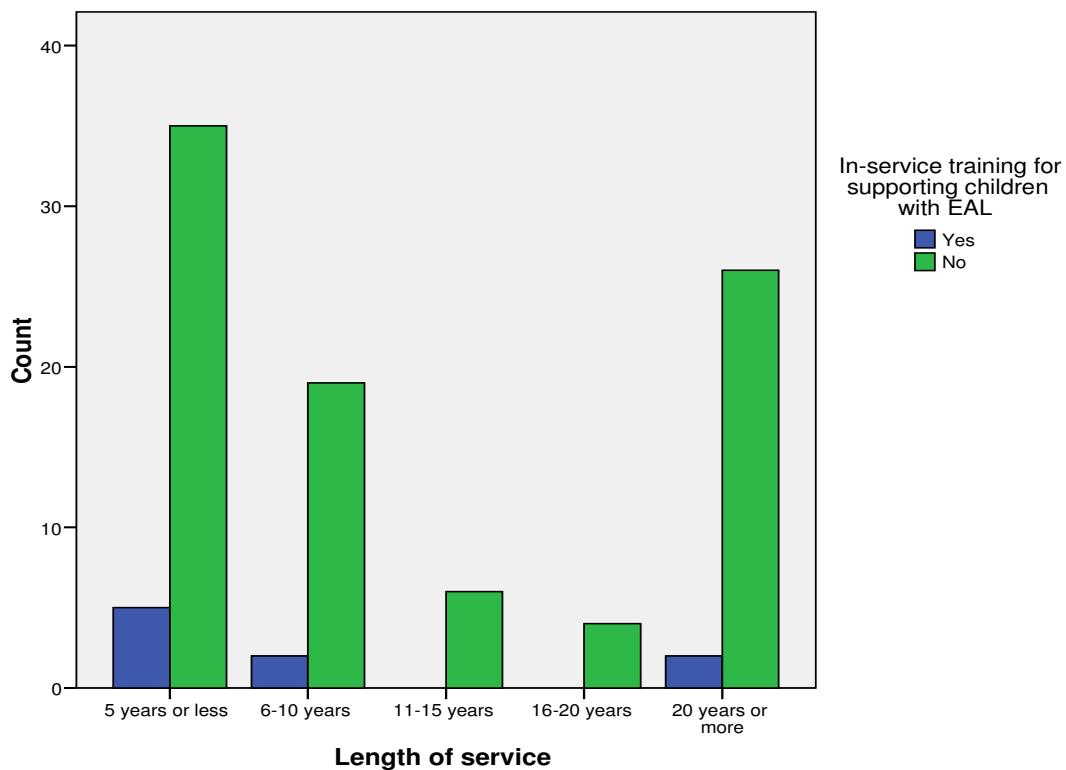
**Figure 2: Pre-service training in relation to length of service**



With regard to in-service training, again the majority of those who had received in-service training had been teaching for 5 years or less (55.6% or n=5 of those who responded positively), with 22.2% (n=2) of those teachers who had been teaching for 6-10 years and the same number of those who had 20 or more years of teaching experience stating that they had received in-service training (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3: In-service training in relation to length of service**



### 6.2.3 Languages spoken in class and resources available

Table 6.1 shows the languages spoken within the classes surveyed (Question 13). A total of 2194 children in 99 classes were included. Of these children, 1746 spoke English as a HL and 448 HLOTE. It is clear that Polish was the language most widely spoken within these classrooms, as 26.1% (n=117) of HLOTE speakers had this as their HL. African languages were spoken by 16.7% (n=75) of HLOTE speakers. The languages spoken, where specified, included Afrikaans (1), Swahili (1), Somali (1), Unspecified Nigerian language (3), Unspecified Kenyan language (1), and Unspecified Ghanaian language (1). Lithuanian is spoken by 9.8% (n=44) of speakers of HLOTE, while Romanian ranks 4<sup>th</sup> on the list with 30 speakers, or 6.7% of HLOTE speakers. Tagalog, the Filipino language, was spoken by 5.4% (n=24) of HLOTE speakers, while Pakistani languages were spoken by a similar number, with 23 speakers or 5.1%. Pakistani languages were identified in

some cases by teachers as Urdu (5) and Sindhi (1). French was spoken by 3.8% (n=17) of the HLOTE population and Latvian and Indian languages were each spoken by 3.6% (n=16) of the group. Indian languages, where specified, included Arabic (1) Hindi (1) and Bengali (2). Russian was spoken by 3.1% (n=14) of the children with HLOTE in classes surveyed, while Chinese was spoken by 2.9% (n=13). German was spoken by 2.2% (n=10) of the children with HLOTE. Spanish and Slovakian [sic] were each spoken by 1.6% (n=7) of HLOTE speakers and Portuguese was spoken by a further 1.3% (n=3).

After that, the numbers start to decrease, and it can be seen that Albanian, Vietnamese, Hungarian and Arabic were each spoken by 0.7% (n=3) of the HLOTE population. It should be noted that although Arabic was mentioned as an Indian language by one respondent, the 3 respondents who classified it as an 'other' language spoken did not do so in an Indian context. Gaelge, Italian, Czech, Kurdistan [sic] were each spoken by 2 HLOTE speakers. It was decided to include Gaelge as a HLOTE, but not to include it for general analysis as it is taught in schools anyway. The following languages had only one speaker among the 2194 children included; Slovenian, Greek, Ukrainian, Swedish, Thai, Armenian, Japanese, Moldovan and Mauritian Creole. While Moldovan and Romanian are identical languages, it was decided to include them separately for the purposes of this analysis, in order to respect what the parents or guardians have chosen to name the language for the teacher. In Section 6.4.2, Romanian and Moldovan will be included under one category for sociolinguistic analysis.

**Table 6.1: Home Language other than English spoken by children in Junior Infants**

	Home Language spoken other than English (HLOTE)	Number of speakers	Proportion within HLOTE	Proportion within HLOTE + English
1	Polish	117	26.1%	5.3%
2	African languages	75	16.7%	3.4%
3	Lithuanian	44	9.8%	2%
4	Romanian	30	6.7%	1.4%
5	Tagalog	24	5.4%	1.1%
6	Pakistani languages	23	5.1%	1%
7	French	17	3.8%	0.8%
8	Latvian	16	3.6%	0.7%
8	Indian languages	16	3.6%	0.7%
9	Russian	14	3.1%	0.6%
10	Chinese	13	2.9%	0.6%
11	German	10	2.2%	0.5%
12	Spanish	7	1.6%	0.3%
12	Slovak	7	1.6%	0.3%
13	Portuguese	6	1.3%	0.3%
14	Albanian	3	0.7%	0.1%
14	Vietnamese	3	0.7%	0.1%
14	Hungarian	3	0.7%	0.1%
14	Arabic	3	0.7%	0.1%
15	Gaeilge	2	0.4%	0.1%
15	Italian	2	0.4%	0.1%
15	Czech	2	0.4%	0.1%
15	Kurdish	2	0.4%	0.1%
16	Slovenian	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Greek	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Ukrainian	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Swedish	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Thai	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Armenian	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Japanese	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Moldovan	1	0.2%	0.05%
16	Mauritian Creole	1	0.2%	0.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31 languages excluding Gaeilge</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 6.2.4 Resources used by teachers

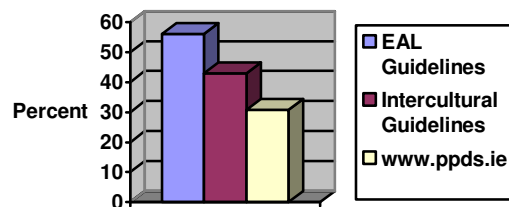
84 teachers responded to Question 14 (a), regarding the use of the *EAL Guidelines* (NCCA, 2006) as a resource. Of those who responded, 56% (n=47) of them said that they had used the resource for planning activities, while 44% (n=37) responded that they had not used it.

70 teachers responded to Question 14 (b), regarding the use of the *Intercultural Guidelines* (NCCA, 2005) as a resource. Of those who responded, a less positive result was recorded, with 42.9% (n=30) responding positively and 57.1% (n=40) responding negatively.

Only 52 teachers responded to Question 14(c), regarding the use of [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie) as a resource. Of those who responded, an even lower result was recorded, with only 30.8% (n=16) stating that they had used the website, and 69.2% (n=36) stating that they had not.

These figures have been collapsed into one graph representing the percentage of teachers who have used these resources (Fig. 4)

**Figure 4: Percentage of teachers who stated that they use EAL Guidelines, Intercultural Guidelines and [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie) as a resource**



There was a space for teachers to identify other resources used if applicable. 22 teachers availed of this option and while some teachers mentioned one resource, others mentioned many more. The IILT resources including *Up and Away* were mentioned four times and extra resources such as pictures, toys, dress-up clothes and other visual resources were mentioned five times. Three references were made to the support teacher being a resource and four teachers mentioned extra explanations, individual attention and modification of language and lessons as being a requirement. ICT support in the form of websites and CD-ROMs were mentioned on three occasions while stories, rhymes and songs were specified twice. Other resources include the EAL school plan, methodologies and theories learned while completing a Master's degree in second language teaching and

learning, basic English word books and the Jolly Phonics programme, all of which were mentioned once by the teachers who responded.

### **6.2.5 Summary of Section A Part 1**

The majority of schools were found to be mainstream, while just over one quarter were designated as DEIS schools. Most were co-educational schools, with a larger minority of girls only schools. Two thirds of classes taught were single-stream. The majority of teachers had relatively small classes with almost two thirds having between 16 and 26 children, below the DES average. The majority of schools, almost 60%, had Junior Infant classes with between 1% and 20% of children speaking HLOTE. 8.1% of classes had over 50% of children speaking HLOTE and classes with a higher proportion of children speaking HLOTE were much more likely to be in DEIS schools.

All teachers who responded were female and the majority of teachers of Junior Infants were relatively young with almost 50% of teachers under the age of 30. The most common teaching qualification was the B.Ed., with over two thirds of teachers having this as their highest qualification. The majority of teachers (over 60%) had less than 10 years of experience teaching, with most of them having 5 years or less of experience, although this was balanced out by almost 30% of teachers having 20 years or more of teaching experience. An overwhelming majority of teachers indicated receiving no pre-service training or in-service for facilitating children with EAL, and all of the teachers who had received pre-service training had been teaching for 10 years or less, with most of that group having taught for five years or less. A similar response was noted for in-service training, although a small number of teachers with more experience had availed of CPD in this area.

Polish was the language most widely spoken within the classrooms surveyed, with over one quarter of speakers of HLOTE in Junior Infants speaking that language. African languages were the next most commonly spoken languages but were specified by only 8 of the respondents. Third on the list is Lithuanian which was spoken by almost 10% of

speakers of HLOTE, while Romanian ranks 4<sup>th</sup> on the list with almost 7%. Tagalog and Pakistani languages were each spoken by just over 5% of the children in classrooms surveyed. French, Latvian and Indian languages were spoken by similar numbers of children, each claiming almost 4% of the population and Russian and Chinese were spoken by approximately 3% of the population. A further 20 languages were spoken by children in the classes surveyed.

Of the resources used by teachers as identified on the questionnaire, the most commonly used one was the *EAL Guidelines* although not overwhelmingly so. The other two, the *Intercultural Guidelines* and [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie) were more commonly not referred to than referred to by the teachers surveyed. A number of other resources were identified by teachers, including most commonly the IILT resources including *Up and Away*, individual attention and extra explanation, planned activities with support teachers and ICT resources.

### **6.3 Findings from Section A Part 2 and Section C**

This section which derives mainly from Question 15 can be broadly divided into the following sections, although there may be some overlap:

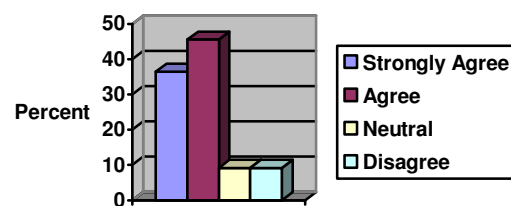
- Teachers' experiences of the HLOTE and parents
- Teachers' experiences of culture, identity and the HL
- Teacher's experiences of the HL in relation to English and Gaeilge
- Teachers' experiences of the HL, school and society

It was also decided to include Section C for analysis in this section of the chapter as it relates thematically to the issues raised above. Teachers were asked to indicate their personal attitudes towards languages specified in the questionnaire.

### 6.3.1 HLOTE and parents

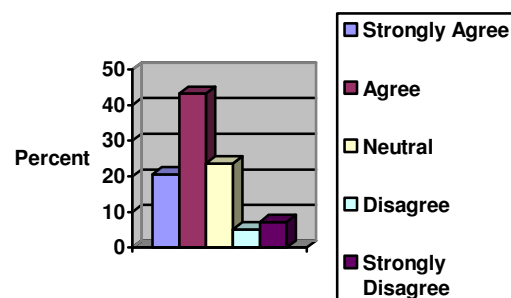
The vast majority of respondents felt that HL maintenance is the responsibility of the parents, with 36.4% (n=36) strongly agreeing and 45.5% (n=45) agreeing. 9.1% (n=9) disagreed with the statement, while a further 9.9% (n=9) were neutral (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5: “Home language maintenance is the responsibility of the parents”**



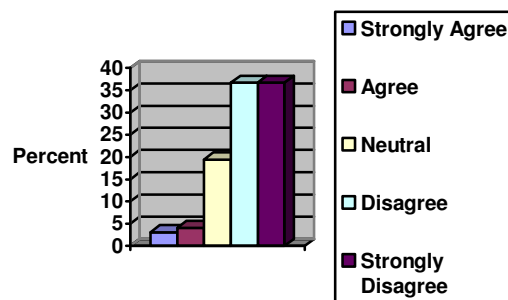
Not all respondents chose to answer (b), but with regard to talking with parents about planning for children both learning English and maintaining their HL, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with 43.3% (n=42) falling into the first category and 20.6% (n=20) into the latter. Almost a quarter of respondents were neutral on this statement, with 23.7% (n=23), while a smaller proportion of respondents did not agree, with 5.2% (n=5) disagreeing and 7.2% (n=7) strongly disagreeing (Fig. 6).

**Figure 6: “I talk with parents to plan on how we can help their children learn English and maintain their home language”**



Responses show that teachers felt parents were interested in their children’s maintenance of the HL. While one response was missing, 72.8% (n=72) felt or felt strongly that parents were interested in this issue, while a much smaller proportion of 3.3% (n=3) felt strongly that parents were not interested and 4.1% (n=4) also felt so. Almost one fifth of respondents were neutral on this issue (Fig. 7).

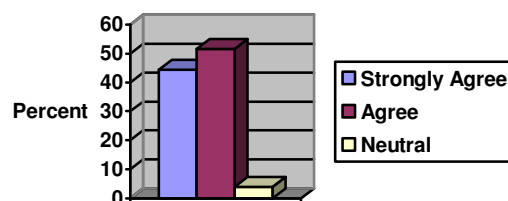
**Figure 7: “Parents do not seem to be interested in their children’s maintenance of the home language”**



### 6.3.2 Culture, identity and the HL

The vast majority of respondents felt that the maintenance of the HL is important for the child’s development of identity, with 44.4% (n=44) strongly agreeing and 51.5% (n=51) agreeing with the statement. Only 4% (n=4) of respondents were neutral, and no respondents disagreed with the statement (Fig. 8).

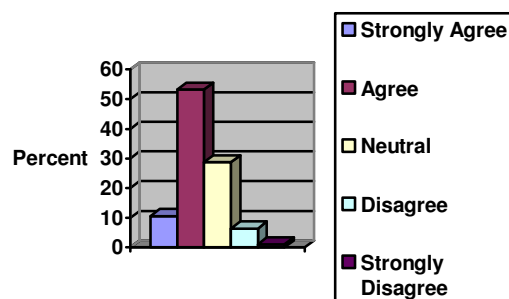
**Figure 8: “The maintenance of the home language is important for the child’s development of his or her identity”**





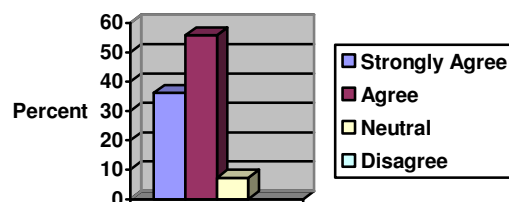
Five respondents did not answer (g). However, of those who did respond, most teachers had their pupils share their HL and home culture whenever they get a chance, with 10.6% (n=10) strongly agreeing and 53.2% (n=50) agreeing. 6.4% (n=6) of respondents disagreed with this statement, while only one respondent strongly disagreed. A relatively large proportion remained neutral on the issue, with 27.3% (n=27) of respondents choosing this option (Fig. 9).

**Figure 9: “In class, I have my pupils share their home language and culture every chance I get”**



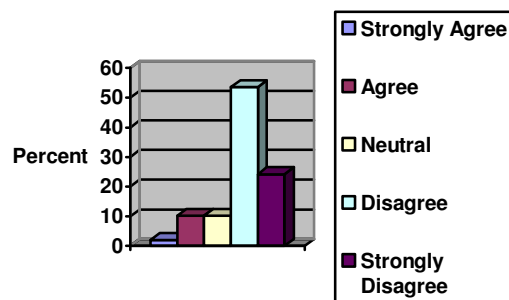
While two respondents chose not to answer k, it appears that the majority of teachers praised the children for knowing another language and culture. 55.7% (n=54) of teachers agreed with the statement, while a further 36.1% (n=35) strongly agreed. Only one respondent disagreed, while a further 7.2% (n=7) remained neutral (Fig. 10).

**Figure 10: “I praise the children for knowing another language and culture”**



Most teachers felt that encouraging children to maintain their HL would not prevent them from acculturating into this society. In total, 77.7% (n=77) felt this to be the case. Only two respondents felt strongly that children’s maintenance of the HL would prevent them from acculturating into this society, while another 10.1% (n=10) also felt so. Again, 10.1% (n=10) were neutral on the issue (Fig. 11).

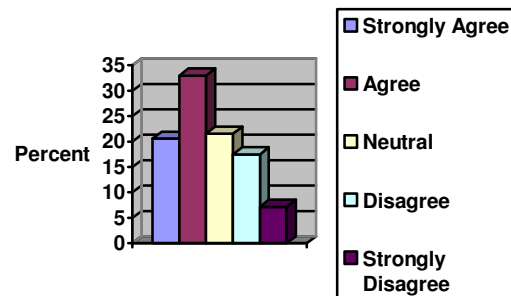
**Figure 11: “Encouraging the children to maintain their home language will prevent them from fully acculturating into this society”**



### 6.3.3 HL in relation to English and Gaelige

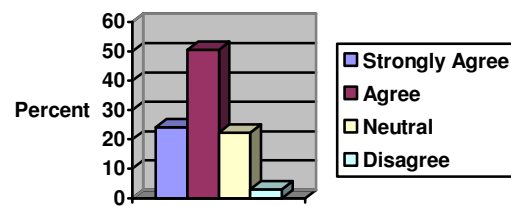
Of the 97 responses, over half of the teachers advised parents to help their children to learn English faster by speaking English in the home. 20.6% (n=20) teachers strongly agreed with this statement, while 33% (n=32) agreed. At the same time, approximately one quarter of teachers disagreed with the statement, with 17.5% (n=17) disagreeing and a further 7.2% (n=7) strongly disagreeing. A relatively high proportion of teachers, 21.6% (n=21) remained neutral on this issue (Fig. 12).

**Figure 12: “I advise parents to help their children to speak English by speaking English in the home”**



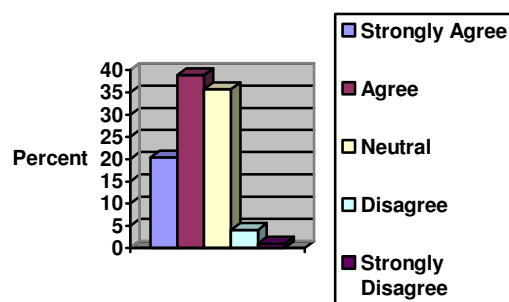
However, a large proportion of teachers recognised that it is important that children would be highly literate and fluent in both English and their HL. 50.5% (n=50) agreed with this statement, while 24.2% (n=24) strongly agreed. Only 3% (n=3) of respondents disagreed, while again a relatively high proportion of teachers 22.2% (n=22) remained neutral (Fig. 13).

**Figure 13: “It is important that children are highly literate and fluent in both English and their home language”**



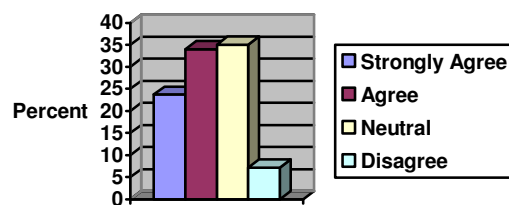
Interestingly, a large proportion of the 98 teachers who responded remained neutral on the issue of HL instruction being beneficial for children’s English language development. However, over half of teachers did think that it is important, with 38.8% (n=38) agreeing and 20.4% (n=20) strongly agreeing. 4.1% (n=4) disagreed with the statement, while only one respondent strongly disagreed (Fig. 14).

**Figure 14: “Home language instruction is beneficial for children’s English language development”**



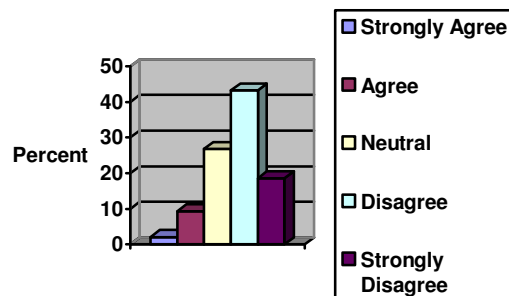
Over half of the 97 responses indicate that teachers felt that proficiency in the home language helps children in their academic progress, with 23.7% (n=23) strongly agreeing and 34% (n=33) agreeing. Over one third (35.1%) of the teachers remained neutral on this issue while 7.2% (n=7) disagreed with the statement (Fig. 15).

**Figure 15: “Proficiency in the home language helps children in their academic progress”**



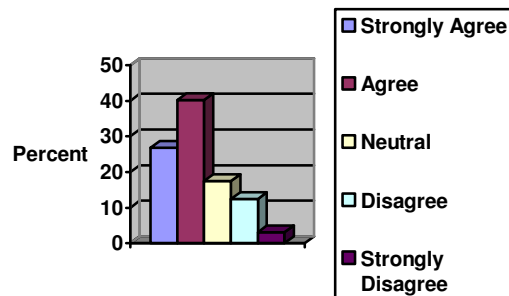
Again, a large proportion of teachers (26.8%) remained neutral on the issue of children spending their time and energy learning English rather than learning their HL. Just over 10% of respondents felt that this should be the case, with 2.1% (n=2) strongly agreeing and 9.3% (n=9) agreeing. Nonetheless, over half of teachers disagreed with this statement, with 43.3% (n=43) disagreeing and a further 18.6% (n=18) strongly disagreeing (Fig. 16).

**Figure 16: “Children should spend their time and energy learning English rather than learning their heritage language”**



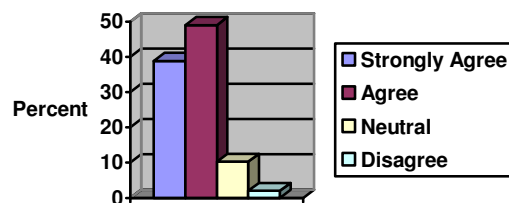
At the same time, when it comes to teachers telling pupils that their HL is important and valuable, but at school they must use English, over half of the 97 teachers who answered felt that this is the case. Over a quarter, 26.8% (n=26) strongly agreed, while 40.2% (n=39) agree. Less than one quarter of teachers disagreed, with 12.4% (n=12) respondents disagreeing and only 3.1% (n=3) strongly disagreeing. Again, almost one fifth of respondents remained neutral on this issue, with 17.5% (n=17) choosing this option (Fig. 17).

**Figure 17: “I tell my pupils that their home language is important and valuable but at school we must use English”**



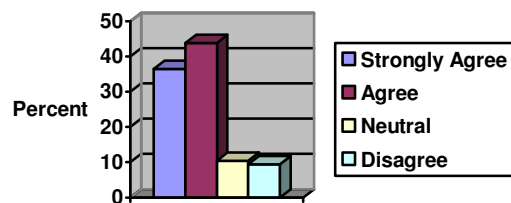
One respondent chose not to respond to the statement that it is important for children with EAL to learn Gaeilge, just as native English speakers do, but it is clear that teachers were overall in favour of this. 38.8% (n=38) strongly agreed with this statement, with a further 49% (n=48) agreeing. 10% (n=10) of respondents remained neutral, with only two respondents disagreeing (Fig. 18).

**Figure 18: “It is important for children with EAL to learn Gaeilge in Junior Infants, just as the native English speakers do”**



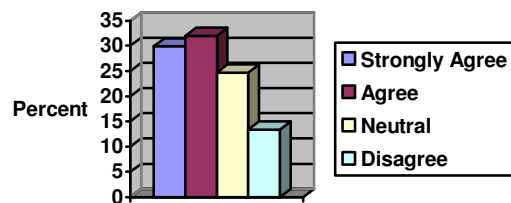
Teachers seemed to think that children with EAL attain a similar level of Gaeilge as native English speakers in their class. Of the 96 people who responded, 36.5% (n=35) strongly agreed with this statement, while 43.8% (n=42) agree. 9.4% (n=9) of respondents disagreed with this statement, while 10.4% (n=10) remained neutral (Fig. 19).

**Figure 19: “Children with EAL attain a similar level of Gaeilge as the native English speakers in their class”**



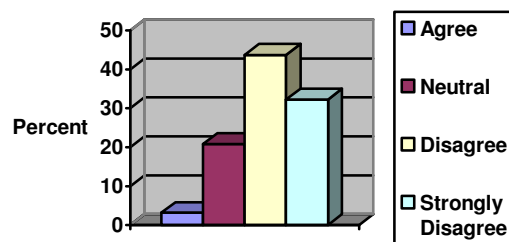
With regard to teachers thinking that children with EAL attain a higher level of Gaeilge than native English speakers in their class, just over 60% of the 97 teachers who responded felt this to be the case. 29.9% (n=29) strongly agreed with the statement, while 32% (n=31) agree. 13.4% (n=13) disagreed with the statement, with almost one quarter of respondents remaining neutral (Fig. 20).

**Figure 20: “Children with EAL tend to do better at Gaeilge than the native English speakers in their class”**



Approximately three quarters of the 96 teachers who responded to (v), that children with EAL tend to do worse at Gaelige than native English speakers in their class, disagreed with the statement. Only three respondents agreed with the statement, with 20.8% (n=20) of teachers remaining neutral. 43.8% (n=42) disagreed and a further 32.3% (n=31) strongly disagreed (Fig. 21).

**Figure 21: “Children with EAL tend to do worse at Gaelige than the native English speakers in their class”**



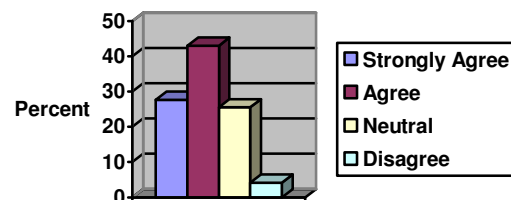
Of the 93 teachers who responded, the majority of them did not allow children to use their HL when completing exercises at home or at school. 62.4% (n=58) did not, while 37.6% (n=35) of teachers did allow pupils to do so (Fig. 7, Appendix F).



### 6.3.4 HL, school and society

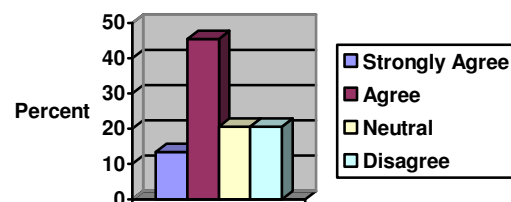
Question f asked teachers to indicate their agreement with a statement about teachers encouraging children to maintain their home language. Of the 98 responses 27.6% (n=27) strongly agreed while a further 42.9% (n=42) agreed. 25.5% (n=25) of teachers remained neutral while 4.1% (n=4) disagreed with the statement (Fig. 22).

**Figure 22: “Teachers should encourage children to maintain their home language”**



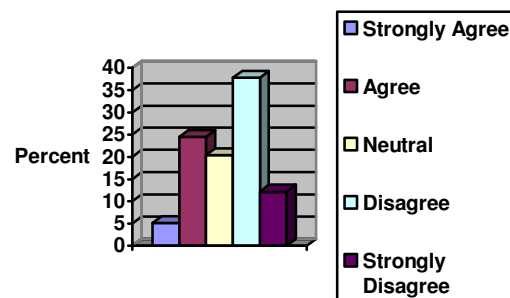
With regard to teachers making an effort to learn phrases in their pupils' home languages, the most common response was to agree with this statement with 45.4% (n=44) of the 97 respondents choosing this option. A small percentage of 13.4% (n=13) of teachers strongly agreed with this, leaving equal numbers of teachers neutral or disagreeing, with 20.6% (n=20) choosing each of these options (Figure 23).

**Figure 23: “I make an effort to learn phrases in my pupils' home languages”**



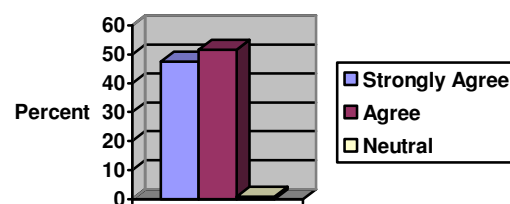
Almost half of the 98 teachers who responded disagreed with the statement that ideally, schools should provide home language instruction. 37.8% (n=37) disagreed while a further 12.2% (n=12) strongly disagreed. 24.5% (n=24) of teachers agreed that schools should provide home language instruction, with 5.1% (n=5) strongly agreeing. 20.4% (n=20) of teachers remained neutral on this issue (Fig. 24).

**Figure 24: “Ideally schools should provide home language instruction”**



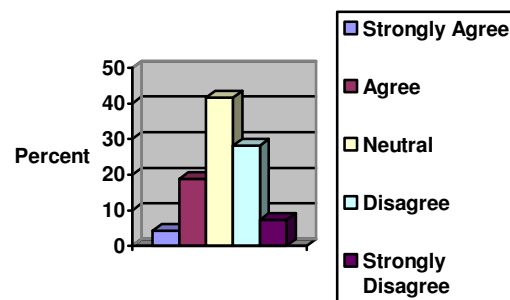
Almost all of the 99 respondents agreed that it is valuable to be multilingual in our society, with 47.5% (n=47) strongly agreeing, 51.5% (n=51) agreeing and only one respondent remaining neutral (Fig. 25).

**Figure 25: “It is valuable to be multilingual in our society”**



The 96 responses to statement (o) indicate that many teachers are neutral on the statement that heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society, with 41.7% (n=40) falling into this category. More teachers disagreed than agreed with this statement, with 28.1% (n=27) teachers disagreeing, 7.3% (n=7) strongly disagreeing, 18.8% (n=18) agreeing and 4.2% (n=4) strongly agreeing (Fig. 26). This means that in general, they felt that heritage language maintenance was achievable in our society.

**Figure 26: “Heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society”**



### 6.3.5 Section C – Teachers’ personal attitudes towards languages

The languages specified for teachers to rate regarding personal importance were English, Gaelige, French, German and Spanish, with a space for other languages if applicable.

Overall, English was found to be important to the 95 respondents. English was found to be the language of most critical importance to respondents, with 86.3% (n=82) of teachers choosing this option. It was found to be very important to 9.5% (n=9) of teachers and important to 4.2% (n=4).

Gaelige was also found to be important to all of the 95 respondents, although to a lesser degree than English. 4.2% (n=4) found the language to be of some importance, 27.4% (n=26) indicating that it was important, 50.5% (n=48) indicating that it was very important to them and a further 17.9% (n=17) stating that Gaelige was of critical importance to them personally.

Results were much more mixed regarding French. Of the 95 respondents, 36.8% (n=35) deemed it not applicable. 7.1% (n=7) of respondents deemed it unimportant. The most frequent responses after this were 'of some importance', with 23.2% (n=22) of responses and 'important', with 22.1% (n=21) of responses. 8.4% (n=8) of teachers said that French was very important to them, while only two respondents (2.1%) said that it was of critical importance.

An even larger proportion of the 94 respondents deemed Spanish as not applicable, with 48.9% (n=46) of teachers choosing this option. 16% (n=15) of teachers deemed it as unimportant. 18.1% (n=17) said that Spanish was of some importance, with a further 12.8% (n=12) claiming that it was important. Only three respondents (3.2%) said that Spanish was very important to them while only one teacher stated that it was of critical importance to them.

With regard to other languages, 90.5% (n=86) of the teachers who responded to this question deemed this category as not applicable. One person stated that Lithuanian was of some importance, six people (6.3%) stated that another language was important (the specified languages being Russian (1), Polish (2) and Italian (1)) and two people stated that another language was of critical importance to them (Italian and 'Chinese in the future').

### **6.3.6 Summary of Section A Part 2 and Section C**

Almost four fifths of respondents felt that HL maintenance is the responsibility of the parents. Over half of the teachers felt that talking with parents about planning for children both learning English and maintaining their HL was important. Almost three quarters of responses show that teachers felt that parents are interested in their children's maintenance of the HL.

The vast majority of respondents felt that the maintenance of the HL is important for the child's development of identity, with almost 95% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing. Almost two thirds of teachers had their pupils share their HL and home culture whenever they got a chance and a relatively large proportion of over one quarter of the teachers remained neutral on the issue. It appears that the majority of teachers praised the children for knowing another language and culture, with over 90% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with this. Over three quarters of teachers felt that encouraging children to maintain their HL would not prevent them from acculturating into this society. Over half of the teachers surveyed advised parents to help their children to learn English faster by speaking English in the home, although approximately one quarter of teachers disagreed with the statement. A relatively high proportion of teachers, over one fifth, remained neutral on this issue. However, a large proportion of almost three quarters of teachers recognised that it is important that children would be highly literate and fluent in both English and their HL while again a relatively high proportion of over one fifth of teachers remained neutral. Interestingly, a large proportion of teachers remained neutral on the issue of HL instruction being beneficial for children's English language development while over half of them did think that it is important. Again, over one quarter of teachers remained neutral on the issue of children spending their time and energy learning English rather than learning their HL. Just over 10% of respondents felt that this should be the case. Nonetheless, over half of teachers disagreed with this statement. At the same time, when it comes to teachers telling pupils that their HL is important and valuable, but at school they must use English, over half of the 97 teachers

who answered felt that this is the case. Less than one quarter of teachers disagreed and again, almost one fifth of respondents remained neutral on this issue.

It is clear that teachers were overall in favour of children with EAL learning Gaeilge, with almost 90% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this. Teachers seemed to think that children with EAL attain a similar or higher level of Gaeilge as native English speakers in their class. Almost 80% of respondents felt that these children attain a similar level of Gaeilge while 60% of teachers felt that they attain a higher level of Gaeilge than native English speakers in their class. A high proportion of one quarter of teachers remained neutral on this second issue. In agreement with the above figures, when asked whether children with EAL tend to do worse at Gaeilge than native English speakers in their class, approximately three quarters of respondents disagreed with the statement, although again a high proportion of one fifth remained neutral on this. The majority of teachers, almost two thirds, did not allow children to use their HL when completing exercises at home or at school.

Almost 70% of teachers felt that they should encourage children to maintain their home language, with just over one quarter of teachers remaining neutral on this. Responses were quite mixed with regard to teachers making an effort to learn phrases in their pupils' home language, with almost 60% agreeing with this, one fifth of teachers remaining neutral and a further fifth disagreeing with this practice. Almost half of the respondents disagreed with the statement that ideally, schools should provide home language instruction, with a further 30% agreeing with this concept and another fifth of teachers remaining neutral. Almost all of the 99 respondents agreed that it is valuable to be multilingual in our society. Many teachers were neutral on the statement that heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society, with over 40% falling into this category. More teachers disagreed than agreed with this statement.

English and Gaeilge were found to be the languages of most importance to the teachers surveyed, with English identified as the language of most critical importance. Other languages such as French, German and Spanish were seen as of less personal importance,

with Spanish being of the least importance to respondents. The majority of teachers did not identify any other languages as of personal importance to them but some of those identified did relate to the HLOTE of newcomer children.

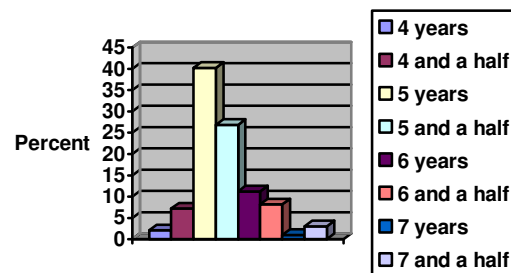
## 6.4 Section B: Individual Pupil Profiles

It was possible to gather language profiles for 99 individual children through the questionnaire data. The following section outlines the overall profile of these children. However it should be noted that data were missing from certain categories.

### 6.4.1 The Child and the First Language

Of the 97 respondents, over three quarters were between 5 and 6 years of age, with 40.2% (n=39) at 5 years, 26.8% (n=26) at 5 and a half and 11.3% (n=11) at 6 years of age (Fig. 27).

**Figure 27: Age of Child**



Most of the children selected by teachers were not born in Ireland. Out of 94 responses, 70.2% (n=66) were born outside of Ireland. 62 teachers responded to the question regarding the length of time the child has been living in the Republic of Ireland. Most of the valid responses (37.1% (n=23)) indicated that the child had been living in Ireland for one year or less but 27.4% (n=17) had been living in Ireland for 2 years or less, with 21% (n=13) having lived here for 3 years or less and 14.5% (n=9) of respondents having spent less than 4 years in Ireland (Fig. 28).

**Figure 28: How long the child has been living in Ireland**

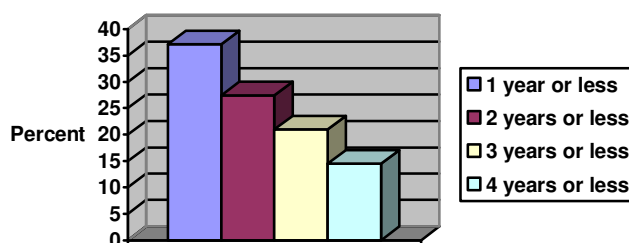


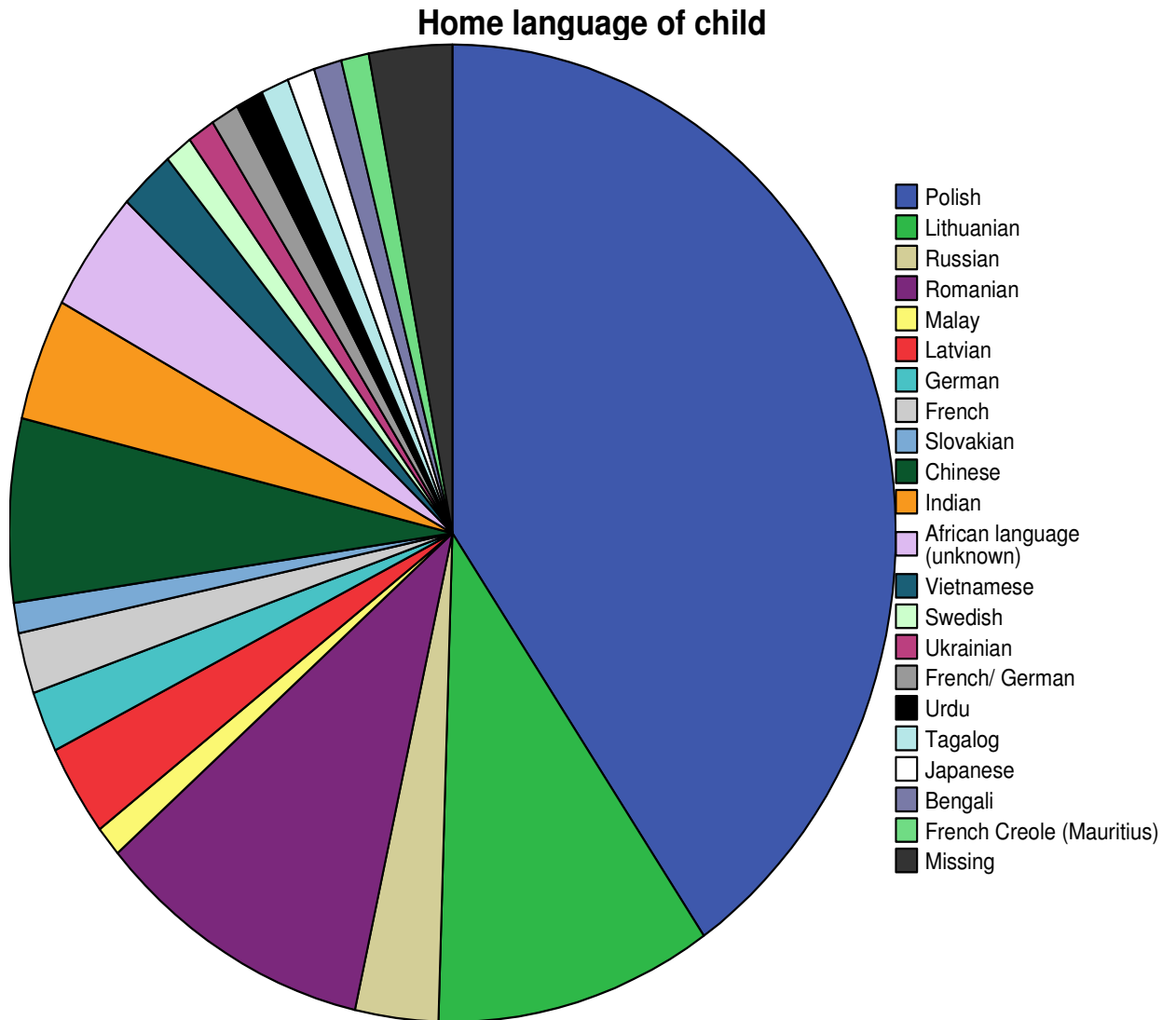
Table 6.2 shows the languages spoken by the children profiled in the questionnaire. The distribution of language of languages is similar to that outlined above in Table 6.1 and is also displayed in Figure 29 below.

**Table 6.2: Language spoken by pupils profiled**

Language	Number of speakers	Percentage of Total
Polish	40	42.1%
Lithuanian	10	10.5%
Romanian (incl. Moldovan)	10	10.5%
Chinese	6	6.3%
Indian language (unspecified)	4	4.2%
African language (unspecified)	4	4.2%
Latvian	3	3.2%
Russian	3	3.2%
German	2	2.1%
French	2	2.1%
Vietnamese	2	2.1%
Slovakian	1	1.1%
Malay	1	1.1%
Swedish	1	1.1%
French & German	1	1.1%
Urdu	1	1.1%
Tagalog	1	1.1%
Japanese	1	1.1%
Bengali	1	1.1%
French Creole (Mauritius)	1	1.1%
	95	100%



**Figure 29: Languages Spoken by Children Profiled**



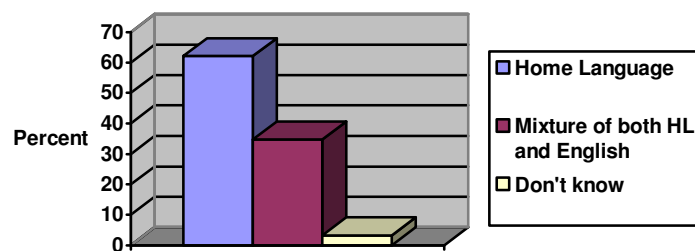
The majority of responses given for this question as a whole came from teachers reporting on Polish-speaking children, with 42.1% (n=40) of the total responses. A further 10.5% (n=10) of responses came from teacher reporting on speakers of Lithuanian, with 3.2% (n=3) of responses from teachers of Russian-speaking children.

The top five languages outlined in Table 6.2 are among the top six languages spoken in Ireland according to the 2006 census<sup>28</sup>.

The majority of children were attending Language Support, although this was not a strong majority as out of 95 responses, 68.4% (n=65) were attending Language Support and 31.6% (n=30) were not (Fig. 8, Appendix F).

No teachers reported that English was the main language spoken by the child outside of school. The majority of the 95 teachers who responded reported that the Home language was the main language spoken, with 62.1% (n=59). 34.7% (n=33) of the respondents reporting that the child speaks a mixture of both English and the HL at home, while a further 3.2% (n=3) reported not knowing (Fig. 30).

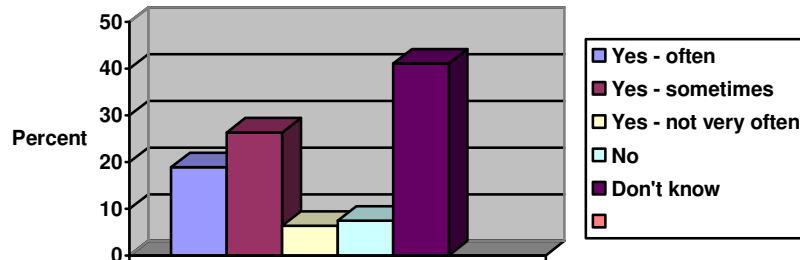
**Figure 30: Main language spoken by child outside school**



With regard to the child having any experience of literacy in the HL, the most frequent response was 'Don't know', with 41.1% (n=39) of 95 respondents choosing this option. 7.4% (n=7) of teachers reported that the child did not have any experience of HL literacy, while over 50% reported that the child does have experience of HL literacy. Within the 'yes' category, the most frequent response was 'Sometimes', with 26.3% (n=25); the next was 'Often' with 18.9% (n=18) of respondents and 'Not very often' had the lowest response rate with 6.3% (n=6) of responses (Fig. 31).

<sup>28</sup> [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) Accessed 13.10.07.

**Figure 31: The child's experience of literacy in the HL**



#### **6.4.2 Individual language profiles by nationality**

The following sections outline children's experiences of literacy in the HL and the dominant languages spoken in the home according to the main nationalities represented in this section of the questionnaire.

##### **6.4.2.1 Speakers of Polish**

Of the 40 Polish speaking Junior Infants reported, teachers of 15 children (37.5%) did not know if they had any experience of literacy in the HL. Over half of Polish speakers were reported as having experience of HL literacy. Of these, 25% (n=10) were stated to have had this experience *often*, with 20% (n=8) as having this experience *sometimes* and 10% (n=4) as *not very often*. 7.5% (n=3) of the children were said to have no experience of HL literacy. The vast majority of Polish-speaking children were reported as speaking Polish as the dominant language in the home, with 75% (n=30) of teachers reporting that this is the case. Two teachers (5%) reported that they did not know, while 20% (n=8) of children were reported as using a mixture of Polish and English in the home.

##### **6.4.2.2 Speakers of Lithuanian**

Of the 10 Lithuanian speaking Junior Infants reported, teachers of two children did not know if they had any experience of literacy in the HL. Once again, over half of Lithuanian speakers were reported as having experience of HL literacy. Of these, two

were said to have had this experience *often*, while three were said to have this experience *sometimes* and 1 speaker was stated to have had the experience *not very often*. It was reported that two Lithuanian-speaking children had had no experience of HL literacy. The majority of Lithuanian-speaking children were reported as speaking Lithuanian as the dominant language in the home, with six teachers reporting that this is the case. Four children were reported as using a mixture of Lithuanian and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.3 Speakers of Romanian**

Of the 10 Romanian speaking Junior Infants reported, teachers of two children did not know if they had any experience of literacy in the HL. Almost three quarters of Romanian speakers were reported as having experience of HL literacy. Of these, three were said to have had this experience *often*, while four were said to have this experience *sometimes*. It was reported that one Romanian speaker had had no experience of HL literacy. The majority of Romanian-speaking children were reported as speaking Romanian as the dominant language in the home, with six teachers reporting that this is the case. Four children were reported as using a mixture of Romanian and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.4 Speakers of Chinese**

Of the 6 Chinese speaking Junior Infants reported, teachers of three children did not know if they had any experience of literacy in the HL. Half of the Chinese speakers were reported as having experience of HL literacy. Of these, one child was said to have had this experience *often*, while two were said to have this experience *sometimes*. The majority of Chinese-speaking children were reported as speaking Chinese as the dominant language in the home, with four teachers reporting that this is the case. Two children were reported as using a mixture of Chinese and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.5 Speakers of Indian Languages**

Of the 4 speakers of Indian languages in Junior Infants, the teacher of one child did not know if they had any experience of literacy in the HL. Three speakers of Indian languages were reported as having experience of HL literacy. Of these, one was said to have had this experience *often*, one was said to have this experience *sometimes* and one was said to have has this experience *not very often*. Two of the children speaking Indian languages were reported as speaking those languages as the dominant language in the home. The other two children were reported as using a mixture of Indian languages and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.6 Speakers of African Languages**

Of the four speakers of African languages in Junior Infants, all of the teachers surveyed stated that they did not know if the children had any experience of literacy in the HL. All of the teachers of children speaking African languages reported that the children speak a mixture of the African languages and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.7 Speakers of Latvian**

Of the 3 speakers of Latvian in Junior Infants, two of the teachers surveyed stated that they did not know if the children had any experience of literacy in the HL. The majority of Latvian-speaking children were reported as speaking Latvian as the dominant language in the home, with two teachers reporting that this is the case. One child was reported as using a mixture of Latvian and English in the home.

#### **6.4.2.8 Speakers of Russian**

Of the three speakers of Russian in Junior Infants, all of the teachers surveyed stated that they did not know if the children had any experience of literacy in the HL. The majority of Russian-speaking children were reported as speaking Russian as the dominant

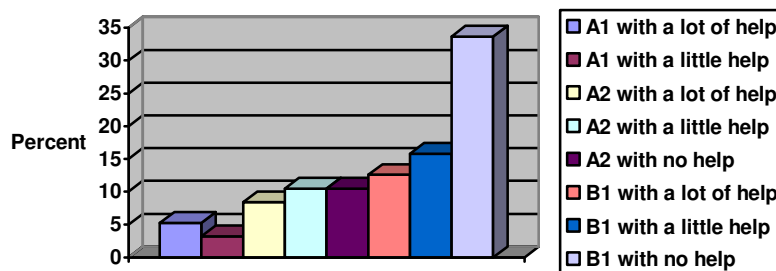
language in the home, with two teachers reporting that this is the case. One child was reported as using a mixture of Russian and English in the home.

## 6.5 The Child and the Second Language - English

### 6.5.1 Listening

With regard to the ELP ratings given by class teachers, it was reported that 8.5% of children (n=8) fell into the A1 category. This rating means that the child “can understand words and phrases about him/ herself, family and school and simple questions and instructions” (IILT, 2004: 5). 29.4% (n=28) fell into the A2 category, meaning that the child is functioning at the A1 level and “can understand most instructions given inside and outside school, can follow topics covered in the mainstream class, and can follow a simple story” (ibid.). A total of 62.1% (n=59) fell into the B1 category, with 28.4% (n=27) of them requiring either a lot of or a little help, and a further 33.7% (n=32) requiring no help, thereby indicating that they may be in a higher category not covered by the ELP at this level (Fig. 32). The B1 category means that in addition to functioning at the A1 and A2 levels, as well as understanding “instructions given in schools, the main points of topics presented and stories read aloud in the mainstream classroom, and films about things he/ she is familiar with. He/ she can follow most conversations between other pupils without difficulty” (ibid.).

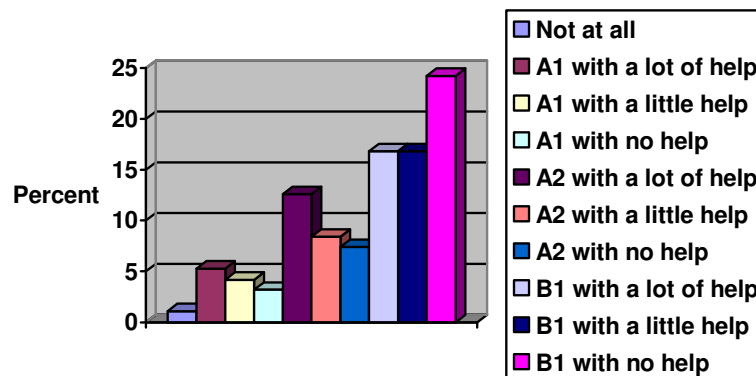
**Figure 32: ELP rating for Listening**



### 6.5.2 Spoken Interaction

95 children were reported on in this category. It was reported that one child (1.1%) could not fulfil the targets at all. 12.7% (n=12) of children fell into the A1 category, meaning that the child “can say hello and goodbye, please and thank you, can ask for directions in the school and can ask for and answer simple questions” (IILT, 2004: 6). 28.4% (n=27) of children fell into the A2 category, meaning that the child can function at the A1 level as well as answering questions about family, friends, school work, holidays and hobbies and “keep up a conversation with classmates when working together, and can express feelings” (ibid.). Again, the majority of children fell into the B1 category, with 57.8% (n=55) of cases. 33.6% (n=32) were reported as needing either a lot of or a little help, and almost one quarter (24.2%/ n=23) of the total children were reported as needing no help at the B1 level, thereby indicating that they may be in a higher category not covered by the ELP at this level (Fig. 33). The B1 category denotes that in addition to fulfilling the targets at the A1 and A2 levels, he or she can “talk fluently about school, family, daily routine, likes and dislikes, take part in classroom discussions and can hold conversations with other pupils about things of interest, and repeat what has been said and pass information to another person” (ibid.).

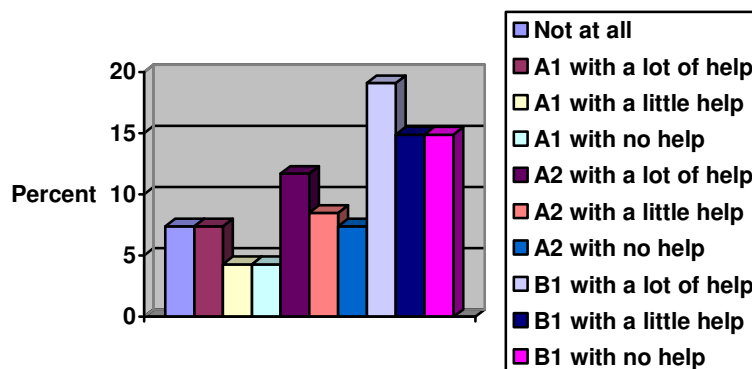
**Figure 33: ELP rating for Spoken Interaction**



### 6.5.3 Spoken Production

94 children were reported on in this category. A total of 7.4% (n=7) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil any of the targets at this level. 8.6% (n=15) of children fell into the A1 category, meaning that they can “give a simple description of where he/ she lives and people he/ she knows, especially members of family” (ibid.). Over a quarter of the children fell into the A2 category, with 27.6% (n=26) of the total, meaning that in addition to reaching all of the targets at the A1 level they can “describe family, daily routines and activities and plans for immediate or more distant future” (ibid.). Almost one half of the children fell into the B1 category, with 48.9% (n=46) of cases. Of these, 34% (n=32) were reported as needing either a lot of or a little help, and 14.9% (n=14) were reported as needing no help at the B1 level, thereby indicating that they may be in a higher category not covered by the ELP at this level (Fig. 34). The B1 category indicates that in addition to reaching all of the targets at the A1 and A2 levels, the can “retell a story that has been read in class or the plot of a film seen or a book read and describe a special family event and explain opinions and plans” (ibid.).

**Figure 34: ELP Rating for Spoken Production**





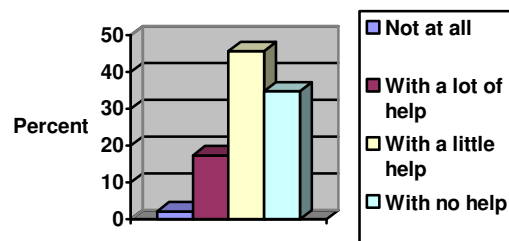
## 6.6 The Child and the Second Language - Irish

Each objective within the strand units of the Irish language curriculum for Gaeilge was listed. The teacher was asked to indicate whether the child being profiled could fulfil the objective with a lot of help, with a little help, with no help, or not at all. The results for each objective are outlined as follows:

### 6.6.1 Listening

The first content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to Irish being used instructionally as a language of interaction and management’. Of the 92 responses given, 2.2% (n=2) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 17.4% (n=16) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 45.7% (n=42) of children were reported as needing a little help. 34.8% (n=32) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 35).

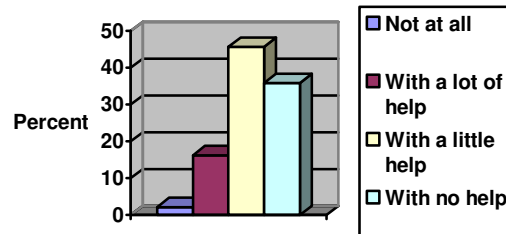
**Figure 35: The child should be enabled to listen to Irish being used instructionally as a language of interaction and management**



The second content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to other people as well as the teacher, even though he/ she may not understand every word’. Of the 92 responses given, 2.2% (n=2) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 16.3% (n=15) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 45.7% (n=42) of children were reported as needing a little help.

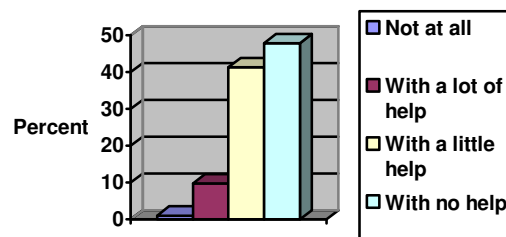
35.9% (n=33) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 36)

**Figure 36: The child should be enabled to listen to other people as well as the teacher, even though he/ she may not understand every word**



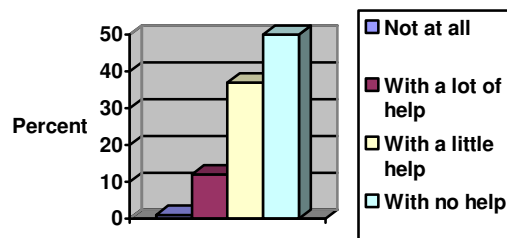
The third content objective is translated as follows: 'The child should be enabled to listen to attractive materials such as rhymes, international or native stories, action d=songs, without undue pressure'. Of the 92 responses given, 1.1% (n=1) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 9.8% (n=9) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 41.3% (n=38) of children were reported as needing a little help. 47.8% (n=44) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 37).

**Figure 37: The child should be enabled to listen to attractive materials such as rhymes, international or native stories, action songs, without undue pressure**



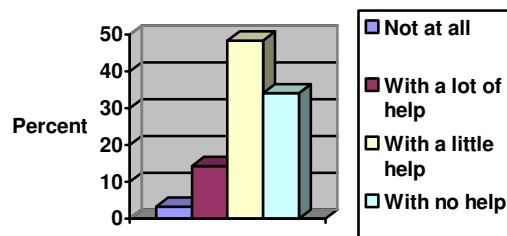
The fourth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to Irish being spoken regularly every day in order to reinforce particular phrases’. Of the 92 responses given, 1.1% (n=1) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 12% (n=11) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 37% (n=34) of children were reported as needing a little help. 50% (n=46) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 38).

**Figure 38: The child should be enabled to listen to Irish being spoken regularly every day in order to reinforce particular phrases**



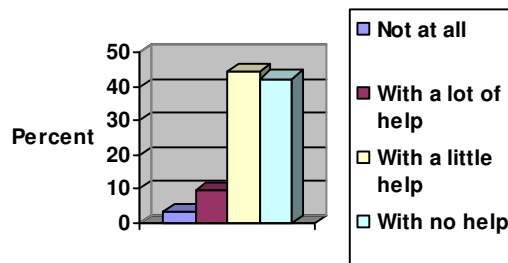
The fifth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to a speaker and get clues from various prompts/ cues’. Of the 91 responses given, 3.3% (n=3) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 14.3% (n=13) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 48.4% (n=44) of children were reported as needing a little help. 34.1% (n=31) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 39).

**Figure 39: The child should be enabled to listen to a speaker and get clues from various prompts/ cues**



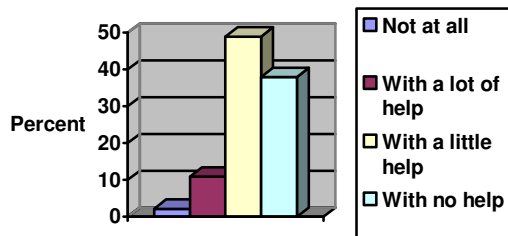
The sixth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to play listening games and do simple actions’. Of the 92 responses given, 3.3% (n=3) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 9.8% (n=9) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 44.8% (n=41) of children were reported as needing a little help. 42.4% (n=39) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 40).

**Figure 40: The child should be enabled to play listening games and do simple actions.**



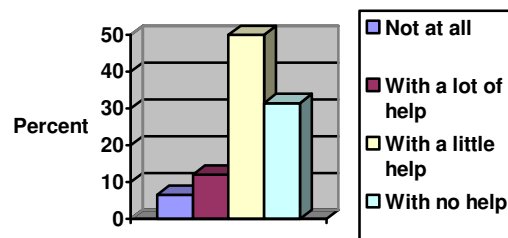
The seventh content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to and follow simple instructions’. Of the 92 responses given, 2.2% (n=2) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 10.9% (n=10) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 48.9% (n=45) of children were reported as needing a little help. 38% (n=35) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 41).

**Figure 41: The child should be enabled to listen to and follow simple instructions.**



The eighth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to teacher-led instructions and show feelings through mime or pictures’. Of the 92 responses given, 6.5% (n=6) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 12% (n=11) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 50% (n=46) of children were reported as needing a little help. 31.5% (n=29) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 42).

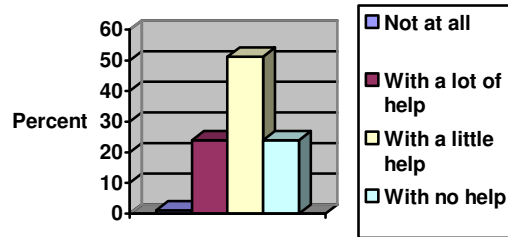
**Figure 42: The child should be enabled to listen to teacher-led instructions and show feelings through mime or pictures**



### 6.6.2 Speaking

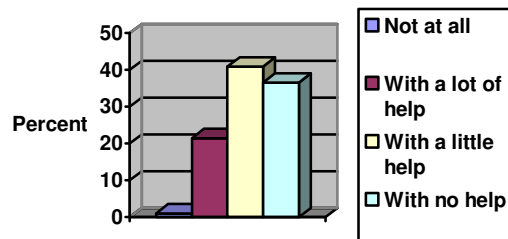
The first content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to attempt to speak Irish’. Of the 92 responses given, 1.1% (n=1) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 23.9% (n=22) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 51.1% (n=47) of children were reported as needing a little help. 23.9% (n=22) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 43).

**Figure 43: The child should be enabled to attempt to speak Irish**



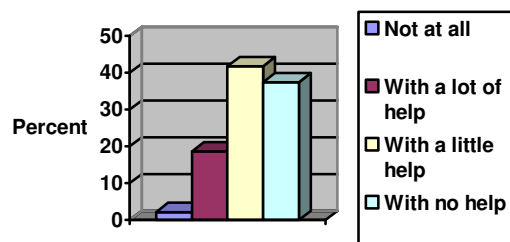
The second content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to recite rhymes with repetition’. Of the 93 responses given, 1.1% (n=1) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 21.5% (n=20) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 40.9% (n=38) of children were reported as needing a little help. 36.6% (n=34) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 44).

**Figure 44: The child should be enabled to recite rhymes with repetition**



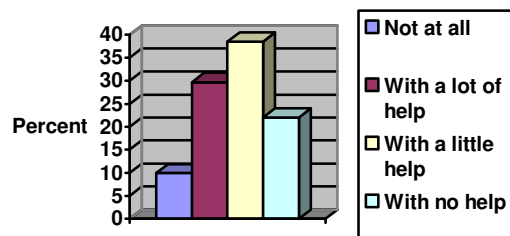
The third content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to sing songs’. Of the 91 responses given, 2.2% (n=2) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 18.7% (n=17) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 41.8% (n=38) of children were reported as needing a little help. 37.4% (n=34) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 45).

**Figure 45: The child should be enabled to sing songs**



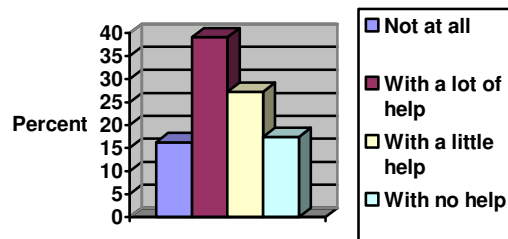
The fourth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to listen to known stories and participate in simple plays based on them’. Of the 91 responses given, 9.9% (n=9) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 29.7% (n=27) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 38.5% (n=35) of children were reported as needing a little help. 22% (n=20) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 46).

**Figure 46: The child should be enabled to listen to known stories and participate in simple plays based on them**



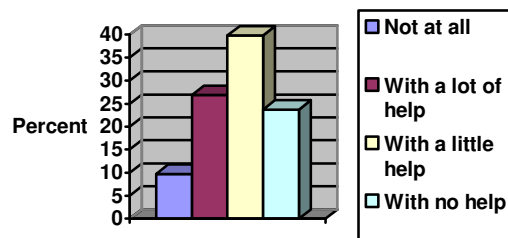
The fifth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to speak Irish in cultural contexts (e.g. Lá Fhéile Pádraig)’. Of the 92 responses given, 16.3% (n=15) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 39.1% (n=36) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 27.2% (n=25) of children were reported as needing a little help. 17.4% (n=16) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 47).

**Figure 47: The child should be enabled to speak Irish in cultural contexts**



The sixth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to use actions/ movement and tone of voice to assist in communication’. Of the 93 responses given, 9.7% (n=9) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 26.9% (n=25) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 39.8% (n=37) of children were reported as needing a little help. 23.7% (n=22) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 48).

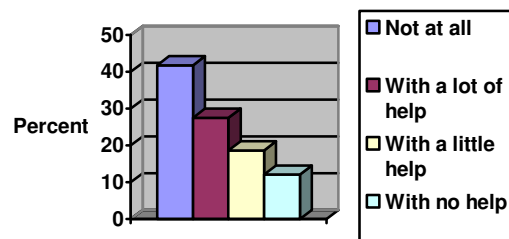
**Figure 48: The child should be enabled to use actions/ movement and tone of voice to assist in communication**





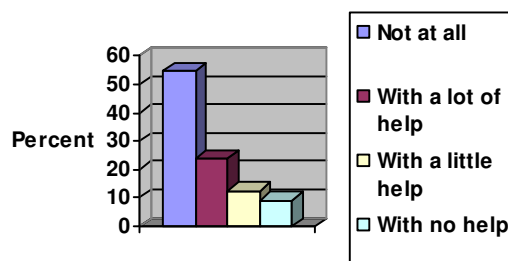
The seventh content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to explain their simple personal news’. Of the 91 responses given, 41.8% (n=38) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 27.5% (n=25) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 18.7% (n=17) of children were reported as needing a little help. 12.1% (n=11) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 49).

**Figure 49: The child should be enabled to explain their simple personal news**



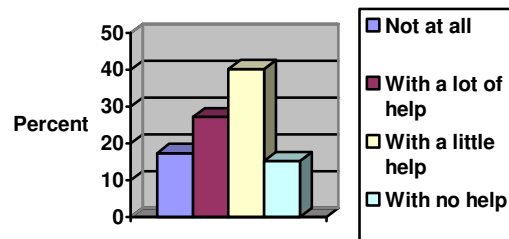
The eighth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to tell short stories using a series of verbs’. Of the 88 responses given, 54.5% (n=48) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 23.9% (n=21) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 12.5% (n=11) of children were reported as needing a little help. 9.1% (n=8) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 50).

**Figure 50: The child should be enabled to tell short stories using a series of verbs**



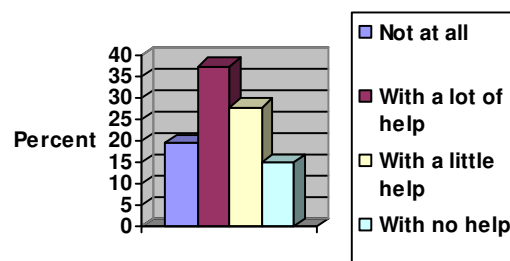
The ninth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to use the main vocabulary of the major themes in context with resources such as pictures, toys etc.’ Of the 92 responses given, 17.4% (n=16) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 27.2% (n=25) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 40.2% (n=37) of children were reported as needing a little help. 15.2% (n=14) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 51).

**Figure 51: The child should be enabled to use the main vocabulary of the major themes in context with resources such as pictures, toys etc.**



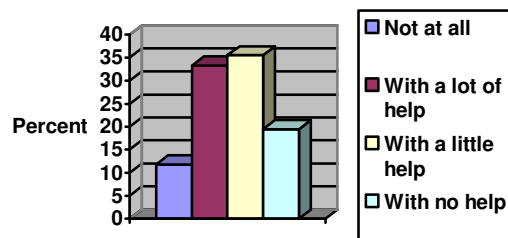
The tenth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to use opposites (beag/ mór etc)’. Of the 93 responses given, 19.4% (n=18) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 37.6% (n=35) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 28% (n=26) of children were reported as needing a little help. 15.1% (n=14) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 52).

**Figure 52: The child should be enabled to use opposites**



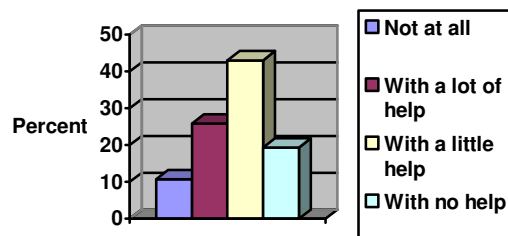
The eleventh content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to participate in role-play at an age-appropriate level’. Of the 93 responses given, 11.8% (n=11) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 33.3% (n=31) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 35.5% (n=33) of children were reported as needing a little help. 19.4% (n=18) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 53).

**Figure 53: The child should be enabled to participate in role-play at an age-appropriate level**



The twelfth content objective is translated as follows: ‘The child should be enabled to play language games’. Of the 93 responses given, 10.8% (n=10) of children were reported as not being able to fulfil the objective. 25.8% (n=24) were reported as needing a lot of help to fulfil the objective, while 43% (n=40) of children were reported as needing a little help. 19.4% (n=18) of children were reported as needing no help to fulfil the objective (Fig. 54).

**Figure 54: The child should be enabled to play language games**



### **6.6.3 Summary of Section B**

#### **6.6.3.1 Summary of The Child and the First Language**

Three quarters of the children profiled were between 5 and 6 years of age. Most of the children selected by teachers were not born in Ireland. The majority of responses given for this question as a whole came from teachers reporting on Polish-speaking children, with teachers of Lithuanian-speaking children coming next, followed by responses from teachers of Russian-speaking children. The top five languages outlined in Table 6.2 correspond with the top 6 languages spoken according to the 2006 census (CSO). Just over two thirds of the children profiled were attending Language Support. Profiles showed that 50% of teachers were unaware of the child's L1 literacy experiences and just over one quarter did state that the children sometimes had experience of L1 literacy and another fifth of respondents indicating that the children often had these experiences. Almost two thirds of teachers surveyed reported that HL was the main language spoken in the home, with the other third reported as speaking a mixture of the HL and English and a very small number of teachers reported not knowing which was the dominant language spoken by the child at home.

There were some differences between language experiences of various nationalities. Polish-speaking children were reported as being the most likely to speak their HL as the dominant language at home with three quarters of teachers believing this to be the case, although between 60% and two thirds of teachers said that speakers of Lithuanian, Romanian, Chinese, Latvian and Russian spoke those languages at home. All of the speakers of African languages were believed to speak a mixture of these languages and English at home and speakers of Indian languages were divided equally between speaking these as dominant languages in the home and a mixture of the HL and English. Romanian speakers and speakers of Indian languages were reported as most likely to have experience of HL literacy with three quarters of teachers reporting this while half of Polish, Lithuanian and Chinese speakers were said to have experience of literacy in the

HL. Teachers did not know if speakers of African languages or speakers of Russian had these experiences.

### **6.6.3.2 Summary of The Child and the Second Language - English**

Almost two thirds of children fell into the B1 category for the skill of Listening, with one third of those requiring no help at this level. This means that a high proportion of children can understand instructions given in school, the main points of topics presented, stories read aloud and films about familiar topics, as well as following conversations between other pupils without difficulty. For the skill of Spoken Interaction, the majority (57.8%) of children again fell into the B1 category. Almost one quarter of these need no help at this level to talk fluently about school, family, their daily routine and likes and dislikes, as well as taking part in classroom discussion and holding conversations with other pupils about things of interest and repeating what has been said and passing information to another person. With regard to Spoken Production, a smaller number of children fell into the B1 category, although it was still the most common rating, with almost one half of children in that category and almost 15% of them required no extra help at that level. The B1 rating for Spoken Production means that the child can retell a story that has been read in class or the plot of a film seen or book read, as well as being able to describe a special family event and explain opinions and plans.

### **6.6.3.3 Summary of The Child and the Second Language - Irish**

Teachers reported their pupils with EAL as finding content objectives 3 and 4 the easiest listening skills to achieve. These objectives are concerned with listening to Irish being spoken regularly in order to reinforce particular phrases and listen to poems, rhymes, stories and action songs. Content objective 6, which is concerned with playing listening games and doing simple actions was also considered relatively easy for the children to achieve. The listening skills outlined in content objectives 1, 2 and 7 were perceived as the next most difficult for the children and similar responses were given for needing a little help in these areas and the children not being able to achieve these objectives at all,

although low numbers of these children were present. These objectives include listening to Irish being used as a language of interaction and management, listening to people other than the teacher speaking Irish and listening to and following simple instructions. The skills of listening to a speaker and getting clues from various prompts and cues (content objective 5) and listening to teacher-led instructions to show feelings through mime or pictures (content objective 8) were seen as the most difficult for children with EAL to achieve, with the latter being the most difficult of the eight content objectives according to teachers.

Content objectives 2 and 3 were reported as being the speaking targets achieved by most children. These objectives involve reciting rhymes with repetition and singing songs. The next most achievable target was content objective 1 regarding making an attempt to speak Irish. The objectives relating to listening to simple stories and participating in plays based on them (Objective 4) and using actions or movements and tone of voice to assist in communication (Objective 6) were seen as almost equally achievable by the teachers surveyed, although almost 10% of children were reported as not being able to achieve the latter objective at all. After this came content objective 12, playing language games, again with 10% of children not being able to fulfil this objective and almost two thirds needing a lot of or a little help. Speaking Irish in cultural contexts (Objective 5) was seen as achieved by the same amount of children with a lot of or a little help but the number of children not having achieved this objective rose here with one sixth of children not reaching the target at all. Similar numbers are present for Objective 9, which is concerned with using the main vocabulary of the major themes in context with appropriate resources. Using opposites (objective 10) was seen as unachieved by almost one fifth of the children with decreasing numbers of children needing no help for this objective. By far the most difficult objectives were objective 7 and 8, with explaining simple personal news (Objective 7) being unachieved by just over 40% of the children and the next most frequent response being with a lot of help, and telling short stories using a series of verbs being seen as the most difficult, with under 10% of children having achieved this objective and over half of children not having reached this target at all.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The responses of teachers of Junior Infant classes were presented in this chapter, under headings similar to those used in the questionnaire. A full discussion on these findings in relation to the research questions posed at the outset and implications for policy and practice is outlined in Chapters Eight and Nine. The following chapter will present findings from Phase III of the research; classroom observation carried out in one Junior Infant classroom.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS – CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

**7.1 Introduction**

Ten observations were carried out by the researcher over a three month period in a Junior Infant classroom in a large primary school in an urban area. Details regarding the date and time of each observation session and the activities carried out during each one are outlined below in Table 4.3, as presented in Chapter Four. As well as observing the scaffolding evident in the classroom according to the framework for analysis, details about the children observed and the teacher’s experience were gathered from informal discussions with the class teacher during and after observation sessions and during a more formal interview held just after the final observation session. This interview was guided by the questions in the questionnaire.

*Table 4.3 Classroom Observation Details*

	Date	Start/ End time	Time spent	Activities
Observation 1	28.09.09	9.00 – 10.00	60 minutes	Welcome Routine; Irish Lesson; English Lesson
Observation 2	05.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
Observation 3	12.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson
Observation 4	02.11.09	9.00 – 10.10	70 minutes	English Lesson; Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
Observation 5	03.11.09	9.00 – 10.30	90 minutes	‘Activities morning’
Observation 6	09.11.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Music Lesson; Maths Lesson
Observation 7	16.11.09	9.00 - 10.00	60 minutes	Letterland; Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time
Observation 8	01.12.09	9.40 – 10.50	70 minutes	Religion/ English Lesson; Science Lesson
Observation 9	10.12.09	9.30 – 10.50	80 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time; Science Lesson
Observation 10	14.12.09	9.00 – 10.20	80 minutes	‘Activities morning’
			690 minutes 11.5 hours	



A school profile was also conducted using the Whole School Evaluation report, conducted in November 2008, and informal discussions with the school principal and class teacher. These supplementary sources of information help to contextualise the work being done in this classroom.

## 7.2 Class, Child and School Profile

### 7.2.1 Class Profile

Out of 24 children in the class, 9 of them came from family backgrounds where either one or both parents had immigrated to Ireland in the last ten years or less. Nine of them spoke LOTE at the beginning of the year. Pseudonyms have been used to identify all teachers and children mentioned to ensure privacy and confidentiality wherever possible.

*Table 7.1 LOTE spoken by children in class observed*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Languages spoken at home in order of frequency</b>
Anne	Malay, English
Siobhán	Yoruba, English
Maureen	English, Polish
Paul	Tagalog, English
Jack	Polish
James	Tagalog, English
Peter	Polish
David	Punjabi, English
Eugene	Russian

### 7.2.2 Child Profiles

The following section outlines the background of each child observed in detail; Jack, Peter and Eugene. It is apparent that the three children observed are male. While a gender balance would have been ideal, it happened that the three children speaking little or no English in this particular class were boys. Details were gathered from informal chats with the class teacher, Mrs Smith, during observation sessions and during a more formal interview held with the class teacher on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2009, just after the final observation session.

### **Jack**

Jack lives with his mother and father who are expecting a new baby in April. He was reared in Poland with his grandmother until August 2009 (just before starting school) and speaks Polish as his first language. He didn't come to the Welcome Day in June but the school had been notified of his enrolment. His mother had lived in Ireland for 2 years and speaks English reasonably well. While Jack was living in Poland, he had little or no contact with English. His grandmother visited once since September and came to visit the school. During the visit it became clear that he and his grandmother have a strong bond. Jack's mother had to translate from Polish to English when the grandmother was trying to communicate with the class teacher. The class teacher feels that the family plans on staying in the area long-term and both are employed. Jack is the second oldest in the class. He was 5 years and 3 months old starting school.

### **Peter**

Peter was born in Ireland to Polish parents and speaks Polish as his first language. It seems to the class teacher that the family has very little interaction with the community. They have no TV and there is no English spoken in the home. Peter has a brother in 5<sup>th</sup> class (Paul). The class teacher thinks the family came to Ireland just before Peter was born. Peter's mother has little English – just phrases such as yes or no – and communicates through facial expressions, much as Peter does. The class teacher has had no contact with Peter's father but she knows that he lives in the family home. Peter's other brother Simon is seventeen or eighteen years old. Halfway through the observation period, it was brought to Mrs Smith's attention that Peter may be experiencing language difficulties in Polish having had some conversations with a Polish Special Needs Assistant who happened to be doing some short-term substitution work at the time.

### **Eugene**

Eugene was brought up in Belarus during his early years, although his mother is from Belarus and his father is Irish. He has Russian as his first language. His mother, who appears to be parenting alone, is fluent in English and the class teacher has remarked a few times that she comes across as well educated. They do not speak much English at

home as the mother says he doesn't like it. However, he does have more exposure to English than Jack or Peter. Eugene was living in Ireland for just over 6 months before starting school and he attended welcome days in April and June. Eugene does have experience of literacy in his L1. His mother reads a lot of books to him in Russian and he loves books (clearly seen during activities morning). Eugene does a lot of doodling and doesn't apply himself at school as much as he could, although he appears to be very bright. He has missed 21 days of school since starting in September.

### **7.2.3 School Profile**

All information about the school has been gathered from informal discussions with the newly appointed principal, class teacher and the most up to date Whole School Evaluation (WSE) report (DES, 2009). The report is available online along with all other WSE reports. However, I have decided not to disclose the web link to the report within this thesis as to do so would be in breach of confidentiality arrangements with the school.

When the report was completed, there were 520 pupils enrolled in the school. Of these, 124 pupils have EAL. This is 24% of the school's enrolment, although only 9% require language support, according to the WSE report. It is noted that the school has had over 30 years of experience in supporting children with EAL. The school also has a strong, well-established Language Support (LS) team, comprising three staff members. In terms of In-school management, the WSE report states in Section 1.3 that "The co-ordination of provision for English as an Additional Language is particularly effective". Specific references are made to the quality of whole-school planning and classroom planning for EAL. The WSE report states that the quality of whole-school planning is good, and also makes reference to the school's multicultural policy which "indicates that there are clear and transparent arrangements in place for the admission, enrolment and induction of EAL pupils". While the report does make recommendations for documenting more thoroughly the approaches used in the provision of EAL support, it also recognises that "Values are articulated and procedures for affirming cultural and linguistic diversity on a whole school and class level are outlined".

In terms of classroom planning, the quality is deemed to be very good. Reference is made in Section 2.2 and 2.3 of the WSE report to comprehensive long- and short-term planning and coherence across class levels due to collaboration with colleagues. The early years i.e. infant classes are referred to as using formative assessment data to “inform teachers on pupil needs and to identify short and long-term learning outcomes”. Across all class levels, reference is made to the differentiation that is practised by modifying approaches to meet pupils’ specific learning needs. The collaboration between the Language Support team and mainstream teachers is noted and the WSE report states that “mainstream teachers have become very aware of the needs of EAL pupils and this knowledge informs their long and short-term planning”. Regular meetings are held to plan in-class and withdrawal activities to support the needs of EAL pupils. Mrs Smith mentioned this collaboration on several occasions and specifically mentioned during a discussion after class that on a daily basis she tells the Language Support teacher what’s going on in class so that the LS teacher can focus on Action Maths posters that are going to be used later on in the day and so on. She also stated that while the withdrawal system is needed at times and the three children being observed have been going to LS for 40 minutes per day every day, she feels that EAL teachers should be going into the classroom more and taking groups within the room – that they are needed more inside the classroom than outside.

In the WSE report, Section 3.1 is dedicated to ‘Quality of Teaching and Learning; Teaching of English and English as an Additional Language’. Overall, the report states that the quality varies from good to very good throughout the school. With regard to the infant classes, “the teaching of English is particularly very good in the early years where there is excellent practice in planning, delivering and evaluating age-appropriate approaches”. It is also stated that in the infant classes “emergent reading was very well supported” and that “play-based approaches were dominant” with regard to oral language.

According to the WSE report, “Class teachers assume full responsibility for teaching the EAL pupils in their own classrooms”. The observation schedule for LS teachers observing EAL pupils within the mainstream classroom is noted as providing a basis for

consequential EAL teaching. Reference is made to the “excellent resources” which support the teaching and learning of all pupils. Within the context of the school, where English is reported as being of a high standard, the report states that “The quality of learning of EAL pupils is very good. In many classes where group work is the dominant teaching methodology, EAL pupils work with and communicate with their peers during role play, pair work and group activities”.

Section 4.2 of the WSE report details the praise given by the inspectorate to the school in terms of the quality of supports for pupils with EAL. The language support teachers are described as experienced and knowledgeable; assessment is noted as being detailed and in keeping with recommended approaches; teachers themselves are noted as having empathy with and understanding of newcomer pupils. Overall, “EAL pupils are affirmed and their learning is well developed in this school” and the school is described as having pioneering approaches to supporting pupils with EAL. The staff as a whole is praised as an example of effective collaboration between mainstream and support teachers, and recognition is given to the fact that much of it happens outside of school hours.

### **7.3 Analysis of Classroom Observation**

The following section will outline in turn the classroom activities the whole class participated in during the ten sessions observed, with a particular focus on Observations 1, 4, 5 and 10 and a more summarized version for Observations 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. This is in an effort to track change over time in the types of scaffolding engaged in by Mrs Smith and the children and the linguistic progress made by each of the children. In order to facilitate this, particular examples of successful communication are provided later in the chapter in a summary of each child’s individual progress. After each session has been contextualised in terms of lessons taught and types of activities facilitated by the teacher, an analysis of the experiences of Jack, Peter and Eugene will be conducted according to the framework outlined in the Methodology chapter i.e. an adaptation of Tabors’ (2008: 89 - 102) recommendations for interactional scaffolding and environmental scaffolding combined with Walsh’s work on features of teacher talk (2006: 167) and Saville-Troike’s

(2006: 109) list of types of interactional modifications. Table 4.4, as presented in Chapter Four, summarises the framework for analysis.

**Table 4.4 Framework for Analysis – Classroom Observation**

Interactional scaffolding	Environmental scaffolding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Starting with what the children know; allowing use of L1</li> <li>- Starting slowly</li> <li>- Buttreassing communication</li> <li>- Repetition</li> <li>- Talking about the here and now</li> <li>- Expanding and extending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group</li> <li>- Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion</li> <li>- Social support: getting help from the English-speaking children.</li> </ul>

Where the Irish language is used as part of the lessons, translations are given once in the session summary. Where titles of songs, rhymes or prayers are provided, the full text is available in Appendix J. The transcription notation presented in this chapter is outlined in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2 Transcription Notation for Classroom Observation**

Curly brackets	{my translation into English}
---	Prompting pause (3 dashes)
..	Pause (2 dots)
...	Silence/ incomplete response (3 dots)
Italics in square brackets	[ <i>appropriate gesture, e.g. nods/ shakes head</i> ]

(Adapted from Mhic Mhathúna, 2004).

## 7.4 Analysis of Observation 1

<p><b>Observation 1 - Session Summary</b></p> <p>Date: 28.09.09  Time: 9.00 – 10.00 (60 minutes)  Subjects: Welcome Routine; Irish lesson; English lesson</p> <p><b>Welcome Routine (9.00 – 9.15)</b>  During the Welcome Routine, the class are in a familiar routine where their names are displayed by Mrs Smith on a flashcard. They are expected to say their name and age. There is also a routine for displaying the day and the weather on the weather chart where the children select the pictures and numbers relevant to the day and type of weather. The final aspect of the Welcome Routine is feeding the fish.</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.15 – 9.45)</b>  During the Irish lesson, Mrs Smith firstly asks the children ‘Cé tusa?’ {Who are you?}. The correct answer is ‘Mise (name)’ {I am (name)}. The focus is then on miming verbs e.g. ag caoineadh {crying} ag súgradh {playing}, ag rith {running}. There is a song to go along with the actions,</p>
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depending on the verb. It's called 'Hé hó mo dhaideó' (see Appendix J). Mrs Smith then moves onto items in the lunchbox, which are ceapairí {sandwiches}, iógart {yoghurt}, milseáin {sweets} and banana buí {a yellow banana}. The whole class repeats the words chorally. There is a song to go along with this, called 'Oscail an bosca' {Open the box} (See Appendix J). The next activity in the Irish lesson involves Mrs Smith going to many children asking with the assistance of the puppet Rocaí Rua 'An bhfuil (name) ar scoil?' {Is (name) at school?}. The rhymes 'Rólaí Pólaí' and 'Lámh, lámh eile' are then recited by the children (See Appendix J). Mrs Smith gets the children to identify some parts of the body by saying 'Taispeáin dom (part of body) {Show me (part of body)}, for example lámh {hand}, ceann {head}, súil {eye}. At the end of the Irish lesson, Mrs Smith calls the roll and expects the children to respond with 'Anseo' {Here}.

#### **English Lesson (9.45 – 10.00)**

To start off the English lesson, the whole class sings 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' (See Appendix J). Mrs Smith opens up her colourful umbrella and elicits 'Uppy Umbrella'. She then proceeds to ask the children what colours are in the umbrella, which includes blue, red, yellow and green.

### **7.4.1 Interactional scaffolding**

#### **7.4.1.1 Starting slowly**

Mrs Smith prepares the children for participation by asking them to respond only after a number of other children have done so. For example, Jack responds 'Mise Jack' after five children have been asked the same question 'Cé tusa?' during the Irish lesson. Peter responds 'Mise Peter' after eleven children have been asked the same question. In the English lesson, after seven of the children had been asked to identify the colours, Peter identifies yellow correctly.

Mrs Smith also shows an awareness of the need for wait time when asking the class 'Taispeáin dom...' during the Irish lesson. Mrs Smith catches Jack's attention using eye contact. He knows where ceann is but no others. Teacher waits for him to respond with the appropriate action before moving on with the rest of the class.

#### **7.4.1.2 Buttressing communication**

Mrs Smith enhances the meaning of her instructions by doubling the message using gestures when she invites Jack to participate in miming in front of class after one other child during the Irish lesson. When she instructs him 'Bí ag caoineadh', he doesn't

respond. Mrs Smith does the action and he repeats the action. She then instructs him ‘Bí ag súgradh’. He starts running (as Ian, the first mimer, had done). Mrs Smith does the correct action and he repeats. A similar exchange occurs when Mrs Smith invites Eugene to participate in miming in front of class before Eve (the seventh person).

Mrs Smith: Bí ag caoineadh  
Eugene: ...  
Mrs Smith: Bí ag caoineadh [*does action*]  
Eugene: Bí ag caoineadh [*does action*]

Later, Mrs Smith catches Eugene’s attention and notices that he doesn’t know where the body parts are. She specifically points at ceann, srón, béal, smig while looking at him. He responds with the action.

Both teacher and child use gestures when during the Welcome Routine, Peter sneezes into a tissue, tries to hand it to Mrs Smith and says something to her in Polish. She gestures and says to put it in the bin, which he does. During the English lesson, Mrs Smith points out that Peter isn’t doing the actions for the song. He looks sad and starts to cry quietly. She asks what’s wrong. He replies in Polish. She encourages him by giving the thumbs up. He then does the actions the second time the song is sung. He doesn’t say any words but is able to participate in the whole group activity using actions alone. Non-verbal communication is used to great effect here, both on an individual and group level.

Peter uses his fingers to complete an activity when he doesn’t have enough language to complete the task. During Welcome Routine, he says ‘My name is Peter’ very quietly and mumbling. Instead of saying ‘I am 4’, he shows it on his fingers. Teacher prompts by saying ‘I am 4’ twice and he repeats quietly.

During the English lesson, after seven of the children had been asked to identify the colours, Peter identifies yellow correctly. Mrs Smith then uses his prior knowledge of a colour in the room to enhance his understanding of the colours on the umbrella during the following conversation.



Mrs Smith: green [*pointing at colour on umbrella*]  
 Peter: green  
 Mrs Smith: and this one? [*pointing at blue*]  
 Peter: ...  
 Mrs Smith: Look at the colours table  
 Peter: blue  
 Mrs Smith: And this one? It's red

Mrs Smith also utilizes the prompting pause to encourage communication, as in the English lesson. After seven of the children had been asked to identify the colours, Eugene identifies blue correctly. Following from this

Mrs Smith: r --- [*pointing at colour on umbrella*]  
 Eugene: red  
 Mrs Smith: red  
 Eugene: red  
 Mrs Smith: yellow [*pointing at colour on umbrella*]  
 Eugene: yellow  
 Mrs Smith: gr --- [*pointing at colour on umbrella*]  
 Eugene: green.

#### 7.4.1.3 Repetition

Mrs Smith calls Peter along with Aoife, Anne and Lee to the top of the room and gives them each an item during the Irish lesson. She hands Peter milseáin. When he does not know the word in Irish, she emphasizes it and encourages him to repeat it.

Mrs Smith: What are they?  
 Peter: ...  
 Mrs Smith: milseáin --- milseáin  
 Peter: milseáin  
 Peter holds up the milseáin when it comes to that part of the song.

Eugene seems to repeat the words along with the rest of the class who are responding chorally. Mrs Smith then shows picture of doras {door}. When he isn't sure of the full response, Mrs Smith encourages him to repeat it after she emphasises the phrase.

Eugene: ...  
 Mrs Smith: d  
 Eugene: doras

Mrs Smith: doras buí --- doras buí ---  
Eugene: doras buí.

#### **7.4.1.4 Talking about the here and now**

During the Welcome Routine, Mrs Smith talks about the weather with John and asks Jack what kind of day it is, showing him the pictures. During the conversation, she supplies him with missing vocabulary items.

Mrs Smith: Is it sunny?  
Jack: No [*shaking head*]  
Mrs Smith: Is it windy?  
Jack: Yes [*nodding head*]  
Mrs Smith: It's not windy - Is it cloudy?  
Jack: Yes [*nodding head*]  
Mrs Smith: cloudy --- cloudy --- cloudy ---  
Jack: cloudy  
Mrs Smith [*demonstrates putting the fish food into the aquarium*]  
Mrs Smith: Are they eating?  
Jack: eating [*nodding head*]

#### **7.4.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

##### **7.4.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

Involving Jack in the Welcome Routine by appointing him as a helper enables him to pick up cues regarding what to do and when, using John, an English-speaking child as a model. Mrs Smith tells Jack and John that as leaders, they will stand at the top of the line in the yard. John nods and Jack doesn't react. When Jack and John are called to top of class, he reads along with rest of class from the poster 'Teacher's helpers are Jack and John'. Mrs Smith tells Jack to take out the numbers and John to take out the pictures. John starts first, and Jack follows. John tells Jack they're looking for 2 and 8 and gives him 28. Jack walks over confidently and puts the number in the correct place, with 'Today' sign behind it. He runs over to teacher and teacher praises him by patting his head and saying 'Good boy'. This helps him to feel more secure in the classroom.

During the Welcome Routine, Jack, Peter and Eugene say 'Anseo' loudly and clearly while Mrs Smith calls the roll. This shows that they have acquired the activity structure of this classroom routine.

Doing activities involving whole group singing as part of a routine also enhances the children's chance of becoming members of the group. For example, Mrs Smith picks up a bosca lóin and says 'Céard atá sa bhosca?' {What is in the box?} As the rest of the class sings 'Oscail an bosca' together, Jack sings almost accurately, only missing out on the word milseáin.

While the whole class sings "Head shoulders knees and toes", Jack and Maureen are sent out on a message to another classroom. Jack smiles widely at me when leaving. When they come back, Jack shakes head at Maureen as they didn't get the message done – Maureen explains to Mrs Smith that she forgot where the classroom was. The exchange shows that Jack is an important and trusted member of the group who knows how to follow instructions to go on messages.

#### **7.4.2.2 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

The seating arrangement in the classroom means that Jack, Peter and Eugene are seated beside English-speaking peers. During the Irish lesson, Jack and Eve (beside him) interact non-verbally and smile.

During the Welcome Routine, Eugene is sitting beside Sophie. She waves an empty bucket and he smiles, swings on chair and is interested in Sophie. He's alert and looking around. During the Irish lesson, Sophie roots in her bag and Eugene smiles with her.

## 7.5 Analysis of Observation 2 and Observation 3

<p><b>Observation 2 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 05.10.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.10 – 10.10 (60 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> Irish lesson; Welcome Routine; English lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack, Peter &amp; Eugene</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.10 – 9.35)</b>  Mrs Smith takes out Rocaí Rua, the class puppet, and a ‘mála draíochta’ {magic bag}. Various items are taken out of the bag by Rocaí Rua while the children are invited to repeat the word. Words for the day are cóta {coat}, stocaí buí {yellow socks}, bríste {trousers}, bríste eile {other trousers}, hata beag dearg {a little red hat} and bróga {shoes}. Each item is placed on a table at the top of the classroom. Mrs Smith uses phrases such as ‘Céard é seo?’ {What is this?} and ‘Tar anseo’ {Come here}. Various children are then invited up to the table to point out the items, hold them up and say ‘Seo (item)’ {This is a (item)} in response to ‘Taispeáin dom’ {Show me}. Mrs Smith puts some very simple pictures on the blackboard which show the rhyme ‘Hata beag dearg’ {Little Red Hat} (See Appendix J). The whole class recites the poem and various children are invited to say it on their own at top of classroom as the múinteoir {teacher}. Then the groups are invited to say the poem with different children acting as múinteoir. After this, they practice doing lámha trasna {arms folded} by group.</p> <p><b>Welcome Routine (9.35 – 9.45)</b>  Mrs Smith decides not to have the children say their full sentence as their flashcards come up as she usually does – she instead asks them to put their hands up when their name appears. She also appoints the helpers and goes through the days of the week with the class. She discusses the weather chart with the appointed helpers and they feed the fish.</p> <p><b>English Lesson (9.45 – 10.10)</b>  Mrs Smith shows the new playmat and gets the class to line up like they did on Thursday to sit around playmat on their chairs. Teacher places basket full of items on playmat. Mrs Smith says ‘I’m going to pass around Eddie and when you have Eddie that’s your turn. We’re looking for things that start with</p>	<p><b>Observation 3 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 12.10.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.10 – 10.10 (60 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> Irish lesson; English lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack &amp; Peter</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.10 – 9.40)</b>  Mrs Smith puts up a líne {washing line} and tells the children that Rocaí Rua had to do the washing so he’s left it in a laundry bag. She takes out each one in turn and says ‘Céard atá sa mhála?’ {What is in the bag?} The correct response is ‘Sin (item)’ {That is (item)}. The items are cóta {coat}, stocaí buí {yellow socks}, geansaí {jumper}, sciorta {skirt}, bríste {trousers}, bróga {shoes} and gúna {dress}. When all of the items are on the líne, Mrs Smith invites individual children to come and point out what each item is. They should say ‘Sin cóta, sin sciorta..’ etc. as they point to each item. Having completed this, Mrs Smith starts singing a new song called ‘Tá cóta mór ar an múinteoir’ (See Appendix J). The word cóta is then replaced with bríste and subsequently with bróga. Mrs Smith gets her helpers to give out bundles of pictures for each child. She tells the children that they should say ‘Seo duit’ {This is for you} each time they hand a bundle to another child. When all the children have received the pictures, which are of the items of clothing on the líne as well as t-léine {t-shirt}, Mrs Smith asks them what is on each card. She asks in English but the answer should be in Irish. Then she plays a game where she calls out a word and everyone should hold it up. After that she invites individual children to come to the top of the classroom as the múinteoir and do the same thing. The pictures are tidied up.</p> <p><b>English - Oral Language (9.40 – 10.10)</b>  Mrs Smith holds up a stack of pictures which were painted last week. The pictures are of everyone’s family and she asks individual children to describe who’s in the picture. Mrs Smith chooses five children to come to the playmat and act out the rhyme ‘5 fat sausages’. Each child takes a number and sits down in turn when appropriate. The rhyme is repeated 5 times as different groups of 5 are chosen to come up and act as the sausages. Once this is over, Mrs Smith gives each group</p>
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<p>Dippy Duck. Let's sing Dippy Duck's song'. Eddie is a puppet and used as the "turn taking" toy on this occasion. Each child then puts the item they chose on the Dippy Duck Letterland table. When each child has had a turn, Mrs Smith holds up the words and checks who picked out each one. Children return to their places in an orderly manner.</p>	<p>a smiley face for the reward chart.</p>
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## **7.5.1 Interactional Scaffolding**

### **7.5.1.1 Starting with what the children know**

During the Oral Language lesson in Observation 3, Jack and Peter are called up as part of the final 5. Straight away, Jack and Peter interact with each other, putting their numbers (4 and 5) together. When they sit down on mat, they chat to each other in Polish. Their talking to each other in Polish is not interrupted by the teacher although no-one is supposed to be talking at that point.

### **7.5.1.2 Starting slowly**

Mrs Smith prepares the EAL children for participation by asking them to respond only after a number of other children have done so. For example, during the Irish lesson in Observation 2, Jack responds with 'Sin cota' when asked by teacher after 4 children had said the correct answer. Mrs Smith prepares Peter for participation by inviting him as the seventh person to take something out of the laundry bag during the Irish lesson in Observation 3.

Peter is invited to be the múinteoir just after Jack during Observation 2. Mrs Smith requires him only to point at the pictures while the whole class says the poem, thereby providing him with an opportunity to participate meaningfully but at his linguistic level.

### 7.5.1.3 Buttredding communication

Mrs Smith uses prompting pauses to encourage Jack's fluency when he is listing items on the líne during the Irish lesson in Observation 3. She subtly corrects him where needed by supplying the first letter sound and at times overtly corrects him with a full phrase.

Mrs Smith: Bhuel Jack ar aghaidh leat  
Jack: Sin bríste, ..  
Mrs Smith: c --  
Jack: Sin gúna  
Mrs Smith: Sin cóta  
Jack: Sin léine, sin stocaí buí, sin geansaí. . Sin sciorta, sin bróga.  
Mrs Smith: g --  
Jack: Sin gúna.

Mrs Smith also supplies first letter sounds to Peter when encouraging his fluency during another part of the same Irish lesson.

Mrs Smith: Tar anseo Peter. Céard atá sa mhála?  
Peter: ... [*takes out bróga*].  
Mrs Smith: Sin br --  
Peter: bróga (louder than usual)

Peter initiates a non-verbal exchange with Mrs Smith when during the 'Five Fat Sausages' rhyme in Observation 3, when his arms get tangled up with Adam's beside him, Peter gets annoyed, gets up and taps teacher on tummy, pointing at Adam. He says nothing. Adam explains that their arms got tangled.

Mrs Smith: Are you ok now?  
Peter: ... [*nods head*].

During this whole conversation, Peter uses only gestures and actions to make himself understood.

#### 7.5.1.4 Repetition

Mrs Smith provides opportunities for children to learn a single word by emphasising the word when necessary and repeating.

At the end of the English lesson in Observation 2, Mrs Smith holds up a dictionary and looks for words beginning with d.

Mrs Smith: What is this Jack?  
Jack: ...  
Mrs Smith: doctor  
Jack: doctor

#### 7.5.1.5 Talking about the here and now

During the Welcome Routine in Observation 2, a discussion about the weather with Eugene provides him with some missing vocabulary items that make sense within the real-life context.

Mrs Smith: Is it rainy? [*shows relevant picture*]  
Eugene: No  
Mrs Smith: Is it sunny? [*shows relevant picture*]  
Eugene: No  
Mrs Smith: Is it snowy? [*shows relevant picture*]  
Eugene: No  
Mrs Smith: --- [*shows relevant picture*]  
Eugene: yes  
Mrs Smith: What is it? Cloudy  
Eugene: Cloudy.

During the Oral Language lesson in Observation 3, Mrs Smith engages both Jack and Peter in conversations about the pictures they created of their families. This initially provides a context which helps the teacher and child to develop the conversation and provides opportunities for the teacher to supply the children with missing vocabulary items. These communicative opportunities help both Jack and Peter to expand their

language skills by talking about the here and now, but also extending into other vocabulary areas.

At the start of the Oral Language lesson, Mrs Smith had asked John about his picture. During this exchange, language that has been previously used during the Welcome Routine relating to weather is used.

Mrs Smith: Well done John. Now [*shuffling through pictures*] who is this?  
Jack (hand up): Mammy, Daddy and Jack.  
Mrs Smith: Any other brothers and sisters?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: How many – just 1 child. What colour did you use? What colour? What colour paint?  
Jack: Yes  
Mrs Smith: What colour. Green?  
Jack: Yellow  
Mrs Smith: Is mum happy? [*makes smile action with mouth and hands*]  
Jack: ... [*does action*]  
Mrs Smith: What about Dad?  
Jack: Happy  
Mrs Smith: What about Jack?  
Jack: Happy.  
Mrs Smith: What kind of day is it? Is it cloudy?  
Jack: Sun  
Mrs Smith: Who's in the picture again?  
Jack: Mammy Daddy Jack  
Mrs Smith: Is Daddy big or small?  
Jack: big  
Mrs Smith: What about Mummy?  
Jack [*makes signal of middle size with fingers*].  
Mrs Smith: She's middle size. What about Jack?  
Jack: Yes  
Mrs Smith: He's sm  
Jack: small.

Peter is invited to talk about his picture during the Oral Language lesson. He is the fourth person.

Mrs Smith: Come here Peter. Tell us about your picture. Is this your picture?  
Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: Who's in it?  
Peter: Mama, Dad, Simon, Paul, Peter. (whispers) [*Mrs Smith points to each one*]  
Mrs Smith: Is mama happy?



Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: Is Dad sad?  
Peter: ... [*shakes head*]  
Mrs Smith: So is Dad happy?  
Peter: happy (whispers) [*nods head*]  
Mrs Smith: What's here. Eyes?  
Peter: ... [*nods*]  
Mrs Smith: And a mouth  
Peter: Yes  
Mrs Smith: And [*waves hands*]  
Peter: Yes [*waves hands*]  
Mrs Smith: Who've we got? Who is this?  
Peter says each name very quietly, not audible to anyone but teacher as she points them out.  
Mrs Smith: Well done. You can sit down. You can sit down Peter [*gestures to his seat*].

#### 7.5.1.6 Fine-tuning

Mrs Smith enables the children to continue with their communication even when there is a mistake made. She uses the mistakes as learning opportunities, as can be seen in the following conversation from Observation 2.

Mrs Smith: Jack taispeáin dom gúna.  
Jack: ... [*picks up hata*].  
Mrs Smith: That's a hata try again.  
Jack: ... [*picks up cóta*].  
Mrs Smith: That's a cóta [*pointing*] and seo gúna [*pointing at gúna*].  
Jack: seo gúna [*picks it up*]  
Mrs Smith: Jack taispeáin dom cóta.  
Jack: ... [*picks up hata*].  
Mrs Smith: that's a hata. Say it for me?  
Jack: yes [*nods head*]  
Mrs Smith: yes sin hata.  
Jack: sin hata. [*looking pleased*].

## **7.5.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

### **7.5.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

When Mrs Smith calls out the grúpa oráiste for lámha trasna during Observation 2, Jack does not cross his arms until Adam his group member does so. Jack uses Adam as a model to pick up cues regarding what to do. During the Maths lesson in Observation 3 Jack is enlisted as an extra helper to distribute the bundles. He uses the English-speaking children as models for his behaviour and follows what they are doing. The structure of distributing items in the classroom allows him to act just as any other member of the group, with some assistance from the others.

During the Welcome Routine in Observation 2, Eugene is chosen by the teacher to be a helper along with Siobhan. This inclusion of Eugene as part of a classroom routine helps him to become a valuable member of the group. When the class says the days of the week together, Eugene reads out Friday from a chart on the wall. For the weather chart, Eugene takes cards out when Siobhán starts to. He puts the number (date) in the correct place on the chart and puts the ‘Today’ card behind it. Again, Siobhán acts as a model for Eugene’s behaviour.

During the Irish lesson in Observation 2, Peter moves his mouth to look like he’s saying the rhyme, rather than actually saying it. This allows him to be a part of the group and do what’s expected of him without having the language necessary to do so.

### **7.5.2.2 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

During the start of the English lesson in Observation 2, Jack is swinging on his chair and humming. While waiting in line, Jack interacts non-verbally with Ian and John on either side of him, waving and smiling. The seating arrangement means that Jack, a particularly sociable child, makes an effort to interact with the English-speaking children. The good relationship between them is shown when, towards end of this activity, Jack is messing

by patting Ian on the back. Jack continues to develop relationships with the English-speaking children he is seated with during Observation 3 by playing and gesturing. During the Irish lesson, Jack points an imaginary gun at James (his usual game). James and Jack then make up their own actions to go along with the song.

During the English lesson in Observation 2, Jack is ninth in the class to take a turn. He picks up a dinosaur but doesn't say it. Other English-speaking children supply him with the word and he repeats it accurately.

When Mrs Smith says 'Taispeáin dom geansaí' during the Irish lesson in Observation 3, Jack holds up the t-léine, along with James and 2 other children. They then look around and correct their answer once they see that the rest of the class is holding up something different. In this way, there is a two-way exchange of assistance occurring between Jack and the English-speaking children.

In fact, Jack engages in peer scaffolding while helping to James when Sam acts as múinteoir straight after Jack in Observation 3. Sam says 'Taispeáin dom bríste'. James, sitting beside Jack, picks up t-léine buí. Jack points to bríste for him.

## 7.6 Analysis of Observation 4

### **Observation 4 – Session Summary**

**Date:** 02.11.09

**Time:** 9.00 – 10.10 (70 minutes)

**Subjects:** English lesson; Irish lesson; Welcome Routine; English lesson

**Children:** Jack & Peter

#### **English - Oral Language (9.00 – 9.30)**

Mrs Smith conducts a class discussion about the week of holidays they children have just had. She prompts and encourages the children to think about the reason why they had holidays. Anne produces the word 'Hallowe'en'. She tells the children that she's going to go around the classroom with the microphone and ask everyone what they dressed up as for Hallowe'en. Mrs Smith says "I dressed up as a witch and on Hallowe'en I went trick-or-treating. I went to see a bonfire. Now I want you to tell me one thing you did on Hallowe'en night or one thing you enjoyed about your week". Various children are encouraged to give their responses.

#### **Irish Lesson (9.30 – 9.45)**

Aoife is asked by Mrs Smith to bring in her cóta {coat}. Mrs Smith says 'Féach, tá sé ag cur báistí' {Look, it's raining} while looking out of the window. She opens the umbrella and gets Aoife to

stand underneath it. Mrs Smith says rhyme 'Plip plop plí' (See Appendix J). The children start to join in after approximately three repetitions and Mrs Smith adds the actions of clapping and fingers to look like rainfall. The rhyme is repeated in total nine times. Mrs Smith then says that the children should put their coats on when they go out to play. The song is 'Cuir ort do chóta' (See Appendix J). The final rhyme to be recited is Rílle rílle ráille. Mrs Smith chooses groups of five to hold hands and dance to the rhyme.

#### **Welcome Routine (9.45 – 9.55)**

Mrs Smith picks out the helpers and decides to go through the children's names on flashcards. The children are expected to say 'My name is (name) and I am (age)'. The weather and date are filled in on the chart and the fish are fed. Mrs Smith refers to 'Plip plop plí' to elicit the current weather.

#### **English - Oral Language (9.55 – 10.10)**

Mrs Smith plays the song about the apple tree, using the display that has been up since before the holidays as a teaching aid. She then invites the children to come through the 'Magic Door', which is held by the helpers, and to sit on the playmat to participate in story time. She explains that it is a clapping story time and that when she reads out a line of the story the children must clap according to the number mentioned in the line. She shows the book to the children. Mrs Smith initiates a discussion about school.

T: What do we like about school? Well I like coming in to see the smiling faces. I'm going to pass around Eddie so you can tell me what you like about school. You must say 'I like' at the start of the sentence'.

Using Eddie as the speaking object, all the children mention something they like about school such as home time, musical instruments, teacher, the computer and so on.

### **7.6.1 Interactional Scaffolding**

#### **7.6.1.1 Starting with what the children know**

During the 60 seconds or so it takes Mrs Smith to find the apple tree song in the Oral Language lesson, Jack turns around to Peter to smile and play around (puts finger under nose). They are allowed to communicate with each other using their common language but choose here to interact non-verbally.

#### **7.6.1.2 Starting slowly**

When eliciting the word 'Hallowe'en' at the start of Oral Language, Mrs Smith asks Peter to repeat the word after Anne but he doesn't. She doesn't force him to use language when he may not be feeling confident about it.

### 7.6.1.3 Buttrressing communication

When Mrs Smith is showing the story of Little Red Riding Hood during the Oral Language lesson, she shows the book specifically to Peter and Jack. Peter nods and smiles in response. This shows both child and teacher doubling the message using directed gaze and gestures.

During the same lesson, Peter is asked to respond after nine other children. He does not respond verbally but instead uses gestures to continue the conversation with Mrs Smith.

Mrs Smith: Peter what do you like about school? Say I like  
Peter: I like  
Mrs Smith: Do you like going to Mrs Morris?  
Peter: ... [nods]  
Mrs Smith: Do you like playing – ag súgradh [*does recognised action*]  
Peter: ... [nods]

### 7.6.1.4 Repetition

When Mrs Smith is showing the story of Little Red Riding Hood during the Oral Language lesson, she shows the book specifically to Peter and Jack. She emphasises an important word from the story along with a picture in order to enhance understanding.

Mrs Smith: That's the wolf  
Jack: wolf  
Mrs Smith: Ok?  
Jack: Ok.

### 7.6.1.5 Talking about the here and now/ Expanding and Extending

During the Oral Language lesson, Peter is asked what he dressed up as for Hallowe'en. Although he has very little of the language necessary to engage in the conversation with Mrs Smith, she supplies him with missing vocabulary and he uses gestures to add meaning. His nodding acts as a non-verbal signal that he understands the questions.

Mrs Smith: Now Peter what did you dress up as?  
 Peter: ...  
 Mrs Smith: I dressed up as  
 Peter: (mumbles sound of words but not actual words and says Hallowe'en)  
 Mrs Smith: Did you wear a witch's hat?  
 Peter: ... [*shakes head*]  
 Mrs Smith: Did you dress up?  
 Peter: Paul [*nods head*]  
 Mrs Smith: Did you go trick-or-treating with Paul?  
 Peter: ... Hallowe'en  
 Mrs Smith: Did you get sweets?  
 Peter: ... [*nods and smiles*]

During the same part of the lesson, Jack is one of the last children to be asked what he dressed up as. The context helps him to engage with the conversation. His language skills expand as the conversation develops. At times he repeats what Mrs Smith says as he thinks that is what is required of him, but it is interesting that when Mrs Smith supplies words in Irish rather than in English he appears to understand more. Another child is also able to assist as he knows that Jack is very interested in Power Rangers.

Mrs Smith: Now Jack what did you dress up as? I dressed up as  
 Jack: I dressed up  
 Mrs Smith: What did you wear Jack? Was it a witch?  
 Jack: witch  
 Mrs Smith: Was it a cailleach?  
 Jack: No  
 Mrs Smith: A púca?  
 Jack: No  
 One of children says Power Ranger.  
 Jack ... [*nods*]  
 Mrs Smith: I dressed up ---  
 Jack: I dressed up  
 Mrs Smith: as a Power Ranger  
 Jack: Power Ranger

In the Oral Language lesson, Peter is asked what he did for Hallowe'en. Mrs Smith uses his understanding of the context to elicit responses, which he gives verbally and non-verbally. The fact that sometime he repeats only part of what Mrs Smith supplies shows his understanding of the phrase.

Mrs Smith: Now Peter what did you do for Hallowe'en?  
 Peter: Paul and Simon  
 Mrs Smith: Did you get dressed up?  
 Peter: ... [*nods head*]  
 Mrs Smith: Did you go trick-or-treating?  
 Peter: trick or treat  
 Mrs Smith: What did you get in your bag?  
 Peter: ... [*nods and smiles*]  
 Mrs Smith: Did you get sweets and nuts?  
 Peter: ... [*nods*]  
 Mrs Smith: What else?  
 Peter: Paul and Simon

Mrs Smith holds Peter's hand and sits on his desk during the conversation to support him in his communication. When finished, he does the squinting he often does in this situation.

During the same part of the lesson, Jack is asked about trick-or-treating after four other children have been. He shows his understanding of the question by responding with an appropriate word, although the word may not directly answer the question. Mrs Smith helps him to expand his vocabulary by using the context to help him understand and by developing his fluency through continued conversation. Although the topic is decontextualised, it makes sense to the children as they have just spent a week on holidays for Hallowe'en.

Mrs Smith: Jack, did you go trick-or-treating?  
 Jack: Mammy  
 Mrs Smith: What did you do?  
 Jack: Jack  
 Mrs Smith: Did you knock on the door?  
 Jack: treat  
 Mrs Smith: Did you have a bag?  
 Jack: bag  
 Mrs Smith: What was in it?  
 Jack: yes  
 Mrs Smith: What was in the bag?  
 Jack: In the bag  
 Mrs Smith: What did you get? [*holding up sweets*]  
 Jack: yes  
 Mrs Smith: What did you get?

John: milseáin  
Jack: milseáin  
Mrs Smith: Did you have báirín breac?  
Jack: báirín breac  
Mrs Smith: Did you have cake?  
Jack: cake

## **7.6.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

### **7.6.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

Jack joins in with the rhymes ‘Plip plop plí’ and ‘Cuir ort do chóta’ as much as any other child in the class. During these rhymes, Peter moves his mouth but does not sing the words. Both examples show that reciting rhymes as a group allows second-language learners to be a part of the group while tuning into the classroom action.

As part of the Welcome Routine, Jack’s flashcard is the second one to appear. He says ‘My name is Jack’. When everyone else has been asked, Mrs Smith comes back to him. He is able to expand his sentence as expected by the teacher as this is part of the routine for everybody.

Jack: My name is Jack  
Mrs Smith: and  
Jack: I am 5.

During the story at the end of the lesson, Jack counts each time as directed – sometimes with too many claps, as many of the L1 English speakers also do.

### **7.6.2.2 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

During the Oral Language lesson, Jack lies down on his desk while James rubs his head. Jack then makes shapes with his hands and James and him play together. This shows that their relationship is developing and they have developed a good rapport with each other.



During the conversations around trick-or-treating and Hallowe'en in the Oral Language lessons, other children supply Jack with missing vocabulary to assist him, such as Power Ranger or milseáin. Without being instructed to do so, the English-speaking children sense that the second-language learners need some assistance in getting their message across.

## 7.7 Analysis of Observation 5

### **Observation 5 – Session Summary**

**Date:** 03.11.09

**Time:** 9.00 – 10.30 (90 minutes)

**Children:** Jack, Peter and Eugene

The session begins with Mrs Smith telling the children to get into their groups. This is the third time the children have had this type of activities morning. The group being observed has Peter, Ian, Alanah, Jack and Eugene. They start off in the Reading Corner (9.10 – 9.30), move onto the Sand Tray (9.30 – 9.50), then onto the Water Station (9.50 – 10.05), from there to the Home Corner (10.05 – 10.20) and finally to the Tangrams (10.20 – 10.40).

### 7.7.1 Interactional Scaffolding

#### 7.7.1.1 Starting with what the children know

Peter shows me a picture of Kipper on a snowball. He says snowball in Polish while I say snowball. I ask what does the dog say and Ian says woof woof. At the Sand Tray, Peter picks up an object and tells me what it is in Polish. As I do not know what it is, I ask Ian, who tells me it is a fire hose. I tell Peter fire hose and he nods.

Jack spills sand on himself at the Sand Tray and Peter wipes it off him. This happens twice and Jack says thank you in Polish.

During this session, there are many more examples of the home language being used than I have noticed during any other session. Perhaps the informality of the small-group situation is a factor in this.

### **7.7.1.2 Buttressing communication**

When Jack comes in late he puts his bosca lóin in the correct place, showing that he is aware of the routines in the classroom. When Mrs Smith asks him to come to the reading corner once he's ready, she gestures towards the area where the rest of his group is sitting.

Jack points at his shapes to show me while he is making tangrams on templates. Jack calls me 'teacher' when he is looking for a shape. He points to the shape that he needs, using non-verbal interactions instead of words to communicate his needs. Peter also points at his shapes to show me while he makes his tangrams on templates.

During Reading Corner, when Eugene is looking for a book, Peter points at him, taps me, and points at a cushion. I take it and put it under Eugene and tell Peter he's very kind. His kindness shines through despite not having enough words to express himself verbally yet. Peter looks at slide-out books and points to certain things which he comes and shows me.

Peter hurts his hand when Jack hits it accidentally. He points at his hand, taps me and points at spade. I touch his hand and ask where it is sore. He points at the front of his hand. I kiss it and say 'Is that ok now' He nods. It is clear that he understands what I am saying and is willing to communicate with me at the non-verbal level where he is most comfortable.

At the Water Station, Peter shows me how the water runs through a cup. Later on, Peter wants the siphon and taps me to point at it when another child has it, asking for help non-verbally.

At the Home Corner, Peter takes a spoon out of washing machine, comes over to show it to me and shakes his head and smiles to show that he understands that it is inappropriate to put a spoon into a washing machine. Peter looks at me with a cross look on his face and points to the washing machine when Ian puts food into the washing machine.

### 7.7.1.3 Repetition

Jack shows me a picture in the book '10 Little Tadpoles', of frogs on a pop-out page. I say frogs and he repeats. While he did not know the word before now, the emphasis on the single word provides an opportunity for him to learn it.

I point out the number 4 on one of the pages and Jack says '4' and counts the tadpoles that are sticking out from the page. I direct him to the start of the book and on each page Jack counts the sticking out tadpoles and then points to the number typed on the page. He gets more excited as the pages go on. He seems comfortable with every number from 1-10 but doesn't seem to know the number 8 and we come across it 3 or 4 times, each time with me saying it and him repeating. Jack then takes out a book about animals. I point to the pig and say 'What's that?' Jack replies in Polish.

Jack finds a page about all the different animals. I point to different ones and he gives me the Polish word. I say the word in English and he repeats. This again provides an opportunity for him to learn the word, in a translation style.

In the Home Corner Jack finds an item of food which I'm not sure of. I say 'I don't know' and shrug my shoulders. Jack does same action and says 'dunno'. Mrs Smith comes and says one of the unidentified items is beans. She finds the bread and says 'beans on toast', which Jack repeats. Jack finds a fried egg. I point to it and say 'egg' which he repeats. I show him the frying pan and the spatula, and he starts to cook them for a while.

Jack is showing himself to be at a stage where he is soaking up the new language he comes across. He has the confidence to repeat words where necessary and begin an interaction with another person.

#### **7.7.1.4 Talking about the here and now**

While at the Water Station Jack spills some water on me and I laugh. He laughs too and I say 'You got water all over me' while laughing. He says sorry. This is the first time I have encountered uninitiated speech and the context has helped Jack to supply the apology.

#### **7.7.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

##### **7.7.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

When Eugene needs a tool at the Sand Tray, he takes it out of the person's hand and says please. He knows the expectation in the classroom is to use words such as please, thank you and so on. These phrases have been picked up over time from the English-speaking children. Eugene is quite boisterous in his play, particularly at the Water Station. Eugene often grabs things from other people, and says please at the same time so that the other person knows he's taking it.

##### **7.7.2.2 Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion**

When Jack comes to the corner he selects a green cushion first, and then swaps for a blue one. There is some non-verbal interaction between himself and Peter. While in the Reading Corner, after the interaction between myself and Jack over clothes, he points to a pair of underpants on the line and I say I don't know and gesture. He laughs and shows the picture to Eugene.

At the Home Corner Alanah hangs up clothes. Peter starts hanging up clothes with her. Ian and Jack play with pretend food and utensils – mainly burger and bread. After a few minutes Peter Jack and Eugene cook and for 30 seconds or so speak Polish, pretending the hob is hot. The three engage in a little rough and tumble play which I stop.

Later on after the interaction between myself and Jack, Ian and Jack play together again. Ian puts some food into Jack's mouth and they both laugh. Ian says 'I want you to make bread for me' (pointing to toaster) and Jack replies briefly in Polish.

All the while, Eugene and Alanah are making tea. Peter hangs up clothes. Ian puts some food into the washing machine. Peter says 'no' and takes the food out. Peter speaks briefly to Ian in Polish, sounding quite agitated about the clothes in the washing machine. After I have found the fried egg and spatula for Jack, Ian says 'Can I have that'. Jack says no quite clearly. Ian takes it anyway and makes a big sandwich which they share.

These interactions were all made possible by the small group situation. The social proximity with other children, English-speaking or not, makes interaction easier. Even when Peter is playing non-verbally, the small group situation enables him to hear a lot of language being used.

### 7.7.2.3 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children

At the Sand Tray, Alanah makes scooping sweeping shapes in the sand and says 'Come on Jack you do it'. Jack is doing a similar activity anyway. Alanah tries to include Jack as she is aware that he speaks a different language.

## 7.8 Analysis of Observation 6 and Observation 7

<p><b>Observation 6 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 09.11.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.10 – 10.10 (60 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> Irish lesson; Music lesson; Maths lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack &amp; Peter</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.10 – 9.30)</b>  Mrs Smith takes out the umbrella and the whole class recites 'Plip plop plí' and 'Cuir ort do chóta'. She then talks about the puppets Eddie and Rocaí Rua as follows: 'Tá Eddie ag gáire' {Eddie is laughing}. She says a short rhyme 'Yipi Ei ó' (See Appendix J). She uses a toy television as a teaching aid. Mrs Smith starts singing a new song called 'Tá mé i mo</p>	<p><b>Observation 7 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 16.11.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.00 – 10.00 (60 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> English lesson; Irish lesson; Library Time; Welcome Routine; English lesson; Maths lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack, Peter and Eugene</p> <p><b>English lesson - Letterland (9.00 – 9.10)</b>  Mrs Smith collects a letter from the children and invites those who have items for the Munching Mike table to come up and talk about them. Items such as a magnet and a money box stimulate discussion. The flashcards to go with the items are then placed on the</p>
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<p>shuí ar mo chathaoir' (See Appendix J). She then adds actions and the children start to join in. When the principal comes to the door, Mrs Smith instructs the children to 'Téigh a chodladh' {Go to sleep} and they lie on their desks. When he leaves the whole class sings then song again. Mrs Smith picks up the lunchboxes and says 'Cé leis é?' {Who does this belong to?} The required response is 'Is liomsa é' {It is mine}. She then holds up schoolbags and asks the same question.</p> <p><b>Music Lesson (9.30 – 9.50)</b> Mrs Smith says a rhyme called 'Pitter Patter' She asks all the children to take their peann luaidhe dearg {red pencil} and put it on their name, and then hold it in the air. The children tap the pencil along with the rhyme. Mrs Smith then takes out the musical instruments and talks through each one – how to strike it and what it's called. She says to the class to have nice manners. Each group is invited to the top of the class in turn and each child chooses an instrument to strike while the whole class says the thyme.</p> <p><b>Maths Lesson (9.50 – 10.10)</b> Mrs Smith puts multiples of pictures and toys on a table. She calls individual children to find sets of 3 and encourages each child to talk about what they found.</p>	<p>Letterland table.</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.15 – 9.25)</b> The whole class sings 'Tá mé i mo shuí ar mo chathaoir' twice with the actions, then 'Yipi Ei ó'. Mrs Smith then introduces the siopa {shop}. She brings out table with a toy till, sweets and money in the till, as well as a trolley. She takes out airgead {money} and says 'Seo airgead' {This is money}. The children repeat. Mrs Smith does the same with úll {apple}, milseáin {sweets} and peann luaidhe {pencil}. She holds up the trolley and says 'Seo ciseán' {This is a basket}. The children repeat. Mrs Smith says 'Mise an siopadóir' {I am the shopkeeper}. She puts on a white hat and sings the new song, 'Mise an Siopadóir' (See Appendix J). Mrs Smith invites two children to be the shopkeeper and the shopper (Daidí or Mamaí). First of all, Mrs Smith starts singing 'Mise an siopadóir', replacing 'Mise' with the child's name. The shopper pushes around the trolley while the class sings the song. The conversation Mrs Smith encourages is as follows:</p> <p><b>Library Time (9.25 – 9.40)</b> Mrs Smith asks the children to take out their library books and asks the children questions about their stories. One child is selected to tell the story with Mrs Smith's help.</p> <p><b>Oral Language/ Welcome Routine (9.40 – 9.50)</b> The helpers are selected to fill in the weather chart and feed the fish. Mrs Smith then conducts a class discussion about the clay snakes which were made by the children the previous week. The snowmen that were painted last week are also discussed.</p> <p><b>Maths Lesson (9.50 – 10.00)</b> The children are instructed to look at the pattern on the blackboard, where Mrs Smith has stuck counters in the pattern red, yellow, blue, red, yellow, blue, red, yellow, blue. The whole class says it together. Mrs Smith then explains that she's going to give them all a piece of paper and to turn it over to the empty side (it has squares on one side and it's empty on the other). When they are finished making the pattern, they are instructed to make Munching Mike and then anything they want to.</p>
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## 7.8.1 Interactional Scaffolding

### 7.8.1.1 Starting slowly

Mrs Smith continues to show her awareness of the need to prepare the children for participation in class during Observation 6. For example, Peter is the fourth person to be asked about his schoolbag during the Irish lesson. He says something that sounds like ‘Le lioba é’, quite loudly.

### 7.8.1.2 Buttressing communication

When it is his turn to choose an instrument during Observation 6, Jack picks up 2 maracas.

Mrs Smith: Jack, just one [*gesturing*]  
Jack ... [*puts one back*]

This shows that words in combination with gestures can make an instruction well understood by second-language learners.

At the start of the music lesson during Observation 6, Mrs Smith tells Peter to put away his pencil case. Peter starts to put his pencil back into his pencil case, looking around him all the time, but then leaves it on the desk. Mrs Smith comes over and shows him bit by bit, taking the pencil out of his hand and pointing to his schoolbag. “Keep your peann luaidhe but put the pencil case into your mála scoile”. This exchange shows that Peter understood something about the pencil or the pencil case, but didn’t quite understand the whole instruction. Mrs Smith physically shows him when she becomes aware of his partial understanding.

When Eugene can’t find his library book in Observation 7, Peter looks at Mrs Smith and shakes his head. He is communicating his sense of Eugene being a bit silly to Mrs Smith, but non-verbally as he doesn’t have the language to convey that yet.

### 7.8.1.3 Talking about the here and now

During Library Time in Observation 7, some of the children do not have their books. Mrs Smith engages in a conversation with Jack about his missing book. He is able to respond to her questions at times with responses that make sense, although he does lack the appropriate vocabulary. Mrs Smith supplies him with missing phrases and vocabulary items.

Mrs Smith: Where is your book Jack?  
Jack: ... [*throws hands up in the air*]  
Mrs Smith: Where is it?  
Jack: No mammy.  
Mrs Smith: Will you bring it in tomorrow?  
Jack: Yes.

As Jack has finished making his pattern at the end of the Maths lesson in Observation 7, Mrs Smith tells him he can make any shape he likes. While he does respond, it is hard to know if whether or not he understands her suggestions as the responses are monosyllabic.

Mrs Smith: Jack, you can make a flower  
Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: a house  
Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: a snake  
Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: Anything you like.

At the very start of the day in Observation 7, it appears Eugene has been absent for a few days. Although he doesn't appear to show understanding at the start of the conversation, the context and the assistance offered by the teacher help him to move forward to responding both verbally and non-verbally.

Mrs Smith: Eugene you can move into Eva's place (he moves). You left your bulletin here. You can put it into your plastic sleeve. Give me your books.  
Eugene: ...  
Mrs Smith: Put that into your plastic sleeve [*does action with plastic sleeve*]  
Eugene: this



Mrs Smith: Yes. Is that ok?  
Eugene: ok  
Mrs Smith: Did you do your work at home?  
Eugene: ... [*nods*]

#### 7.8.1.4 Expanding and extending

Jack is the third person to be chosen to find a set of three during the Maths lesson in Observation 6. He is able to finish off sentences that Mrs Smith starts for him, and give responses that clearly show his understanding of the task. When he does not know what the fruit is, Mrs Smith prompts him with names of other fruits before finally supplying the missing vocabulary. His initial task helps to expand his vocabulary using the initial utterance as a starting point. At times, Jack repeats a word that is not the correct answer, in the hope that it will be but Mrs Smith keeps moving on until the right answer is given and repeated.

Mrs Smith: Now we'll have Jack. What are you picking Jack?  
Jack ... [*shows her pears*].  
Mrs Smith: Have you enough? (starts to count) One ---  
Jack: Two, three  
Mrs Smith: What colour are they? Are they red?  
Jack: No. green.  
Mrs Smith: Are they apples?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: Oranges?  
Jack: Oranges  
Mrs Smith: They're pears  
Mrs Smith: One pear  
Jack: One pear  
Mrs Smith: Two pears  
Jack: Two pears  
Mrs Smith: three pears  
Jack: Three pears.  
Jack ... [*puts them on the magnetic board and sits down*]

When Peter is asked to pick a set of 3 during the same lesson, it is clear that he understands what to do and in fact how to count them. Mrs Smith expands his vocabulary knowledge by supplying the missing word for pumpkins.

Mrs Smith: Peter can I have a set of 3?  
Peter [picks up 3 pumpkins]  
Mrs Smith: What are they?  
Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: 3 pumpkins  
Peter: One, two, three [as Mrs Smith points to them]  
Mrs Smith: pumpkins

At the start of Library time in Observation 7, Eugene searches in his bag for his book. He is able to explain that he doesn't have his book, while Mrs Smith expands the conversation by explaining why.

Eugene: Teacher no book [shakes head]  
Mrs Smith: Where is your book?  
Eugene: No  
Mrs Smith: Oh, you were out on Thursday, that's why. That's ok.

Continuing with the fact that he had been absent for a few days, he is asked to move places. Mrs Smith extends the conversation by instructing him to put his bulletin away and he continues the conversation by responding both verbally and non-verbally.

## **7.8.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

### **7.8.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

During the Maths lesson in Observation 6, Jack keeps his hand up through three children in order to get a turn. This shows that he is aware of the structure for turn-taking in the classroom.

While Peter's group is playing the percussion instruments as part of the music lesson in Observation 6, Jack says the rhyme along with the rest of his class, getting stronger when it comes to pitter patter. Group participation in saying the rhyme allows Jack to practice his language skills within a safe environment and enhances his membership of the group. Jack participates in all of the rhymes, as much as any of the other children in the class.

Jack is invited to be Daidí as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> pair in the Irish lesson as part of Observation 7, along with James. Jack pushes the trolley while the class sings ‘James an siopadóir’. Being able to lead the song, while not requiring any language to do so, helps Jack to feel secure as a member of the group. He is able to use the English-speaking children as models so he can pick up cues regarding what to do and when in this situation. The structured conversation between Jack and James in role shows Mrs Smith and James helping Jack to move forward in the conversation.

Jack	[ <i>looks at all the items</i> ]
Mrs Smith:	Right Jack
Jack:	milseáin
Mrs Smith:	más é do thoil é.
Jack:	milseáin do thoil é
James:	Seo duit
Mrs Smith:	Seo airgead duit
Jack:	Seo airgead duit
James:	Go raibh maith agat
Mrs Smith:	Slán leat Jack. Slán leat siopadóir
Jack:	Slán leat siopadóir [ <i>waves and pushes trolley around room</i> ]

For ‘Cuir ort do chóta’ in Observation 6, Peter does 1, 2, 3 movement with his fingers and follows the appropriate actions. He follows the appropriate actions for all of the rhymes and songs in the Irish lesson but does not say the words. He is able to participate in the group activity at his own linguistic level.

During the Irish lesson in Observation 7, Peter has his hand up to take part on the role play, particularly during the last few turns. This normal classroom routine is used by Peter as a strategy to be chosen to participate, showing his security in the group and his ability to follow the actions of the English-speaking children.

#### **7.8.2.2 Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion**

At the start of the Maths lesson in Observation 7, Jack has his page on the squared side. His neighbour Sophie says ‘Jack the empty side’. Jack turns it over looking at Sophie’s.

When the counters are distributed, Jack and Sophie scuffle over the counters in a friendly way. When Mrs Smith praises Jack and Sophie for being finished, Jack gives Sophie the thumbs up and they smile at each other. Sophie says 'Let's tidy up' to him. She gathers up counters in middle of page and puts them into the box. He copies her action.

Peter and Eugene engage in some peer scaffolding during Observation 7. In the middle of making patterns during the Maths lesson, Peter notices that John behind him is not doing it correctly. Peter points to John S. and points at his own pattern. John makes a fist at Peter and says 'leave me alone'. Peter shows that he is aware of what others in the class are doing and that he is a valuable member of the group, although John (who has diagnosed behavioural difficulties) doesn't heed him in this case. In a similar way, Eugene also helps John during the Maths lesson. Eugene notices that John has his page on the wrong side. He turns around and says 'come on – this, this', while demonstrating both sides of page. John ignores him, despite the verbal and non-verbal assistance given by Eugene.

### **7.8.2.3 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

The seating arrangement means that Jack is seated beside English-language speakers. He shows his sociable nature when interacting with Alanah. During the Irish lesson in Observation 6, when the principal comes to the classroom, Alanah talks to Jack. Jack responds verbally in a way by saying 'haaa'.

During the Maths lesson in Observation 6, Sophie passes wind and Jack laughs and points quietly at her. Sophie shows herself to be in tune with Jack's need for extra explanation in Observation 7. She and Jack have a number of verbal and non-verbal exchanges. Jack hears a lot of language as a result of being seated next to Sophie and the social proximity makes interactions between them easier.

## 7.9 Analysis of Observation 8 and Observation 9

<p><b>Observation 8 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 01.12.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.40 – 10.50 (70 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> Integrated English/ Religion lesson; Science lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack, Peter and Eugene</p> <p><b>Integrated English - Oral Language/ Religion Lesson (9.40 – 10.20)</b>  Mrs Smith conducts a class discussion about some artwork the children did last week and the story they read about the 2 little dicky birds. She then points out the winter table which has a prayer written on it saying 'Thank you God for all your care You are with us everywhere'.  The whole class recites it chorally and some children are asked to recite it individually. Mrs Smith draws the children's attention to the Story of Jesus, which is displayed on the blackboard since yesterday. Teams of children worked together to colour in the pictures, which have flashcards underneath telling the story. Mrs Smith asks the children who did which picture. She then asks the whole class to read out the flashcards telling the story. They are as follows:  'Mary and Joseph'; 'Bethlehem'; 'No room'; 'Stable'; 'Shepherds'; 'Jesus is born'; 'Kings'; 'Welcome Baby Jesus'. Then some individual children are asked to read the story out.  Mrs Smith draws the attention of the class to the Christmas table and holds a class discussion about the items and what Letterland sound they start with. Each item has an identifying flashcard beside it. The words are tinsel, crib, snow family, snowman, Santa and reindeer. She then takes the flashcards away and invites groups of children at a time to come and put the correct flashcard beside the correct item. The song 'Little Donkey' is played on the CD and the class sings along with it.</p> <p><b>Science lesson (10.20 – 10.50)</b>  Mrs Smith displays a new chart on the blackboard and says that it's all about materials. One of the children asks what the word 'materials' means.  T: It means what things are made of. Our clothes are made of fabric. Remember when we made Winnie the Witch at Hallowe'en, we made her dress out of f..</p>	<p><b>Observation 9 – Session Summary</b>  <b>Date:</b> 10.12.09  <b>Time:</b> 9.30 – 10.50 (80 minutes)  <b>Subjects:</b> Irish lesson; Computer time; English lesson/ Library time; Science lesson  <b>Children:</b> Jack and Peter</p> <p><b>Irish Lesson (9.30 – 10.10)</b>  The whole class is singing 'Tá San Nioclás ag teacht anocht' (See Appendix J). The children are doing actions and each time, a different child comes to the top of the classroom to act as San Nioclás and dress in a Santa Cape carrying around Santa's sack.  Mrs Smith then elicits what the words are for the Christmas word table in Irish. The words are fear sneachta {snowman}, San Nioclás {Santa Claus}, máinséar {crib} and crann nollag {Christmas tree}. She asks 'Céard é sin?' {What is that?} and the response is 'Sin (item)' {That is a (item)}. She asks various children about the items.  The Irish book 'Maith Thú' is distributed and the children are asked to find the page with the mála scoile {schoolbag}. Once the children have found the page with the pictures on it, they are asked as a group to say all the revision words together. Then various children are asked to do so individually. The children are instructed to take their colours out and Mrs Smith starts telling them to colour in certain things particular colours. For example, she tells them 'Dathaigh na bróga glas' {Colour the shoes green}. Once they have all finished, she gets them all to do an action rhyme called 'Bualadh Bos'.</p> <p><b>Computer Time (9.50 – 10.00 during Jack's allocated time)</b>  Each child receives a turn on the computer programme from the start of the day onwards. They are familiar with the programme as they have played it before. Each child plays individually and wears a headset. They know how many turns to take as they must put a cube into the bowl provided once they've taken a turn.</p> <p><b>English - Oral Language/ Library Time (10.10 – 10.30)</b>  The class say a rhyme that they have heard</p>
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<p>All: Fabric. A class discussion ensues about what is made of fabric. The discussion moves onto wood, metal and plastic in turn. For each material, some time is spent discussing items in the classroom that are made from it. Mrs Smith puts the children working in pairs to look through sorting boxes and she asks each pair to look for wood, plastic and metal in turn. Each time, they must put the items they find in the lid of the sorting box. When the activities have been completed satisfactorily, Mrs Smith allows the children to play with the items in the sorting boxes.</p>	<p>once or twice previously called 'The Chubby Snowman' (See Appendix J). The class says it three times and then Mrs Smith put on the song 'Little Donkey' for the children to sing along with. Mrs Smith points out that Clíona, a girl from 6<sup>th</sup> class, is helping the children to paint their Christmas candles. She is taking 2 children at a time to do their painting. Mrs Smith asks some children about how they made the candle and what they'll be used for. She then invites the children to take out their library books. One child is asked to share their story with the rest of the class.</p> <p><b>Science lesson (10.30 – 10.50)</b> Mrs Smith distributes the Science workbook 'It's a Wonderful World'. She asks them to put their finger on the picture of a ball of wool in the workbook and take out their peann luaidhe dearg {red pencil} for writing. The children are first asked to find items made out of wool in the classroom, then glass, then paper, then metal. A short discussion about each material ensues. She instructs them to draw a circle around the happy face if they can find an item made of that material in the classroom, and to put a circle around the sad face if not.</p>
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## 7.9.1 Interactional Scaffolding

### 7.9.1.1 Buttressing communication

Mrs Smith uses gestures and sounds to reinforce the meaning of the word 'reindeer' when Jack is asked to put the word beside the correct item after the other children in his group in Observation 8.

- Mrs Smith: Now Jack, what about your word.  
 Jack ... [*puts his word beside the snowman*]  
 Mrs Smith: It's a reindeer  
 Jack ... [*puts the word beside Santa*]  
 Mrs Smith: It's Santa's reindeer [*makes clip clop sounds and action of antlers*]  
 Jack ... [*smiles and puts his word beside the reindeer*]  
 Mrs Smith: What is it? Reindeer  
 Jack: reindeer

During the Science lesson in Observation 8, Eugene and Peter are working together on one sorting box. When Mrs Smith comes to ask what is made from wood, Peter holds up a lollipop stick. Mrs Smith says ‘That’s right the lollipop sticks are made of wood’. Peter chooses to respond non-verbally in that situation, using gestures instead.

During Library Time in Observation 9, Mrs Smith says ‘Could you quietly take out your library books for me?’

Peter is the first child to take it out. He holds it up for Mrs Smith to see. This shows that Peter understands the instruction and is able to respond appropriately.

During the Science lesson in Observation 9, Mrs Smith continues to make efforts to engage Peter in conversation. His non-verbal responses help to keep the conversation going, while also indicating his level of understanding. Mrs Smith’s tone of voice also assists Peter when the answer is incorrect, as when she asks the question “Glass?”

Mrs Smith: Now glass – can we find glass anywhere? Peter, where’s the glass. Show teacher the glass. Where’s the glass? Look at the glass.  
Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: Is that glass [*pointing to blackboard*]  
Peter: ... [*shakes head*]  
Mrs Smith: Is that glass [*pointing to crib*]  
Peter: ... [*nods*]  
Mrs Smith: Glass?  
Peter: ... [*shakes head*]  
Mrs Smith: Paul show Peter the glass. Is there glass in the room? Yes!  
Paul: ... [*points to window*]

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Eugene is asked to read out the flashcards telling the story of Jesus through pictures after two children have done so. He is able to supply many of the words himself without hesitation, but where assistance is required Mrs Smith needs only to prompt with the initial sound of the word.

Mrs Smith: I might pick a boy now. Eugene come on, up you come.  
Mrs Smith: Mary  
Eugene: Mary and  
Mrs Smith: J ---

Eugene: Joseph  
 Mrs Smith: Out loud!  
 Eugene: Mary and Joseph  
 Mrs Smith: Now what does the next one say? Be, be --- Bethlehem  
 Eugene: Bethlehem, No room, Stable  
 Mrs Smith: That's the one you did isn't it?  
 Eugene: This and this and this [*pointing at donkeys*]. Shepherds  
 Mrs Smith: Je ---  
 Eugene: Jesus  
 Mrs Smith: is b ---  
 Eugene: Jesus is ..  
 Mrs Smith: born  
 Eugene: Jesus is born  
 Mrs Smith: K, K, Kings  
 Eugene: Kings. Welcome Baby Jesus.

Similarly, Jack is asked to read out the flashcards telling the story of Jesus through pictures after four children have done so. He is given initial letter prompts by Mrs Smith at times, and at other times supplies the word or phrase himself, resulting in further encouragement. It is clear that his familiarity with the story is of assistance, but also that he has enough command of the language involved for initial letter prompts to suffice as assistance.

Mrs Smith: Come on Jack. I'll help you. Shout it out.  
 Mrs Smith: M ---  
 Jack: Mary Joseph, Bethlehem, No ..  
 Mrs Smith: No roo ---  
 Jack: No room, Stable, Shepherds, ..  
 Mrs Smith: Jesus  
 Jack : Jesus ..  
 Mrs Smith: is --  
 Jack: is ..  
 Mrs Smith: born  
 Jack: born ..  
 Mrs Smith: Jesus is born. This is Jack's picture. It's K, k, kings  
 Jack: Kings  
 Mrs Smith: And look at this. These are ca --  
 Jack: camels  
 Mrs Smith: Welcome ..  
 Jack: Welcome baby welcome  
 Mrs Smith: Welcome baby Jesus



When Jack is almost finished catching up with his colouring in Irish lesson in Observation 9, Mrs Smith says

Mrs Smith: Those who are finished, we're going to sing a song. We're going to sit back a little bit and stand up. Come on Jack stand up  
Jack ... [*holds up his pencil case*]

Jack is explaining here his ability to understand what the teacher is saying, while responding with appropriate body language, in fact more appropriately than using words in this situation.

At the start of the Science lesson in Observation 9, the children must find the page with the ball of wool.

Mrs Smith: Put your finger on the ball of wall  
Jack: ... [*puts his pencil on the ball of wool*]  
Mrs Smith: No Jack your finger.  
Jack: ... [*puts his finger on his mouth*]  
Mrs Smith: [*takes his finger and places it on ball of wool*]

Although Jack's language skills have developed a lot, Mrs Smith is still aware of when he needs extra help through physical actions.

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Eugene is asked about his flashcard. His is the second group to have a turn. He isn't sure what the phrase written on his flashcard is, but is able to respond correctly having been given the initial letter sounds by Mrs Smith.

Mrs Smith: What did you get Eugene?  
Mrs Smith: s ---  
Eugene: snow  
Mrs Smith: f ---  
Eugene: family

He is then asked to put his flashcard beside the correct item He's the first in his group to do so. He puts the flashcard in the correct place.

Mrs Smith: What does it say?  
Eugene: snow family

### 7.9.1.2 Repetition

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Jack is asked about his flashcard. His is the second group to have a turn. Mrs Smith uses prompting pauses initially, before realizing that she needs to supply the word for Jack to learn it.

Mrs Smith: What did you get Jack?  
Jack: ...  
Mrs Smith: r --  
Jack: r ..  
Mrs Smith: reindeer  
Jack: reindeer

In the following exchange during the same lesson, Peter is learning the word 'crib'. Mrs Smith uses every opportunity for Peter to repeat the word by emphasizing it and having Peter repeat it at different registers. His is the second group to have a turn.

Mrs Smith: Peter what's this you have?  
Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: It's a crib.  
Peter: crib  
Mrs Smith: crib  
Peter: crib

He is then asked to put his flashcard beside the correct item after two other people in his group. Mrs Smith continues to reinforce the new word.

Mrs Smith: Peter put your word in the right place.  
Peter: ... [*puts his word in the correct place*].  
Mrs Smith: What does it say?  
Peter: ...  
Mrs Smith: Crib ---  
Peter: Crib  
Mrs Smith: Louder [*gestures at ear*]  
Peter: Crib

During the Science lesson in Observation 8, both Eugene and Peter learn new words which they emphasize by repeating it straight away. For example, during the Science lesson, Peter is included in the discussion around materials made from metal.

Mrs Smith: Peter can you see metal?  
Peter: metal

Eugene takes an opportunity to repeat a new word when he hears it mentioned by another child and Mrs Smith during the discussion around items made of glass.

Mrs Smith: That's right my glasses that I wear sometimes  
Eugene: Teacher's glasses.

### **7.9.1.3 Talking about the here and now/ Expanding and extending**

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Jack is asked to talk about his part of the 'Kings' picture after his other teammates have done so. Mrs Smith uses the context of the work Jack himself has done to provide missing vocabulary items. Jack is able to respond to questions as part of the conversation in order to extend the exchange. In his effort to make himself understood, he even over-repeats but his interaction still makes sense and allows the conversation to move forward.

Mrs Smith: What did you colour Jack?  
Jack: ... [*points to brown camel*]  
Mrs Smith: brown camel  
Jack: brown camel, brown camel, brown camel [*pointing as he goes*]  
Mrs Smith: How many camels? [*holds up 3 fingers*]  
Jack: Three  
Mrs Smith: So you coloured in 3 camels  
Jack: yes

During the same part of the lesson, when Mrs Smith asks who did the stable, Peter puts his hand up. He also points at Eugene when Mrs Smith asks who did the donkey. She points to the picture while asking questions. He uses non-verbal strategies to converse

with her about the picture, and repeats words that are supplied by his teacher. The context also helps him to answer the initial questions particularly.

When Jack returns from his turn at the computer in Observation 9, he taps James on the shoulder to take his turn. However, James doesn't take any notice the first time. When instructed by Mrs Smith, he tells him again, using gestures and words. The context of knowing that James should be next to take a turn assists Jack in furthering the conversation.

Mrs Smith: Pass it onto James – tell James to go to the computer.  
Jack: computer [*taps James and points again*]

Mrs Smith manages to elicit a verbal response from Peter when he repeats part of her sentence in Observation 8. He is able to engage in the conversation by nodding and repeating part of a phrase to show his understanding.

Mrs Smith: Peter what part did you do? Show me. Good boy.  
Peter ... [*points out his part of the picture*]  
Mrs Smith: You did the orange part  
Peter: Orange  
Mrs Smith: so you worked with Eugene on those bits didn't you?  
Peter ... [*nods*]

While talking about materials in the Science lesson in Observation 8, after seven children have been asked about items in the environment made from wood, Jack is asked. While he gives monosyllabic answers, it is clear that he understands what is being asked, especially when he jokes at the end of the exchange.

Mrs Smith: Jack do you see anything?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: Well look around! Is the crib made from wood?  
Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: The chair?  
Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: the window?  
Jack ... [*nods*]

Mrs Smith: Is it?  
Jack: No (laughs)

As part of the same lesson, Eugene joins in the discussion around items made of wood after five other children have given answers. He initiates the exchange by pointing to the item he knows is made of wood and Mrs Smith supplies the missing vocabulary item for him.

Eugene ... [*points to press*]  
Mrs Smith: It's a press  
Eugene: press  
Mrs Smith: and here's the door. Is it wood?  
Eugene ... [*nods*]

Eugene also makes progress during the Science lesson in Observation 8. He continues to participate when looking for wood in the sorting box with Sam, and initiates an exchange between himself and his teacher and himself and myself. He receives confirmation of his answers and his original utterances help him to extend the conversation.

Eugene: Pencil wood. Teacher this wood? [*holding up pen*]  
Mrs Smith: No that's plastic

Furthermore, Eugene shows me some things. 'That plastic?' or says 'That wood'. He picks up a plastic cube with a magnet and says 'magnet plastic?'

He also joins in the discussion around items made of metal from the very beginning.

Mrs Smith: Now look at this metal tap.  
Eugene: metal  
Mrs Smith: That's right, metal.

After two children have given examples of metals items (tap, legs of table), Ella says 'magnetic board'.

Eugene: magnetic board  
Mrs Smith: Eugene yes – can you see metal anywhere else?

Eugene: No  
Mrs Smith: What about the handle of the door?  
Another child responds to this.

During Library Time in Observation 9, the children are asked by Mrs Smith to take out their library books. Mrs Smith uses the opportunity presented by Jack not having brought in his book to expand his language skills by extending the conversation to elicit more information. His original utterance could have been used to simply move onto the next thing but instead it was used to create opportunities for Jack to use his language skills.

Mrs Smith: Jack where's your library book?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: Where is it?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: Where is it?  
Jack: Mammy  
Mrs Smith: But where? Is it at home?  
Jack: Home  
Mrs Smith: Bring it back tomorrow. Keep it in your mála scoile.

#### 7.9.1.4 Fine-tuning

Mrs Smith tries again to get Jack's attention during the discussion around metal in Observation 9. While her original message may have been confusing for him, she is able to reiterate the message in a more understandable form so that he can respond appropriately.

Mrs Smith: Now see the one with the key? That's metal. Hands up who can see metal.  
Jack put your finger on the key. Jack can you see metal?  
Jack: ...  
Mrs Smith: Look around the room. Jack! Where's the metal? Look around the room.  
Is this metal (lunchbox)  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: Is there metal?  
Jack: ... [*picks up pencil case and points to edge*]  
Mrs Smith: Well that's metal colour but not metal. What about the door handle  
[*pointing*] is that metal?  
Jack: No  
Mrs Smith: It is!

Jack: yes  
Mrs Smith: And the sink – so have we found metal? Cross out the sad face, circle the happy face.

## 7.9.2 Environmental Scaffolding

### 7.9.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group

When the class is singing the song in Observation 8, Jack does not join in. Mrs Smith notices and encourages him to join in the whole group activity.

Mrs Smith: Jack sing [*makes action with mouth*]  
Jack moves his mouth for a minute while Mrs Smith watches.

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Jack is asked to read the prayer after the child beside him did so. This prayer has been on display in the classroom for a few days and the children have been reciting it together. He repeats what Mrs Smith says at times, but then is able to complete her sentences. This shows that he is tuned into the language in use in the classroom.

Mrs Smith: Now Jack can you try?  
Mrs Smith: Thank you ---  
Jack: Thank you ..  
Mrs Smith: God for all your ---  
Jack: care ..  
Mrs Smith: You are with us ---  
Mrs Smith & Jack: everywhere.

During the same part of the lesson, Eugene is asked to read the prayer after two other children. Again, he repeats some of what Mrs Smith supplies, but also offers some of the phrases independently.

Mrs Smith: Now Eugene, maybe you can try  
Eugene: Thank you God  
Mrs Smith: for all your ---  
Eugene: all your ..  
Mrs Smith: care. You are with us ---

Eugene: You are with us ..  
Mrs Smith: every --  
Eugene: where.

During the Irish lesson in Observation 9, Peter is chosen as San Nioclás after three other children as Mrs Smith said he was singing very well. He does the actions at top of room just like the others. This shows that he has been following the actions of the English-speaking children to gather his knowledge of the routine expected during this part of the lesson.

### **7.9.2.2 Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion**

Jack and Sophie work together while looking through the sorting boxes in Observation 8. Sophie talks to Jack and he responds with gestures. The social proximity makes interacting with each other easier.

During the playing phase of the Science lesson in Observation 8, Peter and Ella play nonverbally. They seem to be communicating with hand gestures and actions alone – neither Ella nor Peter says a word to each other. The fact that Peter and Ella are seated beside each other for this activity makes it easier for Peter to join in pair work without having to negotiate entry.

While they are engaged in pair work in Observation 8, Sam and Eugene converse – Sam holds up a few items to Eugene and Eugene responds correctly ‘No that’s plastic’. This provides an opportunity for Eugene to hear a lot of language and practice language in a safe environment with just one other participant.

### **7.9.2.3 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

During the Science lesson in Observation 8, Jack puts his hand up when talking about items made from plastic.



Jack: plastic sleeve  
Mrs Smith: plastic yes  
Sophie: He said plastic sleeve  
Mrs Smith: Well done that's right – we put our work in our plastic sleeve.

In this case, while Mrs Smith didn't hear at first the fact that Jack supplied an appropriate example of an item made from plastic, his neighbour speaks up for him to ensure that he is heard. This is successful and Mrs Smith praises Jack for the response.

During the Oral Language/ Religion lesson in Observation 8, Ian gestures to Jack to put his hand up when it is their group's turn. Jack does so. In this way, Ian is watching out for Jack's ability to model the behaviour of the rest of the group and offers assistance subtly when needed.

During the same lesson in Observation 8, when Jack's group is called to pick out a flashcard, John asks him which one he has. Jack shows him the flashcard. John also then asks Peter which one he has. Peter shows him the flashcard, gesturing in a left-right orientation. This shows that he understands John's question, while not being able to respond verbally. Both Jack and Peter are showing signs of comprehension of their peers' language.

During the Science lesson in Observation 8, Eugene is messing with Peter by laughing, making hand movements. Mrs Smith switches Peter with Ella as Eugene does not stop when she firmly tells him to. Eugene and Peter are clearly developing a good relationship with each other, albeit without using words to communicate.

While discussing paper in the environment during the Science lesson in Observation 9, Mrs Smith notices that Jack doesn't have his finger on the correct place in the book. She asks David (his English-speaking neighbour) to do it so that Jack can use him as a model.

Mrs Smith: Jack put your finger on the book. David you do it so Jack can see you.  
Jack: ...  
Mrs Smith: [*comes over and puts Jack's finger on the page*]

When it comes to Computer Time in Observation 9, David comes back from the computer and taps Jack on shoulder and points to computer. When his computer time is over, Jack sits down, taps James, says “James” and points to computer. To catch up with work done during the Irish lesson, David says “Jack – you do red and green”

Jack looks into David’s book to see what to do. David points at his book and at Jack’s to show him what to do, volunteering on this occasion to help Jack out using non-verbal cues supplemented with language. During the discussion about wood as part of the Science lesson, David shows Jack how to point at it on the page.

When the children are told to take out their pencils at the start of the Science lesson in Observation 9, Jack and David play with their pencils by tapping them against each other’s, showing their good relationship with each other.

At the end of the Science lesson in Observation 9, it is Jack’s turn to paint his candle. Clfona comes over to get him. She gets him to pick which paintbrush he’d like by holding 2 out and gesturing with them, thereby supplementing her verbal instructions with non-verbal cues.

On two separate occasions, Jack is assisted by other children supplying the correct word. Maureen, a second-language learner with English and Polish as home languages supplies the Irish word for him on one occasion, while on another the whole class is invited by Mrs Smith to supply the missing word.

Mrs Smith: Jack, céard é sin ? Sin ---  
Jack: ...  
Maureen: fear sneachta  
Jack: fear sneachta (not quite clearly)

A few minutes later, Mrs Smith comes back to him.

Mrs Smith: Jack céard é sin?  
Jack : ...  
Mrs Smith: Sin f ---  
All: fear sneachta

## 7.10 Analysis of Observation 10

### Observation 10 – Session Summary

**Date:** 14.12.09

**Time:** 9.00 – 10.20 (80 minutes)

The session begins with Prayers and Letterland (9.00 – 9.20). Mrs Smith then puts the children into groups for the activities. Eugene, Jack, Peter, Ella and Aoife are in one group. Each group rotates stations after approximately 20 minutes. The group starts at the Sand Tray (9.20 – 9.40), moves onto the Water Station (9.40 – 10.00), then onto the Home Corner (10.00 – 10.20) and finally to the Reading Corner (10.20 – 10.40).

Prayers and Letterland

The two prayers are 'Morning Prayer' and 'Oh Angel of God' (Appendix J)

Mrs Smith then reminds the children that they will be starting a new letter in Letterland today – Sammy Snake. As usual, some children have brought in items for the Letterland table. In particular, Ian has brought in a wide variety of items, ranging from slipper, sharpener, scarf, swan, stickers and so on – around 20 items in total.

### 7.10.1 Interactional Scaffolding

#### 7.10.1.1 Starting with what the children know

During their time at the Sand Tray, Jack and Peter speak to each other in Polish a little bit while playing. Peter sticks his hand into something else Jack is making and Jack makes a face at him, complaining to him in Polish. The children are of course allowed to speak to each other while playing and speaking the home language is a natural part of this in the classroom. At the Water Station they also have an opportunity to converse when Jack is looking for something else to play with. Peter points at his toy and explains in Polish. They play on the water pinball machine.

#### 7.10.1.2 Buttressing communication

Peter has found the iron and starts ironing the clothes, looking for the steam button. He comes over with the iron, waving at me to look at him. In this case, he doesn't have the phrase to ask where the button is but makes himself understood very well with gestures.

While queuing up for the home corner after his time playing with water, Eugene looks at my notebook and makes a writing action. In this case, the use of non-verbal gestures makes more sense than saying it out loud.

### 7.10.1.3 Repetition

Jack picks up a book about the time, with an analogue clock in it. He counts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 on the clock and points at them to me. When it comes to 11 and 12, he shrugs his shoulders. Emphasizing the single word provides opportunities for Jack to hear it clearly and repeat as appropriate, as in the following excerpt.

Anna: Eleven --- [*pointing at number*]  
Jack: Eleven ..  
Anna: Twelve --- [*pointing at number*]  
Jack: Twelve

During Reading Corner, Peter picks up a book about Letterland. He points at Hairy Hat Man.

Anna: Hairy Hat Man ---  
Peter: Hairy hat man.

While Mrs Smith looks through the flashcards during Letterland time, which takes longer than usual due to the amount of items, Eugene says 'snowman' to himself twice or three times. Here he shows an example of how a child sometimes repeats to himself in order to emphasize the sound and learn the word.

During Letterland Time, Eugene gets involved in the discussion twice. The first time, the word has been mentioned by Ian, who brought in the item, once.

Mrs Smith: Eugene what is it? Sharpener  
Eugene: sharpener

The second time, Mrs Smith is trying to get his attention after the word has been mentioned once by Ian.

Mrs Smith: Eugene look at the swan  
Eugene: swan

During his time at the Water Station, I supply the word for Eugene and he repeats. In order to ensure that he has internalised the word, I ask him to identify a duck a few minutes later, which he does correctly.

Anna: Eugene, what did you get?  
Eugene: ...  
Anna: a duck!  
Eugene: a duck

#### **7.10.1.4 Expanding and extending**

Mrs Smith asks Jack about a number of items Ian has brought in during Letterland time. The words he produces have only been mentioned once by the teacher or Ian. He shows that he was paying attention and therefore has expanded his language skills, something which Mrs Smith must have been expecting as she extended the conversation.

Mrs Smith: What's this one Jack?  
Jack: ...  
Mrs Smith: a swan ---  
Jack: swan  
Mrs Smith: and this one?  
Jack: .. squirrel

#### **7.10.2 Environmental Scaffolding**

##### **7.10.2.1 Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

During Prayer Time Jack blesses himself and says most of the words. This routine morning activity is powerful in helping him become a member of the group.

The following description of activities at the Water Station show that the children have learned the structures of saying please and thank you, and that the second-language learners have picked up on the English-speaking children's cues in this regard, for the most part. During Water Station when Mrs Smith asks Eugene to hand the plunger to Jack, he does so. I notice, particularly at the Water Station, that when Eugene wants something, he grabs more than saying please. When Aoife wants the plunger, she says 'Jack can I have that please?' Jack hands it over. Eugene then gets the plunger and Jack wants it back after a few minutes. When Jack wants the watering can he says please to Ella. Eugene then wants something and says 'Peter please'. Peter says no. Eugene then gets the boat and says 'Beep beep beep'. Aoife has the long water filter and says Eugene please. He gives it to her.

#### **7.10.2.2 Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion**

Peter and Aoife shovel things at each other. Jack fills a bowl with sand, ready to make a sandcastle. Aoife pours on some extra sand. Jack makes a face at her and says no quite loudly. This interaction during a play activity has made it easier for Jack to interact with an English-speaking child as it was made possible for him to be part of the group by being placed there by Mrs Smith.

#### **7.10.2.3 Social support: Getting help from the English-speaking children**

While Mrs Smith is looking through the flashcards during Letterland time, Peter and Eugene stick their tongues out at each other and smile at each other. Eugene has been messing a bit with Alanah (smiling, laughing – nothing verbal) so Mrs Smith calls Eugene to listen. They are developing a friendship with each other as they are seated beside each other.

When Peter is playing with the iron in the Home Corner, Eugene tries to get it off Peter. During Library Time, Ella and Peter begin to take an interest in the Letterland books Jack and Peter have chosen.

Jack picks up a different Letterland book. He goes through it and says Annie Apple, Bouncy Ben, Clever Cat. He recognises P for Peter and calls Peter to show him. He recognises the initial letters of all of his group from the Letterland book and shows them all. Aoife and Ella interact with him; Aoife by telling him the ones he doesn't know. He repeats after her. He traces each letter and says it out loud. This is an excellent example of English-speaking children being aware of the need for assistance required by second-language learners. They act as tutors to their second-language learning peers in a most sensitive and caring manner.

### **7.11 Development of language over time**

One way to track the linguistic progress of each child is in conjunction with their more successful attempts at communication. An analysis of each child's linguistic progress will be made using these examples as a starting point where possible. These examples of particularly successful interactions have not been given before now.

#### **7.11.1 Jack's language development over ten weeks**

Jack shows himself to be a willing language learner when in conversation with Mrs Smith in Observation 1. She engages him with an opportunity to talk about the here and now when supplying him with missing vocabulary items regarding the weather, where he also responds with gestures. He is involved as a helper for the day and picks up his cues from others regarding what to do and when.

During the Irish lesson in Observation 2, Jack counts a haon a dó a trí on his fingers. He hums the rhythm of the rhyme to himself. After one child has been the múinteoir, Jack is invited to be the múinteoir. This shows Mrs Smith's confidence in his ability to complete the task unaided.

Mrs Smith: Jack tar anseo [*gestures to him*]

Jack: [*points to the pictures and says the rhyme on his own*]

Teacher gives Jack the ‘an-mhaith’ {very good} star. He sits down smiling at the star and looks around at others. On other occasions, as when learning a new word, repetition is used and Mrs Smith enables him to continue a conversation even where mistakes are made. Jack also makes an effort to interact with other children and makes use of peer scaffolding where possible.

In Observation 3 during the Oral Language lesson, Jack is engaged by Mrs Smith in a conversation about a picture he created of his family. This communicative opportunity not only reinforces language already known by him but also helps him to extend this language. He responds with one-word answers, which are sometimes but not always prompted by Mrs Smith. During the same lesson, Jack is chosen as part of the first five to recite the rhyme. He picks the number 2 and stands in the correct order. He continues to develop a relationship with his peers by playing with them when he shouldn’t be (during a lesson) and by engaging in two-way peer scaffolding.

During the Irish lesson, Jack is invited as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person to take something out of the laundry bag after putting up his hand.

Mrs Smith: Tar anseo Jack.  
Jack [takes out léine].  
Mrs Smith: Céard é sin? Sin l ---  
Jack: Sin léine  
Mrs Smith: Maith an buachaill.

Prior to this, he had been engaged in two other exchanges with Mrs Smith where prompting pauses and gestures had been used by her in developing his language.

In Observation 4 during the Oral Language lesson, Jack is one of the last children to be asked about school.

Mrs Smith: Jack do you like school? What do you like?  
Jack [smiles and closes his eyes tightly blinking]  
Mrs Smith: I like ---  
Jack: I like .. Rocaí Rua



It is clear from his response that he relates to Irish as *Rocaí Rua* is the character used in the classroom during Irish lessons. When talking about Hallowe'en, he is able to tell Mrs Smith what he didn't dress up as in response to her questions and Mrs Smith shows that she is aware of his understanding of Irish by using the word 'cailleach' instead of witch to elicit a response. A similar exchange occurs when discussing items received while trick-or-treating. He also offers responses that are not quite correct, but make sense within the context. This observation session shows quite a few examples of peer scaffolding, which may result from the good relationships he is building with his classmates.

During the Activities morning which constitutes Observation 5, Jack opens a picture dictionary (in English) on a page about clothes in the Reading Corner. The clothes are displayed on the *líne*. I point to a jumper and ask what it is. He replied 'geansaí'. I ask 'What is that?' and he says 'Sin stocaí buí'. As they are red, I point out that they are *stocaí dearg* and also point to his own socks which are red. Jack repeats. These examples of code-mixing once again show his familiarity with Irish words. Furthermore, when his group goes to the sand tray the door swings open and Mrs Smith asks Jack to 'Dún an doras' {Close the door}, which he does straight away. At the same time, he often communicates non-verbally when requesting something, as when making tangrams. Jack again shows himself to be a willing language learner by engaging me as the researcher in activities such as showing me books and waiting for me to say the names of items in English after him saying them in Polish. He also shows me items in the Home Corner and mimics my actions while playing.

His first recorded instance of uninitiated speech occurs during this session when apologises for spilling water on me at the Water Station.

During the Irish lesson in Observation 6, Mrs Smith picks up Jack's lunchbox first. He responds to the formulaic question 'Cé leis é?' with no prompting and very clearly, once again displaying how comfortable he is with Irish. He also shows his understanding of

the Maths task by successfully creating sets of three and responding with one-word answers. He also participates in rhymes as always and says as many of the words he can.

During Observation 7 Jack constructs a two-word sentence ‘No mammy’, the first one recorded during the observed sessions. Although incomplete, the context helps him to construct it and his gestures buttress comprehension in both directions. When Mrs Smith is helping him to play a role during the Irish lesson, he responds using the end of the phrase supplied, saying ‘milseáin do thoil é’, which, although grammatically incorrect, makes sense within the context. This is a typical pattern when with language learners who are on the road to sentence construction. His relationship with other children is still shown to be a positive one as he works well with Sophie during a pair work activity as part of the Maths lesson.

Observation 8 sees a Jack where gestures and sounds are used by Mrs Smith where appropriate when explaining new words such as reindeer. He also shows when reading out the story of Jesus through pictures and flashcards (a story co-constructed during a previous lesson by Mrs Smith and the children) that he needs initial letter sounds as prompts from time to time but also supplies many of the phrases himself. He utilises the formulaic phrases and even attempts to create his own ‘Welcome baby welcome’. He also shows an ability to respond appropriately with yes and no to questions and shows that he grasps the concept of counting when pointing out the camels he had coloured in. His relationship with Sophie develops as she highlights the fact that he had said a two word phrase (plastic sleeve) to Mrs Smith. During the Science lesson, I notice that Jack has been playing with plastic links instead of looking for wood. I ask him if it’s wood. He says no and I say “it’s pl...”. He says “plastic” correctly. While they are supposed to be looking for metal Jack continues to play with plastic links and when I ask him questions about what the different materials are made of, he playfully gives me the wrong answer sometimes.

During Observation 9 Jack appears to be a little tired, particularly at the beginning. However, near the end of the Irish lesson, Jack comes to Mrs Smith and says “An bhfuil

cead agam dul go dtí an leithreas?” {May I have permission to go to the toilet?} without prompting. She allows him to go. This formulaic phrase has assisted him in making himself understood in his L3. During the same lesson, Jack is the fourth child to be asked to say what all the items on the page are.

Jack: mála scoile, bosca lóin, Rocaí Rua ag ithe, hata ..  
Mrs Smith: liathróid ---  
Jack: Liathróid, teilifís líreachán, púca, cailleach, oráiste, leaba, bainne.

Jack hadn't been pointing to the pictures before then (like most others in the class had been) but does so as he reads fluently, only missing out on one word. This again shows his level of familiarity with Irish. He still needs some assistance with understanding, as during the Science lesson when Mrs Smith has to physically show him what to do. He also has an opportunity to show his understanding using contextual cues when telling James non-verbally that it is his turn for the computer.

Observation 10 sees Jack enjoy the Reading Corner once again and provides an opportunity for Jack to practice his counting, which he can do fluently from 1 to 10. He responds well to his peers telling him the names of Letterland characters he doesn't know while reading a Letterland book there, although he does recognise and identify some of them. He also provides a relatively obscure word without any prompting (squirrel) during Letterland. He correctly responds with the word 'boat' without any prompting at the Water Station. When Eugene hands over the plunger to Jack, Mrs Smith says to Jack "Say thank you" and he says "Thank you" to Eugene, thereby following her instruction.

He also provides new information for the first time in a conversation about lunch in the Home Corner, as in the following exchange while playing with the kitchen: Jack is trying to find the food. I find the bread and sausages and pretend to eat. I offer it to Jack and he does the same.

Anna: sausage sandwich  
Jack: yes  
Anna: Is that for lunch?  
Jack: Yes. Mammy lunch.

He also spots his a painting he has done above the Home Corner. He points at it and says 'Jack me!'

### 7.11.2 Peter's language development over ten weeks

Peter engages in primarily non-verbal communication with Mrs Smith during Observation 1 and she gives him quite a lot of time to internalise language before asking him to participate, as with responding to the formulaic phrase 'Cé tusa?' However, he does respond with the correct answer when identifying colours when given a contextual clue by Mrs Smith. He uses his L1 to try to communicate with Mrs Smith and bolsters this with non-verbal communication. She responds sensitively to his needs when he appears to be in some distress.

Peter is invited up to the table during the Irish lesson in Observation 2. The following exchange displays his ability to understand the Irish words but his lack of confidence which leads him to whisper to Mrs Smith.

Mrs Smith: Taispeáin dom bríste.  
Peter: Seo bríste [*picks up bríste*] (only Mrs Smith can hear the response)  
Mrs Smith: Peter, taispeáin dom bríste eile  
Peter: ... [*he looks for a minute and picks up bríste eile*]  
Mrs Smith: Yes sin bríste eile. Taispeáin dom hata  
Peter: Sin hata

He whispers on more than one occasion during this session and Mrs Smith deals with him sensitively. As part of the group, he also moves his mouth rather than verbalising the words when saying a rhyme, which enables him to be a part of the group without using language.

During Observation 3, Peter is among the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of 5 to be chosen to recite the 'Five Fat Sausages' rhyme,. He is the last to pick his number (4) and he slots into the correct place. This shows his awareness of number and ability to be a part of the group. He does continue to talk primarily to Mrs Smith as when participating in the Irish lesson and the

Oral Language lesson, rather than making himself audible to his classmates, although his confidence does seem to grow as he begins to say things louder. He shows that although quiet and rather shy, he can make himself understood to his teacher when he gets frustrated with another child while saying the rhyme. However, this same instance is one of the first times we see him interacting with another child.

Observation 4 sees Peter continue to engage in primarily non-verbal communication with Mrs Smith, when he uses gestures to respond correctly to Mrs Smith during Oral Language on two separate occasions. Mrs Smith continues to offer him extra emotional assistance when he is talking about Hallowe'en and squinting, possibly an indication of emotional distress in this situation. He sometime responds by using some of the phrases Mrs Smith supplies, thereby indicating his comprehension.

During Observation 5 Peter has an opportunity to interact rather more with me as a researcher. He tells me what items are in Polish while pointing to them and I supply the English translation, although he tends not to repeat. He is able to indicate his discomfort when accidentally injured at the Sand Tray by tapping me and his wish to ask for items from others, although he doesn't seem to have the confidence to ask the other children directly by tapping and pointing. He also points and makes faces to indicate that someone is being silly. He becomes quite involved in activities in the Home Corner, mostly by playing on his own. He shows his awareness of others when Eugene is looking for a book by offering him a cushion. However, he offers it to him by tapping me and pointing at the cushion, rather than initiating the exchange with Eugene himself.

During the Maths lesson in Observation 6, Peter comes up to Mrs Smith holding his groin and clearly needing to go to the toilet. She prompts 'An bhfuil cead agam...' Peter mumbles quietly to repeat. Because Mrs Smith knows that Peter knows the appropriate phrase to request permission, she becomes more insistent that he use the verbal language in that situation. He also shows some progress in his English language when responding to 'Cé leis é?' aloud, although the response is not quite accurate. Mrs Smith uses code-mixing when explaining to him what to do during the music lesson, but is still aware of

his need for certain things to be explained physically, using a lot of gestures. He shows even more progress when counting aloud during the Maths lesson, prompted only by Mrs Smith pointing to the set of three. He shows again, as during Observation 2, that he is more willing to physically recite a rhyme than to use the words.

Observation 7 sees Peter once again using body language to indicate his disapproval, as when Eugene can't find his library book. Later in the lesson, he enjoys play-acting with Eugene during pair work and his increasing confidence as a member of the group as he continues to put his hand up to be chosen by Mrs Smith to participate in role-playing. He again shows his concern for others when indicating that John is not doing his exercise correctly. In this case, he points it out to John himself, although his offer of help is rejected.

Peter continues to use non-verbal communication during Observation 8, as when indicating materials during the Science lesson and when putting his hand up to respond to the discussion around a picture he has drawn. However, he does show more of a willingness to repeat words out loud, not only speaking to teacher but to the rest of the group during the Oral Language/ Religion lesson. He also repeats parts of phrases she supplies, indicating his understanding. He also has an opportunity to participate willingly in pair work with his neighbour while playing during the Science lesson, although the interaction is non-verbal. His friendship with Eugene continues to develop during this session.

Peter also shows a good level of comprehension of Irish during Observation 9. When Mrs Smith asks the children to find the page with the mála scoile, she says 'Good boy Peter' as he finds it quite quickly. Later in the Irish lesson, Peter is still colouring in. He starts colouring in the shoes red.

Mrs Smith: It's glas --- glas --- glas--- {It's green... green... green}  
Peter: [picks up glas and colours in shoes green]

He also shows a level of understanding when he is the first child to take out his library book when requested of the group by Mrs Smith. Mrs Smith also invites him to

participate in a classroom routine, in this case a role-play of San Nioclás, as he is able to participate at a non-verbal level but with the whole group.

During his time at the Water Station in Observation 10, Peter is pouring water through different vessels. He squeals with delight, showing his pleasure at playing there. When it is time to tidy up after Water Station, Mrs Smith says to Peter “Go to Anna”, which he does, thereby indicating his understanding of the instruction. He makes himself very well understood by using gestures in the Home Corner and also shows his developing friendship with Eugene. He and Jack speak to each other using their L1 at the Sand Tray.

### **7.11.3 Eugene’s language development over ten weeks**

Eugene is aided by the prompting pause when identifying colours and repeats willingly when prompted to do so during Observation 1. He is quick to respond. He appears to be quickly developing a relationship with his peers, albeit non-verbal, shown by his interaction with Sophie.

At the end of the English lesson in Observation 2, Eugene says ‘Teacher go toilet’. Mrs Smith allows him to go to the toilet, although the phrase usually required is in Irish. She acknowledges his ability to construct a sentence, albeit grammatically incomplete, to make himself understood. During the same lesson, Eugene is the 4<sup>th</sup> person to pick an item beginning with ‘d’. He picks out a dolphin and says ‘dolphin’ without any prompting. Again during the same lesson, Eugene looks at the pictures on the board representing the rhyme. He says very little. After Jack and Peter have been invited to be the múinteoir, Eugene is invited. He points to the pictures and says the rhyme on his own. Mrs Smith gives him a sweet. All of these examples point to someone whose language is emerging with confidence and an ability to ‘have a go’. Mrs Smith does show her awareness for offering him wait time during the Irish lesson and opportunities to discover the correct answer. He is chosen as a helper during this session, using his classmate Siobhán as a model for his actions.

Eugene was absent during Observations 3 and 4.

When Eugene comes in late during Observation 5 he says ‘Hi’ to me and Mrs Smith at the door. In the Reading Corner, I point to the dress on the page and he says ‘Sin gúna’. Eugene is looking at a slide-out book and calls Mrs Smith over by saying ‘Teacher look’. All of these instances are examples of Eugene initiating communication himself. He is able to use formulaic phrases and put together his own short sentences. He is also able to use the formulaic words and phrases ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, as indicated at the Sand Tray and Water Station, although he does forget to use the words from time to time and grabs tools from other children.

Eugene was absent during Observation 6.

During the discussion of magnets that ensues as a result of Ella’s magnet for Munching Mike in Observation 7, Eugene puts up his hand and supplies a phrase without prompting. His language progress is enabling him to participate more fully in class discussions such as this.

Eugene: magnetic board [*points*]  
Mrs Smith: That’s right, you know what we’re talking about [*putting it up on the magnetic board*]  
Eugene [*smiles and nods*]

He is also able to put together sentences of three words such as ‘Teacher no book’ and ‘Teacher Maureen look’, thereby indicating his linguistic progress despite being absent from class a lot during the term. When seated beside Peter, with whom he is developing a friendship, he helps Peter to explain to John how to do his exercise properly by supplying the language ‘come on – this, this’ and pointing.

When Eugene is part of the third pair to be chosen as siopadóir and Daidí during the Irish lesson, he shows his confidence and willingness to participate, while at the same time



code-mixing English and Irish words to complete phrases. He repeats well but his lack of attendance makes it difficult to account for his progress in Irish.

Mrs Smith: Tar anseo Lee. Tusa an siopadóir. Tar anseo Eugene. Tá tusa ag siopadóireacht. Tusa Daidí.  
Eugene [*pushes the trolley*] while the class sings 'Lee an siopadóir'.  
Mrs Smith: Cad is maith leat?  
Eugene: pencil  
Mrs Smith: what is it? Peann luaidhe  
Eugene: dearg.  
Mrs Smith: más é do thoil é ---  
Eugene: más é do thoil é.  
Lee: Go raibh maith agat.  
Mrs Smith: Seo airgead duit ---  
Eugene: Seo airgead duit.  
Mrs Smith: Now says Slán leat siopadóir.  
Eugene: Slán leat siopadóir [*waves*]

Observation 8 sees Eugene's language progress continue, as when he tells the story of Jesus with very little prompting other than initial letter sounds. He also shows that he sometimes repeats words to himself after another child has supplied it (e.g. teacher's glasses). He continues with his ability to construct three word sentences as when he asks Mrs Smith 'Teacher this wood?'" and he is engaged with pair work with Sam.

Eugene was absent during Observation 9.

During Observation 10 Eugene again repeats words that other children have said such as snowman, and also repeats very well new words Mrs Smith supplies. As with Observation 5, he does use the phrase '(name) please' when he wants something, but tends to grab it at the same time. Eugene squeezes water into my eyes and says sorry. His use of the phrase indicates his pragmatic understanding of when certain words and phrases should be used. He also continues to develop good, primarily non-verbal, relationships with whoever he is seated beside.

## **7.12 Conclusion**

The findings from classroom observation conducted over a ten week period in a Junior Infant classroom with high numbers of children with EAL were presented in this chapter. Three children in particular were the focus of the observations and their interactions with each other, with other children and with the class teacher were presented in two ways – using a framework for analysis based on scaffolding techniques and by tracking their development over time. A full discussion on these findings in relation to the research questions posed at the outset is presented in the following chapter and implications for policy and practice will be outlined in Chapter Nine.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to review the findings which have emerged from the study and to discuss them with reference to the research questions posed at the outset and with the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The key themes which emerged from the research are intertwined with the research questions:

- Teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL
- Support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community
- Teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants
- Teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants
- Types of scaffolding evident in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL

Each of these will be discussed in turn after having explored the language ecologies in which the newcomer children are living. This initial discussion also integrates many of the other important considerations of SLA as outlined in Chapters Two and Three, as do the subsequent sections of this chapter.

#### **8.2 Language ecologies of the present study**

Each child who participated in the study, either directly as in classroom observation or indirectly through teachers' comments during focus group interviews and the questionnaire, has a linguistic repertoire of at least three languages – their home language (HL), English and Irish. However, each child's home and school environment ensures that the linguistic environment of one child is never the same as another's. At the early stages of language development among emerging bilinguals and in this case emerging

plurilinguals a developmental sequence is generally followed by learners (Tabors, 2008; De Houwer, 2006). However, there can be a wide range of variation between learners across productive skills and receptive skills because children learning a second language do not move discretely from one period to the next but rather add skills to each level of language use. Furthermore, individual difference needs to be taken into consideration and the language ecologies of children allow for a particular acknowledgement of these differences. These differences form part of the ecological context which for van Lier (2002) should be an important focus of study.

The particular status of the Irish language has an important place in this research as one of the additional languages (ALs) being added to the plurilingual repertoire of the children concerned and therefore forming part of each child's linguistic ecology. It has already been stated that Irish is taught to newcomer children as standard unless there is a particular reason for granting an exemption (DES, Circular 12/96) and the analysis and discussion of findings regarding teachers' experiences in this regard will be presented later in the chapter. It is recognised in the *Intercultural Guidelines* (NCCA, 2005b) that the Irish language should be accessible to all and that learning ALs can contribute to the recognition and value of diversity. More importantly, the document states that:

All children, irrespective of their ethnicity or first language, can be supported in understanding commonly used phrases in the class and school through the use of these phrases in structured routines, and through the use of pictures, demonstration or other gestures (NCCA, 2005b: 163).

Although each of the three children observed was in the same classroom and therefore exposed to the same type of input from teachers and children, their home backgrounds were quite different from each other's. In the class of 24, nine children were speakers of LOTE at home (Table 7.1, Chapter Seven). Polish was the most frequently spoken HL in the class, with three children. Two of these, Jack and Peter, were the children observed and the other child was already fluent in English and Polish due to her bilingual and bicultural upbringing. The other languages spoken as HLs by the children included Malay and English (1), Yoruba and English (1), Tagalog and English (2), Punjabi and English (1) and Russian (1). Eugene, who was observed in detail, was a speaker of Russian.

Upon discussion of the language backgrounds of these children with Mrs Smith it seemed that Peter had been raised through the Polish language alone, although he was born in Ireland, and that the family took part in few Irish community events. Therefore, Peter's language ecology prior to starting school was quite one-dimensional and would have undergone many changes upon starting school. In contrast, Eugene's language ecology was quite different. He was born in Belarus and was reported as speaking Russian as his HL. His father was Irish and he had lived in Ireland for six months prior to starting school. He had missed 21 days of school out of approximately 75 by mid-December and therefore had not received the same kind of language input as the two other children observed. However, his mother's fluency in English and his reported experience of L1 literacy meant that his language ecology was much more diverse than Peter's. Jack on the other hand only came to Ireland the month before starting school and had been cared for by his grandmother in Poland while his parents were getting settled in Ireland, meaning that although his mother spoke English quite well, he had had very little exposure to it prior to starting school. Chapter Seven already outlined the differences in the language development of these three children over a ten-week period, some of which may be attributed to the differences in their language ecologies. These individual differences will also be referred to throughout the rest of this chapter.

Questionnaire data highlighted in particular the languages spoken in Junior Infant classrooms. Over half of classes (58.6%) had between 1 and 20% of children who spoke HLOTE. One third of classes had between 21% and 49% of children who spoke HLOTE, and a further 8.1% of classes had over 50% of children speaking HLOTE. In three cases this number ran to up to 76.9%. The classroom experiences of children in each type of classroom identified would obviously be quite different, based on the influence of the diversity of linguistic ecologies present. Smyth et al.'s (2009) report did focus on the whole school rather than on Junior Infant classes but they found that primary schools tended to have either a high proportion of newcomers or none at all and that almost 10% of primary schools had over 20% newcomers. Their report and the present study also showed that DEIS schools were almost twice as likely to have newcomer students, and

that Catholic schools were slightly less likely than multi-/ inter-denominational schools to have newcomer children.

The present study did not measure the percentage of national groups present in Junior Infant classrooms but rather by languages spoken overall. However, it is relevant to examine Smyth et al.'s study which showed that "there is no strong evidence of segregation by nationalities in Irish schools; in fact, there is a variety of nationalities in many schools with newcomers" (2009: 57). Their study did find that East European nationals were most likely to be the dominant group in 40% of primary schools, which corresponds with the findings from the present study where Polish was spoken by over one quarter of speakers of HLOTE in Junior Infants and Lithuanian was spoken by almost 10% of speakers of HLOTE overall.

The above-mentioned findings have implications for the diversity of language ecologies present in classrooms countrywide because this type of wide variation in cultural and linguistic backgrounds presents a particular type of challenge to the whole school community. Furthermore, the rights of children to maintain the HL (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Phillipson et al., 1995; Wiley, 2002) as well as the view taken in this study that there is room for all languages and where the goodness of diversity is a given (Edwards, 2004) may well be challenged in situations where the languages present in one classroom do not constitute a homogenous grouping. This is evidenced from comments made by teachers during focus group interviews. For example, on the topic of HL maintenance in the school context, one teacher made the following comment in relation to the presence of many languages in one classroom:

SBT1: It kind of all depends on what the language is like let's say if you have four different languages like Nigerian [sic], Pakistani, Polish and South African [sic], for argument's sake, it would be exceptionally difficult to be focusing on all of them all of the time.

While it is acknowledged that each child's linguistic environment is different and therefore generalisations are made cautiously, one national group worth highlighting with regard to language ecology is the largest group of newcomer children in schools; the

Polish community. The tendency for some cultures to be more language-centred than others has implications for the sustenance of language ecologies and Polish speakers have been found to be a particularly language-centred culture (Janik, 1996). This has implications for Language Shift (LS) and Language Maintenance (LM) and cultures that are more language-centred will tend to be slower to engage in LS (Holmes, 2001). In the Irish context, the Polish community have been found to be proactive in maintaining their language and culture, even when it is the intention of newcomers to remain in the country long-term (Debaene, 2008). The prevalence of Polish-language classes, forms of media and services available shows the commitment of that group to LM and these types of activities result in greater harmony between the language and its physical environment (Mühlhäusler, 2002). However, more consideration of this type is needed in education at the macro and micro levels to ensure avoidance of Mühlhäusler's 'greenspeaking' which involves a tokenistic approach to catering for linguistic diversity. Therefore, the role of language planning and policy making is acknowledged in maintaining language ecologies (Creese and Martin, 2003).

### **8.3 Teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL**

Over 95% of questionnaire respondents felt that the maintenance of the HL is important for the child's development of identity. These teachers were clearly in agreement with Sook Lee and Oxelson's (2006) argument that teachers' recognition of the importance of heritage language maintenance is crucial to the child's holistic development. Almost two thirds of teachers had their pupils share their HL and home culture whenever they got a chance, while a relatively large proportion of just over one quarter of teachers remained neutral on this issue. It is difficult to know whether or not this sharing of HL and culture is what Villegas and Lucas (2002) or Mac Naughton (2006) might call a tokenistic approach, with cultures represented in simplistic and stereotyped ways. It also appears that just over 90% of teachers praised the children for knowing another language and culture. Cummins (2008) maintains that the messages received by newcomer children from their teachers and whole school community affect the degree of academic

engagement and the afore-mentioned messages from teachers clearly indicate that there is overall a positive attitude towards HL maintenance.

However, this is a very complex issue and a number of teachers interviewed felt that although maintaining and encouraging the home language would be 'nice', it would be very difficult to do in reality, and that the overloaded curriculum certainly would not help them in doing so. The NCCA states that teachers have reported during curriculum review that they have insufficient time to plan for and meet the needs of all learners (2010: 5). Some teachers felt that they did not need to encourage the speakers of EAL to maintain their home language actively and in fact some thought it would be confusing for the children to promote the use of their HL in the classroom. Questionnaire data show that almost 70% of teachers agreed with encouraging children to maintain their home language, although one quarter were neutral on this and very few teachers disagreed. Significantly, almost half of the teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement that ideally, schools should provide home language instruction, while approximately 30% of teachers felt schools should provide home language instruction. One fifth of teachers remained neutral on this issue. The intellectual and cultural benefits of maintaining young children's first languages in education have been described in detail by authors such as Corson (2001), Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002), Brisk (2005), Tabors (2008) and Genesee (2008) but teachers seem to have mixed levels of awareness of this stemming from a lack of awareness in pre-service and in-service training.

The conflicting nature of teachers' opinions continued to highlight the complexity around these issues. A number of comments made by teachers interviewed indicated that they felt it was of most importance that the children continue to speak English at home and at school. Equally however, a high proportion of comments were also made regarding the active promotion of the home language and home culture in the classroom. This was due to teachers' opinions that it would help with the children with their metalinguistic awareness and language development in general, that multilingualism would be valuable for them in the future and that from a cultural point of view it would also benefit the other children in the class. These types of benefits outlined by teachers have also been



elucidated by Corson (2001), Cummins (1979), the PNS (2007), Bialystok (2001), Kenner and Hickey (2008) and Baker (2006). All but one of the questionnaire respondents agreed that it is valuable to be multilingual in our society. However, mixed responses were evident from the statement that heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society with many teachers (41.7%) remaining neutral on this issue. Over three quarters of teachers surveyed felt that encouraging children to maintain their HL would not prevent them from acculturating into this society.

As part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to indicate their personal attitudes towards languages. The languages specified were English, Gaeilge, French, German and Spanish, with a space for other languages if applicable. English and Gaeilge were found to be the languages of most importance to the teachers surveyed, with English identified as the language of most critical importance. Other languages such as French, German and Spanish were seen as of considerably less personal importance, with Spanish being of the least importance to respondents. The majority of teachers did not identify any other languages as of personal importance to them but some of those identified did relate to the HLOTE of newcomer children such as Lithuanian, Polish and Russian. Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) found that teachers with proficiency in a second language were more sensitive to issues around diversity and although teachers' proficiency was not measured here it is of note to take Nieto's suggestion (2002) that teachers should embrace multilingualism and multiculturalism and become sociolinguistically knowledgeable (Grant, 1995) in their personal lives to over-ride any possible monocultural tendencies in their teaching and try not to discourage the use of the use of the pupils' home languages.

A number of teachers interviewed were willing to learn and use some phrases in the children's L1, thereby developing their own linguistic competence. Almost 60% of teachers surveyed agreed that teachers should make an effort to learn phrases in their pupils' home languages with one fifth of teachers either disagreeing with this or neutral on the issue, thereby acknowledging Nieto's research which found that teachers do not have to be fluent in the HL of their students to support their use in the classroom. Around the same percentage of teachers (62.4%) reported that they did not allow pupils with EAL

to use their home language when completing exercises at home or at school, and so do not encourage the languages as resources for learning, as advocated by Nieto (2002) and Kenner (2000), although a number of teachers interviewed felt that when the children started school it would be appropriate to allow them to use their L1 when necessary. Of ten teachers interviewed by Skilton-Sylvester (2003), only one of them saw L1 as a potential resource for students. A number of teachers interviewed for the current study saw the children's HL as a resource, but only for a limited period of time, for example:

SCT5: So maybe for the first week or the first 2 weeks, I wouldn't be very strict on them not speaking their own language because at least they're communicating with somebody

#### **8.4 Support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community**

The Whole School Community includes in this context issues relating to home school links, school planning for inclusion and training and resources for teachers.

During focus group interviews, many of the teachers commented on the fact that they had noticed how much the parents appreciate what is being done at school and commented on the level of support being received from parents. A number of teachers commented on language and cultural differences causing a breakdown in communication at times, and stated that cultural differences often occurred depending on nationality due to a lack of understanding on the part of the teacher and sometimes, the parent. These misunderstandings were sometimes avoided where a translator or translated documents were available. Many of the parents mentioned by the teachers during focus group interviews seemed to have much less English than the children themselves although comments were made about the high levels of English some parents seemed to have in comparison with their children. It is acknowledged by Smyth et al. (2009: 81) that at present, very little is known about the involvement of newcomer parents in their child's education in Ireland. However, their research has shown that in general, parents' lack of

English makes it very difficult to develop good communication links between home and school.

Some teachers interviewed commented on the parents' wishes to have English promoted in school and out of school and the school providing English classes for parents of children with EAL (this will be explored further in Section 8.5). The vast majority of teachers surveyed felt that HL maintenance is the responsibility of the parents, with over 80% of teachers strongly agreeing or agreeing with that statement. Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) also found that strong attitudes were present among teachers regarding the perception that HL maintenance is the responsibility of the parents, not of the school or the teacher, particularly among teachers with no training in ESL, as is the case with most of the teachers surveyed. Responses also show that 72.8% of teachers surveyed felt that parents are interested in their children's maintenance of the HL. The child language profiles showed that 50% of teachers were unaware of the child's L1 literacy experiences. This indicates a lack of information being transferred between school and home but of the other 50% of teachers just over one quarter did state that the children sometimes had experience of L1 literacy and another fifth of respondents indicated that the children often had these experiences. Again, curriculum overload may be a factor here as there is minimal time allocated formally to meeting with parents. The NCCA points out the irony in this:

that the relationship with parents adds to teachers' workload and experience of curriculum overload, given the possibilities of collaborating with parents in ways that support both parents and teachers in their respective roles and ultimately, support children's learning (2010: 21).

Kelly-Laine (2008) highlights the importance of building partnerships in education and that OECD member countries are increasing parents' involvement in education for a number of different reasons. The reason most pertinent to this research is tackling disadvantages and improving equity, which refers to raising individual children's performance by showing their parents how to support them more effectively at home. She states that "This is particularly important when there are cultural differences between the education system and the family" (2008: 342). Ireland is highlighted by Kelly-Laine as being one of the countries where the benefits of parental support, particularly in the early

years, is harnessed. The NCCA document, *Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools* (2010), states that parental involvement in education is a relatively new feature of Irish education and refers to the *Primary School Curriculum: Introduction* (1999), which recognises the parent as the child's primary educator and calls for close co-operation between home and school for children to receive the maximum benefit from the curriculum.

There were some differences between the language experiences of children of various nationalities. Romanian speakers and speakers of Indian languages were reported as most likely to have experience of HL literacy with three quarters of teachers reporting this while half of Polish, Lithuanian and Chinese speakers were said to have experience of literacy in the HL. Teachers did not know if speakers of African languages or speakers of Russian had these experiences. Teachers reporting their experiences to Smyth et al. (2009) emphasised the diversity apparent among the newcomer population, with varying levels of language competence among different nationalities, although they did acknowledge that this was down to individual differences in certain cases.

Almost two thirds of teachers in the current survey reported that the HL was the main language spoken in the home, with the other third reported as speaking a mixture of the HL and English and only 3.2% of teachers reporting not knowing which was the dominant language spoken by the child at home. Polish-speaking children were reported as being the most likely to speak their HL as the dominant language at home with three quarters of teachers believing this to be the case, although between 60% and two thirds of teachers said that speakers of Lithuanian, Romanian, Chinese, Latvian and Russian spoke those languages at home. Poles were similarly found by Janik (1996) and Clyne (1991) to have a will to preserve their own language and culture, something which is also evident from the amount of Polish-language community schools and media resources made available by and to that community in Ireland (Debaene, 2008). All of the speakers of African languages were believed to speak a mixture of these languages and English at home and speakers of Indian languages were divided equally between speaking these as dominant languages in the home and a mixture of the HL and English. Teachers of

children of African heritage were reported during focus group interviews as being likely to speak more English in the home than African languages, although it was thought that some mixtures of the HL and English were spoken.

SCT1: You see sometimes [*they're speaking Nigerian languages at home*] – but they will never speak it at school – never.

Upon interviewing teachers they were found to be spending a lot of time after school planning for inclusion and on an ad hoc basis in conjunction with the Language Support teacher. Over 60% of teachers surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed with a statement regarding the importance of planning for children learning English and maintaining their HL with parents. Questionnaire data shows that some teachers regarded the Language Support teacher as a vital resource in their toolkit for planning for inclusion. Language Support teachers have been seen as having most responsibility for the language development of children with EAL since they were introduced in 1999 and they have been the professionals provided with in-service training and to whom most handbooks are directed (IILT, 2006). Furthermore, the issue of Language Support is something worth highlighting especially bearing in mind that this resource is usually available to children with EAL for a maximum of two years, despite advice from the research which warns that it may take five years or longer for CALP to develop among learners of EAL (Cummins, 2008; Cameron, 2001; Grant, 1995). The model of Language Support will be explored in Section 8.6.

Most of the teachers who participated in focus group interviews reported not having received any training in the area of EAL. Similarly, questionnaire data showed that 87.9% of teachers had not received any pre-service training and 90.9% of teachers had not received any in-service training, although those who had received in-service training had done so voluntarily by engaging with online DES-approved summer courses, something which was also found by Smyth et al. in response to a similar interview question in 2009. All of the teachers surveyed who had received pre-service training had been teaching for ten years or less, with a great majority having taught for five years or less. With regard to in-service training, again the majority of those who had received in-

service training had been teaching for five years or less. All of the teachers interviewed who referred to any type of training had qualified in the last five years or so. Many of the teachers interviewed had not used any of the NCCA documents such as the *EAL guidelines*, the *Intercultural Guidelines*, or *Up and Away*, although a minority had. Questionnaire data revealed that 56% of respondents reported having used the *EAL Guidelines* as a resource for planning activities, while only 42.9% of respondents reported having referred to the *Intercultural Guidelines* when planning classroom activities. Principals and teachers were found by Smyth et al. as not seeing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) or on-going professional development as providing adequate preparation for teaching in a diverse society (2009).

Other in-school resources were mentioned by teachers during focus group interviews and the EAL school plan was specified once in the questionnaire as a resource. As one teacher said during interview:

SAT1: [...] we have so many policies! To be honest you go into your room and you close the door and don't think about policies – I don't know whether we have one or not.

Skilton-Sylvester (2003) notes that teachers, in a way, create policies of their own within classrooms and sees that language teaching can be seen as language policymaking, thereby highlighting the importance of looking at teachers as the prime implementers of language policies. Indeed, these issues around policy have implications for children's Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) (McGroarty, 2002; Phillipson et al., 1995; Toolan, 2003) and lack of adherence to such policies, whether teachers are aware of them or not, may result in some students being marginalized and inequalities being created (Tollefson, 2002). All of the evidence presented in Sections 8.3 and 8.4 points to a willingness in theory to advocate for the Linguistic Human Rights of children, but a lack of know-how regarding how to achieve this. This leads back to the much earlier discussion where children in Junior Infant classrooms may be in the process of being colonised linguistically, unbeknownst to those teachers who are implementing policies at the micro level within their classrooms (Mac Naughton, 2006; Viruru, 2005). This will have

implications for children's identity formation at the level of microsystem and a possibility of Language Shift in their mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fishman, 1985; 1991)

### **8.5 Teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

Comments made by teachers during focus group interviews about the level of English acquired by children in their classes were generally positive. These comments were particularly positive where the children had lived in Ireland for a period of time prior to starting school, or where they had been born in Ireland. However, other teachers interviewed found that things were difficult for the children at the start, particularly when no English was spoken at home. Over half of the teachers surveyed advised parents to help their children to learn English faster by speaking English in the home while approximately one quarter of teachers disagreed with this practice. Cummins (2008) and Nieto (2002) assert that it is unethical for educators to suggest to parents to speak English at home, as this deprives the child of opportunities to develop their bilingualism and Jeon (2008) refers to the negative influence of English-only schooling on HL maintenance. However, Corson (2001) and Jeon (2008) note that many minority parents and communities prefer their teachers to emphasise English above home languages. Skilton-Sylvester (2003) found that teachers in a school she conducted research in see it as their job to prepare the Khmer-speaking students for success in mainstream classes and that they do not need the HL at school. She also found one teacher who self-reported as discouraging the use of the HL but not in an unfriendly way, simply in terms of emphasising that it is time to practice English at school and not really polite to be using Cambodian when not everyone understands it. This is similar to one of the comments made during focus group interviews.

SCT1: Well when they start talking Polish to each other at school, like they don't understand what I'm saying but I say "No Polish at school – English at school, Polish at home" – because it's important for them to keep their own language.

A relatively high proportion of teachers (one fifth) in the present study remained neutral on this issue. However, a large proportion of almost three quarters of the teachers surveyed recognise that it is important that children would be highly literate and fluent in both English and their HL. Again a relatively high proportion of teachers (22.2%) remain neutral on this. At the same time, when it comes to teachers telling pupils that their HL is important and valuable, but at school they must use English, over half of the 97 teachers who answered feel that this is the case with approximately 15% of respondents disagreeing with this. Again, almost one fifth of respondents remained neutral on this issue. Burnaby (2002) considers many of the above-mentioned points as widely held by teachers internationally and therefore Ireland is no different from other countries in this regard.

Some teachers interviewed found that the children's rate of English language acquisition was improving as a result of extra support, and that those who were receiving little or no Language Support were finding things difficult. One teacher commented that the basic vocabulary was coming along and there were mixed feelings among interviewees about how problematic phonics seemed to be for the children.

Interestingly, a large proportion of teachers surveyed remained neutral on the issue of HL instruction being beneficial for children's English language development. However, over half of teachers do think that it is important. Again, over one quarter of teachers remain neutral on the issue of children spending their time and energy learning English rather than learning their HL. Nonetheless, over half of teachers disagreed with this statement and so seem to be of the opinion that children need to spend time learning their HL in addition to English. The evidence of HL instruction being beneficial for children's English language development has been presented widely by Shameem (2003), Thomas and Collier (1997), Fitzgerald and Amendum (2007) and Weiyun He (2006). As the dates of the references show, this understanding is relatively new and may take some time to be transferred over into teacher training.



Before entering into a discussion on the ELP ratings in relation to the children involved in the study, it must be noted that the ratings were given by teachers surveyed at the end of the school year, while each of the three children observed was rated by the teacher after only three and a half months of school in mid-December. This brings some limitations to drawing comparisons between the children observed and the children reported upon in the teacher questionnaire. However it also allows an insight into the chronosystem which encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to the child's environment by providing a snapshot of language competency among children in Junior Infants at two different times of the year. Finnegan-Ćatibušić (2007) also highlights the need for empirical validation of the ELP in the Irish primary school context. It is difficult to draw comparisons between the achievements of the children involved in the present study and other groups due to the lack of publications in this area.

For the children profiled individually by teachers in the questionnaire, almost two thirds of children fell into the B1 category for the skill of Listening (the highest available for the self-assessment checklists), with one third of those requiring no help at this level. After three and a half months in school Mrs Smith rated Jack as achieving the A2 targets of being able to understand most instructions given inside and outside school, follow topics covered in the mainstream class and follow a simple story with a little help. Peter was rated as achieving the A2 targets with a lot of help and Eugene was rated as achieving the B1 targets of being able to understand instructions given in school, the main points of topics presented and stories read aloud in the mainstream classroom and films about things he is already familiar with, as well as being able to follow most conversations between other pupils without difficulty, with a little help.

For the skill of Spoken Interaction, the majority (57.8%) of children profiled in the teacher questionnaire again fell into the B1 category, with almost one quarter of them needing no help at this level. Peter was rated as achieving the A1 targets of being able to say hello and goodbye, please and thank you, asking for directions in the school and asking and answering simple questions with a lot of help. Mrs Smith rated Jack as achieving the A2 targets of being able to answer questions about family, friends, school

work, hobbies and holidays and keeping up a conversation with classmates when working together and expressing feelings, with a lot of help. Eugene was rated as being able to achieve the A2 targets with a little help.

With regard to Spoken Production, a smaller number of children fell into the B1 category, although it was still the most common rating, with almost one half of children in that category and almost 15% of them requiring no extra help at that level. Jack was rated as being able to achieve the A1 target of giving a simple description of where he lives and people he knows, especially family, A1 with a lot of help. Mrs Smith felt that if Peter could achieve that target at all it was with a lot of help whereas she felt that Eugene could achieve this target with a little help.

By Observation 8 Jack does show that he can achieve the B1 target of retelling a story that has been read in class with a little help, but it must be borne in mind that this was a one-off occasion with very short sentences. He shows when reading out the story of Jesus through pictures and flashcards (a story co-constructed during a previous lesson by Mrs Smith and the children) that he needs initial letter sounds as prompts from time to time but also supplies many of the phrases himself. He utilises the formulaic phrases and even attempts to create his own 'Welcome baby welcome', thereby building his own sentence and moving beyond reliance on the prefabricated pattern alone (Tabors, 2008; Littlewood, 1984). By Observation 5, Eugene is able to use the high-utility formulaic words and phrases 'please' and 'thank you' (some of those indicated by Tabors, 2008), as indicated at the Sand Tray and Water Station, although he does forget to use the words from time to time and grabs tools from other children.

The first time Jack is observed constructing a two-word sentence is during Observation 7 when he says 'No mammy' in response to a question about where his library book is. This is a type of telegraphic speech, or using a few content words as an entire utterance, something which is particularly common in the very early stages of language learning among young children (Tabors, 2008; Wray, 2002a). Eugene is able to put together his own short three-word sentences at an earlier stage, as during Observation 2 when he says

'Teacher go toilet'. Mrs Smith allows him to go to the toilet, although the phrase usually required is in Irish. She acknowledges his ability to construct a sentence, albeit grammatically incomplete, to make himself understood. By Observation 7, this is happening with Eugene much more frequently as he often constructs sentences of three words such as 'Teacher no book' and 'Teacher Maureen look', thereby indicating his linguistic progress despite being absent from class a lot during the term. When seated beside Peter, with whom he is developing a friendship, he helps Peter to explain to John how to do his exercise properly by supplying the language 'come on – this, this' and pointing. In Observation 8 he continues with his ability to construct three word sentences as when he asks Mrs Smith 'Teacher this wood?' while engaged with pair work with Sam. Peter does not at any point during the sessions observed attempt to create sentences.

As expected (Pica, 2005; Tabors, 2008; Bialystok, 2001), children were found to be doing better at an earlier stage with the receptive skill of Listening while the productive skills of Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production proved more challenging for them and could be seen as a more long-term goal.

### **8.6 Teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

Most of the comments made by teachers during focus group interviews on the children's ability to acquire Irish were positive, in line with the Council of Europe's expectations (2008) and Cummins's observations (2008). In fact, many teachers commented on their opinions that knowing more than one language helps you to learn another. Pronunciation is one aspect where teachers noted the speakers of EAL excelled, in accordance with Tabors's expectations that accent is the only age-sensitive aspect of SLA (2008). Some teachers interviewed would equate the achievement in Gaeilge of the speakers of EAL with that of the native English speakers. Just over 80% of teachers surveyed seemed to think that children with EAL attain a similar level of Gaeilge as native English speakers in their class, while just over 60% of teachers felt that children with EAL attain a higher level of Gaeilge than native English speakers in their class. Approximately three quarters

of teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement that children with EAL tend to do worse at Gaeilge than native English speakers in their class. A level of enjoyment of Gaeilge was noted by the teachers interviewed, and this related to the communicative approach to teaching Gaeilge at this level.

A few negative comments were made by teachers interviewed about the rate of Irish language acquisition among speakers of EAL. These were primarily due to children joining late in the school year, and in one situation, the children having been withdrawn for Language Support during Irish lessons all the way through Junior Infants. Smyth et al. report that in one fifth of primary schools, students are withdrawn from class for language support during Irish (2009: 123). In order to counteract any negative effects mentioned by teachers interviewed of children being withdrawn from Irish lessons to attend Language Support every effort should be made by teachers when timetabling to avoid this situation. This has implications for the model of Language Support available. The most usual model in primary schools is that of withdrawing pupils from the classroom for a period of time. Mrs Smith felt that EAL teachers should be going into the classroom more and taking groups within the room – that they are needed more inside the classroom than outside. While this is only one voice, it is certainly something which deserves consideration as withdrawal from class for Language Support could either be seen as excluding the child from classroom activities in a negative and subtractive sense, or conversely as providing the child with valuable individual attention and therefore in an additive and positive sense (Baker and Prys Jones, 1998: 485).

Some teachers did note the type of confusion that can occur between Irish and English, and the fact that the children distinguish between English and Irish, calling Gaeilge the ‘other English’. This is a point worth highlighting and has implications for the tendency of the children and teacher observed to engage in code-switching and code-mixing. Mhic Mhathúna (1995) and Wong-Fillmore (1985) note the fact that children can tell the difference between languages and develop expectations regarding which one should be used in which situation. Responsible and reflective code-switching within a language lesson (Garcia, 2009) or indeed any spoken interaction can help to scaffold the TL and its

place in enhancing comprehension (Baker, 2006) is strongly acknowledged in this study (e.g. Section 8.7.3). It is clear that teachers surveyed feel it is important for children with EAL to learn Gaeilge, just as native English speakers do, with almost 90% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement in the questionnaire.

Before reporting on the teachers' ratings of children's Irish language skills based on the questionnaire, it is worth mentioning the difficulties mentioned by teachers interviewed in one particular school in covering the strand units for Irish at Level 1 for all children, not only those children with EAL.

SCT1: Yeah – and you know the curriculum says that we should teach them sentences, but realistically speaking Junior Infants you're teaching them words, teaching vocabulary like

SCT5: You're trying to drag sentences out of them by the end of the year

SCT3: I mean even in first class they find it hard to construct a sentence in Irish

SCT1, 2, 4, 5 [*nodding in agreement*].

This critique of *Curaclam na Gaeilge* should not be taken lightly, especially bearing in mind the comments made by teachers about which objectives they found easiest to teach during *Primary Curriculum Review Phase II*, although it is acknowledged that the comments are derived from a very small number of teachers.

Teachers reported their pupils with EAL as finding the content objectives concerned with listening to Irish being spoken regularly in order to reinforce particular phrases and listening to poems, rhymes, stories and action songs the easiest listening skills to achieve. Classroom observation of Peter shows similar results. The activities that Peter engaged with most meaningfully from an early stage were poems, rhymes and action songs such as his non-verbal engagement with the rhymes 'Hata beag dearg' {Little red hat} during Observation 2 and 'Plip plop plí' {onomatopoeic – no translation} and 'Cuir ort do chóta' {Put on your coat} during Observation 4, thereby allowing himself to be a part of the group actively engaged in listening but not quite ready to verbalise yet. Cameron (2001) and Mhic Mhathúna (1995; 2008) refer to the power of these types of activities in

extending the child's knowledge and understanding of words due to their formulaic nature.

The objective regarding playing listening games and doing simple actions was also considered relatively easy for the children to achieve. Again this is supported by an incident during Observation 7 where Peter follows the appropriate actions for the rhyme 'Cuir ort do chóta' while still not verbalising, thereby allowing himself to participate at his own linguistic level. Jack also shows evidence of doing simple actions during Observation 1, when he responds to the teacher saying 'Taispeáin dom ceann' {Show me the head} with the appropriate action, the teacher having practiced this phrase with the rest of the class.

The listening skills outlined in content objectives 1, 2 and 7 were perceived as the next most difficult for the children and similar responses were given for needing a little help in these areas and the children not being able to achieve these objectives at all, although low numbers of these children were present. These objectives include listening to Irish being used as a language of interaction and management, listening to people other than the teacher speaking Irish and listening to and following simple instructions. Jack showed his ability to follow simple instructions and listen to Irish as a language of management during Observation 5 when Mrs Smith asked him to 'Dún an doras' {Close the door}. This required the action as a response rather than a phrase and Jack was successful in this, although it must be noted that this occurred half way through the set of observations, whereas for example during Observation 1 when asked to follow the instruction 'Bí ag caoineadh' {imperative order to cry} as part of the lesson Jack required some prompting, leading on to content objective 5 of listening to a speaker and getting clues from various prompts and cues. This was seen as the second most difficult target to reach and content objective 8 of listening to teacher-led instructions to show feelings through mime or pictures (content objective 8) was seen as the most difficult for children with EAL to achieve.

It is not surprising that the objectives seen as easiest for the children with EAL to achieve are so, as the *Primary Curriculum Review Phase II* showed that these are the types of strategies teachers feel most comfortable using to promote communicative competence (2008: 168), in particular those active learning methods relating to songs, rhymes, poems and games. These were also seen by teachers as the most appealing aspects of learning Gaeilge (2008: 173).

Content objectives 2 and 3 were reported as being the speaking targets achieved by most children. These objectives involve reciting rhymes with repetition and singing songs. During classroom observation, Jack showed as early as Observation 1 that he could sing the song ‘Oscail an bosca’ {Open the box} almost perfectly along with his classmates. The next most achievable target was content objective 1 regarding making an attempt to speak Irish. Peter and Jack show themselves as willing to do this as early as Observation 1 when they both respond to the question ‘Cé tusa?’ {Who are you?} correctly, given enough time by the teacher to prepare for participation, this being an early example of formulaic language providing a frame for sentence construction (Saville-Troike, 2006). The objectives relating to listening to simple stories and participating in plays based on them (Objective 4) and using actions or movements and tone of voice to assist in communication (Objective 6) were seen as almost equally achievable by the teachers surveyed, although almost 10% of children were reported as not being able to achieve the latter objective at all. A similar activity to Objective 4 is evident during Observation 7, when individual children dramatise being the shopkeeper and a customer. Jack required quite a lot of help with this structured conversation. Any of his volunteered phrases were one word in length and any longer phrases had to be supplied by Mrs Smith and repeated by Jack. However, he was able to do this task with a lot of help.

After this came content objective 12, playing language games, again with 10% of children not being able to fulfil this objective and almost two thirds needing a lot of or a little help. Language games are difficult to isolate from classroom observation sessions as many of the Irish language aspects of lessons were presented in a game format. One example of this is Jack’s willingness to withdraw an item from the laundry bag and

identify it during Observation 3, where he is able to identify the item, 'léine' {shirt}, correctly with a minimum of prompting from Mrs Smith. Speaking Irish in cultural contexts (Objective 5) was seen as achieved by the same amount of children with a lot of or a little help but the number of children not having achieved this objective rose here with one sixth of children not reaching the target at all. This did not arise in the sense outlined in *Curaclam na Gaeilge* during classroom observation. Similar numbers are present for Objective 9, which is concerned with using the main vocabulary of the major themes in context with appropriate resources. Jack did particularly well on this point, but only during later observation sessions. For example, Jack was able to identify almost all of the twelve items in pictorial format in his workbook without prompting from Mrs Smith during Observation 9; each word had been covered thematically in different lessons by the class.

Using opposites (Objective 10) was seen as unachieved by almost one fifth of the children with decreasing numbers of children needing no help for this objective. By far the most difficult objectives were objective 7 and 8, with explaining simple personal news (Objective 7) being unachieved by just over 40% of the children and the next most frequent response being with a lot of help. Telling short stories using a series of verbs was seen as the most difficult, with under 10% of children having achieved this objective and over half of children not having reached this target at all. There was no evidence of objectives 7, 8 and 10 observed during the lessons observed.

The use of formulaic language when speaking is evident throughout the observation sessions and as early as Observation 2 Mrs Smith uses formulaic phrases consistently in the Irish lesson, asking a question such as 'Céard é seo?' {What is this?} to elicit a response such as 'Seo (item)' {This is a/ an (item)}. The use of formulaic language appears more consistently from the perspective of the children as their productive language skills begin to improve during later sessions observed. By Observation 6 Jack is able to respond to 'Cé leis é?' {Who does this belong to?} correctly with no prompting. By Observation 9 he is able to say the whole sentence 'An bhfuil cead agam dul go dtí an



leithreas' {May I have permission to go to the toilet?} correctly and without prompting. This formulaic phrase has assisted him in making himself understood in his L3.

The *Primary Curriculum Review Phase II* shows that around one-fifth of teachers mentioned the limited use of Gaeilge as a challenge when teaching the Speaking strand, and that children who do not have English or Gaeilge as L1 and therefore come to school with limited English or Irish vocabulary posed an additional challenge in relation to providing opportunities for all children to practise and develop their speaking skills (2008: 151-152). However, this did not appear to be such an issue among the three children observed and was not mentioned by the teacher as a concern. Again, it is not surprising that the objectives seen as easiest for children with EAL to achieve in this research are so because the top three strategies that teachers indicated as being helpful in developing the children's competence and confidence in speaking Gaeilge were games, tasks and problems, rhymes and poetry and active songs/songs. One teacher interviewed referred to the fact that it is taught in a fun and interactive manner to all children in Junior Infant classes.

SBT2: Again in Infants the Irish is all Oral Irish, and there's never, you never really give much homework in Irish, so it's all oral, it's all words, and a lot of fun-based activities so they pick it up easily – I came down to Junior Infants last year and was surprised at how quickly Junior Infants pick up Irish – I was thinking at first 'How am I going to teach them , this is completely alien to them' so I was really surprised at how well they picked it up.

Teachers also reported using role-play, storytelling and drama frequently to develop children's speaking skills in Gaeilge (2008: 148-149). Harris and Murtagh (1999: 120) found prior to the introduction of the *Primary School Curriculum* that pupils wanted more conversations, games, drama songs and poems, so it interesting to see that these types of activities have been taken up by teachers in taking a communicative approach to teaching Irish.

## 8.7 Types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL

Ten observation sessions were carried out in a class with 24 children, nine of whom spoke LOTE in the home. These were analysed in Chapter Seven in order to track change over time in the types of scaffolding engaged in by Mrs Smith and the children and the linguistic progress made by each of the three children observed in detail. Analysis was conducted according to the framework outlined in the Methodology chapter i.e. an adaptation of Tabors' (2008: 89 - 102) recommendations for interactional scaffolding and environmental scaffolding combined with Walsh's work on features of teacher talk (2006: 167) and Saville-Troike's (2006: 109) list of types of interactional modifications (Table 4.4). A full discussion of interactional scaffolding as observed during the ten sessions in relation to literature reviewed in Chapter Three in particular, followed by a similar discussion of environmental scaffolding observed, is available in Appendix K. Table 8.1, which is based on Table 4.4, summarises the main points of the discussion as a *Frame for Practice for Mainstream Teachers of Children with EAL* by highlighting a number of practical recommendations based on the literature reviewed and data gathered. It is of note that although focus group interviews and questionnaires did not set out to explore scaffolding, some of the comments made by teachers during both of these are relevant to this area and will be highlighted where appropriate.

*Table 8.1 Frame for Practice for Mainstream Teachers of Children with EAL*

<b>Interactional scaffolding</b>	<b>Recommendations from theory</b>	<b>Recommendations for practice</b>
Starting with what the children know; allowing use of L1	Awareness of need for children to use L1 in appropriate situations (Nieto, 2002; Cummins, 2008)	Conversations between speakers of HLOTE to be encouraged particularly during small-group and paired activities
	Non-verbal emotional support (Tabors, 2008)	Use of thumbs up, proximity and smiling where possible
	Awareness of need for children to engage in private speech (Ohta, 2001; Tabors, 2008)	Child whispering to self/ repeating a new word quietly to be encouraged

Starting slowly	<p>Preparation of children for participation (Lantolf , 2002; Walsh, 2006)</p> <p>Use of wait time to allow children to develop within own ZPD (Corson, 2001; Cazden, 1990)</p>	<p>Allowing a number of children with English as L1 to respond prior to eliciting similar responses from speakers of HLOTE; modifying this over time as appropriate for individuals</p> <p>Not putting pressure on children to respond within a certain timeframe but to be sensitive to and patient regarding their need for thinking time</p>
Buttressing communication	<p>Use of mime, eye contact and prompting pause to scaffold instructional conversations appropriate to developmental stage (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, 2002; Flynn, 2007)</p> <p>Creative thought regarding lesson presentation (NCCA, 2006; Cummins, 2008)</p> <p>Encouragement of code-mixing between English and Irish where appropriate as a development of interlanguage (Baker , 2006; Pica, 2005; Deuchar and Quay, 2000)</p>	<p>Supplying first letter sounds; using a directed gaze and gesture to bring the child's attention to something discreetly</p> <p>Use of pictures, toys, dress-up clothes and technology to clearly illustrate point wherever possible</p> <p>Allowing the child to answer in Irish even if the question has been asked in English (often because of the context the language has been learned in)</p> <p>Supplying missing vocabulary in Irish at appropriate times to allow the fluency of a conversation to continue</p>
Repetition	<p>Key vocabulary to be made prominent, particularly at early stage (Robinson, 2008)</p> <p>Provision of opportunities for open ended talk among children</p> <p>Use of formulaic phrases to provide a frame for construction (Saville-Troike, 2006; Mhic Mhathúna, 2008)</p> <p>Intrapersonal language play to internalize new words (Lantolf; 2002, 2006)</p>	<p>Pronunciation may be clarified and new words said clearly (but not at the expense of lesson flow)</p> <p>Children may learn words from each other during play time and working in small groups and repeat where needed</p> <p>Telling stories where key vocabulary is repeated and planning for opportunities for children to use this language in other contexts</p> <p>Awareness of and encouragement of children repeating to themselves</p>
Talking about the here and now	<p>Real language practice due to contextual discussion (Meier, 2004)</p>	<p>Discussion of weather, themes such as Hallowe'en and Christmas; responding to visual art created by children themselves; classroom management language</p>

	Negotiation of meaning/ Modified interaction (Mhic Mhathúna, 2008; Gass, 2003; Lightbown and Spada, 2006)	Adjusting language in line with learners' understanding and supplying children with missing vocabulary items sensitively without disrupting flow
Expanding and extending	Context as an aid for children to understand and complete sentences  The development of children's comprehensible output by providing comprehensible input (Gass, 2002; Swain, 2000; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Pica, 2005)	As in 'Talking about the here and now' but with extended conversations. At a later stage in early language development but can be as early as second month depending on context  Using professional knowledge of the child's linguistic level to put them under developmentally appropriate communicative pressure under guidance – use of context to elicit more information which may result in teacher supplying new words but within a frame the child understands

<b>Environmental scaffolding</b>	<b>Recommendations from theory</b>	<b>Recommendations for practice</b>
Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group	Involvement of children in activity structures (Tabors , 2008; Cameron, 2001; Ohta, 2001; NCCA, 2005b)	Familiarisation with roll call and lámha suas signal; acting as a helper/ messenger from an early stage in conjunction with speakers of English as HL  Joining in with rhymes and prayers although perhaps not fully or fluently  Participating in role play at a developmentally appropriate level
Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion	Designated and frequent opportunities for children to interact freely with each other and hear a lot of language being used in small group situations (Grant, 1995; Swain, 2000)  Pair work in a variety of subjects between speakers of English as HL and speakers of HLOTE, allowing interaction verbally and non-verbally in a collaborative dialogue allows opportunity for learners to practice language in a safe environment (Meier, 2004; Mercer, 2000; Donato, 2004)	Free play; station teaching which allows children to interact in small groups at the Sand Tray, Home Corner, Water Station, Library and similar  Mathematics and Science provide particularly useful contexts for discovery learning and the use of concrete materials

<p>Social support: getting help from the English-speaking children</p>	<p>Seating speakers of English as L1 with speakers of children with HLOTE together at times</p> <p>Two-way scaffolding as speaker of HLOTE assists speaker of English as HL and vice versa (Aukrust , 2004; Meier, 2004; Mercer, 2000; Donato, 2004; Swain, 2000)</p> <p>Usefulness of children with English as HL as models of language (Aukrust , 2004; Meier, 2004; Mercer, 2000; Donato, 2004; Swain, 2000)</p>	<p>Variety is crucial - having a system whereby children change places regularly to practice English with a variety of speakers</p> <p>Encouragement of children with EAL to engage with and assist others e.g. explaining a computer activity or what page of the book to turn to</p> <p>Harness the willingness of young children to engage in explanatory peer talk and collaborative dialogue, particularly in group situations, resulting in a language apprenticeship</p>
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## 8.8 Summary

The topics which were explored throughout the research related to the following five areas: teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL; support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community; teachers' experiences of L2 (English) acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; teachers' experiences of L2 (Irish) acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; types of scaffolding evident in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL. Underpinning these themes is an awareness of the fragility of language ecologies newcomer children in Junior Infants often experience.

There is a wide variation in cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children in Junior Infant classes. This type of variation presents a particular type of challenge to the whole school community and particularly to the mainstream teacher. The role of language planning and policy-making in maintaining language ecologies has been acknowledged throughout the study, in particular the place of the teacher as the prime implementer of language policies. Activities engaged in by, for example, the Polish community in Ireland have resulted in greater harmony between the language and its maintenance in the environment. This type of harmony is proving extremely difficult for teachers and schools to put into practice meaningfully.

The study showed that teachers generally had positive attitudes towards the concept of L1 maintenance among newcomer children, but felt that the concept would be difficult to put into practice. Many teachers did not appear to be effectively creating a language environment reflecting the languages of all the children and adults in the setting.

Home/ school links were apparent on occasion but not to the degree that would be of most benefit in the classroom. Curriculum overload seemed to be an issue for mainstream teachers regarding planning with parents, with the Language Support teacher and familiarisation with policies. An overwhelming majority of teachers who participated in the study indicated that they had received no training, either pre- or in-service, in using some of the core documents for including children with EAL in mainstream classes

Teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants were shown by this study to be relatively positive, in particular where children were attending Language Support and were already able to speak English upon starting school. The ELP ratings for Listening, Spoken Production and Spoken Interaction gathered for this study indicated that many pupils were achieving at the highest level of B1 with no help at all by the end of Junior Infants, but that they tended to score highest in the receptive skill of Listening.

The study showed that teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants were very positive. Similarly to their English language skills, children tended to score higher in Irish in the receptive skill of Listening rather than the productive skill of Speaking in this study.

Many types of interactional scaffolding were evident in the Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL in which classroom observation was carried out. The mainstream teacher provided opportunities for instructional conversations and for the children to generate comprehensible output by negotiating meaning through the use of strategies such as wait time, repetition, the prompting pause,

mime and code-mixing. The importance of environmental scaffolding such as classroom routines, group- and pair-work to ensure inclusion and social support from the English-speaking children was evident throughout the study.

The exploration of these themes throughout Chapter Eight leads to conclusions and recommendations which are discussed in Chapter Nine.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusions from this study and highlights issues for future policy development. Implications arising from the findings are analysed and recommendations made. The results presented must be interpreted carefully in the context of the research limitations which were outlined in previous chapters. It was decided to take a mixed methods approach and use was made of focus group interviews, a postal questionnaire and classroom observation to explore the research questions in the field. With regard to the classroom observation in particular – Phase III of the study - as with all ethnographic case-study type research, one limitation is that it is not possible to generalise across settings. The aim of this phase of the project was to give an insight into the types of linguistic scaffolding engaged in by teachers and children in one Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children with EAL. It is acknowledged that the experience will be different for individual children and teachers in classrooms countrywide. It is also acknowledged that this research was conducted at a particular point in time, when numbers of newcomer children were relatively high and the phenomenon of newcomer children was still new to many schools. This situation may change with the changing economic climate and newcomer children are already a more established feature of Irish classrooms. Generalisations from the results are therefore made with caution.

#### **9.2 Restatement of Rationale**

It was stated at the outset of the study that postcolonial theory finds a place in this research (Mac Naughton, 2006; Viruru, 2005; Altbach, 1971). The main issue that inspired the research prior to research questions being formulated was that of Ireland being a postcolonial nation and the initial idea was to explore the idea of education in the early years advocating for, or indeed not advocating for, the cultural and linguistic wants



and needs of newcomers. A concern highlighted was that of newcomers being colonised linguistically at the expense of their own language in the neocolonial sense (the more dominant group imposing their practices and policies on the minority group). Another concern was that of newcomers being colonised in the more additive sense of promoting Gaeilge among those communities. In this sense it was of most importance to explore educational language policy in Ireland and internationally at the micro level by looking at the Whole School Community in this regard through the eyes of teachers. Connected with this is the area of teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL because policies and guidelines are implemented at the micro level by teachers and their ability to be culturally and linguistically responsive can have major implications for children under their tutelage in terms of challenging neocolonialism. It also made sense to explore teachers' experiences of English and Irish language acquisition among children in Junior Infants and in connection with this, at a more applied level, the types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with many children speaking EAL or to use the other term widely used throughout this research, LOTE.

The rights of children to acquire and maintain home languages and additional languages are of particular relevance to this study as the home languages of children with EAL are seen as being endangered in some ways and therefore in need of protection from the three-generational shift outlined in Chapter Two. While measuring Language Shift and Language Maintenance was not within the scope of the current study, this will have implications for further research with families and communities. The concepts behind ecological linguistics (Mühlhäusler 2002, 2003) and the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) underpin the present study as the main focus is on how the children manage to survive linguistically in a situation where their L2 is being used for interaction and the support systems around this, including their teachers and communities.

### **9.3 Conclusions**

The conclusions of the study are outlined following on from five topics which were explored during Chapter Eight. These topics are synonymous with the research questions: conclusions relating to teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL; conclusions relating to support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community; conclusions relating to teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; conclusions relating to teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; and conclusions relating to the types of scaffolding evident in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL.

#### **9.3.1 Conclusions relating to teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL**

There was evidence of an internal conflict from teachers' responses with regard to the issues arising from this theme. The study showed that teachers generally had positive attitudes towards the concept of L1 maintenance among newcomer children, but felt that the concept would be difficult to put into practice. Teachers generally felt that being plurilingual would bring benefits for children, especially as they get older, but a high number of teachers did not make any comment on HL maintenance being achievable in our society. Most teachers did not allow pupils to use their HL when completing exercises but still acknowledged that the HL acts as a potential resource for children with EAL. The area of teachers being able to support children's HLs in the classroom did appear to be of note, with a high number of teachers willing to learn phrases in the child's HL, but when asked specifically about LOTE being of personal importance to teachers the numbers appear much lower.

Within *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (2009) two of the goals are that children would become proficient users of at least one language and have an awareness and appreciation of other languages and that they would have positive attitudes

towards their home language, and know that they can use different languages to communicate with different people and in different situations. It would seem that in order to facilitate these goals teachers need to build on the linguistic and cultural knowledge of their students, and identify and include the perspectives and experiences of their students and families in the classroom as advised by Nieto (2002). Teachers who participated in this study appear to have a conceptual grasp of the importance of the L1 in the education of children with EAL but despite a number of recommendations in the *EAL Guidelines* (2006), *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b) and *Aistear* (2009) many teachers did not appear to be creating a language environment reflecting the languages of all the children and adults in the setting. The reasons for this are related to the conclusions outlined in Section 9.3.2 below regarding curriculum overload and pre-service and in-service training.

### **9.3.2 Conclusions relating to support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community**

Parents, planning and resources were the main themes highlighted in this area during this study. Strong attitudes towards HL maintenance being the responsibility of the parents were noted, although the parents' wishes to have English and not the HL promoted at school were highlighted by teachers, along with their acknowledgement of home/ school support. These home/ school links appear to be used on occasion but perhaps not to a degree that would be of most benefit in the classroom due to a lack of time and at times a language or cultural barrier being present. For example, half of the teachers surveyed were unaware of the child's L1 literacy experiences, something which research shows is crucial in the L2 and L3 development of children with EAL (Kenner, 2000; Cummins, 2008; Krashen, 1999). Curriculum overload seemed to be an issue regarding planning with parents, planning with the Language Support teacher and familiarisation with policies.

An overwhelming majority of teachers who participated in this study indicated that they had received no training, either pre- or in-service, in using some of the core documents for including children with EAL in mainstream classes such as the *EAL Guidelines*

(2006), *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b) and the resources on [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie). This did indicate perhaps an over-reliance on the Language Support teacher in this regard, although brief meetings between the mainstream and Language Support teacher did take place, most often on an informal basis. Familiarisation with guidelines in school policies was not seen by teachers as a major concern in planning for inclusion.

### **9.3.3 Conclusions relating to teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

Teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants were shown by this study to be relatively positive, in particular where the child already spoke English upon entering school. There did seem to be a strong tendency among teachers to recommend to parents to speak English in the home, although the research recommends strongly to do exactly the opposite (Nieto, 2002; Cummins, 2008). Language Support was mentioned during the study as an indicator of pupils' success in English, with a lack of Language Support often predicting lower achievement. The evidence for HL instruction being beneficial for children's English language development was acknowledged by only one half of teachers and many responses on this theme resulted in neutral responses.

The ELP ratings for Listening, Spoken Production and Spoken Interaction gathered for this study indicated that many pupils were achieving at the highest level of B1 with no help at all by the end of Junior Infants, but that they tended to score highest in the receptive skill of Listening. The same could be said for children profiled by teachers and those observed, although observation did elucidate the fact that while a child could be ranked at one level he/ she may occasionally be able to achieve at a higher level. High utility formulaic phrases encouraged by the teacher appeared to be those of most use to the children observed in this study in terms of promoting their Speaking skills, as well as the teacher ensuring the highest levels of comprehension by not imposing language but rather co-constructing language through negotiation of meaning.

#### **9.3.4 Conclusions relating to teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

The study showed that teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants were very positive as expected by the Council of Europe (2008) and Cummins (2008), in particular in relation to pronunciation and in comparison with native English speaking peers. The communicative approach to teaching Irish was highlighted as something which was enjoyed by children at this level. An issue with regard to allocating Language Support time during Irish lessons arose but this is not the case in the majority of schools.

Similarly to their English language skills, children tended to score higher in Irish in the receptive skill of Listening rather than the productive one of Speaking in this study and those objectives which were seen as easily achievable by children profiled by their teachers were also evidently more easily achievable by those children observed. These skills included most frequently listening to poems, rhymes, stories and action songs (receptive) and reciting rhymes with repetition and singing songs (productive) and so were similar for both strands of the curriculum. Formulaic language and providing a frame for sentence construction seemed to be of particular assistance in developing the language skills of the children observed throughout the study, both at the receptive level of Listening and as their productive language skills began to improve during later sessions observed. Although the *Primary Curriculum Review Phase II* (2008) did not give details for Infant classes specifically, the content objectives for Listening and Speaking highlighted as those most easily achievable by children with EAL as part of the current research also featured as those aspects that were easiest or most pleasant to teach within the afore-mentioned document.

### **9.3.5 Conclusions relating to the types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL**

In this study many types of interactional scaffolding were evident in the Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL in which classroom observation was carried out. The classroom teacher possessed many of the relevant skills appropriate to facilitating children with EAL and in fact used a lot of strategies recommended in the literature. She employed wait time when starting slowly with the children and showed an awareness of the children's individual ZPDs. She buttressed their communication by using a variety of strategies such as the prompting pause, mime and eye contact and she encouraged the use of code-mixing in order for everyone's comprehension to be enhanced. Repetition was used as a way of making key vocabulary prominent and in fact the children could be seen as self-scaffolding as they engaged in self-mediated language play. She negotiated meaning with the children when talking about the here and now and expanding and extending, thereby providing opportunities for instructional conversations and for the children to generate comprehensible output.

Environmental scaffolding such as classroom routines, group- and pair-work to ensure inclusion and social support from the English-speaking children was evident throughout the study. The children with EAL were enabled to pick up cues regarding what to do and when, to be a part of the group while tuning into the classroom action, to hear a lot of language being used and to practice language in a safe environment, as well as allowing their peers to act as their language tutors when appropriate to their second-language learning peers and indeed vice versa.

## **9.4 Recommendations**

The recommendations of the study are outlined following on from five topics which were explored during Chapter Eight. These topics are synonymous with the research questions: recommendations relating to teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL; recommendations relating to support of L1 maintenance among children with

EAL by the Whole School Community; recommendations relating to teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; recommendations relating to teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants; and recommendations relating to the types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL.

#### **9.4.1 Recommendations relating to teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL**

It is of note that teachers seemed to be in agreement with the concept of L1 maintenance among newcomer children and that they saw the benefits of plurilingualism as well as the potential benefit of children with EAL using their HL as a resource. These types of attitudes will continue to enhance the educational experience of newcomer children under their care.

Appropriate training for teachers in the areas of intercultural awareness and language awareness would be most useful in helping them to put their instinctual understanding of issues around L1 maintenance into practice. In Section 9.4.2 more specific details regarding the type of training required for implementing guidelines and policies will be outlined but language training also deserves to be explored specifically in this section. Research is telling us that teachers who speak LOTE tend to be more sociolinguistically knowledgeable and therefore more empathetic to children learning EAL. *A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* was published by the DES in late 2010. Alongside a number of very worthwhile recommendations such as increasing the length of the B.Ed. degree from three years to four, one recommendation made to ensure the development of teachers' skills in literacy and numeracy teaching is as follows:

Discontinue the study of academic subjects currently included within the B.Ed. programme in favour of academic subjects more closely related to education in order to allow more time for the development of the professional skills and knowledge of teachers described above (DES, 2010: 19).

Discontinuing the study of subjects such as French and German would have a catastrophic effect on firstly, the types of applicants to the programme as some prospective teachers may be attracted to the combination of Education and German or Education and French (Egger and Dillon, 2010; Studer, Egger and Dillon, 2009) and secondly, the intercultural understanding of teachers who are learners of additional languages. It has already been noted that teachers with proficiency in a second language are more sensitive to issues around diversity (Sook Lee and Oxelson, 2006). The uptake of French and German and indeed other languages should in fact be encouraged by the DES rather than withdrawn as an option, especially in consideration of the fact that plurilingualism is a fundamental principle of Council of Europe language education policies (2007: 17) and Ireland is in no way close to the standards of other European countries in terms of language provision in primary schools even aside from the issue of EAL (Egger and Dillon, 2010).

It is difficult to see where a place for developing plurilingual competence can be found in ITE other than elective subjects offered to small groups of students, to be explored in Section 9.4.2. Again, although some teachers are willing to learn words or phrases in LOTE to facilitate newcomers in the classroom, the best place to tackle this is in ITE. Kerper Mora warns against narrowing the content of teacher preparation programs to specific teaching strategies in English, thereby inherently opposing culturally responsive pedagogy (2000: 345). The content of the B.Ed. programme must not be narrowed in the manner suggested in the *Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (2010) and it will be interesting to see what kinds of submissions the major stakeholders have made in this regard to protect the diversity available to undergraduates and postgraduates engaged in ITE<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Submissions were invited by February 2011 and had not been made public knowledge at the time of completion of this study (10.04.11).



#### **9.4.2 Recommendations relating to support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community**

Home/ school links do need to be reinforced in order to plan more effectively for the education of children with EAL. If these links were reinforced and highlighted, more teachers would become aware of the children's L1 literacy experiences, as well as the languages spoken in the home. In this way, parents could work more effectively as partners in this regard. However, this study has shown that there can be cultural and linguistic barriers to this. One way of ensuring parental inclusion is to provide interpreting/ translation services to schools. One such initiative that has been implemented in the past is the SCMP<sup>30</sup>, already mentioned in Chapter One in the discussion around the significance of language to shaping attitudes, especially as it applies to terminology such as 'newcomer' or 'ethnic linguistic minority children'.

Although funding was stopped after one year due to general budgetary cuts in education at the time, the project found that there was a better turnout at parent/ teacher meetings because of the translator being available, that it was worthwhile to organise follow-up meetings to discuss parental concerns and that there was a successful referral to other services if the need arose. It was also noted that parents often became emotional as it was the first time they had been able to communicate with a professional about their child's progress (Yacef, 2008: 7). These initial observations would surely have led to significant improvements in home/ school communication in time. It is unrealistic to expect that in current recessionary times, when Language Support teachers are in fact being further restricted, as announced in the recent Budget for 2011<sup>31</sup> that translation and interpreting services would be provided to schools and in the interim resources such as the documents available on the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) website and the website of the Irish National Teacher's Organisation (INTO) are acknowledged. This is an issue which warrants further research, as outlined in Section 9.5.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.nccri.ie/news/mar07.html> Amel Yacef who was the project co-ordinator won the European Languages Ambassador award for 2008.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.into.ie/ROI/Downloads/Education%20Measures%202011.pdf> Accessed 11.12.10.

Curriculum overload has been mentioned as an issue preventing time spent on planning with parents, planning with the Language Support teacher and familiarisation with policies. These are also factors identified by the NCCA in contributing to curriculum overload (2010: 9) and in fact many of the documents referred to during this study are listed as aspects of the expanding curriculum contributing to curriculum overload (the *EAL Guidelines* (2006), *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005b), *Aistear* (2009)). Assessment procedures were also listed as a contributing factor in that document although the ELP was not specifically mentioned. It is noted that the DES currently provides one school development planning day per year (2010: 20). In order to support teachers in delivering excellence and trying to minimise the effects of curriculum overload, the NCCA (2010: 31-32) offers a range of strategies including the promotion of professional development among teachers, for example through creating learning communities; allowing teachers time to adopt new ideas and practices by presenting them visually and by not being forced to respond to change too quickly; expanding the range of assessment tools and teaching methodologies, as can be seen on the ACTION section of the NCCA website; improving the resourcing of teaching and learning materials, again with a focus on centralising these; encouraging teachers to rely less heavily on the textbook by employing more ICT resources; and giving greater autonomy to schools and teachers by taking local needs into account while planning learning.

While teachers may interpret some of these suggestions as adding to curriculum overload rather than reducing it, these strategies certainly offer ideas for reconceptualising the way teachers and schools work. The suggestion of creating learning communities would serve as an effective way for teachers to share good practice and although it is certainly an investment of time outside of school hours, either through meetings in Education Centres or blogging, it would create a space for teachers to become familiar with their relevant school policies and NCCA or DES guidelines as well as sharing resources.

While curriculum overload is a legitimate problem in catering for children with diverse needs including linguistic needs, the issue again returns to the need for pre-service and in-service training. It has been seen that in this study most teachers did not receive any pre- or in-service training in the main guidelines supplied by the NCCA for facilitating

children with EAL. Language Support teachers have received some training for using *Up and Away* (2006) and other IILT resources but this study is only concerned with the mainstream teacher, each child remaining the responsibility of the mainstream teacher (DES, Circular 0015/ 2009; DES, Circular 0053/ 2007). The B.Ed. degree has already been mentioned in terms of being a good place to start with helping teachers to develop proficiency in LOTE. At present, most courses related to the themes identified in this study come under the umbrella of Development and Intercultural Education (DICE). The DICE project which is underway in the Colleges of Education should go some way to ensuring that the delivery of courses and programmes within schools and colleges is well-informed by their research.

It is always difficult to ascertain the minutiae of what is covered in individual modules in any degree course so in this case reference will be made to only one College of Education, MIC, due to personal experience. MIC had in 2008 a lecturer funded by the DICE project, where between 20 and 30 students chose to participate in an elective module on DICE and a further 20 chose to participate in another elective based on languages in the primary school, including opportunities for learning phrases in LOTE and experiencing the beginning phase of learning a language (Dillon and O'Rourke, 2008). This resulted in up to 50 out of 400 students gaining an insight into issues around DICE. While it is impossible to say what changes in numbers may take place from year to year, or indeed what issues around DICE may be covered during lectures in the Sociology of Education or other similar subjects, it must be noted that the number of teachers receiving pre-service training at the height of newcomer children arriving in Irish primary classrooms were quite low in MIC. Other colleges do have different systems in place, but without a consistent emphasis on language acquisition as well as intercultural education it will be very difficult for teachers to implement policies and guidelines other than instinctually.

*The Report of the Review Panel to The Teaching Council* following the review of the B.Ed. in MIC recommended considering mainstreaming critical areas which are currently on offer as elective subjects (Teaching Council, 2010: 12). The panel recommends either

increasing the number of electives which a student may pursue or examining the list of electives to identify those which should be mandatory for all students. In particular, they noted that the College should have regard to students' evolving professional development needs because some electives are of critical relevance to ITE. I concur with the recommendations of the Teaching Council and suggest that these be applied to all Colleges of Education, as long as electives in DICE and EAL are deemed as of critical relevance to ITE. These two areas integrate well in practice and some space could be found within such an elective for students to participate in basic language courses in the languages most likely to be spoken in the classroom, such as Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian.

It is therefore imperative that recommendations from the DES to instigate a B.Ed. of four years instead of three years in length are followed (2010: 18). This has also been recommended by the Teaching Council following the recent above-mentioned review (Teaching Council, 2010: 14).

In-service training must also be noted here, whether in the form of postgraduate degrees, summer courses or evening classes, or indeed in-school training. In this study any teachers who had received in-service training had engaged voluntarily with DES summer courses and one teacher surveyed who mentioned the extra resources she uses also made reference to her Master's in Teaching and Learning a Second Language. Attending any form of CPD such as summer courses or pursuing a Master's or other postgraduate degree such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Education in Marino Institute of Education involves a conscious decision on the part of the teacher who must be highly motivated. However, the best way of reaching teachers who feel overloaded by the curriculum and can not seem to find time to attend any form of CPD is for the DES to provide in-school in-service training, similar to that provided by the Primary Curriculum Support Unit when implementing the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) over a number of years. It would also be interesting to look at modes of provision and which modes would suit teachers best at certain times of the year – direct contact, mixed-mode including web-based components or solely web-based and who the providers of such in-

service would be – higher education, teachers as tutors or mentors, national authorities including inspectors or regional or local authorities (Johnstone, 2004: 652).

Furthermore, the current provision of Language Support to limited numbers of children with EAL for a two year period does not take into consideration research previously discussed which warns that it may take five years or longer for learners to develop more academic language skills (CALP) (Cummins, 2008; Cameron, 2001; Grant, 1995). This is certainly an area which needs to be brought to the attention of the DES because BICS skills may help children with EAL to survive in the classroom but may not provide sufficient depth of language to engage meaningfully with the curriculum, especially at higher levels.

#### **9.4.3 Recommendations relating to teachers' experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

Recommendations from Sections 9.4.1 and 9.4.2 also hold sway with regard to teacher's experiences of English language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants. Their experiences were relatively positive, particularly where the child already spoke English upon entering school. Teachers' awareness of the importance of maintaining the L1 however needs to be raised due to the strong tendency to recommend to parents to speak English in the home and the fact that only one half of teachers acknowledged how beneficial HL instruction would be for English language development. Once again, this means more space is needed for pre-service and in-service training as outlined above.

In asking teachers to profile children with EAL using the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) ratings, I also acknowledge that training had not been received by these teachers in the use of the ELP. This has implications not only for the validity of these results, but also for teachers' knowledge of assessment strategies. The ELP checklists are not included as part of the *Primary School Curriculum's* toolkit of assessment strategies, although similarities can be identified. The ELP covers both Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL) by enabling the teacher (and the child) to use

evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning (AfL) as well as recording children's progress periodically for reporting purposes. Furthermore, the Dossier in the ELP is similar to portfolio assessment in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and self-assessment is included as a child-centred method of assessment in *Assessment in the Primary School* (NCCA, 2007: 12), this being similar to the language biography. It must be noted however that self-assessment was not included in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and so teachers would not have received any training on this strategy during in-service days despite having attended training for implementing and assessing each subject of the curriculum between 2000 and 2007.

During *Primary Curriculum Review Phase I* teachers reported a need to increase their knowledge of and competencies in assessment of student progress and requested greater advice on the use of different assessment tools and resources (2005: 248). *Primary Curriculum Review Phase II* showed that teachers were still unclear on "the purpose, role and function of assessment and its potential in supporting teaching and learning" (NCCA, 2008: 164) but it was noted that with the document *Assessment in the Primary School* would come a programme of support for assessment. Upon examination of the contents of the three seminars<sup>32</sup> it seems that the emphasis was on standardised testing and did not address the other seven methods of assessment outlined in the 2007 document, which appear to be the ones teachers required more help with. In this instance, although in-service training has been provided, it appears that more training is required in the more diverse areas of assessment such as self-assessment and portfolio assessment, which would in turn enhance teachers' understanding of such documents as the ELP even without specialist training.

As children tended to score higher on receptive rather than productive skills, every effort should be made to support their receptive language skills while promoting their Spoken Production and Spoken Interaction skills. The use of formulaic language was noted as being of benefit in this regard and therefore mainstream teachers and Language Support

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<sup>32</sup> [www.pcsp.ie](http://www.pcsp.ie) Accessed 10.01.11.

teachers should collaborate wherever possible to ensure that telegraphic and formulaic language can be produced by children with their joint assistance.

#### **9.4.4 Recommendations relating to teachers' experiences of Irish language acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants**

Teachers of Junior Infants should be commended for their positive attitudes towards teaching Irish to newcomer children considering the absence of training most teachers have received in this regard. It is clear that teachers see the advantages that learning Irish brings to newcomer children and employ a communicative approach as much as possible. Although not the case in the majority of schools, any tendency to have children in Junior Infants attend Language Support during Irish lessons should be strongly avoided through recommendations of a DES circular or perhaps the ACTION section of the NCCA website.

Similarly to their English language skills, children tended to score higher in the receptive skill of Listening rather than the productive one of Speaking. Again, formulaic language and frames for sentence construction appeared to help children in developing telegraphic speech. Therefore a consistent approach should be borne in mind by teachers and every use should be made of stories with repetition and language games to reinforce language in different contexts. *Primary Curriculum Review Part II* notes that assessing children's oral language skills posed difficulty for teachers, particularly in infant classes where reading and writing have not yet been formally introduced (2008: 76). One challenge mentioned was that many children can understand more than they can produce, especially when they are young. Another was the challenge of finding time to assess Gaeilge when there are large class sizes and a large number of children learning EAL, in addition to the general challenge of curriculum overload (ibid.).

A move towards using an ELP for Gaeilge would be of benefit in this instance, especially if teachers were provided with in-service training for assessment, including self-assessment and portfolio assessment as outlined above. An ELP for the Modern

Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) is in existence and is in fact presented in English, Irish, French, German, Spanish and Italian and so could be easily adapted for use with Gaeilge alone. However, some adjustments would need to be made in order to ensure its age-appropriateness as the ELP for the MLPSI is aimed at children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes, albeit with the emphasis on the benchmarks at levels A1 and A2.

#### **9.4.5 Recommendations relating to the types of scaffolding evident in a classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL**

The wide range of strategies for interactional and environmental scaffolding observed during this study serve in many ways as a model for exemplary teaching in a Junior Infant classroom with significant numbers of children speaking EAL. An awareness of children's ZPDs and the provision of opportunities for children to generate comprehensible output through guided conversations facilitated by the mainstream teacher are essential components of such a model. Skilled use of wait time and repetition along with the facilitation of meaningful pair work to ensure inclusion and social support as well as creating opportunities for children with EAL to use and listen to language being modelled are all aspects of teaching which are relevant to teaching any subject area to any group of children with diverse needs - cultural, linguistic or otherwise - and would normally be covered in ITE through subject areas such as Developmental Psychology, Teaching Methodologies of Irish and Educational Methodology, as in MIC for example<sup>33</sup>. The encouragement of code-mixing where appropriate is not a strategy which would normally be recommended as a teaching methodology for Irish as the recommendation is to teach through the target language. However, this study has found it to be appropriate in fostering comprehension skills in the early stages of language learning.

Any newly conceived modules dealing with intercultural education and plurilingual education for a four-year B. Ed. programme should include guidance on using these types of scaffolding in classrooms with children speaking LOTE. In the interim, when

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<sup>33</sup> This was found in discussion with lecturers in these areas during the researcher's time working as a lecturer in the area of Educational Methodology in MIC (2007 – 2010). Similar modules are taught in the other four Colleges of Education.



delivering lectures in the above-mentioned subject areas an integrated approach could be taken by lecturers engaging in co-operative planning to make reference to the types of scaffolding mentioned in this study with a particular emphasis on their usage in classrooms with significant numbers of children with EAL.

## **9.5 Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research will be made with regard to each topic which was explored in the thesis. It would certainly be worth allowing for some of the limitations of this study when looking at areas for future research.

Regarding teachers' attitudes towards L1 maintenance among children with EAL and in particular the research suggesting that teachers' knowledge of additional language(s) (other than Irish in the case of teachers in Ireland) helps them to become more empathetic to the needs of learners of EAL, it would be of interest to conduct some similar attitudinal research with undergraduates studying for a B.Ed. taking French or German as an academic subject and comparing their attitudes with those of students taking other subjects such as Mathematics or History as an academic subject. Questionnaires and interviews could be employed as research methods in order to yield reliable responses. Following on from this, it would be of interest to conduct some longitudinal research on this cohort of students, tracking their attitudes and in particular experiences from undergraduate level through to post-qualification level over a period of three to five years, perhaps from final year in college until their second or third year teaching in schools. In this way, classroom observation could be carried out in a number of classrooms to investigate the variables which may influence their practices and to see whether positive teacher attitudes transfer to positive experiences for children with EAL in an Irish context.

With regard to recommendations relating to support of L1 maintenance among children with EAL by the Whole School Community, some research with parents would be well worth conducting as the present study relies only on teachers' experiences with parents.

Giving parents a voice regarding their wishes for their children's language development would be worthwhile and add another dimension to this study. It would also be of interest to conduct an action research project of intervention in schools, having secured funding for interpretation and translation services, similar to the model of the SCMP. An application could be made for a research bursary from a body such as the Teaching Council<sup>34</sup>. The experiences of parents and teachers in schools with translation and interpretation services could be compared with those in schools without those services, through focus group interviews. Not only would this research yield interesting results but it would also be of benefit to those schools in receipt of translation services for the funding period. It would also provide research-based evidence of the benefits of translation services such as these in an Irish context.

With regard to English and Irish language development among children in Junior Infants, although this study explored their competence levels at two points in the academic year through observation and through teachers' reports supplied through the questionnaire, it would add more reliability to both methods if the assessments were to be carried out at the same point of the year. Results would be more generalisable, while still bearing in mind the danger of generalising results based on ethnographic methods such as observation. It would also be worth investigating the possibility of developing an ELP for use with the Irish language in primary schools, based on the models available from the MLPSI and IILT. Any ELP devised would have to take teachers' needs into consideration and complement the other types of assessment already ongoing in the classroom. This would involve a collaborative approach to developing an ELP for Irish in primary schools, with teachers' voices being heard in the process. This is already recognised by the NCCA as an integral part of curriculum development, especially considering teachers as key agents of change (2009: 16). The teachers involved could conduct research as appropriate with their own colleagues and bring this to the table in planning for such an ELP.

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<sup>34</sup> [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie) Accessed 17.02.11. In 2010, 36 research bursaries worth a total of €123,000 were awarded and since 2006 the organization has awarded almost €355,000 in research bursaries.

Another way of strengthening recommendations made based on the present study would be to engage in classroom observation in a number of classrooms in order to explore the scaffolding techniques in use in other classrooms by other teachers, but using the framework for analysis employed here. This would bring a gender balance to the observation and allow for richer data to be collected, thereby providing a good basis for comparison and guidelines for classroom practice. Furthermore, bearing in mind the willingness on the part of teachers to learn key phrases in the pupils' HL, a large-scale research project could be conducted using mixed methods to identify the key classroom language required, especially in the early years of the primary school. This could then lead to a database of important phrases in the context of a primary school classroom in Ireland being created, to be accessible online and in print format. It would also be interesting to look at code-mixing among young children learning English and Irish as additional languages and in particular to consider the influence of L2 English on L2 Irish and vice versa, as well as the three-way influence the HL and additional L2s may have on each other. Linguistic distance could be taken into consideration as part of a study in this area.

The phenomena of Language Maintenance and Language Shift have been of interest in this study and to the researcher, although there was no opportunity to measure this along with exploring the research questions addressed. This is an area which would be most interesting to explore over time and would necessitate a detailed longitudinal study, starting with children at the pre-school level or at the beginning of primary school and following their linguistic development over time at regular intervals. The SEVQ (Giles et al., 1977) could be adapted for use in an Irish context as one part of a multi-modal approach to the research. The inclusion of language questions relating to the language spoken in the home and the respondent's level of English in the 2011 Census would provide an excellent starting point for accessing the most relevant data and up-to-date information in this regard once the results are published<sup>35</sup>. These questions were not included in the last Census of 2006.

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<sup>35</sup> The Census took place on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

## 9.6 Personal and Professional Interpretation of the Findings

It has become apparent over the course of the study that there is a chronic lack of support for the mainstream teacher in facilitating children with EAL. While engaged in my work as a teaching principal during the initial stages of the study and as a lecturer in education throughout the data collection, this gap in support for teachers was already quite visible. This gap has become even clearer based on the analysis of findings from focus group interviews, the teacher questionnaire and classroom observation and this study has highlighted the need for immediate changes in and additions to Initial Teacher Education programmes and Continuing Professional Development.

Some teachers have mentioned anecdotally that many families are returning to their countries of origin due to the worsening economic situation and it would be very easy to use this as an excuse to ignore the specific linguistic needs of these families and children based on this. Preliminary estimates from the Census of 2011<sup>36</sup> do show a lower number of migrants between 2006 and 2011 than during the previous intercensal period 2002-2006, with an average annual inflow of 23,730 in recent years and an annual average figure of 47,832 during the peak net inward migration period 2002-2006. However, the CSO does advise that the net migration estimate be treated with caution until a greater level of analysis can be conducted on the actual Census returns. It is clear from these estimates that although some changes have occurred in the population of newcomers, migration is still occurring and the newcomers who arrived 2002-2006 must continue to have their linguistic needs catered for in schools countrywide using some of the strategies outlined in the thesis. The issue of support for the families of children with EAL as well as the children themselves will continue to need highlighting and I intend to advocate strongly for these families and children in my new role as a teaching principal of a school with many children learning EAL in the ways I have already outlined.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/census/documents/Commentary%20part%202.pdf> Accessed 09.09.11. These preliminary estimates became available a matter of weeks before my submission date.

Given my personal interest in plurilingual language learners and my own high regard for and love of the Irish language, the findings regarding the Irish language among newcomer children have been particularly interesting for me. The relevance of continuing to encourage children speaking HLOTE to participate actively during Irish lessons has become even more apparent as a result of the classroom observation in particular. The skills that this teacher possessed in scaffolding children's learning appropriately and sensitively in learning the language as active classroom participants have inspired me as a teacher to undertake this work in my own classroom with a renewed sense of purpose.

## **9.7 Summary**

By taking an ecological approach to the study and looking at the various systems in place affecting the child's linguistic environment, the importance of language policy in terms of the implications of decisions made by government organisations on the languages spoken by newcomer children has been highlighted. It is essential that our schools become better prepared to face the challenges of a rapidly changing society and develop strategies for modifying old approaches and exploring new techniques to educate all of the children. According to Little (2006), languages are larger than other school subjects, for it is through language that all other subject matter is communicated. He is also of the opinion that "Irish should be the starting point for the plurilingual development of the majority of Ireland's citizens" (Little, 2006: 7). His advice reinforces the positivity among teachers regarding Irish language learning among children with EAL and also the potential for plurilingual development to occur and unite people with knowledge of a common language. The L1 of children also has a crucial part to play in intercultural communication and academic success and Banks (2008) summarises this when he says that "In order to become part of a culture, immigrants need to feel validated within that culture. One way in which we can do this is to validate their language". This study has shown that teachers are innately disposed towards both of these issues and has highlighted their very significant role in the lives of newcomer children. The work of teachers is framed by their attitudes and their education and mainstream teachers need more comprehensive pre-service and in-service training to prepare them more adequately

for facing a population of pupils whose ethnic composition and cultural heritage is dramatically different from that of the past.

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*Circular 12/96, Department of Education and Science 'Revision of Circular 18/79 on Exemption from the Study of Irish in National Schools'* Accessed 30.03.08

[http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/pc12\\_96.doc](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/pc12_96.doc)

*Circular 0053/2007, Department of Education and Science 'Meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language'* Accessed 30.03.08

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*Department of Education and Science, Press Release 17.05.05, 'New guidelines will contribute to developing a school culture that is welcoming, respectful and sensitive to the needs of all children'* Accessed 23.02.08

<http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&category=40272&link=link001&doc=28150>

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<http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&category=10876&link=link001&doc=34567>

*Department of Education and Science Press, Release 28.02.08, 'Schools must be responsive and dynamic as they meet the challenges of diversity'* Accessed 30.03.08

<http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&category=43192&link=link001&doc=39853>

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## GLOSSARY

### Additive bilingualism:

The result of SLA in social contexts where members of a group learn another language without losing their L1 or ethnic identity. The opposite of subtractive bilingualism.

### Bilingualism:

The ability to use more than one language. However, the word does not specify the degree of proficiency in either language.

### Communicative competence:

A basic tenet of sociolinguistics defined as “what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community” (Saville-Troike, 2003)

### Comprehensible input:

Krashen’s term for language that a learner can understand. The input may be comprehensible because of gestures, situations or contextual information.

### Comprehensible output:

This is Swain’s hypothesis that successful SLA depends on learners producing language.

### English as an Additional Language:

“The phrase ‘English as an additional language’ recognises that English is the language used in teaching the child and that, where possible, the child will also learn Irish. The teaching of English will build on the language and literacy skills which the child has attained in his/her home language to the greatest extent possible” (NCCA, 2006: 5).

### Formulaic language:

Expressions or phrases that are often perceived as unanalysed chunks. The L2 learner may hear ‘le do thoil’ {please} or ‘how are you?’ as a single unit of language rather than as three units.

### Gaelscoil:

A primary school where all or most subjects are taught through the medium of Irish (early partial immersion/ early total immersion).

### Home language:

(also referred to as mother tongue, heritage language, first language, L1)

A language that is acquired naturally in early childhood, usually because it is the primary language of one’s family.

### Interlanguage:

The developing L2 knowledge of a learner. It may have characteristics of the learner’s L1 and the learner’s L2. Interlanguages tend to change as learners receive more input and revise their hypotheses about the L2.

Language maintenance:

The maintenance of a given language rather than its displacement by another language. Often refers to the languages of ethnolinguistic minority groups.

Language shift:

The progressive process whereby a speech community of a language shifts to speaking another language. According to Jeon (2008) this can occur completely over three generations, with the third generation having shifted completely from using the language of their grandparents to the language of the host society.

Negotiation of meaning:

“Collaborative effort during interaction that helps prevent or repair breakdowns of communication between native and nonnative speakers, like comprehension checks and clarification requests” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 192)

Private speech:

The language used when talking to oneself without expecting anyone to hear or respond.

Scaffolding:

“Verbal guidance which an expert provides to help a learner perform any specific task, or the verbal collaboration of peers to perform a task which would be too difficult for any one of them in individual performance” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 193).

Target language:

The language being learned, whether it is the L1, L2, L3 or any further language.

Zone of Proximal Development:

Vygotsky’s term for the metaphorical place where a learner is capable of a higher level of performance due to interaction with an interlocutor.



## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM REGARDING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
Limerick  
Email address  
Telephone number

A Chara

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in my research. The working title of my PhD research is 'A Study of L1 maintenance and L2/L3 acquisition among newcomer children in Junior Infant classes in Irish primary schools'. The research is funded by the CECDE and is being conducted through Dublin Institute of Technology.

Your contribution in the initial stages of this research is vital and of huge importance to the study. I intend to conduct focus group interviews with various groups of teachers over the coming month. Having undertaken a review of the literature available on the subject, the focus group interviews will assist me in highlighting important issues and in devising questionnaires to be sent to a sample of schools in the coming year.

The focus group interview will last approximately 45 minutes. My job is primarily to listen to and to moderate the discussion. The interview will be recorded, in order to facilitate transcription.

The tapes from the interview will be stored securely, as will the transcription. At no point will your identity or the name of the school appear in the research. A pseudonym will be given, or something to the effect of 'Teacher 1, School X' will be used in order to identify various statements within the research.

Please sign the consent sheet available in order for me to conduct the interview with you. If you have any questions about the research, please contact me by email or by phone.

Once again, I extend my gratitude to you for offering your time to this research project.

Le gach dea-ghuí

Anna M. Dillon  
Research Student, DIT

### Consent Form – Focus Group Interviews

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I give my consent to Anna Marie Dillon, PhD candidate, DIT, to record a focus group interview in which I will participate. I understand that any statements made by myself are confidential and that I will at no stage be identifiable within the research project. Statements made by myself may be reproduced within the research but will always be referred to under a pseudonym. The name of the school will not be referred to at any point during the research.

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE

## **ADDENDIX B: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

- Years teaching Junior or Senior Infants
- Experience teaching EAL to Junior or Senior Infants
- Number of EAL children in class
- Knowledge of HL spoken by children
- Contact with parents prior to starting school
- Awareness of children's literacy in HL vis à vis literacy in English and additional languages
- Linguistic or cultural barriers between home and school
- Levels of English among children with EAL
- Levels of Irish among children with EAL
- Children experiencing silent period/ stages of SLA
- Levels of language improvement with or without Language Support
- Collaboration with Language Support teacher
- Usefulness of teachers knowing phrases in LOTE
- Awareness of ELP, *Intercultural Guidelines*, *EAL Guidelines* and other appropriate resources
- Encouragement or discouragement of children speaking HL at home and in school

## APPENDIX C: LETTER TO JUNIOR INFANT TEACHER REGARDING QUESTIONNAIRE

(printed on DIT headed paper)

Anna M. Dillon  
Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
25.05.09

Phone XXXXXXXXXXXX  
Email [annamarie.dillon@xxx.com](mailto:annamarie.dillon@xxx.com)

Dear Junior Infant teacher

Would you be prepared to assist in a research project by completing the attached questionnaire?

I am a PhD student in Dublin Institute of Technology. The working title of the research is '**The effects of L1 maintenance on L2 and L3 acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants in Irish primary schools**'. As part of my studies I am carrying out a survey of a sample of schools in the Republic of Ireland. It is hoped that the findings will assist mainstream teachers in supporting children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Your school name and address were found on the website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). Full confidentiality is guaranteed and the questionnaires are anonymous.

The questionnaire should take up to 15 minutes for you to complete. A stamped addressed envelope is included. I would appreciate if the questionnaire could be returned to me by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June.

In anticipation of your help I thank you for giving of your valuable time. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries.

Le gach dea-ghuí

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Anna M. Dillon, B.Ed., M.A. (Ed.)  
Acting Coordinator of Microteaching, Mary Immaculate College

## APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL REGARDING QUESTIONNAIRE

(printed on DIT headed paper)

Anna M. Dillon  
Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
Limerick  
25.05.09

Phone XXXXXXXXXX  
Email [annamarie.dillon@xxx.com](mailto:annamarie.dillon@xxx.com)

A Phríomhoide, a chara,

Would you be prepared to assist in a research project by asking a teacher of **Junior Infants to complete** the attached questionnaire?

I am a PhD student in Dublin Institute of Technology. The working title of the research is '**The effects of L1 maintenance on L2 and L3 acquisition among children with EAL in Junior Infants in Irish primary schools**'. As part of my studies I am carrying out a survey of a sample of schools in the Republic of Ireland. It is hoped that the findings will assist mainstream teachers in supporting children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Your school name and address were found on the website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). Full confidentiality is guaranteed and the questionnaires are anonymous.

The questionnaire should take up to 15 minutes for the Junior Infant teacher to complete. A stamped addressed envelope is included. I would appreciate if the questionnaire could be returned to me by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June.

In anticipation of your help I thank you for giving your assistance to this project by passing the questionnaire onto the Junior Infant teacher. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries.

Le gach dea-ghuí

---

Anna M. Dillon, B.Ed., M.A. (Ed.)  
Acting Coordinator of Microteaching, Mary Immaculate College

**APPENDIX E**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF JUNIOR INFANTS**

Note: In the questionnaire administered, page numbers had been inserted and the letters to the principal and Junior Infant teacher were attached. There was a header on the top of each page stating 'Please tick the most appropriate answer, unless otherwise indicated'.



**Section A: Class, Teacher and Language Information**

1. What **type** of school do you teach in?

English-medium	Gaelscoil/ Any All Irish School

2. Please specify, to which **category** your school belongs

Mainstream	DEIS	Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate what **denomination** your school is

Multi-/ Inter-denominational	Catholic	Church of Ireland	Presbyterian	Other (please specify)

4. To which **gender category** does your school belong?

Co-educational (boys and girls)	Boys only	Girls only

5. What is your **gender**?

Male	Female

6. What **age** are you?

18 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 35	36 – 40	41 – 45	46 – 50	51 – 55	55 +

7. Please specify your **TEACHING** qualification – tick **only highest** applicable

None	Graduate Certificate
B.Ed. (primary education)	Graduate Diploma in Education
Graduate Diploma in Primary Education	Master's degree
P.G.C.E.	Ph.D./ Ed.D. etc.
Higher Diploma in Education (secondary)	Other (please specify)

8. **How long** have you been teaching for?

5 years or less	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20 years or more

9. Did you receive any **pre-service training** in facilitating children with EAL (English as an Additional Language)?

Yes	No

10. Did you receive any **in-service training** in facilitating children with EAL?

Yes	No

11. What **class** do you teach?

Junior Infants	Junior and Senior Infants	Any other combination – please specify

12. How many children are in your **class**?

10 or less	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31 or more



13. Please indicate **how many** children in your class speak the following languages as a **home language**:

	Number	Description – only in boxes with *
(a) English		
(b) Gaeilge		
(c) French		
(d) German		
(e) Spanish		
(f) Italian		
(g) Polish		
(h) Lithuanian		
(i) Latvian		
(j) Russian		
(k) Slovakian		
(l) Slovenian		
(m) Filipino		
(n) Chinese		
(o) Any African language (specify if possible e.g. Yoruba, Swahili etc.)		*
(p) Any Pakistani language (specify if possible e.g. Urdu, Punjabi etc.)		*
(q) Any Indian language (specify if possible e.g. Hindi, Bengali etc.)		*
Other – please specify		*
Other – please specify		*
Other – please specify		*

14. Please indicate what **resources**, if any, you use when planning activities for including children with EAL?

	Yes	No
(a) English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers (NCCA, 2006)		
(b) Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools (NCCA, 2005)		
(c) <a href="http://www.ppds.ie">www.ppds.ie</a> (Section entitled 'EAL')		
(d) Other – please specify		
(e) Other – please specify		
(f) Other – please specify		

15. Please read the following statements and indicate **how strongly** you agree or disagree with each.

(SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree)

	SA	A	N	D	SD
(a) Home language maintenance is the responsibility of the parents.					
(b) I talk with parents to plan on how we can help their children learn English and maintain their home language.					
(c) Parents do not seem to be interested in their children's maintenance of the home language.					

	SA	A	N	D	SD
(d) The maintenance of the home language is important for the child's development of his or her identity.					
(e) I advise parents to help their children learn to speak English faster by speaking English in the home.					
(f) Teachers should encourage children to maintain their home language.					
(g) In class, I have my pupils share their home language and culture every chance I get.					
(h) I make an effort to learn phrases in my pupils' home languages.					
(i) Ideally schools should provide home language instruction.					
(j) It is important that children are highly literate and fluent in both English and their home language.					
(k) I praise the children for knowing another language and culture.					
(l) It is valuable to be multilingual in our society					
(m) Home language instruction is beneficial for children's English language development.					
(n) Proficiency in the home language helps children in their academic progress.					
(o) Heritage language maintenance is too difficult to achieve in our society.					
(p) Children should spend their time and energy learning English rather than learning their heritage language.					
(q) Encouraging the children to maintain their home language will prevent them from fully acculturating into this society.					
(r) I tell my pupils that their home language is important and valuable, but at school we must use English.					
(s) It is important for children with EAL to learn Gaeilge in Junior Infants, just as the Irish children do.					
(t) Children with EAL attain a similar level of Gaeilge to the Irish children in their class.					
(u) Children with EAL tend to do better at Gaeilge than Irish children in their class.					
(v) Children with EAL tend to do worse at Gaeilge than Irish children in their class.					

16. Do you ever allow your pupils to use their home language when completing exercises (written or oral) at home or at school?

Yes	No

### **Section B: Individual Pupil Profile**

Please choose **one child** in your Junior Infant class who has a language other than English or Gaeilge as a home language.

Fill in the following grids based on your professional judgement and any assessment carried out throughout the year.

**(1) The Child and the First Language – Polish/ Latvian/ French etc.**

(a) Age of child		___ years ___ months (approx.)		
(b) Was this child born in Ireland?				
Yes		No		
(c) If no, how long has this child spent in Ireland? ___ years ___ months (approx.)				
(d) What is the <b>first language</b> of this child? _____				
(e) Is this child attending <b>Language Support</b> ?				
Yes		No		
(f) What is the <b>main language</b> spoken by the child <b>outside of school</b> ?				
English	Home language	Mixture of both	Don't know	
(g) Does the child have any experience of <b>literacy in the home language e.g. storytelling/ reading</b> ?				
Yes – often	Yes – sometimes	Yes – not very often	No	Don't know

**(2) The Child and the Second Language – English**

Each bullet point is based on the European Language Portfolio self-assessment checklists. Please choose the most appropriate row (either 1, 2 or 3), and **indicate in that row only** whether the child can achieve this with a lot of help, a little help, or no help (or not at all).

*Please indicate your answer in either Line 1, 2, or 3*

	<b>Listening The child can understand...</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>With a lot of help</b>	<b>With a little help</b>	<b>With no help</b>
<b>1</b>	...words and phrases about him/ herself, family and school and simple questions and instructions				
<b>2</b>	...most instructions given inside and outside school, can follow topics covered in the mainstream class, and can follow a simple story.				
<b>3</b>	... instructions given in schools, the main points of topics presented and stories read aloud in the mainstream classroom, and films about things he/ she is familiar with. He/ she can follow most conversations between other pupils without difficulty.				

*Please indicate your answer in either Line 1, 2, or 3*

	<b>Spoken Interaction The child can...</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>With a lot of help</b>	<b>With a little help</b>	<b>With no help</b>
<b>1</b>	... say hello and goodbye, please and thank you, can ask for directions in the school and can ask and answer simple questions				
<b>2</b>	... answer questions about family,				

	friends, school work, hobbies and holidays. ... keep up a conversation with classmates when working together, and can express feelings.				
<b>3</b>	... talk fluently about school, family, daily routine, likes and dislikes. ... take part in classroom discussions and can hold conversations with other pupils about things of interest. ... repeat what has been said and pass information to another person.				

*Please indicate your answer in either Line 1, 2, or 3*

	<b>Spoken Production The child can...</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>With a lot of help</b>	<b>With a little help</b>	<b>With no help</b>
<b>1</b>	... give a simple description of where he/ she lives and people he/ she knows, especially members of family				
<b>2</b>	... describe family, daily routines and activities and plans for immediate or more distant future				
<b>3</b>	... retell a story that has been read in class or the plot of a film seen or a book read. ... describe a special family event and explain opinions and plans.				

**(3) The Child and the Third Language – Gaeilge**

Each bullet point has been translated from a content objective in 'Curaclam na Gaeilge, Ranganna Naíonán'. Please indicate whether the child can achieve each objective with a lot of help, a little help, or no help (or not at all).

<b>Listening The child should be enabled to ...</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>With a lot of help</b>	<b>With a little help</b>	<b>With no help</b>
... listen to Irish being used instructionally as a language of interaction and management				
... listen to other people as well as the teacher, even though he/ she may not understand every word				
... listen to attractive materials such as rhymes, international or native stories, action songs, without undue pressure				
... listen to Irish being spoken regularly every day in order to reinforce particular phrases				
... listen to a speaker and get clues from various prompts/ cues				
... play listening games and do simple actions				
... listen to and follow simple instructions				
... listen to teacher-led instructions and show feelings through mime or pictures				
<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Not at</b>	<b>With a lot</b>	<b>With a</b>	<b>With no</b>

The child should be enabled to ...	all	of help	little help	help
... attempt to speak Irish				
... recite rhymes with repetition				
... sing songs				
... listen to known stories and participate in simple plays based on them				
... speak Irish in cultural contexts (e.g. Lá Fhéile Pádraig)				
... use actions/ movement and tone of voice to assist in communication				
... explain their simple personal news				
... tell short stories using a series of verbs				
... use the main vocabulary of the major themes in context with resources such as pictures, toys, etc.				
... use opposites (beag/ mór etc)				
... participate in role-play at an age-appropriate level				
... play language games				

### Section C: Your personal attitude towards language(s)

Please rank on the following scale, **how important the following languages are to you personally**. Please do not assess your competence level, but your **personal reaction** to that language – how important it is to you in your daily life/ culturally/ academically etc....

	Unimportant	Of some importance	Important	Very important	Of critical importance
English					
Gaeilge					
French (if applicable)					
German (if applicable)					
Spanish (if applicable)					
Other (specify)					
Other (specify)					
Other (specify)					

#### Dublin Institute of Technology – Consent Form (Section 3) (available at [www.dit.ie](http://www.dit.ie))

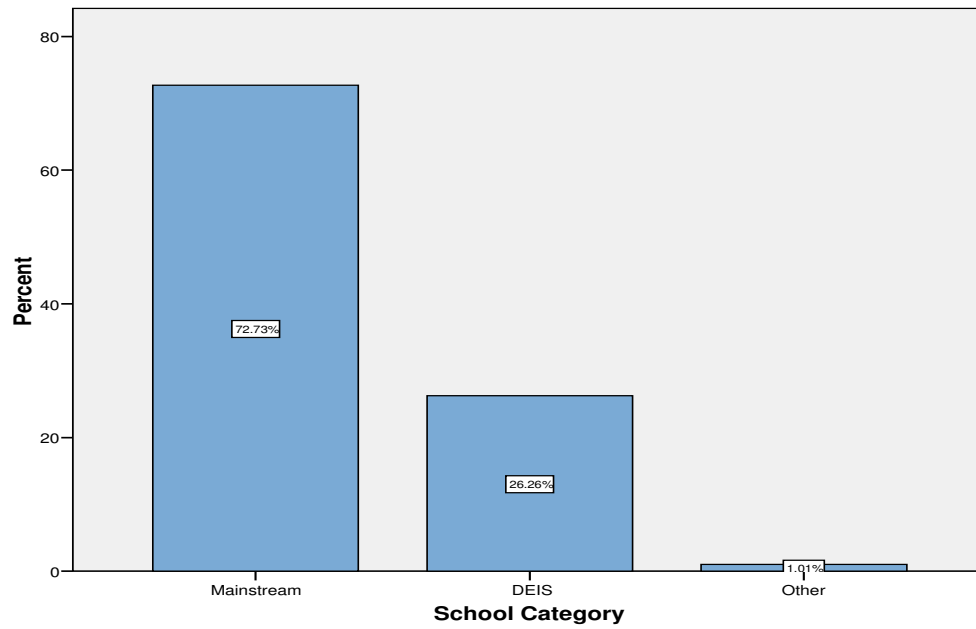
1. Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study? YES/ NO
2. Have you been given contact details in order to ask questions and discuss this study? YES/ NO
3. Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study?
  - at any time
  - without giving a reason for withdrawing
 YES/ NO
4. Do you agree to take part in this study the results of which are likely to be published anonymously? YES/NO

This consent form shall be kept in the confidence of the researcher

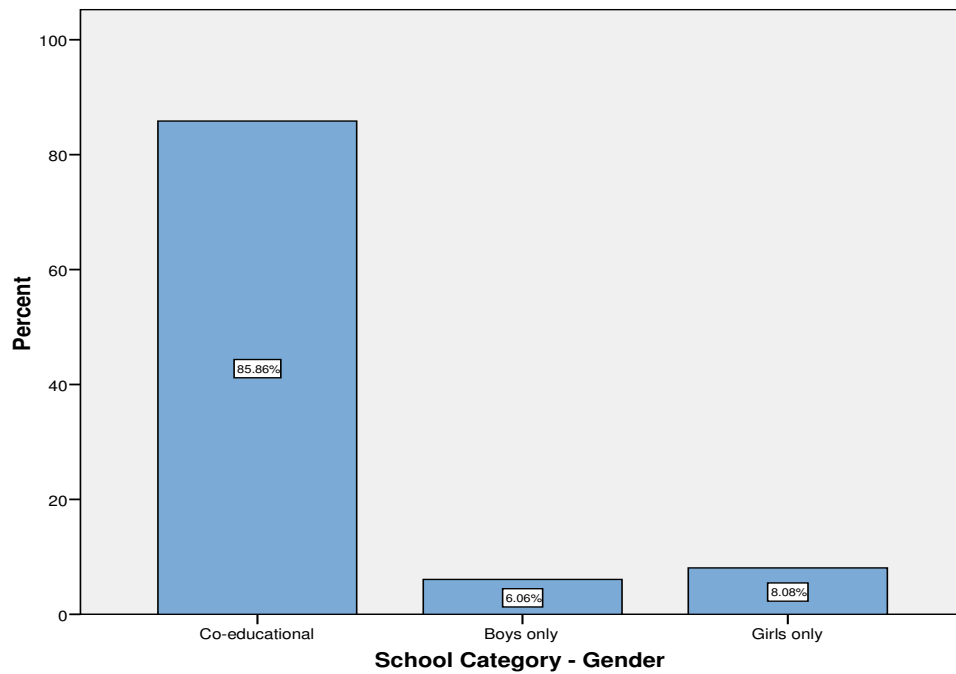
*Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Go raibh míle maith agat as ucht an ceistneoir seo a líonadh isteach dom. Táim fíor-bhuíoch diot.  
Vielen Dank! Merci beaucoup! Muchas gracias! Tante Grazie!*

## APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA (EXTRA FIGURES)

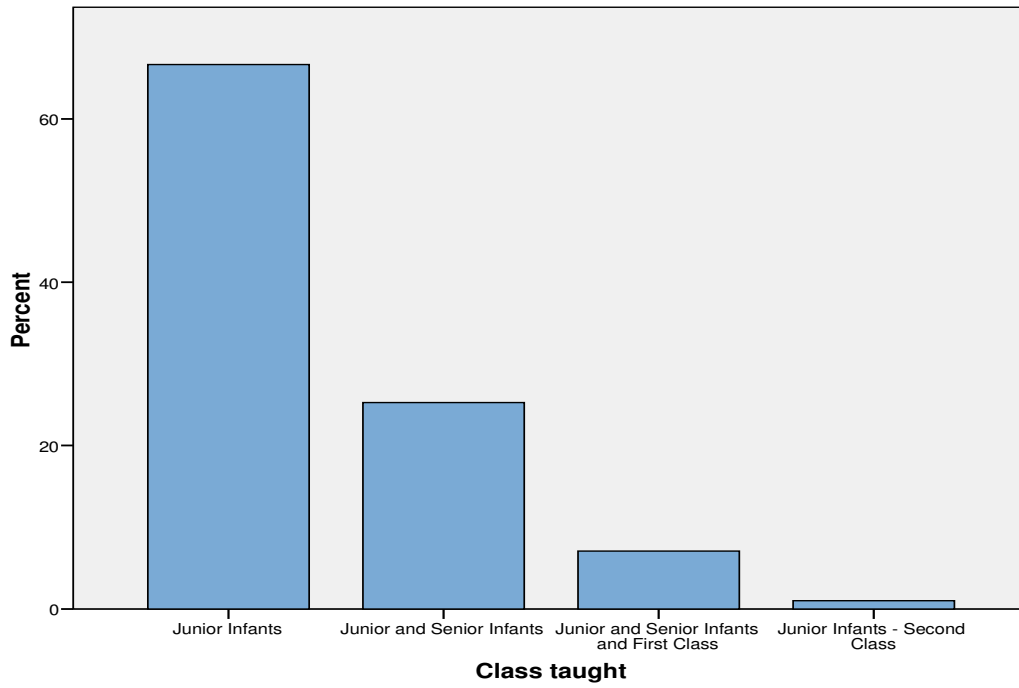
**Figure 1: School Category**



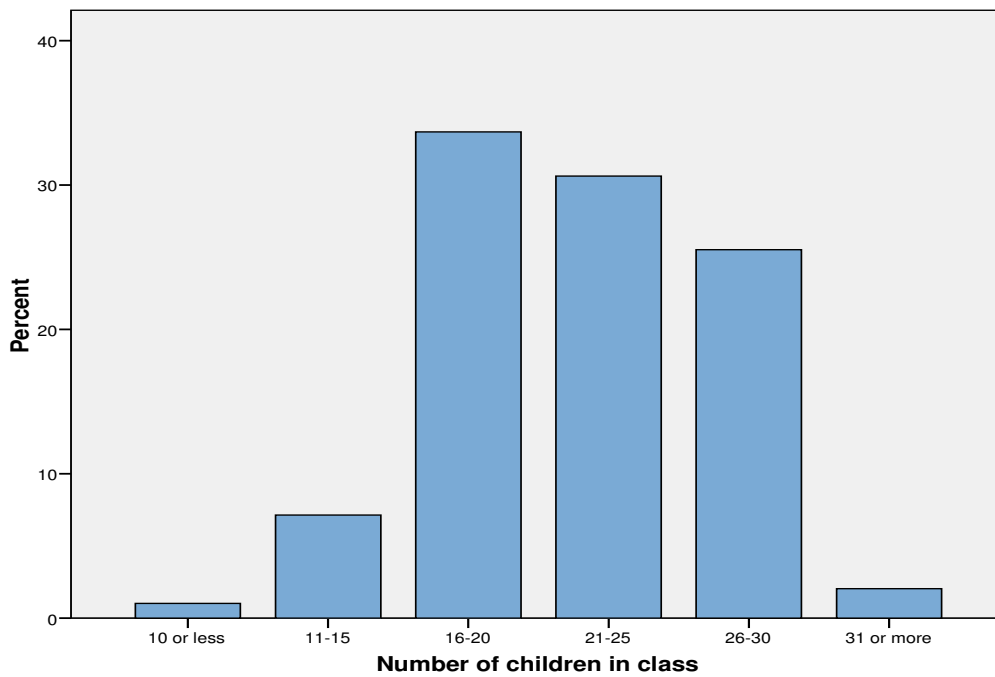
**Figure 2: School Category - Gender**



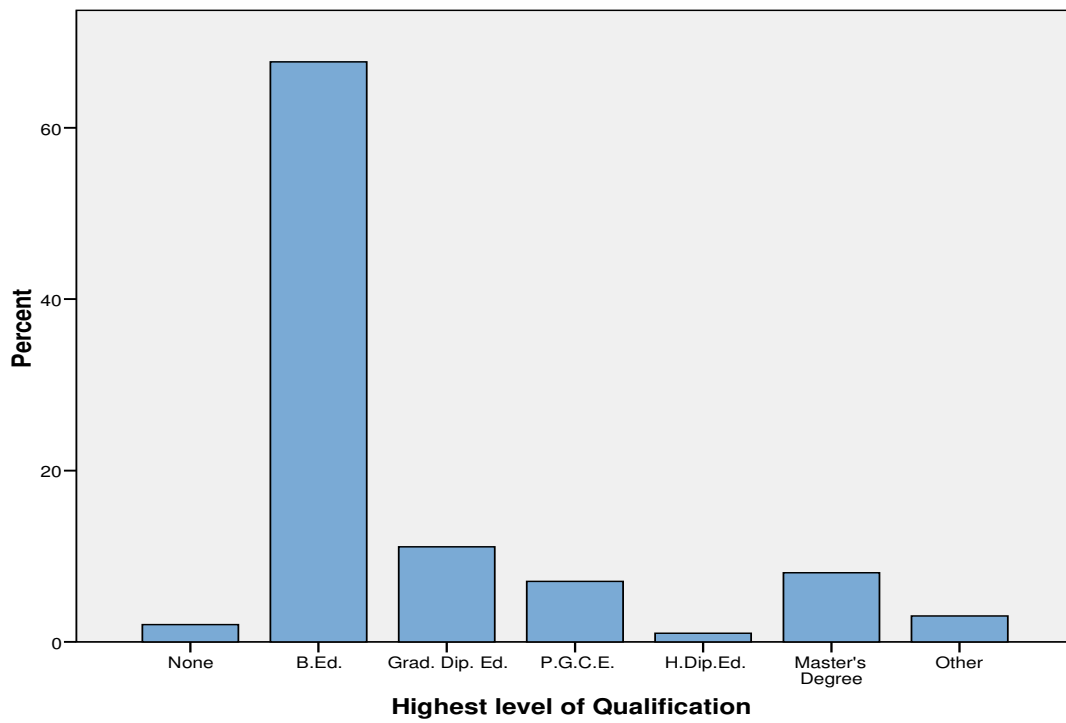
**Figure 3: Class level taught**



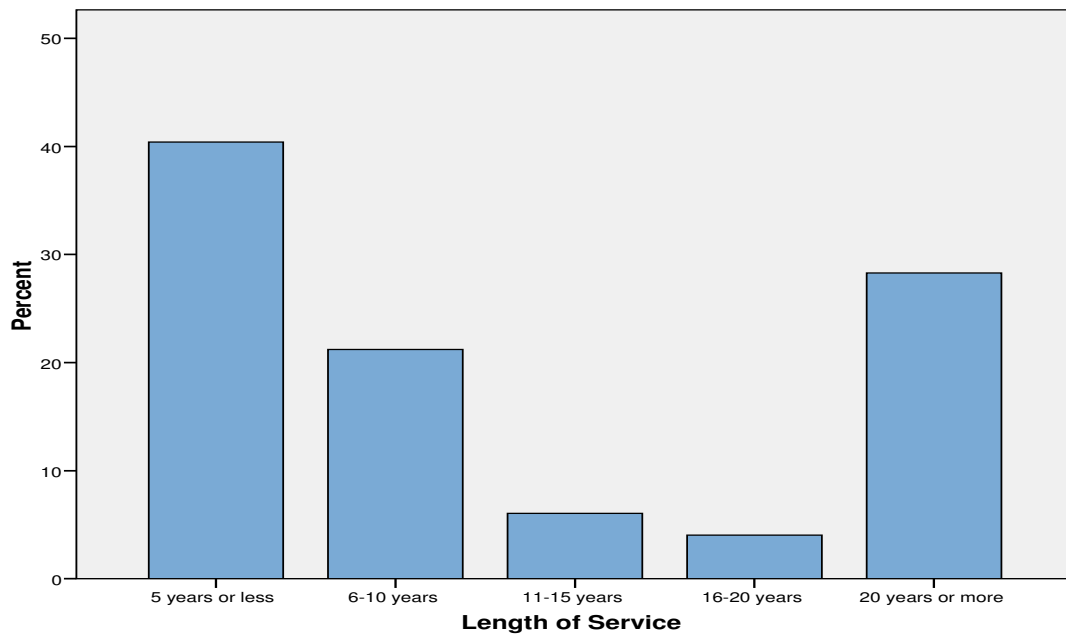
**Figure 4: Class size**



**Figure 5: Teaching Qualifications**

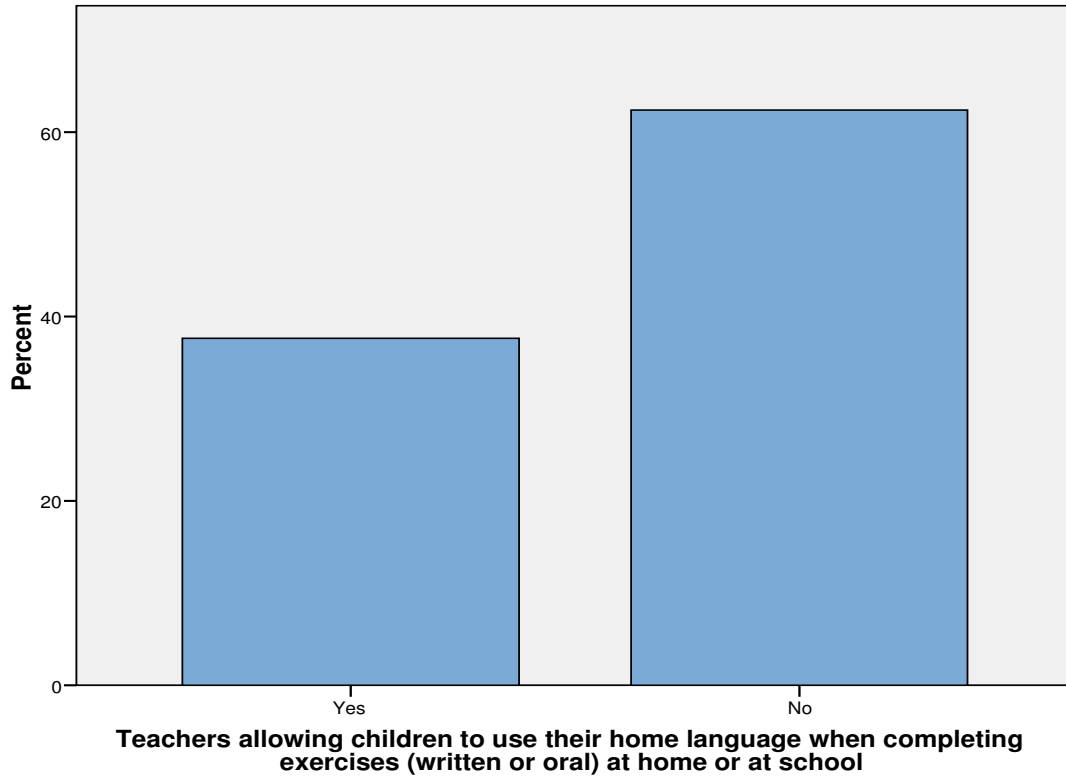


**Figure 6: Length of teaching service**

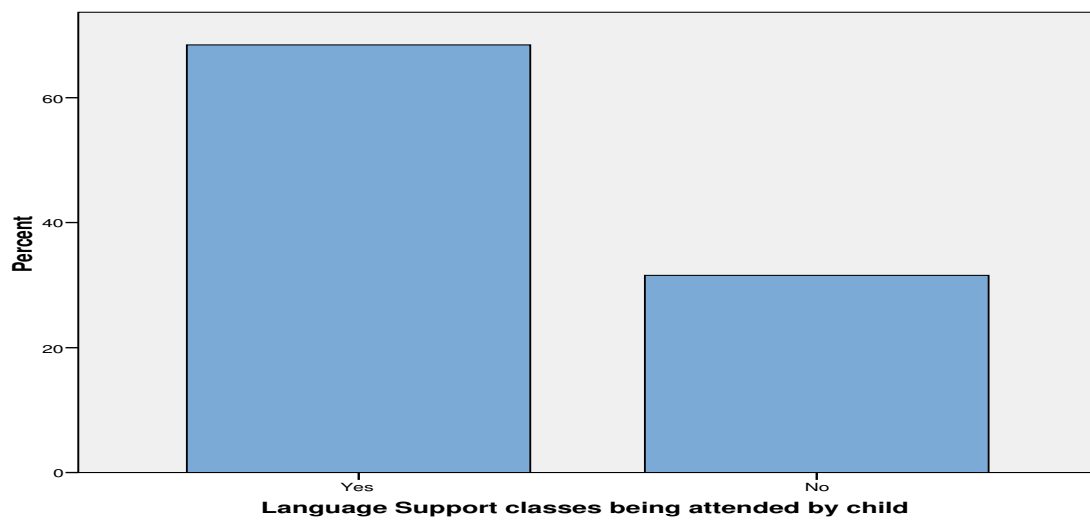




**Figure 7: Teachers allowing children to use their home language when completing exercises (written or oral) at home or at school**



**Figure 8: Children attending Language Support Classes**



## **APPENDIX G: LETTER TO PARENTS FROM PRINCIPAL REGARDING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

(printed on school headed paper)

Dear Parents/ Guardians

I am writing regarding a piece of research that is being conducted in your child's classroom by Ms Anna Dillon. The research is focused on the language acquired by children learning English and Irish as an additional language.

This will form part of her PhD research. During her time in the classroom, Anna will act as an assistant in the class. She will be interacting with the children as they work and will take written notes of some of their conversations.

If you have any queries about the research, please contact me and I will forward on your contact details to Anna. If you do not wish your child to be quoted in the research, please let me know in writing. However, when quoting from the classroom in her research, she will not use the children's names and will not at any point state what school or classroom she was observing in. Therefore, the confidentiality of all children is guaranteed.

Anna is a fully qualified primary school teacher who has worked as a school principal and is currently working as a lecturer in Mary Immaculate College of Education. I am delighted to be participating in the research. Anna and I will keep you updated with her progress and any results as they are published.







Kind regards  
Mr Potts  
Principal

**APPENDIX H: PERMISSION FORM FOR CHILDREN REGARDING  
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

(Completed by each child before commencing the classroom observation)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Colour in the box you agree with!

	Anna working	Us working	
	 <small>© Mystic Arts, LLC</small>		
I <b>would like</b> Anna to help us with our work and do her own work in our class sometimes.			
	 <small>© Mystic Arts, LLC</small>		
I <b>would not like</b> Anna to help us with our work and do her own work in our class sometimes.			

**APPENDIX I: INITIAL LETTER TO PRINCIPAL, BóM AND CLASS TEACHER  
REGARDING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

07.06.09

Dear Principal

I am currently studying for a PhD in the area of Early Childhood Education. This research is being funded by the Centre for Early Childhood Development in Education and Dublin Institute of Technology. The focus of the research is to identify the type of language being used by newcomer children in the classroom, and in particular the types of interactions those children are able to engage in with the teacher, depending on their level of language.

The research involves an analysis of some interaction samples from the children and teachers in order to identify specifically what language skills the children have and what skills they need to acquire in order to engage successfully with the school system and to improve language levels. It will also look at methodologies employed by teachers for this purpose. The research may also involve having an opportunity to chat with children, parents and teachers about the experience of talking in the context of school. Results of the study (where complete confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed) will be published in the form of the PhD thesis. Results may also be published in academic journals, or presented at conferences.

My proposal is to come to the classroom on one day each week or fortnight (September to December inclusive) to observe half an hour of a lesson each time, at a time to be agreed with the teacher. Two other schools will also participate in these observations.

I would appreciate if I could have permission from you and your staff, and from your Board of Management, to use your school to generate data for this research. If you agree to allow this project to go ahead in your school, I will draft a letter to the parents of each child selected to participate, seeking parental permission and explaining the purpose of the activities and the procedure involved.

If you have any queries in relation to this I will be more than happy to talk it through with you at a time that is convenient for you.

Go raibh míle maith agat

Anna Dillon  
PhD Student, DIT

30.08.09

Dear Mrs Smith

I am writing in connection with my PhD research, which is being conducted through DIT. You might remember me from last May, when I met you during Teaching Practice supervision. We discussed briefly the possibility of me coming to observe in your classroom. I had meant to call you in the last week, but I saved your number in a phone I broke over the summer!

I hope it will still be possible for me to come and observe in your classroom either once a week or once a fortnight between now and Christmas. It's very much an exploratory type of observation, and once I chat with you again I'd arrange for parental consent to be gathered in any way you deem appropriate.

My number is XXXXXXXXX and my email address is [anna.dillon@XXX.ie](mailto:anna.dillon@XXX.ie). I'd really appreciate it if you could contact me either way. I'm avoiding phoning you at school as I know things must be very hectic with all the Junior Infants starting.

Should the new principal require any further information, I'd be most happy to make contact with him/ her.

Kind regards

Anna Dillon

**APPENDIX J: RHYMES, SONGS AND PRAYERS OBSERVED DURING  
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

**Observation 1**

28.09.09	9.00 – 10.00	60 minutes	Welcome Routine; Irish Lesson; English Lesson
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**Hé hó mo dhaideó (song)**

‘Tá Jack ag rith, tá Jack ag rith, Hé ho mo dhaideó, tá Jack ag rith’  
{Jack is running, Jack is running, Hé ho mo dhaideó, Jack is running}

**Rólaí Pólaí (rhyme)**

Rólaí pólaí rólaí pólaí suas suas suas {Roly poly roly poly up up up}  
Rólaí pólaí rólaí pólaí síos síos síos {Roly poly roly poly down down down}  
Rólaí pólaí rólaí pólaí amach amach amach { Roly poly roly poly out out out}  
Rólaí pólaí rólaí pólaí isteach isteach isteach {Roly poly roly poly in in in}.

**Lámh, lámh eile (rhyme)**

Lámh, lámh eile, a haon, a dó, {Hand, other hand, one, two}  
Cos, cos eile, a haon, a dó {Leg, other leg, one, two}  
Ceann is srón is béal is smig {Head and nose and mouth and chin}  
Is fiacla bána sa bhéal istigh.’ {And white teeth inside the mouth}.

**Head, shoulders, knees and toes (song)**

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes  
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes  
Any eyes and ears and mouth and nose  
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.

**Observation 2**

05.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
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**Hata beag dearg (rhyme)**

Hata beag dearg, hata beag buí, hata beag gorm, a haon a dó a trí.  
Carr beag dearg, carr beag buí, carr beag gorm, a haon a dó a trí’.

{Little red hat, little yellow hat, little blue hat, one two three  
Little red car, little yellow car, little blue car, one two three}.

**Dippy Duck’s song**

D d d goes Dippy Duck, Dippy Duck, Dippy Duck  
D d d goes Dippy Duck, Dippy Duck, Dippy Duck  
all duck down.

**Observation 3**

12.10.09	9.10 – 10.10	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson
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**Tá cóta mór ar an múinteoir (song)**

Tá cóta mór ar an múinteoir,	{ the teacher has a big coat on }
ar an múinteoir, ar an múinteoir	{ on the teacher, on the teacher }
Tá cóta mór ar an múinteoir	{ the teacher has a big coat on }
Tá sí go hálainn	{ she is lovely }.

**Five Fat Sausages (rhyme)**

We had 5 fat sausages frying in the pan  
 All of a sudden one went BAM  
 We had 4 fat sausages frying in the pan  
 All of a sudden one went BAM  
 We had 3 fat sausages frying in the pan  
 All of a sudden one went BAM  
 We had 2 fat sausages frying in the pan  
 All of a sudden one went BAM  
 We had 1 fat sausage frying in the pan  
 All of a sudden one went BAM

**Observation 4**

02.11.09	9.00 – 10.15	75 minutes	English Lesson; Irish Lesson; Welcome Routine; English Lesson
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**Plip plop plí (rhyme)**

Plip plop plí	
Tá sé ag cur báistí	{ It is raining }
Tá sé fliuch	{ It is wet }
Plip plop plí’.	

**Cuir ort do chóta (song)**

Cuir ort do chóta, cuir ort do chóta	{ Put your coat on, put your coat on }
Aon dó trí, aon dó trí	{ One, two, three, one, two, three }
Cóta agus hata, cóta agus hata	{ Coat and hat, Coat and hat }
Aon do trí, aon do trí	{ One, two, three, one, two, three }

**Observation 6**

09.11.09	9.00 – 10.00	60 minutes	Irish Lesson; Music Lesson; Maths Lesson
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**Yipi Ei ó (rhyme)**

Tá Eddie ar an teilifís, yip ei ó  
Tá Eddie ag gáire, hó hó hó

{Eddie is on the television, yipi ei ó}  
{Eddie is laughing, ho ho ho}

**Tá mé i mo shuí ar mo chathaoir (song)**

Tá mé i mo shuí ar mo chathaoir  
Tá mé i mo sheasamh arís  
Tá mé i mo shuí ar mo chathaoir  
Ag féachaint ar an teilifís  
Seas suas, suigh síos,  
seas suas is suigh síos is lig do scíth  
Seas suas, suigh síos,  
seas suas is suigh síos arís.

{I am sitting on my chair}  
{I am standing up again}  
{I am sitting on my chair}  
{Looking at the television}  
{Stand up, sit down}  
{Stand up and sit down and relax}  
{Stand up, sit down}  
{Stand up and sit down again}.

**Pitter Patter (rhyme)**

Pitter patter pitter patter listen to the rain  
Pitter patter pitter patter on the window pane.

**Observation 7**

16.11.09	9.00 - 10.00	60 minutes	Letterland; Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time
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**Mise an siopadóir (song)**

Mise an siopadóir, an siopadóir, an siopadóir  
Mise an siopadóir is tá mé sa siopa'.  
{I am the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper  
I am the shopkeeper and I am in the shop}.

**Observation 9**

10.12.09	9.30 – 10.50	80 minutes	Irish Lesson; English Lesson/ Library time; Science Lesson
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**Tá San Nioclás ag teacht anocht (song)**

‘Tá San Nioclás ag teacht anocht, ag teacht anocht, ag teacht anocht  
Anuas an siléar  
Tá mála mór ag San Nioclás, ag San Nioclás, ag San Nioclás  
Anuas an siléar  
Tá hata dearg ag San Nioclás, ag San Nioclás, ag San Nioclás  
Anuas an siléar’



{ Santa Claus is coming tonight, coming tonight, coming tonight  
Down the chimney  
Santa Claus has a big bag, Santa Claus, Santa Claus  
Down the chimney  
Santa Claus has a red hat, Santa Claus, Santa Claus  
Down the chimney }.

**Bualadh Bos (rhyme)**

Bualadh bos, gread cos, cas timpeall is glac sos.  
{ Clap hands, take a step, turn around and take a break }

**The Chubby Snowman (rhyme)**

There was a chubby snowman and he had a carrot nose  
Along came a bunny and what do you suppose  
That hungry little bunny was looking for his lunch  
He grabbed the snowman's carrot nose  
Nibble nibble crunch.

**Observation 10**

14.12.09	9.00 – 10.20	80 minutes	'Activities morning'
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**Morning Prayer**

'Father in Heaven you love me  
You are with me night and day  
I want to love you always  
In all I do and say  
I'll try to please you Father  
Bless me through the day'

**Oh Angel of God**

'Oh Angel of God my guardian dear  
To whom God's love commits me here  
Ever this day be at my side  
To light and guard  
To rule and guide'

## **APPENDIX K**

### Discussion of Frame for Practice for Mainstream Teachers of Children with EAL

#### **Introduction**

Aside from the types of interactional and environmental scaffolding observed, it is of note that while a lot of the language learning observed took place during formal Irish and English language lessons, much of the higher-order language learning took place outside of language classes and instead took place as part of Science, Music or Maths lessons and especially during play-based 'Activity mornings'. The use of an integrated approach to language teaching and learning, commonly known as CLIL, cannot be underestimated here. Robinson's recommendation (2008) of taking a language-conscious approach to subject language development has been taken on board by Mrs Smith in this case as she continually identifies and exploits opportunities for language development in a variety of subject areas. The language being used repeatedly across a wide variety of physical and language contexts, results in the phrases and words being internalised and contextualised by the child, as is evident from the present research (Cameron, 2001; Genesee, 2008). Many of the techniques recommended as part of a CLIL approach include the types of scaffolding outlined below – the challenge for teachers is to keep the focus on the language and content using as balanced an approach as possible (Brisk, 2005).

#### **Starting with what the children know; allowing use of L1**

Mrs Smith shows her awareness of the need for the children to use their L1 in appropriate situations as recommended by Nieto (2002) and Cummins (2008), as with Jack and Peter chatting to each other in Observation 3. This also occurs during the Activities mornings (Observation 5 and Observation 10), when Jack, Peter and Eugene use their L1 on different occasions. Mrs Smith also demonstrates her awareness of the children's need for emotional support particularly in the early stages of the year. During Observation 1, she uses the thumbs up sign as a way of communicating with Peter when he is sad about something. She also praises Jack during the same session during the Welcome Routine by patting his head, smiling and saying 'Good boy'. Peter shows his reliance on his teacher again particularly in the early stages of language learning when he insists on giving his

responses to Mrs Smith alone, rather than the class as a whole, for example during Observations 2 and 3. During Observation 2 he does this for English and Irish language exchanges. Young SLA learners often talk solely to adults first rather than their peers because the adult can interpret the child's attempts at communication (Tabors, 2008). During Observation 3 he has moved on from saying things to teacher alone but still says things very quietly, whispering on any occasion he must communicate. This whispering is a form of private speech (Ohta, 2001; Tabors, 2008) which is a precursor of social speech and therefore an important part of the developmental stages of SLA.

### **Starting slowly**

Again, Mrs Smith scaffolds the children by starting slowly, or preparing the children for participation particularly in the early stages of this period of language acquisition. During Observation 1, she mediates Jack and Peter's response to the question 'Cé tusa?' {Who are you?} by asking them to respond after five and eleven other children have responded, in order to ensure their ability to respond within their ZPD as part of an instructional conversation (Lantolf, 2002). Other examples of this are observed in Observations 2 and 3 but after this it is mainly Peter who is allowed to 'start slowly', as in Observations 4 and 6, where she particularly shows her awareness of his comfort zone by not forcing him to use language and asks him earlier than usual to respond, thereby allowing him to develop within his own ZPD. Corson (2001) and Cazden (1990) highlight the importance of this and other types of wait time for early language learners. During Observation 4, Mrs Smith shows awareness of Peter's possible emotional distress when he squints a lot during an elicited conversation. She responds by sitting on his desk and using proximity to reassure him, as well as holding his hand.

### **Buttressing communication**

Mrs Smith uses techniques such as mime, eye contact and the prompting pause in exchanges with all three children throughout almost all ten observation sessions. With Eugene in Observation 1 she mimes words specifically for him and uses the prompting pause to great effect in moving forward his linguistic knowledge when identifying colours in English. She similarly uses prompting pauses to encourage Jack's Irish

language fluency when identifying clothes and supplies first letter sounds where necessary for Peter during Observation 3. During Observation 4 both children and teacher double the message by using directed gaze and gestures in an effort to understand the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Observation 5 sees many opportunities for the children to buttress their communication, particularly Peter. At the Reading Corner, Water Station, Sand Tray and Home Corner Peter taps me and points to indicate a variety of meanings on a number of occasions. Jack also does so during the Tangrams session. This not only shows their awareness of my not understanding Polish but also their awareness of the usefulness of signs and symbols in the absence of being able to verbalise their wants and needs. Observation 6 still shows a need for buttressing communication when Mrs Smith realises that Peter doesn't understand an instruction she has given him and she physically demonstrates what she means him to do.

As the language used by all three children becomes increasingly more complex, communication is buttressed in Observation 8 and 9. Jack is given initial letter sound prompts where necessary for a long elicited story about Christmas in Observation 8, as is Eugene but to a slightly lesser degree. Interestingly during Observation 9, Jack shows his ability to convey a new meaning by using gesture only when the language required would be too advanced; he holds up his pencil case to indicate that he is not ready to do the next activity until he puts it away. Observation 10 sees Peter still expressing himself using gestures, although to a much lesser degree than previously, and Eugene similarly to Jack during Observation 9 uses a gesture to convey meaning because it is simply more appropriate to do so than to use language on that occasion. This shows how earlier strategies continue to be used in different contexts, even when the children are at a more advanced stage in language acquisition.

One teacher interviewed felt that buttressing communication by miming, gesturing and sourcing props ate into their teaching time but that it was necessary. Unfortunately, it seemed to add to curriculum overload by using up teaching time.

SCT1: So like achieving curriculum objectives, you can just cut your time in half because of the time we have to spend miming and explaining and gesturing things.

With regard to resources sourced by teachers surveyed, extra resources such as pictures, toys, dress-up clothes and other visual resources were mentioned in five cases out of 22 responses to this open-ended question, pointing to the importance of thinking creatively in preparing lessons (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez, 2002; Flynn, 2007; NCCA, 2006).

Code-mixing is used as a way of buttressing communication by Mrs Smith and the children alike. Jack, during Observation 5, responds in Irish when asked a question in English as follows:

Anna:           What is that?

Jack:           Sin stocáí {They are socks }

The responses given by Jack during this conversation are all in Irish, regardless of whether the question was asked in English or in Irish. In this case, Jack may be choosing to substitute phrases in Irish because he is not sure of the translation (Baker, 2006). It is interesting that during Observation 4 when Mrs Smith supplies words in Irish rather than in English he appears to understand more, particularly in relation to the theme of Hallowe'en. The context in which the vocabulary was learned initially has an influence on language production and there was clearly a lot of work done on these themes during Irish lessons.

During Observation 6, Mrs Smith's construction of a sentence composed of English and Irish words, with the key words (peann luaidhe {pencil} and mála scoile {schoolbag}) given in Irish, helps Peter to understand more effectively than if it had been said in English alone and therefore clarifies the meaning for him (Baker, 2006; Garcia, 2009). Similarly during Observation 4 Mrs Smith uses the verb 'playing' in English and in its Irish form (ag súgradh {playing}) when eliciting a response from Peter. Code-mixing on the part of the children forms in a way an interlanguage which indicates their linguistic creativity and reflects their worthwhile attempts at communication (Baker, 2006; Pica, 2005; Deuchar and Quay, 2000).

## **Repetition**

Repetition as a means of scaffolding the children's linguistic knowledge appears throughout the observation sessions but most commonly in earlier ones. For example, the word 'milseáin' {sweets} is emphasised for Peter through encouraging him to repeat it after the teacher during Observation 1 and Eugene similarly learns the correct pronunciation of 'doras buí' {yellow door} by Mrs Smith repeating it specifically for him. Robinson (2008) identifies repetition as one strategy for making key vocabulary prominent. During Observation 2 Jack is encouraged in the same manner to repeat the word doctor in order to learn that word. During Observation 4 we see an example of possibly over-repeating, when Jack responds with 'ok' to Mrs Smith – in this instance he may be confirming that he is ok or may be simply repeating what she has said. In Observation 5 there are many opportunities for the children to repeat new words, as each station provides new contexts for vocabulary practice. Jack in particular seems eager to learn new words and phrases as in the Reading Corner and Home Corner he takes every opportunity to engage with me and absorb new language. Observation 7 sees Jack follow a typical pattern in language learning when repeating after Mrs Smith as part of an elicited conversation, as follows:

Jack: milseáin {sweets}

Mrs Smith: más é do thoil é {please – literally if it is your wish}

Jack: milseáin do thoil é {sweets your wish}.

Here he uses the end of the supplied phrase in addition to the word already known by him, which in fact makes some sense semantically but is grammatically inaccurate. This is an example of using a frame for construction by making his own use of a formulaic phrase (Saville-Troike, 2006), showing that he is beginning to process the language.

In Observation 8 we see more opportunities for the children to repeat new words and in particular in the correct manner i.e. not repeating the last word Mrs Smith has said but rather the particular word elicited. For example, when Mrs Smith asks Peter to say the word 'crib' louder, he does so rather than repeating the word 'louder' and Eugene goes even further in constructing a new phrase 'teacher's glasses' from a longer sentence Mrs Smith has just supplied. Observation 10, similarly to Observation 5, provides many opportunities for the children to develop their language skills on a one-to-one level and for them to engage in language analysis at an age-appropriate level. Both Peter and Jack make use of this opportunity during Reading Corner when I emphasise new words for them. Eugene does similar things here and also shows his ability on a number of occasions to repeat only the necessary word rather than the whole sentence in order to internalise it. He also repeats the word 'snowman' to himself twice or three times, which demonstrates a strategy sometimes children use to internalise new words – self-mediation through language play (Lantolf, 2002; 2006).

### **Talking about the here and now**

Talking about the here and now provides many opportunities for real language practice even in the very early stages as it provides opportunities for contextual discussion. In Observation 1 and 2, words relating to the weather are learned as part of the Welcome Routine and Mrs Smith uses the opportunity to supply Jack and Eugene with missing vocabulary items. In Observation 2 Jack and Peter are encouraged to talk about the pictures they have drawn, thereby encouraging them to talk about topics of relevance to them personally. In fact, visual art often tends to be relied upon by children with EAL as a way of representing their feelings, experiences, objects and thoughts (Meier, 2004), so the use of visual art as a starting point for interaction provides an ideal context which helps the teacher and child to develop the conversation. It also provides opportunities for the teacher to supply the children with missing vocabulary items, thereby encouraging interaction. Mrs Smith facilitates the children in negotiating meaning by adjusting her language in line with the learners' understanding (Mhic Mhathúna, 2008; Gass, 2003; Lightbown and Spada, 2006). These communicative opportunities help both Jack and Peter to expand their language skills by talking about the here and now, but also

extending into other vocabulary areas. Use is made of the theme of Hallowe'en during Observation 4, as Jack and Peter are both encouraged to talk about what they dressed up as and what they did to celebrate the festival during quite long and detailed conversations with Mrs Smith. Although the topic is de-contextualised in terms of the actual here and now in the classroom, it makes sense to the children as they have just spent a week on holidays for Hallowe'en. An opportunity for talking about the here and now also presents itself during Observation 5 when the context of having to say sorry after a humorous accident helps Jack create his first unelicited phrase.

Classroom management is a factor in Observation 7 as two of the opportunities for talking about the here and now relate to issues such as returning library books (Jack) and school absence (Eugene). This happens again during Observation 9 but in Observation 8 in particular Jack and Peter are provided with opportunities to describe the pictures they have created themselves. Jack shows that is able to respond to questions as part of the conversation in order to extend the exchange. He also uses the context of knowing that his classmate James should be next to take a turn on the computer in prompting him to tap him and say 'computer'. In the discussion of materials in the environment in Observation 8 the everyday words help Eugene in particular to participate meaningfully in the lesson.

### **Expanding and Extending**

Expanding and extending is used as a strategy for the children to develop their language skills and is closely related to talking about the here and now, although conversations tended to be expanded and extended in the later stages of the observation period. Mrs Smith during Observation 4 helps both Jack and Peter to expand their vocabulary by using the context to help them to understand and by developing their fluency through continued conversation around the familiar theme of Hallowe'en. Similarly during Observation 6 Jack is able to finish off sentences that Mrs Smith starts for him, and give responses that clearly show his understanding of the Mathematics task. In this way, Mrs Smith supplies comprehensible input, which enables Jack to participate more fully in the conversation (Gass, 2002). This comprehensible input however is complemented by facilitating the learners in generating comprehensible output (Swain, 2000; Lightbown



and Spada, 2006; Pica, 2005), as in the following examples. In Observation 8, as before, the theme of Christmas helps Jack to expand his vocabulary under Mrs Smith's guidance when describing his Christmas picture and during Library Time in Observation 9 she uses the opportunity presented by Jack not having brought in his book to expand his language skills by extending the conversation to elicit more information. Eugene is also afforded opportunities for expanding his linguistic knowledge while discussing materials during the Science lesson and successfully participates in the lesson. These examples present opportunities for the learners to negotiate meaning with scaffolds from Mrs Smith, expertly guided by her awareness of each individual's ZPD.

### **Classroom routines: Helping children become members of the group**

Involving children in classroom routines to help them become members of the group occurs during each session observed. Activity structures such as the roll call (Observation 1), lámha trasna {arms folded} (Observation 2) and morning prayers (Observation 8 and 9) are followed as well as including Jack as a helper during Observation 1 and Jack and Eugene as helpers during Observation 2, thereby enabling them to pick up cues regarding what to do and when, using an English-speaking child as a model (Tabors, 2008; Cameron, 2001; Ohta, 2001). Peter uses the classroom routines of reciting certain rhymes as his time to silently practice language, as he often moves his mouth without saying the words (Observation 2, 4 and 6). Jack joins in with the rhymes recited in Observation 4 and 6 and so it is evident that reciting rhymes as a group allows second-language learners to be a part of the group while tuning into the classroom action. Eugene shows his knowledge of appropriate manners during Observation 5, although he does not always follow his knowledge! He says please and thank you on occasion while playing at the Sand Tray, showing his ability to use formulaic phrases in appropriate contexts (Wray, 2002a; Tabors, 2008). He does this more consistently by Observation 10, showing the development of his language over time.

By Observation 6 and 7 Jack and Peter both show their awareness of the 'lámha suas' signal, which means that they understand when they must take turns (NCCA, 2005b). More crucially, their willingness to put their hands up at this point along the way of the observation sessions shows their willingness to participate using language. Jack and

Eugene both say the prayer when requested to during Observation 8, having already practiced it with the rest of the class. Observation 9 sees Peter partake in a role-play during the Irish lesson, having been able to follow his classmates previously, just as Jack had done during Observation 7. It is of note that these more individual ‘performances’ were encouraged at a later point in the observation sessions.

### **Small-group activities: Ensuring inclusion**

The first occasion on which small-group activities are seen is during Observation 5 (Activities Morning). Here, small groups of 4 or 5 children are allowed to interact freely at different activity stations. Much interaction was seen at the Home Corner, where Peter, Eugene and Jack each played non-verbally with an English-speaking child. The small group situation enables them to hear a lot of language being used (Grant, 1995) and the language focus is on meaning not on form (Swain, 2000). On two occasions during this session the L1 is spoken during child-child unstructured play and interaction – once between Peter and Jack and once when Jack is addressing an English-speaking child.

After this session, interactions become more frequent, in particular in more structured pair work situations. For example Jack and his neighbour Sophie interact to help each other during Maths in Observation 7 when provided with an opportunity to engage in pair work, although it is non-verbal from Jack’s side. Peter and Eugene also get involved with encouraging another classmate to do his work properly during the same session, although their best efforts are ignored. Meier (2004) and Mercer (2000) recommend this type of apprenticeship between language experts and language novices as a way of building bridges between native English speakers and speakers of varied Englishes. This concept of apprenticeship is also mentioned by Donato (1994), who recognises that the type of scaffolding usually associated with teachers or parents assisting learners can also be associated with peers engaged in language learning. It is also an example of Swain’s concept of examination of collaborative dialogue (2000) between experts and novices.

During Observation 8, Jack and Peter both interact successfully and non-verbally with their partners in pair work relating to Science, while Eugene engages in a conversation with his partner resulting in a three word phrase. The social proximity makes interacting

with each other easier and the fact that children are seated beside each other for this activity makes it easier for them to join in pair work without having to negotiate entry (Tabors, 2008). It also provides an opportunity for Eugene to hear a lot of language and practice language in a safe environment with just one other participant.

Observation 10 sees Jack interact with an English-speaking child during a play activity and was made possible for him by being placed there by Mrs Smith. If they hadn't been allocated groups in a thoughtful manner then this opportunity may not have presented itself.

### **Social support: getting help from the English-speaking children**

Social support was offered by the English-speaking children throughout almost all of the sessions observed. The seating arrangement in the classroom often means that Jack, Peter and Eugene are seated beside English-speaking peers (as for example in Observation 1 but also in 4 and 6). Jack and Eugene interact non-verbally with the pupils seated beside them during Observation 1 and Jack does so in Observation 2 and 3. English-speaking pupils supply Jack with a missing word during Observation 2 and 4, sensing that the second-language learners need some assistance in getting their message across and during Observation 3 he engages in two-way scaffolding as he assists others by pointing to the correct item in the Irish lesson and as part of a group activity. In Observation 5 he is encouraged by an English-speaking peer at the Sand Tray.

Sophie and Jack have a number of verbal and non-verbal exchanges in Observation 7 and she shows herself to be in tune with Jack's need for extra explanation. Jack hears a lot of language as a result of the social proximity which makes interactions between them easier. She also ensures that Mrs Smith hears his response in Observation 8 when he supplies a phrase in English. Mrs Smith seems to be mindful of the usefulness of the English-speaking children in modelling behaviour for the children with EAL as she encourages David to show Jack what to do and their relationship seems to be a positive one. During Observation 10 in the Reading Corner the English-speaking children show their awareness of the need for assistance required by second-language learners and act as tutors to their second-language learning peers in a most sensitive and caring manner

while identifying Letterland characters, together with my assistance. Aukrust (2004) has found these types of explanatory peer talk in pre-schools to result in higher academic language skills among bilingual children over time. Again, this points to the language apprenticeship outlined by Meier (2004), Mercer (2000) and Donato (1994), and Swain's collaborative dialogue (2000), all of who maintain that peer scaffolding extends the linguistic development of language learners. The assistance given by native speakers of English may have already had a positive effect on the language development of the three children observed.

The social interaction described in above sections indicates the fact that the newcomer students and Irish students seem to be getting on well with each other, a similar finding to that of Smyth et al. (2009) and of significance considering that the same piece of research found this to be a matter of concern for teachers.

## List of Publications

Dillon, A.M. (2009) The CLIL Approach in Irish Primary Schools; A Multilingual Perspective. In Marsh, D., Mehisto, P. with Aliaga, R., Asikainen, T, Frigols, M., Hughes, S., Lange, G, (eds) *CLIL Practice: Perspectives from the Field*. CCN: University of Jyväskylä.

Dillon, A.M. (2009) Metalinguistic awareness and evidence of cross-linguistic influence among bilingual learners in Irish primary schools. *Language Awareness*, 1747-7565, Volume 18, Issue 2, 2009, Pages 182 – 197

Dillon, A.M. & O'Rourke, D. (2008) The use of technology in addressing contemporary teaching and learning challenges. In M. Fiedler and A. V Perez Piran (eds.) *Challenging Perspectives – Teaching Globalisation and Diversity in the Knowledge Society*. Dublin: DICE Project. Available online on 07.02.09: <http://www.diceproject.org/upload/uploadedFile/Challenging%20Perspectives.pdf>

## List of Papers Presented at Professional Conferences

Dillon, A.M. & Egger, S. (2010) The impact of CLIL in Initial Teacher Education on student teachers' attitudes to primary classroom practice. *In Pursuit of Excellence: Uncovering CLIL Quality by CLIL Practitioners - Evidencing CLIL Quality by CLIL Researchers*. Eichstätt, Germany, 30 September - 2 October.

Dillon, A.M. (2010) Multiple perspectives on L3 Irish language acquisition among aged 4-6. *10th International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness*. University of Kassel, Germany, 25-28 July.

Dillon, A.M. (2010) One school, many voices; In-school language planning and practices for children in early childhood with EAL in the Republic of Ireland. *The International Conference on Who needs languages? Micro and macro perspectives into language education policies*. University of Jyväskylä, Finland, 7-10 June.

Dillon, A.M. (2010) Creating language learning environments for young children with EAL; Micro and macro perspectives into language education practices. *ESAI Annual Conference 2010*. Dundalk, Ireland. 25– 27 March.

Mhic Mhathúna, M., Mac Con Iomaire, M. & Dillon, A.M. (2009) Implementing Language Policy in Gaeltacht Naíonraí. *Language Policy and Language Learning: New Paradigms and New Challenges*. University of Limerick, 18-20 June.

Studer, P., Egger, S. & Dillon, A.M. (2009) CLIL in higher education: a cross-cultural perspective. *Language Policy and Language Learning: New Paradigms and New Challenges*. University of Limerick, 18-20 June.

Dillon, A.M. & Carswell, D. (2009) Linguistic Valuation of the 'other' as 'other': pleading the case for additive bilingualism in the Irish primary school. *Inaugural Conference of the Postcolonial Studies Association. Re-imagining Identity: New Directions in Postcolonial Studies*, Waterford Institute of Technology, 6-8 May.

Dillon, A.M. (2008) The CLIL approach in Irish primary schools; a multilingual perspective. *Multilingual Mindsets in a Multicultural World: Building quality learning communities. International CLIL conference*, Tallinn, Estonia, 24-25 October.

Dillon, A.M. (2008) First language maintenance among newcomer children in Irish primary schools. *Polish-Irish Encounters in the New and Old Europe*. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 3-4 October.

O'Rourke, D. & Dillon, A.M. (2008) Teaching and Learning to Support Human Rights in the primary school classroom. *Human Rights Education for a sustainable future: Celebrating 60 years of the UDHR*. St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, 19-20 September.

Dillon, A.M. (2008) Supporting English as an Additional Language and L1 maintenance in multicultural Ireland. *IMBILD Programme Conference*, Pädagogische Hochschule Linz, Austria, 17-31 August.

Dillon, A.M. & O'Rourke, D. (2008) The use of technology in addressing contemporary teaching and learning challenges. *Challenging Perspectives: Teaching Globalisation and Diversity in the Knowledge Society*. Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, 6-7 June.

Dillon, A.M. (2008) An Examination of the Language Education Policies and Practices in place for newcomer children in Irish Primary Schools. *Migration Studies in Ireland – An Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference*, Trinity College Dublin, 26-28 March.