

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION IN THE LEARNING OF IRISH AND GERMAN AMONG LEAVING CERTIFICATE STUDENTS IN SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

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#### **Abstract**

This article compares the attitudes and motivations of Leaving Certificate students to the learning of Irish and of German in Ireland. The main purpose of the study was to determine whether there were significant differences in students' attitudes towards the learning of the two languages. Comparisons are also made of attitudes of students from Irish-medium schools with those of students from English-medium schools.

#### **Introduction**

This paper, which is an overview of research findings from the author's Ph.D. dissertation, investigated 400 Leaving Certificate students' attitudes to and motivation in the learning of Irish as a second language and the learning of German as a foreign language in 25 second-level schools in Ireland from 2001-2005. The 400 students included 100 students from Irish-medium second-level schools and 300 students from English-medium second-level

schools. The sample of 400 students consisted of 200 boys and 200 girls so as to maintain gender balance in the study. The main purpose of this comparative study was to ascertain if there were significant differences in students' attitudes towards the learning of the two languages. The findings indicated that students in general were more positive towards Irish than they were towards German. The results also showed that students were very positive towards Irish because they considered it as part of their cultural and national identity as Irish citizens. They were not, however, very positive towards the actual business of learning the language per se. The findings indicated that students were instrumentally motivated to learn German for practical purposes, that is, to acquire points in the Leaving Certificate state examinations for entry to tertiary education with the view to securing employment in German-speaking countries or with German companies in Ireland, as noted by Ruane (1991). Respondents in Irish-medium second-level schools were both integratively and instrumentally more motivated to learn Irish and German than respondents in English-medium second-level schools. Girls, it should be said, were more positive at language learning than boys, while Higher-Level learners had more positive attitudes towards language learning than Ordinary-Level learners. The findings also demonstrated that additional exposure to language learning in the form of student exchanges to Germany and attendance at Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking district) impacts positively on language learning. No significant differences in attitudes towards Irish were found between Irish-medium students and Higher-Level students from English-medium schools who, periodically, attended Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht*. The rationale, therefore, for the study was based on the author's own teaching experience and conviction that motivational factors play a significant role in second and foreign language learning. Finally, these findings are of particular relevance to second and foreign language teachers not only in Ireland but also to the learning of French and Spanish as second

and foreign languages in America.

### Theoretical background to the research

Ó Laoire (1999) claims that motivation is often singled out as being the most central component in the language learning process. The teaching of Irish has been associated over the years with demotivated learners and with allegedly ineffective and unproductive learning. Demotivated language learners are always a challenge even for the most dedicated teachers in the profession. Studies conducted by Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin (1984); Fahy (1988); Kavanagh (1999); Murtagh (2003); Ó Cuinneagáin (2006) show that, while students are favourably disposed towards Irish as a symbol of cultural and national identity, they are not, however, very favourably disposed towards the actual learning of the language itself. It is very disconcerting that learners should be unduly demotivated to learn Irish given that the language's survival will depend more and more on such learners becoming active users in ever-widening networks of neo-speakers. Education in the context of minority languages is also the site where political, social and ideological values are transmitted and reflected, the very values that fuel language revitalisation (Ó Cuinneagáin 2006: 1).

Without motivation, learners will simply not learn. What constitutes motivation in language learning, therefore, is of considerable interest to language teachers all over the world, including America. If students are not self-motivated as language learners, they will make little progress. The regulation of this motivation can only come from the students themselves and not from the teachers. Therefore, interactive social processes and values play a significant role in encouraging the development of motivation from within the students themselves (Deci 1978: 198).

It has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers that motivation is one of the key factors that influence the rate of success in second and

foreign language learning. It provides the principal impetus ‘to sustain the long-term effort to master a second language’ (Gardner and Lambert 1972: 15). Research carried out by Gardner and Lambert (1972) into the learning of French as a second language in North America tends to support the widespread view that favourable attitudes and high levels of motivation, either integrative or instrumental, are crucial factors in language learning. Different types of motivation, for example, integrative and instrumental, seem to be optimal in different language learning situations. The nature of the learning experience may be a significant influence in fostering attitudes and motivation in language learning. They claim that integrative motivation means that a person wants “to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and to take on very subtle aspects of their behaviour, including their distinctive style of speech and language” (ibid. 1972: 135). Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, means that a person wants to learn a language because it will be useful in getting employment, reading newspapers in a foreign language or passing examinations. Richards et al. (1992: 155) would define language attitudes as the supports of motivation “which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other’s languages or to their own language”. They (ibid.) also state that “language attitudes may have an effect on second or foreign language learning”, which affect motivation.

Until the 1990s, language motivation had been dominated by the social psychological approach inspired by the research of Gardner and Lambert (1972) who saw it as a relatively static learner characteristic. The 1990s, however, brought a shift in thought on motivation in language learning by researchers in many parts of the world such as Au (1988); Ushioda (1995); Dörnyei (1998); Dörnyei and Kormos (2000); Dörnyei (2001) who reopened the research agenda on the subject. This renewed interest, which resulted in a plethora of both theoretical and empirical research studies, led to the adaptation from mainstream psychology of a number of cognitive and

situation-specific variables to the existing model of Gardner and Lambert (1972). Dörnyei (1998: 177) and his associates took the opposite position that motivation is a combination of both integrative and instrumental factors. Dörnyei (1998), in particular, maintains that this combination created an air of eclecticism in second and foreign language motivation, as there was insufficient discussion of the interrelationship of the new scientific terms. In the words of Dörnyei himself (1998: 177):

A general assumption underlying this overview is the belief that L2 motivation is a complex, multifaceted construct, and that the diverse approaches highlight different aspects of this complexity. Thus, they do not necessarily conflict, but rather can enrich our understanding – both from a theoretical and practical point of view – provided they are properly integrated.

It would appear, however, that there is no global theory of motivation to date that can successfully explain all aspects of student motivation in language learning, as the concept itself is an elusive phenomenon. In the context of what has been discussed by Gardner and Lambert (1972); Dörnyei (1998) and their associates, the author adapted their language learning theories as a theoretical construct upon which to base his own empirical research.

### Research variables

The present study combined measures of attitudinal and motivational variables in both Irish as a second language and German acquired sequentially as a foreign language in an instructed school context. Research on the role of attitudes to and motivation in second and foreign language learning among Leaving Certificate students indicated that both in-school and out-of-school factors were involved. For this reason it was decided to include a comprehensive range of research variables in this study:

- Additional exposure to language learning, e.g. Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* and German language courses in Germany.

- Gender differences in attitudes towards languages as schools subjects.
- Students' attitudes towards the target language community and culture.
- Peer influence.
- Students' attitudes towards the language learning situation.
- The influence of parental attitudes.
- Class anxiety in second and foreign language learning.
- Learner autonomy.

### Research question

Are there any significant quantifiable differences in Leaving Certificate students' attitudes towards the learning of German and Irish? Research to date, including the author's own language teaching experience at both second and third level institutions, would seem to indicate that there are such significant quantifiable differences. The following brief résumé of the findings in this research will make the point:

- Students are more positive towards Irish than they are towards German.
- Irish-medium students have more integrative and instrumental levels of motivation in the learning of German and Irish than English-medium students.
- Girls have more positive attitudes towards language learning than boys.
- Higher-Level respondents have more positive attitudes towards German and Irish than Ordinary-Level respondents.
- Additional exposure to the learning of German and Irish increases integrative and instrumental levels of motivation e.g. trips to the *Gaeltacht* to learn Irish and exchange visits to Germany to learn German.

### Research methodology

Two research instruments were employed to ascertain the extent to which attitudinal and motivational variables contribute to and effect the language learning process. These include both a quantitative research instrument (400 questionnaires) and a qualitative research instrument (interviews with 12 respondents) which built on and added to previous studies and methodological approaches to attitudes and motivation. The quantitative research instrument consisted of a twelve-scale questionnaire with 228 items measuring attitudes towards the learning of German and Irish. The questionnaire took cognisance of the items employed by Cavanaugh (1976); Gardner (1985b); Pritchard (1987); Fahy (1988); Green (1993, 1999); Murtagh (2003). Analysis of the quantitative data involved frequency distributions and *t*-test statistics. The qualitative instrument involved semi-structured interviews with twelve Leaving Certificate students to complement and to corroborate the quantitative data.

The analysis of the 400 questionnaires was processed by using the five-point Likert (1932) measuring scale: that is, Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Don't know=3, Agree=4, Strongly agree=5. The positive mean scores for each scale were obtained by collapsing the strongly agree scales with the agree scales. The same procedure was applied to the strongly disagree scales and disagree scales to obtain the negative mean scores. This resulted in there being three scales for each table for the purpose of computation, that is, 'Disagree', 'Don't know' and 'Agree'. Therefore, the mean score is the sum of all the scores in the scale divided by the total number of items in the scale. "The mean score is the most commonly used and most widely applicable measure of the central tendency of a distribution" (Richards et al. 1992: 172). The present study was primarily concerned with the non-linguistic goals, namely, attitudes and motivation that focus on aspects of improved understanding of the target language community with a desire to continue language learning and

an interest in both Irish and German.

#### The format of the student questionnaire

The format of the twelve-attitude scales for the questionnaire in the present study is contextualised as illustrated below. The 228-item questionnaire instrument is divided into three sections. The first section of the questionnaire, consisting of ten items, deals with biographical details so as to ascertain linguistic, social and demographic data, regarding the subjects' background. The second section, which consists of 109 items, deals with German and the third section, which also comprises 109 items, deals with Irish. Both sections of the questionnaire instrument dealing with German and Irish have the same number of items and are worded identically the same so as to maintain reliability and validity throughout. In order to maintain the greatest possible consistency, the same format is used for both German and Irish. Since attitudes and motivation are complex issues, it was decided to administer a comprehensive number of items in the questionnaire. With regard to German, items from 1-67 and from 94-109 were based on Gardner's questionnaire. Items 68-93 dealing with learner autonomy were adapted from Green's (1999) questionnaire, which he used in his Hong Kong study on the learning of English as a foreign language. Items on learner autonomy in the present study were also measured by employing the five-point Likert (1932) measuring scale so as to maintain consistency and to facilitate the respondents' completion of the questionnaire. In relation to Irish, items from 110-176 and from 203-218 again were based on Gardner's questionnaire. Items 177-202 again dealing with learner autonomy were based on Green's scale. The words of German and Irish were substituted for 'French' and instead of 'attitudes towards French Canadians' the author adapted the words, attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish. The measurement of the instrument and the method of scoring is known as factor analysis which identifies clusters of

items that are highly correlated with each other and which are tapping into a single underlying dimension of attitude (see tables).

The following twelve scales are outlined:

- Interest in second and foreign languages.
- Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.
- Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.
- Integrative motivation.
- Instrumental motivation.
- German and Irish class anxiety.
- Parental encouragement.
- Motivational intensity.
- Desire to learn German and Irish.
- Orientation index.
- Learner autonomy.
- Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish Leaving Certificate Courses.

#### Findings and discussion

The findings of the research are shown in the following tables. The results show that seven scales out of eleven measuring attitudes towards German and Irish have  $p$ -values of less than 0.05 of statistical significance. The scores for the two variables are computed by using both manual and  $t$ -tests statistics.

**Table 1.0 Comparative analysis of mean scores for German and Irish in the entire sample (N=400)**

Interest in 2nd and foreign languages.	Entire sample (N=400) German 67.5% mean score	Entire sample (N=400) Irish mean scores.
Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.	50.1%	69.4% p<0.05
Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.	50.9%	59.3% p<0.05
Integrative motivation.	54.6%	57.8% p>0.05
Instrumental motivation.	45.5%	43.2% p>0.05
German and Irish class anxiety.	40.2%	21.7% p<0.05
Parental encouragement.	38.5%	51.7% p<0.05
Motivational intensity.	53.1%	61.6% p<0.05
Desire to learn German and Irish.	52.8%	56.6% p>0.05
Orientation index.	51.2%	55.8% p>0.05
Learner autonomy.	32.1%	47% p<0.05
Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish LC courses	45.7%	53.1% p<0.05

It would appear in Table 1.0 above that the majority of respondents are favourably disposed towards language learning in general. Nevertheless, they are more positive towards Irish than they are towards German. Respondents are more positive towards Irish as a symbol of cultural, ethnic and national identity than they are towards German. Students learn German mainly for its utilitarian value to acquire points in the Leaving Certificate for entry to tertiary education and employment thereafter. It is interesting to note that students experience less class anxiety in the learning of Irish than in the learning of German. One must also remember, however, that pupils spend fourteen years learning Irish as a second language in both Primary- and Second-Level schools, whereas they only spend five years learning German as a foreign language in Second-Level schools. It is also interesting to note that parents offer more encouragement to their children in the learning of Irish than in the learning of German. Possibly, parents see German as only a means to an end for employment purposes. Informants exhibit more learner autonomy in the learning of Irish than in the learning of German. Students express more favourable attitudes towards the Irish Leaving Certificate course than they do towards the German Leaving Certificate course. It is ironical to note that the majority of English-medium students (300) were taking Higher-Level German in the Leaving Certificate state examinations instead of Higher-Level Irish. One of the reasons cited for taking Higher-Level German in the Leaving Certificate is that there is only one written paper in German, while there are two written papers in Higher-Level Irish.

Further analysis of selected items in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 from the student questionnaire highlights the significant differences in their attitudes towards the two languages.

**Table 1.1 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish (N=400)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	15.5%	22%	62.5%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	8.2%	15.3%	76.5%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	12.5%	8.5%	79%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	25%	25.5%	49.5%
6. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	15%	12.5%	72.5%
10. I like to hear Irish spoken well.	9%	11.5%	79.5%

Scores for **Table 1.1.**

Mean: Disagree 14.1% Agree 69.4%

**Table 1.2. Attitudes towards speakers of German (N=400)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	9.3%	37%	53.7%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	10%	32.7%	57.3%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German.	32.5%	35%	32.5%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	29.2%	38.3%	32.5%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German	18.2%	25.3%	55.5%
10. I like to hear German spoken well.	13.2%	19.5%	67.3%

Scores for **Table 1.2.**

Mean: Disagree 18.5% Agree 50.1 %

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 above exhibit a large cluster of neutral responses which possibly echoes Sagarra's (cited in Ruane 1990: foreword) claims that in "Irish schools foreign languages are not core subjects" which may indicate a certain degree of indifference regarding foreign language learning. What is also noticeable, although not significant, is that respondents have more favourable attitudes towards "native speakers" of German/ Irish in item 2 above than they have towards "non-native speakers" of the two languages in

item 1. This shows some developed sense of language awareness. Perhaps they regard native speakers as being more authentic as well as being more proficient in the language than non-native speakers. There is a stark contrast, however, between attitudes towards speakers of German and speakers of Irish for all informants. Item 10 indicated that a substantial majority of students (79%) were in favour of Irish.

Table 2.0 Comparative analysis of scores for German and Irish: (a) Irish-medium respondents (N=100) and (b) English-medium respondents (N=300)

Interest in 2nd and foreign languages	Irish-medium sample (N=100) German mean scores. 74.7% $p>0.05$	English-medium sample (N=300) German mean scores. 66.2%	Irish-medium sample (N=100) Irish mean scores.	English-medium sample (N=300) Irish mean scores.
Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.	<b>61.1%</b> $p<0.05$	46.3%	<b>82.2%</b> $p<0.05$	64.9%
Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.	<b>60.4%</b> $p<0.05$	47.4%	<b>77.7%</b> $p<0.05$	53.1%
Integrative motivation.	<b>63.7%</b> $p<0.05$	51.6%	<b>73.7%</b> $p<0.05$	52.1%
Instrumental motivation.	47.2% $p>0.05$	45.8%	<b>56.2%</b> $p<0.05$	39.7%
German and Irish class anxiety.	38.6% $p>0.05$	40.7%	<b>11.8%</b> $p<0.05$	25.1%
Parental encouragement.	37.6% $p>0.05$	38.7%	<b>61%</b> $p<0.05$	48.5%
Motivational intensity.	55.1% $p>0.05$	52.2%	67.3% $p>0.05$	59.6%
Desire to learn German and Irish.	55.1% $p>0.05$	51.2%	<b>70.8%</b> $p<0.05$	51.9%
Orientation index.	54% $p>0.05$	50.3%	<b>67.3%</b> $p<0.05$	50.5%
Learner autonomy.	39.3% $p>0.05$	30.1%	<b>62.5%</b> $p<0.05$	41.9%
Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish LC courses.	52.3% $p>0.05$	43.1%	<b>65.2%</b> $p<0.05$	48.8%

It is important to observe that Irish-medium students are taught all subjects through the medium of Irish, while English-medium students are taught all subjects through the medium of English. The findings in Table 2.0 above confirmed the view that Irish-medium respondents are significantly more disposed towards language learning than their English-medium counterparts, as was also demonstrated by Murtagh (2003) in her findings. It appears from the findings that the Irish-medium sample is generally more positive towards German than the English-medium sample. The qualitative research (interviewees) revealed that Irish-medium education has a very positive effect on foreign language learning. It is also important to note that integrative motivation appears to be more salient in the learning of German and Irish for Irish-medium informants than it is for English-medium informants. It would appear that the Irish-medium school system creates more of an awareness of the importance of foreign language learning. As expected, the Irish-medium sample is more positive towards Irish as a symbol of cultural and national identity than that of the English-medium sample. Irish-medium respondents are more instrumentally disposed towards Irish than the English-medium respondents. Students in the Irish-medium schools, because of their language competence in Irish, experience less class anxiety in the Irish language class than the English-medium students. Parental encouragement is more salient for the Irish-medium cohort than it is for the English-medium cohort. Parents who send their children to Irish-medium schools would have very positive attitudes towards Irish and, hence, would encourage their children to learn Irish so as to play an active part in Irish cultural events outside of the school environment, for example, Irish music, dancing and drama. It appears from the findings that Irish-medium respondents are more autonomous language learners than their peers in the English-medium sample. Finally, Irish-medium students seem to be more positive towards the Irish and German Leaving Certificate courses than the English-medium

students, as echoed by Murtagh (2003).

In keeping with the trend of the entire sample (N=400) in the previous tables, all respondents in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below exhibit a large cluster of neutral responses, especially English-medium respondents. It would appear that there is a certain degree of indifference or negative attitudes towards foreign language learning in general, especially for English-medium respondents. What is also noticeably consistent for all subjects in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 is that they have more favourable attitudes towards “*native speakers*” of German than they have towards “*non-native speakers*” in items 1 and 2. Again respondents prefer to listen to “*native speakers of German*” than to listen to “*non-native speakers*” of the language in items 5 and 6. Interviewee 1 in the qualitative research from an English-medium school claims that “*native speakers would have total fluency from birth with natural expression*”.

**Table 2.1. Attitudes towards speakers of German for the Irish-medium sample (N=100)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	7%	30%	63%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	7%	25%	68%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	11%	41%	48%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	6%	29%	65%

Scores for **Table 2.1** Mean: Disagree 9.8% Agree 61.1%

**Table 2.2. Attitudes towards speakers of German for the English-medium sample (N=300)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	10%	42%	48%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	11%	33.3%	57.7%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	35.3%	37.3%	27.4%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	23%	24.6%	52.4%

Scores for **Table 2.2** Mean: Disagree 21.7% Agree 46.3%

As would be expected, there is a positive mean score of 61.1% for Irish-medium respondents as against 46.3% for English-medium respondents, thus resulting in a *p*-value 0.0098 level of significance. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Irish-medium sample’s continuous exposure to Irish-medium instruction might be impacting positively on the learning of German or on language learning in general. Interviewee 3 claims that this “*holds true for people that are good at languages in general*” and she also states that “*if you have a good ear for Irish then you will have a good ear for German*”, while interviewee 6 claims that “*if you are good at Irish, you will automatically be good at German*”. One could tentatively conclude from the comments by interviewees 3 and 6 above that if one were positive and competent in one language, then one could be positive and competent in another language. The literature review indicates that the greater students’ proficiency in Irish, the more positive their attitudes will be (Baker, 1992; Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin, 1994).

The data here show that Irish-medium informants are significantly more positive towards speakers of Irish than English-medium informants in Tables 2.3 and 2.4 below. It would appear that all respondents have significantly high positive attitudes “*towards native speakers of Irish*” in item 111 and towards the “*Irish language culture*” in item 112.

**Table 2.3. Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for the Irish-medium sample (N=100)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	11%	12%	77%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	3%	8%	89%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	5%	5%	90%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	5%	3%	92%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	13%	13%	74%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	6%	11%	83%

Scores for **Table 2.3** Mean: Disagree 7.1% Agree 82.2%

**Table 2.4. Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for the English-medium sample (N=300)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	17%	25.3%	57.7%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	10.3%	17.7%	72%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	12%	9.6%	78.4%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	15%	10.3%	74.7%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	15%	22.6%	62.4%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	10.3%	15.3%	74.4%

Scores for **Table 2.4.** Mean: Disagree 16.5% Agree 64.9%

Both samples have more positive attitudes towards “*native speakers*” of Irish than “*non-native speakers*” in item 110. Additionally, all respondents think “*that Irish people should make a greater effort to learn Irish*”, as expressed in item 113. Irish medium informants admire “*native speakers of Irish*” more so than “*non-native speakers*”, as expressed in items 116 and 117. This is also corroborated by the views of interviewee 1 when he claims that native speakers

of Irish “*sound like they own the language as opposed to somebody trying to learn it*”. It would appear, therefore, that there is a substantial majority of respondents in favour of the cultural and ethnic ideal, which differentiates the Irish people from other nations, as already confirmed by Fahy (1988: 417). In support of Fahy’s (1988) research findings, the importance of the cultural and ethnic ideal as a nation is further emphasised by interviewee 3 in the qualitative research when she says that “*in time I would learn more Irish because it is part of our culture*”.

Table 3.0 below proves the point that girls have more positive attitudes towards language learning than boys, as was also demonstrated by Pritchard’s (1987) findings. It appears from the findings that girls demonstrate more propensity for language learning than boys, which supports the findings of Burstall (1974: 60) in “that foreign language learning is a more suitable accomplishment for girls”. Interviewees in the qualitative research state “*that girls prefer to learn languages, while boys prefer to learn mathematics*”. The findings here appear to support the findings of Powell and Batters (1985) that girls are more positively disposed towards language learning than boys, while Callaghan (1998: 2) claims that “language teaching in our schools is becoming increasingly feminized”. McDonagh and Patterson in the *Irish Independent* newspaper (5 November 2002) state that “girls outperform boys in languages”. Integrative motivation and autonomous language learning of German and Irish appear to be more salient for girls than they are for boys. Girls are more integratively disposed towards Irish as a symbol of cultural, national and ethnic identity than boys are. Girls also see more instrumental value in the learning of Irish than boys.

**Table 3.0 Comparative analysis of mean scores in gender differences for German and Irish: Girls (N=200) Boys (N=200)**

	<b>Girls (N=200) German mean 78.8% scores. <math>p &lt; 0.05</math></b>	<b>Boys (N=200) German mean 59.5% scores.</b>	<b>Girls (N=200) Irish mean scores.</b>	<b>Boys (N=200) Irish mean scores.</b>
Interest in second and foreign languages.				
Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.	<b>60.8%</b> $p < 0.05$	38.5%	<b>75.3%</b> $p < 0.05$	63.2%
Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.	<b>58.5%</b> $p < 0.05$	42.5%	<b>65.4%</b> $p < 0.05$	53.1%
Integrative motivation.	61.7% $p < 0.05$	47.5%	66.5% $p < 0.05$	47.4%
Instrumental motivation.	49.4% $p > 0.05$	41.5%	<b>46.8%</b> $p < 0.05$	37.1%
German and Irish class anxiety.	35.6% $p > 0.05$	44.8%	18.7% $p > 0.05$	24.9%
Parental encouragement.	39.7% $p > 0.05$	37.2%	55.6% $p > 0.05$	47.7%
Motivational intensity.	<b>59.9%</b> $p < 0.05$	46.1%	<b>66.4%</b> $p < 0.05$	56.8%
Desire to learn German and Irish.	<b>58%</b> $p < 0.05$	47.4%	60.6% $p > 0.05$	52.8%
Orientation index.	<b>58.8%</b> $p < 0.05$	45%	<b>57.8%</b> $p < 0.05$	45.3%
Learner autonomy.	<b>39.9%</b> $p < 0.05$	28.5%	<b>52.2%</b> $p < 0.05$	26%
Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish LC courses.	49% $p > 0.05$	41.9%	53.6% $p > 0.05$	49.8%

Further analysis reveals that girls have more positive attitudes than boys towards speakers of German as shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below. It would appear that girls are significantly more positive towards German than boys in many attitude scales. Hirst (1982: 110) claims that any empirical study in the area of gender difference needs to be carefully analysed before reaching definite conclusions because difference of attitudes between girls and boys is determined principally by society. As can be seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, girls have a positive mean score of 60.8% towards speakers of German, whereas boys have a positive mean score of only 38.5%. Girls are 22.3% more positive, as shown by a  $p$ -value 0 as being highly significant. Boys express little enthusiasm for the fact that *“Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German”*. Girls, on the other hand, are significantly more positive at 41%. There appears to be a high level of neutral responses particularly for boys at 39.5% with regard to *“native speakers of German”*. This may indicate a certain degree of indifference among boys regarding speakers of German and possibly towards the German language itself in the light of Sagarra’s comments above.

**Table 3.1 Attitudes towards speakers of German for girls (N=200)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	9%	35%	56%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	6%	26%	68%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German.	23.5%	35.5%	41%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	20%	38.5%	41.5%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	6.5%	21.5%	72%
10. I like to hear German spoken well.	6%	12.5%	81.5%

Scores for **Table 3.1** Mean: Disagree 11.3% Agree 60.8%

**Table 3.2 Attitudes towards speakers of German for boys (N=200)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	9.5%	43%	47.5%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	14%	39.5%	46.5%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German.	45.5%	34.5%	20%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	38.5%	38%	23.5%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	31%	30%	39%
10. I like to hear German spoken well.	20.5%	26.5%	53%

Scores for **Table 3.2** Mean: Disagree 26.4% Agree 38.5%

Girls, on the other hand, express 68% positive agreement for *“native speakers of German”*. Girls like to *“hear German spoken well”* significantly more so than boys. Again all respondents *“like to listen to native speakers of German”* as opposed *“to non-native speakers”* which appears to be consistent with the findings hitherto.

It appears from the data that girls are more integratively disposed

towards Irish as a symbol of cultural and ethnic identity than boys. There is an obvious contrast between attitudes *“towards speakers of German”* and *“speakers of Irish”* for all informants, particularly for female informants when Tables 3.1 and 3.2 for German above are compared with Tables 3.3 and 3.4 for Irish below. Girls exhibit a significant positive mean score of 75.3% as against 63.2% for boys. It is also interesting to note that boys are 24.7% more favourable *“towards native speakers of Irish”* than they are *“towards native speakers of German”*, whereas girls are 14.5% more positively disposed *“towards native speakers of Irish”* than they are *“towards native speakers of German”*. While these differences for boys are significant and more pronounced in the light of the responses received for German, the general pattern seems to persist that male informants are less positive towards both languages than female informants.

**Table 3.3 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for girls (N=200)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	14%	19%	67%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	8.5%	11.5%	80%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	10%	5.5%	84.5%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	9.5%	5.5%	85%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	22%	24%	54%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	9%	7.5%	83.5%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	6%	9%	85%
119. I like to hear Irish spoken well.	6%	5.5%	88.5%

Scores for **Table 3.3** Mean: Disagree 11.2% Agree 75.3%

**Table 3.4 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for boys (N=200)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	17%	25%	58%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	8.5%	19%	72.5%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	10.5%	11.5%	78%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	15.5%	11.5%	73%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	28%	27.5%	44.5%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	21%	18%	61%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	12.5%	18.5%	69%
119. I like to hear Irish spoken well.	12%	18%	70%

Scores for **Table 3.4** Mean: Disagree 17.2% Agree 63.2%

Additionally, it would also appear that all subjects consider “*native speakers of Irish*” and “*German*” more favourably than “*non-native speakers*” of the two languages, while girls are more favourably disposed to both types of speakers than boys. Perhaps informants regard native speakers more authentic than non-native speakers in the sense that native speakers reflect the culture and the *Weltanschauung* of the respective target language communities. It is worth noting that “*I like the Irish language culture*” and that “*Irish people should make a greater effort to learn Irish*” receive high positive responses towards Irish from all respondents, particularly from girls, which are in complete contrast to the attitudes expressed by the same respondents towards German for the corresponding items in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. Again the items “*listening to native speakers of Irish*”, and “*admiring native speakers of Irish*” confirm respondents’ preferences for native speakers as being more authentic than non-native speakers.

Table 4.0 below illustrates that Higher-Level students have more positive attitudes towards German and Irish than Ordinary-Level students. Again integrative and instrumental levels of motivation in the learning of

German and Irish, appear to be more salient for Higher-Level students than it is for Ordinary-Level students. It is clear from Table 4.0 that Higher-Level students appear to be more positive towards the German and Irish Leaving Certificate courses than Ordinary-Level students. It is interesting to note, also, that the importance of motivational intensity for Higher-Level students is significantly more positive than it is for Ordinary-Level students. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 2) and Dörnyei (1998: 122) make the point that motivational intensity is a crucial factor in language learning. This also demonstrates that the higher the course level chosen, the higher the level of positive motivation in language learning, as shown by Murtagh’s findings in the case of Irish (2003: 152). Crowley (1996: 25) found similar results when contrasting the difference between Higher and Ordinary-Level students in her research in relation to attitudes towards Irish in second-level schools. In relation to foreign language learning, Lukmani (1972: 261-273) discovered similar results in India when she researched the relationship between language levels in English as a foreign language among Mahratta high school students.

**Table 4.0 Comparative analysis of mean scores of attitudes to German and Irish among Higher-Level and Ordinary-Level respondents**

Interest in 2nd and foreign languages in general.	Higher-Level (N=335) German mean scores. <b>71.8%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	Ordinary-Level (N=65) German mean scores. 52.1%	Higher-Level (N=290) Irish mean scores.	Ordinary-Level (N=110) Irish mean scores.
Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.	<b>55.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	34.6%	<b>79.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	52.7%
Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.	<b>55.6%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	29.8%	<b>71.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	53.1%
Integrative motivation.	<b>61.7%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	40.5%	<b>69.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	35.7%
Instrumental motivation.	<b>46.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	30.2%	<b>50.2%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	33%
German and Irish class anxiety.	39% <i>p</i> >0.05	52%	17.8% <i>p</i> >0.05	29.8%
Parental encouragement.	40% <i>p</i> >0.05	30.1%	57.3% <i>p</i> >0.05	38.9%
Motivational intensity.	<b>57.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	32%	<b>67%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	46.9%
Desire to learn German and Irish.	57.7% <i>p</i> >0.05	45.8%	<b>65.8%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	36.8%
Orientation index.	<b>56%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	30.2%	<b>63%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	35.7%
Learner autonomy.	<b>39.4%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	22.6%	<b>57.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	29.5%
Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish LC courses.	48.9% <i>p</i> >0.05	33.1%	<b>59%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	37.9%

Autonomous language learning of German and Irish for Higher-Level students is significantly more positive than it is for Ordinary-Level students. Perhaps, the findings here for Higher-Level students echo Deci and Ryan's (1995) model of language learning in that identified regulation in a school setting would involve learners undertaking voluntary autonomous language learning in the form of some kind of a self-directed programme of additional study.

More detailed analysis measures respondents' attitudes in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below towards speakers of German. It is hardly surprising, given Higher Level students' propensity for language learning, that they would have a significant positive mean score of 55.1% in comparison with only 34.6% for Ordinary Level respondents. In keeping with the consistent trend up to now, all informants have more positive attitudes "towards native speakers of German" than they have "towards non-native speakers".

**Table 4.1 Attitudes towards speakers of German for Higher Level informants (N=335)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	8%	35%	57%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	8%	30%	62%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German.	30%	38%	32%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	22%	40%	38%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	12%	28%	60%
10. I like to hear German spoken well.	8%	19%	73%

Scores for **Table 4.1** Mean: Disagree 14.3% Agree 55.1%

**Table 4.2 Attitudes towards speakers of German for Ordinary Level informants (N=65).**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
1. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of German.	14%	58%	28%
2. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of German.	18%	49%	33%
4. Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German.	44%	35%	21%
5. I like listening to non-native speakers of German.	48%	29%	23%
6. I like listening to native speakers of German.	38%	19%	43%
10. I like to hear German spoken well.	25%	23%	52%

Scores for **Table 4.2** Mean: Disagree 21.7% Agree 34.6%

Again the level of consistency is most noticeable in that respondents prefer to listen to *“native speakers”* than to listen to *“non-native speakers”*. As previously mentioned, they possibly consider native speakers more genuine and truly representative of the language, as stated by interviewee 1 when he claims that native speakers *“sound as if they own the language as opposed to somebody trying to learn it”*. In item 4 where *“Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn German”*, evinces low positive responses, particularly from Ordinary-Level informants. Interestingly enough, all respondents *“like to hear German spoken well”*, particularly Higher-Level respondents.

Again the findings on Irish show that there are significant differences between Higher and Ordinary Level respondents in the learning of Irish, as demonstrated in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below. There are significant differences between attitudes towards speakers of German and speakers of Irish for all informants, particularly for Higher-Level respondents, as can be observed from Tables 4.3 and 4.4 when compared with Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for German above.

**Table 4.3 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for Higher Level informants (N=290)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	12%	17%	71%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	6%	10%	84%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	6%	6%	88%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	7%	17%	76%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	8%	8%	84%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	12%	18%	70%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	6%	10%	84%

Scores for **Table 4.3** Mean: Disagree 7.9% Agree 79.1%

**Table 4.4 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for Ordinary Level informants (N=110)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	20%	32%	48%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	14%	22%	64%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	27%	11%	62%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	39%	31%	30%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	28%	25%	47%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	18%	26%	56%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	18%	19%	63%

Scores for **Table 4.4** Mean: Disagree 24% Agree 52.7%

This again supports the argument that respondents are more favourably disposed towards Irish as a symbol of cultural and national identity. Higher-Level respondents have a significant positive mean score of 79.1% compared with 52.7% for Ordinary-Level respondents. Consistent with

the findings in the previous tables, many respondents regard “*native speakers of Irish*” as being more authentic than “*non-native speakers*”. Native speakers reflect the culture and the traditions of the target language community. Additionally, there is a very positive response to the item that “*Irish people should make a greater effort to learn Irish*” which is in complete contrast to attitudes expressed for the corresponding items in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for German which are 55.1% for Higher-Level and 34.6% for Ordinary-Level respectively. Likewise, respondents prefer “*listening to native speakers of Irish*” (item 115) than “*listening to non-native speakers of Irish*” (item 114). It is also worth noting that respondents appear to have greater admiration “*for native speakers of Irish*” than they have for “*non-native speakers*”. Again these data appear to be consistent with the general trends of the analysis.

Table 5.0 below confirms the view that additional exposure to the learning of German and Irish increases both integrative and instrumental levels of motivation, particularly for Irish. Out of a total of 40 respondents who had additional exposure to German, only six respondents participated in student exchanges to Germany, while the remainder attended Euro colleges in Ireland or went on school tours to Germany. Since an insignificant number of students participated in school exchanges to Germany, it was possible to conclude that this could account for the absence of any significant difference between respondents with additional exposure to German and those who had no additional exposure to the language. Respondents attending Euro colleges might perhaps be more interested in the utilitarian value of German for securing points in the Leaving Certificate and not necessarily have any great intrinsic motive for learning the language per se. Respondents visiting Germany on school tours may not necessarily speak much German as they would normally speak English among themselves and, hence, would not sample the cultural flavour of the German language or come into close contact with the target language community.

Respondents with additional exposure to German and Irish appear to experience less class anxiety than respondents with no additional exposure to the languages. Informants with additional exposure to Irish are more positive towards the language as a symbol of cultural and national identity than informants with no additional exposure. Again parental encouragement is more salient for the cohort with additional exposure to Irish than it is for the cohort with no additional exposure to the language.

**Table 5.0** Comparative analysis of positive mean scores for additional exposure to the learning of German and Irish

Interest in 2nd and foreign languages in general.	<b>Additional exposure (N=40)</b> German mean scores. 70.2% <i>p</i> >0.05	<b>Non-additional exposure (N=360)</b> German mean scores. 63.3%	<b>Additional exposure (N=165)</b> Irish mean scores.	<b>Non-additional exposure (N=235)</b> Irish mean scores.
Attitudes towards speakers of German and Irish.	47.5% <i>p</i> >0.05	49.3%	<b>78.7%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	53.5%
Attitudes towards learning German and Irish.	59.5% <i>p</i> >0.05	49.3%	<b>71.6%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	37.9%
Integrative motivation.	56.2% <i>p</i> >0.05	52%	<b>65.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	45.5%
Instrumental motivation.	46.8% <i>p</i> >0.05	44.8%	43.9% <i>p</i> >0.05	40.5%
German and Irish class anxiety.	<b>21.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	42.1%	<b>17.3%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	29.5%
Parental encouragement.	45.7% <i>p</i> >0.05	36.4%	<b>59.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	36.5%
Motivational intensity.	58.5% <i>p</i> >0.05	51.5%	<b>66.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	48.6%
Desire to learn German and Irish.	60% <i>p</i> >0.05	51.1%	<b>64.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	44.3%
Orientation index.	50.6% <i>p</i> >0.05	50.4%	<b>60.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	42.4%
Learner autonomy.	39.1% <i>p</i> >0.05	32.3%	<b>53.5%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	34.8%
Semantic differential assessment of the German and Irish L.C courses.	46.7% <i>p</i> >0.05	44.8%	<b>59.1%</b> <i>p</i> <0.05	42.7%

Respondents with additional exposure to Irish are more autonomous language learners than their counterparts with no additional exposure to the language outside of the classroom. Respondents with additional exposure to Irish seem to be more positive towards the Irish Leaving Certificate course than those with no additional exposure to the language. In the context of the present study, it would appear from the findings in Table 5.0 above that the more exposure students have towards language learning, the more positive they will be in their language learning ability (Baker, 1992).

Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 provide further data on additional exposure to German and Irish. Closer analysis would indicate that respondents in this study who had additional exposure to the learning of German reported a significantly low level of class anxiety at 21.5% in Table 5.1 as against a high level of 42.1% in Table 5.2 for those with no additional exposure to the language. Littlewood (1984: 97) claims that class anxiety can be a source of hindrance to language learning, while Philips et al. (1972) would argue that anxiety can both aid and hinder the language learning process.

**Table 5.1** German class anxiety for informants with additional exposure to German (N=40)

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
29. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in the German class.	77.5%	7.5%	15%
30. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking German in the German class.	52.5%	10%	7.5%
31. I always feel that other students speak German better than I do.	47.5%	25%	27.5%
32. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking German in the German class.	70%	15%	15%
33. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak German	77.5%	10%	12.5%

Scores for **Table 5.1**

Mean: Disagree 65% Agree 21.5%

**Table 5.2 German class anxiety for informants with no additional exposure to German (N=360)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
29. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in the German class.	55.7%	18%	26.3%
30. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking German in the German class.	29.1%	8.6%	62.3%
31. I always feel that other students speak German better than I do.	32.7%	18%	49.3%
32. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking German in the German class.	38.3%	12.7%	49%
33. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak German.	66.5%	9.7%	23.8%

Scores for **Table 5.2** Mean: Disagree 44.4% Agree 42.1%

The difference between the two population proportions represents a *p*-value 0.002 as being significant. It would appear from the data in the qualitative analysis that respondents, who had additional language exposure, have gained more confidence as speakers of German. This is illustrated by interviewee 3, which is representative of all the interviewees, when she comments that *“the more language you hear, the more you pick up/ the more competent you become in your own ability as you improve in the language”*. Interviewee 1, who was also on a student exchange to Germany, says that additional exposure *“improved my fluency and the natural vibes you pick up from the German people, you can't pick them up from being in a classroom”*. In short, additional exposure and immersion in the target language community seems to reduce the level of language anxiety and increase fluency in the language classroom. It would appear from the above findings that the more exposure that learners have to German, the more confidence they appear to have in their ability to speak the language and hence reduce the level of language anxiety.

It is significant to note that informants attending Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* were also taking Higher Level-Irish to the Leaving Certificate.

**Table 5.3 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for respondents with additional exposure to Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht (N=165)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	12.5%	15%	72.5%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	7.5%	10%	82.5%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	5.6%	3.7%	90.7%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	6.2%	4.3%	89.5%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	17.5%	26.2%	56.3%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	10%	8.7%	81.3%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	11.2%	19.3%	69.5%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	5.6%	10%	84.4%
118. I like speaking to non-native speakers of Irish.	12.5%	22.5%	65%

Scores for **Table 5.3** Mean: Disagree 9.2% Agree 78.7%

**Table 5.4 Attitudes towards speakers of Irish for respondents with no additional exposure to Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht (N=235)**

	Disagree	Don't know	Agree
110. I have a favourable attitude towards non-native speakers of Irish.	23.4%	31.9%	44.7%
111. I have a favourable attitude towards native speakers of Irish.	15.4%	23.4%	61.2%
112. I like the Irish language culture.	17.5%	14.3%	68.2%
113. The Irish people in general should make a greater effort to learn Irish.	23.4%	13.2%	63.4%
114. I like listening to non-native speakers of Irish.	39.3%	31.3%	29.4%
115. I like listening to native speakers of Irish.	24.4%	21.8%	53.8%
116. I admire non-native speakers of Irish.	20.2%	27.1%	52.7%
117. I admire native speakers of Irish.	15.9%	21.2%	62.9%
118. I like speaking to non-native speakers of Irish.	35.1%	31.9%	33%

Scores for **Table 5.4** Mean: Disagree 23% Agree 53.5%

This also included 70 respondents from Irish-medium schools which could possibly account for high positive attitudes towards Irish in all attitude scales, as opposed to respondents who did not attend Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht*. There is a significant difference between attitudes towards speakers of Irish at 78.7% for students with additional exposure to Irish as compared with only 47.5% for speakers of German in Table 5.3. All 40 respondents who had additional exposure to German are also included in the 165 respondents who had additional exposure to Irish. While these differences are significant and more pronounced in the light of the responses received for Irish in Table 5.3, nevertheless, a similar pattern seems to persist in that all respondents are more positive towards “*native speakers of Irish*”. This is again reflected in items 114-118. It must be also borne in mind that many of these 165 respondents had participated a number of times in Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* during the course of their second-level education. In short, students would have more additional exposure to Irish than they would have to German. Interviewee 1 also claims that ‘*speaking with native speakers would definitely improve your language*’. It is noteworthy that “*the Irish language culture*” attracts a very high level of support from Higher-Level respondents, which possibly epitomises the concept of Irish as being a symbol of “*our cultural and ethnic identity*”. It is self-evident that increased exposure to native speakers of Irish and Irish culture is associated with more positive attitudes towards the language as exemplified by respondents who attended Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht*. This is also confirmed by Kavanagh’s findings (1999: 229) in relation to Irish-medium instruction. In short, all respondents with additional exposure to Irish are significantly more positive for all items in Table 5.3.

In view of the generally high positive attitudes of the 165 students who attended Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht*, which consisted of 70 Irish-medium students, it was decided in Table 6.0 below to compare 65 Higher-Level respondents from English-medium schools, who had participated in Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* with the

100 respondents from Irish-medium schools to see if there were statistically significant differences in attitudes towards Irish between the two cohorts.

**Table 6.0 Comparative analysis of positive mean scores for Irish-medium respondents with Higher-Level English-medium respondents who had additional exposure to Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht***

	Irish-medium respondents (N=100) -mean scores for Irish.	HL English-medium respondents (N=65) with additional exposure to Irish language courses in the <i>Gaeltacht</i> -mean scores for Irish.
Attitudes towards speakers of Irish.	82.2% $p>0.05$	77.4%
Attitudes towards learning Irish	77.7% $p>0.05$	69.1%
Integrative motivation.	73.7% $p>0.05$	64.9%
Instrumental motivation.	56.2% $p>0.05$	45%
Irish class anxiety.	11.8% $p>0.05$	21.5%
Parental encouragement.	61% $p>0.05$	60.9%
Motivational intensity.	67.3% $p>0.05$	67.1%
Desire to learn Irish.	70.8% $p>0.05$	65.5%
Orientation index.	67.3% $p>0.05$	57.4%
Learner autonomy.	62.5% $p>0.05$	54.4%
Semantic differential assessment of the Irish L.C course.	65.2% $p>0.05$	54.4%

Having compared both sets of data, it was learned that while the Irish-medium pupils had more positive attitudes towards Irish, there were no statistically significant differences between the two cohorts of respondents. It appears that additional exposure to Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* for Higher-Level respondents from English-medium schools does create more positive attitudes towards learning the language. As already noted, the majority of these Higher-Level respondents from English-medium schools have participated in Irish language courses in the *Gaeltacht* on a number of occasions. It is also well documented that Irish-medium respondents expressed more positive attitudes towards the utility of Irish and, especially, towards its importance as a symbol of cultural and national identity than English-medium respondents (Kavanagh 1999: 229). This seems to support Spolsky's (1969) argument that increased exposure to language learning results in more integrative and instrumental types of motivation.

These are interesting findings with regard to positive attitudes towards Irish for Higher-Level respondents from English-medium schools in the current study, given that Irish-medium respondents have a major advantage over English-medium respondents in that they are continuously exposed to the language as a teaching medium in the school environment. Again in the words of Murtagh (2003: 106) with regard to English-medium students:

Extra-school use of Irish among IC2 students mainly involves contact with Irish through summer courses in the *Gaeltacht*, watching Irish language TV or using Irish as a secret code, for example, when on holidays abroad.

### Conclusion and implications for language learning

The findings of this research demonstrate that students from Irish-medium schools have more positive attitudes towards the learning of Irish and German than students from English-medium schools. It is also interesting to

note that Irish-medium students attach greater importance to the practical value of learning Irish than they do to the learning of German. Since students from Irish-medium second-level schools express more favourable attitudes towards the learning of Irish as a second language, this in turn seems to have a positive influence on their attitudes towards the learning of German as a foreign language, as demonstrated in the findings. It must be noted that Irish-medium second-level schools represent a very small portion of the overall number of second-level schools in the country, whereas English-medium schools are in the majority. Students in English-medium second-level schools have only approximately 450 hours of Irish instruction, which is only half of what they receive in the primary school (Murtagh 2003: 163).

While students express more favourable attitudes towards Irish than they do towards German, it is ironic to note that the majority of English-medium students take Higher-Level German in the Leaving Certificate state examinations instead of Higher-Level Irish. One of the reasons cited for taking Higher-Level German in the Leaving Certificate state examinations is that there is only one written paper in German, while there are two written papers in Higher-Level Irish. As expressed by the majority of students interviewed in the qualitative research:

“...there is a requirement to learn a lot of poetry and prose and the course is very broad in Higher-Level Irish. There are two written papers in Leaving Certificate Irish, whereas there is only one written paper in Leaving Certificate Higher-Level German”.

This appears to discourage many students from taking Leaving Certificate Higher-Level Irish, since it is perceived that the volume of work in German is somewhat less with only one written paper. Ó Dubhthaigh (1978: 29) claims that:

Má tá aon rud ag marú na Gaeilge sna hiarbhunscoileanna is í an litríocht atá á déanamh sin. Cuirtear an oiread sin litríochta faoi bhráid na ndaltaí nach bhfuil ullamh dá leithéid go dtuigtear

dóibh gur ghnó dodhéanta dóibh é *Gaeilge a fhoghlaim*. [If there is one thing that is defeating the purpose of learning Irish in post-primary schools, it is the sheer volume of literature. The pupils, who are not ready to absorb so much literature, think that it is an impossible task for them to learn the language. Author's translation].

From the data analysis in this study, as corroborated by the interviewees in the qualitative research, it would appear that the high literature content has negative implications for the learning of Higher-Level Irish, which may be one of the reasons why many students opt for the Higher-Level examination paper in Leaving Certificate German. Students want more emphasis to be placed on the actual teaching and learning of Irish in terms of its aural, oral and written components to boost its written, communicative and utilitarian value. One of the best means of increasing the utilitarian value of Irish is to incorporate it more into the commercial and social life of the country. Baker (1992: 110) reminds us that “a language that has no place in daily business, administration and transactions, is likely to be linked with attitude decline”.

The role and status of German, on the other hand, has been characterised by pendular movement with periods of growth, enthusiasm and increased use, contrasting sharply with decline, apathy and significant decrease in student take-up rates due to overcrowding of other subjects in the curriculum. Despite its popularity in the mid-1990s, German has declined somewhat in second-level schools in recent times (Hughes, 1999). This may possibly be due to the economic boom in the Irish economy during the “Celtic Tiger” years which has led to a decline in the number of people seeking employment in Germany. German, as a foreign language in Ireland, is studied primarily for its utilitarian value in the area of business and science for employment purposes. This was very much reflected by all students both in the quantitative and in the qualitative research. Since there is a downturn

in the Irish economy at present, it might reverse the process again and lead to an increased uptake of the language among students with a view to seeking employment in Germany. In relation to the educational context in second-level schools, another factor that is militating against student take-up rates of German in recent times is overcrowding in the school curriculum (Murphy, 2002). New subjects have been added to the curriculum in recent times that are reducing contact hours not only in the teaching of German but also in the teaching of Irish. The result is that German is either dropped altogether or is put opposite another high profile subject on the curriculum in which the students have to make a choice. Rützel (2008: 6) states that German was taught in 502 second-level schools in the school year 2006/2007, whereas it was only taught in 476 second-level schools in the school year 2007/2008 a significant decrease of 26 schools within one school year.

The author observed no significant shift in student attitudes towards the learning of Irish and German during the course of this research study from the years 2001–2005. However, it would be more interesting to see if a similar research study were carried out in the same schools commencing in 2011–2015, whether it would yield the same results. It is also necessary to point out that that fewer schools find themselves unable to offer German as a foreign language because of financial cutbacks, timetable constraints and overcrowding of additional subjects in the school curriculum. This does not necessarily mean that pupils have become less positive towards learning German per se.

It would also seem valid that, when developing new curricular procedures and methods of second and foreign language teaching, full cognisance of the above attitudinal and motivational findings in this study should be taken into account. Perhaps with these accumulated data into the psychology and sociology of language learning, more effective ways and means could include students' integrative and instrumental types of motivation in developing language teaching programmes in schools. Language teachers not only in

Europe and America but also throughout the world should develop students' fundamental interests in foreign travel to sample the language and culture of the target language community. Since more and more students are travelling abroad, it is incumbent on teachers to take cognisance of these factors that contribute to success in second and foreign language learning. The primary aim is to develop students' interest in an understanding of the target language community. This broadening of students' knowledge, language awareness and tolerance of the target language community can help to eliminate students' ignorance, suspicion and prejudices and to develop more positive attitudes towards second and foreign language learning.

Finally, with regard to the situation of second and foreign language teaching and learning in Ireland, the time for lipservice is long since past and it is time for a more pro-active approach to language teaching. The issue of language teaching and learning will have to be addressed sooner rather than later if languages are to remain as core subjects in the curriculum of second-level schools in Ireland. There is not the same emphasis on language teaching as there is on the teaching of mathematics and the sciences.

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