IS IRISH A MUSEUM LANGUAGE? AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SUCCESS OF 'THE 20 YEAR STRATEGY' AT REJUVENATING THE ATTITUDES SURROUNDING THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE EAST OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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English Language, 2022

Abstract: This research paper investigates the attitudes towards the Irish language in the East of the Republic of Ireland and how the extraneous variables age, sex, locality, and schooling dictate the attitudes towards the language. A secondary objective running parallel is evaluating the success of the language policy 'The 20-Year Strategy' at the halfway mark. Attitudes were measured via an online questionnaire based on a previous survey (Darmody, 2015) which elicited attitude scores for each participant which was then used to exhibit the influence of the independent variables (age, sex, locality, and schooling) on their attitudes towards the language. Statistical analysis via X was undertaken to test the significance of the independent variable effect on attitudes. Secondly, the success of 'The 20-Year Strategy' was evaluated through comparison of the current questionnaire responses to Darmody's attitudes survey which was carried out prior to the implementation of the language policy. Results demonstrated that gender and schooling significantly influenced participants attitudes towards the Irish language. Female participants and those who attended Irish medium schooling were significantly more likely to have positive attitudes towards the language. Furthermore, comparison of questionnaire responses exhibited initial indication of the success of 'The 20-Year Strategy' rejuvenating the reputation of the Irish language.

Is Irish a museum language? An investigation into the of the success of 'The 20 Year Strategy' at rejuvenating the attitudes surrounding the Irish language in the East of the Republic of Ireland.

1. Introduction

"(...) It is now necessary for the Irish people to examine their own personal reflections in the mirror which convey their "psychological make-up" (Tuama, 1995: 28).

The 21st century brought a surge of implementation of language policies in the Republic Ireland to protect the Irish language from its vulnerability to language attrition. The dominant policy at present responsible for implementing change is the '20-year strategy' which aims to achieve rejuvenation by 2030 (Fiontar, 2009). The policy was implemented in 2010, and now that the halfway mark has been reached, it is essential to assess whether Ireland is on target for successful rejuvenation. Evidently, this has motivated the current research, with the novel aim of uncovering whether the rejuvenation has been successful thus far through positively improving the attitudes surrounding the Irish language. This research builds on previous analyses of Irish communities' attitudes, comparing the extent to which the current samples attitudes differ from previous research samples. Thus, engaging with the primary research question; *Have the language policies implemented caused a positive change in attitudes towards Irish?* Whilst evaluating the success of the rejuvenation, this research also aims to shed light on external factors which interplay in attitudes towards Irish, such as locality, schooling, age, and sex.

Chapter 2 provides 1) a synthesis of previous research into the history of the Irish language in Ireland, 2) an outline of the 20-year strategy and 3) an illustration of how language attitudes may be affected. What is found from this review is that attitudes towards languages are complex constructs with historical and psychological characteristics. Macro level influences include governmental policy orientation and the norm status in geographically and culturally defined locales; while micro level influences include entities such as sex and educational experience of the language. It is surmised that attitudes must be treated as these multifaceted constructs in order for a proper evaluation of their content and the effect of state intervention. In continuation, once the literature has been critically evaluated, the current research questions and hypotheses will be presented in chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of the methodology and design of the current study, leading to chapter 5 which exhibits the results

found as well as cross comparison to previous studies results (Darmody, 2015). Finally, chapter 6 discusses and evaluates the results and reaches the consensus that the research shows an initial indication of 'the 20 Year Strategy' having marginally changed participants attitudes towards the Irish language in a positive manner, alongside showing tentative conclusions that gender and schooling significantly influenced the participants attitudes.

2. Literature Review
2.1 A brief history of Irish versus English

Despite given historic colonisation attempts in Ireland and anglicising the region from the medieval period onwards, Irish has survived. Prior to the 16th century, attempts at the deliberate acculturation of Ireland were without substantial success. From 1150-1541, the Anglo-French were present in Ireland invading the county to gain power and wealth, however, this was temporary due to the strength of the Irish community. For instance, there were not enough Normans in Ireland to assist their attempts in achieving power (Abbot, 1998). As part of the Anglo-French presence, many of the Lords married into Irish culture, however although such Lords were held in high esteem, when they married Irish women, they assimilated their language and culture to Irish (Hickey, 2007). Despite the presence of the different groups, the language did not decay or suffer from the associations of it being considered poorer or lower class.

After this, Ireland endured a period of colonialization which marked the beginning of the decline of the Irish language from 1550 to 1620 (Abbot, 1998). Over this time period, England dominated Ireland and set up four plantations with the aim of extending control over the island. These plantations included the 1556 Plantation of Laois and Offaly, 1586 Munster plantation, 1609 Ulster plantation and the Cromwellian plantation in 1652 (Corrigan, 2015). Such planation's led to Gaelic lords fleeing to Europe to escape the seemingly bleak future, which consequently left Ireland vulnerable to invaders (Hickey, 2007). This cemented the end of the "Gaelic Order" and beginning of the infiltration of English into Ireland's community (Corrigan, 2015). Alongside this historical backdrop, other political forces were also working against the survival of Irish; the Penal Laws were implemented with the aim of removing Catholicism from Ireland and forcing a Protestant reign (Abbot, 1998). For example, the laws removed Catholics rights such as the ability to vote and fining those who used the Irish language. As

most Catholics were natives of Ireland, this inadvertently impacted Irish speakers. Halmari (2005) argues that languages with negative connotations are vulnerable to language attrition, therefore it is significant that Irish managed to survive despite the authoritative forces working against the language.

2.1.1 The Pale

The English colonial attempts had a higher rate of success in the East. An area of the East was labelled *'The Pale'* which referred to the urban hub which the British empire had substantial power within (the area which stretches from Dundalk to Dalkey through Dublin) (Hickey, 2007). During the Normans reign in Ireland (1150-1450), their power only significantly dictated the 20-mile strip around Dublin (Hickey, 2007). The Pale had a higher concentration of British influence due to the previous Plantation success. Consequently, the natives were immersed in more bilingualism in this concentrated pocket, and already beginning to become monolingual in English and discarding the Irish tongue as a method of communication much earlier on than the rest of Ireland (Corrigan, 2020). This effect is still evident when comparing the Pale with more rural areas phonological characterisations of Irish, as the more rural regions have more notable Irish characteristics, such as more overt dentalisation (Lass, 1984). Therefore, this region was substantially more anglicized than the rural areas, which reflects that some regions of Ireland had more English influence. This will be revisited in section 2.4.1 discussing the influence of geographical differences on people's attitudes to the language today.

2.1.2 The Great Famine

The 19th century further shifted the identity of Irish amongst the people. The Great Famine (1845-1849) caused the loss of 2.5 million of the Irish population from death and emigration combined (Ceallaigh, and Dhonnabáin, 2015). Many of the deceased would have been Irish natives as they were the lower-class, rural citizens more at risk of starvation. The decline of the Irish speaking natives is clearly conveyed by statistics showing that in the Republic of Ireland 40% of people spoke Irish in the early 1800s, however this substantially declined to 24% in 1861 after the famine (Abbot, 1998). In addition, the geographical breakdown of the deceased shows that they came from rural regions which were not occupied by English invaders; for instance, in the figures of the deceased; 40% from Connaught, 30% from Munster 21% from Ulster and 9% from Leinster (Hickey, 2007). The death of the rural population caused the

knock-on effect of the death of Irish. After the famine, Irish was stigmatised, with overt connotations of powerlessness and poverty (Ceallaigh, and Dhonnabáin, 2015). As the prestige English leaders survived, English symbolised social desirability, and good fortune, whilst depicting the illiterate Celtic peasant as the symbol of Irishness (Crowley, 2005). The stigmatisation of Irish aided the loss of the language over time; natives viewed English as the solution to poverty, and since language is understood as a form of social capital, Irish became synonymous with social immobility (Bourdieu, 1977). Irish natives neglected the language as social incentives meant it a better strategic decision to speak English, which had the unfortunate effect of halting the generations' ability to "grow up Irish" (Crowley, 2005: 6). The cumulative effect of the English presence meant that the Irish people were consistently exposed to English influence whilst their own language was denigrated. Accordingly, this provides rationale and insight into why the Irish language was neglected and labelled as the substratum.

2.1.3 The Act of Union

The Act of Union in 1800 depicted The United Kingdom having entire control of Ireland politically. All regional parliaments were abolished, which meant that Ireland could not pass laws without the support of England (Abbot, 1998). This further discrimination led many Irish natives to flee to America in hope of a brighter future, which consequently led the population to fall by 25% (Abbot, 1998). This upset in Ireland aided the development of the War of Independence. This dark period continued throughout the 20th century, with the Irish Civil War in the 1920s (Abbot, 1998). In consequence, this conflict led to the development of Ireland as a Free State, and from the suffering of Ireland, attitudes towards Irish and the national identity began to change.

2.1.4 The shift of attitudes in the 20th century

The 20th century saw successful rejuvenation in the Irish language due in part to the changing political backdrop, namely Ireland becoming a free state in 1921 (Corrigan, 2020). This rejuvenation was seen in a variety of ways; Irish language lessons were reintroduced into education in 1925, inherently conveying the message that this was a useful language which needn't be concealed anymore (Abbot, 1998). Additionally, to mark the act of the Free State, Irish became the official language of Ireland in 1937, this change overtly marked a break from previous colonial ties to the British empire. (Abbot, 1998). Therefore, the government's official

recognition aided a new respect and positive connotations of the language. Following the free state, the Republic of Ireland Act in 1948, catapulted the Republic into Irish independence, necessitating the primary focus of bringing Irish into the community (Wynne, 2020). In a move which enabled Ireland to rebuild its identity, the state declared Irish (Gaelic) as the official language in the Republic (Ceallaigh, 2015). The government invested money into preserving the language in the Gaeltacht (areas in Ireland where Irish is still spoken) and terminating the language loss across the country (Ceallaigh, 2015). These changes were further reinforced by the Official Languages Act in 2003 where citizens were given the right to communicate to the state in Irish (Barry, 2020). This change was reinforced in in 2007 when Irish was recognised as an official language in the European Union (Ceallaigh, 2015). Overall, such events forced a sea change in the way Irish was viewed, enabling it to become recognised as a language in its own right.

Overall, the independence of the Republic gave the opportunity to rewrite Irish back into their community, which exemplifies the importance of Irish in Ireland. This has motivated the current research to gain an understanding of whether the societal changes in the Republic have continued to positively shift the populations attitudes towards Irish.

2.2 Language Policies in Ireland
2.2.1 The 20 Year Strategy
At present, prominent government language policy is focused on a 20-year strategy aiming to cultivate Irish into a community language with more visibility within society (Fiontar, 2009). The strategy started in 2010 with the objective to achieve its goals by 2030; a key target is to have 2 million people with some knowledge of Irish, alongside a specified 250,000 fluent daily speakers.

The central aim of the policy is to increase the competency of Irish among future generations. Consequently, with investment into education and resources, the strategy declared that partial immersion (of Irish) should be offered to all children in education (Fiontar, 2009). Partial immersion is when students learn some subjects through Irish. This is to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn Irish. In tandem, Irish is now a compulsory subject from primary school to leaving certificate level. Moreover, the leaving certificate exam has an increased focus on spoken Irish, with 40% of the marks determined by an oral exam, with the intent to increase spoken Irish in the community rather than the one-dimensional ability to only understand it (Fiontar, 2009). However, although the increased focus on Irish within

educational institutions is critical, it is limited to promoting Irish usage for educational purposes only. The government recognise that a community-based approach to the language is necessary, however the possibility of this is uncertain (McDermott, 2011).

2.2.2 How successful have language policies been?

Despite the positive shift of attitude towards the Irish language, evident in the political projects of the last century, this good will has not translated to high levels of language proficiency (Devitt et al., 2018). Ní Mhaoláin (2005) illustrates the deficiency of Irish being used outside a classroom context, depicting a surface level societal attitude to the Irish language. In other words, Irish is viewed positively by people, however there is no intent to acquire it for purposes outside the classroom (Harris et al., 2006; Duibhir, 2009, Ceallaigh et al, 2015). It is merely a museum language. Approximately 42% of the population of Ireland can speak Irish, however only 3% speak it within the community and only 1 in 20 of those use it every day (Devitt et al, 2018). Corrigan (2020) exemplifies this demonstrating a pattern that the East of Ireland has a lower proportion of the population having the ability to speak Irish (25-45% of the populations of these areas) (figure 1 below).
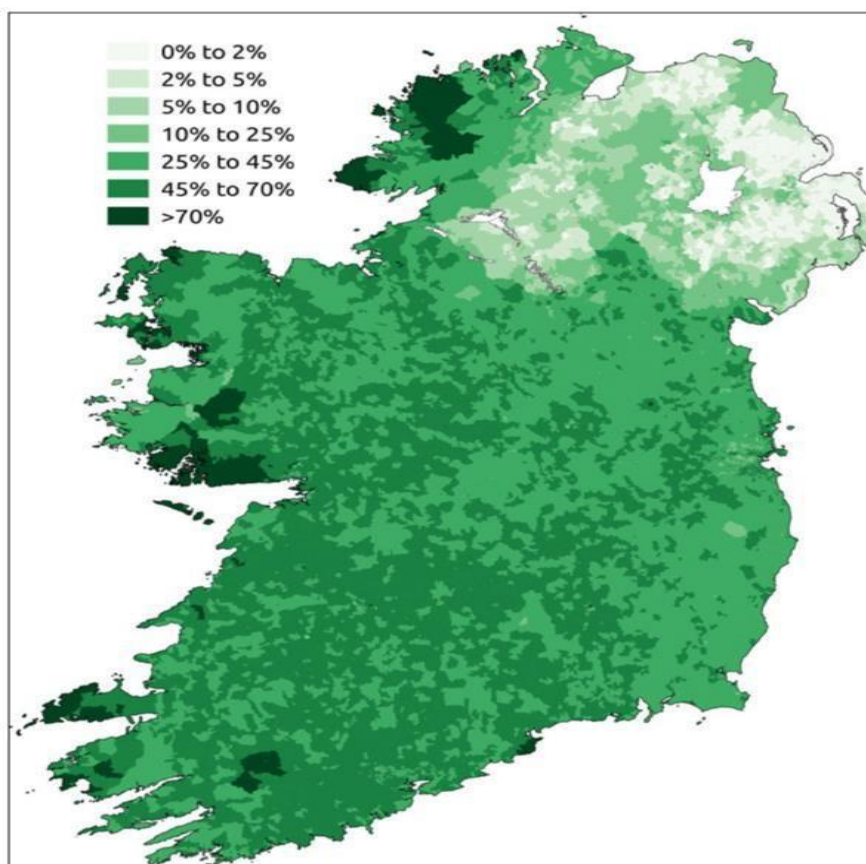

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of Irish speakers across Ireland (Corrigan, 2020).

Therefore, although Irish is no longer associated with poverty, it seems there is no perceivable purpose to use it outside of the classroom, particularly in the east. This ties into the East of Ireland being stigmatized as 'less Irish' than the rest of the Republic, which is explained in section 2.4.2. This lack of motivation can be attributed to the lack of opportunity the language has as it isn't used externally (Baker, 2001). As English is still defined as the hegemonic language in the Republic, there is a shortage of primary benefits to learn Irish (Laoire 2005: 252). Giles (1977: 308) coined the term 'ethnolinguistic vitality' to define the relationship between language usage and culture. He suggests those languages with low vitality (associated with lower status and purpose) are unlikely to continue in society (Giles, 1977). Therefore, the Irish language would have a low vitality as there is a lack of purpose for it in the current society, which may be seen as leaving it in a vulnerable position. This shows that learning and using Irish in education is not aiding the revitalization of Irish as effectively as it previously did at the beginning of the language rejuvenation (Harris, 2007). Consequently, there is a vicious cycle of a lack of reason to speak the language, which creates a lack of motivation amongst students, in turn feeding the phenomenon of the language being lost in the community.

In addition, a criticism is that the political independence of Ireland is mainly a façade. Crowley (2005) highlights that Gaelic symbols and the language use on stamps and money is only a "manifestation of nationality" as it is not embedded in the community's speech. It has been questioned whether the aim to revitalize the Irish language has been for political advances for power and independence, rather than focusing on rebuilding the Irish community (Watson, 2016). Watson refers to this as a "political project in cultural clothing" (Watson, 2016). This raises concerns as to whether the language is important to the community. Tuama (1995) suggests that Irish citizens need to review their personal attachments to the language, to see if it will survive in the future. This is because the identity of being Irish does not directly link to speaking Irish (Watson, 2016).

In summary, the literature has revealed that it is uncertain whether these policies are successful within the community. The uncertainty and fluidity of attitudes towards the Irish language has provided rationale for the current research to uncover whether the policies have been successful thus far. Consequently, research question 1 and hypothesis 1 have been formulated to gain further insight.

2.3 Previous research into Irish attitudes

Research has raised concerns over the future of the Irish language, in particular the lack of transmission from one generation to the next (Darmody, 2015). Darmody, (2015) conducted a survey comparing adults' attitudes towards the Irish language in the Republic and North of Ireland, and explored external factors influencing the attitudes of Irish, concluding that the language was embedded in 3 domains: education, the community and the family (Darmody, 2015). The survey provided optimal comparisons of how attitudes have developed longitudinally through comparing the data from 2015 to a 2001 survey. Darmody's (2015) research concluded an incremental change to positive attitudes towards the language. However, it is uncertain how authentic these positive attitudes are as well as whether they have longevity throughout people's lifetime; for example, it has been shown that within the Republic of Ireland there is a perception of Irish as a means to pass an exam (Darmody, 2015). This view can be translated to an inauthentic positive attitude to the language, as it may be seen as key to get through the educational system rather than as a symbol of Irish identity. Elsewhere, the language was perceived as a difficult subject, with students preferring subjects such as mathematics, which could be coded as a negative attitude. (Darmody, 2015). This current paper aims to build on Darmody's research and explore whether the incremental increase of positive attitudes is still occurring in 2022. Furthermore, Darmody's research does not reflect the potential effects 'The 20 Year Strategy' has had on attitudes of towards the language. Therefore, this paper will aim address this gap, updating understanding of attitudes in the Republic specifically and depict whether the policies have been effective at influencing the perception of Irish.

2.4 Individual differences effecting attitudes and competency of Irish
2.4.1 Schooling

The education sector is responsible for forming fundamental attitudes towards the Irish language (Murtagh, 2007). Devitt (2018) shows that children attending Irish medium schools (all teaching conducted in Irish) were 3.3 times more likely to engage with positive attitudes about the Irish language. He found a correlation between exposure to Irish and students' engagement with the language (Devitt, 2018). Murtagh (2007) agrees with Devitt stating that positive attitudes towards Irish are reinforced by Irish-medium schools' ethos and engagement with the language, providing more opportunity to learn and use the language. However, on the contrary, English-medium schools (Irish taught as a second language) only dedicate 1500 hours

to the acquisition of Irish, thus with less time spent on learning the language as a notable number of students fail to achieve mastery of comprehension skills (Harris, 1984, 1988, 1991; Harris et al., 2006; Harris and Murtagh, 1998, 1999). Accordingly, English medium students are more likely to have lower proficiency levels, which in turn impact their attitude towards Irish. In summary, research above demonstrates the importance of investigating the effect of school type on Irish attitudes as critical differences in the educational system have shown to influence language attitudes. These findings have motivated my research into the effect of school type on language attitudes and provided the foundations for hypothesis 5.

2.4.2 Urban versus Rural

Watson's (2016) analysis of the presence of Irish in Dublin concludes that despite the large proportion of Irish speakers in Dublin, they do not converse in Irish within the community. Reasons for the lack of Irish usage can be linked to the historical backdrop of Ireland explained in section 2.1. The veritable lack of an Irish community centralized around a specifically Irish culture has resulted in a sort of atomized individualism divorced somewhat from the countries Gaelic origins. This translates directly to a lack of shared linguistic community, inevitably meaning a trend of people becoming distanced from the Irish language and thus a decrease in the perceived importance of that language (McDermott, 2011).

Furthermore, as explained in section 2.1, attitudes towards Irish are politically charged, specifically regarding the East of Ireland. Due to the colonial history of the Pale, the region was more anglicized with a larger input of English in comparison to other areas of Ireland (Hickey, 2007). Within Ireland this has created the stereotype of Dubliners being less attached to their Gaelic roots (Hickey, 2007). The derogatory terms "West Brit" and "Palers" are commonly used to refer to Dubliners, insinuating that they are not part of Irish culture (Hickey, 2007). Figure 2 below exemplifies this through the image of the Irish man covered in culture, standing pridefully with the Irish heritage, however the West Brit is portrayed as uncultured and plain, whilst being positioned as ashamed and hunched over. The loaded question "on which side are you?" aids the preconception that there is a right and wrong side, with the West Brits on the wrong side. This clearly illustrates a certain attitude within the community that Irish citizens from the Pale have rejected their heritage and are not part of the community.

Figure 2: Image showing the dichotomy of Irishness (Gaelic League, 1913).

Therefore, in the current sample, the rural participants may have stronger positive attitudes to Irish than the Dubliners (urban area) as they perceive themselves as more connected to their Irish history. This assumption is exhibited in hypothesis 4. This would align with Darmody's findings (2015) in which there was a positive correlation between rural dwellers and positive attitudes regarding Irish. Accordingly, my research seeks to determine whether this pattern has continued into 2022.

2.4.2 Age

Younger generations of the Republic of Ireland would be expected to have more positive attitudes due to the connection to future opportunities in education. Firstly, many universities demand a high competency in Irish for entry of further studies (Borooah 2009, Watson 2016). The denser weighting of oral assessment in Irish in the leaving certificate from 2012 has motivated younger generations to learn Irish, which is shown by the significant increase of students taking the Irish oral examination at junior certificate from 1% in 2007 to 14.5% in 2012 (Darmody et al, 2015). Thus, students would want more Irish oral practice. Evidently, as younger generations are attempting to pave their future and put themselves in the best position

to enter the labor market, they would have more reason to value Irish. This interlinks with previous research showing attitudes towards Irish are influenced by social ambition (DouglasCowie 1978, Gal 1978). Therefore, learning Irish is less to do with motivation to bring it back to the community, but rather for career possibilities (Murtagh, 2007). Thus, the higher stakes which Irish holds for younger generations may result in higher prestige attitudes towards Irish in comparison to older generations.

On the other hand, a prominent worry from the start of the rejuvenation of the Irish language has been the maintenance of the language through each generation to come (Saarikivi and Marten, 2012). Considering the language policies which have been implemented in the 21st century, it is hoped that attitudes and competency of Irish have improved in the younger demographics. Since the 1970s, parents have been pressurising the government to establish Irish in the country through the means of Irish medium schools (Ceallaigh, and Dhonnabáin, 2015). In tandem younger generations have been brought up immersed in policies revitalising the language such as the Education Act of 1998 which aimed to achieve greater use of the Irish language in schools and the community (Ceallaigh, and Dhonnabáin, 2015). Census figures support the success of these policies as there has been a small upward growth in the proportion of Irish speakers (Darmody, 2015). Moreover, attitude surveys from 2001 and 2013 also show positive developments towards the language (Darmody, 2015). This increase of Irish competency would be expected to run parallel with an increase of positive attitudes towards the language as there is more enthusiasm to learn Irish. For instance, Irish medium schools are considerably oversubscribed compared to English-medium schools, thus showing that more young people want to learn the Irish language (Darmody, 2015). Ergo, regarding the current sample, the younger generation could have stronger affiliations to the language. This has motivated the formulation of hypothesis 2.

2.4.3 Sex

The social variable, sex has been consistently studied in linguistics and found to affect many speech communities (Trudgill, 1983:162). Sex influences how people identify with language. Lai (2007) conducted research into language attitudes in Hong Kong after a drastic change in the socio-political context of sovereignty of China from Britain. The sample revealed that the female participants were more cooperative to other languages, thus would be more open to being multilingual (Lai, 2007). Contrastingly, the male participants were more positive towards the vernacular as well as engaging with more negative views of non-native languages (e.g.,

English) (Lai, 2007). Lai's (2007) language context is similar to how this current research sample may associate with Irish as the language attitude changes are coated in politically charged history and agendas. Therefore, it would be likely that the female participants have more positive associations with Irish as they are more open to a multilingual society. Likewise, Chan et al's (2018) research into bilingual communities found that females had more positive attitudes towards the native language. Interestingly, analysis revealed that the positive attitudes were linked to contexts with higher stakes, in other words meaning that the females viewed the languages more positively for social prestige reasons (Chen 2018, Lai 2007, Trudgill 1995). This links with Irish having a form of capital in Ireland, as some universities entry require Irish language competency (Borooah et al, 2009). It has been considered that linguistic behaviour is related to social ambition (Douglas-Cowie 1978, Gal 1978). This would provide possible rationale for why Irish speakers would be more positively inclined towards multilingualism as it aids their prospects. Ergo, perhaps the female participants will have more positive attitudes regarding Irish because of the advantages it serves in prospects.

Paradoxically, it must be noted that not all literature aligns with these assumptions. For instance, Ladegaards sample of Denmark's rural community revealed that the male participants expressed more genuine positive attitudes to their local language and culture (Ladegaard, 1998). This shows that their native language had a stronger sense of identity within the males in comparison to the females. This contradicts the evidence above, thus it is uncertain how the genders will differentiate in the current research. However, the results from Chan (2018) and Lai (2007) are more comparable to the current research sample of Irish attitudes as the communities analysed had similar socio-political contexts towards English. Evidently, the extraneous variable of gender may interact similarly with the attitudes and identity towards Irish. However, Darmody's 2015 survey analysis found no significant relationship between gender and language attitudes, thus highlighting the present uncertainty. Therefore, this has motivated the interest of the extraneous variable gender in the current research (hypothesis 3), aiming to shed light on the possibility of gender influencing attitudes towards Irish.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses
3.1 Research questions

After accessing literature, 5 research questions and 5 hypotheses have been formatted in alignment with previous findings.

1. Have the language policies implemented caused a positive change in attitudes towards Irish?

2. Is the Irish language a more prevalent part of the latest generations identity today in comparison to previous generations?

3. Is the Irish language a more prevalent part of female Irish speakers' identity than male Irish speakers?

4. Is the Irish language a more integral part of the rural participants identity than urban participants?

5. Is the Irish language a more integral part of participants identity who attended Irish medium schools than participants who attended English medium schools?

3.2 Hypotheses

1. The language policies put in place by the government have affected attitudes towards the Irish language. Participants in the current study will have more favourable attitudes towards the Irish language than participants from previous studies.

   (***Alternative hypothesis****: Participants in the current study will have less favourable attitudes towards the Irish language than participants from previous studies.*)

2. Age will affect attitudes towards the Irish language. Younger participants will have more positive attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language in comparison to the older participants.

   (***Alternative hypothesis:*** *younger participants will have more negative attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language in comparison to the older participants.*)

3. Gender will affect attitudes towards the Irish language. Female participants will have more positive attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language in comparison to the males.

   (***Alternative hypothesis****: Female participants will have more negative attitudes regarding the Irish language in comparison to the males.*)

4. Geographic location will affect attitudes towards the Irish language. Participants from rural backgrounds will have more positive attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language than the participants from urban areas.

*(**Alternative hypothesis**: Participants from rural backgrounds will have more negative attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language than the participants from urban areas.)*

5. The type of school will affect attitudes towards the Irish language. Participants who attended Irish medium schools will have more positive attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language than participants attended English medium, and mixed schooling.

*(**Alternative hypothesis**: Participants who attended Irish medium schools will have more negative attitudes regarding Irish and the future of the language than participants who attended English medium, and mixed schooling.)*

4.Methodology

4.1Design

The current research partially replicates Darmody's (2015) attitude survey questions from 2013 with the aim of updating our understanding of the Republic of Irelands attitudes towards the Irish Language. Darmody designed this questionnaire to allow for comparisons to be drawn to the Irish language survey 2001. Considering this, a selection of questions was used from the previous surveys that were relevant to the current research questions (see section 3.1 for research questions). Not all the questions were used to ensure that the questionnaire was time efficient and did not discourage completion due to attention issues. Therefore, as some of Darmody's (2015) questions seemed repetitive, only a sample of questions were selected. To enable direct comparison, most of the questions remained in the same format as Darmodys surveys. However, after the questions were briefly trialed in a pilot study sent out to one individual, it was relayed that the wording of one question created uncertainty and the participant did not understand what the question was asking. Therefore, the question *"how much Irish did you do in primary?"* was altered to *"how much Irish did you learn in primary?*

Furthermore, due to the unfortunate circumstances of COVID-19 the face, to-face methodology used in 2001 and 2013 could not be utilised in the current body of research. Instead, the questionnaires were completed electronically by participants. This also aided the change of the

format of the questionnaire as the previous surveys were more conversational. For example, researchers could not communicate with participants, thus the current survey excluded conversational intersections such as *"Could I now ask a few questions about your parents' and your own attitudes towards Irish when you were at school"*.

The dependent variable measured was the attitudes towards the Irish language. Participants' attitudes were collected and measured through a 5-point lickert scale style question format, ranging from strongly agree, to strongly disagree. This enabled a more detailed insight into the participants attitudes and how strong they were. The statements used in the Likert scales measured the attitudes regarding the language in education, the community and within the family unit. This provided a holistic insight into participants attitudes as Darmody's study concluded these 3 categories in which attitudes are formulated in (Darmody, 2015). In addition, the study tested the manipulation of 4 independent variables; age, sex, locality, and the type of school they attended. Importantly, the independent variable age was split into 2 groups: 18-25s and 26+. This was purposely done, as the 18-25 cohort would have been influenced by the implementation of 'the 20 Year Strategy' when they were adolescents, thus this separates them from the rest of the participants (26+) who wouldn't have experienced influence of the said policy when in school. Thus, the results will clearly reflect the effect of the policies implementation. Moreover, schooling and participants place of origin was measured as Darmodys (2015) study revealed that these significantly influenced attitudes surrounding Irish. Therefore, these independent variables were further tested to provide an updated understanding of their effect in the current climate. Alongside this, sex was selected as an independent variable as previous research showed conflicting conclusions of its effect (see section 2.43). Ergo, this research aims to gain further clarity on the effect of participants sex on their attitudes towards language.

Participant information required for the measurement of these independent variables was accessed through asking participants demographic background in the first section of the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix. These social predictors can be broken down into levels which are exhibited in table 2.

4.2 Participants

33 participant responses were collected through a means of opportunity and snowball sampling techniques. Due to circumstantial constraints of undergraduate research (e.g., lack of funding),

these sampling techniques were most optimal due to the ease. However, the techniques compromised the chance of an equal probability of the wider population being selected (Lomas, 2013). Ergo, this lowers the external validity of the research and removes the chance of the results being generalizable to the wider population. Moreover, 1 participant had to be excluded from analysis due to their geographic location in the Midlands of Ireland, thus the data was not relevant to the current research into the East of the Republic. After exclusions were made, the sample for analysis consisted of 32 participants. Table 2 below outlines the sample stratification in relation to the 4 independent variables being tested.

Table 2: Sample stratification

	Female				Male			
	18-25s		26+		18-25s		26+	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Irish medium schooling	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
English medium schooling	0	0	6	0	2	2	2	2
Mixture schooling	0	2	1	2	2	0	1	0

Table 2 demonstrates that the sample is unevenly distributed regarding demographic information, in particular regarding sex; 65.6% of participants were female (21) and 34.4% were males (11). This skews the data to favour female representation therefore, this needs to be considered when interpreting the results based on sex. Additionally, the sample collected does not include any male participants who attended Irish medium schooling, which will need to be considered when drawing potential claims about the effect of Irish schooling, as the variable sex will also inversely impact the results. The sampling techniques selected made the unevenly distributed sample unavoidable and out of the researchers control as we only had access to a limited number of people. Despite the sample lacking practical applications of generalisability, the research will produce interesting results about language attitude patterns and tentative suggestions and conclusions will be drawn.

All participants completed the experiment electronically on their personal devices within their environments. Additionally, to ensure ethical guidelines were met all participants gave their informed consent prior to starting the questionnaire and were briefed on the nature of the research as well as any potential risks.

4.3 Procedure

Participants completed the experiment in their own homes on personal devices and accessed the questionnaire through a link sent out via email or text message. The questionnaire was created on google docs forms. Participants first read a brief which outlined the purpose of the research and their rights as a voluntary subject in the experiment. Next, participants were asked for their informed consent through ticking a box.

The survey contained 3 sections and elicited quantitative data. The first collected demographic information of the participants such as age, sex, and where they grew up. Participants did not give their names in the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality, and all data was stored on a password encrypted laptop, to meet the ethical guidelines at Newcastle University. Next followed the background of Irish section which elicited information about participants experience with Irish in their lifetime. This section was primarily used to gain insight into the amount of Irish exposure participants have had. Finally, section 3 yielded the attitudes participants had towards the Irish language. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a statement presented on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To reduce order effects, the order of questions in each section were randomised for each participant. Overall, the survey took 10 minutes to complete, and participants had the option to leave the experiment through exiting the link on the internet tab or through not submitting their responses at the end of the survey.

4.4 Analysis

4.4.1 Attitudes

Participant's responses were collected and inputted onto an excel spreadsheet. To measure the extent to how integral Irish was to participants, they were given an Irish attitude score which depicted how positively/ negatively they viewed Irish. Each Likert scale question aligned with a scoring system which allocated a number on the scale. The responses which showed favourable attitudes towards Irish were given positive numbers, in contrast to those which showed negative attitudes which were given negative numbers. To ensure order effects did not manipulate participants scores, the statement formats changed so that agreeing with the statement did not always reflect positive attitudes. This system is outlined in table 3 which can be found in the appendix.

This elicited an Irish attitude score for each participant. These attitude scores were then used to compare participants in relation to the independent variables. Ergo, the attitude scores were utilised to answer research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 (see section 3.1). It must be mentioned that 2 participants did not give information on where they were brought up, thus when analysing the independent variable of locality, these 2 participants were excluded and so the analysis was conducted on a total of 30 participants rather than 32. Participants were categorised into three groups (positive attitudes, neutral attitudes, negative attitudes) depending on their score. The boundaries for each category are exhibited in table 4 below. The boundaries were rationalised by analysing the mean score (2.906), the range (-25 to 17) and the median score (4). The boundaries were played around with to see whether any slight changes would impact the results however this did not create any substantial differences. Ultimately, 8 participants were in the positive category, 14 in the neutral attitudes category, and 10 in the negative attitudes category.

Table 4: Participant attitude score category boundaries

	Attitude Score boundaries
Positive attitudes to Irish	9 and above
Neutral attitudes to Irish	$2 - 8$
Negative attitudes to Irish	$2 \leq$

The independent variables (age, sex, locality, and schooling) were analysed via observation of descriptive statistics, namely the percentage of participants in each attitude category. These results are presented in figures 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Following on from this, inferential analysis was undertaken in order to assess the significance of the differences in attitude scores between the groups in the study. First the normality of each independent variable was evaluated. All predictors were non-normally distributed and so a nonparametric test was chosen. A Mann-Whitney U test was selected as it is a commonly used non-parametric alternative to the independent T-test. Other reasons included the small sample size of the study and the ordinal nature of the dependent variables. All features that the Mann Whitney U test is optimised for. Bootstrapping the data to enable a t-test would have risked being unsuccessful because of the small sample size so was decided against. Once this method was selected the excel spreadsheet of participants attitude scores was exported onto SPSS and a process of data cleaning and coding was conducted. For example, as the data in SPSS needed to be numeric, female participants were coded as 1 and males as 2. For statistical analysis, with

the independent variable schooling, mixture schooling and English medium schooling were grouped together in order to create two groups that could be assessed. This was taken to be legitimate because as Hypothesis 5 specifies, Irish medium schools are the reference and so the difference in schooling between all other individuals is redundant.

4.4.2 Comparison to Darmody's 2013 study

The results from this research will be compared to Darmody's pervious 2013 study's results to obtain an insight into how the attitudes of Irish have changes in the last 10 years, with the new language policies underway. Specifically, the questions from chapter 7 (attitudes towards the Irish language and the future of the language survey findings) of Darmody's research will be selected for comparison as these are the questions which Darmody defined as electing information about participants attitudes. Some of these questions will be compared with the 2001 survey findings which were included in Dermody's results, however not all 2001 results were included, ergo these will not be included in the current research either. However, these comparisons will only provide tentative indications of how attitudes towards Irish have changed, as generalisations about Irelands attitudes cannot be drawn from this as the samples are not directly comparable. For instance, Darmody's sample was large and included all of the Republic of Ireland, however the current research only investigated a small area of The East of the Republic.

5. Results

Chapter 5 provides quantitative evidence into participants attitudes towards the Irish language. Participant attitude information was collected through the questionnaire where they responded to Likert style questions. From participants responses, attitude scores were tabulated (see section 4.4.1 for details on how these were quantified). Section 5.1 presents the comparison of participants attitude scores in relation to each independent variable, age, sex, locality, and schooling. Alongside this, the validity of the results were examined through the method of Mann Whitney U to check the significance of the effect of each independent variable on participants attitude scores. Therefore, providing an understanding to research questions and hypotheses 2-5; *Is the Irish language a more prevalent part of the latest generations identity in comparison to previous generations? Is the Irish language a more prevalent part of Irish female speakers' identity than male Irish speakers? Is the Irish language a more integral part of rural participants identity than urban participants? Does the type of school attended affect the attitudes of the Irish language?* (See section 3.1 for further detail).

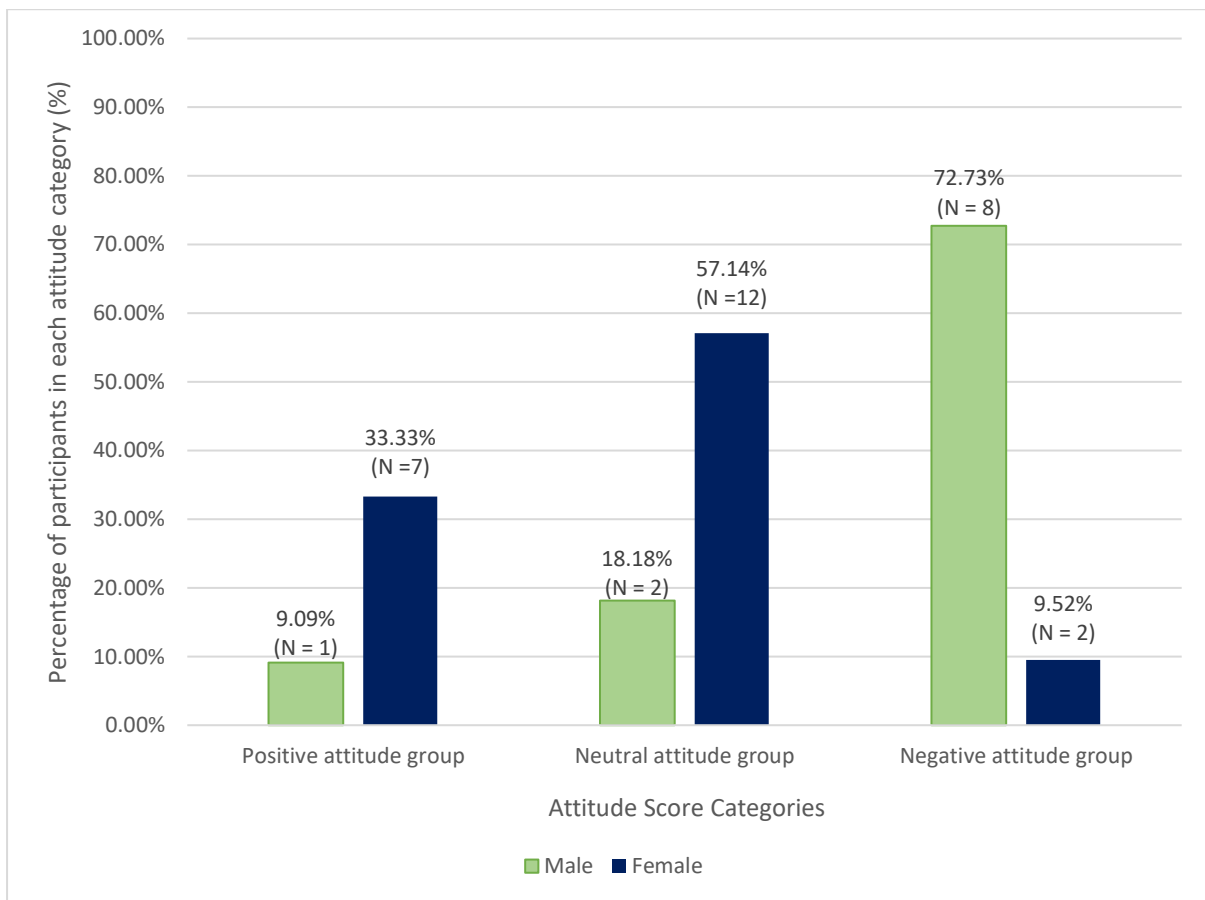## 5.1 Relative Frequencies Analysis of independent variables

Figure 3: The relative frequencies of participant attitude scores affected by the independent variable sex

Figure 3 demonstrates that most female participants scored within the neutral attitudes of Irish category (57.1%). Contrastingly, the majority of male participants scored in the negative attitudes of Irish category (72.7%). In alignment, results indicate that there is a higher proportion of females in the positive attitudes category than males (a 24.2% difference between male and females in the positive attitudes group). Accordingly, figure 3 also highlights a higher concentration of males with negative attitudes of Irish (63.2% more males in the negative attitudes of Irish category). Comprehensively, figure 3 shows a consistent trend of female participants being more positive regarding Irish, while the male participants reported more negative associations.
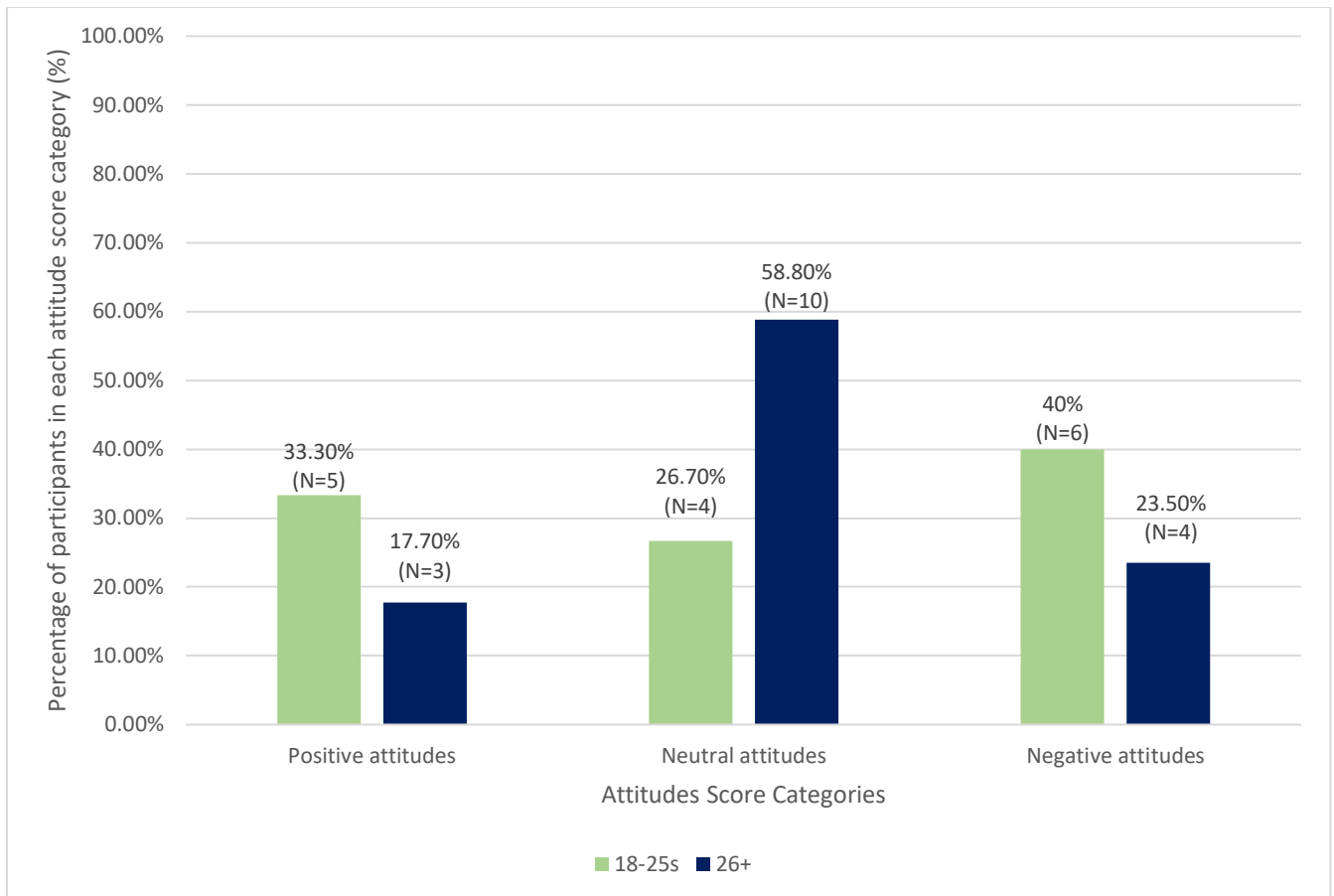
Figure 4: The relative frequencies of participant attitude scores affected by the independent variable age

Figure 4 reveals that the younger participants (18-25s) held more extreme attitudes around Irish; the lowest proportion of younger participants were in the neutral attitudes category (26.7%) compared to 40% in the negative attitudes category and 33.3% in the positive attitudes category. For example, the younger cohort had a higher proportion of participants with positive attitudes (15.6% more than the older participants) as well as a higher proportion of participants in the negative attitudes category (16.5% more) in comparison to the older participants. This yields the assumption that the younger participants held stronger views surrounding the Irish language in comparison to the older participants (26+), as figure 4 highlights that most of the older sample identified within the neutral attitudes category (58.8%).
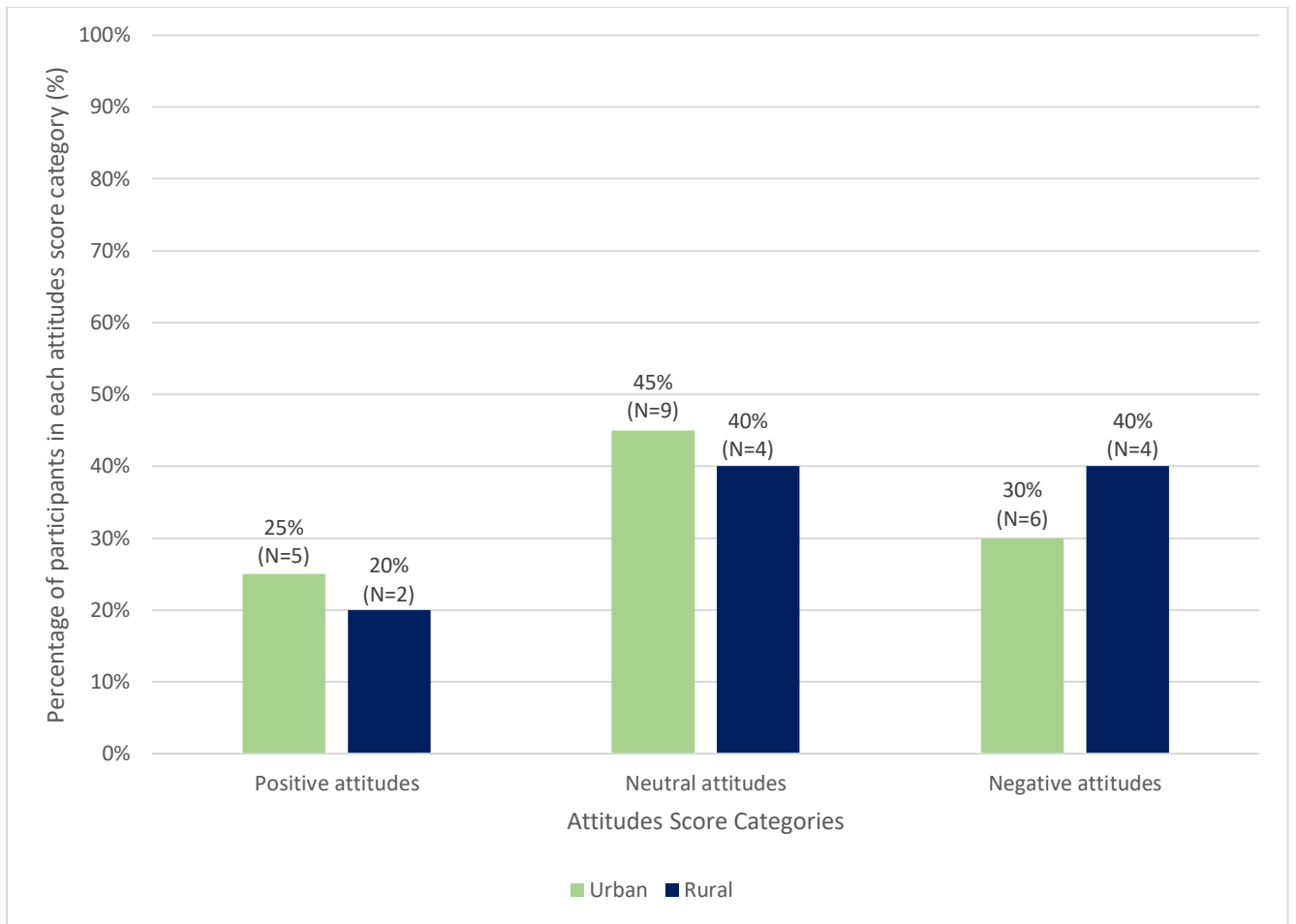
Figure 5: The relative frequencies of participant attitude scores affected by the independent variable geographic background

Figure 5 shows that slightly more urban participants had positive attitudes towards Irish in comparison to the rural participants (5% more). This pattern is also consistent within the neutral attitudes category 5% more urban participants than rural participants in the category. However, in the negative attitudes category, there is a considerably higher proportion of rural participants within the negative attitudes category in comparison to the urban participants (10% more). While the urban sample mostly fell into the neutral attitudes category (45%), the rural sample majority was evenly split between the neutral and negative attitudes categories (40% of participants in each). Evidently, figure 5 shows a trend of the rural participants engaging in more negative attitudes towards Irish, while the urban participants held slightly more positive attitudes.
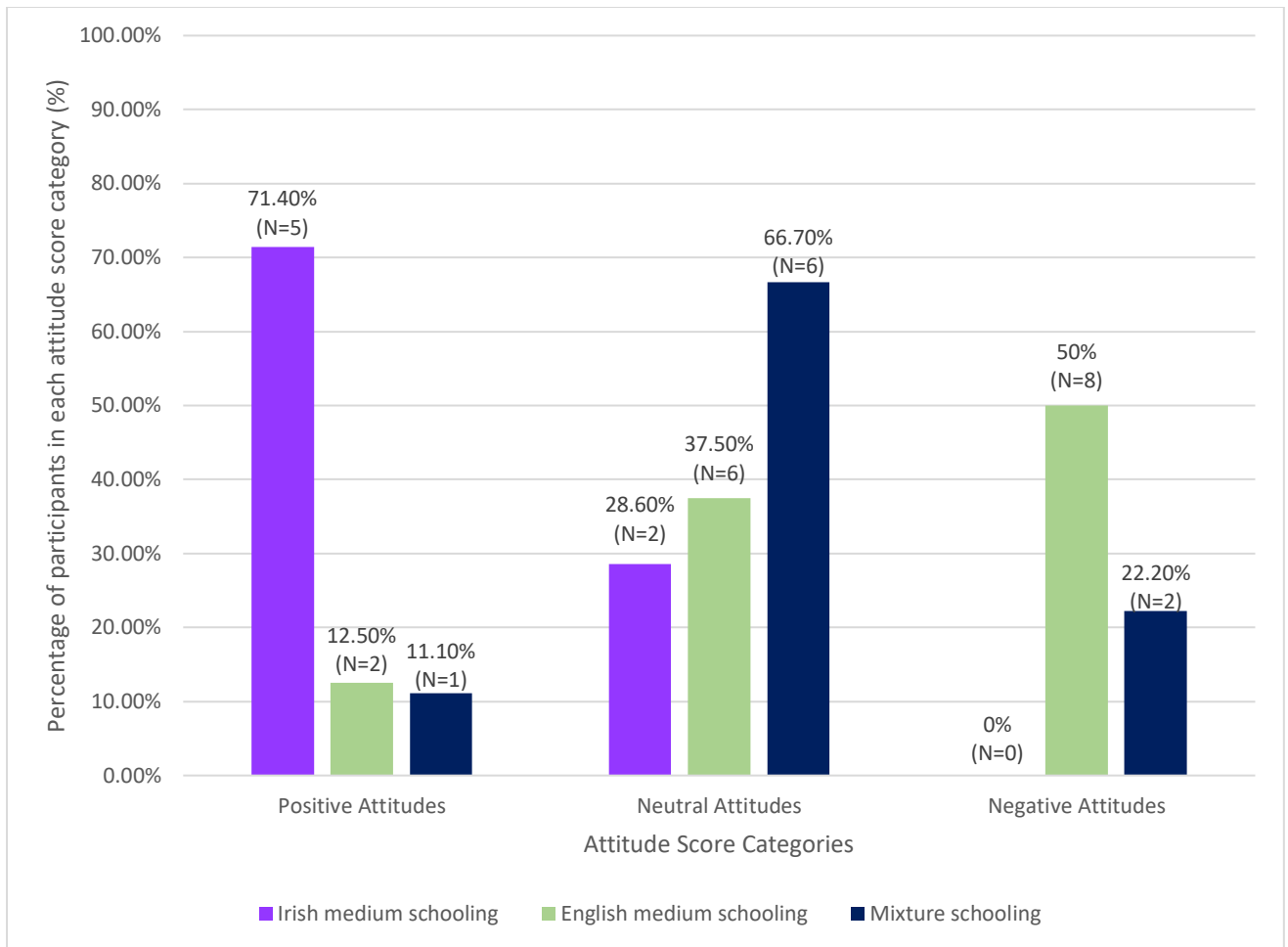
Figure 6: The relative frequencies of participant attitude scores affected by the independent type of schooling

Figure 6 demonstrates a clear pattern that the type of school participants attended influenced the attitudes they manifested. Most of the participants who attended Irish medium schools fell into the positive attitudes category (71.4%). Interestingly, no participants who attended Irish medium schools were categorised as having negative attitudes towards Irish. Contrastingly, figure 6 exhibits that most of the participants who attended English medium schools had negative attitudes to Irish (50%), and as well this group had a higher proportion of participants in the neutral attitudes group than the Irish medium sample. Most of the participants in the mixed schooling group (those who had been taught through partial emersion or both Irish medium and English medium schools) had neutral attitudes (66.7%). Ergo, this shows a neat, consistent pattern of the more Irish a participant was exposed to in education, positively increases the attitudes towards Irish.

Table 5: Relationship between participant attitude scores and independent variables

Independent Variable	Difference in mean rank	P value	Z value	Decision
Age	0.25	0.941	0.081	Accept null hypothesis
Gender	10.63	0.001	3.347	Reject null hypothesis
Schooling	11.34	0.003	-3.028	Reject null hypothesis
Locality	1.65	0.05		Accept null hypothesis

Note alpha (P) = 0.05

Table 5 shows that the independent variable age had no significant effect on participants attitude scores, as the P value from the Mann Whitney U test (0.941) is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Therefore, even though figure 4 suggests a pattern of older participants having more neutral attitudes, and younger participants being more extreme, this could be down to chance, and is not statistically significant. Additionally, table 5 demonstrates that participants sex did significantly affect their attitudes towards Irish as the P value (0.001) is smaller than 0.05. Thus, the pattern shown in figure 3 of females being more positive within the sample is significant. Furthermore, table 5 shows that the type of school participants attended significantly affected their attitudes towards Irish as the P value generated (0.003) is small than the level of significance (0.05). Ergo, the pattern shown in figure 6 of Irish medium school participants having more positive attitudes of Irish than English medium and mixture schooling participants is statistically significant rather than down to chance. Moreover, the results from the Mann Whitney U test in table 5 show that the independent variable locality did not have a statistically significant effect on participants attitudes towards Irish as the P value generated (0.05) was not less than the level of significance 0.05. In other words, whether participants were from a rural or urban place did not influence their attitudes towards Irish.

5.2 Comparison of previous studies responses

Section 5.2 compares the current samples questionnaire responses with Darmody's samples responses in 2001 and 2013, before the 20 Year strategy was implemented. Ergo, this section holds the aim of demonstrating an indication of the effect that the language policy the 20-year strategy has had on attitudes towards the Irish language, which aligns with answering research question 1 (*Have the language policies implemented caused a positive change in attitudes towards Irish?*). These results can only be used to draw preliminary conclusions/ assumptions

about how the language attitudes towards Irish has changed as the samples are not directly comparable (see section 4.4.2 for further detail on how).
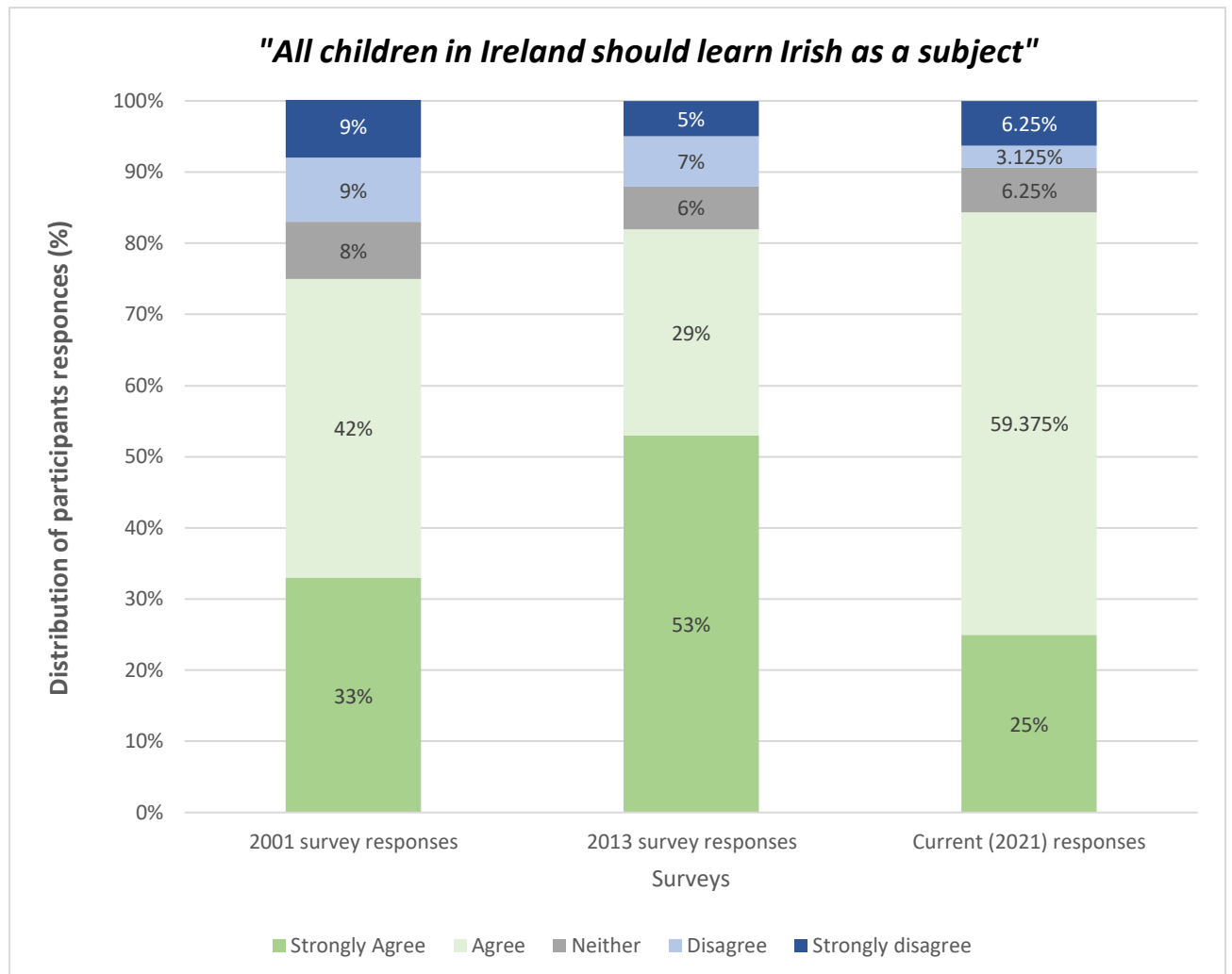

Figure 7: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "All children in Ireland should learn Irish as a subject".

Figure 7 shows a marginal increase of responses agreeing that all children should be taught Irish from 2001 to the current 2021 findings. For instance, between 2013 and 2021 there has been a 2.375% increase of responses showing agreement (strongly agree and agree). However, the increase is minute. Specifically, figure 7 shows considerably more responses of agreeing than strongly agreeing (30.375% more than in 2013). In alignment, there is also a slight decrease of disagreeing responses (2.625% from 2013 to 2021). Thus, figure 7 alludes that there has been a slight increase of people today in the Republic believing that it is important for Irish to be taught to all children. Furthermore, the recent results demonstrate a considerable

decrease in strongly agree' responses (28% less than in 2013), suggesting that people have fewer extreme views regarding Irish than previously.
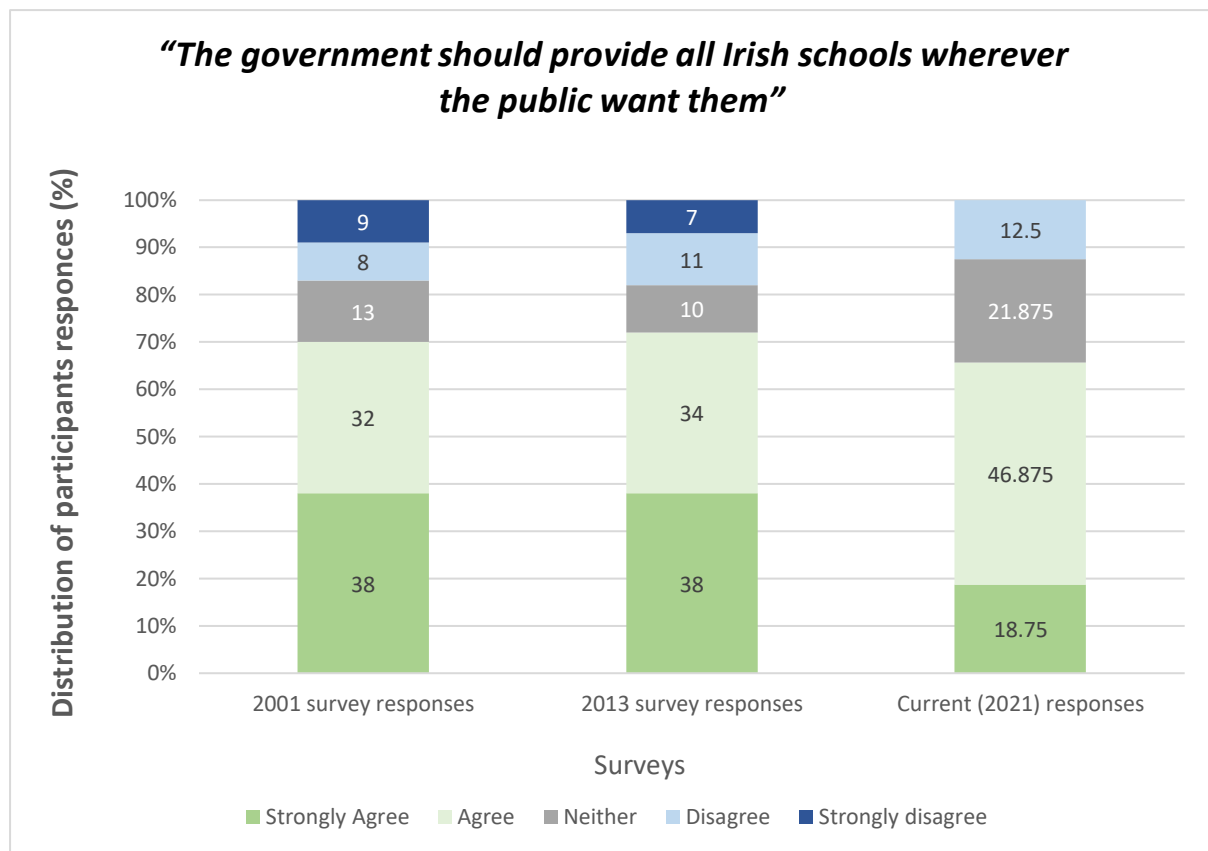

Figure 8: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "The government should provide all Irish schools wherever the public want them"

Figure 8 highlights a marginal decrease from 2013 to 2021 of overall responses in agreement that the government should provide all Irish schools wherever the public may want them. In 2013 the agreeing responses increased to 72% (from 70% in 2001), however the current results display a decrease of 6.375% of responses in agreement with the statement (65.625%). However, overall, the current results still show a majority of responses agreed with the statement. This aligns with a decline of disagreement with the statement. Interestingly, figure 8 displays an increase of responses from 2013 with no opinion on the matter. Evidently, figure 8 shows that not much has changed in the public's opinions since 2013.
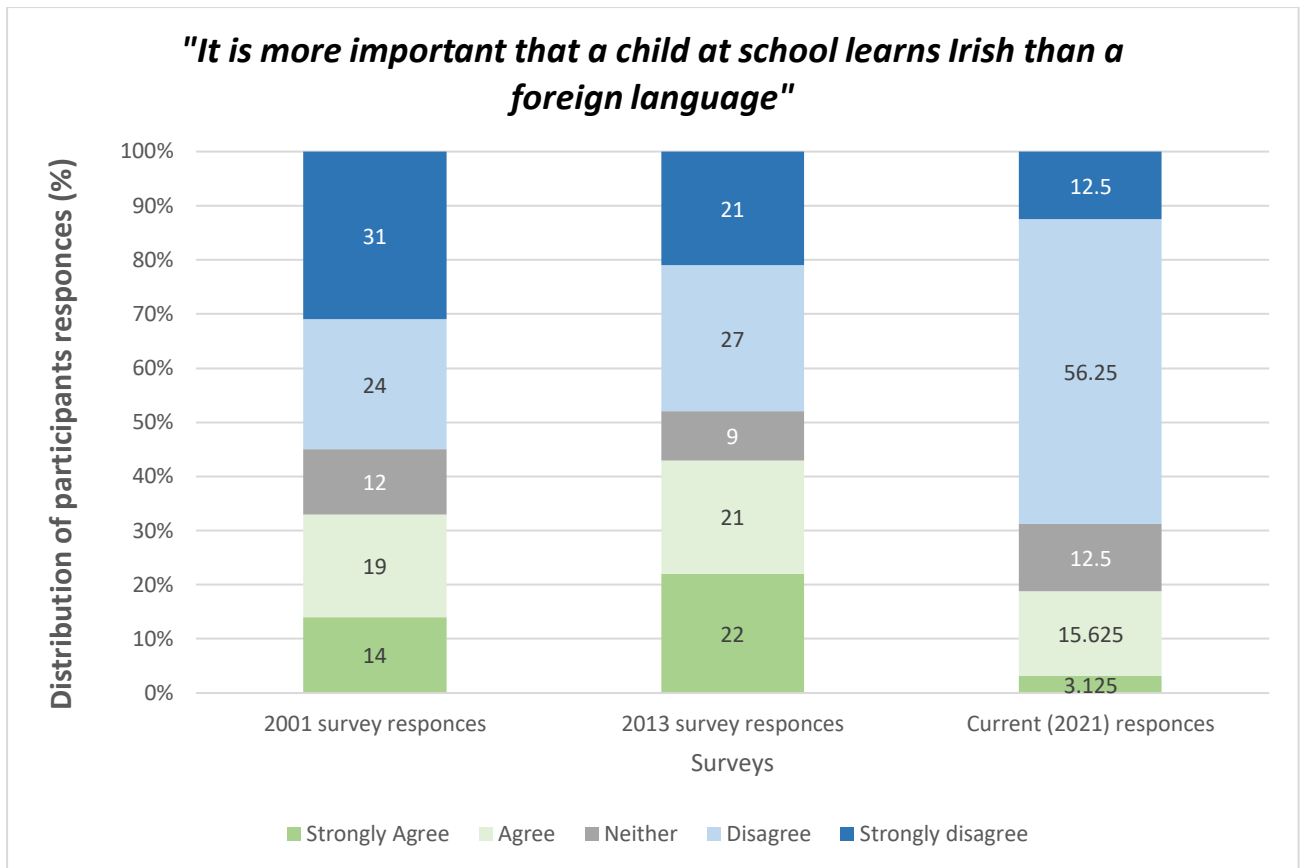
Figure 9: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "It is more important that a child at school learns Irish than a foreign language"

Figure 9 displays a notable decrease of responses agreeing that learning Irish at school is more important than learning a foreign language (24.25% decrease of strongly agree and agree responses combined since 2013). This is inconsistent with the previous trend from 2001 to 2013 which shows an increase of responses in agreement. However, in all 3 surveys most responses have been disagreeing with the statement for example (combining strongly disagree and disagree responses), 55% in 2001, 48% in 2013 and 68.75% in the current sample. Thus, the current findings further support this pattern of disagreement.
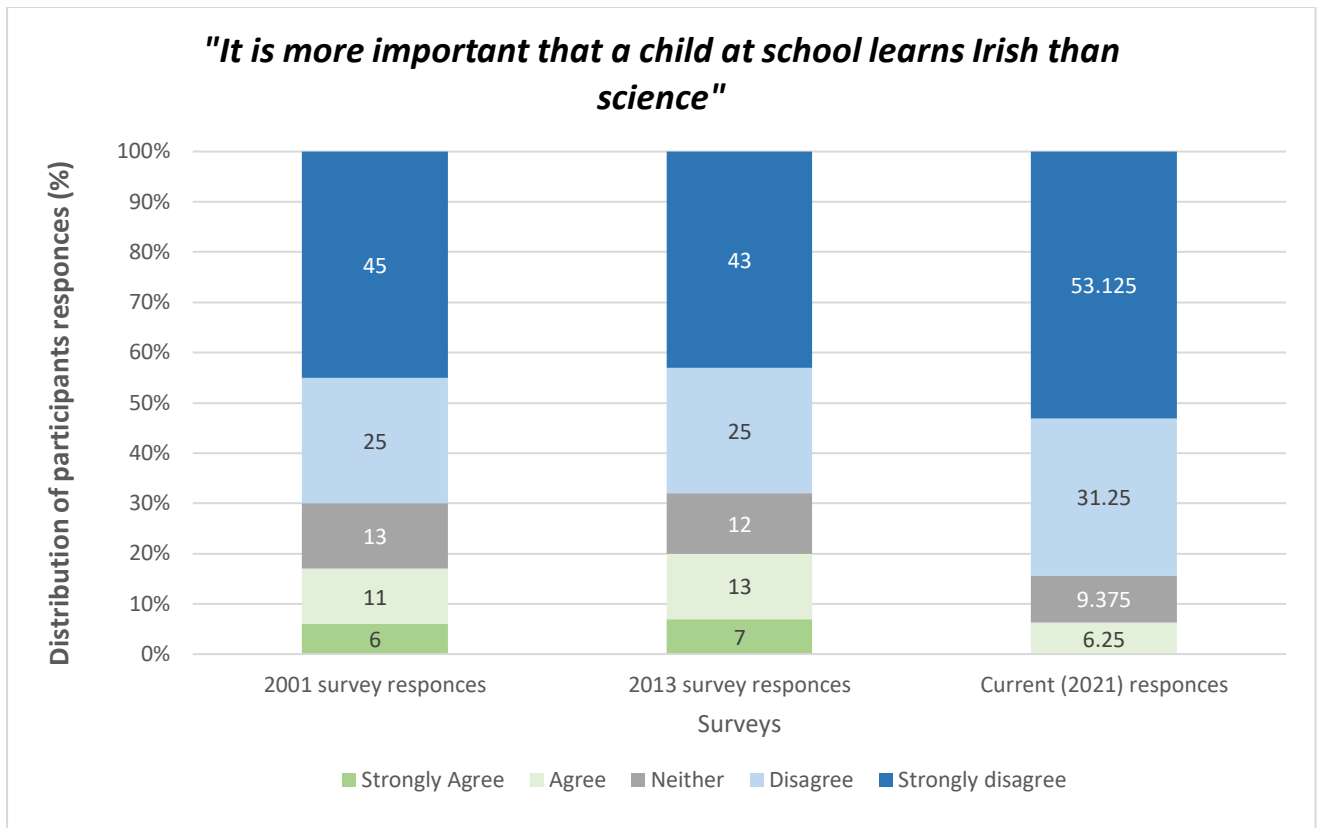
"It is more important that a child at school learns Irish than science"

Figure 10: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "It is more important that a child at school learns Irish than science"

Figure 10 shows that in the current results most responses were disagreeing that learning Irish is more important than science in school (84.375% of disagrees and strongly disagrees altogether). The previous findings have also shown a consistent majority of responses in disagreement with the statement, however the current research shows a further increase of disagreement, as well as a decrease of agreeing responses, and no opinion responses. Thus, figure 10 reveals that overtime there is an increase of people thinking that Science is more important than Irish.
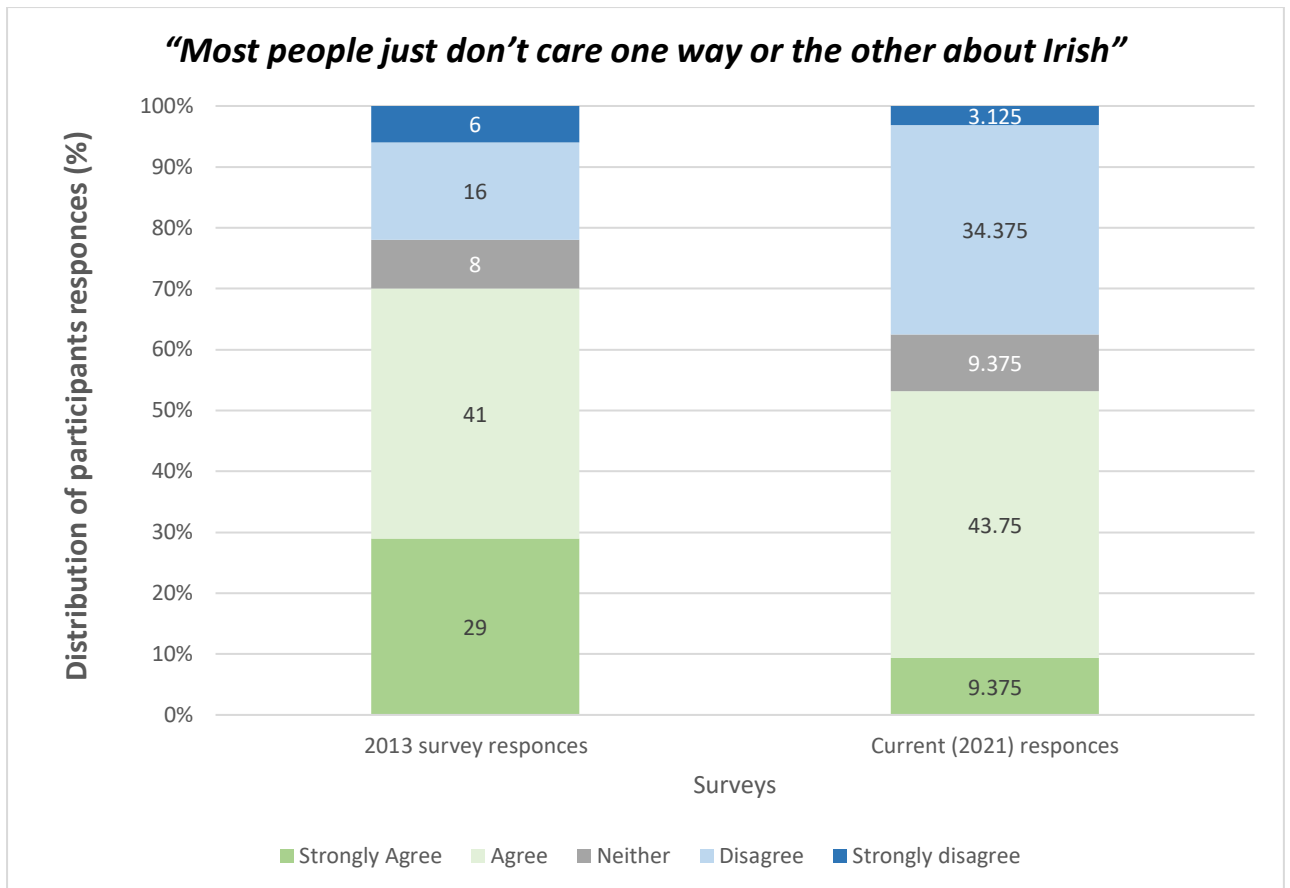
"Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish"

Figure 11: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish"

Figure 11 shows a consistent decline of responses agreeing with the statement *"Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish",* which suggests that more people care about Irish today than in comparison to previous years. For example, agreeing responses have declined from 70% to 53.125%. (16.9% decrease). This demonstrates that even though the majority of responses are still agreeing with the statement, there has been a substantial decline from 2013. This alludes to initial inclination that attitudes towards Irish may have been changing over the last decade. Moreover, similar to figure 7, there is a pattern of participants giving less strong responses to the statements. This may suggest that over the last decade, Irish people feel less strongly on the matters regarding the Irish language.
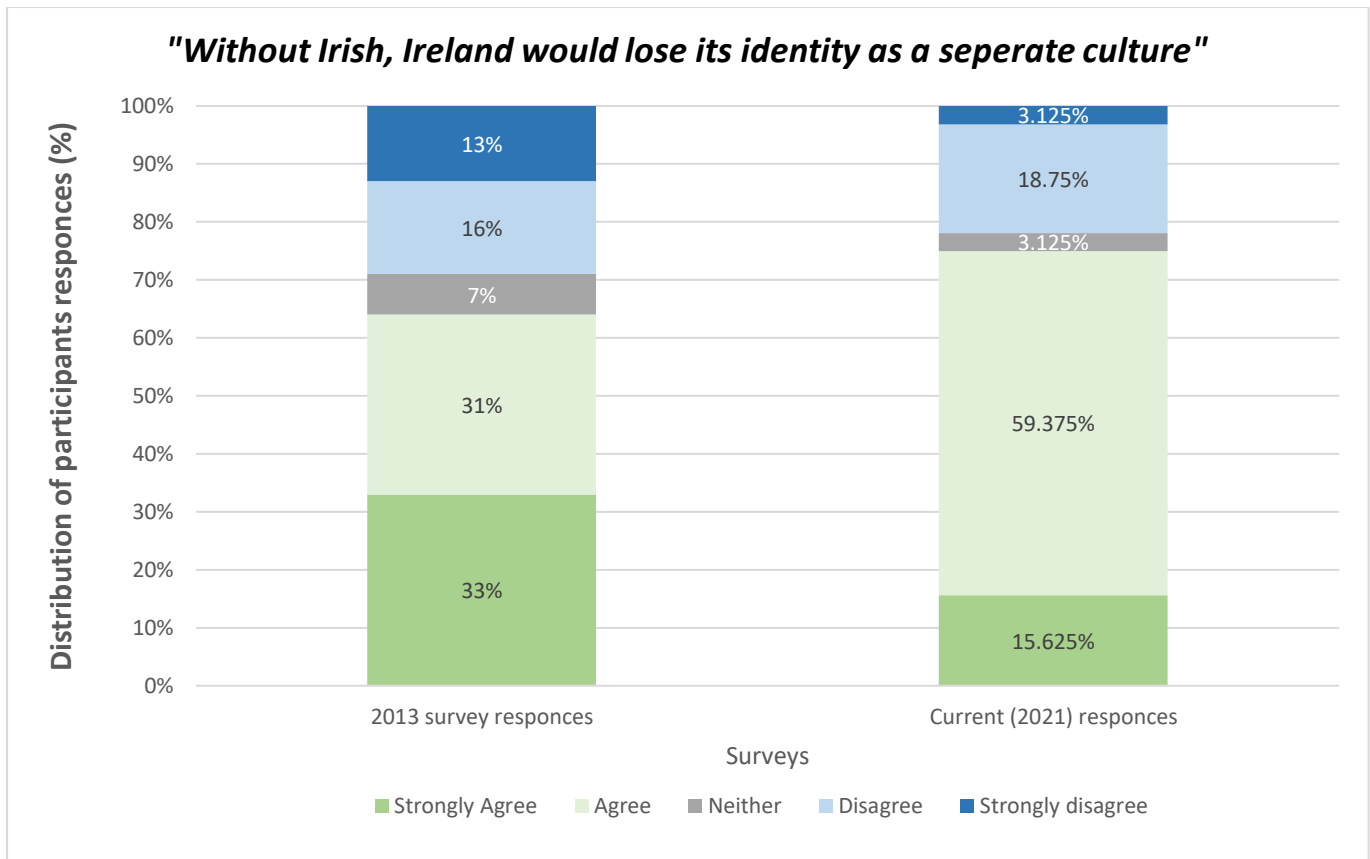
"*Without Irish, Ireland would lose its identity as a seperate culture*"

Figure 12: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "Without Irish, Ireland would lose its identity as a separate culture"

Figure 12 exhibits that the majority of the current responses were in agreement that without Irish, Ireland would lose its identity as a separate culture (59.375% agreed and 15.625% strongly agreed which equates to a total of 75% of the responses agreeing). This suggests initial indication that the sample view Irish as an important part of their identity today. Moreover, the increase of agreement since 2013 suggests the number of people in Ireland viewing Irish as a core piece of Irelands identity has risen (responses showing agreement has risen 11% since 2013). In alignment with figure 7-10, figure 12 shows a considerable reduction of strong responses (*strongly agree and strongly disagree*). For example, in 2013 33% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, however only 15.625% strongly agreed with the statement in 2021 despite the overall increase of agreement when comparing both survey samples.
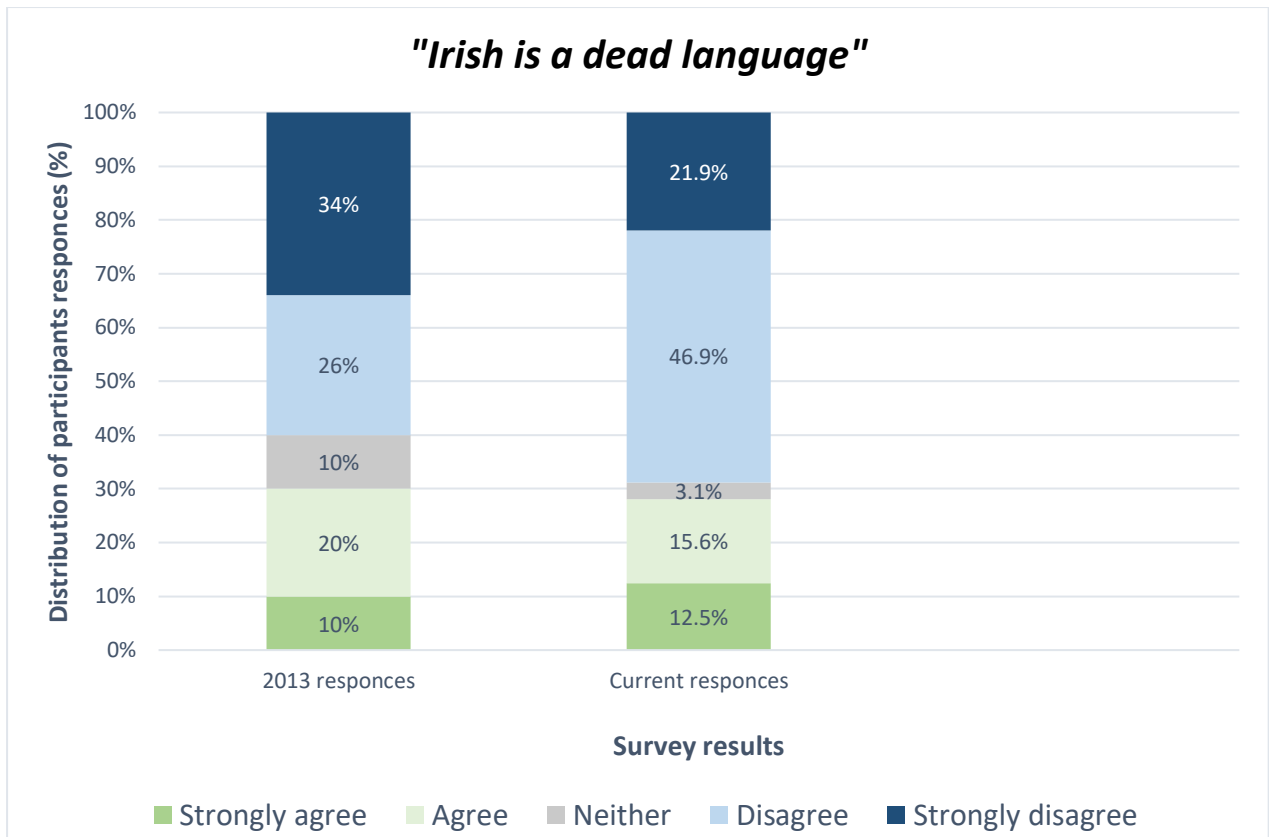
"Irish is a dead language"

Figure 13: Comparison of participants responses to the statement "Irish is a dead language"

Figure 13 indicates that the majority of responses in the current survey were disagreeing with the statement "*Irish is a dead language*", which is an increase of 8.8% when compared to the 2013 findings (combining disagree and strongly disagree responses). This shows that a smaller proportion of respondents in the current sample view Irish as a dead language in comparison to the 2013 sample used. Furthermore, figure 13 shows that the largest proportion of 2013 respondents were in the *strongly agree* bracket (34%), in comparison to the largest proportion of 2021 respondents in the *agree* bracket (46.9%).
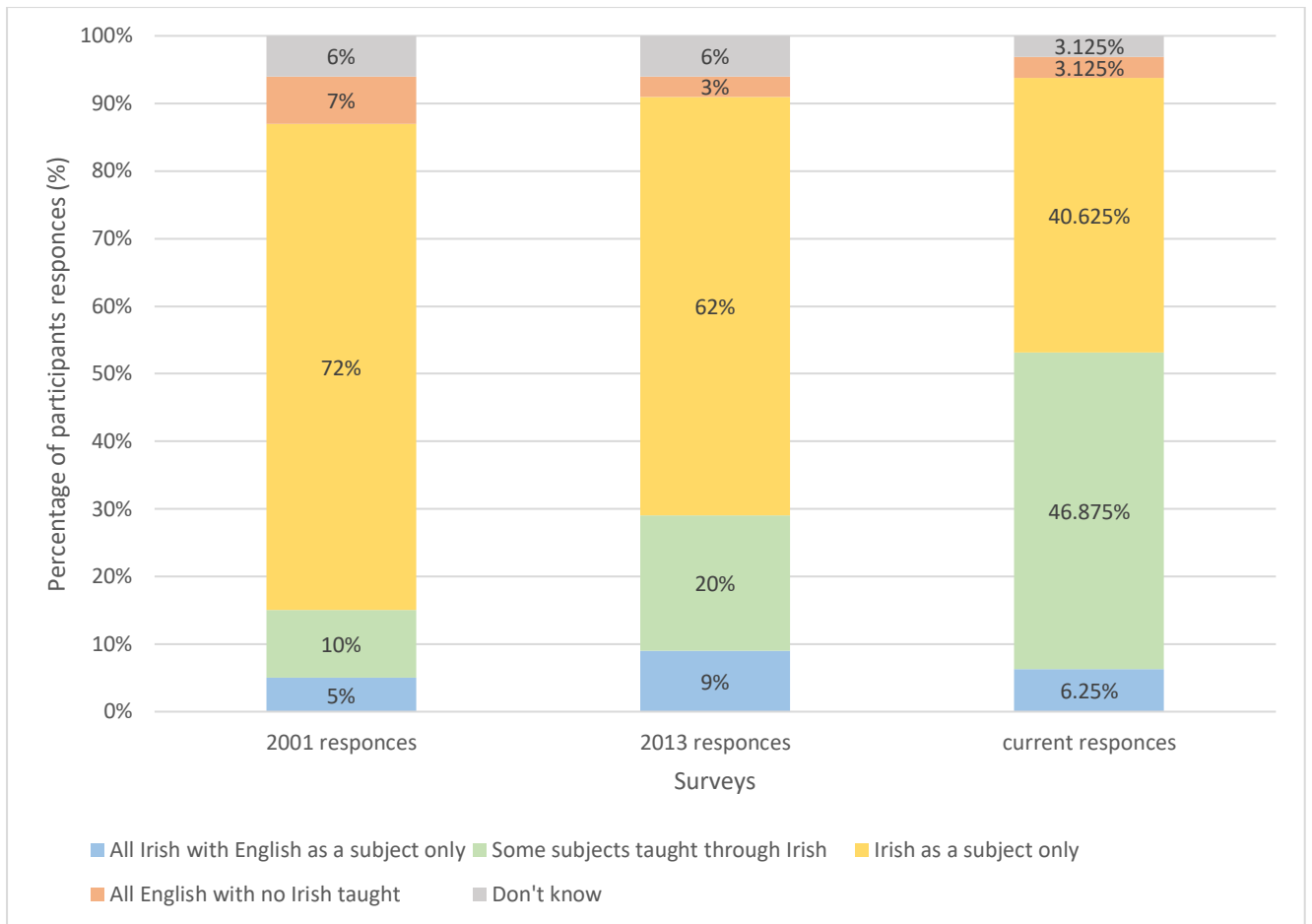
Figure 14: Comparison of participants responses from different surveys to the most suitable education for children in primary school

Figure 14 indicates that within the current survey sample, partial immersion of Irish is the most desired teaching technique in primary school (46.875%). This is consistent with the trend of increase of popularity in this strategy from 2001. Alongside this incremental increase, figure 14 shows a reduction of responses preferring Irish to be taught as a subject only overtime (a decrease of 21.375% in popularity from 2013). However, this is still the second most popular teaching strategy in 2021. This has largely changed since 2001 and 2013 in which Irish being taught as a subject only was the most popular method within the survey samples. Furthermore, there has been a fluctuation of responses preferring all Irish teaching, however the proportion of respondents selecting this method of teaching has remained small. Therefore, figure 14 alludes that more people may want an increase of Irish taught in primary.
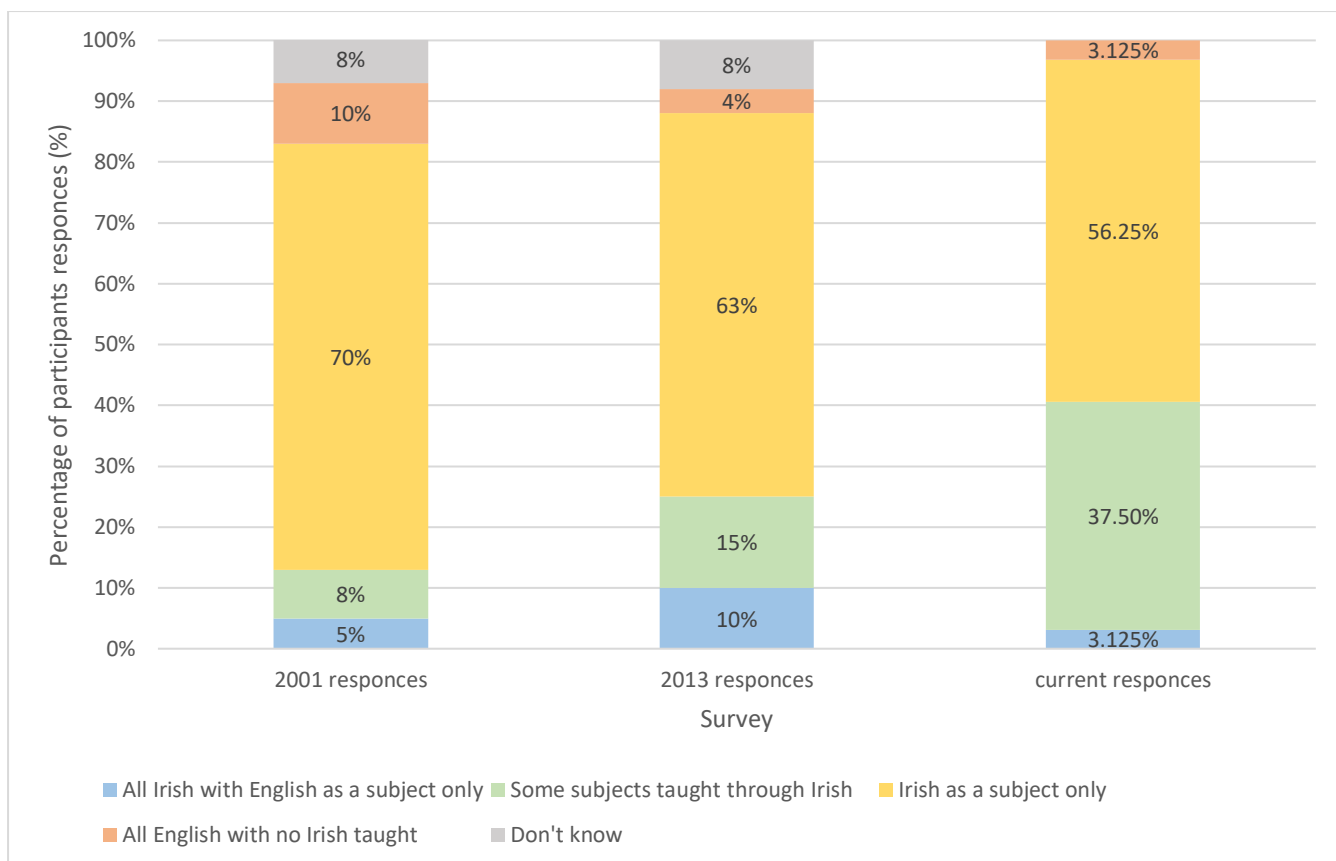
Figure 15: Comparison of participants responses from different surveys to the most suitable education for children post primary school

Figure 15 shows a trend of decrease in popularity of teaching Irish as a subject only in secondary education (a 6.75% decrease from 2013). Despite this decreasing pattern, the current findings show that Irish being taught as a subject only is still the most popular method (56.25% of respondents chose this as the most optimal method). Additionally, figure 15 conveys a pattern of partial emersion (some subjects being taught through Irish) as increasing in popularity through time (7% increase from 2001 to 2013 and a further 22.5% increase from 2013 in the current survey findings), as well as a slight decrease of respondents favouring no Irish being taught (from 4% of the respondents in 2013 to 3.125% in the current data). Overall, the current findings are consistent with the previous years with Irish being taught as a subject only and partial immersion being the most popular methods of teaching in secondary school.

6. Discussion

This chapter aims to concisely answer the research questions of this project, whilst evaluating whether the results further support or falsify the hypotheses. As a reminder, the research questions and hypotheses are outlined in section 3.1.

6.1 Does the sex of a person influence their attitude of Irish?

The independent variable sex was found to influence participants attitudes towards Irish. Compatible with the third hypothesis, positive attitudes were more frequent with the female participants than the males (figure 3). The inverse of this pattern also holds true as the negative attitudes were also more prevalent within the male sample (figure 3). Table 5 demonstrated that this effect was statistically significant, rather than random chance. Ergo, solidifying our understanding that the effect of sex on language attitudes was present in the sample and hypotheses 3 is supported. However, these findings are inconsistent with Darmody's research into attitudes towards Irish in 2013, where he found that sex had no influence on participants attitudes (Darmody, 2015). As flagged in section 4.2, my sample was unevenly distributed (21 females and 11 males), thus it is probable that this could have skewed the results. If more male participants had been recruited, then we would have been able to see whether this pattern holds true with a larger population. Therefore, these opposing results in my research and Darmody's could be ascribed to the substantially different samples, for instance the differing sample sizes as well as populations of interest as Darmody researched all of Ireland, whereas my research only concerned the East.

Paradoxically, my results showing that sex did significantly influence attitudes in the sample could be an initial indication of how the attitudes towards Irish have changed in the last decade, as this effect has been found in other bodies of literature. For example, Mee-Ling Lai's literature on attitudes of endangered languages revealed their female participants were more open to multilingualism (Mee-Ling Lai, 2007). This is also true in Chen's research in which the females viewed languages more positively for social prestige reasons (Chen, 2018). Altogether, it is not far-fetched that sex would interplay in language attitudes as it is a common theme across many speech communities (Trudgill, 1983; 162). Thus, even though this research cannot provide generalised conclusions about the effect of sex on attitudes towards Irish, it certainly has exhibited preliminary indications which is unsurprising considering other bodies of research finding similar patterns.

Overall, despite my results exhibiting that the sex of participants significantly affected the attitudes towards Irish in my sample, these findings are too premature to be generalised to the wider population of the East of Ireland. Thus, it is essential that further research is conducted by a team with access to larger samples to determine whether this effect holds true.

6.2 Does the locality of a person influence their attitude towards Irish?

The findings in figure 5 indicate that the urban participants from Dublin had more positive attitudes than the participants from surrounding rural areas, as well as the rural participants engaging in more negative attitudes. However, statistical analysis revealed that this was not a significant relationship thus participants geographic background had no effect on their attitudes of Irish (table 5). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is rejected and we must accept the null.

Nevertheless, despite the findings not being statistically significant, the fact that the rural participants did not have considerably more positive attitudes is very surprising as it contradicts literature showing the rural Irish population had a stronger affiliation towards Irish (Darmody 2015, Hickey 2007, Watson 2016). Darmody's study, which my research is based on, had the opposing conclusion of rurales viewing Irish more positively (Darmody, 2015). The implementation of 'The 20-year strategy' in the last decade could be responsible for the change of conclusions. For instance, urban settlements have a higher proportion of Irish medium schools when compared to rural communities (McDermott, 2011). Therefore, the urban participants would have had more opportunity to be immersed in Irish (McDermott, 2011). Considering that a central aim of the policy is increasing exposure to Irish in education, the strategy encouraged the implementation of more Irish schools (Fiontar, 2009). Urban areas may have been targeted for Irish medium schools due to the acknowledgement of a lack of Irish identity in these areas. This is critical as previous research showed that there is a strong correlation between Irish medium schools and positive attitudes towards the Irish language (McDermott 2011, Harris et al 2006, Devitt et al 2018). Therefore, the focus of the policy increasing Irish schooling in urban areas in turn would have increased the current generations positive exposure to the language, which would explain the influx of positivity towards Irish within the urban sample compared to Darmody's findings prior to the 20-year strategy. This finding tentatively demonstrates that the divide between rural and urban in the East of the Republic is not as clear cut anymore. This looks promising for the future of Irish as the language policies in place have increased positivity towards Irish in areas which were previously unattached to their Irish culture. Thus, tentatively indicating the urban hub previously referred

to as 'The Pale' has severed the tie from its historical backdrop of being disconnected from Irish identity.

6.3 Does the schooling background of a person influence their attitude of Irish?

Results show that the independent variable of participants schooling significantly influenced participants attitudes towards Irish (figure 6 and table 5). Consistent with the fifth hypothesis, participants who attended Irish medium schools had significantly more positive attitudes in comparison to those who had attended English medium or mixture schooling (a combination of both). For example, no participants who attended Irish medium schooling were categorised as having negative attitudes of Irish (figure 6). This shows that exposure is a direct and reliable route for a means of increasing positivity towards Irish, ergo the fifth hypothesis is supported. My findings in isolation would not be suitable for generalisation due to the small sample size and population of interest, however, they also align with Devitt (2018) and Murtagh's (2007) results that more engagement with the Irish language generates positive attitudes. Therefore, my results further strengthen the proposition of prioritising the development of more Irish medium schools in the country, in order to enable a larger proportion of the population to be emersed in Irish. This potentially shows that 'The 20-year strategy' has been successful in its attempts to foster Irish within the educational realm and as such can reap the rewards of increased positive attitudes towards the language.

6.4 Does a person's age influence their attitude of Irish?

Inconsistent with the second hypothesis, age was found to have no significant effect on participants attitudes towards the Irish language (table 5). Thus, the second hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that language policies in place have not significantly affected the current generations view of Irish, as despite the younger participants having more exposure to Irish, their attitudes are not more positive when compared to previous generations which were not influenced by 'The 20 Year Strategy' when they were in education. Consequently, the success of the policy is inconclusive, and so further examination on a larger sample is necessary in order to evaluate the effect of 'The 20 Year Strategy'. Alternatively, perhaps it is too premature to test the effect of 'The 20 Year Strategy' on today's young adults (18-25s) as the language policy would have been implemented halfway through their childhood/ adolescents, which could be attributed to the marginal difference in attitudes between age groups. Ergo, perhaps more reliable insight into the effect of age will be derived in the years to come with

the continuation of the strategy. However, today the age of people in the East of Ireland does not impact their attitudes towards Irish.

Alternatively, a more sophisticated mixed models statistics test that issued regression values for each individual, could have proven more fruitful as it would have provided rich insights into what effectively supports the growth of Irish. For example, there could have been varying differences between individuals' experiences of Irish within the categories, such as Irish language class sizes, teachers, or even school funding which would have influenced their attitudes towards Irish. Therefore, future research should investigate a more fine-grained nuanced understanding of what specific elements are generating positive attitudes towards Irish through a more advanced model of statistical analysis.

6.5 Have attitudes about the Irish language changed in the last decade?

Overall, comparisons of my current survey findings (figures 7-15) with Darmody's survey findings demonstrated a marginally positive increase of attitudes towards the Irish language within the community and education. Although not all questions align with an increase in positivity (figures 9 and 10), most of the questions show an incremental growth of positivity. This slight inconsistency could be attributed to being the beginning of the change, thus the changing attitudes are not consistent throughout and only marginal right now. Despite this marginal pattern being found, it cannot be generalised to the wider population of the Republic of Ireland as the sample was small and only reported responses in the East. Nevertheless, this could be an initial indication of how the attitudes have changed. This tentatively implies that the 20 Year Strategy has been successful at revitalising language attitudes thus far, but it cannot be taken as obsolete since the current sample findings cannot be generalised to the wider population of the Republic of Ireland. However, for now the results allude to a change of attitudes towards Irish with an increase of positivity in some areas. Accordingly, this leaves research question one answered with tentative conclusions, however more research should be conducted on a more representative sample in order to provide firm answers.

6.6 The success of the 20-year strategy

The preliminary conclusions drawn from the comparison of the current findings with Darmody's survey responses prior to 'The 20-year strategy' tentatively implies that the language policy in place has been successful at revitalising the reputation of the Irish Language. This provides primary indication that the implementation of the language policies in Ireland

have been successful as, Irish has been stripped from its pejorative status and the community value it as a symbol of their heritage. Regarding linguistics, this provides evidence that endangered languages can be revitalised with the right language policies in place. Ergo, future language policies should mirror the method of the 20-year strategy as it has indication a marginal change in attitudes. The positive changes so far are only marginal; therefore, it would be beneficial for further research in another couple of years to determine if this hypothesising pattern projection continues with the timeline of the 20-year strategy. Furthermore, future longitudinal research would benefit from conducting statistical analysis on the change of attitudes to determine the level of significance of the change.

6.7 Conclusion

To conclude, my research project has provided original evaluation of 'The 20-year strategy' and has shown initial indication of rejuvenating the attitudes towards the Irish language. Ergo implying that the identity of Irish has been changed positively in the last decade and is on its way to being restored as a truly prideful symbol of Irelands culture. This resolves Saarikivi and Marten's concerns (2012) for the future of the Irish language as it is clear that Irish is still an integral part of Irelands community.

So, by answering the quote which started this research paper, "(...) It is now necessary for the Irish people to examine their own personal reflections in the mirror which convey their "Psychological make-up" (Tuama, 1995: 28), it is clear that the sample reflected on their Irish identity and came to the conclusion that it is a prevalent part of the Irish community today and in the future.

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8. Appendix
Questionnaire: Introduction/ Welcome page

You have been invited to participate in a research project by a undergraduate student from the School of English at Newcastle University (Grace Gregory-g.o.a.gregory1@newcastle.ac.uk). Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, your participation will consist of answering a questionnaire about the Irish language.

Once complete, your answers will archived using best practice for safe storage at Newcastle University (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/necte). Answers in this collection will always remain anonymous. Thus, in writing about this study, your real name will never be used - we will always use whatever pseudonym.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: This exercise does not involve any risks or discomfort for you other than being asked to complete the tasks noted above. It might not be possible for you to foresee any immediate benefit from your participation as you will not receive anything however, scientists have to rely on voluntary participation in order to understand human behaviour, such as language.

SUBJECT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that the interviewer is aware that your participation is entirely voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you do not give consent to all the above points, please indicate which ones to the researcher. Also, if at any point during you change your mind about participating altogether, please let the researcher know.

You have the right to refuse to answer questions.

Thank you very much for your participation and for making this project possible. Should you require further details about any aspect of this interview or the resulting data, please don't hesitate to contact Grace Gregory at: <g.o.a.gregory1@newcastle.ac.uk >

At the beginning of the questionnaire, you will be asked for your informed consent.

Section 1: Informed consent
    I agree and consent to participate in this study
    I do not wish to participate in this study

Section 2: Demographic information
This section briefly asks for background information about you
    1. **What is your age?**
        18-25
        26+
    2. **What is your sex?**
        Male
        Female
        Prefer not to say

    3. **Where did you grow up?**

Dublin
Wicklow
Other

Section 3: Background of Irish

1. **When you were growing up, how often did people speak Irish in your home?**
   Always
   Often
   Occasionally
   Seldom
   Never

2. **How much Irish did you learn in primary school?**
   No Irish at all
   Irish as a subject only
   Some subjects through Irish
   All Irish
   Don't know/ can't remember
   Education outside Ireland
   Not applicable

3. **How much Irish did you learn in secondary school?**
   No Irish at all
   Irish as a subject only
   Some subjects through Irish
   All Irish
   Don't know/ can't remember
   Education outside Ireland
   Not applicable

4. **What is the highest public examination you have sat in Irish?**
   University -full degree level
   University -subsidiary level
   Teacher Training College
   A Level/ AS/ A2
   Leaving Cert Higher
   Leaving Cert Lower
   O Level/ GCSE/ Inter/ Junior Certificate
   None
   Can't recall
   Not applicable

5. **Did your parents want you to learn Irish at school?**
   It was very important to my parents that I learnt Irish
   They did not have an opinion on whether I learnt Irish or not
   They did not want me to learn Irish
   Not applicable

6. **Did you want to learn Irish at school?**
   Yes

I did not mind whether I learnt Irish or not
No
Not applicable

7. **What is your Irish reading ability?**
Can understand everything in Irish
Can understand most things in Irish
Understand some things in Irish
Understand the odd word in Irish
Cannot read Irish

8. **Since leaving school, have you tried to learn or improve Irish as an adult**
Yes
No

9. **Since leaving school, have you participated in any activities or clubs that use Irish**
Yes
No

10. **At present, how often do you speak Irish?**
Daily
Weekly
Less often
Never

11. **Can you recall if you participated in a conversation during the past week in which you used Irish?**
Yes
No

Section 4: Attitudes
Please rate the extent to which you agree with the statements below

1. **All children in Ireland should learn Irish as a subject**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

2. **The government should provide all-Irish schools wherever the public want them**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

3. **It is more important that a child at school learn Irish than a foreign language**
Strongly disagree

Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

4. **It is more important that a child at school learn Irish than science**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

5. **Of the following school programmes, which one would you consider most suitable for most children in primary schools today?**
Some subjects
Irish as a subject only
All Irish with English as a subject only
All English (with no Irish taught)
Don't Know/No opinion

6. **Of the following school programmes, which one would you consider most suitable for most children in post-primary schools today?**
Some subjects
Irish as a subject only
All Irish with English as a subject only
All English (with no Irish taught)
Don't Know/No opinion

7. **I do not like people speaking Irish when others who are present do not know Irish**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

8. **I do not like to begin a conversation in Irish**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

9. **It is important that my children grow up knowing Irish**
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

10. Whether people speak Irish or English doesn't matter to me
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

11. To really understand traditional Irish culture one must know Irish
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

12. Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

13. Without Irish Ireland would lose its identity as a separate culture
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

14. Irish is a dead language

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

15. Ireland would not really be Ireland without Irish speaking people
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

16. Promoting Irish should be the job of voluntary organisations, not the government
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

17. The government should not promote Irish at all
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

18. Regarding the future of the Irish language, which of the following would you like to see happen?
The Irish language should be forgotten
It should be preserved as an important historical cultural heritage in literature
Irish should be preserved as a spoken language, but only in the Gaeltacht
Ireland should be bilingual, with English as the principal language
Ireland should be bilingual with Irish as the principal language
Irish should be the principal language (like English now)
Don't know
Don't care

Section 5: Thank you for participating!
If you have any further questions email me at g.o.a.gregory1@newcastle.ac.uk

Table 3: Attitude Score System

	Points System				
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Likert scale statement					
All children in Ireland should learn Irish as a subject	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
The government should provide all-Irish schools wherever the public want them	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
It is more important that a child at school learn Irish than a foreign language	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
It is more important that a child at school learn Irish than science	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
I do not like people speaking Irish when others who are present do not know Irish	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

I do not like to begin a conversation in Irish	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
It is important that my children grow up knowing Irish	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Whether people speak Irish or English doesn't matter to me	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
To really understand traditional Irish culture, one must know Irish	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Most people just don't care one way or the other about Irish	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Without Irish Ireland would lose its identity as a separate culture	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Irish is a dead language	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Ireland would not really be Ireland without Irish speaking people	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Promoting Irish should be the job of voluntary organisations, not the government	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
The government should not promote Irish at all	-2	-1	0	+1	+2