



Origins and Development of Language Attitudes Towards the Irish Language in the Republic of Ireland

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Masters Thesis from the year 2005 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1,3, Birkbeck, University of London, language: English, abstract: Abstract Given the existing relations between language attitudes and linguistic competence, and places in the bilingual context of the Republic of Ireland (Irish/English) the goal of the present study is twofold: first, attitudes towards the Irish language are described, and second, variables that can explain such attitudes are studied. These include: family language, linguistic proficiency in Irish, residence (Gaeltacht vs. Galltacht), cultural identity, socio-educational background and gender. In addition, attitudes towards Irish and English will be compared. A questionnaire that had been successfully used in other areas was adapted and used in a sample of 62 adult speakers of Irish, about half of them (N=27) coming from traditionally Irish-speaking areas, or Gaeltacht, and the other half (N=35) coming from English-speaking areas, or Galltacht. 33 females and 29 males took part in the study. The mean age was $M=35.5$, $SD=10.35$. All participants had undergone secondary education in the Republic of Ireland. Globally, results show neutral attitudes towards Irish and somewhat unfavourable attitudes towards English. The information of the participants attitudes to the Irish language proved not to be correlated with any of the independent variables. Possible intervening variables, unaccounted for in the questionnaire design, were suspected to be responsible for shaping the respondents Irish language attitudes. An open-ended question in the survey revealed great dissatisfaction over the way Irish is taught in schools as well as lament over the lack of opportunities to use the language in an everyday context.

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