

Name: Roxana van Mourik

Student number: 3109097

Supervisor: Dr. Mícheál Ó Flaithearta

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The Irish language revival: the efforts of Patrick Pearse to save the Irish language.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the question: Was Patrick Pearse able to save the Irish language? In order to answer this question this thesis examines the language decline during the 19th century. It investigates the different reasons which caused this decline. In the second chapter the thesis will look at the solutions Pearse proposed in his editorials in the Gaelic League's news organ *An Claidheamh Soluis*. One of the solutions Pearse proposed was the revolutionising of the education system. By establishing his own school St. Enda's Pearse wanted to set an example for others. In the third chapter the thesis examines how the school tried to save the Irish language. To conclude the thesis reviews what happened after Pearse was executed. What was left of his ideas? Did his ideas save the Irish language?

Chapter 1: An explanation for the decline of the Irish language

How was it possible that the Irish language declined rapidly during the 19th century? The major factors were the impact of the Great Famine on rural Irish speaking areas and emigration. However, the negative view of the Irish language by the Irish people themselves, and the education system also played a significant role. During the nineteenth century, the Celtic scholar Whitley Stokes estimated that *half of the population spoke Irish on an everyday basis. After the Great Famine from 1845 until 1850 the population of Irish speakers declined even further to a quarter of the population to 1,524,285 Irish speaking people.¹ People who died during the famine were mostly living in the rural areas and were Irish speaking. Furthermore, an estimated one million people emigrated to England and America to escape the Great Famine.² The loss of nearly three million people dealt a serious blow to the Irish language. However this was not the only reason for the steady decline. Another reason for the decline was a change in perception by the Irish people themselves. Throughout the nineteenth century a whole body of literature called 'improvement discourse' was written which heightened this perception.³ 'Improvement discourse' portrayed Irish in a negative fashion. It saw Irish as backward and rural. Furthermore, Irish was seen as an emotional language, whereas English was seen as the rational language of economics and trade. These ideas were echoed by important Irish nationalist figures. Thomas Davis, leader of the Young Ireland Movement, insisted on the necessity of a stable and improved populace in order to achieve a nation state. Davis wanted a homogenised rather than an Irish state and therefore all Young Ireland activities were in English.⁴ Also the man who fought for Catholic emancipation rights, Daniel O'Connell, conducted his campaign through the medium of English.⁵ He too wanted Ireland to be accepted as an equal member of the United Kingdom.

¹ Iarfhlaith Watson and Maire nic Ghiolla Phadraig, 'Is there an educational advantage to speaking Irish?', *Small languages and small language communities*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 199 (2009), p. 145.

² This wave of emigration started a trend in Irish society. After the 1850s there was steady emigration from Ireland which continued down until the 1960s.

³ For examples of 'improvement discourse' see Helen O'Connell, 'Improved English: And the Silence of Irish,' *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Re-Thinking the 19th Century/ Repenser le 19ième siècle (Spring, 2004), pp. 13-20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁵ The language issue caused a split within the Catholic hierarchy. On one side there was O'Connell who with his political nationalism did not regret the loss of Irish. On the other side stood the minority of clergymen like Archbishop MacHale who with his cultural nationalism called the national schools 'the graves of the national language' since lessons were only taught through English. See, Tony Crowley, *The politics of language in Ireland 1366-1922: a sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 134-135.

Therefore, it was necessary that Ireland was no longer thought of as different and strange. He saw the advancement of the English language as modernisation.⁶

The last thing which dealt a blow to the Irish language was the education system which was set up by the British department of Education. When national schools were established in 1831, Irish was prohibited from the curriculum since the organisation did not see the need for teaching Irish. Often reading lessons were taught with literature from improvement discourse, which gave pupils a negative view on their own language.

Textbooks used in Irish schools almost completely ignored Irish both as a language and as a language of a nation. These books had a universal and denominational overtone so they could be used through the whole British Empire. A quote from one of the readers used in the nineteenth century shows nicely how the education system treated Irish; ‘Various languages are spoken by the nations of Europe, besides our own English. Even in some parts of Ireland a different language is spoken, viz., Irish; though all who learn to read, learn English, and prefer speaking it.’⁷

Against this tide of Irish language suppression, Gaelic revival movements were founded to stop the decline. Some historians regard The Belfast Harp Festival in 1792 as the origin of the revival.⁸ Although this was followed by many pamphlets and texts which advocated the Irish language and literature, the revival movement really only began to take shape after 1880.⁹ The most prominent movement that established itself for saving the Irish language was the Gaelic League. Douglas Hyde, the founder of the League, strongly opposed the O’Connell stance on the Irish language. He stated that: ‘The ancient Gaelic civilisation died with O’Connell.’¹⁰

Although the main goal of the Gaelic League was the restoration of the Irish language, it saw the need for a change in the educational system.¹¹ The 17 year old Patrick Pearse became a member of the League in 1896. He had been interested in the Irish language from the age of twelve. At that age he heard the stories of the Irish rebels Tone, Rossa and Emmet, and many heroic Old Irish tales. These tales were told by a *senchaide* from his mother’s family.¹² Thereafter Pearse learned Irish grammar and he founded the New Ireland Literary society to tell people about the Old Irish literature.¹³ Pearse’s interest in Irish can even be found in the

⁶ O’Connell, p. 14.

⁷ Quoted in Patrick Walsh, ‘Education and the “universalist” idiom of empire: Irish National School Books in Ireland and Ontario,’ *History of Education*, Vol. 37, No. 5, September 2008, p. 656.

⁸ According to Sean Williams ‘The Belfast Harp Festival was just one manifestation of the currents of cultural preservation and revival that began to sweep Ireland, along with the rest of Europe, and which gained momentum during the nineteenth century. As the Penal Laws were slowly lifted, other laws replaced them, (including those aimed at the suppression of the Irish language).’ See, Sean Williams, *Focus: Irish traditional music* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 60.

⁹ For examples of these texts which advocated the Irish language see Crowley, no specified page number, since this work can be seen as a sourcebook.

¹⁰ For the full speech see, Douglas Hyde, ‘the necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland’, in *ibid*, pp. 182-187.

¹¹ The general aims of the League can be summarized in four points: to keep the language alive in the *Gaeltacht*; to support and strengthen it where it was losing ground (*Breac-Ghaeltacht*); to restore it to the new English-speaking districts (*Galltacht*) and to foster the growth of literature in it. See Caerwyn Williams and Patrick Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition*, Massachusetts: Belmont 1992), pp. 260-261.

¹² a *senchaide* is a story teller who tells tales in the traditional Irish way.

¹³ Desmond Ryan, *the man called Pearse*, (Dublin: Maunsel, 1919), pp. 28-30.

census returns. In the Census of 1901 his name was written in English. In the Census of 1911 his name and all the names in his household were written in Irish.¹⁴

Another great interest of Pearse was the study of education in all its phases.¹⁵ In 1899 he visited Wales as a league delegate to investigate the English Welsh language problem.¹⁶ Together with Douglas Hyde and other prominent League members he wrote a booklet called 'the situation on the schools of Ireland' which was later reworked and published in a Scottish journal in 1905.¹⁷

Pearse and the League were not the only ones who blamed the educational system. However, they focused on the situation of the Irish language instead of the payment-by-results-system which was the area of official English research reports. Most blame was placed on this system which was introduced in 1870. In this system the teacher was paid a certain fee for every student who passed the exams. This led to narrow curricular based teaching. While in Europe education became more child centred, in Ireland a mechanical approach was still adopted because of this system. In 1897 the Belmore Commission stated that the system was counter productive and recommended that primary schools became challenging places of learning.¹⁸ However, despite recommendations of the Palles Commission in 1899 to abolish the results-system successive education acts in 1900 and 1902 did not help to stimulate creative learning and teaching.¹⁹

As mentioned above, the Gaelic League saw the necessity for changing the educational system to give Irish more prominence. Douglas Hyde said to the Robertson Commission who held an inquiry about the educational system in 1902: 'a major aim of the League is to reform all education from the national school to the university.'²⁰ In the system, Irish was often handled as an extra subject and therefore fell outside the curriculum. More often than not, Irish was also taught outside school hours. This often happened because some teachers only spoke English although the children they taught spoke only Irish. This placed Irish at a great disadvantage. English was still seen as the language for obtaining employment. Moreover, the secondary schools and universities educated people for English language jobs such as the civil service in Dublin or London.

Even in 1905 the Dale and Stevens report still criticized the educational system. It stated that the education system was in the same state as in 1899 when the payment-by-results-system had been abolished.²¹

¹⁴ The transcription of Pearse's signature in the censusform of 1911 is incorrect. In the original document it is Pádraic Mac Piarais and not Patrick H Mac Piarais. For the census of 1901 see: http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Dublin/Pembroke_East_Donnybrook/Sandymount_Avenue_Part_of_/1285811/ For the census of 1911 see: http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Whitechurch/Haroldsgrange_/57855/ both retrieved 10-01-2011.

¹⁵ Séamus ó Buachalla, A significant Irish Educationalist: the educational writings of P.H. Pearse, (Dublin and Cork: Mercier Press, 1980), p. xxiii.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. x.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. x-xi.

¹⁸ Elaine Sisson, Pearse's Patriots, *St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood*, (Cork: University Press), 2004, p. 24.

¹⁹ Ibid. 25.

²⁰ Ó Buachalla p. xxxiii.

²¹ Sisson, p. 25.

Chapter 2: *An Claidheamh Soluis*

Pearse placed the blame for the state of the Irish language on the educational system. Throughout his editorship of the Gaelic League's news organ *An Claidheamh Soluis* 'the sword of light,' between 1903 and 1909, Pearse sought to raise public awareness about the language and educational problems. By creating public awareness, he wanted to save the Irish language. To reach a larger audience he wrote all his articles in English. He wrote in 1903: 'Take up the Irish problem at what point you may, you inevitably find yourself in the end back at the education question.'²² Pearse drew the attention of the public to the bad state of the Irish language by proposing solutions for the educational problems he saw. He pleaded that Irish should be taught within school hours. The lessons should be creative and child centred, and therefore teachers had to receive training in modern methods of teaching. Furthermore, since there were no good Irish textbooks available, certainly not for primary schools, Pearse proposed to leave out the textbooks all together and teach the children from the blackboard.²³ Irish could be used outside lessons as well. Pearse gave calling the roll in Irish, performing drills in Irish and encouraging Irish in the playground as practical examples. Furthermore, in Irish-speaking districts teachers who were fluent Irish speakers should be assigned. Moreover, Pearse proposed the introduction of Irish as a subject on every day and boarding school and he proposed the introduction of Irish History in every school and college in Ireland.²⁴ In order to establish a standard, Pearse started to write educational programs in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, on which he received feedback from readers.²⁵ Pearse did not go so far as to state that all schools should be all Irish. He knew well that the majority of the people were English speakers. Therefore, he proposed a bilingual way of teaching in those districts. Pearse drew his inspiration for bilingual teaching from modern educationalists on the continent. He wrote extensively about how to implement a bilingual programme in Irish schools.²⁶ Pearse wrote victoriously but prematurely in 1904: 'Well, to put the matter in a nutshell, our policy and substantially our programme have been adopted by the Commissioners of National Education! Bilingualism in education is at long last, officially established in Ireland'.²⁷ To get a better understanding of bilingual education himself, Pearse travelled through Belgium in 1905. There, he visited Belgian primary and secondary schools and studied the way French and Flemish coexisted. *He published his travel stories in *An Claidheamh Soluis* during that year.

Moreover, Pearse also started to write short stories for children during this period. Again he started doing this because there were no short stories available in modern spoken Irish. His first story Pearse wrote under the pseudonym Colm O Connaire, since he wanted to be taken seriously.²⁸ His story had the ambiguous title *Poll an Phiobaire* which could be translated as 'the piper's cave' or 'the piper's hole.' Pearse later renamed it *An Uaimh 'the wandering Hawk'*.²⁹ The story was published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* and later put on the list for the

²² 'Maynooth', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 18-4-1903, in Séamus O' Buachalla, *A Significant Irish Educationalist*, p. 4. Hereafter *An Claidheamh Soluis* will be abbreviated to ACS in the footnotes.

²³ 'Text-Books', ACS 5-11-1904, in *ibid*, p. 61.

²⁴ 'An Educational Programme', ACS 7-11-1903, in *ibid*, pp. 7-10, see also 'Sham Teaching and Real Teaching', ACS 14-11-1903, in *ibid*, pp. 10-11.

²⁵ For a primary school educational programme see 'The Primary Schools,' ACS 26-12-1903, in *ibid*, pp. 21-23.

²⁶ See, 'Bilingual Education', ACS 2-1-1904, in *ibid*, pp. 23-25, 'Bilingual Education,' ACS 9-1-1904, ACS 16-1-1904, *ibid*, pp. 25-30.

²⁷ 'Bilingual Education!' ACS, 23-4-1904, in *ibid*, p. 43.

²⁸ Pearse new that he would be criticised if he wrote under his own name since he was no native Irish speaker. See, Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The triumph of failure*, (London: Gollancz, 1977), pp. 93-98, for criticism he received.

²⁹ Desmond Ryan, *The man called Pearse*, p. 8 and p. 31.

intermediate examination. Hereafter, Pearse started to write short stories under his own name. He published a book called *Íosagán agus Sgéalte Eile* 'Little Jesus and other stories'. The book existed out of four children's short stories and received good reviews in *An Claidheamh Soluis*. Pearse wrote these stories so they could be used in the classroom and thereby stimulating the use of Irish in the education system. However, he also wanted to provide Irish children with something to read. There was no modern Irish literature for children available so Pearse filled the gap. All Pearse's stories were later used as literature for intermediate exams.³⁰ During his period as editor for *An Claidheamh Soluis* Pearse not only wrote articles about teaching, he also proposed that new training colleges were set up and an Irish University should be established. This led to conflicts with many bishops in Ireland. It even led some bishops to declare that clergymen were forbidden to take part in Gaelic League activities.³¹

However, Pearse still came back to the theme of the primary school if he saw the need for it.³² How to 'Irishise' as Pearse used to put it, the educational system is a recurring theme in Pearse's articles. 'Of course, we all know in a general way what we want; we have got to Irishise education in this country from the smallest National School on a western mountainside, through all the stages of primary, intermediate, and university education, religious and secular, literary, scientific, professional and technical up to the highest educational institutions in the land.'³³

Many authors agree that Pearse was very persistent as editor. He kept hammering away at the same subject. By constantly telling people how to improve the educational system and thereby the state of the Irish language, Pearse hoped that people would become more nationalistic. By calling on members of the Gaelic League he hoped to improve the Irish language programme. One of his first editorials, in which he promoted language week, gives a clear view of how he saw the language in connection to the Gaelic League: 'On the success of *Seachtmhain na Gaedhilge*³⁴ depends the extent to which the League can operate on the Irish-speaking districts during the coming twelve months. On the organisation of the Irish-speaking districts depends the life or death of the language. On the life or death of the language depends the life or death of the nation. That is the issue at stake.'³⁵ Pearse tried to save the Irish language by writing editorials about those topics, telling people to be proud of their own language and raising awareness about how the language was treated in schools.³⁶

³⁰ For more details about Pearse's short stories see, Edwards, pp. 93-98. See also Sisson, pp. 64-67. For the Irish and English versions of the stories see, Padraic Henry Pearse, (collected and edited by Séamus Ó Buachalla), *The literary writings of Patrick Pearse = Na Scribhinní Liteartha le Pádraig Mac Piarais*, (Dublin: Mercier Press 1979).

³¹ 'The University Crisis', ACS 1-5-1909, in Ó Buachalla, pp. 226-229.

³² See, 'The British Treasury and Ireland', ACS 25-2-1905, in *ibid*, p. 75, and 'The Schools' ACS 11-1-1908, in *ibid*, p. 154.

³³ 'An Educational Programme,' ACS 7-11-1903, in *ibid* p. 8.

³⁴ This is the pre-standardised version of 'Seachtain na Gaeilge'.

³⁵ 'The issue at stake', ACS 14-3-1903, in *ibid*, p. 1.

³⁶ Pearse not only wrote articles about educational topics. For more details about other topics see, Edwards, pp. 64-93 and 97-111.

Chapter 3: Sgoil Éanna

As early as 1903 Irish nationalists and Gaelic revivalists started to talk about a school for 'Irish Irelanders'. Pearse expressed the hope that someone would establish such a school: 'It is a project that would gladden the heart of every Irish Irelander if it could be accomplished in time to save the living language.'³⁷ When nobody took up the challenge Pearse decided to do it. When Pearse wrote to his friends that he wanted to establish a school, he got very sceptical reactions. Even though Gaelic leaguers liked the idea of a school where Irish would be the working language and Irish history would be important, people were reluctant to give their financial support because they were not very rich themselves. Macneill was sceptical about turning out fluent Irish speakers. 'I cannot at all agree with you that any course of instruction at school will produce really Irish-speaking children, unless there is a domestic foundation, or its equivalent, to build upon. I fear you have in your mind some imaginary state of things which does not exist. Nothing but life can teach a whole live language,...'³⁸

However, when Pearse got enough financial support, St. Enda's or Sgoil Éanna was founded in 1908. The school was founded with a nationalistic view. Irish was made the working language of the school as much as possible³⁹, Irish history and Irish stories were told and hurling and Gaelic football were played. The school was established in Dublin in Cullenswood House which had nationalistic affinities.⁴⁰ It was a spacious location which was rare for those times. From the start the school received her pupils from important Gaelic Leaguers. Among them were Eoin MacNeill's three sons and a nephew, although MacNeill had his doubts about the success of Pearse's language policy he wanted to give his children an Irish education now there was a chance;⁴¹ the MP and Gaelic Leaguer Stephen Gwynn enrolled his son Denis;⁴² William Bulfin's son Éamonn attended as a boarder, as Bulfin lived in Argentina and was the editor of the League paper, *The Southern Cross*⁴³; George Moore's nephew Ulick attended, as did W. P. Ryan's son Desmond.⁴⁴ James Larkin's sons joined later in the school's history⁴⁵, while relations of Agnes O'Farrelly, Mary Hayden⁴⁶, Stephen

³⁷ 'The New Coisde Gnótha: It's Work', ACS 9-5-1903, in Ó Buchalla, p. 4.

³⁸ See, Edwards, p. 112-113.

³⁹ There was no technical Irish vocabulary for mathematical subjects. Therefore Pearse had to use English in those subjects.

⁴⁰ In Cullenswood House the historian William Lecky was born. Lecky would become a well known Irish historian. Pearse found Lecky's academic achievements a good role model for his pupils. During the Easter Rising the house was used as a safehouse. See, Sisson, p. 19.

⁴¹ Eoin Macneill was the second man in the Gaelic League until 1915. After that year Macneill became president of the League because Douglas Hyde stepped down since he found that his organisation had become too political. Hyde's fears were well founded. See Bulmer Hobson, *A Short History of the Irish Volunteers* (Dublin: Candle Press, 1918), about this topic. Although Macneill approved of the Irish Volunteers he was against the Easter Rising which was proposed by Pearse. See, Eoin Macneill and F. X. Martin, Eoin Macneill on the 1916 Rising, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 12, No 47, March 1961, pp. 226-271, about this topic.

⁴² Dennis Gwynn wrote a critical article about Pearse in which he wondered if things had been for the better or the worse after the rising. See, Dennis Gwynn, 'Patrick Pearse,' *Dublin Review* January-March, 1923, pp. 91-105.

⁴³ Edwards calls this paper a 'Gaelic exile paper' see Edwards, p. 114.

⁴⁴ Desmond Ryan became a close friend of Pearse and many authors call him Pearse's first biographer. He wrote two books *The Story of a Success*, (Dublin: Phoenix, 1919, which dealt with St. Enda's and *The man called Pearse*, (Dublin: Maunsell, 1919.) He also published an article 'St. Enda's fifty years after' *Irish University Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, Jubilee Issue (Autumn - Winter, 1960), pp. 82-90.

⁴⁵ James Larkin was the leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. He is well known for organizing the Dublin Lock-Out in 1913. Pearse sympathised with the strike. Larkin was close friends with James Connolly, one of the executed leaders of the 1916 Rising. For information about Larkin and Connolly See, Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, (London, Profile Books, 2004) chapters 1 and 2. For information about the Lock-Out see, *ibid*, pp. 165-170.

Barrett and Padraic Colum also attended.⁴⁷ Having such a variety of attendance shows that Pearse was accepted by the wider nationalist spectrum.

St. Enda's was a boys school that wanted to train her pupils to be good Irish citizens and to fight for Ireland if need be. However fighting for Ireland was only mentioned in the Irish version of the prospectus.⁴⁸ Preserving the Irish language, Irish storytelling and Irish games were all used to create a love for Ireland. With Pearse as its headmaster who had written so many articles on educational topics in *An Claidheamh Soluis* and *Irish short stories* besides, a new refreshing educational system was put into place. Pearse saw himself as a fosterer who provided the children in his care with a good education. He often refers to his pupils as the boy core of Emhain, which refers back to the Old Irish saga hero Cú Chulainn who received fosterage in that area in Ireland. Also words from the Old Irish warriors the Fianna and the Irish Christian monk Colm Cille were often used.⁴⁹ Hereby Pearse created a Christian school with an Irish Celtic layer underneath.

The school was not only successful because many pupils won hurling and football championships. Also many prominent Gaelic Leaguers such as Irish translators Standish O'Grady and Margaret Hutton, but also poet W. B. Yeats and count and countess Markievicz came to give lectures at the school.⁵⁰ Hereby St. Enda's established a name in the nationalistic circles of Dublin. Furthermore, Irish pageants and plays were acted out which received enthusiastic responses from the audience and granted much publicity for the school.⁵¹

However, not everything went so well. St. Enda's had financial difficulties almost from the start. When Pearse decided to move the school to the Hermitage in Rathfarnham in 1910, things start to go downhill. He wanted to move the school to a more secluded area because 'the school was too much in the Suburban groove. The city was too near; the hills were too far.'⁵² This shows the romantic view Pearse and many other Gaelic Leaguers had of the Irish language. Pearse himself had a holiday cottage in Rosmuc in the Connemara gaeltacht which is still standing today. The reason for his cottage in the west of Ireland was that he found that the people from the west spoke the purest Irish. His romantic view on the language was also echoed in his creative literature which was all set in rural Ireland. After the move to a more

⁴⁶ Mary Heyden was a famous historian and prominent Gaelic Leaguer.

⁴⁷ Sisson, p. 7, and Edwards, p. 114.

⁴⁸ Edwards is the only author who points out this fact. She does not speculate on it further. perhaps Pearse did not want the state authorities finding out about his highly charged nationalistic rhetoric. This might explain why the bit about "fighting for Ireland" is only mentioned in Irish and might therefore go unnoticed by the predominantly English-speaking authorities. See, Edwards, p. 115.

⁴⁹ Pearse explained with citations from his heroes what he meant in the School organ 'an Macaomh' 'the sons, or students'. The Cú Chulainn tradition meant 'better is short life with honour than long life with dishonour,' 'I care not though I were to live but one day and one night, if only my fame and my deeds live after me;' the noble tradition of the Fianna, 'we, the Fianna, never told a lie, falsehood was never imputed to us,' 'strength in our hands, truth on our lips, and cleanness in our hearts;' the Christ-like tradition of Colm Cille, 'if I die, it shall be from the excess of the love I bear the Gael.' It seems to me that with this appeal it will be an easy thing to teach Irish boys to be brave and unselfish, truthful, and pure; I am certain that no other appeal will so stir their hearts or kindle their imaginations to heroic things.' See, Ryan, *The Story of a Success*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Countess Markievicz founded the boyscouts Fianna h'Éreann who fought during the Easter Rising. For a full list of lecturers at St. Enda's see, Sisson, p. 38.

⁵¹ For a general description about the pageants the St. Enda's boys performed see, Sisson, pp. 82, and 90, and Ryan, *Story of Success*, p. 68, pp. 83-84. The play seen as most important and impressive was 'The Passion Play' or an Pháis. For a detailed description of 'The Passion Play' see, *Story of Success*, pp. 99-107. See also, Elaine Sisson, pp. 39-44. See also, Edwards, pp. 139-140. For a thorough overview of what Pearse wrote about other plays and actors see, Philip O'Leary, *The Prose literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921, Ideology and Innovation*, (Pennsylvania: State University Press, 1994).

⁵² Ryan, *Story of Success*, p. 46.

rural setting, Pearse lost his day pupils. Many parents did not want their children to stay at St. Enda's as boarding school. This halved the amount of pupils. Moreover, Pearse started to be more occupied with revolutionary thoughts. Pearse became involved with the Irish volunteers and became a member of the secret Irish republican brotherhood 'IRB' in 1913. When he went to America in 1914 to raise funds for his school he came in contact with members of the Fenian Brotherhood who lived in America and his mindset became revolutionary.⁵³ Pearse started to prepare the rising from 1915 onwards together with the IRB.⁵⁴ When Pearse was executed in May 1916 the school lived on but the spirit was gone. Pearse's sister and mother did not have the teaching capacity of their son and constant quarrels between them and the fundraising committee did not help either. Many people admitted that the school should have died with its founder.⁵⁵ The school closed finally in 1935 never to open again and the hermitage in Rathfarnham is now used as St. Enda's museum.

Chapter 4: Did the language policy Pearse proposed survive the 20th century?

When we look at reports written before Ireland became independent, we see a decline in the Irish language. In 1911, so even when bilingual education was implemented, a census showed that only 17.6% of the population could speak Irish.⁵⁶ Reports written by the Department of Education confirmed this. They mentioned that: 'there seems to be very little local interest in the language revival. Many of the parents consider it a sheer waste of time for their children to learn Irish.'⁵⁷ The Inspector for Letterkenny observed that 'the parents, as a body, display no desire to have the language taught to their children'⁵⁸ while the Inspector for the Galway region noted that 'it is exceedingly disappointing to find on close enquiry in the Gaeltacht that English is the language most highly favoured. The parents speak Irish beautifully, but never seem to do so to their children, when they know sufficient English to serve their purpose.'⁵⁹

When Ireland became independent in 1921 an unstable period followed due to the civil war which arose after signing the treaty. This instability led to difficulty in building up a state. The government tried to focus on the ideas of a Gaelic Ireland. This meant an Ireland with a rural economy, where people all spoke Irish, and the Gaels would become a respected people again. This view was very much romanticised and echoed the view of the Gaelic Leaguers in Pearse's time.

With Eoin Macneill as first minister of Education until 1925, the Irish language became the focus in the school system. Irish from then on was taught in Primary schools and it was made a compulsory subject throughout the whole school career. In order to train teachers, special preparatory colleges were set up by the government which taught people through Irish. People who passed in these colleges got priority in admission to teacher training. Extra grants were

⁵³ For information about the Fenian brotherhood see, John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 115-116.

⁵⁴ Thomas Clarke was an old member of the Fenian Brotherhood who revitalised the IRB. Although Pearse got most credit for the rising, it was Clarke who did most of the organising. See, Séan Farrell Moran, Patrick Pearse, *The Politics of Redemption, the Mind of the Easter Rising*, (Washington: CUA Press 1998), pp. 71-81.

⁵⁵ Edwards pp. 330-332.

⁵⁶ Nic Ghiola, p. 145.

⁵⁷ 'General Report on Irish, Report of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland,' quoted in Sisson, p. 207.

⁵⁸ Mr. O'Carroll, 'General Report on Irish,' quoted in *ibid*.

⁵⁹ W. J. Kelly, 'General Report on Irish,' quoted in *ibid*.

given to schools who taught everything through Irish and extra marks were given to people who answered their exams through Irish.⁶⁰

However, the narrow focus led to neglect in other education areas.⁶¹ Moreover, due to the unstable beginnings of the state, the government chose often only English-speaking people who were seen as better in government work, rather than Irish speaking people who had the romantic rural Ireland image as described above. Thereby, government policies became normalized. Pearse's ideal of schools ran on a voluntary system was not used. Instead, schools were run by Christian Orders such as the Christian Brothers, which often jealously guarded their educational duties. This made interference from the government difficult.⁶²

In order to raise the Irish language to a better status Irish was declared the national language When Éamonn De Valera drafted his new constitution in 1937.⁶³ The language revival policy achieved some results. By the 1940s the number of teachers that was qualified to teach through Irish had risen from 10% to 70% and 10% of the primary schools were all Irish. At secondary level almost 64% of students studied subjects through Irish.

However, even though on paper the people with knowledge of Irish rose, in reality few people spoke the language in daily life. In 1926 238,000 out of a Gaeltacht population of 427,000 were Irish speakers; by 1946 there were only 193,000 Irish speakers out of 398,000.⁶⁴ Many authors have many different ways to explain the language decline in Ireland. John Hutchinson thinks that the language decline was caused because the Irish language was not seen as part of the Irish identity whereas the Catholic faith is seen as part of being Irish.⁶⁵ A.J. Hepburn explained why the language still declines in the 21st Century. He thinks the decline nowadays is declared in a much simpler way. English is no longer seen as the language of the conqueror. It now is seen as an international language that brings opportunities.⁶⁶ However the revival has not failed completely. Gaelscoileanna all Irish schools, were established in the 70s which are successful. Some Gaelscoileanna even have waiting lists today. Also, initiatives are started where children learn Irish in a playful manner from a very young age.⁶⁷ Even though the compulsory element has been dropped by the government, *a small stream of Irish speaking people still leave schools, since Irish is still taught.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_culture_religion_1912-49, retrieved 30-11-2010.

⁶¹ See, Hutchinson, pp. 307-308.

⁶² http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_culture_religion_1912-49, retrieved, 30-11-2010.

⁶³ Éamonn De Valera was a member of the Gaelic League and commandant during the rising in 1916. In 1926 De Valera founded his own party Fianna Fáil, with which he won the elections in 1932. De Valera with Fianna Fáil ruled Ireland for 15 years, from 1932 until 1947. See, Hutchinson, pp. 320-325.

⁶⁴ http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_culture_religion_1912-49, retrieved 30-11-2010

⁶⁵ See, Hutchinson, pp. 307-314.

⁶⁶ See, A.C. Hepburn, 'Language Religion and national identity in Ireland since 1880,' *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 2, no. 2, (2001): pp. 197-220.

⁶⁷ For personal details about the language revival see, Maire Mhac an Tsaoi, In celebration of the Irish Language, *Southern Review*, Vol. 3, summer 1995, pp. 772-786. For more about the dream of restoring the Irish language see, Anne O'Byrne, learning a strange native language, *Social Identities*, vol. 13, May 2007, p p. 307-323.

For an example of learning Irish from a young age, see, Máire Mhic Mhathúna, Supporting children's participation in second language stories in an Irish-language Preschool, *Early Years*, vol. 28, no. 3, October 2008, pp. 299-309.

⁶⁸ Watson and nic Ghiolla Phadraig, p. 154.

Conclusion

Was Pearse able to save the Irish language? When one looks at the question from a statistical point of view, the answer would be negative. However the matter can be looked at from another more indirect perspective. With all the stories, editorials, articles and literature Pearse wrote, he filled a gap in Irish literature and language teaching theories. With his membership of the Gaelic League he reached a larger audience than otherwise would have been possible. Even though not all his plans were used e.g. the schools run on a voluntary basis, his legacy was used in schools and his creative literature became compulsory reading material. Many Gaelic Leaguers became prominent governors in later years. Douglas Hyde who was president of Ireland from 1937 until 1945 was well aware of the political significance of his organisation: *‘The Gaelic League grew up and became the spiritual father of Sinn Féin and Sinn Féin’s progeny were the Volunteers who forced the English to make the Treaty. The Dáil (the government) is the child of the Volunteers, and thus it descends directly from the Gaelic League, whose traditions it inherits.’⁶⁹ However with this argumentation, Hyde showed that the Gaelic League had become more political and that the language policy had been moved to a different level. Even though Pearse’s material was used in the classroom it still is difficult to argue that Pearse’s efforts saved the Irish language. Due to the fact that Pearse’s material was used at schools and the language teaching was compulsory, the language was kept alive. However, Irish is still not spoken in daily life by many people. Therefore it can be concluded that Pearse may have saved the language in an indirect way.

⁶⁹ http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Douglas_Hyde3344120424. Retrieved 30-11-2010.

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