There is no nation without a language (*Ni tír gan teanga*):
Language policy and the Irish Dancing Commission

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Dedication

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Abstract

This study examines how language is employed to (re)create an Irish national identity through one popular form of non-formal education – Irish dancing. I specifically examine the entangled histories of the Gaelic League and An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG), the Irish Dancing Commission dance. Together these two organizations have engaged in an anti-colonial project spanning nearly a century that links the Irish language, dance, and an idealized Irish identity. This year (2016) is the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, the event that marked the beginning of the successful Irish independence movement. In light of this anniversary, language issues are at the forefront of many peoples’ minds. This dissertation considers to what extent the articulation between language and dance continues in Ireland today, and how the role of language and dance in (re)creating an idealized Irish identity has changed from an anti-colonial project to one that seeks to reify Irish national identity in an era of globalization. Furthermore, I argue for a renewed focus on non-formal education in the field of Comparative and International Development Education, specifically the role that non-formal education can play in identity formation and fomenting language attitudes.
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Terminology

An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG) [an komɪʃun ɭə rɪnci gæləxə] – The Irish Dancing Commission. Sometimes referred to as *An Coimisiúin*, or the Commission.

An Comhdháil [an kɔɡəl] – Another Irish dance governing body that split with the CLRG in 1968

Ár Rincí Fóirne/ Ár Rincí Céili [ɔr rɪnci forɲə]/ [ɔr rɪnci kəli]– The céili dance reference book that outlines 30 traditional group dances
céili [kəli] – a. a group dance; b. a social event where group dances are done

Conradh na Gaeilge [kanə də gælɡə]– The Gaelic League. Sometimes referred to as the *Conradh*.

feis [fɛʃ] – Irish dance competition that includes music and other cultural competitions
   Irish pl. feiseanna [fɛʃənə]
   English pl. feises [fɛʃəz]

féile [fɛlə] – Irish dance competition
   Irish pl. féilte a [fɛlətə]
   English pl. feiles [fɛlɪz]

Gaeltacht [gəltaxt]– Irish speaking region, mostly located along the west coast of Ireland
gaelscoil [ɡəlskəil] – Irish medium school
   Irish pl. gaelscoileanna [ɡəlskələnə]
   English pl. gaelscoils [ɡəlskolz]

Oireachtas [əraktəs] – a. regional championships where dancers qualify for the World Championships; b. the Irish parliament

Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne [əraktəs rɪncə nə kɾɪɲə]– the World Championships

scoil [skəil] – school, commonly used in dance school names
Chapter 1 – Introduction

Tir gan teanga, tir gan anam
A land without a language, a country without a soul

Introduction

Curly wigs, flashy dresses, *Riverdance* – these are the images that pervade popular notions of Irish dancing; language promotion and language policy rarely enter the conversation. Yet, even though Irish dancing has become a global competitive sport on par with figure skating for athleticism and glitz, language remains an integral part of the mission of An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG), the Irish Dancing Commission: “The objective of An Coimisiún is to preserve and promote Irish Dancing, including step dancing, céilí\(^2\) dancing and other team dancing, and also to *promote the use of the Irish language* [emphasis added]” (CLRG, 2015a). As such, the purpose of this dissertation is to trace the relationship between Irish dance and the Irish language\(^3\) over time, and to examine how language has been employed by the CLRG, a non-formal educational body, to help (re)create an Irish national identity.

At its heart, this study is the story of two interconnected organizations trying to keep the Irish language relevant in postcolonial Ireland. In addition to the CLRG—the contemporary Irish Dancing Commission—this dissertation explores the older organization from which it arose, namely, Conradh na Gaeilge (hereafter, the Gaelic League). The Gaelic League was founded in Dublin in 1893 to promote the use of the

\(^{1}\) All of the Irish proverbs used to introduce the chapters are from http://www.daltai.com/proverbs

\(^{2}\) The word céili will be in written with a lowercase c throughout the dissertation, except in direct some quotes from older literature. This is a historical anomaly and is not used in current spelling.

\(^{3}\) I use Irish rather than Gaelic to disambiguate between Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic. This convention is used by Irish scholars, as well as being common practice in government documents.
Irish language. By the late 19th century, Ireland was well on its way to independence, and the Gaelic League was formed in the spirit of the Gaelic Revival, a nationalist movement concerned with renewing Irish language and culture (Hutchinson, 1987). Additional branches quickly cropped up in cities with large Irish populations around the world, including London, Glasgow, and New York (Cullinane, 2003).

Today, the Gaelic League is arguably the most powerful language lobbying organization in Ireland and, as such, has had the most influence of any organization in Ireland on national/state level language policy. This work includes efforts to develop dual language road signs, promoting compulsory Irish language education in the schools (Gaelic League, 2015), and securing commitments from the major political parties to include language promotion and preservation efforts in their party platforms (Gaelic League, 2016).

One avenue the Gaelic League saw for Irish language preservation early on was Irish dance, and in 1930 the Gaelic League established the CLRG. As the founding organization, the Gaelic League has influenced CLRG language policy since its formation. Eighty-five years later, the CLRG is the largest Irish dancing organization in the world, and language still plays a role in its administration and dance teacher certification requirements (CLRG, 2015c). Together these two organizations have engaged in an ongoing series of Irish language promotion efforts, sometimes through compulsion, sometimes encouragement, in a pattern that appears to follow the national language policy zeitgeist of Ireland over the past 85 years (Dance teacher and examiner, 13 Feb 2016, personal communication).
Two thousand sixteen (2016) was an exciting year to be conducting a study about language issues in Ireland. April 24-29 marked the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, an Irish nationalist movement to overthrow its colonial master, Great Britain. On April 24th, 1916 Patrick Pearse, a prominent member of the Gaelic League, publically read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic (see Figure 1). The Proclamation called for freedom from British colonial rule and the establishment of an independent Irish nation-state.

Figure 1. Proclamation of the Irish Republic, delivered April 24, 1916
Language, while not explicitly referenced in the Declaration, was nevertheless essential in establishing a postcolonial Irish national identity. It is, however, noteworthy that the entire Declaration was written in English, with the exception of the title. This is likely due to the fact that by 1916 less than 12% of the population spoke Irish as a first language (Finnegan and McCarron, 2000), and it is impractical to declare revolution in a language people do not speak. Though ultimately ill-fated, the Easter Rising marked the beginning of the end of British colonial rule in Ireland. The anniversary of the uprising was commemorated with speeches, céilís, and performances across Ireland and throughout the diaspora (Roîn an Taoisigh, 2016; Irish Fair of Minnesota, 2016).

The celebration of 100th anniversary creates a unique context from which to examine the tension between Irish nationalism and the globalization of Ireland. In recent years, Irish language use has been affected by Ireland’s shift from an emigrant sending nation to an immigrant-receiving nation during the 1990s (Conlon, 2007). In 1996, Ireland became the last European Union (EU) Member State at the time to achieve net-immigration status (Migration Policy Institute, 2009). For fourteen years, until 2009, the inflow of migrants exceeded the outflow. The peak year for immigration occurred in 2007, with some 151,000 migrants entering Ireland. As of 2015, that number had dropped to approximately 69,000 (An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh/Central Statistics Office, 2015). Although Ireland has returned to net-emigration, approximately 160 languages are now spoken in the country (O’Rourke, 2011; O’Laoire, 2008, 2012), with the top ten home languages (other than Irish or English) being Polish, French, Lithuanian, German,

In the face of such rapid globalization and increasing linguistic diversity, Ireland appears to be undergoing what Sassen (2009) refers to as “the renationalizing of citizenship” (p. 240), meaning the narrowing of who counts as a citizen. Indeed, until 2004, the children of migrants were automatically granted Irish citizenship if they were born in Ireland, but a constitutional amendment, which passed with 79% of the vote, banned that practice. Around the same time, Ireland sought to cut down on asylum applications by declaring “safe” states of origin, or states where the Irish government determined migrants were not under undue hardship or exposed to violent regimes and would therefore not be accepted as asylees. These states include Nigeria, Croatia, and South Africa. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia were originally intended to be declared “safe,” but they joined the EU and the point became moot (Ulin, Edwards, & O’Brien, 2013).

These immigration reforms conflict with the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030, which, among many other goals, states that Ireland is seeking to become a hub for “translation, interpretation, language teaching, publishing, language consultancy, and project management” for the entire European Union (Government of Ireland, 2010, p. 30). In other words, the Irish government hopes to attract more linguistically diverse workers who would migrate to Ireland to take these jobs, but it has
also depressed immigration to such a significant degree that it has reverted to a net-emigration state. Furthermore, the language and migration situation has created a tension between government Irish language revitalization efforts, which include giving hiring priority to Irish speakers, and the need to hire speakers of more globally-dominant EU working languages such as English, French, and German to grow the translation industry (Government of Ireland, 2010).

Within this complex postcolonial, linguistically diverse, and fluctuating net-emigration/net-immigration status environment, I examine the role of the CLRG to understand how a non-formal educational organization might work to manage Irish language use and attitudes and how these efforts are connected to Irish identity (re)creation. As such, this study is guided by the following overarching research questions: 1) How have the language policies of the CLRG reflected the broader socio-political context in Ireland during the past century? 2) How has the promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an imagined Irish national identity? Rather than studying the relationship between language, identity, and dance through formal education in schools, my interest lies in the ways that this relationship has been forged in non-formal programs because this is where learning Irish dance occurs in most parts of the world, including Ireland. With these questions in mind, in the rest of this chapter I outline the importance of studying language and Irish dance for comparative and international development education (CIDE), provide a brief history of Irish language policy, and lay out the theoretical framework for this dissertation.
Language issues have long been critical to the field of comparative and international development education (CIDE), especially research related to mother tongue based-multilingual education and language as a way to (re)create national identities. What stands out, however, is that these issues are typically considered within formal education systems; the relationship between language and identity in non-formal settings is under-researched.

With the advent of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Education for All (1990), the Millennium Development Goals (2000), and the new Sustainable Development Goals (2015), the field of CIDE has turned away from its focus on non-formal education. In the 1970s and 1980s, non-formal education was held in higher regard, as there were concerns that formal education systems were too unwieldy and expensive and did not respond well to students’ needs (Fordham, 1993). Likewise, research into non-formal education was prominent in the pages of major CIDE journals such as *Comparative Education Review*. Beginning with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, however, international education goals began a multi-decade process of bolstering formal education worldwide. These goals have had a significant impact on language in formal education, particularly as relates to literacy. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), all children have the right to the

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5 See *Comparative Education Review*, volume 20(3) in 1976, special issue on non-formal education.
development of their home language through education. Article 29c of the Convention states:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own. (CRC, 1989)

Similarly, EFA Goal 2 called for “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality” (UNESCO, 1990). EFA Goal 2 directly informed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Target 2A: “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (United Nations Statistics Division, 2008). One of the measures for monitoring this target is literacy-rates among 15-24 year olds (United Nations Statistics Division, 2008), and a further clarification of MDG Target 2A specifically calls for mother tongue-based education, arguing, “literacy in the mother-tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage” (UNESCO, 2000). The most recent iteration, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), also focuses on literacy as a desired outcome of formal education. SDG 4 states, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” which is clarified by sub-point 4.6, “By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy” (United Nations, n.d., p. 19). Although SDG 4 does provide a nod to non-formal education, mentioning “lifelong learning opportunities,” it is secondary to “inclusive and equitable quality education,” which
implies formal education. Mother tongue-based multilingual education is conspicuously absent from the SDGs.

Though non-formal education has not completely dropped off the CIDE research agenda, as evidenced by SDG 4, it is not nearly as prominent as it was in the 1970s and 1980s. This is an unfortunate change in priorities, as many children and youth still do not have access to formal education, especially formal education in a language in which they are academically proficient. With this study, I argue for a renewed focus on non-formal education in CIDE, specifically the role that non-formal education can play in identity formation and fomenting language attitudes.

One of the challenges in studying non-formal education is that the term is frequently used in juxtaposition to formal education, but it is seldom defined. La Belle (1981) offers a definition that is well-suited to the Irish dance case: “Nonformal education is organized, systematic teaching carried on outside of the formal, usually chronologically graded and hierarchically structured, school system that is intended to provide particular types of learning to specific populations” (p. 316). Irish dance education is highly organized and systematic, with a major organizing body in the CLRG and thousands of dance schools worldwide. These schools provide instruction in both traditional and more innovative forms of Irish dancing. Where La Belle falls short is in his assignment of hierarchical structures being limited to formal education. Irish dancing follows a rigid hierarchical structure with dancers ranked from beginner to championship levels and with the number and complexity of dances increasing at each level. These hierarchies are also visible in other forms of non-formal education, such as martial arts
and music where students progress to higher levels of coursework as their proficiency increases.

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) further differentiate between informal and non-formal education. Informal education, they argue, is “the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media” (p. 8). Non-formal education, on the other hand, is “any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives” (p. 8). While Irish dance fits best into Coombs and Ahmed’s definition of non-formal education as an organized educational activity, it is important to recognize that formal, non-formal, and informal education all contribute to the attitudes, values, skills and knowledge that students learn. In the case of non-formal Irish dance education, the attitudes, values, skills and knowledge include physical dance skills as well as, ideally, positive attitudes toward Irish language and culture. A limited number of dance students also acquire dance-specific Irish language skills as well.

Bearing this in mind, the CLRG makes a fascinating case for studying identity formation and language attitudes in non-formal education because it is so intimately linked to the Gaelic League. As noted above, the Gaelic League has influenced CLRG language policy in many ways. Most importantly, Irish dance teachers in Ireland are required to pass an Irish language exam to become certified teachers. In addition,
members of the Gaelic League and the CLRG sit on each other’s boards; dancers can participate in Irish language competitions and win scholarships to Irish language summer camps; and competition syllabi in Ireland must be bilingual in Irish and English, as must announcements at the World Championships. All of this begs the question--what are the underlying motivations for these efforts? I will argue in this dissertation that the language policies of the CLRG are a reflection of the fluctuating socio-political context in Ireland during the past century, and that the promotion of language through dance is part of an ongoing process to define an idealized Irish national identity. In the next sections, I introduce CLRG and Irish national language policies to provide additional context for this study.

**The Language Policy of An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha**

The language activities of the CLRG are regulated by an Irish language subcommittee. While most of the measures mentioned above appear designed to promote positive attitudes toward and appreciation of the language, one stands out as a gatekeeping device. Since 1943, the CLRG has required dance teachers to take a certification exam, which includes an Irish language test. The full exam is known as the *Teastas Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha*, or TCRG (Cullinane, 2003), and certified teachers are regularly referred to as TCRGs.

Historically, the exam has required varying levels of Irish proficiency. In past decades there were mandatory written and oral components; currently, only a basic oral Irish exam is required. It is possible to take the entire exam in Irish, and at least one of the participants in my study did so. The oral language exam is conducted by fluent Irish
speakers and involves having a conversation with teaching candidates in Irish. Failure is rare, but does occur. As long as a teaching candidate appears to have put forth some effort in learning basic conversational Irish, however, they will pass (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 29, 2015; Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 7, 2015; Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015; Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015).

I follow Shohamy (2001) in understanding language testing as an arm of language policy. Shohamy (2001) suggests that language tests are “an excellent mirror [that] could be used for studying the real priorities of those in power and authority, as these are embedded in political, social, educational and economic contexts” (p. xiii). The language efforts of the CLRG, particularly the TCRG exam, make an excellent case for studying the priorities of CLRG as they relate to the political, social, educational, and economic contexts of Irish language revitalization both within the CLRG and Ireland writ large.

This *de facto* language policy in the non-formal educational context of the CLRG only applies to TCRG candidates on the island of Ireland, both the Republic and Northern Ireland, but not teachers teaching in other countries. This limited application is what initially led me to conduct this study. I wanted to know why, as a US Irish dancer, I would not need to take the Irish language exam if I chose to become a certified Irish dance teacher. It appears that the language exam, as well as the other CLRG language promotion efforts, are connected to the founding of CLRG out of the Gaelic Revival, the

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6 This dissertation will focus on CLRG in the Republic of Ireland because Dublin has been the seat of operation since its founding, and there are clear historical ties between CLRG and cultural nationalism in the south. Furthermore, CLRG did not regulate Irish dancing in Northern Ireland until after 1974 (Cullinane, 2013), and its reliance on Northern Irish language policy is not evident.
cultural nationalism movement of the early 20th century, and to the idea that language was and perhaps still is a necessary component of Irish identity.

While Irish dance outside of Ireland was a way for the Irish diaspora to stay connected to Irish culture, few migrants spoke the language and thus language and dance quickly became disconnected in the diaspora; certainly, the language was not part of my own Irish dance education. Today, Irish dance is so widespread globally, with schools from Russia to Israel to Argentina, that for many dancers, the connection to Irish identity has also likely been broken. Appealing to Shohamy’s (2001) mirror analogy, the continued existence of the language policy in Ireland, however, is suggestive of CLRG prioritizing the language as an element of modern Irish identity (re)creation. Though it might be argued that the language exam is a gatekeeping device, it appears this is not the case, given how rarely people fail and the assertion by multiple examiners that they pass candidates who have put in the effort to learn a little Irish.

Interestingly, until 2016, the language policy of the CLRG was largely de facto; a few isolated language rules existed, but these were never connected to each other in a comprehensive way and thus most of the language practices of the CLRG remained informal. However, at the May 2016 meeting of the CLRG, an official language policy was introduced for the first time. The policy lays out the mission and vision statements for Irish language use within the CLRG and codifies many of the elements that will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six, including requirements for Irish speaking office staff, bilingual competition syllabi, and the use of Irish at meetings. The mission statement of the new Irish language policy states: “An Coimisiún is proud to work in association with
Conradh na Gaeilge [the Gaelic League] in promoting all aspects of our culture, including the use and promotion of the Irish Language.” This objective is clearly articulated in the proposed vision statement:

That the members of An Coimisiún, the Registered Teachers and Adjudicators and the General Irish Dancing Fraternity would enjoy a deep awareness of our rich linguistic heritage and experience the Irish Language as an integral part of their dancing activities. (CLRG, n.d)

Although a formal policy statement has not yet been adopted, the vision statement speaks to the renewed importance of language for the CLRG. Indeed, the decision to embrace the Gaelic League, despite the sometime fraught relationship between the two organizations, is telling. The recognition of the “rich linguistic heritage” of the CLRG points to improving attitudes toward Irish after several decades of ambivalence. This new language policy also appears to mirror the increasing support for Irish at the national level.

It bears repeating that, at the national level, this resurgence of support for Irish appears to correlate with an influx of multilingual migrants. This is not to suggest in any way that the CLRG exhibits anti-migrant attitudes, but rather that CLRG language policy has reflected broader national language attitudes over time. At this moment in history, the combination of increased migration, ambivalence toward migrants, and the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising seems to be entangling ideas about Irish nationalism, identity, and linguistic heritage with ideas about globalization and modernity. The results may have implications for language policy at the national and organizational levels.
A Brief History of Language Policy in Ireland

To understand modern Irish language policy, it is necessary to consider the colonial roots of English language dominance and the decline of Irish. Language policy in Ireland is inextricably tied to the history of British colonialism and postcolonial efforts to reassert Irish national identity. Though Ireland was not officially annexed until 1537, Britain had long been involved in Irish affairs and language policy. The Anglo-Norman invasion occurred in 1169 and brought numerous languages to Ireland, including Middle English, as well as early dialects of French, Welsh, and Flemish. Some two hundred years later, in 1366, the earliest recognized prohibition against speaking Irish was written; the Statutes of Kilkenny forbade Anglo-Norman residents of Ireland from assimilating to Gaelic culture and language. The Celtic Irish were not forbidden from speaking Irish at this time, although future decrees would eventually suppress the use of Irish for all residents (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). Over the next century, English gained power in the towns as a language of trade, and by 1472, it was being used as the language of the Irish Parliament. Irish, however, was dominant in the rural areas where the majority of the population still lived (Crowley, 2005).

In 1537, the rise of English became nearly inevitable. King Henry VIII was declared Head of the Church of Ireland, and that same year he issued the Act for the English Order, Habit and Language, which decreed that Irish subjects were to adopt English cultural customs, forms of dress, and the language. In 1541, King Henry VIII also declared himself king of Ireland. The Act also ordered schools to teach children to speak English, with the goal of implementing English-only education (Crowley, 2005).
The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw continued colonization by the English. Early Protestant colonizers in Ulster were granted plantations by the Crown, while the Act of Settlement in 1652 pushed Irish Catholics, who were also the main Irish speaking population, off of their estates in the east and forced them to resettle at the western edges of Connaught (see Figure 2) (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000). The linguistic and religious divide the Act of Settlement began remains to this day, with the north being largely Protestant and English speaking and the Republic being mostly Catholic and retaining the majority of the Irish speakers. Gaelic uprisings were violently put down, and the influence of English continued to spread (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). Due to the Act of Settlement, the west coast of Ireland remains the heart of the modern Gaeltacht, or Irish-speaking area, to this day (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000).

Figure 2. The four provinces of Ireland: Ulster (green and white), Leinster (pink), Munster (blue), and Connaught (yellow). The southern and western regions, Munster and Connaught house the largest Gaeltacht areas. Ulster is divided by the
international border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The six counties in white constitute Northern Ireland, while the three counties in green remain in the Republic; together they make up the nine counties of Ulster. (Free Genealogy Resources, 2009)

Nearly two hundred years later, in 1831, Henry VIII’s vision of English in the schools was realized with the advent of the National School System. The medium of instruction in the National Schools was English, and speaking Irish was actively discouraged (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). Children who spoke Irish were forced to wear signs around their neck or kneel on the floor for others to ridicule (Benson, 2013). Though such treatment was degrading, other schooling options for Irish speaking students were even more undesirable--hedge schools were rural schools that taught Irish literacy, but classes were often conducted outside near the hedgerow, hardly ideal in a country that averages 1000mm of rain a year. Similarly disagreeable to many families were the Irish-medium Protestant schools, which maintained the Irish language but proselytized the children. Thus, many parents chose the English medium National Schools (Crowley, 2005). There was also a growing perception that English was the language of the future, more useful than Irish for employment and emigration (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). Linguist Jim McCloskey, himself a second language speaker of Irish, discussed the psychological impact of the choice between English and Irish on Public Radio International’s “The World in Words” podcast:

To really remove a language from a community, you have to take a particular step, you have to convince the speakers of that language that it is a burden rather than a culturally useful tool. It’s only at that point that they will take the extraordinary step of not speaking their native language to their own children. Any language that is eliminated, that’s the crucial step that has to be taken in a single generation, a generation that has to
come to believe that their language is such a burden that they will not pass that burden on to their own children [emphasis added]. (Cox, 2016)

Via the National School System, the British colonial government succeeded in convincing people that Irish was a burden that should not be borne by children.

Dorian (1981) referred to the phenomenon of sudden and drastic language shift as tip:

A gradual accretion of negative feeling toward the subordinate group and its language, often accompanied by legal as well as social pressure, until a critical moment arrives and the subordinated group appears to abruptly abandon its original mother tongue and switch over to exclusive use of the dominant language. (p. 75)

Although Dorian’s study focused on the death of a Scottish Gaelic dialect in the face of growing English dominance, her findings apply equally to Irish and align well with McCloskey’s description of language as a burden.

While the national school system contributed to the negative attitudes associated with language tip in Ireland, emigration and famine had a far bigger impact on the decline of Irish language speakers. When the potato crop failed repeatedly between 1845-1852, it disproportionately affected the Gaeltacht, which made up the agricultural areas of the western provinces. More than a million people died and several million more emigrated, primarily to English-dominant nations like the United States, England, and Australia (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). Finnegan and McCarron (2000) estimate
that near the end of the Great Hunger\textsuperscript{7} in 1851, only 25% of the population spoke Irish as a first language, and that by 1911 that number had dropped to 12%.

The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 during this period of precipitous decline in the number of Irish speakers, with the aim of revitalizing the Irish language. In 1893, Britain still controlled Ireland as a colony, but Irish nationalism was heating up, and independence was only three decades away (Cullinane, 2003; Crowley, 2005; O’Connor, 2013). Thus, at the same time that speakers were shifting from Irish to English, the Gaelic Revival began. This occurred in tandem to, though not always in agreement with, the political independence movement. Because the non-Gaelic League political nationalists were more concerned with founding the Irish political state, the Gaelic League played a primary role in supporting the use of the Irish language as part of the national cultural revival. Its founding mission was “(1) the preservation of Irish as the National spoken language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue and (2) the study of and publication of existing Gaelic Literature and cultivation of modern literature in Irish” (Cullinane, 2003, p. 17). Unfortunately, during the period between 1881-1926, when cultural and linguistic nationalism were at their peak, the number of Irish speakers--first or second language speakers--dropped another 41% (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000).

When independence was finally won in 1922, the new Irish government took more responsibility for Irish language revitalization. The first President, Éamon de Valera, was an Irish speaker and prominent member of the Gaelic League. One of the

\textsuperscript{7} I use Great Hunger rather than Irish Potato Famine to acknowledge that although there was sufficient food in Ireland to feed the population, the British colonial government exported foodstuffs from Ireland while the Irish population starved (Woodham-Smith, 1962).
The first acts of the Irish Parliament was to write a constitution, which included Article 4, a provision that made Irish and English co-equal official languages, though technically Irish was recognized as the national language:

The National Language of the Irish Free State (Soarstát Éireann) is the Irish language, but the English language shall be equally recognised as an official language. Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provisions being made by the Parliament of the Irish Free State (otherwise called and herein generally referred to as the ‘Oireachtas’) for districts of areas in which only one language is in general use. (1922 Irish Constitution, as cited in Mac Giolla Chriost, 2012, p. 401)

This Article was revised slightly in the 1937 Constitution, making Irish more clearly the primary language and demoting English from equal status to second place: “The Irish language as the national language is the first official language,” whereas “The English language is recognised as a second official language” (Government of Ireland, 2013). The phrasing from the 1937 revisions remains in Article 8 of the Irish Constitution today.

The 20th century saw numerous official efforts to revitalize Irish. Among the most important was a series of language education policies that mandated compulsory Irish education in the schools. Starting in 1922, Irish was required to be taught in the national schools for at least one hour a day, and from 1926 on, it was to be the medium of instruction for as many subjects as possible, including math, science, and literature, provided the teacher was capable of teaching in Irish. Furthermore, Irish language education was to take priority over class time for other subjects (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000). From 1933-1973, Irish was a required subject for the school-leaving certificate (high school diploma) exam. Though the leaving certificate requirement was abolished in 1973, Irish remains a mandatory subject in school (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000;
Crowley, 2005). Students wishing to enter the National University of Ireland must still pass Irish in the leaving certificate exam (Ó Riagáin, 1997; Finnegan & McCarron, 2000).

On the one hand, these policies seem to have helped create a large group of Irish speaking youth with more than 65% of 10-19 year olds reported being able to speak Irish in 2002. However, this number drops dramatically once students leave school. Fewer than 40% of adults older than 25 reported being able to speak Irish in 2002, clearly many do not continue speaking the language after leaving school (Ó Riangán, 2007). This means that the language education policy of the state is not succeeding in reintroducing Irish as a home language. As such, the role of non-formal educational institutions in promoting the language needs to be seriously considered.

Language education policies were not the only language revitalization efforts the government undertook in the twentieth century. A Minister for Irish was appointed in 1919, three years before independence. Irish proficiency was also mandatory to obtain civil service jobs from the 1920s until 1974 (Finnegan & McCarron, 2000; Crowley, 2005). In 1943, the prime minister instituted Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, an Irish language steering committee for the Gaeltacht. During the 1950s a corpus planning campaign was undertaken; new lexical items were introduced and the orthography was modernized and standardized. In 1969, an advisory council on Irish maintenance and revitalization, Comhairle na Gaeilge, was convened to advise the government on language issues because Irish continued to decline despite all the efforts to make it relevant in the daily lives of the Irish people.
Historically, the Irish language has played an important role in constructing the imagined Irish nation, and it seems that this connection is once again being played up politically (Crowley, 2005). In 2003, the Official Languages Act was passed, which clarified the rights of Irish speakers to use Irish when communicating with the government and in court, as well as made provisions for the use of Irish place names on signs (Government of Ireland, 2003). In addition, a policy document, the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030*, was published in 2010 and laid out thirteen objectives meant to increase the number of home language speakers of Irish, support Irish in the schools and media, and provide opportunities for Irish in business (Government of Ireland, 2010).

Though it has strong political proponents, the modern regulation of Irish is still fraught. This Official Languages Act of 2003 was updated in the Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2014. The 2014 version of the Official Languages Act included eleven amendments to the 2003 version. Some of the amendments were not pro-Irish, including provisions to stop translating documents that are not in high demand (presumably this means not translating into Irish) and eliminating reference to the official Placenames Commission,\(^8\) which was abolished in 2012. On the other hand, the 2014 bill also extended the life of “language schemes,” which are county level language plans, from three to seven years and provided some clarity as to which civil service posts require Irish language proficiency (Government of Ireland, 2014b).

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\(^8\) The Placenames Commission was a federal body founded in 1946. It tasked with researching the Irish names of towns and other geographic features that had been Anglicized. In recent years the Placenames Commission created an internet database with the Irish and English names. After the official Commission was disbanded in 2012, this task was taken over by a volunteer committee (logainm.ie, n.d.)
Another important factor in Irish language promotion are the *gaelscoileanna* (Irish immersion schools). *Gaelscoileanna* are an increasingly popular educational choice; during the 2012-2013 school year, there were 144 primary *gaelscoileanna* and 26 post-primary schools serving 45,373 students (Gaelscoileanna Teo, 2015). As of the 2015-2016 school year, there were 267 primary *gaelscoileanna* and 63 post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland and another 35 primary schools and 6 post-primary schools in Northern Ireland, serving a total of 65,066 students (Gaelscoileanna Teo, 2016). The efforts by the government and private entities like Gaelscoileanna Teo (the Irish immersion school member organization), the Gaelic League, and the CLRG suggest a renewed interest in the role of speaking Irish as a critical element of Irish identity.

At the national level, the hegemony of English complicates the process of constructing an Irish national identity through language. Even though the Constitution elevates Irish above English, the reality is that English is the dominant language in Ireland. Although it has official status in the Constitution, Irish is what Kosonen and Benson (2013) refer to as a non-dominant language, “the languages or language varieties spoken in a given state that are not considered the most prominent in terms of number, prestige or official use by the government and/or the education system” (p. 1). This issue came to a head in the most recent election, which occurred on February 26, 2016. Likely due to the focus on the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, the Gaelic League issued a set of three language commitments that they want the major political parties to sign on to. These commitments were:
1. An additional investment of €18 million in an Irish-language and Gaeltacht plan to expand the use of Irish and to create 1,175+ new jobs
2. The appointment of a senior Minister for Irish and for the Gaeltacht, who has Irish, so that there is Irish language input at the Government table
3. The establishment of a joint Oireachtas [legislative] committee for the Irish language and Gaeltacht affairs of the same standing as other joint Oireachtas committees (Gaelic League, 2016, para. 6)

Before the election, only Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin, two of the four major political parties in Ireland, had signed on (Ó Gairbhí, 2016). The old ruling party, Fine Gael, did not commit and maintained the most seats in Parliament, but did not achieve a statistical majority. Complicating matters, Fianna Fáil came in a close second, and ultimately it was agreed that Fine Gael would maintain power in a minority government rather than the two parties forming a majority coalition (Doyle, 2016). It is as yet unclear how this agreement will affect national language policy, but it seems unlikely that the Fine Gael government will adopt the Gaelic League’s language commitments and that the status quo, specifically the policies laid out in the 2014 Official Languages Act, will prevail. This lack of commitment at the national level could lead to non-formal educational organizations like the CLRG playing a more prominent role in language preservation beyond their traditional purview, though at the moment this remains an open question.

Returning to the purpose of this dissertation, previous research has examined Irish language policy and its role in nationalism, identity formation, and language maintenance

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9 To have Irish is a common phrase in Ireland meaning to speak/know Irish. It is a literal translation of the Irish phrase: Tá Gaeilge agam, I have Irish.
10 Oireachtas means approximately “gathering” (Irish Language Blog, 2009). In this instance it refers to the Irish legislature. In other places in this paper it refers to an Irish dance championship competition. For example, the Irish name for the World Championships is Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne; the midwestern US regional championship is officially called the Mid America Oireachtas.
Similarly, while literature on Irish dance is more limited, it too has focused on Irish nationalism and identity (Cullinane, 2003; O’Connor, 2013). However, no study has brought these two bodies together to critically analyze the role that the regulation of Irish dance has played in Irish language promotion and language attitude formation. Given the intimate relationship between the Gaelic League and the CLRG, such a study is overdue. This dissertation will fill that gap and also speak more broadly to the role that non-formal educational organizations play in language maintenance and language attitude formation. Furthermore, it will address the ways that one educational organization’s language policy has changed over time in relation to national language policy and attitudes. In the case of the CLRG, the findings suggest that instead of consistently being the transformational site for Irish language practices and attitudes envisioned by the founders, the CLRG’s practices and attitudes have often been more closely tied to hegemonic national language policies that favor English. This may be especially important for other non-formal educational organizations to consider, especially those promoting mother tongue-based, multilingual education. National level language policies and practices, which are typically targeted at formal education systems, can still exact significant (hegemonic) influence on non-formal educational outcomes. In the next section, I outline the theoretical framework for this study, connecting the ideas of language promotion and attitude formation at the national and organizational levels to the concepts of imagined communities and invented traditions.
Theoretical Framework

This project is built around Spolsky’s (2009) framework of language policy, Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities, and Hobsbawm’s (1983) invented traditions. Turning first to Spolsky’s framework, I understand language policy to be comprised of three major components: (1) language practices, (2) beliefs, and (3) management. Language practices are the ways in which people actually use language, and they are best studied via observation. As I did not conduct observations of dance classes for this study, I focus specifically on the latter two categories (methods are addressed in Chapter Three). Employing the concepts of language beliefs and language management, I explore dance teachers’ and examiners’ attitudes toward and beliefs about the Irish language, as well as how and why the CLRG, a non-formal educational organization, is trying to manage language in Ireland. Spolsky (2009) argues that among the primary reasons that states and institutions attempt to manage language is “a set of beliefs (language ideology) relating language to national identity, the effects of globalization (the pull towards international languages, especially English), and pressure for the rights of indigenous …linguistic minorities” (p. 175). These factors arose historically in Ireland, as the Gaelic League, and eventually its subsidiary the CLRG, were founded to promote the use of Irish in post-colonial Ireland. It is one of the goals of this study to determine the extent to which these factors are still at play, if at all.

While Spolsky (2009) provides a clear structure for this study, his framework is limited in its analytical utility with regard to nationalism and the cultural imaginary. To supplement Spolsky, I draw on Anderson’s (1991) concept of imagined communities and
Hobsbawm’s (1983) invented traditions. Anderson’s work was inspired by the postcolonial turmoil in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s. He was particularly critical of the Suharto regime in Indonesia and what he argued was the fabrication of stories regarding the murder of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian soldiers and civilians, which ultimately led to him being thrown out of Indonesia until 1999 (Hauge, 2011). Nonetheless, out of these chaotic and often violent contexts he found love:

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism—poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts—show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles. On the other hand, how truly rare it is to find analogous nationalist products expressing fear and loathing. Even in the case of colonized peoples, who have every reason to feel hatred for their imperialist rulers, it is astonishing how insignificant the element of hatred is in these expressions of national feeling [emphasis original]. (pp. 141-142).

This sense of love for nation is pertinent to the Irish situation. The fight for Irish independence was characterized by violence and the murder of nationalist leaders by the British colonial government, and yet the “cultural products of nationalism” that arose out of the Gaelic Revival were music, dance, literature, language and sports. From this space of love, Anderson (1991) defined the nation as:

an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign… It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (p. 6)
The sense of love is evident in the phrase “the image of their communion.” Anderson clearly believed in the power of nationalism to create unity and cohesion. Love also arises in the role of language in imagined communities. On this topic, Anderson (1991) waxed poetic:

> What the eye is to the lover – that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with – language – whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue – is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother’s knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed. (p.154)

Though Anderson saw the potential of nationalism to be a positive force, he was hardly naïve to its many failings. In particular he noted that while people might feel a sense of camaraderie, they are also willing to engage in armed conflict and die for their cause, which has resulted in the loss of millions of lives.

Hobsbawm (1983), who was Anderson’s teacher for a time at Cambridge University (Hauge, 2011), took a more pragmatic view of nationalism. Though he was less concerned with community, he was concerned with how the cultural imaginary connected to nationalist ideals, in particular how traditions were invented to give an imagined nation a history. Invented traditions were defined by Hobsbawm (1983) as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (p. 1). In other words, people create practices intended to conjure up and connect with an imagined and idealized past. Furthermore, Hobsbawm argued that this connection with the past is “largely factitious” and that “they are responses to novel situations which take the form
of reference to old situations” (p. 2). Indeed, it might be argued that invented traditions are one of the major factors in creating imagined communities.

Other scholars have also made this connection. For example, Hall (1999) drew on these concepts, arguing that “the drive to nationhood in many of the ‘ascending’ small nationalisms can often take the form of trying to construct ethnically (or culturally, religiously, or racially) closed or ‘pure’ formations in place of the older…imperial formations” (p. 38). Hall also cautioned that such formations have led to genocide as some newly formed nation-states have been “subsumed by some essentialist conception of national identity” (p. 38). Though Ireland has not succumbed to genocide, one need look no further than the decades of conflict (known as the Troubles), from the 1960s-1990s, between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to see how differing nationalist imaginaries can lead to violence and death.

Though situated in the often-fraught Irish context, the case of Irish dance and language has more in common with Anderson’s positive conceptualization of nationalism, wherein language and dance are cultural products of nationalism that demonstrate love of nation. I argue that the CLRG and the Gaelic League have helped (re)create an Irish national identity around invented traditions that promoted language and dance as practices around which fellowships were imagined and futures dreamed. These traditions include cèilís, gatherings or parties where “traditional” group dances are performed, usually to live music and feiseanna, Irish dance competitions.

Although much of the data in this dissertation deals with these more positive aspects of nationalism, it is important to remember Sassen’s (2009) concept of the
renationalization of citizenship and consider how nationalism can be exclusionary as well. Indeed, Anderson (1991) wrote: “languages … appear rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies…nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language” (p. 145). That is to say, there are feelings (discussed further in Chapter Two) that the Irish language belongs to the “real” Irish rather than migrants. I do not say this to ascribe this position to the CLRG, but to acknowledge that this attitude is also part of the Irish language context today and to more fully engage with the competing constructs of English hegemony and the role of the Irish language in constructing Irish identity.

Conclusion

To summarize, the purpose of this dissertation is to document how non-formal educational bodies like the CLRG engage in language management and how the relationship between Irish dance and language has been employed to help (re)create an Irish national identity. I employ Spolsky’s language policy framework, Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, and Hobsbawm’s invented traditions to speak to both the positive and negative elements of language and national identity.

In the next chapter, I dig deeper into scholarly conceptions of nationalism, language and identity, and the role of non-formal education in promoting language use and learning. The rest of the dissertation is constructed as follows: Chapter Three is a detailed discussion of my methodology, including the research design and limitations of the study. Chapter Four details the entangled histories of the CLRG and the Gaelic League and also includes an authoethnographic section on my own experiences with Irish
dance because I believe it is important to explain the world of Irish dancing in order for the remaining data chapters to make sense. This contextual chapter sets the stage for the data in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Five addresses the period from the founding of the CLRG in 1924 to approximately the 1970s, and Chapter Six addresses the 1970s to the present. These two periods mark distinct differences in the language policy of the CLRG, which supports my central argument that the CLRG has mirrored Irish national language policy in its governance. The earlier years were a time of strict language proficiency management or compulsion, whereas the later years reflect policies meant to promote positive language attitudes, or encouragement, trends that are also visible at the national policy level. Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation, identifying the implications of CLRG language policy in the creation of language attitudes and identities and how this might be important to the future of language and dance in the CLRG. It also includes an argument for additional studies regarding language policy in non-formal education and ends with and avenues for future research.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review: Nationalism, Language Policy, and Irish Dance

*Ní tír gan teanga*
There is no nation without a language

Introduction

As introduced in Chapter One, the role of An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG) in language management is complicated. In this chapter, I analyze three bodies of literature that provide different perspectives on how to understand the relationship between language, identity, and nationalism in the context of Irish dance. These three bodies of literature are political, cultural, and linguistic nationalisms; language and identity; and language management in non-formal education. I have organized the literature into these three categories because they give a broad view of the ways scholars have thought about the role of language in (re)creating identities. I conclude the chapter by connecting these themes to my theoretical framework built upon the notions of language management, imagined communities, and invented tradition. Because the first two bodies are so large, I focus on how they have been discussed in Ireland by Irish scholars. The third body starts to bring together language and non-formal education, which is the type of education I argue Irish dance falls under. The remainder of the dissertation is in many ways an extension of this third body, filling the gap where Irish dance and language intersect.
**Political, Cultural, and Linguistic Nationalisms**

Nationalism can be broadly understood as “primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). This necessitates a definition of what constitutes a nation. As mentioned above, Anderson (1991) considers the nation to be “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 6). Taking Gellner and Anderson together, Ireland can be thought of as an imagined entity comprised of the Irish political state and the Irish cultural nation. The nation-state of Ireland particularly benefits from the concept of imagined community because political Ireland and cultural Ireland are not congruent, as evidenced by the Troubles between the 1960s-1990s, not to mention the significant Diaspora. To this day, many groups, including the CLRG, consider Northern Ireland to be part of the Irish cultural nation, even though it is politically part of Great Britain. This incongruence was one of the underlying factors in the civil strife. Regarding the Diaspora, a 2014 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study showed that 17.5% of people over the age of 15 who were born in Ireland lived abroad, ranking Ireland first out of 34 OECD member states (Kenny, 2015). Though certainly some of these people have been naturalized as citizens of other countries, it remains that case that more than 800,000 members of the Irish political state reside elsewhere.¹¹

Hobsbawm (1990) provided several further clarifications about the advent of nationalist movements that are pertinent to the Irish context. He argues, “For the purposes

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¹¹ Assuming a 2014 total population of approximately 4.7 million
of analysis nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make…nationalisms but the other way round” (p. 10). In the Irish context, this means that nationalist sentiments preceded the imagined Irish cultural nation of the early 20th century and the invention of traditions that went with it. Indeed, nationalist movements in Ireland cropped-up regularly over the centuries of British colonial rule, though until independence in 1922 they were always violently suppressed by the British military (Crowley, 2005).

Hobsbawm also reminds us that “national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods” (p. 11), which is critical to understanding the relationship between Irish language and dance. Earlier unsuccessful nationalist movements imagined different, though not entirely dissimilar Irish nations, but only with the Gaelic Revival do we get the connection between language and dance as facilitated by the Gaelic League.

**Political Nationalism**

While the definitions above serve to explain nationalism broadly, the overarching sense they give is one of political nationalism, or the creation/existence of a governing state. The Irish political nationalist movement of concern in this dissertation was an anti-colonial project that began in earnest in 1886 and was meant to overthrow the British colonial government. Indeed, the parliamentary push for Irish independence predated the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893, which is roughly synonymous with the beginning of the Gaelic Revival.

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12 Discussing earlier nationalist movements is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
The first Home Rule bill introduced to the British parliament in 1886 and the second in 1893. Both of these bills, aimed at establishing an Irish nation-state, failed to garner enough votes and thus Ireland remained part of the British Empire. A Home Rule bill was finally passed in 1914, but the independence movement was briefly delayed by World War I. On April 24, 1916, Easter Monday, the nationalist movement boiled over and an independent Irish Republic was declared by a revolutionary group known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Many prominent Gaelic Leaguers were involved in the Brotherhood, including Patrick Pearse who read the Declaration of the Republic (see Figure 1) from the steps of the Dublin Post Office (Roinn na Taoisigh, 2016). Six of the seven signatories to the Declaration were Gaelic League members. A week later, the Easter Rising was put down by the British military. Sixteen of the leaders of the uprising were executed, fourteen of whom were Gaelic League members and Irish speakers (Ó Conchubhair, 2013). The Irish War of Independence ensued, and independence was finally won in 1922 after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which established the Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) and allowed Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom (Crowley, 2005).

Spencer (2014) warned that thinking of political nationalism as non-cultural is overly simplistic, and this can be seen in the example above in that many prominent Gaelic Leaguers (Irish language and culture activists) were involved in the political elements of Irish nationalism. Nonetheless, there were people involved in the political movement who were ambivalent toward Irish. Many political nationalists favored English for the national language because it was already the dominant language, and it was more
useful for participating in global trade (Crowley, 2005). Because of this, groups like the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association took on the role of cultural “preservation.”

**Cultural Nationalism**

Cultural nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not limited to Ireland. It grew out of the French Revolution and French nationalism and the idea of one-nation, one language. When the French Revolution and thus the coalescence of the French nation-state began in 1789, “The ... popularization of the *one nation, one language* concept resulted in the aspiration to render the state and linguistic boundaries coterminous [emphasis original]” (Lata, 2004, p. 187). This concept spread to other newly forming European nations, including Ireland. Although Ireland was already definitively bilingual by the 19th century, cultural nationalists still found the idea of one-nation, one-language appealing and the idea inspired activists like Douglas Hyde, who was a classical language scholar, founding member of the Gaelic League, and the future President of Ireland (1938-1945) (Crowley, 2005).

Hutchinson (1987) argued, however, that it is a mistake to think of cultural nationalism as solely a linguistic project. Instead he proposes that “historical memory rather than language *as such* serves to define the national community [emphasis original]” (p. 9). This pairs well with Hobsbawm’s (1983) idea of invented tradition, which relies heavily on historical memory to provide the basis for modern “traditions.” Chief among the inventors of tradition in Ireland was Douglas Hyde. In 1892 he gave a famous speech on “The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland,” which set the agenda for
cultural nationalism that was used by both the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association. Among Hyde’s suggestions were both linguistic and non-linguistic ideas, including re-Gaelicizing people’s names\textsuperscript{13} as well as place names that had been Anglicized by the colonists; reintroducing musicians to Irish instruments like the harp, uilleann pipes,\textsuperscript{14} and fiddle; reintroducing or inventing Irish sports like hurling and Gaelic football; encouraging Irish literature; and most importantly reviving the Irish language (Crowley, 2005). These efforts were all intended to build social solidarity and cultural assimilation around “traditionally Irish” ideas, practices, and cultural artifacts.

**Linguistic Nationalism**

By pulling linguistic nationalism out as a particular form of cultural nationalism, we can begin to see just how critical language was to the creation of the Irish nation-state. Much of the history of language policy in Ireland can be understood in terms of linguistic nationalism, which Patton (2006) defined as a “theory of nationalism that established language as a crucial condition of individual well-being and political legitimacy” (p. 223). Likewise, Hass (1964/2008), in describing how nationalist movements take shape and eventually lead to independent statehood, identified language as a key factor:

Imbalances in skills and aspirations occur between two (or more) differentiated groups, so that language, religion, or a sense of past history becomes the unifying symbol of all this who feel they are the victims of social or economic discrimination on the part of the ruling group, which happens to have a different language and/or religion. (p. 451)

\textsuperscript{13} For example, Anna Farrell would become Aine Ní Fhearghail.

\textsuperscript{14} Uilleann pipes are similar to bagpipes but smaller.
Haas seems to have been channeling Irish history when writing this passage because the largely Catholic Irish speakers felt oppressed by the Protestant British government,\(^{15}\) and under the auspices of the Gaelic League, they rallied around the Irish language as a unifying symbol of Irish identity (Crowley, 2005).

Like political and cultural nationalism, linguistic nationalism in Ireland can be understood as an anti-colonial act. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2006, 2009) and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1999, 2001) have written about linguistic genocide in colonial contexts, with a particular focus on Kurdish speakers in Turkey and Iraq. They argue that linguistic genocide is the “forcible transfer of children from a linguistic group to another linguistic group” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006, p. 278), and it occurs through subtractive language education methods like submersion in and exposure to only dominant language media. Historically, it could be said that Irish underwent a linguistic genocide as Irish-speaking children were required to attend school in English, and many families were forced to move to the far western margins of the county as part of colonial land reforms that discriminated against Catholics, who also tended to be Irish speakers (Crowley, 2005). Even today, Irish speakers are largely exposed to English language media, such as television and radio, and to English medium schooling. However, the Irish government has also taken steps to alleviate these issues, including requiring Irish as a subject in primary and secondary schools, instituting state-run Irish medium radio and television

\(^{15}\) A religious analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Although there is a link between Irish nationalism and religion, there were also many prominent Protestant members of the Gaelic League, including Douglas Hyde, the first president of Ireland (Crowley, 2005).
stations, and altering the linguistic landscape of Ireland to include Irish on signs and buildings (Crowley, 2005).

In the context of Ireland, “linguistic imperialism,” rather than outright genocide, seems more apt. The English language played a significant role in the attempt to assimilate the Irish to English customs and values during the 400 years of colonial rule. Phillipson (1992, 2006, 2007, 2009) considered linguistic imperialism in post-colonial contexts in Africa, Asia, and the EU. He defined the term as follows: “Linguistic imperialism entails unequal exchange and unequal communicative rights between people or groups defined in terms of their competence in specific languages, with unequal benefits as a result, in a system that legitimates and naturalizes such exploitation” (2006, p. 348). Phillipson’s primary concern was the role of English in globalization, particularly the spread of English through language teaching and international media. He rather amusingly referred to English as a *lingua frankensteinia* instead of a *lingua franca* (Phillipson, 2009), but his point is clear – he is deeply critical of the elite position English occupies in former British colonies, and increasingly in the language education policies of EU nations that were never colonized by Britain or were, in fact, colonizers themselves.

Although Irish was long held as inferior by many people, considered neither economically viable nor politically useful, the Irish cultural and linguistic nationalists pushed for Irish as the national language, a goal they ultimately achieved. By way of comparison, contemporaneous cultural nationalist scholars in the United States were concerned with Americanization, or the process of Anglicizing the United States. Like
the cultural nationalists in Ireland, these scholars drew on the idea of language as a unifying factor, though in the United States the language of cultural nationalism was English. Economist and professor J. R. Commons (1920) drew on the national motto, *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one), to make the point that immigrants should assimilate to a common language, arguing that “to be great a nation need not be of one blood, it must be of one mind . . . If we think together, we can act together, and the organ of common thought and action is common language” (p. 20). He went on to note that race and ethnicity cannot be helped, “but the instrument of a common language is at hand for conscious improvement through education and social environment” (p. 21). Clearly for Commons, the shared linguistic mode of English was one of the social rules by which citizens, or aspiring citizens, must abide to achieve social solidarity. Similar ideas about education as a means for creating solidarity through a shared language played out in Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, the Irish language requirement in the National School system was a victory for the Gaelic League, which had pushed for Irish medium education since it was founded (Crowley, 2005).

Another way cultural nationalists thought about language for unity in both the US and Ireland was via literature. As co-editor of the nationalistic “The Immigrants in America Review,” Dixon (1916) was deeply entrenched in the Americanization movement and saw Americanization and English as a way to bring immigrants out of their “debased” state (p. 19). He went so far as to suggest that reading foreign language periodicals would cause immigrants to acquire “erroneous ideas” (p. 18) about what it meant to be American. For Dixon, the idea that Americans must speak English was
utterly without question. English was a duty to be forced upon immigrants, and teaching the language was “the heaviest burden” (p. 21), and it should be borne by society, especially schools.

Irish cultural nationalists shared Dixon’s feelings about literature in promoting language use. The Gaelic League’s second founding goal was “the study of and publication of existing Gaelic Literature and cultivation of modern literature in Irish” (Cullinane, 2003, p. 17). Agnes O’Farrelly, an early member of the Gaelic League, was particularly involved in this effort, and she engaged in both writing her own Irish literature, as well as sought to publish other authors as part of the Gaelic League’s Publication Committee (Nic Chongail, 2008).

The cultural and linguistic nationalists were successful in making Irish the first national language in the Constitution and in implementing mandatory Irish language education. However, the 1922 and 1937 Constitutions had already guaranteed the official status of English, and English had been the dominant language on the island for decades. Modern Ireland has never been a monolingual nation-state in Irish or English, and linguistic nationalist ideas about building social solidarity around one language, English or Irish, never fully succeeded. This has become even more true in the past two decades. Ireland has become an immigrant receiving state, and the number of languages spoken there is skyrocketing (McDermott, 2011). Though the idea of one-nation, one-language was never a particularly useful construct in daily life, education, or official policy, cultural and linguistic nationalism seem to be on the rise again, likely in reaction to the
large number of migrants. In the next section, I discuss an idea closely tied to linguistic nationalism—language as a marker of Irish identity.

**Language and Identity in Ireland**

Language and identity research is well-worn territory. Countless studies have found that language is an important marker of identity. What I focus on here is how this idea has been taken up in Ireland specifically. In considering identity, I follow Hall (1990), who suggests that:

> Instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (p. 222)

Hall further defines cultural identity, of which linguistic identity can be considered an element, in two ways:

1. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history.

2. As well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'... Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. (pp. 223-225)

These definitions live in tension with each other, but are not mutually exclusive. For instance, in Ireland, cultural nationalists attempted to impart a shared cultural code around artifacts like language, music, and dance that gave citizens of the new Irish

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16 See especially: Norton (1997, 2010, 2013); Pavlenko & Blackledge (Eds.), 2004
nation-state a sense of common unchanging and continuous historical experience. However, Hall and Hobsbawm both point out that history is full of disjunctures and that what constitutes a shared culture is, in fact, always changing. Importantly, Hall was writing from a post-British colonial perspective as a scholar from Jamaica, and as such, these definitions resonate well with the Irish context. The studies discussed below address both a sense of shared history and cultural oneness related to language, but also an ambivalence toward Irish and its purpose in the future.

Language and identity is not just of concern to scholars in Ireland, the government also regularly conducts surveys regarding the language. Darmody and Daly (2015) reported that 70% of people agreed with the statement that “most people just don’t care one way or the other about Irish,” but simultaneously 64% agreed with “without Irish [Ireland] would lose its identity as a separate culture” (p. 79). So, on the one hand, a majority of people feel that Irish is an important part of Irish identity, but on the other hand they think that their peers do not feel that way. When asked about whether or not children should learn Irish in school 82% agreed, though less than half (43%) felt that it was more important to learn Irish than a foreign language. These statistical findings resonate with the qualitative data below—a majority of people value Irish as a part of their identity, but they do not necessarily agree that Irish is a useful language. These conflicting attitudes are almost certainly a legacy of colonization.

Tymoczko and Ireland (2003) problematize the way language was used to essentialize Irish identity by the government in Ireland for most of the 20th century. “It was used in emblematic and rather stereotypical ways by "patriots" and politicians,
embedded in slogans and polemics, institutionalized in bureaucratic structures and educational requirements” (Tymoczko & Ireland, 2003, para. 19). This is in large part what led to widespread ambivalence toward Irish. However, they also point to post-colonial theory and understandings of hybrid identities as a way forward. In particular, they argue that the sudden “linguistic complexity” that has resulted from rapid migration to Ireland has set it apart from other post-colonial nation states, allowing it “to disambiguate…politically, economically, and culturally from dominant English-language nations … and to establish a place for itself in the globalized world economy” (para. 33). Unlike most former British colonies, Ireland was not very linguistically diverse, but in the past two decades the number of home languages spoken there has increased dramatically. This influx of linguistic resources has enabled Ireland to claim a unique political and economic space as a hub for EU translation services, a role other linguistically diverse English-dominant states have not taken on.

In this globalized, English-dominant context, both O’Rourke and Walsh (2015) and McCubbin (2010) consider what it means to be a “new speaker” of Irish, or Irish learner. O’Rourke and Walsh’s (2015) study challenges the notion that “authentic” Irish speakers must be first language speakers from Gaeltacht areas. They interviewed Irish learners from multiple regions on Ireland about their language practices and attitudes. Some of the participants learned Irish at home while others learned Irish at school or work. Although some of their study participants still held the conservative ideology that “authentic” speakers hail from the Gaeltacht, others rejected it and were proud of their
“new speaker identities” (p. 79). Like Tymoczko and Ireland, O’Rourke and Walsh (2015) found evidence of hybridity:

We see the emergence of new labels to describe new speaker forms such as “Dublin Irish”, and on occasion, a flaunting of hybrid forms accompanied by a deliberate attempt at differentiation from the ideal of the traditional native speaker…this is linked in part to their sociolinguistic inability to access the social world of the native speaker which they in turn voice as a demand for ownership of Irish and recognition as speakers. (p. 74)

This study, however, only represents part of the “new-speaker” phenomenon, as O’Rourke and Walsh only spoke with people who were born and raised in Ireland and would likely identify as ethnically Irish.

McCubbin (2010) interviewed migrants to Ireland to understand their Irish learning experiences. He spoke both with people who identified as ethnically Irish and were “returning” to Ireland after several generations, as well as migrants who did not identify as ethnically Irish. He found that there are disjunctures regarding the “ownership of Irish” (p. 460). In particular, he found that there is a public discourse that migrants should learn English and leave Irish to the Irish. This discourse exists under the guise of English being more useful for employment and communication, but seems to harbor an underlying essentialist ideal about who is allowed to or should speak Irish, namely ethnically Irish people. Conversely, McCubbin found that migrant Irish speakers saw learning Irish as an act of respect, and for all but one participant “Gaelic ethnocultural identity and non-Irish ethnic identity [were] not seen to be mutually exclusive categories” (p. 464). Here again, we see the notion of hybrid identity, participants found it was
possible to simultaneously identify as culturally Gaelic and ethnically Polish or Nigerian, for example.

What all of these studies share is the idea that Irish identities are hybrid and changing. Within this fluid space, language acts both to include and exclude various people. This lines up with Hall’s (1990) understanding of identity. There is simultaneously a sense of shared linguistic history, but also a constant remaking and ‘becoming’ through Irish and English that is creating new and hybrid identities.

**Language Management in Non-formal Education**

One potential site of hybrid identity formation is non-formal language education. Non-formal education is a fairly common way to teach languages; one need look no further than the proliferation of Saturday language schools for children and immigrant cultural organizations in the US offering language classes to find organized, systematic language teaching outside of the formal school system\(^\text{17}\) (Fishman, 1966; Kloss, 1977). Globally, English language classes are common non-formal educational offerings, though Benson (2005) also discusses non-formal mother-tongue education in Cambodia and Guinea Bissau as a tool to eventually introduce mother-tongue education into formal schooling.

Less well understood is how language is transmitted and promoted by other non-formal educational institutions, namely, those that are not focused specifically on language teaching and learning. Nonetheless, each of the groups discussed below has a vested interest in language promotion for national identity that goes beyond using a few

\(^\text{17}\) For example, I participate in non-formal Irish language education through an organization called Gaeltacht Minnesota.
technical terms (e.g. French for ballet, Japanese for karate). Given the small size of this body of literature education, one of the roles of this dissertation is to add to these findings.

In California, several Aztec Danza (dance) groups are working on “revernacularizing” Náhuatl, a language of the southwestern US and northern Mexico. These groups drew on Fishman (1996) to understand revernacularizing as key to reversing language shift. Fishman (1996) specifically argued that, “Revernacularization requires not only inter-generation language transmission, but societal change. More than a language is involved. If you are going to change the language, you have to change the society” (p. 183). The danza groups do this by holding intergenerational dance classes and traveling to participate in ceremonies around the region. Some younger danzantes (Aztec dancers) didn’t find the dance classes to be sufficient for language learning, so the dance groups also began offering lectures on history, dance steps, creation myths, indigenous instruments, and Classical Náhuatl. Regarding the Náhuatl lectures, Tezozomoc, Danza Azteca Huehueteotl, & Danza Azteca Tenochtitlan (1997) noted:

This element [lectures] was necessary for a group of people who have been completely disconnected from their indigenous language. Reaching this stage of consciousness established a consensual environment for language renewal necessary to begin implementing the process, model, and pedagogy for revernacularizing of Classical Náhuatl. (para. 50)

Danza is a deeply spiritual act for the Azteca-Chichimeca peoples, and reconnecting to the language Náhuatl through dance has immense sacred value (Tezozomoc, Danza Azteca Huehueteotl, & Danza Azteca Tenochtitlan, 1997). Though the contexts of
Azteca-Chichimeca and Irish colonization were quite different, there is a shared sense that dance can help revernacularize the languages nearly lost during the colonial era.

Discussing the Lynx Lake Band of Ojibwe in Ontario Canada, Valentine (1995) connected non-formal religious education and language promotion via the Cree Anglican church. Due to their proximity to the Cree people, the Lynx Lake Ojibwe speak Cree as well as Ojibwe, and in fact, their language is somewhat creolized with spoken elements of Ojibwe and a writing system borrowed from Cree. The main way that the Lynx Lake Ojibwe learn Cree is through non-formal religious education, and in particular through music classes for the church choir. The hymnals for the choir are written in both Moose and Plains Cree, and choir members are required to be able to read the songbooks, not just memorize the songs. Similar to the language experiences of Aztec Danza groups, intergenerational transmission of Cree is in a state of decline and younger members of the church choir often sing in English at a separate young adult church service. However, Cree is being preserved in the liturgy, and there is an expectation that the senior church choir sing in Cree (Valentine, 2005). These factors suggest that, as they get older, members of the Lynx Lake Ojibwe band are still obligated to learn Cree and the way they do so it through religious music education.

Askew (2002) connects dance, music, and language in post-colonial Tanzania. She focuses on the role of taarab singing groups and ngoma dance groups in the Swahilization of Tanzania. Although Tanzania has dozens of language groups, Swahili has been used as a lingua franca to help create the Tanzanian nation from the nationalist struggles of the 1950s onward: “[T]he growth of nationalist sentiment was greatly
facilitated by the existence of a language bridging a highly diverse ethnoscape” (Askew, 2002, p. 65). Taarab and ngoma groups were crucial to this national building effort. These groups were open to members of different cultural backgrounds and helped promote a hybridized Tanzanian identity built around the common language of Swahili. The dance groups, in particular, functioned as women’s aid societies that connected women across ethnic and socioeconomic lines. Dance brought them together, and Swahili allowed them to communicate.

In each of these cases, as with the Irish case, it is important to avoid essentialization. By this I mean that the various groups discussed above contribute to their imagined communities via music, dance, and language, but they do not constitute a singular or primordial vision for any of these nations. Instead, these groups represent the two parts of Hall’s (1990) definition of cultural identity; to greater or lesser extent, each group engages with a shared linguistic history while also participating in the act of reforming and becoming something new and hybrid.

**Connecting the Literature and Theoretical Framework:**

**The Remaking of Irish Culture**

Returning to Spolsky (2009), Anderson (1991), and Hobsbawm (1983) we can start to think about how these three bodies of literature about nationalism, identity, and non-formal education fit into my theoretical framework. Hall (1981) offers a helpful way to think about how language policy, imagined communities, and invented tradition might fit together:

Tradition is a vital element in culture; but it has little to do with the mere persistence of old forms. It has much more to do with the way elements
have been linked together or articulated. These arrangements in a nationalpopular culture have no fixed or inscribed position, and certainly no meaning which is carried along, so to speak, in the stream of historical tradition, unchanged. Not only can the elements of ‘tradition’ be rearranged, so that they articulate with different practices and positions, and take on a new meaning and relevance. It is also often the case that cultural struggle arises in its sharpest form just at the point where different opposed traditions meet, intersect. They seek to detach a cultural form from its implantation in one tradition, and give it a new cultural resonance or accent. (p. 236)

In other words, within constructions of language and national identity, there is malleability, but there is still adherence to a shared cultural code.

As part of Irish nationalism the Gaelic League and the Irish government sought to manage people’s use of Irish to (re)create an imagined and essentialized Irish identity. They did so by inventing traditions like céilís and feiseanna and using these events to promote the use of Irish language, thus connecting them in the minds and bodies of the Irish people. These traditions have in turn become codified and regulated by the CLRG, which has language requirements built into its organizational structures. Though promoting Irish is part of the mission of the CLRG, where Irish dance has intersected with global English (or Spanish, Russian, Mandarin etc.) struggles have occurred and Irish dance is constantly taking on new cultural resonances or accents.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the ways various scholars have conceptualized nationalism, identities, and non-formal education as they connect to language. While each of these bodies contributes to the overall picture of the role language has played in Irish national identity formation, none of them fully bridge the gap between dance and
language in this process. The third body of literature, language management in non-formal education begins this conversation, but is very limited in its scope. Thus, this dissertation adds to the scholarly work begun by the Aztec Danza groups and Askew in particular. It also speaks more broadly to the role that non-formal educational organizations (beyond dance) might play in language maintenance and attitude formation. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods I used to explore how the CLRG manages language and how participants connect language and dance in their own lives.
Chapter 3 – Methods

Bionn dhá insint ar scéal agus dhá leagan dèag ar amhrán.
There are two versions to a story and twelve arrangements to a song.

The previous chapters provided an overview of the relationship between the CLRG and the Gaelic League, introduced Irish language policy, and outlined relevant literature related to nationalism, language, and identity. In this chapter I discuss the research methodology I employed to explore and analyze language management in the CLRG, including my positionality, research questions, research design, data sources, coding schemes, and limitations of the study.

Positionality

Before discussing the details of the research design, I believe it is important to explain my personal connection to the study and to the CLRG. I enter this study as a 26-year veteran of CLRG-sanctioned Irish dancing and a critical scholar of language policy. I do have some Irish ancestry; Farrell is the Anglicized spelling of Fearghail/Fearghal, an Irish king of the eleventh century. My Irish great-great-grandparents immigrated to the United States in the aftermath of the Great Hunger and political rebellion in the 1850s. My family is believed to have lost the O in O’Farrell at Ellis Island to make the name sound less Irish. Despite this background, I do not identify as Irish-American, and my family’s cultural practices draw more on our German ancestry. As an Irish dancer, I have competed, taught, and performed in the United States and the Netherlands, and also taught lessons in Japan. I am currently a member of O’Shea Irish Dance, a CLRG dance
school in St. Paul, Minnesota, and I perform with the Knocknagow Irish Dancers, an adult performance group also based in St. Paul.

As a critical scholar of language policy, I also believe it is important to discuss my linguistic relationship to this study. One of the primary limitations of this study is that I do not speak Irish, though I am studying it through the organization Gaeltacht Minnesota. My strongest languages are English, Dutch, German, and Japanese—all major colonial languages that complicate my relationship with post-colonial (Irish) language revitalization. Out of necessity, this study was conducted and written in English, the colonizing language in Ireland, though I have left Irish words and phrases in interview and archival excerpts and provided translations.

Despite my lack of Irish proficiency, I have been able to Irish dance around the world. In my experience, English has been the primary language of dance class, even when many of the dancers were not home-language speakers of English, as was the case when I was studying Irish dance in the Netherlands. English also appears to be the primary language of Irish dance education in Ireland, even though the CLRG has an Irish language requirement for teacher certification (explored further in Chapter Five).

**Research Questions**

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, my theoretical framework draws on Spolsky’s (2009) language policy framework, Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities, and Hobsbawm’s (1983) invented traditions. These three concepts informed my research questions and project design. The research questions are as follows:
1. How have the language policies of CLRG reflected the broader socio-political context in Ireland during the past century?
   a. What language management efforts has the CLRG engaged in at various points in time since 1924?
   b. In what ways have broader national language attitudes influenced CLRG language policy?

2. How has the promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an imagined Irish national identity?

With question one, I hoped to examine the ways in which Irish national language policy has been reflected in the language management decisions of the CLRG over time, particularly in light of Ireland’s post-colonial context. The post-colonial context of Ireland has had a significant impact on national level language education policy, and I wanted to understand how official national policies might have affected the de facto policies of the CLRG. This is particularly important to clarify because the CLRG is a non-formal educational body, and it is not generally well understood how non-formal educational institutions appropriate language education policies intended for formal education.

With question two, I intended to dig deeper into the role of language and non-formal education in identity formation. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, essentialized notions of Irish identity are fairly widespread and often connected to knowledge of Irish. I wished to explore what role the CLRG played in identity formation processes and in particular how dance teachers viewed the connections between language, dance, and identity—did they share essentialized notions of Irish identity with the general populace, or did they have more nuanced ideas about “being and becoming” Irish?
Research design

To answer these questions, this dissertation is constructed as a qualitative case study of the CLRG (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). The units of analysis for this case are the individual CLRG language examiners, teachers, and dancers who enact and appropriate language policy. In addition, I reference archival documents to further understand the historical elements of language issues in the CLRG and provide an autoethnographic account of my own Irish dance experiences. Yin (2014) suggests that unusual or unique case studies such as this one are helpful because they “may reveal insights about normal processes” and thus provide “a distinct opportunity worth documenting and analyzing” (p. 52). In studying language beliefs and management surrounding Irish dance I hope to reveal more about the normal processes of language and non-formal education in the (re)creation of language attitudes and national identities.

Case study research represents a unique opportunity to dig into a topic in depth. The interviews I conducted (discussed below) were filled with rich detail and helped me understand the history of the CLRG as well as current circumstances regarding the language; however, the views of the participants are their own and it is important not to over apply them. For the purposes of the this study, the participants were representing themselves and their experiences with language and dance in the CLRG; they were not speaking as official representatives of the CLRG though some of them do hold leadership roles within the organization. Although the data cannot be over-generalized, many themes were repeated by multiple participants, which suggests that there are common experiences that may apply beyond the people I interviewed.
The CLRG is a large organization and its structure is rather complex. It is headed by a president and a chairperson who are aided by sixteen vice-presidents and two vice-chairs. Additionally, the CLRG has a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, a vetting officer, a public relations officer, and four office staff. There are also representatives from 25 regions across Ireland, Great Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and mainland Europe. All four regions in Ireland and at least two in Great Britain have Gaelic League representatives as well, and two CLGR members sit on the executive committee of the Gaelic League. With the exception of the four office staff members, everyone on the CLRG is a dance teacher. These members serve on eleven committees: costumes, ethics, events, Irish, marketing, music and dance, overseas development, rules, the examination authority, the board of management, and the executive committee. Members can and do sit on multiple committees (CLRG, 2015d).

This study is bounded by the CLRG in Ireland. Teachers, dancers, and examiners of other Irish dance organizations were not consulted because they do not require any amount of language proficiency, nor do they include language in their missions. One caveat to this boundary is that one participant has been involved with both the CLRG and An Comhdháil, a dance organization that split with the CLRG in the 1960s. Likewise, only teachers, dancers, and examiners with schools in Ireland were consulted because the language exam is only required of teachers on the island of Ireland and there is no evidence to suggest that any dance schools outside of Ireland are Irish-medium. Therefore, my autoethnographic section stands in comparison to the rest of the data and represents the general experience of North American dancers.
Research Sites

This study is situated broadly within the Republic of Ireland. I conducted interviews in four cities in Ireland, which I am not identifying for the purpose of confidentiality. Interviews occurred in these locations because it was most convenient for me to travel to the participants rather than asking them to meet me in a central location. Archival research occurred in Dublin and Cork. The two archives I visited were The Cullinane Archive Collection in Cork, which is located in the music department of University College Cork, and the Irish Traditional Music Archive, which is housed in a Georgian house on Marion Square in Dublin City Centre. Data collection occurred over the course of five weeks I spent in Ireland in 2015--three weeks in July and two more in November.

Data Collection

Archival Research. The purpose of examining the archives was to provide a more solid historical context for my research and to confirm my understandings about the long-standing relationship between the CLRG and the Gaelic League. Of archives, Popkewitz (2013) noted:

The archive serves as an external device through which memory/forgetting is constructed … The sum of all texts becomes what a culture keeps to attest to its own past and as evidence of a continuing identity, a record and preservation of what is remembered and what is to be forgotten. (p. 12)

Indeed, the archival materials I examined were a fascinating construction of CLRG memory. Much of the material in the Cullinane Archive Collection was taken from the CLRG’s headquarters when they were preparing to move to a new office building.
Instead of throwing away old documents, the CLRG allowed Dr. John Cullinane, noted Irish dance historian and CLRG examiner emeritus, to collect them and build an Irish dance archive with the materials. The archival materials were especially helpful in addressing the historical elements of research questions 1a: What language management efforts has the CLRG engaged in at various points in time since 1924? and 2: How has the promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an imagined Irish national identity?

At the Cullinane Archive Collection, Dr. Cullinane himself introduced me to numerous materials, including feis syllabi, non-academic books about Irish dance, and Céim, a magazine published by CLRG from 1970-1994. I continued my archival research at the Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin, which owns one of the only known full collections of Céim (donated by Dr. Cullinane). Céim is my main archival source and includes interviews with important CLRG figures who have since passed away, which allowed me access deeper into CLRG history than interviews alone. Céim also includes editorials about earlier language debates that have occurred within CLRG. I took pictures of the archival materials on my iPhone so I could analyze the data more thoroughly upon returning to Minnesota.

Céim is an English-dominant publication, with occasional sections in Irish. My own Irish, though limited, is sufficient to recognize the words for language (teanga), nation (náisiún, tír), Irish (Gaeilge), and English (Béarla), which I used as clues to passages I wanted to have translated. I transcribed these passages verbatim and sent them to University of Minnesota linguistics professor emerita, Nancy Stenson, who is a fluent
speaker of Irish as well as a scholar of Irish linguistics. Professor Stenson translated the passages into English and made notes about where there were typos. While some of these were mistranscriptions on my part, she also noted that, “publishers in Ireland are notorious for misprints in Irish” (N. Stenson, personal communication, April 8, 2016).

Thus, in the Irish passages, I have indicated where the errors are original to Céim with [sic, correct spelling: X]. In fairness to the CLRG, Céim had to have been produced on a typewriter without the possibility of spell-check for most of its publication.

**Semi-structured Interviews.** The bulk of the data in this dissertation came from eleven semi-structured interviews that were conducted with Irish dance teachers, adjudicators, students, and Gaelic League representatives. I used semi-structured interviews because the structured nature gave me access to a common set of data from which I could draw themes and begin to make generalizations (see Appendix 1 for interview protocols) (Yin, 2014). Focusing more on the “semi” part of semi-structured, Wolcott (2008) suggests that such interviews are valuable because they “have an open ended quality about them, the interview taking shape as it progresses” (p. 56). Indeed, as I asked questions about perceptions, practices, and identity, the protocol’s open-ended structure allowed me to follow-up interesting and unexpected points. Furthermore, I view the interview process as a co-construction of knowledge between the interviewee and me; a more rigid protocol could have positioned me as an expert and prevented a more naturally flowing conversation, which was how all of the interviews ultimately unfolded.

The interview protocols varied slightly based on the primary role of the participant. For example, I did not ask dance students and TCRG candidates about their
experiences taking the exam because they have not taken it. This was not an issue with
dance teachers, who have all taken the TCRG exam, or examiners, who have both taken
and regularly administer the exam. With the examiners, I included additional questions to
probe into the history of the exam and their role in adjudicating the exam as it exists
today. Several of the interviewees have lived through many of the changes in national
and CLRG language policy, thus these interviews helped me answer question 1: How
have the language policies of CLRG reflected the broader socio-political context in
Ireland during the past century? and 1b: In what ways have broader national language
attitudes influenced CLRG language policy? As I was able to ask about perceptions of
identity, the interviews were also informative in answering question 2: How has the
promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an
imagined Irish national identity? I recorded each interview with a digital recorder for
later transcription.

Ten of these interviews took place in Ireland in July and November 2015. One
additional phone interview occurred in February 2016. Each interview lasted
approximately 30-60 minutes, though the longest one took 2.5 hours. The in-person
interviews took place in various coffee shops and were most convivial. When allowed by
my interviewees, I treated them to coffee or tea and scones. All of the interviews were
conducted in English, but participants did use Irish phrases occasionally. Many of these
were the names of dances, which I was able to figure out on my own. However, I did not
understand everything and required translation help. The Irish phrases in my interviews
were translated with help from my Irish teacher, Mary Roguski and her colleague Wes
Koster. Mary and I listened through the Irish phrases together so I could write down both the correct Irish spellings and the English translations, and then she double-checked phrases that were hard to hear with Wes.

As mentioned above, the participants in the study were dance teachers, dance students, Gaelic League representatives, and language examiners, who are by default also dance examiners. With the help of my dance teacher, I used purposive sampling to select the participants (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Each of the participants was selected based on their deep knowledge of the history of Irish dance, the language exam, or the activities language committee; most participants fit at least two of these categories. I contacted sixteen potential participants who fit these characteristics, and eleven agreed to be interviewed. By interviewing a wide range of Irish dance stakeholders, I sought to capture numerous language attitudes and language management practices. The world of Irish dance is small, so to protect participants’ identity, I refer to them throughout only by their basic position in relation to CLRG and The Gaelic League (e.g. dance teacher, Gaelic League representative).

Transcription

Initial transcription of the interviews was conducted by a third party transcription service. Upon receiving the files, I listened through and corrected the transcripts as necessary and did my initial coding. One of the most important elements of transcripts is that they are decontextualized. Kvale (1996) explained: “Transcripts are decontextualized conversations, they are abstractions, as topographical maps are abstractions from the original landscape from which they are derived” (p. 165). Thus, transcripts represent an
interview, but they can never fully capture the interaction that occurred in the moment. Though I could not fully capture the dynamism of my interviews on paper, I added in information about paralinguistic features such as emphasis, emotions (laughter, sighing etc.), hedges, and pauses. This paralinguistic data gave additional clues as to how participants understand the role of language within CLRG. Tilley (2010) suggested that pauses can be particularly complex, and warns against making assumptions that participants are bored or uninterested. Indeed silences and laughter were both quite informative in understanding language attitudes during my coding process. For example, one way that some participants demonstrated the low status of Irish was with laughter. At least two also described less proficient people speaking Irish as “having a little laugh” about the language, though interestingly, this was correlated with having a positive attitude toward the language because laughter is fun.

Coding

I began by open coding my data to identify any relevant codes, both etic and emic, and likewise began creating families of codes (Benaquisto, 2008). The etic codes came from my theoretical framework and included: language attitudes, invented traditions, and imagined communities. Interestingly, these terms arose without prompting in some of the interviews, blurring the line between emic and etic. Because my data set was fairly small, I did not use any coding software. Instead, I color coded within the interview transcripts and sorted images into folders (see Appendix 2 for codebook).

In the open coding phase, the code families that arose were:

- attitudes toward Irish
• promoting Irish use
• Irish identity
• Irish culture
• history of CLRG and the Gaelic League
• Irish learning
• TCRG exam
• language competitions

While not all of these families were relevant to my final analysis, they helped me determine what my interviewees found most important and also helped me connect my data and theoretical framework.

Once I exhausted the possibilities for codes during open coding, I started a more focused second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2009), concentrating on those themes that spoke to language attitudes, Irish identity, and language promotion. These were the overarching categories that spoke most directly to the language activities of the CLRG and how they have changed over time. In checking my findings with my participants, I learned two important in vivo codes, or codes taken directly from what participants said (Saldaña, 2009): compulsion and encouragement. By this, the participants meant that the CLRG managed language in two distinct ways in different time periods. In the early years of the CLRG, the language policies were intended to make people learn Irish; more recently, CLRG language policies have focused on building positive language attitudes and encouraging people to learn Irish. These two codes frame Chapters Five and Six.

Member Checking

During my interviews, many of my participants voiced interest in reading my dissertation. To honor that request, I engaged in member checking (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). After my interviews, I emailed eight participants to ask about my findings, which
were focused on the history of CLRG language policy. I was able to ask the February interviewee about some of my findings in the interview. The two I did not email were dance students who were unfamiliar with the history of the CLRG. Three people responded, and each of them agreed that my analysis made sense. It was also during member checking that one of the participants characterized my findings in terms of compulsion and encouragement.

**Autoethnography**

Chapter Four includes an autoethnographic section that serves to explain the world of Irish dance and stands in comparison to the findings I present from Ireland, especially in addressing question 2: How has the promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an imagined Irish national identity. Ellis (2004) offers the following description of autoethnography, “The author usually writes in the first person, making herself…the object of research. The narrative text focuses on generalization within a single case extended over time…The story often discloses hidden details of private life and highlights emotional experience” (p. 30). Behar (1997) refers to this last part as being “vulnerable” (p. 1), and Spiro (1992) calls on authors to “make the strange familiar and the familiar strange” (p. 53). Thus, in the spirit of vulnerability and strangeness, I invite you, the readers, into the most formative activity of my life, hoping that you will be able to envision the world of Irish dance. Likewise, I challenged myself to see Irish dancing with fresh eyes after twenty-six years.

To summarize the research design of this dissertation, I took a qualitative case study approach to examine how the CLRG has employed language to help (re)create an
Irish national identity. I conducted interviews and archival research as well as wrote a short autoethnography to address my research questions. With the interview and archival data, I conducted a two-step coding process to focus on those parts of the data that best addressed the language management activities of the CLRG and how they relate to the imagined community of Ireland and invented traditions surrounding Irish dance.

**Limitations of the Study**

As mentioned above, one limitation of this study is my own lack of Irish proficiency. I was obligated to conduct interviews in English and seek help from fluent Irish speakers for translations of both interview and archival data. Another limitation was my short time in the field. Although I was able to go to Ireland twice for a total of five weeks, this did not leave time to conduct observations or develop rapport with teaching candidates. While observations might not have yielded much useful data, because most dance classes are conducted in English, the lack of participation from teaching candidates is unfortunate. I attended an exam training class with seven teaching candidates and all of them agreed to be interviewed; however, after repeated attempts to follow up with them, no one responded. This dissertation would have been richer for their participation, and it is regrettable that their voices are not present. In my future research I will again attempt to include teaching candidates, as I believe their voices are an important and missing piece of this story.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I sought to clarify my research methods, positionality, and limitations of the study. In the rest of this dissertation, I bring together the
autoethnographic data with the interview and archival data I collected to analyze the intertwined histories of CLRG and the Gaelic League, and how they have worked together to promote the Irish language. The data collected using these methods is drawn-on in Chapters Four-Six, and is further discussed in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework in Chapter Seven.
Chapter 4 – Entangled Histories: The Origins of the Gaelic League and An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha

_Ní neart go cur le chéile_
There is no strength without unity

In Chapters One through Three, I discussed the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study, specifically how language policy, imagined communities, and invented traditions relate to Irish language and identities within An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG). In this chapter, I turn to the myriad circumstances that have led to the current articulation of language and dance in the CLRG. The first section describes the entangled histories of the CLRG and the Gaelic League, while the second section is autoethnographic, and elaborates on the current globalized practice of Irish dance. In these two sections, I argue that entangling of language and dance was an anti-colonial device that helped linguistic and cultural nationalists reify an Irish national identity.

Although Irish dancing can be understood as an anti-colonial act, it also carries significant colonial vestiges in its pedagogy. In particular, there is a reliance on call-and-response pedagogy, primarily English medium instruction, and a hierarchical structure to classes and competitions. These colonial vestiges remain, even in an era of global Irish dance. Ramanathan (2013) sagely suggests, “‘globalization’ is, in many ways, a direct outgrowth of colonialism (especially the English language and Great Britain’s former empire)” (p. 4). Together, these two sections provide a foundation for understanding the data in Chapters Five, which brings together language and dance as a way to understand the (re)creation of Irish national identity, and Chapter Six, where I delve into the
globalization of Irish dance. In order to get to globalization, however, it is necessary to discuss the origins of the CLRG.

**Early History**

The deepest roots of Irish dancing remain a mystery, though traces of it show up in the historical record as early as the 1300s. While it is unlikely that dances from the 1300s would be recognizable to modern Irish dancers, by the mid-1600s, Irish dance as we now know it began to arise. The earliest dances were group dances, now known as céilí dances. They typically involve 4, 6, 8, or 16 dancers. *Rince fada,*\(^{18}\) or long dances, also existed; these can be done by any number of couples and be repeated until the dancers and musicians want to move on to a new dance. Such dances were suitable for community gatherings, and some of them became part of the modern Irish dance canon (Brennan, 1999).

Solo dancing became popular in the early 1700s and was taught by traveling dance masters who would journey from town to town teaching dances in return for room, board, and a small payment. Each master had a region and a circuit, so they might only pass through a town once a year. These masters were responsible for introducing generations of villagers to the basic threes and sevens of Irish dance (described in detail below) as well as passing on older group dances (Brennan, 1999).

Irish dancing was looked down upon by both the British colonial government and the Catholic Church, two groups not usually given to agreeing with each other. The British did not like it because, like language, dance was a symbol of Irish identity. The

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\(^{18}\) Grammatical note: *fada* is also the name of the accent mark over Irish long vowels. For example, céilí has two long vowels—*e fada* and *i fada.*
Church did not like it because it could, theoretically, lead to lascivious acts. Practicing dance, therefore, was a rebellious act (Brennan, 1999). As an anti-colonial activity, Irish dance had significant value to the Gaelic League, so it is not altogether surprising that dance became an instrument of the Irish nationalist movement.

**Entangled: The Gaelic League and An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG)**

The Gaelic League was founded as an explicitly anti-colonial group meant to revive the Irish language and Gaelic culture. As such, it quickly became involved in establishing the modern Irish dance canon. Thus, from the earliest days of the Gaelic League, language and dance became inextricably entangled, ultimately leading to the founding of the CLRG. Sobe (2013) defines entangled histories as the “tangling together of disparate actors, devices, discourses, and practices…this foregrounds the contingency of the worlds we inhabit, constitute, and change through our actions” (pp. 100-101). For the Gaelic League, regulating dance via the CLRG was a device for maintaining the language; and the actors, discourses, and practices overlap to this day.

When it was founded in 1893, the Gaelic League was “the main organization to set up cultural values and norms to be achieved by the Irish nation and the aspirational state” (O’Connor, 2013, p. 12). Along with language, “music, song, dance, sports, and even Irish dress” became arenas for asserting Irish national identity (Cullinane, 2003, p. 17). Crowley (2005) distinguished between the political and cultural nationalism movements, and placed the Gaelic League squarely on the side of cultural nationalism. The political nationalists were largely in favor of keeping English as the language of government because English was already the dominant language of Ireland, and Irish was
seen by many as an inferior language, spoken only by impoverished residents of the 
*Gaeltacht*. It was therefore up to the cultural nationalists to work on language revitalization and overcome the hegemony of English.

While sports like hurling and camogie\(^{19}\) were taken on by the Gaelic Athletic League, dance, at this time, was most emphatically not considered a sport. Other “traditional” cultural practices, including dance, were selected by the Gaelic League to create the imagined cultural nation of Ireland. For instance, throughout the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, “traditional” dances were collected and “foreign” dances were scorned, resulting in the invention of a “traditional” Irish dance canon (O’Conner, 2013). Members of the Gaelic League selected “traditional” dances based on the Munster, or southwestern style of dancing, “which was seen to fit the image of the romantic ‘Celtic West’” (O’Connor, 2013, p. 27). However, new dances were also composed around this time, creating controversy about what truly constituted Irish dance. That is to say, the invented traditions clashed with older dance forms.

Of this clash, one dance teacher explained that new dances that used the same movements as older dances were acceptable inventions, but dances that used perceived “foreign” movements like grabbing a girl around the waist and spinning were verboten:

Dance Teacher: The people in the céilí dancing would say, “Oh foreign dancing not allowed. You can't do any of that stuff here.” The other people would say, “No, no, the céilí dancing are out from these.” The original ones came in, “But they were brought in by British soldiers who went abroad and picked them up.” There was always this... That went all through the period that we’re about to commemorate next year, 1916 to 21. There were some people who wanted home rule, there were other people who want total independence. You had that split all the way. You

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\(^{19}\) Hurling and camogie are Irish sports somewhat similar to lacrosse.
had one group of people whose brothers and sisters, parents were even in the British Army, others felt they were traitors who helped the British Army. There was all this different perspective on things.

You had the same in the dancing, you had the set dancing which really were derivatives of quadrilles and lancers and various other dances that were common in Europe, France and Germany. They were particularly British, even though it was because the British soldiers tended to bring them back. In a lot of garrison towns in Ireland, the soldiers would come back and that's where the set dancing took off. They were far from being British dances. That was the thing. Foreign dancing…

There were also dances that were created by members of the Gaelic League to expand the repertoire. There a lot of dances that have, say, the back-to-back, the Fairy Reel, the Morris Reel, the High Cauled Cap was an old one, say, the Trip to the Cottage. Then you have the Eight-hand Reel and the Eight-hand Jig. A lot of them were inventions of the early 20th century, to expand the whole céilí genre. You had the céilí dancers who did hop 1, 2, 3’s and all the usual. The hop 1, 2, 3 versus the glide 1, 2, 3. The hop 1, 2, 3 down here was regarded as foreign, that's the north, that's Belfast up. You did that in the céilí here [Dublin] you would be thrown out.

Anna: Goodness.

Dance Teacher: You're not allowed to do that. It's amazing the number of restrictive practices that people thought up because they wanted to be pure.

Anna: It was purer to invent a new dance?

Dance Teacher: You could invent a new dance with all movements that are established movements. Put them all together in a different sort of way. Say the High Cauled Cap where you did the sidestep, the tops go all around and the sides go left all around. You had the Morris Reel bit, where it was right and back, left and back, just a variation. The back-to-back, the pairing, all that kind of thing.

Anna: As long as you used those bits, then it was fine. It was Irish.

Dance Teacher: But you didn't do swing. You went to a céilí and you caught a girl around [the waist] and swung that way, you'd be thrown out of town. Not allowed. No.
Anna: What we now call the céilí swing? It was not allowed?

Dance Teacher: Not allowed. No way. That was all involved in the ... When you house around [spin around as a pair] in a set dance, house to home and all, that was all that kind of thing. That was English. That's foreign. That's not Irish. That's foreign dancing. Not allowed. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 11, 2015)

One thing that stands out in this story is that “foreign” specifically seemed to mean British. Quadrilles and lancers were common dances across Europe, but “the British soldiers tended to bring them back,” which led to the equation of Englishness and foreign dances. Since Irish dance was an anti-colonial activity, anything remotely British-seeming was scorned, whether it was an entire dance or a movement like holding a girl by the waist and spinning her in circles.

Ultimately, many of the “traditional” Irish dances (both those collected and those newly composed) were published in *Ár Rinci Fóirne*, the céilí dance guide, which is a foundational text of the modern “traditional” canon. As part of the consolidation of this canon, Irish dance teachers and students were not allowed to practice any form of dance other than Irish, which was undoubtedly difficult since the canon itself was in flux. In addition to the “British” dances discussed above, jazz dance was considered particularly egregious in the eyes of the Gaelic League and cultural nationalists because it was both modern and originated outside of Ireland. Older dance forms like waltzes were also discouraged, however, due to their perceived origins abroad (O’Connor, 2013). This ban on “foreign” dances helped cement the Gaelic League and the CLRG as anti-colonial and pro-Irish nationalism.

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20 *Ár Rinci Fóirne* was republished in 2014 as *Ár Rinci Céilí*. 
Similarly, the reference to purism is an important element of cultural nationalism. As the teacher above noted, “It's amazing the number of restrictive practices that people thought up because they wanted to be pure” (Interview, November 11, 2015). Though he was referencing dances, linguistic purism has loomed large in nationalist movements (Parisian French during the French Revolution, English in the US Americanization movement, etc.). In the “pure” imagined Ireland of the Gaelic League, some perfect and unassailable Irish would supplant English. This notion was reflected in restrictive national language policies for much of the 20th century.

Though the CLRG would not be founded until 1924, Irish dancing was part of the Gaelic League’s language planning from the very beginning. The League was especially influential in setting up céilís, social events where one did traditional group dances. The modern term “céilí dance” is taken from the event name. The first ever céilí was arranged by the London branch of the Gaelic League on October 30, 1887 (Cullinane, 1998). According to Cullinane (1998), “The Irish nationalist spirit was very much alive at Céilí events,” furthermore, “frequently one was obliged to speak Irish at Céilí events” (p. 13). The following year, the Gaelic League held its first feis, or competition, in County Cork. The early competitions involved events in dance, music, and language, and were conducted in Irish. In the words of one dance teacher, “It was a kind of immersing oneself in different aspects of a particular culture that the Gaelic League was promoting” (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2016). Thus, from the earliest days, the Gaelic League was already linking Irish dance and language to each other and to an imagined “pure” Irish national identity that eliminated the shackles of colonialism.
Founding the CLRG

It was out of this environment of cultural nationalism that the CLRG was born in 1924. Cullinane (2003) laid out a timeline for the formation of CLRG:

- 1924: Gaelic League and Dance Teachers establish “Control Board”
- 1928: Gaelic League sets up “Sub-committee for Dancing”
- 1930: The structure of An Coimisiún was laid down in 1930 and the first meeting of An Coimisiún was convened in May 1930
- 1931: The Rules and Regulations/Mandate for An Coimisiún were drawn up in [sic] Easter 1931
- 1932-33: The first year of real activity by An Coimisiún commenced in July 1932, but its first year of real active work was 1932-33. (p. 12)

The 1924 Control Board was a joint committee of the Gaelic League members and Leinster region dance teachers charged with studying and organizing Irish dancing. Its successor, the Sub-Committee for Dancing, was intended to regulate dance teaching and competitions and brought dancing officially under the control of the Gaelic League; it was the first iteration of the CLRG. Archival materials clarify the founding moments further. In this excerpt from “Memoirs of Cormac MacFhionnlaoich Part 12,” Mr. MacFhionnlaoich, an ardent Gaelic Leaguer and the first chairperson of the CLRG, discussed the impetus for the original meeting in 1924:

Caitlín Bean Uí Loingsigh, who was teaching Irish dancing to the poorer children in the Play Centers approached me to see if anything could be done towards finding more teachers, and toward improving the standard of both solo and figure dancing. Bean Uí Loingsigh and I appealed to the Conradh na Gaeilge [The Gaelic League] to help us in this worthy object. An Coiste Gnótha [The General Affairs Committee of the Gaelic League] discussed the question and expressed its willingness to cooperate in any movement having as its object the revival of Irish dancing. This proposed committee was to consist of well-known dancers, plus a number of Gaelic League members who were interested in the matter…

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22 Anglicized as McGinley
An important point discussed at this first meeting of An Coimisiún was the recognition of those who were already teaching dancing. Finally it was decided that existing teachers, eighteen years and over, would be recognised officially and that their pupils alone would be accepted at Gaelic League feiseanna. (Céim 21, 1975, p. 7)

As result of Cormac MacFhionnlaioch approaching the Gaelic League, the original governance structure of the CLRG was dominated by Gaelic League members. It was decided in 1930 that the dance commission would be made up of six members of An Coiste Gnótha, three dance teachers, three musicians, and three members each from the four regional councils of the Gaelic League. In total, that meant the original CLRG consisted of eighteen Gaelic League members and only three dance teachers (Cullinane, 2003). In the words of a dance teacher I interviewed, the early Commission was:

entirely Gaelic League people with only three dancing teachers. The three dancing teachers were from Dublin, none from Cork. That in fact was … a disastrous set up and is something that came back to haunt the commission and still runs through it because the teachers are teachers of Irish dancing. And the Gaelic League, their object was to promote the language, used in the dancing as the vehicle to do that. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 1, 2015)

Notably, the establishment of the CLRG took place post-independence, which occurred in 1922. Nonetheless, there was still much work to be done to shake of the colonial mantle of Britain. O’Connor (2013) argues that the CLRG was founded after independence because the state took on a stronger role in language policy, and the Gaelic League was left somewhat adrift from its original mission. She suggests, “it was accidental that dance itself became a primary concern to the Gaelic League” (p. 37). Cullinane (2003) supports this view:
Interest in the language had diminished following the War of Independence and the Civil War with the attitude that now that we had obtained independence from Britain, the new Irish government would now look after the interests of the language. The popularity of the dancing however, continued to increase. This caused the Gaelic League to become more interested in the dancing. (p. 29)

This shift of focus is somewhat ironic because getting political nationalists involved with language regulation was very much one of the goals of the Gaelic League. One dance teacher I spoke with argued that without the Gaelic League, most dance teachers would have no connection to the language:

I mean, the vast majority of people involved in teaching Irish dancing, what connection would they have with the language except through the Commission? It's always been the cornerstone of the Commission's Constitution, that part of the brief was to keep the language going. Everything that the Gaelic League set up was aimed towards maintaining the language. The maintenance of taking over Irish dancing, when you go back to the beginning and back to the late 20s when the Commission was dreamt up, the Commission was initially a committee... It wasn't necessarily meant to be a governing body. It was all to get rid of corruption and various other practices that people didn't like of the whole Irish dancing and bring it back towards promoting Irish dancing and the language together. Part and parcel of the whole thing was the language.
(Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 11, 2015)

Thus, regulating Irish dancing by making decisions about what constituted Irish “tradition” versus that which was “foreign,” as well as implementing a language requirement for teachers, was a way for the Gaelic League to keep a hand in regulating language.

Over the years, the CLRG underwent several name changes, and it finally landed on Coimisiún an Rince (Dancing Commission) in 1930. During the 50th anniversary year of the Gaelic League, in 1943, the Coimisiún an Rince was given its current name, An
Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (Cullinane, 2003). This was also the year that the Irish dance teachers’ exam, the Teastas Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (TCRG), was established.

Despite the partition between Ireland and Northern Ireland in 1922, Irish dancing also thrived in Ulster. Irish dancing in the north was regulated by Comhaltas Uladh (the Ulster Commission) from 1936-1973, when it was finally integrated fully into the CLRG. Dance teachers from Northern Ireland had to have permission from Comhaltas Uladh to sit the TCRG exam in Dublin, and they were required to take the Irish language exam in the north (Cullinane, 2013). There was concern that the Ulster dialect was dying, which is why teachers from the north were required to take the language exam there (J. Cullinane, personal communication, April 4, 2016). To this day, the CLRG requires any TCRG candidate on the island of Ireland to pass the language exam; they do not see Ulster as separate from Ireland although it is technically part of Great Britain. Furthermore, for dance competition purposes, Ulster consists of the usual nine counties (six in Northern Ireland and three in the Republic of Ireland), and also County Louth, which is the northeastern most county in the province of Leinster (see Figure 2).

The CLRG Today

The CLRG has undergone extensive structural changes since it was first commissioned in 1931. The Gaelic League is still the parent organization and still has representatives to the CLRG, but for the most part the CLRG operates quite independently. There are dance schools in at least 33 countries on five continents – Africa, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America (CLRG, 2016b), which has
resulted in greater international representation on the CLRG board and committees, and a diminishing role for Irish in CLRG governance and meetings. Nonetheless, the modern CLRG continues to be guided by a mission that explicitly mentions language.

**The Modern World of Irish Dance**

It is into this already globalized organization that I entered Irish dance. The process of globalization within the CLRG is discussed in detail in Chapter Six, but I begin to introduce it here because my own experiences in dance cannot be discussed outside of globalization. However, in order for the content in Chapters Five and Six to make more sense, it is important to explain the world of Irish dance in detail first. Thus, in this section, I describe my own experiences with Irish dance over the past 26 years. This serves two purposes: first to provide a window into the vibrant world of modern Irish dancing today, and second to show how in my experience, language and dance have become disarticulated in this era of global Irish dance. This disarticulation seems to have had two conflicting effects. On the one hand, Irish has little relevance for dance outside of Ireland and the more globalized the CLRG becomes, the more this irrelevance is exacerbated. On the other hand, globalization has led to a recent warming of relations between the Gaelic League and the CLRG and thus a rearticulation of language and dance in Ireland, which has implications for Irish identity formation.

Despite the globalization of Irish dance, colonial practices are still in evidence. One will notice in this account that the Irish language plays almost no role beyond a few dance terms that have been borrowed into English (e.g. feis, céilí, Oireachtas). Because I use these as words in English, I will not italicize them in this chapter—this in itself sends a
message about the hegemony of English in Irish dance. Nonetheless, this section is autoethnographic and to fairly represent my own experiences with the language, I feel it is necessary to treat these words as I learned them—borrowings. It is also worth noting the reliance on call-and-response type pedagogy and a rigid, practically militaristic, hierarchy of dance levels. Furthermore, though I am deeply immersed in dance culture and identify as an Irish dancer, I do not identify as Irish-American. That perhaps is one of the most important points I can make about globalized Irish dance—it is a sport, not a cultural activity, for many dancers. The connection between language, dance, and identity was absent for me as a child.

In the following pages, I explain dance schools, dance classes, the dances themselves, costuming, competitions, and some of the rules and regulations. Though the events I describe below are personal, I believe they are representative of the experiences of Irish dancers in the US, including my interpretation of dance as a competitive sport rather than a component of my cultural identity.

**Dance Schools**

Irish dancing is organized at the local level around dance schools. Irish dance schools are generally private small businesses or non-profits, with classes taught after school and on weekends. Dancers choose schools for a variety of reasons: proximity of classes, reputation of the teachers and dancers, where their friends attend lessons, and cost. I have belonged to several dance schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and all of these factors have come into play at various times. During my competing years, I attended classes every week in Milwaukee, which was a two-and-a-half hour drive from
my home. My local dance school was a sister school to the larger one in Milwaukee, and attending classes in both places gave me more contact time with the teachers as well as the chance to compete on teams with the Milwaukee dancers.

The only way for a dance school to be recognized by CLRG is for the main teacher to have their TCRG (teaching certification). For example, there are twelve Irish dance schools in Minnesota, but only six are recognized by CLRG because the teachers at those six schools have passed the TCRG exam. There can be multiple TCRGs at a single school, and it is also common for there to be uncertified assistant teachers, often older dancers. I fulfilled this role at my dance school for several years during middle school and high school. Irish dance schools are regularly invited to perform at local schools, nursing homes, and festivals. Students can also compete in CLRG sanctioned dance competitions around the world.

Dance schools mark themselves in two main ways: costumes and steps. Every school has its own dress that every girl wears for shows and for lower levels of competition (see Figure 3). Boys tend to wear button down shirts, black pants, and perhaps a tie that matches the color of the girls’ dresses. Traditionally, the designs for dances dresses were drawn from patterns in the Book of Kells, an illuminated copy of the four Gospels of the New Testament drawn by Celtic monks ca. 800 AD (Trinity College Dublin, 2015). Since about 2000, the designs have become increasingly abstract and newer dresses do not necessarily draw on the Book of Kells. The dress shown in Figure 3 was my school’s dress in the 1990s and the design is inspired by the Book of Kells.
Steps are also unique to dance schools. One step is danced to eight bars of music on the right foot and then the left foot for a total of sixteen bars. Each dance school uses a unique combination of moves for the various dances. Although steps are proprietary to individual dance schools, at the beginner levels most dancers do similar steps while they master the basic movements of Irish dance (discussed in the next section). The similarity in beginner steps across schools occurs because there are only a finite number of ways to put together basic jumps and sidesteps. As the dancers advance, the number of possible movements increases and combinations become more complex, thus the steps become more distinct.

**The Dances**

There are five main Irish dances, which are tied to the music, but do not have prescribed tunes (see Table 1). These five dances are reels, light jigs, slip jigs, treble jigs, slip jig and hornpipe) or 3 (reel, light jig, treble jig) steps. The difference makes the dances approximately equal in length of time.
and hornpipes. They each have specific time signatures and tempos. A sixth dance called the single jig exists, but it is not common to find it at most competitions. To further differentiate, reels, light jigs, slip jigs, and single jigs are danced in soft shoes. Treble jigs hornpipes are danced in hard shoes and can be done at a slow (harder) or fast (easier) speed. The slip jig, my favorite dance, is special in that it is only danced by girls and women. In the past, the hornpipe was danced only by boys and men, but that is no longer the case.

All solo dances are individual and proprietary to a dance school, though at the beginning levels most of the dances are very similar because the basic steps of Irish dancing, “threes and sevens,” do not give a lot of material with which to work. A “three” involves hopping or jumping on one foot and then taking three steps–hop 1, 2, 3. The hop is done on alternating feet each time. This is like a step ball change in jazz or swing dancing. “Sevens” require dancers to hop on one foot and then take six steps to the side–hop 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

An additional group of dances, called set dances, have prescribed tunes. These are in either hornpipe or treble jig time. Seven set dances are considered traditional; dancers everywhere do exactly the same steps. There may be minor stylistic differences, but the movements that dancers perform are identical. These seven dances are: St. Patrick’s Day, Blackbird, Job of Journeywork, Garden of Daisies, King of the Fairies, Three Sea Captains, and Jockey to the Fair. An additional 30 modern set dances are also used, but the steps are individual to the dancer or dance school.

24 The treble reel is done in hard shoes, but this is a special competition and does not affect a dancer’s level or advancement.
Table 1. The Irish solo dances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Time Signature</th>
<th>Tempo in Beats/Minute&lt;sup&gt;25&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Shoes</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reel</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>113-124</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Jig</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slip Jig</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>113-124</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Female only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treble Jig</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Slow: 73, Fast: 82-96</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornpipe</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Slow: 113, Fast: 130-144</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Female and male, but traditionally only male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Traditional) Set</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Single Jig</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Treble Reel</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Female and male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dances above are all considered solo dances—they are performed by individuals and involve no interaction with other dancers. A group of dancers might all dance together in a line doing the same solo dance, but it would not matter for the dance if there were three or thirty of them, it would still be a solo dance. Solo dances can be identified by the famed image of Irish dancers with their arms at their sides. All of the momentum and movement in solo dances must come from the legs alone. Folk theories<sup>26</sup> abound as to why Irish dancers do not use their arms, but no one really knows why this is the case.

<sup>25</sup> CLRG (2016a)

<sup>26</sup> My personal favorite is that dancers were trying to snub the Bishop by secretly dancing while he came through town. They were said to keep their upper bodies stiff while moving their feet, which were hidden by a Dutch farm door. I suspect the Bishop would have noticed the hopping, but it is a popular theory nonetheless.
Contrary to the popular image, however, Irish dancers do use their arms for céili, or group, dances. There are 30 “traditional” céilís, which like the traditional sets are done the same way the world over and have specified songs that they are performed to. The number of dancers in a céili dance ranges from 4-16. In competition, eight hands (eight dancers) are the most common. The interview excerpt regarding invented dances mentioned several of the 30 traditional céilís, including the Fairy Reel, the Morris Reel, the High Cauled Cap, and the Trip to the Cottage. Céilís are danced in multiple time signatures; the Fairy Reel, Morris Reel, and High Cauled Cap are danced in reel time (4/4), while Trip to the Cottage is a jig (6/8 time).

In much the same way that there are traditional and modern sets, there are traditional and modern group dances. Modern group dances, called figure dances, use 2, 3, 4, or 16 people. These are not traditional and thus vary by dance school. They often use footwork similar to basic solo dances (threes and sevens), but use a group of dancers together to make more intricate patterns. This stands in contrast to a line of dancers all dancing the same solo step together. In figure dances, the dancers interact and use their arms.

At Class

I started Irish dancing at the age of six (see Figure 4), when the Irish dancers walked into the wrong room at the local YMCA. My friend Jessica was one of the dancers, and I walked out of my tap dance class to play with her instead. The tap dancing teachers found me eventually, and I was required to finish the last few weeks of class, but afterward I started Irish dancing and have never looked back.
My first Irish dance classes took place on the stage of the YMCA auditorium in my small Wisconsin hometown. The auditorium seemed cavernous to me as a six year old. It was always quite dark inside – we danced under a few stage lights and what little natural light penetrated the room. The auditorium was filled with cracked leather seats, and dusty black velvet curtains framed the elevated stage, which was taller than I was. I vividly remember my first class, learning my hop 1, 2, 3s. My teacher coached me in her Belfast accent, “step, step, behind; step, step, behind,” eight times in a circle. The stage floor was made of scuffed wood and seemed impossibly large to dance across.

In that same auditorium, I got my first pair of soft shoes (see Figure 5) and danced in my first competition. Tragically, or so it felt at the time, the smallest available shoes were much too large on me, and I had to keep dancing in my socks while all of my friends got to wear their special shoes.
Figure 5. Soft shoes and poodle socks

My first competition was only for the students in my school, and it was not CLRG sanctioned. It was judged by my dance teacher and one of her friends from Milwaukee. Two-by-two, my friends and I danced across the huge YMCA stage. I messed up one of my steps and was convinced I wouldn’t get a prize. Nothing my mother said could convince me otherwise. In the end, we all got Belleek china ornaments (see Figure 6). I still hang mine on my Christmas tree every year.

Figure 6. My first Irish dancing award, a Belleek china Christmas ornament

When the YMCA was torn down some years later, my dance classes moved down the road to the basement of one of the local Catholic churches. The church basement was
much brighter but had a cement floor that was uncomfortable to dance on. The wooden YMCA stage had a lot of give to it; the cement floor at the church did not. As I grew older, I danced in a variety of halls—a Moose Club, a high school gym, a gutted church sanctuary, several art galleries, and an OddFellows Club. All of these halls shared an important feature they were wide open and long enough for twenty or more dancers to line up side-by-side. In recent years, many Irish dance studios have added long walls of mirrors, so that dancers can watch themselves and self-correct.

In my experience, Irish dance classes around the world are quite similar. Dancers sport gym shorts and t-shirts, often with Irish dance slogans like “Gone Feisin’” and “Irish dancers kick butt!” In addition to dance shoes, the girls wear special socks called poodle socks (see Figure 5), so named because they look a little like curly poodle fur. The boys wear gym socks and their own variety of soft shoes, jazz dance shoes with a heel added called reel shoes (see Figure 7). Both female and male dancers wear the same kind of hard shoes, which are like heavy-duty tap shoes with fiberglass tips and heels (see Figure 8).

Figure 7. Boy’s reel shoes
Figure 8. Hard shoes with fiberglass tips and heels

Dance classes start by running through a series of warm-ups. The warm-up moves are individual segments of dances like leaps, clicks, butterflies, and twists. Dancers fly back and forth across the room attempting to perfect these moves in isolation so that they look good when they are combined into full steps. The class then progresses into practicing actual dances. Teachers line the front of the room shouting commands at pairs of dancers running through their steps while music blares from a boombox. Irish dance classes are loud and demanding affairs. One is much more likely to hear, “I could drive a bus through your knees, do it again,” than, “That was good.” One of my teachers used to shout, “You are dancing on my last nerve!” or “This is not brain surgery!” when she was particularly unimpressed. And so we repeat our steps, again and again and again, rather like a call-and-response style lesson in a colonial-era primary school. The rooms invariably smell like a combination of sweat, leather shoes, and dust from all of the activity.
At the back of the room, or off to the side, dancers who are waiting to show their steps to their teachers are either practicing on their own or in small groups. New dance steps are introduced at the teacher’s discretion. Some prefer to do intensive summer workshops and teach all of the new dances all at once, while others introduce steps gradually throughout the year. If a student misses a teaching day, she has to rely on her classmates to teach the new steps while other students are waiting to dance for the teachers.

**At Competition**

The purpose of this drilling and repetition is largely to prepare for competitions. There are six levels of dance competition--beginner, advanced beginner, novice, prizewinner, preliminary championship, and championship—and classes and steps correspond to these levels. Multiple competitions can be found on any given weekend, though summer is the busiest competition season because students are not in school. I danced in my first competition when I was seven, and then did not compete again until I was eleven because my first teacher did not yet have her TCRG (certification). When I was eleven, I got a new teacher who was certified, and I began competing in CLRG competitions.

Competition days in the US and Canada open with a small flag ceremony. A few dancers are recruited to carry in the US, Canadian, and Irish flags to live bagpipe music. A dancer or musician will sing the three national anthems *a cappella*. The dance competitions commence after the color guard ceremony is finished. Several of the adjudicators I spoke with noted that this is specific to the North American context; in
Ireland, there is no such ceremony at the beginning of competitions. This is particularly interesting given my argument that dance is an important symbol of Irish national identity. The one moment of the day that arguably most evokes Irish culture for North American dancers—singing the Irish national anthem—is not a part of competitions in Ireland. Instead it parallels other US and Canadian sporting events, which often open with flag waving and singing the national anthem. This ceremony thus lends to the narrative of Irish dance as a sport rather than Irish dance as a cultural practice.

While Irish dance classes are reminiscent of gym class, dance competitions have more in common with beauty pageants. Rhinestones, curly wigs, fake tan, make-up, and thousand dollar costumes are par for the course. Vendors will happily sell anything dancers need, from the spray tan booth to sparkly poodle socks and headbands. There are some rules in place to counter the beauty pageant atmosphere – dancers under 10 are not allowed to wear dresses with rhinestones or put on make-up. They do, however, still wear wigs and spray tan. Several of my participants indicated that there is a consensus among adjudicators that tanned legs show up better under bright stage lights. Make-up accomplishes the same effect on the face, so dancers typically only have their legs spray tanned.27

When I started competing in the mid-1990s, wigs were the new big thing; spray tan only became popular as my competing days waned around 2005. Before Riverdance

27 A critical race analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but is certainly warranted in the future, especially as there is a pervasive racial discourse in Ireland about who constitutes a “real” Irish person.
premiered in 1996, girls had to wear foam rollers overnight to curl their hair\textsuperscript{28} for competition. Foam rollers are incredibly uncomfortable to sleep on, and I never really slept thoroughly the night before a feis. When we realized that the dancers in \textit{Riverdance} were wearing wigs, and not curling their hair every night, it was a revelation. I still didn’t sleep particularly well before competitions because I was nervous, but at least I was free of the tyranny of foam rollers.

Though I no longer compete, I am still involved in competitions as a volunteer stage manager. Similar to stage managers in theater productions, stage managers at dance competitions keep things running smoothly by checking dancers in for their competitions, counting the music for beginner level dancers, pouring soda on the slippery spots to make the stages stickier, and sweeping up the stage when too many rhinestones fall off the dresses.

\textbf{Championship levels.} An average competition in the Midwest US has five or six stages all running competitions simultaneously. One stage is always dedicated to the preliminary championship and championship level competitions. On the championship stage, the dancers dance in pairs, and the live music stops in between each pair. Dancers are not allowed to dance with someone from their own school, which means that they are doing different steps from the other dancer on stage. Championship-level dancers do three dances in a day. They must do one soft shoe dance, one hard shoe dance, and a

\textsuperscript{28} Rather like the stories about Irish dancers not using their arms, stories about curly hair are apocryphal. My own hypothesis is that curly hair goes with Sunday-best clothing. In the early days of dance competition, dancers wore their Sunday-best rather than school dresses. Part of the church look would include girls curling their hair. Interestingly, \textit{Riverdance} is back to straight hair, so perhaps the straight hair look will return to competition soon.
modern set dance (also in hard shoes). The typical pairings are reel and hornpipe or slip jig and treble jig because these are the combinations mandated at the annual World Championships. These dances are all scored together, and the winner will have the highest score based on all three dances. Championship level results are announced on stage, presumably to more publically recognize the best dancers at the competition.

Dancers at the highest levels do not wear their school costume. Instead, they wear a completely unique vest (boys) or dress (girls) that can cost upwards of $2000. Because it takes several years to advance up the levels, the age of championship-level dancers is weighted toward teenagers. This means that some dancers have to get a new solo costume every year because they quickly outgrow their old dresses. There is also a tendency among the very best dancers to never wear the same dress to the World Championships twice, meaning they must also have a new dress every year. Fortunately, the resale value of a skilled dancer’s dress can be quite high, on the grounds that judges will remember the dress, and thus a dancer can ride the cachet of the dress’s first owner. My first two solo dresses were purchased along these lines (see Figure 9). After the initial investment, families are not necessarily losing thousands of dollars on dresses every year, they simply reinvest the money from the sale of the previous year’s dress. In addition to being unique to the dancer, solo costumes are designed to standout on stage and showcase a dancer’s individuality.
Beginner through Prizewinner Levels. The other stages run a mix of beginner through prizewinner-level competitions. Each stage, or pair of stages, has live musicians. At the lower levels, there is one judge and the music is played continuously until all the dancers on the stage have completed their steps. Dancers line up across the back of the stage and dance two at a time. Beginners and advanced beginners wear their school costumes, novice dancers wear either school or solo costumes depending on what their teacher allows, and prizewinner dancers wear solo costumes. The stages all progress through dances in the same order: figures, reel, light jig, slip jig, treble jig, hornpipe, and traditional set.

All competitions are divided by gender, age, and level. Beginner through prizewinner competitions are also separated out by dance. For example, a competition
might be for novice girls, under 12, reel. While a championship-level dancer can only get one prize, lower-level dancers can leave with medals multiple dances. Lower-level dancers will do two to six dances in a day and each of these dances is judged separately. Beginners will often start by competing in the reel and light jig and slowly add dances as they learn more.

Results are tabulated centrally and posted on large pieces of white paper at a results table where winners can collect their medals. First through third place are awarded, though in larger competitions the placements sometimes go as far as fifth place. To advance to a higher level of competition in a dance, beginners and advanced beginners have to place first, second, or third in that dance; novice dancers must place first. Advancement is by dance, so it is possible to compete in multiple levels at one competition. For example, for most of a summer I was in prizewinner-level reel, light jig, and slip jig, but novice-level treble jig and hornpipe. Prizewinner-level dancers must place first in all of their dances (not all on the same day) to advance to preliminary championships. To move from preliminary championship to championship, a dancer must place first at two different competitions.

**Treble Reel.** Competitions end with a special, celebratory treble reel competition on one or two stages. Dancers dance one step, one at a time while the dancers behind them all clap in time to the music and cheer. When all of the dancers have finished their individual step, everyone does a universal step called the “timing step” together. The winners are announced immediately at the stage.
Rules and Regulations

One thing that stands out about Irish dance is the disjunction between the creativity of the solo dances themselves and the regulation of nearly all other elements of dance. Costuming is perhaps the most highly regulated element of dance competition. Hard shoes may only have fiberglass tips and heels, and metal is strictly forbidden as are bubble heels, which bulge out and theoretically make clicking one’s heels together easier. Dresses are supposed to “adhere to principles of modesty, and enable dancers to safely execute their movements and steps” (CLRG, 2015c). Previously this meant hemlines not more than two-inches above the knee, though at the moment the hems are falling about six-eight inches higher. Poodle socks are required on all girls, but Senior Ladies (over 20) are allowed to wear black tights instead, thus negating the need for spray tan. All girls and women wear curly wigs, though oddly there is no rule requiring this. The rigidity and number of rules adds to the sports-like atmosphere at competition.

Teacher certification is similarly strict and critical to dancers’ competition eligibility. Only dancers with a CLRG certified teacher can compete in CLRG competitions. The exam is offered several times a year in large cities around the world and takes a weekend to complete. The experience is reported to be quite grueling as the exam has six parts:

- (a) practical test in stepdancing
- (b) written céilí dancing test
- (c) practical test in teaching céilí dancing
- (d) practical test in teaching stepdancing
- (e) written music test

A gender analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but clearly, most of the regulations fall on female dancers, a topic which should be more fully explored in the future.
Candidates can fail a section or sections of the exam twice before they have to retake the entire test.

Not only do teachers have to be highly skilled dancers themselves, but they must also be able to teach dances and recognize a large number of tunes. Section (a) tests a dancer’s ability in both modern dances and also the seven traditional set dances mentioned above. Section (b) requires the students to memorize the 30 céilí dances from *Ar Rinci Céilí* and be able to compare and contrast them. Sections (c) and (d) involve teaching solo and céilí dances. Section (e) demands that dancers be able to recognize the specific songs for the seven traditional sets, 30 céilí dances, and 30 modern sets, and the general music for solo dances. Section (f), the oral language test, requires dancers to have a conversation with a fluent language examiner and is mandatory for Irish dance teachers who will be teaching in Ireland, including Northern Ireland (CLRG, 2015c). The examiners I spoke with indicated that it is rare for someone to fail the language exam, but it does happen. On the other hand, it is not at all rare for teaching candidates to fail the other five sections. The pass rate in North America is reportedly only 50%; the teacher who discussed this believes the low pass rate is due to the fact that North American dancers concentrate too heavily on studying for the solo dancing sections and are not familiar enough with the céilí dances and how to teach them. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 7, 2015). This is further evidence that dance is treated as a sport

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30 A teacher I spoke with relayed a story to me about one of her students who did not pass the exam because she failed the language exam twice (Interview, Feb. 10, 2016).
outside of Ireland—the dances considered “traditional” are the ones that get ignored. While, there are many other areas of Irish dance that are regulated, including the music, the feis syllabi, student dance exams, transferring schools etc. I focused only on costuming and the exam here because the appearance of Irish dancers seems to draw the most comments and questions from non-dancers, and the exam is relevant to the rest of the dissertation.

**Conclusion**

While the language exam and other language activities of the CLRG will be taken up in depth in the next two chapters, I focused on Irish dance itself in this chapter to provide an overview of its history and to draw on my own experience with dance as an illustration for the disconnect that many dancers have between language and dancing. Mine has been a very globalized-Irish-dance experience, and my childhood connection to the Irish language was limited to a few technical dance terms. As I have shown, Irish dance has a long history that has vestiges of colonial routines such as call-and-response pedagogy, primarily English medium instruction, and a hierarchical structure, but historically, it had enormous value as an anti-colonial practice. What began in some senses as a tool to oppose the British colonial masters and supply the infant Irish nation state with a set of “traditions” has become a global sport that is largely decoupled from Irish identity. These issues will also be explored in the following chapters as I map out the links between language policy and Irish dance over the course of the 20th century.
Chapter 5 – Compelled to Speak Irish – 1920s-1970s

*Is trom an t-ualach an t-aineolas.*
Ignorance is a heavy burden.

*Aithnitear cara i gcruatán.*
A friend is known in hardship.

As discussed in Chapter Two, national level language policies have undergone numerous changes over the course of the last century. The first few decades of Irish national language policy were characterized by educational and professional mandates, and these mandates were mirrored by CLRG language policies. At both the national and organizational level, such mandates were perceived as acts of linguistic compulsion and were often viewed negatively. At their most extreme, such policies were intended to replace English with Irish, however English-Irish bilingualism was more regularly the stated goal (Ó Riagáin, 1997).

In this chapter, I explore how linguistic compulsion was enacted by the CLRG, and how CLRG language management techniques paralleled national language policy. I connect these language management techniques to the related concepts of imagined communities and invented traditions, to show that the goal of compulsory language policies was to help create a sense of Irish identity in the immediate post-colonial years. However, these policies backfired and resulted in negative attitudes toward Irish that were quite damaging to language revitalization efforts. In the next section, I briefly review some of the highlights of Irish language policy. This is followed by a discussion of an imagined and idealized Irish identity around language and dance; the techniques the
CLRG used to manage the language of dancers and dance teachers; and the generally (though not exclusively) negative attitudes toward the language that this produced.

**Reviewing Irish Language Policy**

Much of Irish language policy has centered on education. As early as 1913, a decade before independence was won, Irish was a required subject in school. In his memoirs, Cormac MacFhionnlaoich, who was a school-teacher as well as a dance teacher and Gaelic Leaguer, relayed the following story about Irish language policy in the summer of 1921. This occurred mere months before the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed and Ireland became fully independent.

The government, in order to hasten the revival of the Irish Language in the National Schools, organised courses in Irish for the National Teachers. These courses were to be held during the two months of July and August. The Department of Education took over all the Irish Colleges in the Gaeltacht areas – including Oméith. The usual Irish Professors in the various colleges were re-engaged for the Teacher’s Course. Centres were also established in the cities and large towns, and the Department selected and appointed professors for these non-Gaeltacht centres….

The Irish Course for the National Teachers opened in Marlboro St. School. N.T.s [National Teachers] from all parts of the country were there—some with a fair knowledge of the language, but the vast majority were absolute beginners. However, they were attentive, industrious and most were enthusiastic. *(Céim 20, 1975, p. 5, 8)*

Given the already seven-year-old requirement that Irish be taught in schools, this Irish course for teachers was probably a very good idea. It is notable, however, that “the vast majority were absolute beginners.” This simultaneously indicates how few people had learned or acquired Irish prior to independence and suggests that compulsory Irish language education was hampered by a lack of teachers. Only twelve years later,
however, passing an Irish exam became required for high school graduation. This lasted from 1933-1973 (Ó Riagáin, 1997). Likewise, from 1925-1974, Irish proficiency was required to obtain a civil service job (Crowley, 2005). Thereafter, civil service applicants who spoke Irish were awarded bonus points on their applications, making it more likely that they would be hired (Ó Riagáin, 1997). This was reversed in 2013 when the Irish language requirement for civil service employment was reinstated (Irish Independent, 2013).

The CLRG has followed this pattern of linguistic compulsion as well, with language promotion efforts that were exclusively compulsory until the 1970s. This is hardly surprising since the Gaelic League was heavily involved in political language lobbying and in managing the affairs of the CLRG. The primary means of linguistic compulsion implemented by the CLRG, the language exam, remains in effect today, but was originally conceived of in 1943. Although compulsory language learning can and did breed negative attitudes toward the language, the intent of the Gaelic League and the CLRG was to grow the number of speakers of the language. As cultural nationalists and Irish language devotees, the Gaelic League members seem to have been blinded by their own enthusiasm; they did not foresee how unpopular language mandates could become.

**Imagining an Irish Identity**

After centuries of British colonial rule, Irish cultural nationalists were determined to remove “foreign” elements from Irish cultural practices, and when necessary invent new traditions that were perceived as more “purely” Irish. The Gaelic League, in particular, attempted to win over the hearts and minds of the Irish citizenry--linking
dance, language, and music as essential practices of an Irish person. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) served the same purpose for Irish sports.

**Family Connections**

Most of the participants in this study had personal family connections to this history of Irish cultural nationalism. Though none of them were born when the Gaelic League was founded, their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles were involved in the Irish nationalist movement in some way, often as dance students. One teacher explained how her older relatives learned to dance though Gaelic League classes decades before the CLRG was founded:

They would've learned of the dancing in a very structured Gaelic League way. If you look what would've happened in Ireland, because of the way the education system went, what ended up happening was when the requirement to have Irish became mandatory, a lot of people who had the dancing didn't have the Irish and a lot of people who had the Irish didn't have the dancing. Because there wasn't the facility, at that time to learn Irish in the school system. It wasn't there. When the Gaelic League set up classes, the people who had, I suppose, inclinations to be very much part of the emerging nation state, and the imagined idealized Ireland of the 20th century ... It is a little bit complex and a little chicken and egg, of which came first. What I can say is that our own experience of the dancing came very much, and very part of that whole notion of Irish culture and what that meant to be an Irish person. Speaking the Irish language, doing Irish things. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

Another teacher described a similar experience in his family, noting that his parents were intentionally dancing as a way to participate in the emerging nation state:

My parents performed their Irish dancing as ... It was a culture, and they were displaying their national identity...Ireland was seeking to become an independent nation, and this was how they expressed their national identity, that they were Irish and they were de-Anglicizing, that lovely term, Ireland, in its own way. So they danced it for that expression…(Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 1, 2015)
Both of these teachers’ families were well aware of the anti-colonial connections between language and dance and wanted to be part of the movement that re-invented Irish identity as something unique and definitively not British. These families were “de-Anglicizing” by defining clearly what it meant to be an Irish person, which in both cases meant practicing Irish dancing and speaking the Irish language.

**Shared Cultural Connections**

The concept of culture also loomed large in participants’ understanding of the historical relationship between dance and language. This was certainly the intent of the Gaelic League in connecting the two practices, and it is significant that it lives on more than a century later. That being said, it is likely that the link to culture is at the forefront of people’s minds right now because of the nationwide focus on the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising. Several teachers spoke of rural, Western areas as the perceived source of culture for the Gaelic League. These are the areas where the predominantly Irish speaking Catholics were forced into by the Act of Settlement in 1652, and thus there is a stereotype that rural Irish speaking Catholics are the “real” Irish as compared to English speaking Protestants. One teacher explained how this perception arose:

Now you're getting the church. You're getting the language. You're getting that whole notion of the emerging citizen from the city. This is important...[You are] going to find that the places where the League was really strong was actually around cities and towns, and this is why there's been a bit of conflict. What ended up happening in the 20th century, a lot of people moved from rural Ireland to urban centers. You had places like Limerick becoming an entity, cultural, that would have previously been perceived as a garrison town. Historically, going back to the Treaty Stone [the document that ended the Siege of Limerick in 1691, carved into limestone], you know what I mean? You had Dublin. People wouldn't
have questioned Galway because it was affiliated to the Gaeltacht. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

Because Irish speakers were forced into the western most reaches of the island until there was nowhere else to go but into the Atlantic Ocean, these areas were perceived to have held on to “authentic” Irish cultural practices in the face of British colonialism. These practices included language, dance, and music:

If you went down West over to the Aran Islands or over to the West of Galway, part of Mayo, up to Donegal, right up in the far corner, down to Kerry, part of Cork... all of those areas, there’s part of Waterford as well. They are what we call Gaeltacht areas and very strong in culture. Some areas would be more into music and drama and all through Irish than in dance. You see, they're all connected...In those places the reason they’re still-there's still Irish speaking places...reason being that in war times when our language was taken from us, people were are actually tortured, because of speaking the language, we didn't have any other language. But those places were never got that because they were in the far corners, they weren't easily accessible, or out in the islands. Okay so, the language is still strong there… (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

The colonial violence depicted in the excerpt is powerful. Irish speakers were certainly punished for speaking Irish in schools (Benson, 2013). This is akin to Native American students being beaten and psychologically threatened for speaking their indigenous languages in boarding schools in the US. Indeed, one the primary purposes of the national school system was to coerce students into speaking English and forgetting Irish (Ó Riagáin, 1997; Crowley, 2005). Thus it was primarily in the most remote Western areas that the language survived the colonial drive eliminate it. The same teacher continued:

Now, the relationship to dance, I think ... Probably the only way of explaining is that, traditionally dancing was done ... in the kitchen, on the
slabs [stone floors] because there was music. Then, it would have been the Irish language that was spoken, Irish music that was played and somebody got up and danced. Okay, so that broadened... Because those, the link between language, music, dance, and Gaelic games, is all a cultural thing. The language is involved in all of them...Irish dancing, is we lead the culture, the whole link of the culture. And you include Gaelic games, music, dance and language, and it's all a family. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

In other words, one of the ways that the Gaelic League used to overcome the negative colonial associations toward the language was to borrow the positive connection between language and dance that still existed in the farthest and least accessible reaches (often islands off the West coast) in Ireland and apply it to the main island.

This connection to culture was not only historical. Teachers and students also saw it as meaningful in their own lives today. The following three quotes stand out because they come from participants who are very different points in their personal and professional lives, yet they all share a sense that knowing Irish affords them a more profound link to their own Irish identities. The first speaker is an older professional, while the second is a young professional, and the third is a university student.

It’s kind of a deeper feel[ing] for me. It's like knowing the music. People might think, "Does it mean that you have to be a musician to do it?" But for me ... I think I had a deeper understanding of the dance from being able to play the music. Even the language, yes, rhythmically, the language, yes, I think that enhances. Even though I mightn't be thinking in Irish, I could be thinking in English. I know I can still go back to a kind of cultural base. I can reference a culture in my head, and that language can be a way into that culture. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2016)

For this teacher, the language provides an entrée into the culture, which includes music and dance. She makes an emotional connection to these cultural practices through the
language, going so far as suggesting that the rhythm of the language provides a rhythm for the music and dance.

The younger professional argues that Irish mythology is only accessible through the language. He notes that the Anglicized place names obscure the history and mythology of Ireland that might otherwise be apparent in the etymology. For him, one of the successes of the Gaelic League has been the increase in the number of bilingual road signs. Though the mythology might still be hidden from non-speakers/readers, people who have acquired or learned Irish now have greater access to culture and local history because they can literally see it on a sign.

You look at any of the road signs and the place names you will see in English inevitably are usually a version of the Irish which have absolutely no meaning and when you actually start thinking about the actual meaning in Irish and going behind what it actually means you open up a huge part of the heritage, huge amount of mythology and huge amounts of even history, local history and so it is amazing all around us apart from that I think young people now that they are looking at what helps identify them in a small world I think language is a part of that identifier. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2016)

The student returns the conversation to dance. She feels that she has developed a connection to the language through dance classes and competitions. She knows the names of the dances and associated songs in Irish and when she attends competitions, she hears the language being used. This has created a connection between the language and other cultural practices for her.

I think Irish is like the key to Irish culture in that if I have an Irish competition that’s dancing, it’s preserving that link. Like the dances have Irish names and the tunes have Irish names, so it’s just trying and spread Irish throughout the world as well I guess. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)
Though they draw on different aspects of culture (music, dance, history, mythology), all three of these speakers connect culture to the Irish language. For each of these participants, the language is the key to accessing the culture in deeper and more vibrant ways that would otherwise be absent for them. Furthermore, the fact that these speakers span three generations suggests the project of (re)creating Irish identity is alive and well.

**Speaking Irish, Being Irish**

Given the deeply personal nature of the cultural connections that all of the participants felt, I was curious to know if they thought it was necessary to speak Irish to “truly” be Irish. I asked everyone a variation on the question, “Do you think there's a sense that being able to speak Irish is a necessary component of being Irish?” The answer was a resounding, “No, but…” Participants had a sense that it was not necessary for other people to speak Irish, but that for them language was a critical part of their Irish identity. According to the teacher from above who argued that language is rhythmically connected to music and dance for her, speaking Irish is a large part of her identity, but she feels it would be judgmental to ascribe that to other Irish people:

I don't think people in Ireland would say that, because a lot of people in Ireland would say, "It doesn't make me less Irish because I don't speak the Irish language." People in Ireland would say there are multiplicities of identities today in Ireland. You're looking at many different ethnic groups and it doesn't make them less or more. That's what you're looking at. There are people out there who believe they speak the Irish language because it's just part of Gaelic culture and they want to be able to speak it for themselves. For me it was always about doing it for me. I was never going to be putting it on anybody else, even though I taught it. Depending on the situation, the context you go to, you know the people who will speak Irish to you, you know the people who will not speak Irish to you. That is something that you negotiate the whole way along… The ordinary
people out there in the street, the layperson, no, I wouldn't say it makes them less Irish, but I think they're losing a particular connection with the past. People may not be interested in the past. People are interested in bread and butter now. People are interested in earning a living now. They're interested in what is it I need now to better myself, and that might mean having French. That's the decision that people are making along the way.

You'd be surprised how many people in Ireland, ordinary people in Ireland, tune over to it [Irish language TV and Radio] because there's a lot of subtitles as well. They try and pick up on little bits of the language, and you'd be surprised at how many people in Ireland could actually understand it. They may not be able to speak it very well, but a lot of them will tell you, "I can understand most of it." (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

Interestingly, the idea that the “ordinary people” do not speak well or often seemed to make the language more special to the population writ large. People are proud of the language, even if they are not particularly proficient in it themselves. This idea is also reflected in the literature. The dancer/university student sees interest in and pride for Irish among her peers:

I think a lot of people are interested in the Irish language especially because like it’s people are proud of the Irish language because we don’t really use it every day, like all the time so I don’t know. I suppose if people come to the Gaeltacht that’s when they really see it, like use it all the time…I suppose every country has their own language. I suppose is what makes them feel different and unique. Even if we don’t speak it every day it’s ours and we just want to preserve that and people like through the centuries, I suppose it’s like ought to preserve the Irish. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

Similarly, there was a shared view among participants that the language is one of the markers of a unique national identity, even if few people speak it on a daily basis. Simply giving a visual cue on a sign is a way to portray Irishness to the rest of the world:
People may come here and they don't see the Irish language anywhere, and they see the English language, and it's good to have both languages because it's a representative of the Irish language, which is the language of the island. It was, and maybe it's not anymore, but at the same time it's still very important for people to know it. It's reclaiming a language, and that notion of not wanting it to be like Latin where it becomes a dead language. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

The overarching view of the participants reported in this study was one of both a historical and ongoing connection between an idealized Irish language and an idealized Irish identity. The Gaelic League actively encouraged this narrative to help imagine and create the Irish nation-state, and they employed dance, a popular pastime, as a tool to do so. In the next section I outline the many ways that the Gaelic League and then the CLRG used dance to promote language in the first part of the 20th century. The language management methods discussed below require at least limited Irish proficiency of dance teachers, which parallels national policies that required Irish as a mandatory subject in school, an Irish language exam for graduation, and Irish proficiency to gain civil service employment.

Language Management

One of the first activities of the CLRG upon its founding was to write rules for the regulation of Irish dance. The 1931 Rules and Regulations specifically stated: “Each entrant at a Feis [dancing competition], must undergo an oral Irish examination and each Feis Committee must be satisfied that every entrant has a speaking knowledge of Irish” (Gaelic League Congress, as cited in Cullinane, 2000, p. 68). Interestingly, this early rule applied only to dancers, but that rule was eliminated quickly, and the student requirement has never been re-implemented. Instead, in 1943, the first teacher’s exam known as the
Teastas Coimisiún le Rinci Gaelacha, or TCRG, was implemented. As discussed briefly in Chapter Four, this exam is the cornerstone of the CLRG’s language management activities.

**Advent of the TCRG Exam**

The creation of the exam occurred in an environment of increasing national concern for the language and coincided with the founding of *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* [The National Irish Council]. Crowley (2005) notes that, “activists in the language movement began to suspect that the policies weren’t working…many of the language revival organizations began to be active after almost twenty years of leaving it to the state” (p. 176). Significantly, Cullinane (2013) noted that 1943 was also the 50th anniversary year of the Gaelic League. This environment of concern over the failure of state language policy and the 50th anniversary of the Gaelic League almost certainly led to the creation of the TCRG exam and the inclusion of the language requirement.

In the introduction to the Syllabus for Examinations 1943, the CLRG stated:

> It had been decided that all future candidates for the Teacher’s Diploma must be competent to teach through the medium of Irish. Such a rule was a very natural step when one considers the close relations existing between the Irish language and the Dancing since the inception of The Gaelic League fifty years ago, apart altogether from the strong position of the schools in the country. However, we are confident that the introduction of the Irish language as an essential qualification for the T.C.R.G. will not be considered a hardship by future candidates for entry to the profession. (CLRG, as cited in Cullinane, 2003, pp. 91-92)

In the excerpt above, it is clear that the CLRG was trying to persuade teachers to instruct their students in Irish rather than English by requiring them to pass a language exam. The assumption that this test will not be too a severe gatekeeping device likely extends from
the fact that students were required to study Irish in school and pass an Irish exam to graduate from secondary school. A dance teacher clarified this how the assumption was made:

When the exam was first brought in the Coimisiún le Rinci Gaelacha [CLRG] was made up of only nominees of Conradh na Gaeilge [the Gaelic League], so they were all Irish speaking members of the Gaelic League. And the core value was the Irish language. The Irish language was key. (Dance teacher and examiner, November 10, 2015)

In other words, it was not necessarily dance teachers who thought it would be a good idea to test teaching candidates in Irish, it was the Gaelic League representatives on the CLRG. Since the dance teachers were far outnumbered by the Gaelic League representatives, it is no surprise that the language exam was implemented.

Cormac MacFhionnlaoich—the first chairperson of the CLRG--has a rich memoir that adds detail to the period preceding the creation of the exam. Though he did not mention language proficiency as a problem, he still included a language exam in his proposal for a dance teacher’s exam. Mr. MacFhionnlaoich was, after all, a dyed-in-the-wool Gaelic Leaguer and would have been well aware of the national concerns regarding language policy. Of the creation of the exam, he stated:

During the next two years [1929-1931], An Coimisiún had application from about thirty young ladies, plus a couple of young men, for recognition as teachers of Irish dancing. No examination was in force at that time, and the only guide to the capability of an application was the written or oral evidence of any of our already recognised teachers, or of that of a Gaelic League secretary. (Céim 23, 1976, p. 3)

Mr. MacFhionnlaoich’s memoirs regarding the proposed teaching exam picked up in the next issue of Céim:
We were all conscious of the fact that this was a faulty method, and our attention was drawn to a number of accepted applicants who came nowhere near the standard envisaged by the members of An Coimisiún. At one of our meetings I put forward a scheme of examination for prospective teachers. Roughly the scheme was as follows: --
(a) Oral examination of the contents of Book I of AR RINNCIDHE FOIRNE
(b) Candidates to know and be prepared to dance any, or all, of the following—Double Jig, Slip Jig, Reel, Hornpipe together with at least eight Set dances
(c) To teach simple steps, and to teach any, or all, of the dances in Book 1 to a class of children
(d) To undergo an examination in elementary Irish

After a long discussion, the scheme substantially as above was accepted. (*Céim* 24, 1976, p. 3)

Elements A-C were included in order to improve the perceived lack of teaching quality by some dance teachers. It was hoped that if teachers had to know a certain number of dances and prove that they could instruct students in those dances then the standard of Irish dancing would improve. The language exam, as shown above, was intended to strengthen the *de facto* link between dance and language, and ideally get teachers to instruct dance in Irish. The skeleton of the modern TCRG exam can be seen in Mr. MacFhionnlaoich’s 1943 proposal; teaching candidates are still required to go through these sections of the exam in addition to several others already discussed in Chapter Four.

In the late 1940s the exam became more difficult; it was revised to include a written section and add ten additional céilí dances to the exam repertoire. Mr. MacFhionnlaoich explained:

These oral examinations continued for four of five years; then I suggested a written examination. This was to consist of 20 questions on Book 1, and the remainder of the syllabus was to remain as it was. We carried on like this for two years until Book 2 of AR RINNCIDHE FOIRNE was in print.
We allowed sufficient time for everyone to become acquainted with the contents of Book 2 before adding it to Section A of the syllabus.

By the middle of the fifties we had so many registered teachers in all parts of Ireland that we were forced to revise the standard of the examination. We did this by adding on another section called ‘Ceol’ [music]. Under this heading candidates for the T.C.R.G. examination were asked to write the names of 20 Set Dance tunes as played for them on the day of the examination. Candidates had also to write the time signature of each Set Dance played. (Céim 24, 1976, p. 3)

It is not totally clear from the original rules if the entire test was conducted in Irish, and participants in my study disagreed on this point, but at the very least, TCRG candidates had to teach all of the dances in book one of Ár Rincí Fóirne in Irish (Cullinane, 2000) as well as take an oral Irish exam (Cullinane, 2013). The other portions of the test were dancing and teaching both solo and céilí dancing (Cullinane, 2013), processes which could have been directed in English or Irish. One participant did report taking his exam fully in Irish, and said that it was required until the mid-1950s.

The modern formulation of the exam with the six parts outlined in Chapter Four seems to have come into existence in the early 1980s, when an official examination committee was formed. Before this, exams were conducted on a somewhat ad hoc basis, depending on who was available to adjudicate them. As of 1984, applicants were required to know the céilí dances from all three books of Ár Rincí Fóirne, as well as take tests in music, dancing, solo and céilí dance teaching, and Irish. Teaching candidates today may opt to take the entire exam in Irish, but only the language test must be taken in Irish. This section is also the only part of the exam syllabus where the instructions are given in both languages. The rest of the syllabus is written in English, although the section titles are
bilingual. The following excerpt shows the instructions for the Irish language exam in both languages. It is interesting to note that the Irish comes first, giving it higher prestige than English for this one section at least:

_Scrúdú Gaeilge - Irish Language Test_

(1) **Tá an trial seo éigeantach do iarrthóirí go bhfuil cónaí in Eirinn nó go bhfuil sé i gceist acu teagasc in Eirinn.**

This test is compulsory for applicants residing in Ireland or intending to teach in Ireland

(2) **Sa triall seo beidh**

(a) **Ceistiú ar théarmaí agus abairtí a bhaineann le rince, ainmneacha rinci san áireamh, mar atá ar fail in "Ar Rinci Foirne" agus i Liosta Oifigiúil na Rinci Leighleacha.**

(b) **Comhrá simplí ar saol an iarrthórá féin agus ar gnáthchúrsaí an lae.**

(c) **Léamh agus tuiscint Gaeilge simplí leis an bheim ar cúrsaí rince.**

In this test candidates will

(a) be required to show a knowledge of the terms and phrases connected with dancing, including names of dances (as found in "Ar Rinci Foirne" and in the Official List of set-dances).

(b) have to show they are capable of simple conversation about themselves and everyday affairs.

(c) take a simple test in reading and understanding written Irish (with the emphasis on dancing matters).

(3) **Cuífear san áireamh tuiscint, liofacht agus stór focal. Ins an áireamh chomh maith beidh oideachas, aois agus cúlra an iarrthóra.**

The understanding, fluency and vocabulary of a candidate will be taken into account. Also considered will be the candidate's education, age and background.

Note: Persons exempted from taking the Irish test because they reside abroad will, if they later move to Ireland, be required to take the test within two years of taking up residence in that country. (CLRG, 2015, p. 7).
Though the test instructions suggest that dance teachers do not need to be fully fluent in Irish, it is reasonably comprehensive in that it tests three of the four major language capabilities—reading, speaking, and listening. It is the comprehensive nature of the exam that makes it interesting from a language management standpoint in that it requires a deeper engagement with the language than can be had from memorizing the names of a few dances.

**Adjudicating the Exam**

Since language exams are used as gatekeeping devices (Shohamy, 2001), I wanted to know how the language exam was judged and how often people failed. Failure is rare, but not unknown, and the scoring is subjective with an inclination by the examiners to be lenient unless it is obvious to them that a person has not tried to learn any Irish at all. In an interview with an examiner, we discussed how the exam is conducted particularly for those teaching candidates with limited Irish skills:

Anna: What happens when they [teaching candidates] really are very poor at the language exam?

Dance Teacher: We don't insist on a very high standard. We tend to have it fairly basic. At the same time, we don't make a mockery. There are certain dance teachers who have come into the exam and thought that they could just laugh their way through it. They’re not allowed to do that, but there is also a sense in which we don't want to make the Irish language an impediment that people could say, “I've got everything else, and I failed the bloody Irish.” We tried to encourage people to pass a basic Irish test. That's the thing.

Anna: A spoken exam, or…?

Dance Teacher: It's an oral. Definitely oral. We ask you to read a little bit. The reason we ask people to read, it gets them actually speaking.
Anna: That makes sense.

Dance Teacher: To try and get people to mouth the words can be difficult.

Anna: How often do you see very fluent people as opposed to very not fluent people?

Dance Teacher: I couldn't say how often. It just varies. You'll have some people that are very fluent, some that are not. People go to all Irish schools, and now we have more all Irish schools in the country and a lot more people who are fluent. In the last census, a large number of people claim to be fluent in Irish. (Dance teacher and examiner, November 10, 2015)

Another examiner reiterated that there are different expectations for people with different levels of language proficiency, and that the language exam rarely excludes someone from gaining their certification.

Anna: What do you see in those [exams]? Do you see people [who] are mildly proficient? Do you see people [who] are incredibly proficient?

Dance Teacher: In the exams?

Anna: Yeah, in the language exams.

Dance Teacher: Oh, you see ... from people who have just learned a few words in order to take the exam to people who are fluent. There's a huge, huge range. The only thing I can say I about it is that it makes people sit down and learn something if they have nothing. There are areas in this country that wouldn't have had Irish, the North. Some do, some don't. And the ones who do have it very strong, and the others don't have any. So, it gives them something, it gives them a focus, it gives them an interest and they have to do some preparation. You know it's only prepared for the day, for the exam, but at least it's done.

Anna: Do you ever have to fail people in that part?

Dance Teacher: Very seldom, but yes. You can't fail ... well this would be me, you can't fail somebody if they've made a good effort and definitely you'd advise them to keep up what they were doing. And usually they do because they have now found an interest in something they didn't have
before. Yeah, yeah, they do because they come back and they tell me. But ... it hasn't happened very often, one or two came in just not prepared. There's a huge range in standards. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

Both of these examiners make the interesting point that they are disinclined to fail people, so the language exam is not a terribly strenuous gatekeeping device. It is certainly less important than the dancing sections of the exam, which cause people to fail regularly. Though the language exam is still compulsory, it appears that most examiners today are more concerned with encouraging people to learn a little bit of Irish in the hope that they will discover a passion for it. The language exam at this point appears to be more of a symbolic gesture that connects dance to language. This is in keeping with the era of language encouragement within the CLRG today, and will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

A third examiner pointed out that people have different strengths. Some people struggle with the written exam in English, others struggle with the oral Irish exam. However, she argues that if the Irish exam did not exist, people would stop associating dance and language with each other.

It's oral. To be fair, it's inclined to be inclusive. This is one of the things that happened historically. For example, people learned their dance in parts of Kerry and parts of Cork and people who didn't speak Irish but who had a wealth of past on transmission of steps and material, the idea is that you can learn it. You can learn the names of the set dances. There is a syllabus, in that way...to be able to say all the different parts of a feis program. Again, you have to remember that the whole study of dancing, all the Irish culture, it was all an oral tradition. That orality has been maintained. Some people find the paper hard, even in English. Hard in any language, just because it's difficult. I think that is tricky.
I think maintaining it as part of the exam is really important, actually, it focuses. People malign exam syllabi. How do you keep something very if you don't foreground? It is good. People have their ... It's the same thing as learning the music or learning, you know people have different strengths obviously. Some people will be quite nervous with the Irish. With an oral exam of any kind, if they are nervous. (Dance teacher, interview, June 27, 2015)

In defense of most teaching candidates, one participant noted, “I conducted those exams for a period of about 15 years, and I only failed two people. Most people come prepared” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015). Unfortunately, I was not able to determine if the language exam was judged more harshly in the early days, but I am inclined to think that the old guard of the Gaelic League were less forgiving regarding the language, as they were the ones who came up with the language requirement in the first place and many of them did not know how to dance.

The descriptions of the exam above suggest that most people take the exam in English, so I was curious to know if anyone ever took the test fully in Irish anymore.

Anna: Does anyone [ever take the whole exam in Irish]? Does it ever happen?

Dance Teacher: Yes, but having said yes, I have to qualify it by saying it would be one in 100. It would be one in 100. People coming from the West Coast, from places like Connemara or in Donegal, their first language would be Irish and therefore they would find it simpler to do it through Irish than translated into English. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015)

The answer was interesting because the people who do take the test all in Irish tend to come from the rural west coast, which is the imagined home of Irish culture. It also leads to an important point—the mandatory exam only applies to those people who live on the
island of Ireland. Elsewhere in the world, it is optional.

Limiting the Language Exam to Ireland

As was outlined in the excerpt from the exam syllabus above, the language exam is only required of dance teachers on the island of Ireland, elsewhere in the world it is optional. The general consensus regarding limiting the language exam to Ireland was that it would be unfair to ask people who did not grow up studying Irish in school to take the exam. In the words of one teacher, “Okay, it is Irish dancing, but it would be very hard for somebody from another country to learn our language for their exam” (Dance teacher, interview, July 7, 2015). There is also the old assumption, argued for by Mr. MacFhionnlaoich, that since Irish people were obligated to study the language in school, an Irish language exam should not be terribly difficult.

The assumption regarding childhood language education is complicated somewhat by the fact that any certified Irish dance teacher who moves to Ireland and wants to continue teaching has to sit the language exam within two years:

If somebody has completed either their teacher's exam or their adjudicated exam while a resident outside of the country and then decide to come back, having qualified, then they decide to come back to reside in the country, they're required to do the all Irish section of the exam. They're given two years from the time they return to learn the language. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015)

Some people are simply returning to Ireland after some years away and studied Irish in school as children in Ireland, but others never had the opportunity to learn Irish because they grew up in another part of the world. They then only have two years to learn the
language before they take the test. That being said, one language examiner explained that people who move to Ireland as adults still do fairly well on the language exam:

You have to do the Irish language exam if you plan to teach in Ireland, and that has stayed there. Even if you are not Irish, and you come to live in Ireland, you still have to do the language exam. People do it, and they are fairly good at it, because it's like anything else, they don't have the same hang-ups about having found it hard to learn at school. It's like if you go to South America, you are probably going to have to learn Spanish or Portuguese. You just do it. I think people actually deal with it quite like that. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

Even though the assumptions about who has studied Irish and who must take the language exam are somewhat contradictory, the feeling among examiners is that requiring anyone teaching in Ireland to take the language exam is a good way to promote the language:

And people come over from England maybe, America. But usually it's England, where their families would have left years ago and now they've come back and they're living or teaching here. They have to do it and they wouldn't have had any background in it. And they make an effort. You know they haven't had background but they make an effort. So from that point-of-view, it's great! It means we can use it and people can understand it and we can bring it back. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

While it is positive that dance teachers who have immigrated to Ireland are making an effort to learn Irish, given the short two-year turnaround, it is unlikely that many acquire sufficient proficiency to then begin teaching class in Irish.

To summarize, the Irish language exam is the main tool of linguistic compulsion in the CLRG. Historically it was likely a more stringent gatekeeping device, but today it appears to be a fairly easy and symbolic hoop to jump through on the way to teaching certification. The original idea as evidenced by Mr. MacFhionnlaoich was to use the
language exam to make sure teachers were capable of teaching in Irish. Today the examiners hope that by learning enough Irish for the exam, teaching candidates will feel positively toward the language and want to learn more. If some of them went on to teach their classes in Irish, that would be above and beyond expectations. This change in attitudes toward the exam is indicative of the shifting language ideologies I am arguing for. In the early years of the CLRG, there was a focus coming from the nationalist element of the Gaelic League on creating a culturally and linguistically “pure” Irish national identity. As the 20th century wore on and colonialism became an increasingly distant memory, people came to see the language as an educational gatekeeping device that prevented high school graduation. This correlates with the weakening language exam for dance teachers, effectively removing the linguistic gatekeeping element from the TCRG exam—the CLRG is now more concerned with cultivating an interest in the language rather than promoting a linguistically purist ideology.

**Studying for the Exam**

Since the language exam is not the part most people fail, I wanted to know how teaching candidates studied for that section. The examiners seem aware that most people study enough to pass the language test, but that they do not exert too much effort on that section. The CLRG does provides a language CD for teaching candidates to study from (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015), but many people get a few lessons from more proficient friends, or even have said friends write up a little script for the examinee to memorize:
Normally a lot of them, the majority of them would have enough Irish for their oral. It’s not very difficult, it’s they just want you to go, and they usually, what we usually do is, they write up their life story. If they’re not good, somebody will write it up for them in the Irish and they will just continually read it and read it and read it. Then when they go in, within a few minutes, the examiner, the oral Irish examiner will know whether they’re fluent or not. If they’re fluent, they speak about everything and anything. If they’re not, they will know that they’ve learnt all about their life and they’d say, tell me all about yourself and the candidate is delighted.

The oral Irish is not there to fail them because it’s only [if] you’re teaching in Ireland that you do the oral Irish. It’s not unfair because we definitely should have our language, but it’s another part that they have to study that the rest of the world don’t have to study. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 7, 2015)

Another examiner concurred:

I think most people go to their friends, who was a primary school teacher, and get a few lessons, I would say. I would say most people do that. They are like people going for waltzing lessons before they get married. You know what I mean? Sort of the same thing. I think that makes sense in that way. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

The fact that teaching candidates put in minimal effort studying for the language exam provides further evidence that it is not particularly important to the practice of Irish dance teaching. That they have to study at all is indicative of the low status of Irish in Ireland—most teaching candidates are not capable of walking into a room and having a conversation in Irish without practice. The comparison to learning some ballroom dancing for one’s wedding reception is quite evocative—it is the sort of thing you learn for a special day and then never do again and promptly forget.
Rules and Regulations

While the teaching exam is the best-known language management technique, the CLRG has a lengthy Constitution and a rules document that outline the expectations for dance teachers. Several of these rules apply specifically to language. Furthermore, the Constitution of the CLRG can only be amended with the permission of the Gaelic League, a requirement that has existed since it was written. Under the assumption that some dance teachers had never seen the CLRG Constitution, it was published in full in *Céim* twice:

The basic rules of An Coimisiún are contained in its *Bunreacht* (Constitution). This fairly lengthy document is in Irish only and sets out in details the aims and responsibilities of the organisation, how it is composed, what it may do and not do, etc. … The Constitution is not easily altered. Except in the event of a dire emergency (and for which special provision is made) and the Constitution may be amended only by formal motion at the Annual General Meeting and the desired amendment must be subsequently approved by Conradh na Gaeilge [The Gaelic League]…We are frequently asked questions regarding the Constitution, in fact many people claim never to have seen it. Copies of the document (in Irish) are readily available on request. However, as a help to those whose knowledge of Irish may be somewhat limited, we will publish in *Céim* a guide in English to the Constitution. (Excerpt from An Bunreacht/The Constitution, *Céim* 29, 1981, p. 7)

It is important to note that the official version of the Constitution is the Irish version, and when disputes about meaning arise, it is the Irish version that takes precedence.

**Constitution Rules Regarding Language.** With 60 rules, the Constitution of the CLRG is quite lengthy and it took three issues of *Céim* to cover all of the rules. Of these 60 rules, two apply to the Irish language:
1. Co-operate with other organisations and groups in activities which are for the promotion of the Irish language, music, dancing or games. (Excerpt from An Bunreacht/The Constitution, Céim 39, 1981, p. 7)


Following the publication of the Constitution, a Code of Ethics for teachers was written, and this too had language guidelines. The CLRG is quick to specify that like the language exam, these rules only apply to teachers living in Ireland, but they also highlight a dance teacher from abroad who was clearly interested in the language as a source of pride for the organization:

You will find in this issue the long awaited Code of Ethics and we are sure it will get a céad Míle fáilte [one hundred thousand welcomes] from many...Needless to say the recommendations about the Irish language will apply only to those living in Ireland, though we heard a teacher recently who came many thousands of miles to the Oireachtas inquiring about books and tapes on the language. (Excerpt from Eagarfhocal [Editorial], Céim 45, 1983, p. 2)

This passage reads just a bit like the CLRG was applying some guilt on teachers from Ireland who were disinterested in the language. There is a sense of “look at this wonderful person who crossed the ocean to get language learning materials, why don’t you make the same effort?”

Like the CLRG Constitution, the Teachers Code of Ethics is a long document, with 59 additional rules for teachers to which to adhere. Two of the rules pertain to language, interestingly both under the heading of “The Teacher’s Relationship to Pupils”:

E. The Teacher’s Relationship with Pupils

38. It should always be the teacher’s principal objective to encourage and foster interest in and love for Irish dancing among his pupils. He should
also teach the pupils respect for every aspect of Irish culture and especially for the language.

44. The teacher should show a liking for the Irish language and should use it for numbers and dance names at least. In Irish-speaking areas, and where possible in other areas, the teacher should conduct the entire class through Irish.

(Excerpt from An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (faoi choimirce Conradh na Gaeilge) [under the auspices of the Gaelic League], Cod Éitici Le Hádáidh Muinteoirí Rince, Code of Ethics for Dancing Teachers, Céim 45, 1983, pp. 10-12)

Rule 44 tries to lay out how a teacher should use Irish in dance classes. The suggestion to use the Irish words for numbers and dance names would seem doable, but it does not seem to have taken root as my participants were unable to identify more than two or three teachers they know to teach classes in Irish.

Another rules document, The Commission’s Competition Rules, regulated how feis syllabi were drawn up. Feis syllabi are documents that explain an upcoming dance competition. The rule is followed by a clarification that echoes the national desperation regarding the rapid loss of Irish by noting that language is most important but has been least successfully maintained as a part of Gaelic culture:

This section consists of six rules regarding the drawing up of a syllabus and the registration and distribution of same … [Rules 1-5 are unrelated to language]

6. The syllabus, for competitions to be held in Ireland, must have the dance titles, age grouping etc. in Irish only. The venue, dates and rules may be bilingual …

Rule No. 6 is an attempt on behalf of An Coimisiún to encourage more use of the Irish language. There are many facets of our Gaelic culture, and while each one is important in itself, the language is the most important and the one that seems to have made least progress. Every little effort helps and An Coimisiún is anxious to make some contribution, however small. [Signed EAMONN DE BHÁL, Claráitheoir Comórtaisí] (Excerpt
The fact that this clarification was written by Mr. De Bhál is doubly important, because he is the president of the CLRG, and his words carry weight. Mr. De Bhál is also an ardent supporter of the language and long time member of the Gaelic League. It is largely due to his efforts that the new Irish Language Policy introduced in Chapter One was written (J. Cullinane, personal communication, April 8, 2016).

Though not an official rule, an attempt was made to correct the terminology people were using to label competitions as seen in this excerpt from Céim in 1983 that highlighted the specific definitions that apply to the words feis and féile, complete with instructions on how to make the words plural in Irish:

While on the question of competitions we should like to point out once more that the word ‘feis’ should only be used when an event includes, as well as dancing, at least music and language competitions. Where dancing only takes place the word ‘ Féile’ should be used—féile rince [dance competition]. And remember the plural of feis is feiseanna (not feises) and that of féile is féilte—féilte rince. A feis in Ireland corresponds to a Mod in Scotland, or an Eisteaddfod in Wales.
(Excerpt from Eagarfhocal [Editorial], Céim 47, 1983, p. 2)

It is possible that feile and feis are used with this level of specificity in Ireland; however, this editorial comment suggests otherwise. Growing up in the US, I was taught that these words were synonymous and that there was nothing wrong with treating the words as borrowings into English and pluralizing them accordingly with –(e)s. Given the number of time my participants said the word “feises” in their interviews, it would appear that
this call for “better” Irish grammar failed. As an act of linguistic compulsion, however, a purist grammarian stance is to be expected.

**Meetings**

As stated in the Constitution, the working language of the CLRG was intended to be Irish. Interestingly, this was not always the case, for many years meetings were bilingual, as Cormac MacFhillionaigh explained in his memoirs:

> Up to 1945 or so our Coimisiún meetings were conducted bilingually – those who had Irish used it and the few who were not too fluent in Irish used English. One day Aodh O Fearnáil suggested that it was now opportune for our meetings to be conducted in the Irish language only. This motion was carried unanimously, and ever since the affairs of An Coimisiún have been discussed almost exclusively in Irish. (Céim 28, 1977, p. 3)

This practice of conducting meetings in Irish lasted into the 1960s. Even when dance teachers objected, the Gaelic League held firm:

> Dance Teacher: The language of the Commission was Irish. There was no English…Somewhere in the late 50s, or it was the early 50s, the dancing teachers demanded representation. As I said to you, it was all just the Gaelic League. They ran the whole show, there was nothing else. That was the only authority that was. The dancing teacher sought representation. And it was one from each region was nominated, so there were dancing teachers. The stipulation was if you wanted representation, Irish. No English. They would not compromise on that.

> Anna: Were there teachers who just didn't understand? Would they just sit in meetings are not know?

> Dance Teacher: They went to Irish classes and they made themselves aware.

> Anna: They made themselves aware.

> Dance Teacher: They made themselves aware. That did happen. The people representing the teachers might've been in their 40s or whatever.
They had to go learn the language. They did. They were proud to learn, at that point. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)

The final comment, “They were proud to learn, at that point,” foreshadows the CLRG’s impending problem with negative attitudes toward Irish.

**Expectation of Irish Speaking Staff**

In addition to Irish being the medium of meetings for many years, the CLRG maintains an expectation of Irish speaking staff. This is comparable to the national level policy that required Irish proficiency to gain employment in the civil service. Two separate introductions published eight years apart show that speaking Irish was necessary, though having an Irish dance background was not, to be hired by the CLRG as an office employee.

Our new full-time permanent Secretary, Sorcha Ní Fháith has taken up duty since January 1st…She is a fluent Gaelic speaker, and has always been interested in Irish culture in all its aspects. (Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 19, 1974, p. 2)

We welcome Siobhán [Bean Uí Chatháin] to our ranks. Although…she has not a dancing background she has wide and varied office and executive experience. We are sure it will not take her long to come to grips with the complications and problems that can only arise in the dancing world! She is, of course, a fluent Irish speaker. (Excerpt from Cursai Reatha – Current Affairs, Céim 37-38. 1982, p. 3)

The expectation of Irish proficiency for CLRG employees applied at all levels.

Figure 10 and the text that follows was an advertisement for a new chairperson of the CLRG. It reads: “Chief executive needed, National Cultural Organization (international business), Good standard of Irish necessary, Further information is available from the CLRG.”
Below the advertisement, a clarification was written:

The above [Figure 10] is the advertisement from the Irish weekly paper ANOIS [Now] in which we are looking for a Chief Executive to look after the affairs of An Coimisiún. It is pointed out that ours is not only a national cultural organisation but an international one.

The successful candidate will be required to put the policies of An Coimisiún into effect, to help in the drafting of such policies, do research, prepare and put into effect schemes for further development, and find ways and means of increasing the income of An Coimisiún so we can cover the cost of much new equipment necessary for the running of a large organisation such as ours.

Naturally candidates need not apply unless they have a fluent knowledge of Irish, as much of our work is done in that language. (Céim 57, 1986, p. 10)

This expectation of Irish speaking staff prevails to this day. One participant noted, “And of the girls in the office. They are well able. Certainly, [one employee] has plenty of Gaeilge and they need to have” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015). Furthermore the current President and Chairwoman of the CLRG are both Irish speakers. The new Irish Language Policy codifies this requirement: “Staff members will be capable of providing a service through Irish to members of An Coimisiún, Teachers and
Adjudicators” (J. Cullinane, personal communication, April 8, 2016). This new policy reflects the national return to requiring Irish for civil service employment. The requirement for Irish speaking staff has carried through since the founding of the CLRG, and it seems to have been reinforced by the recent return of mandated Irish proficiency for civil service employment.

(Negative) Attitudes toward Irish

The strict (in principle) language rules of the CLRG contributed to some dance teachers’ negative attitudes toward Irish. The CLRG was not alone in facing negative language attitudes. Many participants actually pointed to the primary and secondary schools as the main sources of negative language attitudes. The Irish language graduation requirement was a far harsher gatekeeping device than the TCRG exam. Likewise the pedagogical focus on memorization rather than conversation skills was viewed as particularly egregious. In some respects, the CLRG had the misfortune of being associated with such policies, even when they were more lenient with the language.

Irish at School

Even though participants were critical of the school system because the Irish curriculum tended to be poorly implemented, there was also a sense of sorrow that so many people developed a dislike for Irish because of their school experiences:

People think because they go to school and they learn so much vocabulary, not that much vocabulary actually, and they come out at the age of eighteen, from the age of four to eighteen, and they still can't speak it. That's very sad. There's something failing in the system, if that's the case… but a lot of children have been turned off it, because they feel they're being forced to learn it, when in actual fact they're not interested.
Then you're wondering, why aren't they interested? It's their language. That's so sad. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

One teacher suggested that the influence of grammarians was to blame, because language learning was too academic and not practical enough:

You're looking at a revival of a language that was revived by people who were academics and who were not necessarily the fluent speakers of the language. Therefore, grammar became important, and grammar's always important, but if you listen to ordinary people in the street most of the time, grammatically, we may not be very accurate in it. I think it's the over emphasis on the grammar over a long period of time actually turned people off, because they were being stopped in the flow of the language. I think there's a great lot of people who put maybe some Irish in in Irish and then English in, but I know there are people who disagree who would be really into the Irish language, because they feel that's going to dilute the language.

There are two sides of the coin. There are people who are really, really wonderful at the language. They can speak philosophically, historically. They can speak everyday Irish language. They can do what they like with the language; they can create it. That's the fluency of it. Then, there are people who do not have that ability. Many of the people of the cities do not have that ability. In some ways they may feel it's not their language anymore. They're more interested in popular culture. They're more interested in learning maybe French as a foreign language, or German as a foreign language, and they're not necessarily interested in learning the Irish language. There's something wrong with the system, as far as I'm concerned, if that's what happens. People should be able to communicate in a basic Irish here, and not to be turned off it. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

Valdez (2016) refers to this emphasis on memorizing vocabulary and grammar as “curricularizing” language. She argues that this results in language being taught as though it were any other academic topic. “It is assume that ‘language’ can be ‘taught’ and ‘learned’ in classroom settings, its ‘study’ award units of credit, and its ‘learning’ generally assessed by paper and pencil examinations” (p. 257). If
students see no practical application for what they have learned or do not feel confident speaking the language outside of the classroom, it is not surprising that they lose interest. The same could be argued of many academic subjects.

Another teacher, who had a relatively positive language learning experience, suggested that the pedagogy was not always so rigid and that many people fell prey to the prevailing negative attitudes even when they had access to high quality instruction:

All the people came up through education through English and couldn't learn Irish because it's like any language, it's hard to learn. It's hard to learn from behind a desk, you need to hear it. I think because they couldn't grasp it, some people had this thing that it was the way it was taught. That could be right, it could be right but it also was- people did have a huge hang up about it. That it was bashed into [their heads] that kind of thing and to me that's very debatable. Very, very, very debatable. It was a thing- it's stigma that was there, maybe before my time it was bashed into people. There were all rules and regulations, you couldn't go into the civil service unless you had Irish. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

However, she also acknowledged, “If you lay down a very very strict regulation, it puts people off rather than try to encourage it” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015).

By the mid-1960s, attitudes toward Irish were so resoundingly negative that the Language Freedom Movement was started, which was intended to overturn mandatory Irish language education. This movement was lead by well-known playwright John B. Keane, and was a reaction to the both mandatory Irish education and the civil service language requirement. To members of the Language Freedom Movement, Irish was perceived to be a pointless dead language:
Dance Teacher: I think even the school, the teaching of Irish in school is very badly managed because you have the same kind of diehard scholastic type teachers who went for grammar and the book learning. They lost sight of the oral, and the spoken word.

So the kids leaving school, they didn't hardly even know how the bloody language was spoke. It's of course, there was a tremendous feeling, in this country, of objecting to anything that is made compulsory. Irish was compulsory. There was a massive campaign against compulsory Irish. Starting with the playwright John B. Keane, who is a great man in some ways. One of his big creations was the language freedom movement [circa 1966] to oppose compulsory Irish.

Anna: Really? Was that one of the Gaelic League’s push against…

Dance Teacher: The Gaelic league and the LFM, really… They were massive rallies outside the Mansion House up there, massive rows over the compulsory Irish. The result of that was very big. It didn't help the whole thing. The thing that has actually done great is the introduction of the gaelscoileanna, Irish, all Irish. If you want to really get a language going, you have to have young people who still speak in it. Learning it as a book subject …tha's what most people did, they learned it is a book subject. The parents of kids objected seriously to the language. "My child, his education has been hindered by the fact that he has to learn this dead language." The dead language. "It's a dead language. Get on with life. You've got to speak English and forget about this dead language."

Compulsion doesn't work.

Anna: No. No.

Dance Teacher: The whole campaign, and like I said, about the Language Freedom Movement and the Gaelic League. That was hugely disruptive. Terribly disruptive. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)

This dance teacher indicated that the language freedom movement was a low-point in Irish language attitudes in the 20th century. Many people wanted the language out of schools and work. Even though the education and employment language policies were implemented as anti-colonial efforts to promote Irish, they were ultimately as detrimental
to Irish proficiency and positive language attitudes as any attempts by the British to eliminate Irish.

The Split

The brewing language crisis between the government and the people came to a head for the Gaelic League and the CLRG in 1968. Many dance teachers felt that Gaelic League members, as language specialists, did not know enough about Irish dancing, and a new organization, An Comhdháil, focused specifically on dance was formed. Those who remained with the CLRG went into damage control mode, founding Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne, the World Championship Competition, to keep members and appeal to dance teachers abroad.

The teachers who chose to form An Comhdháil did not object to the relationship between language and dance per se, but they did object to non-dancers trying to regulate the dance canon.

There's a whole line of people very into the Irish language there, because the roots would have been ... The difference is, they liked the Irish language in the Comhdháil but they didn't want the Gaelic League dictating how dance should be developed. The dance people wanted to develop the dance themselves, according to their own vision, as opposed to being told by the Gaelic League how to do it. They still liked the Irish language. With the Gaelic League, it seems to be the thing that differentiates them from the other one, because they started out promoting the Irish language as part of cultural nationalism. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2016)

Regional affiliation and beliefs about who “owned” which traditions also played into who stayed with the CLRG and who moved to An Comhdháil:

Dance Teacher: They saw the bureaucracy of it was such that they had this notion of who were the dancers, and where the other dances were
from and what they knew. You have to remember, people who are at the top say in Belfast and Derry were quite different. A very different experience. Really, people split according to what they felt was right for their region at the time. Limerick stayed exclusively Commission at the time. There is only one Comhdhail teacher in Limerick and that is somebody who relocated from somewhere else. I used to say to her, you should stay Comhdhail. It's not that we don't want you, but if that's what you really believe…

Anna: Then do it. Yeah.

Dance Teacher: Then, rather than being Commission because there was nothing else here. Me, we are committed to being Commission. I would very often say you'd have a lot of spinoff organizations. I don't think it was just the language. They had the all this notion as to what the tradition was, and who are the authentic owners of the tradition. I don't even think people know, or remember, historically what happened. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

Though it seems that the CLRG has moved on from the split, it was more than 40 years ago after all, there is lingering sadness that a solution could not be found that would keep everyone united. One participant talked about losing friends as a result of the split and how long it has taken to heal from that. Nonetheless, out of the split the World Championship competition was born:

It was very personal. It was interesting, it was. That idea came about as a result of what we'll refer to as the split in Irish dance, around '69, '70. In spite of all our efforts of working up the dance commission from the mid-'50s right through the '60s and now, we brought in representatives, teachers and so on, the students seemed to be a certain amount of concerned by teachers that they still didn't have the technique. I throw my hands up and say I think they were right. I think that control that was there from the very beginning tended to be still there and people had to let go.

In 1969 there was a bit of a problem…it developed in such a way that a big portion of the teachers who were registered at the time decided they were leaving the commission and they were going to form their own organization. The people who stayed on with us in fact, I remember I went to Manchester to talk with teachers over there and try and convince them
not to break with the commission, the idea we had in fact, "Look, stay with us and we will make the change."

Anyway. We held most of the teachers who had been registered with us, and we felt then we needed to do something...I don't know which one of the three of us, and I wouldn't claim it was my self, but somebody had the suggestion that we have...an all-Ireland and we have an all-England championship, that kind of thing, and there were probably competitions in the States as well at the time, but we didn't have anything that embraced all of those. Out of that discussion, in fact, came the idea to hold a World Championship. We held the first one, I think it was 1970 was the first one. It was out of that discussion that the idea of the World Championship came, and it has been a great success. It's a little bit of a monster at the moment, trying to cater for everybody and all. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015)

The creation of the Worlds marked a turning point for the CLRG. The international contingent of the CLRG grew steadily and the globalization and the related Anglicization of Irish dance rapidly became an issue. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In lining up the CLRG’s language management techniques with national level policy, we can see that the CLRG appears to have been highly influenced by the language policy zeitgeist of Ireland for most of the 20th century. This meant that the CLRG engaged in compelling people to speak Irish from the 1920s-1970s. In the 1920s and 1930s, language policy in Ireland was focused on education. Correspondingly, there was a language requirement for school age children—they had to show proficiency in Irish, but their teachers did not yet need to demonstrate such competency. During this period, the Gaelic League was highly active in promoting formal Irish language education, while simultaneously pushing for an Irish language exam for the CLRG.
By the 1940s there was concern that national level language education policies were failing and that organizations like the Gaelic League needed to resume their language promotion activities, and the TCRG exam was born. Thus, for much of the 20th century, the CLRG engaged in linguistic compulsion in order to promote an idealized Irish identity that involved speaking Irish. They attempted to do this by requiring a language test for teacher certification, mandating Irish-speaking staff, and crafting multiple rules and regulations that required the use of Irish.

The 1960s were characterized by growing resentment toward the language and language organizations like the Gaelic League, which precipitated a split between the CLRG and An Comhdháil. Although many of the dance teachers who chose to leave the CLRG still liked the language, they were tired of being told how to regulate dancing by non-dancing language activists. Out of the split World Championships were born, which in turn led to a massive globalization of Irish dance. The globalization of Irish dance and the effects this had on the language management efforts of the CLRG are the topic of Chapter Six.
Chapter 6 – A Hybrid Policy of Linguistic Encouragement and Compulsion: 1970s-Present

*Tús maith leath na hoibre.*
[A good start is half the work]
*(Céim 31, 1978, p. 2)*

*Ná bíodh do theanga faoi do chrios.*
Don't keep your tongue under your belt.

Following the split between the CLRG and An Comhdháil in 1968, the CLRG turned its language management efforts toward the encouragement and fostering of positive attitudes toward Irish. These efforts have been both helped and hampered by the globalization of the CLRG. On the one hand, English has become the dominant language of the CLRG. On the other hand, as Irish dancing spread outside of Ireland, to some extent, so did an interest in the language. Thus, in this chapter, I argue that globalization has changed the way that language is managed by the CLRG, but that language remains a key piece of the mission and governance of the CLRG.

As it relates to the ongoing importance of Irish within the CLRG, it is worth noting that although the connection between language and identity was discussed in the chapter on compulsion, it is just as critical in this chapter as well. Furthermore, compulsion is not absent in the era of encouragement, only diluted. The language exam is still required, Irish speaking staff are still desired, some meetings are still conducted in Irish, and the Irish versions of the CLRG Constitution and rules remain the official versions. Despite these compulsory elements, attitudes toward the language have improved significantly. The rest of this chapter is devoted to how globalization has affected Irish dance, followed by the resulting changes in the CLRG’s language
management strategy, and concluding with the generally positive attitudes toward the
Irish language today.

**Globalization of Irish Dance**

The globalization of Irish dance began in earnest with the founding of the World
Championships in 1970. Although there had been certified dance teachers outside of
Ireland as early as 1949 (Cullinane, 2000), the World Championships were the first time
the CLRG deliberately brought international dancers together. Though this was primarily
intended to keep dance teachers in the CLRG after the split, it coincided with significant
national language policy changes. The high school leaving certificate requirement was
phased out in 1973 and the civil service language requirements in 1974 (Mac Giolla
Chriost, 2005). Access to global English media also increased significantly between the
1960s and 1980s as people acquired modern technologies like TVs and eventually
computers (Crowley, 2005). Within the CLRG, a complicated environment developed
where Irish was not particularly valued for dance within Ireland, and international dance
teachers gained more power in CLRG governance. English became increasingly
necessary as a means of communication at meetings and competitions because so few
dance teachers or dancers knew Irish. Not liking the decreasing status of Irish in dance,
the Irish members of the CLRG responded with a hybrid policy of language compulsion
and encouragement, with a focus on promoting positive attitudes toward the language
rather than Irish proficiency.

One of the first signs of globalization within the CLRG was the gradual change from Irish medium meetings, which had been instituted in 1945, to bilingual meetings, to primarily English medium meetings with a few small committee meetings still conducted in Irish. One dance teacher explained that this shift was precipitated by a few vocal English-speaking members of the CLRG who felt that they were being deliberately left out:

Anna: What pushed the switch to English? Was it the increase of ...

Dance Teacher: Gradually, there was representation, but that representation began with one from each region in Ireland. Then there was a demand for reps from Britain, not so much Scotland [but] England, to be involved. Whether they like it or not, Irish was the language. There was to be no compromise. When the Americans came on board, they didn't have any election, there was no representation as such. The Commission itself decided we can't have a bunch of people out there who are on the outside. We need to make some provision for bringing them in. The Commission used to nominate a couple, three, from North America to represent Irish dancing.

Anna: Yeah, of course.

Dance Teacher: [US and Canadian dance teachers], they were more vociferous in terms of the Irish language. People would shout, “I know why you bothered to speak Irish because you don't want us to know what we’re deciding. We are being kept on the outside," you can hear them. You can imagine the people with the big voices.

Anna: I can absolutely picture that.

Dance Teacher: "You're keeping us in the dark…Would you speak in the real English?" and all of that. Little by little, little bits of the meetings would be in English. There will be bilingualism. Anywhere that happens, gradually takes over. Bilingualism went out the window and the meetings ended up totally in Irish, or totally in English.
Anna: When was that, do you think? What point?

Dance Teacher: It would be 70s.

Anna: The 70s? It was finally switched over?

Dance Teacher: In the early 70s, it moved. It would be middle to late 70s before English have become the norm. There was no going back, course. We did have some Irish. Meanwhile, of course, we had the split as we call it when the Comhdháil came in and all that happened in the meantime, we were trying to hold on to people, too, we weren't trying to put obstacles in their way. As I said, it was a very gradual process. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)

Because the CLRG was so concerned about the possible repercussions of the split and felt they needed to keep as many dance teachers in the organization as possible, they conceded to the English-speakers and meetings became increasingly English dominant.

As the meetings were moving toward being English medium, so too were versions of the rules. A greater demand for translation resulted in this note in Céim regarding new rules going into effect July 1, 1977:

A booklet containing the new rules and incorporating a detailed guide to the rules in English is at present in course of printing and will shortly be issued to all adjudicators, teachers and organisers of registered competitions. (Excerpt from “Amendments to Rules for Competitions,” Céim 28, 1977, p. 10)

This did not change the CLRG Constitutional requirement that the official rule document was the Irish language version, but it did show a recognition that dance teachers needed to be able to understand the rules if they were to follow them. These changes remained the status quo throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with meetings and competitions gradually becoming almost fully English medium.
Globalization after *Riverdance* (1996-Present)

The second period of substantial international growth followed the premier of *Riverdance* in 1996. For many people, the only reference to Irish dance they know is *Riverdance*, and for good reason. For the past 20 years, shows like *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* have brought Irish dancing to audiences around the world. As the popularity of the shows grew, so too did the number of students registering for dance classes. At the 2016 World Championships there were dancers from 33 participating nations: Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Kenya, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Norway, UAE, Singapore, Mexico, China, Japan, Taiwan, Israel, Spain, Czech Republic (CLRG, 2016b). For many of the participants in this study this massive globalization has been a mixed blessing:

> But now people learning it in Japan, Korea, and China, and thousands, dare I say close to half a million or so, American children learning Irish dancing ... They don't know where Ireland is. They don't know much about Ireland or what it is. It's just their Irish dancing, but they're going to it as an art form, an intricate art form that probably they associate more with [Michael] Flatley and the shows. They empathize with the shows rather than any love for Ireland or its culture or its history. So that in a roundabout way is kind of saying to you, hey, they're not going to speak Irish, you know? They have no connection with the Irish language, the Irish culture. It's only just the dance.” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 1, 2015)

So, the very pieces of identity and culture that participants connected to dance in Chapter Five (history, language, art) are largely absent for dancers outside of Ireland.

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31 Michael Flatley was the original male lead in *Riverdance*. He later went on to choreograph *Lord of the Dance*, *Feet of Flames*, and *Celtic Tiger*. 
Michael Flatley’s perceived influence was also questioned by another teacher, who argued that the reason *Riverdance* was so successful was that there was already excellent dance material to draw from. That is to say, Michael Flatley did not invent global Irish dance, which is a fair argument, as Michael Flatley grew up in Chicago and initially became Irish-dance-famous as the first US American to win at the World Championships. The teacher did, however, acknowledge that the success of CLRG Irish dancing in continental Europe today likely owed something to the success of *Riverdance*:

Dance Teacher: When you actually, when you look up the spirit that Irish dancing has created, a lot of emphasis has been put on the fact that Michael Flatley made Irish dancing sexy. It's as if only for Michael Flatley coming along, it wouldn't have been rescued, Irish dancing would have died. Far from it. It was way different than that. It was absolutely fine and it was the very reason why *Riverdance* had the material it had.

Anna: Oh yeah.

Dance Teacher: It's like people who still take that notion, I mean we've been hugely successful commercially.

Anna: Yeah, of course.

Dance Teacher: Irish dancing, the success of Irish dancing, has largely been fostered by the fact that those shows were run. That has made it more international.

Anna: Sure. That makes sense.

Dance Teacher: Hugely.

Anna: It certainly was not struggling before. Not at all.

Dance Teacher: It was not struggling. It was more limited, but not struggling...I doubt if we would have the same level of Irish dancing in Europe, say for instance. (Dance teacher and examiner, November 10, 2015)
In other words, Irish dance was already successful in many international settings, and it was *Riverdance* that provided the impetus for the second wave of globalization.

One of the outcomes of globalization, which was hinted at above, is that few dancers outside of Ireland feel a cultural connection to Irish dance. Instead, it is seen as a sport. Certainly, I called Irish dance my sport throughout high school and would get snippy with people who tried to tell me that dance was not an athletic undertaking. The interpretation of Irish dance as sport did not resonate with some participants:

> When I was learning Irish dance with [my teacher], I used to go in and teach the tin whistle in her class, I used to go and teach the guitar in her class, we had Irish dancing inside there. She loved the Irish language as well. There was this whole cultural thing, whereas a lot of people are arguing today it's a sport and not a cultural thing.

> I do not agree with the fact that it's a sport, because to me it was never a sport. I think it may be becoming a sport, because that's how people are being assessed today in a sport way, it's being measured. To me it was never a sport. To me it was part of my culture: it was music, it was art. It was all of these wonderful things. It was a physical expression of the music. Therefore, I danced for the love of it and the discipline involved in it, and I knew I was good at it and I could do it and it was great fun. I had great fun doing it, and I loved the Irish language as part of it, and I loved the Irish music as part of that. It was all this combination of all these things together. It wasn't just the dance alone for me. It was that dance could never for me be separate from the music.

That for me was this whole cultural thing of the dance came from rural areas. The competition culture came from the cities, but it had come from rural areas, and people who had spoken the Irish language. That's why the Gaelic League had it, because they wanted to revive the language of the people who did this kind of dancing. It came from rural agricultural regions in the west of Ireland, maybe the south of Ireland...

The thing is, in the Irish dance world, a lot of the time is spent winning in competition, which means a lot of the time the class is spent teaching material for competition to win. Many teachers would say to you, "The
Irish language is marvelous but we haven't the time to teach it. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

The disconnect between dance as culture and dance as sport is the most illustrative example of the way in which dance and language have become disarticulated for many dancers. As a sport, Irish dance has more in common with amateur or school athletic leagues. Dancers train for many hours a week to win competitions. There is no need to learn Irish to be a championship level dancer in the same way that there is no need to learn Irish to be a track or gymnastics star.

The preceding passage also raises questions about the ownership of Irish dance. In the same way that there are public discourses about who is allowed to speak Irish and who is “authentically” Irish, there are discourses that argue that the home of Irish dance is the rural west of Ireland and that “real” Irish dance can only exist there. These discourses regarding the authenticity and ownership of Irish dance and language compete with the idea of Irish dance as sport both globally and within Ireland.

The CLRG recognizes that Irish dance has become an international sport, which makes their language management all the more critical to maintaining a connection between Irish dance and Irish identity. The more successful they can be at reifying the connection between language and dance, the better they can counter discourses that de-ethnize Irish dance and disconnect it from an idealized Irish identity. In many ways, the Irish language is the CLRG’s most powerful tool for asserting Irish identity.
Language Management

In the era of globalized Irish dance, the CLRG has engaged in numerous language promotion schemes. From using Irish at the World Championships, to putting out bilingual or Irish language publications, to creating a language committee, the CLRG has been creative and flexible in trying to keep the language alive in as many contexts as possible.

Irish at the World Championships

As has been mentioned, creating the World Championships was one of the first actions the CLRG took to hold the organization together after the split. Irish is critical to the running of the competition, as explained by one teacher:

You have to have all the signs, you have to have all the announcements, the side stage, etc., are all made as Gaeilge [in Irish], now with varying degrees of accuracy, I would say…(Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

The use of Irish at Worlds is appreciated by some more than others. One teacher who attended the third World Championships very enthusiastically discussed the use of Irish at the competition, calling the Irish language, music, song and dance priceless assets and hallmarks of the “genuine Ireland” without which there would be no Irish nation. She also repeats the word our several times, creating an in-group identity around the language, music, and dance:

We had spent the week-end renewing old acquaintances, making new ones and watching Irish dancing of a very high standard in the splendour of a nicely decorated Mansion House [The official residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin and original location of the World Irish Dance Championships]. Nothing had been spared on arranging everything for our comfort and enjoyment. The fare offered was something very distinctive,
something that bore the hall-mark of the genuine Ireland, something we could be proud of. It is on occasions such as this that one truly realizes the priceless assets we have in our Irish language, music, song and dance. Take these things from us and we have nothing left to show as a nation. Take these things from us and we will become drab and uninteresting, not only to ourselves, but to every intelligent and discerning visitor to our shores. [Signed M. Ni C.] (Céim, 1972, p. 3)

Another teacher writing for Céim provided a glowing review regarding the bilingual nature of the event:

I enjoyed following each competition in the clár [program] and indeed the entire work of the week done bi-lingually, impressed me deeply. Through no fault of my own I am not proficient at Irish but was genuinely pleased at the audience who tried to be patient and sympathetic when Irish was used. We understood everything in the English translation made after each announcement – thank you…(excerpt from “A Glorious Weekend …” Céim 16, 1974, p. 8-9)

However, others found the same event (in 1974) to be less than accommodating to English speakers:

Firstly, regarding adjudicators – it would be beneficial to the non-Gaelic speakers in the audience if each adjudicator was introduced (in English) at some stage during the competition. (Excerpt from a letter to the editor by dance teachers from Glasgow, Scotland], Céim 16, 1974, p. 10)

The complaints do not seem to have put a damper on the CLRG’s promotion of Irish at the Worlds as competitors, families, and adjudicators were also encouraged to, “Oíread Gaeilge agus is féidir a labhairt agus a chur á labhairt” [Try to use Irish as much as possible] (Céim 31, 1978, p. 2). In particular, the CLRG wanted Irish teachers and dancers to show visitors from abroad that Irish was still a living and viable language:

Tá Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne chugainn arís agus beimid ag cur Fáilte UíCheallaigh roimh ár gcuaírteoirí uilíg ó Éirinn, ón Bhreatain, ó Mheiriceá agus Canada, agus ón Astráil.
Leis an oiread sin daoine ag teacht ó thiortha taobh amuigh den tír seo is baoil nach gcoisfear a lán Gaeilge i rith an deireadh seachtaine ach déanfaimid ár ndicheall taispeáint dóibh ó am go chéile go bhfuil teanga dár gcuid féin acu. Ar dhóigh [sic, correct spelling: dhóigh] ar bith déanaimís gach is féidir linn chun deireadh seachtaine geal sona a thabhairt dóibh.

Translation: The World Championships are coming again and we will be welcoming all visitors from Ireland, Britain, America and Canada, and from Australia.

With this many people coming from other countries, there’s a risk that not much Irish will be heard during the weekend but we will do our best to show them occasionally that we have our own language. Anyway, let us do everything we can to give them a pleasant and enjoyable weekend.

(Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 19, 1974, p. 2)

It is noteworthy that one of ways the CLRG wished to provide a pleasant and enjoyable time was by speaking Irish for international dancers. This is a clear example of how the CLRG was changing over from compulsory language learning to promoting positive attitudes.

Another technique the CLRG proposed to foster the use of Irish at Worlds was to connect the competition to Seachtain na Gaeilge, the Gaelic League’s Irish Week:

An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha would like to be associated with Seachtain na Gaeilge—a week, when everybody in the country are urged to use what Irish they have. The obvious good will that now exists for our language is perhaps the best launching pad that we could have for a bilingual population. It is surprising just how easy it is to use a little Irish every day – most children have the basics, ceol is music and rince or damhsa is dancing and that is a good beginning. Tús maith leath na hoibre [A good start is half the work]. There is a new approach to Irish shown on a little lapel badge that I saw recently ‘tá beagán Béarla agam’ [I have a little English]. Anybody who saw it smiled, and laughed inwardly—they could understand that much and enjoyed the joke. (Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 31, 1978, p. 2)
Seachtain na Gaeilge is now held every year from March 1-17 and Worlds are held over Easter week, so they fall within close proximity to each other, but never overlap. A different call to speak Irish during Seachtain na Gaeilge and the Worlds was written in Irish and argued to Irish speakers that if they could read the passage, they should make an effort to speak the language:

Dé do bheatha se [sic, correct spelling: beathase]. Agus Oireachtas na hEireann thart go ceann bliana eile támid ag druidim le Seachtain na Gaeilge agus Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne. Mar aon le na heagrais Gaeilge eile is mian leis an gCoimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha go neireoidh go brea agus go fiontasach leis an iarracht atá a dhéanamh thart timpeall na tire le linn na seachtaine roimh Lá ‘le Pádraig an Gaeilge dhá labhairt go forleathan. Beidh craic agus cultur fite fuite le chéile, ceol agus codology, filiocht agus fianas [sic, correct spelling: fiántas], seisiún tar éis seimneair!! Má tá dothain Gailege agat chun é seo a léamh tá breis is do dhóthain agat chun tairbhe agus taithneamh a thaint [sic, correct spelling: bhaint] as Seachtain na Gaeilge 1978.

Translation: Greetings to you. With the Irish Nationals [dance competition] over for another year, we are approaching Irish Week and the World Championships. Along with the other Irish organisations, the CLRG wishes great success to the effort being made around the country during the week before St. Patrick’s Day to speak Irish extensively. Fun and culture will be inextricably woven together, music and tomfoolery, poetry and wildness, sessions after seminars. If you have enough Irish to read this, you have more than enough to get fun and value from Irish Week. (Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 31, 1978, p. 2)

Eminent guest speakers have also played a role in connecting language and dance at the Worlds. A speech given by the Deputy CEO of Aer Lingus in 1974 appears to have made the argument that speaking Irish is critical to claiming Irish identity:

What a competition for Michael Uas. O Riain, Deputy Chief Executive of Aer Lingus, to see while waiting to present his company’s trophies to the best out of Europe dancers in each age group. His bi-lingual speech was well applauded and rightly so as he said what needed saying the plainest possible language. Nobody in the hall was left under any misapprehension
as to what he considered Irish culture and Irish Ireland to be – he just made his point all the more clear by speaking to his own family in Irish. (Excerpt from “A Glorious Weekend …” Céim 16, 1974, pp. 8-9)

Likewise, speeches by both the Bishop of Galway and the Minister for the Gaeltacht were featured in 1982, both of whom connected Irish dancing to language and identity to an audience that included members of the diaspora. These speeches seemed to anticipate the turn toward dance-as-sport, by reconnecting the diaspora to Irish culture:

The Oireachtas was formally opened on the first day by Most Rev. Dr Casey, Bishop of Galway who in his opening address warmly welcomed the competitors and teachers from all parts, including the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand. He referred to the vital part played by our national dancing in keeping our people abroad, even to second and third generations, in contact with our national culture and in preserving our Irish heritage and identity. Pádraig O Floinn, Aire na Gaeltacht [Minister for the Gaeltacht] also spoke. In his address the Minister referred to the importance of the Irish and urged those involved in Irish dancing to also play their part in the promotion of our national language. (Excerpt from “Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne,” Céim 41, 1982, p. 6)

Soliciting speeches about the importance of language from high-ranking members of the community was also a clever language promotion tactic. It requires no language learning effort from the audience, but likely leaves people feeling positively toward the language and may inspire a few to take up language study.

More recently, dance teachers learning Irish have also gotten involved with making announcements at the World Championships. This was described quite positively by one teacher, “When the Worlds will be in Scotland [Easter 2016], you will have people from America and Scotland and England making the announcements as Gaeilge [in Irish].” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016). One such Irish
learner described her experiences speaking Irish at Worlds as occasionally challenging, but generally fun, another clear sign that the CLRG is successfully promoting positive attitudes toward Irish:

For the last about 15 years An Coimisiún, they've been really trying to push utilizing and including the language in dancing. We've had a couple of different presidents of the organization, and of course the committee itself, trying to come up with ways to get people to use the language, especially obviously Commission flagship events.

There is a rule that the stage announcer when they're announcing competitions or numbers, they want the Gaelic language used. They want people who are announcing who have a basic amount of knowledge so that they can at least use it for introducing the adjudicator or saying 'welcome' to the crowd and maybe even calling the numbers. You tend to see more of the Irish-speaking people running stages so that we can try to include the language.

In Dublin, the first Worlds in Dublin, that we've had there was a while a couple of years ago, they made these strips of paper and they put them on the tables in the cafeteria, kind of like it was the inside of a fortune cookie, to encourage people to pick up the papers. On the front it said the phrase in Irish and on the back it said it in English, and then while you were having lunch you could have a little laugh with the people at your table and maybe pick up a couple of words.

They have always given out awards for trying to speak in Gaelic. [Another teacher] and I were the hosts for…competitions several years in Commission. Phonetically we would introduce things in Gaelic even though we don't have a really strong command of the language. You had the cheat card and you would go out and you would introduce the audience and you would say the names, say the number of the team in Gaelic, and all of that kind of stuff. For those efforts Commission and the Gaelic League give what's called cúpla focal, a few words in Irish, and you get a pin. If you have more than that you get a certificate. They're trying to promote that in Commission, especially the Commission members, that we're all trying to use the words. (Dance teacher, interview, February 10, 2015)
The Irish fortune cookie strip idea stands out as particularly clever because it got the whole Irish dance community involved in speaking Irish in a safe and casual environment, which is conducive to building positive attitudes. This story also stands out because it associates speaking Irish with laughter, which could be seen as derogatory. In this case however, people seem to be laughing out of enjoyment and perhaps at their own linguistic foibles rather than laughing at Irish as somehow silly or useless.

Class in Irish

Though the use of Irish at the World Championships has endured and perhaps even increased in recent years, the use of Irish in dance classes has not. Very few teachers speak Irish with their students, a fact the CLRG has been trying to change for years. The following three excerpts from the editorial page of Céim are from 1973, 1981, and 1986. In nearly identical phrasing, they plead with teachers to count the beats of the music in Irish and use basic terms like the names of dances and “ciúnas,” which means, “be quiet.” The passages point out that teachers need to pass a language exam and that the Worlds will be in the Gaeltacht as reasons why classes should be taught in Irish. One challenge, as discussed in Chapter Five, is that it appears that many teaching candidates only practice enough Irish to pass the language exam and then forget what they have learned. Furthermore, each of these calls to use Irish is are only written in Irish with no translation, so anybody who might know enough Irish to count, but not read, never got the message:

*Seo Lá ’éile Padraig, agus cuireann an lá sin muid ag smaoineadh ar ár dteanga féin, agus, faraor ! ar a laghad úsáide a baintear aisti i ranganna rince. Ba cheart do gach múinteoir, fiú amhain iad san atá ar bheagán*

Translation: It’s St. Patrick’s Day and this day makes us think about our own language and, alas! how little it is used in dance classes. Every teacher, even those with little Irish, should use the language, a little or a lot, during classes. Each teacher in Ireland must take an Irish test; they must show that they have some knowledge of it. And how many of them are there that even say 1234567? Remember that every child knows some Irish. Help them keep their interest in the language. Show them that it is more than just a school subject. (Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 15, 1973, p. 2)

Iarraimid fosta ar mhúinteoirí níos mó úsáid a dhéanamh den Ghaeilge nuair a bhíonn siad ag teagasc. Is cinnte go bhfuil na huimhreach ag furmhór na bpáistí agus d’fhéadfaí fiú an 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 d’úsáid in Gaeilge. ‘Ciúnas’ focal eile atá an-úsáideach i bfhurmhór ranganna. Déan do dhicheall. Má’s beag is cuidiú. Féach thios mar gheall ar cúrsa Gaeilge.

Translation: We also ask teachers to use more Irish when they are teaching. Certainly, most children know the numbers and one could use even 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 in Irish. ‘Silence’ is another very useful word in most classes. Do your best. Every little bit helps. See below regarding the Irish course.

This year we will be going to Bóthar na Trá [Shore Road] in Galway for the World Championships. Quite a bit of Irish can be heard in the streets and shops of the city, but it is only a few miles to the Gaeltacht. Let’s practice from now until Easter. (Excerpt from Éagarfhocal [Editorial], Céim 39, 1981, p. 2)
Cé mhéad d’ár múinteoirí a úsáideann Gaeilge ar bith sna ranganna? Fiú na téarmaí coitianta, nó cuntas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7? Bionn an corrduine ann. Tá bean amháin agus gan morán Gaeilge aici – mar chaith sí furmhór a saol fásta taobh amuigh den tír – ach ní úsáideann sí ariamh ach ainmneacha Gaeilge na rincí foirne nó na rincí cèill. Dá ndéanadh muid uilig go fiú an méid sin, nach ndéanfadh sé difir mhór!

Translation: How many of our teachers use Irish at all in classes? Even the common terms, or counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7? [Only] the occasional person. There’s one woman without much Irish—because she spent most of her adult life outside this country—but she only ever uses the Irish names of the set dances or céilí dances. If we all did even this much, wouldn’t it make a great difference! (Excerpt from Eagarfhocal [Editorial], Céim 58, 1986, p. 2)

Between the 1981 and 1986 editorials, a list of dance terms in Irish was published. The timing appears to coincide with the publication of the Teacher Code of Ethics discussed in Chapter Five, which suggested that as much as possible dance classes should be taught in Irish. Though the individual words are given, there are not instructions as to how to string these words together into sentences or even what parts of speech they represent in Irish. So, in order to use any of the given vocabulary, a dance teacher would already need to know enough Irish grammar to create sentences, conjugate verbs, decline nouns and prepositional pronouns, mutate initial consonants etc. This might have been possible in Ireland, but almost any international teacher hoping to incorporate Irish into their dance classes would be at a total loss. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate these terms; Figure 11 also explains how the moves should be done.
The rustic origin of Irish dancing is obvious. The reason is that during three centuries, the Irish, subject to a vicious persecution in which even education was illegal, were driven back to their work on the farm for artistic expression. The clever dancing system they evolved is an example of that unity in civilization—creative art.

There are 21 basic movements in describing which the following contractions are used:

- Br—Brush (Brt—Brush out; Brn—Brush in)
- D—Dancing
- H—Heel: T—Toe; Hp—Hop
- L—Left; R—Right; Rs—Rise; S—Supporting
- For example—DFT means dancing foot toe; SFH means supporting foot heel.

The movements on the RF are repeated on the LF.

1. Rise (Airigh)—up to the T’s.
2. Tip (Greadach)—DFT hits ground in front of SFT.
3. Toi (boile)—DFT hits ground behind SFT.
4. Snap (Gligram)—DF stamps behind or in front of SFH.
5. Heel (saí)—DFH hits floor in front of SFT.
6. Cut (Baint)—DF crosses SF at shin.
8. Jump (sóinneadh)
9. Hop: (clíop)—differ in that the SF in Hop lands on the take off spot, but in the jump elsewhere.
10. Glide (sleamhan)—a slide to R or L.
11. Point (satha)—raise DFT and thrust.
12. Brush Out (scuabadh amach)—scrape DFT forward at a slant.
13. Brush In—scrape DFT backwards.
14. Grind (sásail)—the Snap repeated to the count of 7—2—3—4 the strong beat on 7 and 4.
15. Shuffle (fulseadha)—SF Hp DF Bt Brn.
16. Drom (drúim)—e.g., LT RT LT LH RH, the strong beats being RT and RH.
17. Hawl (sháll)—strike DFH in front of SFT and twist.
18. Butterfly (féileachán)—Down RH LH up LT RT, Ts out R and L, Ts in, Down LH down RT.
19. Ring (rinn)—Rs Ts together, Hs out-down.
20. Pivot (rince)—Rs Ts together, complete body turn.
21. Rock (luasadh)—cross ankles and oscillate.

Note that No. 3 is not the vaudeville tap.

Notes:
6. ‘Baint’ means the sweep of the scythe through the grass being cut.
9. ‘Sóile’ (meaning orientation) corrupted into ‘Slip’ has given rise to the term ‘Slip Jig’ which conveys a wrong idea to the dancer who thinks in English. Less accurate English ‘Hop Jig’ (9/8 time).
11. ‘Satha’ the thrust of the foot on a spade or hoe.
14. ‘Fulseadh’—harrowing. The movement may have been named from the dancer’s resemblance (mutatis mutandis) to a man on a bouncing harrow. Whatever the reason, the so-called ‘shuffle’ is known as the Ladies’ Step, because they found it the most convenient, being impeded from ‘performing’ the other movements by the amount of drapery between the iliac crest and the calcaneum. ‘Shuffle’ is the sorriest mistranslation of all Gaelic dancing terms.
17. ‘Hawl’ is a contraction of ‘ó sháll go rinn’—from H to T. Rinn, a point or a toe. From ‘rinn’ comes rince. Steppingdance is ‘dámhsa’, which means the gambolling of lambs or calves.
16. ‘Drom’ is short for ‘drum ar dhuim’—from Ts to Hs. The English Drum, verb or noun, is a mistranslation.
18. The butterfly is also called ‘The Box’.
21. ‘Luasadh’ is the rocking of a spade handle to release the spade from sticky soil.

C. Us hAínnín, O.P.

**Figure 11. Dance terms and explanations in Irish (Céim 43, 1982, p. 5)**

The figure above is especially interesting because it also draws on connections between dance and colonialism, arguing that Irish dance evolved because of colonial violence that forced Irish speakers to move to the rural west. In conjunction with the Irish language dance terms, this helps solidify the relationship between dance, language, and an
idealized Irish identity that draws on the romanticized “Celtic West” (O’Connor, 2013, p. 27) to reject British colonial norms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 12. Dance terms in Irish (Céim 44, 1983, p. 4)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Figure 12 does not provide the same level of historical context as Figure 11 but it does add to the pressure to use Irish in dance classes and shares the challenge of presenting individual words without grammatical context.</td>
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Though my interviews and personal experiences indicated that dance classes are rarely taught in Irish, some teachers have heeded the call. In the cities, it appears that these classes tend to be bilingual rather than Irish only. In the Gaeltacht, it is more feasible to teach dance classes entirely through Irish. One teacher explained that she teaches through both English and Irish because not all of her students are equally proficient in Irish:

Anna: What about in your own dance school?

Dance Teacher: Oh, I mix it.

Anna: You mix it. Why?

Dance Teacher: I mix it ... I think some of it would be lost with some of them, they're not all from gaelscoileanna. Actually, I tend to use here [summer dance camp], now there's a few that haven't even started school yet and they wouldn't know ... But I used more of it because kids can grasp it. The reason I mix it is probably this, I learned all my dancing steps through English so there- you know when you learn, "hop one, two, three, and one, two, one, two." I can translate that, no problem. But because you do it to music really fast, you haven't rehearsed. I could break down steps, no problem in Irish, that wouldn't be a problem but I think for ... I don't know, there is no reasons to start mixing because there's a mix of Irish-speaking kids and a few who wouldn't be as fluent.

Anna: Absolutely, that makes sense. Do you think that's a common practice among dance teachers here, or are you a rarity?

Dance Teacher: No, most of them would be in English because I've had people say to me when I've been at feiseanna and I'd be doing going through teams, or going through instructions or something, and people have heard me saying it in Irish, and they had been mesmerized that I actually...(Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

32 Dance is taught entirely through Irish at the urban gaelscoileanna, but those classes are beyond the purview of the CLRG and this dissertation.
A teacher from a different large city had similar experiences in teaching bilingually. She noted that she moved between English and Irish quite fluidly, and that these transitions depended on the languages her students had access to:

Anna: Do you find that the experience is similar teaching it in Irish as opposed to teaching it in English?

Dance Teacher: It depends on ... I find that I tend to use a lot more Irish. But that's because that will be coming out.. Then I’m realizing I actually have to explain, “When I say “Conradh na Gaeilge,” I mean the Gaelic League. When I say, “Cúige Mumhan” [Munster Province] “Cúige Uladh” [Ulster Province] ... so I would find that I would naturally throw in those things. The good thing is, actually, for the people who listen, they get it, because they are listening to you. I wouldn't be deliberately doing it, because I would be used to mixing because I would've learned as Gaeilge [in Irish]. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

A dance student whose teacher speaks Irish described her childhood classes as bilingual, but noted that they became more English dominant as she got older. She also felt that there was little difference between classes being taught in Irish and English. The words were different, but the content and atmosphere were the same:

Anna: Were classes in Irish for you, or?

Dancer: When we were younger yes, I think like she would speak Irish and then now again she’d speak in Irish.

Anna: Okay, but as you got older, it went...

Dancer: It’s probably mostly English, but she’d still speak Irish a bit in class.

Anna: Interesting. Do you have any idea why she would have changed as you got older?

Dancer: I don’t know, I suppose we all speak English to each other. You do when you’re younger, but I suppose coming over from the primary school [it was a gaelscoil] and probably on the way over even from there,
it would be like still in the mode of Irish I guess, but it’s mainly English even I suppose with the younger people but yeah it’s more.

Anna: Is there a difference to you when the class is taught in Irish versus when it is taught in English? Like a dance class.

Dancer: Not really, because I suppose is like *haon, dó, trí* [one, two, three] Like we kind of know all the words, so it doesn’t mainly make the difference...We have a céilí every Christmas in our class, just in our class...And all the little kids and stuff and we do all the dance so that’s mainly through Irish then. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

All three of these quotes suggest that dance teachers are sensitive to the language needs of their students, and that part of the reason why more classes are not taught in Irish is because the dancers do not have sufficient proficiency. This is something of a chicken and egg situation—students are not going to become more proficient if their teachers do not start using the language and teachers do not want to alienate students so they choose not to speak Irish in dance class.

When I asked the dance student if she know of teachers using Irish, she was not aware of other classes that were conducted through Irish, but she identified competitions as sites where Irish is spoken more often. This supports the archival data regarding the use of Irish at the World Championships above:

Anna: Do you know of other dance teachers that would speak in Irish?

Dancer: Well yeah, at the feises I suppose you would here a bit of Irish like they still like calling the number. They’d say the number in Irish or the dance name, like Trip to the Cottage, *Turas ‘an Tí*, yeah like they would still use Irish. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

A different teacher, who taught in the *Gaeltacht* for many years described her experiences teaching dance in an fully Irish medium context. Unlike the student above,
she felt that learning dance through Irish was a very different experience than learning it through English:

Dance Teacher: I went to live in another Gaeltacht for six years, and I taught Irish there, and I taught music through Irish, and I taught dance through Irish, and I taught everything through Irish for six years.

Anna: Very interesting. Do you find it to be a different experience than going through English? Teaching or learning through Irish as opposed to teaching or learning dance through English?

Dance Teacher: My experience, yeah, I think it is.

Anna: How?

Dance Teacher: You use different words. That's the first thing. The second thing is the rhythm of the language is different. It's very different. The people you're teaching are different.

Anna: In what way?

Dance Teacher: For instance, I suppose because I was teaching rural areas. I wouldn't be teaching the Irish language in cities. I was teaching in rural areas where Irish was their language; it was their home language. It isn't like teaching children whose Irish is not their home language. You're trying to give them a few words of Irish, and you're going, “Isteach ’is amach” agus mar sin de [‘in and out’ and the like]. You're not doing that. It's very different. You're teaching people who are already fluent in it. For me, it was very much a learning experience too. I would be there and there were children talking to me who were the most beautiful Irish you'd ever heard in your life.

My experience of teaching Irish in a Gaeltacht was a very different experience to people who'd be teaching dance through Irish in a city. Then you need some vocabulary and you can break into English wherever the case may be, whereas, when you're in a Gaeltacht doing it, the language is already there. They're way beyond you, in actual fact. That's why I thought it was so beautiful, because I was able to teach it, and for me it was a learning experience...

Anna: Oh, it must have been, yeah.
Dance Teacher: ...as well as teaching. It was kind of an exchange of knowledge, and little children ... We were taught in school, like if you wanted to go to the bathroom in school you'd say, “An bhfuil cead agam dul amach más é do thoil é” [Can I go out to the bathroom, please?]. I went to Ballyvourney and kids said, “An bhfuil cead agam dul go dtí clóiséad” [Can I go to the closet?]. And I thought, “clóiséad?” [closet]. The languaging was very different, and in teaching the dance, again, it was something that was very natural to them. You weren't conscious of, "I am now going to use Irish and I'm going to put in a few phrases of Irish now here." People learning for the Coimisiún, for instance, you learn your phrases, and that's all fine, but those phrases mightn't exactly work perfectly in a Gaeltacht area. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

Clearly the experience of dance class in Irish is both personal and contextual. Teaching and learning in a bilingual class in a big city is different from teaching and learning in the Gaeltacht. As the teacher above put it, “the languaging was very different;” monolingual and bilingual people experience language in different ways and have different linguistic resources to draw on. The CLRG has tried to provide Irish resources and encourage people to choose to speak Irish, but ultimately most teachers and students still choose English.

Publications that Promoted Irish

Spoken Irish at class and competitions is not the only means by which the CLRG has worked to promote Irish. There is a long literary tradition in Irish, and the CLRG has also used written publications to support the language.

Céim. Though I have cited Céim as an archival source throughout this dissertation, it warrants further discussion on its merits as a language promotion tool. Céim was first published by the CLGR in 1970, shortly after the split, and was almost certainly another tool to try to unite the struggling dance community. Céim was a notably
bilingual publication and many articles and letters waxed poetic about the language.

Figure 13 shows a typical introduction to an issue of Céim. First updates are written up in Irish and then a partial English translation follows, though sometimes there is no overlap in content. This set-up with Irish first and English second parallels the status of both languages in the Irish Constitution.

![Image of a typical bilingual introduction to Céim](image)

**Figure 13. A typical bilingual introduction to Céim (Céim 4, 1971, p. 1)**

In an era before the internet, Céim served as a general announcement and opinion venue for the CLRG. Occasionally, events were proposed in Céim to aid in the teaching
and learning of Irish through dance. One such event was intended to teach Irish dance teachers how to instruct in Irish:

Cormac Mac Fhionnlaoich’s idea of a crash course in Figure dancing looks like coming to fruition next year, as arrangements are being made to hold such a course in the Gaeltacht. We sincerely hope that many teachers – even those who are already very conversant with all the figure dances—will take this opportunity of learning to impart the knowledge of these dances in the Gaelic tongue. Surely it is time that all teachers used Irish, if only in a small way at the beginning, in their classes. (Céim 17, 1974, p. 2-3)

Unfortunately, it appears that this event never actually occurred:

I’m sure you couldn’t have been in the Mansion House that weekend and not have heard about the IRISH COURSE An Comisiún is planning in Connemara in August. Many people seemed interested when I spoke to them but the response has been almost nil and of course this will mean that the Cúrsa [course] will have to be cancelled. This would be a great pity as it would be a very pleasant and, I think, beneficial course.

I wonder if all the teachers have passed on details to their pupils and seriously considered taking some of them to Galway or at least encouraging them to go. Teachers in Ireland will find information and an application form with this issue of Céim. Forms must be returned immediately or we will be forced to call off the course. (Excerpt from “Ó pheann an rúnaí,” Céim 24, 1976, p. 9)

Such an event would have gone a long way to helping teachers instruct in Irish. If teacher confidence was the issue, this would have been an excellent way to practice. If student proficiency was the issue, teachers could have learned some basic pedagogical techniques for language teaching. Without these skills, it is hard to imagine how teachers could meet the CLRG’s repeated requests to teach in Irish.

Along similar (failed) language promotion lines, an essay competition open to teachers and dancers was proposed for the CLRG Jubilee year in 1979. Essays were
accepted in English or Irish, however it is unclear if anyone submitted such an essay, because no winning piece was printed in Céim as might have been expected. The call for essays was as follows:

Two prizes are being offered for an essay on any aspect of Irish Dancing—one for those under 15 on 1st January 1979 and one for any from 15 to 90!

Some ideas might be—the origin and development of Irish dancing in your or any particular area; an episode in your own dancing or reaching career; your first Feis; traditional music and dancing; any humourous incident in a class or at a Feis. Entries in be in Irish or English, and may be any length, but possibly around 1000 words. (Excerpt from “Jubilee Essay Competition,” Céim 35, 1978, p. 4)

Other ideas advertised in Céim were more successful, including the reinstitution of Feis Shligigh [Sligo Feis], a dance competition held in Irish. Rather like the letter above, that describes how wonderful the 1972 Worlds were, the description of Feis Shligigh in 1975 uses our to convey a sense of Irish identity that is associated with language, music, and dance. The description also honors heroes of the Gaelic Revival like Patrick Pearse and Douglas Hyde, who were the founders of the feis in its first iteration:

Inaugurated as a Gaelic feis for Connacht in 1903 the aims of Feis Sligigh were the revival of our national language, the singing of our national songs and the recital of our poetry and ballads as well as the playing of our Irish music which helped revive our Irish dances.

Today it is difficult to imagine the courage and tenacity of those enthusiastic people who formed the first committee of Feis Sligigh. Prominent leaders of the Gaelic revival associated with the first Feiseanna included Padraic Pearse and Dr Douglas Hyde. The latter adjudicated the Irish language competitions in those early years of the Feis. (Céim 19, 1975, p. 7)
The reintroduction of Feis Shligigh was successful, and the feis is now in its 87th year. The event still includes both language and dance competitions, though the two have been separated out and the dance competitions are now run in English (Feis Shligigh, 2016).

Feis Atha Cliath [Dublin Feis] was also advertised in Céim and highlighted language and dance in a positive way for school children:

While dancing is of course a prominent element of the Feis, Séan [O Dálaigh, CLRG vice-chair at the time] is proud that it does, as he says, “encompass the entire range of cultural activity such as language, singing, drama, music, dancing and choirs”.

For a man with such a total and active commitment to the Irish language, the language dimension of the Feis is of utmost importance to him. It gives, he maintains, “the ordinary children of Dublin contact with the language outside the classroom”. The children can, for example, enter competitions in creative group conversation where they discuss a pre-selected topic such as parties, an accident or going on holiday. Séan feels that this type of activity is vital in introducing Irish as something living and vibrant and not confined to the sterility of the classroom walls. (Excerpt from “Feis Atha Cliath” [Dublin Feis], Céim 62, 1988, p. 5)

Feises such as Feis Shligigh and Feis Atha Cliath are critical to building positive attitudes toward Irish because they give young dancers a venue to speak Irish outside of the classroom. While children could arguably also use Irish at the bank or post office, such transactions are geared toward adults. Dance competitions give children a more relatable scope for conversation.

While Céim was a bilingual publication, English was still the dominant language. In one editorial, the CLRG apologized for the lack of Irish in the publication, but reminded people that there were many English speaking dance teachers who could not read Irish:
Tá brón orainn nach mbíonn níos mó Gaeilge ins an leabhrán seo, ach caithfear cuimhniú go bhfuil 65 Muinteoir againn i Meiriceá, 53 san Astraláis agus níos mó ná 80 sa Bhreatain, agus gan Gaeilge ag níos mó ná triúr nó ceathar acu. Bféidir, ó am go chéile, go sleamhnóimid isteach corr-fhocal nó corr-abairt a d'fheadfaidís foghlaim i ngan fhios doibh féin. Is cinnte go bhfuil an focal ‘céim’ ag gach duine anios!

Translation: We regret that there is not more Irish in this booklet, but it must be remembered that we have 65 teachers in America, 53 in Australian (sic) and more than 80 in Britain, and no more than three or four of them speak Irish. Perhaps, from time to time, we will slip in the odd word or sentence that they can learn without realising it. Certainly everyone knows the word ‘céim’ [step] now! (Excerpt from Réamhrá [Introduction], Céim 10, 1973, p. 2)

Editorial paragraphs in Irish appear and there are full articles in English in every issue, but articles entirely in Irish were rare, and none existed without translation. Figure 14 is one such example and tells a story about the Irish National Competition. Figure 15 is the English translation. The Irish version was given prominence by being printed first.
Figure 14. A rare example of a full article in Irish (Céim 27, ca. 1977, p. 8)
Déan Rince! In 1976, a special cèilí dance book intended for dance students rather than dance teachers was published. The book, *Déan Rince!,* was written entirely in
Irish, but the language was limited to short phrases so as not to intimidate children because there was such fear surrounding negative attitudes toward Irish:

A new book on Irish dancing! Yes, but with a difference. This one was prepared with the pupils who attend Irish summer Colleges in mind. Here young, and not so young people learn all the usual Céili dances; but to help them retain the dances Déan Rince! has many, many diagrams, beautifully and clearly drawn by Aisling Ní Bhriain. A glance at these should help them recall the movements they have learned. The instructions accompanying the pictures are all in Gaelic, and have been kept to a minimum – frequently they just comprise the name of the movement. (Excerpt from Déan Rince!, Céim 25, 1976, p. 10

Figure 16 shows part of a dance from Déan Rince! Called Sólaistí na Bealtaine in Irish, it is translated to English as The Sweets of May. The simple descriptions and clearly drawn figures can be seen.
Figure 16. The Sweets of May

While *Céim* and *Déan Rince!* made the language more visible to teachers and dancers, the CLRG felt more could be done to promote Irish. With the negative attitudes of the
1960s and 1970s in mind, the CLRG set out to improve the status of Irish within the organization.

**Coiste Gaeilge, The Language Committee**

In the mid-1980s a language committee was formed to be more intentional about language management and promotion within the CLRG. The foundation of the language committee was “something you would never think would have been necessary in the past, because of the expansion of dancing to the extent it has, you have a whole lot of people involved to have no connection with the language” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015). The first mention of the language committee appeared in *Céim* in 1982:

Aims and Plans for 1982/3

In addition to improvement of existing schemes it was decided to draw up a list of new aims and activities to be initiated in the year ahead. These are as follows:—

3. Draw up and initiate the implementation of schemes for the promotion of the Irish language amongst the Irish dancing community. (Excerpt from Annual General Meeting of An Comisiun, *Céim* 42, 1982, p. 5)

**Sub-Committees.** Subcommittees were appointed to examine the following matters and to submit reports and recommendations to An Coimisiún by specified dates:—

(g) Promotion of Irish (Excerpt from Annual General Meeting of An Comisiun, Céim 42, 1982, p. 6)

The subcommittee for the promotion of Irish became the permanent Language Committee.

Interviewee: We have what we call a *Coiste Gaeilge*, an Irish language committee. That committee has the responsibility obviously of promoting ideas within the commission and within the dancing fraternity for the promotion of the language… That particular committee conducts all its
Though the need for the language committee was not anticipated when the CLRG was founded, it has proven critical to keeping language issues at the forefront of CLRG business, especially in light of the ongoing globalization of Irish dance:

The Commission never lost sight of the need to keep the language going. We became big, most of our people who would like to boast about it's Irishness… "You're using that language so we won't know what you're talking about." It was that kind of attitude. “The language is not necessary. It's Irish dancing. It's not about the language.” We have to keep that [the language]. That's why there's an Irish language committee. The Irish language committee has managed to keep, between that and the exam, has managed to keep the Irish to the forefront, and not let it slip. It's a difficult task. In the modern world we are living in. Look around the city here, there's a large number of people who live in the city who profess to be fluent in Irish, but it's hard looking for people who speak Irish. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)

Interestingly, in 2015, two US teachers joined the language committee. This was an unexpected development, as no one other than fluent Irish speakers had ever participated on the language committee before. There was an assumption built on the insistence for English language meetings in the 1970s that international teachers were not interested in promoting the language. Though somewhat bemused by the situation, one teacher was pleased with how it is working out:

Anna: Is that still the case now that there are some US teachers on it? Do they speak the language?

Interviewee: No, there are two on…we were a bit surprised that they had any interest in going on that committee, and then we were also surprised in fact when they sat in on the first and second meeting and everything conducted through [Irish]... We were sure that they were estimating understanding what we were doing and what we had said, but the meeting
was completed through Irish and they sat through it without any bother.  
(Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015)

It remains to be seen whether other international teachers will express an interest in joining the language committee when the US teachers’ terms are up. If so, it will suggest that the CLRG’s Irish promotion efforts are beginning to succeed on a global level.

**Language Classes for Dance Teachers.** One of the more recent ideas of the Language Committee was to offer language classes at the Annual General Meeting of the CLRG. When the committee realized that people were quite interested, they also managed to have the schedule of the meeting rearranged so that the language classes did not overlap with any other sessions:

Dance Teacher: I have attended the Irish Language Committee of the Commission as well and the meetings might be bilingual there and I have been able to, I was able to use Irish, but I was using English as well there are a number of people who have a huge interest and mightn’t have a command of the language at the moment but they are trying to take as many steps as they can to try and encourage more people to use Irish in the Commission. They have conversation classes as part of the Commission meetings where people who are not from Ireland can learn their days of the week.

Anna: That is so fascinating.

Dance Teacher: Yeah. That is something that has increased, actually. Even at the last meeting, your people expressing an interest…and then they have the *Coiste Gaeilge* and this was a really interesting development in the last meeting with the Commission. They agreed that they would have a breakfast meeting so that no one would be precluded from coming to the Irish language conversation.

Anna: Because they were overlapping

Dance Teacher: Because what was happening was, if there's six meetings scheduled together at 11:00, there's another six meetings scheduled at 2:00. The problem was, if you were, and this is really significant, if you
were on any of the management or finance committees, you actually didn't have the opportunity to be. They actually flipped it over, so rather than it being a committee that ended up not getting filled ... They've opened it up so that it's more accessible to people who really want to. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

This was a fairly significant restructuring of the CLRG annual meeting, and it bodes well for the use of Irish at meetings and competitions in the future. It is also significant that people are willing to attend early morning Irish lessons before a full day of meetings. They could sleep in for an extra hour, but they do not. Irish learners have expressed appreciation for these classes:

We go for Gaelic lessons when we're over there because they have an open session before the main meeting that anybody is welcome to come to. Some of the people there who are fluent give lessons. Sometimes we have ten people and sometimes it's just me and [one other teacher]. They're just trying to do a lot of different things to promote it. (Dance teacher, interview, February 10, 2016).

Though ten of nearly 100 isn’t such a high percentage, it is a drastic improvement on the attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s when English speaking teachers thought Irish speaking teachers were keeping secrets and excluding them from the Commission. The interest in Irish from abroad has also allowed a return to slightly more bilingual meetings:

The meetings I've been at, I know the business is mostly done in English, obviously, that's more because a lot of the people in the room don't understand Irish. There is the general welcomes and the announcements [in Irish], and I would say that there's probably more. I get the feeling, because they're quite a lot of people who have a good bit of Gaeilge it's coming through. I think that's really, really good. When you have to do it for your adjudicators and you have to do it for your teachers, I don't think that should be lost. I really don't. Otherwise, we could be any of the organizations. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)
On the whole, the language committee is succeeding with getting teachers to buy in to the connection between dance and language. Teachers from around the world seem to have positive attitudes toward Irish and some have been inspired to start learning it.

**Grade Exams.** Rather like the TCRG exam for teachers, there are dance exams students can take. They are not required, but they do give dancers a certain status among their peers. There are twelve “grades” and at each level the number and complexity of the required dances increases. The language committee is now trying to include a language component to the grade exams. Unlike the TCRG exam, dance students would not fail the grade exam if they failed the language component. This is because the CLRG wants dancers to see language a positive and fun element of the exam, not a roadblock. One teacher explained the motivation for adding language to the grade exams:

Moving forward they're proposing that for the grade exams starting with Ireland and perhaps moving on to the rest of the world that there will be a language component to the grade exam. My last little meeting this weekend we went through the phrases that an examiner would ask a candidate taking grade one, and what the responses would be. Trying to promote the language at a younger age and including it in the grade exam for the respect for the language…Obviously they're going to start in Ireland with kids taking the grade exams in Ireland, but they've love for it to continue and move out to the rest of the world so that everybody was getting some Irish language…

The grade exams for the kids, the concept is that they're not actually graded on it. It's not actually part of their grade. It's more a thing of just trying to introduce people to it and get people some words and building on it…The only resistance that would come from the North American body with including Gaelic into their language grade exam, from the perspective that it's not getting graded that's all well and good. The difficulty becomes if you've got kids all over the United States and Canada, where do they find somebody to teach them that? Where do they find, without it becoming an economic impact, where do they find somebody to translate it and go through it with them because they don't
have it in the house. The dancing teacher probably doesn't have it. They might not be near a Gaelic Society. That makes it difficult.

What they're trying to address with that is…They're going to take the grade 1 questions and answers and they're going to be available, audio, on the Commission website. They are going to be in, because there is so many dialects of the Gaelic. If you're from Ulster…or you're in the Gaeltacht it's slight variations on the words and pronunciations and the order of the words. What they're going to do for each phrase is they've tried to capture as many of those things as possible and any of them is accessible. They're going to do the question and the answer in all the different dialects, and it's going to be available on the Commission website. (Dance teacher, interview, February 10, 2016)

This teacher rightly argues that it could be quite difficult for students outside of Ireland to learn the necessary Irish for the Grade Exams, and it is helpful that they will be offering materials on the CLRG website. Also helpful is that the CLRG is accounting for the variety of local Irishes that children speak. The challenge for dancers outside of Ireland may come in deciding which dialect to learn, or mixing dialects if they do not understand that Irish varies regionally. On the other hand, getting language into the grade exams may be the best way to promote Irish internationally. Only a small percentage of the best dancers ever make it to Worlds, which limits the overall exposure of dancers to Irish.

Language Competitions at Irish Nationals. A different tactic the language committee is using to get dancers more involved with the language is holding Irish language competitions at the Irish National Competition. Hosting language competitions in tandem with major dance competitions also helps re-establish the link for a new generation. One of the language competition adjudicators described why the competition was implemented:
Dance Teacher: We have an Irish nationals competition, now, where they’ve instigated language competitions.

Anna: I saw that. I was just going to ask about it. How new is that?

Dance Teacher: The Irish nationals, I think that's in its third or fourth year. There are comórtaisi teanganna [Irish language competitions] children can enter. They are doing it. It's not just ... Some of the kids from the Gaeltacht did enter, but they weren’t a bit impressed. If you're not a talker, it doesn't actually matter if you are fluent or not. If you just say, “Bhí sé togha, sea,” [It was great, yeah], “Cad é...” [What is...?], “B’fhéidir...” [Maybe...]. Monosyllables isn't going to give the poor old moltóir [adjudicator] much to go by, whereas somebody who is quite chatty would do. They have to watch that because of the dialect. I would do a lot of adjudicating at the closed competitions. I've judged. They have the comhrá Gaeilge [Irish conversation] competition is phenomenal. It's phenomenal.

Anna: That's exciting.

Dance Teacher: It's at the Fleadh [competition], they do it at the county fleadhs, but they put money into it as well. They give scholarships to the Munster Fleadh and to the All Ireland. For the All Ireland, you'd have a lot of kids, and they are quite good. I'd be the first to say, a lot of them would have a better Gaeilge than I would. I am good. I'm trained as a primary teacher, I would be able to get them. The standard of the ones under 15 and 18 is super. The good ones. It's really hard for the others, then. But it's a great competition...they are trying hard, you know? You're not trying to exclude people, but they are trying to find a context for the people who want to engage. You've got a lot of parents in it to only come in because their children are in it. They won’t know what's going on, but they are clapping away. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

The fact that parents come watch even though they do not necessarily speak Irish indicates that Irish is gaining status across age groups. The parents of today were the students who were subjected to compulsory Irish for high school graduation and as a group seem to harbor the most negative attitudes toward the language.
A dancer who participated in the language competition described how the competition is run:

Dancer: Well you just go to a room and one member I suppose of the committee and who has got Irish conducts an interview. Then it’s kind of like the exam, the leaving cert, like the oral exam and it’s just like conversations with the office of the table, like ask each other at the table. Just like questions like simple ones starting with like your age, your name and then also like your hobbies or what would you do if … like conditional questions and stuff.

Anna: Interesting. Do they give you anything to prepare with? Do you have any idea going in what they’ll ask you about?

Dancer: Not really, it’s just about yourself and your hobbies. You kind of just know it’s a conversation.

Anna: Yes. How many competitors are there?

Dancer: Well there’s different age groups of course. I can’t remember what age group it was. The oldest age, so like a broader range, or maybe like 15, 10-15 maybe. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

Based on this description, the language competitions sound quite similar to the language exam for the TCRG, which is perhaps not surprising since the same limited set of Irish speaking examiners judge both.

**Scholarships to the Gaeltacht.** Winners of the language competitions are awarded scholarships to Irish immersion summer camps in the Gaeltacht, which further supports language learning and developing positive attitudes toward Irish. At the summer camps, dancers study the language and participate in Irish cultural activities like playing traditional music and dancing in nightly céilís:

Anna: What do you do when you’re in the Gaeltacht? Like how long are you there and what are the …
Dancer: It’s three weeks. I’ve done it three times. There’s different Gaeltachts all over Ireland, but I was in Connemara. You stay in a house, I was with like 15 other girls and like there’s different, some are more strict than others like regards the Irish. Yeah the one I was at was pretty strict, and you just speak Irish for everything. Like you have three Irish classes in the morning, and then your lunch and then activities and a céilí in the afternoon.

Anna: You do the dancing too?

Dancer: That’s awesome.

Anna: Every day?

Dancer: Yeah every night, but a lot more informal.

Anna: Yeah of course.

Dancer: It’s really good.

Anna: Do you do the Commission sanctioned céilí dances or is it more like …

Dancer: Just a mix really. Like Ballai Luimní [Walls of Limerick] and Cor Ceathrar [Four-hand Reel] but then like a waltz or something and just random.

Anna: Yeah, that’s really cool. How on earth do they, you said they’re strict, but how do they control it? There must have been someone there?

Dancer: Yeah like the principle and the teachers, they just listen around and if you’re caught you’d be like given a warning or like things like that.

Anna: Okay, but then in the house at night too?

Dancer: Yeah like for most of it like I’d say it’s only like they speak Irish most of the time and at the start. There’s a cinnire tí [house leader] as well and the oldest person and she’s like kind of keeps an eye on everyone and make sure they are all okay. Depending on how like how they took their role, you know, but then probably the last night [people stop speaking Irish], because people are like they’re going home the next day. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)
Not only is a scholarship to the *Gaeltacht* an excellent prize, but by participating in language camps, students continue to see the relationship between language and dance. For the CLRG, this likely means a new generation of teachers who have already bought into the idea that language and dance belong together. In addition, there may be a larger pool of teaching candidates who are proficient at Irish and can eventually join the Language Committee or become examiners themselves.

**Improving the Relationship with the Gaelic League**

Multiple people pointed to an improving relationship with the Gaelic League as critical to language promotion within the CLRG. Starting with the fallout from the Language Freedom Movement in the 1970s and exacerbated by a building fire in the 1990s, the CLRG and the Gaelic League were on somewhat tense terms for several decades. There was disagreement about whether or not the Gaelic League should continue to be involved with the CLRG. Interestingly, this was instigated by the Gaelic League a few years after the split with An Comhdháil was a *fait accompli*:

Dancer Teacher: There was a whole movement within the Gaelic League in the 70s which sought to change it from being a general cultural organization. The Gaelic league branches all around Dublin, they were multicultural. It wasn't of language, there was always dancing, music, everything, involved. Thereby the feeling was this is how you promote the Irish, people use the language in the dancing, and in the music, and whatever else. It was a movement within the Gaelic League to take it away from that and make the Gaelic League a pressure group. It was an organization who was going to campaign for some of the things they did do like the *gaelscoileanna*, which is the Irish language schools, for the promotion of the language and get rid of all this distraction, dancing, they were distractions.

Anna: Interesting.
Dancer Teacher: The Gaelic League wanted to move in that direction, or at least certain people did.

Anna: In the 70s?

Dancer Teacher: Yeah. Mainly in the late 60s early 70s, there was a lot of movement in the direction of concentrating more on campaigning for the language.

Anna: Which they do do, right? You can go to their website and see all of their political...

Dancer Teacher: It arose from a bunch of people who thought all these other things are only distractions. We are getting nowhere with the language by doing this, so we need to become a different kind of organization. In some respects, that had a negative effect because it separated the language and the dancing. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)

A Gaelic League representative confirmed the dissociation as well as discussing the additional challenges the building fire caused.

G.L. Representative: The relationship between Conradh and the Commission for a number of years I suppose had started to weaken and there is a number of reasons for that I suppose which partly was that the Conradh itself was trying to reorganize itself and the Commission as well got bigger and bigger and bigger and I suppose the influence of the different groups, the different people on the actual commission now meant maybe that the language wasn't as much of a focus anymore….

Anna: Is there any chance that you would come back together in the same building? I heard there was a fire was what happened.

G.L. Representative: There was a fire in the building at the time and people had to, we couldn't work, operate in the building for a while and the Commission moved out. I think they needed more space and we didn't have any extra space at the time, now the building is full. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2016)

Ultimately, less radical voices prevailed, and the Gaelic League and the CLRG did not break apart. Within the past three years, in particular, the Gaelic League and the
CLRG have been making a concerted effort to improve relations and both groups seem pleased with the results:

Now for a while there, we had sort of moved part because Conradh deal with their own things, we deal with ours and they worked away, they left us alone, we worked away and lately we have a stronger, much stronger link and they’ve been attending our meetings, we've been attending theirs and it is really becoming stronger so, they're offering Irish classes to people within the commission, who are interested. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

Multiple participants mentioned a speech that was given by the General Secretary of the Gaelic League in 2015. They were unanimously impressed by the quality of the presentation and the poise of the speaker:

What I thought was super, from the point of view of the Coimisiún, was the address that Julian DeSpáinn gave. First of all, he's young. Second of all, he was not what people expected. I'm not being ageist, here, but they were expecting ... He was younger than most of the people in the Coimisiún. I thought, “One for the Conradh!” Not only was he young, but he had a presentation which was high-tech. The impression that went to all these global reps was, “Wow, Conradh has moved on, the Coimisiún needs to move on in terms of how this reconnects with the Conradh…” Historically, he contextualized what the links had been and he did a wonderful presentation, which I think really gave a clarity to the people there they may never have had. I mean, we always knew because we had learned by osmosis. People who are just coming in as the reps from foreign regions, every year, they just had to take it on trust that this was something that was important. I think he really did help. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

From the CLRG’s perspective it was very helpful for international teachers to learn about the historical connections between the Gaelic League and the CLRG. The relationship is generally well understood in Ireland, but from the outside it is rather opaque. By helping international teachers understand the history, it is likely that the link between language and dance was strengthened.
The Gaelic League also views the improving relationship with the CLRG quite positively. A representative of the Gaelic League described some of the activities the two organizations are undertaking to deepen the relationship, including participating in each other’s meetings and having the Gaelic League staff booths at competitions:

What we are doing this year is taking a very practical approach and for example a lot of what we are going to do is in terms of presence. Making sure people know that both groups exist. Making sure that both groups know what we do and then that there is a relationship there…

What's happened so far is we have attended all the Commission's provincial finals and the main final we will attend as well next year and it's really just having a stand there, having a chance to I suppose communicate with the different groups the different people, all the things we do on the Commission side and they also attend our main meeting and they come to our exec meetings and they have representation there. We have representation on the Commission as well but we appoint as well. It's about developing the relationship.

First of all it's just that there's communication that we there and build this relationship. Then we have to bring it to the next level and start talking about what can we do to develop and that would be more about how we can I suppose do we bring the language, from my side anyway, how we can bring the language more into use in the Commission and I know there is certain amount already used but how can we do that more. How can we get, I suppose a lot of the people maybe from the groups from abroad may not have understood or had a knowledge that there was a relationship there and to trying to say well how do we promote it to them in a practical way. Is there a way of sort of, some way that they can learn the language or use the language more in what happens in the Commission…

We’re very much, there was a motion at an Ardfheis [high assembly/annual convention] about the Commission and our relationship not so long ago and overwhelmingly people were happy with the relationship and want to develop it and I suppose it’s coming from that. In certain ways they gave us the extra incentive to start doing something about it. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2016)
One of the biggest changes that has occurred in CLRG governance since the split with An Comhdháil is how the Gaelic League is represented on the CLRG; all of the Gaelic League representatives are also dance teachers. Prior to the split, there were still non-dance teachers who sat on the CLRG. Interestingly, two dance teachers also sit on the executive committee of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic League representative described this structure:

Anna: Obviously there is representation that goes both way. Are there still non-dancing Conradh reps on the Commission or are they all dance teachers at this point?

G.L. Representative: They're all part of the dancing instructors.

Anna: It used to be. Yeah.

G.L. Representative: Yeah. They would have been part of over the years, they would have taken part, be it teachers or be it that they were part of that structure originally. On the opposite side though we do have a number of members, we got two members of our exec committee who come to meetings from the Commission side and they would be, it goes in terms of two-way communication is very good now. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2016)

Taking the improving relationship a step further, one dance teacher summarized the relationship between the Gaelic League and CLRG as key to the CLRG’s identity:

One of the things that makes the Commission special is, for me, that link to the Conradh. That's why we stayed, certainly [after the split]. Yes, it was the dancing, but it was the dancing as part of the bigger cultural tapestry. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

In other words, for this teacher, being entangled with the Gaelic League lends the CLRG a connection to “authentic” Irish culture that other dancing organizations do not possess.
The Gaelic League at Competitions. As mentioned above, one of the recent avenues for language promotion is that representatives of the Gaelic League have started attending major dance competitions in Ireland. Not only does this publically highlight the relationship between the Gaelic League and the CLRG, it also helps foster interest for the language among dancers and their families who ask for a variety of language resources:

Anna: So you said you are going to the regionals. Does that mean you are out at Leinsters [the Leinster regional championship competition] this weekend?

G.L. Representative: There should be somebody there…They were at the Nationals there in Killarney, they were there recently as well.

Anna: So you have a presence there, a table. Does it seem like it's working? Are people coming up and...

G.L. Representative: Yes huge amount of interest and the people who have been there they were saying in Killarney and they’re telling me there’s huge amount of interest, the amounts of people coming up to them is huge between the teachers and the kids, the kids are loving it as well.

Anna: Oh, that’s great. What are they asking for?

G.L. Representative: They are asking a few things. I suppose a number of the older people are asking about classes, asking about where can they use Irish more. They they’d be asking about sports, sport materials. Younger people then again, especially younger people will be looking for always the freebies the stickers and anything else, you know, but when you get through that you basically talk to them about for example there are Irish only radio stations we set up that’s anchored here upstairs, its available online the whole time, Radio Rírá. It's also available on DAV in Dublin, Cork, and Waterford. They are asking about different ways they can use Irish and we can tell them things like there is a radio station for young people. All the music on it is exactly what they would expect. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2015)

At the time of the interview, these efforts had been limited to Irish regional and national championships, but that changed at the 2016 World Championships in Glasgow,
Scotland. The Gaelic League had the opportunity to meet with dancers from around the world, and it is possible that they may begin sending representatives to regional and national championships outside of Ireland thus expanding the scope of Irish language promotion globally.

**Positive Attitudes Toward Irish**

Though I have mentioned positive attitudes throughout this chapter, the links to national level policy must also be addressed. In the same way that participants pointed to the primary and secondary schools as fomenting negative attitudes toward Irish in the 1960s and 1970s, they identified *gaelscoileanna* as fostering positive attitudes in recent years. The CLRG has been able to use this good will toward the language to aid in their own language promotion efforts.

**Gaelscoileanna**

A common sentiment among participants was that parents (students from the 1960s and 1970s) feel a sense of loss regarding the language—that they regret their own negative attitudes and failure to learn Irish. A teacher indicated that this is how some of the parents of her students feel, and that one of the reasons there is such demand for *gaelscoileanna* today is that these parents do not want their children to have the same sense of regret:

Dance Teacher: Attitudes definitely have changed for there are more people trying to come back into it now.

Anna: Why do you think that is?

Dance Teacher: I’d say they realized they missed out, there's a generation there that missed out. That's my own thinking of it. They want their kids to
learn, that's why we have so many *gaelscoileanna*, Irish schools, all over the place. I couldn't tell you how many would be in Dublin but I can tell you this, there's one here ... I can talk about national schools, there's one ... probably a mile and a half, two miles over that way, there's one a mile up the road, two a mile up the road, there's another one over that way, a few hundred yards, there's another one down this way in a radius of two or three miles. I couldn't tell you there's six or seven.

We've not got a huge population like you would have in the States, right? In this school, there would be four hundred, four hundred and fifty.

Anna: That's a good number.

Dance Teacher: In the national school below, there are eight classes and there'd be about thirty in each class, and a long waiting list. Which they don't take in, they've only one stream and they want to keep it that way. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

Another teacher made this connection as well and also emphasized the role of parents in helping create positive attitudes toward Irish:

An awful lot depends as well on home, the attitude at home, towards the Irish language. I think if people in families see it positively, then children take it positively. A lot of people now are sending children who like it to the Gaelscoils. They weren't that many Gaelscoils before; now there are far more Gaelscoils. That's great. It'll depend then after that if they continue to speak it. I think they'll have some facility to even go back in it, even if they go to University afterwards. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)

Certainly the *gaelscoileanna* are leading to a revolution in language skills and attitudes. It remains to be seen to what extent the CLRG can capitalize on these positive changes as more fluent Irish speakers come up through the teaching ranks.

**Irish at Universities**

The place of tertiary education in language management is a little more fraught. One teacher criticized the Irish medium colleges: “The whole Irish college system is
more like a commercial venture, now, than a cultural one” (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015). Part of the issue seems to be that many students who have attended *gaelscoileanna* do not continue with Irish medium education in college. This is true for one dancer I spoke to, who discussed how difficult it was to choose what language to study in college:

Anna: Are you studying [Irish] at [university] too?

Dancer: No

Anna: Okay. Could you if you wanted to?

Dancer: Yeah, I could have and I was really stuck because I love it so, but I didn’t [she chose French].

Anna: How often do you use it now if you’re not studying?

Dancer: Not as much, but I do want to keep it up still. I’ll probably try go to the *Gaeltacht* again. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

It seems that one thing Irish universities need to figure out is how to promote Irish language study beyond secondary school, especially if students who love the language are choosing not to study it further. A dance teacher agreed that this is a problem, but also believe that things are changing and that more people are learning at least a little Irish in college:

People would say that years ago even if you go to a Gaelscoil in your younger years, primary school, then secondary school, Gaelscoil, then you go to universities in English. People used to feel what happens then. You've got to change over your thinking. At that stage, people have been communicating through English, etc, and you could pick it up. You can pick up the vocabulary, I think. (Dance teacher, interview, June 30, 2015)
Despite the corporatization of higher education and the dominance of English at universities, it seems that on many campuses enthusiasm for Irish is growing, often with the assistance of the Gaelic League:

G.L. Representative: I think people especially young people we know some of our branches are in third level colleges, and the last 10 years they have mushroomed because the amounts of people who are interested. Young, no baggage they are just interested in the language, it's growing.

Anna: It sounds like there is a lot of baggage from the middle of the last century. It happened.

G.L. Representative: It was seen as a foreign language for a long time and it was seen as Irish language has no future and no use. Nowadays it's one of the recognized languages in the European Union. It's being used more and more by as I said young people but also you see young people look up to our using Irish more. We have a lot of music singers and bands now in Ireland and they’re using Irish as well that have done work with us in the past so it's good. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2015)

A dance student mentioned the Irish language club at her university as something she is looking forward to participating in:

Dancer: I joined the ... there’s an Irish society [at my university]… I haven’t done anything with them yet, but yeah.

Anna: What do they do? What are their activities?

Dancer: I think just like anything, from like a céilí or ...

Anna: Oh fun. They do it through Irish?

Dancer: Yes. (Dancer, interview, November 15, 2015)

In addition to having branches on university campuses, the Gaelic League has also opened an Irish language bar in the basement of its Dublin office building. The goal
is to bring people, especially university students, together to speak Irish in a casual setting:

G.L. Representative: There is a club downstairs and it’d be on Tuesday night for the students, apart from that every other night of the week depending on the event.

Anna: Is it Irish medium? Is that the goal of it?

G.L. Representative: Irish medium, that's the goal of it, yes. Not everybody speaks Irish that goes into it, but the vast majority would. It only opens at 8:00 at night and only opens Tuesday to Saturday but it is...

Anna: I think that is a fantastic idea.

G.L. Representative: Oh it’s a great place.

Anna: Get people where they are out on a Friday night...

G.L. Representative: Again it’s the part of encouraging young people not to drink but to speak Irish.

Anna: Or do both…

G.L. Representative: There’d be a good group of them coming in from the Trinity College, University College Dublin, Maynooth. All these people congregate here, so at least they meet each other and interact as well. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2015).

It appears that attitudes toward studying Irish in school and Irish-medium education have improved drastically in the past few decades. The fact that the language is no longer a gatekeeping device for high school graduation is a key factor in addition to the changing attitudes of parents who regret not learning Irish when they had the chance.

**Encouraging Positive Attitudes within the CLRG**

The changes in attitudes toward Irish nationally have been reflected in the CLRG. No doubt this is the result of a combination of improving national attitudes and the
CLRG’s own efforts to improve that status of Irish organizationally. Multiple participants discussed the importance of encouraging people to speak Irish rather than punishing them for not speaking Irish:

You don't want to make the language the thing that stops the expansion of the dancing. You want it to be that people who are attracted to the dancing and the music also then start to have a good regard for the language and start to incorporate that. That is a positive way, not a negative way. (Dance teacher, interview, February 10, 2016)

I think it was people wanting to bring people with them, rather than lose them because you are actually getting a lot more. Do you go with the stick or the carrot? Now you have people are leading by example, at the executive level, when people are showing a willingness. You don't want to exclude people, and this is the thing. You don't want the situation, again, whereby it excluded people who, through no fault of their own, are not Irish speakers. You're 70, you've been in the Commission all your life but never went to school in Ireland…

You [also] have people who would have emigrated, who would be natively Irish speakers, who would be part of the American teachers but also not any less dedicated to the language. I think people were actually surprised at the goodwill that there was for the Gaeilge. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

The 2015 World Championships, held in Montréal, Canada, were a particular source of linguistic inspiration. Participants were impressed by the level of bilingualism and hoped that Ireland could achieve similar results someday:

When you look at the way the Canadians have, when you go up to where we went last year to Montréal, or this year for the Worlds and see how strong the French is up there, it wasn't always, but they made it so. They tried, also, to impose French in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It's very hard to impose a language. You have to encourage. The people who encouraged, it's the Irish schools and all that kind that had been around, and people that taught a different way. Instead of the corporal punishment and kids getting beating for not learning the language. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 10, 2015)
Another teacher argued that French/English bilingualism in Montréal helped foreground Irish even more substantially. To her mind, the three-way contrast made Irish more visible at the competition:

In Montréal, funnily enough…it was then in English and French and Irish. We felt it was more important to have Irish because we had French, actually. You should, everything, the signage, had to be [in French]. It was easier to foreground of the Gaeilge because of that. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2016)

All of the language promotion activities discussed above, as well as the changing attitudes appear to be part of a new Gaelic Revival that has come about as a reaction to globalization and migration to Ireland. As an organization very much involved with the (re)creation of Irish identity, the CLRG is caught up in this movement.

**A New Gaelic Revival**

The combination of Irish dance as a global commodity and the influx of economic migrants seems to have ushered in a new Gaelic Revival—there appears to be a renewed yearning for a sense of Irish identity and language is a major factor in (re)creating this identity. It is significant that *Riverdance* premiered in 1996, only two years after Ireland changed from a net emigrant-sending nation to an immigrant-receiving nation (Conlon, 2007). This influx of migrants during this time was a result of the economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger, the Irish economy was the strongest in the European Union from 1995-2008. In the face of globalization and increasing linguistic diversity, Ireland appears to be undergoing what Sassen (2009) refers to as “the renationalizing of citizenship” (p. 240), or a redefinition of who and what counts as Irish.

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33 The Celtic Tiger name references the Asian economic boom of the 1990s called the Asian Tiger.
The role of Irish dance education in this new Gaelic Revival is fraught. With few exceptions Irish dance promotes a monolingual English *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1991) within Ireland-- the vast majority of classes are taught in English; competitions are conducted primarily in English; most feis syllabi provide only dance names in Irish, all other information is in English -- yet Irish language proficiency remains a powerful symbol of “Irishness” within the CLRG and Ireland writ large. The CLRG maintains an Irish language test for teacher certification, has an Irish language committee, offers Irish competitions and scholarships to dancers, and requires its president to be fluent in Irish. Most participants indicated that they believe Irish is actually growing in importance both nationally and for the CLRG. Of this situation, a teacher noted that lots of people know a few words of Irish, and that the CLRG along with the nation-state of Ireland is going through a “turbulent redefinition” of Irishness:

Dance Teacher: Interviewee: With the 21st century…you're getting people who are trying to show that they have a *cúpla focal* [a few words] because, funnily enough, that is become one of the things that is not to be left behind. That's good.

Anna: Why do you think that is? What is it? What about this moment in time is inspiring that?

Dance Teacher: We are constantly being reminded of how global we are. People, and this is a really tricky one now, it's a really tricky one because, as it expands it brings a whole raft of challenges. A whole, whole raft of challenges with it. That's really tricky. The simple “Irish is not English” is not enough anymore. Why did you learn Irish dancing? Because my granny came from Mayo. That's not enough anymore. Now people are just looking into it because of some inexplicable reason. I think people are trying to have a little toolkit of going forward. Funnily enough, elements of the language seem to have made it into the, I think that's important because throughout the, and this is one of the tricks, throughout the 20th century were it not for the Conradh and the whole system of education, we
just wouldn't have what we have now. I'm not saying it's perfect, but we wouldn't have it at all.

Anna: The numbers, in some ways, are very dire anyhow.

Dance Teacher: We wouldn't have it. The fact that people all over the world know about the Gaelic League is due, actually, to the Coimisiún in some ways. They know that there is...they might not understand it but they will know that there was a general, that the whole mechanism for galvanizing people was through the language. It ended up being more through dance. I do think there has been a conscious effort, I would say, to try and ... I would say the diehard gaeilgeoiri [Irish speakers] of the Conradh, being honest, were not happy with ... To me, looking at the face of it, when you look at the Coimisiún and see, it was trite. The website. It wasn't even actually representative of what was actually happening. I think there is definitely more of an effort to engage. I would say that is been very recent development. I would say the fear in the previous years was, "who are these people and is it ..." I would say, and I don't know this for a fact but, if you approach the Conradh, you might get a fear that the Coimisiún has reneged on its Irishness. My own take on it would be that it is going through a turbulent redefinition of what's now Irish and who is now Irish. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, June 27, 2015)

The same dance teacher went on to describe the language as fashionable right now, and attributed the Revival to the spirit of the Irish people and the way they respond to challenges, which in this case is referring to an antagonistic government rather than migrants or economic crises:

Dance Teacher: I think that's really good. I think there is more of a willingness to take the language forward. I think, funnily, people see it as something fashionable right now.

Anna: Why not? That's exciting.

Dance Teacher: Because Ireland has suddenly turned out to be, I suppose, for a small island if you look at the way we respond to challenges, like Hunger or demonstrations or ... There is great spirit in people. I think that's really good. I think people don't want to the language to go quietly, in spite of the current government. I don't want to pay water taxes, they don't want to lose the language. The biggest threats, I would say, to the
A different teacher attributed the Revival to the proliferation of *gaelscoileanna*, though this begs the question, why did the *gaelscoileanna* suddenly become so popular:

Dance Teacher: There's a huge revival all over the country anyway. But-

Anna: When did that start? The, sort of, it does seem like there's, sort of a renewed cultural revival.

Dance Teacher: Yeah, I couldn't tell when it actually started. I don't know. Possibly with the increasing *gaelscoileanna*. Possibly with that, it's always been there, but we struggled...because of the attitude of people towards it, but that has changed. (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, July 9, 2015)

One dance teacher, however, did point to migrants as the cause of the new Gaelic Revival. His point was not that Irish people were attempting to exclude migrants, but rather that ethnically Irish people are jealous of multilingual migrants and want to have their “own” language back:

Dance Teacher: As far as the language is concerned, I believe the language is more alive today now than it’s ever been.

Anna: It seems that way.

Dance Teacher: My belief is, going back for a moment, for long years, we have little pockets in tip of Donegal, out in far away Galway, down in Kerry and they were Irish speaking only, the rest of the country in fact tended to ignore the language completely. Two things happened, in those areas, they were rather the poorer areas of the country and it didn't have employment. They were very poor. Industry tended to go into those areas and industry tended it to be English speaking, you know?

Anna: Sure.
Dance Teacher: The language kind of died in those areas. It was interesting, that's around the same time and that's only recently now, we've got tremendous number of foreigners coming into the country from various countries, especially from countries in Africa. Those people have no inhibitions whatever, they speak in their own language, you know?

Anna: Yeah.

Dance Teacher: I think it’s time to point out to ourselves that, and we did tend to be a bit embarrassed about speaking Irish. Now I think people would say, “Well if they can speak a language, why shouldn’t we speak ours?” And language that…needs to be heard much more heavily now than ever before, I can go into town and I can conduct my business through Irish in the post office, in the bank, in most of the shops throughout the centers and all that you know? (Dance teacher and examiner, interview, November 13, 2015)

This is a friendlier view than arises in much of the literature, in which other scholars have found that the popular discourse is “Irish is for the Irish.” It would be ideal if the CLRG led from this more inclusive stance rather than trying to exclude people from speaking Irish. From the data presented above, it does seem that they are on an inclusive track.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the many ways the CLRG has attempted to manage language in an era of globalization. From implementing the World Championships and publishing *Céim* in the 1970s to holding Irish language competitions and implementing an Irish segment in the grade exams, the CLRG has been creative and flexible in its language policy. Moreover, the CLRG has been quite successful in promoting positive attitudes toward Irish and to some extent these efforts seems to have encouraged people to learn Irish. In the next chapter I discuss the implications of this data
for the CLRG and the field of CIDE. I also suggest some avenues for future research building upon this study.
Chapter 7 – Implications for the Future

Is maith an scéalait an aimsir.
Time is a good storyteller.

In this dissertation I have demonstrated how the CLRG has engaged in language management as part of an anti-colonial project to create an idealized Irish identity. More specifically, systematic qualitative analysis of the data indicates that the language policies of the CLRG were and are a reflection of the fluctuating socio-political context in Ireland, and that the promotion of language through dance is part of a process to define an ideal Irish national identity. The (re)creation of this idealized identity is ongoing and contested, especially in light of the globalization of Irish dance as well as the globalization of Ireland. In this final chapter, I discuss my findings as they relate to my research questions and theoretical framework, lay out possible implications for other non-formal educational organizations as well as the field of CIDE, and suggest directions for future research.

Discussion

I began this study by asking the following questions informed by Spolsky’s (2009) language policy framework, Anderson’s (1991) imagine communities, and Hobsbawm’s (1983) invented traditions:

1. How have the language policies of CLRG reflected the broader socio-political context in Ireland during the past century?
   a. What language management efforts has the CLRG engaged in at various points in time since 1924?
   b. In what ways have broader national language attitudes influenced CLRG language policy?
2. How has the promotion of language through dance been part of an ongoing process to define an imagined Irish national identity?

These questions are best answered in terms of compulsion and encouragement. The following paragraphs summarize the progress of CLRG language policy, integrating these two themes as they emerged from the historical and qualitative research I conducted.

**Linguistic Compulsion**

During the first five decades following Irish independence, the government and the CLRG engaged in linguistic compulsion. Passing an Irish exam was required for high school graduation, and civil service jobs were limited to those with sufficient Irish proficiency. This national focus on testing and requiring Irish proficiency for employment led to the inclusion of a language test as part of the certification (TCRG) exam for Irish dance teachers. The correlation between national language policy and CLRG language policy during this time is hardly surprising as the Gaelic League was involved in both lobbying the government to require Irish language proficiency of students and civil students and writing the original TCRG exam.

As shown in the archival data and interviews, the language test today is a direct result of the Gaelic League’s anti-colonial project to create an idealized Irish identity, using the language as both a tool and a symbol of Irishness. It was originally implemented by Cormac MacFhionnlaoich who was an active member of the Gaelic League as well as the first chair of the CLRG. Furthermore the CLRG pointed to the
close relationship between the Gaelic League and the CLRG as an important reason for requiring a language exam:

It had been decided that all future candidates for the Teacher’s Diploma must be competent to teach through the medium of Irish. Such a rule was a very natural step when one considers the close relations existing between the Irish language and the Dancing since the inception of The Gaelic League fifty years ago. (CLRG, as cited in Cullinane, 2003, pp. 91-92)

Given that the Gaelic League was founded as a cultural nationalist organization and explicitly used the Irish language to work against British colonial practices, the CLRG’s language exam can be seen as an arm of the same anti-colonial project.

Although the language test was and is the main way the CLRG has sought to compel dance teachers to speak Irish, the organization also required meetings to be held in Irish, the office staff must still speak Irish, and announcements are delivered in Irish at major competitions. Participants affirmed that these practices are enacted as ways to promote Irish though dance. All of these practices might be considered invented traditions that were created to help foster an imagined Ireland where Irish dance is taught through Irish rather than English. Certainly at some point in the distant past dance was taught entirely through Irish, but even by the time traveling dance masters were beginning to teach in the late 1700s, English was already spreading throughout Ireland. Despite the efforts of the Gaelic League to host Irish medium dance classes, the reality is that CLRG style Irish dance has long been dominated by English language pedagogy.

Unfortunately, the compulsory language management efforts by the government led to overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward Irish by the 1960s and 1970s (Ó Riagáin, 1997). The data in Chapter Five demonstrates that these negative attitudes also
pervaded the CLRG. In conjunction with these negative attitudes and the view that members of the Gaelic League who were non-dancers were trying to control the dance canon, a group of dance teachers split off to form An Comhdháil. This led the CLRG to reconsider its identity as a subsidiary of the Gaelic League. Though there were some tense years, the CLRG and the Gaelic League stayed connected, and the CLRG strategically engaged in efforts to be more inclusive of overseas dancers. This globalization of Irish dance, however, opened the doors to a nearly complete shift to English language governance that is only now starting to be reversed.

**Linguistic Encouragement**

Today, Irish dance is widespread globally and for many dancers the connection to Irish identity has likely been broken, not to mention the connection between language and dance. If we follow Ramanathan’s (2013) idea that “‘globalization’ is, in many ways, a direct outgrowth of colonialism (especially the English language and Great Britain’s former empire)” (p. 4), this disarticulation makes sense. English is so globally important that even anti-colonial efforts to promote Irish have been essentially powerless in confronting it.

In response to negative attitudes toward Irish and globalization, the Irish government eliminated the Irish exam for high school graduation as well as the civil service language requirement. The CLRG quickly followed suit, forming an Irish language committee and enacting new language policies and inventing new traditions meant to promote positive attitudes toward Irish in the hope that this would encourage people to learn the language. Some of these efforts have included bilingual or Irish
language publications, language classes for dance teachers, and language competitions for dance students. Not all of the compulsory elements are gone, but they appear to have been softened. It is rare for anyone to fail the Irish test for teaching certification, and the mandatory use of Irish at international competitions has been made “fun,” with international teachers trying out their cúpla focal, “learn Irish” fortune cookie strips spread around tables, and the Gaelic League present to direct people toward Irish language radio and television shows.

As discussed by dance students and Gaelic League Representatives, these new, fun traditions have helped (re)create an imagined community around language and dance for a younger generation. For example when Gaelic League representatives attended the World Championship competition, they interacted with many young dancers:

They they’d be asking about sports, sport materials. Younger people then again, especially younger people will be looking for always the freebies the stickers and anything else, you know, but when you get through that you basically talk to them about for example there are Irish only radio stations …They are asking about different ways they can use Irish and we can tell them things like there is a radio station for young people. All the music on it is exactly what they would expect. (Gaelic League representative, interview, November 12, 2015)

Older generations imagined language and dance to be part of an anti-colonial project, but younger dancers have a different frame of reference—a globalized Ireland, accessible online and over the air, and populated by a linguistically diverse citizenry.

Colonialism and globalization are intimately linked as Ramanathan (2013) indicated, but whereas the anti-colonial project generated an environment of compulsion
to speak Irish, globalization has resulted in encouragement of positive attitudes toward the language, with the hopes that people will choose to learn Irish. Interestingly, in this era of encouragement, the CLRG formed an Irish language committee and is formalizing their language policy. This is suggestive of CLRG’s understanding that the language continues to play a role in modern Irish identity (re)creation. In light of these findings, it is important to consider the implications for non-formal educational organizations, such as the CLRG, as well as the field of CIDE.

Language Policy and Non-formal Education

While the data should not be over-generalized, several themes arose repeatedly in the interviews and archives, which indicates that there are broader trends at play. These themes are discussed below as they bear on future research in both non-formal educational contexts and CIDE research generally, specifically the role that non-formal education can play in identity formation and fomenting language attitudes.

Organizational Considerations

One important lesson to be learned is that non-formal educational systems need to be very strategic about what they can and cannot successfully teach. The CLRG has been incredibly successful at turning out accomplished dancers, but, as reported in the interviews, it has not been anywhere near as successful at turning out Irish speakers. This is not to say that dance education is a poor medium for teaching the language, but rather that the data in this study suggests that it must actually be used to teach dance if students and teachers are going to value it as a language of instruction. The CLRG has struggled to convince teachers to teach in Irish because students and teachers often have limited
Irish language proficiency. In cases where the teachers are capable of teaching dance through Irish, they do not necessarily possess the skills to teach the language in a way that will help the students learn it. Assuming that teaching through Irish is intuitive is a mistake. This suggests that the CLRG and other non-formal educational organizations need to train teachers how to teach in the desired language. Several trainers already offer Irish-dance-teaching courses for teaching candidates, so it might be possible to replicate these courses to help teachers learn how to teach dance in Irish.

Another consideration is whether or not to create an official organizational language policy. Because the CLRG’s formal Irish language policy is still in the process of being implemented, it is not yet possible to make a solid case for or against this idea. However, given that until this year, the CLRG’s rules regarding language were spread out among multiple documents, it does seem like a positive change that they have been consolidated into a central policy. At the very least, having an official language policy sends a message to constituents that the organization values the language. Whether or not anyone adheres to the policy and what the consequences are for not adhering to the policy remains to be seen.

One of the definite successes of the CLRG in recent years has been promoting positive attitudes toward Irish. Participants noted the use of Irish at competitions, scholarships to summer camp in the Gaeltacht, and language lessons at meetings and the World Championships as practices they appreciated and enjoyed. If non-formal education organizations like the CLRG can promote positive attitudes toward language, formal school systems might have an easier time convincing students to enroll in language
courses, especially at the tertiary level where Irish language classes are not required. This might be the most useful thing the CLRG can do regarding the language. Non-formal educational organizations globally could also engage in positive attitude development toward non-dominant languages. Of course, this would be most effective in contexts where the non-dominant language is also taught in schools, as Irish is in Ireland.

**Implications for the Field of CIDE**

Regarding the field of CIDE, the most significant finding in this study is that non-formal education can play a serious role in (re)creating certain attitudes toward language. Similar to the Irish case, Trudell (2009) found that at the national language level, colonial languages (English, French, Spanish) pervade, but:

> At the community level, the local language committee or language association is an important site of institutionalized language activism. These locally organized and locally managed groups are typically made up of members of the local-language-speaking elite, and their primary goal is to promote the use of the language in both spoken and written forms. (p. 348)

These practices sound remarkably similar to the role the Gaelic League, and by extension, the CLRG play in Irish language promotion. Likewise, in Cameroon, Chiatoh (2011) found that a non-formal community language organization helped improve attitudes toward mother tongue education and literacy. Thus, it is generally recognized that community and non-formal educational organizations can effectively promote positive language attitudes and mother tongue/heritage language learning. Where this study differs, however, is in its focus on language promotion within a non-formal dance
teaching organization, whereas previous studies occurred within non-formal language teaching organizations.

As outlined in the previous chapters, national attitudes toward Irish were readily taken up by the CLRG in their internal policies and practices. Furthermore, as a desire for an Irish national identity has grown, the CLRG has responded with programs that promote an idealized national identity that involves speaking Irish. Typically this sort of identity building is associated with civics classes in formal education systems. In addition, we know from various scholars such as Ó Riagáin (1997, 2007) and Crowley (2005) as well as census documents that the language education policy of the state is not succeeding in reintroducing Irish as a home language. This is likely the case with other non-dominant languages, especially in post-colonial contexts. As such, the role of non-formal educational institutions in promoting the language needs to be seriously considered, especially as learners of any age might engage in non-formal education.

Because it has been several decades since non-formal education has been a major part of the CIDE research agenda, it is unclear how widespread the phenomenon of identity formation in non-formal education currently is. Projects that do consider non-formal education seem more concerned with skill development rather than identity (re)creation. For example, Valerio, Parton, and Robb (2014) discussed the increasing popularity of non-formal entrepreneurship education globally, arguing, “Common targeted performance objectives include increases in profits, employees, and productivity, as well as business expansion in markets, financing, investment, and the implementation of better business practices and innovations” (p. 7). Similarly, Nellemann, Podolskiy, and
Levin (2015) found that non-formal adult education in Russia is focused on knowledge and skills rather than identity formation: “The results of these forms of education [are] seen as a process that leads to the attainment of economic, social, psychological, and educational benefits and advantages” (p. 31). If language learning and identity formation are part of non-formal curricula, it is not being reported on in the literature.

**Directions for Future Research**

These findings have provoked additional questions regarding language, dance, and non-formal education. Perhaps most importantly, a follow-up study should be conducted that focuses on the language attitudes of teaching candidates. It will be necessary to spend additional time in the field to gain the trust of these dancers. Interviewing teaching candidates will be particularly interesting in the future because they will likely have had different schooling experiences with the language than current teachers. With the growing popularity of *gaelscoileanna*, it is probable that the proportion of proficient Irish speakers will increase in the coming years. This could impact the role Irish plays in dance classes, competitions, and CLRG meetings.

As part of a study that looks at younger teachers and teaching candidates, it would be informative to conduct observations of their teaching. While few teachers currently teach in Irish, it is possible that more will have the language skills to do so in the future. It remains to be seen whether a demand for dance lessons in Irish reaches a critical mass. Some alternate ways to approach an observation-based project would be to spend several months each with the two or three CLRG teachers who do currently offer Irish medium or bilingual dance classes; to observe dance classes in the *gaelscoileanna*; or to observe
dance classes at summer camps in the Gaeltacht. An ambitious project might combine all three in a comparative study of how language is enacted in different dance teaching contexts.

Another interesting avenue for research is what role languages other than English or Irish will play in the future of the CLRG. Already teachers from around the world are requesting translated materials, and there appears to be a desire for the teaching exam to be offered in additional languages as well. As the language capacity of the CLRG grows, this could become a possibility. However, as was the case with English, acknowledging different exam languages also brings questions about Irish culture and identity that will need to be addressed.

The likelihood that more people will speak Irish as well as other world languages in the future has implications for the new Irish language policy. One the one hand, there should be a thorough policy analysis conducted in a few years to see how the language policy is working. On the other hand, the language and overseas development committee might need to write another language policy that clarifies to what extent they are willing to incorporate additional languages into the practices and governance of the CLRG.

Finally, there is a need for more case studies regarding language promotion in non-formal education. The limited literature regarding indigenous groups in North America and the Taarab singing and ngoma dance groups in Tanzania suggests that there are many more lessons to be learned. This study filled part of that gap, but more work needs to be done. Furthermore, comparative case studies into multiple groups would
likely net significant cross-cultural findings that could be used to inform non-formal pedagogy more broadly.

**Conclusion**

Over the course of the past century, the CLRG has helped enact and (re)create an idealized Irish identity that includes speaking Irish. Some of the CLRG’s language promotion activities have been successful, others less so. Whether via compulsion or encouragement, the goal has always been to promote the use of Irish through dancing as a way to build an anti-colonial Irish identity. Returning to the words of Stuart Hall (1990), “Cultural identity…is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past (p. 225).” Where the CLRG takes the language next is unknown, but it promises to be both creative and reflective of the broader language attitudes of the times.
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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

For TCRGs (Irish dance teachers)
1. Name

2. How many years have you been dancing?

3. How many years have you been teaching?

4. Where do you teach? (Own school? Gaelscoileanna? Other schools?)

5. How did you start Irish dancing?

6. What language(s) were your dance classes taught in?

7. Tell me about how you teach dance.
   Probes:
   What does a typical lesson look like?
   What language(s) do you teach in? How do you decide?

8. Tell me about how you use of Irish in your life
   Probes: When/where/with whom do you speak Irish? English?

9. Tell me about your experiences learning Irish

10. How did you study for the Irish language exam for the TCRG?

11. Why do you think this requirement was created? What was the rationale for the requirement?
    Probes:
    Why do you have to take Irish for the TCRG?

12. Tell me about your experience with the Irish language exam (who gave it, what happened)?
    Probes:
    Walk me step-by-step through the exam.
    Was taking the Irish language exam a positive experience? Negative? Neutral?
    Why?
    What affect does the exam have after it is over?
    Do you think the Irish language exam helps maintain the language?

13. Is speaking Irish an important part of being Irish? Why or why not?
Additional questions for examiners

14. How do you understand the history of the Irish language exam?

15. Did non-Irish TCRG candidates ever take the Irish language exam?
   Probe: If yes, when and why?

16. What are your feelings on non-Irish candidates and the language exam?
   Probe: Why are non-Irish dance teachers exempt from the language exam?

17. What is different between dance classes taught in Irish and dance classes taught in English?
   Probe: Should Irish dancing be taught in Irish?

Questions for TCRG Candidates (dance students studying to be Irish dance teachers)

1. Name

2. How many years have you been dancing?

3. How many years have you been teaching?

4. Where do you teach? (Own school? Gaelscoileanna? Other schools?)

5. How did you start Irish dancing?

6. What language(s) were your dance classes taught in?

7. Tell me about how you use of Irish in your life
   Probes: When/where/with whom do you speak Irish? English?

8. Tell me about your experiences learning Irish

9. How are you studying for the Irish language exam for the TCRG?

10. Why do you think this requirement was created? What was the rationale for the requirement?
    Probes:
    Why do you have to take Irish for the TCRG?

11. Is speaking Irish an important part of being Irish? Why or why not?
**Appendix 2 -- Codebook**

Attitudes toward Irish
- Positive
- Negative
- Ambivalent

Promoting Irish use
- Compulsion
  - TCRG exam
  - Meetings
- Encouragement
  - Language competitions
  - Language at competitions
  - Dance class in Irish

Imagined Irish identity
- Irish culture
- History of CLRG and the Gaelic League

Irish learning
- At school
- At home
- In the *Gaeltacht*
- At dance class

Globalization
- Dance as sport
- English
Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Document

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH

Ni tir gan teanga – there is no nation without a language:
Language policy and the Irish Dancing Commission

You are invited to be in a research study of the relationship between Irish dance and the Irish language. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a TCRG who was required to take the Irish language exam you are an Irish language examiner for the Irish Dance Commission. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Anna Farrell, University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Research Policy and Development.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
Participate in a 1-hour interview this summer and a follow-up interview in the fall.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The recordings will be digital and saved in encrypted and password protected files. Only Anna Farrell will have access to these recordings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher(s) conducting this study is (are): Anna Farrell and . You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at by phone or email, +1 612-599-4712, farre223@umn.edu. Anna is being advised by Professor Frances Vavrus. Professor Vavrus can be reached at +1 612-625-6387 or vavru003@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects’ Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.
Appendix 4 – Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear __________,

I hope this finds you well. I am one of Cormac O'Se's dance students in Minnesota USA. I am in the process of writing my dissertation on the relationship between the Irish dance and the Irish language. Cormac suggested that you would be a good person to talk to about all of this.

I will be coming to Ireland this summer (June 19-July 10), and I am hoping I might be able to talk with you about language and Irish dance. It would be such a pleasure to meet you and learn from you. I am planning to be in Dublin from June 19-26 and Cork for about a week after that. My last week is still largely unscheduled, but does slightly overlap the North American Nationals. Please let me know if it would be possible to meet and talk, and if yes, when would work best for you.

Sincerely,

Anna Farrell