

Background

Irish language subjugation began when England invaded Ireland in 1169 CE. In order to assert their dominance, English rulers passed laws forbidding the use of the Irish language. Irish people began using Irish as a way to differentiate themselves from their colonizer. The increased Irish nationalism as a means of decolonization culminated in the Irish War of Independence fought from 1919-1921. The island was then partitioned into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, where the conflict continues.

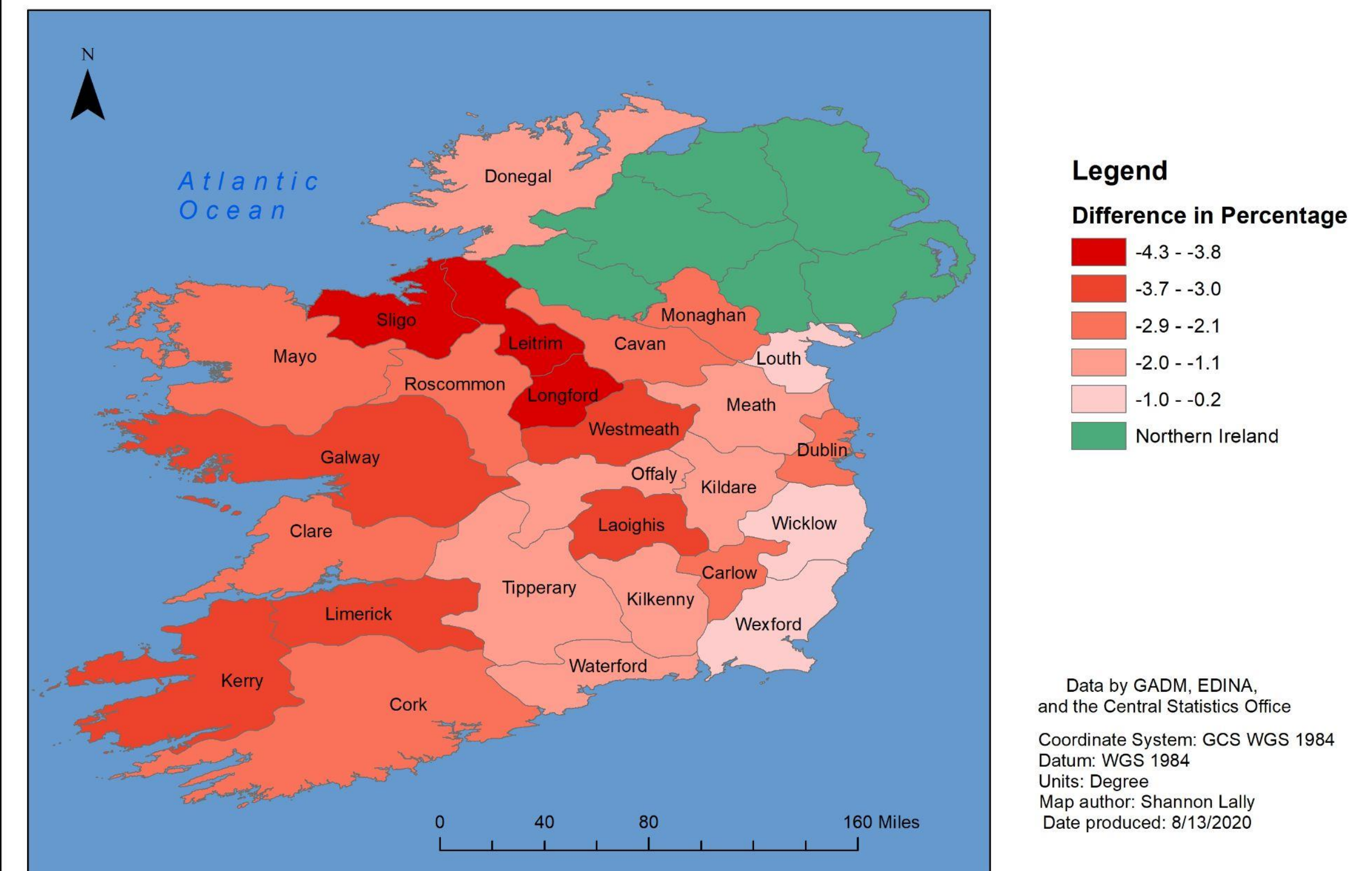
Research Questions

How effective have Irish language revitalization movements been in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland? What accounts for the difference between these regions? How do colonial relationships affect the success of language revitalization movements?

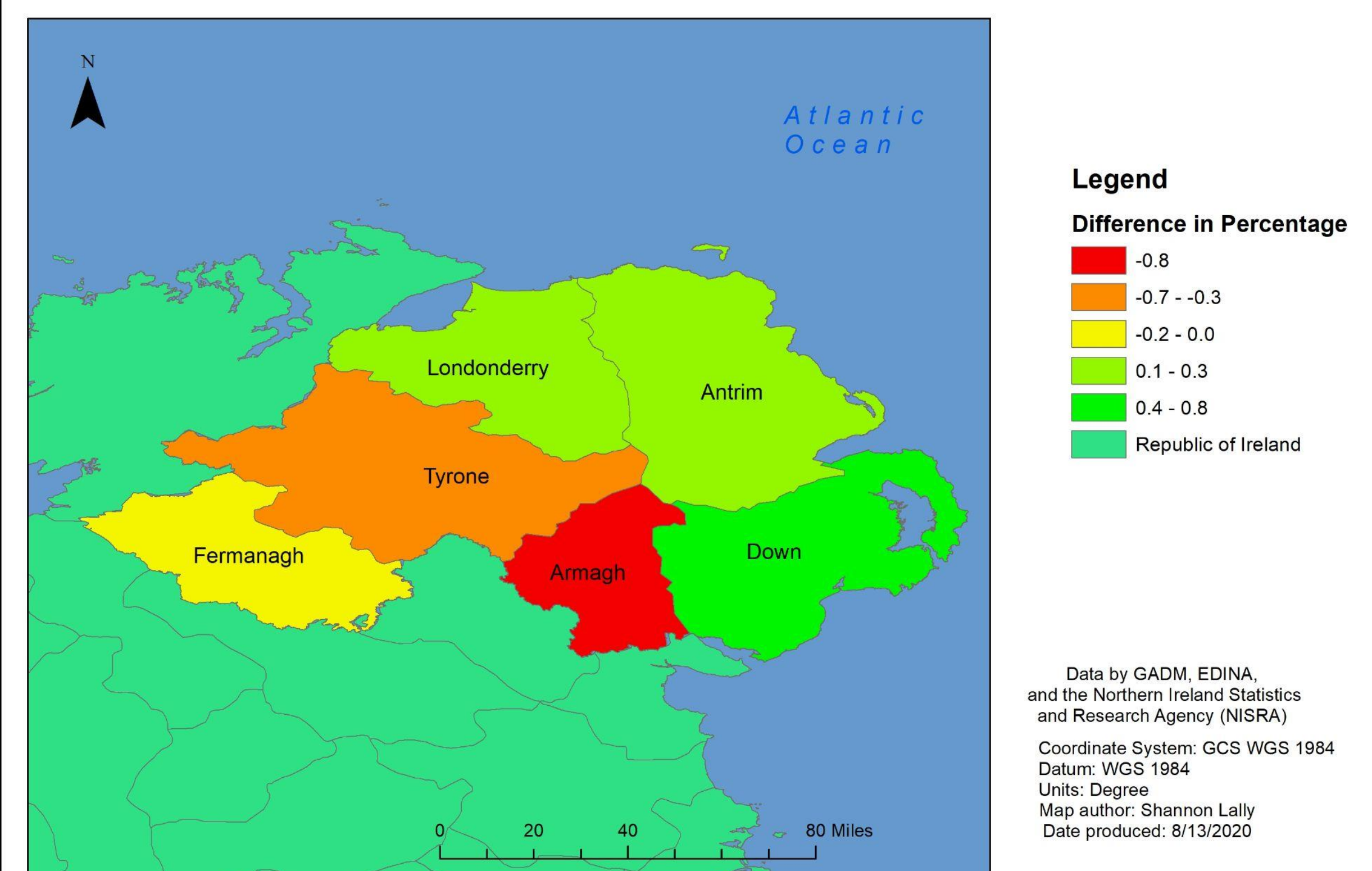
Methods

In addition to library research, the most recent census data from both regions were used to produce maps of the percentage of Irish speakers per county. The difference in the percentage of speakers in each region over time was found and mapped in order to represent the efficacy of language revitalization movements in both regions.

Change in Percentage of Irish Speakers in the Republic of Ireland by County, 2002-2011



Change in Percentage of Irish Speakers in Northern Ireland by County, 2001-2011



References

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Results

Every county in the Republic of Ireland saw a decrease in the percentage of speakers. Three counties in Northern Ireland increased in the percentage of Irish speakers, and the rest of the counties decreased at a lower rate than counties in the Republic of Ireland.

Discussion

Despite governmental support, all counties in the Republic of Ireland decreased in the percentage of Irish speakers. On the other hand, Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, had an increase in Irish speakers in half of their counties. This evidence indicates that governmental intervention in language revitalization movements is not a primary indicator of success. Furthermore, the counties in Northern Ireland that saw an increase in Irish speakers were also counties that experienced the most conflict during The Troubles. The historical success of anticolonial nationalist movements in promoting the use of the Irish language in addition to the ongoing anticolonial nationalist struggle in Northern Ireland indicate that this conflict is a predictor of Irish language revitalization success.

Future Research

Additional research is needed in order to determine how language legislation impacts the amount of speakers long term, as well as how Brexit will affect the identity struggle and language use in Northern Ireland.