

**Tobin, Catherine, 1998, *An Evaluation of Government policy towards the Irish Language in the Primary School and a Proposed Irish Studies Syllabus.***

### **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

The following dissertation offers a chronological and analytical account of Government policy towards the Irish language in the primary school since the foundation of the Irish Free State. It was done in the context of a recent renewal of interest in the Irish language, sparked off by the debate on Europe. Its aim was to establish what the official policy has been up to now and to assess its success and failure.

A literature and document search was carried out which established that the aim of past Governments has been, at least in theory, revivalism. A critical evaluation of this policy of revivalism has been undertaken and the author has argued that the policy has failed to penetrate into society at large. The current programme in the Irish primary schools was also criticised on the grounds that it has unrealistic and unattainable aims, resulting in negative attitudes towards Irish.

An alternative to the current programme, based on a cultural studies approach, is proposed and a series of sample lessons, piloted with fourth class in Crecora National School is included. The outcome of these lessons indicated that such a programme had the potential to develop a positive attitude in children towards the Irish language. The dissertation concludes by recommending that the Government implement a programme similar to the pilot study conducted in the course of this dissertation. The author cites much evidence to suggest that a cultural studies approach is both a practical and credible way forward.