CEOL AGUS TEANGA: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRISH

LANGUAGE MUSIC AND IRISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

by

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Turn and face the strange

"Changes"

David Bowie, 1971

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between music, language, and cultural knowledge management, through the lens of Knowledge Management. I interviewed both students and educators on-site at St. Mary's University Halifax, Nova Scotia, using a combined Grounded Theory and Phenomenological approach. I tracked the themes that emerged regarding the participants' experiences with music as a tool for learning and teaching, focusing on their experiences with Irish language songs in the classroom and in their personal learning, teaching, and Personal Knowledge Management experiences. Overall, the emergent themes support a correlation between the use of music in the language learning process and a learner's ability to recall and utilize elements of vocabulary and grammatical structures and pronunciation and listening skills. Moreover, participants also recalled that music became a part of the emotional context for the learning experience, and created a sense of community among the listeners, both of which helped form a sense of ownership over their learning process.

Keywords: Personal Knowledge Management, Music, Language Learning, Irish Language

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the evidence of how, sometimes, one class paper can consume your life. In the first semester of Graduate School, I wrote a paper on the Jeremy Dutcher album *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa,* and its potential uses as a tool in the Knowledge Management aspect of language and cultural preservation. Knowledge Management as a field studies the way humans interact with knowledge as a whole. Jennifer Rowley (1999) suggests that the four main goals of Knowledge Management are:

(1) "to create knowledge repositories, which store both knowledge and information, often in documentary form. A common feature is 'added value' through categorization and pruning;

(2) to improve knowledge access, or to provide access to knowledge or to facilitate its transfer amongst individuals; here the emphasis is on connectivity, access, and transfer; (3) to enhance the knowledge environment, so that the environment is conducive to more effective knowledge creation, transfer, and use; and

(4) to manage knowledge as an asset, and to recognise the value of knowledge to an organization." (p. 416-7)

The second and third goals on this list are the most important to my thesis. The specific type of Knowledge Management that I deal with throughout this thesis is Personal Knowledge Management. Knowledge is different from information, in that knowledge is *used* information, and for the purposes of this thesis that is the key difference. The Knowledge Management I refer to in this thesis will always be Personal Knowledge Management. This simply means that rather than dealing with corporate knowledge or knowledge accrued and used by a specific organization, this thesis deals with knowledge gathered and used by individuals. Specifically, as I am examining Knowledge Management in the context of language learning, knowledge is the enacted

information of speaking. In the context of this thesis, information is the language itself – the vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical structures, syntax and dialectical variations. Knowledge is the use of this information, or the act of drawing all the aforementioned information together and using it to actively speak the Irish language.

As I worked on this thesis, my focus shifted from looking at the preservation aspect examined in my previously mentioned paper to looking at use. Rather than looking at the possibility of using music as a language preservation tool, I began to look specifically at the way music can help facilitate easier knowledge use, or language speaking. If there is an overarching and driving question to this thesis, it would be how does using Irish language songs in the learning process affect the experience of learning to speak the Irish language? The Research Questions listed after the Literature Review will provide a more nuanced series of inquiries about how music could affect the language learning process, but for now I would like to linger on the generalities in terms of Rowley's four goals of Knowledge Management.

I may have started this adventure with an interest in language preservation and the way music can aid language preservation, but as my study developed, I shifted focus. Rowley identified improving knowledge access one of the main goals of Knowledge Management. I wanted to investigate if, in the process of language learning, music can become a tool in the Personal Knowledge Management aspect of language learning. Over the course of months, further research, and too many too long conversations with patient faculty members, the thesis project that emerged resembled that original paper only in that I was still examining music as a Knowledge Management tool.

Instead of looking at the preservation aspect of Knowledge Management, I began looking at the way participants could use music to help them actively use their knowledge to speak Irish

Gaelic (Irish). This included looking at how Irish language songs could help participants recall specific verb conjugations, word meaning, connection to the classroom social setting, or their classmates and pronunciation.

I chose to look specifically at the role Irish Language Verbal Songs – hereafter referred to as "Irish language songs" – can play in a learner's journey to speaking Irish. Saint Mary's University has a noted and renowned Irish Studies Department and was also geographically convenient for research purposes. Working with the Irish Studies Department of Saint Mary's University, I interviewed both students and educators about their experiences with Irish language songs in the classroom and their own learning and teaching experiences. For the purposes of this thesis, any music discussed, unless otherwise specified, is music with a lyrical and verbal component, all of which are in the Irish language. One example of these songs is *Óró sé do bheatha 'bhaile* (Appendix A), which was used in the interviews, as participants were given copies of the song lyrics to discuss

Baruch Spinoza, a 17th century philosopher, wrote that there are four ways of knowing, one of which is "knowledge by inferring the essence of one thing from another" (Spinoza, 1677/1958, p. 8). This concept of inferring one thing from another informed my concept of how I viewed the possible connection between listening to Irish language songs and learning to speak Irish. I wondered if students and educators could use music to help facilitate learning the Irish language, or to "improve knowledge access," as Jennifer Rowley states (1999, p. 416-7). The data did eventually reveal that this does happen when instructors include Irish language songs in the learning process. The data also revealed that the use of music in the classroom helped to positively affect the overall classroom experience, or as one might put it, "enhance the knowledge environment" (Rowley, 1999, pp. 416-7).

There is an opportunity in the bones of this thesis for a far more interdisciplinary study than the one I performed. This project could incorporate more elements of Sociology and Musicology. However, I chose to focus on Information Management, and Knowledge Management in particular. When theories of Sociology and Musicology do find their way into this thesis, they are considered only in relation to how those disciplines could inform the Knowledge Management aspect of my study. My thesis is built on the implication of using music as a tool in the language learning process, and what that could reveal about Personal Knowledge Management and language learning. There are places in this thesis where the possibilities for expanding the scope of my research present themselves, and ways in which I could push further into Sociology or Musicology. I have noted these opportunities and they may be considered in the future, but for this thesis, even when those opportunities present themselves, I always return to the topic of Knowledge Management and how music affects the language learning process.

As far as I am aware, there is very little research other than my own, looking into the relationship between language learning and Personal Knowledge Management, especially with a focus on the role music can play in that relationship. There is very little literature on how music can aid in Personal Knowledge Management schemes, though there is healthy amount of literature and research on how to include music in the language classroom at various level of education. There is some literature on the use of music to create motivation to learn languages, but in general there is a gap in how using that music affect each individual learner, and how they can use the music to own their learning experience. This gap is the one I attempt to step into and begin to bridge. Thousands of heritage languages are at risk of disappearing in the next century, and a key aspect of language revitalisation is simply increasing the number of speakers of a

struggling language. Motivating these speakers however, is a challenge if they feel no connection to the language they are being told to learn.

While I shifted the focus of my thesis away from language preservation to language speaking, that beginning was always with me. I don't consider this project to be truly interdisciplinary in nature because of my concern with Personal Knowledge Management, but I do attempt to 'think outside the box' in terms of how I conceive of and discuss Personal Knowledge Management schemes and how they are affected by language learning and music. I believe, that in studying how music affects the motivations to learn, connections with and language use of second language learners, there is a possibility to begin understanding how to approach language revitalization and preservation projects from new and interesting perspectives. The bulk of research into language learning and music and the relationship between the two is currently dominated by the field of (socio)linguistic studies and educational literature. While there is nothing wrong with that, it does limit the possibilities of understanding how individuals process languages and the relationship between the individual and the process of language learning. That is the area of study I am most interested in, not just how does the individual find motivation to begin learning a language, but how does music affect that entire process?

CHAPTER TWO   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 MUSIC, KNOWLEDGE, AND CONTEXT

Our long-term impressions of a piece of music are informed by the context in which we first experience that specific piece of music. My younger brother is a perfect example. He first heard the David Bowie song *Changes* as part of a movie soundtrack, so if I describe *Changes* as "the song from *Shrek 2*, after Shrek is turned into a human" to my brother, he can identify it. If, however, I say it was a chart-topping hit, he does not. From the context of the second *Shrek* film, he can identify the song, rather than from hearing it on the radio or from my phone. Individuals bring their specific experiences and understandings of life to their experiences of music (Slobin, 1993; Shepard & Wicke, 1997). Through the lens of an individual's experience, music becomes part of their sense-making process. Shepard and Wicke described how "there are, in fact many levels of meaning having to do with music, lyrics, images and movement as negotiated by individuals with specific social and cultural biographies" (1997, p. 9). The experience of the song is informed by the context in which the song was created as well as the individual listener's own context for the song within their personal set of experiences. These experiences, in turn, inform the way an individual internalizes and processes the events and information around their first interaction with a piece of music.

The signals created by the context of a piece of music can be created deliberately and therefore used to communicate specific meanings or engender certain actions and information processes. Masoga (2007) examined how Rangwato Magoro, a South African woman, uses forms of Sepedi musical art, the traditional music of the Sepedi people of the Limpopo province in South Africa, to teach young women in her village and elsewhere about their history and the world around them. To Magoro "music is life" (2007, p. 287), regarding her conception of, and

interactions with, music. The use of music in this case helps to facilitate clear and easily traceable paths between information and meaning. The songs Magoro used create signals in the consciousness of her students, which leads to the songs taking on a new meaning, which then informs the students' understanding of the songs and their messages. Noel O'Regan (2014) described how the Catholic Church used music as a tool to spread its message within its own ranks, and through its Jesuit Missionaries. Catholic hymns, chanting, and the singing of common prayers were an effective tool in spreading devotions and the Christian worldview. These hymns would have been sung in Latin, their musical accompaniment making the heavy phrases easier to comprehend, enunciate and replicate. Here, music is shown to explicitly create certain signals in the minds of listeners, in terms of actions, namely when to kneel, which prayers to recite and when to rise.

The most ubiquitous example of this relationship between music and action is *Frère Jacques*, where the repetitive "sonnez les matins" signals not only an action, the ringing of the morning bells, but also the significance of this event. The sound of the morning bells informs the eponymous Jacques that not only does he have to go to morning prayer, but also that he is late for it. The sound of the bells creates the signal in Jacques's experiences and consciousness that it is time to go to morning prayer – they do not determine his actions, but they do inform his actions. In Jacques' own, fictional, scheme of Personal Knowledge Management, the bells signify that there are actions to be undertaken.

Music can also be used to understand a past society or social context. Anna Peak (2016) argued that music is just as important for understanding Victorian culture as literature and art history. Peak claimed that by studying the music of the Victorian period, scholars can "understand more completely Victorian ideas about evolution, gender, and race in relation to

aesthetics" (2016, p. 423). Peak lingered on how studying music produced in the Victorian

period can lead to a nuanced discussion of "Orientalism and Victorian constructions of race that

also demonstrates the extent to which even the most theoretical discussions of music are always

embedded in intellectual, social, and cultural history" (2016, p. 430). The immersion of learners

into the culture of the language they are learning can help to inform the context of the learner's

experience (Dolphen, 2014; McClutchie, 2007). Music helps to form this overall context, giving

structure to the information the learner receives both inside and outside the classroom, as well as

providing a sense of the culture from which the music and language were born.

Slobin wrote that "one-way people stitch their lives together is through musical

memories, which act as milestones" (1993, p. 6). These musical milestones become a part of the

fabric of one's Personal Knowledge experience and can play a role in managing this Personal

Knowledge. Sound provides very specific triggers to memories throughout the course of one's

life; Pachelbel's *Canon in D Major* is used in pop-culture to signify a wedding ceremony, the

alphabet is taught to pre-schoolers using a simple tune, couples dance at their wedding to specific

songs with emotional meaning, and parents share specific lullabies with their children. Hearing

the opening notes of *Magic Dance* from the *Labyrinth* soundtrack can trigger childhood

memories, and my mother taught me how to spell the word "because" by teaching me to sing the

letters of the word to a specific rhythm. Music helps to make sense of the memories and chaos of

experiencing human life and – apart from my final example – the songs can exist on their own,

independent of the meaning individuals imbue them with.

2.2 MUSIC IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The performance of a piece of music offers a clear and convenient example of the

transition from data to information to knowledge. David Elliot declared that playing a piece of

music is "an organized set of informed actions" (1991, p. 23). Each time a musician interacts with a piece, and understands the origins of their actions to create sound and music, they partake in the dual actions of knowledge use and knowledge creation. Each step in the music-making process has a purpose and the individual steps exist in a specific order to contribute to the larger production of the piece. The action of learning to create music involves taking information about the theory of how to play an instrument and, through experience and practice, that information becomes knowledge. This process is supported by the assertion that knowledge is "information in use … it is through use that you gain further information" (Lloyd 2007, p.7). To Lloyd, the act of information becoming knowledge is a fluid, dynamic and constant process. Lloyd echoes Elliot's argument for music as knowledge, filtered through a musician's experience. The musician receives the information in the form of written music notes or instruction, plays or performs the music and thus gains knowledge of the piece. For both Lloyd and Elliot, knowledge is information that is actively being used.

The clear line between information and knowledge, and the process of information becoming knowledge is described by Lloyd as a series of "quantum jumps" (2007, p. 7). This description by Lloyd highlights that the progression is not a strictly linear process, but rather an integrative one, requiring the information to be used to achieve knowledge status. Lloyd's rejection of the so-called "Newtonian" progression of data → information →knowledge → wisdom allows for a non-traditional approach to studying the field of knowledge and knowledge management (2007, p. 7). Lloyd's rejection also allows for greater variability areas of generosity when it comes to conceptualizing the movement of information to knowledge, and the knowledge's dependence on usage.

The "competing discourses" (2007, p. 203) Olsson described within the field of

Knowledge Management about the most appropriate way to facilitate Knowledge Management,

allow for a more robust understanding of how information becomes Knowledge (2007, p. 203).

Olsson specifically focuses on the Foucauldian conception wherein discourse, and in this case

Knowledge Management discourse within institutions, is seen as a "complex network of

relationships between individuals, texts, ideas and institutions, with each node impacting, to

varying degrees, on other nodes, and on the dynamics of the discourse as a whole" (2007, p.

203). In Olsson's words, Foucault's theoretical frameworks place social context and "established

social practices … as central to a person's sense-making processes" (Olsson 2007, p. 203). The

world around an individual informs the way they perceive, order and understand the information

about the world around them. The context that surrounds the information also plays a role in how

a person receives, processes, and utilizes the information. Similar to how Lloyd asserted that

knowledge and information are dynamic in their exchanges, Olsson asserted that the discourses

in the field of Knowledge Management - the needs of knowledge management professionals, and

the social context of the overall knowledge management - are "never static" (Olsson 2007, p.

204). This constant emphasis on the fluid and dynamic nature of Knowledge Management

reflects the fluid and difficult-to-capture process of how information becomes knowledge.

Knowledge Management in universities and classrooms specifically presents unique

challenges, as the knowledge must be codified, standardized, and even commodified in a

consistent and replicable manner (Guzman & Trivaleto, 2010). My thesis is an inquiry into how,

in the specific case of Irish language learning, music can help the process of imparting,

acquiring, and using this knowledge. Mirbagheri describes information as "data put in context"

(Mirbagheri, 2014, p. 149) and describes knowledge as this information combined with

experience, reflection and context. Guzman and Trivaleto (2010) use the metaphor of the human mind being a container for knowledge, and the contents of said container are acquired and used by the 'owner' of the container. The use of this knowledge requires a way to sort through all the contents of the metaphorical container, and music can be a tool for this activity. There is also an aspect of knowledge creation involved in teaching languages, specifically the "exploitation of content knowledge … both linguistic and sociocultural knowledge" (Li & Edwards, 2014, p. 93). While conducting the research for my thesis I kept returning to the 'mind as a container' metaphor because it helped me understand how the participants were using Irish songs in the process of learning Irish.

2.3 MUSIC AND LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE

Music containing songs performed in languages that are struggling or diminished in their usage is experiencing a rising swell in the collective cultural awareness in the form of critically acclaimed albums and other productions (Greir, 2018). These albums can promote the celebration, healing and sharing of languages that are otherwise fighting to exist (Greir, 2018; Dutcher, 2018a: Dutcher, 2018b). The albums can also be used to aid language learning. While listening to the albums themselves may not teach a person the language, the albums can create an enthusiasm for the language, transmit cultural knowledge, and even give a sense of how the language should sound when spoken fluently. The music on these albums also provides access to information opportunities for learners, information which can then become knowledge.

A clear example of the information contained in music becoming knowledge comes from Tung-an Kao, who, along with Rebecca Oxford, recounted his experience using Hip-Hop to motivate himself to learn English. The authors found more conventional classroom methods of learning English to be inhospitable to Kao's learning process and instead turned to music to help

provide exposure to an English-speaking culture and vocabulary. Kao and Oxford also noted that music improved his "proficiency, motivation, and confidence" (2014, p. 115). Kao and Oxford also observed that through Kao's use of Hip Hop, he noted an improvement in his ability to reproduce the phonetics of English words. The use of music to familiarize and improve one's grasp of phonetics in a new language is a sentiment echoed by Ashtiani & Zafarghandi (2015), who found there was a strong correlation between learners' speaking and listening skills and the use of English language verbal songs (2015). As learners listened to the English songs, they learned how to pronounce the words of the song and eventually those lessons on pronunciation became knowledge through repeated listening and performance of the songs. This focus on repetition leading to proper pronunciation is present in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Professor Higgins's attempt to hide Liza Doolittle's pauper background by teaching her how to pronounce words 'properly' manifests through a series of scenes wherein Liza parrots Higgin's speech patterns. Liza learns to hear the words and letter sounds that constitute the English language in a new way by listening to them repeatedly (Shaw, 1913). Music and its connection to learners' segmentation – the process of defining the boundaries between words – and of new elements of speech or improvement in phonetic performance of language learners is a common theme through the literature dealing with second language learners (Kao & Oxford, 2014; Ashtiani & Zafarghandi, 2015; Schön, et al. 2006). Music provides exposure to new vocabulary and phonetics, which can help learners orient themselves in the new language they are learning.

Another recurrent theme in the literature concerned with music and language learning includes the effect of music on the emotional and motivational state or experience of the learner. Schön et al. discuss how the "emotional aspects of a song may increase the … level of attention" (Schön et al, 2006, p. 976) in language learners. Music can instill language learners with the

desire to continue their education and help to encourage new learners to begin their own learning process (Engh, 2013; Gould, 2009; Kao & Oxford, 2014). Three researchers in Atlantic Canada examined the motivation of traditional musicians in Cape Breton to learn Gaelic (MacIntyre, Baker & Sparling, 2017). While the article examines the relationship between language preservation, music and the motivation to learn a language from an psychology perspective, it nonetheless draws a very important connection between the existence of music from a specific language culture and its role as a motivation to learn a heritage language. MacIntyre, Baker and Sparling (2017) addressed the confluence of music and the motivation to learn a heritage language. The authors explain how the participants in the study felt far more comfortable learning or hearing the Gaelic language spoken in an informal context because many had been exposed to it all their lives. The formal context of learning created a sense of defamiliarization among the participants that was eventually overcome through the familiarity of the music, and its positive associations. The use of music helps motivate the learners to overcome that defamiliarization and move forward with their learning experiences. Music is such an effective tool for language learning because it allows the learners and users to access a level of motivation and desire to learn, as well as to contextualize and understand the information they are receiving.

2.4 GROUNDED THEORY

The emphasis on exploring new means of acquiring information and for changing conceptions of information to be something more organic discussed in the previous section is in line with the qualitative nature of Grounded Theory. Grounded theory is the most appropriate methodology to use for my study, as the underpinning of symbolic interactionism – the idea that we produce our identities through interactions with others – that runs through grounded theory speaks directly to my research questions. Judith Wuest (2012) describes Blumer's identification

of the three assumptions of, with the first one listed as: "People act toward things and people on the basis of the meanings they have for them" (Wuest, 2012, p. 228). This concept of altering one's action toward music and its role in Personal Knowledge Management in the language learning process, based on the personal experience, is the subject of my study. To what extent can Irish learners at St. Mary's University use Irish cultural music as a tool in their learning, rather than simply as an object of enjoyment?

One of the philosophical assumptions of grounded theory is that "people's meanings are modified through an interpretive process used to make sense of and manage their social worlds" (Wuest, 2012, p. 228). Symbolic interactionism speaks to my assertion that people and societies use music to communicate their emotions, experiences, and histories. It also speaks to the interconnected nature of information, knowledge, usage, and the way music can become tangled in a learner's journey from language information to linguistic knowledge to language use. Wuest's assertion that "interactions are problematic and therefore "worthy of observation and analysis" provides an accurate description of the interconnected nature of phenomena studied using grounded theory methodologies (2012, p. 228). The interactions, and the personal interpretation of music that I examined in this study, are exactly such problematic and complicated interactions.

Grounded theory is useful because it focuses on the "process related to a particular topic" (Leedy & Ormrod 2015, p. 256), and it is this prioritization of the process that is an essential hallmark of the formation of theories through grounded theory (Singh & Estefan, 2018). Grounded theory is about establishing a theory of participant actions and experiences by making sense of data provided in, and emerging from, interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, Singh &

Estefan, 2018, Thornberg, 2012). This focus on the process is central to the nature of this study, as the study aims to examine the way music affects the process of language learning.

Classic grounded theory suggests a limited – or no – literature review; all the information needed to answer the research questions emerges from the study participants. However, I chose to begin my study by conducting a literature review, which is in line with the tenets of a range of grounded theory approaches (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The literature review helped me to familiarize myself with the information already available in the field of music and language learning, which helped guide my interview questions. Grounded theory's focus on the "actions, interactions and social processes of people" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82), and its emphasis on the researcher's theories being "grounded" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82) in the data collected means that, much like the nature of information becoming knowledge, grounded theory has enough flexibility to allow the data to shape the direction of the research. Researchers who gravitate toward grounded theory often wish to "move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.82), while grounded theory as a research design is described as "the discovery of theory from data" (Thornberg, 2012, p. 243). Grounded theory is a research design that focuses on uncovering processes and cases of symbolic interactionism in the behaviour of study populations. As the data begins to 'speak', this uncovering moves towards an understanding and eventual theory for the processes and interactionism.

By using grounded theory as the foundation for my research design, I was able to focus on the themes in my data which emerged through the coding process. This was particularly useful, as the participants discussed how the use of music affected their Personal Knowledge Management processes. Wuest (2012) describes the movement from data to theory as the identification of a "core category that explains most of the [variation] in the behaviour pattern"

(p. 230). In the case of my participants, this explanation came in the form of uncovering how they used music to help organize and access their knowledge of the Irish language, which eventually led to the discovery of the mind as a container metaphor.

2.5 PHENOMENOLOGY

While the primary structure of the study is based on grounded theory, another form of qualitative methodology, Phenomenology, influences much of the design of the study. Phenomenology is a term that refers to people's "perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to an event as it exists external to the person" (Leedy & Ormrod 2015, p. 255). Traditional phenomenological studies investigate "various aspects of consciousness, such as perception, imagination, body-awareness, attention, intentionality, social cognition, and self-consciousness" (Zahavi & Martiny, 2019, p. 158). This emphasis on the internality of the experience is crucial, as I asked participants about their specific experience with learning a language and how music affects learning both the structural elements of the language and gaining a sense of the identity of the culture the language came from.

Unlike the shorter interviews I conducted, phenomenological interviews are often lengthier in nature (Leedy & Ormrod 2015, p. 255). The long duration of phenomenological interviews was not necessary for my purposes, however, because the questions I asked targeted a very specific experience. I designed the interview questions to capture the participants' thoughts and experiences with Irish songs and language learning, specifically regarding Personal Knowledge Management. This focused approach meant that a multi-hour interview that looked at the generalities of participants' experiences with music and language was not required.

I also originally intended to perform follow-up interviews with each of the participants, which would have been in keeping with the traditions of phenomenological studies; however,

circumstances – COVID-19 – prevented this. In addition, the unstructured element of phenomenological interviews, designed to allow the researcher and participants to "work together to arrive at the heart of the matter" (Leedy & Ormrod 2015, p. 256), is not something I used. The interviews I conducted were shorter in length than the multi-hour interviews typically favoured in phenomenological studies and were more structured in nature. The influence of phenomenology is most evident in the way my interview questions interrogate the experiences of the participants, rather than in the structure of the interviews themselves.

Phenomenology's influence on this thesis is evident in the structure of my research questions and research plan, particularly in terms of "hermeneutical phenomenology", defined as "research oriented toward lived experience" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Linda Findley describes this emphasis on the experiences of study participants as an exploration of the "'lifeworld' – the world as directly and subjectively experienced in everyday life - as distinguished from the objective physical world of the sciences" (Findley, 2009, p. 475). Many of the questions in my study, and the way in which I interpreted the answers the participants provided, were structured through the lens of trying to understand Findley's "lifeworld" (2009, p. 475). It was key, both during the interviews and in the process of coding the results and interpreting the data, to remember the subjectivity and uniqueness of the participant responses, as the participants were relaying individual experiences.

 In recounting their experiences learning Irish, the participants spoke to an aspect of phenomenology that Findley describes as one of the eight "fractions" of the lifeworld – or ways of understanding how individuals relate to, experience and understand the world (Findley, 2009). This study examined the fraction of "project, i.e. activities which drive and motivate a person" (Findley, 2009, p. 475). For this study, the "project" was the participants' learning to speak Irish,

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and so using principles of Phenomenological studies to inquire how the use of Irish songs influenced that project seemed appropriate. The participants often tied their use of Irish songs to their emotional and subjective experiences of the music. Their impressions of the songs and its usefulness were informed by their emotional, social and physical experiences of the music when it was introduced to them. Phenomenology is particularly appropriate to guide this study because it provides a way to inquire about the "created reality of private knowledge and behaviours" (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2020, p. 338) of the participants during their project to learn to speak Irish.

2.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research questions are listed below. The original research questions for this thesis focused on the student's experiences using Irish language songs to learn to speak Irish. These questions focused on the way Irish language songs could help learners in refining segmentation, in creating a more enriching learning environment, and aiding in things like vocabulary and grammatical convention recall. As my study evolved and I decided to include the perspectives of educators in the study population, I elected to keep the questions the same. This is because I feel that, fundamentally, the research questions I developed are about learning. Student participants offered their perspective on this process through the eyes of learners, while the instructors were able to discuss it both from the perspective of learners themselves, and educators. In one question that appears below, I use the phrase "holistic context", which in this case refers to a learning experience that encompasses not only the student learning the structure and elements of the Irish language, but also gaining a sense of Irish culture. In another question I enquire about music's ability to aid in language retention. I am not referring to the duration of a student's knowledge – though there is evidence to support this phenomenon – but rather if the student

retains or remembers the lesson at all. It is not a question of the longevity of the student's knowledge of the Irish language, but of its existence in the first place, and how that existence is connected to music.

These research questions, and the themes they present, provide much of the general shape of the Discussion section found later in this thesis, but are answered indirectly. This lack of explicit connection between the Research Questions and Discussion sections is due to the nature of the interview data and the inductive approach I took to the analysis of the data. In the same way, participants were not asked to speak directly to the research questions in their interviews, the data and themes that emerged from the data were permitted to speak for themselves, as it were. Therefore the research questions are indeed answered in the Discussion section..

2.6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What role do Irish language songs play in creating a more holistic context for learning to speak or teach a language in a structured environment, such as a university classroom?
- How can studying a language with the aid of music help the language learner integrate cultural knowledge into their language learning experience?
- How does music help a language learner acquire the personal knowledge of a language, such as:
  - How to formulate sounds?
  - The specific cultural connotations of words?
- Does music increase the likelihood of a language learner's knowledge retention? If so, how?
- How can or does music affect personal knowledge management?
- What role does music play in facilitating a greater level of retention of personal knowledge?
- What specific knowledge is being managed if music can aid language learners in language acquisition and retention?

CHAPTER THREE   METHODOLOGY

3.1 REFLEXIVITY

I have a background in English and History. The study of these two fields requires researchers to look at the larger contexts of the cultures that create the texts and objects we study. English and History are about seeing connections between culture, product, and at times the reception of a work of literature That was the original intention of this study: to look at using music as a language preservation tool. As I proceeded through developing the research design and subsequent literature review, the study became more focused on the question of using music as a language *learning* tool. I approached the question of learning from both sides, with interviews conducted with learners and teachers, to gain a more complete understanding of the process of language learning.

I chose to study Irish for two reasons. First, Saint Mary's University, and its Irish Studies Department, are a block away from Dalhousie, so convenience played a role. Second, my awareness of Irish Gaelic, and Irish culture, has been an ongoing phenomenon throughout my entire life. Though I don't speak a word of Irish, Irish Newfoundland and Irish songs – shall we say pub-music – were the soundtrack to brunches and Sunday mornings. I was raised in a household that prioritized Irish Newfoundland music, Gaelic, and the Irish Rovers. The early soundtrack of my life was music that is tied very specifically to certain places, cultures, peoples, and ways of speaking. Learning languages is hard (I know this, I don't do it easily), it is complex, and requires interesting shifts in how humans move from data, to information, to knowledge. In this study, I looked at how music not only helps facilitate this shift in knowledge use from the perspective of instructors, but also how music can help students learn to use their knowledge as they continue their language learning journey.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study followed the structure and guidelines of grounded theory. As such, it is a study designed to capture and quantify the responses of several participants to a lived event or experience. I interviewed both students and educators at St Mary's University's Irish Studies Department. The inclusion of both demographics was done to learn how the use of Irish songs in the language learning process influenced the Personal Knowledge Management process of students. By including educators in the study population, I gained their perspective on how music could help shape the language learning process. Educators provided perspectives that encompassed not only their own language learning experience, but also the experience of helping their students to learn Irish.

This study was performed inductively. I attempted to capture the specific ways participants used Irish songs in the process of learning to speak Irish, by performing semi-structured interviews. Once I had conducted these interviews, I allowed the themes that emerged from participant responses to govern the categories and properties the data were sorted into. Prior to coding the participant responses, I had no categories or properties for the data to be sorted into; rather I let the behaviour and words of the participants determine the way the responses would be coded, allowing my theories about the way music, knowledge and the Irish language interact to emerge from the interview data.

I began with research questions that examine different facets of the original question: "Does listening to Irish language music help individuals learn to speak Irish"? The questions were broken down to further examine the ways in which music could aid Irish language learners in their linguistic education. Inductive grounded theory methodology allowed me to build my

coding categories and theories about the relationship between songs and language learning without fitting the responses into pre-existing categories.

I conducted a literature review before beginning the interview process to gain not only a better understanding of the world of Irish music and its role in Irish culture, but also to understand, albeit briefly, the academic conversation surrounding teaching second languages. I also completed the literature review to orient myself as a researcher, as I had previously never researched the Irish Language, Knowledge Management, nor Language Education. This literature review was kept short and surface level in order to prevent the interviews from being constructed to reflect the information I had already learned, rather than "emergent theory providing new insights" (Thornberg, 2012, p. 244).

Participants made choices regarding their use of music in their learning journey that influenced their perception of the language, or they experienced others' use of music, which then influenced their perception of the learning process. These two types of perceptions sometimes meant that their opinion on the use of music was not always in line with the way they reported on having used music during their Irish language learning or teaching. Glaser's classical grounded theory approach emphasizes that what the study participants experienced, the specific situation they are being questioned on, can manifest more completely in the study if researchers allow the data to speak (Singh and Estefan, 2018, p. 3). The interview questions were designed in such a way that I was able to ask the participants similar questions from different 'angles.' The advantage of this approach allowed for a more complex record of participant experiences to emerge. The lack of pre-ascribed themes in the questions also allowed for the emergent similarities in the responses of the participants to be reinforced, not only through the words of the participants, but also across the populations of educators and students. Coding inductively

means that the themes and categories that were eventually used in analyzing the study results were the ones that best fit the data across all participant interviews. This in turn assured that the results described the participants' experiences with the greatest accuracy possible. Perhaps due to the small sample size, the majority of emergent themes were identified in all participant responses.

3.3 PHENOMENOLOGY

While grounded theory formed the core structure and practical design of this project, many of the insights into participant responses and the language used in crafting the questions asked of the participants were informed by the tenets of phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on the experiences of the participants and aims to uncover their lived reality to a deeper extent than even grounded theory. While grounded theory captures the commonalities of study participants' experiences and responses around processes and interactions and identifies thematic categories, phenomenology is a "qualitative strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies and understands the essence of human lived experiences of a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants" (Joubert &Van der Meer 2020, pp. 338-39). Phenomenology's emphasis on the lived experience of the participant informed much of the language I used during participant interviews both in terms of the questions I asked and the notes I recorded.

By including principles of phenomenology in the research design, I can identify the emotional aspect of participants' experiences with learning Irish, in addition to the linguistic elements through the use of music. The latter elements are captured using grounded theory principles as a guide to understanding and interpreting the participants' experiences. This is particularly important because the process of learning can be a deeply personal one and can often be tied to emotions. During the interviews, participants often displayed emotional signifiers

through their facial expressions or body language that later revealed emotional motivation for actions taken during learning Irish or emotions caused by the music. One participant recounted attempting to learn to sing and understand an Irish love song to play for their partner. As the participant described this activity and recounted the vocabulary they learned from the song, they grinned and blushed about their motivation. They described how affection for their partner was the motivating force in attempting to learn to perform the love song and therefore the vocabulary associated with the love song and with love in general.

Phenomenology allowed me to frame the emotions the participants displayed but also to make sense of the answers they provided that were not about grammar or concrete language skills. Phenomenology created space in the interviews to discuss the more emotional and internal processes of the participants' learning experiences. This space was essential because, as participant answers revealed, the process of learning Irish was a very personal and at times emotional experience. While on paper teaching a language with the help of music can be broken down into discrete and finite goals, the process of living through the achievement of these goals and acquiring the language is one that involves investment from the learner. Phenomenology provided space for interrogating that experiential aspect of learning: the participants' own internal processes, thoughts, and impressions of the lesson, including the connections between language and music.

Because the project investigates not only the structural and skills aspect of language learning, for which grounded theory provided the framework for discussing and dissecting, but also the emotional, internalized aspect of language learning, phenomenology or 'phenomenological insights' were included in the research design.

3.4 RECRUITMENT

Both student and faculty participants were recruited from St. Mary's University's Irish Studies Department in Halifax. As noted earlier, this location was chosen because of its convenient location for sampling and the robustness of St. Mary's Irish Studies program. Participants were made aware of the project via an email asking for volunteers, circulated by faculty. Dalhousie University's Research Ethics Board approved this project on November 29, 2019. Because this project involved students from St. Mary's University, it was subject to ethics review by St. Mary's University Research Ethics Board in addition to approval from Dalhousie. St. Mary's awarded approval for this project on January 20, 2020.

Criteria for volunteers included any students who were enrolled in the Irish Studies Department with either a Minor or a Major in Irish Studies and who had previously been, or were currently, enrolled in an Irish language course. There was no requirement in the call for participants that the volunteers have had any experience with Irish language music, though it was made clear that this project was a study about the relationship between Irish music and Irish language learning. Participants self-selected if they met these criteria and volunteered to participate in the study. Educators were also recruited from the faculty of the Irish Studies Department to gain a more complex picture of how music could be used in learning a language. Educators could speak from the perspective of both learners and teachers, creating a more complete view of the classroom environment and learning experience. While there were two demographics (students and educators) interviewed for this study, when the data was combined, coded, and analyzed, the data was all treated equally, and I did not make distinctions between the two groups. I chose not to make distinctions because, fundamentally, both populations were discussing the process of learning. The student participants exclusively discussed their own

learning, while the instructors discussed learning from the perspective of their students and at times themselves. Because of this common focus on learning, and not on teaching, I felt that the responses were all thematically similar enough that the two populations did not merit distinction in the larger data results.

I had a total of four volunteer participants – Two Irish language instructors and two students. Because of the small pool of participants and the small population of the Irish Studies Department at Saint Mary's University, I will not be providing further identifying details, to ensure anonymity.

3.5 INTERVIEWS

Initially the plan was to have each participant give two semi-structured interviews: an initial interview and then a follow-up. However, the COVID-19 Quarantine was enacted in the middle of my data gathering period. Because of this disruption, I was able to conduct only two follow-up interviews (one with an instructor and one with at student), one of which was conducted via Zoom rather than in person. Due to the inability to contact the other two participants during the worst of the Quarantine, I elected to continue my work with only two follow-up interviews.

The initial interviews were conducted on location at St. Mary's University. These interviews lasted an average of 48:30 minutes with the longest being 51:18 minutes and the shortest 45:52 minutes. Interviews were slated to last no longer than 55 minutes. The interviews were recorded, but I also took notes throughout the process. The notes detailed the emotional markers of the participants such as specific phrases where their physical reaction to a question (frowns, pensive faces, broad smiles) signaled an important emotional significance to the participant's answer. The notes also contained keywords for my own organization for crafting

questions for the follow-up interviews or for further examination in the data analysis stage. Once these interviews were completed, the recordings and transcripts were reviewed for opportunities to further explore the answers participants provided.

Once the initial interviews were complete, participants were asked to explore the "Irish" genre section of the music streaming app Spotify. They were not given specific playlists or material to look up, but rather asked to explore the category as a whole, and to explore podcasts, literature or music as they chose. I asked the participants to do this after their first interview so that they were familiar with the content on the platform and could speculate in their follow-up interview if they thought any of the content would be useful in their future attempts to learn Irish. Having the participants examine the "Irish" section of Spotify also served to make them explicitly aware of the possibilities of using Irish songs and audio content to aid in their learning experience. There was also the possibility that this activity would make them aware of how they perhaps had already been using Irish songs without realizing it, but that the interview process had brought to their attention.

The two follow-up interviews lasted an average of 34 minutes: one took 35 minutes and the other lasted 33:02. The interviews were designed to last no longer than 35 minutes. Both interviews were recorded, while, as before, I took notes by hand to document significant themes and non-linguistic communication, such as facial expressions, body language, and hand gestures.

Both the initial and follow-up interviews were all audio-recorded and anonymized on my phone, apart from one follow-up interview, which was conducted via Zoom and screen-recorded. Once I had completed the interviews, I transcribed them for coding and analysis purposes. Following the conventions of grounded theory, notes taken during the interview were later used

to create the first coding categories and to track the common themes that emerged across all participant interviews.

3.6 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner: participants were asked the same questions but were free to go in any direction with their responses as they pleased. This freedom allowed me to explore through prompting whichever direction, or in some cases tangent, the participants went with their responses. For the initial interview, I formulated two streams of questions, a "Yes Stream" set of questions (questions to ask if the participant confirmed they listened to Irish songs with any amount of regularity) and a "No Stream" (used if the participant denied listening to Irish songs). These questions served to provide a sense of consistency across all participant interviews.

The "Yes Stream" questions asked participants about their experiences with Irish songs, and if or how these songs had affected their experience learning to speak Irish, if they felt Irish verbal songs had been beneficial to their ability to understand Irish and Irish culture. The "No Stream" questions were designed to give participants a chance to discuss why they didn't use Irish verbal songs in their learning process or, if the possibility had never occurred to them, if they felt the use of Irish verbal songs would aid in their language learning process. For a complete list of the interview questions participants were asked, see Appendix B. All the questions were designed to interrogate the participants' personal relationship to music and language *learning*. In the case of the instructors, this occasionally included their experience *teaching* the Irish language as well (since teaching is about facilitating someone else's learning). If a participant claimed not to use music in language learning, they were encouraged to explore their negation of music as a language learning tool.

Participants were also asked to discuss the Irish song *Óró sé do bheatha 'bhaile* (O ro welcome home) during their interviews. They were given a copy of the lyrics during the interview and asked to comment on anything interesting they saw in the lyrics, related to the learning experience or otherwise. This song was first introduced to me in the context of an interview by Instructor B, during their interview. I continued to use this song because I had access to the audio form via Spotify, and the lyrics from Instructor B. After this song was introduced to me by Instructor B, I asked all subsequent participants, excluding Instructor A due to an inability to interview them again, to address the song and its potential usability in aiding the Irish language learning process.

The questions for the follow-up interviews were developed from the notes taken during each participant's initial interview. These interviews were an opportunity for both me and the participant to revisit and explore previously discussed topics, or to reaffirm previously stated opinions. Member checking – going back over the interviews with participants once I had transcribed the interviews to ensure clarity and correctness - was performed with participants regarding questions involving topics such as emotional reactions to music or the use of music to validate the learner's experience.

3.7 CODING

Once interviews were completed and transcribed, I began the process of coding the responses. I used sentences as my coding unit, with one or two instances of incomplete phrases being used in the analysis. This usually only occurred when participants discussed two themes in the same sentence. I refer to this unit as 'responses'. As explained previously, I did not assign any predetermined categories. The coding categories were formed based on common themes extracted from the transcribed interviews and the notes I took during the interviews. Once initial

categories were determined, the participant responses were sorted into these categories. Throughout the process of sorting participant responses, the categories were refined and further specified until what emerged was a series of categories and properties that were used in the final coding and analysis of my findings.

The themes that emerged in my initial notes were very broad, consisting of concepts such as "emotions," "structure," and "social." These themes reflected responses given by the participants. The process of refining the participant data into these themes eventually produced a series of categories and sub-properties. I used the program NVivo to help keep my coding notes organized and my figures accurate.

CHAPTER FOUR   FINDINGS

There was a total of 229 coded participant responses, pulled from the larger context of participant interviews. These responses were then coded into four categories: Affect, Social Context, Structural Content, and Types of Learning. The categories are composed of at least two properties each, which developed out of the emergent themes in participant answers. The category of Affect, which contained 50 participant responses, contained the themes of community building, positive emotional feedback, and emotional validation. These themes later emerged again in the category of Social Context (41 responses). Structural Content (60 responses) contains participants' comments on the practical ways they used music as a study aid, or as a tool to help them remember spelling or verb conjugation in real world, or classroom, experiences. While the category Types of Learning had the most participant answers of any category (78 responses), it has the least amount of bearing on the discussion of the results of this project. This lack of relevance will be discussed later on in both the Findings and Discussion sections.

Table A shows the category, number of coded responses per category, and the properties per category and the number of coded responses per property.

Category	Number of responses	Properties and number of responses per Property
Affect	50	o Positive Affects – 29 o Negative Affects – 13 o Self-Validation - 8
Social Context	41	o Linguistic Identity – 17 o Community Values - 15 o Idioms and Dialect - 9
Structural Content	60	o Grammar and Syntax – 33 o Listening Skills – 21 o Accents and Phonetics - 6
Types of Learning	78	o Intentional – 40 o Accidental – 38

Table 1   A detailed breakdown of the participant responses per category

4.1 AFFECT

This category is comprised of instances when participants remarked upon Irish language music creating strong emotional responses in either themselves or their students, particularly in relation to the language learning process. My criteria included instances of emotional language, participants directly relating an instance of a song triggering an emotional response, or participants displaying strong physical emotional articulation. Physical emotional articulation included hand gestures, body language and facial features recorded in the interview and then being matched with the corresponding moment in the transcript. Of the 229 responses, 50 are coded in the Affect category.

The category Affect is made of up of three properties: Positive Affects (29 responses), Negative Affects (13 responses) and Self-Validation (8 responses). The property of Positive Affects consists explicitly of instances of participants discussing moments when Irish music used in the learning process triggered a positive emotional response, exclusive of feelings of validation. The Positive property emotions are those of enthusiasm, joy, humour, and increased

willingness to participate in classroom activities. Participants also remarked on music creating a sense of camaraderie and commonality among the students, and a sense of ownership over their own learning process. To minimize overlap with the themes of Social Context and Affect, the answers were sorted according to whether music created camaraderie (which was motivational, encouraging students to participate more) and music merely created a communal atmosphere. The former responses were sorted into Affect, while the latter went into Social Context.

The Property of Negative Affects (13 responses) consists of instances where participants recalled a negative emotional experience with music in themselves or their classroom. This includes a dislike of using music in the learning process, perhaps because it was viewed as a reduction of the integrity of the music or the language. A participant's dislike of Irish music also created a discouraging environment in the classroom. The final Property of Affect, Self-Validation (8 responses), consists of participant responses that express a sense of achievement, or recognition of the efforts in learning Irish as a result of listening to Irish music. This includes music the participants chose to listen to on their own while studying, or music introduced in the classroom. Participants felt accomplished when they could recognize words in the music or understand lyrics without needing to look up a translation. This created a sense of emotional validation in their learning progress quite apart from their classroom assessments.

4.2 SOCIAL CONTEXT

The category of Social Context (41 coded responses) was developed as participants discussed Irish music giving them a sense of the culture and identity of Irish language speakers. In this Category, it becomes clear that Irish music is a cultural artefact for the participants, and that learning a language can include more than learning the rules and structure of a language. Social Context contains the three Properties of Linguistic Identity (17 responses), Community

Values (15 responses), and Idioms and Dialect (9 responses). Community Values deals with instances of participants discussing how music helped them gain a sense of the culture of Irish language speakers; the 'values,' in this case, deal with the concepts of beauty, familial affection, and national pride. In the context of this property, the participants discussed how Irish language music made it easier for them to internalize and access these social values and ways of understanding the world.

Idioms and Dialect encompasses students and instructors discussing how Irish language music introduces learners to linguistic quirks and distinctive qualities that otherwise would not be explained in a standardized academic context. Music can be used to introduce students to regional dialects not spoken by their instructors or help them compare the differing turns of phrase used in the various Irish dialects.

Linguistic Identity, unlike Community Values, deals not with the identity of Irish speakers, but with the language itself. Much of the content of this property contains remarks where the participants discuss gaining a sense of the Irish language that extends beyond the conventions of grammar. Many of the comments in this property are non-specific in nature, detailing the participant's impressions of the Irish language as a complete entity, rather than discrete elements such as accents, spelling, or grammar.

4.3 STRUCTURAL CONTENT

Structural Content consists of 60 participant responses divided into three Properties. These properties discuss the ways participants and educators observed, remembered or used Irish language music as a way to memorize or utilize the structural (either written or oral) components of the Irish Language. The Properties are Grammar and Syntax (33 responses), Listening Skills (21 responses), and Accents and Phonetics (6 responses).

Grammar and Syntax contains responses referring specifically to language rules. This is partly because participants were given an Irish language song to look at during their interview and were able to identify specific grammatical elements in the song and point to them in their interviews. Participants were able to recall, with startling clarity, instances wherein they had used Irish language music to remember or utilize certain grammatical or syntactical elements. This property represents the most practical aspects of language learning, as most of the data consisted of memories of using Irish language music as a tool, rather than imagining the possibility of using it as a tool.

Listening Skills consists of participant anecdotes regarding a specific type of Irish language music called Sean-nós ("old-style"). This song genre involves a highly elaborate and ornamental singing style, which can make it difficult for listeners, especially listeners new to the Irish language, to hear the separation between words. Participants frequently commented throughout their interviews that listening to Sean-nós style music helped refine and train their ear. In other words, listening to this style of music helped the participants refine their ability to listen to Irish as a language. Further, they commented on how simply listening to any Irish language music helped them to develop a familiarity with the language.

The property Accents and Phonetics contains responses wherein participants discussed how music helped to create exposure to the sounds of the Irish language. This aspect was particularly relevant to the participants in their early stages of learning Irish, as many Irish words sound similar and sometimes vowel length, which is significant to meaning in the Irish language, or context provide the only indication of the difference between words.

4.5 TYPES OF LEARNING

The final category is Types of Learning, which contains the highest number of participant responses (78 responses). This Category deals with instances when participants discussed their use of music as a tool in the language learning process – either recounting a deliberate and active use of music, or recalling an instance when music was indirectly or passively used. While all the above properties and categories discuss the use of music, they represent specific themes referring to the end goal of using music to aid in the process of learning Irish. There is a clear result of the use of Irish language music in the learning process. In Types of Learning, the focus is on music's context (broadly speaking) rather than as a specific tool for language learning

The Intentional property (40 responses) deals with instances where participants recalled music being used in an active and deliberate way to teach a lesson in the classroom, or the participants themselves sought out and deliberately used music help them learn or understand a classroom lesson. The intentional use of music as a learning tool is what determines the contents of this property.

The Accidental property (38 responses) consists of anecdotes where participants recalled music helping them to remember grammatical conventions or words, even if this was not the music's intended purpose when it was introduced. The lessons learned from music this way, or the fact that the music was used as a tool for these specific uses, was accidental to the exposure to the music. Much of this category consists of participants realizing only in the context of the interviews how much they had been using music to remember linguistic quirks and elements of the Irish language. Often the participants realized in the context of the interviews that they had in fact been using music a means to remember certain linguistic quirks, and this moment of

realization was key in sorting the responses into Accidental, as any use of music described in those instances was clearly not deliberate.

CHAPTER FIVE   DISCUSSION

5.1 GENERAL DISCUSSION

In structuring the discussion section, I chose not to isolate the individual research questions, but rather to look at the categories and the themes in the data as a whole. Much in the same way the categories become entwined the more the data is analyzed, the answers to the research questions became entangled. Therefore, while the research questions below guided the way I shaped the discussion and made sense of the themes that emerged from the data, the discussion section does not address individual research questions, but takes a more holistic approach shaped by the emergent themes. The answers to the research questions are tied to the larger, more complex analysis of the themes the data presented. To attempt to divide the themes along the lines of the research questions felt disingenuous to the data and the results that emerged from participant answers.

5.1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What role do Irish language songs play in creating a more holistic context for learning to speak or teach a language in a structured environment, such as a university classroom?
- How can studying a language with the aid of music help the language learner integrate cultural knowledge into their language learning experience?
- How does music help a language learner acquire the personal knowledge of a language, such as:
    - How to formulate sounds?
    - The specific cultural connotations of words?
- Does music increase the likelihood of a language learner's knowledge retention? If so, how?
- How can or does music affect personal knowledge management?
- What role does music play in facilitating a greater level of retention of personal knowledge?

- What specific knowledge is being managed if music can aid language learners in language acquisition and retention?

Overall, the data supports the correlation between the use of music in the language learning process and a learner's ability to recall and use elements of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Much of the interview data suggests that language learners create mental links between language elements and specific musical memories rather than attempt to memorize the intricacies of the language by itself. This process of creating links between linguistic elements and music creates a context for the vocabulary and grammatical conventions the learners are being introduced to. This process makes it easier for the language learners to recall and use these language elements when they intend to use them in conversation, on assignments, or in another classroom setting. Participants found that, in addition to helping them to recall linguistic elements, music aided in their pronunciation and listening skills, helped them to overcome anxieties associated with the learning process, and created emotional responses to the learning process.

The use of music in the learning process encourages a sense of community and a more socially interactive and enjoyable learning environment, which in turn leads to the learner's greater willingness to participate. Music can be used by the instructor to introduce the students to new linguistic elements, or by the student at their own discretion as a study tool. Regardless of its origin, the presence of music in the classroom can lead to lowered inhibitions and to greater levels of participation and student contribution. This increased participation creates a cyclical set of events: music encourages students to participate, which creates more learning opportunities and a context for students to use linguistic elements, which in turn can create more confidence in the students and encourages them to take advantage of learning opportunities.
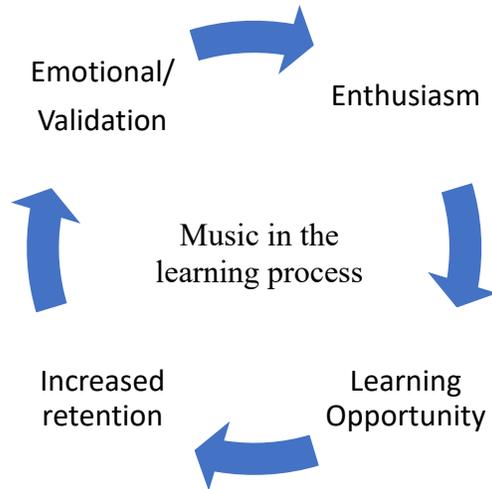
Figure 1   A representation of the effect of including music in the learning process

Participants also detailed that music and memories wherein the Irish language featured prominently created links between their emotional feedback and the context of the learning experience. This emotional feedback makes the learning process more enjoyable for the learner, but also, according to the study participants, cements the specific linguistic element in the mind of the learner. In addition to generating emotions in the learner, which leads to the lesson having more relevance and therefore importance to the participant, music can be used to develop a sense of validation. This validation can extend outside of the context of the primary learning environment of the classroom. Learners who were exposed to Irish language music in an environment other than the classroom, reported gaining a sense of validation separate from the confines of the course's assessments and benchmarks. Validation from a situation or context separate from the classroom aids in creating a positive feedback loop of encouragement for the learner, and simultaneously provides validation and a sense of accomplishment associated with the effort already expended in the learning process.

Music used in the learning process, and especially in the classroom, works to create a sense of community amongst the learners. This rapport exists primarily due to the shared experiences of the students in the classroom, and a commonality from having enjoyed or undertaken the same activities in the learning process. The benefit of having a community atmosphere is two-fold: it introduces the learners to the community that produced the music, and it creates a sense of commonality between the learners in the classroom. This commonality and community lead to an increased ease between the members of a classroom that encourages participation, which as previously discussed, creates more learning opportunities. Ease in this case is a specific level of trust felt by the participants, namely trust in their classmates to be forgiving should they make a mistake or potentially embarrass themselves. This trust leads to a level of comfort in the classroom that makes the participants more willing to join in classroom activities. Additionally, the use of music in a classroom can be used to help the learners create a sense of ownership over their learning process.

Over the course of the interviews, some participants initially denied using music in their language learning process, or expressed skepticism about music's place in the classroom, but subsequently recounted an instance where music had been useful to them. This use included helping them remember a specific word to recalling a specific conjugation. The participants were often unaware that they were relating anecdotes that involved using music in their language learning process. There were often instances where the participants who were resistant to the notion of having used music in language learning remarked on the physicality of the music as well: tapping a beat on a table, discussing the technique of certain singing styles, or recounting how some music encourages dancing. In these instances, participants who initially denied using music also remarked on the embodied nature of remembering linguistic elements of the Irish

language. Instructor A recalled an instance where, ten years after having taught a student, they ran into them at an event. The student then asked Instructor A "'you know what I remember?' And he started singing one of the songs." The song was one they had learned in Instructor A's introductory class ten years earlier. The act of singing the song remained with the student years after he learned it, locking in any lessons that Instructor A intended the song to communicate.

5.2 AFFECT

I described category Affect as instances where the learning process, when considered in conjunction with music, elicited an emotional response or involved emotional signifiers in participant responses. This category was derived from participant answers that contained both emotional language and clear statements of emotional relation to the subject being discussed, and the embodied articulation of emotion. "Embodied" articulation in this case refers to instances where participants displayed strong physical reactions indicative of emotional reactions (e.g., smiles, pronounced frowns, arms crossing in consternation); the conversations or responses were noted and later translated to emotional responses in the coding process. For this reason, of all the categories, Affect relies most heavily on the embodied emotional responses of the participant, their specific physical reaction to the questions they were asked, and the inferred root of these responses. Affect also deals the most with music being used as a method of sense-making, a way for students to navigate the experiences of learning Irish, and use music as a series of "milestones" (Slobin, 1993, p. 6) to track their progress.

The emotional relationship participants experienced with Irish language music use in the learning and teaching process was largely positive, with the unexpected property of Self-Validation emerging in participant answers alongside positive emotional experiences. Many of the instances of emotional connection with Irish music in the learning process could be attributed

to the experience of listening to music collectively in the classroom, either of enjoying the music or enjoying the social interactions that emerged as part of the use of music. The use of music varied from its deliberate use to teach a specific verb conjugation, to songs used to expose learners to new vocabulary, to songs learned in classes outside of language classes which later played a role in the student's learning process[1]. Songs were even sometimes played in class to fill up the last five minutes of a lesson, creating an opportunity to expose students to new language content, or prepare them for the next lesson. Instructor B also discussed how they felt it was important "to try and incorporate as many of the senses into one lesson – simply because not everybody learns the same way." By using music in their lessons Instructor B could support the needs of auditory learners, and introduce the positive, social aspect of music to their classroom.

The participants' positive associations with these songs created memories associated with language learning. Guzman and Trivaleto (2014) discuss the metaphor of the brain as a container, with the container filled with the knowledge humans gain from living. Li and Edwards (2014) discuss the "exploitation of content knowledge" (p. 93), as an essential part of knowledge creation, which is what happens when a person learns a language. The learner receives the data of the language, which becomes information and then – through use, internalization, and experience – the information becomes knowledge. The problems with language learning arise when one wants to use the language without the aid of notes or helpful classroom visual aids, or during a test when study materials are prohibited. Students reported instances of recalling these moments when they were required to use the elements the song had been employed to teach, or even to use the song to remember vocabulary and grammar in an unrelated class or assignment.

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[1] Student B recounted taking an Irish Music class, and often discussed how the songs they learned in this class would later play a role in the way they memorized certain sounds, verb conjugations and vocabulary, as well as emotional validation.

Instructor B related their impression that, for students to experience hearing an Irish song outside the classroom and recognize and understand the words, would be "interesting" and "an eyeopener." The students would have the opportunity to connect their lessons to something in their everyday life, creating a deeper connection with the song and the lessons it imparted. The combination of music, valence, and language created a rich context within the students' experiences, which provided multiple avenues in which the students could access their memories and knowledge of the Irish language and find the specific linguistic element they required.

Extending Guzman and Trivaleto's metaphor of the mind as a container, we must consider that filling the container with information-turned-knowledge can lead to a sense of disarray, can make it difficult to sort through the contents of the container. In the specific case of this study, the container would be filled with scraps of the Irish language, which, while having some semblance of organization due to the various teaching methods used, can be difficult to sort through. This sorting difficulty can lead to further difficulty in using the lessons and information the students learn. Music helps to provide organization and order to the scraps in the container, making it easier for the students to access the particular element of the Irish language they require as the situation arises.

Putting aside the metaphor, I acknowledge that I am not trying to make sense of the processes of memory or human cognition, but rather I'm talking specifically about how Irish language songs can help to manage the knowledge students gain over the course of learning Irish. I say 'knowledge' because as the students continue to use the Irish language, they gain the necessary experience to turn information into knowledge. Music becomes a Personal Knowledge Management tool when the students begin to use music to remember certain bits of their

knowledge of the Irish language to improve or motivate their ability to speak the language. They interact with the information and knowledge with the help of the Irish language music.

The property of Positive Affects is defined as participants connecting the use of music in language learning to a positive emotion – other than validation – such as joy, discovery, ownership, and humour. This property contained many instances of participants professing their enjoyment of Irish music and how this affinity led to having fun during the learning process. Participants reported that this positive reaction to music correlated to an increased willingness to participate in class and in classroom activities. Music helped to remove or reduce the anxiety associated with speaking out loud in class or pronouncing new vocabulary. Participants reported that when music was used to introduce new vocabulary elements or new pronunciations in class there was less anxiety involved in the initial attempt to pronounce or understand the new element. As Student B remarked: "No one wants to be the person making the ugliest noise you've ever heard alone, but when there's a group of you, and you're all singing and trying to say the word, it's not as bad." The effect music and collective singing has on the classroom was also noted by Instructors. Instructor A justified their choice to include music in their lessons for multiple reasons but ending with the question "isn't it a wonderful party piece?" Instructor B echoed this sentiment by stating that, when they included music in their classroom, they observed that their students "got really into the swing of it, and they felt really part of the exercise. Or part of the activity." Music helped to break down the barriers between students, and the positive emotions and enjoyment associated with songs performed as a group activity encouraged the students to participate and connect more with their lessons. Other studies suggest that group activities in the classroom such as singing "positively influenc[e] both trust and cooperation" among students, enriching the learning environment (Engh 2013, p. 114). These

positive associations also made it easier for the students to retain and use the lessons the song had been employed to teach.

Music helps learners to become more comfortable in the learning environment, creating a sense of ownership in their own learning experience. The theme of a sense of ownership of their learning experience was expressed by one of the two Irish language instructors interviewed for this project. One instructor remarked how, in their experience, when students were exposed to music in the classroom – particularly music which had been created for them – the students felt a sense of pride and ownership in the song and the lessons it had taught. Instructor B remarked "it's something I've made for them, something no one else has and that can feel quite special." This proposed sense of ownership can create a level of comfort and ease in the classroom by allowing students to feel they are personalizing their learning experience. A sense of comfort can also lead to increased willingness to participate in classroom activities, such as singing, especially if encouraged by their instructor, or after watching the instructor sing. Instructor B commented on how: "I can't sing, but if the students see me making a fool of myself, then they're more likely to also try singing." This again comes back to that sense of ease in the classroom: the instructor enjoying themselves and "making a fool" of themselves leads to a heightened ease among the students, and a willingness to participate. Student B remarked that no one wanted to draw attention to themselves by making an incorrect and potentially embarrassing noise. They continued to state that in a group setting with other classmates also participating, the activity is shared and the fear of making "the ugliest noise" is lessened. This ease and willingness to participate aids the students in their efforts to learn Irish. It creates a comfortable environment for learning and helps to bring excitement and at times laughter into the classroom and learning experience.

Humour also plays a key role in students' willingness to learn, and their use of music to recall linguistic elements. One participant related how, in the song *Dúlamán,* an Irish song about gathering seaweed mispronouncing the phrase "binne buí" leads to the song being about diarrhea, rather than seaweed. The participant highlighted how this helped them to remember the correct pronunciation for both terms. The same participant also discussed a humorous song about a cow who is "worked up" (Student B) about rock'n'roll music. The humour of this song and the participant's enjoyment of it meant they were able to recall the vocabulary, dialect and meaning of the song readily. This in turn meant that the participant remembered all the words and terms introduced in the song. The participant enjoyed learning the song because of the humorous anecdotes and remembered their enjoyment and humour every time they used the songs to recall specific words or pronunciations they had linked to the song.

The final property of the Affect category is that of Self-Validation. This property is threaded throughout most of the discussion of the Affect category. Specific references to the experience of validation included instances when participants stated that hearing an Irish language song and being able to understand the lyrics without needing to look up translations was one of the most affirming experiences of language learning. These occurrences were sorted into the Self-Validation property because the participants discussed this happening in the context of a) having chosen to listen to Irish language music of their own volition, and b) because the affirmation of their skills and language experience was not a result of a prescribed language assessment. Participants used phrases such as "payoff" and "put[ting] the puzzle pieces together" when describing this sense of self-validation. Participants also remarked that the more difficult the song was to understand, such as Sean Nòs music with its elaborate singing style and

unclear word segmentation, the greater the sense of accomplishment and validation for the effort they spent in learning.

Critically, the category of Self-Validation deals with the participants themselves seeing the rewards of their efforts in a spontaneous situation outside the classroom. Student B detailed how the use of Irish in a video game provided this sense of validation, as they could understand the characters as they spoke, and did not need to wait for the game's translation. Student B had only themselves to provide the validation for the effort they had spent in learning Irish, and this small moment helped them to realize the results of that effort. Likewise, Student A detailed listening to Irish language music in the car and realizing they understood the words and emotions of the song without needing to look up the translation.

5.3 SOCIAL CONTEXT

The category Social Context contains instances when the participants described how the use of music in the language learning process helped them to gain an understanding of the social practices, norms, and cultural nuances common to Irish people. This category includes the properties of Community Values, Idioms and Dialect , and Linguistic Identity. The properties that constitute this category are related to the social and cultural aspects of language. Each property is therefore a facet of the phenomenon referred to as Social Context, with more interaction and combination among the three properties of this category than the properties of other categories. Community Values refers to the values and cultural practices common to the Irish people as understood by the participants. This property includes elements such as concepts of love and valuing tradition. Idioms and Dialect refers to instances when participants mentioned Irish language music exposing them to specific, regional slang or turns of phrase, as well as introducing them to new dialects such as Gaeltacht Irish vs the Ulster dialect. Finally,

Linguistic Identity refers to any instance when the participant referenced music helping them to gain an understanding of the cultural identity associated with the Irish language. Cultural identity includes nuanced ways of relating grammar to a world view, or documents to heritage or a cultural and or historical moment.

The category of Social Context is constituted of instances when participants identified the use of Irish Language music as a tool that enabled them to not only gain a greater understanding of Irish culture, but to additionally feel a sense of participation in this culture. This participation ranged from understanding, and at times internalizing, concepts of love, historical pride, and a sense of community among Irish speakers as a culture. Social Context also discussed the way music helped to make the classroom environment feel more like a community of connected individuals rather than disconnected students. Music sessions in the classroom, and the sense of community in the environment can lead to a variation of the "Language Nest" discussed by McClutchie (2007). The Language Nest is a specific style of that involves immersing the children in a minority language's associated life, culture, and music (McClutchie, 2007). Including music in the classroom is obviously not a true immersion, but it does serve to enrich the classroom environment in a way that extends beyond wall posters and textbooks. Adding music in the classroom also moves in the direction of a Language Nest by allowing the learners to become immersed in Irish culture if only for a moment. There is a liveliness to music that cannot be replicated in text.

The educators interviewed for this project particularly focused on how the inclusion of music in Irish Language lessons led to fostering a more social learning experience in the classroom and among the students. Remarks made by participants that typified this category include comments such as "what a lovely party piece" (Instructor A), "it's a social thing"

(Student B) and "you go to the pubs and there's music, and people singing" (Student A). These were all comments received after I asked participants for their opinion on the benefits of including Irish songs in the classroom and lessons. When asked if they thought the social aspect of music —both the creation and experience of music— played a role in learning the Irish language, participants all agreed that the social element of music played a role in their learning experience and enjoyment during learning.

The importance of this category is that it characterizes the ways in which learners feel connected to the Irish language through means other than the academic. Learners could connect to the language through social experiences, which fostered a sense of ownership of both their learning experience and the language in general. The social context of music, entwined with the learning experience, further cemented the experience of learning Irish. The ownership experienced by the participants is one that echoed the sense of ownership discussed in the Affect category, tying the two properties to reinforce the positive experiences of the Social Context category and Affect category. Using music to aid the Irish Language learning process, shifts the language from being an academic concept, a system of rules and sounds, to a lived-in experience. By connecting to the language as a very personal aspect of life, the participants could internalize the language and the lessons from instructors in deeply personal and meaningful ways, which encouraged the retention of the spoken aspects of the language. The way the participants made sense of the language – its rules, constructs, vocabulary, and meanings - was influenced by the inclusion of music in the education process.

The use of music to introduce the participants to aspects of Irish social culture resonated with the participants: the language, in a sense, became a living thing, rather than something confined to classrooms and texts. During their initial interview, Student B remarked that "Irish,

as a language, feels deep," going on to describe how music helped them to connect to and understand this sense of depth. According to Student B, the sense of depth comes from the language's age, which in turn becomes apparent when they listen to Irish language songs. For Student B, this sense of age manifests itself through the preciousness of spoken Irish: "I don't know what it is about the language – probably because it isn't being used very much in modern times it feels like an old language."

Music's ability to create a social environment also encouraged participants to contribute more to their class discussions, due to a sense of comfort and ease created by the recognition of a classroom community, which "many teachers explicitly strive to establish for their learners in the classroom" (Engh 2013, p. 114). And this point is critical: the use of music in the classrooms strengthens the community bonds that already exist within the classroom environment. The social act of participating in music reinforces these community bonds, but there were also instances of educators describing specific intentions to encourage the sense of community with music. One of these instances includes a professor creating an Irish translation of an English language pop song for their students. This exercise not only linked the students through a shared experience of common classroom materials but also encouraged a sense of solidarity within the class because the song was something "created … for them. It's something no one else has" (Instructor B). The educator further mused that they hoped this exercise encouraged their students to feel a sense of ownership over their own learning experiences, since the translated pop song 'belonged' exclusively to the class it had been created for. This increased sense of community adds comfort to the classroom and can help to lessen student anxiety about contributing to class or attempting to speak in Irish during class time. If simultaneous singing is an activity shared amongst all students, it can minimize each individual student's fear of ridicule.

If every student is singing and joining in, individuals need not be as wary of mistakes, returning to that discussion of ease and comfort with other classmates. The music itself is "de-othering" (Student B), creating a sense of inclusion among the students. Even if students do not entirely understand the lyrics of the music, they can still appreciate the tune, melody, and tonality of the song. Regardless of their level of experience or expertise in the Irish language, the students can participate in the classroom activity or appreciate Irish language music outside of the classroom.

Music also served as a way for participants to gain an understanding of the values of Irish culture. The participants described how music deepened their understanding of a community's intangible values or attitudes towards life. The use of a specific song such as *Óró, sé do bheatha 'bhaile* can help students to identify with a sense of Irish culture and history. By using a song with such strong cultural resonance, Instructor B supposed that learners may feel more connected to the Irish language and Irish culture, and that the song might even "awaken some sense of pride in the students themselves." The use of lullabies in classes not only exposed students to cultural understandings of love and parenthood, but also to the words used in association with these specific emotions. One of the participants remarked on how, upon first hearing an unspecified lullaby[2], they cried because they connected to the version of the lullaby they were listening to. The student had an emotional reaction to the song and interpreted the moral of the song as, "don't travel too far over rough seas" (Student A). To this participant, the song was a cautionary tale from a concerned parent to an infant and the expressions of love and concern found in the cultural artefact of the lullaby were key to their appreciation of the piece.

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[2] Which I believe to be either "Óró Mo Bháidín" or "Báidín Fheilimí." The participant, on the day of the interview was able to recite several lines of the lullaby but was unable to recall the name of the lullaby specifically.

Student A described how there are two versions of the lullaby: one in the Ulster dialect and another in the Connaught dialect. The participant explained variations in "d" sounds in the two dialects. Student A explained that these are dialectal differences that "you wouldn't study [on their own, separate from a song] to learn the difference [between them] but … if you take it overarchingly, you see the difference in the dialect." This example makes it clear that songs are an excellent opportunity to introduce students to a new dialect that "perhaps may be different from what we've read or … covered in class" (Instructor A). This clear exposure to dialectical differences exposes the students to the differences in the Irish language, creating a sense of place within the experience of the students. Music was also mentioned as a way for students to hear turns of phrase or idioms that the professor wouldn't normally introduce to their lessons. According to Instructor A, this is because "a lot of the [songs] inevitably put down on tape belong to a certain locality," which brings with them idioms or expressions unique to that area of Ireland.

The final property of the Social Context category was that of Linguistic Identity. There were 17 instances when the participants remarked on the way music helped them to gain an understanding of Irish identity. These allusions to the Linguistic Identity of the Irish people were often tied to examples of dialect or idioms. One notable example from Student B came when they expressed that music, to them, "was a grounding thing." Music made the abstractness of Linguistic Identity into a concrete and tangible concept.

The difference between Linguistic Identity and Idioms and Dialect is that the latter refers to concrete linguistic elements, whereas the former is a far more intangible concept focused on identity. Linguistic Identity hints at a strong sense of Irishness, not a specifically identifiable set of principles and qualities. Student B described that, grammatically, "in Irish [the language] you

never *have* something, it's *with* you. You would never say you have the pen; the pen is with you. You never are sad; sadness is on you." Or at least, that is how it seems to Student B, and that is perhaps the best way to explain this category: music leads to a sense of a deeper, intangible sense of the identity of the language itself beyond structures and conventions which form it, but the language as a complete whole.

5.4 STRUCTURAL CONTENT

Most of the participant data indicated that the most common use of music in the Irish language learning process was to learn, memorize, and internalize the structural elements of the language. This aspect of the use of music in the language learning process is tied to the other categories, in that there is a practical use of the skills and lessons involving music, rather than the more enigmatic emotional connections and senses of ownership in the learning process. The previous categories were about how the participants connect with the music either emotionally or culturally. While these connections did at times lead to the internalization of specific grammatical examples or rules, their focus was on the participants' own experiences with the music and their emotional relationship with the music.

The Structural Content category deals with instances where participants internalized something about the language mechanics from the experience of using music to learn the Irish language. Grammar and Syntax covers the use of music to learn and eventually use in conversation specific conjugations and phrasing. Listening Skills is a property that emerged unexpectedly, but consistently, throughout the participant interviews. This property involved the participants detailing how music helped them with recognizing the patterns of Irish speech and word usage, or a concept known as segmentation. Finally, the Property of Accents and Phonetics

deals specifically with participants being exposed to accents and instances of region-specific phonetics beyond their instructor's own accent.

Grammar and Syntax, as a property, often involved the participants discussing specific instances of using a song as a mnemonic device in classroom and test settings, as well as in conversational instances. Student A detailed how, on the day of our interview, they had coincidentally taken a test in one of their classes, and, to remember a specific conjugation for the test, they sang part of a song containing that conjugation. In the interview, neither the song nor the conjugation was identified. This was a recurring theme throughout other participant interviews: recalling instances of using a snippet of a song or lyrics to remember a conjugation. Recollections included both songs that had been formally studied in the classroom and songs the participants had heard and that contained grammatical elements they recognized. Instructor B, in detail, broke down how this process could potentially occur based on the song *Óró 'Sé do Bheatha 'Bhaile* (Appendix C). Instructor B explained how, the song contains the line "anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh." This roughly translates to "and now the coming of summer". The word "anois" means "now", and the phrase "theacht an tsamhraidh" contains a specific grammatical rule. These vocabulary and grammatical elements are things which the student could use the song to remember or "zone back to" (Instructor B), as they continue their language learning journey.

While most of the answers during the interview process involved using music in the aural sense, in the case of this property, participants also discussed using music in terms of reading and studying the lyrics. Grammar and Syntax provided a host of specific examples of the advantages of using music as a tool for language learning. Participants relayed how this specific way of examining the artefact of the music or song helped them to understand and link the rules of

conjugation and grammatical conventions to the specific memories of physically listening to the songs. Instructor B shared, anecdotally, that during their teaching practicum, they worked with a professor who would create:

> A song, and teach a song, and have it laid out in such a way that is covers every consonant that takes and – so that if a student is faced with a question in an exam, or not even an exam but a social situation or in a university kind of interaction, and they think "okay, that noun begins with a b so think to my song, the eru[3] for a b is m" and they can use that song to remember that grammatical point.

The professor was specifically creating triggers in their students' Irish language learning experiences tied to music that they used. While the songs used by the professor are not the kind of Irish songs I was looking at, as they were created specifically to teach grammatical lessons and have no cultural relevance, this example does illuminate the use of music in creating specific memory signals tied to music. Rather than frantically scrambling to remember the proper conjugation, students could hum the song for the noun to themselves to remember the proper grammatical form.

The property of Listening Skills has been specifically named and isolated because participants often remarked that, regardless of accents and dialect, they occasionally had difficulty distinguishing where words ended, and that music helped them refine their ability to recognize vocabulary. The property of Listening Skills was filled with participant anecdotes regarding a specific style of Irish music called Sean- nós. Sean-nós involves an elaborate singing style with extensive ornamentation that stretches words out; words seem to mesh into each other. Participants remarked that listening to Sean-nós helped refine and train their ears to recognize

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[3] A specific change made to the beginning of a noun when conjugating said noun.

words when spoken out of the context of the clearly dictated sounds of the classroom. This is precisely what Kao and Oxford (2014) were referring to when Kao discussed using Hip Hop to learn English. Listening to music helps train the ear to be able to make sense of the language the students are learning.

Unlike the previously mentioned property of Idioms and Dialect, Listening Skills deals specifically with participants recognizing words when spoken, particularly since Irish nouns change according to their grammatical role, resulting in different spellings and pronunciations. This property, while not the strongest of the Structural Content in terms of number of incidences, was the one property participants were the most passionate about and articulated with the greatest degree of clarity. Student B explained that Sean-nós music is difficult to listen to as a beginner Irish speaker, because of how the syllables of the lyrics blend together. They went on to say that, once a student has a solid foundation and grasp of Irish, it's "really satisfying when you can listen to a Sean-nós singer," because the student can hear the segmentation in the lyrics. The ability of the students to recognize segmentation comes back to the Self-Validation property, fostering encouragement and enthusiasm in the students to continue learning Irish, while being able recognize the tangible results of their efforts.

In the final property Accents and Phonetics participants remarked that exposure to various styles and sources of music drew their attention to the specifics and importance of pronunciation, as many words can sound similar, particularly when conjugated. This property was usually evoked first when participants were asked about their experiences with using music to learn the Irish language. Even so, participants rarely discussed using music to help with accent exposure or phonetic clarity except in passing. The lack of discussion around accents and phonetics could be due to the limited size of the Irish Studies Department at St. Mary's. The students would not

regularly be exposed to dialects other than that of their instructors' – only two in Irish Gaelic were employed in the Department at the time of this study – or due to the distortion in spoken accents which occurs when a singer performs a piece of verbal music. It could also be due the relatively beginner status of the interviewed students. Due to their relatively controlled exposure to the Irish language, and Irish language speakers – essentially confined to classroom experience – they may not be aware of the nuances and differences in dialect found in the Irish language. The instructors acknowledged that music is a way to expose their students to the dialects found in spoke Irish but focused more on the way music could be used to gain technical and structural knowledge of the language. This focus on music as a way to facilitate the actual speaking of Irish, regardless of accent or dialect is potentially due to the focus on the standardized version of Irish taught in classrooms.

5.5 TYPES OF LEARNING

Types of Learning is another category that emerged unexpectedly from the themes of participant answers during the interview process. This category consists of instances when participants discussed their self-directed use of music in the Irish language learning process. The contents of this category are a series of anecdotes of students relating instances where they sought out Irish songs to aid in the learning process. Students also detailed how they used Irish songs to enrich and reinforce their language learning process such as listening to Irish music playlists in the car while driving or having said playlists playing quietly in the background while completing their homework. This category is significant because it reinforces the recurring theme throughout the previous categories of the student taking ownership of their own learning experience. Music helps these students to feel a sense of ownership and internalization of the music and therefore the language. Of the 229 coded responses, Types of Learning accounts for

78 of those responses. This is a higher level of participant responses than found in any other category. The category of Types of Learning is divided into the properties of Intentional and Accidental. Much of the Intentional category consists of participant musing on ways in which they could deliberately and intentionally use music to supplement their Irish language learning experience at some point in the future. These were not memories of how they had used music to learn language. Many of these suppositions were prefaced by "I wonder if" or "I suppose" and most often the participant arrived at these musings unintentionally, or when they veered from a statement, they had been previously making to muse on the ways they could use music in the future.

The remaining property of Accidental accounts for the remaining 38 participant responses in the Types of Learning. This category is mainly formed from participants providing anecdotes of times music had helped them remember grammatical or structural elements of the Irish language. These anecdotes often occurred to the participants during the interview, when they seemed to realize for the first time that they had been using music to remember specific linguistic quirks that they had connected to specific musical memories. These memories were varied in nature and had little in common with each other, other than in the way participants used music to lock language elements into their memory. The Accidental property also includes instances when a participant used a song to help them remember language elements or vocabulary even though this was not the student's original intention in learning a given song. This property relies heavily on the word 'serendipity' to explain how music was used. Students were not told to use music, but in choosing to do so they found that parts of the music they listened to helped them to remember certain linguistic elements or provided validation for their efforts.

Types of Learning was so named because it deals with how the students, and sometimes even the instructors, used music to help them understand the language they were learning. In other words, this category deals with the way music was used in the sense-making process of the participants, how the foreign syllables and spellings of the Irish language were marshalled and organized into recognizable words and terms, how inflections came to have meaning and how segmentation was eventually made clear. This category discusses how – either intentionally or accidentally – participants used music in the process of making sense of the Irish language, echoing Slobin's statement that "music serves as a soundtrack to our consciousness" (1993, p. 7). One student discussed how they would get in the car and go for a drive while listening to Irish music playlists, not for educational purposes but simply to enjoy listening to the music while incidentally continuing to expose themselves to the Irish language. Another student described how sometimes they just liked to listen to Irish language songs while doing homework for other classes. Slobin's statement is here proven quite literally: the playing of Irish music in the background was a soundtrack to activities these students enjoyed. While enjoying the music, the students were also internalizing and using the music to make sense of the lessons they were learning in Irish language classes.

CHAPTER SIX   LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations that impacted the proceedings of this study. I did conduct as many interviews with students as I had originally intended. The COVID-19 quarantine restrictions also prevented me from conducting two of the follow-up interviews I had intended to perform. In one case this was due to a participant declaring themselves too busy with the work of moving to online learning to give a second interview, and in the remaining case, the participant never responded to my inquiries. Further, in the content of the study itself, I restricted my focus to music used in an in-class, formal learning setting and looked exclusively at the use of verbal songs to the exclusion of other types of music or sonic media that could potentially be used in the learning process.

For a grounded theory-based study, a smaller number of interviews is much smaller than typically considered appropriate compared with other qualitative research methods. Even so, my study might be considered more of a pilot, or 'first' foray into the subject of language learning and Personal Knowledge Management and how music influences the relationship between the two. Further interviews and research are required to begin the process of building a theory or model of the most effective ways to use music as a Personal Knowledge Management Tool in the language learning process.

Qualitative studies such as the one I conducted for this thesis do not intend to generalize to a larger population. The value of this study lies in the descriptions of the complex processes and experiences of the participants. I examine and describe a very specific set of circumstances and experiences, but the underlying concept of the phenomenon I capture could apply to a larger population. The transferability found in this study and its research design is an inherent part of

the value of this study, and if applied properly to a quantitative, larger scale study population, a

level of generalization could be uncovered.

CHAPTER SEVEN   FUTURE RESEARCH

The focus of this study was limited to the effect music had on the learning process for Irish language learners, specifically university level students. Future research could include looking at the effect of other forms of audiovisual media on the language learning process such as audiobooks, podcasts, or Irish language television shows. Having a larger number of interviewees to confirm and expand upon the themes discovered in this study is another way to move the research forward. The future recruits could be pulled from the several different language classrooms to ascertain if the language itself – whether or not it's a heritage language – makes a difference in the themes and results of this study. There is also the potential to include a variety of universities in the recruitment process, and to have a more varied level of proficiency in selected language from the student participants. By expanding not only the amount of universities included in the study, but also having a discrepancy in fluency among the student participants I would be able to examine if language level or instruction style impact the responses of students.

The role place plays in learning language, specifically the city of the university could also be a factor in the results. Sticking with interrogating the use of music in Irish language learning, I could compare learners from Halifax, Toronto, and Dublin. This raises the question of if the atmosphere of the city surrounding the university and student participants contributes to their use of music to learn, and connection with, the Irish language. With the expanded study population would come the opportunity to see how matters of identity – e.g., gender, race, age – impact the effectiveness of using music in the language learning process, and how these factors influence the Personal Knowledge Management schemes of the individuals.

I could also expand the genres and styles of music included in the study. In this study I focused on Sean-nós, while drawing on an article about hip-hop in English language learning. One area to be explored would be if the level of familiarity the student has with the music affects their use of music in the language learning process. For instance, is there a difference between how students use the more familiar Irish-language popular music versus the more "traditional" forms of Irish music – e.g., Sean-nós and other traditional songs? Does the level of comfort the participant feels with the music affect the connection they feel to the language, or their ability to use the song to create signals to aid in their language learning and eventual Irish language speaking processes?

Finally, there is always the possibility of expanding the scope of any future research to examine the psychological and cognitive implications of the use of music as a tool to influence or improve the Personal Knowledge Management of learners. There is also the possibility of looking at how music affects the language retention of Irish language learners, in the traditional sense of language retention, where the longevity of the learner's knowledge is tested.

CHAPTER EIGHT   CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between music, language learning, and culture. This study is seemingly interdisciplinary in nature, containing elements of Information Management, Sociology, Psychology, Education and Ethnomusicology. However, the latter two disciplines were only ever considered in relation to how these fields related to the Knowledge Management phenomena I was exploring. The focus of this thesis was always on how using music as a tool in the language learning process could affect Personal Knowledge Management schemes of language learners. Irish was selected as the language for learners not only due to St. Mary's University Irish Studies program being geographically close to Dalhousie University, but also given the very specific aesthetics and culture associated with Irish music and the language.

By conducting interviews with both students and educators in St. Mary's University's Irish Studies Department, I was able to determine that there is a correlation between the use of music in the language learning processes and a learner's ability to recall and use elements of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The interviews also provided evidence of how music helps to shape not only the Personal Knowledge Management of participants, but that it also shaped their experiences within the classroom environment in positive ways. Participants described how music became a part of their emotional context for the learning experience, as it created and strengthened a sense of community among learners. Finally, music also helped learners to attain a sense of ownership over their learning experience, creating a rewarding emotional environment for learning.

The three main areas where music was shown to influence the language learning process of the participants were in emotional, structural and social contexts. The remaining category, Types of Learning, deals more with the 'when' of music being a tool in the language learning

process rather than how music aided the learners with specific linguistic elements where music aided the leaners. The prevalence of Structural Content as an area where participants found music useful to remember specific linguistic elements demonstrates music's ability to create specific signals in the memory of learners. However, in the Affect and Social Context categories, music demonstrably created emotional ties between the participants and their own learning experiences and also fostered a sense of community between peers in a classroom. The underlying theme that runs through these two categories is enthusiasm: with the help of music participants reported multiple instances of finding joy in the learning experience and this encouraged them to continue learning. Music helped participants enjoy not only the efforts expended in the learning process, but also the act of being in the classroom with their peers. There was a lack of inhibitions in the classroom when music was used, leading to higher levels of student participation and therefore a higher amount of learning opportunities.

Music's ability to create specific signals and triggers in the mind of participants was also clear in the data. Whether those signals were related to Structural Content or associated with the experience of first learning the song was dependent on the context of the participant's response. The existence of the signals and their ability to function as a form of indexing system for the participant's Personal Knowledge Management in relation to speaking Irish was clear. As previously discussed, knowledge is enacted information; through use it has become something integrated in the participant's experience. Speaking a language is the act of taking information puzzle pieces, if you will, and fitting them together to create intelligible sentences and phrases to communicate with others. All of the pieces, or scraps of information, are placed inside the container of the mind and a speaker has to sort through them in order to communicate effectively with others, and to satisfactorily express themselves. This 'container' can, understandably, be

cluttered and disorganized by virtue of being well – not really a container to begin with. This difficulty of sorting the non-corporal container can, in the case of this study, be offset by the use of music to help organize the contents and aid in the retrieval of language elements. The container may be slightly organized, due to teaching methods and structured lessons, but learning a language is still a confusing and oftentimes overwhelming process. Music can help ameliorate the difficulty in accessing the required information for speakers to express themselves by creating the aforementioned signals. These signals can be tied to vocabulary, spelling, conjugation, or even ephemeral concepts of love and ways of expressing it. Music helped participants organize the contents of their 'container' or mind throughout the process of tuning information related to the Irish language into knowledge as they continued to learn and speak Irish.

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A.1 LYRICS TO "ÓRÓ SÉ DO BHEATHA 'BHAILE"

Sé do bheatha, a bhean ba léanmhar

do bé ár gcreach tú bheith i ngéibhinn

do dhúiche bhreá i seilbh meirleach

's tú díolta leis na Gallaibh.

Chorus:

Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

óró, sé do bheatha bhaile

anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh.

Tá Gráinne Mhaol ag teacht thar sáile

óglaigh armtha léi mar gharda,

Gaeil iad féin is ní Francaigh ná Spáinnigh

's cuirfidh siad ruaig ar Ghallaibh.

Chorus

A bhuí le Rí na bhFeart go bhfeiceam

muna mbeam beo ina dhiaidh ach seachtain

Gráinne Mhaol agus míle gaiscíoch

ag fógairt fáin ar Ghallaibh.

Chorus

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A.2 LYRICS TO "ÓRÓ SÉ DO BHEATHA 'BHAILE" (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Hail, oh woman, who was so afflicted,

Hail, oh woman, who was so afflicted,

It was our ruin that you were in chains,

Your fine land in the possession of thieves...

While you were sold to the foreigners!

Chorus:

Oh-ro, welcome home

Oh-ro, welcome home

Oh-ro, welcome home

Now that summer's coming!

Grace O'Malley is coming over the sea,

Armed warriors as her guard,

Only Gaels are they, not French nor Spanish...

and they will rout the foreigners!

Chorus

May it please the King of Prodigy that we might see,

Although we may live but one week after,

Grace O'Malley and a thousand warriors...

Dispersing the foreigners!

Chorus

Lyrics retrieved from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%93r%C3%B3_s%C3%A9_do_bheatha_abhaile

APPENDIX B   INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

B.1   "YES" STREAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- o Can you describe to me the process of learning Irish? In a classroom setting?
- o Do you listen to Irish cultural music?
- o Can you explain your experience with Irish cultural music?
  - ▪ Have you found it useful in your language studies?
  - ▪ If yes, did you find this helpful to the process
  - ▪ Can describe how it helped you
  - ▪ Do you feel that music helped cultural knowledge acquisition?
    - • Do you feel like you gain a sense of Irish culture when you listen to the music? This can be either specific or general knowledge.
  - ▪ Do you feel like listening to Irish language music helps you understand how to pronounce the Irish words?
    - • Does the music give you a sense of the rhythm of the language?
    - • Do you find listening to music helps you internalize the contexts of certain words? Does it help you remember specific words, phrases or other sounds?

B.2   "NO" STREAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
- • Can you describe to the process of learning Irish for me?
  - o Specifically, can you describe the process of learning Irish in a classroom setting?
- • Do you listen to Irish cultural music?
  - o Do you have any experience with Irish cultural music?
  - o Do you think it would have been helpful in your studies?
  - o Do you feel like your studies would have been aided with the inclusion of Irish Music?
  - o Do you think Irish Cultural Music would help you to figure out the pronunciation of Irish Language words?
  - o Would you consider using Irish Language to in your future learning?
  - o Were you ever encouraged to listen to Irish Cultural Music by a professor?

B.3   FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

Follow up interview questions will be developed in their complete form after the initial interview. This is because the follow-up interview is designed to give participants and the researcher the opportunity to explore previously discussed questions or concepts.

An example of such a question would be; "In our previous conversation you mentioned x experience, I was wondering if you have had any further thoughts on this topic?"
"Last time, when I asked you x, you responded 'I'm not sure, I'd have to think about it', have you had a chance to think about it?"

"In our previous session you mentioned x, I was wondering if you could clarify what you meant by that?"

APPENDIX C   ANNECDOTE TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription of anecdote about using "Óró, sé do bheatha bhaile" in language learning

I think it makes it a little bit more – present for them, relevant. I'll jump to a song that was very popular in Ireland a couple years ago – "Óró, sé do bheatha 'bhaile" **--** and that was kind of like the song that was chosen for all the schools to celebrate this around Easter time. And every school had to perform it and every student had to be part of this kind of nationwide celebration – the students were able to zone in on different words that maybe they had heard loads of times but didn't really know what they meant.

Even, I suppose, as an Irish speaker and a music teacher, I didn't understand every single word myself, so it's kind of broadened my understanding of the language. Certain phrases that – could be used in other contexts. For example, one of the lines is *anois ar theacht an tsamhraidh,* "and now the coming of summer," and the grammatical rules …

Not only for the word "anois" which means now -- so that could be something that is very easy to retain; "theacht an tsamhraidh" has a grammatical rule implied in it. And that's something that a learner can recognize and maybe zone back to or relate back to remember that grammatical rule.

 So maybe that one example could help them retain that grammatical rule - for all their contexts, not only for the word for summer, but for other words that are masculine – that have a slender ending to the word.