Reversing Language Shift in France: The Breton Case

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

Sorcha Foy
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Language Revival in France: The Breton Case

Sorcha Foy

Abstract

This thesis investigates language revival in Brittany. The first section presents a theoretical framework for Reversing Language Shift. This framework is the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale put forward by Joshua Fishman. Succeeding sections examine the status of Breton in Brittany, and efforts being undertaken there to revive the language. There is also an extensive examination of the attitudes towards regional languages in France, how in the past they have helped shape language policy, and how in the present they continue to do so. It is concluded that language revival in the sense of restoration may not be possible, that perhaps more attention should be paid by X-Men seeking to revive X-Ish, to the importance attached to Y-Ish by both Y-Men and X-Men alike, and that some modification to the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale may be necessary with regard to the reclamation by X-Ish of the work domain.
Introduction

In the last number of years it has become increasingly clear both to linguists and non-linguists, that a large proportion of the world’s estimated 6000 languages are in danger. Some linguists have even suggested that as many as 90% of the worlds languages are in danger of extinction within the next century. The reasons for this decline are myriad, but undoubtedly economic and political pressures are mostly to blame. The process by which languages become endangered and eventually extinct is referred to by linguists as language shift, and according to Fishman most of the linguistic interest in endangered languages over the past half century has been directed at this phenomenon of language shift, while comparatively little research has been directed at the reversal of this process.

"The modern, Western social sciences have only very recently come to recognise socially patterned language use and socially manifested behaviour towards language as topics to be reckoned with. Sociolinguistics,…even in its more RLS-sympathetic (although less intensively cultivated) ‘macro’ or ‘sociology of language’ pursuits, has not arrived at a sufficiently refined taxonomy of language status planning to explicitly provide for the consideration of RLS activity" Fishman (1990: 6)

A major part of this thesis is concerned with Fishman’s own theory of Reversing Language Shift (RLS), this theory is mostly concerned with identifying the stages in language death and prescribing possible remedies for the condition of the language at each stage. Fishman’s theory is the only comprehensive treatment of the subject, and in order to examine how his framework can be matched and applied to a particular language situation, a study of Breton was undertaken.

Breton is a regional language spoken on the north-western seaboard of France, it is a member of the brethonic family of Celtic languages, and thus largely unrelated to French. It has undergone an enormous language shift over the course of the last century. The aspects of the Breton language which are most intensely concentrated upon in this thesis are: 1) the size, distribution and age-spread of the current population of Breton speakers and 2) the efforts being made by
Revivalists to promote the language. Throughout the course of the investigation it became clear that perhaps there was an aspect which Fishman had overlooked: his framework is very much concerned with revival efforts at the local level, but while revival efforts within a language community are crucial to that language’s survival, Revivalists also must address the social, economic and political influence of the supra-local community. In the case of Breton, the supra-local community which has had such a negative impact on the language is France.

A large part of this thesis concerns the importance of the French language as a symbol of the French state, and the language policies which have reflected this importance, and proved so damaging to the health of the regional languages in France. The reasons for this investigation are two-fold, first Fishman’s framework requires that Revivalists work hard to maintain and strengthen the identity of the language community, in Brittany many Breton speakers are torn between two identities, a Breton one which many are ashamed by, and a French one which many aspire to. An investigation into the symbolic link between French and France, may shed some light on the strength of the association between French and Frenchness, and why Bretons would aspire to this identity. Second, RLS efforts exist also at international level, in Europe the strongest attempt to safeguard the rights of regional or minority language speakers exists in the guise of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The French have refused to ratify this Charter, and an examination of the reasons why may shed more light on the opposition faced by revival movements at supra-local level, and which must be overcome if the language is to survive.

The main objective of this thesis is to examine whether Fishman’s framework is sufficient to describe the stages through which an endangered language must pass to regain its health. The structure of the thesis is as follows: in Chapter 1 Fishman’s framework will be presented. In Chapter 2 the current status of Breton will be examined and evaluated in the context of Fishman’s framework. Chapters 3 and 4 will be concerned with the status of French, and the evolving language policies of the French state. The Charter for Regional or Minority Languages will also be examined extensively in Chapter 4. Finally in Chapter 5 some conclusions regarding
Fishman's framework, and language revival will be presented. The conclusion will also draw attention to the short-comings of the study, and suggest some directions for future research.
Chapter 1

Reversing Language Shift

(1) Introduction

Society is more international than ever before. The technological revolution of the late twentieth century has made nearly instantaneous global communication possible. The new global economy has raised the need for successful communication to new heights. English has become the lingua franca of this new economy, while Mandarin Chinese remains the language with the greatest number of speakers, English has the greater global distribution. We are undergoing a Communications Revolution, but ironically our most basic instrument for communication: language, is coming other increasing threat. It is estimated that we face losing between five and ten percent of the world’s six thousand languages this century. Many communities around the world are currently fighting to save endangered languages, but while much sociolinguistic attention has been given to the causes of language shift\(^1\), comparatively little has been given to the reversal of such language shift.

(2) What is an endangered language?

There are many ways of defining endangered languages, the most simplistic being languages below some critical number of speakers. Smaller languages are in more danger, but complex social, economic, political, or religious factors are decisive for the transmission of an original language from parents to children.


- Krauss (1992) in his comparison of language to endangered biological species, defines three categories of languages:
  1. *moribund*: “languages no longer being learned as mother tongue by children”

\(^1\) Language Shift refers to the gradual encroachment by one language on another, which if left unchecked will gradually lead to the extinction of the language being encroached upon.
2. endangered: “languages which, though now still being learned by children, will – if the present conditions continue – cease to be learned by children during the coming century”; and

3. safe: languages with “official state support and very large numbers of speakers”

- Fishman uses an eight-stage intergenerational disruption scale, where the most threatened languages are those used only 1) by socially isolated elderly people, 2) by a socially integrated population beyond child-bearing age, 3) only orally, with no literacy.

(3) Language Revival

What exactly is “language revival”, what does it entail, what are its goals? Bentahila and Davies (1993: 357) define the term revival as covering ‘all organised efforts to strengthen the position of a relatively weak, endangered or apparently dead language’. The circumstances in which such efforts are undertaken are quite varied, and depend on the ultimate goals of the revival movements themselves. Language Revival movements are rarely if ever concerned with reviving a language for its own sake, and most often are part of a wider nationalist movement, though it must be stressed that not all such movements are separatist in nature. Paradoxically, while many minority and regional languages in Europe are benefiting from language revival movements which have a decidedly nationalist slant, it is to nationalism itself that we often have to look to discover the reasons behind the language shift which these languages have undergone.

(3.1) Nationalism and Language Shift

Nationalism is characterised by three broad emphases (cf. Fishman (1972)):

1. Unification

   Nationalism is a movement which seeks to go beyond the ties of family and community, creating a nationality by integrating the rural, the urban and the regional.
"In its birth throes nationalism stresses the inherent unity of populations that have never been aware of such unity before. In its further development nationalism may stress unification rather than unification alone" Fishman (1972: 224-225).

2. Authentification

Nationalism stresses internal commonality and uniqueness contrasted with the differences of the external. In order to unify diverse subgroups under one nationality it is necessary to emphasise ethnic uniqueness and past cultural greatness, which must be captured again in all of its authenticity if the nation can hope to rise again.

3. Modernisation

The rise of nationalism was a result of the new modern pressures being brought to bear by the Industrial Revolution.

"Under the leadership of new proto-elites\(^2\) that are orientated with respect to the challenges involved, nationalism brings to bear the weight of unified numbers and the dynamism of convictions of uniqueness upon the pursuit of organised cultural self-preservation, the attainment of political independence, the improvement of material circumstances, or the attainment of whatever other purposes will enhance the position of the nationality in a world in which social change is markedly rapid and conflictive"

Fishman (1972: 225).

European Nationalism can be separated into two distinct types:

1. State into Nation

2. Nation into State

And it is the "State into Nation" process which is to blame for many of the problems encountered by regional and minority languages in Europe today. The “Nation into State” process on the other hand is beneficial for such languages as they are perhaps the most powerful symbol of identity available to nations seeking political autonomy, and as such are safeguarded and promoted vociferously.

\(^2\) The leadership of nationalist groups in their early formative period, before they are fully formed and organised.
The “State into Nation” process created the so called “historic nations” of Europe, which were by consensus: England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Denmark and Sweden. These nations were seen to have digested the various ethnic groups that had existed within their borders: the Welsh, Scots and Irish had been digested by English, the Bretons, Normans, Basques, Gascons, and others by the French. This had been achieved by a process of unification and re-authentification. Various sub-groups were united under the aegis of the state, and re-designated as Englishmen, or Frenchmen. This re-designation often involved the subjugation of ethnic identities and the imposition of a new national identity. Invariably the key to this new national identity was the unifying property of a common language, the imposition of this common language led inevitably to the language shift which has occurred in all of these “historic nations” over the course of the last two centuries.

Language Revival movements have often been a key component in “Nation into State” nationalism. In the mid to late nineteenth century, nationality came to be seen as the primary phenomenon giving rise to the state. Unique nationality, was something to be defended and liberated.

“The uniquenesses – and first and foremost among them their respective vernaculars – were not only reflections of the limitless ingenuity and bounty of the Divine Force but also, each in its own right, directly responsible for the past period of greatness and glory that each submerged nationality had at one time experienced.” Fishman (1972: 230).

State seeking nations emphasising their uniqueness placed great importance on their respective vernaculars, which had the effect of preventing language shift where it had not yet occurred, or more often of slowing it down in places where it was well under way. The twentieth century saw the rise of a different kind of nationalist sensibility in the aforementioned “historic nations”, ethnic groups which had been “digested” by these nations began to seek political recognition, while wishing to remain within the state. These movements were not without their separatist elements, but these were usually considered extremist by the movements themselves. Language Revival has often been the major component in this quasi-nationalism.
(3.2) **Revivalist Concerns**

The three major areas of concern for Revivalists fall under three headings:

- A Diminishing Number Of Speakers
- Diminishing Domain of Language Use
- The Language’s Status Within the Society

In examining the number of speakers of an endangered language it is important to take into account that absolute numbers are less important than overall trends. A stationary or even increasing population of native speakers may coincide with a decline in the proportion of speakers in a larger population. Also the distribution of the remaining speakers is more important than their population, a large number of speakers isolated among a larger population of speakers of the more dominant language will find it difficult to carry on their everyday lives in their native tongue. A language is safer where it is still spoken in tight knit communities and is still the language in everyday use. Yet there is still a danger to a language which has a sizeable number of native speakers in such communities, when all these native speakers are in fact bilingual:

> “when a language possesses no more monoglots, the process of decline has very often begun”.

Edwards (1985: 71)

The domains in which a language is used are crucial to its survival; the extent to which a language is used may bear very little relation to the number of people who actually know the language. In situations involving rapid language shift, it is not uncommon to find native speakers of a language, who in later life rarely use the language and in many cases doubt their ability to speak it. Diminishing use of a language is often associated with a corresponding diminution in its domains of use, a language which was once universal in all domains of use, be it as the language of the marketplace, of the school etc, often finds itself confined to the domain of the home, but this is not necessarily the death knell it appears to be, as long as a language continues to be transmitted from parents to children, it will continue to be a living language.
Revivalists often concentrate on a language’s position within a society, often fighting to give it some kind of official status, however a language’s status within a society has little to do with the state of its health and does little to promote a revival, this has been well illustrated by the position of Irish in the Republic of Ireland, this language enjoys the position of national language and first official language, yet its survival remains far from assured after eighty years of efforts to revive it.

The strategies endorsed by revival movements are aimed at remedying these types of weaknesses, they seek to increase, maintain or at the very least arrest further decline in the number of speakers, promoting the use of the language, and working to increase the number of domains in which the language may be used, while trying to improve its status and image within the society.

(4) **What is Reversing Language Shift?**

It should be noted that, so far, no one has developed a comprehensive theory of language shift … what causes it under widely varying conditions, what prevents it from happening, what can help to reverse it. Linguists have generally neglected this area, only Joshua Fishman appears to have examined the problem extensively, and it is his Reversing Language Shift model (RLS) that will be referred to throughout this examination of the status of Breton within the French State. Before turning to Fishman’s model however, language shift itself must be explained. In situations where Language Shift is occurring the following three phenomena are present:

- Fluency in the language increases with age, as younger generations prefer to speak another (usually the dominant societal) tongue.
- There is usage decline in “domains” where the language was once secure… e.g. in churches, the workplace, schools and most importantly the home
- Growing numbers of parents fail to teach the language to their children

Reversing Language Shift as the name implies, involves reversing these trends. Fishman’s model called the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale presents an eight-stage scale, which can be
used to show the language’s current situation and be used to plan efforts concerned with its revival. In examining this model Fishman’s own pattern in looking at the early stages as the ‘weak side’ and the latter stages as the ‘strong side’ will be used, as will his definitions of X-Men and Xish, versus Y-Men and Yish. Xish referring to the endangered language, and X-Men being those who speak it, while Yish refers to the majority language, and Y-men those who speak it.

(4.1) **Stages 8 to 5: RLS on the ‘weak side’**

(4.1.1) **Stage 8**
A language at this stage of language shift is moribund; children are no longer learning it as a mother tongue. This stage of RLS involves assembling or rather reassembling a language model for Xish; this involves a previous stage of establishing community norms of grammar, phonology, intonation and prosody, and ideomaticity and semantic typologies. The linguists role in RLS is most pronounced at this stage, but care must be taken to avoid allowing the movement to stop here and having efforts be forever sentenced to suspended animation within the covers of a “how to learn” textbook. Writing a detailed grammar of an endangered language does very little on its own to arrest its decline.

(4.1.2) **Stage 7**
This stage is a very misleading one, if use of Xish is prevalent among the elderly it is easy to be complacent and assume that the language isn’t in as much danger as previously thought. However from an RLS point of view any language activity undertaken by the elderly be it concerts, bingo etc is useless as far as it concerns RLS because these people are the last refuge of the endangered language, when they die the language dies with them. All efforts by this group to promote the language are useless if they a) don’t use the language in an every day setting themselves; a one off celebration of their language and culture no matter how successful will not help reverse the tide if they don’t use the language in every day settings and b) don’t succeed in capturing the imaginations of their grandchildren on whom the future of the language depends.
This is not to say that stage 7 is useless but it must be transcended if successful RLS is to take place.

(4.1.3) **Stage 6**

This stage is the most important of all, it involves family, neighbourhood and community reinforcement of Xish, and its implementation is at the heart of the RLS ideology. Intergenerational transmission must be fostered if successful RLS is to take place; Fishman (1990: 20): “It is inescapably true that the bulk of language socialisation, identity socialisation and commitment socialisation generally takes place through intergenerationally proximate, face-to-face interaction and generally takes place relatively early at that” However knowing that promotion of the intergenerational link is essential to the success of all ventures into RLS does not guarantee that the intergenerational link can be preserved, and if this stage is not satisfied all the language has to look forward to is a slow lingering death because it has been robbed of its most basic means of sustaining itself.

(4.1.4) **Stage 5**

Formal linguistic socialisation takes place at this stage, and in the modern setting what this entails normally is promotion of literacy. Stage 5 involves some kind of schooling open to adults and children alike, but not in lieu of the established compulsory system run and administered by the state, rather as an addendum open to all speakers or potential speakers of Xish.

Stages 8 to 5 are the ‘programme minimum of RLS’. These stages are not cost prohibitive and don’t depend on the cooperation of the state. They are particularly well suited for those movements, which are politically and numerically weak. Concentration on these four initial steps, promotes a state of diglossia whereby all speakers of Xish will be bilingual. The problem with this is that in most domains in which such speakers operate they will not be using Xish; the bulk of their life outside the home being conducted through Yish, thus maintaining its perceived status as a minority (read second class citizen) language. If the movement wants to push beyond this
stage, then it must continue to the final four steps, but it is equally crucial that they don't get onto them until the movement is ready for it, if it is not they risk crippling the entire venture.

4.2 Stages 4 to 1: RLS on the 'strong side'

4.2.1 Stage 4

Stage 4 entails a much more direct debate on and implementation of an educational system favourable to Xish. This usually means the establishment of private, parochial, or proprietary schools to facilitate the learning of Xish. Such schools must follow the minimal essentials of the approved general curriculum, otherwise they are free to implement any measures they see fit to facilitate courses in Xish. Such schools (type 4a schools) entail major costs for the movement, and are not really effective in places where the concentration of Xish speaking parents is not sufficient and where the Yish education system is extremely centralised. If the concentration of Xish speaking parents is high enough and the Yish government is favourably disposed, special RLS public school programmes can be allowed for minority language children, (these are referred to as type 4b schools in the literature), however even this doesn't always have a favourable outcome, in order to achieve success they must be in an area of dense RLS support. A belief that schooling is the essential ingredient of successful RLS must also be avoided, if the intergenerational link is not nourished then successful RLS cannot occur, no matter how wonderful the schooling system is, Fishman (1990: 24): 'Only the demographically and economically strong can cross this bridge with relative safety by providing the societal support that schools themselves need in order to successfully extend RLS efforts outwards into the larger community'. It is clear that no such extension can take place before the basic family-neighbourhood-community support of Xish is in place.

4.2.2 Stage 3

This stage is involved in promoting Xish in higher more influential workspheres that cannot be contained in the Xish environment. Obviously such efforts to extend the domain of Xish into traditionally Yish environments has great implications for the status of Xish within society at large,
but it is a particularly difficult area for RLS to penetrate, influence and control. The link between promoting Xish at work and reinforcing the intergenerational link is actually an indirect one, but if speakers of Xish desire a measure of cultural autonomy it is a domain that must be captured if they are to avoid a diglossic arrangement where Xish is the language of the home, and Yish the language of everything else.

(4.2.3) **Stage 2**
Stage 2 is concerned with lower governmental services; those that have direct contact with the people, most importantly the local mass media. Like the previous stage, RLS efforts in such areas should be about creating a climate in which they can foster favourable attitudes towards Xish, not about achieving symbolic goals such as the establishing of an Xish television station. The importance of having Xish radio, television and journalism is beyond question but only insofar as it promotes the intergenerational link. If RLS movements do not keep this in mind then such services constitute nothing more than a holding pattern and will not be able ultimately to sustain themselves. It is harder to build and sustain Xish communities than to broadcast Xish on television, but such efforts are far more useful in promoting intergenerational transmission than a half hour political broadcast in Xish.

(4.2.4) **Stage 1**
At stage 1 cultural autonomy is recognised and implemented, even in the upper reaches of education, media and government operations, and particularly within the region (or regions) of Xish concentration. But it must be remembered even at this stage that if such efforts do not succeed in promoting intergenerational transmission, they will do no more then foster bureaucracy and elitism. Again the Irish situation can be used to illustrate the problems, in a state where Gaelic is the official language, where the learning of Gaelic is compulsory, where there exists both a television station and radio station which broadcast in Gaelic, the position of the language is such that there are no longer any monoglots, all native speakers of Gaelic also speak English.
Concluding Remarks

This eight stage framework put forward by Fishman puts great emphasis on the promotion of intergenerational transmission, all the stages reach back to this basic tenet, if the number of children learning Xish as their native language cannot be increased, then the language will face extinction sooner rather than later. In the next section, the Breton language will be examined in the context of Fishman’s framework. Current efforts being made to revive the language will be discussed, as will whether any of these efforts are successfully reinforcing the intergenerational link.
Chapter 2

Breton: The State of the Language

(1) Introduction

This chapter is intended to give an overview of the sociolinguistic situation in Brittany. A brief historical overview of the language will be given, and the current situation will be presented in some detail. Some sociological factors contributing to the decline of Breton will also be established, and the role of the French state in this decline will be briefly touched upon, a fuller examination of French language policy and its impact on the regional languages will be reserved for later chapters. Finally the language revival efforts in Brittany will be examined in the context of Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.

(2) Brittany

Breton was first introduced into Armorica (i.e. Brittany) in the 4th century by immigrants from the British Isles, it is a member of the Brethonic branch of Celtic languages, thus its closest relatives are Welsh, Cornish and Manx. The present Breton-speaking area lies west of a line drawn from St Brieuc to St-Nazaire comprising Finistère and the western part of Côtes d’Armor, Morbihan and Loire Atlantique, and is commonly referred to as Basse-Bretagne. This historical boundary, which can be traced back to the time of the Veneti and the Ossismi, is borne out by the toponomy (it is the area of the Breton place-names: “ker”, “loc”, “plou”, “lan”, etc.) as well as by the research of Coquebert de Montbret. His research was carried out in 1806 before the internal migrations and forced imposition of French had taken place.

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3 The Ossismi were a tribe settled in what is now known as the Léon region, which is the region in which Brest is situated in or around the 5th century A.D. The Veneti occupied Brittany at the time of Caesar’s invasion of Gaul in 55 A.D.
Brittany has been a bi-ethnic unit since 850, when its kings extended their dominion well beyond the bounds of Breton settlement and deep into Romance-speaking territory. Their hold on most of this proved short lived, yet the fact that Rennes and Nantes were permanently incorporated was to have profound consequences, as these two French-speaking cities would henceforth play a dominant role in the region. Dating from this time, French had a profound effect on Breton, and by the time of Middle Breton, which appears around the fifteenth century its lexicon pertaining to the areas of scholarship and government had been deeply penetrated by French loanwords. By the sixteenth century, the advance of French in the area was well underway, the Breton language began to retreat from urban areas in Basse-Bretagne (Lower Brittany) where the language was indigenous. It was in the sixteenth century too that Brittany formally became a region of France, when Claude de France ceded her Duchy to France in 1532. Nothing happened to change the inferior social position of the language for which no official function of any kind has been documented.
There were gains made in the seventeenth century as Breton was linked to the Catholic Church, although Breton was not used in the mass, the liturgy being in Latin, it was essential in communications between the church and the common people, indeed Breton preaching was not abandoned until the 1960’s. Political recognition came with the Revolution: it was mildly positive in the federalist phase, during which Breton was used for printed proclamations; it was rabidly negative after the Jacobin triumph of 1793, which branded it as counter-revolutionary and incompatible with the ‘République une et indivisible’.

The position of Breton remained strong throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It wasn’t until 1882 in fact that the machinery was set up which could finally make France monolingual, it was in this year that a network of free compulsory schools was set up to give education solely through the medium of French. “These provided a daily demonstration – whether by assertion or implication – of the inferiority of Breton and, more importantly perhaps, of the advantages which a knowledge of French conferred” Humphreys (1993). The aspiration to learn French is easily understood if we take into account that the industrial revolution had led to the collapse of the regions important unmechanised textile industry, and made an ever-growing population completely dependant on an agriculture that could barely support it. Humphreys (1993) “in 1872 over 7% of the population of Finistère and Côtes-du-Nord were beggars”.

The severe decline in Breton in the 20th century owes much to the educational measures put in place in the latter part of the 19th century, to the economic crisis faced by the province, and perhaps most crucially to World War I. Breton soldiers in the trenches in order to successfully integrate were forced to use French, and returning soldiers in an attempt to spare their children the humiliation they had felt in the French-speaking world switched to French. Through the combined experiences of school, the army, and emigration, Bretons growing up in the early twentieth century learned that social power and advancement were linked to the mastery of French.
Attitudes changed in favour of Breton in the 1930’s, many local politicians put forward legislative proposals aimed at the provision of classes to teach Breton. But it was not until the Deixonne Law was passed in 1951 that any provision was made for the teaching of minority languages in France. This law, while regarded as crucial in the fight for minority language recognition in France, in truth achieved little, amounting to little more than a smoke screen to hide the government’s unwillingness to recognise the rights of minority languages. The Deixonne Law officially recognised and allowed the teaching of Breton, Basque, Occitan, and Catalan in state schools, but the teaching of them would be optional and limited to one hour per week. Due to confusion regarding the financing of such classes, and the conditions which had to be met in order for a regional language to be taught; 1) a minimum number of students was required, 2) parents and teachers had to agree to such teaching, the language in question, Breton in this case, often remained excluded from the classroom.

The 1975 Loi Haby, strengthened the position of regional languages within the education system with its statement in Article 12 that “Un enseignement des langues et cultures régionales peut être dispense tout au long de la scolarité”. In 1977, the first Diwan écoles maternelles were founded, these were nursery or pre-primary schools originally financed by parents and supporters where the children were totally “immersed” in the Breton tongue. Next, bilingual primary schools were founded, followed by the first Breton-speaking secondary school opened in Brest in 1989. In 1994 after 16 years in existence, the Diwan schools became state recognised and are practically entirely financed out of public funds. In 1997 the first pupils at Diwan schools passed their baccalauréat exam. In response to popular demand and injunctions from Europe, the French National Education authority finally agreed to make an exception to its strict monolingual principle and create bilingual classes in nursery schools, and primary school, then in secondary schools. Similarly the private Catholic schools launched a bilingual scheme for their schools with financial aid from the Finistère département. But the total number of pupils benefiting from bilingual education, nearly 2,700 in 1994, is still far from counterbalancing the rate of loss of native speakers.
**Breton: The Current Situation**

In 1500 the number of Breton speakers was estimated at 430,000, rising to 660,000 by 1685 based on the assumption that a third of the population of the whole of Brittany were Breton speakers. The nineteenth century brings census based estimates: 967,000 in 1808 according to Coquebert de Montbret, and, 1,320,000 in 1886 according to Sébillot, who further estimated that 51% of the population of Basse-Bretagne were monoglot Breton and only 5% monoglot French. The estimate of the situation at the beginning of the 20th century by Broudic (1983) is shown in the table below contrasted with that of Gourvil (1952) the basis of whose estimates are however unknown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C1905 (Broudic)</th>
<th>C1952 (Gourvil)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breton monoglots</strong></td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breton dominant (bilingual)</strong></td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French dominant (bilingual)</strong></td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French monoglots</strong></td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 2.2 The Decline of Breton

- According to Broudic’s estimate for 1905, 1.4 million people spoke Breton, or 93% of the population of Basse Bretagne, 64.3% of these were monoglot Breton, 35.7% being bilingual.
- According to Gourvil’s estimate for 1952, 1.1 million people spoke Breton, 9% of these were monoglot Breton, 91% being bilingual, 70% of those who were bilingual were native speakers of Breton.
It is interesting to note the discrepancy between the numbers of native Breton speakers who were bilingual, and the number of native French speakers who were bilingual; it is obvious that learning French for the Bretonnants (Breton speakers) was more important than learning Breton for the French speakers. There is a drastic drop in this period in the number of monolingual Bretonnants, probably linked to the education measures of the late 19th century whereby education had become compulsory with French as the sole language of instruction. In 1905 only those under 30 would have benefited from such a system, by 1952 the entire population of Bretonnants would have received such an education.

The most recent figures available on Breton are provided by TMO’s 1997 survey undertaken by Fanch Broudic, the results are shown below:

According to the 1997 survey 240,000 people speak Breton in Basse Bretagne corresponding to 20% of the population. This makes 80% of Bas-Bretons monolingual francophones.

Looking at the current situation from the point of view of Fishman’s RLS model, it is clear that an intergenerational interruption has taken place, i.e. intergenerational transmission is breaking down. The figures from Broudic’s 1997 survey support this fact categorically. If we look at the 1991 census and the 1997 survey it would appear that the number of speakers has remained
static around the 250,000 mark. However the movement in the age distribution of the figures has been quite drastic.

- In the 15-39 age group the number of those that can at least express themselves in Breton has halved in 7 years. It was 11.5% in 1991: it’s no more than 5.6% according to the 1997 survey.
- There has been an equally important disruption in the 40-59 age group, from 30% in 1991 to 20.5% in 1997.
- Among the over-60’s, the percentages are increasing. Nearly 50% of Bretonnants are between 60-74 years, the figure rising to 67% if we add the over-75’s. In 1991 the figure was 45%, thus there was an increase of more than 20% in the period 1991-1997.
- On the other end of the scale the number of speakers in the 15-19 age group is miniscule and difficult to measure (somewhere in the order of 0.2% or less than 500 people). In total, the number of people below the age of 49 who can speak Breton stands at no more than 13,000.

What these figures indicate is that the Bretonnant population is elderly, 67% of Bretonnants are over 60 years old. This places Breton squarely in stage 7 of language shift. Even in Breton speaking communities intergenerational transmission is breaking down, this is born out both by Broudic’s survey and Mari. C. Jones’s findings in Plougastel-Daoulas. Broudic found that only 26% of parents expressed themselves in Breton to their sons, and 24% with their daughters, he also found that only 13.5% of grandparents spoke Breton to their grandchildren, in an alarming 55% of cases Breton was never spoken to their sons, daughters or grandchildren.

Jones found that Bretonnants in Plougastel-Daoulas used the language predominantly with members of their family who are older than themselves. Nine out of every ten Bretonnants interviewed declared that they used, or had used, Breton with their grandparents, and four out of five of them used or had used it with their parents. It would seem from such findings that Breton is relatively secure in this its last remaining domain; the home, but digging below the surface it
emerges that this is far from the case. Only just over half the Bretonnants questioned in Plougastel used the language with their siblings, only one in five spoke it to their children and of those old enough, only a mere one in ten used Breton with their grandchildren. This evidence indicates without question that Breton has been losing ground in this domain with each successive generation. The stigma attached to Breton led to parents, even if they were imperfect speakers of French themselves, trying to ensure that their children would grow up with knowledge of French. These in turn, would have children and in many cases “by this third generation the classic language death scenario has taken place.”4 (Jones). In Plougastel, few of the Generation 2 bilingual parents seem to have passed Breton on to their offspring – in the words of one such parent “Ma mère a été punie pour parler breton. Pourquoi donc l’enseigner à mes enfants?”

Evidently the stigma engendered in the beginning of the century by the imposition of French only education continues to filter down and handicap any efforts to promote the language among its native speakers. The question posed by such alarming figures is this, are the revival efforts a) providing an atmosphere where intergenerational transmission is promoted b) making any efforts to target the native population, who alone have a realistic chance of reviving it as a living language.

The question of intergenerational transmission has been somewhat addressed in the previous paragraphs, again referring to Jones’s Plougastel study, 63% of the informants interviewed had Breton speaking parents, but only 35% of them were actually able to speak Breton themselves. If all the informants in the study are taken into account 46% of all people with Breton speaking parents are unable to speak Breton themselves, this is very slightly offset by the 6% who can speak Breton despite the fact of not having Breton speaking parents, however this still represents a net loss of 40% of Breton speakers over the course of a single generation, but this is not the most worrying statistic, that is provided by the Bretonnants who are parents, out of all Bretonnant parents interviewed only a quarter affirmed that their children could speak Breton. This represents

4 That is, where Generation 1 are monolingual Breton speakers with an acquired imperfect knowledge of French; Generation 2 are bilingual in Breton and French and Generation 3 are monolingual French speakers, with occasionally an imperfect knowledge of Breton.
a further net loss to the language of 75% of its speakers. The only conclusion to be drawn from these figures is that the loss of speakers is growing with each generation. It is painfully obvious from these figures that the efforts to revive Breton are failing at stage six, they are failing to successfully promote intergenerational transmission. This failing is also clearly illustrated in the attitudes towards Breton in the rural community of Plougastel. While three quarters of the sample when asked were in favour of saving the Breton language, it was noticeable that those unable to speak Breton were more favourable in their attitudes towards the language than their Breton-speaking counterparts. This is consistent with the opinion of Breton speakers (in Plougastel) that the language has no relevance in a modern setting.

(4) Negative Identity

Breton, like all languages, is a powerful symbol of group identity. Its survival is thus heavily dependant on the continued cohesion of the group for which it is the symbol of identity, i.e. the Bretons themselves. In France, regional identities as we shall see in the next chapter, have suffered enormously due to the aggressive promotion of French identity, they have often been portrayed as having characteristics which are the exact inverse of those associated with 'Frenchness'. As a result a sense of shame and inferiority has become part and parcel of many regional identities in France, the main and most serious consequence of this is that have chosen and continue to choose to spare their children the shame they may have felt growing up, by refusing to impose upon them the main instrument of this shame, the Breton language itself.

We have seen the intergenerational interruption which has occurred in Brittany over the last century, No doubt the drastic decline in intergenerational transmission was due at least in part to the negative Breton identity. Today however, many commentators, and Bretons themselves, feel that this negative identity has long since vanished.


As part of his research for his 1998 book l’Identité Bretonne, Ronan Le Coadic interviewed a number of people living in Brittany, both Bretonnant and non-Bretonnant. He found that the
majority of his interviewees were of the opinion that the negative Breton identity was a thing of the past.

Michel: Quand j’étais jeune c’était plutôt … Breton … C’était plutôt désobligeant, les remarques que les gens faisaient par rapport à la Bretagne ou par rapport aux Bretons.

Ronan Le Coadic: Et maintenant vous avez le sentiment que c’est différent?

Michel: Oui, mais enfin là c’est pareil, je vais encore répondre par rapport au plan professionnel. Oui, aujourd’hui, c’est totalement différent. Aujourd’hui par rapport à une majorité de régions, on est envié.

However in other interviews, there were indications of a latent inferiority complex, one interviewee when asked if Bretons had certain characteristics, tended to concentrate on negative characteristics while insisting that these aspects of Breton identity, like the Bretons themselves had evolved:

RLC: Avez-vous l’impression que les Bretons ont certaines caractéristiques, certains comportements particuliers?

Sylvie: (Soupir) Peut-être dans les mentalités… Mais oh! Non maintenant, ça évolue… Mais maintenant, les jeunes sont confrontés à d’autres jeunes, d’autres mentalités, Avec les écoles, ça évolue, tout ça. Ca a bien évolué. On trouve que les jeunes qui s’installent même maintenant, nous en agriculture, moi je trouve qu’au niveau mentalité ça évolue très bien.

Is this evolution which according to Le Coadic, Sylvie referred to a total of 45 times throughout her identity an evolution towards a French identity, are these mentalities which young people are being confronted with, French mentalities? If there is no longer a problem with Breton identity, this may be because Breton identity has been eroded to such an extent that people no longer feel torn between two identities, their Breton identity as evolved to a state more consistent with that of French identity. This disintegration of identity in the Breton heartland has profound consequences for the state of the language.
Intergenerational transmission has been upset to such an extent that there are not enough Breton speakers of child-bearing age to reverse the trend even if they all miraculously decided to bring their children up through Breton, according to Broudic the number of Bretonnants under 49 stands at no more than 13,000. Thus the only real option open to revivalists is the educational route, if children are not going to learn Breton from their parents, they will have to learn it in school.

(5) **The Breton Language in Education**

As it stands today, the public education system provides for up to 3 extra hours a week instruction in Breton language and culture, these hours being provided as extra hours outside the curriculum, in addition as previously mentioned, some public and Catholic schools have implemented their own bilingual education schemes promoted privately by the organisations *Div Yezh* and *Dihun*.

From a revivalist viewpoint, the most important organisation in this vital area of education is Diwan. Diwan is an organisation which functions as a network of Breton schools, it started in 1977, providing education at pre-primary and post primary levels, in its school at Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau. In the year of its foundation, only five students attended the school. The first Diwan lycée was opened in Relecq-Kerhuon (Brest) in September 1994, with the first Diwan students passing their baccalauréat in 1997. Today the organisation has 30 écoles maternelles, 28 écoles primaires, 3 collèges and 1 Lycée, the number of students attending Diwan schools for the academic year 2000-2001 was 2616.

The objective of the Diwan system is to provide an education through the medium of Breton from pre-primary level all the way to university. The Diwan movement bases its system on the immersion principle, the children who are attending the écoles maternelles are totally immersed in Breton, all class hours at this level are dedicated to the teaching of Breton in Breton. French is

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5 These are parents’ organizations which support the creation of bilingual streams in both public and Catholic education and form lobbies to convince local authorities or school boards to set up bilingual streams.

6 Meaning “the seed” in Breton
not introduced into the teaching programme until the second year of the primary cycle (CE1), at this level also French begins to be used as the language of instruction in subjects which had been previously taught through Breton, in order to provide students with the vocabulary necessary to express ideas in French they up to this point knew only through the medium of Breton. At post-primary level, the language of instruction is Breton for two thirds of the subjects, and French for the remaining third. This gradual introduction of French ensures that parents fears that the students level of French will be affected is unfounded, and in fact national evaluations at CE2 and 6ème show the contrary: the results for the students in Diwan schools are higher than the national average.

Diwan signed a contract with the State in 1994 which gave Diwan schools the status of private schools under agreement (according to the Debré Law) which means that the State pays the salaries of primary school teachers. Whenever Diwan wishes to create new schools, the State will only start supporting them from the fifth year of their existence, which makes their creation very difficult. It is the aim of Diwan to become part of the public education system. As we will see in chapter four, the current minister for education Jack Lang, has put forward proposals for such an absorption of Diwan into the public education system, but his efforts have been stalled by the Conseil d’Etat and the Conseil Constitutionnel.

Breton attitudes towards the Diwan movement and towards the teaching of Breton in general is mixed, and unfortunately while the Diwan schools do produce competent speakers of Breton, they speak a standard dialect of Breton (neo-Breton); the Breton learned by the native speaker in the home is likely to be dialectal in nature and thus mutual comprehensibility is not guaranteed. Learners find that native speakers ‘ne prononcent pas les mots’ while native speakers find that the learners are not using vocabulary with which they are familiar, accustomed as they are to borrowing words from French when there are no Breton words to express ideas in such domains as technology, politics etc. There is also the attitude that exists among some older native speakers that there are things such as science and politics, which you are just not supposed to
discuss in Breton. Such lexical discrepancy is fast becoming critical for the language, in order to perfect a language it is necessary to spend time in the area where it is spoken in order to practise it, however in Brittany a situation is emerging whereby Breton learners are not able to perfect their language via contact with native speakers.

Although people are learning Breton, there are not very many places in which they can practise what they have learnt, even in places like Plougastel-Daoulas where there is still a sizeable albeit elderly population of native speakers. In Jones’s study, schoolchildren learning Breton in Plougastel stated that apart from conversations with grandparents where the aforementioned comprehension problems frequently pop up, opportunities for them to speak Breton in Plougastel were few and far between. Given the lack of opportunities to speak the language it is unlikely that the majority of those learning Breton in school will become fluent. If we take into account the small number of people learning the language (only 1.6% of students in 1997 were receiving any kind of instruction in Breton), plus the negative connotations attached to it by many of its speakers, compounded with the problems caused by the dialectal nature of the language itself, it is extremely doubtful whether enough learners will become proficient enough to introduce Breton into their homes and continue the cycle of intergenerational transmission which is crucial to the survival of Breton, the likelihood of this happening diminishes even more if the learner marries a non-Bretonnant.

A crucial question which must be asked is whether the teaching of Breton is widely supported among the population of native speakers. Significantly more non-Bretonnants than Bretonnants support the teaching of Breton in schools. Native speakers tend to view the language as archaic and of no use in a modern setting, many Bretonnants feel that their children’s time would be better spent learning English, a language that would serve them well in their adult lives. One informant in Jones’s study put this idea very succinctly “On est en Europe. Tu vas aller parler Breton à Bruxelles?".
The two groups least in favour of the teaching of Breton in schools are ironically those who constitute the largest Breton speaking section of the population. These are the generations who were taught that Breton was the language of the backward and ignorant, the language of the ‘ploucs’. The general feeling appears to be: why teach a language to our children which has stigmatised us all our lives? That the native Breton speakers are the section of society the least supportive of the teaching of Breton in schools does not augur well for the future of the language. Comments made to Broudic in his 1997 survey by elderly Bretonnants are a stark illustration of their attitude towards their own language:

- A woman of 62 made the claim that Breton is useless; ‘C’est nul’
- Another woman felt that Breton ‘n’a pas d’intérêt dans la vie pratique’
- A woman from Finistère aged 82 expressed the opinion ‘ça ne sert à rien’
- The typical attitude was expressed by others from Finistère: ‘ça ne donne pas de travail’ or that one ‘ne peut rien faire avec le breton’

Jones found that in Plougastel attitudes towards the Diwan were far from favourable, only about one in ten favoured the Diwan system, and many informants stated categorically “certainement pas Diwan”. When we take into account that 70% of pupils in Diwan schools have non-Bretonnant parents, it is clear that the movement is failing to promote the language among the only group who can realistically save it, the Bretonnants themselves.

(6) Breton in the Media

Breton’s entry into the broadcast media is limited and inconsistent. Only the state-run regional television channel broadcasts any Breton, and this is limited to four to five minutes of news items daily, which can only be received over part of the Breton speaking area. A 45-minute general interest programme is available across the whole of Brittany on Sundays. All these broadcasts are currently at off-peak hours.

7 Plouc is a pejorative Breton term, which can be glossed as ‘Country Bumpkin’
Breton is better represented on the radio, although there is no monolingual service. Both State owned Breton regional stations carry programmes in Breton (2-14 hours per week), as do some local association radio stations, notably Radio Kreiz Breizh (20 hours in Breton) and Radio Bro Gwened (17 hours).

The Euromosaic Survey has shown low rates of listening and viewing of the available services, but some interpretation is called for. Whereas most Breton speakers watch nearly all available television in Breton in their area, they also watch much more in French. This cannot be interpreted as implying a preference for the French service. The local television estimates approximately 80,000 viewers for the Sunday programmes, whereas the figures for 1993 reveal that fully 15% of the population of Finistère watch the short daily news bulletin in Breton. These figures compare favourably with other minority language broadcasting services in Europe. Surveys studying the number of radio listeners have shown problems of interdialectal comprehension, especially in the case of viewer-listeners in the Gwened area, and in the Bigouden country of south Finistère as well.

Jones’s study in Plougastel also raised the question of comprehension difficulties when she investigated the listening and viewing habits of the bretonnant population. She found that while many people admitted to having watched programmes at one time or another, they did not do so regularly because they often found it difficult to understand the dialect being used in the broadcast. Unless the variety was from the area then most informants stated it was impossible to understand. Jones did express an opinion however that such difficulties may be more psychological than otherwise since 37% of informants watched Breton-medium television regularly. The media are also failing to reach significant proportions of their target audience as 25% of bretonnants professed themselves to be indifferent to the presence of Breton in the media, this may be due to the fact that many of the elderly rural speakers of Breton do not actually own a television set.

There are no weekly magazines in Breton, but there are a number of periodicals, mostly devoted to literature and language issues. The biggest of these, Bremañ, has a circulation of

8 The Euromosaic Survey was commissioned by the European Union to investigate minority European languages
approximately 1000 and a readership of some 2500-3000 people. There is a new children’s magazine called *Moutig* which is produced through cooperation with a similar Basque language publication, and with subsidies from the Regional Council and the European Union. Circulation is picking up rapidly, and it may be that this form of cooperation and subsidy will prove a valuable model for the future.

Literacy in Breton remains very low and this, together with the choice of subject matter, are the principle obstacles to selling publications to the main body of the Breton speaking population. Indeed, the Survey points up that over 85% of Breton speakers read a daily newspaper in French, but that only a minority regularly read books in any language.

### (7) Breton in the Workplace

Breton has nearly entirely retreated from this domain of use, the most obvious reason for this of course is the fact that the majority of bretonnants are over the age of 60 and therefore are no longer active in the workplace. Any Breton that is used, is used between colleagues rather than between employer and employee, but it must be stressed that any use of Breton in this domain is at best occasional.

Unemployment has been running at approximately 10% in Brittany for a number of years. Of those in work, about 10% are employed in agriculture, while some 25% work in industry, and as much as 50% in the service sector. About a half of those working in the services are employed by the state, equally divided between the armed forces and the education system. As can be seen from the table below, employment patterns are fairly similar across the five Breton departments, except in urban dominated Loire Atlantique, where the small number of agricultural workers brings down the primary sector figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finistère</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côtes d’Armor</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morbihan</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ille et Vilaine</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loire Atlantique</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</table>
The Euromosaic Survey, although on a very small scale, is representative of the Breton speaking population. Of those respondents in employment some 79% were active as small farmers or agricultural workers, while only 6% were in the tertiary sector. Two thirds of those who had worked for companies were employed by small firms of less than 24 employees that were locally owned and whose manager or owner knew or spoke Breton. There was no tendency to employ Breton speakers in particular positions or for special tasks, and the relevance of French and Breton in the workplace would seem to reflect their positions in wider society: Whereas oral ability and literacy in French were perceived as being essential in most cases, only understanding and speaking of Breton were considered "essential" or "useful" by a majority of respondents, with relatively few requiring a reading and writing ability.

Only a very few jobs, such as in the administration of the Regional Park, and teaching of the language itself require workers to know or to learn Breton. Indeed, most Breton-related jobs are in education, a few in "cultural" tourism, local authority bilingual service, and a few in journalism/radio/TV.

Under 17% of respondents, all Breton speakers, claimed a very good reading ability in Breton, compared to nearly a quarter of speakers who claimed to be completely illiterate in the language. The vast majority claimed to read and write French very well. This is probably the main reason why only a very few campaigns for particularly Breton products (dairy produce, crêpes, biscuits, alcoholic drinks) have been marketed in Breton, and then only with simple catch phrases or brand names. The Survey shows public support for a higher profile for Breton, but Breton speakers, broadly disagree that Breton should be compulsory and so privileged in the labour market.

(8) **Public Authorities and Services**

Breton is neither used nor permitted in the central administration of the State, in accordance with the general principles of the law. Nor is any Breton used by the Regional administration; either by the Breton Regional Council or by organs of the central State in Brittany. There is no specific
policy governing this usage, but as most local administration simply copies the central
government, the question does not come up.

The Euromosaic Survey found that, where Breton is widely spoken and understood, it is
sometimes used by local citizens with their own "mairie" and commune council. The Survey
showed that only very few Breton speakers do not use the language with their local councillor. A
very few communes work entirely in Breton, but only when all the elected members speak the
language. Minutes, notes and notices are always in French and only very rarely bilingual. Very
few people can read and write Breton, and they are simply not used to the idea of writing official
business in Breton. Indeed, the very ethos of official administrative settings seems to discourage
the use of Breton, as the Survey revealed overwhelming majorities of speakers who would only
use French with lawyers, librarians, at the unemployment exchange and benefits office, with the
police and taking a driving test, even when they were certain that their interlocutor spoke Breton.
Finistère Council has adopted a bilingual policy and has encouraged the communes on its
territory to do so too. They offer advice on village names and spellings. Most communes are now
adopting this practice. Legally one cannot change the name of the commune or village without an
act of parliament, and so official name changes are generally ruled out. Côtes d'Armor
Departmental Council is also developing policy on Breton, but mostly as with Finistère, this is
exclusively in symbolic domains through bilingual signposting and subsidies to Breton language
arts. Some aid is given to Breton medium education, but this is not the responsibility of local
government in the French State.

One area where some local councils have acted is in giving optional Breton classes to non-
speakers and literacy classes to those who speak the language. Some authorities have also
provided theatre, library, and educational leaflets in or about the language. As so few of the
general population are literate in Breton, requests for publications and services in Breton are
generally only made by a small number of language activists.

The survey indicates that Breton still serves as a community language but is becoming
increasingly reliant on a speaker's personal knowledge of a network. It is therefore logical that a
locally elected representative will be considered part of such a network, but that all other areas of
administration will be seen as outside of the personal network. To this one must add the negative linguistic identity upon language use in this sphere. These facts point to the use of Breton by the administration as being an entirely local phenomena restricted to informal and oral usage in areas with large numbers of Breton speakers.

(9) Revivalist Efforts in Brittany in the Context of Fishman’s RLS Model

Having examined the current situation of Breton in the domains of the home, the school, the workplace and the public domain, we will now examine whether the current efforts directed at reviving the language stand any chance of success in the context of Fishman’s RLS model.

It is clear from the above examination of the population distribution of Breton speakers that the language is largely spoken only by the elderly, of the estimated 240,000 speakers of Breton today 160,000 are over 60, we can estimate that the present population of Breton speakers who are over 60 will be halved in the period to 2005-2006: there will then be no more than 80,000 people in this age bracket with the female speakers outnumbering male speakers. As mentioned previously the age distribution of Bretonnants places the language squarely in stage 7 of language shift.

“Le Breton, me semble-t-il, se situe exactement au stade 7, puisque la plupart des locuteurs constituent toujours une population que l’on peut effectivement caractériser par son intégration sociale et par son existant ethnolinguistique, mais il ne s’agit plus de locuteurs en âge d’avoir enfants” Broudic (1999: 121).

(9.1) Promotion of Intergenerational Transmission at Community Level

In order to promote the revival of the language it is necessary to move the language back to stage 6, in which stage the language is secure in the home domain. Fishman proposes to achieve this security by promoting a situation in which intergenerational transmission can take place, leaving aside proposals on how exactly this is to be achieved, in the light of the age distribution of bretonnants even if every single bretonnant started speaking Breton to their children or grandchildren it may not be possible to reverse the trend whereby on average 40% of speakers
are lost with each successive generation. It is obvious from comments made both to Broudic in his 1997 survey, and to Jones in her study in Plougastel, that although the image of Breton has improved in the last 20 or so years, this is largely among non-bretonnants and neo-bretonnants i.e. those who have learnt their Breton through the school system. The native speakers, still feel the sting of the stigma attached to the Breton language and they don’t want their children and grandchildren to be burdened with it as well, add to this the feeling that Breton is of no use in the modern world and it is clear that measures must be taken to improve the language’s image among those who speak it. The revival movement appears to be ignoring stage 6 to the detriment of the language, they promote Breton to non-speakers which while necessary and is without doubt to be encouraged, does nothing to provide community situations where Breton can flourish organically, they seem to be under the illusion that the present Breton speaking communities in Basse-Bretagne will sustain themselves without them having to maintain awareness among such communities that their active use of the language is needed if the language is to survive. This oversight is detrimental to any efforts to revive the language; the cycle of intergenerational transmission must be maintained if successful language shift reversal is to take place, and in the case of Breton speaking communities in Basse-Bretagne it is clear that it is not.

(9.2) Education in Breton and Intergenerational Transmission

The fact that 70% of pupils at Diwan schools are children of non-bretonnant parents indicates such immersion schooling isn’t reaching those with whom it could achieve the most, there are few Diwan schools in Breton speaking communities, and attitudes such as the one expressed to Jones in Plougastel ‘certainement pas Breton’ shows that either the Diwan movement does not target the native population, which is unlikely, or that they have simply failed to represent their aims properly, again this was born out in Jones’s study where many people from Plougastel were under the impression that French wasn’t taught in Diwan schools. The Diwan schools are what are referred to in the literature as type 4a schools, i.e. relatively independent schools which must follow the general curriculum, while being free afterwards to facilitate the teaching of the endangered language in any way they see fit, lengthening of the school day, less holidays etc. In
“They [type 4a schools] are particularly unsuited to the attainment of the goals of weak and inexperienced RLS movements, and the more centralised the Yish [dominant language] educational establishment is, the more unsatisfactory such schools are if the local attainment of RLS success per se is utilised as the criterion of ‘success’” Fishman (1990: 23).

The children who graduate from Diwan schools speak the standard Breton dialect, despite the Diwan schools claim in their charter that the Breton taught in Diwan schools is that of the community in which they are present. As has been previously mentioned Breton is very dialectal in nature, time and time again when asked about the Breton being taught in the Diwan, native Breton speakers reply that it is not the same Breton, often grandparents who are native speakers cannot understand their grandchildren who have learned Breton in the Diwan. Thus the children even if living in or close to a Breton community have very little opportunity to use it outside the classroom; the efforts of the Diwan will be in vain if these children cannot introduce the Breton they have learned into the living of their daily lives. This is the case is illustrated in a film released in Brittany in 1999, which followed the lives over two or three years of several students who were the first to earn their ‘baccalauréats’ in Diwan and bilingual schools. The film illustrates that despite these young people’s commitment to the language they find it very difficult to maintain social relationships in that language, this is mostly because they are so diffusely scattered across the population of Brittany, but also because of the problems of mutual incomprehensibility when encountering native Breton speakers. The obvious conclusion to draw from this is that the Diwan schools despite their heroics efforts are not making any inroads into reversing the trend in language shift, largely because in the rush to provide schooling through Breton they have forgotten to target those who could benefit the language most from such education, namely the native speakers. According to Fishman the most important stage in RLS is stage 6, the promotion of intergenerational transmission, such considerations seem to have been overlooked in the Breton case. While these schools do
produce speakers of Breton, they do not guarantee that these children will speak Breton to their own children, especially given the likelihood of such neo-bretonnants marrying non-bretonnants, thus the cycle of interrupted transmission remains in force.

The Diwan’s teaching of standard Breton raises an issue other than that of mutual incomprehensibility. The existence of standard Breton is a recent occurrence, and its existence has further stigmatised local varieties,

“a double inferiorization effect, which may have influenced more people to rely on French; this was happening before, but the process accelerated after the Second World War” Timm (2000: 151).

Standard or neo-Breton has been characterized by Jones as a ‘xenolect’. Xenolects are “slightly foreignized varieties spoken natively which are not Creoles because they have not undergone significant restructuring” Timm (2000: 149). Jones suggests that the creation of such a xenolect could represent the terminal phase of a dying language. This is not necessarily the case, but it does mean that if Breton is to survive, it is likely that it will do so only under the guise of neo-breton, as the Diwan now provides nearly the sole means by which children may learn Breton.

The Diwan in trying to promote language revival appear to be promoting language transformation, but is language revival ever really a possible goal?

“Despite all the energetic campaigning and the impassioned rhetoric of revivalist leaders, it would seem that the chances of returning a declining language to its old domains in a restored speech community are very slim, so that if the term revival is interpreted in this sense, the whole enterprise may be dismissed as impractical and unrealistic” Bentahila and Davies (1993: 371)

(9.3) Breton Revivalism and the later stages of RLS

Fishman warns against rushing into the later stages of RLS without establishing a strong community base, the establishment of schools, the promotion of the language in the workplace, in the media and in politics only masks the true situation of the language, giving people a false

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9 neo-Bretonnant refers to speakers of Breton who have learned the ‘standard’ neo-Breton in school.
sense of security. Many people believe that having bilingual road signs, TV and radio programmes etc. promotes interest in the language thus helping revival efforts, but unless there is a strong community to take advantage of such services they do very little other than promote a passive feeling of goodwill towards the language. In Brittany many elderly people are in favour of reviving the language, but see no use in their speaking the language to their grandchildren as they feel it will be taught to them in school, they seem largely indifferent to the existence of Breton in the media, they are happy with the number of programmes broadcast in Breton on radio and television. The only comment they have to make on such broadcasts is that the Breton used is sometimes hard to understand. Fishman’s proviso that stage 6 must always be kept to the forefront, that all revival efforts must be aimed at promoting intergenerational transmission, is not being fulfilled in the Breton situation. That there are broadcasts in Breton is a wonderful achievement, but when all it promotes is a passive interaction with the language by people who already speak it, does it have any true worth in a revival movement?

(10) **Concluding Remarks**

The future of Breton despite the efforts to revive it remains very tenuous as we begin the 21st century. With 67% of the Breton speaking population over 60, and only 2000 students in the Diwan system for the academic year 2000-2001, the future seems very bleak. This need not be the case however if the French government shows itself to be more in favour of the preservation of regional languages and its recent signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, would seem to indicate that its policy is moving in that direction. Favourable attitudes are inversely proportional to ability to speak the language, and so far the revival movement has reflected this, it is the non-Breonnants who are sending their children to Diwan schools, while the language’s core population continues to be eroded by a century long process of stigmatisation whereby there is no value attached to the language a) because native speakers have been psychologically conditioned to view Breton as almost an inferior language and b) because it is not seen as useful in a modern setting by a people whose pragmatism seems to outweigh cultural considerations.
“At the turn of the 21st century, popular support among the middle classes for the promotion of Breton in schools has become widespread. Working class Bretons seem distinctly less interested, while the older generations – including the great bulk of native Breton speakers – mainly cleave to the diglossic model and are faintly bemused by it, in part because of the mismatch between their own Breton and the Breton that is now heard in the media and from school children” Timm(2000: 150).

In order for successful revival to occur, major efforts must be made to promote the language in areas where it is still spoken by a significant proportion of the population, and these efforts must be two-fold. Firstly the vernaculars must be de-stigmatised in these areas, so that people feel that Breton has as much value as French or even the neo-Breton which has come to be looked upon as the high form of the language, this will encourage people to pass on to their children a language that they value, and which they feel is valued within a wider national context. Secondly, the standard neo-Breton must become a tool available to all, it must be taught in much the same way as standard French or English is taught, this will promote communication across all vernacular barriers, thus reducing the problems of mutual incomprehensibility which is a serious threat to the language’s survival. If the native speakers can speak this ‘standard’ Breton as well as their respective vernacular this might go some way to reducing the stigma they feel for speaking a form of the language, which they have been taught to believe is inferior to the new standard form. Efforts to educate children from outside the traditional Breton speaking areas should run side by side with the consolidations being made within the native population. The immersion model in use by the Diwan movement seems to produce Breton speakers whose ability to speak French and work in a French-speaking environment has not been impaired, but who cannot function in a vernacular Breton situation, and this has to be addressed. Non-Bretonnant children learning Breton must be made aware of the vernaculars and helped to understand them, the similarities between the dialects rather than the differences must be stressed in order to combat the prevalent psychology which ensures that any differences between the dialects are perceived to be much greater than they actually are.
The treatment of Breton in the media must also be modified if it is to contribute to the promotion of intergenerational transmission. Problems of interdialectal comprehension must be addressed, but resolving the problem is far from easy, if the movement is to avoid feelings of exclusion, then it must cater for all dialects in its broadcasts, this has been done in the case of Radio na Gaeltachta in Ireland, but the Irish situation is very different as the differences in the dialects have been eroded by a standardisation in the language which is a result of 80 years of revival efforts.

The purpose of the media must be to promote accessibility to the language, so that it is open to all people at all levels of ability, only then will it make any contribution to the promotion of intergenerational transmission.

The Breton language is not doomed to extinction yet, but if modifications are not made to the programmes put in place by the revivalist movements, its future appears very bleak indeed. Even if the language makes a come back it is likely that much of the dialectal diversity will be lost as those at this stage likely to lead the revival will be speakers of the neo-Breton taught in the Diwan schools. The efforts by the revivalists to return Breton to its former state of security will not succeed in reviving the language as it was, but can only promote the use of a transformed language, this is a problem faced by all revival movements in the world today.
Chapter 3

France: Language and State

(1) **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical overview of the emergence of French and the subsequent subjugation of the regional languages. It will examine the importance of the French language to the French national identity, and attempt to show that French identity is based on a centralist myth, which has been detrimental to the health of the regional languages.

(2) **The Basis of French Identity**

In order to fully understand France's opposition to regionalism, it is necessary to examine French identity. This identity is based in a somewhat mythical understanding of French history, which has been formulated to promote the belief that France is absolute, that the people of France have always formed one indivisible nation. Regionalism threatens this identity, and fear of disintegration has led the State inexorably towards centralisation. This myth of identity referred to by Ager (1999) as the 'myth of the hexagon', seems deliberately designed to tempt regionalists away from their cultural identity. The components of this myth are listed below:

i. France has always existed in her present state

ii. France forms a natural unit, predestined to form one social group and one political nation

iii. No-one has ever become French against their will

iv. The myth of an anti-French conspiracy (attested historical examples include 'conspiracies' by Jews, by Freemasons, by Jesuits) and the idea of domination by external forces

v. The idea of the strong man as the saviour, associated in France with the concept of the legitimacy of the state

vi. The belief in a past golden age

vii. Belief in unity

viii. The sovereignty of the people, individually and not through membership of any group, class or category
ix. The social contract, made as a free choice by individuals with the state
x. The idea of fraternity, or the expression of a general will to act together
xi. The indivisibility of the state
xii. The universality of the Rights of Man, of the ideas of liberty and equality and the belief that these are the inalienable rights of all humanity


These points form the basic of the political ideologies of every contemporary political party in France, and lie at the very heart of what it means to be French. But despite the myth, France is, and always has been a country of great diversity. The France ‘une et indivisible’ is largely a construct of the revolution, but throughout the history of France, at least from the 12th century on, the French language has been used as the great unifying factor of the disparate peoples of France.

(3) The Emergence of French

(3.1) The Latinisation of Gaul

The geographical area to which the Romans gave the name ‘Gaul’, does not coincide exactly with the geographical area which we today refer to as France. Nor does it coincide with the linguistic boundaries of present day French speaking Europe. Though Gaul was ethnically and linguistically diverse, the people with whom the Romans had the most frequent encounters were the Celts of northern Gaul, these Celts were themselves divided into two different tribes, the Galli were by far the larger tribe, while the Belgae were largely relegated to the area north and east of the Seine and Marne rivers.

(cf. Miquel(1976), Kitchin(1881), Judge (2000))

The Roman conquest of Gaul took place in stages. In 125 BC, the Romans were asked by the Greeks, who around 600 BC had established colonies in modern day Marseilles, Nice and Antibes, to help end raids which were being carried out by the Gauls. By 124 BC, the Romans had put an end to these raids, and they decided to stay, creating the first Roman province
Provicia (Provence) around 120 BC. In 58 BC, it was the Gauls who called on the Romans for help in defending themselves against Germanic invaders. Again, once the Romans had succeeded in repelling the Germanic tribes, they decided to stay on, conquering Amorica (roughly corresponding to present day Brittany), and Aquitaine. The Gauls resisted, but after the defeat of Vercingétorix in 52 BC, the whole of Gaul was conquered, and declared a Roman province in 51 BC.

As Rome allowed the people of Gaul a significant measure of autonomy, the Gaulish aristocracy survived the Roman invasion largely intact. The association of Latin with Roman citizenship and political power meant however that they quickly became Romanised. The Latin which came to be spoken in Gaul, was not the classical Latin of Ovid, of Virgil, or even of Caesar, rather it was a vernacular form of Latin, known as Gallo-Romance, of which there were a number of varieties, all spoken with a Gaulish substratum. By the fifth century AD, the process of latinisation was very advanced in most areas of Gaul, but it was not complete: as late as the fourth century AD, there are reports by Christians preaching through the medium of Latin, that much of the rural population of Gaul remained ignorant of it. In certain areas pidginised forms of Latin may have existed to facilitate communication between speakers of Celtic languages, and speakers of Gallo-Romance. Not much is certain about the linguistic situation in France around the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, and there are widely differing opinions on the subject, some argue that the dialectalisation of Latin, preceding the emergence of the Romance language did not occur until the ninth century AD, others argue that it had largely occurred by AD 476 when the Roman Empire in the west finally collapsed. It is likely however that certain parts of Gaul were more profoundly latinised than others: the south of France being geographically closer to Rome, and the Mediterranean seaboard, was where the first and most intense Roman colonisations occurred.

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10 Substratum influences – occurring when speakers of a native language shift to an ‘invading’ language
Fig. 3.1 The Romanisation of Gaul (from Lodge 1993)

- Principal Urban centres involved in the initial phase of romanisation
- Initial zones of romanisation (Provence, Narbonnais)
- Great urban centres involved in the general romanisation of Gaul
- Important Regional centres of romanisation
- Principal avenues of romanisation
- Zones where romanisation came very late (eighth to tenth centuries).
- ‘Aquitanian’ substratum (Paleo-Basque)
- Substrata in southern Gaul difficult to locate with precision (Ligurians, Iberians)

Areas north of the Loire were less intensely colonised, and maintained their pre-Roman social structures longer, traditional Latin norms were much weaker here than in the south, as a
consequence of this, the Germanic invasions of the fifth century were to bring much more rapid linguistic change here than in the south.

(3.2) From Gallo-Romance to French

For the one-hundred and fifty years preceding its collapse, the Roman Empire had been at constant war with the various Germanic tribes surrounding its borders. The north of Gaul came under enormous pressure from the various Germanic tribes amassed on the German side of the Rhine, in particular from the Franks. In 486, Clovis King of the Franks, defeated the Romans at Soissons, thus becoming lord of northern Gaul. He allegedly converted to Christianity around 496 AD, and was crowned in the name of God in the Cathedral at Rheims. The conversion of Clovis, and his coronation in Rheims, are important to the myth of the hexagon. Clovis is recognised as the first king of France, though the kingdom which he ruled does not correspond to modern day France, and in 1996, the 1500th anniversary of his coronation was celebrated in Rheims, the celebrations included a visit to Rheims by Pope John Paul II. The celebrations were seen the by the extreme right *Front National* as a celebration of the beginnings of the French nation.

“This infuriated the other political parties, for whom the anniversary was not meant to be the occasion for racist propaganda, but a simple celebration of national history (in either event, however, the celebrations may be described as ‘nationalist’).” Anne Judge (2000: 69-70).

The Frankish settlement of Gaul was most dense in the north east of the country, and here they succeeded in displacing the Gallo-Romance language completely, the legacy of this displacement remains with us: the regional languages of Alsace and the Moselle are Germanic in character. Elsewhere, they were unable to impose their language, but particularly in the north of Gaul a Frankish superstratum\textsuperscript{11} was imposed onto Gallo-Romance. This gave rise to the *langues d’oïl*, modern French is a member of the *langues d’oïl*, the name *français* deriving from the Latin *franciscus*, originally meaning Frankish.

\textsuperscript{11} *Superstratum* influences – occurring when speakers of an ‘invading’ language shift to the language of the native population.
In the southern part of Gaul, where the influence of Rome had been strongest, and the process of latinisation had been thoroughly completed, the influence of the Franks was much weaker, indeed Aquitaine and Provence did not come under Frankish rule until 732. Thus in the south the *langue(s) d’oc* emerged, and because of the lack of Frankish superstratum, they remained much closer in character to Latin.

By the late eighth century, the Gallo-Romance language spoken in northern France was so different from Latin as to render the two languages mutually unintelligible. This problem was recognised by the Church, which decided in 813 at the Council of Tours that in order to be understood, priests would have to preach in the *rustica romana lingua*. At the same time, Charlemagne (King of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor), founded the cathedral schools to
teach clerics classical Latin. These schools trained administrators, and civil servants as well as priests, and so Latin became the language of law and administration.

"Thus the Gauls having abandoned Gaulish for a vernacularised form of Latin, turned to a scholastic from of Latin for administrative, judicial, academic, and religious purposes. It is, however the vernacular form that emerged as French" Judge (2000: 70-71).

The Strasbourg Oaths, written in 842, are generally considered to be the oldest text written in the French language:

‘Pro Deo amur et pro christian pablo et nostro commun salvament, d'ist di in avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si salvarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo et in ajudha et in cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fradra salvar dift, in o quid il mi altresi fazet, et ab Ludher nul plaid nunqua prindrai, qui meon vol cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit.’

Which translates into modern French as:

‘Pour l’amour de Dieu et pour le salut du peuple chrétien et notre salut commun, de ce jour en avant, autant que Dieu me donne le savoir et le pouvoir, je défendrai mon frère, Charles, et en aide de tout, comme il faut par droit naturelle défendre son frère, pourvu qu’il me fasse la même, et avec Lothaire je ne prendrai aucune accorde au préjudice de mon frère Charles’.

Collins and Collins (1997).

By the time the Strasbourg Oaths were written it is clear that a diglossic situation had emerged at least in northern France, Latin performed the H functions in society, while the local vernaculars performed the L functions. The sociolinguistic history of France between the ninth and sixteenth century is essentially concerned with the gradual displacement of Latin as the H language by the francien dialect which would eventually give rise to modern French.

(3.3) The Displacement of Latin

By the ninth century, the Gallo-Romance language had fragmented into a number of different dialects, those in the north were referred to as the langues d'oïl, those in the south as the langues d’oc. Francien, the dialect which would eventually give rise to modern French, was but one of these dialects. The fact that it eventually succeeded in displacing all the other vernaculars, and in
the end even Latin itself, is due entirely to the fact that it was the language of the Kings of France.

It is important to remember however, that despite the myth of the hexagon, France has not always existed in its present state, and that in the ninth century, the area ruled by the so called Kings of France was actually confined to the Ile-de-France. The Kingdoms of the South: Gascony, Aquitaine, Toulouse and Burgundy ruled themselves, and in these kingdoms the langues d'oc flourished, indeed the first Gallo-Romance literature and poetry was produced in these regions by the *troubadors*. It wasn't until the latter half of the twelfth century until the King of France’s influence began to be felt in the south, and it was around this time too, that francien began to acquire some prestige as the language of the King. The prestige of the French language, was not limited to France; by the time of the First Crusade “*the King’s French had come to play a vehicular role across Europe’s aristocracy*” Lodge (1993: 101). In the 1270’s Adenet le Roy wrote about the contemporary aristocratic practice in Germany of learning the King’s French:

Tout droit a celui tans que je ci vous devis

*Avoit une coustume ens el tiois pays,*

*Que tout li grant seignor, li conte et li marchis*

*Avoient entour aus gent francoise tous dis*

*Pour aprender Francois lor filles et leur fis.*

*Li rois et la royne et Berte o le cler vis*

*Sorent pres d’aussi bien le francois de Paris,*

*Com se il fussent ne ou bourc a Saint Denis*.  

*At the very time I am talking about*

*It was the custom in Germany*

*That all the great lords, earls and marquesses*

*Surrounded themselves with French people*

*To teach French to their sons and daughters.*

*The King and Queen and Bertha with her radiant face*

*Knew French almost as well*

*As if they had been born in the town of Saint Denis*  

Lodge (1993: 101)
Fig 3.3 France under Hugh Capet AD 987 (from Kitchin 1881)

At this time despite the increasing prestige of the King’s French, Latin continued to perform the H functions in society. This was despite the emergence of two potential vernacular standards lemosi in the south, and François (the King’s French) in the north. By the sixteenth century, when the French Kings had finally succeeded in uniting all of France under their rule, their language had begun to take over the H functions which up until then had been the sole preserve of Latin. It is this displacement of Latin, which marks the beginning of the state’s enforcement of French, as the language of administration, which would prove so costly to the regional languages.

(3.4) French becomes the Language of Administration

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, any administrative business to be conducted between the King of France, and the Occitan south, was conducted either in Latin, or in Occitan. This policies changed drastically following the end of the Hundred Years War, when the Kingdom
of France began to consolidate its power in the south. At first the only language which the crown sought to eliminate from its administration was Latin not Occitan. Thus in 1490 the Ordinance of Moulins specifies 'langage Français ou maternel' for court interrogations and verbatim reports. In 1510 documents of procedure are required to be written in the '[langage] vulgaire et langage du pays'. At this stage the local dialects still have parity with the King’s French as regards the administration of the country. In 1535 the Ordinance of Is-sur-Tille was published, this marks the first downgrading of the non-français dialects.

"[There is] the suggestion of a change in prospect in 1535 in the Ordinance of Is-sur-Tille: 'en françoys ou a tout le moins en vulgaire dudict pays'.” Lodge (1993: 125).

Then in 1539 came the first piece of language legislation that would have the effect of extending the domain of the French language at the expense of the other languages of France: The Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, which stated:

"tous arrestz ensemble toutes aultres procedures, soit des cours souveraines ou aultres subalterns et inferieures, soit de registres, enquetes, contrats, commissions, sentences, testaments ou aultry quelquonques actes ou exploits de justice ou qui en dependent ... soient prononcexe enregistrez et deliverez aux parties en langage maternel François et non aultrement" (Lodge 1993: 126).

The chief target of the ordinance was Latin, and by 1539 most regional languages had been replaced in legal documents by the King’s French. The importance of the ordinance lies in its establishment of the King’s French as the only language of administration, henceforth political control could only be wielded through the medium of the King’s French, and this had the effect of drastically reducing the status of the regional languages.

(3.5) The Prestige of French

The subjugation and assimilation of the ‘nations’ of France, i.e. the Picards, Burgundians, Gascons etc, and the centralisation of power in the hands of the King, caused a new sense of national identity to emerge in the dominant group, and the symbol of this new identity was the
French language. The transfer of function from Latin to the King’s French had lent a new prestige to the latter, which none of the other vernaculars of France possessed.

The codification of the French language began in earnest in the sixteenth century. There was a desire to enhance the prestige of the language, so that it could be seen as the equal of Latin, or Italian. It is interesting to note that many grammarians at the time felt French to be inferior to Italian, it might be possible to trace the immense process of codification which the language underwent in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to the inferiority complex which continues to plague the French today, and which inspires laws such as the Toubon Law. The Académie Française was founded by Richelieu in 1635, specifically to standardise and improve the French language, and also to raise the prestige of France throughout the rest of Europe. Throughout the following two centuries, the Académie and also various Court grammarians, ensured the creation of a standardised, widely accepted written and spoken form of the language. The prestige of the language was raised to incredible heights, French was thought by the writers of the eighteenth century to be the language which reflected best the natural logic of humanity.

“Ce qui distingue notre langue des langues anciennes et modernes, c’est l’ordre et la construction de la phrase. Cet ordre doit toujours être direct et nécessairement clair. Le Français nomme d’abord le sujet du discours, ensuite le verbe qui est action, et enfin l’objet de cette action: voilà la logique naturelle à tous les homes … la syntaxe française et incorruptible. C’est de là que résulte cette admirable clarté [sic], base éternelle de notre langue. Ce qui n’est pas clair n’est pas français: ce qui n’est pas clair est encore anglais, italien, grec ou latin.”

(Rivarol, 1784. From Lodge 1993: 184)

This attitude has persisted to the present day:

“Le 17e siècle, qui a cru pouvoir tout plier aux exigences de la raison, a sans doute donné à la logique l’occasion de transformer dans le sens de la raison la langue française. Aujourd’hui encore il est évident qu’elle répond beaucoup plus que toutes les autres aux exigences de la logique pure” (Wartburg 1962, From Lodge 1993: 185).
And more recently still, the former President François Mitterand, on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition devoted to the French language declares:

“A propos de la langue française, il est difficile d’ajouter, après tant d’autres des éloges tant de fois répétés sur sa rigeur, sa clarté, son élegance, ses nuances, la richesse de ses temps et de ses modes, la délicatesse de ses sonorités, la logique de son ordonnancement”

(Lodge 1993: 185)

The increased prestige of the French language was achieved at the expense of the regional languages; any hope of social advancement necessitated the study and mastering of French, but by the end of the eighteenth century on the eve of the Revolution, while French may have been the most prestigious language in Europe, the language of Kings and princes, it was not the language of the vast majority of the population of France. By 1792, only three million out of a population of twenty-five million, used French as their preferred spoken language.

(3.6) The Institutionalisation of French as the Symbol of the France

The French Revolution occurred in a centralised state, and although the objective of the Revolution was to build a new kind of state, what occurred, at least in the case of linguistic legislation, was the culmination of the royalist policy of centralisation and social control of the language. In the beginning the Revolutionaries encouraged the principle of bilingualism, in January 1790 they issued a decree encouraging the translation of official texts into the regional languages, and in May 1790, another decree was issued, instituting an increase in salary for bilingual teachers. The Revolutionaries were split into two opposing camps: the Jacobins and the Girondins. The Girondins derived their name from the fact that many of them came from the Gironde region of France, which is near Bordeaux. They were moderate republicans who sat in the French assembly between 1791 and 1793. They favoured a federal state, and felt that it was the duty of the State to satisfy all its component groups, thus they opposed the centralisation of power in Paris, and recognised the need to give a measure of power to the regions in order to allow them to develop freely. Their opponents the Jacobins, were committed to a form of democracy based on the rights of the individual, and the principle of equal opportunity. Originally
the Jacobins were members of a political club in Paris, which took its name from the convent of the Jacobins where they conducted their meetings. The Jacobins favoured a centralised government in a unified centralised state. The principle of a France ‘une et indivisible’ has been inherited from them. The Jacobins prevailed over the Girondins, who in 1793 suffered total military collapse, and began to build a centralised state, based on their principles of individual rights and equality. These principles had direct consequences for the regional languages in France. Since language can be a source of inequality, it soon became apparent to the revolutionaries, that everybody should speak the same language. A common language was also necessary, to enable communication in a society which was to become increasingly centralised. The regional languages soon came to be associated, with feudalism and the lower classes, which lowered their prestige even more.

In 1790 the Abbé Gregoire had been charged by the National Assembly with investigating the language situation in France. His report was presented in 1794, and was subtitled Sur la nécessité et les moyens d’anéantir les patois et d’universaliser l’usage de la langue française. He found that six million French people particularly the peasants of the south, had no knowledge of French at all. Six million more barely understood it, and only three million (one eighth) of the total population used French as their everyday language.

“On peut assurer sans exaggeration qu’au moins six millions de Français, surtout dans les campagnes, ignorant la langue nationale: qu’un nombre égal est à peu près incapable de soutenir une conversation suivie; qu’en dernier résultat, le nombre de ceux qui la parlent n’excède pas trios millions, et probablement le nombre de ceux qui l’écrivent correctement est encore moindre”
In 1793 it was decreed that public education would be made available throughout France, the main aim of this was to teach French to those people who were ignorant of it. French was to be the sole language of instruction in this new public education system.

“To share a language that had previously been the preserve of the elite was a supreme act of democracy and the principle of ‘one language, one nation, one state’ became the cornerstone of the new French republic. French was the symbol of a nation that was ‘une et indivisible’, and all other languages were forbidden” Judge (2000: 73).

In January 1794, the Barère report linked regional languages with attacks on the Revolution. Barère made the accusation that opponents of the regime were using regional languages to mislead and misinform the population. He proposed the banishment of the regional languages:

“Le fédéralisme et la superstition parlent bas-breton; l'émigration et haine de la République parlent allemand... La Contre-révolution parle l'italien et le fanatisme parle basque. Cassons ces instruments de dommage et d'erreurs.” Following Barère’s report another decree was issued ordering the appointment of a teacher of French within ten days in every commune of every
department where a regional language was spoken: in Brittany, Alsace-Lorraine, Corsica, and in the departments of Nord, Alpes Maritimes, and Basse-Pyrénées. Many people involved in the debate, felt that this measure did not go far enough, and wanted to extend the decree into all parts of France, where the French language was not used as the vernacular. Following Grégoire’s report which was presented in May 1794, the original Assembly policy of providing translations of official documents into the regional languages was completely rejected. Grégoire’s proposed banning of regional languages, coupled with promoting a new pride in the French language, underlined the extent to which the Jacobins had achieved their objective of a centralised state, where the rights and equality of individuals were guaranteed. This recognition of individual rights was accorded at the expense of group rights, thus the Bretons, Corsican, Alsatians, etc. no longer had any rights as a group of people with a common language, as according to Jacobin doctrine, this would jeopardise the stability of the State. The required usage of French spread through all levels of administration, there was even a call that married couples should have to prove that they could read, write and speak French. Rejection of regional languages now became a proof of patriotism.

“La féodalité … y conserva soigneusement cette disparité d’idiomes comme un moyen de reconnaître, de ressaisir les serfs fugitives et de river leurs chaînes…l’unité de l’idiome est une partie intégrante de la révolution…que le zèle des citoyens proscrive à jamais les jargons, qui sont les dernières vestiges de la féodalité détruite.” Rapport Grégoire: From Ager (1999: 224).

They were seen as rude tongues lacking the vocabulary with which modern ideas could be expressed.

“Si dans notre langue la partie politique est à peine crée, que peut-elle être dans les idioms don’t les uns abondent à la vérité, en expressions sentimentales pour peindre les douces effusions du Coeur, mais sont absolument dénués de termes relatifs à la politique; les autres sont des jargons lourds et grossiers, sans syntaxe déterminée.” Rapport Grégoire: From Ager (1999: 224).

The 1794 decree which followed the publication of the Barère and Grégoire reports, the administrative supremacy of the French language was fixed:
Article 1. À compter du jour de la publication de la présente loi, nul acte public ne pourra, dans quelque partie que ce soit du territoire de la République, être écrit qu’en langue française.

Article 2. Après le mois qui suivra la publication de la présente loi, il ne pourra être enregistré aucun acte, même sous seing privé, s’il n’est écrit en langue française.

Article 3. Tout fonctionnaire ou officier public, tout agent du Gouvernement qui, à dater du jour de la publication de la présente loi, dressera, écrira ou souscrira, dans l’exercice de ses fonctions, des procès-verbaux, jugements, contrats ou autres actes généralement quelconques conçus en idiomes ou langues autres que la française, sera traduit devant le tribunal de police correctionnelle de sa résidence, condamné à six mois d’emprisonnement, et destitué.

Article 4. La même peine aura lieu contre tout receveur du droit d’enregistrement qui, après le mois de la publication de la présente loi, enregistrera des actes, même sous seing privé, écrits en idiomes ou langues autres que le français.

This decree marked a huge change in state policy towards regional languages. Up until this, we have seen that the policy under the monarchic state was simply to ensure that the royal message was understood and implemented. Now the new République wished to ensure equality, and free access to information for everybody, this policy required the imposition of French, and the destruction of regional languages, to the extent that an agent of the government found guilty of using a regional language in the exercise of his functions could be imprisoned for six months and made destitute. However this decree may have been too severe even for the Revolutionaries themselves, or perhaps it was simply too impractical to enforce, because after the fall of Robespierre the decree was suspended until a new report could be produced by the comités de législation et d’instruction publique. This was followed by another decree in November 1794 which stated:
“Dans toutes les parties de la République, l'instruction ne se fait qu'en langue française.”

In the aftermath of the Revolution a great hatred and suspicion was fomented against the regional languages. They came to symbolise political fragmentation, and were seen as threatening the new centralised Jacobin state. French and French alone could provide the freedom which every person in France had a right to, it was only through the dissemination of the French language that the Universal Rights of Man and of the Citizen could be upheld. Language policies from the Revolution until the present day, have been ensured at ensuring social and political integration, and also crucially territorial integrity. It would not be hard to argue that this aspect of language policy has not undergone much evolution in the two centuries since the revolution:


(4) Language Policies from 1800 to 1950

The principles of language policy which had been developed during the Revolution underwent little modification during the course of the nineteenth century. The main developments occurred in the implementation of the policy. The two main areas affected were the judicial system, which underwent further linguistic centralisation: the principle of privileging French over all other language in legal documents was reinforced through decisions in 1830, 1859, and 1875, and most importantly the education system. The Revolutionary aim to make education freely available to all, and only through the medium of French, could not be achieved straight away, because of lack of resources. Even in 1832, when nationwide primary education was implemented, there were too few teachers to achieve this aim. It wasn’t until 1881, when primary education was made, obligatory, secular and free, that it was finally possible the implement the Revolutionaries ideal of equality for all through the provision of free education through the medium of French.
Of course as noted in the previous section, the Revolutionaries also aimed to stamp out the regional languages, and so the Minister for Education ensured that French and French only could be used in the classrooms, and in the schoolgrounds. Children who spoke their regional language were systematically ridiculed, being forced to wear the *symbole*, the equivalent of a dunce’s cap, around their necks. Local customs were also ridiculed, and the children were made to feel that they were backward and unequal to the long and great tradition of France. The shame engendered by this repression and ridicule is still anchored in the psyche of many speakers of regional languages today, militant Occitanists call it *la verghona*. French represented the Nation, and Enlightenment and had to be prioritised.

Fig 3.5 Departments where Regional Languages Are Spoken 1860’s (Lodge 1993)
“French, the national language, must come before the others. It was and is the vehicle for all ideas of liberty and must be spread as much as possible” Georges Leygue, Minister of Education 1902: (Ager 1999: 29).

There were other factors working against the regional languages in these years. The First World War in particular made a huge impact on the numbers of men from the regions coming into contact with French. French was the language of the army, and the conscription introduced in the nineteenth century, meant that many men were coming into contact with it, who otherwise might never have done so. The depressed economic situation of the regions also played an enormous part in slow decline of the regional languages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Fig 3.6 Areas Where Regional Languages Are Spoken 1960’s (Lodge 1993)

(5) Concluding Remarks

It is part of the political ideology of France, that she has always existed, that the France ruled over by the Merovingians, the Capetians, the Carolingians, the Valois, and the Bourbons, was
one and the same. However, modern day France is the product of centuries of bloodshed aimed first at uniting the regions under the Kings of the Ile de France, and later after the Revolution, at intensifying the centralisation which had been started by the Kings. The major casualties of these policies were to be the regions themselves, and especially the great symbol which bound them together in the first place: the language they shared. The creation of the powerful French identity which exists today, was achieved through the negation of regional identities. Any group hoping to reverse the inexorable decline of the languages: to reverse the language shift, must face this fact head on. They must convince people that the reinforcement of regional identities through language revival is not a threat to the central French identity, only when this is properly achieved will the State feel itself free enough the properly support their efforts. Of course what this amounts to in effect is the subordination of regional identities to the central French identity, a continuation of the process of negation which has been ongoing since the Revolution.
Chapter 4

Linguistic Policies in France in the 20th Century.

(1) Introduction

This chapter is intended to highlight the key areas of French linguistic policy regarding regional languages in the 20th Century and into the 21st century. The focus of the chapter will be an analysis of French regional language policy with particular attention paid to France’s reaction to the recent European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The chapter comprise three parts, the first part will deal with French language policies from the 1951 Deixonne Law through to the debate on the signing of the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, while the second will deal with the status of the associative schools. The third section will consist of an examination of the Charter, and France’s reaction to the Charter. This will be followed by a brief examination of the recent proposals on the teaching of Regional Languages in France, put forward by the Minister for Education Jack Lang.

(2) Linguistic Policy from the Deixonne Law to the Charter Debate

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, French Linguistic Policy certainly from the French Revolution onwards was unreservedly anti-regionalist, regionalism was perceived to threaten the unity of the Republic “une et indivisible” and had to be eradicated at all costs, and as the French language was to be the instrument which would unite the disparate peoples of France the regional languages could not be allowed to challenge its supremacy.

“Il est vrai que ce développement du français s’est fait au détriment d’autres langues. Il est vrai que l’Etat a appliqué des méthodes qui ont été à l’encontre des réalités linguistiques des populations, de leurs traditions et de leurs cultures aussi” Poignant(1998)

Any claim that the French State set out to destroy the regional languages would be a contentious one indeed, and the State itself appears keen not to be seen to have engaged in any deliberate attempt to destroy the regional languages as is evidenced by the following statement in Poignant’s 1998 report to Lionel Jospin on the regional languages:
“…on ne trouve aucun trace de volonté d’anéantir les langues régionales dans les discours de Jules Ferry à la Chambre de Députés.”

The Ferry Laws of 1881-1886 made primary education compulsory secular and free, but the language of instruction was to be French and only French, any child caught using a regional language was to be punished and this punishment was often severe, this policy could easily be seen as a wilful attempt to wipe out regional languages, but as policy implementation was delegated to the departments, the state itself can deny that the laws it formulated had as their goal the destruction of the regional languages.

“…chaque conseil départemental reste maître d’adopter pour son ressort, sous réserve de la sanction du conseil supérieur, toutes les mesures qui, sans être contraires aux règles communes, lui paraîtront répondre à des besoins particuliers” Jules Ferry: Poignant (1998)

The Abbé Grégoires 1794 report subtitled “Sur la nécessité et les moyens d’anéantir les patois et d’universaliser l’usage de la langue française” set the tone for the linguistic policies of post revolutionary France, but it was not until 1881 when Jules Ferry began the process of making primary education free for all, that the State finally had the tools with which to implement the policies which would finally make France a homogenous linguistic unit. French represented both Nation and Enlightenment and the regional languages were systematically downgraded and ridiculed in the schools through the punishments meted out to the unfortunate students caught speaking their native tongues. The learning of French was the priority, even as late as 1925, the then Education Minister, A de Monzie declared that “In order for France to achieve linguistic unity, Breton must disappear” and that “Lay schools cannot shelter languages competing with French” Ager (1999: 29-30).

Though it is true that State policy was not the only enemy of the regional languages in the period between 1881 and 1951, its disinclination to support regionalism and the regional languages meant that the process of language shift was hugely accelerated in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.
(2.1) **The Deixonne Law**

It was not until 1951 that there was any softening in the State's approach towards the regional languages. In that year an Act entitled “La Loi Deixonne”, gave formal status in education to four of the regional languages: Basque, Breton, Catalan and Occitan. This act ended “the century and a half of systematic attacks on the use of regional languages” Ager (1999: 31), but it was far from being an active support mechanism for these languages. Only four languages could be taught in the public education system, on the basis of the expressed wish of both teacher and pupils for a maximum one hour per week. These languages could be taught as part of the provisions for general education; but they could only form part of the examination system as optional extras, not counting towards the overall grade awarded for the baccalaureate, and could therefore count only in minor ways to certifying the child’s education. The Act allowed but did not insist that education was provided. Neither did it make additional resources available immediately. There was no teacher training, higher education or research support, or teaching materials. It would take eighteen years for the law to finally be applied. The ministerial circular giving effect to its provisions is dated 1969, and it was not until 1970 that achievement in the regional languages was included as part of the overall score for the baccalaureate. The provisions of the Deixonne Act were extended to Corsican in 1974, and have been gradually applied to other regional languages in later years. A systematic review of the situation had to wait until 1982 and later.

(2.2) **The Haby Law**

The next major attempt to reform the French education system by making further provisions for the teaching of regional languages was the Haby law of 1975. It strengthened the position of regional languages within the education system with its statement in Article 12 that ‘Un enseignement des langues et cultures régionales peut être dispense tout au long de la scolarité’ (Loi n° 75-620 du 11 juillet 1975 relative à l’éducation). The Haby Law provided for minor additions to the Deixonne Law, including a mandatory three hours per year devoted to the comparison of French and the regional language, ten hours of history and the study of ten regional civilisation texts.
(2.3) **Recent Changes in Language Policy**

In the 1970's the plight of the regional languages became a political weapon wielded by the Left in their attack on the political stagnation of the Right. It was during this period that Giscard d'Estaing as President began to set up 'cultural charters' or 'contracts' with the regions. These contracts though undoubtedly a step forward in terms of relations between the State and the regions, were seen by many as an attempt to reduce the regional languages to just another example of local colour, on the same level as bagpipe playing in Scotland or Irish dancing in Ireland. Immersion schools which exploited the 1901 law on associations\(^\text{12}\) also began to appear at this time. The first schools to exploit the legal loophole provided by the 1901 law were the Basque immersion schools or *Ikastolak* which were founded in 1969. These schools were not recognised by the French state, but despite this the number of schools began to increase. The Ikastolak inspired similar movements in the other regions such as, the Diwan in Brittany, the Calendretas in Occitania and the Bressolas for speakers of Catalan, spawning an alternative education system the écoles associatives. These schools faced huge financial problems because of the lack of State support, and were in the early days entirely supported by the voluntary contributions of parents and benefactors.

By 1981 the regional language question had risen so high in the national consciousness that François Mitterand chose to exploit it in order to gain the support of the regionalists for his election campaign..

"*Le temps est venu d'un statut des langues et cultures de France qui leur reconnaîsse une existence réelle. Le temps est venu de leur ouvrir grandes les portes de l'école, de la radio et de la télévision permettant leur diffusion, de leur accorder toute la place qu'elles méritent dans la vie publique*"(François Mitterand 14 mars 1981). This was a far cry from a statement made by the then President Georges Pompidou only 7 years previously:

\(^{12}\) An *association* is a legal person created by agreement by which ‘…two or more persons share in a permanent way their knowledge or activities towards an aim other than the sharing of profits’. Article 1. Law of 1 July 1901. Judge and Judge (2000: 115)
“il n'y a pas de place pour les langues régionales dans une France destinée à marquer l'Europe de son sceau” Mitterand’s remarks smack somewhat of political opportunism, but it is undeniable that some beneficial developments did take place during his two terms as President.

In 1982 Alain Savary the Minister for Education published a ‘circulaire’ (No. 82-261 of 12 June 1982) proposing a new programme for the teaching of regional languages and cultures. Savary proposed that

- The State should be responsible for the teaching of regional languages;
- Regional languages should be taught from primary level all the way to University, and that they should be accorded the status of a separate discipline;
- The teaching of regional languages should be based on the expressed wish of both teacher and pupils.

This was followed by another ‘circulaire’ in 1983 which gave local communities the right to organise cultural activities to complement the curriculum. Together, these circulaires made it possible to teach other subjects, albeit on an experimental basis, through a regional language. Perhaps the most important element of the ‘Savary’ circulaires was the fact that the regional languages weren’t actually listed, which meant that Savary’s proposals applied to them all, including the langues d’oïl. The issue of secondary education programmes for the regional languages were tackled somewhat with a number of arrêtés which followed the ‘Savary’ circulaires. In 1988 the way in which regional languages were to be taught was changed yet again. The Ministry named the following languages as being authorised for teaching in the Lycées: Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corse, Auvergnat, Gascon, Languedocien, Limousin, Niçart, Provençal, Vivaro-Alpin, Tahitien, Gallo, the regional languages of Alsace, the regional languages of the Moselle, and four Melanesian regional languages. These languages could now be taken for the baccalaureate as either the second or third language and as an obligatory subject or an optional one, depending on the particular type of Baccalaureate. In 1991 a CAPES was established for Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Occitan, Gallo, the regional languages in Alsace and also Tahitian and Melanesian through the arrêté of 30 April 1991, but the regional
language still had to be combined with another subject such as French. An *arrêté* of 23 June 1994 allows for pupils to sit their Junior Certificate equivalent exam in history and geography in a regional language. In 1990 Lionel Jospin the then Minister for Education drew up a *Convention*\(^\text{13}\) which recognised the validity of teaching regional languages and paying for specialist teachers in the nursery and primary sector. In 1995 another circulaire was drawn up by François Bayrou which emphasised that the State was committed to the preservation of the regional languages which were recognised to be an integral part of the French national heritage. Individual Académies (i.e. education areas) were requested to draw up academic plans jointly with regional authorities, and also to appoint coordinators to ensure the provision of teaching materials. At primary level, teachers were encouraged to increase their pupil’s awareness of their cultural heritage. Regional languages could now be taught for between one and three hours per week and used as the teaching medium for history geography, sport, art or the sciences. In bilingual classes there was provision made for an equal amount of teaching in the regional language and French, although the number of hours devoted to the teaching of the French language itself was not up for negotiation. At secondary level, regional languages could be taught for at least three hours per week, plus one or two other disciplines could be taught in that language. Regional languages could be taken as a language option in the baccalaureate.

Education was not the only area concentrated on by politicians wishing to increase the support for regional languages during Mitterand’s reign as President, the issue of the lack of representation for the regional languages in the media was also tackled. Before 1982 French was the sole language which could be used in the media apart from the few concessionary hours a week given to the regional languages. However in that year Article 5 of the Law No. 82-652 of 29 July 1982 on audiovisual communications made it clear that radio and television had a duty to help maintain and promote the regional languages and cultures. As a result of this law the regional languages benefited from an increased number of hours of radio and television broadcasts. A more interesting development at least from the point of view of the status of French and French

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\(^\text{13}\) A *convention* is an agreement drawn up between two legal persons, in this case the Ministry of Education and local administrations and associations.
heritage is an amendment to the ‘Loi Carignon’ of 1994 which obliged that 40% of the songs on French radio be in the French language, in Letter No. 88 of January 1997 the C.S.A (Conseil Supérieur de l’audiovisuelle) defined a song in French as being a song in French or in a regional language of France,

"[this] illustrates certain paradoxical aspects of the regional languages debate: a language spoken in France in French even if it is not, because it is part of the concept of French Heritage"

Judge and Judge (2000: 115).

Despite all these efforts to improve the status of regional languages within the French education system, there was no evidence that that government was willing to put forward any legislation on the status of regional languages, and as the vast majority of schools did not have any interest in implementing the teaching of regional languages because of the lack of demand for such teaching, the real status of the regional languages remained unchanged.


Between 1951 and 1998 there was certainly a softening in the State’s attitude towards the regional languages, they came to be seen as part of France’s cultural heritage, part of the ‘patrimoine’ to be safeguarded as an integral part of French national identity. However, while some efforts have been made to promote these languages through the national education system, there is a huge problem of lack of application of governmental proposals, while the government may make it possible for regional languages to be more widely taught, this will not improve the situation of these languages if the schools do not take advantage of this new latitude.

"Les textes existants ne sont cependant pas appliqués comme il le faudrait: les plans prévus par la circulaire de 1995 n’ont pas partout été prépares; dans les régions concernées de nombreux établissements ne proposent aucune forme d’enseignement en langue régionale. L’objectif de
“préservation d’un élément essentiel du patrimoine national et de transmission des langues et cultures régionales” est donc loin d’être assuré” Poignant (1998).

There also appears to be no efforts being made to promote the regional languages outside the regions in which they are spoken, if they are so important to the “patrimoine national” why is it that the majority of the nation doesn’t seem to concern itself with them?

(3) The Status of the Associative Schools

The fact that any state movement on the teaching of regional languages in the public education system took place at all is due in large part to the foundation of immersion schools by regional language enthusiasts. These schools took advantage of the 1901 law of associations which was mentioned in the last section. The first of these schools (Ikastolak) was opened in the Basque region in 1969, other schools followed throughout the 1970’s, the Bressolas (Catalan) in 1976, Diwan (Breton) in 1977, and later the Calendradas (Occitan) in 1982. The major difference between these schools and the state schools is that they function entirely through a regional language; students are from day one immersed in an environment where no French at all is spoken. Like state schools they are apolitical and secular. Strictly speaking these schools were illegal, but they remained open because of fears of what might happen if the government attempted to close them.

The associative schools movement has come a long way in the last twenty years despite the huge problems it has faced, both political and financial. Because the schools were not recognised by the state, they were entirely dependant on contributions from parents and benefactors for their survival, so for the past two decades they have been campaigning constantly for state recognition, and slowly but surely the government has been grudgingly giving in to their demands. The first concession the state made was the authorisation of a government subsidy from the Ministry of Culture (not the Ministry of Education) to the Ikastolak in 1982; this was followed by a further subsidy from the Ministry of Education in 1982. Due to the election of a conservative government in 1986, further progress wasn’t made until 1991 when Lionel Jospin’s Convention
included financial arrangements for the secondary sector. A major breakthrough was finally made in 1994 when a protocole by the Ministry of Education made it possible for the associative schools to be contracted to the State: they were granted ‘private school’ status on the same level as the private religious schools but without the same financial advantages.

"For the first time the State recognised teaching in a regional language as a valid part of the national educational system." Judge and Judge (2000: 115).

The campaign is ongoing for full integration into the state system.

Demand for immersion schools is on the increase, but they still face enormous problems, though the protocole of 1994 does mean that these schools are now recognised by the State and subsidised by it, there is a general unwillingness on the part of the State to increase the number of posts, this is due mainly to economic concerns as the falling school population means that creating a new post often means closing down another. Nevertheless, in 1998, 65 posts for Diwan teachers were being financed by the State, which given the State attitude to these schools on their creation in 1977, is something of a minor miracle.

(4) France and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

(4.1) What is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is an attempt by the Council of Europe to address the issue of regional and minority languages in Europe, and it was first put forward for signing in 1992. The Charter has the legal status of a Convention, which means that it has no force in law, however there exists a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommendation that this Convention should be complemented with an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights to set out:

“...clearly defined rights which individuals may invoke before independent judiciary organs.”

14 Recommendation 1285 of the 1996 Ordinary Session in Paragraph 10
The Charter has a long provenance, although it is a Council of Europe proposal, it owes its existence in large part to European Parliament initiatives of the late 1970’s and 1980’s. The European Parliament in 1979 and 1980, passed several motions demanding protection for regional and minority languages and cultures. Then in 1982 the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) was founded, through the efforts of the First Arté Resolution. The Second Arté Resolution led in 1983, to the creation of an official budget for the support of regional and minority languages and cultures in the E.E.C. Finally in 1987 the Kuijpers Resolution demanded concrete measure to promote regional languages and cultures, and gave support to the Council of Europe’s efforts to draw up a Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Council of Europe has long been trying to deal with the issue of regional languages in Europe although serious movement on the issue has really only been achieved in the last twenty years. In the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which came into force on the 3rd September 1953, there are two articles related to the issue of minority languages and cultures:

- **Article 14:** Principle of non-discrimination ‘on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political/other opinion, national/social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status’.

- **Article 6:** Judicial Authorities
  - minimum right of accused
    - a) to be informed promptly in a language which he understands of nature/cause of accusation
    - b) free assistance of interpreter if cannot understand/speak language used un court

These articles are really the first recognition of the rights of minorities to their culture and language, but while these articles are important in establishing these rights, the Convention does not offer a concrete system of protection to ensure these rights are respected. This lack of protection was recognised in Recommendation 285 of the Parliamentary Assembly in 1961, which called for a protection measure to supplement the European Convention to be devised in
order to safeguard the rights of minorities to their language and culture. The direct precursor to the Charter was Recommendation 928 of the Parliamentary Assembly which was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1981, some of the issues it addressed were:

- respect for/balanced development of, all the European cultures and of linguistic identities in particular, very important to the development of Europe and the European idea
- principles: right of children to their own language
- right of communities to develop their own language and culture

Perhaps most importantly, the recommendation called for a Charter to be drawn up to address the issue of minority languages and cultures.

In 1984 the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe established a Committee of Experts to prepare a draft European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Two members of the EBLUL Council were on this Committee, and EBLUL’s Secretary General, Dónal Ó Riagáin was consulted on the final draft. The Charter was adopted by the Standing Conference in March 1988, and was favourably received by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in October 1988. In June 1992, the Minister’s Deputies of the Council of Europe voted to accord the Charter the legal form of a Convention. France, the UK, Cyprus and Turkey abstained and Greece voted against. The Convention was opened for signature on 5th November 1992, and required ratification by five member states of the Council of Europe for it to come into force. The first five countries to ratify it were: Norway (1993), Finland (1994), Hungary (1995), The Netherlands (1996), and Croatia (1997), and it came into force in those countries on 3rd March 1998. By 25th January 2002 the Charter had been ratified by sixteen countries. Twelve others have signed but not ratified: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Iceland, Italy,

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15 European Conventions are not statutory acts of the Council of Europe; ‘they owe their legal existence simply to the expression of the will of those States that may become Parties thereto, as manifested inter alia by the signature and ratification of the treaty. …a European Convention is usually the object of the deposit if an instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval’ (Statute of the Council of Europe 1949 Article 1 paragraph b)
Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Russia, ‘the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia’, Ukraine and France.

The Charter is far reaching, at least in principle, and is divided into four parts. The first part deals with generalities and includes a definition of the term regional or minority languages:

- “regional or minority languages” means languages that are:
  - i. traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population; and
  - ii. different from the official language(s) of that State;

It is interesting to note that this definition excludes the languages of immigrants from the provisions of the Charter. Part II sets out the principles and aims which each contracting party must accept in their entirety in respect of all national regional languages. Part III is the most important part of the Charter, as it contains the measures to promote the use of designated regional or minority languages in public life. The status of the regional or minority languages are dealt with in a number of areas including: justice (Article 8), public services (Article 10), the media (Article 11), cultural activities and facilities – libraries, museums, archives, theatre, literary and cinematographic output – (Article 12), and economic and social life (Article 13). States must agree to apply a minimum of 35 paragraphs or sub-paragraphs of Part III for each language designated for Part III recognition by the state on ratification. At least three must be chosen from each of Articles 8 and 12 and one from each of Articles 9, 10, 11 and 13. The fourth part of the Charter is concerned with its enforcement.

If the Charter were to be ratified by a State in its entirety it would provide significant protection for all regional languages within that State. Pre-school, primary, secondary, technical, vocational and university level education would be provided in the relevant regional or minority language. Within the judicial system, the proceedings of the courts would if requested be conducted through the relevant regional or minority language, there would be a guarantee that evidence would not be rendered inadmissible solely because formulated in a regional or minority language, and
documents connected with legal proceedings would be produced if requested in the relevant regional or minority language. All this would be done at no extra cost to the person or parties concerned. As regards administrative authorities and public services, the State would ensure wherever necessary that the authorities and public services use the regional or minority language, and that users of regional or minority languages may submit requests and receive answers to these requests in their language. Within the Media, the State would ensure the creation of at least one radio station, one television channel, and one newspaper in the regional or minority language, and would guarantee freedom of direct reception of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries in a language used in identical or similar form to a regional or minority language. The State would promote the creation of cultural activities and facilities, such as ‘libraries, video libraries, cultural centres, museums, archives, academies, theatres and cinemas as well as literary work and film production, vernacular forms of cultural expressions, festivals and the culture industries, including inter alia the use of new technologies’.

The State would undertake to eliminate from its legislation provisions prohibiting or limiting ‘without justifiable reasons the use of regional or minority languages in documents relating to economic or social life, particularly contracts of employment, and in technical documents such as instructions for the use of products or installations;’ Finally the State would engage itself in the pursuit of transfrontier exchanges with other States which share the same regional languages so as to ‘foster contacts between the users of the same language in the States concerned in the fields of culture, education, information, vocational training and permanent education;’

However in order to get the Charter ratified at all, there had to be a large degree of flexibility in the provisions of the Charter, states are allowed to choose the degree to which they will recognise the regional or minority language in each category, thus the power of the Charter to affect the status of regional or minority languages has been considerably weakened, a state need only commit itself to a minimum thirty five out of the ninety eight proposed articles in order to sign the Charter. Thus in effect states can choose whether to afford these languages full and equal
status within their frontiers, or to simply tolerate them, and maintain the *status quo*. The Charter also sidesteps the issue of linguistic discrimination, despite the requirement in Article 7 that:

"The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it. The adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages."

The need to produce a Charter which member states would find possible to sign and ratify has meant that the provisions of Article 7 had to be diluted, thus we find in Article 21 that:

"Any State may, at the time of signature or when depositing its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, make one or more reservations to paragraphs 2 to 5 of Article 7 of this Charter. No other reservation may be made."

The formulation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has been informed by the need to make it possible for all the member states to ratify it, but because the Council of Europe is made up of so many ideologically disparate states this has necessitated a rather *A La Carte* style Charter which many see to be its great weakness. Where it has succeeded is in recognising that the problem of the status of regional or minority languages must be addressed, and in putting forward proposals to address them. States may or may not commit themselves to all these proposals, but the fact that such proposals exist at all will continue to fuel the debate on regional or minority languages.

(4.2) **Events leading to France’s signing of the Charter.**

In France the issue of regional or minority languages is a political minefield as the recognition of these languages and the consequent recognition of the regions in which they are spoken could very well threaten the French perception of the State and what the State constitutes. It is a debate which goes back to the Jacobin/Girondin split of the French Revolution. The France of today is a
product of Jacobin centralism; regionalism is feared because of the perception that it threatens the principles of the Revolution and thus the unity of France. So when the Charter was signed on the 7th May 1999, it came as somewhat of a surprise to many. Why this should have been the case is a minor mystery, after all the State had slowly been according through the various laws, circulaires, and arrêtés described in the first section of this chapter more and more recognition to the regional languages, and the President Jacques Chirac had in 1996 approved the principle of signing the Charter. France was obviously moving into a position where it would be possible for her to sign the Charter, and it was in fact politically expedient to do so, in the spring of 1998 there had been a number of large demonstrations in Bayonne, Rennes and Strasbourg demanding more aid for the regional languages. A lot of careful planning went into the signing of the Charter, after Chirac had indicated that he was favourable to such a step being taken, the Conseil d’Etat was asked by the then Prime Minister Alain Juppé to consider the constitutionality of the Charter, it came to the decision that the Charter was incompatible with Article 2 of the constitution which states that “La langue de la République est le français.” In October 1997, Lionel Jospin, Juppé’s successor as Prime Minister, commissioned a report into the status of regional languages and cultures in France; the result was presented to him by Bernard Poignant in 1st July 1998. The report was scathing in its criticism of the State’s treatment of regional languages, in particular the failure to implement the various circulaires and arrêtés to their fullest extents. Poignant argued forcefully that the acceptance of the regional languages was no threat to the unity of the State, and that in fact the loss of these languages would be a great loss to France’s cultural life and a betrayal of the principles of the Republic.

“Nos langues et cultures régionales sont aussi notre patrimoine commun, une partie du patrimoine de l’humanité. Aujourd’hui, la République ne respecterait pas ses propres principes si elle n’était pas attentive aux demandes, aux attentes, à la vie de ces langues qui existent sur son territoire”

He recommended a move away from the Jacobin policies of the past, a move away from centralisation, a final realisation that Paris is not the state, and the state is not Paris. He saw
recognition of the regional languages as a further step towards decentralisation, which should be taken for the good of the Republic itself.

“Le besoin d’Etat est essentiel mais sa forme concentrée est paralysante. La République est notre forme de vie en commun mais sa forme jacobine a épuisé ses effets”

Poignant’s conclusion was that the Charter should be signed, but that there were constitutional issues concerning the position of French as the official language of the Republic, which would have to be addressed before doing so.

Guy Carcassone, professor of Constitutional law at the University of Paris X-Nanterre, and ex-advisor to Michel Rocard, a previous socialist Prime Minister, was given the task of investigating the constitutionality aspect. He came to the conclusion that forty-six of the Charter’s provisions could be accepted without any incompatibility problems, but recommended that a restrictive declaration be made, clarifying France’s position on various aspects of the Charter, notably its position on the definition of what a group using a regional or minority language actually is, such a declaration would imply that a group is made up of individuals and not distinct of those who build it. A declaration such as this, on the legal definition of a group, could appear to be nitpicking, but what it actually amounts to is a continuation of France’s traditional refusal to recognise the existence of minorities. This tradition can be traced all the way back to the French Revolution; the idea of human rights was first formulated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, but these rights were only accorded to individuals, these was no concept of group rights. This belief is reflected in the first French constitution of 1791:

"Il n’y a plus, pour aucune partie de la nation, ni pour aucun individu, aucun privilège, ni exception au droit commun de tous les Français." (Preamble to the 1791 constitution).

The French state does not allow the creation of distinct groups, which could be based on one specific criterion, because it could lead to specific rights. Carcassonne’s insistence that there be clarification on France’s definition of group rights reflects this traditionalist Jacobinist view.
France signed the Charter on 7th May 1999 in Budapest, and the signature was accompanied by the following interpretative declaration on the advice of Guy Carcassone:

**Declaration contained in the full powers handed to the Secretary General at the time of signature of the instrument, on 7 May 1999 - Or. Fr.**

France intends to make the following declaration in its instrument of ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

1. In so far as the aim of the Charter is not to recognise or protect minorities but to promote the European language heritage, and as the use of the term "groups" of speakers does not grant collective rights to speakers of regional or minority languages, the French Government interprets this instrument in a manner compatible with the Preamble to the Constitution, which ensures the equality of all citizens before the law and recognises only the French people, composed of all citizens, without distinction as to origin, race or religion.

2. The French Government interprets Article 7-1, paragraph d, and Articles 9 and 10 as posing a general principle which is not in conflict with Article 2 of the Constitution, pursuant to which the use of the French language is mandatory on all public-law corporations and private individuals in the exercise of a public service function, as well as on individuals in their relations with public administrations and services.

3. The French Government interprets Article 7-1, paragraph f, and Article 8 to mean that they preserve the optional nature of the teaching and study of regional or minority languages, as well
as of the history and culture which is reflected by them, and that the purpose of this teaching is not to remove from pupils enrolled in schools on the national territory the rights and obligations applicable to all those attending establishments providing the public education service or associated therewith.

4. The French Government interprets Article 9-3 as not opposing the possible use only of the official French version, which is legally authoritative, of statutory texts made available in the regional or minority languages, by public-law corporations and private individuals in the exercise of a public service function, as well as by individuals in their relations with public administrations and services.

The preceding statement concerns Article(s): 1, 10, 7, 8, 9

As can be seen from the interpretative declaration and the fact that she only signed up for 39 of the 98 regulations, just four above the minimum number necessary to sign the Charter, France has taken full advantage of the 'a la carte' nature of the Charter. She has succeeded in showing a measure of good will towards the regional languages without committing herself to doing anything concrete to improve their status within the state. Furthermore, on 15 June 1999, following a request made by Jacques Chirac the day before the signing of the Charter to investigate its constitutionality, the Conseil constitutionnel came to the decision that the Charter was unconstitutional, and that any ratification of the Charter would require prior amendment to the Constitution. While Jospin the Prime Minister showed himself to be favourable to such a constitutional amendment, Chirac was opposed and even went so far as to state that he would use his presidential veto and refuse to order the revision of the Constitution even if the Prime Minister requested it. He even claimed that there was no need to ratify the Charter, because most of what the government had committed itself to when signing the Charter was already practised in France, instead he suggested that Jospin draw up a 'loi-programme pour le développement des langues régionales'. Since 1999, there has been little movement towards ratification of the Charter, and in fact it seems that the French government has decided once and for all that there

\[16\] The Conseil constitutionnel is the body which tests the constitutionality of new laws.
is no need to sign the Charter, this much is clear from Jack Lang’s (the current Minister for Education) statement on the occasion of the presentation of his “nouvelles orientations pour l’enseignement des langues régionales” on 25th April 2001, in which he stated that:

“Il n’est nul besoin d’une ratification de la Charte européenne des langues régionales pour avancer”.

(4.3) Jack Lang’s “nouvelles orientations pour l’enseignement des langues régionales”.

The new programme for the teaching of regional languages presented by the Minister for Education Jack Lang in April 2001, marked a new departure in government policy towards regional languages, for the first time bilingual education was recognised, and a proposal for the implementation of such education in the public education system was put forward, most controversially this included the full integration of the Diwan schools into the public education system. The new framework has four specific objectives:

- to preserve and transmit an element of national heritage
- to contribute to the recognition of the diversity of cultural identities
- to contribute to the programme for the development of living languages at primary school
- to guarantee continuity for the teaching of regional languages which begins in primary school, through all levels of education.

These objectives are to be realised through the implementation of bilingual education in the state system, from nursery school all the way to university wherever parental demand for such education has been recognised. There will be two methods of bilingual education on offer in the state system: the parity17 method, and the immersion method. In order to make the immersion method available in the state system, the Diwan schools are to be fully integrated. There are also new proposals regarding teacher training, there will be special “concours” put in place for the recruitment of regional language teachers, and of teachers who can teach other disciplines

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17 The parity method refers to a method of bilingual education where the languages taught are given equal parity, i.e. they are used as the language of instruction for an equal number of hours each week.
through a regional language. The “lauréates” of these “concours” will have the exact same title and qualifications as other “lauréates”.

The “nouvelles orientations pour l’enseignement des langues régionales” implement the commitments made by France when she signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

“Ces mesures constituent une mise en œuvre de fait des engagements de la charte européenne sur les langues minoritaires que la France n’a pas pu ratifier, malgré la volonté gouvernementale”

Whether are not there was actually a willingness on the part of the government to ratify the Charter is a moot point, but it is undeniable that Lang’s proposals appeared to be an honest attempt to address the lower status of regional languages within the education system. The proposals were submitted to the Conseil Supérieur de l’éducation on the 3rd May 2001. The general framework was presented in a circulaire: the regional languages would participate in the “plan de développement des langues vivantes dès l’école primaire”. In primary school they would be offered in the same capacity as English, for up to three hours a week. At college where from 2005 the study of two languages will be obligatory, three hours a week may be offered as well as an option of two hours. In addition the training and recruitment of teachers would put new value on their competence in regional languages. A second ministerial circulaire was concerned with bilingual education. From 2002 in seventeen academies, special concours would allow the recruitment of teachers capable of teaching a regional language, or teaching other disciplines through a regional language. Bilingual education which would be organised from nursery school was called on to become the main method of regional language teaching. The minister fixed specific goals for this method of teaching:

- it should by CM2 bring students to the same level of competence as in French
- in the primary public schools or in the associative schools, bilingual areas should be developed where there is parental demand.
- At collège and later on at lycée regional language sections should be created on the same model as European language sections. They would keep at least two subjects
taught through the medium of French outside of mathematics, history, geography and P.E.

Parity bilingual education will even be able to evolve towards immersion.

"Notre système doit être assez généreux pour admettre cet enseignement qui a fait ses preuves".

The education system is from now on engaged with four of the regions in a partnership. A convention was signed with Alsace in 2000 for the period 2000-2006, which provides for the generalisation of the teaching of German in the primary schools, and the creation of a bilingual subject in each collège, and also the specialisation of fifty bilingual teachers a year, plus the opening of a training centre at Guebwiller (Haut-Rhin). A similar convention has been agreed with the Basque region. In Corsica, 25 million francs has been set aside to offer three hours a week of Corsican from nursery school all the way to University. And in Brittany on the 28th May 2001 the protocol for the integration of the associative Diwan schools was signed.

(4.4) Reaction to Lang’s Proposals

Lang’s proposals have proved to be highly controversial. While the majority trade unions for primary and secondary level teachers SNUipp-FSU and SNES-FSU, gave the measures qualified approval, the republican camp coupled with the lay movements judged the proposals to be unacceptable. The reasons for this unacceptability were twofold, firstly it was alleged that the new educational framework threatened the existence of the Nation-State, in its support of regional languages:

“cette réforme prepare le démantelement de l’Etat-nation au profit de l’Europe des regions”
(Georges Sarre, acting president of the Mouvement des citoyens, Le Monde 26/04/01)

Secondly it was feared that the French language would be relegated to the status of second language:

“Le CNAL n’accepte pas l’introduction, dans le service public, d’une troisième voie, l’enseignement linguistique par immersion, qui relège le français, langue de la République en
vertu de la Constitution, au rang de langue seconde” (From a letter addressed to Lionel Jospin on 23rd October 2000, asking for the suspension of the project of integration for the Diwan schools). Movements such as the Mouvement des Citoyens (MDC), the Comité national d’action laïque (CNAL), the Fédération des conseils de parents d’élèves and the Ligue de l’enseignement, all declared themselves opposed to the immersion method of teaching a regional language, while remaining open to the method of parity bilingual education. Lang’s proposals were submitted to the Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation where they were rejected by 25 votes to 14. This in itself wasn’t enough to prevent its implementation so the question was referred by the lay movements to the Conseil d’Etat. The result of this referral was the suspension by the Conseil d’État of the integration of the Diwan schools into the national education system. This decision was based on serious doubts surrounding the legality of the protocol. Despite the Conseil d’État’s suspension of the protocol, the National Assembly voted on 8th November 2001, in favour of the integration of the Diwan teachers into the national education system, this means that from now on their salaries will be paid by the State. Unfortunately the Conseil d’Etats decision has prevented the implementation of full integration of Diwan schools into the education system, but preparations are still going ahead as the Conseil d’État are to review their decision in 2002. The Conseil Constitutionnel has also made a few pronouncements on the subject, intimating that the full integration of Diwan schools would be unconstitutional:

“L’usage d’une langue autre que le français ne peut être imposé aux élèves des établissements de l’enseignement public, ni dans la vie de l’établissement ni dans l’enseignement des disciplines autres que celles de la langue considérée”.

(5) Concluding Remarks

The debate on the Charter for Regional or Minority languages clearly illustrates that France remains a profoundly centralised state, despite the decentralisation which has been ongoing since 1982. The inroads made by the language revival movements in the last thirty years have been based on the tacit understanding that French is not to be threatened. In order for the existence of the regional languages to be reconciled with the “myth of the hexagon”, they have been assimilated into the “patrimoine” because forming part of the “patrimoine” they cannot
possibly threaten it. Poignant’s report is particularly striking in this respect, for him the regional languages enrich the “patrimoine” but at the same time he appears to make the distinction between France as the language of the “patrimoine” and the various regional languages as the property of it. This perception of regional languages is even more evident in Guy Carcassone’s report: he sees the regional languages as elements of the “patrimoine” and not as modern languages capable of being used in the modern age of global communication, at one point he even compares the regional languages to historical monuments.

“il n’est pas inutile de recourir à une métaphore, celle des monuments historiques… tous bénéficient d’une même protection, même si elle ne se traduit naturellement pas par les mêmes besoins, les mêmes soins, les mêmes mesures. Il n’est pas déplacé de faire exactement la même observation à propos des langues de la France, qu’elles soient régionales ou minoritaires.” Guy Carcassone (1998: 114).

In order to make the existence of regional languages acceptable to the French state, they have effectively been folklorised, and assimilated into the French cultural heritage, thus they are no longer a potent symbol of ethnic identities within the French state, but a property of the state and no longer a threat to it.
Chapter 5

Is RLS Possible?

(1) Introduction

Whether RLS can succeed is a matter of much debate. In the previous chapters the situation of the Breton language, and the French state’s evolving policies towards regional languages has been examined, illustrating RLS efforts at the regional, national and international levels. We have seen how RLS efforts at the regional level can be thwarted by disagreement within the language community over the importance, and necessity of such efforts due to socio-economic concerns, and feelings of ambiguity regarding identity. At the national level we have seen Y-Men desperately concerned with maintaining the hegemony of Y-Ish, while being seen to be acceding to the demands of X-Men regarding X-Ish. Finally at the international level, we have seen the difficulty in getting nations to agree on policy regarding minority languages. In this chapter the various difficulties associated with RLS will be discussed and related to the preceding chapters. In particular the question of restoration versus transformation will be examined, as well as the weighting and ordering of Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.

(2) Restoration or Transformation

Language Revival is the ultimate goal of any RLS movement, but the concept of Language Revival is a conflicted one. There is no standard by which one can measure successful revival, and consequently different commentators will have different opinions as to whether a given RLS movement is achieving success or not. The definition of revival is also problematic, most often it involves the idea of restoring a language to its people, so that for example all Bretons will come to speak Breton as their native language, as they did a century ago, but this idea is simplistic at best for any language which has reached stage 7 of language shift.
(2.1) Restoration

Restoration is the dream of all language revival movements. Revivalists hark back to a glorious past where their language was vibrant, and work ceaselessly to return the language to this state of vibrancy. Ironically, those who work hardest for the revival of the language are often those for whom the language is no longer a part of everyday life. We have seen this very clearly in our examination of the socio-economic backgrounds of the children in bilingual and immersion education in Brittany. The majority of children come from a professional urban middle class background, Edwards describes such people as having “romantically rediscovered their “roots”” Bentahila and Davies (1993: 359). The efforts of such people in attempting to revive a language which they have lost but which they still identify with, are symptomatic of nationalistic tendencies, or at the very least the toothless kind of non-separatist nationalism. Fishman might call this traditionalism, or nativism, but these movements display the unification, authentification and modernisation characteristics which he deems essential for nationalism. Revivalists working to restore endangered languages are all at some level asserting their separate identity, an identity their own ancestors choose to ignore in their path to social and economic advancement.

“It is easy to see how [they] might feel nostalgia for the language’s past glories, and thus why the notion of a restoration of the language to its former position might be uppermost in their minds as the central goal of a revival movement; for those still in the rural heartland, struggling to gain access to the advantages of modern city life, the past might seem far less alluring” Bentahila and Davies (1993: 359).

The bretonnant population of Brittany is rural and largely agricultural, they see very little use in their children studying Breton in school, as it will be of little use to them in their future search for employment. For these people the study of English seems a far more reasonable proposition.

(2.2) Transformation

The efforts made by revival movements to reverse language shift are largely aimed at combating the weaknesses we identified in chapter 1:

- A Diminishing Number of Speakers
• Diminishing Domains of Language Use
• The Language’s Status within Society.

We will now examine the various policies proposed by Revivalists to combat these weaknesses, and consider the extent to which these policies are likely to promote either restoration or transformation.

The policies which are most closely targeted at restoration are those concerned with reversing the trend whereby the number of speakers in the languages heartland is constantly diminishing. In many such communities the economy is underdeveloped and young people have to leave the area in such of work. This is certainly the case in Brittany, and in the Gaeltacht area of Ireland. If the economy is developed, as is the case in Catalonia, and the Basque country, the influx of immigrants to the area will have negative effects on the language. The objective of revival movements is to help the community to flourish economically while preserving its use of the language, and the measures employed to achieve this include economic protection, special control of housing developments and employment policies giving preferential treatment to speakers of the language. These measures seem straightforward, but they are not without their problems.

Industrialisation projects aimed at attracting people back to the area by improving employment prospects have been attempted in various regions throughout Europe, and though they are intended to safeguard and promote the languages of these regions, they often have unforeseen negative effects. In the initial stages it is necessary to import skilled workers to the region, the majority of whom will have no knowledge of the regional language in question, even when natives of the area are attracted back they have often married people with no knowledge of the regional language, and consequently have not brought their children up through it. This has the effect of reducing the percentage of regional language speakers in the area. It has been suggested by some activists commenting on the situation in the Gaeltacht that continued employment of non-Irish speakers in the area should be conditional on their acquiring a level of competence in the
Irish language. This hardly seems feasible, should a highly skilled professional be removed from his/her job just because he/she has not achieved sufficient proficiency in the Irish language. In France, where the right of French people to use French in the workplace in enshrined in the constitution, such a suggestion would not even be considered.

Revivalists are probably most active in the field of education, this is certainly true in the case of Brittany, where the measures described in the previous paragraph have for the most part not been applied due to state opposition. As we have seen, the percentage of children attending the Diwan immersion schools, or participating in bilingual education is minute: 1.6% in 1997. Yet, more children are learning Breton through the education system than are learning it as a mother tongue. This has serious ramifications for the revival movement: the nature of the language being taught in the education system, makes it likely that if Breton is successfully revived in the future, it will be a transformed language, the revivalists dream of restoration will have been thwarted.

Like many languages relegated to the status of regional language, Breton was without a standard. Breton has four dialects: Léonard, Trégorrais, Cornouaillas, and Vannetais. The Léonard dialect is the oldest, and is considered to form the basis of the standard Breton being taught in the schools. The dialects of Breton are very different, often mutually unintelligible; Vannetais is so different from the other three that some linguists even consider it a separate language. We have seen in the chapter relating to the Breton language that students who have learned their Breton through the education system speak a standardised form of the language and often find it difficult to understand native Breton speakers, who themselves have difficulties understanding the standard.

The codification and elaboration of the language is a necessary part of RLS. Endangered languages having been limited to the domains of home and community, often lack the vocabulary necessary for them to become vehicular languages. Codification and elaboration involves the selection or the imposition of a norm, and is unlikely to proceed very far unless the community
can agree on the selection of some kind of model from which the norm can be derived. The selection of a norm is a complex problem: it is rare to find a situation where everyone speaks virtually the same dialect. In a situation where a vernacular has several dialects (as in the case of Breton) choosing any one vernacular as the norm means favouring one group over the rest. In a situation where there is no recognised elite dialect likely to prevail over the others, there will be great resistance among the various dialects group to the chosen norm if it is not their own dialect. Such resistance will be strongest where there is the greatest language distances between the groups.

“*It may often be a question of solidarity versus alienation: a group that feels intense solidarity is willing to overcome great linguistic differences, while one that is not is alienated by relatively small differences*” Haugen (1997: 349).

Despite the efforts of Breton nationalists and RLS activists over the last century, Bretons for the most part seem to lack this sense of solidarity crucial to overcoming the linguistic differences which they face. Bretonnants are often scornful of the efforts being made by neo-Bretonnants to learn the language, this has led to a linguistic fracture whereby there is little communication between these two groups of Breton speakers. Bretonnants are not learning the new standard, and in many cases the existence of this new standard increases the feeling of inferiority felt by some Bretonnants, because now not only do they speak a language they associate with backwardness, they are also speaking a less prestigious dialectal form of it. Neo-Bretonnants who will form the backbone of the next generation of Breton speakers speak a modified form of the language, which has been codified and elaborated. The language has been transformed.

(3) **Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale**

In chapter 1 we were presented with Fishman’s model of language shift, the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). It is an eight-point scale which characterises the extent to which a particular language is endangered, and also provides a scheme for reversing language shift, which involves specific activities needed at each point of the GIDS scale, if
language shift is to be reversed. The model hinges on the successful promotion of intergenerational transmission.

"Unlike other stages, when stage 6 is transcended it is not merely 'left behind'; quite the contrary: all subsequent stages must be diligently tied back to and connected to stage 6 if they are to contribute to the living reality of RLS." Fishman (1990: 21)

Fishman has several suggestions as to how intergenerational transmission should be promoted, such as “language related local sports teams for toddlers and singing contests for adolescents… prizes for language-championing essays at every grade level and prepaid vacations for language insistent and language-successful parents” (Bentahila and Davies: 363). There are a number of problems associated with such forceful promotion of a language to children, the first is the likelihood that such aggressive immersion may have an opposing effect to the one intended: instead of making the children ardent defenders and fluent speakers of the language, they may instead inspire wholly negative feelings towards the language. Another potential problem is the reliance of successful promotion of intergenerational transmission on minority group vitality.

The willingness of a linguistic community to engage in efforts to save their language is largely dependant on group vitality. According to Giles, Bourhis and Taylor’s theory of language in ethnic group relations there are three main groups of factors to be considered in determining ‘ethnolinguistic vitality’: status variables (e.g. economic, political and linguistic prestige), demographic factors (e.g. population, birth rate, geographical concentration, mixed marriages, immigration, emigration) and institutional support factors (recognition and representation in the mass-media, education, government, industry, religion and culture). An ethnic group with high vitality is most likely to continue as a distinct collective entity. The level of ethnolinguistic vitality and the groups perception of it, acts so as to increase or decrease the prominence of ethnic identification. Giles and Johnson’s ethnolinguistic identity theory analyses minority members’ strategies for positive distinctiveness and hypotheses about when and why they are adopted. The theory suggests that individuals try to achieve a positive social identity in belonging to groups which provide them with a sense of pride. If the group fails to achieve a positive ‘ethnolinguistic
identity, it has been suggested by Tajfel (Saint-Blancat 1984: 515) that ingroup members may adopt several specified strategies to achieve a more positive self concept: individual mobility or group assimilation, social creativity and social competition.

"Perceived negative characteristics and inferior socio-economic and linguistic status can offer little satisfaction to the group members" (Saint-Blancat 1984: 515).

In the case of Breton and indeed all the regional languages of France, the negative identity associated with them is due in large part to the ceaseless promotion of French by the French state. Particularly since the Revolution, French has been used to bind the nation which grew from the state created and enlarged by the King's of France. Regional languages threaten the unity of the state, and as a result the State has done its utmost to undo them first through aggressive subjugation of the language, and then when this was no longer necessary through simple neglect. We have seen that even when efforts are undertaken at the international level to safeguard the rights of linguistic minorities, the French state refuses to comply, and indeed denies that there is any need to improve the structures they have put in place to support the regional languages. Despite the ground that has been made in recent times with regard to government policy concerning the regional languages, the idea of regionalism is still feared, it still threatens the unity of the centralised French state.

In order to make the existence of regional languages in France more palatable to the national consciousness, the threat that any regional language could supplant the position of French had to be taken away. That this has been done so is clear from both Poignant's and Carcassone's reports concerning the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Regional languages are to be safeguarded as a cherished part of the 'patrimoine', but not to be seriously entertained as modern languages. Thus they are relegated to the status of cultural curiosities and the process of identity trivialisation begins anew.
Minority groups which have a negative self concept and who are trying to achieve a more positive one through increased individual mobility or assimilation are less likely to involve themselves enthusiastically in the efforts at community level which are crucial to successful RLS. Yet nowhere in Fishman’s model do we find any recognition of this. It seems to be assumed that this positive identity is already present, but if this were the case it is less likely that an RLS effort would be necessary, though the Irish example shows that RLS efforts can be necessary even among groups with a strongly positive self concept, but examples like the Breton one which we have been examining illustrates the negativity that can be a property of a groups identity, and in this case the measures proposed by Fishman at stage 6 are likely to meet with significant opposition.

All RLS movements eventually have to face the twin challenges of codification and elaboration. Once this work has been complete, the changes made to the language must be communicated to its speakers. This communication is usually achieved through the education system. As we have seen in this chapter language planning such as this can lead to social fracture, and the transformation of the language. In Brittany this problem might be solved of both bretonnants and non-bretonnants were both being taught standard Breton, but for socio-economic reasons bretonnants are un-willing to study the language. Fishman’s solution to this would be the introduction of Breton into the work domain, but according to his model this step should be taken after it has been fully introduced into the domain of education. However, if there are no advantages to be gained by being a Breton speaker in the workplace, there will be no incentive to study Breton, it will provide no opportunities for socio-economic advancement. It may make sense to reorganise Fishman’s GIDS so that the re-introduction of the language undergoing RLS to the workplace occurs in parallel with efforts introduce its instruction within the education system.

(4) **Concluding Remarks**

Whether RLS is possible or not is largely dependant upon the aims of specific RLS movements. Language restoration is a vague term. It seems to imply that language is like an antique, and as
such is fundamentally unchanging, but languages change with each succeeding generation of speakers, indeed a language which does not evolve is a dead language. Languages undergoing RLS must undergo an elaboration of function process in order to meet the communication demands of the modern world, a language such as Breton which has been confined to use in isolated rural communities simply would not have the vocabulary necessary to serve in domains such as those of science or information technology. Codification is also necessary to ensure that the language is universally understandable to all speakers regardless of their original dialects. These two processes effectively transform the language, but whether this transformation is a negative aspect of RLS is a moot point. If RLS succeeds in successfully reviving a language albeit in a modified form, can it really be said to have failed in its objectives to restore the language?

The success of any RLS movement is dependant on the willingness of the community to have their language revived. Low group vitality is a major obstacle to RLS. If a group is already undergoing a process of assimilation they will not want to be reminded of the linguistic heritage which they associate with the identity they are trying to shed. Fishman has addressed this issue in his literature concerning RLS, yet measures to increase group vitality do not appear in the schemes associated with his GIDS. Perhaps he views RLS as part of a process of reinforcing positive group identity, but if a group has a negative self concept, how can we hope to engage them in a process to revive a language which they have been voluntarily abandoning for generations?

Fishman’s model does not take into account the power and influence of the supra-local community which RLSers must contend with, and ultimately win over if their efforts are to be successful. Folklorisation is a term Fishman has used time and time again to describe the process by which a language becomes little more than a cultural curiosity. RLSers must have the cooperation of the supra-local community the Y-Men if they are to succeed, but they must also
ensure that their language does not become viewed as the cultural property of the Y-Men as has occurred with Breton and the other regional languages of France.

The present study clearly has some limitations, and any future studies in the area would have to take account of them. This study has been purely theoretical, and would be greatly enhanced by empirical studies of language attitudes both in Brittany and in the rest of France. Surveys of attitudes regarding regional languages seem to concentrate on the speakers of the endangered language, and less on the those members of the community who don't speak the community language, i.e. the X-Men who don't speak X-Ish. Furthermore, the speakers of the majority language, i.e. the Y-Men, don't seem to figure in such studies at all. This study would have benefited greatly from such surveys, as language attitudes among the various groups could have been compared and contrasted, the importance of identity, and more specifically dichotomies in the identities of regional language speakers could have been better illustrated, and the language attitudes of Y-Men with regard to X-Ish could have been investigated.

The question of language transformation and whether it is an acceptable outcome of language revival movements could also be investigated. Specifically, what do we lose when the language revived is a transformed version of the language we sought to revive, and is it really important if this transformed language performs its function as well as the original language did? Linguists and language activists all over there world are decrying the standardisation of languages and the ensuing disappearance of dialect, but what do the existence of dialects add to a language and why should we fight to preserve them?

It is hoped that this thesis gives some impression of the difficulties faced by RLS movements all over the world, and particularly the seriousness of the predicament in which the regional languages in France and particularly Breton find themselves in, where their very existence in many ways seems like an affront to the French state.
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