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Minority Languages and Group Identity

Cases and Categories

John Edwards

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by John Edwards

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To Suzanne

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CHAPTER 1

An introductory overview

Themes

The issues surrounding minority languages and the identities with which they are intertwined are timely ones. A recent treatment of 'endangered languages', for example, is that of Grenoble and Whaley (1998). Apart from one chapter on typology, their collection covers such broad topics as community efforts to resist language shift and the mechanisms by which languages are 'lost', as well as some consideration of exactly *what* is lost when language shift occurs and why, therefore, a case can be made for the preservation of linguistic diversity. In a later volume, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) focussed specifically on this last matter. Nettle and Romaine (2000) present a description of language shift around the world, also touching upon just what is lost in the process. Like most who choose to write on the subject, they are in favour of sustained language diversity, and make a case for it. They argue that conceptions of justice and 'rights' imply action on behalf of threatened varieties and, indeed, end their book with some suggestions for 'general activism' in this regard. Freeland and Patrick (2004) also approach language survival, maintenance and revival from the perspective of 'language rights' – a sub-discipline within the sociology of language that has attracted particular attention, notably under the rubric of language ecology. The idea of linking 'rights' with threatened language varieties is an obvious and compelling one: if the maintenance of diversity can be seen as a facet of quite basic social justice, then a stronger case can clearly be made for it, more pressure can be put upon authorities to support at-risk language communities, and so on. The notion, however, of language rights is nowhere near as straightforward as some advocates imply (Edwards, 2003; see also Chapter 3).

With one or two exceptions, the contributions in the Freeland and Patrick collection are of the case-study variety, and such anthologies constitute the most common approach to the topic. Brenzinger's (1992) survey of the East African scene is another example here, as is the treatment of endangered languages in the Pacific edited by Cunningham, Ingram and Sumbuk (2006). Again, it can be assumed that most of these collections reflect favourable dispositions towards language diversity, the maintenance and support of 'small' varieties, and, consequently, a rather specialised perspective on language ecology. They also often champion what is local and indigenous, railing against the levelling and homogenising forces

of globalisation that ride roughshod over the rights of small communities. Cultural 'authenticity' and the forces of tradition and heritage are often seen as sacrifices to the juggernauts of 'modernity' and 'westernisation'. In these depictions, it is quite clear where morality and justice reside. Further observations on these sorts of treatments will be found in the chapters to follow.

There are also, of course, more even-handed approaches to the problems of minority languages and cultures, more dispassionate perspectives on linguistic endangerment and shift. The book edited by Duchêne and Heller (2007) is a case in point. The sub-title of the collection mentions 'ideology and interest' as their focal points, and these are apt words indeed: what sociopolitical stances are adopted by those writing in the area, and what interests are involved? The editors point out in the opening chapter (pp. 2–3) that some 'critical distance' from the 'explosion of discursive material' on threatened languages is called for. It is probably fair to say that both Duchêne and Heller are, themselves, committed to the cause of language diversity – but their panel of contributors (both 'scholars' and 'scholar-activists', to use their own words) implies that this commitment rests upon argument and is not simply a *parti pris*. Similarly, the collection assembled by Janse and Tol (2003) attempts a wider coverage, most notably in a chapter putting the work of those 'scholar-activists' under the microscope (Newman, 2003).

Given such a timely topic, and one often approached from very specific angles indeed, the present book attempts three related things: first, to provide a broad treatment of 'small' languages and identities under one, monographic roof; second, to present a typology by which cross-context generalisations might better be highlighted; third, to flesh matters out with several selected case-studies, settings that seem to exemplify many of the most important features in the area. In choosing the latter – Irish, Gaelic and Esperanto – I have been primarily influenced by the fact that the history of each reveals both strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, efforts in support of each one of these three varieties have been seen (by different commentators, of course) as either partial successes or disappointing failures. Additionally, for the first two at least, we are confronted with long historical journeys and many varying fortunes, stories in which most of the chapters have now been written.

I realise, of course, that there are many other minority-language contact settings that I might reasonably have chosen for my illustrative examples and, furthermore, the fact that (Esperanto excepted) the examples I *have* chosen are Celtic ones might be seen as an unfortunate limitation. I can make one or two points in response. First, we have a great deal of information about these settings and it is therefore possible to consider points of detail that are simply unavailable for others; at the same time, I hope that my treatments will be found to occupy a useful place among others that have often emerged from quite specific bases. I cannot of course claim any value-free approach here – who could? – but I can assure the

reader that I have no specific axes to grind in the fortunes of either the Celtic languages or constructed ones. Second, as my typological attempts in Chapter 5 suggest, I believe that many points of similarity crop up across settings and so, given that richness of Celtic detail just referred to, my hope is that the discussions of Irish and Scottish Gaelic here will be seen as at least partly illuminating other settings of language and cultural contact.

As a constructed variety, the third of my case-studies – Esperanto – may seem an unlikely choice in this context, but it offers an entirely different perspective on the problems of 'small' languages while, at the same time, illustrating many of the familiar difficulties that have dogged 'natural' varieties. And, as I shall show, the relatively short history of Esperanto itself should not deceive us into thinking that constructed languages *per se* are a recent phenomenon. On the contrary, they too have a very lengthy historical pedigree and so, like Irish and Gaelic, Esperanto – the study of which has been unjustifiably neglected by sociologists of language – can also tell us something of the forces bearing upon maintenance and shift, revival and loss.

My general hope for this book is that it may help to show that the single most important aspect of human language – beyond its obvious instrumental and communicative function – lies in its relationship to group identity. Consequently, when we read of languages at risk, there is usually a deeper and more emotionally charged sub-text. Among other things, this suggests that the issues revealed so clearly in studies of threatened varieties can throw into greater relief features common to *all* languages and identities – even those whose secure positions typically keep the linkages hidden or unexamined. This in turn provides fuller justification for attempts to discover the generalities in the area, the commonalities that connect apparently dissimilar settings. It is true, of course, that every linguistic and cultural context is unique – but the uniqueness is found in the particular combinations and weightings of elements and factors that are, themselves, not at all unique. The images we see in each local kaleidoscopic arrangement may be different, but they are all made of the same underlying constituents.

Languages in contact and conflict

The three chapters immediately following this one attempt to set the scene, as it were, by outlining some of the most important issues that arise when languages come into contact with one another – and particularly when they are of unequal power and prestige. I begin with some brief notes on the dangers of romanticising the existence and the trajectories of 'small' or threatened communities and their languages, and on the related pitfall of seeing nothing good in 'large' polities, or 'western civilisation' or, indeed, with modernity itself. Towards the end of

Chapter 2, I also attempt some definitional approaches to minority groups and languages, and to language maintenance.

Similarities and differences among indigenous and immigrant minority languages are then discussed, and a major point here has to do with the dynamics – or perhaps one could say the *status* – of language shift. It is important, that is, to understand that the language shift brought about by groups in contact is a *symptom* of social interaction; it is not an independent or free-standing entity but rather, as I note in Chapter 2, 'one cell in a complex socioeconomic matrix'. An obvious implication is that attention paid to language alone will almost always be inadequate or unsuccessful and that, in turn, suggests that intervention in language matters should be part of a broader social strategy. Historically, this has sometimes been called revolution. But, quite apart from the difficulties and dangers here, a very salient point is simply that most advocates for language maintenance, enhancement or revival – whether they are within or without the community in question – do not *want* such large-scale alteration. To say that this poses problems when interventions are being considered is a considerable understatement.

Bilingualism (or, of course, multilingualism) suggests itself as an obvious solution in language-contact settings – a linguistic eat-your-cake-and-have-it-too arrangement. And, indeed, it *is* a solution in many contexts. Technically, it presents few problems: after all, while most of the world's population are poor and undereducated, they are also bilingual or better. The old canards about the cognitive limitations supposedly involved in knowing more than one language have been laid to rest in all but the most reactionary corners. Nonetheless, an enduring bilingualism or diglossia is often very hard to sustain, particularly where the languages involved are of unequal social or political or economic clout. The minimum requirement for long-term maintenance seems to be the persistence of domains of use that are associated with one, but not both, of the languages. A typical – perhaps the most typical – situation is that in which one variety is used in and around the home, the other in work settings. If the latter is also dominant in the wider society, it is easy to see how it can gradually but inexorably encroach upon more and more domains of the former, until the time arrives when the last and most intimate of settings is surrendered to the 'bigger' language. Many of the efforts of those concerned with the maintenance or revival of threatened varieties founder when they come up against the large social pressures at work here.

This leads more or less directly to a consideration of minority groups and minority-language maintenance *per se*. I suggest that the very definition of these terms is not always crystal-clear, and that much usually depends upon particular contexts and circumstances. One thing is certain, however: the plight of minority languages, together with attempts at shoring them up, illustrate in boldest relief all of the important social and political features involved in language contact *tout*

court. Given some of the difficulties I have already touched upon here, it becomes immediately apparent that the maintenance of languages put 'at risk' by powerful neighbours is an extremely difficult enterprise. This, as we shall see, constitutes one of the most important threads running through the whole of this book, which can itself be understood – both in its general argument and in its specific case-studies – as a commentary upon the complicated dynamics and ramifications of languages in contact. A commentary, indeed, and perhaps also something of a plea for these complex matters to be more fully considered as part of the even more complex social nexus in which they are embedded. I also introduce at this point the important matter of the interaction often observed between the more or less disinterested attention of scholars to important sociology-of-language contexts, on the one hand, and active intervention by those same scholars, on the other. Advocacy and scholarship do not always make happy partners.

I then turn more specifically to contact dynamics, beginning with a consideration of the mechanics of language endangerment and decline. The chief culprit, as just mentioned, is an overbearing and powerful linguistic neighbour, but there are many intricacies to be noted. When we turn to questions of the maintenance and revival of languages struggling in the shadow of such a neighbour, we are immediately struck by several important points. First, it is very common to find that concerted attention to an endangered language comes rather late in the day. Common, but also entirely understandable, because it is often only with hindsight that one can see where and when remedial action was first indicated. So it often seems to be a matter of too little, too late. Still – not that this is any comfort to those most personally involved – it is generally very doubtful that remedial action can be effective, anyway, at least in the form available to, or recommended by, scholars and activists. This leads directly to the second point (touched upon already), that enduringly successful interventions would require much larger-scale social upheavals than are likely – and, much more importantly in this context, than are desired. A third point is that maintenance and revival activists often hope for a permanence (once the perceived linguistic imbalances have been attended to, of course) that history in general, and the history of their own situation in particular, show to be an illusory hope. Fourth, revivalist efforts are very frequently led by outsiders or by group members who are, in important ways, not typical representatives of those for whom they speak and write. This is not, itself, a particularly surprising state of affairs, but it is nevertheless one that calls for some attention.

I am, of course, an advocate of the study of language in its full and natural social setting, and this must mean that I endorse an 'ecological' approach. However, I am very critical of much of what is written these days under the rubric of ecology. Far from reflecting the full breadth and intertwinings of language-in-society, this 'new' ecology is largely devoted to the preservation of language diversity

and, in particular, to the plight of endangered varieties. I try to make it clear that, while there is absolutely nothing wrong with such an enterprise, it is disingenuous to present it under a heading that logically suggests a much larger scope. A fuller ecology – one that is worthy of the name – must attend to *all* aspects of the web of linguistic life, even those that bode ill for 'small' languages. An ecology of language, then, cannot simply be what, for what many writers, it has now become: an extended argument on behalf of diversity. (And, I must add, very often an oversimplified or selective argument, one that is underpinned by quite specific ideological and preferential leanings, one in which dispassionate scholarship often falls victim to special pleading.)

In the third of this opening group of chapters, I inject a short argument about the essential human tensions that underlie processes of language shift. I draw here upon the dichotomies of Saussure, Tönnies and others who have sought to capture in various but overlapping ways the opposing pressures of 'large' and 'small', of traditional and modern, of provincial and global. When these pressures take on a linguistic aspect, a number of outcomes becomes possible, and these are briefly discussed. Perhaps the most common adaptation, however, is communicative language shift, accompanied by some 'symbolic' retention. That is, the forces acting upon a minority-language community may be such that a shift to the overarching variety becomes inevitable. For a generation or two, some bilingual arrangements may be observed, but often (as I have noted above) these prove to be way-stations on the road to a new monolingualism in the larger language. The original language, then, comes to lose its obvious communicative functions. It may, however, be retained in a symbolic fashion, may continue to exist as a valued part of group history and culture, may even be used on special or ceremonial occasions, and so on. Some have seen this as a bitter retreat, and there is no doubt that an ongoing communicative use of language is the strongest and most obvious pillar of a group's collective identity. My point is simply that, if circumstances bring about language shift, this need not imply an overall *cultural* shift. A continuation of the social and psychological cohesion of the group as a unique entity may be predicted to last for some considerable time – for as long, in fact, as it is desired, because such 'latent' cohesion can coexist with more visible shifts on the surface, as it were. In particular, a language that is no longer regularly spoken may yet have a role to play in the maintenance of group boundaries. I don't suggest for a moment, of course, that this is a point of view likely to appeal to ethnonationalists, language revivalists and group apologists of various stripes – but surely a little thought will suggest that, in situations where communicative language shift seems inevitable, a 'symbolic' retention may be a welcome quantity, one that signals a continued desire for social cohesion. In any event, it is clear from many other personal and social contexts that things that are intangi-

ble are very often the strongest and the most enduring, precisely because they can be maintained without endangering desired mobility in wider waters.

I also deal with some rather more specific reactions to the opposing attractions of 'parochialism' and 'intercourse', considering several categories of languages – from 'small' varieties without states of their own to languages of 'wider communication'. I suggest some possible future scenarios here, as social and political pressures continue to work both within and across languages and language categories. I conclude this part of the discussion with the reminder that what is really at issue in all this is *identity.* And this realisation, in turn, reinforces the importance of what I referred to above as the 'symbolic' or non-communicative aspects of language. Almost all of the social struggles, past and present, in which language has played an important role, have had identity at their core. If language were solely an instrumental medium, these struggles would not have the highly-charged emotional qualities that they obviously do. People are still quite capable, of course, of protesting at *all* aspects of social change, and these certainly include language in its 'normal' everyday roles. Nonetheless, we tend to go to war over ideas, ideologies and identities, not solely on the basis of the mediums in which these are expressed.

Towards a framework of contact situations

Following the opening set of chapters, I present a somewhat lengthier argument, although it requires only a brief introduction here. It involves the construction of a typology to assist in categorising and, hence, understanding different minority-group contexts. I begin by justifying the typological approach, since exercises here have been subject to various sorts of criticism – none fatal, I suggest. I then outline a geographical foundation upon which a typology must rest, drawing particularly upon the earlier work of Paul White (1987). This leads to a framework which makes room for ten types of contact situation, applicable to both indigenous and immigrant minority populations. Geographical clarification can be useful in and of itself, but it is hardly sufficient: a considerable number of what we might reasonably term 'ecological' features must be superimposed upon it. I summarise about a dozen previous attempts here, trying to point out both strengths and weaknesses of these models, before turning to my own. This gives rise to a tabular presentation in which three very broad categories of interest – *speaker*, *language* and *setting* – are plotted in relationship to eleven 'disciplinary perspectives' (including demography, economics, sociology and history), where each of the latter reflects a traditional scholarly or social approach to language-contact contexts. My suggestion is that the 33-cell scaffolding that results can guide us in the formulation of appropriate questions to be asked in any of these contexts. I provide some examples of such

questions. I conclude this part of the discussion by noting some reactions and responses to my model, as well as acknowledging it to be a work-in-progress.

Four case-studies

The last four chapters here present individual studies that, I hope, will flesh out some of the more general comments made earlier – and, at the same time, prompt further reflection and discussion. In each instance, I have several related aims in mind. First, I try to suggest something of the social and historical forces that have acted upon these 'small' varieties – all of them threatened in various ways by powerful and intrusive neighbours. In three of these settings we see how such forces have been brought to bear as part of the colonising process – directly, in the case of Irish and Gaelic in Scotland, and indirectly for Gaelic in the new world.

Second, I attempt some disentanglement of fact, hope and preference. In this connection, four famous references come to mind. When writing of a second marriage following hard on the heels of an unhappy first one, Dr Johnson suggested that the action represented the triumph of hope over experience, and it is surely the case that many attempts to maintain or revive flagging languages – including those discussed here – bear his remark out, albeit in a very different context. I am also reminded of David Hume's famous 'law', his observation that one cannot logically move from non-moral premises to moral conclusions or, more simply, that one cannot say what 'ought to be' solely on the basis of what 'is'. Quite apart from initial difficulties that often arise when trying to determine exactly what 'is' the case – in agreeing upon the facts on the ground, as it were – further problems can clearly emerge with attempts to move onto moral or value grounds. Purely descriptive assessments of, say, groups whose languages are shrinking under external pressure cannot in themselves imply any sort of 'right' for that pressure to be lessened or removed. This is similar to another well-known reference that seems germane in this context – Bertrand Russell's (1950) warning that subaltern or oppressed populations do not automatically come to occupy the moral high ground. I cannot delve further here into his interesting argument, which extends specifically to sentimentalised and romanticised conceptions of the 'noble savage', of 'smaller' societies living in harmony with nature, of the 'simple annals of the poor', or, indeed, of the activities of cultural and linguistic nationalists. Finally here, consider George Orwell's observation:

> it cannot be altogether an accident that nationalists of the most extreme and romantic kind tend not to belong to the nation they idealize... not merely the men of action, but even the theorists of nationalism are frequently foreigners. (1944b)

One implication is that, in many of the intertwinings of fact and hope that are found in the literature, ours ears are not, in any event, pressed to the horse's mouth. The reasons for this are quite complex and, again, I cannot deal with them here – although some will become evident in the case-study chapters. Suffice it to combine here, perhaps, Gellner's bland descriptive comment that 'genuine peasants or tribesmen … do not generally make good nationalists' (1964: 12) with an anecdotal sense that some of the reflexes of the literati vis-à-vis threatened cultures are built upon guilt, that many of those who speak on behalf of 'small' varieties do so in the languages – and accents – of the privileged.

I draw no conclusions at this point, simply wishing readers to bear these sorts of comments in mind when reading or thinking about contacts and conflicts between 'bigger' and 'smaller' languages in the world today.

Irish constitutes an interesting study for many reasons. It has, for example, a long history in which many of the most important chapters have been written – and are thus available for study and reflection; it is an important element in a context which has always been very highly politically charged; and it has come to be one of the few examples of an indigenous minority language that has its own state. In broad-brush terms, the most interesting aspects of the story of Irish (and Gaelic, too, of course) have to do with historical decline and attempted revival. The early chapters reveal a strong medium, one quite capable of assimilating newcomers – like the English. But centuries of occupation, coupled with the ever-increasing potency of English, led inexorably to the growth of perceptions in which Irish was linked to backwardness and in which 'pragmatic' considerations facilitated massive and rapid shift to English. This great force of time and power was what the nineteenth- and twentieth-century language revivalists had immediately to confront. It is little wonder, then, that the 're-vernacularisation' of Irish was not to be achieved. But the Irish experience also reveals that this general failure was accompanied by some specific successes, notably in education. The school system has provided to everyone a thin wash of Irish and, while this is not something that can realistically be seen as a platform for the greater social use of the language, it does open the door – or, at least, indicates clearly how the door may be opened – to further study and development for those who wish it. Given the important literary heritage that can be best approached through the medium of Irish, this is not insignificant.

Educational provisions for Irish and the growth of linguistic interest among some middle-class urban groups have not, however, managed to stem the continued decline of Irish in the *Gaeltacht* – those areas of the country in which native speakers are still to be found, and in which some level of regular usage has been maintained. It is clear that the unofficial pressures towards English have retained their strength. Official support for Irish has of course been in place since national independence, and many bodies committed to aspects of language and culture

exist (or have existed). An overall assessment might conclude that such support, unless it were so draconian and interventionist as to be undemocratic, must always bow to unofficial forces. The Irish context is a particularly rich one in which to examine these and other threads in the evolution of a 'small' language. It is a mark of this richness that efforts on behalf of Irish have been seen as an abject failure in the eyes of some, and that linguistic obituaries have appeared on a more or less regular basis – while, at the same time, others have pointed to successes and achievements. Finally here, the Irish 'case' tends to give the lie to the equation so treasured in many nationalist and revivalist camps, the argument that the retention of the original language is an essential pillar of cultural identity. People on both sides of the Irish Sea speak English – but one would have to be a very insensitive or temporary visitor indeed not to discover the cultural boundaries marking England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

I was prompted to make another Celtic variety my second case-study here because there are important similarities and differences between Gaelic and Irish. Each has a long and complicated history, in which indigenous linguistic and cultural fortunes have been bound up with those of an increasingly powerful neighbour or coloniser. But Gaelic in Scotland was never the language of the entire country in the sense that Ireland was once all a *Gaeltacht*. The powerful divide between Highlands and Lowlands has no real counterpart in Ireland, despite the associated dichotomies between city and countryside, and between the educated classes and the peasantry, and this is important, given its relevance to many language situations elsewhere. Gaelic in Scotland has never had the intimate relationship with identity that Irish has possessed – that is, the fires of Scottish nationalism have often burned independently of Gaelic or, indeed, of interest in Gaelic as a spoken language. In both settings, of course, there are many illustrations of the separation between the instrumental and the symbolic aspects of a language in retreat. Finally here, Gaelic has been the only Celtic language to emigrate significantly across the sea. Many people left Ireland too, of course, but the circumstances of time and destination meant that their language was either not taken with them or was fated to disappear soon after arrival in the new world. In the Scottish Gaelic diaspora, however, the language retained considerable strength for a long time. An examination of this most interesting phenomenon necessarily links studies of the language on both sides of the western ocean.

As with Irish, the story of Gaelic is one that reflects large and continuing pressures from outside, and many of the specific arenas of importance are the same: most notable here are the shrinking heartlands for regular language use, official and unofficial moves for or against the language, the relationship of religion with language and culture, and the educational setting. Much of the detail will become obvious upon reading the chapters themselves, and realising the similarities of

pressures and events to be found for each language. At the same time, there are one or two points worth highlighting in this introductory overview. First, both Protestantism and Catholicism in Scotland have interwined with the language in a way that hardly existed at all in Ireland, where there was a much more singular linkage between Catholicism and the Irish language. And then there are the Scottish 'clearances' that have no direct counterpart in Ireland. The historical, economic, geographical and cultural ramifications of these formal evictions are quite different from the circumstances under which many nineteenth-century Irish people left their native land; see the Epilogue, however.

Following the fortunes of Gaelic across the ocean allows us to make observations, and perhaps to draw some conclusions, in ways generally unavailable or inapplicable in other minority-language discussions. Many 'small' varieties have, of course, migrated from their homelands, sometimes – as in immigration to the United States, for example – in very large numbers indeed. But few have managed to maintain themselves in such a concentrated form as has Gaelic in Canada. Why is this? What features of the language and culture in Scotland gave rise to strength in the diaspora, and – more importantly – what features of the new cultural landscape maintained this strength? The answers to these and other, related questions can add considerably to our understanding of the vicissitudes of languages-in-contact.

Gaelic in Nova Scotia, as we shall see, assumed the status of the third most important Canadian language in the nineteenth century. It was particularly strong in the rural fastness of Cape Breton Island, in the province of Nova Scotia – at the turn of the twentieth century, there were almost 100,00 speakers. The subsequent history then showed how desirable developments can have undesirable cultural and linguistic consequences (assuming, that is, that – given their choice – people would typically like to have both the advantages of 'progress' and the comforts of tradition). Thus, as altering social and physical conditions reduced the isolation of Gaelic speakers in eastern Canada, as they began to 'go down the road' to the rest of the country, to New England and beyond, so the pressures on the language increased. 'The language that is kept in the country is forgotten in the town,' as one commentator put it. There are many interesting threads to be teased out of this particular section of the social fabric, but an important one is surely this: if the price of original-language retention is geographical and cultural isolation, if a mobility that is generally welcomed is destructive of traditional ways of life, then is the price too unaffordable for most people, are the necessary social limitations too severe? These are the sorts of analyses that speakers of 'large' languages rarely have to think about, but they regularly present themselves to minority-language populations.

Not wishing to repeat what I have written about the important influences of education, of politics, of attempts at revival – all of which are found as much on the western side of the ocean as on the eastern – I will make only one further

introductory comment about Gaelic in Nova Scotia. It is, however, one that applies to many linguistic and cultural communities whose immigration has led to minority status vis-à-vis a powerful 'mainstream'. Over time, many of the original cultural 'markers' either disappear or become bastardised, coming to be only bland reflections of their former selves. Since the ethnicity of which they were once unique symbols is clearly – and safely – on its way to assimilation, they can be endorsed without cost. Further than that, they can be extended well beyond their traditional role as boundary-stones, and can be made available for the enjoyment of all. Think of Oktoberfest in Baltimore, where anyone can be German for a day, eat sausage and wear strange leather shorts. Think of Paddy's Day in Boston or Montreal, where anyone can drink green beer and put on a plastic shamrock. Or think of the annual kilted golf tournaments in Nova Scotia, or the venerable Highland Games, where the caber-toss has often been won by Scots called Kowalski or Lejeune. In other words, think of the commercial and touristic exploitation of what once were important markers of group cohesion and solidarity, think of what this tells us about the views of 'ethnics' in mainstream society, and – most important of all – think of what this suggests about the progress of ethnic identity itself.

The final chapter, and the last of my case-studies, deals with Esperanto. I am quite sure that this will seem to many an odd, if not inappropriate, choice. It is certainly a 'small' language, but it is not a 'natural' one, nor can it be categorised as either indigenous or immigrant. It is a constructed medium, one whose proponents and speakers have aimed to propagate in the name of increased communicative efficiency around the world – and also with a view to greater intercultural harmony and understanding. The logical appeal of constructed languages, of which Esperanto is merely the most successful representative, has always been strong: no one is asked to give up his or her mother tongue, only to agree to learn a common auxiliary language. To that end, the constructed or 'artificial' auxiliary medium is purposely made grammatically and lexically regular and easy to learn – and that, coupled with its lack of historical and emotional baggage, might be thought to constitute a powerful package indeed. As soon, however, as we begin to look more closely at Esperanto and its kin, we realise that what seems a logical and potent medium in some quarters is largely ignored elsewhere and, indeed, is often derided. To consider why this should be, to discuss why this rather special minority language should not have fared better, is part of the rationale for its inclusion here.

Given the degree of ignorance and/or misunderstanding surrounding constructed languages – both within and without the academic cloisters – I also wanted to present here something of the long and not ignoble history that preceded the emergence of Esperanto. There have always existed, for example, powerful urges to unearth the 'first' or the most 'perfect' language. In earlier days, these were almost entirely religious in nature: discussions of the language, or languages, spoken in the

Garden of Eden filled many books. In hindsight, these look at best profoundly misguided, at worst distinctly crankish. But they may be said to have spawned rather more sensible – if equally fruitless – efforts. In the heady developments of the 'new science' of the seventeenth century, the seminal writings of Francis Bacon, the establishment of the Royal Society, and so on, there simultaneously arose new linguistic impulses. The perfect language of Eden might be unavailable, but it was thought that a new construction – or, perhaps, a logically overhauled existing language – might serve the new scientific age very well. On the one hand, a 'philosophical' language might encourage more sensible categorisations and classifications of natural phenomena; on the other, it might actually serve as a heuristic tool in and of itself.

Despite the obvious failures, the idea of auxiliary languages never really died away, although claims made on their behalf became progressively less grandiose. When Ludwik Zamenhof published his new language, Esperanto, in the late nineteenth century, in the belief that it could facilitate world-wide communication, he was thus hardly striking out into uncharted territory. It was, he and his followers felt, an eminently *practical* enterprise. And yet, with his hope that such a universal second language could contribute to the emergence of a new 'trans-national identity', we see that practicality was only one of the two great principles underlying its production. The examination of the demographics, the psychology and the sociology of the Esperanto community, taken together with the perceptions – often, but not always, ill-informed – of those outside it, reveal more and more clearly how useful the study of constructed minority languages can be. It is useful in an intrinsic sense, because of the particular attributes of those who devote their time, and sometimes their lives, to such languages. It is also useful because it involves a sort of 'laboratory' instance of the minority-language dynamics that we otherwise see only in the field. The enthusiasm, on the one hand, and the accusations of impracticality, unworldliness and blinkered vision, on the other – the tensions that are also observed in those 'field' studies, in other words – are clearly highlighted here. Why agitate on behalf of a language that is clearly on the retreat, is not 'modern', is increasingly of interest only to narrow nationalists or ivory-tower residents? Why bother with something like Esperanto, when we already have – have *always* had, in fact – a 'natural' lingua franca that effectively crosses cultural and linguistic borders? These are interesting questions, to be sure, but the rather dismissive tone in which they are often put glosses over matters of real import.

A closing note

We are brought back, then, to the chief strands that run through the book as a whole. What is it that continues to energise proponents of 'small' languages in a

world made increasingly safe for anglophones? Are there, in fact, powerful arguments to be made for the maintenance of linguistic diversity *per se*? Should scholars feel uneasy crossing over into advocacy for threatened varieties – or should they actually feel obliged to do so? My view is that these are all extremely interesting and important matters. This is not because they focus most directly or exclusively upon language, for if that were so the constituency of interest would be narrower than it obviously is. No, these and related questions are of interest because they touch essentially upon *identity* – who we think we are, who others think we are, who we wish to be, and so on. And when we consider language in this way, as a marker of identity and a guide to its understanding, we immediately realise the special attention that ought to be given to 'small' or minority settings. It is not that the dynamics there are inoperative in other or 'larger' contexts – it is rather that, in straitened circumstances, we are often able to see in clearest relief what exists elsewhere in more latent fashion.

CHAPTER 2

Languages in contact and conflict I

Small languages and their maintenance

Introduction

I should like to begin here by anticipating my conclusions. I think it has always been natural in our sublunar realm for societies and their languages to falter, to decline and to pass from the scene. It is also entirely understandable that the speakers of those languages – some more than others, of course – will rail against this process. And it is generally inevitable that those speakers will eventually shift their languages. The decline, the protest and the shift are all predictable. There are contextual variations on the theme, and there are some few outright exceptions, but the general pattern is a robust and enduring one.

Languages and cultures – particularly those of minority or subaltern populations, where matters are obviously thrown into much sharper and more immediate relief – have been much in the news in recent times. Substantial parts of the world now show greater concern for the plight of 'small' groups than has historically been the case. Liberal democracies, for instance, are obliged by their own deepest principles to pay attention to matters of tradition, of culture, of rights. Some aspects of this examination feed seemingly interminable debate: liberal philosophies that traditionally saw rights invested in individuals continue, for instance, to have difficulty with the notion of 'group rights'. Minority-group claims can still create resentment in social 'mainstreams'. And so on. Nonetheless, those 'mainstreams' feel it increasingly necessary to consider the circumstances surrounding social heterogeneity. The acknowledgement of the need for a continuing dialogue in which virtually all segments of society are entitled – often encouraged – to participate is a great advance on an ignorance of diversity, or a refusal to engage in social conversation with some groups or, worst of all, policies of state oppression of cultural difference. There are of course many instances in which democratic principles and practices are given only lip-service, and there are many abuses, situations in which liberal-democratic principles are pushed aside. We have seen examples in very recent history in which western societies that feel themselves at risk have shown an alarming propensity to set aside democratic institutions – due legal process, renunciation of torture and coercion, equality of

individuals before the law, and so on – in the name of national security. This is, among other things, a reminder of the fragility of rights and procedures that took a very long time to evolve; they can obviously be overturned very quickly. The price of liberty does indeed seem to be eternal vigilance, and even unsleeping attention cannot always guarantee its survival.

This is not the place for a discussion of liberal democracy and its discontents, but it is worth noting here that, with all their evils, inequities and shortcomings, liberal-democratic societies remain the only ones formally committed to an ever-evolving self-examination. This seems so self-evident a proposition as to require no further comment. Those scholars who are philosophically unwilling to find anything of moral value in modern, western, capitalist society – and there are many such who write about languages and cultures in contact, about the political collisions between large and small societies, about the loss of 'authenticity' in a globalised economic system – will, of course, resist making any ethical concessions here. But it is nonetheless true, as George Steiner has pointed out, in his rather florid way. Modern technologically advanced societies are generally the only ones that offer the possibility for unfettered debate on such issues as cultural relativism and ethnocentrism:

> the very posture of self-indictment, of remorse, in which much of educated western sensibility now finds itself, is again a culturally specific phenomenon... this reflex of self-scrutiny in the name of ethical absolutes is... a characteristically western, post-Voltairean act.
>
> (Steiner, 1971: 55)

The fact that those who are most critical of western 'postures' are regularly found within the very societies that they condemn is, of course, suggestive, as is the contrasting lack of internal scrutiny permitted in societies that are sometimes praised – though rarely by their actual inhabitants – as settings of primitive nobility.

A dislike of the world that supports them (often very well) forms a common backdrop to many scholarly commentaries about the inherent superiority of small and 'indigenous' cultures, of the unalloyed evils of large ones, and so on. (I put 'indigenous' in inverted commas here, as an example of a useful and unexceptionable term that has now acquired quite particular resonances.) Indeed, to suggest west-bashing is perhaps not unfair. Standing up for the overdog is not a popular exercise, of course, but is it an advance to counter one species of insensitivity with another? Do the oppressed, as Bertrand Russell (1950) discussed in the famous essay I touched upon in Chapter 1, hold the moral high ground because of oppression itself? Is it really apposite or accurate for Mühlhäusler (2000: 338) to emphasise a 'holism' which is apparently uniquely associated with the small and the aboriginal, or to cite with approval views that western civilisation is particularly

'artificial' and 'man-made', a world which consists 'almost overwhelmingly of lifeless, inanimate objects'? This seems very bizarre. The disdain here naturally extends to the scientific culture *per se*, indeed to the generalities and 'universals' which many would see as the pivots of progress. Fishman (1982: 8) is cited as endorsing the theme that 'the universal is a fraud, a mask for the self-interest of the dominating over the dominated', in a paper defending those peoples who 'have not capitulated to the massive blandishments of western materialism, who experience life and nature in deeply poetic and collectively meaningful ways'.

Need it be said that – the crimes, failures and insensitivities of contemporary western society notwithstanding – this line of argument is both foolish (sometimes downright nonsensical) and dangerous? I have already cited the view of Steiner, and here are two others. In his famous treatise on the 'two cultures', Snow (1959: 27) concluded that 'industrialisation is the only hope of the poor'. And Gellner (1968: 405) argued for the broad superiority of the 'scientific-industrial' way of life, asserting that modern society offered the best chances (probabilities, of course, hardly guarantees) for individual freedom and 'material liberation'. Again, while not ignoring continuing inequities and outright moral backsliding in modern liberal democracies, it is perfectly obvious that Steiner, Snow and Gellner are right. To argue otherwise is to attempt to hold a philosophical position that cannot be sustained outside the academic cloister.

Of course, these are the views of white males, a group whose opinions are highly suspect in many quarters; indeed, it is often thought unnecessary that they be given any attention at all. But here are similar opinions from quite another quarter. Joseph and his colleagues (1990: 24), writing about Eurocentrism in *Race and Class*, point out that all societies, regardless of their 'cultural assumptions and values', subscribe to the idea of economic growth and progress. More generally, there is a 'universal subscription to the Baconian idea that, through science and technology, growth and affluence are attainable'. There is a small number of voluntarily self-segregating collectivities whose lives run counter to this proposition; they are few and far between, however, and – more than that – the existing ones continue to shrink. Most of the rest of humanity that is still unblessed by modernity and technical advance would like very much to alter that state of affairs. It is of course possible to lament this, or to argue that the vast majority of the world's population is misguided, fails to apprehend what is of real worth, and so on, but such an argument would not alter current circumstances and, more importantly, current perceptions.

A convincing reality check here simply involves observing which sorts of societies and lifestyles people leave behind, and which attract them. Of course, choices are often painful and not particularly welcomed. Of course, the modern globalised economy pushes itself relentlessly into all corners, intent on selling shoes, soft

drinks and sex to everyone from Boston to Bhutan. But there are also powerful 'pull' factors at work in these scenarios. Globalisation and its ramifications are often welcomed by many who see in them upward physical, social and psychological mobility. Or, reverse the optic, and ask how many of those academic researchers and writers who wax poetic about what is indigenous and small actually alter lifestyles themselves.

It might be argued that it is regrettable that positive aspects of 'simpler' lifestyles could not co-exist with more 'advanced' ones. Why, in other words, shouldn't individuals and groups have the best of both (or, indeed, several) worlds? Why should more technically 'sophisticated' lifestyles have to compete with, or erase, earlier ones. Why couldn't fruitful symbioses exist? And so on. These are large questions, well beyond the scope of the limited discussion here, but there is one obvious linguistic ramification: why does a new language so often mean the displacement of an old one? Why is an enduring bilingual accommodation typically very hard to achieve? Why does there seem to be – in some eyes, anyway – a sort of linguistic Gresham's Law at work? I shall return a little later to bilingual matters: my perspective here is simply that, if these sorts of questions were more transparently dealt with, we would have a scholarly literature that more closely reflected real social conditions.

None of this, by the way, need be taken to imply that societies characterised by adjectives like 'modern', 'advanced' or 'technological' – or, indeed, even by 'liberal', 'tolerant' or 'democratic' – are in fact better than others for whom such descriptions would seem strained. I believe it to be so, myself, but it is not necessary for the introductory argument that is most important here. It is, at a minimum, only important to understand that the great bulk of evidence that we can glean from what people actually do when they have social choices – where they move from, where they move to, what sorts of regimes they prefer to live under, what lifestyles attract them and which are abandoned, and so on – demonstrates that the preferences of most ordinary people themselves are rather different from what one might gather if one were only to read some of the scholarly comments and admonishments to be found in the social-scientific literature. One implication is that the assumptions that some writers in the field seem to make may not, after all, correspond very well to events unfolding on the ground.

If we turn more specifically now to cultures seen to be 'at risk', to 'small' languages threatened by larger neighbours, we will find that the most interesting material has to do with minority groups. After all, relatively secure 'mainstream' populations – who have the luxury of living in and through their own languages and values, who rarely have even to think about these matters – are not the ones in which questions of language maintenance, or shift, or revival are particularly pressing. We can begin by making a rough division.

Indigenous and immigrant languages

European dynamics are instructive under this heading: as the continent moves, sometimes erratically, in the direction of increasing federalism, its minority groups and its 'stateless' peoples continue to press for greater and improved recognition. It is, again, a reflection of the times that there is concrete evidence of such recognition.[1] In October 1981, the European Parliament adopted the Arfé resolution, supporting minority languages, and a direct consequence was the establishment of the Dublin-based Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. After a decade of operation, its Secretary-General observed that:

> If our languages have been ignored in the past by European institutions this is no longer the case. The European Community is positive towards the cause of our languages and now includes in its budget a provision of 3.5 million ECU [European Currency Unit: the precursor to the Euro] to promote regional and minority languages and cultures. (Breathnach, 1993: 1)

In 1992, the Council of Europe adopted the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Although more countries have signed it than have ratified it, there have nevertheless been some changes in official attitudes and actions vis-à-vis the 'smaller' European languages. It would be a great mistake, however, to conclude that a significant corner has been turned in the maintenance and promotion of threatened varieties. In an anthology on language politics in Ireland and Scotland, for example, Dunbar (2001) and MacKinnon (2001) have pointed out the continuingly parlous state of Gaelic; see also the more general discussion of the Charter, by Ó Riagáin (the first Secretary-General of the Bureau), in the same collection.

Along with official and semi-official policies and declarations, there are now several voluntary organisations formed expressly for the protection of endangered languages; indigenous minority groups remain the main focus, but there is often also institutional support for immigrant populations. Societies like *Terralingua* (in America) and the *Foundation for Endangered Languages* (in England) usually have a charter or a statement of intent stressing linguistic rights. The former, for instance, observes that 'deciding which language to use, and for what purposes, is a basic human right' (Terralingua, 1999). As well, existing language associations have also argued for linguistic rights. A recent example is that of the *Teachers of*

1. Again, I am not so naïve as to imagine that recognition is always or entirely altruistic. Good political cases can be made, after all, for taking steps to defuse or dilute potentially troublesome social 'problems', and this need have nothing to do with assessments of what is best for the people to be affected. Talleyrand reminded Napoleon that it is difficult to rule with janissaries, and that the clever ruler will encourage a social passivity that is easier and less expensive to manipulate; see Ortega y Gasset (1930).

English to Speakers of Other Languages association, which, in November 2000, passed a resolution advocating that 'all groups of peoples have the right to maintain their native language … a right to retain and use [it]'. The other side of the coin, they argue, is that 'the governments and the people of all countries have a special obligation to affirm, to respect and support the retention, enhancement and use of indigenous and immigrant heritage languages.' These are the sorts of statements that typically animate concerned groups and individuals, their manifestos usually drawing upon existing charters endorsed by the United Nations, the European Union and other international bodies.

I cannot deal further here with the complicated matter of language rights – although I shall have a little more to say in the next chapter, under the rubric of ecology – except to note that there are many problems associated with them, and with their treatment by official and unofficial bodies. Government resolutions and charters, for example, are often outlined in a manner so general as to be virtually useless; or, as I have implied above, legislators may endorse them in principle without intending to formally ratify them. As well, many modern governments, while apparently more tolerant of diversity than before, still consider that toleration need not imply positive action, and arguments linking linguistic uniformity with efficiency, the need for one language to bind disparate groups within state borders, and so on, remain quite common. That is why most supporters of language rights are rather cynical about legislation that, on the surface, seems to be central to their concerns. Mere lip-service is no sort of guarantee of protection. Further information here can be found in several recent overviews of language-rights claims and legislation, the most useful of which is by de Varennes (1996); see also the collection edited by Kontra *et al.* (1999) as well as the rather more pointed contributions by Phillipson (1992, 2000). For a critical discussion of language rights, see Edwards (2003; see also the brief notes in Chapter 3, below).

Immigrant groups, their cultures and their languages, have also been much in the news in recent times. As is often the case, unfortunately, they are frequently attended to only at times of conflict. The recent (2006) agitations in the United States about the status of 'legal' versus 'illegal' immigrants – or 'aliens', as they are unfortunately labelled – have only served to stimulate, not to create, concerns about the changing face of the country. The Hispanic American phenomenon is, in fact, a very interesting and illustrative one. There are now more than 35 million people of Hispanic background in America (about 12.5% of the population): it is the fastest growing minority, having registered a 60% increase over the last decade of the twentieth century, a decade in which overall American population growth was 14%; and, while there are some obvious categorisation difficulties, Hispanic Americans are either more numerous now than Blacks, or they very shortly will be. Bohrer (2000) reported that, by mid-century, their proportions will double,

and one in four Americans will be of Hispanic origin. These are speculative figures, of course, and there is considerable room for variation: Carlos Fuentes (1999) has said, for instance, that three out of every five Americans will speak Spanish by 2050. Still, the numbers are impressive, and they take on more weight when we consider their traditionally concentrated nature: after all, millions of people living more or less together are a different sociological phenomenon than if they are widely scattered among others. At the same time, not all Hispanic people live in the southwest or the southeast, and it is a striking feature of their growth that they now have an importance presence throughout the country. All in all, a powerful and growing population.

The demographic changes here are not welcomed in all quarters, and the perceptions of important, or powerful, or 'mainstream' groups have a significant role to play in matters of language maintenance and shift. The fact that – until the present, at any rate – America has remained essentially anglophone in character, despite an increasingly multi-ethnic reality, testifies to the continued bubbling of the melting-pot. Historically, the 'melting' process has been most effective at the level of language; that is, while aspects of cultural continuity can be discerned in various groups, languages other than English have typically endured no longer than the second or third generation, and the 'normal' progression has been a transition from one monolingualism to another. This is true, even for the two rather special cases, French speakers in New England and Spanish speakers in the southwest – special, inasmuch as they, unlike all other arrivals, remain close to their heartlands, the borders of which are easily and frequently crossed. The *timing* of language shift is naturally dependent upon such variables, but the overall shape of the curve is remarkably similar across groups. But perhaps this is about to change, perhaps some Hispanic 'tipping-point' is about to arrive, after which the cultural and linguistic face of America may significantly alter. One of the many reasons, then, why the Hispanic immigrant experience in the United States is so interesting is that a country whose very existence is based upon the immigrant experience may be about to show us something of that historical metamorphosis by which immigrants become indigenous.

For the moment, however – and despite the increasing presence of Spanish in the American 'linguistic landscape' – the corridors of power remain firmly anglophone, still exerting strong assimilative pressures. And this continues to surprise some commentators. Fuentes (1999) has remarked that it is a 'great paradox' that most Americans know only English, making the United States at once the supreme and the most isolated of world powers. Why, he asks, does America 'want to be a monolingual country'? Shouldn't all contemporary Americans know more than one language, to better understand the world and deal with the global problems in which they are inevitably involved? Wouldn't this make eminently good sense, if

only for the most machiavellian of motives? Well, monolingualism is *not* a paradox on the American scene, of course. Indeed, it is entirely predictable (if somewhat unfortunate), and to say that Americans 'want' to be monolingual would seem to miss the point: it is simply that English serves well enough across a great variety of 'domains'. This is true overseas, where the force of American power and prestige so often means that others will make all the linguistic accommodations. And within the country itself, it has always been difficult to encourage foreign-language learning; after all, wherever you live and wherever you go, English will take you to McDonalds, get you a burger, and bring you safely home again. In other anglophone societies, too, remote and/or island settings have historically lessened the foreign-language requirements that are so obvious to those living in proximity to other cultures. Add to these obvious factors the much more important one of the global clout – economic, political, military, social, cultural, and so on – that English speakers have enjoyed for two centuries, and the continuing existence of English monolingualism is easily explained.

Apart from so often lacking the clear language-learning motivations of most other people in the world – which is, by almost any account, a negative consequence of socioeconomic dominance – anglophones have often shown themselves to be resistant, sometimes vehemently so, to the presence of other languages in their midst. Not only have both formal and unofficial institutionalisations of non-English varieties been rejected, there have been occasional outbreaks of discomfort at even *hearing* such varieties. One might imagine that the linguistic security that comes with being an English speaker in the modern era would lead to an acceptance or, at least, a tolerance of other varieties, immigrant or indigenous: how, after all, could they be taken seriously as rivals? And yet, rather than a *laissez-faire* attitude towards other languages, anglophone communities have often adopted postures characterised by a noisome mixture of arrogance, fear and disdain. Thus, attitudes growing out of the obvious practicality and instrumentality of English competence can expand to less immediate and more unpleasant levels. Not only do languages other than English appear unnecessary, their use can be seen as downright un-patriotic, their speakers as unwilling to immerse themselves wholeheartedly into the anglophone mainstream – 'if they want to live here, let them speak English' – their continuing affiliations with other cultures a suspect commodity. (See Dicker, 2003, and Lippi-Green, 1997, for useful discussions within the American context; and Edwards, 1990, for some analysis of the *U.S. English* movement.[2])

2. My treatment of the *U.S. English* association is not the most up to date study of this interesting organisation – which claims to be *for* English without being *against* other languages – but it remains a useful discussion of it as an expression of the the unpleasant attitudinal amalgam

I have emphasised the American context here, but it is only one illustrative example among many. In Canada, the ongoing struggle between English and French has concentrated minds wonderfully, although interested observers insufficiently appreciate how the debate has drawn in *all* groups (including aboriginal and 'allophone' populations – the latter term refers to non-francophone and non-anglophone immigrants) and has occasioned intense scrutiny of officially-sponsored policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism (Edwards, 1994a, 1995). In western Europe, the presence of the 'guestworkers', many of whom are now permanent residents, has also raised many linguistic and cultural issues – most recently, these have involved a rethinking of multicultural adaptations and accommodations. Here, as elsewhere, we can see something of the difficulties involved when liberal-democratic regimes come up against groups whose cultures and values are either not democratic themselves or who claim social positions that the 'mainstream' finds less than attractive. And, again as elsewhere, we see how the tensions here are often being played out in situations where the old and comfortable distinction between that indigenous 'mainstream' and the immigrant 'others' is blurring: the immigrant of yesterday is the citizen of today.

An example here is the current Dutch debate over official and unofficial multicultural postures – this, as one aspect of the global attention now being given to Islamic fundamentalism, and given specific focus in the Netherlands by the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri. In line with what I have mentioned above, it is perhaps worth noting that Bouyeri was a Dutch citizen. Another example is found in the 2005 disturbances in the French *banlieus* where tensions between the 'mainstream' and Muslim residents received worldwide publicity. Or, at least, where the sensational media coverage *suggested* – to the French, as well as to those in other essentially secular societies, now increasingly worried about radical Islamism – that striking religious differences were at the heart of the matter. In fact, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, poor housing, and widespread prejudice were probably at least as important. When cultures are in contact and conflict, however, popular perceptions regularly trump more measured and nuanced assessment.

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noted here. Among the recent treatments of the theme, Schildkraut's (2005) is perhaps the most dispassionate. The two-volume anthology compiled by González and Melis (2001) contains a mass of useful information, although its claim to provide 'critical perspectives on the Official English movement' is not really borne out: most of the contributors are ideologically committed opponents of the movement. Nothing wrong with that, of course, but – as Paulston (2002) points out in an intelligent review – the overall impression is a clash of largely un-analysed ideologies. Still, as she goes on to say, the collection is useful: 'disregard the ideology and anti-ideology and treat it as a handbook, a purveyor of facts (its real strength), of propositions and legislation, of names and dates, of congressional idiocies, of vain men's fancy' (p. 495).

All of the foregoing comments are very general in nature – and this, for two reasons. First, I shall be dealing with more fine-grained details about cultures in contact, and about the specifically linguistic ramifications of this, in the chapters that follow. Second, I have thought it important to provide a broad-brush treatment in this opening discussion because the matters I've already touched upon, as well as those I shall turn to later on, cannot be meaningfully understood in isolation from other features of the social landscape. An obvious example in all contact situations is the fact that language shift is a *symptom* of the social interplay between communities of unequal status; it is not an independent variable but, rather, one cell in a complex socioeconomic matrix. An implication is that any efforts to encourage, or shore up, or resuscitate flagging varieties are likely to have little success if they focus on language alone. On the contrary, a logical strategy for revival efforts would be to unpick the social fabric as it has evolved, with its unwanted linguistic consequences, and then reweave it into a more acceptable pattern. This is difficult, but it can be done: social revolutions have occurred throughout history. But two points immediately suggest themselves here. First, large-scale social upheavals typically produce many unintended results, some of which may be distressing for significant sectors of the population: when the dust settles, for instance, one often observes that although various players have exchanged roles, broad social problems and inequities remain. One would surely have to be a very parochial enthusiast for linguistic enhancement to blithely accept that the new or renewed fortunes of one language are achievable only at the expense of another.[3] Second, and more specifically, advocates of language revival or reversals-of-shift very rarely *want* wholesale revolution; on the contrary, they usually want social continuity – but with, of course, an altered status for the language in question. It goes without saying that such a highly specific intervention is exceedingly difficult (usually impossible, in fact) given the tight interweaving of all the social threads.

Bilingual solutions

One solution to many of the instrumental and psychological problems that are typically associated with language contact and conflict is bilingualism.[4] When

3. Such narrow advocates do exist, of course. In fact, even the supposedly dispassionate academic literature is full of pleas on behalf of one group or another, one language or another – pleas that disingenuously cloak themselves in the mantle of concern for *all* threatened varieties.

4. I am prescinding in this section from many important aspects of bilingualism: how it is to be defined and understood, how we can attempt to measure it, how it is acquired, its relationship to other aspects of the lives of its speakers (intelligence, for example), the ways in which an individual's two (or more, of course) languages interact and intersect with one another, and so on.

minority groups come up against 'mainstreams', when languages that once were of regular daily use begin to lose ground in new settings, when 'large' and widely important varieties loom over 'smaller' and less prestigious ones, when languages with writing systems threaten those lacking them – when, in a word, the attractions or pressures of a new language begin edging out a group's original one, why not expand the repertoire, why not consider linguistic expansion rather than language replacement? The fact that the latter, the replacement (perhaps over a couple of generations or so) of the original language with another one, is an extremely common phenomenon does not mean that it is a logically inevitable one.

The fact that a majority of the world's population has at least some level of bilingual or multilingual competence surely indicates that moving beyond one's mother tongue is not a particularly remarkable feat. Indeed, many – perhaps most – of those who have more than one linguistic string to their bow are poor, illiterate and under-educated. Bilingual competence is not rocket science. And yet, especially within powerful linguistic groups, it is common to find references to the difficulties involved or to the peculiar lack of language talents supposedly possessed. In the modern world, for example, English and American monolinguals often complain that they have no aptitude for foreign-language learning. This is usually accompanied by expressions of envy for those multilingual Africans, Asians and Europeans, and sometimes (more subtly) by a linguistic smugness reflecting a deeply held conviction that, after all, those clever 'others' who don't already know English will have to accommodate in a world made increasingly safe for anglophones. All such attitudes, of course, reveal more about social dominance and convention than they do about aptitude.

Bilingual competence is not an impossibility for anyone of normal intelligence. More than that, it would seem to be the obvious way in which an existing language, often rich in group history and ancestral associations, can be kept while another is added, usually for instrumental or practical reasons. Each variety would then have its place; each would come to the fore in particular settings, or 'domains'. In fact, this linguistic allotment is quite common in minority-group populations. Although such an arrangement can last for a considerable period of time – in which case, linguists speak of a *diglossic* relationship between the different varieties (see below) – it often does not. A lot has to do with dynamics of group contact. A situation in which groups regularly come into contact with one another, and where this contact does not occur on markedly unequal terms, is one in which two or more languages may well be maintained. Consider the commercial interactions among language communities in Africa or Asia, where multilingual encounters

Similarly, I leave aside here the important relationships between bilingualism and group and individual identity. See Edwards (2004b) for further details under these and other headings.

are obviously extremely common. Two points need to be made here. First, these are not circumstances in which we would expect to see anything like 'balanced' bilingualism; on the contrary, it would be linguistically uneconomical to develop one's second, third or fourth languages beyond their utility level. Second, these are not circumstances in which one group is likely – either unconsciously or deliberately – to attempt to assimilate the other. This means, among other things, that even where the actors come from groups that *are* markedly unequal in social dominance or importance, their interactions need not lead to the stronger gradually edging out the weaker.

How different these settings are from those in which more and less powerful groups come to inhabit essentially the same social ground – where immigrants arrive on the new shore, for example, or where indigenous speech communities become swamped by strong new settlers. In these situations, linguistic and cultural assimilation is very much on the cards: for immigrants, the painful act of dislocation and resetttlement is generally undertaken with the hope of an eventual merger into the new society, a reworking that will make the move worthwhile; for indigenous populations, such a hope – where it exists at all – may be rather more attenuated, but the practicalities of the case often lead to the same social conclusions. In such instances, the separation of language domains that is possible in settings where assimilation or integration is not at all looked for – and, in many cases, would be impossible on religious or tribal or caste grounds – gradually weakens. The greater clout of one language means that it inexorably moves more and more into the domains of the other. When the shift from one variety to the other establishes itself in home-and-hearth settings, the language story is virtually complete.[5] This, of course, is what we often observe over the course of two or three generations.

The fact that not all domains are of equal psychological significance, coupled with continuing and ever more intertwined contact between groups of unequal status and power, means that an enduring bilingualism, or diglossia, is unlikely for most members of most immigrant and indigenous groups. While it is difficult to

5. It is of course the intimacy of the family domain that is the salient factor here. It is one thing to shift from one language to another in public or work settings, but when this also occurs within the privacy of one's own familial walls, it may be assumed that something of social and psychological importance has happened. The intimacy of the family hearth is not, however, the only important private domain where language shift is concerned. Many years ago, I was working in Vermont among what was then termed a 'Franco-American' population – people who had, not so terribly long before, moved down to the United States from neighbouring Québec. One day an elderly francophone told me that he and others of his cohort had recently gone to the priest, to request that he now hear their confessions in English. This, despite the fact that those of his age group were all much more fluent in their mother tongue than in English. Again, the significance of this is surely both obvious and pivotal.

be categorical here, it is possible to identify – for a given variety, at a given time, in a given context – what one might call *domains of necessity.* These domains are related to the most pivotal aspects of people's lives, and so one could single out settings such as the home, the school and the workplace. On the other hand, domains in which participation is voluntary, or sporadic, or idiosyncratic, are not likely to be so important for language stability. The maintenance of a language is on a surer footing if it, and it alone, is required in domains of central and continuing salience. And, from such a position of strength, it sometimes seems as if the admission of another language, in less psychologically central domains, can be undertaken without worry. But the usual patterns of group interaction – along the lines, and under the conditions I have described here – generally lead to the erosion of the first language in even the most central domains. Thus, many sociological investigations in 'receiving' countries of the new world reveal first-language monolingualism among those who step off the boat, various degrees of bilingualism in the second generation, and monolingualism in the new or 'mainstream' language in the third.

If we understand that bilingualism, switching and other dual-language phenomena are still seen as suspicious by some and arcane marks of erudition by others, we should also recall their global nature. Expanded linguistic competence is usually driven by necessity but it has also historically reflected and supported upper-class boundaries. There is a distinction, in other words, between 'élite' and 'folk' bilingualism. In different ages, not to have known Latin or Greek or French in addition to one's mother tongue would have been simply unthinkable for educated people. At other levels and for other reasons, humbler citizens have also been bilingual from earliest times. We know it was necessary under the Ptolemies to acquire Greek, even for quite minor posts, and Athenian slaves – representatives of the lowest class of all – were often bilingual as they were pressed into domestic service and teaching. In these conditions at either end of the social spectrum bilingualism can indeed be a stable phenomenon. And a more permanent bilingualism at an individual level becomes diglossia at a collective one. It exists because of a continuing necessity which is absent among most immigrant populations, and this necessity rests upon different social functions and different domains of use for each language.

Diglossic stability is not, itself, carved in granite. The French-English diglossia that prevailed in England after the Norman conquest eventually broke down, for example, and in more recent times the variety of bilingual arrangements reminds us that the phenomena are essentially dynamic in nature. In some jurisdictions, official bilingualism follows the so-called 'personality' principle, by which language rights inhere in *individuals*, wherever they happen to live within a state. This operated in apartheid South Africa, for example, and remains in what is now a country with eleven officially recognised languages. According to the 'territorial principle', however (as in Belgium), rights vary from region to region and the

linguistic arrangement is commonly some sort of 'twinned' unilingualism. In Canada, the personality principle was legislatively enshrined, even though official-language minorities were (and are) small in all provinces except Québec and New Brunswick. Political factors – chiefly the need to accommodate the francophone population, one of the two 'founding peoples' – underpinned this decision, even though several intermediate possibilities also existed; in Switzerland, for example, the personality principle operates only at the federal level.[6] Demographic pressures on the ground, however, have created a Canadian social landscape that resembles Belgium much more than it does South Africa. The country continues to move inexorably towards separate linguistic realities – French in Québec and English elsewhere – with a 'bilingual belt' in those parts of Ontario and New Brunswick that abut Québec. Part of this development involves the assimilation of francophones outside Québec and the rejection, within that province, of bilingualism. A *de facto* 'territorialism' seems to have emerged, in other words, something that clearly illustrates the importance of the political and social frameworks within which stable bilingualism occurs. Within liberal democracies, at least, socially engineered policies – which is how some have described Canadian arrangements in the areas of language and culture – must ultimately, it seems, be reconciled with widespread popular perceptions, aspirations and self-interest.

Minority groups

Since discussion of language maintenance, shift and revival will almost always touch upon contact between groups of unequal status, terms like 'dominant' and 'subordinate', 'majority' and 'minority', usually figure quite prominently. But what is a minority group or a minority language?

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6. The idea of the French and English in Canada consituting the two 'founding races', or the two 'charter groups' is not, of course, one that always appeals to those who were already there when the Europeans first arrived. Nor, more interestingly, does it appeal very much to 'allophone' groups in the country. If you live in a city like Toronto, where the mother tongue in more than half the homes is neither English nor French and if, in addition, you are a fully-fledged Canadian citizen, it is quite possible that you will see the English-French dichotomy as historically interesting but no longer operative in contemporary socio-political life.

A very recent letter in the *Globe & Mail* newspaper (Awasti, 2008) captures the sentiment I refer to here:

> Perhaps our political leaders should shift from their narrow 'Two Founding Nations' view of Canada to regard it as a pluralistic society, whose government considers all its citizens and all communities residing within its borders equally, and thus does not pit one against another.

Some agreed context is certainly important here. For example, is French in Canada a minority language? It depends on the geographic perspective – provincial, regional, continental – that one adopts. (Indeed, one could say the same about English: there has been considerable debate about whether anglophones in Québec constitute a 'real' minority, for example; see the journalistic summary provided by Gagnon, 1996.) There is, too, the question of minorities *within* minorities (see the recent treatment by Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev, 2005). The aboriginal groups in Québec come to mind here, as do the Abkhazian and Ossetian enclaves within the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Bitter experience teaches us that possession of minority status does not necessarily sensitise groups to the perceived plight of other, smaller entities. Thus, the nationalists in Québec who argue that it is their democratic right to secede, following a successful provincial referendum, would generally deny that same course of action to the James Bay Cree. *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi.*

Numbers are also important. Indigenous people in Canada, for example, now number just over one million, thus constituting only about four per cent of the total population (Cook, 1998; Drapeau, 1998; see also Edwards, 1998, for broad coverage of recent Canadian language issues). Furthermore – since it would be quite inappropriate to consider 'aboriginals' as some monolithic entity – we should also bear in mind that this overall number is broken down into more than fifty language groups, only three of which have more than 5,000 speakers (Edwards, 1994b; Foster, 1982). Numbers alone, however, are obviously not the whole story – nor, indeed, its most important element. Native language groups in South Africa vastly outnumber speakers of English and Afrikaans, but have historically been of 'minority' status there. In the post-apartheid Republic, where eleven languages are now official and another eight are 'recognised', the subaltern status of widely-spoken languages has been *legislatively* enhanced, but the unofficial pressures that sustain English continue unabated.

These are indigenous-language contexts. Although of minority status, such languages – by virtue of cohesion, or concentration, or geographical remoteness, or isolation – do at least have the advantage of a homeland or heartland. The attractions of *heimat* may thus have a sustaining power, if only psychological and intangible. This is something generally unavailable to immigrant minorities (see below, however); consequently, their linguistic and cultural problems may be exacerbated. Of course, there is an interesting temporal dimension to be considered here: the very distinction between indigenous and immigrant can become an arguable one. Consider the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Some came to the island a thousand years ago, others moved there in the mid-nineteenth century: are some indigenous and others not? How will we regard the apparently permanent *gastarbeiter* groups in Europe five hundred years hence? Are the Welsh and Bretons truly indigenous in the lands they now live in? Were they not historical interlopers in

some earlier age? Stephens (1976) once suggested a distinction between 'indigenous' populations (native to an area, with length of residence unspecified) and 'autochthonous' ones (those with a deeper and longer 'of-the-soil' connection to a place). Is it useful or confusing to think that Welsh and Breton might be indigenous but not autochthonous?

If the United States is a country of immigrants, have some now moved to indigenous status with the passage of time? Isn't, however, the English-speaking population also an immigrant one in the eyes of aboriginal groups? And, in their turn, were not the North American aboriginal groups also migrants via 'Beringia'? In the current Canadian context, then, ought we to restrict the term 'indigenous' only to Amerindian groups and languages? Should we consider English and French to be indigenous (now, but not always)? Should distinctions be made between early and later immigrant varieties, between (say) the Gaelic speakers who first came in the late eighteenth century and post-second world war arrivals from southeast Asia? Canadian 'allophones' now constitute a very sizeable presence indeed, with census figures revealing that they comprise about 42% of the overall Canadian population; this is a greater percentage than either of the two 'founding groups' (the English figure is 32%, the French 24%). When, as is obviously becoming more and more the case, these allophones enter fully into Canadian life and become citizens, should we recalculate our indigenous-vs-immigrant metric? All of this is of considerable importance when policies touching upon language and culture are under debate, and the argument of some political philosophers – that indigenous minorities ought to have a greater claim than immigrant groups upon the state's attention – become more nuanced, to say the least (see Kymlicka, 1995a, 1995b).

Further, even if we could agree about the definition of an immigrant minority group, we should still have to admit important variations. As I've mentioned, the French in the northeastern United States, and the Spanish in the southwest are, unlike others, just a metaphorical step away from their 'heartland'. Indeed, the effect of their migration has often been simply to expand that heartland so that it transcends political boundaries.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that minority communities and, more particularly, minority languages and identities, however understood, are by definition always at least at a *potential* risk. This is perhaps the one unifying feature, the one constant, across contexts. Because of the importance of power and status – clearly of greater moment than numbers, concentrations and geographical placement – minority-group stability cannot be assured simply through official recognition. Romansch may be official in Switzerland, but it is not on the same footing as German, French or even Italian. French in Québec is the province's sole official language, and formal support for it has increased in all sorts of ways over the last generation or so, but it is still spoken by only seven million in a North American

anglophone ocean that is more than fifty times greater. Irish is the official language of Ireland but, rather than being the Celtic success story that some had hoped statehood would produce, the fortunes of the language illustrate the relative inadequacy of bureaucratic sanction alone. There are, of course, some success stories. Catalan is one, although it would be simplistic to assume that the possession of regional-autonomy status within Spain was the prime cause of this success: it was necessary, perhaps, but certainly not sufficient.

Language maintenance

As with the concept of 'minority', so the term 'language maintenance' is less than crystal-clear. Must it always imply vernacular oral maintenance? Could a language preserved in written form, but spoken by few (or none) on a regular basis, be considered 'maintained'? In most instances, of course, maintenance *does* imply a continuity of the ordinary spoken medium and this, in turn, highlights the importance of uninterrupted domestic language transmission from one generation to the next: *bho ghlùin gu glùin* – 'from knee to knee', as the Gaelic aphorism has it. If this transmission is sustained, then language maintenance (at some level) is assured; if it falters or ends, then the language becomes vulnerable and its maintenance threatened (see Fishman 1990, 1991). This is another way of saying that the home is perhaps the most important of all language domains. It should also be obvious, however, that the persistence of this domain, pivotal though it may be, cannot stand in isolation from others; typically, there must exist extra-domestic settings within which the language is necessary or, at least, of considerable importance. For Fishman and others to focus upon the home is entirely reasonable, but it is wrong to imply that efforts there can proceed in an independent fashion – and this understanding, of course, brings us directly back to the whole social nexus within which languages rise and fall.[7] A related error is to gloss over the clear fact, already touched upon, that not all domains are of equal weight or value in terms of supporting linguistic continuity. As noted, the maintenance of a language is on firmer ground if it retains important domains.

Language maintenance is not an issue equally germane for all groups. It is, rather, one which assumes greater importance when a group and its language are at some risk of assimilation by a more powerful linguistic neighbour; thus, discus-

7. Slomanson (1996: 119) has suggested – with specific reference to Irish – that the home 'is a relatively unimportant sociolinguistic domain in revival contexts'. This is clearly mistaken, but his following statement is nearer the mark: 'an Irish-only approach in the revivalist home is a crucial safeguard. It is absolutely insufficient as a language revival strategy in the absence of an Irish-using peer group environment'.

sions of language minorities and language maintenance naturally coincide. Furthermore, language maintenance almost always involves at least some element of language *revival,* for it is only when a variety begins to lose ground (or is seen to be at some risk of doing so) that attention becomes focussed upon it. It is useful to bear in mind here that revival does not simply and solely mean a restoration to life after death – and, as we shall see, 'language death' is another term that is less straightforward than it might first appear. Revival can also, quite legitimately, refer to reawakening and renewal, to the restoration of vigour and activity, to the arresting of decline or discontinuity.

How can language maintenance be effected; how can decline and discontinuity be halted? There are two major and interrelated factors involved, one tangible and one more subjective. The first I have already mentioned: the continuing existence of important domains within which the use of the language is necessary. These domains depend upon social, political and economic forces, both within and without the particular language community. Although the details vary from case to case, matters of linguistic practicality, communicative efficiency, social mobility and economic advancement are usually very significant. In fact, these are the greatest advantages associated with 'large' languages, and the greatest disincentives for the maintenance of 'small' ones. In many cases of language contact between varieties that are unequal in important ways, some bilingual accommodation is often sought, but we have seen that bilingualism itself can be an unstable and impermanent way-station on the road to a new monolingualism (in the stronger variety). Formal language planning on behalf of beleaguered languages can often do very little to stem the forces of urbanisation, modernisation and mobility, the forces that typically place a language in danger and which lead to language shift. Simply put, a decline in the existence, attractions and viability of traditional lifestyles inexorably entails a decline in languages associated with them. There have been efforts to standardise and modernise threatened varieties, thereby making them more appropriate in the contemporary world, and thus lessening the pressure to shift to other mediums. These are always theoretically possible, but they are not always practicable, nor do they necessarily change in any substantial way the status-based balance of dominance among competing forms. 'Small' varieties that have been developed to national-language levels (for example, Somali and Guaraní) still remain less broadly useful than (for example) English and Spanish.

It should always be remembered that, historically and linguistically, change rather than stasis is the norm. Environments alter, people move, and needs and demands change: such factors have a very great influence upon language practices. The desire for mobility and modernisation is, with some few notable exceptions, a global phenomenon. Whether one looks at the capitalist world or the former communist one, at contemporary times or historical ones, at empires or small socie-

ties, at immigrant minorities or indigenous groups, one sees a similarity of pressures which take their toll, force change and throw populations into transitional states that have, naturally enough, unpleasant consequences (at least in the short term – and this period can last quite a long time, in fact).

The other, more intangible aspect of language maintenance is the matter of the collective *will* to stem discontinuity, to sustain life in the face of the elements just discussed. This obviously involves larger questions of group identity. Nahir (1977) pointed out that language revival – and, we could also say, efforts at language maintenance generally – presupposes the existence of a variety with which a group identifies, and it is from this source that the will to act arises. It is quite possible, of course, that a subordinate group is not allowed to exercise its will, or that it has allowed itself to be convinced that its language is of inferior quality, or that linguistic choices are only of Hobson's variety. But it is equally true that, in situations in which some collective linguistic action *is* possible, it is not always undertaken. Given some of the powerful pressures already mentioned, and the formidable and very real attractions associated with 'large' languages and their societies, it is not surprising that *active* moves for language maintenance are usually the preserve of only a small number of people. There are, of course, practical reasons why the masses cannnot usually involve themselves in maintenance efforts, and it is a commonplace to find that a broad but rather passive goodwill exists at this level. To galvanise this inert quantity has always been the most pressing issue for activists who, by logical extension, are often rather atypical of those for whom they speak and act. Many years ago, in commenting upon efforts to sustain Irish, Moran (1900: 268) made a point which is still relevant in many quarters: 'without scholars [the revival] cannot succeed; with scholars as leaders it is bound to fail'. (I shall return to matters of revival in the next chapter.)

Language maintenance is usually a parlous enterprise. By the time a 'small' variety is seen to stand in need of it, the precipitating social pressures have often assumed large proportions. In most cases of language decline and shift, linguists have generally seen a 'naturalness' that effectively precludes any useful intervention, even if it were thought broadly desirable (see Bolinger, 1980). Some contemporary scholars (particularly sociolinguists and sociologists of language), however, have not shied away from engagement in what might be called the 'public life' of language. Fishman is a good example here. He has noted (1982: 8) that regret over mother-tongue loss – among groups who 'have not capitulated to the massive blandishments of Western materialism, who experience life and nature in deeply poetic and collectively meaningful ways' – has brought many academics into linguistics and related fields. This self-proclaimed 'founding father' of sociolinguistics makes no secret of his own commitment here, and has (1990, 1991) devoted considerable attention to the question of 'reversing language shift': a 'quest' of

'sanctity', he calls it.[8] Fishman implicitly and explicitly endorses a view of applied linguistics as both scholarship and advocacy, a stance that has been shown to involve some dangers (see Edwards 1994b, 1994c).

In a plea that has become well-known, Krauss (1992: 9) called for a more involved commitment on the part of linguists, noting with alarm the large number of the world's languages now seriously at risk. Scholars should go well beyond the usual academic role of description and documentation, he argues, to 'promote language development in the necessary domains... [and] learn... the techniques of organization, monitoring and lobbying, publicity, and activism'. In a reply, Ladefoged (1992) adopted what is perhaps a more traditional stance, noting that the linguist's task is to present the facts, and not to attempt to persuade groups that language shift is a bad thing *per se*. Not all speakers of threatened varieties, Ladefoged says, will see their preservation as possible or even always desirable:

> One can be a responsible linguist and yet regard the loss of a particular language, or even a whole group of languages, as far from a 'catastrophic d estruction'... statements such as 'just as the extinction of any animal species diminishes our world, so does the extinction of any language' are appeals to our emotions, not to our reason. (p. 810)

And, in response to Ladefoged, Dorian (1993) noted that all arguments about endangered languages are political in nature, that the low status of many at-risk varieties leads naturally to a weakened will-to-maintenance, that the loss of any language is a serious matter, and that the laying out of the 'facts' advocated by Ladefoged is not a straightforward matter, since the 'facts' are inevitably intertwined with political positions.

It is clear that this is a very contentious area. What some would see as inappropriate and unscholarly intervention, others would consider absolutely necessary. Any combination of scholarship and advocacy is fraught with potential danger, but one might at least argue that one of the 'facts' to be presented to groups and policy-makers is the commitment of at least some in the academic constituency. Groups whose languages are at risk might profit from the knowledge that the issues so central to them are also seen as important by 'outsiders'. Indeed, one of the most important things that external observers can do is to make people understand that the linguistic and cultural pressures bearing upon them are not unique.[9] At the end of the day, though, we should remember that the actions of linguists,

8. 'I can still remember,' Fishman notes (1992: 395), 'when I coined the expression "language maintenance and language shift".'

9. I omit from the discussion here any mention of those scholarly activists who are, themselves, from the ethnocultural community about which they write, and whose claims they advocate. There is a good case to be made for the insights and nuanced observations that may be

whether fervently pro-maintenance in tenor or more detached, are likely to pale in comparison with the realities of social and political pressures.

Discussions of language endangerment and language maintenance have proliferated since Krauss issued his alert. Given the nature of the topic, it is not very surprising that most of those who write about it are in favour of some form of intervention to stem linguistic decline. In fact, the whole area has become inextricably intertwined with studies of language ecology – a perspective that I shall touch upon later. Within a field whose title suggests a breadth of concern for all aspects of the social life of language – from ecological arrangements in which languages thrive, all the way to contexts in which they are threatened with extinction – advocacy on behalf of endangered varieties has become the main focus (indeed, the sole one in many instances); see Edwards (2004a). Some recent treatments in which a linguistic call to arms is highlighted include those of Nettle and Romaine (2000), Grenoble and Whaley (2006) and Fishman (1991, 2001); such an approach is of course attractive at a 'popular' level, too – see Dalby (2002) and Abley (2003, 2008). Besides attempting to make various sorts of cases for intervention in declining linguistic fortunes, all of these books present useful information about the causes and the mechanics of language decline (see also below).

Language maintenance efforts are usually best understood as a reflection of the desire to shore up what is commonly conceived to be one of the most important constituents of group identity. Discussions of maintenance and revival are essentially discussions about the existence, the desirability and the forms of multilingual and multicultural accommodation, either within or across state borders. These discussions, at their deeper levels at any rate, are philosophical debates about social life, and it is always salutary to bear in mind this broader perspective when treating particular manifestations of pluralism, linguistic or otherwise.

The literature is replete with case studies of specific contexts, and, to a lesser extent, cross-contextual comparisons. As I have already indicated (see note 3), much special pleading for particular groups occurs under the guise of a more general concern for pluralism *per se*. Apart from this particularity of approach, case studies also typically reflect an unquestioned and often unarticulated acceptance of the view that linguistic and cultural diversity is ever and always a social good. Since this is by no means a generally proven proposition, it is fortunate that increasing attention is now being (belatedly) given to matters of pluralism, diversity and accommodation in liberal-democratic societies. There are more and more indications of a wider perspective that can only improve and broaden our knowledge.

available only to insiders; but an equally good case can be made about lapses in objectivity. The answer is of course some variety of social-scientific triangulation of approaches.

For example, Taylor (1992, 1994, 2007) has treated modern issues of identity – with all their specific manifestations (including language) – as struggles for equality of group 'recognition'. He points out that equal recognition has now become closely tied to a politics of 'difference' in which the uniqueness of identity is to be stressed. 'Assimilation,' he notes, 'is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity' (1992: 38). The demands of equal respect, on the one hand, and of particularity, on the other, can obviously lead to difficulties:

> The reproach [Taylor says] the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of nondiscrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them. (1992: 43)

Throughout, Taylor argues for an 'hospitable' variant of liberalism, one that departs slightly from the traditional adherence to individualism, and which makes room for some collectivist policy – clearly of relevance to minority groups who fear for their language and culture. Kymlicka (1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2007) has also concerned himself with tensions between individualism and collectivism and suggests that the provision of certain *group* rights is not, after all, inconsistent with liberal principle; see also Kymlicka and Patten (2003). Of particular interest here is the case he attempts to make for different treatments of minorities, depending upon whether they are indigenous or immigrant in nature (see above).

CHAPTER 3

Languages in contact and conflict II

Language decline, revival and the 'new' ecology

Language endangerment and decline

Ascertaining the point of language death is not always as easy as some might think. There are very ancient varieties whose existence is confirmed only through classical reference: Cappadocian, for example, once thrived in what is now central Turkey, but we know next to nothing about it. There are also undeciphered varieties. We have thousands of examples of Etruscan texts, but the brevity of many inscriptions (most are funerary), and the 'isolate' nature of the language (there are only two other languages in the family, Lemnian and Rhaetic, and neither is well attested) mean that our understanding of Etruscan is very incomplete: one expert speaks of a 'tentative' grammar and lexicon (Rix, 2004). Still, Etruscan is not quite as dead as Cappadocian. But consider, too, the possibility of further archaeological discoveries at the Kerkenes excavations, discoveries that could lead to increased knowledge of Cappadocian: would we then say that a dead language lived again? And, as for those 'dead' languages that students sometimes moan about – Latin and Attic Greek – well, they don't seem very dead at all in this company.

How do languages die? A once popular view held that they were virtually organic and that they had, therefore, a 'natural' lifespan. An early expression of this idea is found in the preface to Thomas Jones's *British Language in its Lustre* (1688): 'to Languages as well as Dominions,' he wrote, 'there is an appointed time; they have had their infancy, foundations and beginning, their growth and increase in purity and perfection; as also in spreading, and propagation: their state of consistency; and their old age, declinings and decayes'. In his classic book on language, Jespersen (1922: 65) cited the views of the nineteenth-century philologist, Franz Bopp: 'languages are to be considered organic natural bodies, which are formed according to fixed laws, develop as possessing an inner principle of life, and gradually die out because they do not understand themselves any longer!' This is highly figurative language, noted Jespersen (whose exclamation mark it is, by the way), not to be taken at face value. Aitchison (2001: 208) – who also reproduces the Bopp quotation, although omitting Jespersen's mark of incredulity – tells us that, nowadays, it is no longer believed that 'languages behave like beans or chrysanthe-

mums, living out their allotted life, and fading away in due course'. When we consider that Darwin himself said (1871 / 1949: 465–466) that:

> the formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel... languages, like organic beings, can be classed in groups under groups... dominant languages and dialects spread widely, and lead to the gradual extinction of other tongues. A language, like a species, when once extinct, never... reappears.

it becomes even easier to see why the organic metaphor has appealed. Of course, languages do not live or die at all. Languages do not possess any 'inner principle of life'. Languages do not have intrinsic qualities that bear upon any sort of linguistic survival of the fittest. Languages themselves obviously obey no organic imperatives – but their speakers do. So in a way, languages *do* have an 'allotted life', but it is a life granted by human society and culture, and not by the laws of nature. The fortunes of language are bound up with those of its users, and if languages decline or 'die' it is because the circumstances of their speakers have altered. The most common scenario here is that involving language contact and conflict: one language supplants another; see Crystal's concise treatment (2000).

In a well-known discussion of language death – not always of the greatest clarity – Kloss (1984: 651) touched upon three central categories: language death *without* language shift (the speech community itself dies out); language death due to language shift (the speech community does not exist in any 'concentrated' way, or the language succumbs to 'the intrinsic hostility of the technology-based infrastructure of modern civilization'); and *nominal* language death (a linguistic 'downgrading' to dialect status – when, for instance, the speech community stops writing their variety and begins to use another). Although Kloss's death-due-to-shift is not very thoroughly dissected, it is obvious that this second category is the most compelling, especially with regard to the language-identity relationship. After all, if an entire community dies out while speaking its original language, then that relationship may have remained undisturbed to the end. Similarly, the notion of 'nominal' death – something of a *rara avis*, at least as Kloss described it – need not involve any direct interruption of the linkage, although this sort of alteration could well lead to a more complete process of language shift.

Language death as a result of language shift is clearly the most common occurrence, as well as the most relevant here. Thus, for example, dispersal of speakers and/or the lack of a linguistic heartland are features almost always addressed by those concerned to stem decline or to revive moribund varieties. The shrinking *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking area) in Ireland is, as we shall see, a good case in point here. Language revivalists have recognised for a long time that the vitality of the region where the remaining Irish native speakers live is of the greatest importance

for overall language maintenance. However, history shows that little was actually *done* to preserve and sustain the *Gaeltacht* and, in any event, the treatment of shrinking minority-language heartlands is generally problematical. If nothing is done, they continue to contract under the pressure of strong outside influence; if things *are* done – if, for example, special economic aid is provided – then there is the danger of creating enclaves which are seen to be artificial, precisely because they have been specially relieved of certain pressures, by insiders and outsiders alike. Even where a viable heartland continues to exist, however, further difficulties often present themselves: a strong *Gaeltacht*, for example, is still a rural concentration within a society in which urban, industrial forces predominate. Greene (1981), a more than usually acute observer of minority-language scenes, pointed out that Irish simply does not possess a concentrated, modern, urban speech community; nor, indeed, do any of the other Celtic languages. Finally here, we can see that the possession of an urbanised heartland need not itself be a sign that all is well for a minority language: consider the Basque and Catalan heartland, parts of which are industrially strong (Bilbao, Barcelona and their environs) but whose linguistic strength is weakened by the in-migration of Castilian speakers in search of economic opportunities.[1]

What of Kloss's note about language decline caused by 'the intrinsic hostility of the technology-based infrastructure of modern civilization'? This inelegant phrasing does not, in itself, explain very much. Why should there be 'hostility', and why is it 'intrinsic'? Well, I have already mentioned that many linguistic nationalists fear modernisation: part of their apprehension stems from the association between the forces of modernity and dominant languages, but it is also interesting to consider that a broader and deeper dislike of modern life may be a spur to the advocacy of some sort of return to 'roots', a process in which an original group language could easily figure. The 'intrinsic hostility' of technological society derives from the economic power and dominance possessed by speakers of that society's language. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that, while there is often hostility on the part of the threatened speech community, there is often very little on the part of the dominant group. Power and affluence lead more often to ignorance and neglect than to outright hostility; dominance breeds its own myopia. When considering minority-group postures, furthermore, we ought not to use the word 'hostility' without some qualification. Language contact leading to language shift often involves hostility, to be sure, but there are usually interesting admix-

1. Of course, an urban centre is not a necessary condition for in-migration. In rural areas like the Irish *Gaeltacht*, any enhancement of social and economic life is likely to attract speakers of the variety that threatens the protected one. Indeed, where linguistic lines are drawn in areas of socioeconomic deprivation – on this side, a designated linguistic enclave; on that side, not – resentment can often arise from those on the 'wrong' side of the fence.

tures of admiration, envy and pragmatism. The shift from Irish to English in the nineteenth century, for example, can only fully be explained with reference to broad acquiescence in that shift. Many forms of language dynamics reflect pragmatic desires for social mobility and an improved standard of living, and these are ignored by revivalists at their peril. 'In many cases,' Greene (1981: 5) notes, 'we observe that language activists find themselves in pretty much the same situation as the earnest ecologist who asks the people of some area of natural beauty not to permit development there, and is met with the reply: "You can't eat the view".' The same pragmatic forces clearly apply to immigrant populations as well as to indigenous minority-language groups.

There is no doubt that the most obvious cause of language decline and death is an inadequate concentration of speakers faced with economically powerful and technically sophisticated neighbours. And the most common way in which death occurs is lack of transmission of an original language from parents to children. This was clearly the case in Ireland a century and more ago: de Fréine (1977, 1978) writes of a self-generated collective movement to abandon Irish. This is not to say, quite obviously, that such acceptance in language shift was independent of external pressures; but, even if oppression and deprivation had not been factors in the life of the nineteenth-century Irish peasantry, it is inconceivable that English would not have essentially displaced Irish anyway. The fact that today, within the *Gaeltacht* itself, most parents have decided to bring up their children in English is surely suggestive. Many other similar cases have been documented. An interesting trans-Atlantic example was discussed by Harris (1982), in the context of contact among Yiddish, Ladino (Judaeo-Spanish) and Hebrew. Yiddish traditionally served as a lingua franca for Ashkenazic Jews; Ladino did so for the *Sephardim*. But when the status of Hebrew was heightened through becoming the language of Israel, Yiddish and Ladino became somewhat redundant. More than three-quarters of Harris's Ladino informants in New York and Israel were unable to give valid reasons for passing on the language; not one grandchild could speak Ladino.

It is important to note that the Ladino speakers here maintained a strong attachment to the language, and this seems a general phenomenon in contexts in which languages are no longer transmitted. That is, the reasons behind non-transmission are not related to some personal repudiation of the language, but rather to assessments of the likely utility of competing varieties. Trudgill (1983) discussed another example, that of Albanians in Greece. He reported that Arvanitika (an Albanian dialect) was a dying speech, that current attitudes to it were unfavourable, and that it was not being taught to children. Yet almost all of Trudgill's respondents were proud of their Arvanite traditions. It is quite possible, then, for continuingly favourable cultural attitudes to coincide with language shift based upon more 'practical' considerations. This is further exemplified in the attitudes of

immigrant-group members in the United States; in one of his early reports, Fishman (1964) noted that, as original varieties become more and more restricted in use, attitudes towards them actually become more favourable. Finally, to return to the Irish scene, the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (1975) found – in what remains the most comprehensive assessment of language attitudes in the Republic – that strong sentimental attachments to Irish among the population at large existed independently of actual language use, of any desire to actively promote it, and of optimism about its future.

The factors in the decline of languages are many and varied, and I shall go into further detail in later chapters. Let us look at things from the opposite point of view for a moment, and follow Wardhaugh's (1987) list of factors that contribute to language *spread*.[2] Geographical routes into the domains of other varieties, routes that can be exploited in commercial, military and other ways, are important – more important, perhaps, in earlier times. Urban centres are significant, particularly if they are capitals of politics and commerce. A sense of some *mission civilisatrice* will further the spread of a dominant variety, as will blunter forms of imperialism. Religious missions, too, foster the expansion of languages, as they are needed to carry the word of God to remote and heathen parts; and, as the religions of the dominant become more and more accepted by the subordinate, so too will the languages of the former group.[3] Languages that have written forms often have advantages over purely oral mediums – this factor is but one aspect of the greater sociocultural prestige possessed by 'large' languages. Intangible remnants can prove surprisingly enduring here: varieties whose dominance was initially carried by trade, by religion, by the sword, can retain their status long after the evils of colonialism have formally ended. Their penetration of the societies once colonised and, particularly, of the education of the élite members of those societies, can linger for a very long time. Sometimes, indeed, the language of the former colonisers will be retained in an official capacity, because, in societies marked by great cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, it may also come to acquire a curiously 'neutral' or supra-ethnic status. It is not difficult, then, to ascertain which former African colonies were ruled by the French, and which by the English.

In the last chapter, I referred to some rather pointed treatments of language decline; there are other recent books in which a more dispassionate stance is attempted. While factual information about language decline and attempted re-

2. Ostler's (2005) interesting and ambitious attempt to better interweave the story of languages with broader social history – from the earliest times to the present – is particularly good on the vicissitudes of language spread.

3. See my recent treatment of language and identity (Edwards, in press) for much fuller coverage of the interactions between language and religion.

vival may be found in both categories, I take the opportunity here to refer to works in the second, works not previously cited. While the bones of the matter – aspects of language maintenance, spread, decline and revival – have been well understood for some time, each of the recent discussions that I mention here makes a particular contribution to the area, and it is this that I shall highlight.[4] For example, an excellent overview is provided by Coulmas (2005); the great virtue of his book is that its central focus is upon the constraints that bear upon real language behaviour – more specifically, Coulmas refers to 'micro-choices' as well as 'macro' ones. In other words, we are reminded throughout of the constant interplay between language at the individual level and language as a group phenomenon. Coulmas's chapters on diglossia and bilingualism, on language maintenance and shift, and on the language-identity relationship are particularly useful.

Nettle's (1999) measured analysis is what recommends his treatment of the parameters of language diversity; of particular interest are his attempts to come to grips with the features that weigh importantly upon linguistic survival prospects. He notes, for example, that there are more than 600 languages in the gravest danger, with fewer than 150 speakers each. And, while these 600 languages constitute perhaps one-tenth of the world's varieties, they represent about one-third of the total in the Americas, Australia and the Pacific: the implication, as Nettle says, is that linguistic extinction will be felt more severely in some regions than in others. He goes on to suggest that, were we to accept that a figure of 10,000 speakers provides what he calls 'medium-term safety', then about three out of five languages may well be lost in that medium term. If what he calls the more realistic figure of 100,000 is chosen, then the loss could climb to 85%. These are speculations, of course, and Nettle is quick to note that many factors other than numbers alone figure in the language-loss equation. But the numbers alone *are* striking.

The central appeal of Tsunoda's (2006) approach to linguistic endangerment, decline and revival is its comprehensiveness. It is also noteworthy that the author has been able to effectively link scholarly assessments with his own, obviously committed, fieldwork among the speakers of Warrungu, Jaru and Wanyjirra in Australia. The linkage itself is, of course, common enough; what characterises Tsunoda's book is the rarer ability to provide specific experience and commitment as embodiments of features discussed in the literature – fleshing them out and

4. Beyond the monographs mentioned here, I should like to draw readers' attention to a noteworthy edited collection. Brenzinger (1992) presents a number of fascinating case-studies of language decline and death in Africa. Apart from opening chapters by Brenzinger, Dimmendaal and Sasse on some important generalities – important in virtually all contexts, not just the African – there is a fine concluding survey of the entire African scene; by Sommer, it runs to well over a hundred pages.

contextualising them – without allowing personal conviction to warp the broader thesis; see, however, my comments on Tsunoda's treatment in Chapter 5.

Crystal's (2000) book on language death goes beyond a definition and an explanation of the precipitating factors, to ask why language decline or death should be something to care about and, following that, what might be done to intervene. We should pay attention, Crystal says, for at least five reasons. First, he invokes the parallel of biological diversity to suggest that plurality, in many forms, is essential to the human condition. Second, he makes the familiar point that each language is a bearer of group identity. A third, and related, point is that each language maintains the historical archives of the groups. Crystal's fourth 'reason to care' is that every language enhances the general store of human knowledge, that each variety presents a different window on the world. Finally, he says, languages are simply intrinsically interesting. These are all, of course, important arguments for the maintenance of languages, and to some they are very compelling ones – but it is at least arguable that, at some concentrated level, they all essentially reduce to considerations of 'preference'. That is, the biological analogy is, at best, suggestive; group identities and histories can be accessed through languages other than the original one; translatability implies that different world views can be taken back and forth across linguistic borders; and, not everyone may find languages of inherent interest. I do not wish, here, to make any sort of strong case. I do think it useful, however, to at least mention the possibility that – if sociopolitical circumstances make language shift virtually inevitable – the connections first established through the abandoned language need not be irretrievably lost.

However, to continue with Crystal's thesis: if we accept that something ought to be done to help sustain flagging varieties, what courses of action suggest themselves? Again, he presents us with a useful list. First, we need more, and more refined, information about threatened varieties. Second, we must foster positive and favourable attitudes in the community concerned. Relatedly, linguists and other scholars must demonstrate to the community the 'authenticity' of their language and their culture. Fourth, the complexities of the community-culture-language relationship should be more fully explored. These general points are all 'involved in the early stages of working with an endangered language' (p. 127), and they might all be seen as aspects of one overarching recommendation: amass as much relevant information as possible and then present it to a community that has been convinced of the worth of its own cultural and linguistic experience. There is little that a scholar could object to here, although perhaps the Ladefogeds among us might draw back a little from direct involvement: assembling and presenting information is one thing; going on from there to a position of advocacy is another.

And finally, Crystal gives us a third list, this one of factors that have been found important in revitalisation efforts. The chances for endangered languages,

then, will improve when the prestige of its speakers rises in the estimation of the 'mainstream', when they become richer, when they are seen to possess 'legitimate' power and rights, when they have a substantial presence in the educational system, when their language has a written form, and when they have a place in the new electronic universe. Again, it seems perfectly obvious that such factors are socially very important, but it is also quite clear that it is their absence that has substantially contributed to declining language fortunes in the first place. The problem in many real-life settings is that, by the time some intervention along these various lines becomes theoretically possible, the group – and, more importantly, the world around it – have moved on. Suppose, for example, that a place for Haida, or Auvergnat, or Tsakonian, or Ormuri could be found – *really* found now, not merely put on some ornamental or academic pedestal – in the schools of Canada, France, Greece and Afghanistan, respectively: why should we expect parents to endorse or support this place, and what value would they consider it to have?

Parents might indeed see little point in lessons presented in anything other than the 'big' languages that their children clearly need, and they might well summon up the familiar associations between the indigenous variety and a lifestyle they are happy to abandon. Scholarly arguments about linguistic value will largely be of a cultural or traditional nature, not an instrumental one, and while these are not ignoble bases, they are unlikely to have broad appeal among groups whose lives demand close attention to rather more mundane practicalities. Fine words, as my old granny used to say, butter no parsnips. I don't wish to be misunderstood here: I am not attempting to make any sort of moral defence for language shift – only to sketch out some contextual realities. A world in which Haida has been shoved aside by English is a world vastly different from the one that prevailed when Haida was still thriving.

Crystal ends his discussion with the important reminder that, ultimately, only the community can save its language. This is the foundational truth around which everything else revolves. Language 'planning' or 'management' may be necessary at some stage, outside experts may be desirable, legislation and official recognition may be central. But it is the intangible yet powerful will of the people most concerned that will ultimately prevail – providing, of course, that they have the capacity to make some real choices. All the rest, as Hillel might have said, is commentary.

Language revival

If language decline is complete, or nearing completion, attempts may be made by concerned and committed individuals and groups to inject new linguistic life.

Some scholars have argued that success is possible here; for instance, Weinreich (1974: 108) observed that:

> many 'obsolescent' languages have received new leases on life through a rejuvenated language loyalty among their speakers and have made the prediction of the death of languages a hazardous business.

On the other hand (with reference, perhaps, to *really* 'obsolescent' cases), it has sometimes been bluntly stated that dead languages stay dead, and that revival is impossible once a variety has gone to that place from whose bourn no traveller returns. Thus, Osborn Bergin, the Irish philologist and grammarian, noted that 'no language has ever been revived, and no language ever will be revived' (see Ó hAilín, 1969: 91). Still, languages are not people – and Bergin is no Hamlet – and I have already discussed the imprecision of the organic metaphor for language.

Of course, languages are in some sense parasitic upon their human hosts, and we die, right enough. For the death of a language, however, it would seem that an entire group of 'hosts' must perish, either literally or by way of language shift. But, even if all its hosts die, does a language entirely succumb? Surely so long as some record of it exists, a language is not dead. A strong criticism of modern 'revived' Cornish has argued that it is 'self-evident that there is no way by which the pronunciation of a language that no one now living has ever heard spoken can be recovered in anything more than an approximate form, if that' (Price, 1984: 143). Well, yes, although some Sherlock Holmes-like linguists have presented rather compelling cases concerning the sounds of now unspoken varieties (poetry often provides a good spoor). Pronunciation aside, however, the presence of written material suggests a continuing life of sorts, a life for which the parasite no longer needs its hosts. Besides, there is always the possibility that new hosts may arrive who will, however imperfectly, take the language out of the library and back into oral society.

If, as we've seen, determining the point of death is tricky, then *revival* itself begins on rather uncertain terrain. However, as I implied a little earlier, to overly restrict the use of the term through adherence to its Latin root (*vivere*) is to be unwarrantably severe. Revival does not simply and solely mean a restoration to life after death; it can also refer to re-awakening and renewal, to the restoration of vigour and activity, to a return to consciousness, and to the arresting of decline or discontinuity. All of these dictionary connotations have applicability for language and, therefore, *revival* is an entirely appropriate – if rather general – term in virtually every linguistic context in which its use has been debated. For example, about eighty years ago, Tierney (1927: 5) contributed to the arguments about Irish the observation that:

> analogies with Flemish, Czech or the Baltic languages are all misleading, because the problem in their cases has been rather that of restoring a peasant language to cultivated use than that of reviving one which the majority had ceased to speak.

While it is true that the Irish and Flemish cases are not analogous, this is not because one is a 'restoration' and the other an attempted revival. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that the *type* of revival differs in the two instances.

Widely scattered both temporally and by discipline and rigour, there are many accounts of specific language-revival efforts, which may make Nahir's (1977) observation that there has been little scholarly reporting somewhat surprising. On the basis of his own definition of revival (see below), he suggested that this is due to the small number of revival attempts themselves. In fact, however, there have been quite a few and, in a rather flawed survey, Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn (1971) reminded us that many groups have suffered some form of language pressure and have struggled against it; they discuss twenty examples, ranging from Albanian to Korean. I think, rather, that the key word in Nahir's thesis is 'scholarly'; that is, there is a dearth of rigorous and dispassionate studies. It follows that there is also a lack of general or theoretical material on the dynamics of revival *per se.*

Nahir points out that revival presupposes the existence of a language with which a group (or nation) identifies. The *will* to renew the language is thus the first major factor. Where does this originate? One presumes specific linguistic interest, of course – and in many instances this will refer to quite instrumental and mundane considerations – but the language must usually also be a desired marker of groupness, possessing symbolic value in addition to its communicative function. Rabin's (1971) observation, that revival is a radical step and an 'extra-linguistic' one, seems correct. It is extra-linguistic because, apart from the necessary technical processes, revival centrally springs from social rather than (purely) linguistic considerations: revivalist intervention in the social fabric is essentially in the service of group identity. We might add a little to Rabin's note, however, because revivalism typically includes both radical *and* conservative forces; it is radical inasmuch as a significant change to the *status quo* is envisaged, but conservative once a desired outcome has been attained. There is in most revival efforts a sense of injustice to be reversed, but this is often accompanied by the hope, usually quite unrealistic, that the new and reworked social fabric will then have some amber-like permanence.

Language revivals, then, often involve a curious desire for stasis (once perceived inadequacies have been rectified) or, indeed, for some type of psychosocial 'return' to a better time. This latter notion is often disputed by students of revival and nationalistic movements generally, and it is clearly not a necessary feature of the revival process. However, emphasising such actions as 'behaviorally implement[ing]... traditions' and 'remaking social reality' is surely suggestive, as is the observation that those active in the attempt to reverse language shift are 'change-agents on behalf of persistence' (Fishman, 1990: 11, 31–32). In the Irish context of nationalist revivalism – but clearly not only there – there actually emerged a new zealotry, a 'strident authoritarianism' in fact, in which were re-

flected 'romantic nationalism, second-hand racialism, European radicalism, middle-class frustration and cultural awareness' (Mac Lochlainn, 1977: 34). This rather heady mixture is probably inevitable in any small-is-beautiful, past-is-purer, smallness-equals-morality approach – which, incidentally, drives further wedges between revivalist leaders and those who are to be the beneficiaries of their interventions. This goes hand in hand with the selective mining of history in which nationalists typically indulge. In his famous 1882 lecture on nationalism, Ernest Renan thus observed that 'l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses' (Psichari, 1947: 882). All nationalists look to the past in order that – suitably manipulated – it can be made to serve the needs and aspirations of the present.

Commentators as varied as Greene (1981) and Gellner (1964) have pointed out that the quotidian pressures of life are one of the reasons why ordinary citizens are rarely found in the van of social movements. 'Genuine peasants or tribesmen,' as Gellner (p. 162) said, 'do not generally make good nationalists'. As well, however, revivalist leaders often do not make much real effort to engage a broader intellectual sympathy, despite frequent protestations to the contrary. Indeed, given that leaders are often well-educated outsiders, they usually have little in common with their 'constituents'. In the late nineteenth-century Irish revival effort, the romanticised and idealised *Gaeltacht* was conveniently remote from the Dublin-based Gaelic League, whose leadership included many anglo-Irish 'Ascendancy' figures of the huntin' and shootin' persuasion. They described the *Gaeltacht* as the keystone of a renewed Irish civilisation, a place where life was 'poetic' (Byrne, 1938), the homeland of the 'true Gael', a noble savage uncontaminated by modernity. Such *de haut en bas* sentiments are extremely common.

In reality, the western parts of Ireland were economically depressed areas of 'penury, drudgery and backwardness' (Ó Danachair, 1969: 120), areas from which many longed to escape. An observer of Gaelic in Nova Scotia anticipated Ó Danachair's comments almost exactly, noting that the language was associated with 'toil, hardship and scarcity'; English, on the other hand, was a reflection of 'refinement and culture' (Dunn, 1953: 134). Another said that, from the time of the first emigrations to the new world, the settlers 'carried with them the idea that education was coincident with a knowledge of English' (Campbell, 1948: 70). Similarly, Stephens (1976: 81) noted that English in sixteenth-century Scotland 'became associated... with what was solemn and dignified, while the native tongue was reduced to use for everyday, familiar, emotional and comic purposes'. And Gregor (1980: 302) referred to the general tendency in the Celtic regions for indigenous speakers to be seen as 'rustic, stagnant and often unlettered'. It is important to realise here that such feelings were not found only within some arrogant or conquering mainstream

community. On the contrary, the sad – but obvious and entirely understandable – fact is that they came more and more to be held by the 'locals' themselves.

The will to revive a language rests upon a desire to alter or reorientate group and individual identity. It follows that the strength and scope of that will are vitally important in revival efforts, and the leaders of these – while generally maintaining an intellectual distance, as alluded to above – typically devote considerable attention to the mobilisation of social opinion. In many language and cultural matters, general public sentiment is, however, often uninformed and passive. I have already cited Moran's opinion about revivalist leadership; eighty years later, Fennell (1981: 30) concluded that 'the lack of will to stop shrinking is an intrinsic characteristic of a shrinking language community' – a rather gritty problem. It is a problem related, of course, to factors already discussed: the contact between social-political systems of unequal power, and the economic and social changes produced by this contact, changes that lead to altered linguistic behaviour. I say nothing here about the *morality* of this contact which, in any event, need have little practical relevance for attempts at revival. On the one hand, it could be argued that *every* language revival effort presupposes an incursion of one language upon another. On the other, if it were allowed that a language had declined more because of the benign neglect of the larger system, and the relative acquiescence of the smaller (as has sometimes been claimed in the context of the British Isles) – and not because of some more blatant or outrageous suppression (Tsarist Russification policies, say) – well, this would still not necessarily mean an easier course for any planned revival.

Language revivals often seem belated, and there are good reasons for this. For example, where populations are governed by outsiders, attending to the linguistic practices of the natives (indeed, showing them much of an enlightened face at all) often comes as an afterthought – following, that is, the firm establishment of political hegemony. A second and more general reason here has to do with the antiquarian interests animating many revivalists, and the relatively late realisation that a dwindling group of native speakers might somehow be related to these interests. The 'last' speaker of Cornish, Dolly Pentreath of Mousehole, died in 1777 but formalised concern for Cornish took another century to gear up. Sometimes, too, purely literary interests are *never* accompanied by much concern for native speakers. Matthew Arnold had a sincere interest in both Celtic literature *and* in the rapid disappearance of spoken Welsh and the full assimilation of all Celtic populations. Perhaps a more basic point should be underlined here: we cannot assume, from our own perspective, that there has always existed a great concern for minorities and their languages, nor should we ignore the fact that the upsurge in this concern in the nineteenth century was intimately connected with other large-scale social and political developments. Nor – to expand upon a point just made – should we forget that the study of languages safely dead, or on the way to extinc-

tion, or whose remaining speakers are at some physical or social remove, is altogether a neater scholastic exercise than is actually coming to grips with breathing speakers. Although, for example, there were still many speakers of Irish by the time the revival effort began, the literary researches of the revivalists were not inconveniently challenged: by the 1880s, only about fifty people were literate in Irish. Remember the formidable Miss Blimber, in *Dombey and Son*:

> She was dry and sandy [Dickens relates] with working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss Blimber. They must be dead – stone dead – and then Miss Blimber dug them up like a ghoul. (Chapter 11)

It is common, then, to hear the cry, 'if only we had started sooner'. In fact, a cynical view might hold that the very existence of a revival effort is an indication of some ultimate or penultimate chapter in a linguistic history. It is also unfortunate that, even at this critical stage, internal squabbling among revival rivals weakens an already feeble position. It all seems a tale of woe, comprised of strong external linguistic pressure, insufficient or enfeebled popular will, estranged or decontextualised leadership, the transitory nature of bilingualism. And it *is*, in fact, such a tale: language revival is very problematic. However, most of the difficulties discussed here have to do with revival in the sense Nahir (1984: 301) has described: 'an attempt to turn a language with few or no surviving native speakers back into a normal means of communication'. In line with some of my earlier remarks, however, it is clear that the position adopted by Nahir and others is not the only one possible. Revival efforts need not always stand or fall on the matter of wide revernacularisation alone. And, as I shall shortly be arguing more specifically, even 'failures' can sometimes succeed – or, to be a little more precise, outcomes commonly judged to be failures may not always be so.

In his *Ulysses*, James Joyce modelled the character Haines upon an acquaintance named Dermot Trench, a descendant of Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench, who published such nineteenth-century bestsellers as *On the Study of Words* and *English Past and Present*. In a little pamphlet of his own (1907), the later Trench gave several reasons for attempting to revive the Irish language; he pointed particularly to its moral contribution to native self-respect, its intellectual value, its social concomitants, its economic benefits and, finally, to its psychological significance as a marker of national growth and independence. Although many others expressed similar sentiments at the time, often in absurdly exaggerated form, Trench's unique contribution was the conclusion that, even if they *failed*, Irish revival efforts would still constitute a salutary and bracing exercise. Eighty years on, Dorian (1987: 65) argued for the 'value of language-maintenance efforts which are unlikely to succeed'. Her three major points – that such efforts may improve native-speaker attitudes, create a healthy awareness of tradition, and have

useful economic consequences – were all anticipated by Trench. While none of these points is inevitable, they are all both possible and worthy features of a revival which fails at re-vernacularisation. Dorian goes on to say, for example, that 'not all Irish, adults or children, are especially interested in their Celtic heritage. The point is, however, that if they should be, there are no obstacles whatever to learning about it'. Making accessible, on a voluntary basis, aspects of a heritage which may otherwise be quite unfathomable seems a worthy objective, and any revival effort which accomplished it could surely not be judged an utter failure.

There are one or two other aspects of the Irish case that are germane in revival contexts generally. They include ensuring that everyone is given at least a thin wash of the language at school, and forming an 'intellectual identification' with the culture. This is to omit entirely the associated literary revival and the important relationship between linguistic and more overtly political activism. In their jumbled survey of the Czech, the Icelandic, the Indonesian and (seventeen) other examples, Ellis and mac a'Ghobbainn (1971) do manage to demonstrate the great variety of possibilities and 'successes' legitimately considered under the general heading of *revival*.

All of this may suggest the appropriateness of some revival typology. It would allow retention of a useful term and would help in keeping out near-synonyms, unnecessary neologisms and sundry hair-splitting exercises. (When is a revival not a revival? When it's a restoration, a rebirth, a renewal, a renaissance, a resuscitation, a re-awakening, a rejuvenation, a revitalisation, a reintroduction, a resurrection, a reversal of shift. At least they all start with 'r'.) A simple classification of revival scenarios might look like this:

a. a language with few or no speakers, where no written or taped records exist;
b. the same, except that some written material exists;
c. the same, except that written and taped material exists;
d. a language with some native speakers remaining, but where none are monolingual;
e. the same, but where some at least are monolingual;
f. the same, but where monolingualism and *normal family transmission* of the original language occur;
g. the same, but where substantial numbers of speakers are monolingual, where there is language transmission, and where the original variety retains important domains (especially outside the home and family).

This is a very crude outline, of course, but I am not sure that much further detail would be useful, since we would be moving into so many particularities that the exercise might dissolve. To put it another way, perhaps this rough guide leads to the point at which we must turn to unique details of particular contexts; see also

Chapter 5. The scheme is intended only to show that, while all the situations can be subsumed under the heading of *revival*, there are varieties. Specifically, there are degrees of difficulty, and I have arranged things such that the relative ease of revival increases as one goes from (a) to (g). Irish in Ireland, and Gaelic in Nova Scotia, for example, would both fit in category (d), while many of the European examples discussed by Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn fall in category (g). Of course, any arrangement in which both Nova Scotian Gaelic and Irish are to be put in the same broad category must be insufficiently nuanced: besides the obvious fact that there are many more fluent speakers of the latter variety, there are important historical and contextual variations too.

My basic point here, however, is simply that the term *revival* is all that is necessary to cover a variety of situations which, while admittedly different in important ways, do not require further and apparently endlessly debatable terminology. And, to repeat a central part of the thesis, many formulations of revival do not come to grips sufficiently with the powerful underpinnings of *will* and socio-political pressure. The whole question of language revival is inextricably associated with what might be termed the *internal manifestations of external influence* and, on that basis alone, is complex and fraught with difficulty. Success at some level does, however, seem to be available, and the challenge is to find goals that are both desirable and reachable (for some of these, in fact, wide-ranging popular support is *not* vital). To return for the last time here to the Irish situation, we can find all manner of opinions of its success or failure. Tomás Ó Domhnalláin (1959) – a well-known commentator on the Irish scene, and the author of the very successful *Buntús Cainte* series of Irish-learning exercises – proclaimed that the educational successes had been 'astounding'. On the other hand, Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn (1971: 143) asked that we 'remove our gaze from the terrible failure of Ireland'.

The 'new' ecology of language

The matters that I have discussed above are ones that current writers on language ecology have claimed as their own. The 'new' ecology purports to offer fresh ways of understanding the social life of language and, particularly, new approaches to linguistic maintenance and revival. I have argued elsewhere, however, that the novelty of much current 'green' thinking is doubtful (Edwards, 2004a). Einar Haugen, the linguist who popularised the ecological metaphor for language matters, clearly noted that the concept was a reworking of older models (see, for instance, Haugen, 1972). After all, the essential idea – that language matters are political and social, and must be considered in their contexts – has long been accepted. As well, however, the breadth that might be assumed in a field of study now

calling itself the 'ecology of language' is more apparent than real. While the first Darwinian insights were concerned with adaptations of all kinds – with the 'web of life' and the famous struggle for existence, with relationships ranging from the beneficial to the brutal – contemporary views have downplayed competition and have emphasised coexistence and coöperation. Thus, one latter-day language ecologist wrote that:

> functioning ecologies are nowadays characterized by predominantly mutually beneficial links and only to a small degree by competitive relationships … metaphors of struggle of life and survival of the fittest should be replaced by the appreciation of natural kinds and their ability to coexist and cooperate. (Mühlhäusler, 2000: 308)

This is an inappropriate and unwarranted limitation. More reasonable is the earlier observation of William Mackey (1980: 35): linguistic environments (like all others) can be 'friendly, hostile or indifferent'. In the new ecology, however, we are given a view of a world in which there is room for all languages, where the goodness of diversity is a given, where 'the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb'. This is certainly a kinder and gentler picture, but surely the key word here is 'should', surely the key question is whether the desire is also the reality. We might remember Woody Allen's reworking of that passage from Isaiah: 'the lion and the calf shall lie down together, but the calf won't get much sleep'.

The new ecological thrust is driven, above all, by the desire to preserve linguistic diversity in a world where more and more languages are seen to be at risk, and where matters of maintenance and revival are therefore central. Attempts have been made to link this thrust with current environmental concerns for biological diversity, protection of wildlife, and so on. This linkage is understandable and perhaps useful, at a metaphoric level. In a world where opinion can be galvanised to save the whales, to preserve wetlands, to save rare snails and owls – or, indeed, to keep historic buildings from the wrecker's ball, or to repair and restore rare books and paintings – why should we not also try to stem language decline and prevent linguistic predation? It is interesting (but not, perhaps, surprising) that, in some quarters, the linkage has been seen as *more* than metaphoric, with the suggestion that linguistic and biological diversities are co-extensive, mutually supportive, possibly even 'co-evolved' (Maffi, 2000: 175). The most basic problem with the biological approach to language is, quite simply, that language is not organic. As already noted, languages themselves obey no natural imperatives, they have no intrinsic qualities that bear upon any sort of linguistic survival of the fittest. The implication is clear: any attempt to go beyond a purely metaphorical relationship between linguistic and biological diversity will soon find itself on dangerous ground.

There are one or two other revealing aspects of the new ecolinguistics that I must touch upon here. It is commonly assumed, for instance, that human 'interference' has created the necessity for ecological management and planning; 'healthy ecologies', we are told (Mühlhäusler, 2000: 310), are both 'self-organizing' and 'self-perpetuating', but human action often upsets the balance. This is, of course, a naïve and inaccurate stance: in what sphere of life have human actions *not* altered things? Indeed, what social spheres could there possibly be *without* such actions? It seems like lamenting the fact that we have two ears. We also note here the curiously static quality of much ecology-of-language thinking. The hope often seems to be that – once some balance is achieved, some wrong righted, some redress made – the new arrangements will, because of their improved moral basis, be self-perpetuating. But history is the graveyard of cultures, and is quite oblivious to their moral tone.

The new ecology of language is also critical of literacy and education, on the grounds that they often undercut the preservation of linguistic diversity. Indeed, it is sometimes argued that literacy promotion actually works against the vitality of 'small' languages. Literacy is often seen as a sort of bully: written varieties push oral ones aside, writing is more sophisticated than speech; and so on. It would surely be a dangerous instance of isolationism, however, to try and purchase language maintenance at the expense of literacy. A related suggestion is that formal education is not always the ally of enduring diversity and bilingualism, for it often has intrusive qualities, championing literacy over orality, and imposing foreign (i.e. western) values and methods upon small cultures. Again there is the idea of cultural bullying. It is not difficult to sympathise with laments about supposedly intrusive 'foreign' education paradigms but – given that *all* education worthy of the name is multicultural in nature – the argument may be self-defeating. Formal education necessarily involves broadening the horizons, going beyond what is purely local and 'traditional'. In an unequal world whose disparities create risks for languages, education will perforce become yet another another evidence of those disparities.

Any discussion of the moral foundations and aspirations of the new ecology quickly brings up the matter of linguistic human rights. In fact, I cited language rights as an important theme on the first page of the opening chapter here, and, in the second, I touched upon official statements and legislation bearing upon the matter. I do not intend to go into further detail here – my general concern at this point is with language ecology, within which language rights are typically discussed, rather than with those rights in any more free-standing sense; see also Edwards (2003). Within a large and growing literature dealing with language rights – not all of it falling under the narrow contemporary ecological rubric, of course – I can recommend the collections edited by Kymlicka and Patten (2003) and Freeland and Patrick (2004). Among the contributions to the latter, the critical observations by May, Blommaert, and Stroud and Heugh – together with the

useful references cited by these authors – are of special interest. I will only add here that since language rights are generally meant to have an effect at the group level – indeed, their alleged existence is usually highlighted by the plight of small groups whose languages and cultures are at risk – difficulties may arise in liberal-democratic settings that have historically enshrined rights in individuals, not collectivities. Again, this is not the place for fuller discussion of a timely and contentious matter, but it may be noted that issues of pluralist accommodation in societies that are at once democratic and heterogeneous are now of the greatest importance. They have become part of the province of political philosophy, for instance, which implies a very welcome breadth of approach, a search for cross-society generalities, an escape from narrower and intellectually unsatisfying perspectives – and a framework in which language rights are not viewed in isolated fashion but, rather, are considered in their relationship to other social variables.

Many current perspectives on language diversity and its inherent 'rightness' suggest a rejuvenation of more general, romanticised nationalistic assertions. Thus, models of the new ecology of language tend to identify some types of political villains more readily than others: unrestrained free-market capitalism, unfettered industrialisation, galloping globalisation. And, just as eighteenth-century romanticism was a reaction to more enlightened thought, so it has again become possible to find disparagement of the scientific culture and concern for the 'privileging' of its knowledge over 'folk wisdom'. There is a special regard for 'small' cultures and local knowledges, and it takes two forms: first, a simple, straightforward and, indeed, perfectly reasonable desire for the survival of such cultures and systems; second, the argument that they are in some ways superior to larger or broader societies and values. This view is generally expressed in some muted fashion, but occasionally the mask slips: some lines of dedication in a recent anthology read, 'to the world's indigenous and traditional peoples, who hold the key to the inextricable link between [sic] language, knowledge and the environment' (Maffi, 2001: vi).

Overall, the 'new' ecology of language is not so much a refinement of scientific methodology in the face of new understandings and new challenges as it is a socio-political ideology. It is interesting that an ecology that, by its nature, ought to be multi-faceted, inclusive and, above all, aware of nuanced perspectives, should often see things in ways that are often both naïve and highly-charged. My critical remarks here are not directed at ecology *per se*, of course, for who could gainsay its essential elements? But I think that the underlying ideology of much of the current ecology of language is insufficiently examined and, in fact, builds in various assumptions as if they were unremarkable, and beyond enlightened debate. While some of its underpinnings may be appropriate in some cases, there can be little doubt that a wholesale acceptance of them would be both unwise and counterproductive.

Endangered languages, and the identities with which they are associated, are of obvious interest to linguists, and a number of them now seem more or less committed advocates in the service of language maintenance – most centrally via this 'new' ecology. The area is now very much a growth industry, but it is hard to see that it has done anyone much good – except, of course, those scholars who have found ample opportunity for publishing arguments on the side of the angels, and for fostering debate, if only amongst themselves. The latter outcome is of course a common one across all sorts of scholarly discourse, but there is surely a special poignancy here, inasmuch as virtually all the writing is presumably meant to have applied value, intended to make a real contribution to the lives of those whose languages and cultures are overshadowed by larger ones. While it is an acknowledged duty of intellectuals to avoid oversimplification, to search out explanatory nuance, to probe with scholarly lancets and not with the blunter instruments wielded in less sophisticated or disinterested quarters, I am tempted to say that a great deal of the research effort here has been misguided, disingenuous, or both.

To summarise: the narrow focus of most modern writing on linguistic ecology is upon an environmentalism that makes a specific case for the maintenance of diversity. This is not problematic in itself, of course, and it is clearly not an illegitimate stance (although it is not always a sturdy one), but it is surely reasonable to have some misgivings about an area that describes itself in very broad terms while, at the same, marshalling its forces along quite specific lines. My central criticism is that language maintenance and revival are always difficult endeavours, that past efforts have often foundered on the shoals of romantic and unrealistic enthusiasm, and that approaching the topic from a position of ideological commitment – while understandable and in some circumstances laudable – is neither in the best traditions of disinterested scholarship nor likely to realise long-term success.

A preference for diversity, linguistic and otherwise, is one that I share. Indeed, I find it difficult to imagine that any educated perspective would vote for monotony over colour, for sameness over variety. But to see the new ecology as largely undergirded by this preference is not only to criticise its rather more grandiose assertions, it is also to suggest that the old difficulties in maintaining endangered languages have not, after all, been lessened through new insights. The problems here, after all, have been heightened and exacerbated in modern times, as more and more languages and language domains fall under the shadow of English. How might endangered languages best be supported? One would certainly be more indulgent towards the formal shortcomings of the 'new' ecology if its assumptions and its programmes actually seemed to make a difference on the ground. In fact, however, these shortcomings only serve to highlight features that have been quite well understood for some time. Most of these can be summarised by observing that, unless one is interested only in some archival embalming, the maintenance of

languages involves much more than language alone. To put it another way: the conditions under which a variety begins to suffer typically involve a stronger linguistic neighbour and, hence, language endangerment is best understood as a symptom of bigger things, a particular sort of fall-out from a larger collision. Acknowledgement of this simple and indisputable statement of affairs must surely suggest the scope of the difficulties commonly encountered.[5]

5. This is an appropriate spot to correct a misconception about my position that can be found in Hornberger and Pütz (2006). As part of an interview with Joshua Fishman, Pütz refers him to criticisms I have made of the ecology of language (Edwards, 2004a) – noting that I find the area 'too naïve, too romantic … language should be seen as a medium of communication rather than a medium of identity' (p. 14). The first part is fair comment, but of course the second is not. I have always pointed out that language is *both* a communicative and a symbolic (identity-bearing) medium. No rational observer could deny this, or fail to object that 'rather' is entirely the wrong word here – a simple 'and' is its obvious replacement. Fishman immediately endorses this duality, too, but then says that 'Edwards is very one-sided in a statement of that kind'. It is a little thick to be castigated for a statement that is not one's own and that is, in fact, exactly opposite to one's point of view! (See also the discussions in Chapter 4, and elsewhere, in this book.)

A little later in the interview, Fishman says that I don't have 'a leg to stand on' when I argue that others are 'over-emphasizing language and identity' (p. 15). Again, this misses the point completely, although we can perhaps let Fishman off this time, since he is reacting to the (incorrect) suggestions of Pütz, and since – a few lines later – he acknowledges what is obviously true: my criticisms of romanticised and unrealistic treatments of language ecology, the fortunes of 'small' varieties, and the language-identity linkage do not cast the slightest doubt upon the importance of that linkage *per se*. Even the most cursory glance at my work over the last twenty-five years or so will show that that linkage is at the heart of my writing.

CHAPTER 4

Parochialism and intercourse

Metaphors for mobility

In his famous *Cours Générale* (1916 / 1980), Ferdinand de Saussure wrote of the co-occurrence of the opposing forces of parochialism (*l'esprit de clocher*) and wider communications (for which he used the English word *intercourse*, a word retained by the editors of his work, who described it as *cette pittoresque expression de l'auteur)*. Specifically, Saussure said that:

> In every human collectivity two forces are always working simultaneously and in opposing directions... Provincialism keeps a restricted linguistic community faithful to its own traditions … but intercourse, the opposing force, limits their effect. Whereas provincialism makes men sedentary, intercourse obliges them to move about. (p. 206)

While Saussure's terms were not original to him, and while his remarks were directed to the spread of linguistic 'waves' and the course of dialect variation, his ideas here have a broader sociolinguistic thrust. The tension he described has been captured by others, with dichotomies like 'roots and options', or 'tribalism and globalism', or even '*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*'. It is clearly applicable in historical and contemporary struggles between 'small' languages and those of 'wider communication'. The dynamics here illuminate broader matters of identities in contact (and sometimes conflict). We come inexorably, then, to a consideration of the benefits and disadvantages of mobility – geographical, to be sure, but also psychological and linguistic.

Some of the common results of the tension, the struggle, are communicative language shift, defence of the more threatened variety, localisation of the stronger language (as in the development of indigenised Englishes) and, of course, bilingualism. These do not exist in watertight, mutually exclusive compartments. For example, it is easy to think of situations in which defence, localisation and bilingualism coexist – although this is not always a harmonious or comfortable ménage. And, to move 'up' again from purely linguistic matters to the larger identity concerns of which they are an aspect, we see that Saussure was also alerting us to the ongoing conflict between individual and group rights and interests.

Tensions

Recent work aimed at facilitating comparisons across minority-language contexts suggests that the uniqueness of each lies in the particular *patterning* of elements which, in themselves, are often remarkably similar; see also Chapter 5. In so far as the relationship between language and group identity is concerned – and this relationship often constitutes the heart of the matter – a very important and quite basic distinction is that between the view that identities may outlive communicative language shift and the feeling that language is the pillar, the very linchpin, of 'groupness'.

At all levels, minority groups face a struggle, a battle of 'smaller' versus 'larger', a seemingly inevitable conflict between the dominant and the subaltern. This is nowhere more obvious and visible than at the level of language and ethnicity/nationalism. We now regularly observe contests between stronger and weaker languages, between communities at risk of assimilation and the larger societies to which they are increasingly tied. Examples abound, and are well known both to scholars and more casual observers. We have recently seen opportunities for reasserting smothered nationalisms and ethnicities being grasped in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; we have witnessed unprecedented moves on behalf of western European linguistic minorities at the same time as continental federalism is on the march; our attention has been focussed upon the constitutional crises in Canada, most pointedly between the French and English communities, but also involving demands for increased autonomy among aboriginal groups; and so on.

These sorts of struggles have been reflected in various dichotomies, by various writers. Beyond the examples given in the opening paragraphs, other representations of tensions that we must live with – and might even benefit from – have included 'civism and pluralism', 'state and community' and, of course, Saussure's own 'parochialism and intercourse'. Although these dichotomies are not all synonymous, and although the list is incomplete, all of them touch upon the desire to retain something local and valued, something 'traditional' or 'authentic', in the face of strong external pressures. Sometimes, of course, these pressures may be psychologically rejected outright but more often their formidable attractions lead to some accommodation being sought. However articulately stated or understood, the underlying question is often some form of 'How can I and my group keep what we hold dear without forfeiting a desired access to some broader social participation?'

Dilemmas posed by the conjunction of minority and majority, and captured in the dichotomies noted above, are often variants of the age-old tension between tradition and modernity. If we take Rokkan and Urwin's (1983: 115) 'roots vs options' perspective, we may agree with them that while 'domination by roots alone may end in social, cultural and even economic serfdom, the multiplication of options may result in anomia [social isolation or marginalisation].' Or, to put it

another way, 'a policy of alliance and acceptance increases the risk of inexorable loss of cultural identity; a policy of selfassertion may simply lead towards trivialization and folklorization of the peripheral population' (p. 95). It is in the working-out of these matters, at both the group and the individual levels, that we are led to consider large social dynamics of assimilation and pluralism. The fact that sociologists and social historians have coined such terms as 'pluralistic integration', 'participationist pluralism', 'modified pluralism', 'liberal pluralism', 'multivariate assimilation' and 'social accommodation' (among others) surely suggests that, in many societies, some intermediate position between complete, seamless assimilation into a broader mainstream, on the one hand, and social segregation, on the other, has been (or could be) achieved.

I have indicated elsewhere (Edwards, 1985, 1994b) that, in the process of finding some such intermediate position, immigrant and indigenous minority groups typically make adaptations in non-random ways. For example, private markers of groupness are likely to outlast public, visible manifestations. Since the latter may come to act as unwanted barriers between 'small' groups and the 'mainstream' that they wish to join, it is not difficult to predict that they increasingly come to be seen as expendable. But it would be wrong to imagine that this is a process without pain – indeed, who would choose to give up traditional ways, original lifestyles and long-held values if it were possible to retain them *and* engage in the desired mobility? This is one of the reasons why the more private markers are retained: they may continue to act as important anchors to the past without compromising current and future aspirations. We may, indeed, reach a position where only ethnicity of this private, or 'symbolic' kind remains (Gans, 1979). However, precisely because of its nature, this internal 'marking', this intangible sense of groupness, can endure for a long time and can continue to play an important part in the life of the group.

I do not believe it is sensible to dismiss symbolic quantities, as some have, on the grounds that they are merely some ethnic 'residue'. I agree, of course, that many of those most directly concerned are unhappy with what they often see as a cultural retreat to psychological distinctiveness only. After all, even when they are desired and, indeed, desirable, at some pragmatic level, transitions are distressing – or worse. However, since the loss of public, visible group markers has proved historically inevitable, less tangible forms of identity continuity should be more thoughtfully considered. As a psychologist myself, I think it is better to ask questions such as 'What is it that sustains a continuing sense of groupness, once the old and more objective markers (dress, customs and language – and sometimes even religion) have disappeared?' than it is to either simply accept that once these boundary-stones have gone, everything has gone, or to rail against cultural alterations that, as I say, are seemingly inevitable. Many societies have proverbs roughly equivalent to the Chinese admonition that 'it is better to light a candle than to

curse the darkness', and this is partly applicable to those within and without the scholarly community who are unwilling or unable to see the patterns that have historically characterised virtually all societies – big or small, capitalist or socialist, ancient or modern. I say 'partly' because, of course, it would be both naïve and condescending to see the new or reworked social conditions of minority populations simply as 'darkness'. And yet, of course, many commentators do: the old ways are always best, the small society is better than the larger one, the old values are discarded for inferior ones, and so on.[1]

Language is a 'visible' marker often susceptible to early shift. A rough pattern for many immigrants to America, for example, has been: first generation monolingual in the ancestral variety, second generation bilingual, third generation monolingual in English. It is unnecessary to document here why this sort of progression occurs. It may be necessary, however, to point out that language, besides its mundane communicative aspect, also carries symbolic value. It is possible, then, for language to retain symbolic status, and to continue to be at least a psychological prop of groupness, after it has had to surrender its communicative role. Although there is ample evidence of this (Edwards, 1985, 1994b) – not least in those Celtic contexts considered later on in this book – it is worth pointing out that language-as-symbol either coexists with, or grows out of language-as-communication, and not the other way about. The implication is that the symbolic associations which mean a continuing importance for a language no longer spoken are unlikely to carry on forever – they can last a long time, obviously, but their ultimate fate is in little doubt.

If we return for a moment to broader matters, indeed to global ones, we can see that the tensions affecting ethnolinguistic minorities are hardly theirs alone. In an influential article which soon grew into a monograph, Barber (1992, 1996) discussed 'a retribalization of large swaths of humankind … a threatened Lebanonization of national states … a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths.' At the same time, he surveyed the global 'economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize the world with fast music, fast computers, and fast food' (p. 53). Looking at Yugoslavia and the former Soviet republics, Barber felt it ironic that the nationalism that once unified now divides. 'The planet,' he lamented, 'is falling precipitantly apart and coming

1. I am not referring here, of course, to populations that are forced to change their social conditions against their will. And I am not unaware that many 'free' choices are not so free, that moves made in the hope of improving material living standards may be obvious, necessary and grudging all at the same time.

The academic commentators I refer to here often adopt a posture well understood by nineteenth-century statesmen like Canning and Disraeli, but given most notable form in *The Mikado*: 'the idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone / all centuries but this, and every country but his own'. (Disraeli was kinder: for 'idiot' he gave us 'cosmopolitan critic'.)

reluctantly together at the very same moment. These two tendencies are sometimes visible in the same countries at the same instant' (p. 53). It would be surprising, of course, if all the particular villains singled out by Barber still occupied centre stage – although it is true that 'Lebanonisation' (in Lebanon itself) has waned only to wax again in recent times. The former Yugoslavia, too, has hardly left the scene, nor have the conflicts in the former Soviet Union. Perhaps references to the 'McDonaldisation' of the world now seem a little jaded, but this does not mean that the underlying worries have evaporated. Overall, in fact, Barber's concern for the growth of narrow fundamentalisms and nationalisms, on the one hand, and for crassly materialistic global shrinkage, on the other, remains a robust one. Beyond noting his prescience, however, my point here is simply that neither the 'powerful irony' of nationalism nor the joint operation of separation and cohesion are very surprising. They reflect the tensions so clearly adumbrated by Saussure a century ago.

When Saussure wrote of the opposing forces of parochialism and 'intercourse', he was not being entirely original. The idea of *un patriotisme de clocher* predates his usage (*l'esprit de clocher*) which is not, itself, a new coinage. *Clocher* alone signifies *la paroisse* or one's *pays natal*. A person *qui n'a vu que son clocher* is a bumpkin. Nonetheless, Saussure rather neatly captured tensions that are at once longstanding and of particularly pressing current concern. While, as already noted, his remarks were originally meant to apply specifically to linguistic changes (consonantal mutation, diphthongisation, and so on), they clearly apply to a much more general language framework in which 'large' and 'small' varieties come into contact and, often, conflict. And the application is surely broader still, broader than language *tout court*, being relevant to larger and more embracing political and nationalistic convulsions. Opposing centrifugal and centripetal forces are at work simultaneously in many settings around the world.

Let me recall here (for analogy only, for I am in no way an analytical psychologist) the essentially metaphysical idea that was at the heart of Carl Jung's psychology. A sense of personal unity, a fusion of all our disparate attitudes and functions, is impossible [he said] without a thoroughgoing self-awareness at an elemental level. All the bits and pieces of the psyche have to be closely examined and understood before they can meaningfully be combined – a process of *individuation*, as Jung styled it, must precede psychological nirvana. At a descriptive level this makes some sense: how can you build a sturdy house without knowing well your materials? How can you engage in *intercourse* without being fully cognisant of your *parochialism*? How can a new arrangement among the parts of the old Soviet Union occur without inter- and intra-republic struggle and redefinition? The difference between Jung and Saussure, the difference between social tendencies towards unity and individual ones, is that (in Jung's eyes, at least) once a fusion of the elements has occurred, the psyche has substantively altered. Jung speaks of *transcendence*

here. In social life on the other hand, 'provincial' elements are just as likely to be dealt with by accommodation (whose own configuration will change with time) as they are by assimilation. This notion of accommodation leads to a brief consideration of how linguistic tensions are often dealt with.

Dealing with linguistic tensions

We might now consider how tensions between *l'esprit de clocher* and *intercourse* are typically dealt with at the linguistic level. There are four recurring approaches

A very common resolution of linguistic tension is found in communicative language shift. One language gradually gives way before another; a 'big' language takes over more and more of the domains of a 'smaller' one until none are left. This strategy often requires more than one generation to complete, and it resolves tension at the greatest cost to the original and threatened language. And perhaps 'strategy' is not the *mot juste* here, since it suggests an active participation that is not really needed for the working through of the process.

Attempted defence of the small or threatened variety is also a predictable reaction to the tensions brought about by languages in contact, and it is more active a response than a gradually increasing acquiescence in shift. There are real difficulties, however. For example, the perceived necessity of mounting a defence usually reflects a serious and sometimes irretrievable position. The need, for the health of a language, to retain those *domains of necessity* – and not simply to have some contrived *raison d'être* – is often hard to meet. The most important domain is surely that of the family: so long as normal domestic language transmission continues, other avenues remain open for threatened varieties; once this transmission ceases, all other domains become terribly vulnerable. It is insufficiently appreciated by those who make this obvious point, however, that even this most intimate and central of domains can hardly be sustained in the absence of extra-domestic contexts. The typical pattern is one in which the broader social pressures inexorably seep deeper and deeper into even the most private and privileged of settings. The other major point is this: if a language is under threat, it often means that unequal social-political groups have come into contact. The process of language shift, then, is essentially a *symptom* of this contact. And, if this is so, we might well ask how successful 'reversal' attempts are likely to be if they focus upon language alone. *Causes* are central here, not merely linguistic reflections of those larger dynamics. You do not cure measles by putting plasters on the spots.

It is also possible to give the looming, stronger variety a local face. The fact that we see books and journals devoted to varieties of English, to 'Englishes', suggests that languages of wider communication can be indigenised, can be stripped (to varying degrees) of their original connotations. This is seen most clearly in

post-colonial contexts in which the imperial language has been retained. In some of these, indeed, the evolution is quite remarkable. In India, for example, there are now more English speakers than exist in Britain, the country is the second or third largest publisher of English-language books, English remains central in official and judicial life, it is vital for extra-state communication of all kinds, and it has a powerful role as an internal lingua franca. In short, English – Indian English – is now part of the large family of sub-continental varieties.

A fourth obvious adaptation in the face of linguistic tensions is bilingualism, involving the addition of the newer and larger variety to the existing repertoire. Stable bilingualism, or diglossia, is not, of course, easy to achieve; see the discussion above, and in Chapter 2. There is often a linguistic Gresham's Law at work, and an iron rule here might be that people will not retain two languages indefinitely if one serves across all domains. One language often encroaches progressively on the domains of the other.

These approaches do not exist in watertight, mutually exclusive compartments; indeed, they are often intertwined in various ways. Language defence, localisation and bilingualism often coexist, for instance, and they may all be in train over much of the period during which language shift is taking its steady course. To say this is to say nothing original. It is, however, salutary to consider together both the animating tensions – the village bell tower and the wider world – together with some of their likely consequences. I want to conclude this section by drawing attention to a common framework within which tensions and strategies exist, a framework that often puts *individuals* and *collectivities* in opposition. The linkage to provincialism/intercourse lies in the fact that protecting a collectivity is protecting, above all, a heartland, a village, a *clocher*, while focusing upon individuals is – among other things – an endorsement of, and a support for, a mobility that can sap the strength of that heartland.

Adherence, wherever possible, to individual rights is a hallmark of western democracy. However, since some attention to group concerns is usually required as well, another variety of tension immediately presents itself. At a linguistic and cultural level, recent Canadian controversies are particularly illustrative here (see Edwards, 1994a, 1996, 2002). While the province of Québec is officially monolingual in French, it is still widely held that legislation to protect the language, to support a minority group of seven million within a North American anglophone ocean that is fifty times larger, is vital if francophone culture is not to disappear.[2]

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2. As elsewhere in this book, I can recommend Kymlicka's thoughtful treatment of minority languages and minority rights in Canada (Kymlicka, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2007; Kymlicka and Patten, 2003).

The 'anglophone' figure I cite here includes, of course, large numbers of speakers of other languages and, indeed, considerable numbers of non-anglophone monolinguals.

Legislation dealing with educational options has proved particularly controversial, with the general rule being that only the children of Canadian parents who were, themselves, educated through English (originally in Québec, latterly anywhere in the country) are to be permitted instruction through the medium of English. One of the central aims here was to funnel immigrants into the French school system – in the past, parents had often opted to have their children educated in English in Québec, on the grounds that it would be more broadly useful, especially if the family moved on elsewhere in Canada. A recent development has involved complaints, not from anglophones in Québec, but from francophones who would like to put their children into the English school system. The relevant court ruling held that members of the linguistic majority (i.e. francophones in the province) 'have no constitutional right to education in the minority [English] language'. In a most interesting aside, the court also argued that allowing francophone parents to put their children in English schools would undercut the rights of their anglophone counterparts. Why? Because 'English schools would be flooded with French-speaking students' (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2005).

The other most visible consequence of provincial language legislation involves public signage. All public signs and posters in Québec must show the French-language version of the name or message in a 'markedly predominant' position over English.

The important points here have to do with individual versus group rights, the position of Québec within Canada, and the very definition of *minority.* Since Canada is an officially bilingual country, and since citizens can generally move and live wherever they like, isn't it discriminatory that speakers of one official language should be linguistically disadvantaged in one region? And if immigrants arrive – from anywhere – shouldn't their children have the choice of schooling in either official variety? Why should one language be given public dominance over another in Québec? What geographical and political parameters are to be employed in defining the status – minority or otherwise – of French and English, within and without Québec? And are these parameters too fluid, allowing minority status to be assumed or revoked, according to circumstance and desire? These and other related questions have been brought to the fore in contemporary Canadian discourse. It is, of course, a very complicated discourse indeed, and much revolves around the particularities of federal-provincial history, traditions and legislative arrangements – to say nothing of the shifting sands of political exigency and expedience. Because of the complexities, Canadian dynamics put into concrete terms some of the tensions that I have discussed above.

Considering the matter of linguistic and political rights in a broad-brush way, it is important to realise, by the way, that everyone – from the Premier of Québec to writers of letters-to-the-editor of all stripes – agreed that much of the Québec law treating education and display *was* a limitation of rights. This was never really

in dispute in any serious way. Rather, the important debate had – and has – to do with whether, and in what circumstances, some abridgement of individual rights (or, indeed, the rights of one group) might be justifiable on the grounds of some greater good for the francophone collectivity. Some fell back on what might be termed the 'traditional' liberal-democratic position that holds that rights always inhere in individuals, not in groups. A particularly felicitous expression of this was the argument that

> if individuals have few rights … collectivities have even fewer. There is no moral law which states that societies have a right to live on unchallenged. The British Raj … is dead. Few would argue that it had a collective right to perpetual existence. (Walkom, 1988)

A former Québec cabinet minister took what he no doubt considered a practical approach: 'let us be vigilant where language is important but generous and fair where it is only symbolic' (Tetley, 1989). These remain fighting words, however, since they blithely skip over extremely debatable questions. People in highly-charged settings are likely to have deep disagreements over what is 'important', what is 'symbolic', and what sort of line can really distinguish the two. I have no space here for further analysis and, in any event, I have intended only to provide some specific examples of important tensions – certainly not to resolve them. I would suggest, however, that the individual-group tensions that are so often intertwined with those of the Saussurean variety are not, in any event, logically resolvable in any once-and-for-all sense. They necessitate, rather, repeated political and social assessment and discussion.

Linguistic (and other) tensions do not evaporate simply by being brought into the light. Nonetheless, this examination of them may serve to remind us that: (a) they can find expression in several ways; (b) they are not a new phenomenon; (c) the consequences to which they lead are complex in themselves; (d) they reflect pressing needs for adaptation and accommodation, for entering into transitional states, states which are, almost by definition, painful for groups and individuals. Given the attractions that 'bigger' societies have always exerted, and the perceived limitations of remaining *in situ* in the shade of the village clock, tensions are likely to continue. Understanding them and making allowances for them – especially in the political realm, of course, but also within academia – are important. While it is difficult, often counter-productive and sometimes unethical to legislate directly on matters of linguistic and ethnic identity, it is possible to enshrine tolerance and choice in law. Beyond that, large but unofficial pressures will continue to contribute to linguistic and cultural dynamics.[3]

3. This, of course, is another very broad area whose surface I have barely scratched. For example, much of my discussion presumes a liberal-democratic context, a presumption that obvi-

Language futures

Very few prizes have been awarded for successfully predicting the future in any but the most trivial or obvious settings. Acknowledging the truism that some opinions are more valuable than others, however, we might imagine that the views of language experts will be particularly germane for linguistic futurology.

But experts – by virtue of being experts – often see the world through very particular, if not myopic, spectacles. I have read many books and articles about the social life of language which are so much *on* language *alone* that the vision presented is of the tunnel variety. In such treatments, the necessary contextualisation is typically lacking. The clearest examples of this, perhaps, come from the language-revival literature, in which desired outcomes are depicted as if they could be achieved in some stand-alone fashion, in which there is no recognition of the fact that linguistic shift and loss are, as already noted, *symptoms* of a larger dynamic. The logical implication – but one that is insufficiently grasped by many scholarly specialists – is to attend to this broader dynamic. Of course, this is both difficult and risky. Although massive reweaving of the social fabric, or widespread social revolution, is always possible, it is relatively rare (and fraught with danger). A further complication is that, very often, broadly-based alterations to the social fabric are not actually desired – what is wanted, rather, is some linguistic redress by which (for example) a given group retains its place within the modern mainstream, its mobility, and all desired current conditions – but is somehow enabled to revive its ancestral language.

Perhaps it is not so surprising, then, that the best assessments of linguistic conditions – in a social sense, of course – have been produced by those whose original and more basic allegiance was sociology, or political science, or history, or anthropology, or (dare I say?) psychology. They have been forced, as it were, to graft an appreciation of the social life of language onto a broader stem. I don't mean to suggest that nothing valuable in sociolinguistic or sociology-of-language terms has been produced by those whose complete academic *raison d'ẽtre* centres upon language. Nor could I deny that there are sociological, political and historical works which try to comment on language matters and fail abysmally. But the point is obvious here, I'm sure: it is essentially a plea for disciplinary and methodological triangulation. One could put it another way, and say that it would be an egregious error to cast your lot completely with any one set of expert interpretations.

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ously does not apply in many of the most contentious minority-majority contact settings. I also realise that it is difficult for state legislation – either in its presence or in its absence – to maintain that 'neutral' ground within which groups and individuals are supposed to negotiate their own lives. A state may refuse to endorse any particular religion, for instance, but it is rather more difficult not to endorse a specific language (or languages).

To discuss future developments in the social life of language means to consider the factors that bear upon linguistic strength and weakness, scope and influence. While 'small' or 'at-risk' varieties naturally command our attention, their status is only defined in relation to others and, in areas where inter-relationships are paramount, discussing *only* the small is just as blinkered as focussing solely on the powerful. At the beginning of this chapter, I touched upon the pressures affecting languages and the cultural identities of which they are a part, and mentioned several dichotomies reflecting the often conflicting desires to retain what is 'small', 'local' or 'traditional' in the face of overarching external forces. While it is common to equate what is 'small' with what is good, and to cast the 'large' in the role of villain, it must be remembered that the obvious attractions of the wider world hardly suggest such a black-and-white picture. After all, if it were so, if that wider world was completely unpleasant, no tension would exist because there would be no real competition to the local and the familiar. No, tensions arise here because each of the poles – the smaller and the larger – possesses both attractive and unattractive features. In such contexts, one can predict all sorts of risk-assessment and cost-benefit analyses, followed by attempted identity negotiations (or re-negotiations). Of course, these analyses usually do not occur in any coldly economical fashion; indeed, they may remain quite unarticulated or unexamined. But choices, whether or not they are clinically examined from all sides – and whether or not the force of immediate circumstance essentially makes them of Hobson's variety – will nonetheless be made in these circumstances.

The linguistic aspects of such negotiations usually reveal very clearly the push-pull tensions implied above. Factors like linguistic practicality, communicative efficiency, social mobility and economic advancement become increasingly associated with 'large' languages, and so progressively interfere with the maintenance of smaller ones. Mother tongue and lingua franca – parochialism and intercourse.

In many instances of language contact between varieties that are unequal in important ways, the bilingual accommodations that I have already noted in this chapter seem an obvious avenue: one language for home and hearth, another for the world beyond one's gate. Bilingualism, however, is often an unstable and impermanent way-station on the road to a new monolingualism. Formal language planning on behalf of beleaguered languages – to encourage a firmer diglossia, for example – can often do very little to stem the forces of urbanisation, modernisation and mobility, forces that often put a language on the endangered list and lead to shift. In a word, decline in the existence and attractions of traditional lifestyles – in situations of languages-in-contact – inexorably entails decline in languages associated with them. Short of unethical and draconian intervention (or of a voluntary social segregation – usually on religious grounds – that has proved to be of

extremely limited appeal), language shift often seems inevitable and bilingualism often unstable.

People often write about language loss when they are describing language shift. It is true that languages have been well and truly lost, but the dramatic assessments of the consequences of this that are now often made within the boundaries of current writing about language ecology (see Chapter 3) are quite overblown. Despite the fact that some will breathlessly write about 'language loss' as if there were actually some period during which groups and their members had no language at all, despite the fact that in many eyes *globalisation* has become the longest four-letter word, despite the imbalance of heat and light in discussions of the social life of language, we should try to remember that – historically and linguistically – change rather than stasis has ever been the norm. Environments alter, people move, needs and demands evolve, and such factors have a large influence upon language. When considering accusations that certain societies, or groups, or institutions can be singled out as villains in the story of some language or another, we ought to bear some generalities in mind. The desire, for instance, for mobility and modernisation is, with some few notable exceptions, a global phenomenon. Whether one looks at the capitalist world or the former communist one, at contemporary times or historical ones, at empires or small societies, at immigrant minorities or indigenous groups, one sees a similarity of pressures which take their toll, force change and throw populations into transitional states that have, naturally, unpleasant consequences (for some at least, in the short term at least, and so on). Original languages are frequent casualties here.

Since language is far more than an instrument of communication, also possessing powerful symbolic and allegorical value, it is entirely unsurprising that the linguistic dimension – as an element of group identity – should assume special potency and centrality during times of uncertainty, anxiety and transition. Groups whose cultural identities are seen to be under threat, activists for change, nationalists of all stripes, traditionalists – these are some of the constituencies for whom language retention, or maintenance, or revival becomes central. It is the social and psychological aspects, not the linguistic ones *per se*, that warrant the closest attention here – and it is these that, in one way or another, provide the threads that link all the discussions in this book. Drawing upon the general observations made in *this* chapter, I conclude with some remarks about likely outcomes for different categories of languages.

Small and stateless languages

The fate of many of the world's 'smaller' or minority varieties (including dialects, incidentally, as well as languages) has clearly become more precarious in modern

times. In a world in which the big lingua francas and the state-supported languages either ignored smaller and – it was presumed – unimportant mediums, or failed to penetrate their heartlands, the more localised forms continued on a minor but relatively stable basis. But that world has largely vanished. Now, the big languages (we could almost say, I suppose, *the* big language) are everywhere. Their penetrative power is ubiquitous. Their strength derives from the same sources that have always fuelled linguistic dominance, but their scope has increased dramatically because of technological innovation on a scale never before seen. Their progress is like some juggernaut that crushes all in its path. Thus do English and globalisation (or westernisation, or Americanisation – not all quite synonymous, perhaps, but certainly overlapping terms) march arm-in-arm around the world.

But there is another factor here, too. Apart from the inexorable 'push' of a globalised economy, intent on selling the same shoes, soft drinks and sex – through English – to everyone from Boston to Bhutan, there is an almost equally powerful 'pull' factor. Globalisation and its linguistic ramifications are welcomed by many who see in it upward mobility: physical, social, psychological. All of this is very serious for small languages without a state behind them, whose appeal to their once-and-future speakers increasingly rests upon abstract pillars of cultural continuity and tradition. Fine cultural appeals can often seem empty – or, more frequently perhaps, of a rather low priority – to many of those to whom they are chiefly addressed.

Small state languages

Exactly the same pressures apply here. Still, it may be thought that a small language that enjoys state support is powerfully armed. Such varieties do, of course, have an increased likelihood of survival compared to their stateless cousins, but it would be a great mistake to assume that the acquisition of official status by a small language means that a corner has been decisively turned. Irish is the only Celtic language to have its own state, but that has not made it the most dominant member of its family, nor has it managed to bar foreign linguistic influence at the customs-post.

About a decade ago, I attended a meeting of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (the Dutch Language Union) in Brussels. It was convened under the title *Institutional Status and Use of National Languages in Europe*. The real thrust of the conference was the place of the smaller so-called 'national languages' – Dutch, Finnish, Swedish, and so on – in a Europe increasingly dominated by French, German and, above all, English. More than seventy participants from all over the continent (and beyond) provided more evidence than any rational observer could possibly need that being a 'state' variety rather than a 'stateless' one can mean very little in the world as it is today, and as it is extremely likely to be for the foreseeable future.

Languages of wider communication

What is most relevant under this heading has just been presented, in mirror-image form as it were, in the two preceding sections. The fate of 'small' varieties, whether stateless or not, tends to vary inversely with that of the large. There are, however, some interesting dynamics to attend to within the ranks of the 'larger' languages themselves, and of chief importance here is the development of (at least) a two-category division. In one, English exists by itself, enjoying a sort of super-status; in the other, we see a certain amount of jostling for position among French, German, Russian, Spanish and other such 'world' varieties.

Constructed languages

Although not a devotee of constructed languages myself, I have argued that their origins, their forms and functions, their communities and their varied (and often colourful) histories all repay further study. It is unlikely, however, that their scope and their appeal will increase significantly (see also below).

Some research and policy implications

Intervention in linguistic matters can be worse than doing nothing, if there has been inadequate preparation across a wide spectrum of social life. Whether or not they become 'interventionists' themselves, the primary contribution of academic linguists to all aspects of the social life of language is surely to assist in establishing research-based networks of understanding; see Chapters 2 and 3. They may also take some part in the translation of information into policy. Academics are not usually prime movers here and academic research – as Elie Kedourie noted many years ago (1960: 125), in a slightly different context – 'does not add a jot or a tittle to the capacity for ruling [read also *policy-making*], and to pretend otherwise is to hide with equivocation what is a very clear matter'. While being appropriately modest, however, researchers and writers naturally have real and important contributions to make. Here, linked to the preceding discussion and categorisations, are some few thoughts about future scholarly directions.

First, and most generally, I think that we should cultivate a clearer and broader awareness of the *real* forces in the *real* world that bear upon language matters. It may be of interest to continue to point to the 'logic of languages' that all varieties possess, so as to reinforce the perceived validity of any particular variety, any language or dialect under discussion. Or, it may be useful to conduct studies showing the historical roots of a given variety, to suggest that its continuity is bound up

with that of its speakers' culture. It may be valuable to point to the imperialistic and basically unfair practices of those large linguistic neighbours who are stifling the re-emergence of that variety, or who are preventing it from maintaining its own place in the socio-political sun. These sorts of studies and concerns are, of course, eminently worthwhile from an academic and cultural point of view. If, however, we are concerned with *policy* and *planning* – and bearing in mind Kedourie's cautionary note – we should realise that none of this sort of work need have the slightest relevance to actual linguistic developments on the ground.

The evolving nature of the relationships linking small languages and large ones is sure to be of continuing importance. There are some particularly instructive contexts to attend to here: in Europe, for instance, we see a continent coming increasingly together while, at the same time, paying more attention to both 'stateless' and state languages of limited scope. Can a future federal Europe co-exist with a 'Europe of the Regions'? What is the status likely to be of languages like Danish and Finnish – to say nothing of Provençal and Welsh? Of particular importance here, I think, is a deeper consideration of the technological 'shrinkage' of the world and its effects upon small varieties. On the one hand, for example, it can be argued that global technology assists the advance of English – on the other, that technology (together with European political restructuring) actually makes it easier for small cultures (and their languages) to have that desired place in the sun.

Relatedly, there will continue to be competition among the large languages. I have hinted already at what I consider to be the single most interesting question here: the emergence of a two-tiered structure within the ranks of the big languages. We need to know much more about the likelihood of English becoming superdominant, and the effects of this. This is not only important for the speakers of French, Russian, Spanish and so on, because there are obvious knock-on effects that will touch the smaller varieties. A world (or even just a Europe) that evolves more and more to become 'English vs The Others' will not be the same as one in which the continuingly important presence of other large varieties interposes itself, as it were, between the super-language and the little ones. I have not, as yet, seen very much on this topic.

Finally here, what about future developments in the use of constructed languages, those auxiliaries that have seemed to some a logical counterweight to Babel? Again, if we are interested in going beyond academically interesting pursuits, and trying to say something about policy possibilities, I don't see that there is much more mileage to be gained in presenting detailed work outlining the internal structural regularity of Esperanto (for instance), the ease with which it can be learned, the logic of having it as the universal second language, and its desirably neutral status among a world of varieties burdened by particular histories. The really important matters – and they have, in fact, always been central – have to do

with the sociology, the politics, the psychology that surround Esperanto and all other constructed mediums. Why has none of them managed more than a vestigial existence? Why are they so often seen – if seen at all – in negative or dismissive lights? What – realistically, now – could possibly be done to increase their use? Isn't it the case that, as universal lingua francas, their role has been more or less totally eclipsed by English? And so on. Within a reasonably large (but essentially compartmentalised) literature, these sorts of questions have received much less attention than they ought. Attempting to answer them will illuminate much more than constructed language alone.

A concluding thought

In line with the need to continually contextualise all aspects of work in the 'social life of language', I think it is also vital to remember that what is really under discussion is not so much language *per se* – we deal, rather, with matters of *group identity*. As I have said more than once here, if language were purely an instrumental medium, then many elements of its social existence would resolve themselves and many of the most heated controversies and debates would vanish. Language planning, as a formal exercise, would become a very delimited undertaking. But its association with group identity and its continuity mean that language can have profound social and psychological importance. This is why the struggle between large and small varieties is so vehement, why the apparently logical steps that improved communication would benefit from are resisted – why, in a word, we need always remind ourselves that work here will take us into heavily mined territories of emotion. Whatever future developments may unfold, this at least will be constant.

CHAPTER 5

Towards a typology of minority-language settings

Introduction

In a summary of Celtic-language contexts (Edwards, 1985), a number of important and possibly generalisable points emerged:

a. languages in decline typically have a predominance of middle-aged or elderly speakers; there is a lack of transmission to the younger generation;
b. weakening languages are often confined to rural areas, and associations are often made between the language and poverty, isolation and lack of sophistication of its speakers;
c. bilingualism in the declining language and its powerful linguistic neighbour is often only a temporary phenomenon, to be ultimately replaced with dominant-language monolingualism;
d. language decline can be understood properly only as a *symptom* of minority-majority contact; it is thus extremely unlikely that efforts directed towards language preservation alone will be successful;
e. *active* desires to stem the decline of threatened languages are usually operative only for a minority within a minority group. Indeed, revivalists are often *non*-group members who have become apologists for language maintenance;
f. there are important and obvious differences, for the ultimate fate of a language, between native speakers and those who study and learn the language on a more self-conscious basis;
g. cultural activities and symbolic manifestations of ethnicity often continue long after group language declines. They support a continuing sense of groupness yet need not hinder successful movement in the mainstream;
h. the media are two-edged swords for declining languages. On the one hand, it is desirable that minority languages be represented in them; on the other, however, the media act to channel dominant-language influence to the minority group;
i. language change, rather than stasis, is the historical pattern and ordinary people are largely motivated by practical necessity in linguistic matters;
j. it is important to realise that there is a distinction between communicative and symbolic aspects of a language. For majority speakers of majority languages, both

> aspects generally coexist, but they can become separated; minority-group speakers who no longer use the original language for ordinary communicative purposes often retain an attachment that involves the language as a group symbol.

When such points recur across contexts, it is reasonable to think about putting them into some greater typological order. Indeed, despite what some critics have noted (see below), it is hard to see how further careful work here could fail to be useful. It need not be theoretically elaborate, at least not in the beginning stages; more modest undertakings will still repay the effort. As Ferguson (1991: 230) observed:

> It is frustrating to read a stimulating case study and find that it lacks information on what the reader regards as some crucial points … what I have in mind is not so much a well developed theoretical frame of reference as something as simple as a checklist of points to be covered.

The typological thrust

In Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), the egalitarianism with which the four-legged rebellion begins soon falls prey to the corrupt desires of the rulers. The most important of the new social rules – 'all animals are equal' – is modified to read 'all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others'. This famous and often-quoted phrase was first meant as a condemnation of communism-in-practice, but it obviously has a wider resonance. Four decades later, for instance, Allardt (1984: 203) made the Orwellian point that some minorities are more minor than others: 'ils [sic] sont plus minorisés'. The observation is clearly true, and it suggests that there is a great deal of variability within and across minority-group cultures. And this, in turn, suggests that excursions in description and classification could help in determining relative strengths and weaknesses.

What, then, are the sociopolitical aspects of minority-language settings? Broadly, they involve the status, policies, planning, attitudes and intentions of both the 'mainstream' and the 'small'-language community. Specifics may vary enormously across contexts, of course, but there are certainly generalisable features, too – and a case could be made that the very broadness of the area prompts a search for them. My suggestion here is that fuller investigation of these features might profitably take the form of a typology of minority-language contexts, a scaffolding that would include such dimensions as the geographical, historical, political, sociological, psychological, educational and linguistic. Various typologies and part-typologies have already been published, of course – one thinks of the valued work of Ferguson (1962, 1966), Kloss (1967, 1968), Stewart (1962, 1968), Haugen (1972) and others. Since these have not been systematically exploited, however, I

propose here a more comprehensive approach, one that would integrate and expand upon previous insights.

In formulating a typology of minority-language settings, it is necessary to list, categorise and intercorrelate – in a word, to attempt to understand – many factors, along the sorts of dimensions just mentioned. This would produce, in effect, a framework of variables that could serve to illuminate contexts of maintenance and shift. One could imagine, as well, that such a scaffolding could be used to inform and guide relevant policies. If minority communities are described in a formalised or semi-formalised way, they can better understand their own situation (and how it compares to others), and can more accurately present their 'case'. Similarly, if particular responses are desired from some 'mainstream' authority, the latter should be given the best and most candid information available. Without a firm base, inaccurate, inadequate or inappropriate interventions will result, interventions that will consequently have little likelihood of success.

In what follows, I am making the following assumptions: (a) a comprehensive, multidisciplinary analysis of minority-language situations will be intrinsically useful context by context; (b) emerging generalities may be found which will permit comparison and classification of different contexts under certain rubrics. We are aware, of course, that every context possesses unique features, but anyone who has ever attempted a contrastive analysis, or who has cited different examples to make a general point, has in effect argued that some features are constant or at least similar enough across contexts to suggest useful generalisation; (c) information thus obtained may produce a useful sociopolitical picture of minority settings from the perspectives of both minority and majority communities; (d) this in turn might enable predictions to be made about language maintenance and shift and might serve as an indicator of what is desirable, what is possible, and what is likely.

Before proceeding any further, we should first consider just *why* a typology is a worthwhile exercise at all. In several reviews, Williams (1980, 1986, 1988) rather harshly criticised existing approaches to minority-language matters, and has questioned the utility of typologies. For instance, he has claimed (1986: 509) that typologies reflect 'implicit theoretical assumptions' while having only 'limited analytical usefulness'. Two years later, he restated his case, adding that 'I fail to understand the preoccupation of students of language with typologies' (1988: 171). Garner (2004: 197) repeated the criticism more recently, noting that typological categories 'inevitably reflect pre-existing theoretical orientations' and are unlikely to lead to 'new theoretical frameworks'. I think these points are of interest, but they hardly sound a death knell for typologies. All endeavours, after all, proceed from implicit assumptions, but the constraints that these imply can be greater or lesser depending, among other things, upon the comprehensiveness of the undertaking: a broader typology with many elements is more likely to be useful than a narrower

approach. Also, whatever the verdict on the purely analytic utility of typologies – and recalling to mind Ferguson's observation (above) – simply having a broad listing of potentially important elements could well be worthwhile.

A colleague of Williams has also criticised the use of typologies in language policy or conflict situations. They 'are born out of static, descriptive accounts of situations, and imply permanent relationships' (Roberts, 1987: 311). They can provide 'snapshot accounts of particular language situations, but the tendency to "fit" the parameters of a given typology onto a language situation results in some serious limitations' (p. 312). They take no account of the 'historically specific dimensions of a language situation' and are constrained by their 'inability to pinpoint the dynamic (and frequently contradictory) inter-relationships between different elements' (p. 312). A specific difficulty is that their application 'forces discussion of societal bilingualism as a stable state' (p. 321).

These are perhaps useful cautions to be kept in mind, but, in response to each of Roberts's points, it should be noted that a typology *per se* need not imply permanence (typological models could be reworked as necessary), that *any* account will necessarily be a 'snapshot', that it is only misuse of a model that would lead to a forcing of parameters, that there is no reason why a typology could not explore historical dimensions, that a good model could actually elucidate relationships among variables, and that a typological treatment of bilingualism which permitted only discussion of it as a stable state would be obviously flawed.

My point is simply this: since there is every reason to assume that people will continue to interest themselves in language situations, and wish to describe and account for them, since it makes no sense to assume that different contexts are entirely unique, and since we are inevitably and rightfully drawn to the task of theory construction (however informal), a comprehensive and well-specified typology may serve as a useful guide.

Geographical beginnings

At an important conference on lesser-used languages in education, held in Friesland in 1988, Sikma and Gorter (1991) noted that there were three main types of minority-language situations: settings in which the language is found only in one state, those in which the language is also found in a neighbouring state, and those in which the minority variety is the dominant language elsewhere. A similar very basic categorisation was provided by Price (1973). First, he wrote, there are languages that have minority status in one country, but majority status elsewhere (Danish in South Schleswig would be an example). Second, there are languages that are not dominant in any state context (Welsh, Breton, Frisian, and so on);

these *ethnies sans état* may sometimes, however, be self-perceived nations with their own 'homelands'. Two points suggest themselves here: first, such basic approaches to geographical classification must surely be very oversimplified; second, however, a suitably broadened geographical foundation seems an obvious place to begin. There have been several noteworthy efforts.

Anderson (1980, 1981) provided a much more extensive set of descriptions, listing seven types of minority situation. In the first category are language minorities that are situated in their own compact homeland, within a specific country. Anderson cites French in Canada and Provençal in France. This category encompasses both of Price's, in the sense that Welsh, Breton and Frisian could clearly be included here, but the inclusion of French in Canada also involves his first category. A confusion here arises from the fact that, whether or not a minority language has majority status elsewhere, it can still possess a 'homeland' in the state in question. That both Frisian and Welsh can be covered in Price's second category also obscures the fact that one (Welsh) is unique to its locale, while the other (Frisian) is also a minority elsewhere – that is, besides its largest concentration in Friesland, there are other groupings in Germany (the East Frisians of Saterland and the North Frisians in Schleswig). It is thus quite possible for a number of (possibly related) homelands to exist. Anderson's example of Provençal is also, of course, an instance of a 'non-unique' minority and, here, a homeland might be seen to cross state boundaries; see also the fourth category, below.

Anderson's second category comprises minority groups that may be a majority in a neighbouring country; his examples include Albanian in Kosovo and Flemish in north-eastern France. Again, there are difficulties. For example, Albanian in Kosovo has a status which greatly exceeds that of Dutch in France. Until very recently, Kosovo was an autonomous province whose population was more than 80% Albanian; in the new Republic of Kosovo, established in early 2008, Albanians represent more than 90%. On the other hand, Dutch in *Le Nord* has little official status and represents perhaps 4% of the population. This example of what might be termed a 'status' variable will be discussed below; it illustrates one of the limitations of a strictly geographic approach. The other point here is that Anderson's use of the word 'neighbouring' precludes consideration of minorities who are majorities in *non*-contiguous areas (for example, the Greeks in Calabria, or the Albanians in Sicily) – although he does rather extend the sense of 'neighbouring' when he cites as examples in this category the Swedes in Finland and the French speakers of the Channel Islands. My point is simply that there may be important differences between contiguous (in its tighter definition of 'touching', and not just the looser one of 'near') and non-contiguous situations.

Third, there may exist what Anderson calls 'complementary' minorities on both sides of an international border. He cites German in southern Denmark and

Danish in northern Germany. This is really just a special case of his second category, but it can be accommodated within other models (see below).

Anderson terms minorities as 'international', when they are indigenous to a region, yet divided between two or more states. He provides as examples the Saami of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, the Basques and Catalans of Spain and France, and the Frisians of Germany and the Netherlands. The first two examples are clear enough, but the third is problematic insofar as the West, East and North Frisians live in quite separate areas. In any event, this category, too, will be clarified if we consider all these examples as being minorities of a 'non-unique' variety – but where the Saami, Basques and Catalans are of a contiguous type, while the Frisian areas are non-contiguous. We can also observe some overlap between the non-unique, contiguous varieties discussed here and the Provençal example that Anderson places in his initial category, but which (as already noted) can be seen to have a homeland extending across state lines.

In a fifth grouping, Anderson observes that some minorities – the Jewish and Gypsy populations of western Europe, for instance – are widely dispersed. According to Stephens (1976), these are often omitted from due consideration since their problems in Europe are neither linguistic nor territorial. Perhaps Wardhaugh's (1987: 33) statement is rather more accurate: 'they have no historical claims to territories in Western Europe'. Indeed, Stephens's well-known study excludes all refugees, expatriates and immigrants, dealing only with indigenous and autochthonous groups.

Anderson's sixth category is for 'interrelated' minorities undergoing ethnolinguistic revival in separate countries. He deems this a 'special case' and indeed it is, since his example – the 'Celtic Revival' in Scotland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany – deals with minorities of the 'unique' variety already covered in his first grouping. While Anderson's example may bring to mind some sort of irredentism or group consolidation, political movements of the Celtic peoples have not generally involved any cross-state or 'pan' elements. Each revival movement had (or has) its own specific context and although all were (or are) more or less closely in touch with one another, the same could be said of virtually all ethnolinguistic revival efforts. Thus, this category seems a little hollow, although one can imagine instances covered in Anderson's fourth category that exhibit irredentist tendencies. Furthermore, the various Celtic revival movements have varied very widely in scope, and to put the Isle of Man and Canada in the same category with Wales and Ireland surely confuses rather than clarifies.

Interesting contexts in which minorities exist within other minorities have begun to receive more attention (as I have noted already, in Chapter 2; see Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev, 2005), and this seems long overdue. We have recently witnessed (in 2008), for example, Russian incursions into the Ossetian and Abkhazian regions of Georgia, ostensibly to safeguard the indigenous populations.

This has given rise to considerable criticism, as the large and powerful Russian neighbour is seen to have violated Georgian sovereignty. Some will not have forgotten, however, earlier Russian-Georgian dynamics – in which Georgian demands, as victimised minorities under the Russian heel, were not accompanied by any great sympathy for similar claims made by their Ossetian populations. Without drawing any particular or specific conclusions here, we can surely agree with Anderson when, in outlining his seventh and final category, he refers to minority-within-minority contexts as the 'most complicated'.

One example he gives is that of English speakers in Québec, but whether they are best seen as a minority within a minority within a larger collectivity – English within francophone Québec, within largely anglophone Canada – or, more simply, as a minority within a majority (English within francophone Québec) obviously depends upon whether one's largest frame of reference is Québec or Canada; again, see Chapter 2. A European example given by Anderson involves German speakers in the Valle d'Aosta which, itself, is a largely French-speaking area of Italy. Might not, however, German and French each simply be seen as examples of his second category, since both border on states (France and Switzerland) where the language is of majority status? What turns out to be important here is that the Valle d'Aosta has had some recognition of its French character from the Italian government (although decentralisation has been largely theoretical), and this might warrant the separate categorisation Anderson here proposes. He also points to various minorities (German and others) who exist within the (officially-sanctioned) Hungarian-speaking region of Vojvodina, now an autonomous province within Serbia. As Anderson implies when citing these European examples – but does not make clear from the outset – the important factor necessitating a separate category here is this degree of official recognition of the 'less minor' minority; otherwise, this category collapses into the second one. Finally, we must note again that, as with the English- in-Québec-in-Canada case, it would be possible to see the Germans of the Valle d'Aosta and of Vojvodina as minorities within French and Hungarian majorities respectively. Yet again, in other words, the breadth of one's frame of reference is important.

White (1987) provides a third approach to geographic typology, one that I have used as a foundation for my own framework. His model is outlined along three basic dimensions. First, we must ask if the minority group in question is an 'absolute' or 'local' one. The former term refers to minority languages that are minorities in all contexts where they occur (some will, of course, be unique to one state). The second refers to varieties that are majority languages elsewhere. I propose to term these variants *unique minority*, *non-unique minority*, and *local-only minority*. Second, we are to consider the type of geographical connection between speakers of the same minority language in different states – is it a contiguous or a non-contiguous one? Having in mind the 'tighter' and 'looser' meanings that can

be found in dictionary definitions here, I think that better terms would simply be *adjoining* and *non-adjoining*. White's third dimension has to do with the degree of spatial cohesion among speakers of the minority language in a given state. The terms *cohesive* and *non-cohesive* would serve well here.

Given that a distinction between *adjoining* and *non-adjoining* regions has no application for *unique* minorities, it follows that a ten-cell model emerges (see Table 1). White devised his system for the Italian context particularly, and the minority languages in that setting provided examples for seven of the ten possible cells. In expanding and making more general the approach, I have retained some of White's Italian examples but have also included non-Italian instances. In this way, all ten cells can be illustrated. In White's presentation, only indigenous-minority contexts were illustrated. In my extension, however – in the interests of a more comprehensive classification system – immigrant-minority situations are added. (Since immigrant groups may become indigenous over time, we might wish such an extension on practical as well as theoretical grounds.) So, Table 1 here provides examples of *both* indigenous and immigrant minority settings.

There are, of course, difficulties with this (as with any other) typology. For example, the cohesion dimension presents problems. How wide, for example, will we consider a region to be when attempting to distinguish between cohesive and non-cohesive populations? If, for example, a minority language was spoken sparsely over a wide area, but also possessed a centre with considerable concentration of users, then it might be seen as either cohesive or non-cohesive. While there are probably no situations which have a cohesive core without also being non-cohesive in some larger hinterland, it is perhaps possible for non-cohesive groups to have no cohesive counterpart at all (although even here there may be small and relatively cohesive pockets). As we have had occasion to observe, more than once, matters tend to hinge on the scale that one wishes to apply.

Another difficulty arises when considering a minority that is found in adjoining states. Each can perhaps be classified as cohesive or non-cohesive, but the degree of cohesion of the one across the border will also be important. Issues also arise concerning distinctions between adjoining and non-adjoining contexts in themselves. For Basques in France and Spain, the adjoining label seems appropriate, but what of minority groups that are found in neighbouring states but not in their common border areas? Similarly, there is a difficulty that returns us to the matter of 'degrees of indigenity'. The indigenity of the Welsh, Cornish and Saami, for example, may have a breadth and depth that can hardly be matched by (for example) the Greeks in Apulia, who descend from Byzantine invaders of the sixth to tenth centuries, or by the Albanians of the Mezzogiorno, who have been in the region for five hundred years.

Table 1. The geographical contexts of minority languages
(with some examples)

	Type	Indigenous minorities	Immigrant Minorities
1.	Unique Cohesive	Sardinian (Sardinia); Welsh (Wales); Friulian (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia)	Dialect communities (often religiously organised) in which the variety is now divergent from that in the region of origin (e.g., Pennsylvania "Dutch")
2.	Unique Non-cohesive	Cornish (Cornwall)	As above, but where speakers are scattered
3.	Non-unique Adjoining Cohesive	Occitan (Piedmont and Liguria, and in France); Basque (France, and in Spain); Catalan (Spain, and in Andorra)	Enclaves of immigrants found in neighbouring states
4.	Non-unique Adjoining Non-cohesive	Saami (Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia)	Scattered immigrants in neighbouring states
5.	Non-unique Non-adjoining Cohesive	Catalan (Spain, and in Sardinia)	Welsh (Patagonia); Gaelic (Nova Scotia)
6.	Non-unique Non-adjoining Non-cohesive	Romany (throughout Europe)	Scattered immigrants of European origin in "new-world" receiving countries
7.	Local-only Adjoining Cohesive	French (Valle d'Aosta, and in France)	French (in New England town enclaves); Spanish (southwest USA); Italian *gastarbeiter* (in Switzerland)
8.	Local-only Adjoining Non-cohesive	German (Piedmont, and in Switzerland)	French (scattered throughout New England)
9.	Local-only Non-adjoining Cohesive	French (Apulia, and in France)	Immigrant enclaves in "new world" countries
10.	Local-only Non-adjoining Non-cohesive	Albanian (throughout the Mezzogiorno, and in Albania)	As above, but where speakers are scattered

Nonetheless, the typology seems useful. As White noted himself, geographical factors contribute to the strength or weakness of minority- language settings, and thus to different varieties of political stability and expression. By itself, however, a purely geographical approach is clearly of limited utility. White went on to suggest the

addition of sociolinguistic data bearing upon language use, but this would only provide slight extra information: a language can be widely used, for example, but face serious impediments to its further development and spread. And, to return to the authors with whom I began this section, we find that Sikma and Gorter, too, went a little beyond a purely geographical approach. Considering the relative positions of minority languages in European primary schools, for example, they wrote of 'strong', 'middle' and 'weak' varieties, and provided many examples under each heading.

Beyond geography

Foster (1980) outlined a research agenda emphasising three factors vital for any comprehensive study of minority-language situations: history, economics and subjective assessment. First, then, we require a categorisation that goes beyond statistical analyses of populations, languages and socioeconomic issues, to an investigation of the historical development of the political culture of the given regions. Indeed, while examination of the historical record is essential, it is often either ignored or downplayed. This is largely because it does not yield 'data' of a kind that can easily be built into the decontextualised exercises that are, unfortunately, so common in modern social-scientific enquiry

Foster also argues for more study of the relationship between economic factors and ethnic 'groupness'. Again, I agree. We should pay considerable attention to economic and pragmatic matters simply because these are of pressing importance in the lives of most people. Apologists for minority ethnolinguistic diversity may rail against economic 'reductionism' but analyses of many language movements reveal a powerful economic element (Edwards, 1985, 1994b).

Thirdly, Foster writes that we should pay special attention to the subjective features of minority contexts, features that may be inadequately explained in more objective linguistic or economic terms. He advocates fuller survey research to illuminate the feelings and perceptions of ethnic minorities in general, and their language-use patterns, in particular. Subjective assessments are of the greatest significance, to be sure, and any classification scheme that made no room for social and psychological perceptions would be crippled; see the notes, below, on 'subjective vitality'. Feelings can also be studied historically, however, and survey research should thus always be accompanied by intelligent and informed inference. It is necessary to point out, too, that subjective feelings do not arise from nothing: studies of linguistic, economic and other perceptions must go hand-in-hand with investigations of realities on the ground, as it were.

Foster reinforces the general sense that any useful typology of minority-language situations will be broadly based. And indeed, both before and after Foster

wrote, there have been several notable attempts to come to grips with the factors he discusses. As might be expected, there is a considerable degree of overlap. This is not a criticism, of course, for it is an essential part of formal progress that previous insights are built upon by newer ones. I examine here several important typological models and comment upon the strengths and difficulties of each – this, by way of introducing my own framework. Not all of what follows, by the way, is necessarily restricted to *minority*-language situations, since many of the factors important to minority settings will also be relevant in others. However, as noted at other points in this book, the particular dynamics of a minority situation often have the effect of throwing into sharp relief matters that are of much more general interest. The models here are presented in roughly chronological order of development, and I restrict my comments to the most salient matters.

Charles Ferguson: Sociolinguistic profiles

Ferguson (1962) suggested some very basic approaches to sociolinguistic profiles, arguing that the following information should be collected in nations:

1. the number of major languages spoken; he provides some guidance about the 'major' designation (see also Ferguson, 1966);
2. patterns of language dominance;
3. presence of so-called 'languages of wider communication';
4. the extent of standardisation;
5. the extent of written language. As categories here, Ferguson suggests: W0 (not used for normal written purposes); W1 (used for such purposes); and W2 (used in formal academic publishing).

William Stewart: Language types and functions

Two publications by Stewart (in 1962 and 1968) bracket Ferguson's work in the presentation of classificatory information about language types, functions and degrees of use. As there is considerable overlap among all three, I provide here only a brief consideration of Stewart (1968). First, he outlines seven main language types: P (pidgin), K (creole), V (vernacular: an unstandardised native language of a speech community), S (standard: standardised vernacular), C (classical: a standard that has died out as a native language), A (artificial: he means constructed varieties, like Esperanto), and D (dialect: to cover situations in which a particular dialect enjoys special status). Stewart also specifies six degree-of-use categories, ranging from Class I (language users within the state comprise 75% or more of the

population) to Class VI (fewer than 5%). He then turns to the important functions of language, as follows:

1. group language, used for communication within a specific speech community (Stewart designates this as 'g');
2. official language, used at the national level ('o');
3. provincial language, official only in given regions ('p');
4. capital language – communicatively dominant in the area of the national capital (other than an 'o' or 'p' variety) ('c');
5. language of wider communication across language boundaries within the state (other than an 'o' or 'p' variety) ('w');
6. language of wider international communication (other than an 'o' or 'p' variety) ('i');
7. language used for educational purposes, at primary or secondary level ('e). Ferguson (1966) suggests restricting this to varieties used above the earliest school years, and having textbooks). Again, Stewart means this not to overlap with 'o' or 'p' ('e');
8. language used for religious purposes ('r');
9. language used primarily for literary or scholarly purposes ('l');
10. language widely taught as a school subject (other than an 'o' or 'p' variety) ('s').

It is apparent that the use of Stewart's dimensions – or others like them – could be quite helpful in classifying minority languages. It is also apparent that, with regard to his scaffolding of language *functions*, there are social elements included which could easily overlap with some of the others: to take only one example, a 'p' variety could possess 'r' and 'l' status, whereas a variety used primarily for 'r' purposes need have no other function. Nonetheless, so far as it goes, Stewart's typology is useful. What is still needed is further refinement of *social status* factors.

Fasold (1984) devoted a chapter of his book to typologies and formulas aimed at categorising language situations. While making some reference to the six levels of language standardisation (from 'archaic standard' to 'mature standard') provided by Kloss (1968), Fasold also provides some considerable discussion of the approaches of Ferguson and Stewart. He considers that all such 'formulaic' approaches have essentially failed. Nonetheless, he argues that some further pursuit of generalities is warranted, and he builds upon the work of Ferguson and Stewart to provide a reworked framework of language functions. For each, he suggests some of the 'sociolinguistic attributes' required for these functions to be fulfilled. For instance, for a variety to possess official status, it must (Fasold argues) be adequately standardised and it must be known by 'a cadre of educated citizens' He then applies this new framework to Guaraní in Paraguay.

Heinz Kloss: Languages and communities

Kloss (1966) discusses factors that are favourable, unfavourable or ambivalent in minority-language maintenance or shift. As Clyne (2003) implies, the last of these three sets is perhaps the most interesting. Greater absolute numbers and higher levels of education can, for example, be seen as strengths – but they may also lead to greater contact with the surrounding culture, with the familiar implication for the 'smaller' community. Another factor that can, according to circumstance, either promote or retard the fortunes of minority languages is the degree of linguistic distance separating them from the 'larger' variety: if this distance is small, it may be more difficult to maintain the minority language; on the other hand, linguistic proximity will mean that minority-group speakers can move in the larger milieu more effortlessly, and (Clyne notes) may thus be freer to attend to their own cultural and linguistic situation. The attitudes of the speakers of the 'larger' variety to those in the minority group may also be classed under the 'ambivalent' heading. Negative sentiments may provoke renewed defensive activity on the part of the more threatened variety, but they may also promote assimilation; more favourable attitudes may reinforce maintenance or revival efforts, but in some contexts they may sap them by inducing a false sense of confidence (or perhaps, as Clyne suggests, apathy).

A little later, Kloss (1967) presented ten variables of importance in distinguishing among multilingual communities (i.e. not specifically minority-language scenarios). These are as follows:

1. main types of 'national core community' (there are three: a monolingual type, a bi- or tri-lingual type, and a multilingual type);
2. degrees of bi- or multilingualism of individuals within the community;
3. types of bilingualism (i.e. 'natural', 'voluntary' or 'decreed') and the relationship between individuals and 'bilingualism as a social force' (p. 13) – that is, between personal and 'impersonal' or official bilingualism (see also point 6, below);
4. legal status of languages;
5. the 'segments' of the community that are bilingual (almost everyone? just the literate adults? only graduates?);
6. types of bilingualism (see also point 2, above): here, the emphasis is on categories such as 'coordinate', 'compound' and so on;
7. prestige of languages;
8. degree of distance between and among the various languages spoken in a community;
9. the indigenousness of speech communities. ('The feeling that latecomers ought to conform with existing language patterns is often shared by immigrants

themselves; they often display considerable readiness and even eagerness to shed their ancestral tongue'[p. 16]);

10. linguistic (in)stability, often associated with some of the preceding variables. ('But what was once an effect may in turn become a cause … in the United States a century-old tradition of abandonment among linguistic minorities has led to the basic attitude that language shift is a natural and wholesome step which is to be expected from a psychologically mature minority population' [pp. 16–17]. Elsewhere, Koss notes that language retention may be considered the correct response thing.)

(The direct quotes from Kloss, noted above in conjunction with points 9 and 10, reflect points of view that would not be universally endorsed.) In a subsequent chapter, Kloss (1968) goes on to provide a typology that links language variables with types of states – notably, nation-states and multi-national states. See also the related undertakings by Rustow (1968), Ferguson and Dil (1979), Nielsson (1985) and Gurr and Scarritt (1989).

Einar Haugen: Language ecology

In the introduction to his model, Einar Haugen makes the following useful observations:

> most language descriptions are prefaced by a brief and perfunctory statement concerning the number and location of its speakers and something of their history. Rarely does such a description really tell the reader what he ought to know about the social status and function of the language in question. Linguists have generally been too eager to get on with the phonology, grammar, and lexicon to pay more than superficial attention to what I would like to call the 'ecology of language'. (Haugen, 1972: 325)

To this we might add that those interested in language situations who are *not* linguists – but who are, rather, educationalists, sociologists, psychologists and others – have also generally failed to give more than superficial attention to ecological variables; see also Chapter 3. More specifically, typical descriptions refer only to a fraction of the potentially important variables, possibly to those which seem most salient for a given setting. Not attending to other variables – ones that may be less obvious, or less immediately germane – can lead to inaccuracies, as well as contributing to a lessening of inter-situation comparability and generalisation.

In his 1972 popularisation of the ecology-of-language approach, Haugen naturally emphasised the study of interactions between a language and its environment. Specifically, he posed ten ecological questions that he felt should be answered

for any given language; these are given below, together with the sub-discipline that Haugen nominated for each dimension of enquiry:

1. how is the language classified vis-á-vis other languages?
   (historical and descriptive linguistics);
2. who uses it?
   (linguistic demography);
3. what are its domains of use?
   (sociolinguistics);
4. what other languages are used by its speakers?
   (dialinguistics);
5. what are its internal varieties?
   (dialectology);
6. what are its written traditions?
   (philology);
7. what is its degree of standardisation?
   (prescriptive linguistics);
8. what institutional support does it have?
   (glottopolitics);
9. what attitudes towards it are held by its speakers?
   (ethnolinguistics);
10. where do all these factors place it in relation to other languages?
    (ecological classification).

The strength of Haugen's model is that it presents a framework within which language contexts can be considered. Its very existence provides a stimulus to examine vital ecological features. There are, however, some difficulties and shortcomings. First, the model is very general, in that each question implies a host of sub-questions. The fact that these are not specifically laid out leads to a loss of precision and possibly, therefore, to a decreased generalisability of results among those who would use the scheme in describing different language situations. Second, the disciplinary sub-divisions paired with each question are not particularly exact. *Sociolinguistics,* which is mentioned in connection with the question about domains of use, can easily be seen to have applicability to several of the others; and it is not clear, in fact, that we need *linguistic demography, dialinguistics*, *prescriptive linguistics*, *ethnolinguistics* and *glottopolitics.* Relatedly, the terms *dialinguistics* and *glottopolitics* are not clear in themselves and would not seem (along with *prescriptive linguistics*) to particularly or only describe the questions with which they are associated. Third, some important ecological variables are not covered at all here. There is no historical dimension which would provide information about the language group's background; the psychological dimension implied in the

penultimate question is restricted (not seeming to cover, for example, speakers' attitudes towards other competing varieties, or to other salient aspects of the psychological environment – or, indeed, the views of those outside the group); educational, religious and other dimensions are merely implied in the institutional-support question (where they should, perhaps, have separate listings of their own); and a geographical dimension is absent.

Haugen also refers generally to language *status* and *intimacy*. The former signifies the power, prestige and influence that the language possesses through the social categorisation of its speakers. The latter refers to associations with group solidarity, friendship and bonding. This has interesting overlaps with Lambert's (1967) psycho-social categories of language attitudes (*competence*, *personal integrity* and *social attractiveness*). While the first of these may be thought of as a status dimension (in Haugen's terms), the second and third clearly have intimacy and solidarity overtones; see also some further refinements in the categorisation of language attitudes (Edwards, 1994b). In a later publication, Haugen (1981) stresses again the ecology of language idea, while also discussing the language *market*: languages in contact may be seen as commodities, surviving only so long as they find customers. Haugen then discusses briefly some of the relevant factors in this linguistic marketplace.[1]

A final point to be made here – it is not a criticism of Haugen's model, at least not a direct one – is that his outline has not been very much taken up by other researchers. Haarmann (1986) rightly points out that scholars had been conducting 'ecological' investigations before Haugen gave us his framework (and since, too, of course). But given Haugen's aim of more formally encapsulating the necessary requirements for an ecological understanding, it is surprising that we have not seen direct acknowledgement; two important books on the sociology of language – by Fasold (1984) and Wardhaugh (1986) – that were published shortly after Haugen's model appeared did not mention the ecology of language at all.

1. Haugen (1983) has also provided an outline – a taxonomy of sorts – of the features involved in language-planning exercises. His model has four main features: selection, codification, implementation and elaboration. The selection and implementation of a given variety are essentially extra-linguistic, social matters; codification and elaboration, on the other hand, deal directly with the language itself. Haarmann (1990) has also treated this so-called 'status' and 'corpus' planning.

Haugen's was one of the first models of language planning, now an area with a very large literature of its own. Taxonomic arrangements and categorisations – whether formally articulated or note – have remained at its core. After all, the very notion of 'planning' necessarily involves formalisations of one sort or another. This is clearly evident in the masterful overview of the field provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997).

The Québec Symposium on language typology

The proceedings of a 1977 Québec conference on linguistic minorities (Colloque sur les minorités linguistiques, 1978) was entirely devoted to typological matters. It began with a useful paper in which Héraud introduced a baker's dozen of minority contexts. Following this, Pernthaler, Plastre, Mackey and Brazeau presented taxonomic frameworks dealing with legal variations, public-service responses, educational treatments and the use of minority languages in the realm of private enterprise, respectively. Each of these five contributions was followed by remarks from three commentators; some of these – notably Viletta's response to Pernthaler, and Kloss's to Plastre – go beyond critical assessment to make further substantive contributions themselves. Virtually all of the points raised in this collection can be isolated in most of the other schemes reported on here, and certainly in my own. But its 300 pages represent one of the most concentrated efforts under one scholarly roof, and still repays close attention.

Howard Giles: Ethnolinguistic vitality

With their conception of *ethnolinguistic vitality*, Giles and his research associates have given us a model of particular psychological import. Thus, Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) proposed a three-part model in which *status*, *demographic* and *institutional-support* factors were seen to contribute to the survivability of an ethnolinguistic group. Each factor comprises a number of variables: status includes economic, social and linguistic attributes; demography reflects population distributions, concentrations and so on; and institutional support includes formal and informal facets like the media, education, government and religion. The specifically psychological aspects come with the extension of the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality to perceived or 'subjective' vitality. Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal (1981) argued that group members' perceptions of vitality may not always agree with objective assessment, and that perceptions may prove more important than such assessment in determining group and individual behaviour (see also Foster, 1980). In fact, given everything that psychology has taught us over the years, the point could be stated much more strongly, since perceptions are the basis – indeed, the only possible basis – for all human behaviour.

In their article, Bourhis *et al.* present a 'subjective-vitality questionnaire', the 22 items of which relate directly to the original three-factor model. Subjects are thus required to assess status, demographic and institutional factors, both for their own group and for a salient outgroup, the result being a subjective estimate of vitality. The first administration of the questionnaire targeted Australian citizens of British

and Greek descent in Melbourne. They were asked (among other things) to comment on (a) the prestige of Greek and English in Melbourne, (b) the degree of pride that those of Greek and British descent have in their cultural history and achievements, (c) the extent of intra-group marriage in each community, (d) the level of teaching in each language in Melbourne schools, and (e) the political power possessed by each group. Another question (f) asked respondents to estimate birth rates in each of the two communities. It can be seen that (a) and (b) reflect perceived status, (c) and (f) demographic factors, and (d) and (e) institutional-support.

Since this initial study, the subjective-vitality questionnaire has been used by researchers in a variety of cultural contexts. The model itself has been widely referenced, and it possesses considerable heuristic value: among the more recent commentaries and expansions are those of Russell (2000) and Lewis (2000). In general, the strength of the approach lies in the provision of important insights into psychological features of ethnolinguistic situations. Nonetheless, it shares some difficulties with the Haugen and Haarmann models. Most particularly, the areas subsumed under each factor are too general, and some important areas are neglected altogether. It is true that, in the original 'objective' model (Giles *et al.*, 1977), the accompanying discussion gave useful details on each area; as well, the authors admit that their analysis is not an exhaustive one. Nevertheless, they also pointed out that their three-factor scheme can meaningfully group linguistic minorities, and the subsequent translation into the 'subjective' form might be seen to have prematurely solidified the factors in their 22-item format.

In the subjective format, at least, areas including the historical, econornic, religious, political and educational are assessed with only one question each; and, as the sample questions reproduced above show, the level of assessment is extremely rudimentary. It follows from this that some vital matters are left untreated. For example, to assess the educational aspect solely with a question about the extent of language teaching at school is to omit consideration of the following: teaching *about* languages, teaching *through* languages, dialect treatment at school, multicultural policies and practices at school, school as an agent of language renewal or promotion, school as a force in the continuity of ethnolinguistic identity, and so on.

The scheme has been criticised by Haarmann (1986) on terminological grounds, and he also points to the simplified assessment of complex issues, as noted above. Also critical were Husband and Saifullah Khan (1982), who point out that the dimensions used are inexact and not independent of one another, and that no provision is made for differential weighting of areas and items. They feel, overall, that the vitality model may produce clear but simplistic analyses of group situations; further details of the Husband and Saifullah Khan thesis, as well as of a rebuttal by Johnson, Giles and Bourhis (1983), can be found in Edwards (1985, 1994b). Finally here, Clyne (2003: 57) makes the useful point that

the ethnolinguistic-vitality approach may be particularly appropriate in settings where comparisons are drawn between two languages – but somewhat less so, perhaps, in linguistically heterogeneous contexts, those 'highly dynamic and volatile' arenas in which many languages are 'simultaneously in contact with the dominant high-status language'.

Indeed, perhaps the most important point about any typology is that it should be comprehensive. Without this quality, it may have plausibility and face validity, and it may appear to 'meaningfully group' minority populations; such grouping, however, will necessarily be limited in scope and may thus lead to what Husband and Saifullah Khan have called an attractive but illusory conception. With the ethnolinguistic-vitality taxonomy, it is not clear where its makers obtained their variables from, in any systematic sense, and no acknowledgement is made of previous typologists (Ferguson, Haugen, Stewart, Kloss, and so on). While one can fully recognise the scholarship behind the vitality model, one is also drawn to the conclusion that, as with the Haugen and Haarmann (see below) outlines, it suffers from a lack of both breadth and specificity.

Harald Haarmann: Ecology revisited

Among the most methodical and systematic attempts to enlarge upon the language-ecology motif is that of Haarmann (most conveniently summarised in his 1986 book). He provides seven basic categories of ecological variables, as follows:

1. ethnodemographic variables (including size and concentration of language groups, urban-rural distinctions, etc.);
2. ethnosociological variables (sex, age, social stratification, etc.);
3. ethnopolitical variables (group-state relations, institutional status of languages, etc.);
4. ethnocultural variables (descent criteria, organisational promotion of group interests, etc.);
5. ethnopsychological variables (attitudes, language-identity relationship, etc.);
6. interactional variables (communicational mobility, language-variety use by topic and situation, etc.);
7. ethnolinguistic variables (linguistic distance between contactlanguages, etc.).

Haarmann provides considerable detail about all these variables, including their function in language maintenance and language shift. He also gives examples of variables in each category, and presents a profile of a hypothetical speech community with a strong tendency to language shift, with descriptions of each listed variable.

As with Haugen's earlier model, Haarmann's seven-part scheme provides an outline for the study of language situations. It is somewhat more detailed in that a number of specific variables are given within each category (a total of 35, in fact). Despite this, the model is open to the same sort of criticisms that attach to Haugen's. First, Haarmann's approach is also quite general, even though the categories are subdivided in useful ways. For example, in the third category, group-state relations and a language's institutional status are both areas requiring much further breakdown, as are organisational promotion of group interests and group attitudes (in the fourth and fifth categories, respectively). Second, the labelling leaves something to be desired: there are, for example, considerable overlaps among ethnosociological, ethnopolitical, ethnocultural and ethnopsychological variables. As well, category six seems anomalous. Third, geographical and historical components are again lacking, and some of the variables that are present do not begin to encompass the necessary range. For example, Haarmann notes that extreme language-shift conditions may have the following consequences: a community identity based mainly upon tendencies towards acculturation, speakers' rejection of the mother tongue as an identity component – and, therefore, a lack of will to maintain it – and increasing praise for prestige of the language towards which shift is occurring. All these assertions are open to considerable further investigation, and psychological study has revealed that, in each case, more than a simple 'either-or' dichotomy will virtually always apply.

Of course, Haarmann (and Haugen) could respond to some of the critical points I have raised by noting that their models in no way restrict the sorts of amplifications and expansions mentioned here. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these points of detail are not explicitly presented, and I take this to be a failing in frameworks that are meant to facilitate comparability across situations. (It will be seen, below, that this failing is one that I have not completely avoided in my own typological effort.)

Paul Lewis and the UNESCO working party: Endangered languages

Lewis (2005) has built upon the report of a working party of language scholars (UNESCO, 2003) who provided a list of nine factors bearing upon levels of linguistic endangerment.[2] These were:

2. In its famous publication advocating that the best medium for young schoolchildren was their mother tongue, UNESCO (1953) also provided a list of language *types*, not unlike the later frameworks of Stewart and Ferguson.

1. intergenerational language transmission;
2. number of speakers;
3. *proportion* of the total population made up by speakers of the language in question;
4. loss of existing language domains;
5. response to new domains (including media);
6. materials available for purposes of education and literacy;
7. official language attitudes and policies;
8. speakers' own attitudes to their language;
9. amount and quality of relevant documentation.

The working group recommended that scores be assigned to each factor, the sum of which would give a measure of endangerment – and some sense of the 'urgency for remedial and revitalization efforts to be undertaken' (Lewis, 2005: 5). For all but the second factor, they provided five-point evaluational scales. Thus, for intergenerational language transmission (factor 1), a score of 0 represents a situation where no speakers exist at all, the middle score (3: indicating 'definitive endangerment') reflects usage 'mostly by the parental generation and up', and a score of 5 ('safe') is assigned where the language is used by all ages, 'from children up'. Lewis tested the UNESCO framework on 100 varieties ('a small but broad sample of the world's languages', he notes: p. 5), and some of his general observations are worth reproducing here. For instance, he states at the outset that data were missing for a very large number of informational cells – particularly for African languages which, he notes, are 'seriously under-documented' (p. 24). He also draws attention to the fact that items in the UNESCO listing are often ill-defined, or overly simplistic in their scope, or both. He concludes that the framework is usefully suggestive but that further elaborations are clearly needed. The upshot, then, is one that links the UNESCO suggestion to other approaches: existing typologies are insufficiently developed, and the data upon which good ones would have to rely are not always available.

Some further insights

In their treatment of immigrant languages, Conklin and Lourie (1983) discuss a number of well-known factors bearing upon maintenance and loss. Their focus is specifically on the American scene, however, and they do not produce a taxonomic arrangement or framework. Furthermore, their descriptions are sometimes insufficiently nuanced – tending, for instance, to assess factors as broadly favourable or unfavourable for minority-language maintenance, rather than considering

(as Kloss has done; see also Clyne, below) that many factors can be *either* positive or negative in this sense, according to circumstance.

Similarly, Fishman *et al.* (1985) have touched upon most of the important factors bearing upon language maintenance and shift in America. Of special interest is their attention to the institutional resources – particularly those within minority groups themselves – whose influence can be so important here. The details here are of great value, although the overall impact is lessened somewhat by the essentially quantitative approach taken. That is, as Clyne (2003: 58) notes, the assumption of a 'linear relationship between the number of institutions and language maintenance' is dubious. He goes on to write that some 'language maintenance institutions may be dependent on language maintenance patterns themselves'. Well, we can at least assume that the relationship is often a circularly reinforcing one here.

Smolicz and his colleagues have outlined a model that highlights cultural 'core values' (see Smolicz, 1981a, 1981b, 1992; Smolicz and Secombe, 1990; Smolicz, Secombe and Hudson, 2001). Drawing upon the Australian experience, they argue that different ethnic groups place different values on language – and since, for some, language is not so central to identity, an explanation for differences in linguistic shift among minority groups might be possible. Italians, for example, are said to emphasise family over language, Jews stress religion and a sense of history, the Irish core is Catholicism, and the Poles stress language itself.

The value of the concept, however, may be rather more superficial than might first appear. There are undoubtedly differences in cultural emphases among groups; the question is why they should exist. Smolicz notes that Poles hung on to their language despite linguistic persecution – indeed, he states that attempts to extirpate Polish actually emphasised the language as a symbol of group survival. How, then, does he explain, how English prejudice and oppression caused the virtual disappearance of the Irish language? Why did it not strengthen, too, in the face of opposition? Smolicz writes that the Irish, 'bereft of their ancestral tongue' (1981b: 110), found refuge for their identity in Catholicism. This is altogether too neat, however. The concept of core values may or may not be of some explanatory use, but it certainly requires considerable historical sensitivity. We should be careful, in particular, not to confuse core values with surviving aspects of ethnicity. On the other hand, perhaps surviving features *are*, in fact, the core values. There is a looming circularity to be avoided here.

My general suspicion is that the concept of a core value says more about historical changes in the face of changing, and different, environments than it does about central differences across ethnic groups *per se*. After all, what group has not stressed *all* the elements noted by Smolicz (language, religion, family, ancestry, and so on)? What group would not maintain all its 'original' elements if this were possible without social cost? These identity features typically continue to be

stressed for some time after groups come to occupy a minority position in a larger society. The familiar decline in aspects of ethnicity that then so often occurs – and, more pointedly, the variations in the 'retreat' among different ethnic 'markers' – can perhaps be more accurately explained in terms of some public-private ethnic marker distinction than upon one based on core values.

Apart from providing extremely useful critical comments on a number of taxonomic models – notably, those of Kloss, Conklin and Lourie, Edwards, Giles, Fishman and Smolicz – Clyne (2003; see also Clyne, 1985) has suggested some expansions of his own. For example, after presenting a summary of Kloss's 'ambivalent' factors, he points out that religious variables and the circumstances existing in the homeland that (immigrant) minorities have left can also be double-edged swords when it comes to minority-language maintenance and shift. In some religious traditions, central spiritual values are associated with a specific language: this obviously provides powerful reinforcement for language maintenance. In other denominational settings, however, languages are considered in more instrumental lights, with the result that language shift is not – from the religious point of view, at least – seen as quite so pivotal a matter. As for homeland circumstances, it seems clear enough that those who have fled an oppressive state may have weaker attachments to its language and culture. On the other hand, they may become zealous in the defence and promotion of their language if they feel it has been co-opted or corrupted by the oppressors.

A new approach

Introductory remarks

As I have already noted, the researchers whose work I have touched upon here are not the only ones who have interested themselves in typological exercises. Indeed, my explorations have revealed more than thirty other contributions to the area within the last three decades. None of these, however, has had the scope of those I have dealt with above, where the discussion has – I hope – shown what fruitful work has already been done. Haugen and Haarmann, in particular, have made admirable contributions in an ecology-of-language framework, and the subjective ethnolinguistic-vitality treatment of Giles and his co-workers has provided at least the beginnings of a psychological perspective. It is obviously my contention, however, that we can move on a bit further here; see also Clyne's (2003) insightful criticisms of existing approaches. While this is clearly still a work-in-progress, it is clear enough in principle what must be done.

Following the sort of analysis of previous work that I have sketched already here, some drawing up of relevant factors and variables is required. This should reflect the breadth inherent in the area, but should also assume as specific a form as possible. One or two general descriptive statements or questions about the religious aspects of minority-group dynamics, for example, will be much less useful than a number of more pointed ones. With reference again to Ferguson's observation, reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, it seems clear enough that some enhanced specificity at this stage of development could prove useful in and of itself. There are further possibilities, too, however. An obvious one would involve an attempt to provide relative weightings for variables – relating factors to language shift or language maintenance outcomes via regression analyses, for example. As well, providing that initial inputs were sufficiently broadly-based, factor-analytic reduction techniques could create meaningful and heuristic infrastructures. Besides these sorts of formal manipulations, more common-sense adjustments will undoubtedly be required; it will surely become clear, for example, that certain variables are more important for some groups than for others. Relatedly, provision must always be made for the interactions existing among variables.

Most important, perhaps, is the necessity for informed probing into the *meaning* possessed by given variables in given contexts. It is to be expected that many groups will appear similar at superficial levels, but it is also predictable that deeper analysis will often reveal important differences. If two minority-language situations showed male-female differences in language attitudes and use, for instance, we would presumably want to know something of the social dynamics of the two communities in order to appreciate the degree of significance reflected in these differences. As well, if we were to use a typological model as an instrument to assess subjective feelings – and there is no reason why the same outline of variables could not be used for both objective and subjective evaluations – then probing for meaning would become vitally important.

This is because most so-called 'attitude' questionnaires tap only the *beliefs* of respondents, and do not come to grips with the generally-accepted psychological conception of attitude, which is meant to include an evaluative, emotional or feeling component. Thus, if we simply record answers to a question like 'Is it important for your child to learn Welsh at school (yes or no)?', not only do we not know *why* respondents think it important (or not), we have not tapped their *feelings* about the matter. Someone might agree, for example, that learning Welsh was important while, at the same time, wishing it were not so; another might think it important, and see the educational provision as a welcome aspect of language rejuvenation. Obviously, these two hypothetical respondents should not be simply lumped together in any summary of results.

The dimensions of a typological model

My initial consideration of variables that are important for the assessment of language status, variables that have been regularly and repeatedly stressed in the literature, led to the suggestion of three very rough and basic categories: *speaker*, *language* and *setting*. These are not, of course, watertight and mutually exclusive compartments, but they may serve as logically important benchmarks. For example, it is possible to list all relevant variables under one or more of the three headings, and they do reflect the spirit of an ecological enquiry – that is, one that emphasises the interactions between language and environment.

Any list of *speaker* variables must attend to: age; sex; socioeconomic, occupational and educational status; numbers and concentrations of regular and 'irregular' speakers; type of speaker community (e.g. dominant or subordinate);number of monolinguals and bilinguals (with due regard to types and strengths of bilingualism); degree of desire to shift (assessing motivations like communicative efficiency, social mobility, economic advancement, and so on); language attitudes (a large category, including such elements as the romanticism of the language movement, differences between 'ordinary' speakers and group 'leaders' in levels of language activism, and feelings of linguistic insecurity).

Under the *language* rubric, important matters include: the degree of linguistic borrowing, simplification and so on; the stability or instability of bilingualism, and whether it tends to be temporary or permanent; the nature of literary traditions; the oral or written nature of the variety; the breadth of the language (is it, for instance, a medium of 'wider communication'?); the degree of standardisation and modernisation (and of language planning in general); the amount and salience of internal dialectal variation; symbolic and identity-bearing characteristics (that may or may not co-exist with more ordinary communicative functions); the nature of any competing varieties, especially those having *lingua franca* status; the particular associations with other important social phenomena (religion, for example).

Setting variables can include the following: geographic classifications; degree and type of transmission from one generation to the next; the rural-urban nature of the variety (rurality often provides a heartland but at the same time may have connotations of poverty and lack of sophistication; urbanity is often desired as part of social mobility and is often associated with shift – but can also support the heart of intellectual revival movements); the nature and stability of immigration and emigration; state policies regarding the language and its users; institutional support from education, the media, and so on.

We could also consider, by way of cross-perspective, a categorisation of different *disciplinary perspectives*. The following immediately suggest themselves as germane: demography, geography, economics, sociology, linguistics, psychology,

history, politics-law-government, education, religion and the media. Again, these are hardly mutually exclusive categories, nor do I suppose that these eleven cover all the necessary ground. In the interests of brevity, I provide here – in four groupings – only a few of the relevant matters that present themselve under each of these disciplinary headings; where possible, I have taken the opportunity to draw attention to some less-discussed matters.

The extraction of information from basic statistics is more complicated – and more broadly valuable – than might first be supposed. Thus, in discussing *demolinguistics*, de Vries (1989: 18) indicated the usefulness of this avenue for

> the study of second-language acquisition, language maintenance and shift pertaining to linguistic minorities … assessing the relative contributions of fertility, mortality, nuptiality, migration and language shift to the survival or decline of minority language communities.

A *geographical* framework has, of course, already been outlined in this chapter. There are relevant geographical variables, however, beyond those revealed or suggested in Table 1. More attention could be given, for instance, to the physical avenues of transportation and communication available to a language minority: as was the case in Gaelic-speaking Cape Breton Island, the road desired for mobility may also be the road of cultural and linguistic change. While not wishing to argue for a simplistic 'reductionism', it is difficult to deny that, in terms of *economics*, mundane facts have a great deal to do with minority-language viability. This is not, of course, a popular line among many of the more romantically-inclined apologists for language maintenance and, perhaps for that reason, the point has not received due attention.

A *sociological* perspective might include attention to marriage patterns, often of considerable importance in the life of minority groups: majority-minority intermarriage is often detrimental to minority-language survival and transmission. Yet, two studies of ethnicity in Nova Scotia (Edwards and Doucette, 1987; Edwards and MacLellan, 1989) revealed that even students who clearly see themselves as ethnic-group members – and who are, of course, of more or less marriageable age themselves – place within-group marriage at the bottom of a list of factors seen to be important for identity maintenance and continuity. A related sociological factor of great importance is the degree of what Breton (1964) usefully termed 'institutional completeness'. The more self-sufficient a community is, the greater the likelihood of linguistic and cultural maintenance. A matter not sufficiently discussed under the heading of *linguistics* is the degree of dialectal variation found within a given minority-language community. In Nordfriesland, for example, in an area of some 800 square miles, there are five languages in regular use. One of these, Frisian, is divided into ten major dialects, not all of which are mutually

intelligible, among a population of only 10,000. It is not difficult to understand that coming to grips with such internal variation would be vital in any investigation of the setting. A major *psychological* thrust has always been the study of attitudes. With regard to language attitudes, important areas include differences between communicative and symbolic facets of language, and between group 'spokesmen' and more 'ordinary' constituents. We also need more information than we typically receive about the perceptions of *majority*-group members. If, for instance, they report themselves as broadly favourable towards minority-group continuity, do their attitudes and actions cover active promotion, or do they suggest a more passive goodwill towards diversity? Under what circumstances, if any, can goodwill be translated into something more dynamic and positive for minority-group viability?

An *historical* dimension is essential for any meaningful study of minority-language situations. Historians have generally not acquitted themselves very well here. As Seton-Watson (1981: 2) wrote, 'the history of language... forms a very important part of social history, and one which seems to me to be relatively neglected by most historians'. At the same time, most students of language have paid very little attention to history. Not only has the historical perspective typically been given short shrift in research in the sociology of language, examination of the historical record is sometimes downplayed for not producing 'data' of the sort most familiar to most researchers in sociology or psychology. The myopia is obvious. One of the most interesting *political* aspects of minority-language contexts is the potential clash between group and individual rights. The 'sign laws' in Québec, for example, were clearly a restriction of the rights of individual anglophones (in this case, to display commercial signs in English) in the cause of support of francophone language and culture in the province. Efforts were considered necessary, that is to say, at the level of a *group* perceived to be under cultural and linguistic threat. In general terms, difficulties can be expected to arise in such situations, particularly in societies in which rights have traditionally been taken to inhere in the individual person rather than in collectivities.

The single most important factor under the *educational* heading has to do with the type and extent of school support for minority languages. Only fairly fine-grained investigation will reveal what *really* goes on in classrooms as opposed to what official policy dictates *should* go on. Only careful study will tell us if the fifteen hours given weekly to a minority language in context 'A' is in any way comparable to the same time allotment given in context 'B'. It is sometimes the case that a strong association exists between a minority language and *religion*; in the Irish situation, for example, much was made by revivalists of this connection. A related matter worthy of more study is the question of whether and/or when secularisation contributes to language shift. A useful perspective on the *media* is to

Table 2. A Sociology-of-Language Framework for Minority (and other) Languages

	Disciplinary perspective	Speaker	Language	Setting
1.	Demography	1	2	3
2.	Geography	4	5	6
3.	Economics	7	8	9
4.	Sociology	10	11	12
5.	Linguistics	13	14	15
6.	Psychology	16	17	18
7.	History	19	20	21
8.	Politics-Law-Government	22	23	24
9.	Education	25	26	27
10.	Religion	28	29	30
11.	Media	31	32	33

view them as double-edged swords. On the one hand, it can be argued that a minority-language presence, particularly on television, is of great importance for group solidarity and legitimacy; indeed, it has been suggested that television has become a new language domain in its own right. On the other hand, the pervasiveness of satellite-transmitted television, coupled with the overwhelmingly American (or Americanised) content, may create real difficulties for minority-language maintenance efforts.

A simple cross-tabulation of speaker, language and setting variables with the disciplinary perspectives just noted gives rise to the sort of framework depicted in Table 2. It is quite easy to think of the sorts of questions suggested by each of the 33 'cells', or points of intersection, and a list follows here. Of course, these questions are not anywhere near specific enough, in themselves, to comprise a complete or usefully applicable typology – they are merely points of departure. It is also immediately apparent that, in some instances, questions could plausibly fit in more than one cell. Readers are reminded that all this is meant only as an approximation, in the expectation that further work will result in changes and refinements. With these provisos, here is a list of questions, one for each cell, keyed by number to the cells in Table 2.

1. Numbers and concentrations of speakers?
2. Extent of the language (see also geography)?
3. Rural-urban nature of setting?

4–6. See geographic outline (Table 1)

7. Economic health of speaker group?
8. Association between language(s) and economic success/mobility?
9. Economic health of the region?

10. Socioeconomic status of speakers?
11. Degree and type of language transmission?
12. Nature of previous/current maintenance or revival efforts?
13. Linguistic capabilities of speakers?
14. Degree of language standardisation?
15. Nature of in- and out-migration?
16. Language attitudes of speakers?
17. Aspects of the language-identity relationship?
18. Attitudes of majority group towards minority?
19. History and background of the group?
20. History of the language?
21. History of the area in which group now lives?
22. Rights and recognition of speakers?
23. Degree and extent of official recognition of language?
24. Degree of autonomy or 'special status' of the area?
25. Speakers' attitudes and involvement regarding education?
26. Type of school support for language?
27. State of education in the area?
28. Religion of speakers?
29. Type and strength of association between language and religion?
30. Importance of religion in the area?
31. Group representation in media?
32. Language representation in media?
33. General public awareness of area?

Concluding comments

The typological approach that I suggest here was sketched in several earlier publications (see Edwards, 1991b, 1992), which means that other scholars have had a chance to consider it. Grenoble and Whaley (1998) draw centrally upon the model, for instance, and cite both strengths and weaknesses of it. They note, for example, that it usefully distinguishes between the speech community in question and the surrounding context, while at the same time emphasising the intertwining of variables at all levels of specificity. On the other hand, they (rightly) reveal the need for further model elaboration – pointing out that some existing terms ('region' and 'area', as mentioned in questions 9 and 21, for instance) are inadequately defined, that variables might profitably be placed in some hierarchical order, and that more focussed attention upon literacy should be highlighted. (This is not unrelated to Clyne's [2003] observation that my model requires greater descriptive

clarity. He does, however, refer favourably to the contextualisation of variables that is, indeed, a central thrust of the model – something, he notes, that 'could be considered more in the methodology of future studies' [p. 244].)

In her study of language shift and revival among Quichua speakers in Ecuador, for instance, King (2001) briefly discusses the model, citing it along with Fishman's 'Graded Intergenerational Dislocation Scale' (1991) and a three-part framework suggested by Hyltenstam and Stroud (1996). The latter emphasises the social conditions that surround languages and that dictate their fortunes: the authors focus upon variables having to do with the minority-language community at both social and individual levels, and with the sociology of majority-minority interaction. The approach is thus broadly similar in intent to my own, but it does not highlight matters at quite the same levels of specificity. Fishman's approach is much less useful, in that his eight-point scale of obstacles to revival represents only a formalisation of the familiar challenges faced by 'small' languages. It is – to use his own comparison – a sort of Richter Scale of endangerment. As well, since Fishman's intent is to outline the stages by which minority-language shift can be reversed, the model is more of a hortatory action plan than a purely descriptive framework. As Clyne (2003: 64) observes, the steps towards the reversal of shift seem not to coincide very well with the desired life trajectories of many immigrant minority populations: 'many of the measures suggested by Fishman would tend to detract from [their] socioeconomic mobility and would therefore not appeal to most'.

In their studies of Bashkir, Altai and Kazakh speakers in the Russian republics of Bashkortostan and Altai, Yağmur and Kroon (2003, 2006) have employed my framework in conjunction with the ethnolinguistic-vitality approach of Giles and his colleagues. Paulston *et al.* (2007) have referred to it in their examination of 'extrinsic' linguistic minorities – that is, groups who once belonged to a majority population in a neighbouring country (Russians in Latvia being the clearest case in point). 'At the stroke of a pen,' the authors write (p. 386), members of the dominant ruling power can become minorities in a newly-independent state. Extra and Gorter (2008) discuss my approach in the introduction to their own framework for regional minority languages in Europe. They opt 'for a simple typology' (p. 26) and their framework has five categories: (a) languages spoken in only one member state of the European Union; those spoken in more than one – either (b) unofficial in each country, or (c) official in some; (d) those three varieties (Lëtzebuergesch, Irish and Maltese) that are 'small' but yet have official status; and (e) non-territorial languages (notably Romani and Yiddish). Tsunoda (2006) uses the model as the scaffolding for his chapter on endangered languages ('we shall adopt Edwards' … typology, which sets up eleven groups according to which various factors may be classified' [p. 49]). In so doing, he reminds us that typologies are a subsection of language ecology. (Unfortunately, the great potential value of Tsunoda's monograph

– as a comprehensive survey of endangered languages – is curtailed by a rambling and often indigestible presentation. As Mühlhäusler (2007) notes, the confusion and lack of coherence here are particularly disappointing in a volume meant to be 'a textbook or a guide for practitioners' [p. 105].)

Vail (2006) has recently employed the model in his assessment of Northern Khmer. He notes that cultural and social anthropology are 'curious omissions from [my] otherwise comprehensive list' (p. 144). He is right, of course – and there are no doubt many other fine-grained perspectives that could reasonably be included. I did think, however, that the sociological and linguistic perspectives would be sufficient, since their application in minority-language contexts would necessarily have anthropological – or anthropology-of-language – connotations. Overall, Vail refers to my typology as 'the most robust model' (p. 140) of both macro- and micro-level approaches to the ecology of endangered languages. These are kind words. Clearly, however, much more work needs to be done before a really useful typology can emerge from these beginning sketches. Nonetheless, based upon the work of my predecessors – and recalling specifically the words of Haugen and Ferguson – the exercise appears eminently worthwhile. Even a thoroughgoing multivariate checklist would be of service, and a comprehensive typology could be a useful tool for description and comparison, could lead to more complete conceptualisations of minority-language situations, could be a heuristic for further and more systematic investigations, and could perhaps permit predictions to be made concerning language shift and/or maintenance outcomes.

CHAPTER 6

Irish

Introductory note

Irish has been chosen as the subject of a chapter here because it is a rare example of an indigenous minority language that came to have its own government behind it. Yet the Irish revival is still a failed exercise – or is it? In Chapter 3, I noted the contrasting views of Ó Domhnalláin (1959), who claimed that the educational aspects of the revival, at least, had been an 'astounding' achievement, and of Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn (1971: 143), who asked us to 'remove our gaze from the terrible failure of Ireland'. I also cited Dorian (1987), who suggested that even 'failures' have some value. Not everyone, she noted, will be interested in Irish heritage and culture – but post-independence measures on behalf of the language have meant that those who *are* will be able to study it. More recently, Ó hÉallaithe (2004) listed a number of developments that he felt would make a 'positive impact on the use of the Irish language by those who profess to be able to speak it' (p. 180). He mentions a number of formal government initiatives and studies, the success of Irish-language media – radio, television and newspapers – and the increasing availability of Irish programmes at the tertiary educational level. He also refers to the 'vibrancy of the most Irish-speaking parts of the *Gaeltacht* [officially-designated Irish-speaking area], which are no longer shedding their young people', and to the rapid growth of non-English-speaking immigration to Ireland, of a multicultural society that, he claims, 'makes it more acceptable to be heard speaking Irish' (p. 181).[1]

A brief historical introduction

The earliest history of the Gaels in Ireland reflects the displacement of still earlier peoples and languages, such that Irish was strong and secure by about 500 A.D. It became a literary medium and, a little later, a religious one as well. Indeed, having escaped Roman conquest herself, Ireland became a light of learning for all of

1. I should further preface my remarks here by noting that the treatments – of Irish in this chapter, of Gaelic in the next two, and of Esperanto in Chapter 9 – are abbreviated versions of monograph studies that I hope will soon see the light of day.

Europe during Rome's decline and fall, and the Irish language was the only vernacular deemed adequate as a replacement for Latin in education and literature. Arrivals from abroad – even the feared Norsemen – were Gaelicised if they lingered. The seeds of the decline of the Irish language were not sown until the Norman invasions of the twelfth century, and they were not to bear fruit for another four centuries. These first incursions were sanctioned by Pope Adrian and occasioned by an Irish request from Dermot of Leinster for military assistance. This request is of considerable historical importance, for it illustrates how intertwined English and Irish matters have been from the very beginning.

With the advent of French and English speakers, the process of change was set in motion. At the beginning, however, change was not at all rapid. Only in the towns within the Pale – a relatively small area surrounding Dublin – did French and English become established, and the Pale itself tended to shrink. The Gaelicising of the new arrivals and their descendants continued; indeed, they were said to have become *Hiberniores ipsis Hibernis*: more Irish than the Irish. Thus, Titley (2000: 53) notes that 'most of the important "foreign" families – the Butlers, the Burkes, the Fitzgeralds – took on both the colouring and the reality of Irish nobles within a few short generations'. Early laws against 'degeneracy' demonstrate the strength and the attractiveness of Irish language and culture: in 1297, the Anglo-Normans were forbidden to wear their hair in the Irish fashion! The most telling indicator of linguistic and cultural realities came with the passage of the Statutes of Kilkenny, enacted with the authority of Edward III in 1366. The preamble chides the colonists 'for having fallen into Irish ways' (Corkery, 1954: 56), and the laws themselves enjoined them not to speak Irish – and also not to marry the natives, not to dress like them, not to ride horses like them (i.e. without a saddle), and so on. Written in Norman French – Latin and French remained the chief administrative languages in Ireland until the time of the Tudors – the regulations were not effective, and all forms of social intercourse continued apace. The result was that, at the dawn of of the seventeenth century, English (as well as French, and some other varieties that had migrated to Ireland with the Normans, most notably Welsh and Flemish) existed only within a diminished Pale along the eastern coast and in one or two rural enclaves. Overall, then, the first centuries of Irish contact with the invading languages are characterised by expansion of the former at the expense of the latter.

When Plantagenet gave way to Tudor, however, the fortunes of Irish began to change as Ireland began to loom larger in the political and religious landscape. Under the second Tudor monarch, Henry VIII, many proclamations were issued in which Irish was, directly or indirectly, discouraged. More importantly, the plantation schemes – by which English settlers were to displace Irish land-holders – that began in the mid-sixteenth century and that reached their zenith under Cromwell a century later brought about movements of Irish speakers to the south and west. None-

theless, the conquest of Ireland was not completed until, at the end of Elizabeth's reign, Hugh O'Neill and his Spanish allies were decisively beaten by Lord Mountjoy in 1601 at Kinsale. This was followed a few years later by the 'flight of the Earls' – the passage into French and Italian exile of Tyrone, Tyrconnell and their followers. After and because of this came the further acts of plantation, in Ulster, whose consequences have persisted ever since. All of this amounted to the passing of the Gaelic order, just as the Tudor dynasty itself was coming to a close with the death of Elizabeth in 1603. Although Irish was still the majority language, most commentators see the first decade of the seventeenth century as decisive for Ireland and its language.

English began to make steady advances, although these were counted more in terms of status than in numbers. Between 1600 and 1800, it grew to become the language of regular use for about half the population – the more powerful half. Irish speakers were increasingly the poor and the disadvantaged, and their language received no official recognition. From the turn of the nineteenth century, other problems began to beset Irish. Wall (1969: 81) points out that 'every school child in Ireland will tell you that Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic clergy and the National schools together killed the Irish language'. Like all succinct summary statements, this is an oversimplification, but there is no doubt that each of the three strands mentioned by Wall was vitally important. O'Connell, the Great Emancipator, was an Irish speaker; yet, in his own famous linguistic assessment, he said of the Irish language:

> I am sufficiently utilitarian not to regret its gradual abandonment. A diversity of tongues is no benefit; it was first imposed upon mankind as a curse, at the building of Babel. It would be a vast advantage to mankind if all the inhabitants of the Earth spoke the same language. Therefore, although the Irish language is connected with many recollections that twine around the hearts of Irishmen, yet the superior utility of the English tongue, as the medium of all modern communication, is so great that I can witness without a sigh the gradual disuse of Irish. (Daunt, 1848: 14–15).

As for the Catholic clergy, they had increasingly turned to English, displaying their own brand of pragmatism. In 1795 the British had established Maynooth College for them; as well, the Irish language continued to be used by Protestant proselytising groups.[2] The assessment here – logical enough from the point of view of a church concerned with *la longue durée* and, consequently, well practiced in adapt-

2. Attempts were made, beginning in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, to use Irish as a tool of Protestant proselytism, an activity which of course did little to increase the popularity of the language. The most formalised anti-Catholic efforts were the Penal Laws of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, laws for 'the suppression of Popery'. By and large these statutes affected the Irish language only indirectly, as the maternal variety of those whose legal and religious rights across a broad spectrum were systematically restricted. In one or two instances, however, Irish is mentioned specifically.

ing to temporal exigencies – was that saving souls was more important than saving Irish. Since priests were also the managers of the primary schools, they often worked actively against the Irish language in the educational context, too. The National School system itself, established in 1831, thus worked to exclude Irish both in principle and in practice: in a well-known pamphlet (1916), the famous political and linguistic activist Patrick Pearse referred to it as the 'murder machine'.

The single most important event of the first half of the nineteenth century was of course the famine. Its depredations and the emigration that it prompted were felt most severely in rural Irish-speaking areas. As Ó Dochartaigh (1992) has noted, the effects of the Irish famine had more or less the same impact upon the peasantry – and their language – as the slightly earlier clearances had upon the Highland Scots. Thus, we might agree with Adams (1970: 163) who wrote that 'it is clear that English quite suddenly gained an advantage about the middle of the last century'. In fact, the 1851 Census showed only 23% of the population as being Irish-speaking. This figure is probably considerably lower than it ought to be, because people were suspicious of British census motives and because – already – Irish was marked as the language of backwardness and poverty (Nic Craith, 1999). Still, while this census assessment may not be very precise, it is certainly the case that, by mid-century, the number of *monolingual* Irish speakers was quite small, and a bilingual population is often on the road to a new monolingualism.

These and other factors in the decline of Irish are both roughly stated here and, more importantly, subject to considerable interpretation. Many writers, including de Fréine (1960, 1977), have argued that the 'causes' touched upon here, with the obvious exception of the famine, are only *symptoms* of other, deeper matters. This is certainly reasonable, since the language attitudes of political leaders, the church and the educational system were all reflections of broader trends in linguistic and cultural contact. In any event, after the middle of the nineteenth century the most relevant chapters in our story have to do with attempts to maintain, encourage and revive Irish.

Irish revival efforts

From mid-century, revival efforts were led by upper-middle-class individuals, for many of whom Irish fluency was an acquired talent rather than a maternal one. In his newspaper, *The Nation*, Thomas Davis thundered against English, penning such oft-quoted phrases as 'a people without a language of its own is only half a people', and 'to lose your native tongue is the worst badge of conquest' (Davis, 1843 / 1914). Yet he knew little if any Irish himself, his paper was published entirely in English, and – like other enthusiasts who were to follow – he made no contribu-

tion to the revival movement 'beyond pious pronouncements that such an end was desirable' (Edwards, 1968: 111). It is an irony often remarked upon that the great politician O'Connell, an Irish speaker, was unconcerned with the fate of the language, while his contemporary Davis, an English speaker, was so rabidly nationalistic. It is an irony, indeed, that dogs many revival efforts: those native speakers who might be thought to be most exercised over the decline are often much less animated than 'outsiders' of one sort or another.

It was only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that serious and formalised efforts were made to stem the decline of the language. These built upon and reflected a linguistic nationalism outlined earlier by Herder, Fichte and others of the romantic school – a nationalism built, itself, upon the appealing but inaccurate equation of language with nationality. The argument proved extremely attractive, however, which is why linguistic and literary revivals were common phenomena among the 'awakening' peoples of Europe. Attempts to turn the 'Celtic twilight' into a 'Celtic renaissance' were notable here.

Just as Irish, as the language of popery, had been proscribed under the Tudors, then employed to facilitate religious conversion, then indirectly proscribed again, so its religious associations were later exploited by revivalists. The strength of Catholicism could be used, it was thought, to halt and perhaps even reverse the decline of Irish.[3] At the same time, English could be condemned on the grounds of *its* association with a materialistic and godless culture. Thus, in a pamphlet aimed at Irish women, Butler (1901: 2) wrote of a war between 'Irish ideals and British sordid soullessness'. In a similar appeal – like Butler's, published in a pamphlet series by the main revivalist body, the Gaelic League – Forde (1901) said that, since modern materialism had made England turn away from God, anglicisation was evil. It was, in any event, a Protestant medium and therefore unsuitable for Ireland.[4] The reverend Mr Fullerton (1916: 6) put it all quite succinctly when he wrote that 'the Irish language is the casket which encloses the highest and purest religion that any country could boast of since the time of the Twelve Apostles'.

A few years later, it was still possible for the argument to be made: Irish revival would at once strengthen the Catholic and counter foreign (i.e. English) materialism (Clery, 1927). The reverend Edward Cahill – one of the more temper-

3. In fact, as I have suggested elsewhere (Edwards, 1985, 1994b), the strength of Catholicism in Ireland may have actually facilitated the decline of the language. As an obvious and potent component of Irish identity, the continuity afforded by adherence to the church may have diluted the urge to protect the linguistic component.

4. There is an irony here, in that Douglas Hyde and many of the other leaders in the Irish literary and language revival were, in fact, Protestant: members of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. Risteárd Ó Glaisne (2000) provides useful historical details – as well as strong personal convictions – on the relationship between Protestantism and Irish.

ate religious commentators – pointed out in 1930 that the Catholic and Irish-language heritage of the *Gaeltacht* constituted an important barrier against the corrupting influences of the anglophone world. And even later still, the argument was repeated: 'Irish is the instrument and expression of a purely Catholic culture' (O'Donoghue, 1947: 24). There is a type of religious Whorfianism in all this, but the arguments, however bizarre, do reflect a powerful possibility. If, after all, it had proved possible to convince the Irish people – a population almost entirely Catholic – that there was a necessary and indissoluble link between their strongly-held faith and the Irish language, the fortunes of the latter might have shown a dramatic improvement.

There is an important postscript to be added here, one that applies specifically to the more vocal and the more radical of the language activists, whether or not their arguments arose from religious considerations. Their vehement rejection of English language and culture reflected and reinforced a desire – unrealistic even at the beginning of the twentieth century – for a new monolingualism in Irish rather than some possible bilingual accommodation with English. Any suggestion that people might be asked to choose one or the other, but not both, was of course destined to fail. As is often the case, the implication is that the fringe elements of the revival movement, and the disproportionate publicity that their powerful remarks inevitably garnered, worked against the more measured efforts of the leadership and most of the rank and file.

In 1876, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded, followed by the Gaelic Union in 1880 and, in 1893, the Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*). The establishment of the last of these – the largest and most important of the language societies – was prompted in large part by Douglas Hyde's famous address to the Irish National Literary Society in November 1892; it was published two years later as 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland'. The League's objective was essentially to maintain Irish but it is generally, and not unfairly, seen as wishing to do more: to revive the language as the ordinary medium of the mass of the population (although Hyde himself did not think this a very likely possibility; see Hyde, 1886; Ó Laoire, 1995). The establishment and spread of the Gaelic League make a fascinating story in themselves; I can only note here that it was a significant movement, in terms of its supporters, its propagandising and, indeed, its success, for it gained a place for the Irish language in schools and at the university (see O'Donoghue, 2006).

As a cultural and linguistic force, the Gaelic League declined in importance (though it still exists today) in the years leading up to the establishment of the Irish Free State. Many of the political leaders were members of the League and, as the larger national movement grew, so the language aspect waned. As Laffan (2005: 10) put it in his fine study of Sinn Féin, 'nationalism rescued the Irish language revival

from what many people dismissed as mere scholarly antiquarianism, and the Gaelic League's political neutrality became harder to maintain'. Indeed, he goes on to note that 'about half of those who would later serve as government ministers or senior civil servants in the first fifty years after independence had been members of the Gaelic League' (p. 236; see also Ó hÉallaithe, 2004). None of this sat well with Douglas Hyde himself. As the League became more and more political, he became less and less comfortable with the direction that his cultural, literary and linguistic nationalism was increasingly taking. Many could see that the evolution of the Gaelic League into a political organisation was an inevitable consequence of its success in the social and cultural sphere – many, but not Hyde himself. He said that 'so long as we remained non-political, there was no limit to what we could do' (Kiberd, 1982: 10). But of course this was exactly backwards.

With the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and the subsequent establishment of the Free State, it was felt that the restoration of the language could now be largely transferred to governmental responsibility (Macnamara, 1971). Indeed, the well-known nationalist Daniel Corkery was able to note, as late as 1954, that 'for the first time since 1169, the Irish language has a state behind it. To say this is equivalent to saying that everything has changed for it' (p. 128) – a statement that at once illustrates Dr Johnson's triumph of hope over experience and demonstrates the powerful myopia that can afflict revivalist sympathies. For it was apparent, from the earliest days of Irish independence, that no reasonable or democratic means was available to return the Irish language to its former vernacular glory.

Irish was enshrined as the national and first official language from the inception of the state. By the 1920s, however, the number of Irish speakers had of course shrunk dramatically, for reasons already touched upon here. In this blunt respect, the efforts of the Gaelic League had been in vain, as the census figures indicate (see Table 1).

Like all census figures, these are to some extent speculative: the definition of 'an Irish speaker' is hardly a tight category. Certainly, so far as *monolingual* Irish speakers go, it may be assumed that these were very few indeed: some 21,000 were recorded in 1901, representing only about 0.5% of the population (about 4,500 in each of Munster and Ulster, 12,000 in Connaught – and *seven* in Leinster; see

Table 1. Census figures for Irish speakers

Date	Irish speakers (as number)	(as % of total population)
1901	619,710	19.2
1911	553,717	17.6
1926	543,511	18.3

Akenson, 1970). At a more general level, Ó Gliasáin (1996) notes that 5% returned themselves as Irish monolinguals in the first census (1851), 1.25% in 1881, and only 0.4% (in the 26 counties) in 1926 (see also Ó Cuív, 1951). Bearing in mind the many difficulties attendant upon census numbers and their interpretation (Edwards, 1994b), it is interesting to read Ó Gliasáin's arguments about the insufficient use that has been made of language data from Irish censuses. He makes three important points that, taken together, suggest a utility greater than is typically found in national surveys: the longevity of a language question (it has appeared in virtually all censuses since that of 1851), the similarity of the language question over time, and the lack of the social divisiveness sometimes associated with language-census enquiries.

Beyond simple demographics, however, Irish obviously had a special hold upon the founders of the new state. It was closely tied to Irish nationalism, possessing a value quite beyond purely educational, intellectual and, indeed, pragmatic concerns. Eamon de Valera himself argued that 'Ireland with its language and without freedom is preferable to Ireland with freedom and without its language' (Akenson, 1975: 36). It is, of course highly unlikely that de Valera believed this, a statement clearly for general public consumption only. With such sentiment, in such arenas, de Valera and others like him carried on the highly romanticised tradition so carefully accented in much of the revivalist movement. At the same time, it was also good political sense to endorse (or appear to endorse) Irish, because doing so established a clear, non-British line. Under these circumstances, the government passed the burden of Irish restoration to the schools.

The Gaeltacht

Once upon a time, of course, all Ireland was Irish-speaking – the whole country was a *Gaeltacht.* As we have seen, however, the place of Irish has steadily diminished. Today the *Gaeltacht* is almost entirely to be found on the western littoral (in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Cork), and its population is about 70,000. This number cannot, however, be equated with the number of regular Irish speakers there which, even a generation ago, was estimated at only 50,000 – i.e. less than 2% of the overall Irish population (Ó Danachair, 1969). A more recent estimate is provided by Ó hÉallaithe (2004: 179–180): based upon both census data and fieldwork:

> it appears that approximately 20,000 people live in bilingual communities in which Irish is still the dominant language among most age groups in the home and in the community and in which English is a secondary language. [However]... even in the strongest *Gaeltacht* communities, English seems to be replacing Irish as the primary language among teenagers and younger adults.

Despite their small numbers, Irish speakers in the *Gaeltacht* have naturally always occupied a central position in discussions on the language. Nowadays, while it can be argued that the *Gaeltacht* – where linguistic competence is a product of home and hearth rather than of more self-conscious application – remains vital to the language, it is constantly being encroached upon by modern influences of all kinds (which usually means English-language influences). So there is a paradox here: if nothing is done, the *Gaeltacht* continues to shrink; if things *are* done there is the very real danger of creating an enclave which is seen, by those inside as well as by those without, as essentially artificial – a somewhat insulated area, not fully exposed to larger social and economic currents. In such a situation, can a language survive in anything like its usual unselfconscious state?

Ó Riagáin's (1992) work in the Kerry *Gaeltacht* is insightful here. While he found higher than average levels of bilingualism, greater acknowledgement of the symbolic value of Irish, and general support for government initiatives on behalf of the language, he also concluded that:

> there is a deep sense of the dependence of the Gaeltacht on the state... a reliance on the state in the areas of social and economic development... [and] a well-founded perception that the value of Irish is determined primarily by its status in the wider society... English is seen to be the language of advancement... any alternative to local employment requires English. Thus, while we found relatively little outright hostility to Irish, the limited value of Irish in the state's economic and social life understably conditions the views of all respondents, but particularly those in the child-rearing years. (p. 145)

Ó Riagáin also refers, incidentally, to a difficulty that has plagued government support for *Gaeltacht* areas from the start. Apart from the strange and somewhat unnaturally buffered social conditions that such support has brought about, there has also been resentment on the part of those people who live outside the boundaries that were originally drawn up by the *Gaeltacht Commission* of 1926. They may be as impoverished as those within, but they will not receive the same amount of official largesse. (Hindley, 1991, provides a succinct discussion of the difficulties in accurately and fairly defining the *Gaeltacht*.) Almost from the beginning, too, there has been a great deal of criticism of the 'geographical' approach to Irish speakers, an approach that has allowed compartmentalisation of thought and effort.

When Ó hÉallaithe (2004) pointed out that the revival movement's most significant impact was among English speakers, he touched upon a very sore point. The failure of the Dublin-centred revival movement to really support the inhabitants of the *Gaeltacht* is one of the most serious charges to be laid at the feet of the Gaelic League. In a newspaper piece published in 1914, Ó hAodha wrote that

> if the Gaelic League made it its business to enable the Gael to live in the Gaeltacht and prosper there, and dropped all its other work, the language would be saved. If the League continues to do everything else but this, the language will be lost.

Despite the hundreds of League branches throughout the country, and despite the tens of thousands of members, it has been argued that its essential stated goals were often overlaid by more superficial, social activities: 'for the many, it was a fad, not unrelated to the emancipation of women and the advent of the bicycle' (Mac Aodha, 1972: 30).[5] The entire Gaelic League movement could and should have been based upon the *Gaeltacht*, Greene (1972: 19) points out; he goes on to say that 'the Gaeltacht continued to decline while the new political parties used the Gaelic League as a recruiting ground and paid lip-service to its policies'.

Given the social circumstances, perhaps it is unlikely that significant alterations in the course of *Gaeltacht* linguistic history could have been achieved – but it is interesting, to say the very least, that the intellectual leaders of the revival gave the native speakers of the west so little real regard. In part, this was because the *Gaeltacht* was idealised as a romantic corner of a nasty modern world. Essayists and novelists made careers for themselves extolling rural pleasures – while rarely living there themselves. Life was described as 'poetic', the residents as the only 'true Gaels'. All this, of course, was at some variance with the realities of hardscrabble life – and, as Ó Croidheáin (2006: 184) has recently observed, 'the richness of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht reflected the economic stagnation that permitted the survival of ancient practices, customs and ways of life'. And Titley (2000: 101) reminds us that some of the belief patterns and practices of these idyllic enclaves would make one yearn for modernity: malicious deeds and attitudes, banishments and burnings, shunnings and exposures were often the products of narrowly religious or pre-religious understandings. In his famous 1942 handbook for folklorists, we find Ó Súilleabháin suggesting that information be gathered about the form and frequency of punishments 'meted out to those condemned by local opinion'.

In general, the *Gaeltacht* was better and more conveniently conceptualised if kept at a remove. Perhaps, too, the less than rousingly enthusiastic support found among many native Irish speakers for the work of the Gaelic League was an important factor. In any event, the revival movement did very little to support those

5. I found this excerpt in a useful analysis by Ó hÉallaithe (2004), who adds that Ó hAodha's article was rejected by *An Claidheamh Soluis* – the Gaelic League's newspaper – and had to make its appearance, instead, in the pages of *Sinn Féin*.

Mac Aodha would seem to be on dubious ground in describing female emancipation as a 'fad', but there is no doubt that, at least in the beginning stages, the women's movement was seen in that way by many.

areas where Irish remained in a 'natural' context, and from which some realistic growth might have emerged.

While the *Gaeltacht* is the traditional heartland of a rich (and largely oral) culture, it has continued to diminish. Despite the establishment of several important bodies – notably *Údarás na Gaeltachta,* established in 1979 to oversee all aspects of life, with a special remit for linguistic and cultural matters – a harsh assessment was made at the same time: Fennell (1980, 1981) said that the *Gaeltacht* was now a 'crumbling archipelago'. He went on to lay much of the failure at the feet of the language movement, who imagined the *Gaeltacht* as some sort of 'never-never land', also pointing to the obvious inadequacies of various official measures and interventions (see also Ó Gadhra, 1988). But Fennell stated, too, that the *Gaeltacht* population itself was not quite as devoted to the language as might have been wished, observing that 'the majority of parents *throughout the entire Gaeltacht* have decided to rear their children in English'. In noting that the Irish-language achievements of *Gaeltacht* schoolchildren are *poorer* than those of pupils in all-Irish schools *outside* the *Gaeltacht*, Harris (1984) states that almost half of the former come from homes in which English has replaced Irish; and, in their survey of Irish and English ability among *Gaeltacht* primary-school pupils, Harris and Murtagh (1987) acknowledge that forces outside the home, in school and community, are increasingly contributing to Irish-language competence. And Commins (1988: 20–21) also reports 'widespread shift toward English in the *Gaeltacht*... a substantial number of *Gaeltacht* parents now rely on the schools to give their children a knowledge of Irish' (see also Coleman, 2003). This is but one of a number of elephants in the Irish room.

Irish and education

More ignored than oppressed, there was little room for Irish at school in pre-independence Ireland; only towards the end of the nineteenth century did it become an 'optional extra' subject. Indeed, there was little place made for Irish culture and history at all, and Bowen (1983) remarks upon a colonial mentality that aimed at the production of 'happy English children'. This is the atmosphere within which the nationalist revival took shape, and in which the Gaelic League achieved some considerable success in establishing a place for Irish in school and university (see O'Donoghue, 2006). It is the atmosphere that motivated post-independence governments. It is the atmosphere in which the pro-Irish recommendations of the 1922 conference on primary education were so influential.

As Bowen (1983: 156) points out, the first stated policy of the new education ministry was 'to conserve and develop Irish nationality'. A central feature was the

re-establishment of the language via the school, and rigorous policies of Irish instruction were introduced. By the mid-1930s, the teaching time devoted to English, mathematics and science was reduced, so as to make more room for Irish (Akenson, 1970, 1975, provides an overview of the educational scene). The 'forced' aspects here certainly alienated the Protestant minority, whose pre-independence dominance was now gone. But their protests were increasingly muted, and it was the growing concern among the Catholic majority that was to prove decisive in the evolution of Irish educational policy. Overall, the 'public attitude towards the language after 1922 was, as far as we can tell, broadly if inertly benign. All governments henceforth embraced the idea of revival, and promptly subcontracted the implementation of the policy to the Department of Education' (Lee, 1989: 670).

Although the idea that the schools were among the chief culprits in the decline of Irish is, if not simplistic, then clearly a prematurely curtailed analysis, it suggested to some activists an immediate and obvious possibility: the English schools had killed the language, so let the Irish schools revive it. Even if the first half of this statement were true, the second does not necessarily follow. Nevertheless, from the first, the fortunes of the Irish language were considered to be largely in the hands of the school. A corollary – clear in hindsight but also clear at the time in that portion of the political discourse *not* for general public consumption – is that the educational system would quite likely become a convenient scapegoat for the failure of 're-vernacularisation'.

The nationalistic language aims of Irish officials may have been sincerely held (for the most part) but they were rarely fulfilled at a personal level. The pronouncements of de Valera, the frequent calls for the replacement of English by Irish, the party resolutions advocating Irish as the political medium and a prerequisite for office – all these foundered on the shoals of impracticality. But, as Laffan (2005: 237) notes, 'such voices were prophetic of the future, and in later years a privileged and illiberal establishment would impose the task of learning "compulsory" Irish on a passive, acquiescent but unenthusiastic majority'. Thus, from the inception of the Free State, Irish was to be a compulsory subject. In addition, infants' classes were to be conducted entirely through the medium of Irish.

One important concern about 'school' Irish – a difficulty found elsewhere, too – was that it might that it may not reflect anyone's spoken vernacular particularly well. In his commentary on the revival effort at school, Breatnach (1964: 20) thus lamented that the language of the classroom was not 'real' Irish but, rather, an 'artificial standardized amalgam of dialects' (see also Carnie, 1996). O'Byrne (2007: 315) has recently gone further, claiming that 'the language that is the first official language of Ireland today is certainly an invented language'. There are three main dialect areas in Ireland: Munster (in the south), Connaught (west) and Ulster (north) and – unlike the situation sometimes found in other settings – no one of

these three has achieved sociopolitical dominance or a level of prestige markedly higher than the other two. This meant that, with the assignment of the revival effort to the schools, lexical and grammatical standardisation was required. Compromise among the three regional varieties was of course an important social and political consideration, but it is easy to see that a standardised form that aims for some sort of inter-dialectal 'neutrality' runs the risk of pleasing no one.

The finding of suitable teachers of Irish was also something of a problem from the beginning, and necessitated the establishment of preparatory colleges, a system that lasted until the 1960s. As O'Connell (1968) points out in his history of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), teachers continued to be uneasy with aspects of Irish at school; in particular, they objected to the use of the language as a teaching medium in cases in which this might not be 'profitably done'. This is not to say that the INTO wanted the removal of obligatory Irish from the roster of school subjects, but it *is* to say that teachers resented the implicit decision to revive Irish through schools alone, and upon their own already strained backs. Later, Ó Laoire (1995, 1996) confirmed that, from the beginning, teachers were uncertain about the language aims, about their feasiblity and about their own role in the revival movement. INTO reports show that teachers continued to complain, throughout the 1940s, calling for greater curricular flexibility – which they were not granted, despite the fact that official educational documents had for some time acknowledged the disappointing results of classroom Irish. 'Sacred cows could not be submitted,' Lee (1989: 671) reminds us, 'to the most cursory veterinary inspection'. The evidence assembled about the strain of compulsory instruction in a new language, about the inadequate standards that resulted across the board, about parental dissatisfaction with the English competence of their children – this evidence led only to defensiveness in official educational quarters.

In later years, there was occasionally more open comment from teachers. Comber (1960: 27) noted that 'the teacher loses heart flogging a dead horse while the experts debate whether another whip might not revive him'. Harrison (1976: 35) stated that 'Irish, except as an arcane minority rite, is on its way out. Don't blame the teachers for its demise'. No doubt it would be wrong to *over*-interpret such harsh sentiments, but they seem to represent the tip of an attitudinal iceberg.

Macnamara (1971: 71) described the scene in the 1930s:

> it was forbidden to teach English or to use English in the infant classes of the state-financed national (primary) schools. Irish as a subject was compulsory in all classes, and English as a subject was compulsory in the second class... and all higher classes. Further, the rule was that Irish was to be used as the medium of instruction in all classes and subjects where the teacher was competent to do so and where the children were competent to learn in this manner.

All-Irish infants' classes are no more and, from the 1960s, increasing recognition was given to the idea that the use of Irish as a medium of instruction for other subjects might not always be productive. In secondary education, Irish remains a compulsory subject and until 1973 a pass in Irish was necessary to obtain the Leaving Certificate; there was 'little or no opposition' to the rescinding of this policy (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 169). At universities, there is a wide range of possibilities for courses in and about Irish. The primary-school emphasis was always the main one, however; indeed, as Titley (2004: 17) points out, 'national schools did their best, the secondary system was more tepid, and third level turned the other cheek.'

Although a thin wash of Irish competence *has* been applied to almost everyone who has gone through the system, Harris's careful analyses revealed that only one-third of primary-school children made satisfactory progress in Irish; a middle third were said to make only 'minimal progress', and the bottom third failed even that (Harris, 1984, 1988; Harris and Murtagh, 1988). Based upon the proficiency testing of more than 6,000 children, Harris concluded – as have many less meticulous observers – that the achievement of satisfactory levels of spoken Irish would require much more classroom time. The general public may want improved proficiency, but it is unwilling to endorse the measures required to produce it. The result is predictable.

The most recent national assessment is that of Harris and his colleagues (2006), based upon survey work with sixth-class pupils in 2002. The findings themselves reveal that while, in English-medium schools, the numbers of those achieving 'minimal progress' has increased somewhat, there are also fewer reaching 'satisfactory' levels, and more at the bottom of the achievement ladder. Unsurprisingly, students in all-Irish schools outside the *Gaeltacht* are more likely to do better, and those in *Gaeltacht* schools fall somewhere between – better than 'ordinary' students, but not quite as good as their all-Irish counterparts. Harris *et al.* suggest that, overall, there is little doubt that Irish standards are in decline, and that this has serious consequences for the larger picture of language maintenance. They echo the view expressed by the new language commissioner (see below), Seán Ó Cuirreáin, in his inagural report (2005):

> pupils receive almost 1,500 hours of tuition in Irish over a period of 13 years, yet many go through the educational system without attaining basic fluency in the language... teachers should not carry all the blame for the absence of fluency in the language... there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and impartial review of the learning and teaching of Irish. A public debate on this very important issue is essential.

The explanation provided by Harris *et al.* for the general slide in Irish-language standards illustrates the persistence of old trends: inadequacies regarding Irish in officialdom, continuing difficulties with teaching methods and materials, a

reduction in the 'core time' for Irish instruction (now about 3½ hours a week, down from about 5½ a generation ago), declining use of Irish as a medium for other subjects – or even in general conversation – the isolation of Irish within the school setting, teachers' disillusionment and dismay that they continue to shoulder too much of the responsibility for the language, and an increasingly 'hands-off' attitude to Irish on the part of parents Even the relative success of the all-Irish schools (see below) has, it is suggested, added to the woes of the English-medium ones in which most teachers work: the former enrol pupils of higher Irish-language potential, attract more committed and more proficient teachers, and can rely upon much greater support from parents who, themselves, are likely to speak more Irish at home. (The proportion of children attending all-Irish schools rose from about 1% in 1985 to about 5% in 2002. The numbers themselves remain very small, of course, but the trend is an intriguing one.)

As I have just noted, none of these factors is a surprise – the problems listed above have bedevilled Irish-language matters for a very long time, and there is little evidence to suggest that they are on the decline. So, what recommendations are made by Harris and his collaborators? They propose, most generally, a 'long-term exercise in educational and language planning... [to] involve research, development and creative work designed to provide solutions to the challenges presented by the real sociolinguistic situation in which schools operate' (p. 176). They also make a number of more specific recommendations, most of which involve alterations to the methods, timing and intensity of language instruction, or to improved support for teachers. They suggest that attempts should be made to 'bridge that gap between home and school' (p. 180). And they argue for more or less continuous monitoring and programme assessment. These are all, of course, worthy topics – and any recommendation that implies coming more to grips with 'the real sociolinguistic situation' is certainly to be endorsed – but there is no new spark in any of them. They are essentially crippled, as Irish-at-school has always been, by the demands of language teaching and learning *per se*, and the glorious contribution that the classroom is to make to the restoration movement.

If the state were to go all-out for Irish restoration, many things outside the schoolyard would look very different indeed, and many practices within it would become less strained. If schools were able to focus on language teaching, without the shadow of the great national imperative always looming, then – for better or for worse – the learning of Irish at school would be just that. If it remains the general perception, however, that some desirable Irish proficiency can be left to the school, neither implying nor requiring real alteration in the reality of most people's lives, then the tensions within the educational system will obviously remain, too. In this case, none of the recommendations that are made – or, in fairness, *could* be made in the political climate that exists – are going to make very much difference.

All educational initiatives, all reworked curricula, all attempts to teach an Irish that is more like that found in the *Gaeltacht* and less 'bookish' – or less oversimplified, for ease of instruction – all these matters pale before real-life exigencies. The school cannot swim against the linguistic tide flowing outside its gates, and the Irish experience demonstrates how big a mistake it is to place restoration efforts on the shoulders of teachers alone. Mac Aogáin (1990: 30) has bluntly observed that:

> the reason that school Irish doesn't survive very well in everyday life is not because it is school Irish but because there is nothing to do with it. School Irish never stopped anybody who had a worthwhile use for the language.

We could extrapolate from this sentiment, and say that – in the absence of anything 'worthwhile', of any extra-educational rationale for language learning – school programmes, whatever their stripe, are extremely unlikely to achieve any substantial or enduring results.

Official and unofficial support for Irish[6]

There has always been some level of official support for Irish, but from time to time the government has made specific moves to assist in the revival effort. For example, an advisory commission was established in 1958; in its report the broad goodwill towards Irish was noted, and the (eternal) question of how this might be galvanised into something more active was discussed. A broad and important language-attitude study was published in 1975 (see next section). The *Linguistics Institute of Ireland* was established and a 'Buy Irish' campaign was begun. Ó Ciosáin (1988) describes this period as one of transition to a more measured, language-planning approach to Irish (see also Ó Laoire, 2005). Yet, for all of this, there was virtually no change in the lives of ordinary Irish people. It would be easy to say that commissions and white papers provide an immediate and facile way of giving lip service to a cause – easy to say and true, at least in part. But Irish officialdom is in a difficult position. It cannot realistically go all out for Irish and advocate widescale switching to that language; but neither, perhaps, can it renounce the language movement altogether (although some would say this to be the more honest course, in the light of history and the contemporary scene).

Bord na Gaeilge, a body charged with the general promotion of Irish, was established in 1975 (statutorily, 1978); initially at least, progress was slow, with external criticism and internal disruption. Tovey (1988) provides a good overview of

6. In this section, much fine-grained detail of government reports, white papers, and so on, has been omitted.

the first decade of the *Bord*'s work, and her observation of its central difficulty – at a time when most of the community feels passive goodwill towards Irish, and only a small minority favour language activism – is noteworthy:

> The dilemma of Bord na Gaeilge is that it has constantly justified its existence on the grounds of broad public support for Irish and as a result has only been able to act in ways which will not endanger that broad support. To redefine itself as the agency of a minority group, to recognize and attack existing power structures in Irish society, might free its capacities for innovative and decisive action but rob it of much of its rationale as an agency of the state. (p. 67)

In other words, so long as the *Bord* did nothing substantial vis-à-vis the population at large, it could carry on. Following the (1998) Good Friday agreement, in which new linguistic and cultural arrangements linking Northern Ireland and the Republic were outlined, the *Bord*'s activities were taken over by a new body, *Foras na Gaeilge* (established in late 1999). This is one of the two bodies – the other is *Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch* – comprising *An Foras Teanga*, one of the cross-border initiatives. It is too early to say whether this new development represents any real step forward.

A notable recent development is the passage of an *Official Languages Act* in 2003. As Ó hÉallaithe (2004: 183) notes:

> that it should have taken eighty years to provide a legal framework to protect the rights of Irish speakers is a supreme example of state negligence with regard to the Irish language, and raises the legitimate question as to whether a British government would have been guilty of such delay, if it was from Westminster rather than from Dáil Éireann that Ireland was governed.

(He refers here to the recognition of Welsh in the United Kingdom. A language act was passed in Westminster in 1967, and the establishment of a Welsh television channel in 1982 predated the arrival of an Irish-language one in the Republic by fifteen years.)

As Níc Shuibhne (2002) points out, it can be seen as an attempt to translate the symbolic support enshrined in the Irish Constitution into something more mundane and workable. The Act thus aims to provide more services *in* Irish, to encourage bilingualism and to create an overseer and monitor – *an Coimisinéir Teanga*, a Language Commissioner. The problem in all this is that, unlike the provisions of the Canadian legislation (which the *Official Languages Act* mirrors to some extent), the Irish version must rely more upon goodwill than more forceful implementation policies; Ó hÉallaithe (2004: 183) pointedly says that 'it is deliberately designed to be complicated and unwieldy'. Nic Shuibhne (2002: 203) notes, then, that the Commissioner's role will likely involve:

> enforcement more by stealth than force, using the powers of publicity and politics as much as anything... the formal powers attributed to the Commissioner are relatively (though not surprisingly) tepid and are largely connected with facilitating the acquisition by him or her of essential information.

In a similar vein, Ní Bhuacháin (2005) points out that the availability of state services in Irish will depend upon whether or not a particular body has decided to opt in, as it were, to bilingualism – a weaker approach, that is, than one in which *all* official institutions are obliged to provide services in the language of a citizen's choice. Public bodies are to be given time to adapt to new situations, but in some cases the period of adjustment seems absurdly long: it is envisaged, for instance, that all road signs will be bilingual by *2024*! Finally, in what seems a very curious omission indeed, no special legislative attention is given to the *Gaeltacht.* An Act and an Office that are essentially dependent upon 'publicity and politics' for their effects are not, perhaps, making the most propitious beginning: we have seen that 'publicity and politics' have not hitherto supported the Irish language very much.

Other non- or quasi-governmental bodies continue to promote Irish. The Gaelic League is still extant, *Gael Linn* promotes Irish in the business world, and there are several Irish teachers' organisations. Publications in Irish are fairly healthy, both at the magazine and book level. Yet, the great efforts instituted by the Gaelic League in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century have not been repeated, and there seems little likelihood that they will be. Thus, while there are places for the Irish language in ordinary daily life, many are ceremonial, trivial or exist only in tandem with English. Bus scrolls, street signs, bits and pieces of advertisements, labels on the bottom of souvenirs which say 'made in Japan' in Irish, the beginnings and endings of official letters (e.g. the salutation *A chara* – then the text of the letter in English – then, at the end, *Mise, le meas),* are examples here.

The knowledge of Irish once needed for entry into the Civil Service has not been a requirement for a generation now. It was, in any event, a rather nominal entity, and the mid-1970s research report mentioned above pointed out that, even in government sections designated officially as Irish-speaking the majority of employees 'rarely if ever *spoke* Irish... during work hours' (Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research, 1975: 196). Nominal Irish-language qualifications are also required (or have been required) for the police, the army the practice of law, and so on. There have been various state requirements for Irish on television and radio, too. In a rather contentious treatment of Irish, Hindley (1991) made the useful point that minority-language productions in radio, television, literature and the arts might occasionally benefit from being ephemeral. It is of course understandable that, having fought for air-time or print-time for their variety, revivalists

and language activists would try and make every minute and every page count. But over-earnestness can be counter-productive; unremitting didacticism is tedious. One of the reasons why *Raidío na Gaeltachta* has proved successful over the last thirty-five years is its (gradual) willingness to broadcast popular material. As Mr Sleary told Mr Gradgrind, 'people mutht be amuthed, Thquire, thomehow... they can't be alwayth a working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a learning'.

Current trends and research findings

The census of 1851 was the first formal attempt to ascertain language capabilities; however, Hindley (1990) reproduces several earlier estimates which suggest that as much as half the total population was Irish-speaking, perhaps as late as the 1830s. As Ó Cuív (1951) and others have noted, the trend since then has been one of rapid decline; by the end of the nineteenth century, 'in the whole of Ireland only 8 persons in every 1,000 could not speak English, whereas 855 in every 1,000 could not speak Irish' (p. 27; see also FitzGerald, 1984; Ó Murchú, 1993). Soon afterwards, the effects of the revival effort and the activities of the Gaelic League meant that – unlike the underestimation of Irish ability that marked the 1851 returns – twentieth-century censuses began to involve *over*estimation. This has sometimes led to inflated aspirations and accounts of restoration possibilities: modern census data 'may lead unthinking people to believe that great strides are being made in the preservation of our language,' wrote Ó Cuív (p. 30), but the facts are quite otherwise.

It is true that some 800,000 citizens (28%) reported themselves as Irish speakers in the 1971 census, and that this was noted as the highest figure for almost a hundred years (in 1851, the proportion was 23.3%; in 1861, it stood at 24.5%). And, by 1991, almost one-third of the population said that they had some knowledge of Irish: see Maté (1997) for an excellent summary of language-census figures for the century following 1891. It is obvious, however, that the 1861 group were Irish speakers in a way that their modern contemporaries were not. The steady decline in speakers of Irish as a first language, coupled with the post-independence school programme of compulsory Irish has meant a large increase in cursory capabilities.

With all the rhetoric surrounding Irish, comparatively little has been done to investigate matters of attitude, ability and usage; earlier suggestions were that the results of such research would be both unsurprising and, in many nationalist eyes, unpalatable. Indeed, when Macnamara (1966) published a survey of bilingualism and primary education, there was a furore: his basic point was that the amount of time in the school day devoted to Irish necessarily led to lowered English-language competence – for Irish children generally, and for *Gaeltacht* children in particular. While Macnamara's results have since been re-examined in a number of ways, the

fact remains that he was seen to have strayed into restricted areas. It was only two years previously, for example, that Brennan (1964: 271) had argued that:

> if research were to show an undoubted drop in standards of English it would be regrettable; but it would have to be tolerated for the greater good: the production of integrated *Irish* personalities.

The results of the wide-ranging survey that I have already mentioned (Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research, 1975) made clear that most people value Irish as a symbol of national or ethnic identity, of cultural distinctiveness. In 1973, a national sample of about 2,500 people, as well as a special *Gaeltacht* cohort of some 500, supplied information about Irish attitudes, ability and use. Beyond support for the language as an ethnic symbol – something that does not necessarily involve *communicative* aspects of language at all – pessimism about the future of the language, support for official intervention on its behalf, and a general lack of interest in language restoration and promotion efforts were all commonly reported. With regards to linguistic ability, the findings showed, as expected, a decrease in conversational ability (which native speakers possess) and an increase in basic reading and writing skills (which have been emphasised in school Irish). This, it should be mentioned, reveals something of the importance of school language instruction in contexts where larger social support is lacking. For language usage, the findings mirror subjective evaluations: Irish is little used, even in the most likely settings (e.g. in government units designated as Irish-speaking, among teachers, even in the *Gaeltacht*).

The *Linguistics Institute of Ireland* replicated the earlier survey a decade later (i.e. in 1983) and issued a report the following year (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin, 1984). The researchers' decision to repeat, as closely as possible, the original questions is noteworthy and commendable. The findings were broadly similar to those found ten years earlier. Generally low levels of Irish ability and use were unchanged. While favourable attitudes towards Irish as a marker of identity increased somewhat, and while more specific views of Irish at school also seemed rather more positive, there was no change at all in the general assessment that the future of the language was probably not very good. Fewer people believed that government policies for Irish were sufficient or effective. (Ó Riagáin, 1988, provides a detailed assessment of the findings of the 1973 and 1983 surveys; see also Mac Aogáin, 1990, and Ó Riagáin, 1986, 1997, 2001.)

Research shows, then, that the broad restoration of vernacular Irish is impossible. By the time the state was established, the mass of the population had been English-speaking for some generations. Vague or abstract appeals for significant social change, arguments based upon the necessity for linguistic bulwarks to culture and tradition – these are not likely to succeed in such settings. Unless one is a

fanatical revivalist, this is hardly to be wondered at: as in other matters, people are linguistically pragmatic. At the same time, as I have noted, it would be inaccurate to say the the Irish people have turned their backs on the language *tout court* or, indeed, that the restoration movement has been a total failure. Of all the Celtic revival efforts, that for Irish is arguably the most successful.

What the mass of the Irish population seem to have done is to maintain a sense of national or group identity by enshrining it in an English that they have steadily made their own. This is not a popular interpretation among language revivalists, of course. But the procedure is not unique to Ireland, and the argument about the nature of the language-identity linkage – is language an essential pillar of culture? is it important but not essential? how well can a group maintain its sense of distinctiveness after original-language shift has occurred? – is one of the most common in the literature dealing with the vicissitudes of 'small' languages.

Conclusion

It is easy to lay the decline of the Irish at the feet of the English colonists – easy and essentially true: if English had never arrived in the country, its linguistic history would obviously have taken a different path. But the simple answer is not always the complete one. Why did Irish first successfully counter English, and then steadily lose ground? Why didn't things follow the course of, say, Norman French and English in England?

Hadfield (1993) alerts us to the complex social history of post-twelfth-century Ireland in which, following the accession of the Tudors, it becomes impossible to rigidly separate the English and Irish subjects of the crown. From this point, at least, one must take into account the Gaelic Irish, the 'degenerate' or 'old' English – the Anglo-Irish – and the 'new' English who arrived in the sixteenth century, as well as the many interesting intertwinings that threaded through these groups (see also Canny's very useful chapter, 1987; and for a brief contextualised account, Beckett, 1979). De Fréine (1960) has also argued against the simplistic and misleading claim of 700 – or is it 800? – years of oppression; in related vein, he remarks that the idea of some golden age preceding the Norman arrival is equally fanciful (see also O'Byrne, 2007).

Mac Giolla Chríost (2005) is only the most recent commentator to have remarked upon the acquiescence of all sectors of Irish society – not simply the Anglo-Irish – in the anglicisation of the country. While no one denies the depredations of discriminatory legislation, famine and emigration, the view that had they never occurred Irish would not have been displaced is probably a mistaken one. Of course, we could all agree that if English had never crossed over to Ireland in the twelfth century, then Irish might now be secure – but how useful a statement is that?

The idea that an oppressed people must then suffer the further ignominy of being told that they themselves are responsible for their misfortunes is certainly an unpalatable one. Moreover, it suggests a broad and general acquiescence that is usually inaccurate. Durkacz (1983) reminds us that the same people who accepted and participated in language shift were quite capable of fierce resistance in matters of land use and allocation (to cite one example). The question then becomes more nuanced: why persist in one area, risking punishment and reprisal, but not in another? At the very least, such behavioural mosaics suggest the need to consider more finely reactions to social pressures, and patterns of volition.

The argument here was first set out in de Fréine's book (1960), whose English title – *The Great Silence* – does not, as some have mistakenly imagined, refer to the loss of Irish itself, but rather to the fact that most historians had virtually ignored the decline in their treatments of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social history. De Fréine's essential point was that the mass of the Irish people were more or less active contributors to the spread of English for pragmatic reasons brought into being by longstanding historical forces. Other scholars, both before and after de Fréine's book, have held similar views. To say that the Irish people themselves accepted English and increasingly rejected Irish does not necessarily imply that this would have been their choice in other circumstances. As Durkacz (1983: 217) puts it, the attitudes contributing to shift were 'conditioned by the respective histories of the languages. English was seen as the language of commerce, the path to prosperity: Gaelic a lovely but useless museum piece'. Durkacz's context here is the Scottish one, but the sentiment is equally applicable in the Irish case.

Attitudes, however, are not everything – at least not in the world beyond the school gates, the voluntary language society and the scholar's study. The report of the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (1975) showed that Irish usage was more associated with ability than with attitudes, an 'unsurprising relationship [that] does not mean that attitudes are unimportant but... that in certain contexts, attitudes are more likely to assume importance only after some minimal competence has been established' (Edwards, 1977: 57). In the context of massive language shift to English, it might seem unnecessary to bring attitudes into the picture at all. Indeed, most historical changes in language use owe much more to socioeconomic and political exigencies than they do to attitudes. However, to use terms common in the social-psychological literature, one might distinguish between *instrumental* and *integrative* attitudes. For example, a mid-nineteenth century Irishman might have loathed English and what it represented, while at the same time realising the necessity of the language for himself and, more importantly, for his children. Language shift here would arise from a grudgingly instrumental motivation, not from a more favourable and inclusive integrative one (see Edwards, 1983).

To come to grips with the complexities of language shift in Ireland is to understand why so little scholarly and dispassionate investigation into the sociolinguistics of Irish and English has occurred: it inevitably throws up unpalatable facts that language revivalists and often, indeed, the state itself have been unwilling to accept – at least publicly (see the accurate assessment made by Breatnach, 1956, half a century ago). It also explains why those critical of any aspect of Irish revival or Irish teaching have often been unwilling to make public their feelings; and why, when they *have* done so, they have aroused such hostility.

While it is inconceivable that Irish will ever be restored as a vernacular, its survival is evident in certain areas, and school policy will no doubt continue to ensure a widespread, if rather meagre, competence among the general population. There has been a steady if small demand for Irish-medium education and preschool Irish among middle-class urbanites – particularly in Dublin. Ó Laoire (1995) provides some statistics here: over 100 all-Irish schools outside the *Gaeltacht*, together with almost 200 all-Irish playschools. Significant as this may be, it is also important to see that a growth in what has been called 'secondary' bilingualism does not mean the same thing for the language as an increase in native speakers, or in 'primary' bilingualism, would do. Two-thirds of the phrase, 'urban neo-*Gaeltacht*' (as Maguire, 1987 has styled it) reveals the important distinctions here. Ó Laoire's claim (p. 223) that 'the production of secondary bilinguals through the educational system compensates somewhat for the demise in numbers of native speakers in the *Gaeltacht*' is unrealistic in the context of vernacular revival. McCloskey (2001: 46–47) makes the same claim: 'as the *Gaeltacht* communities have declined, the numbers entering this other [i.e. secondary-bilingual] community over the years have been sufficient to keep the overall number of speakers of Irish more or less stable since the beginning of the twentieth century'.

CHAPTER 7

Gaelic in Scotland

Introductory note

As a complement to Irish, we can look at Gaelic in Scotland as an example of an indigenous Celtic language that has *not* acquired its own state – by far the most common setting in which minority languages find themselves. Part of the interest here arises because, despite this important difference, the fortunes of Irish and Gaelic are in fact surprisingly similar. Beyond its status as an indigenous variety, Gaelic also figures as an immigrant minority language in North America, whereas Irish in the diaspora has been much more ephemeral. This means that the Scottish 'case' is also important here because it constitutes the necessary backdrop to this overseas incarnation of the language. 'It seems to me almost axiomatic that any understanding of the role of the Scot in Canada,' Bumsted (1999: 89) has written, 'has to begin with the history of Scotland itself'.

A brief historical introduction

This is hardly the place for a detailed historical assessment, but a brief synopsis is certainly appropriate. Given that the story is essentially a *Highland* one, it is useful to bear in mind that we are dealing as much with a psychological and social construct as with a physical, geographical region. Before the early fourteenth century, the terms 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' were essentially unknown (Barrow, 1973).

Gaelic arrived from Ireland, from about the third century – and Christianity, too, came from there, with Columba landing in Iona in the mid-sixth century. For a time, five languages coexisted in Scotland: Norse varieties and Pictish in the north, British to the south, with 'Anglian' beginning to encroach from below the border and Gaelic coming in from the west. Between the fifth and seventh centuries, the Pictish and British languages were effectively ousted, the Picts and Gaels merged in a Highland union by the middle of the ninth, and Gaelic became predominant throughout Scotland: it was, indeed, the 'Scottish' language.[1] The

1. 'British' in this context signifies something like Welsh or, at least, some representative of the 'Brythonic' branch (the so-called 'P-Celtic', comprising Welsh, Breton and the now-extinct

greatest extent of that predominance occurred in the eleventh century. But by the twelfth, the royal court was moving towards 'Inglis' and soon thereafter the story of Gaelic became 'one of slow but steady attrition' (Thomson, 1994: 228). In the process of replacement by English in the Lowlands, in Highland retreat, and in steady social-status decline, the language was now labelled as 'Irish'. The *Gàidhealtachd* (Gaelic-speaking area) became confined to the north and west. The English language, in its Lowlands varieties, now became 'Scots' or 'Scottis'. In a pattern found elsewhere, Gaelic survived longest at the edges of the mainland, and in the islands.

Withers (1988, 1992) argues that the first formal attempts at the anglicisation of the Highlands can be traced to educational policies of the early seventeenth century.[2] The Statutes of Iona in 1609 obliged the Highland chiefs to educate their heirs in the Lowlands; until then, they would have been instructed in classical Gaelic. An Act of the Privy Council in 1616 reinforced the idea: sons of chiefs who knew only Gaelic would be disinherited; it also states that the school is the most obvious place in which to inculcate the desired virtues. Macleod (1960–1963) suggested that neither the 1609 nor the 1616 legislation had any great impact. Rather, their importance lies in their very existence, as the formal beginnings of a policy that was soon to grow, both officially and unofficially. The Civil War in Scotland exacerbated Lowland fears of 'Irish'-speaking Highland papists. In 1646 the Parliament approved a resolution to establish an English school in every Highland parish; the act was repealed in 1662, but not for lack of desire to see English flourish, and its impetus was renewed in the 1696 'Act for the Settling of Schools'. This was really the first attempt to bring all areas within a national educational system. Practical difficulties, however – particularly the geography and distribution of the Gaelic-speaking population – meant that the one-school-per-parish arrangement was insufficient.

The Highlands remained a distant and little-known area until the seventeenth century. The language and culture of the people, the specifics of their agricultural lifestyle, the social structure of the clan system – all these were essentially foreign, not just to the English but also to the Lowland Scots. As Macaulay noted in his

Cornish). Scots Gaelic is a member of the other, 'Goidelic' branch ('Q-Celtic'), together with Irish and the now-extinct Manx. The distinction highlighted in the labels here – it is not the only one – refers to the replacement of a 'hard c' or 'k' sound in the Goidelic varieties with a 'p' sound in the Brythonic ones: thus, 'four' is *ceathair* and *ceithir* in Irish and Scots Gaelic, respectively, while in Welsh and Cornish it is *pedwar* and *peswar.*

2. The Tudor policies that were so important in the fate of other Celtic varieties paid little attention to the hardly-known Highlands. However, the point that Brennan (2001) has made – that their coercive attitudes towards languages other than English arose from not any great concern with language *per se* but, rather, with the desire to consolidate political power, to bring about social order, to promulgate religious truth and unity, and so on – has a generality that extends well beyond the Tudors and, for that matter, well beyond the Gaelic 'case'; see also Edwards (1985).

History (1876, III: 285), in the colourful manner he often adopted when discussing those for whom he had little sympathy: 'at no remote period, a Macdonald or a Macgregor in his tartan was to a citizen of Edinburgh or Glasgow what an Indian hunter in his war paint is to an inhabitant of Philadelphia or Boston'. Once Highland culture and language were deemed to be no further threat, they were 'discovered' and celebrated, and the Highlanders themselves were seen as noble savages – proud, warlike and, above all, 'authentic'. But before that time, they and their lifestyles were feared and disliked, and the Highlander was often seen as an unambitious, indolent and therefore reluctant participant in organised labour (Richards, 1982). As English more and more became the medium of civility and status, so the image of Gaelic – never a very positive one, to be sure – was increasingly associated with backwardness and barbarism.

From the mid-eighteenth century, there was a gradual realisation of the value of teaching people through the medium of their own language: thus, a Gaelic version of the New Testament appeared in 1767, and a full Bible in 1803. In 1824, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) ordained that children should first learn to read in Gaelic, and soon began to produce textbooks for that purpose. The SSPCK was not the only organisation in the field. The Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools was established in 1811 for the express purpose of teaching Highlanders and Islanders to read the scriptures in Gaelic. This society was formally non-denominational, which of course enhanced its reception in those Catholic areas cool to the ministrations of the SSPCK, whose larger purpose was the uprooting of Catholicism. Other similar organisations were soon set up, including an arm of the Church of Scotland, and their ambitions generally went beyond literacy for religious purposes.

The educational undertakings of the various societies and organisations were largely eclipsed by the formal Education Act of 1872 (see below). As may be imagined, it made no provision for Gaelic. Later additions and amendments made some use of Gaelic possible at school, and endorsed its teaching as one subject among others, but it is of course hardly coincidental that such arrangements emerged only after the language was well in retreat. Durkacz (1977: 27) observes that, among all the organisations that worked in the Highlands in the nineteenth century and that employed Gaelic in their programmes, virtually none hoped for the preservation of the language. It was all a means to an end, in which 'English was the language of the future'.

As we shall see, the Gaels generally mounted little resistance to their increasing anglicisation, but it would be wrong to read into this a broad or general passivity. There was, as Withers (1988: 136) remarks, considerable opposition to 'the lack of Gaelic clergy or the imposition in a Highland parish of a non-Gaelic-speaking catechist or minister'. This is a most important point, for it reveals that people

protested against some things and not others – and this in turn suggests that depictions of blanket oppression are entirely too crude. Withers remakes the point: 'many Highlanders actively sought English through schooling as a means "to get on in life", yet they would petition the General Assembly for Gaelic-speaking clergy and protest at any shortage' (p. 165). Academic assumptions about the suppression of Gaelic *tout court* do not take into sufficient consideration these sorts of variations, variations that suggest that those at the receiving end of social and political policy played a much more active and engaged role – and thought more deeply about possible responses – than some models of language maintenance and shift would have us believe; see also below.

This is not to gainsay the crippling effects of conquest and domination, of the repudiation of language and culture – but only to point out that, within the years of oppression and suppression, some actions evoked protest and violent reaction while others did not. Durkacz (1977: 27) bluntly observed that 'Gaelic speakers were as indifferent to the fate of their language as they were to its educational value'. He does not deny, of course, the importance of the general anti-Gaelic educational bias which 'reinforced the trend to bilingualism in Gaelic-speaking areas'. But this would not in itself have been sufficient, he argues, to carry the thrust on to a new English monolingualism 'unless the Highlanders had wished it so'; see also Macdonald (1997: 48), who notes that the 'Gaels were not so resistant to learning English as the "beating out of the Gaelic" portrayals imply'.

As Withers (1984), Durkacz (1983), Gregor (1980) and many other commentators have noted, the overall picture of Gaelic in Scotland is one of decline. While, as Withers notes, the language was never predominant throughout Scotland as a whole, its gradual demise can be dated to the late fourteenth century, when it began to lose its position as a 'national' and – more importantly, perhaps – a broadly acceptable language (see also MacAulay, 1992). The hardening of the division between Highlands and Lowlands then contributed to the increasing isolation of Gaelic, and its association with a remote, alien and 'troublesome' population. As the Highlands became better known and more travelled, the civilising and anglicising thrust only accelerated the linguistic decline. Reliable data are hard to come by before the mid-nineteenth century, but Withers presents a table that depicts a decline from the 50% of the population who were Gaelic speakers in 1500 to only about 2% five centuries later. From the 1881 census – the first to ask about Gaelic fluency – to that of 1981, the number recorded as Gaelic speakers dropped from about 250,000 to about 85,000.

As background to the more specific comments that follow, consider this recent observation by McLeod (2006b: 12):

> the position of Gaelic in Scotland has become increasingly contradictory. Public support for the language, in terms of government financing, institutional provision and favourable attitudes among the general Scottish population, has never been greater, but the language has continued to weaken in terms of speaker numbers and intensity of use, to the point where it now can hardly be said to function as a community language anywhere in Scotland.

Gaelic in education

By the mid-nineteenth century, there was a 'confusing' number of agencies at work in the Highlands, although, as Macleod (1960–1963) points out, the generality linking their various activities was that the use of Gaelic was the most productive educational approach for Gaelic-speaking children. So it seems strange that, when the national Education Act was passed in 1872, no provision at all was made for Gaelic; indeed, the language was not even mentioned. Well, not so strange, perhaps. After all, the general feeling in the country was strongly in favour of English by that time, and those societies that had endorsed the use of Gaelic were themselves inclined to such use only as a more expeditious route to English: an either-or position, with no conception of Gaelic-English bilingualism or diglossia.

In the mid-1870s, some official provision was made for the assessment – *in* Gaelic – of Gaelic-speaking children's levels of ability, but it 'seems to have immediately become a dead letter', lacking both force and a sufficiency of Gaelic-speaking school inspectors (Macleod, 1960–1963: 321). The report of the Crofting Commission (Napier, 1884) made further and more explicit recommendations for a real place for Gaelic at school, and this was partially responsible for the provision for the language (as a subject) that took effect in 1885. Again, however, this seems to have had little practical impact. The Education Act of 1908 made no headway, nor did the following one (of 1918). The possibility of teaching Gaelic as a subject remained on the books, but the use of the language at the beginning levels remained sporadic and 'as soon as the Gaelic-speaking pupil had acquired a modest acquaintance with English, Gaelic was almost completely discarded' (Macleod, 1960–1963: 324).

Nonetheless, half a century earlier, a well-recognised body had formally stated that:

> viewed politically... the introduction of the English language, and its propagation over all the Highlands, is [sic] a thing to be desired … But although it be at once

> conceded, that the acquisition of the English language would be much for the advantage of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands, yet, until the English shall cease to be a foreign tongue, the obligation to communicate to them the knowledge of the language of their fathers remains untouched and altogether imperative. (Gaelic Schools Society, 1825: 1–2)

Here we see the essential tension: while few considered Gaelic to be of value in and of itself, opinions yet differed as to its use as a purely expeditious medium. Generally, the cultivation of Gaelic as 'a certain though indirect road to promote the study of English' (Withers, 1988: 148) increasingly recommended itself to both religious and civil authorities. They clearly hoped for a rapid transition to English, and not some stable diglossic arrangement, and history has largely brought those hopes to fruition. For several generations, however, a Gaelic-English bilingualism was nurtured, resting upon assessements that held Gaelic to be the language of home, hearth and religion, with English serving in most other domains.

In fact, it soon became necessary – perhaps as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century – for educational organisations to reassure parents, now increasingly unsympathetic to Gaelic literacy, that school programmes would in fact hasten their children's acquisition of English (Withers, 1988). 'There is little evidence,' Withers continues (p. 136), 'of any formal opposition from Gaels to the SSPCK, the establishment of schools or the role of schoolmasters'. There is considerable credence, then, in Chapman's (1978: 12) observation that 'the easy association of the English language... with the kingdom of England and its institutions makes it possible to deny *Scottish* political and moral responsibility for the suppression of Gaelic culture and language' (my italics).

The Clearances

When we think of Highland history from the mid-eighteenth century, the 'clearances' immediately come to mind. The process was set in train much earlier, in fact, as government interventions began to turn the heads of clans into landlords, and their people into tenants. Things accelerated after the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 – with the Disarming Acts of 1716 and 1725, regulations that forbade Highlanders the possession and use of weapons; and it reached its height during the century following 'the 45'.[3] The unintended consequence of these acts was that, by the time of Culloden, clans loyal to the crown were without weapons while their

3. There were two main 'waves' of clearances: from about 1780 to 1820, and 1840–1865. Prebble (1963: 307–310) provides a useful chronology here.

opponents remained well armed; the 1746 Act was thus more strictly enforced in this regard (Hume Brown, 1911; Youngson, 1973).

The Clearances themselves are said to have started, in a small way, on Skye in the 1730s, then in Ross in the 1760s, and then more and more widely spread. The lairds, or their agents, encouraged their tenants to leave and to make way for the much more profitable sheep. It was the chiefs, then, who – co-opted as it were by the central authorities – participated more or less willingly in the clearing of their ancestral lands.[4] The modern notion of 'ethnic cleansing', sometimes invoked for these times, is inappropriate: this was Scotsmen clearing other Scotsmen, in an age and a context considerably less democratic than our own, an age in which brutal treatment of employees and the lower classes generally was very much the norm. It is something of an irony, noted by more than one commentator, that those expatriate Scots who today are most active in the various clan organisations and societies are keen to establish links with, and demonstrate allegiance to, the descendants of those chiefs who had their ancestors evicted.

In any event, there is no doubt that the Clearances constitute a more complicated question than romanticised history has sometimes suggested. As Macdonald (1997: 73) points out, for example, some contemporary historians 'have seen the events of the eighteenth and nineteenth century less in terms of exploitation and oppression, and more as a matter of broader, inescapable, agricultural and economic developments'. Interpretational disputes lead some to think that the views of economic historians are bloodless, and neglect the human toll associated with rural modernisation. Those historians, however, counter with the argument that an inaccurate romanticisation of Highland life before the Clearances has cast these events too pointedly as sinister and cynical betrayals of an essentially noble way of life. The truth, no doubt, lies somewhere between. Macdonald's (1997) account, presented in terms of the various 'players', and embedded in a discussion of conceptions of identity and 'peoplehood' that may or may not have prevailed at the time, is recommended here.

Richards (1973) comments on the myth of the 'tameness' of the Highlanders during the Clearances, noting that the real story involves many incidents, protests and 'agitations' when matters of land and religion were in contention. Later, in his history of the Clearances, he remarks again on the persistence of the inaccurate idea that the general reaction of the people was 'undemonstrative and unresisting' (1985: 389; see also above). In reality, however, 'to suppose the transformation of

4. Necker de Saussure (1822: 115) observed, on the basis of his tour of the Highlands and Islands, that emigration could have been much eased had the 'pecuniary interest' of the chiefs been softened from that 'moral point of view which is the most essential'; they ought to have remembered, he went on, 'the duties which they had contracted towards their ancient vassals'. A few less sheep might have meant a few more people staying on the land.

the Highland way of life was without opposition from those whose lives were being transformed would be to distort seriously the history of the Highlands' (Withers, 1988: 327). As Withers and many others have made clear, there was often opposition wherever sheep and crofters came into conflict. During the famous *bliadhna nan caorach* – 1792, the 'year of the sheep' – this took an organised and collective form, as tenant farmers in the north-eastern Highlands aimed to drive away the incoming animals. Land matters were generally the ones that became the most inflamed, affronting as they did the idea of *dùthchas* – a concept of ancient birthrights and hereditary claims, often seen to have greater force than strictly legalistic notions. Indeed, studies reveal frequent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century protests throughout the Highlands.

Kennedy (1999: 277) has also pointed to indigenous 'resistance to a new economic order which Gaels saw as imposed from the outside for the benefit of others, and which would lead to their ruination'. He has considered, as well, the written record produced by emigrants themselves, and this further supports the idea of resistance to new and unwanted social change, with letters and other documents showing emigrants

> making active, rational choices to emigrate in order to protect their independence... [they] do not depict a helpless people swept out of Scotland against their will, but an active people making a positive decision to start a new life... The mythology of being swept out of Scotland helplessly and against their will to make room for sheep is not a tradition invented by Gaels in the New World but owes its popularity to the dominance of English narratives. (pp. 279, 293)

Kennedy's reference to 'English narratives' here is meant to remind us that Scottish history as written by 'outsiders' often viewed Gaelic resistance as evidence of an obstinate unwillingness to accept that economic and social life was undergoing inevitable change. His treatment does rather gloss over the fact that many of these 'active', 'positive' and 'rational' choices were essentially of Hobson's variety – and that they suggest, at best, the natural inclination to make the best of a bad situation not of one's own choosing – but he is surely right to suggest that the picture of a cowed and inert mass is incorrect. This again modifies the picture often painted by revivalists and language activists, who have typically wished to sustain an oversimplified and unnuanced portrayal of brutal and relentless oppression under which resistance was futile. Kennedy's extended discussion reveals that emigrants often described the advantages of their new life when they wrote to friends and relations still in Scotland. Even the Bard MacLean, the author of that famous poem of emigrant despair, *A' choille ghruamach* ('The gloomy forest'), soon altered his point of view: when friends who had read his lament offered to restore him to Scotland, he refused to leave Nova Scotia.

There is something else, too, that rather damages the image of the helpless Highlanders, swept aside by brutality, forced to recast their lives overseas – but gallantly persevering, maintaining the wellsprings of their culture, and so on. It is simply the reminder that these 'victims' – like other victims, at other times, in other places – have shown little hesitation in persecuting others. The record of brutality against aboriginal groups in Australia and New Zealand, for instance, comes to mind; and the relations between Scots and North American Indians are hardly ones of sweetness and light. Consider here Cowan's (1999) discussion of contemporary accounts of the various ethnic groups that have come to make up Canada, the generally laudatory comments made about the Scots, and this particular observation:

> Why do we hear so much about the Scots and the Irish in Canada, and so little about the English? How is it that the Scots, who were up to their necks in the skullduggery of Empire, have managed to leave the English with the burdensome responsibility of imperialism?

My point here is obviously not to blacken Scottish emigrant reputations, but simply to suggest that these are just as varied – along every social dimension one cares to imagine – as those of any other group.

Modern times

There have of course been periodic accounts of the state and the prospects of Gaelic. Many have been unrealistically optimistic; the little collection edited by Hulbert (1985) is a fine case in point. For recent and more balanced discussion of Gaelic and of attempts to revitalise it, see the collection edited by McLeod (2006a). For the most detailed and up-to-date coverage, undertaken with a comparative focus that involves Ireland as well, see the numerous volumes published in Belfast under the general editorship of Dónall Ó Baoill and John Kirk (for a review of the first dozen of these, see Edwards, 2006). Macdonald (1997: 57–59) makes a very useful tabular presentation of developments in the promotion of Gaelic, from 1950 to 1990: these include the establishment of publications and associations, political and educational initiatives, and the place of the language in the broadcast media.

Gaelic: Numbers and use

Withers and MacKinnon (1983) and MacKinnon (1984, 1990, 1991) provide very useful overviews of the demographics of Gaelic, with maps of historical and contemporary distributions, and tables showing speakers of Gaelic (both monolingual

and bilingual, and with both numbers and percentages) from the turn of the nineteenth century up to the census of 1981. To stay within more or less recent times, we see that there were about 43,700 Gaelic monolinguals in 1891 (1.1% of the overall Scottish population), with another 210,700 returned as bilingual (5.2%). By 1971, there were fewer than 500 Gaelic-only speakers, and about 88,400 (1.7%) bilinguals. The 1981 census showed the latter number to have declined to 82,600, and contained no data for monolinguals. The authors note (p. 113) that 'today Gaelic monolingualism is vestigial, prevalent only among pre-school infants and the oldest women'. Price (1966) gave us a very detailed breakdown of the 1961 census figures, with comparisons across earlier census findings, that remains useful as a guide to current distributions by geographical area – notably, the inner and outer Hebrides and the 'mainland zone'. His analyses led him to two familiar and robust conclusions: the more remote the area, the greater the staying-power of Gaelic; and, towns become anglicised before rural areas do, meaning that the pressure of English spreads out from market town to hinterland. (See also Gordon's, 1951, description of the English 'pale' that develops around the island ports opposite the mainland, and then gradually pushes inland.)

McLeod (1997) notes that the 1991 census showed a further drop (to about 66,000 speakers, or some 1.4%), also reminding readers that any attempts to bolster Gaelic solely in the Highlands and Islands neglects the fact that most speakers now live outwith these areas. The largest concentration is in and around Glasgow, with about 11,000 speakers (see also MacKinnon, 1993; McLeod, 2001). The figures for 2001 show a continuing decline, to about 59,000 Gaelic speakers; see also McLeod (2006b). It is in the Western Isles, where slightly over 60% of the population can still speak Gaelic, that the reduced heartland is now found. As in the Irish *Gaeltacht*, however, generational transmission is faltering there, too, with the census revealing that only about 27% of the youngest children now speak the language. Literacy levels are low. While two-thirds of Gaelic speakers report themselves as able to read the language, and about half say that they can write it, McLeod observes that many 'do not necessarily do so frequently or comfortably' (p. 5).

McLeod (2006b) reminds us, too, that the Scottish census (unlike its Irish equivalent) does not ask respondents about language *use*. We can be quite sure, however, that considerable divides will exist between ability – limited though that may be in itself – and usage, especially regular usage. This is an observation commonly made about minority varieties, of course. Within this, as it were, one typically finds that the declining language becomes more and more restricted in terms of its domains of use. Thus, Thomson (1994: 231) points out that most Gaelic speakers use the language for 'chat and gossip, household purposes, telling jokes and stories, perhaps talking of crops and sheep and fishing... basically for rather local and parochial purposes'.

Code-switching is also frequent, once one moves beyond home and hearth, and some contemporary writers have reproduced this in their work:

> Nothing but the best *anns a'Ghearmailt. Ach tha rudan gu math* dear. Wine, coffee, *tha iad sin* exorbitant. *Tha mo mhac a'handligeadh* computers. *Bha e ann a* New York *ach chuir* employers *a-null a* Germany *e... Tha iad gu math* spotless over there. *Na* gardens *aca cho* clean, *na* pavements as well. I liked it very much. In fact I would go back there. I went by plane, *tha thu tuigsinn*. [I have put the Gaelic in italics here.]

This passage from Mac a'Ghobhainn (1987: 41) is reproduced by Thomson as an example. (The speaker says that there is nothing but the best in Germany, but things are quite dear. His son handles computers, was in New York, but then his employers sent him to Germany, etc.) As is the case elsewhere, writers who are not linguists typically take a negative view of language switching and mixing, seeing in such practices evidence of decline (see MacDonald, 1968). Admittedly, however, the situation in which a robust language (like English) engages in such borrowing is not at all the same as one in which a weaker one (like Gaelic) does, and MacDonald makes the important point that 'unlike the borrowings of earlier times, [words] no longer undergo much phonological adaptation, and are made to conform to Gaelic usage only as regards word-order, initial mutation and the addition of some declensional and conjugational endings' (p. 183).

In overall terms, more than 98% of Scots do not speak Gaelic, and McLeod observes (2006b: 7) that more of them 'would know the French words *petit* and *rouge* than their Gaelic counterparts, *beag* or *dearg*'. Few know much about the history of Gaelic either. McLeod claims that the most common attitude towards Gaelic is of 'mild support', leavened occasionally by rather empty, and often sentimentalised political expressions ('a precious jewel in the heart and soul of Scotland', as the Minister of Gaelic put it in 2000; see p. 10). Smith (1968: 77) has also commented on this general cultural neglect – quite apart from Gaelic per se, other aspects of cultural heritage have been given short educational shrift:

> little use has been made in Scottish education generally of the worthwhile contribution which Gaelic culture might make... the assumption that Gaelic is simply a language and not the expression of a wider culture which belongs to Scotland as a whole and which could be made accessible even to those who do not speak the language.

Media

Cox (1998) observes that Gaelic publishing has generally meant a lot of very short-lived publications, sustained by philanthropy or government grants. 'Gaelic magazines,' he notes (p. 74), 'are few and either have a literary bias or are issued by

Gaelic pressure groups of one kind or another'. There has never been a Gaelic daily (McLeod, 2006b), and the presence of the language in the national press is slight. Some local publications 'take advantage of what easy gain they see as obtainable from the language' (Cox, 1998: 74), by giving themselves Gaelic titles, for instance. An example of this tokenism is found in '*Am Paipear* … whose Gaelic content stops at the title' (p. 79). Cox also mentions Gaelic in the broadcast media, where, he says, 'the reality is different from the hype' (p. 73) in terms of amount, substance and influence. There have, however, been advances here since Cox wrote (see Cormack and Hourigan, 2007; Kirk and Ó Baoill, 2003; MacCaluim, 2002; McLeod, 2001, 2006b), and the language can now be heard regularly on both television and radio. It remains debatable, however, just what this means for the life of the language; see also the following discussions of support and attitudes.

Formal support

The Highland Association (*An Comunn Gàidhealach*) was established in 1891. Its first priority was the annual *Mòd* – a festival modelled on the Welsh *Eisteddfod*. It is a little ironical that this is now officially known as the 'Royal National Mod', and that Queen Elizabeth is its patron. *ACG* has been regularly criticised for emphasising music and the arts, and attempting to steer clear of political matters (see MacDonald, 1968; and recall, by way of comparison, Douglas Hyde's Gaelic League in Ireland). Finlay MacDonald – the author of the childhood memoir, *Crowdie and Cream* (1982) – has also noted that *ACG* has relied upon an 'optimistic method' that hasn't worked. 'Its leaders have zealously observed its purely cultural ambitions', he notes, but in confining itself to the 'rarified [sic] atmosphere of music and literature', it neglected the political, social and economic reasons underpinning the decline of the language. It has flourished most among people who, while sympathetic to Gaelic, were not always speakers. 'As a result, *An Comunn's* following has tended to become dilettante, and the more dilettante the organisation has become the less weight it has carried with the genuine Gaelic population. Only a handful of Western Islanders are members' (pp. 18–19).

McLeod (1997) notes the appointment of the first Minister for Gaelic, but wonders if government interest is really anything more than lip-service, merely a 'verbal declaration', a symbolic gesture – or perhaps, indeed, 'a cruel hoax played... for crassly utilitarian reasons' (citing Ruiz, 1990: 16). Later (2001b), he notes that the government initiatives, such as they are, are increasingly relied upon for funding, and discusses the obvious dangers of 'top-down' approaches as opposed to more desirable grass-roots ones.

Thomson (1994: 231) points to increased public recognition of Gaelic – bilingual cheque-books, signage, letter-heads, and so on – but acknowledges that 'there

is a fair degree of window-dressing' here. One might be a little foolish, then, to imagine a direct link between the increased visibility of the language and a role as a 'living language in families and communities' (McLeod, 2006b: 6).

While Gaelic has never been legally proscribed, it has of course been discouraged. McLeod (2006b; see also MacInnes, 1992) discusses the sole parliamentary effort (in 1981) to give some legislative status to Gaelic, an effort that elicited much negative comment. The reaction occurred along three main lines. First, there was a number of hostile, offensive and patronising comments about Gaelic and its speakers; second, there were the familiar questions about the utility of the language in modern life; third, the fact that Gaelic was not the language of most of the population, nor had it been for a very long time, was mentioned. Unsurprisingly, the effort came to naught. It is noteworthy that McLeod was able to take all his examples of the reactionary comments from Scottish MPs.

McLeod also notes that, unlike in Ireland and Wales, Gaelic in Scotland has not figured prominently in nationalist politics. He cites Ní Annracháin (1991: 44): 'Scots, and not Gaelic, has come to be... widely accepted as the Scottish national alternative to English'. McLeod (2001: 7) says simply that 'the Gaelic language does not serve as a talisman of Scottish national identity'; see also Thomson (1994) and McEwan-Fujita (2003). As he later put it (2006b: 6), 'support for Scottish independence by no means signals a commitment to Gaelic, and speaking Gaelic by no means signals support for Scottish independence'. Similarly, Smith (1994: 5) states that

> in media terms, 'nationalism' remains confined principally to promotion of the Scottish interest and the concurrent defence of indigenous economic mainstays: heavy manufacturing, steel, North Sea oil, Rosyth dockyard, the financial sector, and so on.

It is surely noteworthy that, in a book dealing with the relationship between the press and national identity, Smith makes not one mention of the Gaelic language! (It is, of course, the case that – unlike the Irish situation – Gaelic has never been the sole language of the country.)

Adding to the discussion of the parliamentary efforts and the Gaelic Ministry, McLeod (2001) describes what the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 has meant for Gaelic. This new body, a product of British devolution, was indeed a momentous development, being the first Scottish parliament since the 1707 Union that linked Scotland and England. However, the parliamentary presence of Gaelic is only symbolic, even though there is a 'Gaelic officer' (see below). McLeod reported that, at the time of writing, only 2 of the 129 members of parliament were fluent Gaelic speakers.

MacCaluim and McLeod (2001) provide a critique of the very brief report of the *Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic* (2000) – a body known generally as

the 'Macpherson Committee'. It proclaimed Gaelic a 'national asset' while simultaneously revealing considerable ignorance of the technicalities of language planning. In fairness, the committee had proceeded on the assumption that a parliamentary language act was imminent, a piece of legislation that was in fact delayed for five years, but MacCaluim and McLeod still criticise the report for its brevity, vagueness and ambiguity. By 2006, however, McLeod was able to discuss the new *Gaelic Language Act* (of 2005). For the first time, official status was granted to Gaelic; as well, the language board established in 2003, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, has now been put on a statutory footing. The phrasing is interesting, however: Gaelic is 'an official language of Scotland commanding equal *respect* with the English language' (p. 6 – my italics). McLeod naturally makes the observation that the word has no clear and obvious legal meaning.

Attitudes to Gaelic

In 1968, Smith wrote that while the influence of Gaelic sources can be detected 'here and there' in schoolbooks, the accounts were 'often second-hand and romanticised... the glorious heritage of Gaelic folk-lore, literature, music, art, archaeology and so forth is not only sadly neglected but also largely unknown to the schools and general public at large' (p. 77). Watson had made a similar observation fifty years before: Gaelic literature was much too inaccessible and, where available, was 'too often badly printed and poorly edited' (1914–1916: 77). Beveridge and Turnbull (1989) show that the general historical vision of Scottish evolution, in any event, has depicted a pre-Union (1707) society of violence and feuds, of religious and political dogmatism, of poverty and backwardness, of harsh and barbaric tribalism – a dark and remote society that was ushered into the light of civilisation, into a new age of social and economic order and development: a true enlightenment. This is the ground on which recent generations have built their historical and cultural conceptions, and the background to more pointed assessments of those conceptions.

MacKinnon (1981) found generally favourable attitudes towards Gaelic among a representative sample of the general population. On the basis of a more focussed survey of parents in the Western Isles, Roberts (1991) found the familiar pattern of favourable attitudes towards bilingualism, Gaelic play-groups and Gaelic-medium education coexisting with the reality that Gaelic is no longer the regular language in most households. Commissioned by *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* and the BBC, *Market Research UK* (2003) issued a report on attitudes towards Gaelic, based upon interviews with a thousand people. While 87% reported no knowledge of the language, about two-thirds agreed that it was an important aspect of Scottish life. Most said that they favoured children learning Gaelic if they wished, and more than half

agreed that Gaelic-medium programmes should be expanded. *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* naturally interpreted these findings as very encouraging, although there is of course ample evidence from many quarters that passive goodwill is not always easily translated into something more dynamic.

McLeod (2005) reports on a survey of about 100 fluent Gaelic speakers in Edinburgh – his sampling techique was varied, drawing upon help from several Gaelic organisations, as well as 'word-of-mouth' referrals. Most speakers were quite highly educated. Once again, it was found that while the respondents were clearly supportive of Gaelic and saw it as important, use of the language was minimal. (In the 2001 census, just over 1% of Edinburgh residents reported some Gaelic competence. Only half said that they could speak it, however, and we may safely assume that fluency is rare.) McLeod concludes that 'it is probably not realistic to expect that Edinburgh can become a Gaelic city, or indeed a bilingual city in any meaningful sense' – a rather obvious statement, one would have thought – but he does argue that 'efforts should be made to make "living through Gaelic" possible for those who would wish this' (p. 26). Even this seems naïve, to say the least – and note the use of the word 'should', a very common one in revivalist literature around the world.

Another recent survey has been conducted by MacCaluim (2002), now Gaelic Communications Officer for the Scottish Parliament. Beginning with an excellent summary of the current state of affairs of Gaelic, particularly in terms of educational provisions (and the lack thereof), the author presents the results of his questionnaire enquiries among some 450 students of Gaelic. The findings I (inadequately) summarise here reveal a great deal about the current and likely future fortunes of the language. Most of these language learners were middle-aged or older, with few falling into what MacCaluim called the 'strategically important 16–25 age group' (p. 323). There were disproportionate numbers of well-educated, middle-class and left-leaning informants. Although quite likely to know languages other than English and Gaelic, very few had parents who spoke Gaelic; about one-third did, however, report some grand-parental competence. Still, the implication is that most of MacCaluim's samples were unable to summon up ancestral connections with Gaelic. Most respondents had fairly basic competence in Gaelic – there were more at the 'less advanced end of the Gaelic learning scale due to a high drop-out rate amongst learners and the inadequacies of the Gaelic learning infrastructure' (p. 237). About four in ten agreed that learning Gaelic was essentially a 'hobby' for them. Helping the language to survive was reportedly an important incentive, matters of 'identity' and 'roots' were also frequently endorsed, but more instrumental motives were rather more rarely mentioned. Many reported that they hoped that their children would become fluent speakers – a hopeful sign – but MacCaluim injects the important facts that many do not begin to learn Gaelic

until *after* they have met non-Gaelic-speaking partners, and that evidence from many 'small'-language settings shows that such 'mixed' partnerships typically do not bode well for the smaller variety.

MacCaluim is obliged to note that, overall, things look somewhat bleak:

> Census data suggests [sic] that around 700 new Gaelic speakers would have to be created each year to sustain numbers of Gaelic speakers at their current level. While no detailed research has yet been carried out into the number of fluent Gaelic learners, there can be no doubt that fewer than 700 learners are reaching fluency each year. In fact, the experience of the present author would suggest that there are fewer than 700 fluent learners of the language *in total.* (p. 333)

He nonetheless writes, however, that new government and educational policy could change things 'relatively quickly'. More emphasis should be placed upon extra-educational matters, too: Gaelic broadcasting, revised economic policies, more concerted strategic planning, an awareness of the changing demographics of Gaelic (since most speakers now live outwith the traditional heartlands). At the end, MacCaluim acknowledges that Gaelic remains 'rather peripheral to Scottish life', that it is not a major political issue, that it is 'rarely seen or heard by most Scots' and that the connection between Gaelic and a sense of Scottishness 'tends to be weak, or even non-existent, in the mind of most Scots' (p. 335).

Given what we have learned, over a long time and in many different linguistic settings, it is entirely predictable that attitude surveys reveal broadly favourable, but essentially passive, opinions. McLeod (2006b: 5) writes of support that is 'shallow and vague... and does not necessarily translate into backing for proactive language revitalisation measures'. It is also to be remembered that the continuum marked by revivalist enthusiasm at one end and passive goodwill somewhere in the middle also has a negative pole. In the contemporary Scottish context, it is not difficult to find indications of outright negativity, of contempt, of *mì-rùn mòr nan Gall* – the great ill-will of the Lowlanders.[5] For instance, there is the stereotype of Gaelic speakers as 'rigid, dogmatic, joyless Calvinists who delight in droning psalms and chaining up children's swings on the Sabbath' (p. 25) – this of course neglects the many Catholic speakers of Gaelic. Speakers of 'small' languages can expect to attract amateur and inaccurate sociological and linguistic comment, and humorous descriptions of various sorts – not all of them affectionate by any means. Their communities will regularly and sometimes wilfully be misunderstood and misrepresented. McEwan-Fujita (2003) cites, for instance, various contemporary portrayals of the Hebrides as remote, unsophisticated and completely cut off from the usual amenities – even though she observes that one could have a cappucino

5. This is the famous phrase of Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, the eighteenth-century poet and nationalist.

in Benbecula, or listen to the latest Britney Spears songs, or buy clothes from The Gap, or use a cellphone. Dubious though these blessings of civilisation may be, their presence hardly signifies frontier hardship.

There are, as well, many more direct examples of antipathy towards Gaelic – and, unfortunately, these can easily be found within Scotland itself. I have selected the three examples that follow because their intemperate comments are quite representative of an ill-natured but not inconsiderable segment of the community – but also because each one touches upon important and sensitive issues. Here is Peter Clark (1995), writing in *The Scotsman*:

> It [Gaelic] can be safely ignored and left to be an object of rarified [sic] study... there is nothing in Gaelic that is worth passing on to the rest of mankind. In the history of ideas or of invention Gaeldom is a desert. No philosopher, no insight, not even any joke illuminates us non-Gaels from the body of Gaelic literature... day to day vernacular Gaelic is a low level peasantish sort of debris that we need not be in the least reverential about.

In the same newspaper, Allan Massie (1998) stated that:

> You could seat all Scotland's professed Gaelic-speakers [sic] in the stands at Murrayfield, and not many would have to spill over on to the pitch. If you restricted your invitation to those who habitually use Gaelic as the means of communication within the family home and the circle of their friends, a very much smaller stadium would accommodate them. The noise made by the Gaelic lobby and the attention paid to it are out of proportion to its size... Yet [a letter writer] tells us that 'Gaelic is the closest we have to a national language'. This is preposterous... Gaelic is a minority interest and a minority culture.

And third, here is Alan Brown (2000) in the *Sunday Times*:

> [a] ludicrous scenario … will be played out in the Scottish parliament later this week. The chamber has been kitted out, at what expense we can only begin to imagine, with headphones and other technical apparatus to facilitate the simultaneous translation of Gaelic into English... All this despite the fact that only a smattering of MSPs can speak the language. It really does beggar belief. Picture it: a chamberful of political representatives, every one of whom speaks English... struggling to keep up as a stream of Hebridean twittering assails their senses, all for the sake of a handful of overindulged zealots.

What are the sensitive matters, worthy of discussion, to be found here? Clark suggests that Gaelic is now only of interest to a very restricted community, at best. Massie reinforces the point: this community is indeed tiny – and yet somehow manages to attract unreasonable amounts of public attention. He also refutes the argument that Gaelic is 'the closest we have to a national language'. Brown also refers to the 'overindulged zealots' in the revivalist community, and laments the

unnecessary expense. The important point that can be extracted – with tongs, perhaps – from these highly-charged descriptions is a common one in minority settings: the language has retreated to very minimal levels, its constituency is atypical (but vocal), and further official attention to it is a waste of public resources. (An editorial in the *West Highland Free Press* of 15 September 2000 pointed out, incidentally, that 'there is a golden rule at BBC Scotland. Whenever Gaelic is being discussed in English... it is compulsory to include Alan Brown... [who] has made a cottage industry out of sneering at Gaelic'.)

Gaelic in education today

A century ago, Watson (1914–1916: 81) noted that, while 'it is not actually illegal to teach Gaelic in an elementary school... when done, it is done precariously and on sufferance'. A little later (1921), he agreed that the 1918 Education Act permitted the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas, but wondered if the legislation would be interpreted liberally enough to be of real, practical importance. His concerns have been borne out by subsequent events for, as MacKinnon (1993: 492) and others have pointed out, it took another generation before 'some instrumental acknowledgement' of Gaelic was to be made, before the language was accepted as the medium of instruction at the first primary levels in Gaelic-speaking areas. The policy remains an unenthusiastic one in many quarters, with a transition-to-English underpinning, and no real moves to give Gaelic a regular place in the wider Scottish school system. Thus, Smith (1968: 70–71) writes of 'the underlying apathy towards the language and its lack of prestige', remarks on the teaching of Gaelic in an overly 'academic' manner, as befits a 'dead' language, and even suggests that it 'is still too closely associated with old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago.

Macleod (1960–1963: 325) describes how educational regulations have gradually paid more attention to Gaelic speakers. Rather than making a great many specific recommendations, these have typically encouraged teachers to use the language as and where necessary and, indeed, have given them a relatively free hand: 'teachers should experiment and find out for themselves the extent to which the native language can be made an effective means of instruction'. Nisbet (1963) provides a practical rider here: the use of 'bright, modern texts' for English and 'old, tattered' books for Gaelic has reinforced the unfortunate sense that the latter is a second-rate medium. Adding to the difficulties, Nisbet goes on to say, is a continuing over-emphasis upon the intricacies of grammar and spelling, something that can quickly sour interest in literacy and oral competence. (This last point will surely strike a chord in all those whose recollections of language lessons are of tedious drills in the subjunctive, coupled with a lamentable disregard for vernacular usage.)

Macleod began his article by referring to the 1961 report of the *Scottish Council for Research in Education*, a report that showed the continuing and rapid decline of Gaelic speakers (see also Nisbet, 1963). Nisbet points out, too, that 'in the long run, formal education is ineffective against the powerful force of social pressures' (p. 49) – an insightful assessment, and one still insufficiently appreciated today. The Scottish Council report itself is a model of careful survey work, incidentally. The researchers considered both primary- and secondary-school children, and their questions touched upon such important matters as the incidence of Gaelic-English bilingualism (and some Gaelic monolingualism, too, among the very young), the type and extent of language use at home, school, playground and elsewhere, and the degree of Gaelic fluency.

Murray and Morrison (1984) provided an unusually thorough report on a bilingual education project that took place in primary schools on Lewis, Harris, the Uists, Eriskay and Barra between 1975 and 1981. Their sample involved more than a thousand pupils (more than a quarter, in fact, of all those in the Western Isles) and over fifty teachers. Some 92% of the children had at least some knowledge of Gaelic, and only two of the teachers had none. A bilingual curriculum was developed, the general aim being to ensure that, at the transition from primary to secondary school, the children would be 'as literate and fluent in Gaelic as in English' (p. 161). It is important to note that one of the criteria for choosing the project schools was the presence of Gaelic-speaking teachers, that the range of children's Gaelic competence was very wide, and that the thrust of the project was hampered, both by the presence of non-Gaelic-speaking children in classrooms and by poor integration with the regular school arrangements. Taking these and other factors into consideration, the authors reached conclusions of guarded optimism.

Smith (1968) made the observation – prescient at the time and in the context in which he wrote – that much of the lack of enthusiasm for Gaelic derives from the commonly held view that to foster Gaelic is to deny time to English, that facility in one is purchased at the expense of the other. 'The answer to these fears,' he writes (p. 84), 'is a simple one. They are unfounded... indeed, there is reason to believe that for Gaelic-speaking children literacy in Gaelic could *improve* literacy in English' (my italics). There is a considerable body of psycholinguistic literature that demonstrates the truth of this observation – which would be a much more compelling argument, of course, were the Gaelic-language situation outside the school gates something other than what it has become.

MacKinnon (1993) and others have highlighted a little more specifically the context within those gates. Gaelic-medium pre-school playgroups exist, both within and without Gaelic-speaking areas, bilingual primary education is provided in some island districts, and Gaelic as a primary- and secondary-school subject is available in over a hundred schools. Education through the medium of the

language is typically found in 'units' within regular English-medium schools, with some forty or fifty such 'units'. After reminding us that the priorities of the first Minister for Gaelic (see above) were announced as '*foghlam, foghlam, foghlam*' – 'education, education, education' – McLeod (2001; 2006b; see also *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, 2007) also discusses the sixty Gaelic schools (or 'units') currently providing Gaelic-medium education to about 1,900 primary-school pupils. This common reliance upon Gaelic 'units' means, of course, that most children receiving their education in Gaelic are surrounded by English speakers. In fact, there are very few all-Gaelic primary schools. Furthermore, MacKinnon (1993) is critical of the fact that provisions for Gaelic-medium primary schooling are not matched by secondary ones; MacCaluim (2002) describes here the very low number of students (fewer than 2%) who opt to study Gaelic at secondary level. Part of the difficulty, as he notes, is lack of opportunity, but there is a real chicken-and-egg problem, too: if more students wanted Gaelic, it would be offered more frequently.

There is also the very important fact – familiar in other Celtic contexts, and beyond (in French-immersion settings in Canada, for example) – that even those pupils in Gaelic-medium education programmes make little use of the language outside the classroom (Macdonald, in press). And finally here, McLeod has also pointed to the obvious dangers involved in putting so many revivalist eggs in the educational basket.

CHAPTER 8

Gaelic in Nova Scotia

Introductory note

In this chapter, we turn from Gaelic as a beleaguered indigenous language to its existence as the strongest of all the transplanted Celtic varieties. As we shall see, Gaelic in Canada was once a strong language, although its fortunes eventually came to resemble those of other immigrant languages in the new world. The Nova Scotian setting is the most important for transatlantic Gaelic, along almost any sociological and linguistic dimension one cares to consider. Gaelic has of course had a presence elsewhere in Canada, and in the United States. But it is in Nova Scotia that we find the strongest diaspora, the most vibrant and powerful of the new-world settings. The rapid decline in inter-generational transmission of Gaelic south of the border (Newton, 2001b, 2005) was held at bay in eastern Canada – particularly in Cape Breton Island – largely because of its greater geographical and social isolation. Indeed, many Gaels in the United States 'have bonded with Cape Breton Island as the Gaelic homeland' (Newton, 2005: 27). And finally here, the centrality of the Nova Scotian Gaelic experience is heightened further when we read MacDonald's (1988: 141) assessment: 'the Scottish society of Eastern Nova Scotia remains an almost totally unexamined aspect of Canada's ethnic composition'. He refers, of course, to the 'real' Scottish-Canadian society, not that culturally empty and superficial one that is increasingly promoted for reasons of tourism and money. Although MacDonald overstated his case a little, he is essentially right.

A brief historical introduction

The Clearances in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland meant large-scale migration. As Withers (1998: xiii) notes: 'many did not leave Scotland, preferring, if they had any choice in the matter, to move to the urban Lowlands' (see also Withers, 1991). Soon there were many Gaelic speakers in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other towns and cities. By the end of the nineteenth century, indeed, the *Oban Times* was calling Glasgow the 'capital of the Highlands'. But many went further afield.

The major destinations in the United States were Georgia, New York and North Carolina – and later in industrial centres, notably Detroit (see Newton, 2001a,

2003a, 2003b). Most of the social factors that impinged upon the new arrivals were the same as those that worked upon Gaelic settlers elsewhere: immigrants typically brought with them the idea that their mother tongue was of little status or utility, calls for Gaelic-speaking ministers declined as the church itself began to promote English as the language of prestige and advancement, efforts at revitalisation were weak and sporadic, and so on. After the American Revolution, 'most direct migration was redirected to British North America' (Newton, 2003b: 2), so that most later emigrants to the United States came from or via Canada. In general terms, Newton (2005: 1) remarks, 'large-scale settlement in Canada accelerated after the American Revolution, and continued long after migration to the States declined to the individual level'. This is not strictly true for Scots in general (see the figures tabulated fifty years ago by Berthoff, 1953), but it is accurate so far as Gaelic speakers are concerned. Gaelic in the United States had certainly lost its status as a community language by the mid-nineteenth century, largely because its speakers found themselves in much closer proximity to others than was the case in eastern Canada.

The major settlement of Nova Scotia by Scots began in the 1770s. The emigrants, mostly Highlanders, came voluntarily during the eighteenth century (Bumsted, 1981, 1982; Withers, 1984) – or, at least, as voluntarily as any poor emigrants have ever left their native heath. In fact, landlords were not at all eager to see those early emigrants depart. Campey (2004: 3) thus says that those on the *Hector* (see below) 'left against a backdrop of feverish opposition'. When Dr Johnson toured the Hebrides in 1773, he remarked upon the 'epidemic desire for wandering' and argued that ways should be found to halt it. And it is certainly true that the authorities tried to stop the activities of shipping agents in the 1770s, the fear being of labour shortages in Scotland (and Ireland, for that matter). Newton (2003a) reports that about one-fifth of the Skye population was lured away by *fhir-bhaile* – the middle-class men, the 'tacksmen', who stood between the lairds and their tenants. The agents often painted rosily inaccurate pictures of new-world life: Harper (2006: 32) describes the 'shanty town encased in mud and snow' that greeted settlers to New Brunswick in the mid-nineteenth century. In this real-life version of Martin Chuzzlewit's disastrous move to the malarial settlement of 'Eden', we find the unhappy emigrants rounding upon the agent who had enticed them there with promises of good houses and roads – just as the passengers on the *Hector* had earlier turned on their agent.

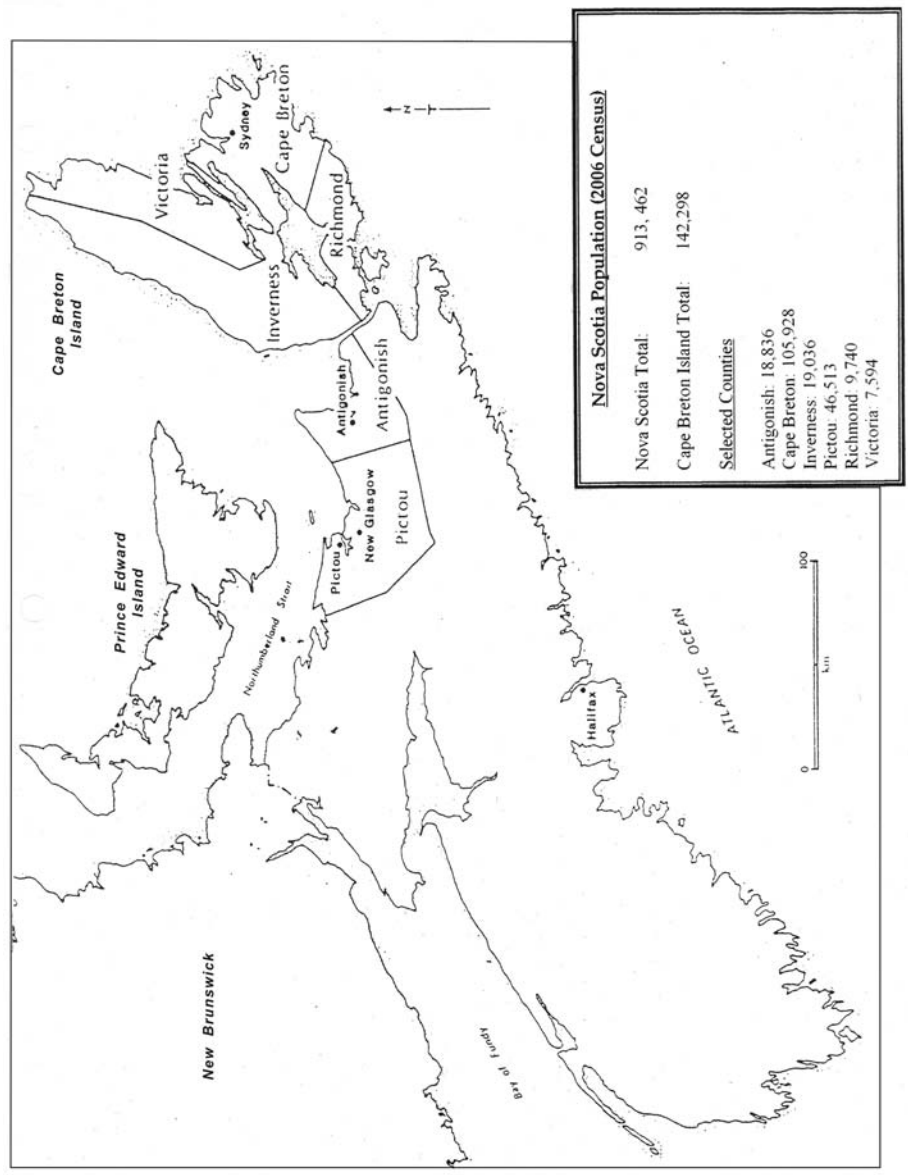
Later emigration was increasingly less likely to have been voluntary – especially during the Clearances – but Campey has argued that, overall, 'most emigration was voluntary and self-financed' (p. xvi) and that moving in groups to British North America might actually have meant less cultural disruption than that experienced by Highlanders who went to the Scottish lowlands. Bumsted (1982: xi) notes that 'the case for landlord heartlessness is much.stronger after 1815 than before'; see also Campbell (1945) and MacLean (1992).

Campbell and MacLean (1974) and MacLean (1978) have suggested that there were four main waves of emigration. Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, a first wave of Highlanders arrived on Prince Edward Island – then part of Nova Scotia, and called St John's Island (Kennedy, 2002). The beginning, for Nova Scotia proper, came with the 1773 voyage of the *Hector*. Leaving Ullapool with some 200 people on board (all but a handful Presbyterian, with a few lowlanders as well), the ship arrived in Pictou after a terrible crossing.[1] Although emigration was checked for a time because of the American Revolution, Prebble (1963) has estimated that 10,000 Highlanders left for Nova Scotia and Upper Canada between 1800 and 1803. (We must bear in mind that accurate figures are generally unavailable for early emigration to North America; Withers, 1984.) Before 1802, it can be noted, there was no direct emigration to Cape Breton Island and most emigrants went first to Pictou and Antigonish counties, and then on to Cape Breton (Millward, 1981). The island's strongest links were always with the western islands of Scotland (Campey, 2004). In 1803 a Passenger Act was passed, intended to ensure better conditions of passage; these, however, hardly improved.

A second wave of emigration occurred between 1803 and 1815. During this period settlement continued in Pictou, Antigonish and, to some extent, western Cape Breton. Emigration declined with the need for men during the Napoleonic wars. In a third wave, it is estimated that about 20,000 Scots left for British North America between 1815 and 1821. The weakened post-Napoleonic economy in Scotland led to the land-owners' perception that emigration and 'clearance' was desirable. Sinclair (1950 / 1951) notes that large-scale emigration to Cape Breton Island began in 1817, and it is this wave that determined the Highland character of the island. Finally, between the late 1830s and the early 1850s, some 15,000 more came to Nova Scotia. By 1830, large numbers of Highlanders had moved east from Pictou towards Cape Breton (Campbell, 1936) and the Scots had become the largest ethnic group in Nova Scotia. British government policy now encouraged emigration and Prebble (1963) observes, for example, that 58,000 left for Canada in 1831 and 66,000 in 1832. As part of this migration, considerable numbers of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders went to western and central Ontario.

Since settlers came in groups – moving from one part of Scotland to one part of Nova Scotia – and often remained relatively isolated from one another, distinctive varieties of Gaelic maintained themselves after emigration. Thus, 'Barra Gaelic was spoken in Cape Breton, Skye Gaelic in Prince Edward Island, and Sutherland Gaelic in Pictou County' (Sinclair, 1950 / 1951: 253).

1. The first substantial group of *Catholic* emigrants to Nova Scotia came in 1791, arriving in Pictou but then moving on to Antigonish and other locations.


Nova Scotia Population (2006 Census)
Nova Scotia Total: 913, 462
Cape Breton Island Total: 142,298
Selected Counties
Antigonish: 18,836
Cape Breton: 105,928
Inverness: 19,036
Pictou: 46,513
Richmond: 9,740
Victoria: 7,594
Cape Breton Island
Prince Edward Island
New Brunswick
Victoria
Sydney
Cape Breton
Inverness
Richmond
Antigonish
Antigonish
New Glasgow
Pictou
Pictou
Northumberland Strait
Halifax
ATLANTIC OCEAN
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For Nova Scotia, overall, most emigration occurred between 1790 and 1830 (MacLeod, 1958). The Scottish influence was strongest in Antigonish, Victoria, Inverness and Cape Breton counties. Cape Breton Island as a whole was settled later and became the firmest bastion of Scottish culture (Dunn, 1953; MacLean, 1978), aided in this by its rurality and physical isolation. Population estimates for the island during the major emigration period are 8,000 (1817), 18,000 (1827) and 38,000 (1838). For those readers unfamiliar with the area, the map here will be of some use. It should be noted that Cape Breton Island, joined to the mainland by a causeway since 1955, is part of the province of Nova Scotia. There is, furthermore, a Cape Breton *county* (one of four on the island).

In the mid-nineteenth century, Gaelic was the third language of Canada, after English and French. In Nova Scotia, there are many historical allusions to its strength. In an 1845 petition to the House of Assembly, for instance, the editor of a Sydney newspaper argued that rural residents of Cape Breton were in need of agricultural manuals translated into Gaelic. Although he was not making any sort of plea for the maintenance of the language itself, his suggestion was not implemented (Kennedy, 2002). In 1890, one Thomas MacInnes (Tòmas Mac Aonghais), a member of the Senate originally from Cape Breton, argued for official-language status for Gaelic. He reminded his colleagues that Gaelic was the most common mother tongue among the founding 'Fathers of Canadian Confederation' in 1867, that there were currently about fifty Irish- or Gaelic-speaking Senators and MPs in Ottawa, and that three-quarters of the total Cape Breton population of 100,000 spoke Gaelic; see also Stephens (1976). Nonetheless, MacInnes's bill was soundly defeated (42 votes to 7) – in part because there was no widespread desire to expand official-language status *tout court*, in part because dissenters were able to argue that Gaelic had yet to be made official in Scotland itself, and in part because of a prejudice – both within and without the Gaelic community – that the language was unsuitable for modern life, for commerce, for scientific advance, and so on.

Another newspaper editor provided further proof of the strength of Gaelic in Cape Breton:

> Nearly all the Gaels belong to one of two churches, the Presbyterian Church or the Roman Catholic Church. The Presbyterians have thirty-nine places of worship in the island, and Gaelic is preached in all of these except six... they have thirty-five appointed ministers, twenty-nine of whom can preach in Gaelic. The Catholics have thirty-seven parishes and all but six have Gaelic. There are forty-nine priests at work, of whom thirty-one are Gaelic speakers. (MacKinnon, 1902: 53)

It should be noted, however, that the presence of Gaelic-speaking clergymen did not always, or at all times, translate into Gaelic services. The language was weakening. In the middle of the nineteenth century complaints were being heard about the younger

generation's lack of interest in the language (Anderson, 1973), but there is also evidence that parents wanted their children to learn English, and punished them for speaking Gaelic (Kelly, 1980; MacInnes, 1977 / 1978; Sinclair, 1950 / 1951).

Neil MacNeil, born in Massachusetts but brought up as a boy in the community to which his ancestors had emigrated in the early nineteenth century, presents a vivid personal picture of the state of Gaelic in rural Cape Breton, *circa* 1900; it is worth quoting at some length:

> They all spoke Gaelic, both in the home and out of it. Some of the older people, especially the women, spoke nothing else. Those who did speak English did so with a strong Gaelic accent and intonation, and with an admixture of Gaelic words. They also used English words in their Gaelic, mostly words for the new things like stoves, matches, wagons and tools for the farm and utensils for the home... [Gaelic] was a grand language in which to curse, for it provided a range of denunciation and damnation that was at once alarming and magnificent... Gaelic was also a grand language in which to pray... All men and women had, of course, a legal name, usually the anglicized form of the family or clan name... but this name was only used on legal documents, for addressing mail, and for voting. Besides this every one, with no exception, had an intimate neighborly name... almost always it was a Gaelic name... (MacNeil, 1948: 17–20)

Out-migration from Cape Breton to other parts of Canada and to the 'Boston States' was also a factor in the decline of Gaelic, as was the decrease in isolation brought about by improvements in road and rail links. Gaelic became a stigmatised variety, associated with backwardness and rurality (Anderson, 1973; Campbell and MacLean, 1974). Campbell (1936) observes that Gaelic was seen as a social liability, particularly for one's children. It became the language of 'toil, hardship and scarcity', while English was the language of 'refinement and culture' (Dunn, 1953: 134). These factors led Campbell and MacLean (1974) to estimate that, after 1830, Gaelic rarely had complete domination within a community.

Modern census figures

MacLean (1978) claimed that Gaelic had decreased by about 50% every ten years since 1921. The estimates of others would seem to bear this out, although precision is difficult since Gaelic was classified with English for census purposes until 1931 (Campbell and MacLean, 1974; see also Mertz, 1989, on the rapid shift to English during the 1930s and 1940s). Also, census data are often not very reliable on language matters. For example, Foster (1983: 183) refers to under-reporting of Gaelic competence in Nova Scotia; he cites a study by MacInnes, who claimed that the denial of competence was an effort to ward off outside intervention from the

'impertinent, the inquisitive and the romantic', and to avoid possible stigmatisation (see also Dorian, 1986). Another difficulty is revealed in Canadian census data which showed, amazingly, that the number of those claiming Gaelic as their mother tongue increased from about 7,500 in 1961 to about 21,400 in 1971. This, as MacKinnon (1979a) has pointed out, is largely due to coding procedures which, for the latter census, included Celtic languages other than Welsh with Gaelic. (See Sarkar's collection, 2003, on issues of importance in the Canadian census; de Vries, 1985, provides a good discussion of methodological problems with census data; see also de Vries, 1990.)

MacLeod (1958) suggests that there were some 30,000 Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton Island in 1931 and – on the basis of a survey he made of Cape Breton Gaelic in 1932 – Campbell (1936) estimated 25,000. He noted, too, that the strongest preserve of the language was in Inverness County, that nearly all the Gaelic speakers were bilingual, and that official census figures (for 1931) may have underestimated the number of speakers because 'many Gaels are said to have been unaware' of the census (p. 129). In 1941 there were about 10,000 speakers (Dunn, 1953), in 1951 about 7,000 (MacLeod, 1958) and, in 1961, about 3,400; these figures all refer to Cape Breton Island. A visiting Scottish scholar estimated in 1985 that about a thousand people could understand Gaelic in Cape Breton, but fewer than a hundred were 'very fluent speakers' (MacLean, 1985).

Census reports of those with Gaelic as their mother tongue reveal the steepness of the decline. In 1931, there were about 32,000 such individuals in Canada, 25,000 of whom lived in Nova Scotia. Ten years later, the Canadian total was about the same, while the number in Nova Scotia had halved, to 12,000. In 1951, the provincial figure was half again (6,800), as it was in 1961 (3,700) and 1971 (1,400). The decline accelerated still more, such that the figure only five years later (1976) was down to 540. Mother-tongue figures, of course, become less and less applicable – indeed, from (at least) the 1971 census tabulations, we know that English was the regular language of the home for nine out of ten Gaelic mother-tongue speakers. In 1996, only 410 Nova Scotians claimed Gaelic as a mother tongue, and it was reported as the home language by 30; in 2001, regular use of Gaelic was reported by 135 respondents, but only 20 of them said it was *the* home variety. The latest available information (from the 2006 census and from Kennedy's analysis, 2002) suggests that there are now about 850 speakers of Gaelic in Canada as a whole, some 500 of whom live in Nova Scotia; of these, about half are mother-tongue speakers of the language. These last two numbers shrink further in importance – if that is possible – when we consider that they include some non-fluent speakers and certainly do not reflect levels of regular daily usage.

The state of Gaelic in Nova Scotia is clearly a very precarious one. Indeed, as MacKinnon (1979a) pointed out a generation ago, Nova Scotia has become the

most English of the mainland provinces, with the 2006 census showing 93% (of the 'single-origin' respondents) as English mother-tongue speakers. There is still an appreciable number who report themselves as being of Scottish origin but, linguistically, the picture is very clear indeed. Obviously, the writing has been on the wall for a long time. Dunn (1953) observed (based upon his studies in the 1940s) that, in Cape Breton as in other minority-language locations, the remaining speakers were characterised by their location and their age: the language was preserved in the country, forgotten in the town, and spoken mainly by older people. The urban-rural distinction, of course, proved important in the fortunes of Gaelic throughout the province: the relatively industrialised Pictou county experienced a rapid decline in Gaelic, and, in Cape Breton, where perhaps 75% of the population still spoke Gaelic at the turn of the twentieth century, only a quarter of those living in the Sydney urban district did so. And the rural heartland of Gaelic was itself in serious decline, as many native speakers were lost to an out-migration (to central Canada and New England) prompted by poor economic prospects at home. Among those remaining, Campbell and MacLean (1974) reported that supporters of Gaelic (whether fluent speakers themselves or not), members of Gaelic societies, and even students of the language were largely middle-aged or older.

Education

The Nova Scotia Education Act of 1841 permitted Gaelic as a medium of instruction, if a school district so desired. The legislation was not, however – as is sometimes believed – directed towards Gaelic alone:

> *Be it enacted*, That any school wherein the ordinary Instruction may be in the French, Gaelic or German Language, in any School District in this Province, shall be entitled to the like portion of the public money as any school wherein the ordinary Instruction may be in the English language.

Indeed, as Kennedy (2002) has pointed out, the lack of any special status for Gaelic in this legislation was reinforced when, in an amendment four years later, *all* languages other than English were included in the bill. In any event, in all but a few cases the Scots made little effort to take advantage of this legislation (Campbell and MacLean, 1974; MacKinnon, 1985b; MacLean, 1994). As already noted, English and not Gaelic was seen as the key to advancement: virtually from the beginning, the Scottish settlers 'carried with them the idea that education was coincident with a knowledge of English' (Campbell, 1936: 130).

When state schools were first established in 1864, no provision was made for Gaelic (Campbell, 1936; MacEachen, 1977) – this despite the fact that official re-

ports sometimes made particular note of the need for teachers who were competent in the language. 'In many cases,' one county inspector pointed out in 1867, 'it is almost indispensable that a teacher should possess a knowledge of Gaelic', because there are 'numerous remote and scattered [areas] where the Gaelic language is almost invariably spoken and the children are utterly unacquainted with English' (Cox, 1994: 23; see also Kennedy, 2002). But other educational officers took a harsher, if more familiar, line. In 1870, another school inspector remarked upon the 'perpetual contest which the teacher has to wage in combatting the peculiarities of idiom and pronunciation consequent on the prevalence of the Gaelic language' (Cox, 1994: 24). Generally, both teachers and parents were either hostile to Gaelic or felt it to be an outdated impediment to children's progress; and, as in other settings, children could be punished for speaking it at school (MacEachen, 1977; Sinclair, 1950 / 1951).

In 1879, legislative representatives of both French- and Gaelic-speaking areas argued for the provision of teachers competent in these languages. Rather than presenting a united front, however, each seemed to find the proposals of the other as threats to their own fortunes. Thus, M. LeBlanc suggested that there were no Gaelic teachers in the province, nor were there likely to be, and he felt that the Gaelic demands only distracted from the legitimate French case. In reply, Mr Morrison claimed that Gaelic was superior to both English and French, each of which sounded ugly – the latter, he said, sounded like stones splashing into a brook. This no doubt strengthened the existing resolve in the House of Assembly, and the government made it clear that no funds would be made available for Gaelic instruction, even though some were quite aware – as some have been elsewhere – that provision of such instruction might actually expedite what was broadly seen as most desirable: a more efficient adoption of English (Anderson, 1973; Cox, 1994; Kennedy, 2002; MacDonell, 1983; Mertz, 1982).

Only in 1921, with the language well in decline, was it admitted as an optional subject if the majority of students demanded it, and if qualified teachers could be found. This came in response to a petition, initiated by a Catholic society but with significant Protestant support, signed by more than 5,000 people and presented to the provincial legislature. Citing the extent of Gaelic use in Nova Scotia, its educational value, its literature and 'its great practical utility', the petitioners requested a place for the language in the curriculum. And their request was granted. However, there was little general demand (Anderson, 1973) and very real difficulties in finding suitable teachers (Dunn, 1953; Cox, 1994). The 'small proviso' concerning qualified teachers was, Kennedy (2002: 80) suggests, 'sufficient to stop the movement in its tracks'.

At the primary and secondary levels, there have been sporadic attempts to find a place for the language in latter years; none, however, has achieved permanence

(see MacDonell, 1983; MacKinnon, 1964). A ten-year school programme in Inverness was initiated in 1972, but discontinued in 1977; while voices were heard protesting at this, no concerted effort was mounted to save the classes, which had been seen by some as of only peripheral importance, and had been more or less completely ignored by most. Both Cox (1994: 35) and Mertz (1982) have argued that the programme was quite ineffectual, providing only a 'superficial smattering' of Gaelic. Cox summarised the current situation: 'Gaelic language programs in Nova Scotia continue to be inadequate at all levels' (p. 36); see also Kennedy's (2002) useful analysis of modern educational efforts, including the irregular attempts to find a place for Gaelic at school – either within or without regular hours. Kennedy notes that the language, dropped from the provincial curriculum in 1964, was formally reinstated in 1969 and its status extended somewhat following the Inverness pilot project. Today, 'any school in Nova Scotia could opt to offer Gaelic courses' (p. 97), and several do, in fact, offer (or have offered) Gaelic Studies programmes or language instruction. Kennedy cites several small success stories at both primary and secondary levels. ('There are presently [sic] more than 25 individuals and institutions, including three universities and several public schools, teaching Gaelic to roughly 800 learners in Nova Scotia'; p. 116.)

Cox (1994) cites MacKinnon as suggesting that education has contributed to a 'lively Gaelic culture' in Nova Scotia – a misguided view, to be sure; and, in any event, MacKinnon himself (1979a) remade an old and familiar point in this connection, when he pointed out that the schoolroom can hardly be expected to turn the tide for Gaelic.

The Gaelic language – and Scottish culture – in Nova Scotia today

Recent efforts in support of Scottish culture have tended, in the eyes of some at least, to be superficial, even distasteful; MacDonell (1981: 657) refers to the 'banalities, the crudities, and the illiteracies' that are now omnipresent. This seems particularly so when culture is allied to efforts aimed at increasing tourism; see Taylor (1986) and MacDonald (1988) on money and the promotion of crass Scottish stereotypes. The romanticism over a Scottish past is now sometimes demonstrated by children in full Highland regalia singing songs they do not understand, and by the alliance between 'Scottishness' and commercial interests. Even where 'Gaelic' events are promoted and staged, there is rarely any place for the language, apart, of course, from a ritual *ceud* (or, more often, *ciad*) *mìle fàilte*. And sometimes even quite popular Celtic celebrations fail to last: an annual Celtic *fèis* was inaugurated in 2005, but it has proved to be a one-off event. As Shaw (1977) aptly

noted, people praise Gaelic in English, and it is perhaps telling that the major Gaelic society in Cape Breton operates in English.

Kennedy (2002) cites one or two egregious examples of the trivialisation of Gaelic culture. In the 1960s a puffin was used in tourism promotion, a 'MacPuffin' dressed in a Highland bonnet and holding a *cromag* (walking-stick). In later brochures, visitors were informed that 'You don't even have to be Scottish to know how to pronounce *ceilidh*. Just say "kaylee" and it's probably all the Gaelic you need to know'. Promotional material for the International Gathering of the Clans in 1979 reflected historical and linguistic ignorance: Kennedy notes that tourists were asked to 'Say *ciamar a tha sibh* to your ain folk', in a strange mix of a real, if now-clichéd, Gaelic phrase with a hint of Lallans. And at the second gathering, in 1987, the disjunction between the Gaelic traditions of the province and the emphases of the festivities was, according to Kennedy, more marked still, 'a sterling example of how manipulated Gaelic cultural images were used to promote Nova Scotia with little or no regard to the validity of what was being sold, or to the impact such a presentation could have on the native culture' (p. 244). Particularly noticeable – but not, perhaps, to every tourist – was the *Lowland* nature of many events: the celebrated performances of the Lothian and Borders Police Pipe Band being a case in point (see also MacDonald, 1988).

Nonetheless, despite these features, there is no doubt that the Scottish ancestry of many in Nova Scotia is a valued aspect of life, even if their ethnicity is now mainly of a symbolic kind (Gans, 1979). Only for a very small number does the Gaelic language – in its ordinary communicative role – figure as an element here. Most public displays (e.g. the annual Highland Games in Antigonish, established in 1861) are events open to all, and some others (a kilted golf tournament, for example) are mere curiosities. However, one should not downplay the significance and endurance of symbolic ethnicity which, attacked by some as merely representing some sort of 'ethnic residue', remains precisely because it is not stigmatising, does not visibly differentiate people in their day-to-day lives and, in minority-majority contact situations, does not interfere with success and advancement in the social mainstream. Thus, language, as a visible ethnic marker, is often a casualty of social interaction but, despite the view expressed by some – by MacDonald (1982) and MacPherson (1985), for example – it is not an essential condition of Scottish ethnic continuity. MacKinnon (1979a) presents some examples of the remaining public use of the Gaelic language and, interestingly, mentions the exaggeration in some circles in Scotland of the Scottishness of Nova Scotia.[2]

2. There is a popular belief in some quarters that Gaelic is spoken more widely in the new world than it is in the old. After having given some lectures in Aberdeen and Edinburgh in 1982, I was interviewed by reporters from the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, and *The Scotsman*.

Scots Gaelic revivalists, as those elsewhere, often paint a romantic picture of present and past which may not always accord with reality. As an example, one can consider the following expression, cited in Campbell and MacLean (1974: 178):

> The one who is taught Gaelic acquires knowledge of wisdom and an understanding of truth and honour which will guide his steps along the paths of righteousness, and will stay with him for the rest of his life. The Gaelic is a powerful, spiritual language; and Gaels who are indifferent to it are slighting their forefathers and kinsmen.

Campbell and MacLean argue that the revivalists were over-optimistic, and that there is no evidence that their efforts had much effect. Gaelic, for these authors, was already in 'the realm of the exotic' (p. 180). In fact, there has been very little organised revivalist sentiment in Nova Scotia and it is hard to deny that what little there *has* been has largely bypassed two essential groups – the now almost non-existent pool of older Gaelic speakers, and young children (Shaw, 1977).

Gaelic revivalism

A feature of the Nova Scotia scene that is also common in others is the presence of small groups of enthusiasts who see their role as galvanising a moribund linguistic situation, and reawakening old impulses that they feel sure still exist among the population at large. They typically issue various sorts of 'strategic plans', but their activities fail to ignite much interest beyond their own membership. A report by the *Gaelic Development Steering Group* (2004) is instructive here. Concerned to produce a 'strategy for a community-based initiative', the report lists some of the antecedent activities. These include conferences on Gaelic language and culture in 1987 and 1989; a report to the Minister of Education in 1997, arguing that the language could become a 'renewable, sustainable source of economic development'; a meeting

One seemed to believe, indeed, that Cape Breton Gaelic was the healthiest branch; another asked me if it were true that the Canadian variety was a 'purer' Gaelic than that spoken in the Highlands and Islands.

As to the Highland Games, one should recall that they are essentially a Victorian and an English invention – an emanation of 'Balmorality' (Blake, 1934). See Jarvie (1991, 2005) for detailed discussion of Highland Games, particularly in the Scottish diaspora. It is undoubtedly true that athletic contests are of ancient vintage in Scotland – and everywhere else – but it also seems to be true that the first formally-organised gathering easily comparable to contemporary games was held by Loch Earn in 1819 – that is, just prior to King George's famous Highland 'jaunt' in 1822, after which the events quickly became popular. Cowan (1999) has some amusing details about early contests, which included lifting 250-pound stones five feet off the ground, the dismembering of live cows, and other such frivolities; see also Webster (1973).

at the Highland Village in Iona in 1999 to discuss policy-making; the formation of the Steering Group itself in 2002, and the subsequent commissioning and production of a lengthy 'impact study' by Kennedy (2002 – a very useful historical and contemporary overview); a series of community meetings and consultations to gain 'feedback' on the Group's draft document; and the 2004 document itself.

Examination of this document (of only 21 pages) suggests that a great deal of effort – think of all those earlier reports, meetings and consultations – has culminated in a 'long-range strategy' that is heavy on enthusiasm but light on practicability. There is a 'twenty-year vision', reflecting the hope that 'our Gaelic language and culture thrive in Nova Scotia. Those things we value are maintained in each community because Gaelic lives' (p. 9). There is a 'mission statement' dedicated to creating the environment in which this vision might become a reality. The specific goals (nine of them) include such obvious and familiar activities as increasing the number of Gaelic speakers, strengthening the existing Gaelic culture, encouraging greater public awareness and appreciation of that culture, and heightening community pride and self-confidence.

It goes without saying that such lists have nothing at all to do with conditions on the ground. The Group is probably aware of the danger of creating such disembodied manifestos, so the report essentially concludes with notes of real action to be taken. It is unsurprising that the first action involves ongoing plans for modifying the structure and operations of the Steering Group itself; that the second details the development of five-year 'action plans' for each of the nine goals (with the identification of 'key initiatives' and 'project teams'); that the third aims to promulgate the Group's intentions in various ways, so as to ensure that all actual and potential 'stakeholders' are kept fully informed; and that the fourth activity is to hold further meetings and 'community forums'. The only results that can be guaranteed to flow from these efforts are more such efforts, and the only people who make them are those who have pre-selected themselves as revivalist 'activists'.

Kennedy (2002: 114) reports on the 1989 conference noted above. His brief description can serve as a summary for many such meetings, and his final sentence here is also very generalisable:

> Rather than a strictly academic gathering, this conference was designed to bring together Gaelic stakeholders from throughout Nova Scotia to discuss the way ahead for the language and culture in the province. The conference used a consensus-building approach for identifying and discussing the most critical topics and at the end produced an interesting report with recommendations for Gaelic development in Nova Scotia entitled 'Options for the 90s'. Unfortunately, the report did not appear to result in any concrete action.

Despite the adoption of modern managerial jargon, these earnest undertakings virtually always fail to deal with the most 'critical topic' of all – the social evolution that has brought the language to its present condition, and the almost infinitesimal possibility of altering the social fabric in ways that would alter that condition. Instead, reports and recommendations are heavy-laden with words like 'ought' and 'must' – essentially declarations of prefernce, wish and hope. Kennedy (2002: 115), for example, writes that 'if Gaelic is to have a future in Nova Scotia, the institutions that have played such a significant role in undermining the culture must now begin providing meaningful support and opportunities'. Such sentiments make at least two mistakes: first, that institutional neglect in the past can be rectified by institutional attention now (this ignores that social evolution I have just alluded to); second, that formal, institutional efforts can make any great headway – in liberal democracies, at any rate – against powerful, but unofficial and unlegislated, social pressures.

Ó Néill (2005a: 359) illustrates the naïveté that typically accompanies expressions of what 'should' or 'must' be done in order to rejuvenate flagging linguistic fortunes. Writing of Gaelic in Scotland, he claims that 'strong leadership, frank dialogue, sensitive and elegant management, creative vision and a strong institutional structure' are required for a remedy for the ills of the language. Turning to Nova Scotia, he discusses the 'high esteem in which Gaelic is held by even the conservative political and economic establishment' (2005b: 369), the passive goodwill towards the language which 'clearly could be activated' (p. 371) and the fact that 'Gaelic is increasingly offered in schools as a regular subject' (p. 373). To the extent to which such sentiments are listened to at all, it seems likely that their only effect is one of confusion. I am coming to the realisation, however, that most of the publications of this sort are best understood as morale-boosting statements directed towards other enthusiasts.

Hope for meaningful government attention also springs eternal, and the latest manifestation here is the provincial *Office for Gaelic Affairs*, established in 2007. Its main stated aim is to have 25,000 fluent speakers of Gaelic by 2027. It is hard to escape the conclusion, however, that government involvement – where it is at all sincere – is essentially motivated by hopes for increased tourism. To that end, we may expect to see more commercial exploitation of a superficial 'Gaelicness', some bilingual street and highway signage, and the like.

It is doubtful if this sort of usage is of any significance in the life of the language – apart, perhaps, from what Cox (1998) has referred to as an 'historical evocation'. And Cox himself (discussing the phenomenon in Scotland) points to problems with this sort of superficiality. First, insufficient care is often taken with matters of spelling, translation and the particularities of local dialect variation; second, 'emblematic' use of the language is generally only tokenism, and is usually

driven by a desire to establish some commercial 'uniqueness'; third, and most importantly, Gaelic-as-symbol:

> is the language of appeasement: it nails Gaelic down, it confines it; it salves a cultural conscience, it meets a cultural need; but then turns to the business at hand, abandoning the Gaelic phrase like a symbol stone, sustaining the isolation, with the inevitable consequence of sidelining the language.[3] (p. 80)

Research findings

There have been very few well-conducted sociological or sociolinguistic studies of Gaelic in Nova Scotia. Campbell (1936) visited Cape Breton Island in 1932 and sent a questionnaire to all clergymen, of various denominations, to discover the number of Gaelic speakers, their distribution and the general condition of the language. He found that almost all of those speaking Gaelic were bilingual. Campbell's crude survey was discussed by Sinclair (1950 / 1951), who revealed some of the questions used; the 'questionnaire' itself (seven extremely general items) is reproduced in Campbell (1990: 32), who goes on to break down his findings by location. Overall, the results revealed that the language was used less and less by children, and was in fairly dramatic decline among older adults. Campbell tended to be optimistic in his assessments. In a letter to the *Revue Celtique* (1934: 162), he stated that he had probably underestimated the extent of Gaelic on Cape Breton Island and in Antigonish county, which he now put at between 35,000 and 40,000 speakers. It is rare, he notes, 'to meet a man of Highland name, of any class, older than 35 years who does not know Gaelic...my own impression is that Scottish Gaelic is actually better known, though not so widely spoken, in Canada than in Scotland' (p. 162). Although Campbell mistakenly observed that the 'proportion of Gaelic speakers does not decrease in the younger age groups' (1936: 69), Sinclair cites him as also stating that 'on the whole it cannot be denied that Gaelic in the Maritimes is a dying language' (pp. 258-259).

A relatively systematic investigation was that of Kenneth MacKinnon. His findings, based upon fieldwork undertaken between 1976 and 1978, are reported in a series of papers (1979a, 1979b, 1982, 1985a, 1985b). They represent the study of two rural Cape Breton communities, one mainly Catholic (99 respondents, 96 of them Catholic), the other largely Protestant (112 respondents, 84 of them Protestant). In the Catholic group, 44 people (44%) claimed Gaelic as their mother tongue; in the Protestant one, 33 (29%) did. Since the 1976 Canadian census had

3. 'Symbol stones' are Pictish monuments, typically pillars or other arrangements of stone. The meaning of many of their markings remains incompletely understood today.

shown only 540 Gaelic speakers for *all* Nova Scotia (see above), MacKinnon (1979b) comments that either his sample overestimates, or else the census underestimates, the incidence of Gaelic speaking.

MacKinnon's major findings of relevance can be easily summarised. First, older people were more fluent in Gaelic than were younger ones, and they spoke it more often; it was thus rare to find native speakers who were less than middle-aged. These speakers, unsurprisingly, exhibited the highest levels of 'language loyalty' (i.e. had the most positive attitudes towards Gaelic). MacKinnon (1979a: 8) reported that there were still a few Gaelic monolinguals left by the mid-1970s, 'a handful of women in their 80s and 90s'. He also observed at this time a few families raising children through the medium of Gaelic; later (1985a), he reports that at the end of the 1970s he found only two cases of active transmission of Gaelic to children. Generally, then, young people were found not to be using Gaelic, with young women the least 'language loyal' of all, and least likely to use it. (MacKinnon, 1993: 528, has described the same pattern in Scotland: 'supportive attitudes and usage of the language are less well represented amongst the younger women'. This, as he points out, has serious implications for transmission of the language to children and, indeed, some of his survey results show quite clearly that Gaelic-speaking parents do not always produce Gaelic-speaking children.) There is something of an irony here: in earlier times, women – less socially and physically mobile, and generally more poorly educated – tended to retain Gaelic longer than did their men. MacIsaac (2006) remarks on this phenomenon, which is only a particular manifestation of the more general linguistic conservatism of women (Edwards, 1994b)

MacKinnon found language loyalty to be minimal, with the highest levels found among those who are most fluent (unsurprisingly), among Catholics, and among the semi-skilled. This last group constitutes what MacKinnon called the ethnic 'core', and largely comprises fishermen, farmers and forestry workers. As well as having the most favourable attitudes towards Gaelic, these people tended to be the leaders in language maintenance (such as existed). Language loyalty correlated with relatively low levels of formal education, and this in turn correlated with the age factor (see above). An important point, and one of continuing interest today, is that MacKinnon found a vague and general 'cultural loyalty' to be more evident than language loyalty alone, and less restricted to a particular group.

On the religious dimension, MacKinnon found Catholics to be slightly more language loyal than Protestants, more fluent and stronger in terms of language maintenance – and, indeed, the *ceilidh*, dancing, story-telling and other cultural practices associated with Gaelic culture have generally been more prevalent and more long-lasting among Catholics (Campbell and MacLean, 1974). This may be due to a closer knit and more embracing culture associated with Catholicism, but MacKinnon also notes that it may reflect the greater geographical isolation of

Catholics in Cape Breton. Gaelic *literacy*, however, was found to be higher among Protestants (particularly Presbyterians). In one assessment, MacKinnon reported a Protestant literacy rate of 52%, and a Catholic one of 17%. This doubtless reflects the former's emphasis upon home bible study and reading: these things have historically been actively *dis*couraged by the Catholic hierarchy (and not just in Nova Scotia, of course). As can be imagined, the English bible was more quickly adopted in Presbyterian quarters than in Catholic ones.

In general, MacKinnon is obliged to point to the tenuous state of the language, observing that it is too late to save Gaelic as a general communicative medium. However, although the language shift is 'acute and advanced', commitment to Gaelic and, more generally, to the Scottish culture is expressed in 'various ways', he has argued (MacKinnon, 1985a: 4). Elsewhere, and relatedly, he suggested (1982: 26) that Gaelic might be enshrined 'as a "cultural" if not a community language'. And a little later (1985a: 18) he asked:

> may there still be a 'cultural' role for Gaelic in the transatlantic diaspora? Probably most Scots Canadians... are of Highland rather than Lowland origin. It is pitiful to see their descendants adopt a Lowland cultural identity – one which was never that of their actual forebears... There is still a very lively and very Gaelic culture in eastern Canada at any rate. This and the language could yet reinforce one another.

It hardly seems necessary to add that, all things considered – both historical and contemporary – such sentiments represent the triumph of hope over experience.

Dembling (1991) conducted a survey of 50 residents in each of two rural Cape Breton communities – one overwhelmingly Catholic, the other largely Presbyterian. About 35% reported some ability to speak Gaelic, with a slightly higher proportion able to understand the language. Age was the most important factor here: only one person younger than 45 claimed any linguistic competence, about a third of those between 45 and 64, and more than 90% of those 65 and older. Literacy rates were lower and, again, capabilities here were best among the elderly. Perhaps the most striking finding is the difference found along religious lines: only 12% of Dembling's Catholic respondents reported any reading ability, while almost half the Protestants had some competence; furthermore:

> No one in the [Catholic] sample recalled having a Gaelic Bible in the home, and only one respondent remembered there being any in the church... In the [Protestant] sample, 76% had a Gaelic Bible in the home and 62% remembered them [sic] being in the church. (p. 28)

This finding supports those of MacKinnon (1982) on Protestant versus Catholic reading practices – and their sometimes dramatic effect on Gaelic literacy.

Unsurprisingly, Dembling reports favourable attitudes towards Gaelic coexisting with very little interest in actually learning it. He cites an observation by Mertz (1982) to the effect that the former is a reflection of the 'positive politicization of Gaelic in recent decades', while the latter suggests a continuation of the older associations made between the language and backwardness, poverty and so on. In fact, however, the explanation is simpler still, and it is one supported by evidence from other 'small'-language settings. Positive but passive goodwill towards a language is essentially a no-cost strategy for proclaiming – and perhaps believing in – one's adherence to an important ethnic 'marker'. And this strategy is made easier when a strong sense of group affiliation has been maintained beyond language shift. This accounts for the continuing sense of 'Irishness', for example, among that very large part of the population that speaks no Irish, and it is clearly operative among Cape Breton Scottish-Canadians as well. Dembling alludes to this process himself.

Dembling also touches upon another important and generalisable point, when he notes that 'my presence as an individual obviously interested in Gaelic may have further encouraged expressions of goodwill towards the language' (p. 57). Indeed it might. There is a very large social-psychological literature that deals with the contexts in which enquiries are made, and the ways in which informants' perceptions of these contexts affect their responses on questionnaires, interviews and other evaluational instruments (see Edwards, 1985, 1989). It is easy to see that the effects of giving what are thought to be 'socially desirable' responses to an interviewer's question may be heightened when the impulse behind those responses is only a passive one in any event; see also Crowne and Marlowe (1964) on 'the approval motive' in social-scientific investigation. The essential matter here, of course, is how best to obtain information from people without suggesting to them that that information is valuable or interesting. The essential problem is that the very act of asking for information tends to signal its importance to respondents. One solution is to deceive people about the object of the enquiry, and another is to observe them when they are led to believe that they are not under observation. Both are unethical. That is why, in many areas of social and emotional relevance, there can be no substitute for intelligent extrapolation from 'real-life' behaviour and practices. In language terms, then, while it is of very great interest to see how people respond to direct or indirect probing, a consideration of what they actually *do* is usually more germane.

A little later, Dembling (1997) reported the results of another survey, this one of 66 Gaelic learners. Dembling's sampling procedure was rather haphazard: he distributed questionnaires to university classes in Antigonish and Sydney, at a weekend immersion retreat, at several festivals, and to individual learners 'whenever [he] came across' them (p. 79). One need not be a statistician to realise that a small total

number, divided into so many different categories, is unlikely to produce robust and generalisable results – and Dembling acknowledges the difficulty here. Respondents varied by age (although Dembling's use of university learners meant that his respondents' average age was about 35, younger than most in other surveys), by Gaelic fluency, by motivation, and so on. A very rough overview would depict Dembling's sample as relatively young, well-educated, slightly 'left' politically, and largely of Scottish descent; this last characteristic is noteworthy: see Newton (below).

The most interesting questions for Dembling's informants, of course, had to do with their motivation for learning the language, and the uses to which they intended to put it. Here, they frequently mentioned the importance of a connection with one's cultural heritage, and had often been stimulated by family members who spoke Gaelic. Almost half of the sample expressed hopes for eventual interactions with native speakers of Gaelic. In response to rather loaded questions, most said that they believed that Gaelic could be 'saved' in the province, and that it was not a 'language of backward country people'. The statement that 'Gaelic is the language of a people rooted in the land, rejecting modern ways' elicited either agreement or uncertainty from half the sample. There is some element of 'greenness' here, and Dembling (p. 114) notes that 'many people view Gaelic culture with the anti-modernism described by McKay (1994), and some consider the Gaels to be the spiritual cousins of First Nations peoples'; see Newton again (below). This, of course, is not a million miles away from the old conception of Highlanders as some species of 'noble savage' or, at least, as some 'real' and uncorrupted people of the earth.

Feeling strongly that 'minority languages everywhere should be preserved and promoted', most of Dembling's informants said that Gaelic was an ancient and beautiful medium, and that some knowledge of it was necessary for a full understanding of Scottish culture in Nova Scotia. This latter perception was strongest among those who were most proficient in the language. Dembling broke down other answers by fluency levels, too. Generally speaking, the more linguistically proficient were also less likely to see kilts, dancing, concerts, choirs and piping as important 'cultural expressions'.

A more recent survey of Gaelic learners is reported by Newton (2005). Although the results are, again, broadly unsurprising to those with any familiarity with minority-language settings – and although Newton makes some interesting and useful comments, some of which also reflect his earlier work in the area – the survey itself, as a sociological investigation, is almost fatally flawed. Newton presents some elementary statistics and a number of verbatim comments derived from a sample of 78 people who responded to a questionnaire that he circulated over the internet, or to paper-copy versions that he distributed at two events in Virginia, or to 'about fifty' other copies that he sent out 'to New Mexico, Toronto and Glengarry' (p. 3). No meaningful generalisations can be derived from such an

olla podrida, a sample extremely varied in provenance, self-selected, and generally unrepresentative of any reasonably definable group – unless, as I have hinted, the findings are not only similar amongst themselves, but also (and much more importantly here) similar to results from other more carefully-conducted investigations. With these reservations in mind, I reproduce here one or two points arising from Newton's survey.

He notes a lack of interest among the younger generation (most of his respondents were middle-aged) but cites Dembling's observation (1997: 107) that 'there are reasons to believe that learning Gaelic is more popular with younger people in Nova Scotia' – a very dubious assertion indeed, and one based solely upon Dembling's university-level sampling of Gaelic learners. Dembling had made the point that the fairly vibrant music scene in Cape Breton, with its Gaelic elements, attracts younger rather than older listeners, but – although it is true, as Dembling and others have discussed, that music and song are often integral elements in Gaelic-language classes (see also Dembling, 2005) – it is a mistake to try and extrapolate from an affection for 'Celtic' music and dance to any active interest in the language. As we shall see, and as Newton's studies reveal, interest in a 'Gaelic revival' is typically interest in heritage, music and dance, but rarely in the altogether more serious and difficult business of language learning. As he rather curiously puts it, 'language learning is not a popular *pastime* among North American youth' (p. 5; my italics). It is easy, he says (pp. 10–11) to 'become intimidated or exhausted by the lexical and grammatical struggle'. Indeed, Gaelic classes often have difficulty retaining their students: initial enthusiasm often tails off rather dramatically. As Dembling (1997: 1) pointed out, 'there is a distinction to be made between a Gaelic revival... and a revival of Gaelic'.

I have noted elsewhere (see Edwards, 1985, for instance) that actual or would-be revivalist leaders are commonly from outside the group or are otherwise atypical of those they wish to represent – having spent considerable time away, for example.[4] Reporting that some of his informants apparently felt that there was too much scholarship and not enough 'fun' in the Gaelic-learning experience, Newton also notes that many 'outsiders' interest themselves in Gaelic – he refers here to learners more than leaders. So it is not surprising that he continues, 'few Gaelic learners place any great weight on kinship, and some do not have any Scottish ancestry at all' (p. 8). Of the various 'motivations for learning Gaelic' that he presented to his sample, 'some or all of my ancestors spoke Gaelic' was at the bottom of a list of eight possibilities. This is all reminiscent of the Gael-for-a-day possibilities that attract many to Highland Games and other such events, of the fact that

4. I have discussed this and other related points in a treatment of the contributions made by intellectuals to revival movements (Edwards, 2005).

anyone can be German during 'Oktoberfest', and so on. A television documentary that depicted the annual 'Grandfather Mountain Highland Games' in North Carolina – described by the narrator as a 'Highland Disneyland' – showed passers-by being enjoined to join 'their own' clan. Further, for just a few dollars, one could join *any* clan (or, indeed, clans). As one southern-accented Scot breathlessly proclaimed, 'If you love it, that's enough'. Lots of people do indeed seem to love it: some 30,000 people now attend this annual two-day event; see Brocklebank (1988), Berthoff (1982) and Ray (2005b) for good general discussions of clans, tartans and games in America.

Dembling (1997: 32) has highlighted this very loose conception of clanship, 'whereby a person with the right surname anywhere in the family tree can, for a small fee, "officially" become a member of a Highland Clan' – but I would think that a visitor to Grandfather Mountain could easily become a Campbell even if her name were Bronowski. Well, in a country of immigrants where ancestry is often mixed, why shouldn't they? Respondents told Newton that they were 'Scots-German-Swede', or 'half German, and the rest is Scottish, Irish, English, French and Cherokee' and, in such circumstances, accuracy is hardly a necessary virtue. Indeed, given an assortment, it is easier to choose: 'my background is such a hodgepodge... however I feel strongest about (and the proudest of) my Scottish and Native American ties' (p. 23)

If many American learners are not of Scottish lineage, what does this mean about any revitalisation? Newton suggests – on an up-beat note – that learners come to 'feel that they form an *intentional community* united not by a common ancestry, but by the common goal of keeping the language and tradition alive' (p. 15; my italics). I like this notion of an *intentional community*, but it can hardly be relied upon to have longlasting significance, especially given the difficulty and rarity of language learning in these circumstances. It is essentially a club, a 'pastime', rather than any sort of serious movement. And where, in all of these exciting developments, are those who *do* have ancestral connections?

Newton reports that the chief inspiration of his informants is a sense of idealism in 'keeping Gaelic alive'. They imagine themselves to be torch-carriers, hoping to 'buck the worldwide trend towards Anglo-Americanization' (as one said; p. 9). Given Dembling's observation (above), it is also worth noting that many of Newton's respondents, too, had 'come to Gaelic after an initial interest in Native America' (p. 11). And, like Dembling's informants, they also hoped to become able to 'speak to native Gaels'; many aspire to visit Cape Breton, where, they imagine, native speakers are to be found. They seem to think that, as one respondent put it, the island 'escaped the fate of Scottish Gaeldom's subordination into a Victorian/British Empire consciousness'. Another argued that Gaelic was 'presented' in a formal way in Scotland, whereas 'in Cape Breton it is more about having fun' (p. 27).

Perhaps I can be forgiven for suggesting here that my own recent investigations (Edwards, 1991a; Edwards, MacInnes and Jackson, 1993) provide, overall, the most useful perspective since MacKinnon's studies in the 1970s. In the 1991 undertaking, I sampled the attitudes of more than 150 people, in three main groups. Drawing upon resources and data bases assembled as part of a longitudinal Gaelic folklore project at St Francis Xavier University, I was able, first of all, to put questions to 50 Gaelic speakers (whose average age was 69 years). The second group was made up of members of the Cape Breton Gaelic Society – not all were Gaelic speakers, but all were actively interested in matters of language and culture; the sample size here was 90, and the mean age was 61 years. The third group comprised 20 adult learners of Gaelic and even here the average age was a not-so-youthful 57 years.

Taken together with previous reports and findings, the results of this study can be conveniently summarised here. *First,* as a language in decline, Gaelic in Nova Scotia is still essentially associated with older speakers in rural areas. Attempts to spark interest among young people – whether through school programmes or not – are sporadic and ephemeral. *Second,* bilingualism in the Nova Scotia Gaelic context has indeed been a temporary way-station on the road to English monolingualism. *Third,* short of unacceptably draconian measures, the decline of Gaelic cannot be halted, since it is the result of large-scale social dynamics involving out-migration, decreasing geographical isolation and the overwhelming socio-economic clout of a powerful linguistic neighbour. *Fourth,* there has always been very little *active* support for Gaelic revival, and what there has been has not emanated primarily from within the dwindling native-speaker group. Dorian (1986: 560) once observed that little language loyalty is often exhibited by native speakers of languages in decline, that there exists a 'lightly regretful pragmatism which gives rise to general protestations about the regrettable loss of the language unaccompanied by efforts to halt that loss'. In this connection, many have noted that a general 'cultural loyalty' is greater than specific language loyalty among Cape Breton Gaelic speakers (e.g. MacKinnon, 1985a). Dorian also mentioned that 'strongly negative' attitudes to declining languages may in fact be found, but this is often not the case at all. There is certainly little evidence of this in the Nova Scotian context. Indeed, the lack of language transmission from one generation to the next is generally 'not related to some personal repudiation of the language but rather to pragmatic assessments of the likely utility of competing varieties' (Edwards, 1985: 51). This presumably relates to that 'regretful pragmatism' noted by Dorian. A *fifth* observation is that those learning Gaelic now are few in number, tend to be middle-aged or older, and can hardly be seen as the vanguard of language revival. Indeed, most of the stated reasons for learning Gaelic involve the symbolic status of the language rather than any realistic instrumental use. *Sixth,* there is

considerable evidence of the continuity of Scottish culture (and cultural stereotypes) in Nova Scotia, and this no longer dependent upon knowledge and use of Gaelic; again, we note cultural loyalty in the absence of its more specific linguistic counterpart.

The second study (Edwards, MacInnes and Jackson, 1993) involved a survey of those attending the 'Iona Highland Village Day' (in Cape Breton) in August 1989. We refer, in the subtitle of our report, to a 'biased sample' – this, in the sense that those present at the festivities were presumably at least interested in the continuation of Gaelic culture in general, and the Gaelic language in particular. Nonetheless, this very limitation suggested a possibility: to gather information, not from a wide or random sample, but rather from a section of the 'interested' group. The fact that not all questionnaires distributed were returned (see below) may heighten this bias. In short, this sort of sample may be of value for some specific purposes.

The fact that a large number of people would be attending the events on Iona Day indicated the appropriateness of a brief questionnaire; we relied upon the goodwill of 'subjects' who were, above all, enjoying a day out. The questionnaire posed six questions dealing with the respondent's age, sex, educational level, occupation, birthplace and current place of residence; two on the Gaelic-language ability of the respondent, and of neighbours and relatives; and four touching the respondent's desire to be able to speak Gaelic, the wish that his/her children could speak it, the level of interest in a stronger Gaelic presence in the community, and an assessment of the extent to which the language was being adequately safeguarded and served in Nova Scotia. About 1,700 one-page questionnaires were distributed and 553 usable responses were evaluated. The average age of our informants was 42 years, three-fifths of the sample was female, and a third were university educated. Occupations ranged widely, but well-represented were teachers, medical, technical and clerical workers, and those in religious life.

Among a group presumably quite enthusiastic, on average, about Gaelic culture and language, we found here very little language competence and considerable evidence of generational loss – but high levels of favourability, which increased with personal fluency and, to a lesser degree, with general exposure to Gaelic. The fact that some three-quarters said that they would like to be able to speak Gaelic should not be over-valued, since so few have taken any steps in this direction. Nonetheless, these sorts of expressions, coupled with those supporting greater Gaelic visibility and protection, can at least be seen as passive goodwill. The findings are of course strongly reminiscent of those reported in many other contexts; the question, here as elsewhere, is the extent to which this passive tolerance might be translated into rather more active commitment.

One of the notable findings of the earlier study (Edwards, 1991a) was that, among students of Gaelic, the reasons given for learning virtually never included

speaking the language. Rather, the link to heritage and cultural traditions was stressed. This suggests that, even within that small group committed enough to want to achieve some linguistic competence, the language – apart of course, from its obvious value for reading – has become largely a symbolic quantity. This in turn illustrates a common phenomenon in minority-language settings: the separation of the communicative and symbolic aspects of language, and the survival of the latter in the absence of the former.

None of this rules out the possibility of a modest resurgence. In Scotland and Ireland today, the most dynamic Gaelic-language settings are often those involving urban, middle-class individuals. However, there are obvious problems if one wishes to extrapolate from this to a broader base, particularly since these voluntary networks – which generally centre upon parent-initiated and/or parent-supported schools – often coexist with a continuing decline in the traditional linguistic heartland. One might say, bluntly, that there is no substitute for 'normal' home transmission. In all likelihood, the future of Gaelic in Nova Scotia will be as a symbolic supporter of a Scottish culture which is, itself, of continuing significance. While some of this is clearly tourism-related (indeed, the provincial government ministry is the 'Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage': the name is surely a telling reflection of bureaucratic thought and direction), there yet remains that sense of ethnic 'groupness' which is the ultimate bedrock, which can survive the loss of any given objective marker, and which – precisely because of its subjective nature – can last for a long time. One of the informants in the earlier study noted that:

> the continuance of Scottish culture [in Nova Scotia] should not be promoted on Gaelic language... for the Scots many other aspects of their culture are near and dear to their hearts. Emphasis on the Gaelic language will, I feel, bring small returns. Studies in Celtic history... are very important [and] music – all this is part of the make-up of our culture. (Edwards 1991a: 290)

On the basis of an attitude survey in the village of Dervaig (Isle of Mull), Dorian (1981) found that both Gaelic and English speakers valued the beauty and expressiveness of Gaelic, and its link to traditional culture (especially music). Perhaps the words of the Gaelic-society member quoted above, coupled with Dorian's observation, suggest future avenues for those concerned with the maintenance and enhancement of Scottish-Canadian heritage. More importantly – if more regrettably in the eyes of some revivalists – perhaps they also suggest something of the present and future status of Gaelic.

CHAPTER 9

Esperanto

Introductory note

This chapter presents the third of my minority-language case studies. Irish is an indigenous variety that came to have its own state – a great rarity indeed. Gaelic represents a 'small' language that is both indigenous (in Scotland) and immigrant (in North America). And Esperanto? It is an altogether different language, neither immigrant nor indigenous, a 'constructed' variety (reasonably enough, the term 'artificial' is seen as pejorative by Esperantists). Two aspects of Esperanto have recommended its inclusion here. First, a constructed variety that is apparently free of the emotional charges that, for good or ill, must inevitably accompany 'natural' languages would certainly seem a useful entity. When, in addition, its construction has been arranged such that there are no grammatical irregularities to impede easy and rapid acquisition, the appeal must only increase. A universal second language, one that puts all speakers on an equal footing regardless of the strength or weakness of their maternal varieties, an instrument to lubricate the wheels of international and cross-cultural communication, a tangible contribution to global harmony – who could ignore these and other attractive qualities? The logic seems unassailable. But history has consigned many earlier constructed languages to oblivion, and it seems unlikely that Esperanto – arguably the most successful of all of them – is going to buck the trend. To consider why this is so is part of my rationale here. The second aspect is related to the first: given the intriguing nature of Esperanto and, indeed, of all its predecessors, why has it received so little scholarly attention? To attempt some slight redress is another reason for writing about it here.

As we shall see, for many both within and without academia, the whole idea of constructed or 'artificial' languages immediately suggests a sort of linguistic lunatic fringe or, at best, profoundly misguided enthusiasm. Esperanto and other languages like it are seen as the fantasy creations of eccentrics and cranks. Jane Edwards (1986: 99) notes that 'to write about the [Esperanto] movement is to invite association with it', and this may be a high-risk strategy for social scientists; many of them, after all, have had to defend their enterprises from disdainful 'real' scientists and from a wider public who are regularly entertained with the bizarre

imaginings of (say) sociologists.[1] So, since my reputation is already shaky enough, I should say at the outset that I am not in any way a devotee of constructed languages. I simply think it is unfortunate that some sort of guilt-by-association should have so seriously discouraged work in an area of both intrinsic and generalisable interest.

A brief historical introduction

The interest in constructed languages is an outgrowth of a very early and pervasive quest for the first human language, the language of Eden. Throughout history there have been repeated attempts to make a case for one variety or another – and very often the search was not unconnected to contemporary considerations. After all, as Rubin (1998) has pointed out, being able to claim some linguistic affinity with the original language would inevitably imply a specially intimate relationship with divinity itself. Little wonder, then, that claim and counter-claim were so important. Particular conceptions of social and political identity would be immeasurably strengthened if their linguistic, cultural and religious components had such an impeccable pedigree. Rubin considers the matter from early Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives.

Did the first language survive in some form or other? Was it Hebrew? Was it the apparently nonsensical utterings, the *glossolalia*, of Pentecost? Could we recapture it, either literally or by analogy, by inventing a new language whose symbols, unlike the words of existing languages, actually depict in some logical fashion the things they represent? These were some of the questions that intrigued the pioneers of language-making – like Athanasius Kircher in the seventeenth century, for example (Cornelius, 1965). Like most of his clerical contemporaries, Kircher argued for Hebrew as the original *lingua humana* and, like some of them, he felt that certain of Noah's descendants had continued to use this divine tongue, even after the great confusion of Babel (the second great human 'fall'). Of course, it was realised that, even if Hebrew had in fact been the language of Eden, the contemporary varieties of it must have lost that essential 'character' that allowed the perfect fit between words and things that is described in the bible.

Hebrew was not the only language in the running, however. In 1569, Jan van Gorp (Goropius) published an argument that Flemish was a direct descendant of the divine language. Many of his contemporaries laughed him to scorn, but Goropius did manage to find some disciples, and not only in the low countries. In 1636, the physician and antiquary, Ole Worm (Wormius) suggested Danish as the chosen

1. Jane Edwards is not related to me; she is, however, a friend and colleague.

language, and there were supporters for Swedish, Polish, Basque, Hungarian, Breton (and other Celtic varieties), German and Chinese (Gera, 2003; Katz, 1981). Eco (1993) reminds us that these bizarre suggestions – even when clearly satirical in nature – were not entirely unrelated to political developments and aspirations. A case in point is found in a treatise by Louis le Laboureur (1667), whose explicit aim was to proclaim the superiority of French: he cited an argument that held that God spoke Spanish to Adam, the Devil spoke Italian, and Adam and Eve subsequently apologised to God – in French. Max Müller (1862) reported the Persian view: Adam and Eve spoke Persian, the snake spoke Arabic, and Gabriel spoke Turkish. And so on.

Such wild surmises were of course derided by important thinkers of the time. Vico, for instance, wrote of 'opinions so uncertain, inept, frivolous, pretentious or ridiculous, and so numerous, that we need not relate them' (1725: 430). Eco cites a letter written by Leibniz in 1699 in which he too ridicules those wishing to 'draw out everything from their own language' (p. 100), and in which he observes that if the Turks and Tartars became as learned as Europeans, they would argue that *their* languages were the mother tongues of all. Eco also points out, however, that Leibniz himself was not above making a nationalistic language claim, supporting a 'Celto-Scythian' hypothesis that would embrace German (see also Walker, 1972). Müller (1862: 129) lamented that so much 'real learning and ingenuity was wasted on this question during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' (p. 129). In 1786, William ('Oriental') Jones gave the famous address to the Asiatick Society of Bengal (published twelve years later) in which he suggested affinities among Sanskrit, Greek and Latin – strongly reinforcing existing but incomplete ideas about an Indo-European family of languages. The antiquity and dominance of Sanskrit in such a family had the effect of finally displacing Hebrew as any reasonable contender for the *lingua humana* – although, as Olender (1989) points out, it did not go without a struggle, and nineteenth-century disquisitions on the place of the 'Aryan' family and the newly-styled 'Semitic' varieties continued for some time. A common accommodation held that the two could have been 'twins at the origin of civilization... in the same or neighboring cradles' (pp. 15, 152).

In his preface to Pellerey's book on *le lingue perfette*, Eco (1992: viii) situates the growth of interest in a perfect language in a Europe in which the influence of the *ecumene imperiale* was beginning to wane, and where Latin was beginning to give way to the new 'vulgar' tongues. Here we find, he says

> la ricerca di una lingua perfetta (in tutte le sue variazoni: lingua adamica, lingua madre, lingua filosofica, lingua universale, lingua internazionale veicolare)...

Before the appearance of the *volgari europei*, Eco continues, there had of course been some attention given to earlier languages, but as carriers of wisdom that

might be usefully recaptured. Only when European languages were themselves burgeoning was the story of Babel and the *confusio linguarum* really considered. Soon there were searches both backwards and forwards: backwards, in the hope of somehow regaining *l'ebraico adamico* or some other variety in which words and things were in harmony; or forwards, with the construction of some new language, a human contrivance to replicate the pre-Babel universality. Language projects multiplied, with a number of specific motivations:

> per convertire gli infedeli; per unificare le tre grande religioni monoteistiche, per sanare il dissidio tra catolici e protestanti, per facilitare la comunicazione delle scoperte scientifiche... per incrementare i commerci, per unificare le tassonomie scientifiche... (p. ix).

Eco's list is more or less appropriate for all of the European language schemes. The religious impulse that he puts first has always, indeed, been paramount – even if in latter days a narrowly denominational thrust has given way to more generally spiritual impulses. Facilitating scientific research, discovery and classification was of course a central factor for the early projects, and commercial motives were not absent, either. One can also see in Eco's list just how closely the forces behind language systems were allied to general scientific and social advance; the story of constructed languages is part of the history of ideas.[2]

Before Esperanto

The intertwining of religion with language has been an historical constant, either in efforts towards some pure or primitive 'rediscovery', or in attempts to remedy what has been lost with an invented variety. The early language inventors had religious agendas – almost all of them were scientist-theologians, and they hoped that their work would both testify to, and enhance, God's work. Among other things, it was felt that a more perfect 'universal' or 'philosophical' language could be a tool for proselytism, a logical medium whose influence would inevitably draw people together under some common umbrella of belief. Thomas Sprat, a theologian and the first to write a history of the Royal Society, pointed out that many 'active, industrious, inquisitive minds... weary of the Relicks of Antiquity and satiated with Religious Disputes... [had a] universal desire and appetite after knowledge' (1667: 152).

The religious connection may be less apparent as we approach our own time, with the invention of auxiliary languages like Volapük (in 1880), or Esperanto

2. Indeed, the intertwining of the search for the 'perfect' language, the growing concern for man-made varieties, and the wider history of scientific progress is the underlying thread for the more extensive treatment of this theme that I alluded to at the beginning of Chapter 4.

(1887), or Ido (1907). But even though less immediately obvious than in its seventeenth-century vehicles, it is still present. Almost all of the modern language-makers hoped to create much more than an aid to cross-cultural understanding, much more than a practical communicative instrument. They also felt that a common second language could make a significant contribution to brotherhood, to global harmony and peace, to the replacement of swords by ploughshares.

In 1987, the centenary of Esperanto was marked by an 'Esperanto Week' and an 'Esperanto Day'. In Britain, a Sussex vineyard produced an Esperanto wine, and a new rose (*Esperanto Jubilee*) made its appearance. There was a ceremony at the world's only Esperanto pub – the *Green Star* in Stoke, which is at the corner of Esperanto Way. In fact, the Lord Mayor of Stoke persuaded Bass Worthington to put the Esperanto translation (*La Verda Stelo*) on the side of the pub. In July, an Esperanto production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* was to be part of a cultural festival. And so on – or, rather, *kaj tiel plu*.[3] This all suggests a state of health – but just what *is* the current status of Esperanto and other 'constructed' varieties?

I mentioned at the outset that there has been little contemporary scholarly interest in 'artificial', or 'constructed', or 'planned', or 'international' languages – linguists have tended to see them as well-intended but pointless anomalies, and their proponents as naïve and often crankish enthusiasts. But there have been some notable exceptions. The great Danish grammarian and Anglicist, Otto Jespersen, was intrigued by the idea of a universal and easily learned auxiliary language and was involved in the development of Ido – an offshoot of Esperanto (*ido* means 'offspring', or 'successor' in Esperanto). Later, he produced his own language, which he called Novial: the derivation here is *nov* (new) + *ial* (the initial letters of *international*, *auxiliari* and *lingue*). His monograph on Novial appeared in 1928, but he was writing about constructed languages as early as 1885; full details of can be found in Jespersen (1995). It is noteworthy that, despite thinking and writing about constructed languages for seven decades, Jespersen says that his interests here

> led to what many may regard as the greatest folly of my life … the colossal amount of labour I devoted to this cause … These countless hours might perhaps have been better spent on other tasks. And yet I realize that through this work I have been made aware of many features of 'natural' languages that might otherwise not have caught my eye. At any rate … I have never abandoned the idea of both the desirability and the feasibility of devising a simple and adequately copious language for use between nations … It would have been prudent of me... to have remained a distant observer of how the work for an international language was developing, having declared my support for the idea in general. (Jespersen, 1995: 147–148)

3. Most of the information here is taken from an unsigned notice in the February 1987 edition of *Language Monthly*. A web search for the Stoke pub will supply a picture or two.

I apologise for the lengthy quotation, but we have here – in microcosm as it were – something of the tensions that have always surrounded constructed languages. On the one hand, there is an obvious appeal to the idea of promoting a simple auxiliary variety that could be a universal second language – logical, functional, no threat to the maternal tongue: a dependable maid-of-all-work who never interferes above stairs. It is hard to see how the global sharing of a common medium could be anything but beneficial. On the other hand, though, there is – as Jespersen states – a sense of wasted time, a feeling that any investment in an auxiliary language represents a lapse of rationality. Jespersen does throw himself a life-belt of sorts when he mentions the heightened sensitivity to the features of 'natural' languages that the study of constructed ones has fostered. However, although there are indeed scholarly benefits associated with the study of constructed languages and their speakers, this is not quite the practice that Jespersen is attempting to justify here: the devotion of significant amounts of time to the *development* of these languages. I don't think, in fact, that Jespersen really convinces himself; his concluding remarks about the more prudent course of action ring true.

In his book on Novial, Jespersen makes brief reference to the context of his work, and it is clear that the idea of a constructed language is not a new one. Moreover, the further back in history one goes, the more illustrious the names associated with constructed languages and their promise. Few would consider Comenius, Descartes, Bacon and Leibniz scholarly cranks. One of the most elaborate of the early schemes was that of John Wilkins, and it is worth some attention here, since it represents the idea of *universality* pushed much farther than even the most fervent modern Esperantist would recommend; it represents, in fact, a logical apotheosis of the impulse for rationality, simplicity and order. And, despite the very real shortcomings of Wilkins's creation – more apparent now, perhaps, than they once were – we also see in it, in highly magnified form, the limitations associated with appeals to logic alone. To return to Jespersen's tensions, we can better understand why something can be at once so sensible and so lifeless. Or, perhaps, we can more fully flesh out conceptions of what *is* sensible.

John Wilkins's *Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* was published in 1668; the word 'philosophical' is is meant to signify 'logical' or 'scientific'. While some early language makers had a sort of Esperanto in mind, Wilkins and other like him had rather grander ideas. They relied (apparently, at least) upon no existing variety, their constructions were of whole cloth, they tried to link an ordered knowledge of the natural world with a universal grammar to describe it – and they always ended up with a system that, whether or not it was

'logical', was terribly unwieldy and completely impractical. A general example illustrates the idea:

> the lexical item 'dog' would consist of enough sounds and letters to describe the constituent features of <dog> – there would be symbols indicating features such as <animal>, <four-legged>, <carnivorous>, and so forth. On the other hand, the word for <cat> would consist of many of the symbols used for <dog> except for symbols signifying <feline> or <fur-bearing>... the words not only have referents but they also define the meaning of their referents by the composition and arrangement of their constituent elements. (Subbiondo, 1996: 1013; see also Dolezal, 1987)

And here is something a little more specific. In Wilkins's language, the beginning words of the Lord's Prayer ('Our father') are rendered as 'Hαι coba'. The explanation is as follows:

> (Hαι): this dipthong (αι) is assigned to signifie the first person plural amongst the pronouns, *viz.* 'we'. The letter 'h' prefixed to it, doth denote that pronoun to be used possessively, *viz.* 'our'. (Coba): 'Co' doth denote the genus of *oeconomical relation*; the letter 'b' signifying the first difference under that genus, which is relation of consanguinity; the vowel 'a' the second species, which is *direct ascending*; namely, 'parent'. (p. 422)

There have been hundreds of universal-language schemes over the centuries, few of them quite as rigorous – or as unworkable – as that of Wilkins. Slaughter (1982) and Knowlson (1975) provide useful overviews, and the latter gives us an excellent checklist of some 65 language projects published between 1627 and 1808. Most recent surveys of universal languages have focussed, however, upon the century following Zamenhof's publication of Esperanto (in 1887): this is both expedient and reasonable, given that broadly similar aims have always animated language makers. Although the rhetoric surrounding constructed languages has often been very grandiose indeed, and although – as I have already stressed – advances in global harmony have often been hoped for, the most basic aim has been to produce some neutral and auxiliary variety that would facilitate cross-cultural communication. Although some constructions have been modified or simplified versions of existing 'natural' languages, the desire for neutrality has typically left powerful existing languages out of the lists: they are always tinged by history, and often by imperialism. The way has always been *theoretically* clear for a constructed language to fill what is perceived as a yawning and receptive gap.

Among the more successful languages of the century or so are *Volapiik* (created by Johann Schleyer in 1880), *Latino Sine Flexione* (Giuseppe Peano, 1903), *Ido* (Louis de Beaufront, 1907), *Occidental* (Edgar de Wahl, 1922), and *Novial* (Otto Jespersen, 1928). Perhaps to this list one should also add Charles Ogden's *Basic English* (1930). Details of these and other attempts may be found in Large (1985). None of them,

however, proved as successful as *Esperanto,* published by Ludwik Zamenhof in 1887. It has, without doubt, stood the test of time better than any of the others.

The birth of Esperanto

Ludwik Łazarz Zamenhof, a Polish oculist, had already interested himself in constructed languages – particularly Schleyer's *Volapük* – when he published his own scheme on *Lingvo Internacia* under the pseudonym of Dr Esperanto ('the hoping one'). Encouraged by the initial response, Zamenhof published a second book on the language in the same year (1887); further publications followed and the first international congress on Esperanto took place in Boulogne in 1905.

The core of Esperanto lies in its famous 'sixteen rules' of grammar, and the guiding force behind these is simplicity and regularity. All nouns, for example, end in *o* (nominative case), with an *n* added for the accusative; the definite article *la* serves for all cases, numbers and sexes; all adjectives end in *a;* verb forms are the same, regardless of person or number; accent is always on the penultimate syllable; and so forth.

It is clear that Zamenhof, like virtually all other makers and supporters of constructed languages, hoped that Esperanto would provide more than a universal second language to supplement, but not supplant, mother tongues. He believed it could also contribute greatly to some 'trans-national identity', an apt goal for one who observed that 'if the nationalism of the strong is ignoble, the nationalism of the weak is imprudent' (Lieberman, 1979: 96). To dilute the former and to obviate the latter must have seemed a pressing need when Zamenhof said this – in 1914.[4] What better way to make a contribution to peace than to try and ensure that everyone could speak to everyone else? The underlying assumption, of course, is that the lack of immediate and fluent communication among peoples makes conflict more likely, but the assumption is at least debatable. Harris (1970: 804) considers it a misconception, noting that 'most social conflicts and not a few wars are fought within a common language'.

While most modern proponents of constructed languages are, at best, cautiously optimistic about the contribution of a common auxiliary to global har-

4. Calvet (1987) has pointed out that – just as the idea of a *lingua universalis* initially appealed most strongly when Latin was in decline as the European *lingua franca* – so this appeal resurfaced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when French was losing ground in that role and when war served to stoke what he calls the 'pacifist illusion' associated with Esperanto. Indeed, Monnerot-Dumaine (1960) was able to enumerate 145 language projects between 1880 and the 1914–18 war; this is about 40 per cent of all that he lists over four centuries; similarly, Porset (1979) lists about 170 such projects for the nineteenth century.

mony, the motivations that animated Zamenhof's earliest efforts remain potent. In 1925, John Flugel – a psychologist, psycho-analyst and Esperantist – looked more deeply into these motivations; his lengthy article was republished in 1934, as one chapter in a book devoted to 'men and their motives'. Unless one is a psycho-analyst oneself, most of Flugel's conjectures will seem bizarre and far-fetched, but some of his observations are worthwhile. Noting, for instance, that an international auxiliary language is not an unreasonable proposition 'from the linguistic point of view' (p. 160), Flugel suggests that social-psychological attention to its various features might repay the effort, a point with which I agree completely. He also emphasises, throughout his article, that it is the 'enthusiastic and quasi-religious character' of the Esperanto movement that is its most striking psychological characteristic; for Zamenhof, the language 'was never more than a stepping-stone to the higher goal of human love that should transcend the barriers of language, race and nationality' (p. 161). Flugel states matters a little too bluntly here, particularly in the light of constructed-language developments and aspirations since Zamenhof's day, but if he has exaggerated the animating spirit he has not invented it.

Flugel also illustrates the combative features that characterise all constructed-language movements – again, perfectly predictable once one accepts them as 'quasi-religious' in tenor, as ideologies to which allegiances are pledged, and not as dispassionate systems of purely instrumental intent. As an Esperantist himself, Flugel saw the worst excesses and the greatest fissiparous tendencies among languages other than Esperanto, notably Volapük and Ido. As can be imagined, however, Esperanto has not been free of either war or civil conflict. Michéa (1983: 29) mentions the 'luttes... incessants conflits intérieurs', and George Orwell (1944a) noted that 'for sheer dirtiness of fighting, the feud between the inventors of various of the international languages would take a lot of beating'. His observation arose from the endless debates engaged in by prominent Esperantists.

The scope of Esperanto

There has always been a debate about the breadth and popularity of Esperanto, about the number of its speakers: estimates for the latter range from several hundred thousand to fifteen million. One problem is that most of the information comes either from committed apologists or from detractors – and neither group has always had a sterling reputation for accuracy. Jouko Lindstedt, a Slavicist at the University of Helsinki, suggests the following distribution: ten million people have studied Esperanto, one million have a 'passive' competence, one hundred thousand have 'active' ability, ten thousand are fluent, and there are a thousand *native*

speakers. Any scheme that neatly drops by ten-fold at each juncture is clearly a very rough guide, but it is probably not too far out.[5] In any event, Esperanto is more popular than any other constructed language now or in the past; indeed, Pool and Grofman (1989: 146) suggest that the Esperanto 'community' is 'about a thousand times the size of all other planned languages combined' (p. 146).

Piron (1989b) argues for about three million worldwide users of Esperanto, of whom about three-quarters are European. He is particularly interested in the professions and occupations of Esperantists, and in age and sex distributions. It would seem that teachers constitute the largest single category (on the order of 20% to 25%), joined near the top of the list by clerical workers and some professionals (engineers, draughtsmen and technicians of various stripes figure prominently here). It is worth noting that, although the typical Esperantist may be somewhat better educated than the population at large (see also Forster, 1982), we find few adherents from the highest educational levels (university teachers, lawyers, judges, legislative officials, and so on). I shall return to this point.

Piron reported more male than female Esperantists, although the number of teachers and clerical workers in the movement suggests a strong female presence. He found substantial numbers of both students and retired people, and his most interesting age-related assessment is that Esperantists live longer than others, a finding he relates to the largely white-collar Esperantist community and to 'the well-known fact that people with a serious commitment of a social or intellectual nature tend to live longer than people who lack that kind of interest' (p. 167). One can easily think of other reasons, of course, why mental workers last longer than physical labourers!

Since most fluent and committed speakers of Esperanto are members of local or international bodies, attempts have been made to extrapolate from organisational statistics, but we can still only speculate about the number of Esperantists who are *not* affiliated with formal bodies. We do know, however, that the Esperanto movement has experienced two major growth periods, each terminated by a world war, and that more recently there appears to be a levelling off. Within this, as it were, there have been different patterns of rise and decline in various parts of the world. Esperanto almost succeeded in obtaining official recognition from the League of Nations in the 1920s, and it has had some success with UNESCO: in 1954, that organisation noted that the universalist goals of Esperanto accorded with its own, a position reiterated more recently. In 1966 the Rotterdam-based

5. I say this, having read a considerable number of other estimates – from very different quarters – and having spoken to Esperantists who are linguists, sociologists and educators. The Lindstedt estimate (and some others) can be consulted on-line, at the Wikipedia entry for Esperanto; see also Lindstedt's Finnish website, www.helsinki.fi/~jslindst. On numbers of users – of Esperanto, and several other constructed varieties – see also Sakaguchi (1989) and Fiedler (2006).

Universal Esperanto Association proposed to the United Nations that it should encourage and support language, but the suggestion was not adopted.

In the contemporary climate of concern (in some quarters) about the spread and penetration of English around the world, there has been some resurgence of interest in promoting Esperanto. Phillipson (2003: 177) has endorsed, for instance, the 'acceptance of Esperanto as the sole pivot language for interpretation' in the European Union (see also Gobbo, 2005a, 2005b). Many others, too, have seen the European Union – with an increasing number of languages to be catered for, spiralling translation costs, creaking linguistic bureaucracies, and so on – as a perfect context in which a 'neutral' auxiliary might serve well. Gubbins (2002) provides some data on putative levels of support for Esperanto among members of the European Parliament, and these seem very encouraging in some cases. Apparently fourteen out of fifteen Irish MEPs, for instance, said that they thought the use of Esperanto could ease European language problems. Nonetheless, the chances of any active support are very slim, and Gubbins cautions the constructed-language community not to seize upon dubious statistics, or to imagine that any real corners have been turned. So, when surveying some actual Union discussions on language issues, Gubbins comments that 'the Esperanto option appears a non-starter' (p. 54).

Proponents of constructed languages are of course interested in the educational dissemination of their variety, and Large (1985) estimated that Esperanto was taught in some 600 schools and 30 universities around the world; see also Tonkin (1977). At the time, non-European educational support was particularly strong in China: Parks (1984) reported 120,000 students in 32 universities learning Esperanto, with numerous local organisations, 30 publications, and regular broadcasts by Radio Beijing on its world service. To place this into some perspective, it should be noted that China had about ten million students learning English – a figure which has dramatically increased over the last two decades. University students apart, virtually all Chinese children now study English at school, while the fortunes of Esperanto have waned considerably. Despite earlier strengths, the *People's Daily* (2004) online service reported a drop in Chinese Esperantists, from 400,000 in the early 1980s to only about 10,000 now: of these, some 10% are fluent, another 40% have very basic competence, while the remaining half are restricted to a few sentences. These changes are dramatic, to say the least, but they illustrate something of the vicissitudes that Esperanto and, indeed, all constructed varieties are prey to.

Popular perceptions of Esperanto

Why has a logical, potentially useful and easy-to-learn language not proved more appealing? What has held constructed varieties back? To answer these sorts of questions, we have to consider public perceptions.

Many people have not heard of Esperanto at all, of course (see also below) and, of those who have, a rough distinction seems to be between those who – while not necessarily unsympathetic to the idea of constructed languages – nevertheless perceive fatal flaws, and those who see Esperantists (and other constructed-language apologists) as unrealistic and faddish enthusiasts. A 'general-public' reaction is probably captured well in a piece by Gubbins (1997), who looked at the use of the word 'Esperanto' in seven well-known European newspapers (Swiss, French, German, British and Israeli). Over a period of eighteen months, Gubbins found 66 references; most (58%) were metaphoric, suggesting that the word itself is quite widely known. In discussing Latin at Lourdes, for example, *The Guardian* referred to it as 'a sort of spiritual Esperanto'; a band was described as using a type of 'musical Esperanto'. Gubbins found that most of these metaphoric usages were positive or neutral in tone – the word has come to mean 'universality'. The other 42% of these journalistic references related to the language *per se* – and here, most were negative in tone, focussing upon the artificiality of Esperanto, the lack of any necessity for it, and the strangeness of those interested in such a fringe matter. Other typical media references lie along a continuum from 'dismissive humor [to] sneering disgust' (as Okrent, 2006, has recently observed).

Views from within the cultural and academic communities include the linguist Karl Vossler's observation that a constructed variety 'can serve only language cranks and language maniacs who want to speak merely for the sake of speaking' (1932: 167). The philosopher, Rudolf Carnap, had somewhat more positive attitudes towards both the structure and the utility of Esperanto (see Schilpp, 1963). Ivor Richards, a co-apostle with Charles Ogden of *Basic English*, stated that 'the immediate incentive which would make enough people learn and use one [a constructed language] is lacking... the feeling that you are contributing in your small way to an idealistic but doubtful future is an inadequate motive' (1943: 11); this is an important point, to which I shall return. Although he was himself interested in the simplification of English, Bernard Shaw wrote to a correspondent that 'toothpicks like universal language cannot move the world... damn your Esperanto' (Tauber, 1965: 158). Just as the fully-formed Athena emerged from the forehead of Zeus, so Esperanto has often been seen as the already mature offspring of Zamenhof. It has had neither ancestry nor childhood. Thus, H. L. Mencken (1963: 772) noted that 'the trouble with all the "universal" languages... is that the juices of life are simply not in them'. Among constructed languages, George Steiner (1992: 212)

noted, 'only Esperanto continues to lead a somewhat Utopian, vestigial existence', suffering from that absence of a 'natural semantics of remembrance which disqualifies artificial languages from any but trivial or ad hoc usage' (p. 494).

If constructed varieties are seen as historically deprived, it is also the case that their own structures and vocabularies are considered too spartan ('sterile', as the journalist James Fallows noted, 1986) to carry any substantial range of emotional or allusive meaning: they are insufficiently subtle. Jespersen (1928: 27) said that an auxiliary variety 'must necessarily remain an intellectual language, a language for the brain, not for the heart... there will always be something dry and prosaic about it'.

Beyond the more formal rebuttals that I shall turn to later, counter-arguments have noted the existence of an original literature in Esperanto, which now even has its own erotica. Piron (1989a) tells us that there is Esperanto slang and vulgarity. Jane Edwards (1986: 105) said that 'humor is used a great deal in Esperanto, to a great extent in joking manipulation of the language', going on to add that there are Esperanto songs satirising the movement itself (see also Lagrange, 1983). The quality of such developments may be debated, but they hardly suggest linguistic sterility.

In a paper presented in 1930, but published only in 1983, Tolkien said that he was 'a believer in an "artificial" language … I particularly like Esperanto, not least because it is the creation ultimately of one man' (p. 198). In a revised draft, however, he changed his mind a little, as his son relates (p. 219). The important point here, however – and it touches some of the other objections, too – is that the 'one-man' conception is not entirely fair. Zamenhof was clear from the earliest days that he had merely launched a ship that others would then steer; there would be some formal guidance via an Esperanto Academy, but the official hand was not meant to rest too heavily on linguistic evolution. He published his *Fundamento de Esperanto* in 1905 – it summarised what he took to be the central tenets of Esperanto grammar and vocabulary, and it was adopted at the famous Boulogne conference as the official guide to the language – but even here, Zamenhof specifically suggested that an 'official dictionary' was not yet possible, and that periodic additions to the *Fundamento* would no doubt be required.

Scholarly objections and rebuttals

Eco (1993) mentions two particular objections to Esperanto and other constructed languages, but these are not particularly compelling. First, he notes that 'if the *a priori* languages [varieties constructed from whole cloth, like that of John Wilkins] were too philosophical, their *a posteriori* successors [languages, like Esperanto, that build upon existing varieties] are not philosophical enough' (p. 330). The first part is right: I have already implied how unwieldy the early constructions

were, how they now strike us as a curious combination of the pedantic and the bizarre. But the second half of Eco's point is a little too blunt. In defence of it, he says that that modern varieties 'can make no claim to having identified and artificially reorganized a content-system'. The proponents of Esperanto and its counterparts, however, might say that this is like criticising a painting for not being a sculpture: the intent was not to duplicate or update the 'philosophical' aspects of earlier systems but, rather, to produce easy-to-learn alternatives to existing 'natural' varieties with all their political baggage and linguistic irregularities. The intent was translation rather than creation. There *is*, of course, something to Eco's point, and it resides in exactly the sorts of comments made by critics like Steiner and Tolkien: modern constructed languages are deficient in that they have no myths, no ancestral literature, no history, and so on. Again, Esperantists would argue that such things are in the process of becoming – that original literary works are now written in the language, that it will, in time, have a body of culture and tradition, and so on. But even if we discounted this argument as an example of Dr Johnson's triumph of hope over experience, we might still be satisfied with a powerful instrumental tool with which to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. That is, the lack of a 'philosophical' base might vitiate the more grandiose claims made by constructed-language enthusiasts, but a more spartan medium, content with achieving more mundane goals, might still be workable.

A second difficulty raised by Eco has to do with linguistic relativity, with the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, with the notion that the language one speaks constrains one's thinking capabilities (see Carroll, 1972; Edwards, 1989). Benjamin Whorf had essentially argued, in the 1930s, that language determines thought: our own particular language influences the ways in which we see the world and, hence, our cognitive functioning. But this 'strong' hypothesis has been rejected by linguists and psychologists, who point to the possibility of translating from one language to another, and to the fact that we are all capable of expanding and adjusting our language (our vocabulary, to give one specific example) if circumstances require. There is no good evidence, in short, to suggest a 'tight' connection between the given language one speaks and one's basic thought processes. There *is* evidence, however, for the shaping influence of environment upon language. If, for instance, your group lives in a desert, and has done so for a long time, it is quite possible that your colour vocabulary will not range over the nuances of green and red reflected in the language of speakers in more temperate climatic zones. But if your community suddenly finds oil under the sands, becomes very rich, and moves *en masse* to the Riviera, then you can be sure that lexical expansion will soon follow. So, if a 'strong' or 'tight' Whorfianism is unlikely, a 'weaker' variety makes perfect sense. It is plausible to accept that there is a circular and mutually reinforcing relationship between language and the environment (both physical and

socio-cultural), and the upshot will be that language influences our customary or habitual ways of thinking. There is a connection here, but it is a 'loose' one reflecting habitual ways of looking at the world, not cognitively inevitable ones. With regard to this Whorfian 'relativity', Eco's point is that those who create, learn and speak auxiliary languages have ignored that fact that 'different languages present the world in different ways, sometimes mutually incommensurable', taking for granted that 'synonymous expressions exist from language to language'. The problem, then, is the acceptance of 'the idea that there is a content-system which is the same for all languages' (p. 330). There is a little confusion here, however, between the uniqueness of 'content-systems' and translatability. Few would deny that different languages cut up the world in different ways; and, bearing in mind the 'weaker' version of Whorfianism, it is then reasonable to assume that – in *some* ways, but certainly not all – the thoughts of different groups of people, in different parts of the world, tend to run along slightly different lines.

A useful summary of common objections to Esperanto (and, by extension, to other constructed varieties) was presented by Piron (1982a, 1984a). Some of these are as follows (Piron's rebuttals are in parentheses):

- Esperanto exists only through the agitations of its claimants, and only dreamers can see Esperanto as a true world language. (There are many regular speakers of Esperanto.)
- Esperanto is just an invention of one man. (Esperanto lives and *develops*; Zamenhof only laid the groundwork.)
- Esperanto is based upon Indo-European roots, and is thus not likely to achieve global success. (Esperanto is *not* just for Europeans and is not particularly Indo-European in its structure.)
- Esperanto is a rigid, inflexible language. (In fact, it has great flexibility, has been used to create poetry, etc.)
- Esperanto doesn't reflect a culture. (Esperanto *does* have a culture, a community).
- Esperanto will gradually suppress old traditions, cultures and languages. (It is an auxiliary, not a replacement.)
- World problems cannot be solved through a universal language. (Esperanto claims only to help, not to resolve conflict completely.)

Beyond this, Piron (see also 1982b, 1984b) discusses the fear of change, unfavourable media coverage, and sociopolitical pressure as reasons for the relative failure of Esperanto. Taken together, his arguments deal essentially with the confusion of facts and values, and the 'psychological resistance' to Esperanto. This is a theme also taken up by Janton (1983), who notes and attempts to counter the criticisms that Esperanto is without official sanction, lacks a cultural setting, and is basically an unnatural construction.

Even some of those writers who are not unsympathetic to constructed varieties have focussed upon the idea of 'community'. The conclusion reached is generally that, if 'community' is to be understood as some sort of association, or club, or collectivity of like-minded enthusiasts, then there is certainly such a thing as (say) an Esperanto community. If, however, one thinks of 'community' as 'culture', then there is no such entity, despite the claims of Esperantists. Levin (1986: 21), for example, denies that they form 'a community whose way of life is bound up with a certain language'; on the contrary, Esperantists and all other adherents of constructed forms live in cultures in which some 'natural' language is the one 'bound up' with daily life. The 'deliberateness' behind the creation of a constructed language, Levin argues (p. 25), means that it begins life as a *detachment* from some existing community and 'it would take something extraordinary indeed to get it adopted' by that – or another – real-life community. Jane Edwards has suggested that the 'community' for most Esperantists is the annual international congress, which represents an 'alternative reality' willingly entered by the delegates – but this, of course, is a very brief and discontinuous meeting of 'community members'. She goes on to point out that the notion that 'the medium is the message' is true for the Esperanto movement, whereas it hardly holds in other international gatherings.

Van Deth (1983) sees a community of ideals as the 'homeland' of Esperantists; and this would also seem to be the opinion of Carlevaro (1989). 'It is evident,' he says, 'that the motives to learn Esperanto are not the same as those which move one to learn English' (p. 179), and he goes on to discuss how joining the Esperanto community means 'accepting a series of concepts about values, norms and beliefs' (p. 181) – about the language itself, to be sure, but also the 'movement'. Fiedler (2006) cites Fettes (1996) as referring to the Esperanto 'community' as a 'self-elected linguistic minority' – and, while I cannot in fact find this phrase in Fettes's article, it is, I think, a telling one (see also Wood, 1979). Finally here, Tonkin (2006) notes that the Esperanto idea – which has always had an internationalist ethos, and whose very beginnings grew out of dislike and fear of narrow European nationalisms – has shown quite 'nationalist' tendencies in its desire to be thought of as a community, and in its attempts to facilitate the emergence of a 'culture' that would embrace and promote its purely linguistic features. Citing Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) well-known collection on the inventing of traditions, and Benedict Anderson's equally familiar discussion of 'imagined communities' (1983), Tonkin suggests that we might consider that there is, today, a 'virtual' Esperanto 'nation'

While Esperanto is far and away the most successful of all the constructed languages, success is a relative quantity. In comparison with existing 'natural' lingua francas – French, German and English, to name only those important during Esperanto's life-span – it has been a dismal failure. Furthermore, the future looks bleak, since all indications suggest that English will continue to expand into every

corner of the world, displacing 'smaller' varieties and leaving very few toe-holds for any constructed contender. How, then, has Esperanto managed to hang on at all; how has it managed to maintain some vitality (McQuown, 1982)? This is a very interesting question and, essentially, a psychological one. Part of the answer involves the same social bonding that sustains all voluntary clubs, societies and associations. But another part, essentially an extension of the first that is not found in most 'lay' organisations, is the strong quasi-religious commitment that has animated Esperantists and their counterparts in other constructed-language communities. We have ample historical evidence that, when such communities fall upon hard times, they are more likely to redouble their efforts, to rekindle the camaraderie that sustains them, and to pledge themselves anew to their goals than they are to collapse. The stronger the commitment, the hardier the endurance.

Research findings

If one attempts to summarise formal research into Esperanto and other constructed languages, one is immediately struck by the paucity of 'hard data'. Some years ago, Tonkin (1977) pointed out that there was little real linguistic analysis of Esperanto, and that what existed was of quite recent vintage. Sapir (1961), Firth (1970) and, of course, Jespersen (1928, 1995) are perhaps the most well-known contemporary scholars to have interested themselves in the area, but their interests have not translated into actual research. Prior to the pronouncements of these twentieth-century linguists, André Meillet (1918) also expressed some sympathy with the idea of an international auxiliary language. His famous observation was that theoretical discussions paled beside the fact that Esperanto *worked*, and this is often cited by Esperantists; not so frequently referred to, however, is Meillet's immediate qualification: what works still must be implemented. Zellig Harris, who was Chomsky's teacher, once published a short but cautiously favourable paper, in which he pointed out some of the obvious advantages of an international auxiliary language, and went on to say that past failures were not in themselves 'an argument against the possibilities of the future' (1970: 797).

While linguistic musings have not generally translated into empirical investigation, it is perhaps more disappointing to realise that researchers in sociolinguistics and the sociology of language have largely ignored an area of study in which 'facts, texts and living subjects [are] readily available' (Lieberman, 1979: 100; see also Tonkin, 1987; Wood, 1979, 1982). Fettes (1996: 57) makes the same sort of observation: 'here is a field of study which could provide exciting insights into the relationships between [sic] language, culture, ethnicity and identity'. Michéa (1983: 30) notes that 'la communauté espérantiste offre en miniature un modèle

intéressant de ce qu'est un ensemble social'. Similarly, Dasgupta (1987) suggests some obvious areas of research interest: the contentious matter of an Esperanto 'culture', the alleged linguistic neutrality of the language vis-à-vis what might be seen as creole status, and the question of language loyalty. Nonetheless, the situation has hardly changed since Lieberman framed his criticism; only Forster (see below) has really taken up the cudgels here. The topic – constructed languages, their developers, and their speakers – continues to be largely prejudged and dismissed. This is a great pity because, quite apart from intrinsic interest (if not linguistic, then sociological, political and psychological), and beyond the points already noted, investigation could provide insight into general perceptions of the practicality and desirability of lingua francas, the associations made between language and group identity, and so on. At a time when English is casting a very long global shadow, these are matters of some importance.

Most of the existing research is of the opinion-poll variety and it must be approached with due regard for that perennial gap between 'vague sympathy and determined action' (Large 1985: 198). As well, the representativeness of polls is often a dubious quantity. As an example of findings from which it would be dangerous to extrapolate, the report by Connor *et al.* (1948) – on a Gallup poll of 1945 – revealed that 71% of the respondents thought that an international language should be taught in schools worldwide, 57% thought that the UN should select and endorse one, and 60% agreed that a universal language would contribute to world peace. Emmart (1971) discussed two other American polls (taken in 1952 and 1961): in the first, 78% agreed that schoolchildren should learn a second, internationally-understood language; this rose to 84% in 1961. It appears, however, that few respondents were thinking of *constructed* languages here, since French, Spanish and German were the most frequent choices endorsed. Similarly favourable percentages have emerged from polls conducted in the United States, Canada, Norway, Holland, Finland and Japan (Silverman and Silverman, 1979). The important details are almost always lacking: who were the informants, how were they chosen, what was the wording of the questions put to them, how were their choices to be indicated, and so on?

There have been a few attempts to make matters a little more precise. A Minnesota poll discussed by Connor *et al.* (1948), for example, found that the most enthusiastic of those saying they might actually *learn* an international language (56%), were those with a college education and those aged between 21 and 29. Emmart (1971) reports on four polls, a French sampling taken in 1946, a Dutch survey two years later, and Hungarian polls of 1947 and 1949. The French poll, specifically concerned with Esperanto, found 65% in favour of compulsory school instruction, with 20% against and 15% undecided; the 'favourable' respondents tended to be young and/or poor and/or politically radical. The Dutch research

probed views of English and Esperanto. It was found that the richest favoured English over Esperanto (47% to 27%), the poorest Esperanto over English (29% to 20%). Those best educated endorsed English over Esperanto (55% to 17%), while the least educated reversed the order (by 31% to 24%). The first of the two Hungarian surveys found that 86% approved of Esperanto, but this dropped drastically – in favour of Russian – in the second sampling. To describe these findings, now two generations old, as a pot-pourri is something of an understatement.

Forster (1982) has provided the only comprehensive study to date of the Esperanto movement. He took a 25% sample of ordinary British Esperanto Association (BEA) members, and a 100% sample of junior members and association officials. With return rates of about 85%, Forster obtained completed questionnaires from 343 people. His major findings: most BEA members were male, almost half were over sixty years old (about one-third were retired), over half the women members were single (as opposed to one-quarter in the total British population; many married women, however, may benefit from the membership of their husbands, without formally joining themselves), most were of middle to high socioeconomic status, family size was small, and many members were teachers. On the distribution of age and sex, Rašić (1995) reports lower number of Esperantists between the ages of 30 and 50; and a ratio of males to females of about 7:3. Fettes (1996) notes that this skewed distribution is found in virtually all investigations, and he suggests that it may arise because men are more likely than women to participate in formal organised activities – and more willing to fill up survey questionnaires! The latter suggestion certainly does not hold true for social-scientific surveys in general, but the former is probably accurate.

The question lurking behind the figures is intriguing: *why* should more men than women be attracted to institutionalised activities? It might be argued that men have traditionally proved more 'clubbable', but there are a great many women's organisations, too, having regular and committed activities. It must, therefore, have to do with the *nature* of the organisation or activity, of the commitment that one is making in joining a group. Reporting a disparity on the order of two to one in favour of male membership in the BEA (very similar, then, to Rašić's ratio), Forster (p. 301) went on to write that 'very few young females are recruited to the movement' and that the 'BEA, like other social movements not holding aims of particular interest to women is composed mainly of men' – this, of course, is about the same as saying that men's organisations attract men. I wonder if useful information could be teased out of the relationship between sex and attraction to a constructed language, in terms of the two classic hinges upon which movements have always swung – practicality and idealism? Although Forster correlates idealistic motivations with two other variables (age and years of commitment to Esperanto), he does not plumb the relationship between sex and type of motivation.

Given the over-representation of men in the constructed-language ranks, and the low female 'recruitment' rate, this might be a useful course to chart.

Since many BEA members materially better off than average, it is not surprising to find that they tend to be better educated as well. Forster found that 43% had a grammar-school education, 11% had teacher training, 30% had professional qualifications, and 15% had a university degree. There was a high level of language competence, particularly in French and German, and for some members, at least, 'Esperanto was merely the rounding-off of a wide range of linguistic achievement' (Forster, 1982: 319; see also Flugel, 1934). Rašić's work is again supportive here: about two-thirds of his respondents – his sample was drawn from participants at Esperanto conferences – had third-level education, and 'on average, respondents declared a knowledge of 3.4 languages in addition to their native tongue(s) and Esperanto' (Fettes, 1996: 55; see also Fiedler, 2006).

Politically, Forster found a pronounced bias for Labour (left) and an underrepresentation of Conservatives (right). As a group, BEA members were not as religious as the general population, with high levels of professed atheism. When asked about 'idealistic' versus 'practical' reasons for Esperanto, members *personally* stressed both; however, they felt that for the movement as a whole – particularly for publicity purposes and attracting new recruits – the practical value of an international constructed language should be emphasised. Older members were generally more idealistic, while younger ones stressed pragmatic and personal satisfaction motives. Interestingly, officials were the least idealistic of all, and Forster suggests a 'more mellowed enthusiasm' that comes from 'running the system' (p. 341).

Forster's findings have a generalisable value that goes beyond the British context, and, indeed, beyond the specifically Esperanto one. The tension – sometimes creative, sometimes not – between pragmatic and visionary aims, the quasi-religious attachment, the left-leaning sympathies: such factors crop up in all constructed-language contexts (see also Sakaguchi, 1989). While Forster's study provided information beyond the more rudimentary enquiries that preceded it, there remain important gaps in our understanding. The most egregious of these has to do with the motivations for learning an international constructed language. Also important is the educational perspective: all constructed languages have been driven for obvious reasons to push for, and then maintain, footholds in the classroom. As well, if it is true that the proponents of auxiliary languages are typically middle-class, well-educated, linguistically gifted and socialist in tendency, some might reasonably ask why their linguistic projects have not met with greater success. Finally, given the (mistaken) notion so often voiced by opponents of constructed languages – that adoption of a universal second language implies the gradual loss of maternal varieties – some probing of the perceived relationship between language and group identity would be useful (see Edwards, 1985).

Edwards and MacPherson (1987) conducted an opinion survey of 223 respondents: fifty of these were university staff members, the remainder sociology undergraduates. While only 8% of the students were able to say what 'Esperanto' was, almost 88% of the academics had some awareness of it. They were better-educated and less religious than the students, politically left-leaning, more often competent in second and subsequent languages, and their average age was only 44 years. Given Forster's profile, it might then be supposed that this group would be broadly favourable to constructed-language ideas and ideals. In fact, however, academics across the faculties of arts and science were generally less well-disposed than were the students: they felt that Esperanto was not a very practical or realistic proposition. (Opinions here were tapped only after some brief description of constructed languages had been provided to all respondents.)

Our academic informants knew more about constructed languages than did students – most of whom knew nothing at all, in fact – but were much less enthusiastic about them. It was the university staff group who most downplayed the usefulness of languages like Esperanto, who saw them as impractical, or who viewed the whole enterprise as naïve. This is so even though the group's characteristics are quite similar to those in Forster's BEA sample. Our suspicion is that education is the key here. If we accept that Forster and others are right in associating favourable attitudes to constructed languages with a relatively high degree of education, it may also be the case that those with *very* high levels of education, like our university scholars here, are less favourably disposed precisely because they know more about such languages and the disadvantages and impracticalities traditionally associated with them. That is, beyond a certain level, education may actually militate *against* favorability.

All our informants were invited to provide further comments, beyond the specific questions we put to them. Those offered by the university group often reflected the same concerns that Piron (above) had documented, as well as the objections raised by some of the well-known authors whose views I reproduced earlier on here – people who can presumably all be placed in the very-well-educated category. The single most frequent theme was impracticality, coupled with lack of opportunity for use. There is a paradox here, in that Esperanto and other constructed languages are seen to be potentially useful only if large numbers of people know and use them. However, since at present this is not the case, many are unwilling to learn them. To construct adequate motivations for people to begin, has always been the central difficulty dogging proponents of constructed languages, and this is clearly reflected in the present study. There is a sort of Catch-22 at work: why should I agree to learn Esperanto until I can be shown that it will have practical benefits? It may be very easy to acquire but there is still a finite amount of time and effort that must be invested. And how can it promise to repay my effort,

without a greatly expanded number and range of speakers and contexts of use? But how will it ever achieve some critical mass unless I – and many others like me – agree to take the plunge?

A future prospect

Given what I have discussed in this chapter, what might be said about future developments in the area of constructed languages? If one were interested in going beyond what, for some, may be intrinsically interesting but essentially scholarly or academic pursuits, and getting to grips with policy possibilities, I cannot see that there is much more mileage to be gained by restating the familiar points that every enthusiast, from Zamenhof onwards, has made in defence of international auxiliary languages. These typically include an outline of internal structural regularities, the ease of acquisition, the logic of having a universal second variety, the desirably neutral status among a world of natural languages burdened by particular histories, the great potential social and psychological ramifications of global adoption, and so on. Such points as these are sometimes presented in such pedantic or pedestrian tones that their intrinsic argumentative weight is overshadowed. In any event, however, the really important matters have always had to do with the sociology, the politics, the psychology surrounding constructed mediums. Why has none of them managed more than a vestigial existence? Why are they so often seen – if seen at all – in negative or dismissive lights? What – realistically, now – could possibly be done to increase their use? Isn't it the case that, as universal lingua francas, their role has been more or less totally eclipsed by English? And so on. Within a reasonably large (but essentially compartmentalised) literature, these sorts of questions have received much less attention than they ought. Attempting to answer them will illuminate much more than constructed language alone.

Epilogue

In this brief concluding statement, I want only to return to the main themes of the book, as outlined in Chapter 1 and then fleshed out in subsequent chapters. The study of linguistic diversity and its ramifications can be considered the most general connecting thread to the story. This leads immediately to minority and endangered varieties, to the language-identity linkage, and to language ecology – in its narrow and often disingenuous contemporary dress, but also in its broader and more intellectually satisfying role. Taken in this latter sense, indeed, ecological contextualisation can be readily seen as the central fibre in that connecting thread. The thread as a whole, however, could be labelled group identity. One of the questions posed at the end of the first chapter asked how we might best approach 'small'-language dynamics and the motivation (or the lack of it) surrounding the maintenance of linguistic diversity. The implicit answer was to understand the topic as a sociological, or political, or psychological one, and not primarily a language matter at all. In its more symbolic aspects at least, language is to group identity as a badge or a jersey is to team membership: there are interesting things to say about the markers themselves, of course, but the identity that they represent is of the greatest importance.

The overall intent, then, has been to pay some attention to the vicissitudes of 'small' languages and the identities with which they are associated – not only, incidentally, with an eye to the intrinsic interest here, but also in the hope that the language and cultural matters that minority contexts display in greatest relief will be seen as relevant to 'larger' or more 'mainstream' settings as well. The general discussion in the opening chapters leads on to the typological exercise described in Chapter 5, with the final four chapters presenting illuminative case-studies.

I should highlight here some of the more important features of that opening discussion. We need to be clear, for example, about the definitions and connotations of terms like 'minority' and 'maintenance'. For the former, it is immediately obvious that numbers alone are not, in any but the most trivial applications, centrally important. If we are concerned with social, economic or political dominance, colonial history has repeatedly shown the true balance between small ruling constituencies and the large numbers of their subjects. As for maintenance, it is often difficult to assess the state of linguistic disorder, or decline, or restoration. It might be argued that language maintenance has to do with the vitality of ordinary

vernacular usage; on the other hand, all languages for which we have some sort of record – whether or not they are now spoken widely or regularly, or indeed at all – have been maintained in some sense. It is undoubtedly the case, however, that discussions of language maintenance never occur until trouble looms. A healthy language, after all, is not a conspicuous object to its speakers. Because of this, attention to a variety now seen to be flagging, at risk from a more powerful neighbour, is commonly perceived as coming too late in the day – and this perception is often quite accurate. This is why language-revival efforts have proved so difficult; indeed, some have deemed them virtually impossible. Again, however, definition is important here: are we to consider Hebrew in Israel as one of the very few successful revivals, or is it better understood as the reinvigoration – under unique circumstances – of a language that may have receded but was certainly not dead?

Timing, however, is not the most important factor in contexts of attempted maintenance and revival. It is at least theoretically possible, after all, to intervene at any stage of social life. I suggest that the central factors bedevilling most forms of linguistic engineering are lack of sufficient will and the misguided perception that the course of language can be meaningfully altered in isolation from other features of social life. Lack of will, of course, can be seen as a by-product of linguistic contact between larger and smaller forces. As external pressures mount, and as internal networks fall into decline, it is easy to understand how difficult it can be to galvanise resistance – and it is surely unreasonable to expect much dynamism from those whose status is, or has become, subaltern. It is surely unfair to blame the victim, as it were. Nonetheless, there are instances in which opportunities for cultural or linguistic action are not taken, and where external pressures cannot fully explain passivity or irresolution. Why are some parents suspicious of educational programmes that might help to maintain their children's fluency in the familial mother tongue? Why do some immigrant groups seem to shift to the dominant language more quickly than do others, and with little apparent trauma? Why do some indigenous minority groups not profit as fully as they might from government measures to encourage language maintenance? Why do native-speaker populations often languish, while 'secondary' bilingualism flourishes? Why do those rejoicing in the rediscovery of their ethnic heritage so seldom engage in language learning? The answers here have, once again, to do with perceptions of identity and, more pointedly, they remind us of that other feature just mentioned above – the inaccurate perspective on language as part of wider social life.

Many treatments in the literature focus solely upon language alone, upon maintenance and revival efforts in isolation from other social currents. Apart from being quite 'un-ecological', such perspectives are naïve, to say the least, because they ignore or obscure the very complex of pressures that have brought the language to its present pass. Languages become endangered, for example, because of

social contact between communities of unequal strength and dominance; their situations are best understood as *symptoms* of such contact. It follows, then, attempts to 'treat' them in essentially freestanding fashion will almost inevitably fail. And there is another twist here, too. Those who (within or without the group whose language is seen to stand in need of assistance) are concerned to intervene typically do not want to alter *all* aspects of that complex of pressures just mentioned above. That is, they wish to make only *some* changes, while leaving other social features more or less untouched. Thus, language revivalists – who are constantly preoccupied with the amount of support they are getting from those 'ordinary' folk who are to be the beneficiaries of their actions – have the difficult job of convincing those beneficiaries that language change can happily coexist with retention of the desired products of social evolution. And this is precisely where we can understand the apparent lack of general will, the less than enthusiastic endorsement of revivalist agendas, and the apparent submission to the 'mainstream': they are not, after all, the marks of the weak or the quisling; rather, they are the results of analyses, however unarticulated, of cultural and linguistic realities.

I do not mean to say, of course, that linguistic and cultural coercion is of no moment, nor that oppression has not figured prominently throughout history. I *do* mean to say, however, that a judicious application of Occam's razor often reveals simpler explanations for language dynamics than imperial pressure, colonial cringe, and the conspiracies of officialdom. Simpler, and less condescending towards the attitudes and actions of individuals. While the concerns of revivalists are, curiously enough, essentially conservative and static in tone – once some linguistic wrong has been redressed, the implication is that a new and more 'authentic' stability will eventuate – those of 'ordinary' people suggest a more realistic appreciation of the dynamism of human life, of the fact that change is the only constant. It is in quotidian activities and responses that we see important tensions dealt with: the pull of the 'small' community versus the attractions of the wider world; the attempt to maintain traditional things of value in a 'globalised' environment; 'parochialism' versus 'intercourse', as Saussure put it.

I also make some room in the discussion here for a brief consideration of scholars as activists. Since those who investigate and write about 'small' languages are in most cases advocates of maintenance or revival, and since it is clearly difficult to resist helping those who are at risk in some sense or other, one can understand why a number of researchers become committed interventionists. Donning this additional cap, however, can create problems. On the one hand, scholar-activists may find that they are giving up the traditionally disinterested stance of the intellectual enquirer and, quite apart from any personal effects, this may mean that the research they produce is not the dispassionate assessment that others will expect to read. (I prescind here, of course, from the broader question of 'value-free'

enquiry. I am happy to admit that virtually *no* human undertakings are free of the values of those involved – but I would insist that some are relatively freer than others.) On the other hand, the involvement of academic outsiders who have become personally committed to linguistic communities has often created what turns out to be a false sense of optimism among group members.

In the opening chapters, I also discuss possible adaptations beyond language shift. Faced with powerful linguistic neighbours, or with a dominant social mainstream whose language is not one's own, an entirely reasonable response is bilingualism or, indeed, diglossia. Why, then, is bilingualism so often 'subtractive' rather than 'additive' – why, that is, does it so often represent only a way-station on the road to a new monolingualism? (This is a simplest-case scenario, of course. A similar sort of analysis can be applied to situations where more than two languages are involved.) Encroaching languages typically take over more and more of the domains that once belonged exclusively to the at-risk variety, and this tends to happen in a non-random fashion. The most public and 'social' domains exhibit the earliest signs of language shift, while the more private ones hold out longest. Consequently, the argument is often made that the maintenance of the original variety in the bosom of the family is all-important; if it can be sustained here, even in some bilingual arrangement, then life remains – and, more importantly in some eyes, hope persists for some eventual return to a larger stage. At one level, this is a reasonable analysis: the language practices of family members in the privacy of their own homes can surely resist pressures brought to bear in more public or overt settings. At another level, however, the analysis is built upon that false isolationism that I have already referred to. Family members have to leave the home, have to interact with others, have to make their way in a wider world, and will – over time – increasingly develop intimate and longstanding relationships with non-group members. The social isolation practiced by a few – a very few – religious minority groups has of course permitted longer-term language and cultural maintenance, but their tendencies are not widely emulated, and the price they are willing to pay for the maintenance of stringent community boundaries is too high for most.

These, as I conceive them, are some of the realities that undergird minority-language dynamics. The specific factors bearing upon language decline and shift – and, therefore, the factors that give rise to maintenance and revival efforts – are many, and I discuss them in the opening chapters. All are consequences, however, of contact between groups of unequal social clout. This contact is the prime mover in the case; everything else is symptomatic of it. A logical conclusion is that, when change is required, the entire social fabric needs to be considered, and possibly rewoven. However, as I have just noted, most revivalists do not want such drastic action, and seem to believe – their actions would seem to imply, at any event – that some threads can be altered without affecting the rest. Without the more revolution-

ary action that would be required, without abandoning the mistaken view that language dynamics can be meaningfully affected in isolation, the important domains of the at-risk variety – what I have termed 'domains of necessity' – continue to shrink, taken over more and more by larger and more powerful neighbours. In such circumstances, bilingual accommodations tend to fade after two or three generations. (This is not a comment on long-term bilingualism *per se*, of course – contact between groups of more or less equal status or potency, or in highly delimited contexts, can lead to bilingual and multilingual accommodations that endure for centuries.)

While some of the literature bearing upon language and minority-group identity rests upon uncertain pillars of assumption, the topic itself remains of the greatest interest and importance. I say this not in any glib or offhand way, but as a reminder that scholars in the area are dealing – often in a direct field-work capacity – with real people whose lives stand to be affected by the policy implications of research. This is why the 'advocacy' stances adopted by some investigators need, themselves, to be closely considered. It is also why contemporary literature appearing under the rubric of language ecology has such an immediate appeal – and why the narrowness of much of that literature is so disappointing. I try to point out here that the advantages of a thoroughgoing ecology cannot be disputed and that, in fact, an ecological awareness has *always* been evident in the best scholarship. The 'new' ecology of language, however, is essentially concerned with the maintenance of linguistic diversity and, to that extent, betrays the promise implied in the term. Although I present some information that should lead to an awareness of the difficulties involved in the maintenance of threatened languages, I do not suggest for a moment that working for their preservation is necessarily ill-conceived. I *do* suggest, however, that any ecology worthy of the name must concern itself with *all* aspects of the social life of language, and ought not simply to be an undertaking devoted to preservation and revival. The 'new' ecology, I am tempted to say, represents a desire that has historically been quite common among intellectuals: a feeling that small is better than large, that old is better than new, that peasants have a firmer grasp on the important things of life, that sophisticated urban existence is destructive of 'authenticity', and so on. We have, in other words, a romantic anti-modernism. One need be neither a whiggish believer in the inevitability of progress, nor a panglossian optimist, to see some potential problems with such a stance.

After the general remarks in the opening chapters, I turn – in Chapter 5 – to a framework that may help in understanding minority-language contexts. It is constructed on the following assumption: while every situation is unique, the uniqueness does not arise because of elements found nowhere else – rather, it is the particular arrangement and weighting of elements that are, in fact, quite common that accounts for the unique quality of every language setting. I begin the discussion here by listing ten recurring features that previous work had highlighted.

These summarise, in fact, the points made in the preceding chapters, and remind us (for example) that lack of generational transmission, rurality, impermanent bilingualism and restricted revivalist interests and activities are all important considerations. Important, too, are distinctions between the communicative and symbolic aspects of language, as well as the type and degree of media involvement. And, at the most general level, we should bear in mind the *symptomatic* nature of language dynamics, already noted in this epilogue, as well as the simple fact that the historical pattern is typically one of language change and not stasis. The framework in which these and other features are arranged in this chapter follows a fairly detailed examination of previous efforts. The point of the exercise is not to suggest that some end-point has been reached in our assessment and analysis of language contexts – far from it. It is, rather, to present some guidelines – no doubt in need of considerable further work – that may be useful in coming to grips with a wide range of contact scenarios.

The concluding chapters present case-studies that I hope will be of both intrinsic and generalisable interest. I have tried to justify the choices made here – in the full knowledge, of course, that any selection is necessarily incomplete and, in particular, prone to sins of omission. Nonetheless, I hope the information presented will give specificity to some of the earlier observations. Here I shall only touch upon some of the more salient aspects of that information.

The history of contact between Irish and English is a long and complicated one, a history in which initial Irish dominance – strong enough to place at some risk the English of early settlers and colonists – increasingly receded. If Ireland had become fully independent a century before it actually did, its linguistic face might now look very different. As it is, Irish speakers were pushed to the margins, both physically and socially, and – as in many other milieus (Scotland and Wales immediately come to mind in a Celtic context) – the native speakers and, latterly, the 'primary' bilinguals were increasingly found, therefore, in western and northern littorals. The growth of 'secondary' bilingualism, typically a middle-class urban phenomenon, also links Celtic and other contexts. The contemporary scene, therefore, displays a continuing interest and concern with the ancestral language that coincide with a steady shrinkage of those 'marginal' areas. We have, then, what I describe as the 'paradox of the *Gaeltacht*'. If officialdom takes no action, then further shrinkage is likely, further encroachment by outsiders may occur, and further out-migration may continue to weaken the native heath. If, however, some action *is* taken, if official intervention in the name of linguistic and cultural maintenance is put in train, then other problems arise. An economically more sustainable *Gaeltacht* may attract outsiders whose presence constitutes a linguistic dilutant; official intervention may arouse resentment in neighbours whose socioeconomic situation is also tenuous, but who have the misfortune to live outside the designated

catchment area; external involvement may create a rather artificial enclave, temporarily insulated from prevailing economic pressures and having some of the qualities of a social fish-bowl.

The Scottish clearances did more, of course, than pushing people to the margins of the country. Although many of those 'cleared' to make way for sheep went to cities in the Lowlands, many also went overseas. As I noted in passing in Chapter 1, these clearances had no exact equivalent in Ireland, but the depredations of the nineteenth century – in particular the famines – led both to starvation and to the departure of many emigrants on the 'coffin ships' bound for North America; the numbers in each category were staggering. And earlier, there were several plantation schemes that were characterised by confiscation and displacement, if not always by outright 'clearance'. The most (in)famous of these was the Ulster Plantation of the early seventeenth century, in which English-speaking Protestants were given land belonging to others, so as to weaken the hold of the Irish leaders and their capacity for rebellion. However, the plantations and other measures did not prevent the great Catholic rising of mid-century and its subsequent crushing by Oliver Cromwell. Many Irish land-owners were expelled and 'transplanted' to generally poorer areas in the west of the country – sent 'to Hell or to Connaught' – and further plantations followed; the beneficiaries included Irish Protestants, English 'adventurers' (financiers and speculators) and soldiers in Cromwell's New Model Army.

The Irish setting also illustrates the interweaving of language with another powerful identity marker: religion. At some historical points, the church hierarchy was opposed to maintenance and revival efforts; at others, it was more indulgent, and some of its representatives were active in those efforts. It is clear, however, that saving souls has almost always trumped saving languages. From an ecclesiastical view point, of course, this is entirely understandable, but the various circumstances in which pragmatic accommodations with temporal authority were negotiated have not always been favourable in linguistic-preservation terms. An alliance between religion and language was often considered highly desirable, since the former could bolster the latter. At the same time, the very strength of Irish Catholicism may have weakened support for the language. If identity protection and a strengthened or reinvigorated sense of 'groupness' are the fundamental issues, and if the overwhelming and continuing Catholic nature of the population can be taken as a given, then language maintenance – seen more and more as a very problematic enterprise, anyway, and one endorsed by a small and contracting minority – need not, after all, be the major constituent in boundary formation.

This is not to say that interest in, or concern for, the Irish language has largely disappeared from the broad public consciousness. It is, however, yet another central (and generalisable) point to be extracted from the Irish context that a popular appreciation of the ancestral and national role of the language need not coincide

with any great or active desire for vernacular maintenance and revival. That is, public attitudes typically reveal an attachment to the language at a *symbolic* level. This is not necessarily a negligible quantity, but it does tend to suggest why efforts to extrapolate from attitude surveys have often foundered. It also permits the continuation of rather tepid official moves on behalf of the language and, most notable of all, the type and degree of public attitudes towards Irish account for yet another feature common to 'small'-language settings – the delegation of maintenance and revival efforts to the schools.

Attention to Scotland highlights many of the same features. Unlike Irish, however, Scottish Gaelic has had some considerable longevity as a diasporic language, its strongest transatlantic presence being in Nova Scotia. It has also had a rather different experience at home. Unlike Irish, Gaelic was never the ancestral language of all those regions now found within the Scottish borders, and the long-standing divisions between Highlands and Lowlands – in terms of status, culture, language, religion and so on – have introduced internal fissures which were not present in Ireland (barring the presence of the minority Protestant 'ascendancy', of course). One aspect of this internal variation that is, once again, not unknown elsewhere is the curious portrayal – well, perhaps not so curious – of the Gaelic-speaking 'natives'. On the one hand, they were regarded as rude and savage impediments to progress, unsophisticated and unreliable, prone to a violence born out of primitive tribal attachments; on the other, they were *noble* savages, uncontaminated by modernity, at one with nature and responsive to the deepest imperatives of human life, fierce in both battle and loyalty. *Romanticism* is the word that summarises these apparently contradictory depictions.

In the Scottish context, native political awareness and growing desires for governmental autonomy have not been nearly so closely tied to language matters. Thus, the growth and success of the Scottish National Party owes little to language promotion – although its official policy certainly endorses greater attention to Gaelic. In Wales, the nationalist party, *Plaid Cymru*, has been closely concerned with language and cultural matters from its inception, whereas the SNP is a social-democratic organisation whose central remit is for political and economic change. It is perhaps worthy of note that while *Plaid Cymru* is always referred to by that name – i.e. *in* Welsh – and while the two main parties in Ireland are *Fine Gael* and *Fianna Fáil* – the Gaelic (and Scots) equivalents of 'Scottish Nationalist Party' are rarely heard or read. In other words, assumptions can be made about official linguistic support in Wales and Ireland (if only of an opportunistic or lip-service nature) that do not apply in Scotland

The other point I wish to emphasise from the Scottish 'case' has to do with acquiescence in language shift. It is often argued that minority groups contribute to the efficiency and speed of change here, because of the oppression they suffer.

Subject to overwhelming and generally insensitive external force, and often sapped from within by linguistic quislings and cultural fifth-columnists, their weaknesses and susceptibilities can hardly be wondered at. While this picture is broadly accurate, it is insufficiently nuanced. The same Gaelic speakers who seemed quite passive in the face of linguistic pressures from school, church and secular authority were capable of mounting strong resistance to matters affecting their land tenancy. This suggests that some acquiescent 'passivity' doesn't fully capture things; rather, it argues for a selectivity of battlegrounds, no doubt allied to considerations of social advance and mobility.

The story of Gaelic in the new world, and especially in Nova Scotia, is one of both strength and weakness. At the end of the nineteenth century, there were so many Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia – more than in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland today – that some consideration was given to making the language a provincially official one. A hundred years later, however, there were no monolingual Gaelic speakers left, and only a small and dwindling band of bilinguals. Once again, the explanation lies in context – in the ecology of the situation. The heartland of Gaeldom was Cape Breton Island – and this region of Nova Scotia *was* an island until linked to the mainland by causeway and bridge in 1955. In isolated, rural and generally spartan settings, both wealth and mobility were extremely limited. While these may not be conditions that one would wish upon a population, they can be exceedingly supportive of linguistic and cultural maintenance. As the physical infrastructure developed, however, as transportation networks grew, and as more and more people emigrated – if only temporarily – to 'the Boston states' for waged employment, so did that maintenance begin to flag. Decreased isolation and improved life chances spelled trouble for Gaelic-language retention.

It could be argued, in fact, that there had been a pent-up demand for social, psychological and, indeed, physical expansion long before opportunities presented themselves to most people. We note, for example, that mid-nineteenth century provisions for Gaelic in the classroom were very tepidly received, and the slightly later state-school legislation that made no room for the language seems to have occasioned virtually no protest. I have already touched upon the likely reasons for this in some earlier comments.

The current state of Gaelic in Nova Scotia is, by all disinterested measures, precarious. But this does not mean that it is entirely absent from the landscape, and the types of presence that it retains are instructive and (yet again) illustrative of features in other settings, for other languages. There is, for example, a Gaelic Affairs unit within the provincial government, and one or two surveys have been commissioned. For most people, however, the only evidence of the language is its place on some street and highway signage – and this has almost certainly been approved with an eye to provincial distinctiveness and tourism. Visitors are often

greeted with signs reading *ciad mile failte* ('a hundred thousand welcomes'), for instance. Approaching Antigonish on the highway, one sees that name on the sign, accompanied by *Siorramachd Antaiginis* ('Antigonish County'), although the bilingual entry sign for the town itself reads *Am Baile Mòr* – simply, 'the town', a reflection of its past importance to country-dwellers. (I should perhaps point out that, contrary to what many visitors believe, the name 'Antigonish' itself is not of Gaelic origin; it is, rather, a Mi'kmaq designation.)

It is not without interest that the Office of Gaelic Affairs falls under the administrative wing of the Minister of Health – an indication, perhaps, of somewhat peripheral status. Better, one might think, if it had found a home in some department devoted to culture, heritage or ancestry. Unfortunately, there is no such dedicated department. There is, however, a Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, an assortment that once again suggests something of official perspectives and priorities. It is unfair, of course, to single Nova Scotia out in this regard, when one remembers that – across North America – 'ethnicity' has often survived, if in diminished or emasculated form, by throwing wide its gates and making at least some aspects of its distinctiveness available to all who are interested. We can all be German for Oktoberfest in Baltimore, or drink green beer with the Irish of Montreal, or join in the Antigonish Highland Games, go to a *cèilidh*, and watch Ian Kowalski toss the caber. Apart from what strikes many as the crass commercialism here, this cultural opening of boundaries might not be so odd if there remained some inner ethnic sanctum, one that stayed closed to casual outsiders and passing tourists. In most contemporary instances, however, one would be pressed to find such a residual core of 'authenticity'. Finally, I need hardly say that – despite the self-described Scottishness of many Nova Scotians, and despite the obvious and entirely sincere identification with an ancestry that is more immediately remembered here than in most parts of the continent – the attachments are, for the vast majority, symbolic. This means, among other things, that the acquisition and subsequent use of Gaelic crosses very few minds indeed.

Three final points here, ones that link this context with others. First, the efforts of language promoters and revivalists have largely focussed upon school programmes; these have tended to be rather short-lived, dependent as they so often are upon the work of enthusiasts. Second, and relatedly, these 'enthusiasts' and activists are notably different from those whom they attempt to galvanise: a surprising number have no ancestral connection to the area at all, and others differ from more 'ordinary' folk by virtue of greatly heightened Gaelic sensitivities. Third, the small number of adults who have attempted to learn the language over the years are typically motivated more by 'symbolic' than by 'communicative' impulses. In a study of my own, for instance, I was struck to find that virtually no one thought it likely that the Gaelic being acquired would be put to conversational use;

motivations rested, rather, upon a sense of heritage and connection with the past. This is not, I hasten to say, an unreasonable impulse, but it hardly suggests renewed vernacular usage.

The final chapter deals with Esperanto, which is far and away the most successful of all the many constructed or 'artificial' languages. One of the main points is to emphasise that Esperanto is a more or less contemporary manifestation of very old impulses – and, for that reason alone, worthy of much greater scholarly attention. In fact, I suggest that the long historical interest in constructed varieties is a drama in three acts. In the earliest times, the hope was that it might be possible to reconstruct or at least to re-imagine the first 'universal' language, that spoken in the Garden of Eden. Many efforts here were built upon the hope that one or another existing language – perhaps Hebrew, perhaps Arabic – was the direct descendant of this original *lingua humana.* Undergirding the frenzy of philological interest, the chief motivations here were of course religious and political. After all, a connection with the Adamic language would confer a rather special status upon speakers of the existing language, they would be a sort of 'chosen people', and they could argue that their language and their identity were superior to those of others.

One of the mystical qualities possessed by that first language was an exact correlation between words and things. *Genesis* II:19 tells us that God formed all the birds and beasts, 'and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof'. As Milton recounts in *Paradise Lost*, Adam then 'nam'd them, as they pass'd, and understood their nature, with such knowledge God endu'd my sudden apprehension'. It is this precise correspondence between names and the named that leads to the second act in the drama. Recapturing the language of the Garden might be a fruitless enterprise, but perhaps a new construction might improve on 'natural' languages, might regularise and make more logical existing semantic and grammatical arrangements. The greater part of this second act occurred during the seventeenth century – that is to say, at a time when science was beginning to take on a modern face, and when the need for more exact description and categorisation became particularly pressing. We see, then, various attempts to construct a universal and 'philosophical' language which, although lacking the metaphysical qualities of the Adamic medium, might nevertheless hope to emulate its most valuable element. (The earlier religious thread was maintained here, however, since many of language 'projectors' were clerics.)

But this act, too, was of course doomed to failure, and the final scenes involve entirely more modest undertakings, of which Zamenhof's nineteenth-century Esperanto is the best known example. The logic seems unassailable: people are not required to give up their mother tongue, but only to agree to learn the same lingua franca. To that end, Esperanto is built upon absolutely regular and easy-to-learn

lines. The intent, then, would seem to rest upon purely instrumental considerations. Slightly closer inspection of Esperanto and other similar schemes reveals, however, that they have typically swung on two pivots: instrumentalism was one, to be sure, but the other was the hope that a common second language would reduce conflict, encourage greater global harmony, and so on. The quasi-spiritual nature that often informed this desire further strengthens the essentially religious links among all three acts in the constructed-language drama.

I suggest that constructed languages – which, of course, have always been minority varieties – possess a two-fold interest. Both the backgrounds, the motivations and the activities of those who create them, and the type and degree of interest among the learners and speakers, provide linguistic perspectives that we are unlikely to find elsewhere. Many important and potentially revealing questions immediately come to mind. In what ways are the creators and the adherents of constructed languages different from others who are equally interested in the promotion of greater cross-language communication? Why have proponents of different constructed languages sparred so violently with one another? Why has no constructed language managed more than a vestigial existence? Why do so many intellectuals and scholars seem to reject out of hand the efforts of constructed-language disciples, often viewing them as little more than the work of eccentric cranks? These and other questions promise useful insights – some linguistic, some sociological, some psychological.

This epilogue has provided a brief but not inaccurate outline of some of the important issues dealt with in the book. Many points of interest, of course, have not been touched upon at all here. The most basic argument of the work is two-fold, emphasising the centrality of *identity*, and the necessity for fuller contextualisation and historical embedding – a more complete ecology, if you like. Nonetheless, this rather simple thrust has involved many ramifications and much detail. Consequently, I hope that this concluding summary, although very abbreviated, may assist the reader in forming an overall picture of the central themes of the work, and the directions taken to illustrate them.

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