

Young People and Minority Languages:
Language use outside the classroom

Pádraig Ó Riagáin

Glyn Williams

F. Xavier Vila i Moreno

**Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College, Dublin**

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Chapter One

Introduction

1. History of Project

In May 2006, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta¹ (CnG), in partnership with Iontaobhas ULTACH², invited tenders for a research project to investigate the socio-linguistic impacts (including attitudinal) of after-school activities of adolescents attending second level schools in which (a) they are being taught through a second language, and (b) where this school language was also a minority language within the relevant political jurisdiction. It was also envisaged that the research team would examine international best practice, with particular emphasis on situations relevant to the Irish language in Northern Ireland and non-Gaeltacht areas of the Republic of Ireland.

The tender was awarded to the Centre of Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, Dublin in July 2006, and contracts were exchanged in October 2006. The Principal Investigator was Professor Pádraig Ó Riagáin. The research began on the project in November 2006, and concluded with the circulation of a draft report in April 2007. Following a period of consultation with all of the parties concerned, this final report was completed in August 2007.

2. Background to the Project

The teenage years are a crucial period in the evolution of attitude towards a minority language (see, for example, Ó Riagáin 1997, Mac Giolla Chríost 2005), and the experience of young people at this stage can lead to either their continued use of the language or the erosion and eventual loss of these language skills. It is an established fact that a majority of non-Gaeltacht school-going bilinguals become passive bilinguals once they leave school (Maguire 1991, Ó Riagáin 1997, Murtagh 2004). This is, therefore, a matter of great concern to those responsible for Irish language policy. It is not a phenomenon confined to the Irish case, as the disjunction between levels of language acquisition and actual use extends across a wide range of minority language situations (e.g. Williams 2000, Sharp et al 1973, Baker 1992, Ferrer 2004).

In exploring this issue, the project's sponsors asked that particular attention be given to the role of social networks among adolescents, while at the same time it was accepted that the issues surrounding language use and maintenance in this age-group are much wider than local networks and that some attention should also be given to the external processes impacting on the language community.

Having regard to these considerations, the aims of the present study are:

1. To identify and assess the effect of after schools activity in minority languages across a range of societies with regard to willingness-to-use the language and language use outside of formal school contexts;
2. Where the evidence is available, to identify best practice;

¹ Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (The Council for Irish-medium Education) was established by the Department of Education in 2000 with a remit to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland.

² Iontaobhas ULTACH (The ULTACH Trust) is an independent charitable trust based in Belfast. It was established in 1989, and its principal aim is to promote the Irish language throughout the entire community of Northern Ireland. The Trust is currently core-funded by Foras na Gaeilge.

3. To assess the value of after school activities in relation to willingness-to-use language, language use and *favourable disposition* towards the language among 11 – 18 year olds in the after schools setting in Northern Ireland
4. To recommend the best possible model(s) to be used in Northern Ireland, and best practice, to encourage the continued use of Irish among teenagers outside the formal school context.

3. Methodology

As the project's financial resources were limited, it was decided at an early stage that its aims could be best achieved by a study which was primarily based on a review of the *existing* theoretical and empirical literature in the relevant research areas, but which was, at the same time widened by the inclusion of partners in Wales (Centre for European Research, Wales) and Catalonia/The Basque Country (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona).

Secondly, although it was initially intended to examine the relevant Northern Ireland context by analyzing existing survey data, it became clear as work progressed that these existing sources were inadequate for the purpose, and a small pilot survey was undertaken among pupils at the Northern Ireland Irish-medium secondary schools.

Thirdly, while the research literature dealing with social networks and language use was assessed, this corpus is actually relatively small by comparison with the research output in other policy areas, especially with regard to the age-groups in question. This review was, therefore, expanded to include a range of other approaches in mainstream sociology, as well as in sociology of language .

Taking all of these considerations into account, the research programme was structured as follows:

- (a) A review, from the perspective of language planning requirements, of applied social network analysis in the social policy field and which relate to young people.
- (b) A review of the research literature, especially social network related research , pertaining to after-school use of Irish (and Welsh, Catalan, Basque, also the Valencian and Balearic situation).
- (c) A Sociolinguistic profile of 11-18 year-old Irish-speakers in Northern Ireland
- (d) An evaluation of the policy approaches that have tried to influence the nature, scale or location of afterschool activities in order to achieve specific language policy goals.
- (e) Finally, recommendations based on the strategies which have either proved their worth, and/or appear most promising.

4. The Research Team

With the exception of the work reported in Chapters Four and Five of the report (see below), the research and project coordination was undertaken in Trinity College by Prof. Padraig Ó Riagáin, assisted by Paul Cunningham. The section on Catalonia and Basque research was prepared by Prof. F. Xavier Vila i Moreno (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona), assisted by Eva Gomàriz and Pablo Suberbiola. The section on Wales was prepared by Dr. Glyn Williams (Centre for European Research, Wales).

5. Outline of Report

The report is presented in seven short chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two reviews some of the more important studies from the sociological and sociology of language perspective. Chapters Three to Six then review the relevant literature in the Republic of Ireland, Wales, Catalonia and the Basque Region, and Northern Ireland respectively. The Northern Ireland chapter also contains the findings from the pilot survey. The seventh, and final, chapter summarises the report's main conclusions and makes some recommendations.

6. Acknowledgements

The research team would like to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation that they received at all times from Seán Ó Coinn, Príomhfheidhmeannach, and Seán Ó Muireagáin (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) and from Róise Ní Bhaoill and Aodán Mac Poilín (Iontaobhas Ultach). We would like to express our thanks to Seán Ó Muireagáin in particular, not least for the efficient manner in which he coordinated the pilot survey among the schools, and to the teachers and pupils who participated in the same survey. Finally, we would like to thank Hilary Tovey (Trinity College) for her ever willing assistance and advice in the course of the research,

Chapter Two

Sociological Approaches to the Study of Adolescent Social and Linguistic Behaviour

1. Introduction

Until the 1960s most theories of child development stressed the importance of adults in the socialisation of children (Corsaro, 1990). By contrast, little attention was paid to the influence of young people on each other. Over time, the narrowness of this approach was recognised, and the importance of children's peer groups within the socialisation process was acknowledged. This shift in emphasis led to a wave of studies examining the social world of children and adolescents, in which the role of adults within child socialisation was accorded less importance and, sometimes, very little importance at all. (Youniss et al, 1994).

Scholars working in the field of sociology of language – a sub-discipline which also took shape in the 1960s – naturally borrowed some of the conceptual and theoretical tools which had developed within mainstream sociology and used them in their studies of language behaviour in social life.

Some key aspects of this research field is reviewed in the remainder of this chapter. However, the large number of scholars writing on these topics is a problem in a short review, and we have chosen to emphasise a small number of representative contributions, rather than attempt a full and comprehensive survey.

2. J. Coleman 'The Adolescent Society' (1961)

Coleman's study of high school peer culture in the United States was one of the first to challenge the view that adolescent peer cultures simply duplicate the structural features of adult society (Brown, 1993).

Coleman's study has, however, to be set in context. The post-war economic boom of the 1950s led to significant changes in social and economic structures and an expansion in the education system. As a consequence, adolescents spent longer in school and delayed their entry into the labour market. Aware of these developments, Coleman (1961) emphasised the formation of an homogenous peer culture which was distinct from and independent from parental influence. The work of Coleman, and other studies within this tradition, suggested that adolescent peer groups had become uncoupled from adult society and were "encapsulated inside a distinct culture with its own values and codes of conduct that adults could not readily penetrate" (Youniss, 1994: 103).

However, Coleman's assertion that peer pressure tends to overwhelm parental influence has been consistently challenged. Despite their increased importance during adolescence, peer groups have a less than total influence on behaviour. Whether peer influence or adult influence predominates depends on what aspect of peer behaviour is in question (Sebold 1989). In some circumstances, it has been shown that teenagers are often more likely to follow adult instruction than acquiesce to peer influence (Gullotta et al, 1999). This later research does not repudiate all aspects of Coleman's theory, *rather does it point* to the existence of a multiplicity of behavioural influences. In countries with a strong history of clearly defined class boundaries, such as Britain, social class has been consistently identified as a major factor in teenage peer group formation. In the United States, on the other hand, ethnicity has been shown to be a key dimension of social relations in adolescence e.g. 'Mexicans' or 'Asians' (Brown, 1993).

The acknowledgment of the importance of the totality of the social relationships in adolescent's lives, as well as the heterogeneity of adolescent peer group formation and structure, made the application of the 'social network' paradigm to the adolescent world increasingly attractive.

3. Bo 'The Significant People in the Social Networks of Adolescents' (1996)

Bo's (1996) study of the significant people in the social networks of adolescents may be taken as a good example of this approach. The author examined the social networks of 174 fifteen and sixteen year olds attending schools in a small village and large town in Norway.

The research questions included: With whom do adolescents most frequently interact? In which roles do adolescents know their salient network members? Which socio-economic factors contribute the most to their social networks? What connections can be found between their networks and school-related variables?

Adolescent peer group were found to be heterogeneous in nature. Unlike earlier studies, peers were not found to be a single dominating group. Rather, most of the peers were rated as secondary or tertiary network members and the most intimate zone of the networks was made up of the core family and some selected best friends and extended family members. The social networks of adults and offspring overlapped. There was evidence of extensive exchanges between the friends of these Norwegian adolescents and their parents. These results call into question stereotypes maintaining that adolescents in general live in a separate world – a teenage culture – detached from adult society.

Bo postulated that a small personal network characterised by high levels of density, intimacy and contact frequency is a less fertile seedbed for personal growth than a more open and heterogeneous network. This would also confirm the theory of the strength of Granovetter's (1984) assertion that weak ties, specifically because they are less dense in nature, are indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities. However, Bo hypothesises that a network consisting of both weak and strong ties is needed to stimulate social development.

Another study of adolescent social networks carried out by Bo & Cochran (1989) focused more narrowly on the effect of network features on pro- and anti-social behaviour. This study used a similar methodological framework although combined with more limited variables and a much smaller sample. Analysis of the data revealed that the educational level of parents, and the number of non-kin adults in the social network of adolescents were factors which related positively to school performance, lower absenteeism, and better adjusted social behaviour. Bo's analysis emphasises the important role of adults in adolescent's social networks as positive models, norm re-enforcers, and sources of information.

4. L. Milroy 'Vernacular Language Loyalty and Social Network' (1980)

The best known example of social network analysis in the field of sociolinguistics is the work of Milroy in the 1980s. Although this research was based on an adult sample, the approach and field techniques used here have proved to be easily adapted to the study of younger people.

Milroy's (1980) social network study attempted to explain the linguistic behaviour of forty-six working-class English speakers from three comparable working class communities in Belfast. She hypothesised that the persistence of vernacular speech norms was correlated positively with the level of individual speaker's integration into local community networks. In order to test this theory, the incidence of a number of established phonological variables were correlated against a combined measure of multiplexity and density in individual networks, the 'Network Strength Scale'. The novelty of this approach lay in its potential to make a quantitative statement of the extent to which individual network structure predicted linguistic behaviour – "linking individual use of a vernacular code and integration into a localised, relatively closed network" (Milroy, 1980: 44), with reference to a systematic, quantitative measure of this integration.

Milroy's technique relies on a key assumption, backed up by reference to anthropological literature, that where networks are dense, role relationships are usually multiplex, that is, individuals in close-knit communities tend to interact with each other in more than one context. This particular type of network, being both highly dense and multiplex, has the capacity to act as a strong norm enforcement mechanism. As such, "the more dense and multiplex an individual's network, the greater its capacity to impose its own norms of linguistic behaviour on him or her" (Milroy, 1980: 48). According to this hypothesis, there is a graduation of linguistic conformity to local dialect correlated fairly closely with the individual's integration into the network (Chambers, 1995: 67).

Milroy suggests that, in showing this close correlation between vernacular use and network, the study revealed the characteristic rural and working-class network structure to be an important mechanism for the maintenance of vernacular norms. Vernaculars persist because close-knit networks enforce obligation of 'local team' or vernacular norms as opposed to national norms. In these communities it is the local language that functions as an index of symbolic integration, and not the 'standard' national language. Accordingly, speakers become more susceptible to influence from 'prestige' language patterns as their network structures become less dense and multiplex, because their personal networks no longer have the power to exert counter-institutional pressures on their behaviour (Milroy, 1980). This generally happens when there are changes in socioeconomic position.

5. P. Kerswill & A. Williams 'Social Networks in Adolescence and Language Transmission' (2000)

Kerswill and Williams' (2000) study emphasised the role the social networks of adolescents play in the introduction of new language varieties. Kerswill and Williams' study analysed the relationships between demographic, socioeconomic, phonological and social network variables gathered from a series of interviews with 48 Milton Keynes born children, the principal caregiver of each child and several elderly locally born residents.

The authors argue that each developmental stage in the life of young people is reflected in differences in language use which are associated particularly with changes in the young person's orientation to other people and the process of peer group formation. For instance, the predominance of peer influence in middle adolescence corresponds with a greater preference for non-standard speech in this age group.

As we are primarily interested in the influence of adolescent social networks on language patterning, only some of the study's conclusions need concern us here.

Firstly, that *'adults, adolescents, and children influence the outcome of dialect contact differently'*. Linguistic outcomes are related to the conduciveness of the social structure to the creation of social networks among children and adolescents. Communities less conducive to the formation of child/ adolescent peer groups and social networks have been shown to delay dialect change until the second or third generation of native children.

Secondly, *'The adoption of (phonological) features by a speaker depends on his or her network characteristics'*. Essentially, this corresponds with Milroy's assertion that a close knit network will resist the adoption of changes, unless these changes come via an "insider" who has links elsewhere. A close-knit network will rapidly adopt changes that have been accepted into it in this way. It is the sociable and peer centred children who tend to lead in terms of phonological change. Peer orientation tends to override all other factors. It is the children with the greater social resources and more extensive social contacts who lead in language innovation.

6. P. Eckert 'Communities of Practice' (2006)

Analyses of language employing the 'communities of practice' perspective have features in common with social network analysis.

Simply put, the key idea of 'communities of practice' is that, "by virtue of their engaging over time in their endeavour, participants in groups develop ways of doing things together"(Eckert & Connell-Giner, 1997). In order to constitute a community of practice, the group under study must exhibit three crucial dimensions: have regular mutual interaction, pursue a joint enterprise and share repertoires (this includes linguistic resources).

Holmes & Meyerhoff (1999) defines communities of practice as "highly localised social networks". There is a common distinction between core and peripheral membership. Additionally, the idea of measuring an individual's ties within a network, and the density of a network as a whole, are similar. Accordingly, a social network and a community of practice can be differentiated by the nature of the contact that defines them. However, a social network requires quantity of interaction; a community of practice requires a specific quality of interaction (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999: 180).

In relation to language use among adolescents, the most useful study to use a community of practice based approach is found in Eckert's 1989 book: *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School'*. This project was an ethnographic study of the association between the spread of linguistic change and adolescent social structure, by use of participant observation techniques in several suburban Detroit high schools. It neatly illustrates the value of the Community of Practice framework in linking micro-level linguistic practices to more abstract macro-level socioeconomic constructs.

Eckert asserts that “the use of local phonological variables in adolescence is determined by a social structure within the age cohort” (Eckert, 1988: 183). In all of the schools she studied, there was a hegemonic opposition between two social categories which she terms as ‘jocks’ and ‘burnouts’. According to Eckert: “The jocks are a school-oriented community of practice, embodying middle class culture. The burnouts are a locally-oriented community of practice, embodying working class culture (Eckert, 2006: 1).”

Hence, these categories articulate adolescent social structure with adult socioeconomic class. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail in the book, but in short, Jocks tend to be ‘college-bound’ whereas Burnouts intend to enter the labour market immediately upon graduation from high school.

Development of this basic social division within the adolescent cohort begins around the time of entrance into secondary school, as the age cohort begins to develop and manages its own class structure. Because these two categories differ in their orientation to wider social structures and share a mutual antipathy, it is logical that they adopt different vernacular norms. Because Burnout identity is premised on membership of networks that extend into the (local) urban area, they experience greater exposure to, and motivation to adopt, urban vernacular features. Conversely, the Jocks seek to transcend the communities and urban areas through participation in networks and institutions that are abstracted from the local context, and thus are removed from some of the motivations to adopt urban linguistic changes in progress (Eckert, 1988). In short, the relationship of these groups to macro-level socioeconomic structures (such as the labour market) is manifested in micro-level linguistic practices.

It must be noted that the ramifications of this study are not limited to those students who can be easily classified as Jock or Burnout. Rather, because Jocks and Burnouts represent the extremes, the majority of students who do not define themselves as either must locate themselves socially (and linguistically) with reference to these two points.

This example illustrates how the communities of practice perspective can prove a useful aid in sociolinguistic analysis. The explanatory power of the two communities of practice identified in this case serves to simplify “the complex relationship between broad demographic categories and the daily realities of social and linguistic life” (Eckert, 1988: 206).

7. Concluding Remarks

As can be seen from this short review, the study of adolescent social and linguistic behaviour is still being developed. The contemporary perspectives place an emphasis on the heterogeneous character of adolescent social life, and this has led to the use of social network and communities of practice (‘Localised social networks’) approaches. While such studies are still too few in number to permit any confident generalisations, there are some recurring themes.

Nearly all the studies reviewed here make some reference to the importance of macro-sociological factors, such as social class and ethnicity. Nonetheless, as Eckert (1988) points out, people do not draw the features of their language use directly from, for example, their social class, but rather from their day-to-day experience in the communities of practices particular to their social position, which are in turn influenced by the larger institutional context. This gives the community of practice perspective an accountable link between local linguistic practice, membership of abstracted socioeconomic categories and top-down institutional pressures.

Secondly, several of the authors reviewed here argue that the age of the adolescent in question remains an important factor. Kerswill and Williams’ (2000) argue that each developmental stage in the life of young people is associated with changes in orientation to other people and the process of peer group formation.

Thirdly, a point emphasised by Kerswill and Williams’ (2000), but also mentioned by others (e.g. Bo 1996) is the importance of adults (not necessarily only parents) in the life of adolescents. Thus, Cottrell’s (1996) in-depth analysis of adolescent social relations in adult-organised settings (*Social Networks and Social Influences in Adolescence*) has to be noted in the context of the

present report . He asserts that many researchers miss the educational benefits that can flow to young people from the community provision of structured recreational activities.

Chapter Three

Republic of Ireland

1. Introduction

Very little research of the type described in Chapter One has been conducted in the Republic of Ireland. There are only two examples of research studies which attempted to map the social networks of respondents in quantifiable detail. One of these was conducted in Gaeltacht areas in 1973–4, and the second was undertaken in Galway city in 1998. Neither deal specifically with the age-group in question here, although the second example focused on 18–35 year-olds.

There are a small number of other studies which used the social network concept in a less rigorous fashion to examine language patterns in different segments of the respondent's social network, e.g. family, relatives, friends, work associates, etc. Of these, the most useful and relevant in the present context is a 1979 study of families and children attending all-Irish primary schools in the Dublin area.

Finally, large scale national surveys, of which there have been several, have usually asked a few limited questions about contexts in which respondents use Irish.

Generally speaking, respondents in the above studies have been drawn from the adult population, but despite these limitations, the studies in total provide some useful insights which are applicable in an assessment of the use of Irish in the social networks of adolescents.

2. Data on Use of Irish in National Surveys

There were three national surveys, conducted in 1973, 1983 and 1993 respectively. In 1973, just under two thirds of the sample claimed that 'people in my circle just don't use Irish at all'. This was claimed by just over three quarters in 1983 and 1993. The corollary of this is that only 23% of respondents in 1993 perceived members of their social circles to use Irish, and that the proportion has declined over the period. While these perceptions may not always accurately reflect the reality, they do suggest that the extent to which Irish is actually used in society is extremely limited.

All three surveys contained a large number of questions about the use of Irish, ranging from general conversation to a variety of contexts, such as the home, the workplace, religious services, the mass media, social and recreational activities. Between one-sixth and one-fifth of the sample said that they had used Irish 'often' or 'several times' since leaving school. However, when asked the more specific question about their use of Irish in the preceding week, the proportions were halved to about 10%.

In 1993, respondents who reported that they had used Irish in conversation in the week prior to the interview were further asked with whom they had spoken. The replies strongly suggest that Irish is used mostly with known Irish speakers in the social networks of the respondents. Relatives (52%), friends (46%), work associates (23%) were the most frequently mentioned categories. Even the inclusion of an open-ended other category did not receive replies from more than 10% of these respondents.

There is a predictable relationship between levels of ability to speak Irish as its use in conversation. Actual use of Irish increases with level of ability. However, only in the case of the group on the top point of the ability scale do a majority report use of Irish. Only just over a quarter (28%) of the next most able group ('most conversations') claim to have used Irish in the past week. Nonetheless, the use ratio for this second group is nearly twice that of the next highest ability group, after which current use ratios drop below 10%.

Furthermore, when respondents in 1973 were asked about the degree to which they used Irish outside of school in their school years, the rate of reported usage was shown to vary with the amount of use of Irish as a teaching medium in the classroom. Over 70% of those who attended Irish-medium schools claimed to have used Irish outside school, compared to just 30% of those who studied Irish as a subject only (CILAR 1976, 180).

A word of caution is necessary in interpreting data from large-scale surveys. As APC (1988: 15) observed, they provide little direct evidence 'in relation to issues such as: topics most likely to be discussed in Irish; the extent to which, and the reasons why, switching may occur between Irish and English in the course of a conversation; or whether Irish is used in bilingual conversations to achieve particular social effects'.

We therefore turn to a number of smaller-scale studies which probed these issues in more detail.

2. The CILAR Network Study (Gaeltacht) 1973

The first study to be reviewed was conducted in Gaeltacht areas in 1973. From each dialect area in the Gaeltacht – Kerry, Galway and Donegal – a Fíor-Ghaeltacht (core area) and a Breac-Ghaeltacht (peripheral area) were chosen. From five of these six communities twenty adult informants (four from each) were selected for lengthy interview.

The network interview (of some six to eight hours duration) obtained from the informant information on the sets of people (e.g. co-workers, kin, neighbours) with whom he or she had contact. Questions about language use, commitment and ability were then pursued in relation to the informant himself or herself, his/her network acquaintances (members), individually and in the various links and interpersonal relationships within his network. The data catalogued some 15,000 pair-wise interactions from which measures of language choice were drawn. This is, thus, a very large study of language use in social networks, and only some of the conclusions can be noted here.

In their own behaviour towards members of their networks, respondents are guided partially by their own language preferences but also partially by what they believe to be normal modes of language behaviour of the members. Language choice by respondents thus shows a clear-cut relationship with the length of acquaintance with their member contacts.

Compared to the Fíor-Ghaeltacht respondents, Breac-Ghaeltacht respondents had, in their networks, twice the proportion of members from locally accessible English speaking areas. But even in the Breac-Ghaeltacht context, the findings suggest that there is a strong disposition among segments of the population to maintain the use of Irish as much as feasible given the distribution of skills and commitment, and the geographical situation of the areas. In the Breac-Ghaeltachtai, however, where Irish is a more marked form (than among the natively Irish-dominant), ability accounts for a greater degree of variation in Irish speaking.

The network analysis showed an association of Irish with the informal and recreational domain. It is in this situation that domain appears to be the criterial variable in conjunction with network. Particularly in the Breac-Ghaeltacht networks, Irish was seen as a function of the intimacy of their social relationships. Among neighbours in the Breac-Ghaeltacht networks the amount of English spoken was rather high.

In Gaeltacht areas, status differences were recognisable controlling factors in language choice. (In relation to formal/transactional role relationships, preliminary studies in urban networks and with Irish families showed that a difference in social status was a key variable in language choice in dyadic relationships. Higher status in terms of age, job-seniority or social standing was seen to be a characteristic of persons who could set the tone of language interactions (CILAR 1975, 263)).

In the Gaeltacht, the general ambience of the Irish language pressurizes the networks in the direction of Irish (see also the Welsh research in the following chapter). However, this varies between Gaeltacht areas. Looking solely at judged ability in

Irish, it appears that, irrespective of residence or native language, few members of Breac-Ghaeltacht networks with less than the highest level of competence use Irish as their main language with anyone at all.

Looking at the under 16 year olds and controlling for network members' place of residence, one sees that preference for Irish in the Breac-Ghaeltacht is as high as in the older age groups. It is only in the age group between leaving school and university, or job adoption, i.e. 16–23 years, that commitment is seen to take a sharp drop. Perhaps this indicates that English is viewed as a means of status and mobility and Irish is associated with places and circumstances from which young people in these communities may be trying to extricate themselves.

2. The (Galway) Social Network Study 1997

A second small study also made explicit use of social network approach. It was conducted in 1997 as part of an EU-funded project which also involved partners in Wales, Catalonia, the Basque Region, Galicia and Friesland. Within the Irish module of this project, some 21 respondents in the 18-36 age-groups were interviewed in Galway. The objective of the study was to find out if these young adults used more or less Irish at the time of the survey than they did in their last year at school, and if changes in their social networks were associated with these changes in language use.

The respondents were asked questions about the number of people they most frequently interact with, their relationship with these people, the degree to which these network contacts interact with each other, the language used in interactions, etc. In total, the 21 respondents cited 319 named individual network members, an average of 15.2 per respondent. At a later stage in the interview the respondent filled in a short questionnaire for each of the first two names to be elicited in each context – eight altogether. This sub-sample of network members was only selected to provide a more detailed cross-section of each network. It is not to be understood in terms of 'closest', 'most intimate', 'network core', etc. Respondents were not asked to rank their network associates in this way.

Overall, only 17% of network members speak Irish with respondents at least 50% of the time. A further 14% speak some Irish with the respondents, but conversations with these members are mostly in English. It would appear that while almost 17% of network members are from the same family or grew up with the respondents, these categories of network members account for 32% of high ability Irish-speakers in their networks. Otherwise, the main contexts are work, organisations and pre-existing friendships. School or third-level contacts are less important as a source of Irish-speaking contacts than their overall importance in network formation might suggest. Thus, while the re-structuring of networks associated with transition to adulthood leads to a lower proportion of high ability speakers overall, new Irish speakers are also introduced into networks.

Although nearly half of respondents living in an independent residence speak less Irish now than they did at 18 years, just over half had either maintained or increased their level of use. A closer examination of their responses showed that most of those in the 'more' category attributed this to the fact that they used Irish at work.

Of those who speak less Irish than they did at school, half said this was due to the fact that their spouse/housemates didn't speak it. The remainder cited less opportunity, residence in an English speaking area and leaving school. Thus, although it is difficult to conclude that independent residence has any direct impact on language use, its effect may largely be felt through intervening factors. These include moving from a home where at least some family members have high levels of ability to one where people have low ability; moving from an area where Irish is generally spoken to one where no Irish is spoken.

Four of the five married respondents said they speak less Irish at home now - due to the fact that their spouse didn't speak Irish. In fact, all married respondents said that they speak less Irish at home now than when they were eighteen. Nonetheless, four of these five parents speak Irish to their children. (Respondents' children are aged from under a year to six years and thus, some are of school-going age.)

Those who use Irish at home are not the same people who used Irish at work. Those who use Irish frequently at work report the highest level of speaking Irish in their networks as a whole. Eighty percent of those who use Irish in their network, use Irish frequently at work. Use of Irish at home is less clearly associated with its use in the overall network. (This finding corresponds with a similar finding of the national survey conducted in 1973. "people who use Irish at work will also use it in the home also. ...On the other hand, however, use of Irish in the home is not such a good predictor of its use at work". (CILAR 1975: 195)

The overall figure for network interactions wherein any Irish is used is 31%. This is so close to the proportion of high ability speakers in the networks as to suggest that it is only with high ability associates that any Irish at all is spoken. The ability thresholds required to sustain network interaction through Irish appear to be high.

Although the numbers in the sample are small, there is a clear and significant pattern. Irrespective of their subjective appraisal of change, L1 speakers of Irish appear to have been significantly more successful in both maintaining a high proportion of Irish speakers in their networks (despite migrating to the city in all cases) and in using Irish with them. Moderate ability L2 speakers of Irish, on the other hand, have relatively few Irish-speakers in their networks and speak little Irish with them. High ability L2 speakers of Irish have considerably higher proportions of Irish-speakers in their networks than moderate ability speakers, but are closer to them in terms of actual use than they are to L1 speakers.

When ability levels are high, language can be seen to exert an independent influence on the formation of social networks. That is, high ability speakers would appear to consciously attach themselves to networks with a high proportion of Irish-speakers. For speakers of moderate competence, the presence of Irish-speakers in their networks is an incidental outcome, conditioned by the operation of other social processes. Thus, in the Irish circumstances, the capacity of the educational system to produce bilinguals with a high level of competence is a critical factor. The majority of L2 speakers of Irish in our sample had only moderate levels of competence and their use patterns reflected this.

However, it must also be noted that little or no Irish is spoken in 53% of interactions with fluent or nearly fluent speakers. So ability thresholds are not the only constraint.

3. All-Irish School Families (Dublin) 1979

A third study was conducted in the Dublin area in 1979. There were 10 all-Irish primary schools (AISs) in the Dublin area at the time of the research, supported by approximately 1100 families. A survey was conducted among a selected group of the mothers of children in these schools in order to obtain a quantitative sociolinguistic description of all-Irish school families before and after they began sending children to the school. The valid population consisted of 126 mothers, of whom 110 (87%) were interviewed.

This project did not attempt to study the complete social networks of either the respondents or other family members. Nonetheless, the survey collected a large amount of information about the contexts, frequency and density of Irish language usage, inside and outside the home. It particularly focused on the role of the school in helping to establish and maintain these Irish-language networks.

It would appear that prior to AIS involvement, Irish was already used much more extensively in the homes of AIS families than the population generally. Nonetheless, at this pre-AIS stage only 15% of the families used Irish extensively (i.e. 50% of the time or often); while for approximately two thirds of the families, little or no Irish was used by anyone in the home. The most notable feature was the reported 76% complete non-use of Irish between children themselves. This would appear to indicate parental unwillingness or inability to establish bilingualism at home prior to AIS involvement.

Most of the families had a child in the AIS for two to four years by the time of the survey. Seventy percent of respondents claimed a general increase had occurred in the frequency with which Irish was used in their home since their child began attending the school. When those reporting a change in home use were further asked if the AIS was primarily responsible for this increase/decrease, all of the respondents said that it was.

However, of even greater interest is the sharply differentiated pattern now revealed within the household relationships. The greatest Irish use occurs between parents and child(ren) attending an AIS. This contrasts strongly with the reported use between parents and other (non-AIS) children. Use of Irish between parents themselves is much lower than use between parents and AIS children. These differences suggest that within a general family effort to increase the use of Irish, there are considerable variations in the ability and/or motivation of individual members to respond. The study also emphasised the extent to which the parents seemed to have relied on the schools to build up ability and use in the home.

Use of Irish outside the Home. In 1983, only 20% of respondents in a national survey claimed that people in their social circles used Irish (Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1984: 22). In the Dublin AIS survey, conducted in 1977, in reply to an identical question, 40% of respondents made this claim. Again, in the national survey, 29% said that they had friends and relatives who spoke Irish outside their homes (Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1984: 22). In the AIS survey, about half of the respondents claimed that the majority of their own closest friends, their husbands' friends and their joint friends (common to them both as a couple) had "good to middling" Irish ability. Furthermore, the vast majority of their friends who have "good" Irish use it "often". In the survey, "closest" friends were defined in terms of those most regularly met so the comparison with the question used in the national survey may conceal an even greater contrast.

Four fifths of the respondents (78%) reported that, apart from AIS-related contacts, they and/or their husbands would meet what they described as "Irish speakers" at some stage or other. They were then asked about these occasions as regards frequency, language used, whether the meetings occurred by chance or by appointment and whether the activity itself was organised or ad-hoc. No single activity came anywhere near the "general" contact figure of 78%, the closest being recreational activities (56%) followed by casual neighbourhood encounters (40%). These apart, there is no other context – with the possible exception of after-hours work-related meetings (15%) –in which significant numbers of parents meet other Irish speakers. Nevertheless, the numbers involved in the above-mentioned activities are quite substantial; a third of the mothers and/or fathers of the children attending all-Irish schools meet someone at least once a month either casually in the street or in recreational contexts whom they identify as being Irish speakers, while 20%-25% do so at least weekly.

But networks directly related to the school are obviously likely to be of importance also. The findings point quite clearly to a very positive link between contact with and attendance at an all-Irish school and the growth of networks of Irish-using friends. It is, in fact, clear that the all-Irish school has achieved for, and been ascribed by, the parents the role of central focus in relation to maintaining an Irish-speaking network. Recreational activities comes poor second while the Irish language per se, divorced from the school context, is cited by only a small minority.

As to the children, actual attendance at an AIS would seem to be crucial to the growth of Irish-speaking networks as the comparative data on older non-AIS children clearly shows, while, with regard to the AIS-attending children, for approximately half of them (a) most of their friends have good Irish; (b) most of their friends use Irish often; (c) they play with AIS schoolmates outside school hours.

There are again marked variations between the school groups on all these measures. It was not possible, with the data available to the study, to fully account for these variations. To a far greater extent than in the case of home bilingualism, social or community bilingualism is clearly affected by variables not accounted for in the study's research design. It is, by comparison with the home situation, a much more complex research area, with larger ranges of participants, activities and relationships involved.

4. Conclusions

Although the sources reviewed here provide very little information about language use among 12-18 year-old cohorts, three general points stand out from the findings.

First, there is a strong relationship between ability levels in Irish and social use of the language. It is only those who have significantly high levels of ability in Irish, who also report high levels of Irish usage within their networks. The relationship is

by no means 100%. Many people with high levels of ability in Irish, do not report high levels of use among their network contacts, so other factors clearly influence these patterns.

Secondly, there is nearly always some organized, institutional basis underpinning the network – especially in non-Gaeltacht areas. For young adults in Galway it is the work environment, for parents and pupils it is the school. Only in core Gaeltacht areas is Irish language use institutionalized within the community. This led one report (APC 1988: 26) to suggest a further distinction – 'institutionally-based bilingualism' – which is useful in this context. As compared to the domain concept it argues that while 'bilingualism in Ireland does not depend on universally agreed distinctions within which institutions as such (e.g. work, home, recreation or religion) are appropriate or inappropriate domains for the Irish language, nonetheless, some specific organisations, schools, clubs and families have defined themselves as Irish-medium institutions. On the other hand, they differ from networks in that an institution can survive an extensive change in its personnel while a network of its nature cannot'.

Thirdly, for speakers of moderate competence, the presence of Irish-speakers in their networks is an incidental outcome, conditioned by the operation of other social processes. There is a marked relationship between social class and Irish and the spatial distribution of Irish/English bilinguals varies with the class character of residential areas.

Chapter Four

Social Network Research in Wales

Glyn Williams

1. Introduction:

Over the past century, the Welsh language has been in decline both numerically and in percentage terms. In 1901, approximately a million people, 50% of the population of Wales, was Welsh speaking, but by 2001 this figure declined to just 21% of the population, around half a million in number. However, the 2001 Census also showed a significant increase in the incidence of Welsh speakers within the younger age groups, especially those aged between 5–9 years, and also the 10–14 years and 15–19 age groups. This increase in the percentage of Welsh-speaking young people was first noted in 1981, and the results of the 1991 and 2001 Census confirmed the general upward trend. The dramatic increase experienced in 2001 has been attributed partly to the increased role of Welsh within the National Curriculum, where it is a core subject studied by all children in Wales between 7-16 years of age in Welsh-medium education and a foundation subject for pupils in other schools in Wales. Welsh is also used as the main teaching medium in 448 primary schools in Wales and 54 secondary schools are defined as Welsh Language Secondary Schools.³ The demand for Welsh-medium education continues, especially in the more Anglicised areas of south Wales, such as Rhondda, Cynon and Rhymni valleys and in Cardiff, where the community use of Welsh is relatively low.⁴ However, the number of these young people who use Welsh outside the formal school environment is unknown.

This chapter reviews recent research concerning the use of Welsh among young people. While all relevant research is reviewed, the chapter includes a more detailed analysis of one particular study of social networks and the use of Welsh amongst young people.

2. Earlier Studies

Given the centrality of youth in the efforts to sustain the use of Welsh, the number of recent studies of young people and their use of Welsh are remarkably few. There have been several unpublished surveys of young Welsh speakers and their use of the media or of their involvement in the Welsh language pop 'scene'.

The limited number of language-use surveys have also provided some data on the use of Welsh among the younger members of the population surveyed. Such studies tend to cover the entire geographic space of Wales and use location as one of the analytical variables, side by side with sociological factors, most notably social class and language density.

The early studies tended to focus on attitudinal work and more particularly on the attitudes of parents to having their children educated through the medium of Welsh. This was partly a measure of the centrality of attitudes in educational and related work at the time. During the 1960s a large scale survey of children and their parents was undertaken by the University of Wales, Swansea (Sharpe et. al. 1973). There have also been several studies of child socialization, but these tend to focus on young children. One such study examined the location of Blaenau Ffestiniog and surveyed 311 bilingual mothers with children aged 2-5 years of age (Harrison, G., Bellin, W. and Piette, B. 1981). Another study focused on children aged 3 and 4 years old in Dyfed and their relationship with different kinds of carers (Bellin, Hughes and Thomas, 1996). Yet another study involved a questionnaire based analysis of parental language background and their children's language development. The sample consisted of 384 couples and was based in Anglesey. This work was supplemented by observations of parent-child

³ Where more than half the basic subjects are taught partially or entirely through the medium of Welsh.

⁴ Welsh Language Board, *The Welsh Language Board's Youth Strategy*, 2006:9-10

interaction, involving ten cases (Lyon, 1996). Such studies partly relate to a concern about the institutionalisation of language use which is believed to occur at this early age. This reflects the importance of child socialization as a generator of adult practice within the social sciences.

A more relevant study which looked at older children focused on the creation of public services aimed directly at this group (Morris and Griffiths, 2003). It examined the different formal and informal groups, ventures and partnerships within the public and voluntary sector in Gwynedd in order to ascertain the extent to which their previous developments and practice encompassed the target group. It incorporated a concern with language. Similar work was undertaken elsewhere (Ioan, 1998, 2000). A small pilot study was undertaken by Jones (2003). It consisted of a focus group conducted with a cohort of young people- the focus being on the use of language within the peer group.

More sociologically motivated work dates from the 1970s. This was the time when the language prestige of Welsh, or its value for social mobility, was beginning to be explicit and there was an increased demand for schooling through the medium of Welsh. Among these studies, one (Williams, Roberts and Isaac, 1978) sought to determine the motivation for parents to send their children to Welsh medium schools in one of the south Wales industrial valleys. Another study made the case for a relationship between industrial decline and the emergence of nationalism, and in exploring the attitudes of sixth form pupils, concluded that positive attitudes towards the language were reflected in a heightened nationalism while involvement in Welsh language schools also related to positive attitudes.

More recently a study by Evas and Williams (1997) focused on three distinct communities in undertaking an overview of language use and its relationship to social institutions within these communities. There was a limited attempt to determine which social networks supported the Welsh language, and the impact of the absence of such networks on language use. The method used in this study tended not to conform to the general principles and concepts of network analysis, but did seek to relate social networks, language use and domains. The work involved 563 respondents in the three communities. Among the findings, it was stated that the use largely depended upon language density, that the existence of non-Welsh medium high schools isolated pupils from Welsh language networks. In addition, the main threat to the language was perceived as related to the substantial in-migration from outside of Wales.

A dissertation at the University of Wales, Bangor (Hodges, 2006) explored the use of Welsh among post-secondary young people in a south Wales valley. It argued that the high prestige of Welsh in education and employment was not reflected in other contexts. The work focused on in-depth work with eight individuals. The use of Welsh after leaving school was limited and even siblings raised within Welsh speaking homes tended to interact together through the medium of English, while using Welsh with their parents. The main context for the use of Welsh was employment, especially among those employed by the Welsh Assembly.

3. Social Network Studies

The two studies which have focused exclusively on social networks and the use of Welsh among young people were undertaken relatively recently.

The first was part of a comparative project involving Ireland, the Basque Country, Galicia and Catalunya. The focus of the study was on the transition from school to work, and the study sought to encounter how a change that derived from this transition influenced social networks and the use of Welsh (Williams and Williams 1998). The study was undertaken in the county of Gwynedd where all primary school education in the public sector involves the immersion of children in Welsh and a gradual transition to bilingual teaching by the time the child is 11. In secondary school the pupils attend one of three kinds of schools: Welsh medium schools where the teaching is exclusively through the medium of Welsh; English medium schools where most, but not all, of the teaching is through the medium of English; and bilingual schools where the pupils are streamed into Welsh medium, English medium and bilingual streams according to their competence in Welsh. All children, regardless of the language of the home, tend to be fluent in English by the age of 11. The main conclusions drawn by

reference to Welsh indicated that there was a very grave danger that the substantial investment that was made in teaching Welsh as L2 in the schools of Gwynedd would go to waste **except** under particular circumstances. These circumstances involved the L2 learner finding employment where the working environment focused upon the use of Welsh. Under such circumstances there was an intensification of the Welsh language network, and a significant improvement in the Welsh language competence of the employee.

The second study was commissioned by the Welsh Language Board (2006) and involved a network study of 13-17 year olds in 14 locations across Wales. These locations focused upon local market towns and their hinterland. Such towns tend to be the focus of the secondary schools within non-metropolitan Wales. This allowed the research team to consider the secondary school and its catchment area as the spatial dimension of the study. This study is considered in greater detail in the following sections.

4. Young People's Social Networks and Language Use (in Wales)

4.1. The Method:

Twenty four participants, aged 13-17 years were selected in each of 14 localities, providing a total sample of 336. Participants were selected in the basis of the Welsh language competence of their families. There was a threefold division into families with no Welsh language competence, families where some have competence, and families where everyone has some competence. The sample was also divided between those who had, and those who had not had, a Welsh medium primary education. As gender and age were also seen to be determinants of social networks, these factors were incorporated into the sampling frame. Additionally, equal numbers of participants were included in terms of gender and age group.

The selection of cases was undertaken through consultation with the school/college in each locality. Also, the initial interviews were undertaken in the school/college involved.

The interview lasted about one hour. It included a language competence assessment, background factors and a social network inventory. Each informant was asked to keep a diary during the week following the interview. A return interview was scheduled which allowed the field worker to overview the contents of the diary with the informant. The focus was not simply on the peer group, but on the community as a whole, e.g. family/kin, education/work, voluntary associations.

4.2. Analysis:

The final report of this project runs to some 300 pages. The major portion of the report (c.250 pages) is devoted to a case by case analysis of the 14 localities. These analyses emphasise the patterns of network language use for each of the network segments, and seeks to account for internal variation. Numerous kinds of relationships are discussed – peer group, kinship, ego with neighbours, ego in institutions etc. These are referred to as segments of the entire social network of each individual. The density of Welsh language use for each segment is compared, thereby giving an indication of the relative points of strength and weakness of Welsh language use within each network.

The later part of the report presents a comparative analysis of the fourteen cases. The goal of this analysis was the development of a typology of different contexts.

The authors chose to limit the types of the schema to three – those cases where the Welsh language group assimilates newcomers, cases where two distinctive language groups appear to coexist, and those cases where there is an assimilation of the Welsh speakers into the normative practice of the English language group.

The evidence collected through the diaries kept by each of the respondents makes it clear that most of their time is spent in the company of the family, the peer group and other school associates. However, community and the institutional contexts

also exert an influence by reference to which of the two languages is the normative language in which context. Those from homes where Welsh is either not used, or where it cannot be used, are restricted by reference to the extent of use of Welsh. Such families have their own network configurations, and these networks will invariably focus on the use of English. Such group networks overlap with the networks of the individual members. The extent to which each situational setting (involving institutions, the community, the family etc.) reinforces the general pattern of language use is important in the institutionalisation process.

The authors maintain that the greater the density of Welsh speakers in the social network, the greater the opportunity and tendency for the associated network members to use Welsh. Thus the relevant starting point involves a comparison of the respective use of Welsh in the different segments of the social networks for each location.

Those from homes where no Welsh is used and yet have a relatively high Welsh language density within the peer network are the locations where there is greatest pressure for the associated actors to conform with using Welsh as the normative practice. Secondly, those locations which have a high density for the use of Welsh among the networks of those from homes which use only Welsh, and low density figures for the peer networks of those from homes which use only English, constitute communities with two quite distinct and separate language groups. Thirdly, those locations with low Welsh language densities for both sets of peer groups are communities where the Welsh context is rapidly being assimilated into the English norm.

This still leaves locations which have lower Welsh language densities for the respondents from homes which use Welsh, and a relatively high Welsh language density for those from homes which use only English. These are communities where Welsh cannot be treated as the norm, but which have sufficient salience to incorporate new members into the Welsh language group. We suspect that language prestige or the value of language for social mobility may play a role here.

There seems to be a point below which the use of Welsh in the networks declines considerably quicker than the incidence of Welsh language competence. This has to do with the probability of using Welsh as the number of Welsh speakers in a network declines. Eventually, the potential number of Welsh speakers in a network declines to the point where the probability of using Welsh declines significantly. This may well be particularly true of a young generation in locations where there is a mix of schooling, with Welsh medium education being only one of the alternatives. If the institutional organisation cuts across the educational providers it may well be that the peer groups are as much structured by these activities as they are by schooling.

In summary:

TYPE 1: Assimilating Communities

These are communities where there is considerable pressure on those who have not learnt Welsh through family socialisation to use the language. This pressure exists within the peer group, the community and the local institutions. They tend to be communities where the incidence of Welsh language competence is high, and where the local community has not been entirely engulfed by recent in-migration. There is a single secondary school which socialises the pupils within what is largely a Welsh language environment. This carries over into the community where peer group socialisation is not obliged to adapt to the existence of peers who have attended schools with different language socialisation patterns.

TYPE 2: Distinctive language groups

These are communities where Welsh speakers belong to quite distinctive language groups and communities. On the one hand, those from homes which use Welsh, and even some from homes which use only English, belong to a social world which focuses on the use of Welsh in very much the same way as those in the communities associated with Type 1 above. On the other hand, most of those from homes which do not use Welsh, and some from homes which do use Welsh, belong to a different social world within which the use of Welsh is rare. There are institutions which focus exclusively on the use of English, and communities where a large proportion of the population do not have any Welsh language competence. The two

communities may well occupy quite different geographical locations. On the other hand they may coexist within the same location.

TYPE 3: Assimilated Communities

Finally, there are those type of localities where the Welsh language group is rapidly becoming assimilated into the normative context wherein English is the predominant language. It would appear that for the vast majority, the school is the primary agency of Welsh language use. Yet the peer group uses virtually no Welsh, even among those whose home language is Welsh. The community and institutions continue to use Welsh, but to a much lesser degree than in the other locations. Furthermore, the density of Welsh in these segments for those from homes where English is used is very low. These tend to be locations where there has been a significant influx of in-migrants in recent years.

5. Implications of the Study for the Present Project

The Welsh research has quite a bit in common with the Gaeltacht Social Network study reviewed in Chapter Three, and it comes to some of the same conclusions.

If the experience of the Welsh cases are applied to Ireland then it seems clear that, left to their own devices, peer group networks of speakers who acquired Irish as a second language (L2) are unlikely to use their L2 and that some form of direct intervention is essential. Therefore, a number of recommendations made in the Welsh report just reviewed are worth noting. A fuller discussion can be found in the report itself (Chapter 4: www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/cynnwys.php?cID=&pID=109&nID=1845&langID=2.)

It is stressed in the report that these are general priorities, and that language planners should look at every local situation individually in order to set relevant priorities that fit local circumstance.

- Maintaining and increasing the number of families who use Welsh at home.
- Maintaining and increasing the number of schools who use Welsh as the main or only means of education and administration.
- Introducing an element of language awareness education⁵ to the Personal and Social Education curriculum.
- Developing appropriate training for youth workers and others on inclusive approaches to Welsh language use
- Providing opportunities for young people to socialise in Welsh outside the school.
- Introducing liaison youth workers to promote Welsh both in the community and at school.
- Increasing the number of significant institutions that reinforce the use of Welsh in the community.
- Increasing the visual status and the social value of Welsh in the community.

⁵ “Such a course might introduce information regarding the history of the Welsh language, the historic repression of the language, the current status of the language, local opportunities to use Welsh, services available to young people through the medium of Welsh. Explaining to young people *why* they should speak Welsh, is as beneficial as teaching them *how* to speak Welsh”.

Chapter Five

Catalonia and the Basque Region

*F. Xavier Vila i Moreno,
with the support of Eva Gomàriz i Auró and Pablo Suberbiola*

1. The sociolinguistic situation of Catalan and Basque

Catalan is spoken along the eastern coast of Spain, in particular, in the administrative areas of Catalonia, the Valencian Autonomous Community, and the Balearic islands. The sociolinguistic position of Catalan is different in each area, although the proportion of the population with Catalan as first language is approximately 40% in each case. Whereas families in which both parents speak Catalan typically raise their children in Catalan in all areas, families where parents have mixed linguistic, or non-Catalan, backgrounds are less likely, especially outside Catalonia itself, to use Catalan with their children.

Basque is spoken in the Basque Autonomous Community (32%) and Navarre (12%), both in Spain, and Iparralde, the Basque speaking area in Southern France (23%).⁶ The official status of Basque is different in each area, in fact, it has no official status in Iparralde. Basque-speaking couples tend to raise their children in Basque in the first two areas, but linguistically mixed, or non-Basque- speaking parents raise their children in Basque only in the Basque Autonomous Community. Basque is rapidly losing ground to French in the Iparralde area.

The political and administrative fragmentation of both the Catalan and Basque language areas, combined with the demographic and linguistic differences, make it difficult to present a coherent overview, especially as regards the role of these languages in the education systems of these communities:

- Catalonia has developed a unified linguistic school model which is known as the *Model de conjunció en català* ('Catalan Conjoint Model'). This model was formally approved in 2006, and it mandatory for all primary and secondary schools. Catalan is the "normal" language of education at all levels, but children can receive initial primary education in their habitual language, whether this is Catalan or Castilian. The Catalan language is to be progressively used as pupils become proficient in it and all children in Catalonia should be able to use Catalan and Castilian in a normal and correct way by the end of primary education. Actual practice is unclear, but 80-90 % of primary schools appear to function in Catalan, but approximately 40 % of secondary education schools appear to use either Castilian or Catalan and Castilian.
- In the Valencian Autonomous Community, both Catalan and Castilian are compulsory subjects at all levels of education outside university,⁷ but the language of instruction can be Castilian or Catalan, either as an L1, or within an immersion programme. Around 30 % of pupils in primary education, and 20 % in secondary education, follow one or other of the two latter programmes.
- In the Balearic Islands, Catalan is the language of instruction for up to 50 % of the time table. In 2006, the official policy was changed to allow schools to adopt a trilingual model which, in practical terms, will reduce the time devoted to Catalan. It is not yet clear how this change will effect school practices.

⁶ Although there is a strong movement to achieve a Basque *Département*, to the day this area does not enjoy any official recognition by the French administration.

⁷ With the exception of the Castilian-speaking area, where teaching of Catalan was to be introduced gradually and on a voluntary basis.

- Policy in the Basque Autonomous Community allows for three models: Model A uses Castilian as the language of instruction and teaches Basque as a subject; Model B uses both Basque and Castilian as languages of instruction; finally, Model D⁸ is a Basque-medium school, in which Castilian is just a subject. Today, Model D is predominant in primary education, and is growing in importance in secondary education. Reforms approved by the Parliament in March 2007 suggests that a flexible D model will be adopted in the near future for the whole of the educational system.
- In Navarre, Basque medium education is in a minority position. It is provided by a private (*ikastola*) network of schools, and by some public schools. In many public and private schools Basque is not even taught as a subject.
- In Iparralde, Basque is the medium of education only in a small network of private, cooperative schools (*Ikastolak*), but recently a few public schools have started to offer bilingual education.

2. Relevant Sociolinguistic Research

Empirical research on the language behaviour of young people has expanded significantly in the last three decades, although very little of it has been translated into English. Much of this research has examined interpersonal language practices from a variety of perspectives,⁹ in combination with, or separately from, a study of language competence, practices, ideologies and acrolectal varieties.

In general terms, research containing relevant information about the current extra school language used in the Catalan and Basque language areas can found in:

1. Censuses (since 1976 to the present), with information about linguistic competence and – in some cases – language use.
2. General sociological surveys of adolescents, many of which include some linguistic questions (e.g. Casal *et al.* 2004).
3. Large-scale sociolinguistic surveys of representative samples of the population including questions about language knowledge and/or practices. While these generally include samples of the adult population, some include younger age-groups. Most of these latter studies are local and descriptive, sometimes longitudinal, and their goal is to analyse language practices and ideologies both within and without schools.
4. Large-scale sociolinguistic studies, involving the collection of data on observed linguistic behaviour, rather than personal interviews.
5. Ethnographic research on small communities of practices, combining the analyses of language use and representations (e.g. Boix 1993, Pujolar 1996).
6. Psychosociological studies, with a strong interest in connecting ethnolinguistic identities and language use (e.g. Querol 2000).
7. Research on the young people's acrolectal variety, code-switching and language quality.
8. (Critical) analysis of young peoples' discourse and discourse on young people.
9. Language planning studies and policy evaluation.

⁸ Letter *C* does not exist in the Basque spelling system.

⁹ Catalan and Basque sociolinguistics tend to follow the opposition between *institutionalized* and *interpersonal* communication.

10. Research focused on the (linguistic) integration of “new immigrants”.

As there are a very large number of studies with data which are relevant to the present project, and as both languages areas under scrutiny in this chapter are spread over several territories, a short overview must, of necessity, be somewhat selective in the themes chosen for more detailed comment

2.1 *Competence and Use: Contradictory Trends*

In broad terms, it can be said that both Catalan and Basque have been *subordinated* languages for many decades, i.e. (a) both languages were banned from official domains,¹⁰ and (b) speakers of both languages were expected to switch to the state language whenever speakers of the state language entered a given interaction. Of course, this rule knew many nuances and exceptions, but, in general, Catalan and Basque were used as an in-group language, while Castilian gained ground as a language of intergroup communication (see for instance Tuson and Calsamiglia 1978, Woolard 1983, 1989 or Intxausti 1992).

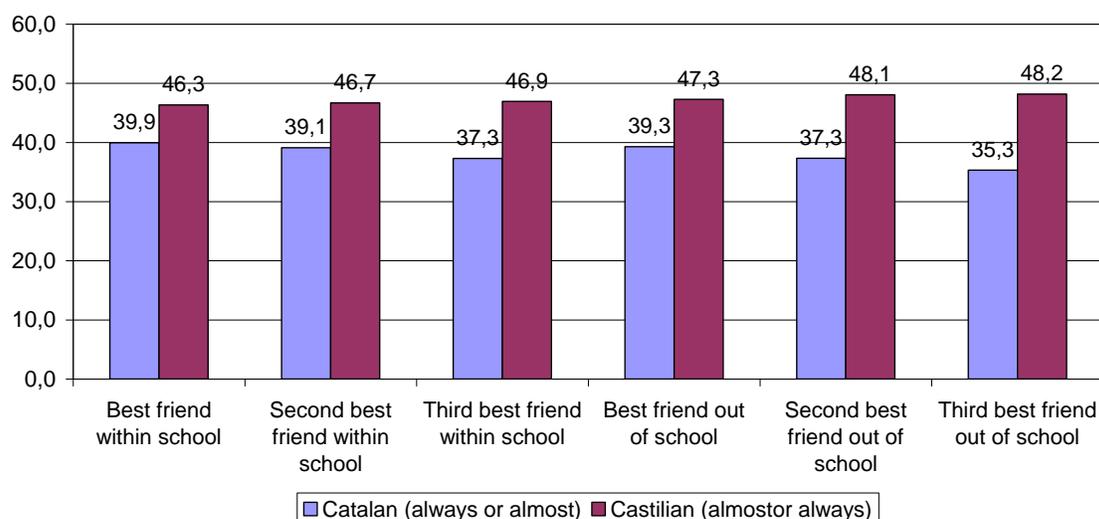
After Franco's death (1975) and the adoption of a democratic Spanish constitution (1978), Catalonia recovered political and cultural autonomy. Policies were adopted to spread the use of each language in many public areas, and much attention was paid to language-in-education issues. Some researchers in the 1980's and early 1990's suggested that political changes were also leading to changes in the position of Catalan and Basque *vis-à-vis* Castilian in interpersonal relations. Thus, Boix (1993), for instance, suggested that younger speakers in Catalonia felt freer to switch between languages, and that Castilian-speakers were switching languages more than before. In contrast, other authors (such as Vila 1996) argued that patterns of interpersonal language choice and use appeared to be very resistant to change. Thus, while both languages were gaining ground in the education system, in formal spheres and in the mass media – and more and more people, especially young people, could be described as competent bilinguals – little evidence could be detected of significant growth in the *interpersonal* use of either Catalan or Basque.

In this sense, [Graph 1](#) illustrates quite well the pattern of language use which was already perceived in the 1980's (although the data in the table actually relate to 2006): Catalan has a significant presence, but Castilian retained the dominant position achieved during the years of dictatorship. In spite of the belief that acquired competence would translate into social use, younger speakers were not shown to be using more Catalan for interpersonal communication. The cultural domain was also problematic for Catalan and Basque. Castilian and English were dominant in the pop and rock music world, and pop-rock singers in the Catalan and Basque languages found it difficult – especially in the 1980's – to reach wide audiences in their own language communities.

Graph 1

¹⁰ To the eyes of a foreigner, the linguistic arrangements up to the 70's might have looked *diglossic*, in the sense that the titular languages were not widely used either in written or in the formal areas. To locals, though, and especially in Catalonia, the hypothesis that prevalent language choices were based on a consensual distribution of domains was clearly not credible, for everybody was aware of the strong legal restrictions in this area. With autonomy, namely in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, Catalan regained access to formal domains. In fact, in both territories, Catalan is conspicuously absent especially from those institutions which remain strongly dependent from Spanish central institutions, namely the judicial system, armed forces and Spanish *Guardia Civil* and police.

Catalan (always/almost always) or Castilian (always/almost always) with best friends. Catalonia, secondary education. Sources: ESL 2006



Thus Catalan and Basque remained the ingroup¹¹ language, and they only became the language of intergroup communication when minority speakers were in a large majority. Furthermore, Castilian speakers older than about 10-12 years made progressively less use of Catalan and Basque, and it was not uncommon – at least in Catalonia – that they gave up Catalan when entering secondary education.

2.2 The Search for an Explanation

Thus, after more than one decade of promoting Catalan and Basque, the situation was perplexing. Why were the new generations, which had not only acquired a competence in these languages, but had also been educated through the medium of these languages, not using them outside the school setting?

Some researchers pointed to the (negative) associations of these languages with particular institutions and social groups. For example, in his ethnographic research, Pujolar (1996) argued that, for many native Castilian speaking young people, Catalan had become associated with the school, with feminized *personae*, and, in some way, with local authorities. This is hardly surprising, as the sole source of Catalan for these speakers was, precisely, their female teachers. However, as a consequence, Catalan was presented as a language lacking social and stylistic variation. Unfortunately, and in contrast with Catalan, Castilian appeared to offer – at least for urban, lower class teenagers – a wider range of social *personae* from all social sectors.¹² Opposing Catalan thus became a focus for teenage rebellion among such groups. Such opposition was, in any case, an easy option as few sanctions existed to support Catalan in the classroom.

A number of other authors began to speak about what was believed to be a new trend. This was termed "dimissió lingüística". There is no exact English equivalent, but it may be understood as a metaphorical concept used by these authors to distinguish between the manner in which former generations 'resisted' the pressure of Castilian, compared to the tendency of younger generations 'surrender' ('démision'), and switch readily from Catalan to Castilian in the company of Castilian speakers. It was further argued that the young generation were losing some sentimental connection with the language, and that speaking Catalan was no longer seen as an anti-dictatorial symbol.

¹¹ Of the same first language group people.

¹² Bear in mind that foreign films are systematically dubbed into Spanish both in theatres and TV. Thus, for Spanish citizens – Catalan and Basques included – virtually all audiovisual influence from Anglo-American culture arrives by interposition of Spanish.

Although the "dimissió lingüística" argument is really only a hypothesis, as yet unproven, it has been readily accepted in two contradictory social sectors: among both Catalan militants and Castilian activists. Indeed, among these groups, which are also influential,¹³ a variation of the argument has developed according to which the so-called "aggressive language policies" in the schools are seen to increase levels of competence of pupils, but at expense of reversing previously positive attitudes towards Catalan. The solution to the problem – so defined - is invariably to "soften the pressure". This argument ignores, however, some compelling counter-arguments. For example, in the Valencian Autonomous Community and in the Balearic Islands language policy in favour of Catalan is far less intensive, yet attitudes against the language are much aggressive than in Catalonia. Nonetheless, the "dimissió lingüística" argument has substantial political support, and figures prominently in public discourse.¹⁴

By the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 2000's, new data about language use and language competence allowed a more nuanced view about the language behaviour of young people. The *Enquestes d'Usos Lingüístics 2003-2004 (Surveys on Language Uses 2003-2004)*, are of particular importance. These surveys analysed the position of the language in all the Catalan speaking territories. It is clear that the increase in language competence among adolescents had not translated into more widespread use of Catalan or Basque. In fact, one could perceive a smooth decline in language use among the younger generation. Although the surveys provide no evidence in support of the "dimissió lingüística" hypothesis, attitudes about the languages in competition were not as unanimous among the young generation, as they were among their parents and grandparents. Some adolescents were reluctant to speak the titular languages, while others remained strongly attached to them and a wide section regarded all languages in rather instrumental views.¹⁵ Third, it became quite clear that the analysis needed to take more account of structural factors – demo linguistics, social position, language competence – and not rely solely on individual attitudinal and/or ideological factors.

2.3 Structural factors

Up to the 1960's, and in spite of regional differences, the majority of Catalan-speakers in most of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands had socialised in rather homogeneous linguistic environments where Catalan was the sole everyday language of interpersonal communication, while Castilian was the language of public administration as well as the language of growing numbers of immigrants living mostly in peripheral urban areas. Since the early 1960's, however, the sociolinguistic landscape has changed dramatically: the mass media have brought progressively more Castilian into private homes; growing numbers of Castilian speakers have moved into the Catalan language area, intermingling with the locals, and – especially in Valencia – promoting language shift. In the mid-1970's, the number of children born to Catalan speaking families in Catalonia, as a percentage of the total population, reached the lowest point in history: probably around 38 % of all births, compared to 96-100 % around 1900 (cf. Vila 2006). In this sense, the Catalan and the Basque situations are converging, for Basque-speakers were already – in demographic terms – a minority in their own territory.

These changes may have gone unnoticed by Catalan elites, but they had a dramatic effect on patterns of language production and reproduction among the young generations. In comparison to those born in the 1940's to 1950's, and in spite of the growing presence of Catalan in schools, children born during the 1970's through the 1990's grew up in environments where Castilian was much more widespread, became acquainted with that language earlier and better than their parents, and – more importantly – had many more Castilian speaking classmates sitting next to them in

¹³ Especially in some intellectual circles which had Castilian as their professional language, wide access to influential newspapers such as *El País*, and were close to the Socialist Party, by then in the opposition in the Catalan Parliament. It should be born in mind that most of these opinion makers eventually broke up with the Socialist *miliens* and gave birth to several pro-Castilian language movements and, quite recently, even a political party.

¹⁴ In order to understand its prevalence, even today, it has to be taken into account that the debate has much to do with a generational feeling of disenchantment among those who had been leading the recovery of Catalan in the 80's and 90's, when they came to realize that bringing the language back to school was not enough to modify deeply in-rooted patterns of language choice, not to speak about demolinguistic balances. In much the same line as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, a well known leftist writer had put it in the 80's, «Contra Franco vivíamos mejor», i.e., 'against Franco we used to live better'.

¹⁵ The main difference was — and this was indeed a novelty in connection with the previous decade — that pro-Catalan had a less vehement discourse, while anti-Catalan were increasingly aggressive and based their discourse in a neoliberal paradigm. In the Basque area, aggressive discourse against Basque has only been active in Navarre... starting by the ruling party.

the same class benches. It is only by keeping in mind that young speakers of both Catalan and Basque are in a minority in their own territories that one can understand the impact of other factors on language practices.

2.4 Understanding the basis for language choice

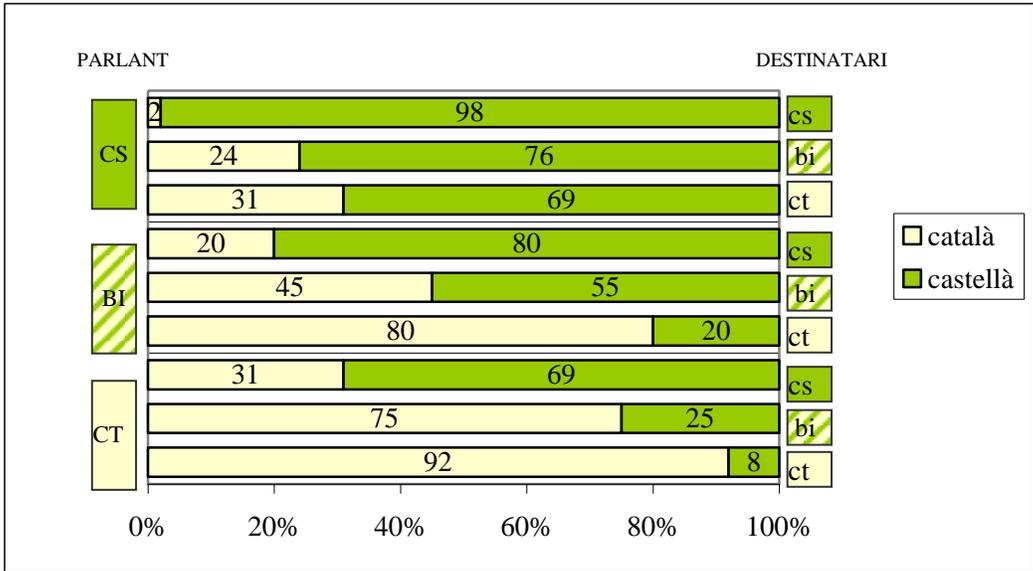
Evidence from self-reported survey data suggest that willingness to accommodate to the language of the interlocutor in interpersonal interaction is growing among the younger generations in comparison with their parents and grandparents (Fabà 2005, Riera, Sagalés i Sedó 2006). Among speakers of the minority languages, this tendency is even more pronounced. If these figures reflect actual practice, then those promoting Catalan and Basque have a serious problem. If minority speakers are even more willing to accommodate majority speakers, where will the latter find incentive to learn the minority language?

However, observational data about language practices suggests that the survey data may be reflecting politeness norms rather than actual language use patterns. In the largest available research study on language practices of primary school students (see Vila, Vial and Galindo 2005), patterns of actual language choice appeared to be quite similar to those of the adults, and quite dissimilar from the pattern reported in surveys. Observational data suggest that (a) both Catalan and Castilians are systematically used in in-group interactions; (b) Castilian is much more used than Catalan in out-group interactions. In other words, Castilian speakers would still be much less eager to use their second language than Catalan speakers.

Obviously, in these circumstances, the degree to which native speakers are concentrated in geographic areas becomes a powerful predictor of language production and reproduction. Very little research has been done in this direction, but all indices make it clear that the minority languages are used for interpersonal communication only in schools with a significant percentage of Catalan and Basque native speakers; even more, only in schools where these speakers form a clear majority are Castilian speakers inclined towards the use of Catalan or Basque with their peers.

Graph 2 . Percentage of speech turns in Catalan and Castilian produced by pupils in their last year of primary education, classified according to the family language of speakers (*parlant*) and addressee (*destinatari*)

GRÀFIC 7. Llengua dels torns de parla que s'intercanvien castellanoparlants, bilingües familiars i catalanoparlants.



F
CS = Castilian; BI = Bilingual; CT = Catalan

Observational data confirms also that language choice in the two areas under study is not diglossic, in the sense that no general consensus exists about a stable distribution of languages according to different domains. Rather, and especially in the Catalan language area, language choice remains firmly based on personal networks which combines affiliation to a language

group with persistence in time: once a language is selected for a given dyad of people, the same language seems to remain stable and rarely experiences modification. This pattern of language choice appears to be more solid in the Catalan language area – where the language are much more closely related – than in the Basque country, where the presence of non-Basque speakers triggers a switch to Castilian much more often.

2.5 Reconsidering Competence Issues

Thus, in spite of the efforts to promote their languages, language practices in these areas remain quite similar to those established during the Franco period. Since this situation cannot be simply attributed to ideological factors alone, the issue of competence itself is being reconsidered. Current research in this area is emphasising a number of issues:

1. Competence in a given language is a very complex set of abilities which are not well captured by self-reported assessments.¹⁶
2. In order to promote the use of a language in minority language environment, it is not general competence in L1 that counts, but rather competence in L1, especially in connection to interpersonal skills, relative to competence in L2.
3. The development of academic competence is not necessarily accompanied by interpersonal abilities: contrary to what happens in immigration contexts, a percentage of pupils in contexts such as the Basque and Catalan areas appear to develop quite well in academic terms while not developing interpersonal skills – thus they interact with their classmates in the majority language.

Taking these three factors into consideration, the recent evolution of Catalan and Basque in the schools becomes much clearer. Although schools in both areas have so far successfully promoted language competence, they may have paid too much attention to promoting the standard language, to develop written language skills, and to fighting undesired language contact phenomena ('interferences'). But none of these language teaching goals expressly promote the interpersonal skills which are vital for any language revitalization project. This appears to be especially dangerous in cases such as the Basque one, where a considerable distance exists between traditional dialects and the modern unified form of Basque. With some exceptions, the educational systems under study have proved in many aspects unable to promote the linguistic skills (lexical, phraseological, etc.) that allow for informal, interpersonal language use among peers. The situation is exactly the opposite for Castilian. Castilian is overwhelmingly predominant in the mass media, and this means that while adolescents are constantly exposed to everyday, informal Castilian language use, the minority languages are much less widely available. As a consequence, pupils from Castilian speaking background living in Castilian speaking neighbourhoods and with few Catalan speakers in their social networks rarely have access to informal Catalan and, not surprisingly, do not master it. As a result, in the whole, bilingualism is clearly unbalanced in favour of Castilian. Only in those environments where Catalan native speakers predominate is Catalan actively adopted by Castilian-speakers as a language of inter-peer communication. In the other contexts, Castilian remains the language of inter-group communication and, therefore, Castilian speakers rarely acquire competence in informal Catalan or in Basque.

Bretxa and Parera (2003) analysed the biographies of young Castilian speakers from Castilian-speaking neighbourhoods who left school in the 1990's. In many aspects, Catalan is for inhabitants of these neighbourhoods a rather distant language, and students attending immersion centres there can be compared to English-speakers attending immersion centres in Canada. During their childhood and adolescence, and although they attended either immersion or partial immersion primary schools, these informants never included Catalan as an active variety in their repertoire. It was only after leaving secondary education and entering either university or work place, when they came in contact with native speakers of Catalan, when a number of them started to put their Catalan into use as a means for interpersonal communication. And, according to these speakers, then they realized that "[Catalan medium] school gives you a [linguistic] basis" which one may eventually put into practice, but school does not furnish the many instruments needed for effective interpersonal communication.

¹⁶ For instance, Vila (in press) suggests that dichotomic measurements overestimate competence in Catalan by at least 10-15 % of the population.

2.6 Extra school linguistic practices: a short synthesis

Language policies in favour of Basque and Catalan have significantly modified institutional language practices, but they have been much less efficient in promoting the use of these languages in interpersonal, individualized communication. Indeed, in this area, patterns of language choice do not seem to have been significantly transformed since the Francoist period: Catalan and Basque are more in-group languages, while Castilian remains the dominant language of intergroup communication.

Several factors have been pointed out as responsible for this situation. Some of them are ideological and representational in nature: once the hypothesis of massive *linguistic demission* is discarded, it remains possible that excessive association with school may be detrimental for the adoption of Catalan/Basque as a language of interpersonal communication among Castilian-speakers. For language spread to be more effective, Catalan and Basque need to be more incorporated in activities not connected with education. But, at the same time, it is a fact that in extra-school activities Castilian speakers feel fully legitimized to function in their language as monolinguals, and their lack of interpersonal linguistic skills puts pressure on Catalan speakers to accommodate to them. A vicious circle is created that is extremely difficult to change.

3. Encouraging the interpersonal use of a language: a (preliminary) review of experiences

There is no systematic research in this area. However, one can track down a number of initiatives. Some of these initiatives have been promoted by the public sector, while others have their origin among language activists, with little exchange between the two. As usual with such initiatives, the vast majority of these actions were not designed in the framework of an explicit language planning process, and they have not been properly evaluated. On the whole, little has been done to arrive at a general, detailed evaluation of these initiatives, and even a state of the art review is not easily accomplished.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in total, they offer a number of promising avenues for further exploration.

In order to synthesise, we suggest that, in very broad terms, four main approaches have so far emerged. They are:

- a. The language awareness approach: Spreading favourable messages;
- b. The educational approach: promoting the use of language beyond the classroom
- c. The pop culture approach: promoting the interpersonal use of Catalan and Basque in events and products significant to youth (sub)cultures;
- d. The interpersonal approach: Supporting the creation of informal networks

3.1 The language awareness approach

“Language campaigns” were common in the early days of language promotion (late 1970’s and early 1980’s). Judged as inefficient – although hardly ever evaluated – they gave way to more technocratic and/or legalistic approaches to language promotion until the early 2000’s, when – especially in Catalonia – it was felt that public involvement with language policies was fundamental. The promotion of Catalan among the young people is no exception to this rule.

In recent years, several initiatives have been launched in order to raise public awareness about the need to protect and use Catalan/Basque. Some place the Catalan/Basque promotion in a broad eco-linguistic framework, emphasising the need to preserve all languages if global diversity is to be saved; this is the case, for instance, of the conferences on linguistic diversity addressed to young people such as *Vida i mort de les llengües* [‘life and death of language’] described by Mayans (2001). Other initiatives focus more specifically on the position of Catalan/Basque vis-à-vis Castilian, such as the round tables on sociolinguistic considerations about Catalan use in the campaign *Per què en català?* (López 2003 i Saperas 2004) or in the numerous private web pages with information about both languages (cf. *Àlatac*).¹⁸ In this sense, several leaflets and other materials have been produced containing reasons for the use of Catalan, such as in *Tu, que parles català* (‘You, who speak Catalan’) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Associació Voluntariat Lingüístic), or the *Per molts anys! Ets la primera*

¹ In the Basque Country, a project called *Gazteen erabilera. Perspektiba eta prospektiba* (‘Youngsters’ use. Perspective and prospective’) has been launched, which explicitly asks for the information on the use of the Basque language at extra school activities in the seven Basque provinces.

¹⁸ < <http://www2.upc.edu/slt/alatac/index.html> >

*generació*¹⁹ ('Congratulations! You are the first generation [able to speak and write Catalan]'), produced by the Universitat de Barcelona.

In keeping with their goals of attracting young people, many of these initiatives take a 'light-hearted' approach to the issues, trying to avoid excessive argumentation and making use of games, such as the quiz programs on the Catalan language situation *I jo, què sé?* ('What do I know') (López 2003). Humour is by no means avoided – see, for instance, the *Tu i jo tenim una història*²⁰ ('You and me have a (hi)story', where *història* also means affair). This pragmatic, humorous approach is also apparent in other initiatives, such as the theatre play (*Que no te'ls trepitgin!* lit., 'Do not let them step on your... rights')²¹, addressed at the issue of language rights, written and played by university students. An example of a provocative and innovative linguistic campaign was that of *Fes servir la llengua* ('Use your tongue') (Patordi), accompanied with the image of a young couple kissing, which had the ultimate objective of showing that Catalan was also a suitable language to be used in personal relationships. Similar campaigns have been developed, with a local basis, in the Basque Country, e.g. *Acampallengua*.

3.2 Promoting the language beyond the classroom

While educational authorities never took the initiative, a considerable number of activities were designed and implemented, although they were always restricted to small numbers of students: concerts, festivals, summer camps, trips, meetings between different schools, writing letters to students who live in Catalan-speaking villages, going to Catalan villages and markets, watching Catalan films or amusing TV programs, reading interesting books or comics in groups, staying with Basque families, assisting Basque boarding schools (called *barnetegí*), creating young peoples' unions to promote the use of colloquial Basque within young peoples' groups, either face-to-face or Internet chatting (*Concerts & Rock-and-roll, El país a l'escola, Ajuda'm, Jo t'escric. Escriu-me* or *Kuadrillategí*) (Melià 2004, Mateu 2003, Sedó 2001, Mayans 2001 i Egizabal 2004).

In Catalonia, the arrival of a large number of new immigrants –many of whom are totally alloglot– during the last decade²² has encouraged the search for ways to integrate the so-called "newcomers" linguistically and culturally. Two initiatives, both of them strongly connected with the schools, are of interest here: on the one hand, a number of *aulas d'acollida* ('reception classes')²³ have been set up to teach the language during part of the day to foreign students who share regular classes during the rest of the day with their native classmates. It is expected that combining language learning with integration in peer-networks will fuel the process of Catalan language learning, but it still has to be proved. A second initiative is that known as *Plans educatius d'entorn*²⁴ ('Educational plans of surrounding'). These plans try to break the isolation of school learning by taking the students to do part of their learning *in situ* in some nearby institution, such as shops, markets, local businesses, city council, etc. A strong emphasis is put on the need to make such connections by means of Catalan. Again, it is still too early to speak about the results of this programme.

Apart from the young peoples' activities already commented on, other minor activities have been organised for children and young people. Thus, for instance, linguistic competitions (*Jocs de llengua* or *Croncurs*) were organised, and winners were given a set of Catalan cultural and leisure products (Melià 2004, Gelabert 2003 i Mateu 2003).

3.3 Promoting the use of Catalan and Basque in events and products significant for youth (sub)cultures

All over the Catalan and the Basque language areas, there is concern with the highly subordinated position of both languages in the area of popular culture among the young generations. Especially in the Catalan language area, the (relative) absence of the language in this sphere of life is often felt as a crucial obstacle in promoting language use among youth.

In the Catalan language area, for example, activities were organised to create the lyrics of a known song that, later, was sung by a real music group; this is the case of the *Catcanta* or *Posa-hi lletra* activities described by López (2003) and Saperas (2004).

¹⁹ < <http://www.ub.es/cpl/pg1.htm> >

²⁰ < <http://www2.upc.edu/slt/alatac/cat/joc/index.html> >

²¹ < <http://www2.upc.edu/slt/alatac/cat/drets/index.html> >

²² Foreign students skyrocketed from less than 1% in the early 90's to more than 12% in 2006-2007.

²³ < <http://www.xtec.cat/lic/nouvingut/index.htm> >

²⁴ < <http://www.xtec.cat/lic/entorn/index.htm> >

In these cases, the goal was that of inviting young people of any language background to pool their abilities to manipulate Catalan in a creative, realistic way. Other initiatives have sought to promote inter-personal use of language in preparing and broadcasting local radio programmes, as in the initiatives *Ni solta ni volta*, *Cau de meravelles* or *Banc de dades* described by Saperas (2004), Melià (2004) and Gelabert (2003). Another strategy for promoting interpersonal use of Catalan has been that of participating in radio, TV, comic, theatre, cinema, reading and photography workshops or competitions (*Encontre d'audiovisuals*, *Encontre de teatre*, *Marató de teatre*, *Aventura de llegir* or *Mes de la poesia*) (Melià 2004 and Gelabert 2003). Many of these activities were, in one way or another, connected with educational institutions, or language promotion institutions (see *Associació Trenta-1*, for instance²⁵; also Castellví 2001). In the Basque Country, young people were invited to join in music activities, expositions, the elaboration of magazines, journals or other kinds of publications, activities to reinforce the oral expressivity such as theatre, literary and compliment/insults competitions, the creation and singing of improvised and sung rhyming verses called *bertsolarism*, etc. Popular games and songs have also been compiled and published in the Basque Country, (for instance, *Euskal Jolasen bilduma II*, Urtxintxa).

One of the most successful events designed to promote the language²⁶ among the young people is the one known as the *Acampallengua* (a pun made with the works *acampar* 'to camp' and *llengua* 'language'), organized by the Joves de Mallorca per la Llengua,²⁷ a very active language activist movement addressed and formed by young people. It consists of an annual camp – usually in summer– where young people from all over Majorca, and even the rest of the Catalan speaking countries, gather to socialize with each other, enjoy music and games, and plan actions in favour of the language. The *acampallengua* has been repeated in other areas and is quite successful in promoting positive attitudes towards Catalan.

The promotion of pop/rock music furnishes us with a very interesting case to analyse the dilemma faced by institutions in the field of promoting a particular language. Compared to Basque, which has enjoyed a rather good music scene, the use of Catalan declined abruptly in this domain during the 1980's. In the early 1990's, a new generation of bands appeared which used Catalan for pop, rock and other international (mostly anglo-american) styles. The government of Catalonia tried to use the unexpected success of these bands to spearhead the promotion of Catalan among the young people in general. But, unfortunately, the operation turned out to be negative for almost everybody. Opponents of Catalan took this opportunity to argue that popular culture in this language was generously subsidized by the authorities. Although this was not actually the case, the claim ruined the legitimacy of a movement which aspired, as elsewhere, to be perceived as independent from the political power. At the same time, bands singing in Castilian were able to present themselves as marginalised by the powers-that-be and, therefore, more 'authentic'.

3.4 Networking

The last approach to the promotion of Catalan/Basque language use is that of encouraging the development of networks of people making active use of the language. It has to be pointed out that these are very recent initiatives which are not restricted to young people, and no reliable evaluation is yet available.

One of the pioneer initiatives in this sector was that of the Catalan *Associació Voluntariat Lingüístic* ('Linguistic Volunteers' Association), which promoted a number of actions in connection with the interpersonal use of Catalan. The association started its work at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in mid-90's, and among other things, its members took on the task of facilitating the arrival and linguistic integration of foreign students.²⁸ The Linguistic Volunteers spread eventually to the other universities of the Catalan language area, with a different degree of success. Strongly connected to this initiative is a similar one which is called *Voluntaris per la Llengua* ('Volunteers for the language').²⁹ This is a programme supported by the public agency for Catalan promotion (Consorti per a la Normalització Lingüística), and identified as one of the 50 most successful methods to promote language learning by the Lingo study. It consists of a protocol that helps in the formation of language couples – a native and a learner – that interact during at least 10 weeks, at their own rate and convenience. A similar

²⁵ < <http://www.mallorcaweb.net/trenta1/> >

²⁶ < http://www.acampallengua.cat/acampallen_web/acampallengua_inici.php >

²⁷ < http://www.jovesllengua.org/web/joveslle_01/historia_joves_llengua.php5 >

²⁸ < <http://www.upf.edu/vl/general/historia.htm> >, < <http://www.upf.edu/vl/general/altresvol.htm> >

²⁹ < <http://www.cpnl.cat/immigracio/> >

initiative in the Basque Country is *Mintzlaguna*, coordinated by Euskara Elkarten Topagunea. It consists of mixed groups, formed by Basque L1 speakers and Basque learners, which meet around once a week, in order to provide the latter with a context to practice the language. Also the Basque *Ikastolen Elkartea* (“Association of Ikastolas”) or *Herrietako Euskara Elkarreak* (“Social groups for Basque use in towns”) design activities to promote the local use of Basque.

4. Conclusions

In spite of the deep differences that set them apart, the Catalan and Basque language areas share a number of common features. This makes it reasonable to consider them jointly, in order to gain an insight into the factors that govern young people’s interpersonal use of lesser-used languages.

In both cases there is a marked discrepancy between the formal use of a language in educational settings, and its use as a means of informal communication among adolescent peers. Especially in communities where the dominant language pervades the environment, the transition from language acquisition is neither automatic nor inevitable, and use patterns associated with the dominant language can easily be a serious constraint. Thus, those projects of language revitalization seeking to achieve interpersonal communication in one language should ensure that the interpersonal skills in that particular language are effectively acquired by the learners. Otherwise, a pattern of language choice may arise, reserving the school language for academic activities.

Another of the lessons to be learned from these experiences has to do with the values that can be assigned to a language, and their significance. Excessive dependence on official bodies –either the school itself, or other official institutions – may turn young people against the language. In liberal, westernised societies, citizens tend to be zealous of their personal freedom, and suspicious about explicit instructions from the authorities. Especially when addressing young people, language promoters should avoid patronizing or paternalistic positions. It is also good for the language that different social voices are allowed to be heard in that language: heterogeneity is a mark of contemporary societies, and contemporary languages have to reflect internal heterogeneity.

Finally, there is one more lesson to be gained from the Catalan and Basque experiences. Language revitalization promoters have to play a delicate and difficult balance between what may be called an horizontal and vertical dimension. Sometimes, it will be wise to look for the spatial and social spread of the language (horizontal dimension), for that will enhance mutual comprehension and lessen intergroup suspicions. However, the horizontal dimension sometimes operates against the vertical goal. Creating (or recreating) communities of actual speakers requires the concentration of efforts on a limited number of speakers that is, by definition, smaller than the one that can be addressed by (simpler) language teaching strategies. And networks of actual users are a necessary condition if a language is to be kept alive and sustainable. Thus, language promoters are continuously faced with the difficult dilemma of choosing between an horizontal and vertical emphasis. And, to nobody’s surprise, making decisions turns out to be more than difficult in many occasions.

Chapter 6

Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

Both the sociolinguistic and ideological context make the Northern Ireland case different from other contexts examined in this report, although there are also aspects which are common to all.

The estimates³⁰ of the percentage of Irish-speakers in Northern Ireland provided by census and surveys range between 10% (Census 2001) and 18% (Social Mobility Survey 1996). Only 1-2% of the population claim to be completely fluent, and the majority of those claiming an ability to speak Irish have only partial or limited fluency in the language. (However, nearly all survey and census questionnaires used different questions about Irish language ability. Even the census changed the form of its question between 1991 and 2001. This makes comparison between survey and census findings difficult, and any attempt to reliably estimate the scale or direction of changes over time becomes practically impossible.)

All surveys have shown a very strong relationship between the religious affiliation of respondents and their ability to speak Irish. Very few Protestants claim to know any Irish, and those who make such a claim have only the 'odd word'. The overwhelming majority of Irish-speakers in Northern Ireland belong to the Catholic tradition.

It is also clear that while the majority of Irish-speakers are Catholic, large proportions of Catholics have no knowledge, or very little, of Irish. In fact, only a minority (15%) of Catholics know more than a few simple sentences, and these figures indicate how constrained social use of Irish is in practice. It is clear, for example, that there are important differences within the Catholic community in its relationship with Irish, as well as differences between Catholics and Protestants.

There is a strong relationship between education and Irish. Generally speaking, Irish-speakers form a larger minority of those with higher levels of education, than among other groups. Therefore, the social distribution of Irish-speakers is skewed towards the higher ranking occupational groups. However, this distribution also reflects the relative weighting of Catholics and Protestants in the various occupational groups. For example, Catholics are growing in importance in the professional segments of the middle classes, but not among 'legislators, senior officials and managers'. There is also a greater likelihood for Catholics to find themselves among the unemployed, and this is reflected in higher ratios of Irish-speakers there (compared to working-class occupations generally).

The ideological context is quite complex. Northern Ireland Protestants identify themselves primarily as British; Irish is not seen as of significance in their conception of this identity, and they are generally opposed to any state intervention on its behalf. Furthermore, Irish plays very little part in their schools, and very few have any competence in the language. Protestants generally speaking describe themselves as either having no opinion, indifferent or opposed. Nonetheless, while very few Protestants want their own children to learn Irish, a sizeable minority (20%) would like to see it spoken in the future and a similar proportion is prepared to see public resources made available so that others can do so (e.g. taught as subject in Northern Ireland schools).

³⁰ The ability and attitudinal statistics included in this introductory section are based on research currently in progress in Trinity College, under the direction of Pádraig Ó Riagáin. This research will be published in early 2008. A partial account may be found in Ó Riagáin, P (2007) 'Relationships between Attitudes to Irish, Social Class, Religion and National Identity in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland', *International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*, 10, 4, 1-25.

Northern Ireland Catholics differ from Northern Protestants on almost all measures. Large proportions perceive Irish as a living language (74%), and 62% would like to see Irish maintained in the future. However, they do not see Irish as a central element of Northern Irish identity, and one must conclude that their positive views about Irish are framed within an all-Ireland context. Moreover, in terms of the practicalities of education policy, Northern Ireland Catholics are quite divided in their views. In replies to the question about their preferred programme for most children – all-Irish, Irish as a subject, No Irish – no option chosen by Northern Ireland Catholics received support from more than 34% of the group. This disagreement about basic policy options reflects some sharp internal divisions among Northern Catholics about Irish.

These are all factors that have to be taken into account in assessing the possibilities of extending the use of Irish among adolescents outside of school.

While there are no language related studies dealing specifically with the age-groups of interest in this project, there have been a number of sociological studies of adolescent age-groups in Northern Ireland. These can be divided into two main categories:

- Firstly, studies with a strong qualitative emphasis, usually ethnographies which collect data through participant observation and semi-structured interviewing techniques:
- Secondly, broad based quantitative surveys aiming to gather statistically representative information on social networks for specific age cohorts. From a Northern Ireland perspective the most relevant of these are the annual ‘Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey’ and the related ‘Young Life and Times Survey’.

Finally, these two sources, which deal with general social issues, are supplemented with the findings of a small pilot survey conducted especially for this report among children attending the three Irish-medium secondary schools in Northern Ireland.

2. Qualitative Research

‘Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids: Working-class Youth Life-styles in Belfast’ (1982) is an ethnographic study of a housing estate on the outskirts of Belfast. The study uses participant observation methods. The study examines cultural reproduction among young people; in particular comparing differences in youth life-styles with regard to family background, education, delinquency, employment and marriage. Jenkins’ main interest concerns the interaction of the social worlds of young people and labour market processes. He emphasises three elements of the social processes which lead to life-style differences. First, the process reflects the practices of the young people themselves. Second, ‘significant others’ have an influence. These are people who occupy positions within institutions, and hence despite being external to the community are heavily implicated in its reproduction, due to their ability to allocate resources (and penalties) to the inhabitants of Ballyhightown. Thirdly, the structures of the institutions themselves matter, in particular, the institutionalised hierarchy of positions and careers in the labour market and its relation to class.

In *‘Acts of Union’* (1990) Desmond Bell examines *Youth Culture and Ethnic identity in Northern Ireland* and, in particular, Protestant working-class adolescents in the 14–18 age-group. The main objective was to elucidate the particular role of youth cultural practices and peer-group associations in sustaining sectarian identities among young Protestants in Northern Ireland. Additionally, Bell was interested in the impact of religious and residential segregation and ongoing civil and political conflict on peer group formation. Bell contends that Jenkins over-emphasises the normality of childhood and adolescence in Northern Ireland and systematically plays down the sectarian and ethnic dimension of Protestant working-class life. By drawing too many parallels with other disadvantaged areas of the United Kingdom, Jenkins ignores the fact that sectarian division remains a fundamental mode of stratification in Northern Ireland.

Gabrielle Maguire, in her book *“Our Own Language: An Irish Initiative”* (1991) draws on research in the Republic (see Chapter 3) to study the impact of one Irish immersion primary school on the participating families. The one school examined in her book grew

out of an attempt by a small number of families in the Shaw's Road in the nationalist area of Belfast to establish an Irish-speaking community. As the school expanded it drew in families who were not in the original founding group and the central five chapters of the book presents the results of a survey of the families who were (in 1985) sending their children to the Irish immersion primary school. Nearly 100 families were interviewed in 1985. The research appears to have been designed to test the proposition that the involvement of families with the school resulted in changes in the parents', as well the childrens', proficiency in and use of Irish. Thus the questionnaire - which is not reproduced in the book – appears to have been structured on a 'before and after' basis, with questions about the parents' knowledge of and prior association with Irish, their use of Irish in the home and in the community before and after their children attended the school and the role of the school in these changes.

Gabrielle Maguire's ethnographic study of the growth of the Irish language in Belfast *'Our Own Language: An Irish Initiative'* was written before the foundation of Irish-medium secondary schools in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, Maguire draws a distinction between younger children attending Irish-medium primary schools, and teenagers who must attend English-medium secondary schools.

She claims that the recreational activities of children attending the Irish-medium primary school are based within the (Irish speaking) community, and are associated with school friends. However, as the pupils grow older there is a general shift towards English. Partly, this was due to the then absence of Irish-medium secondary education, which meant that school-based friendships established after a certain age were almost certain to be mediated through English. When monolingual contacts visit the Irish-speaking community, their bilingual counterparts tend to speak English in their presence, encouraging language switching, and decreasing the overall tendency to use Irish.

Nevertheless, an equally important factor is the social development associated with adolescence, which necessitates the extension of the social life into English-dominant domains, due to the dearth of Irish-medium leisure activities for this age group. While some participate in Irish-language activities such as traditional music or dance classes, in reality, teenage Irish speakers are very restricted socially. Leisure activities for teenagers, such as local sports clubs, youth clubs, discos etc. are largely part of the English speaking environment. The stability of Irish as a spoken medium is seriously threatened by the intense exposure of young people to these English language dominated activities, which are not balanced out by a complementary range of Irish-medium possibilities. Because of this, young people often find that an English-speaking environment intensifies its dominance over all aspects of their lives during adolescence. "A need exists for the provision of cultural centres which would offer young Irish speakers and learners social opportunities, resources and amenities comparable to those available to the general public".

The association between the English language and the adolescent peer culture develops a corresponding association between that language and the type of subjects discussed with peers. Accordingly, bilingual adolescents come to consider English to be a more suitable or appropriate medium for certain conversation topics (e.g. romantic relationships) and Irish is deemed 'inappropriate'. Additionally, the shift among older adolescents towards English has the effect of exposing their younger siblings to a higher degree of English use.

'Ethnicity and Language Change: English in (London) Derry, Northern Ireland' (2001) is Kevin McCafferty's attempt to account for the affect of ethnicity on English-language dialect formation in Northern Ireland. His study is partly a fairly straightforward sociolinguistic study of the use of English in a single urban speech community (i.e. (London) Derry), measuring the effects of ethnicity on language variation and change in comparison with age, sex, social class and social network variables. However, he also uses interview material gathered for sociolinguistic analysis to provide an ethnographic account of some of the workings of ethnic division in the informants' everyday lives. This approach stands in opposition to previous sociolinguistic studies in Northern Ireland which invoked the non-sectarian principal in relation to language distribution. While ethnicity was frequently explicitly denied by respondents as being a significant context for peer group formation, in practice the division affects all aspects of life. On both sides of the divide, people are aware of the ethnic distribution of the population in general, and the ethnic make-up of their own neighbourhood in particular. This geographical segregation is strongly reinforced by activity segregation. Hence, most major contexts for teenage peer group formation are segregated. Accordingly, there is a clear linguistic divide between the two communities. Protestants tended to lead in the adoption of language innovations from

other parts of the country, resulting in a linguistic divergence away from the city's majority Catholic population. While it is speculated that this difference may disappear in time as Catholics begin to adopt these language changes themselves, it is clear that ethnicity is a very real factor in this process.

3. Quantitative Studies

Life and Times Surveys. Beginning in 1998 and administered annually, the Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys aim to “put on record the attitudes, values and beliefs of the people in Northern Ireland to a wide range of social policy issues.” Over the years, it has asked a number of questions concerning social network formation. The component of these surveys of most interest in the present context is that titled *Young Life and Times Surveys*. From 1998–2002 these surveys included 12–18 year olds, but from 2003 on the sample was restricted to 16–18 year olds only.

In 2006, the *Young Life and Times Survey* asked 16–18 year-olds: ‘How many close friends do you have, friends you could talk to if you were in some kind of trouble?’ In reply, the vast majority of adolescents in the sample claimed to have between two and ten ‘close’ friends (76%). Within this total, similar proportions reporting two to three close friends (22%), four to five (28%) and six to ten (26%). These findings are in keeping with international research concerning the size of adolescent peer groups.

In the 2003 survey, respondents were asked: ‘Not counting the people you live with, how often do you see your friends?’ More than half of the adolescents surveyed saw their friends everyday (53%). In addition to this, a further 27% saw their friends five or six days a week, and 10% three or four days a week. Only 9% of the adolescents surveyed saw their friends less frequently. Clearly then, the vast majority of adolescents maintain close, ‘multiplex’ ties with their friends. This fits in with theoretical perspectives that emphasise the importance of friendship networks in adolescent socialisation.

The 2003 survey then went on to ask ‘Apart from the people that you live with, how many friends live within a 12-20 minute walk or a 5-10 minute drive?’ The results emphasised the key role of geographical proximity in the process of adolescent friendship formation. Only 4% have no friends who live within this range. 16% have ‘one or two’ and 22% have ‘three or four’. However, a clear majority (56%) reported having ‘five or more’ friends living relatively close to their home.

The 2003 survey also covered adolescent participation in organised activities. A majority (66%) reported involvement in one or more activity, although a substantial minority (30%) did not participate at all. Breaking down the sample, by far the most popular activity among adolescents was ‘sports/ hobbies clubs’ in which roughly half of the relevant sub-sample participated. Next were ‘social clubs’ in which 27% of the sample was involved. Roughly similar percentages were involved in ‘religious groups’ (18%) and ‘associations’ (15%). It should be noted that, according to the findings of this survey, young Protestants are much more likely to be involved in ‘religious groups’ than their Catholic counterparts.

4. Results of Pilot Survey

Although the available research provided some useful insights of a general nature, very little was directly relevant to the specific category of adolescent upon which the project was focused, i.e. children aged 12–18 years who were attending Irish-medium schools. It was, therefore, decided to undertake a small exploratory survey, with the assistance of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the principals of the three Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland. It should be emphasised that, as explained in Chapter One, this project did not have the time or resources to undertake detailed fieldwork, and this pilot survey is only intended to provide some information about the basic parameters in a situation where no information at all exists. Its findings should be regarded as tentative and provisional, pending a fuller inquiry (Appendix A contains the questionnaire and the main tables).

The number of pupils in these schools in 2003–4 was Belfast (406), Derry (49) and Armagh (26). The survey sought to obtain responses from all pupils in the two smaller schools, but only the youngest and oldest cohorts in the Belfast school. The bilingual questionnaire consisted of 14 questions on one page. (The Irish version) on one side of the page, and the

English version on the reverse.) It was requested that the questionnaire should be completed by each pupil in class time, and that the teacher would explain the layout of the questionnaire and the procedures for answering questions. Some 145 completed questionnaires were returned for analysis. Because the timing of the surveys coincided with the time some classes in the largest school were away on a school trip, the numbers in the sample from that school are disproportionately low. However, this has been taken into account in interpreting the findings.

The questions were as simple and straightforward as possible. They sought to obtain very basic information about Irish language use with the pupil's parents, siblings, relations, visitors to their home, with their friends outside the home and in various activities and organisations. Background variables included gender, age, distance from school, ability to speak Irish, contact with other school pupils.

Although this project is not concerned with language use in either the home or the school, both these domains form important elements of an adolescent's life and some information was collected on these topics.

Language use in the school life of the pupils in the sample appears the most straightforward issue. Practically all pupils in the sample had attended an Irish-medium preschool and primary school, and they were now, of course, by definition in an Irish-medium secondary school.

Use of Irish in the home is, by contrast, a more variable and complicated matter. About one-third of the sample claimed that Irish was used as much as English in their homes or even more intensively in the case of a minority (5%). About a further one third said that they used mostly English, but this response allows for the possibility of some Irish being spoken. A final 27% said that no Irish was spoken their homes. As regards participants in conversations in which Irish was spoken, rather more cited siblings (58%) than parents (30%) or other adults (20%).

As the focus of this project primarily concerns use of Irish outside of school and home environments, we now turn to these issues. In response to the question 'What language do you normally use when talking to your friends outside of school?' nearly half (47%) said that English was the normal language used, and a further 27% said that 'mostly' English was used. Thus, only a little more than one quarter of those responding to the question claimed to use Irish in normal conversations. Of these, most claimed to use Irish and English in equal proportions ('half and half'), rather than exclusive use of Irish.

There was very little difference between boys and girls in this respect. There also appeared to be no significant and/or consistent relationship between this measure of the extent to which Irish was used with friends and age, home/school distance, or proportion of the respondent's friends in same school. There is a slight school effect, which appears to be related to differences between compact and dispersed catchment areas – the more dispersed school group reporting the lower level of use. The variable, however, that correlates most strongly with Irish language use among friends, however, is reported level of home use of Irish. Of those who report use of Irish in their homes at least half the time, 51% report the same level of Irish language use with their friends. But of those who report that English is mostly or always used in their home, only 17% claim to use Irish ('half and half' with English, or better) with their friends.

Roughly the same proportion (32%) of the survey participants took part in activities or organisations in which Irish was used, as spoke Irish with their friends (27%). They are not, however, the same group of adolescents. Only about 10% of the sample used Irish at intensive levels with friends and also participated in Irish-using activities and organisations. About two thirds (68%) of those who use Irish with their friends in normal conversation do not attend any activities where Irish is used. On the other hand, about 32% of those who do not use Irish with their friends, do attend such activities. For this group, attendance at such activities is the only context within which they spoke, or at least encountered Irish outside of the school. The activities most frequently mentioned were sports (48%), school related (34%), youth clubs (27%), and Irish language organisations (27%).

Unlike informal use of Irish among friends, participation rates in organized Irish-using activities seems to be marked by some striking differences among the sample. First, there is a distinct gender difference – boys (42%) are considerably more likely to

be involved than girls (20%). This is primarily due to the lower participation of girls (21%) in sports activities in which Irish is used, compared to boys (60%). Girls (43%) are actually more likely than boys (23%) to be involved in youth clubs, and in Irish language organisations (36% compared to 23% for boys). However, the numbers here are smaller than for sports activities, and girls' better participation rates in these activities do not alter the overall picture. (Obviously, all groups participate in equal measure in school related activities.) Secondly, younger respondents (40%) are more likely to be involved than older age-groups (24%). Finally, there is a difference between the largest and longest established school (42%) and the smaller and newer schools (26%).

Finally, respondents who did not report involvement in activities or organisations in which Irish was used were asked for the reasons for their non-involvement. About 30% of this group said that they had no interest in such activities. These were more likely to be boys (46%) than girls (18%), younger (40%) rather than older (21%) and to live nearest the school (45%) than farther away (over 5 miles) (13%). However, the majority of this group (65%) claimed that the reason for non-participation was that there were no such activities in their areas. The breakdown here is the opposite of the 'no interest' group. Girls (78%), older respondents (70%) and those living furthest away from their school (82%) were far more likely to give this reason than boys (45%), younger respondents (55%), and those living nearest the school (48%).

One other point should be noted here. The pilot survey did not ask the young respondents about their participation in out of school activities and organisations generally, but only about those in which some Irish was used. If the figure for the 'Young Life and Times' surveys is taken as broadly applicable here (see above), it appears that 66% of our sample are likely to be involved in some activities/organisations of this kind. This is twice the proportion who reported themselves in the current survey as participants (32%) in Irish-using activities. In other words, at least as many again are likely to be involved in English-using activities of these types.

5. Conclusion

Obviously, all of the issues touched upon in the survey require further and more detailed examination. Many topics were not covered at all (e.g. attitudes), and even those that were included (e.g. home and social use of Irish) were dealt with in a sketchy way. But, bearing in mind that the survey is designed only as an exploratory study, and that the questions are of a simple, general nature, the picture revealed is coherent, consistent and credible. Some of these points will be taken up again in the final chapter.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and Conclusions

1. Introduction

Although the minority language communities surveyed in earlier chapters (Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Wales, Catalonia, the Basque Region) differ considerably from each other, they all share a common concern with the problem at the heart of this report. All of these communities have managed to increase the numbers of children in immersion education programmes. These pupils do not generally speak the minority language as their mother tongue and many, in fact, have no knowledge whatsoever of the minority language when they begin school (or preschool). All of the available evidence suggests that these schools and programmes have been very successful in bringing their pupils to high levels of fluency in the minority language, although it is a second language for most of them. However, there is a shared concern that this acquired competence in the target language is not leading to similar rates of increase in the pupils' social use of the language. School settings generally serve as the place where friendships are formed, whereas non-school settings serve as the context for cementing these relationships. Therefore, the non-school context is a vital consideration if the ultimate objective is the formation of sustainable Irish-speaking (or Welsh-, Catalan-, or Basque-speaking) networks. This is not altogether a new finding. The comprehensive report of the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (CILAR) in 1975 found that – after taking the amount of Irish in the school teaching programme into account – *‘that the second item most highly correlated with the (speaking) ability (of adults) is the extent to which Irish was used by the respondent outside the classroom during his school years’* (CILAR Report 1975: 140)

Language use in non-school activities and organizations also impacts on the quality of minority language learning overall. Prof. Vila i Moreno, reviewing the Basque and Catalan experience in the present report, argues persuasively that pupils coming from homes in which Catalan/Basque is absent may not – despite immersion education – have *‘the linguistic skills (lexical, stylistic, etc.) that allow for informal, interpersonal language use among peers’*. While this finding clearly has some implications for language teaching programmes within the school, it also confirms the importance of promoting minority language use in informal, interpersonal contexts outside of it. In this sense, the contexts examined in the report may be viewed as ***the informal learning environment***, in contrast to the more formal environment of the school.

While the problem is widely acknowledged, there is still a lack of research dedicated to the study of this particular problem³¹. Research approaches (see Chapter One) which have the potential to illuminate the disjunction between competence in a minority language and its use in social life have not yet been applied in this context in a sufficient number of cases to sustain any general conclusions about the underlying processes or about ‘best practice’ solutions. In many cases, including both parts of Ireland, such approaches have not been applied at all.

³¹ The Final Report (October 2007) of the European Commission's High Level Group on Multilingualism gives priority to the need to study *‘the impact of extracurricular or out-of-school measures, including leisure activities and exchanges, on the acquisition of competence in languages’*(p.21).

Obviously, in these circumstances, it is inevitable that we should conclude by recommending further research work in this area. While this is our main conclusion, the materials reviewed in this report also point to a number of factors which appear to have a bearing on the problem, and these are briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

2. Numbers and thresholds

In various ways, nearly all reviews conducted for this project point to the differences between situations in which minority speakers are in a local majority, and those in which this does not or cannot happen. For example, Prof. Vila i Moreno (Chapter Five) writes ‘all indices make it clear that the minority languages are used for interpersonal communication only in schools with a significant percentage of Catalan and Basque native speakers; even more, only in schools where these speakers form a clear majority are Castilian speakers inclined towards the use of Catalan or Basque with their peers’. And Glyn Williams (Chapter Four) notes that ‘the greater the density of Welsh speakers in the social network, the greater the opportunity and tendency for the associated network members to use Welsh’, while in Ireland the most obvious differences are found between Fíor-Ghaeltacht, Breac-Ghaeltacht and Galltacht areas in Ireland, they are also found among urban networks (Chapter Three). These observations all embody the concept of ‘threshold’ or ‘critical mass’, and the point has a more general relevance. Just as Irish-medium schools require a certain number of participating families within their catchment areas to become and remain viable, so too do all of those many organizations and activities which use Irish. However, given the very small size of the Irish-medium sector in Northern Ireland, one has to ask if it contains sufficient numbers for the development for community-based, as distinct from school-based, activities. Policy interventions of this type may, therefore, have to incorporate adolescents from other schools in the area, and this widens the reference group from a research as well as a policy perspective. Even if they are not Irish-medium schools, such schools may be teaching Irish as a subject. Perhaps the next phase of research might, therefore, usefully take the local community as its analytical frame, rather than just the Irish-medium school alone. It would, in any case, provide a fuller context for understanding adolescents’ use of Irish in social interaction if the research took all pupils studying Irish into account, and not just those in Irish-medium education.

3. Use of Irish in the home

While peer groups become a more important context for development throughout adolescence, mainstream sociological research has demonstrated that adults continue to influence the functioning of adolescents peer groups. Bo’s study (Chapter One) found that most peers were rated as secondary or tertiary network members and the most intimate zone of the networks was made up of the core family and some selected best friends and extended family members. The social networks of adults and their children overlap. These results call into question stereotypes maintaining that adolescents in general live in a separate world, detached from adult society. The pilot survey (Chapter Six) showed that those pupils who reported higher than average ratio of Irish language usage in their homes, were also far more likely to report higher than average use of Irish with their friends. The topic, of course, requires more extensive study than was possible in this project – both home and social use of Irish were measured in very gross terms. (The Dublin All-Irish schools study (1979, p113) also found that ‘high home users of Irish tend to have more intensive and extensive Irish-speaking networks than lower home users of Irish’. While this finding was primarily based on evidence relating to parents, the analysis also included measures of children’s social use of Irish.)

4. The ‘competence’ issue

Nonetheless, leaving the possible influence of home attitudes on language use aside, the role attributed to the home in these findings may more importantly be related to ability issues. When the home is an active partner in the language socialization process, the quality of language learning may differ from those who rely on the school alone. Prof. Vila (Chapter Five) pointed out that pupils coming from homes in which Catalan/Basque is absent may not – despite immersion education - have ‘the linguistic skills (lexical, stylistic, etc.) that allow for informal, interpersonal language use among peers’. He wonders if schools ‘may have paid too much attention to promoting the standard language, to develop written language skills, and to fighting undesired language contact phenomena (‘interference’), and he calls for a reconsideration of the competence issue, even in immersion schools. The importance of ability constraints was also mentioned more than once in the review of the Irish research, and these topics clearly merit further and more detailed consideration.

5. The importance of the socio-economic context

The report 'Irish and the Education System: an analysis of examination results' (1986) was one of the first (in Ireland) to point out that the impact of the education system was conditioned by the linkages between the different elements of the system and the labour market. Thus, a highly structured relationship was shown to exist between class background of pupils, the duration of their education and, consequently, their choice of Irish as a school subject or medium of instruction. If this applies to the pupils proclivity to study Irish, it may also be expected to influence pupils attitudes to and tendencies to use Irish outside school. The communities of practice approach (Chapter One) argued that social groups were defined by their relation to the labour market, with some intending to enter college upon graduation and some intending to enter the labour market as soon as possible. As their networks were differently orientated, members of each group (in the work of Penny Eckert) adopted differing vernacular norms. Hence, relationship to macro-level socioeconomic structures (such as the labour market) is manifested in micro-level linguistic practices. This may suggest that approaches to the formation of Irish-speaking social networks outside of the school environment, or 'communities of practice' should take account of socio-economic background of pupils and their relation to the labour market.

6. Some possibilities for policy intervention

Structured after-school activities are believed to have a role linking the school to the out of school context, and thus strengthening the Irish-speaking peer networks formed in school. Glyn Williams, for example, observes that, in communities where little Welsh is spoken in the community, 'peer group networks are unlikely to use L2 and some form of direct intervention is essential'. There is support for this general approach in the mainstream sociological literature. Dubois and Hirsch (1989) suggest that structured non-school activities can serve as an aide to friendship formation, acting as a 'first step' from seeing a friend in school only, to seeing them in unstructured surroundings. Mc Gee (2006) contends that participation in formal clubs and groups can widen the 'social convoy' to which young people are exposed as well as strengthening relationships within that convoy. Cottrell (1996) undertook an in-depth analysis of adolescent social relations in adult-organised settings. He asserts that many researchers miss the educational benefits that can flow to young people from the community provision of structured recreational activities. Through participation in structured activities, adolescents learn the unwritten social rules which characterise the organisation and conform to the standing pattern of behaviour, making such clubs a potentially powerful agent of socialisation. If the above arguments are correct, they suggest that the provision of structured activities has obvious value in the formation and maintenance of Irish speaking networks among adolescents.

Thus, while this report emphasises the need for on-going research on this important topic, it also provides some guidelines for the development of policy initiatives in the immediate future, given the objective of forming sustainable Irish-speaking networks, or achieve the objective of encouraging the continued use of Irish into and beyond adolescence. The authors fully endorse the recommendation of the report 'Young People's Social Networks and Language Use', published by the Welsh Language Board, 2006.

Any strategy to promote the (Irish) language amongst young people needs to pay attention to measures that could maintain and increase the use of (Irish) in families' homes where possible and, secondly, increase opportunities for young (Irish) speakers from English speaking homes to use (Irish) socially' (p. 279) 'It is therefore important to support activities organized by organisations and youth services in the voluntary and public sectors that create Irish only contexts and that give a prominent place to the Irish language in their activities. The sooner young people are involved with Irish-medium social activities the better in order to establish language use patterns that involve Irish(p. 281).

(Irish' has been substituted for 'Welsh' in preceding extracts).

Therefore, when considering future Government policy and provision in Northern Ireland, in order to maximise the potential for success, it is argued that policy, structures and activities should focus on the following:

- notwithstanding the popular tendency to think of ‘youth culture’ as something quite distinct and separate from mainstream society, research has repeatedly shown that adults (parents and significant others) continue to have an important influence on young people’s language practice;
- all studies reviewed in the present report have emphasized that the language of the home is a core factor in every context. Therefore, even in a policy strategy that focuses on language use in the social networks of adolescents, it is important that support is given to their families;
- as regards non-school activities and organizations, viability thresholds, or critical mass considerations, are important planning considerations. At the local level, it may be important to exploit and the combined potential of Irish-Medium and English-Medium pupils;
- age and gender factors are equally important. The survey conducted as part of the present study show clearly that girls and older adolescents are not as well supported with organized Irish-using activities as their younger counterparts;
- lastly, ‘the policies and practices of public bodies along with the attitudes and behaviour of the general public affect young people in the same way as they affect everyone else in society. Those general influences also affect the status and prestige of the Welsh language and the opportunities to use it’. (Welsh Language Board, 2006: 278). In this regard the linkages between the schools and the labour market are particularly important. Several research studies have shown that language use in the workplace is as important in encouraging and maintaining Irish-speaking networks among young adults, as Irish-Medium schools are for the younger cohort.

7. The International Dimension

Finally, this project was constructed on an international basis from the outset in the belief that these problems are common to many, if not all, minority language situations. In this respect, the belief proved to be well-founded, as the contributions to this report of Glyn Williams, F. Xavier Vila i Moreno and his associates demonstrate. We believe that the benefits of this kind of cooperation between researchers in minority language communities are clear and substantial, and we would recommend that this dimension be retained in any future research programme. Apart from enriching a particular project, such cooperative efforts help to avoid the problems of duplication and fragmentation of research efforts – which bedevil all research sectors.

Appendix A

Table 1: School attended

	Frequency	Percentage
Armagh	65	44.8
Belfast	51	35.2
Derry	29	20
Total	145	100

Table 2: Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	49
Female	73	51
Total	143	100

Table 3: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
11-12 yrs.	69	48.3
13-15 yrs.	51	35.7
16+ yrs.	23	16.0
Total	143	100

Table 4: Home-School Distance

Distance (miles)	Frequency	Percentage
Under 1	47	34.6
2-5	55	40.4
6-10	12	8.8
Over 11	22	16.2
Total	136	100

Table 5: Do other children from this school live on the same street or area as you?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	107	74.3
No	37	25.7
Total	144	100

Table 6: How many of your friends go to your school?

	Frequency	Percentage
All	12	8.4
Most	61	42.7
Half	25	17.5
Less than Half	40	28
None	5	3.5
Total	145	100

Table 7: Did you attend an Irish-medium (All-Irish) preschool?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	139	95.9
No	6	4.1
Total	145	100

Table 8: How would you describe your ability to speak Irish?

	Frequency	Percentage
As good as English	90	62.9
Can manage most conversations	49	34.3
Can manage parts of conversations	4	2.8
Total	143	100

Table 9: How much Irish do you normally speak at home?

	Frequency	Percentage
Always Irish	3	2.1
Mostly Irish	5	3.5
Half and Half	40	27.8
Mostly English	57	39.6
Always English	39	27.1
Total	144	100

Table 10: If you speak any Irish at home, with whom do you speak it?

	Mother		Father		Brother/ Sister		Visiting Friends		Other Relatives		Other People	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	42	29.6	47	33.1	83	58.5	29	20.4	31	21.8	27	19
No	100	70.4	95	66.9	59	41.5	113	79.6	111	78.2	115	81
Total	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100	142	100

Table 11: What language do you normally use when talking to your friends outside of school?

	Frequency	Percentage
Mostly Irish	5	3.5
Half and Half	33	23.1
Mostly English	38	26.6
Always English	67	46.9
Total	143	100

Table 12: Do you normally attend activities/ organisations outside of school where Irish is spoken?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	31.9
No	96	68.1
Total	141	100

Table 13: Participation in various Irish-medium after-school activities

	Sports		Irish Language Organisations		Youth Clubs		Church- Related Activities		School- Related Activities		Other Activities	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	21	47.7	12	27.3	12	27.3	5	11.4	25	34.1	3	6.8
No	23	52.3	32	72.7	32	72.7	39	88.6	29	65.9	41	93.2
Total	44	100	44	100	44	100	44	100	44	100	44	100

Table 14: Reasons for non-participation in Irish-language activities

	Frequency	Percentage
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No Interest	27	29
No Activities Available	60	64.5
Other	6	6.5
Total	93	100

Questionnaire (English Version)

Young People and Use of Irish Outside of School

This questionnaire is part of a research project being conducted by Trinity College Dublin. In this study, we seek the help of young people in Irish medium schools in gathering basic information, and we ask that you do this by completing this questionnaire. Your answers are confidential and you are not asked for your name or address. This is not an examination, and there are no right or wrong answers. We simply ask you to give an honest answer to each question. A few questions require you to write in your answers, but mostly you will be asked to circle the number (or sometimes the numbers) that you think is, or are, closest to your answer.

- 1) Male (1) Female (2) (Circle One)
- 2) How old are you? _____ years old (write in)
- 3) How far from this school do you live? _____ miles.
- 4) Do other children from this school live on the same street or area as you? Yes (1) No (2) (Circle One)
- 5) How many of your friends go to your school? All (1) Most (2) Half (3) Less than half (4) None (5)
- 6) Did you attend an Irish-medium (all-Irish) pre-school? Yes (1) No (2) Circle one.
- 7) How would you describe your ability to speak Irish? (circle one)
 - As good as English (1)
 - Can manage most conversations (2)
 - Can manage parts of conversations (3)
 - A few simple sentences (4)
- 8) How much Irish do you normally speak at home? (circle one)
 - Always Irish (1)
 - Mostly Irish (2)
 - Half & half (3)
 - Mostly English (4)
 - Always English (5)
- 9) If you speak any Irish at home, with whom do you speak it? (NB circle ALL boxes that apply to you)
 - Mother (1)
 - Father (1)
 - Brother/ Sister (1)
 - Visiting Friends (1)
 - Other Relatives (1)
 - Other People (1)
 - Do not speak Irish at home at all. (1)

10) What language do you normally use when talking to your friends outside of school? (circle one)

- Always Irish (1)
- Mostly Irish (2)
- Half & half (3)
- Mostly English (4)
- Always English (5)

11) Do you normally attend activities/ organisations outside of school where Irish is spoken? (circle one)

- Yes (1) No (2)

12) If you answered **'yes'** to question 11, what kind of activity is that? (circle ALL boxes that apply to you)

- Sports (1)
- Irish Language Organisation (1)
- Youth Clubs (1)
- Church-related Activities (1)
- School-related Activities (1)
- Other _____ (1)

13) If you answered **'no'** to question 11, is this because: (circle one)

- You have no interest in such activities/ organisations (1)
- No activities/ organisations of this kind are available in your area (2)
- Other Reasons (write in) _____ (3)

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