

Part II

Language Contact and Language Choice

4. Strong languages. Language vigour in societal settings

*“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone,
“it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”
“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make
a word mean so many different things.”
“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty,
“which is master – that’s all.”*

*Questions of language are basically questions of power.
N. Chomsky*

4.1 Introductory

The subject of this chapter, which, as will become clear, represents a pivotal topic of this study, is the notion of “language vigour”, which we can define, for the present time, as the relative status and stability of a language within a social setting. Language vigour plays a central role when we try to assess the relationship and the balance (or lack of it) between several languages in a language contact situation, for example, a language border area or a bilingual community. One model which would lend itself to such an assessment would be the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality proposed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) (cf. also Landry and Allard 1994a/b and Harwood *et al.* 1994). I shall discuss my reasons for opting for a different approach – and a different focus – in section 4.1.

To return to the concept of language vigour, it may be a truism to say that the more vigorous a language is, the more secure is its future, and the less vigorous the more precarious its chances of survival. Truism or not, this consideration must be a central issue in the definition of a language policy for the society in question. As this study is concerned with bilingual education in a societal framework, one question we need to examine is which languages are considered as a medium of instruction in bilingual education programmes and for what reasons. It is in this context that the question of language vigour plays a crucial, if not always acknowledged, role.

A central problem in reviewing language contact situations is that such an assessment tends to be relevant mainly for the situation in which it is made, thus presenting us with a parallel problem to the one we encountered when discussing individual bilingualism. In principle there are as many different forms of language coexistence and language contact as there are language contact situations and as there are points in time at which the studies on language contact (and conflict) are carried out. We can therefore assume that multilingual settings are likely to differ from one another quite considerably. Similarly, in the case of a stable language contact situation there is a possibility of diachronic differences within the same setting; in the case of an unstable contact situation such differences are highly probable. This means that even if we restrict our focus to a Western framework, as is the case in the present study, the need arises to develop a

model which is flexible enough to be widely applicable while at the same time containing sufficient provisions to accommodate exigencies of specific settings.

With this requirement in mind, it becomes clear that the referential framework about to be developed cannot account for all aspects of language vigour in all contexts and, indeed, it is not intended to do that. It provides an extrapolation of those factors which can be observed in most social settings; thus, the model is based on the “lowest common denominators” which make up the vigour of the various languages co-existing within a given society. The discussion of the various elements of the model will pave the way to the next chapter where we will discuss the impact of language vigour on bilingual education and the choice of a language as a medium of instruction.

One may object to the development of such a model and its terminology on the grounds that there are already terminologies to which one could take recourse, and by not doing so this study simply adds to an already inflated body of jargon. However, I feel that the development of the proposed model is justifiable from two points of view. Firstly, the existing terminology is not always as unequivocal as we might wish. We have seen in the previous chapters that bilingualism can be defined or understood in many different ways and can thus create problems as it may raise expectations which cannot be met or give rise to feelings of apprehension which are uncalled for. In the same way we can see that the term “bilingual education” is at times used in a manner which has very little or nothing to do with the way in which we have defined it for this study, i.e. as adding one or more languages to the one(s) the students already speak. Many so called bilingual education programmes are aimed at transitional bilingualism (cf. Appel 1988: 52-53.; Tosi 1988: 86-89; Fishman 1990: 210) whose aim is to transfer speakers of lesser-used languages as swiftly and efficiently as possible to a level of majority language proficiency which allows these children to function as unproblematically as possible within the majority language education system. Secondly, it has been shown that bilingual education programmes themselves must be based on specific local settings (Albrecht *et al.* 1990: 129; Nelde 1990) if they are to be successful. The choice of the medium of instruction in bilingual education programmes is therefore a central issue. In a contested situation such as one in which speakers of a language “with little vigour” are taught through the medium of a considerably more vigorous language, the resulting bilingualism is likely to be subtractive or transitional rather than stable. I therefore maintain that we need an unequivocal terminological framework for bilingual education based on considerations of language vigour in order to be able to discuss the features and needs of the various bilingual education programmes.

The structure of this chapter will thus be as follows: First I shall discuss the concept of language vigour, its nature and the main contributing factors. On this basis I shall then present the model for assessing language vigour from a theoretical point of view. To round off the picture, a brief discussion of the various types of language vigour will follow. Within this I shall focus in greater detail on the less vigorous languages as some will receive somewhat more attention in the rest of this study.

4.2 The notion of language vigour

As mentioned in 4.1., in 1977 Giles *et al.* introduced the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality or EV, which they defined as “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active entity in intergroup situations” (1977: 308). They listed a number of variables for this concept, which can be grouped into three categories i.e. status, demographic factors and institutional support and control (see Figure 4.1. for an overview). Status variables reflect the prestige in the widest sense which members of a group command in a given social setting. This includes such

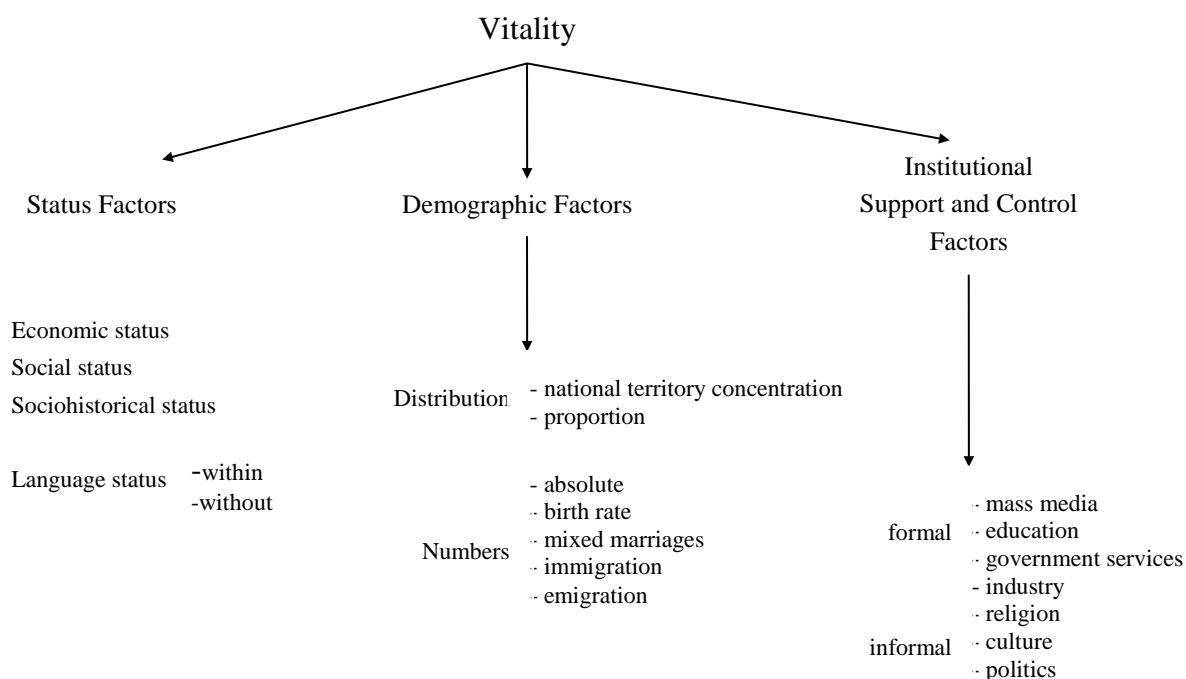


Figure 4.1 Factor structure of the vitality construct (Harwood *et al.* 1994: 169)

aspects as socio-economic status of the group, its social history and the status of the language they speak. Demographic factors are concerned with the “presence” of the group within the societal setting, in particular, their numbers, both in absolute and in relative terms, their territorial concentration, the question whether their population is likely increase or decrease, be it through migration or birth/death rate, etc. Finally, institutional support variables relate to the representation of the group, both formally and informally within the institutions of the setting such as education, religion, government and its agencies, industry, etc. Giles *et al.* claim convincingly that these variables and the way in which they interrelate “provide the context for understanding the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups”, and that their model allows “linguistic minorities [to] be meaningfully grouped according to this three-factored view of vitality” (Giles *et al.* 1977: 309).

In view of this thorough and according to the literature (Landry and Allard 1994a) widely accepted model, the question raised in the section 4.1 needs to be posed again: why should we want to propose another model of language vigour if there already is a perfectly good one in place, i.e. that of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV)? The answer to this question becomes evident if we review the passages I have quoted above.

There are three main aspects I should like to focus on: firstly, Giles *et al.* are primarily concerned with the identity of ethnolinguistic groups and the way in which such a group defines itself “as a distinctive and active entity in intergroup situations”. In other words, they focus on the relationships between language groups in interaction. However, as this study is ultimately concerned with the choice of a language as a medium of instruction in bilingual education, we need a model which also allows us to assess the vitality (or vigour) of a language in situations where the issue of group identity is insignificant or not given at all. Without preempting the discussion in chapter 5 we can say at this stage that in a specific setting a language may be chosen as a medium of instruction which is not the language of any of the groups present in that

setting so that the question as to how group identity can be demonstrated in intergroup interaction does not enter into the picture at all.

Secondly, Giles *et al.* see their “three-factored view” of EV mainly in reference to “linguistic minorities”. Again, as the main issue in this study is the choice of a language as a medium of instruction, we need to be able to review the languages available for such a choice in the broader context, also of languages which are not threatened in any sense and thus unaffected at all by the demographic factors of the EV model. Such languages would probably have no (significant) demographic base within the societal setting, but are considered for a medium of instruction for reasons such as economic advantages, economic and political cooperation, etc. As such they would only be affected – if at all – by some status and some institutional factors.

Thirdly, Giles *et al.* are primarily concerned with “the vitality of *ethnolinguistic groups*” with the vigour of *languages* clearly taking second place in the sense that it is only one of several factors. The discussion in this study is concerned with languages and their vigour within specific settings, as we have seen, at times without being an immediate constituent of that setting. This may look like rather an abstract way of tackling the issue as it may seem unwise to try to divorce languages from their speakers.¹ However, if we look at the (language) political implications of language choice in bilingual education, the issue of minority group identity may, but need not – and perhaps unfortunately often does not – enter the debate whereas the question of the language status according to Giles *et al.* may be quite central.

Therefore, the model I shall introduce is based on the “vigour” which a *language* enjoys in a given society, or, in other words, its “relative status and stability” (cf. above.). No European society is “monolingual” (Grillo 1989: 1). In each one there are instances of language contact either because the society in itself is composed of several ethnicities or language groups (in Spain for example Catalans, Galicians, Basques, Castilians, etc.) or because of in-migrants (for example migrant workers, imported specialists, diplomats, etc). Let us also not overlook the impact of tourism as a form of language contact, especially in countries where it is an important source of revenue.²

When we look at the way in which these languages are used (or not used) throughout a given society, we can appreciate that not all of them have the same standing. Some languages can be said to enjoy a high degree of vigour. This manifests itself in the sense that the value of being proficient in them is never questioned. To know such languages or to learn them is seen as a “good thing”, because being proficient in them is either vital for economic survival or for access to socio-economically privileged positions. Other languages are seen as being important mainly for political, cultural or social reasons, even if proficiency in such a language does not necessarily contribute to an individual’s chances in life. Their vigour must be lower than that of the first type. Then, of course there may be languages which are not really spoken by anybody except a very small, probably powerless minority, e.g. by migrant workers or refugees. These languages are perceived as being of no real use. In fact, quite frequently they are even seen as problematic to an individual’s chances in life, and speakers are encouraged to “unlearn” such languages and to replace them with more useful ones.³ If this view is encouraged by or

¹ As the debate on language shift and language death will show in 4.3.2.4., there is a strong tradition in the literature of focusing on language as if it were an independent (even animate) entity.

² We also need to mention, even though this aspect of language contact plays less of a role for this study, that within what seems a homogenous language there are varieties and variants: regional dialects, sociolects, specific forms of discourse and so on (for a more detailed discussion cf. Grillo 1989: 10 - 16).

³ Clyne 1974: 65 describes the belief that immigrant children should abandon their mother tongue in order to this further their proficiency in the majority language as a “prize fallacy”. However, in terms of relative “values” of languages this opinion, appropriate as it may seem from a socio-psychological point of view, has rather little support for reasons we shall discuss below.

exclusively held by the speakers of the majority languages and enforced by their political power structure, we are faced with what Skutnabb-Kangas has described as “linguicism” (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988: 13-14). Whether such languages are the subject of linguicism or whether they are weak because their speakers no longer see any point in passing them on to their children, a scenario suggested by Dennison (1977), is not our central issue in this discussion. What we can say is that in the terms used here, such languages have little vigour in that social setting.

What does the above mean in more practical terms? Let us consider an Anglo-Canadian who, to all intents and purposes, is monolingual. The chances are extremely good that she can lead a full and rich life without being able to speak any French or any other language for that matter. Her monolingualism will not prevent her from getting a good job, except if she aspires to a position in the Canadian federal administration. She can settle in most if not all parts of the country, live in a pleasant home and rest safely in the knowledge that wherever she goes in Canada there is an extremely small chance that she is going to encounter insurmountable problems because her language repertoire is restricted to English.

The same, however, does not apply to a monolingual Francophone Canadian, a somewhat rarer individual (cf. Heller 1982; also Lachapelle and Henripin 1980). Officially such an individual should have access to all aspects of Canadian political and legal processes because the national policy of bilingualism includes French as an official language. However, unlike the Anglophone counterpart, access to the economy would probably be limited, even within the federal administration. Settling anywhere in Canada except in Quebec would almost certainly necessitate learning English because, even though Canada has a policy of bilingualism, this does not imply that all Canadians are bilingual.⁴ In fact, one of the reasons for the inception of bilingual education in the form of French immersion programmes was the view of a group of anglophone parents that the education system did not succeed in providing an adequate level of proficiency in French (cf. Gibson 1984). Whereas the children of the Anglo-Canadian discussed above have an opportunity to learn French in such French immersion programmes, there are no comparable provisions for the offspring of the Franco-Canadian counterpart. English is considered so ubiquitous in Canada that francophones often claim that “*l’anglais s’attrape*” (Heller 1990: 73) and that setting up English immersion centres would jeopardise the already threatened French language and culture even further. However, a Franco-Canadian within the French language area, e.g. Quebec, may be able to lead a relatively unproblematic existence.

The situation is similar and at the same time quite different in Wales. For an English speaker with no knowledge of Welsh there would be no serious hindrance to settling in Wales while remaining monolingual. As a matter of fact B. L. Jones, in describing the standing of the Welsh language in its heartland of Gwynedd and Clwyd, shows that the priority of the Welsh language movement is not necessarily to shore up Welsh but “to stabilise bilingualism” (1981: 50). This is a priority because there is a serious problem of in-migrants moving into the area, often without any intention of staying there for very long. They are therefore reluctant to support their children’s acculturation into the Welsh school system, which implies becoming proficient in Welsh because a considerable proportion of the syllabus is taught in Welsh (T. P. Jones 1991). What is more, English speakers *can* refuse to become bilingual, a refusal few Welsh speakers can afford.⁵ This is the case in spite of the impressive revival of Welsh and the fact that for certain management positions in Welsh industry, also of branches of British or multinational corporations, it is an advantage to speak Welsh or to be (perceived) learning it. For publicly

⁴ The same, as we will see, is true for Switzerland and the Swiss.

⁵ Census figures make it clear that in recent decades the reservoir of monolingual Welsh speakers has dwindled to an almost insignificant level (Ambrose and Williams 1981: 54ff.); in B. L. Jones’s (1981: 46) terms: “apart from very young children, monolinguals are a rare, if not extinct, species.”

funded organisations or in education the requirement is even more binding: When Alan Dear took on the position as Head of the Community and Education/*Addysg a'r Gymuned* department at the Welsh National Opera, he had to undertake to enrol in a Welsh language course (A. Dear: personal communication). Similarly, Heath (1993) reports that Bernard Jones, the chief executive of the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW), lost his job after 25 years of acclaimed service when the new body, the *Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cwmbry* (ACAC), was instituted because one of the requirements for the corresponding position was being able to communicate effectively in Welsh, a requirement Jones does not meet.

Nevertheless, it is still quite clear that a monolingual Welsh speaker even in an ostensibly Welsh-speaking area would be economically severely handicapped. Without a good knowledge of English "survival" anywhere else in Britain, even in some areas in Wales would be seriously jeopardised. Nevertheless, in spite of the lack of economic motivation for learning Welsh, there is a growing interest among parents living in Wales for their children to do so, as demonstrated by the demand of places in the Welsh-medium pre-schools, the *Ysgolion Meithrin* (Roberts 1986; cf. also TES 1990). The reason given very often is that it is to preserve the Welshness which most anglophone parents of Welsh origin have lost (Baker 1985).

Monolingual speakers of Urdu, Gujarati, Hindi or any other CLOTE⁶ living in Britain are likely to find themselves in the same predicament as the Welsh monoglot outside the Welsh language region. They may be able to survive in an urban area inhabited predominantly by immigrants of the same language background but freedom of movement would be severely curtailed. Although efforts are being made sometimes at the instigation of local immigrant leaders, sometimes by committed teachers of immigrant extraction towards maintaining the languages and cultures of their communities (N. Chakraborty and K. Singh Rai, personal communication, cf. also NFER 1991), the rule is that in order to have access to socio-economic status, a high degree of proficiency in the dominant language is essential. A reciprocal pressure on the dominant group, the English speakers, to learn any of these languages does not exist, even if such an English speaking person were to work almost exclusively in the respective community.

These examples show different levels of "language vigour". English in all the examples given is the most vigorous language. Whereas French is not really a threatened language as such, it leads a somewhat precarious existence in Canada. However, it does have its own language area within which it can be considered to be relatively safe. Both languages, English and French, are officially recognised and measures have been taken in Quebec to safeguard the continued use of French (Bourhis 1984; Daoust 1984; Miller 1984). The situation is different for a small regional language like Welsh which can be used only to a limited degree, even in its own language area. The threat to such languages is that in purely utilitarian terms they have no readily apparent value. The rationale for preserving them is very largely a cultural conservationist one. In comparison, languages of migrants are considered to lack even that. Perhaps nowadays their importance in socio-psychological terms is beginning to be recognised by some educationalists (cf. Miller 1983: 153ff; Wright 1978; cf also Greenwood 1993) but the tenor in the respective immigrant communities is that still too little is being done for their maintenance.

So how can we account for these differences between the standing of languages in a society? Which factors determine language vigour? My hypothesis is that the main factors can be grouped into two basic parameters, to which we have already alluded in the preceding discussion: that of *currency*, i.e. how widely a language is used or usable, and that of *territory*,

⁶ The acronym is used in Australian language politics and stands for *community languages other than English* (cf. Clyne 1991: 3).

i.e. where the language is used. I shall define these terms and discuss their implications in the next two subsections.

Before doing so, however; I want to draw attention to the fact that the notion of *domain* (Fishman 1972) has not been mentioned explicitly as a factor. This does not imply that the concept is being ignored. Most of its features would have to be subsumed under the notion of currency, as we can distinguish between different levels of currency according to domain. Other aspects, however, need to be considered in the context of territory as we shall see.

4.2.1 The notion of currency

When this notion was first presented in the form of a paper at a conference of the *Societas Linguistica Europaea* in Galway in 1992 I used the term “prestige” rather than “currency”. However, in the course of the development of the ideas on this topic I became increasingly uneasy with the notion of “prestige”. There are two reasons for this: firstly, not all researchers seem to use the term in the same way, and at times fail to define it clearly. A second and perhaps more weighty reason is that the “prestige” of a language can differ considerably even within the same societal setting. In practical terms, whereas one social or language group does not attach a great deal of prestige to the use of a certain language, another group, typically the speakers of the language in question, may feel very different. To give an example: Irish has little to no prestige in Ulster as a whole, but among the parents of Shaw’s Road and teachers of the bilingual primary school (*Bunscoil*) in West Belfast it is seen as a valid and prestigious means of ascertaining their identity (cf. Maguire 1991). The issue can be resolved if we abandon the concept of prestige, which may depend largely on an individual or group value judgment, and instead try to assess to which degree a language is or can be used in a societal setting, i.e. to the degree to which it can function as linguistic “currency”. However, as this term is not entirely uncontroversial I feel it is necessary to digress briefly in order to justify its adoption for the present purpose.

Developing a theory to account for a phenomenon observable in “real live” we usually have to take recourse to an image which most closely or most aptly reflects this phenomenon. In practical terms this means that we have to find a way of expressing the features of this phenomenon, a representation, which contains as many, ideally all, elements of the phenomenon. In other words, forming such a theory means to create an often metaphorical construct, and this may entail representing something which will not fit neatly into categories or descriptive terms (i.e. a “messy” natural occurrence) within an accessible framework, thus attempting to fit it into “neat” structure.⁷ This metaphor is likely to be tailored to the needs of the theory, i.e. it will embody those elements of the phenomenon it attempts to explain while ignoring – or at least not fully accounting for – other elements with which it is not primarily concerned. Thus Chomsky’s ideal speaker-listener discussed in 3.2. serves the purpose of developing the concepts regarding the notion of competence, but, as we have seen, it cannot account either individual bilingualism or societal bilingualism.

The problem of developing a metaphor for the first set of parameters to describe language vigour is subject to the considerations just discussed in the sense that some aspects of the metaphor do not tally completely with the phenomenon it describes, but the term “currency”

⁷ Consider the orbital and the shell model in nuclear physics: both describe specific behaviour of electrons in atoms, the former representing the nucleus in a way comparable to the sun around which the electrons are in orbit, the latter postulates that electrons form layers of shells around a core; either model is capable of representing some aspects of the behaviour of atoms but other aspects are better represented by the other model. A similar case is light, whose properties can either be explained in terms of an emission of waves or a stream of particles.

combines two important elements which make my point: through its derivation it entails the notion of “being current”. In dictionary definitions (i.e. SOED) something which is current is “running in time”, is “in general circulation” or is “generally accepted” and “in vogue”. All of these notions apply to a language “running” through a social environment or group. The second element is the association of “currency” with economic aspects inasmuch as the term suggests that a language can be a valid tool in transactions between individuals and that it can be “exchanged” or “converted”. Admittedly, if we take “currency” only in the economic sense, i.e. the aspect of currency being a symbolic means that can be exchanged for goods or services, the term may seem less apt, even though currency as well as language share the feature that they are or may be a prerequisite for securing such goods or services. Nevertheless, as we have already seen on several occasions, languages can have specific and unequal “values”. This can be explained in a very satisfactory fashion if we adopt Bourdieu’s (1991) notions of linguistic exchanges as representative of a definition of the distribution of symbolic power. Thus the participants and the styles they have at their disposal enter into a relationship within which a “price formation” – in itself an economic metaphor – determining the value of their styles (or code) takes place. Bourdieu describes this process as follows:

Linguistic exchange – a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver ... and therefore also based on the implementation of a code or a generative competence – is also an economic exchange which establishes within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring certain material or symbolic profit. (Bourdieu 1991: 66)

Whoever uses or is capable of using which style or code may be at an advantage in such an exchange as

... the relation between linguistic competences – which, as socially classified productive capacities, characterize socially classified units of production and, as capacities of appropriation and appreciation, define markets that are themselves socially classified – helps to determine the law of price formation that obtains in a particular exchange. (Bourdieu 1991: 67)

These quotes establish that we can posit – as Bourdieu does – a linguistic marketplace in which the possession of capital for procuring services is evidently not distributed evenly and where therefore some participants in an exchange are at an advantage because they have access to more highly valued linguistic capital.

In terms of the notion of currency this would mean that in order to take part in this market certain internationally convertible forms of currency are likely to provide easier access to certain goods than forms of currency with more restricted convertibility. We can apply this notion using the metaphor of national and international currencies: with a form of currency which is recognised world-wide, such as the US dollar, goods and services can be procured almost anywhere in the world. On the other hand, where foreign currency restrictions are in operation, e.g. as was the case in the former Eastern Block countries, the only legitimate currency to use is the local one, which has absolutely no function outside the national boundaries. Finally there are some forms of currency which are only used locally, i.e. many Third World national currencies, currencies that have a nominal value, usually subject to heavy inflation, but locals will prefer a more widely usable or convertible currency if it is available. Translated from the metaphor into practical examples of language use (and usefulness) this means that the first type of currency would correspond to English and to a lesser degree French and German as main languages of the EU. The second type would represent languages like Finnish, Danish or Icelandic, in other words, languages spoken by a relatively limited number of people and rarely outside their immediate areas but uncontested within these areas, whereas the third type would correspond to lesser-used languages, which are rarely spoken by monoglots

and are not “convertible” outside their own limited market places. Similarly languages of displaced peoples would fit into this category as they are only convertible within their own networks, e.g. of émigrés or of ethnic neighbourhoods.

In view of what we already discussed in the preceding chapters, with the notion of a linguistic market place in which languages (and styles) are subject to their value as linguistic capital, it is inevitable that some of them will rank more highly than others in terms of their convertibility, i.e. the wider use to which they can be put, thus defining a language hierarchy usually ranging from the widely useful to the severely restricted. However, in a largely self-sufficient marketplace, an internationally convertible currency may not necessarily be as important as the local respected one.

The usefulness of the notion of currency over prestige, as mentioned in the opening paragraph of this subsection can be seen clearly in the example of Irish in West Belfast and the Shaw’s Road *Bunscoil*. Whereas parents (as well as the teachers) involved in the project are unlikely to be under any illusion that Irish in Ulster has real currency, i.e. that it could be used widely to perform mundane linguistic tasks such as asking for directions, ordering food in a restaurant or socialising, etc. many have made an effort to learn Irish (Maguire 1991: 134) and do so with some success. The lack of currency does not affect the value they attach to an initiative which “represents a concentrated force in [the] thirst for self and community expression of Irishness” (Maguire 1991: 148). Thus there is a clear disparity between the prestige which Irish enjoys in the community and the lack of currency it has within the wider context of Ulster.

After this rather lengthy justification of the term I shall now define it: *currency* refers the “standing” of a language in a given societal setting. This standing is reflected in several ways, for example in the likelihood with which members of that setting will speak a language when addressed in it, even if their proficiency is limited. Connected with this readiness to use the language is the question whether proficiency in such a language is widely considered “a good thing”, in other words, whether it represents a desirable ability in the societal setting. Thus the currency of a language is based, firstly, on it being recognised by non-native interlocutors; secondly, on interlocutors’ readiness and willingness to respond in it, at least in a rudimentarily communicative fashion; and, lastly, on the degree to which being able to speak it is considered desirable and useful.

Thus we can identify three elements of currency: *recognition*, *response* and *desirability* which constitute currency. I will discuss these briefly in turn.⁸

Recognition reflects the familiarity of a speech community with a “foreign language”. There are some languages which would be recognised quite readily. Languages used for international or supra-regional communication are obviously recognised more easily and readily by non-native speakers than those used either by small speech communities or in remote parts of the world. The same holds true for an officially recognised national language in a country like Belgium, Canada and Switzerland when this language is used outside its traditional territory. It is also likely that languages spoken in neighbouring countries will be recognised quite readily. In contrast, it is unlikely that non-native speakers would recognise lesser-used languages which do not have any kind of official status (whether regional or migrant).

Response, the second parameter, complements the first one as it provides a finer distinction once recognition has taken place. It is in this area that currency in a given societal setting becomes fully apparent: non-native interlocutors need to be able to respond in the language in which they have been addressed if a language is to have linguistic currency, even if this response is anything but “correct”. Thus, it shows to what degree a monolingual speaker of a “foreign

⁸ It needs to be mentioned that at the present stage, the notion of currency is largely a theoretical one, which would need to be verified empirically. This, however, would be the subject of a separate study.

language” would be able to survive in a given societal setting or, in other words, to what degree her language can be used as currency. Whether a response would be forthcoming depends on a number of issues. Perhaps the most obvious one is the addressee’s minimal proficiency in the language the addresser has used. This in turn depends on access to the language in question, i.e. to what extent a non-native speaker would be in a position to acquire at least such a minimal proficiency.

Directly related to this issue is the third parameter, *desirability*. In order to attain some degree of proficiency in a language, non-native speakers have to see a need for or a use in doing so. Failing this, it seems highly unlikely that the linguistic ability to recognise a language and to respond in it could or would be acquired. Furthermore, some form of language training or an opportunity for being exposed to the target language would have to be available, which, as we have seen in chapter 1, depends largely on popular demand, which in turn depends on perceived usefulness. However, there is another aspect to the parameter of desirability: assuming the language used by the addresser is recognised by the addressee, and the addressee is capable of responding, the latter may refuse to do so for specific reasons. The language may, for example, be associated with backwardness or lack of sophistication as is often the case with lesser-used regional languages (cf. Priestley 1990: 143), it may be considered unpopular (e.g. German with the war and postwar generation of Dutch) or politically problematic. Here, some former Soviet republics present an interesting case, where Russian from being the language of power (Rannut 1991) has been supplanted by the local languages and proficiency in them has become a prerequisite for public office or indeed citizenship (as in the case of Estonia, cf. *The European* 1992).

On the basis of the three parameters *recognition*, *response* and *desirability*, we can postulate five typical situations:

1. Language A, somewhat trivially, is the local language. Therefore it is recognised by all interlocutors, they respond in it, and there is no doubt that in order to have access to career possibilities all interlocutors know that they need to be proficient in Language A, usually in the standardised form (which according to Bourdieu would also be the legitimate language (Bourdieu 1991: 45 ff.))
2. Language B is recognised by non-native interlocutors and most of them would respond or attempt to respond in it. In fact they would be quite eager to show a certain level of proficiency in language B.⁹ Examples in Switzerland would be English and probably to a lesser degree French in some German-speaking regions.
3. Language C is recognised by the non-native interlocutors and some of them would attempt to respond in it. However, there might be a certain degree of reluctance to do so possibly because of a real (or perceived) lack of proficiency. Examples in Switzerland would be German in French-speaking regions.¹⁰
4. Language D is recognised by most non-native interlocutors but they would not be able to respond in it because their command of language D does not go beyond a few words. Here the example in Switzerland would probably be Italian and perhaps Spanish.
5. Language E is not recognised by most interlocutors and even if it was they would not be able to respond in it even with a few words. This is a likely scenario for lesser-used regional languages, in Switzerland Romansch (even though there is a remote possibility that it could

⁹ In addition we could postulate a kind of hyper-currency, which would characterise situations in which a speaker of language B speaks the local language with a detectable mothertongue-influenced phonology, and an addressee switches to language B in recognition of the speaker’s linguistic background.

¹⁰ Cf. Cavadini’s (1985: 23) assessment, which would fit in with this characterisation: “... *les Suisses allemands parlent le français mais ne le comprennent pas, tandis que les Suisses romands ne parlent pas l’allemand même s’ils le comprennent.*” translation cf. 7.3.

come under 4.), and most of the other languages spoken by the migrant minorities in Switzerland such as Turkish, probably Portuguese and the Southern Slavonic languages.

There is a problem with this description inasmuch as it does not take into account on what topic or domain the addresser bases the opening conversational move. As far as way-finding or simple socialising are concerned, the emerging picture will differ noticeably from language functions which involve more subtlety, for example polite requests (cf. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984), story-telling, or discussing intellectual or professional problems. Obviously, the number of domains in which a language is used is an indicator of its currency. However, to adopt a purely quantitative point of view, i.e. to equate the number of domains in which a language is used with its currency is problematic because in a setting where several languages coexist, there is likely to be a functional distribution of the codes available (cf. for example Ukrainian and Russian in Soviet times as described by Lewis 1971). That this distribution of codes does not mean instability or a threat to the currency of one particular code can be illustrated in the case of Swiss-German dialects, which are not (or more rarely) used in certain domains, most notably in scientific lectures and written language (the situation and exceptions to this rule will be discussed later in chapter 7), but are nevertheless more common currency than the Standard German used in the other domains.

To sum up we can say that a language with a high level of currency has to fulfill the following requirements to a greater or lesser extent:

- It must be spoken and understood widely, i.e. by most if not all members of a given societal setting.
- Proficiency in it is important or vital for access to socio-economic status. There is no real question about this in the minds of the population.
- The language is used in as many domains as possible, both orally and usually also in a (standardised) written form.¹¹ The association between language and domain is relatively stable.
- In a literate setting there must be a substantial body of written texts, both fictional and non-fictional, journalistic and literary, even though the texts may be mainly folk-literary.

In a discussion of the features of a language with a high level of currency there is a certain temptation to include a characteristic which may read: short of a major geopolitical change there is no real threat of the language being displaced by another. Whereas we can be sure that such a feature would be beneficial to the currency of a language, we have to take into account that it belongs with the second parameter, i.e. that of territory. We shall discuss this in more detail in the following subsection.

4.2.2 The notion of territory

In the course of lobbying efforts leading up to the referendum on the European economic area, Federal Councilor René Felber made the case for joining the EEA at a rally in Schaffhausen, a town in Eastern Switzerland next to the German border. He spoke in German, but being a Romand, i.e. a French-speaker, he used Standard German with a French accent. One of the statements from the audience was that he should learn the local language, i.e. the German dialect, properly before addressing the people in the area. One may take this anecdote as an ignominious example of the Swiss parochialism which we shall discuss in chapter 6, but it illustrates the close connection between language and the area in which it is spoken.

¹¹ We shall see in chapter 7 that this is not an absolute necessity: the Swiss German dialects, which are quite clearly common currency in the German-speaking area, understandably less so in the Romandie or in Ticino, are rarely written, by no means as often as Standard German. Hence the reference to folk literature in the following criterion.

The notion of territory is indispensable to any consideration of language distribution and language vigour, but, as the discussion will show, it is full of potentially highly charged and problematic preconceptions. On the basis of a number of examples from recent history I shall discuss two aspects in this subsection which I consider particularly problematic. These two aspects are conflicting territorial claims and the nature of borders between language regions. There is a third and very serious area of difficulty connected with the question of territory, which I shall discuss below in subsections 0 in the context of claims to territory for indigenous peoples and the fact that there are divergent concepts of what territory (or land) may represent. However, as far as the notion of territory is concerned, including it in this context would introduce aspects which are not in keeping with the more general nature of this subsection.

In order to be able to discuss the notion, I shall first give a definition of what I mean by “territory”. In our context the term “territory” refers to language communities which can be said to be indigenous to or to have occupied a given region long enough so that the speakers of the language consider themselves to be resident in a hereditary homeland. The existence of an ethnic group and its language in a given region is therefore “legitimised” by a more or less long-term territorial claim. There are of course several problems involved with this notion as the countless current and incipient regional conflicts in Europe demonstrate. Given the fact that there has always been migration of some kind, the question as to who is indigenous to a region is bound to be difficult if not impossible to answer. Thus, the belief of a speech-community that its language, and, connected with it, its ethnicity and culture, is based on a hereditary claim to a homeland may quite possibly be in conflict with that of another group. As such claims are notoriously difficult to assess fairly and in a detached fashion, they lend themselves extremely well to being used by politicians or powerful majorities to justify their aspirations.¹² As history and the present show, conflicting territorial claims represent one of the main reasons for violent struggle.

Just how difficult it is to determine what constitutes a “long-term territorial claim” to a region could be illustrated by a considerable number of cases. I will restrict myself to one, which illustrates the problem rather drastically, because it involves an “ancient” territorial claim against a “continuous” one. Forces within the Israeli state claim the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as part of the traditional Eretz Israel from biblical times, whereas the radical Palestinians consider it the territory of their state because they had lived there continuously for several centuries until the creation of the modern state of Israel. With the *de facto* annexation of some of the contested territories after the Six Day War, these two claims were pitched against each other causing a deadlock which seemed all but unresolvable until recently. However, whether the Palestinians will settle for anything less than an independent state is a question to which only future developments will provide an answer.

Problems arising from conflicting claims to territory are usually the result of territorial boundary lines being drawn either by powerful outsiders with an almost complete disregard for existing boundaries between ethnic groups, a frequent state of affairs in the formerly colonised parts of the world, or by a majority (or powerful elite), which shaped territories to suit their interest. To give a few symptomatic examples, consider India and Pakistan and more recently Rwanda and Burundi for the former case, and the various separatist struggles in Ireland, the former Soviet Union, Corsica, etc. for the latter. In either situation conflicts flare up when the minorities begin to fight for recognition or to ascertain the rights to being culturally different or to adhere to a different religion. As many if not most of these conflicts are based on

¹² The policy of “ethnic cleansing” in former Yugoslavia as well as the countless attempts to get the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to agree to a partition illustrate the tenacity with which the different factions adhere to their territorial views and how the seed for future conflict is sown by the oppression/suppression of minorities or by their expulsion.

contradictory interpretations of socio-historical events and developments, the dispute usually lies outside the sphere of a sober (scientific) approach.¹³

To return to the example of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, it is interesting to note that there is a linguistic parallel to the political conflict: with the creation of Israel the language of the same historical period was revived as the official language against considerable odds. It had hitherto been mainly used by affluent, male, orthodox Jews and almost exclusively for textual and predominantly religious purposes. Its use as a spoken language was rare and considered awkward (cf. Fishman 1990: 289-290). There was (and is) considerable opposition to it among Zionists, particularly of secularist background, and from ultra-orthodox groups, who consider vernacularisation of the Holy Tongue sinful.¹⁴ As far as the characterisation of the language situation in modern Israel goes, there are two interesting aspects: firstly, there are conscious “undercountings” of other Jewish languages in competition with Hebrew (Mughrabi-Yahudic, Parsic and Judezmo, as well as Yiddish, undercounted by as much as 50%) in the Israeli census figures (cf. Fishman 1990: 314; Gold 1989), and secondly, Israel’s linguistic make-up is characterised by a “massive use of English ... and the massive ignorance of Arabic” (Fishman 1990: 315).

This close connection between territory and language is observable in other contexts as well. It is probably no coincidence that many European countries with one dominant language use the same word to denote nationality and the language, viz. German, Spanish, Russian, English, Polish, French, Italian, etc. To a certain extent this usage reflects the assumption that the country in question is the territory or the heartland of the language (and its culture) while generally obscuring the fact that some nationals may traditionally speak another language. In other words there is a tendency to associate territory with the belief that it is inhabited by one ethnic group, very often exclusively. This belief suggests and is based on the idea of an ethnic homogeneity which is extremely rare in our days and probably always has been except for earliest human settlements or in regions so remote that intergroup contacts are unlikely. However, even if the nationalist creed which connects a people with their language, thus laying the foundation for a nation (based at least in parts on Herder’s romanticist notion as put forward in the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, cf. Hobsbawm 1990), may no longer be adhered to quite so globally, the association of territory and language remains strong. As an interesting case in point consider newly independent Ukraine: with the official language being Ukrainian, Russian is no longer supposed to be used in education, thus creating problems for ethnic minorities like Germans and Hungarians in Transcarpathia, who relied on Russian as a lingua franca (Faina Citkina, personal communication). As we have seen, similar problems arise for the formerly powerful minority elite of Russians in the Baltic states, who are now caught in the difficult situation of falling from their formerly powerful position to almost complete disenfranchisement and loss of citizenship (cf. The European 1992). Another illustration of the association between language and territory is Italian fascism which adopted the nationalist notion of *Irredentismo* based on the idea that the *terre irredente* the unredeemed (Italian-speaking) territories had to be brought back into the fold of the Italian state. This would have included Romansch speaking areas, including the Swiss ones, because Italian linguists faithful

¹³ There is an anecdotal but nevertheless striking example for this kind of lack of detachedness. In the wake of Macedonian independence from former Yugoslavia a document was faxed to various universities signed by “Greek professors of English” which urged academics to avoid using the term Macedonia for the newly created state as it violated Greek sensitivities about “their” Macedonia.

¹⁴ The language previously used as a Jewish lingua franca had been Yiddish. In fact Yiddish was used especially for Zionist congresses in a form sometimes facetiously referred to as “Kongress Deutsch” (Fishman 1990: 324). Ultra-Orthodox groups continue to use Yiddish as a medium of everyday conversation as well as in education, mainly for boys (Fishman 1990: 315).

to the irredentist cause claimed, despite evidence to contrary, as we shall see, that Romansch was a Italian dialect (Im Hof 1988: 65; cf. also Andres 1990b).

On the other hand, in settings where language may be an initial rallying point, it can nevertheless be abandoned as a unifying factor when it is seen to have served its purpose. A case in point for this situation is Irish Gaelic and the fate of the Gaelic League. At the end of the last century the Gaelic League was founded, with the express purpose of keeping the Irish language alive. Douglas Hyde, its first president (and later first President of Eire), was adamant that the League had no political goals but was dedicated purely to maintenance of the Irish language. Nevertheless the League turned out to be a political rallying point comparable to similar societies for the maintenance of, for example, Magyar and Czech later in the 19th and 20th century (Mansergh 1965: 246). However, even before Irish independence became a reality, it was felt that the function of Irish, as a marker of Irish (nationalist) identity, had ceased to be of importance. In fact, Patrick Pearse, leader of the Easter Rising in 1916 put this sentiment into words when he said:

... when the seven men met in O'Connell Street to found the Gaelic League they were commencing ... a revolution. The work of the Gaelic League ... is done. (...) The deed of the generation that has now reached middle life was the Gaelic league: the beginning of the Irish Revolution. Let our generation now not shirk *its* deed, which is to accomplish the revolution. (quoted in Mansergh, 1965: 247)

It is interesting to note that the statement was made in 1913, i.e. approximately three years before the Easter Rising, which was planned as the commencement of the revolution alluded to by Pearse and nearly 10 years before Irish independence did become a reality in the form of the Irish Free State.

Ireland represents a striking example of the question of territory in a societal setting where a less vigorous language competes with a more vigorous one, and where by nature of the setting most people have a choice and not surprisingly opt for the more vigorous language. This in turn leads to a loss of domains in which the less vigorous language has currency and thus contributes to the erosion of its traditional territory (cf. Fennell 1981; Ó Riagáin 1992). As the territory shrinks it is likely to break up into non-contiguous islands. As a result there are fewer contacts between speakers of the less vigorous language and a greater need for being proficient in the more vigorous language in order to have extra-communal contacts. As most speakers are likely to be bilingual and may perceive their own language to be inferior and inadequate for a more sophisticated lifestyle, there is an even stronger trend towards the more vigorous language, resulting in an increased loss of territory. Not only is it hard to break this vicious circle, but the lack of contiguity and the resulting limitation on interaction between speakers of the less vigorous language has another problematic result: the development of divergent variants which become more and more difficult to standardise as many speakers become more protective towards their own variant and reluctant to use elements considered coming from outside.¹⁵ This in turn makes it more difficult to teach the language if one wants to revive or revitalise it. This problem is alluded to in the introductory section of *Learning Irish: An Introductory Self-Tutor* (Ó Siadhail 1988: 3):

Today the Irish-speaking areas are separated geographically by wide stretches of English-speaking territory. (...) The old bridges between them have fallen and [the Irish-speaking communities] have

¹⁵ The two main varieties in Welsh are North Walian and South Walian variants which are spoken by the “hwntws” and “gogs” respectively. These terms are somewhat derogatory and it is said that SC4, the Welsh channel receives complaints from both groups about featuring too many of the other speakers in their programmes (Eleri Lewis, personal communication). Cf. in this context also the discussion of Romansch in chapter 8.

drifted apart. (...) In such circumstances what sort of Irish should one teach to beginners? A dialect must be used, for though there has been one Official Standard of Irish spelling since 1945, there is as yet no standard pronunciation.

Ó Siadhail goes on to explain that the Irish chosen was the dialect of Cois Fharrige, Co. Galway, since “it is fairly central, geographically and linguistically, and since it has a relatively large number of native speakers.”

An additional problem in the case of Irish as well as many other lesser-used languages is the lack of an urban centre. Even though Cois Fharrige is near Galway it would be wrong to assume that Galway belongs to the *Gaeltacht* in any sense. Like the *Gaeltachtaí* on the West coast of Connemara and the Dingle peninsula, we find only rural settlements and small villages. Similarly, in the case of Welsh there are no major urban centres in which the language is still being widely used:¹⁶ according to Green (1981: 3) the biggest “Welsh” town could be said to be Caernarfon/Carnarvon with just under 10'000 inhabitants and a distinctive “urban slang which marks out its speakers from those of the surrounding countryside”. However, Green points out further that it “is not the capital of a linguistic community and it lies in the shadow of its much larger neighbour Bangor, in which Welsh is now a declining minority language”. This situation has an impact on the status of the lesser-used language, a point which will be discussed below.

What does the lack of an urban centre mean for a language region? The absence of such a focal point produces difficulties in three significant areas: firstly an urban centre can provide a cultural and social infrastructure, secondly, a regional centre with its “centripetal” force affords cohesion for the community as a whole, and thirdly, it offers a pool of speakers with more intense and varied intra-community contact in a wider range of domains than one can expect in rural settlements. I shall discuss these aspects in the following subsection.

Let us now turn our attention to the second problematic aspect of territory mentioned above, that of the definition of language borders and the homogeneity of the speech community within them. When we talk about a language region and its borders we usually assume a clearly definable line separating two language territories from one another. This may be true for those areas where two distinctly different languages, e. g., French and German, border onto each other especially if the language border represents a national border as well. However, there is a likelihood that individuals on either side of the border will be sufficiently proficient in the other language to communicate with a member of the other speech community. Therefore in many cases the language border is likely to be a construct based on geographical, historical and political considerations. If this boundary line does not follow a state border, however, it is likely to be even more diffuse. Pryce (1975: 88) uses the term “buffer zone” to describe the language border between English and Welsh in the late 18th century when English spread into the Welsh border counties together with industrialisation and increased overall mobility. Williams and Ambrose (1988: 113), in their assessment of the present geolinguistic situation, refer to a “zone of collapse”, where Welsh is being displaced by English “not only in numeric terms, but also in the frequency and range of usage of the language” despite the fact that language distribution maps show comparatively clear-cut language borders. The artificial nature of the concept of language border is even more noticeable in the case of related languages. Haugen (1987: 16) points out that one of the criteria for the definition of language distance is mutual intelligibility between its dialects (or a possible standard). However, as he goes on to show, mutual intelligibility is less likely between Bavarian (or perhaps Valais) dialects and Low German than between Low German and Dutch even though the former are supposed to represent one

¹⁶ There may be speakers of the lesser-used language who organise themselves into networks (for Welsh cf. e.g. B. L. Jones 1981), but they do not form coherent communities.

language, whereas the latter are considered two separate languages. Here too we have to accept that language territory does not represent a homogeneous speech community but a continuum of variants which may not be mutually intelligible between peripheral regions (or indeed from periphery to either centre or standard variant).

Before synthesising the notions of currency and territory into the model of relative language vigour, two points need to be made briefly. Firstly, I am aware that the preceding discussion has largely ignored one issue, that of self-appraisal of the speakers of a language. In other words, how valid do speakers of less vigorous languages see their claim to a traditional territory, i.e. to an area which was at some stage in history a stable “homeland” (even if this claim rests on their own interpretation of history)? It is quite significant that this consideration seems to play a more important part for speakers of less vigorous languages, and it may even be a key feature for their re-emergence or their survival. As the question hardly ever arises with more vigorous languages, I shall return to this issue after the introduction of the model of relative language vigour in the discussion of the typology of languages in specific settings. Secondly, the notion of territory is admittedly ethnocentric. A more detailed discussion will follow below, but for the moment I want to point out that the lack of a territory in the sense of this discussion, which is typical for non-sedentary ethnic groups, makes it even more difficult for them to gain recognition from the majority and avoid being assimilated into the mainstream thereby losing their ethnic identity and with it usually their language. Examples of such groups are nomadic peoples like the Rom, semi-sedentary peoples like the Koories, Inuit, Native American or Sami,¹⁷ but also displaced people like refugees or migrant workers. It may be said that most of these groups have some kind of territory (with the exception of the Rom): the indigenous peoples in the form of reservations, the displaced people often in the form of urban areas given over to them. The central question in this context is, however, to what degree the majorities recognise and/or respect these territories.

To summarise the issues of territorial stability we can postulate the following:

- The stability of a language territory depends partly on the overall size of its area but even more so on the stability of its borders.
- Connected with the first point is the issue of whether the language territory forms a contiguous whole or whether it is in the process of disintegrating into more and more isolated pockets.
- Perhaps not indispensable but nevertheless very important to the stability of a small language territory is the existence of at least one demographic focal point, usually in the form of an urban centre, to ensure the existence of a large number of domains in everyday language as well as varied speaker interaction.
- Perhaps the most telling aspect of stability and indeed security of a language territory is the behaviour of in-migrants: can they “afford” to continue speaking their own language or are they forced to assimilate and learn the language of the area. In the case of lesser-used languages, learning the regional language is rarely necessary for in-migrants as the locals are almost always bilingual.

¹⁷ In using names for indigenous peoples I have attempted to use those which they have used for themselves in recent literature. I am aware of the fact, however, that many of these terms have been used by a limited set of indigenous writers and that while they may be acceptable to one group of indigenous people they might not be to others. Be that as it may, such terms seem to me more acceptable than those chosen by (white) outsiders for these peoples.

4.3 Relative language vigour

4.3.1 Overview

In the introduction to this chapter I pointed out that even though every language contact situation is unique, languages in a social setting conform to certain basic patterns which account for the relative vigour within that setting. Language vigour, as we have seen, depends mainly on two factors: firstly, whether a language has currency within a given social setting, in other words whether it will be recognised, used in different domains, and seen as an asset if one is proficient in it; and secondly whether it has a territory within which measures could be based on a (historical) claim to declare it as the language of that territory (or protect it for the same reason). To which degree these factors interact in a given setting determines the relative vigour of the language (or languages) under consideration. To illustrate these patterns I propose the simple matrix in Figure 4.2.

Based on this matrix we can say that the most vigorous language in a given societal setting is one which has currency *and* enjoys territorial recognition, in other words, an uncontested regional language. On the other hand, the least vigorous languages are those with neither currency nor territory, i.e. migrant and indigenous languages. As the discussion in this and in chapter one has shown, from a socio-economic point of view the language types in the two right-hand quadrants may well be necessary for social betterment and are therefore considered valuable for an individual to be proficient in. The two types in the left-hand quadrants, on the other hand, do not normally represent an asset in an individual's language repertoire. On the contrary, as we have discussed in 0, they may be seen as an obstacle to a better future and are therefore often in danger of disappearing. Furthermore, for their survival they usually depend on the support and/or goodwill of the dominant group in the social/political setting.

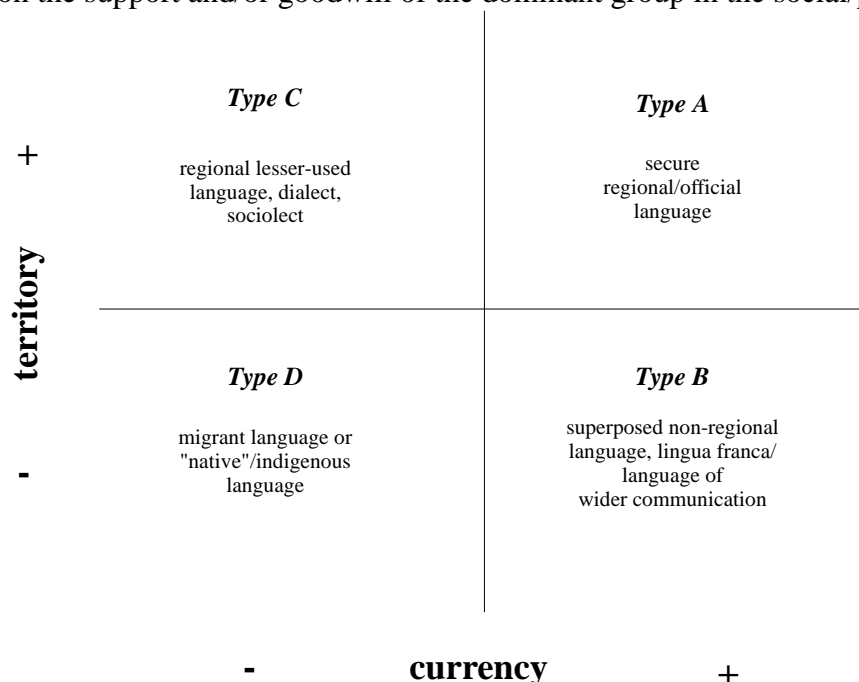


Figure 4.2 *Relative language vigour in given society*

4.3.2 A simple typology

In this subsection I shall briefly discuss the four basic types of language in a social setting in terms of their relative vigour. Somewhat more emphasis will be placed on the two types in the left-hand quadrants as the discussion in this study focuses to a greater extent on these two types. In discussing each type I shall briefly present some of the general characteristics and demonstrate with a few examples how these characteristics present themselves in a practical context. In view of the bias of this study, the discussion of Type C (0) will be somewhat more detailed.

4.3.2.1 Type A: a language with territory and currency

It has been said that there are languages with a comparatively small number of speakers which are nevertheless in no danger of being displaced. Probably the most obvious example in Europe is Icelandic with its approx. 200'000 speakers (Simpson 1981: 237). Similarly Swiss-German¹⁸ with its 3.4 million speakers is vigorous enough to be considered a danger to the other Swiss languages.

Both have the same characteristics: they have a clearly definable territory (even though in the case of Swiss German some dialects spoken across the national border belong to the same dialect group; cf. Albrecht and Mathis 1990 and chapter 7), and within that territory there are few if any domains in which they could not be or are not used, especially in everyday oral communication. Another criterion mentioned above is to which degree in-migrants moving into the area can afford not to learn the local language. In either case one "can get by", for example with English, but for closer contacts with the local population at least passive knowledge is an asset. For most Type A languages the same is true: in order to ensure socio-economic chances it is vital to have a good command of the local language.

In plurilingual nations we are faced with a special form of Type A languages. Consider Canada where concrete legislation ensures the maintenance of French as a majority language in Quebec or Belgium where there are three Type A languages side by side, each with a guaranteed territory. Such coexistence of uncontested languages leads to the interesting situation in which a Type A language can become a Type C language when people, for whichever reason, cross the language border. How the situation presents itself in Switzerland will be discussed below in chapters 6 and 7.

4.3.2.2 Type B: a language without territory, but with currency

Type B languages are those languages which are "useful" for wider-ranging communication. Whereas exclusive proficiency in a Type A language allows an individual or a group to exist without serious language problems in the framework of a monolingual nation state, province or territory, it severely limits the same individual's chances of mobility outside this framework. In this sense we can distinguish between two basic forms which are, interestingly enough, based on practically the same set of languages. One subtype consists of a lingua franca in a Western context, in which the languages in question are used as a means for international communication. These languages would be mainly English and French, but may include Spanish, possibly Portuguese, Dutch and, although more for religious purposes, classic Arabic. The second subtype is the result of colonisation where, after the departure of the colonial powers, the question of the national language had to be settled, ideally in a way which did not

¹⁸ The term is used here as though it stood for a homogenous language even though it does not, according to linguistic analysis (Kloss 1952) represent a language but a strongly divergent variant. Furthermore, as we shall see in chapter 7, the term is a misnomer.

prejudice the chances of any of the (artificially) united ethnic and linguistic groups. The answer to the problem was usually the continued use of the colonial language (cf e. g. Inglehart and Woodward 1967: 365; Bratt Paulston 1986; Phillipson 1992).

Type B languages share an interesting characteristic, i.e. that in most settings there is a clear need for proficiency in them for certain types of discourse. Most scientific texts in our times are in English, which means that papers not written or presented in this language either need to be translated or relegated to journals where English is not a requirement.¹⁹ Another domain where proficiency in a type B language is almost indispensable is in industry and commerce. A symposium held in Berne in 1991 on needs for in-company language training showed clearly that most Swiss firms with international connections feel that there is a deficit in the English proficiency of their employees, in service sector firms especially below the level of middle management (AGISA 1991; Keiser 1993).²⁰

4.3.2.3 Type C: a language with territory, but without currency

The problem of Type C languages has recently acquired increasing attention, mainly because there is a growing concern in Europe with the disappearance of these lesser-used regional languages. Much of the concern for attempts at saving lesser-used languages centres around considerations such as a loss of “access” to the culture and literature (cf. Thieberger 1990, Trudgill 1991) and is thus somewhat elitist in the sense that a language is seen as a vehicle for the finer aspects of a culture. In some cases considerable amounts of money are spent in order to promote Type C languages, at times with dishearteningly little to show: the numbers of speakers continue to decline, the language territories shrink and develop into more and more isolated pockets with little contact amongst each other. The problem is that many speakers of Type C languages, aware of their lack of currency simply do not pass on their language to the next generation (Denison 1977). As long as speakers of lesser-used regional languages cannot overcome the stigma (real or perceived) of backwardness inherent in their ethnic identity (cf. Priestley 1990), the chances for the survival of such languages continue to be questionable (Fennell 1981).

The resulting consciousness that “something ought to be done” to ensure the maintenance of lesser-used regional languages exists in many areas which form the traditional heartland of these languages. Such attempts at safeguarding traditional language areas are usually supported by groups inside the surviving language community but perhaps even more often from speakers in diaspora as well as from groups outside,²¹ who do not actually speak the language themselves (Simpson 1981).

There are, however, several problems besetting such efforts. The first problem is the lack of an urban centre in which the language has currency. Kloss (1975: 192) points out that it “is vital for any linguistic minority to have or even to create some urban centre where its language predominates”. The impact of such a lack cannot be underestimated: towns or regional centres of a certain size can provide an *infrastructure* which a mainly rural area with a multitude of small villages dotted over the countryside cannot provide or certainly not as easily as an urban focal point. The cultural infrastructure would include such institutions as theatres, cinemas,

¹⁹ An interesting example for this situation is *Multilingua*, which officially accepts publication of papers in German and French also, but in reality such texts are rare and usually restricted to book reviews.

²⁰ On the other hand, there seems to be little cause for concern for a basic communicative proficiency in Switzerland as we shall see in chapters 10 and 11.

²¹ This is true provided the dominant group recognises the situation instead of trying to stamp out the lesser-used language or denying the existence of the respective ethnic community.

concert halls,²² clubs as well as bookshops. The urban infrastructure also extends to the media, to print media such as newspapers, magazines, and books, as well as to sound media such as local radio, possibly local musical productions like orchestral and, quite importantly, popular music. The third type of infrastructure more readily available in urban settings is a potential for a centralised, political apparatus, which provides the means for the organisation of lobbies to encourage investment, improve living conditions in an area, etc. It is easier to set up such an apparatus when the people who would need to be rallied can be easily mobilised and can get to potential meetings without having to travel long distances, possibly braving the elements.

Urban centres, by definition, offer a focal point for a community. Given the fact that they provide services to a wider area with institutions and commercial opportunities to be found in the centre but not (necessarily) in the hinterland, they have a centripetal force on a community. Thus, they can act as a cohesive factor for a language area, which might otherwise remain fragmented, a patchwork of small local communities. The inhabitants of such areas, even if they claim to have little love for the regional centre, in general tend to view the town as an integrative focus.

The third aspect is that an urban centre provides a pool of speakers who are in comparatively close contact with one another, tend to interact in a variety of settings, allow the formation of subcultures (e.g. for young people), and generally foster a kind of self-invigoration. The same can be true for a rural setting, but as there will always be less varied contact between the speakers with greater restrictions on settings in which speakers interact, one could claim that they often provide less of a linguistically (and sociolinguistically) rich environment.

There is an interesting development however in the context of lesser-used regional languages as an ethnic rallying point. In various areas middle-class support has sprung up for the maintenance of lesser-used regional languages. In South Wales, for example, we might mention the movement to increase the opportunities for children, even of anglophone parents, for learning Welsh. We shall discuss this point in more detail in the following chapter. What is significant in this development is that, on the one hand, there is a conscious attempt on the part of language activists to provide "their" language with more currency by finding new domains in which it could be used and, on the other hand, many of these activists have an urban background to build up at least a network of speakers in the anglicised towns of South Wales in the absence of an actual urban speech community (B. L. Jones 1981).

This growing confidence and pride in one's own language has manifested itself in the ways in which activists have managed to block political and commercial appointments of non-Welsh speakers, ensure that all materials provided by some Welsh cultural institutions most prominently the Welsh National Opera produce their materials both in English and in Welsh, and has brought about a remarkable renaissance of Welsh as a public language.

In view of the discussion of lesser-used regional languages so far, it may be advisable to sum up the factors responsible for the relative lack of vigour observable in these languages. The following table presents such a summary, based mainly on the considerations of Gregor (1980), Simpson (1981), and Gunter (1991).

²² These institutions are not, or not only, to be understood in the somewhat elitist sense of the "accepted canon"; very often folk or popular culture provides as good, if not a better vehicle for reaching a larger audience.

Factors	Elements	Additional sources (selection)
1. loss/lack of territorial base	– geographic displacement	Williams (1988)
	– decline in the number of speakers	Green (1991), Carter (1986)
	– loss or lack of linguistic hinterland	Schmid (1989), Billigmeier (1983)
	– loss or lack of urban centre	Kloss (1975)
1. loss/lack of status	– language considered poor and inadequate	Fennell (1981), Priestley (1990)
	– attempts at marginalisation/eradication from within or outside	Kloss (1969), Evans (1978), Cummins (1984), Skutnabb-Kangas (1988)
	– lack of a generally accepted (written) standard	Ó Siadhail (1988)
1. loss/lack of domains	– political/legal discourse	Villeta (1984)
	– education	Thomson (1981), Griffiths (1986)
	– scientific discourse and technology	Lutz (1982)
	– world of work	Lutz (1982)
	– print media/electronic media	Thomson (1981), B. L. Jones (1981)
	– art and music	Thomson (1981)
	– sports	Alban Rees (personal communication)
	– religious discourse	Billigmeier (1983), Feitsma (1990)
– interpersonal relationships/family	Denison (1977)	
1. influences from language contact	– widespread bilingualism	Green (1981)
	– language shift towards dominant language	Dorian (1973; 1977), Denison (1977), Fennell (1981), Fishman (1991)
	– lack of competence in lesser-used language	Dorian (1973; 1977)

Table 4.1 *Factors of language shift/death*

4.3.2.4 Type D: a language without territory or currency

Whereas Type C languages at least have a territory to which they can make claims and which could, at least theoretically, be safeguarded by legislation in the form of a principle of territoriality, Type D languages have no such means at their disposal. It is inconceivable even in areas where migrants of the same ethnic and linguistic background form a sizeable proportion of the population that the political establishment would grant them any kind of territorial autonomy. While they may be free to use their own languages in the limited context of their immediate environment, in order to be able to interact with the host country they have no option but to conform as far as possible with the demands made on them from the majorities. They are outsiders, and there are few if any demands they can make for recognition which the majority could accede to for reasons other than goodwill.

On the other hand, we need to consider the case of those groups who may have a legitimate claim to territory which the majority is either unaware of or refuses to honour. Such a situation

usually arises (as I pointed out briefly in the preceding subsection 4.3.1.3) when there are socio-political conflicts based on different attitudes towards the role of land in the cultural context of the groups concerned. The issue has an impact on this debate, even though some of its aspects may seem somewhat remote from the (European-oriented) focus of this study. Nevertheless, we can see from it that language vigour has some clear connections with the perceived validity of an ethnic group's claim to linguistic and cultural self-determination. Telling examples in this context are the conflict between semi-nomadic groups like the Native Americans in both North and South America, the Koories in Australia or the Sami in Scandinavia and their respective sedentary counterparts, the settlers in the Americas and Australia and the Norwegians and Swedes in Scandinavia. Jordan (1988: 189) points out that indigenous peoples' "claims to landrights" are not "merely a question of disputed ownership", but have "at their core one all-embracing claim: the right to identity as an indigenous people, the right to self-determination as people". These claims are often either not recognised at all by the powerful majority or, if they are, not interpreted as a manifestation of an inseparable link between the land and their way of life.²³

An explanation for this may be that it seems inconceivable to sedentary Europeans and their descendants that a (nomadic or semi-nomadic) people may not make any use of the land, i.e. farm it and exploit its natural wealth (to the point of exhaustion), and still consider it inviolate or even sacred. Bullivant (1984: 15-16), drawing on Yarwood and Knowling (1982) for his analysis, provides a model description of these conflicting views, which I shall summarise briefly. The British (and the general colonialist) view was that land was an economic resource and thus a basis of social status and of economic power. As an economic resource it could be exploited, but also transferred to new ownership. Possessions, of which land is one, lie at the centre of British (and colonialist) culture. Colonialist powers took possession of land and drew the maps based on spheres of influence while the settlers themselves did the same "on the ground" by fencing in the land they had claimed as theirs. Incursions in either case "necessitated" the use of force at least in defense, but often resulted in punitive retaliation.²⁴

These activities could be justified in three ways. Most obviously the only response to attacks by "bloodthirsty savages" was violence, as, for example, Gardner's (1980) account of the Warrigal Creek massacre relates: in retaliation for the killing of one Ronald Macalister, allegedly by Koories, a punitive expedition under Angus McMillan in July 1843 resulted in what can only be described as a systematic extermination of a group of Koories. The second way of justifying displacement, subjugation or extermination lay in the Christian ideology: the indigenous people were often seen as lazy, having squandered the gifts God had given them, i.e. "had made no impact on the land" (Bullivant 1984: 16). So the land was there for those who were prepared to make use of God's gift, to assume the position as the crown of creation of Christian ideology and to "subjugate the land and make it fertile". The third point, related to the preceding one, was the prevalent belief in social and ethnic Darwinism of the 19th century: whereas the Europeans regarded themselves as the bearers of civilisation and thus "accepted themselves as the fittest", the "Koories were considered the lowest on the evolutionary scale; therefore they were doomed to die out or be wiped out. This justified official death squads" (Fesl 1993: 72). Similarly Ruong (1983: 38) claims that social Darwinism was used to justify the Norwegian attitude to the Sami as an inferior race. As a result, assimilated Sami often deny their ethnicity except to outsiders, i.e. non-Norwegians, once the latter have gained enough

²³ Chatwin's *Songlines* provides an interesting illustration of this inability on the part of the Whites to understand that in a Koorie cosmos there is no area of the land which is not sacred.

²⁴ Such responses are based on a history full of violent struggles about owning or controlling land, an alien concept to Koories, as we shall see.

trust. Eidheim (1969: 42) relates an interesting example of Sami who almost pathologically emphasised personal features, for example they had “a craze for cleanliness, to contradict the “local Norwegian theory” according to which “uncleanliness was one of the vices of the Lapps (sic).”

The Koories, on the other hand, view land in spiritual and totemic terms. It can thus not be owned and therefore does not need to be claimed. The land does not belong to human beings, they belong to the land. According to Fesl (1993: 56) the Koories are custodians of their area of the land for future generations of their group. Areas inhabited by other Koories are of no significance, spiritual or otherwise. There is therefore no need to try and wrest it from them and consequently no need to establish or defend any claims on territory by violent or non-violent means.

Because of this attitude to territory, peoples such as the Koories, the Native Americans and the Sami do not make “clearly stated” territorial claims which could be drawn on maps. It is therefore difficult if not impossible to assign a region to such ethnic groups,²⁵ and as a result they cannot claim to have a “homeland” in which they have the right to exist in a manner typical for their ethnicity and culture and speak their own language, in other words to live as a people with their own “identity, pride, self-respect and independence” (Berger 1977: 95).

Moreover, the sedentary majorities, who believe in their superiority largely on the basis of their possessions, land being one of them, were until recently and in many ways probably still are intent on imparting the blessings of their civilisatory achievements on the minority groups, often with devastating effects. This purpose can be achieved by assimilating the respective minorities into the mainstream thus eradicating their language and by extension their cultural identity. One of the most efficient ways of achieving this goal is to ban their languages from education or even to penalise children for using them on the school premises. This strategy has been used in the past and continues to be used for both Type C²⁶ and Type D languages. On the other hand, some efforts at restoring the self-determination and self-esteem of these groups is to use their languages as a means of instruction in specific educational settings, partly because educationalists are beginning to realise that a healthy confident attitude towards one’s own ethnicity may be a stepping stone to a higher achievement rate of children from minority backgrounds in the educational system (Clyne 1974; Cummins 1984; Steiner-Khamsi 1989).

4.4 Conclusion

We have seen that language vigour plays a central role when determining what position a language may have in a societal setting. As we can assume that monolingual settings as such are rather rare, we have to come to terms with the problem of language with divergent levels of language vigour existing side by side. If, as I believe we have to, we are to find ways in which people from different language backgrounds and cultures can co-exist in the same societal setting and retain their cultural identity without this prejudicing their chances of living a full life, we need to find ways in which we can accommodate these various groups and their cultures. Recognising their situation, or in some cases their plight, may present a first step. A second step would have to be an analysis as to what the education system can do for them, firstly because it represents a domain in which young people, children and adolescents spend a sizeable amount of their time, and secondly, because it fulfills an important and widely

²⁵ The Sioux Wars are just one sad case in point where a reservation, promised to the Native Americans by treaty and for eternity was overrun by white prospectors after gold was found in the Black Hills, sacred to the Sioux. The result was the complete subjugation of the Sioux nation and their confinement in a yet smaller and more inadequate reservation incapable of sustaining their lifestyle. (cf. Brown 1974)

²⁶ Viz. the description of the Welsh “not” in Llewellyn’s *How Green was my Valley* (cf. 5.4.2).

recognised gate-keeping function. The school curriculum fulfils a similar gate-keeping function inasmuch as it separates the useful (subjects) from the less useful (i.e. those things which are not directly considered as a boon to a young person's education). If, however, by giving Type C and D languages recognition, the educational establishment can signal to speakers of such languages that their proficiencies are recognised and appreciated (Miller 1983), it may achieve more than by simply preparing all who go through it for a mainstream culture and denying some a linguistic and cultural individuality.