

Language diversity and linguistic identity in Brittany: a critical
analysis of the changing practice of Breton

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which linguistic diversity is represented, articulated and theorised in the context of the promotion of Breton, a minority or lesser-used language spoken in the region of Brittany in western France. In doing so it seeks to provide a critical analysis of the changing practice of Breton and the different ways in which the language is mobilised as a vehicle for personal and collective identity. It provides a historical reading of the development of a sense of Breton identity through the language, locating the changing practice of Breton, particularly following the revival movement that began in the 1960s, in a socio-political and socio-cultural context.

In tracking these functional and symbolic transformations of Breton, the thesis takes a theoretical approach that can broadly be described as belonging to the discipline of critical language studies. Working from this critical perspective, it explores the way different language ideologies frame issues of linguistic diversity and examines the way notions of language, linguistic diversity and identity are epistemologically constructed. In doing so it argues the need for greater critical awareness of the effects these ideologies may have on diversity, with a view to developing more effective ways of promoting diverse language practices and linguistic identities in Brittany.

Introduction

Languages are like oceans: they both exist and don't exist. Oceans exist in the minds of people, on maps and in stories, in the historical voyages of discovery and the traditions of knowledge that called them into being. But oceans don't actually exist in a literal or absolute sense. This planet we share is covered by water, but the division of this water into oceans and seas is not physical or literal, it is fundamentally geopolitical. It is an expression of the desire of people to conceptualise, divide and inscribe their own vision of the world onto their environment. Stand at Cape Horn and look around: there is no difference between the Atlantic on your left and the Pacific on your right, there is just lots of water.

Likewise the division of language into discrete and different languages is a process that is fundamentally political. Languages may be spoken, or not spoken, according to where you are on the planet, but the reasons for this have more to do with war and politics than they do with nature. In some ways it is tempting to believe that languages are somehow separate and enduring entities, that they form a privileged link between a people and a territory or that languages are divided into distinct families or hierarchies of language and dialect, but in other ways the emergence of languages and their continued association with a place is a process of constant flux. As Stephen May suggests "...languages are created out of the politics of state-making, not – as we often assume – the other way round" (May 2001:5). Where one language officially stops and another begins will most likely be a geo-political border and those borders have been continually shifting through time.

Take the Armorican peninsula for example, the place called Brittany. In the last few millennia many languages have been associated with that land: Gaulish, Latin, Norse, Breton, Gallo, French, and to that could be added all of the other languages that are spoken there such as English, Arabic and German, not to mention the range of linguistic difference characterised by dialectal diversity and the idiolect of each person. If there is a legitimate and privileged language that forms a link between a territory and a people, then that privilege is a political one since the language has

changed depending on the cultural and political influence of the day. It may not be arbitrary but it is certainly contingent.

The same, of course, could be said of nations. As Ernest Renan noted in 1882: “nations are not eternal. They had a beginning and they will have an end” (Renan 1882/1990; Thiesse 1999): they exist as an expression of an ongoing and historical political will. France has not always existed, and it does not exist now because there is a language called French that called it into being. But nor are French and France random historical events. Rather, both language and nation emerge as aspects of a phenomenon: the expression of desire and power – the desire to be a part of a group, a culture, a civilization, and the power to make that happen and reproduce its expression across time.

This is not to say that languages do, or do not belong to a place or a people. Clearly languages play a strong affective role in the lives of people and the expression of their identities both individual and collective. Rather, I am suggesting the relation of ‘belonging’ is complex and contingent and the emergence of languages is intricately linked to broader issues of politics and identity. What is interesting is how the tradition of seeing the world divided up into categories of oceans, nations and languages occurred. Through which theoretical and epistemological framework is this perception meaningful? What makes us see an ocean, a nation or a language as a separate and distinct entity? In other words, what processes create this knowledge and allow us to see the world the way we do?

This thesis is about language, power and identity. It is about the ways people use language to express themselves both as individuals and as members of a broader community. It is about the way language is used as a marker of identity and it is also about the ways in which languages are the products or outcomes of the expression and assertion of these identities. It is about the ways in which power and identity is reproduced, resisted and asserted through language. Of specific interest are the ways in which minority or lesser-used languages, of which Breton is the principal example, are used and invoked to promote the interests of different groups and the effects language politics have had, and continue to have, for members of these

groups. How do these languages, the small, stateless and often marginalised languages and language practices that represent the vast majority of global linguistic diversity, remain relevant against their more powerful neighbours? Beyond this, this thesis is a critical analysis of the theoretical frameworks and epistemologies within which the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages is commonly located. It seeks to explore different ways in which the issues of linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages such as Breton are discursively, ideologically and epistemologically framed.

This thesis is also about diversity: the ways in which minority or lesser-used languages are invoked as representations of linguistic diversity and the ways in which diversity is contested, moderated and regulated within languages, through language policy as well as through broader theoretical frameworks and discourses of knowledge and power. It is about the ways some forms of linguistic diversity are promoted as legitimate markers or emblems of national identities, while others are not, and the specific and contested role that minority or lesser-used languages such as Breton play in this process.

This thesis therefore, is about the changing role Breton plays in articulating identity, diversity and community and its changing practice through the 19th and 20th centuries. As a language Breton has undergone a number of dramatic transformations in the past century and a half, from the diverse and varied language of over a million people, to a stigma of shame and backwardness, to the symbol of a new sense of national consciousness. Breton is a language that in less than a century has lost 80% of its speakers (Broudic 1995:444) and whilst it is a language that enjoys widespread public support – an overwhelming number of people would like to see it continue to be spoken (Abalain 2000:123) – it is a language that is learned by only a tiny minority of young people and is barely practiced in public. As such, it is a language with an uncertain future. Breton is a language that has been marginalised within France and within Brittany itself, but it is also a language whose speakers have shown resilience and acumen. Even as the speaking population of Breton diminishes, a growing number of people are learning Breton for a variety of reasons. Despite strong pressure from the French State to universalise the practice of French, many

Breton speakers continue to reclaim their right to speak their language and a growing cultural and political movement has seen the promotion of a sense of Breton identity through the language. Breton might be marginalised, but it inhabits those margins in ways that are often surprising and creative and which assert and maintain a sense of cultural and linguistic difference for many Bretons.

In response to these geo-political, linguistic and identity shifts, this thesis is also an analysis and a critique of the ways in which Breton is it is practiced by its speakers, the ways in which it is invoked as a cultural and political symbol and the way it is promoted as a legitimate language by activists: those people who have consciously become engaged politically, socially or creatively for the promotion and development of the language. It examines the ways in which activists represent the relationship between language, power and identity, the notion of linguistic diversity, and the Breton language itself in their work. In particular it uses post-structuralism and critical language theory to explore not just the practice and the status of the language, but also the discursive, ideological and epistemological fields in which Breton is situated. In doing so it works towards the development of a new area of language work that involves new ways of promoting linguistic diversity: that of critical language activism. My sincere hope is that this might in some way be useful in developing language strategies that support speakers of Breton, and of other languages in Brittany and elsewhere, not simply in the promotion of Breton as a language, but in the development of strategies through which people can express their own sense of linguistic identity in diverse, creative and productive ways.

Finally, then, this thesis is about people. Beyond an intellectualisation and a politicisation of language, it seeks to affirm and support the creative and diverse ways in which people use language to express themselves. One goal, in a linguistic sense is the promotion of language policies, projects and processes that lead to “the promotion of the maximum use, and the enjoyment of... personal energy under personal control” (Illich 1973:11-12). In this sense it seeks to develop ways in which Breton can be promoted as a site of identity that is achieved or inhabited, rather than ascribed or externally imposed (Blommaert, Collins et al. 2004:10), and ways in which Breton can be promoted, not (only) as a strong, powerful language, but (also)

as a practice of difference, local identity and *Gemeinschaft*, or intimate community (Rose 1990; Fishman 1991:6; Calhoun 1993). It therefore seeks to explore ways in which people's language practices and linguistic identities can be acknowledged and valorised in ways that are inclusive of difference and diversity.

The critical sociolinguistic perspective

The initial motivation for this thesis came from an observation made by a number of linguists and language activists that the world is facing an unprecedented reduction in global linguistic diversity (see for example Crystal 2000). The majority of languages in the world are under threat, it is suggested, primarily from dominant languages such as English, or from other languages that have become more powerful because of disruptions to language environments caused by dominant languages (Mühlhäusler 1996). At issue was why certain languages seemed to become dominant at the expense of others and what processes were involved in this potential loss of linguistic diversity.

However as I read about language and society from a theoretical point of view, a sense of disquiet came about. Although much has been written about languages and their various communicative and socio-political roles, a good deal of this literature is based on a rather unproblematised notion of languages and their link between power, identity and society. What appeared to be assumed, particularly in a number of texts on language maintenance and reversing language shift, was the stability of the notion of a language in a socio-political and theoretical context. By this I mean that languages were described as essentially neutral, unproblematic, complete, reified and timeless entities that are "tied to ethnicity, territory, birth [and] nation" (Pennycook 2004:8) and are acted upon by a variety of external forces.

As I started to read the work of a number of post-structural language theorists, sociologists and philosophers, I began to ask myself in more critical ways what these things called languages were. There seemed to be an unspecified tension within the notion of a language that saw languages as different things: as the loci and vehicle of

personal and social identity; as a site for the contestation of social power; as forms of communication, knowledge and culture; as sites of contestation between different societies; and as symbols of political and symbolic power (for example a symbol of a nation). To me these notions of a language were in each case importantly different. Beyond this, I wanted to know how the notion of *a language* emerged seemingly so easily from a concept of *language* to the point where the notions were often, in English at least, conflated.

At the centre of my questioning was a need to reconcile two problematic issues. From a post-structuralist perspective it became tempting to see languages fundamentally as effects or processes of relations of power, always contingent, ever changing and located as part of a much broader symbolic field. But this position in no way explained why people experience languages as deeply meaningful *affective* phenomena that link people and communities and create social meaning and a sense of belonging.

As a number of theorists including Bauman and Briggs (2003) and Makoni and Pennycook (2005) have shown, the notion of discrete and standard languages emerged from a socio-historical context of a struggle for political authority and legitimacy, especially as it related to the development of nationalism, colonialism and enlightenment ideology. As such, it has been argued that languages serve specific interests, especially, though not entirely, those of powerful elites. In this way some forms of language are privileged and become standard languages, while innumerable others are deemed to be dialects, patois, slang or otherwise deviant and therefore illegitimate.

Within this logic standardised languages too are hierarchialised with the most prestigious languages being those that represent the greatest political, economic, social, cultural and symbolic power. Thus languages reinforce the privilege of certain parts of society at the expense of others, as well as of particular societies. Pierre Bourdieu in particular describes how, both within a language as well as between languages in contact, a market of linguistic capital operates, ostensibly to maintain a profit of distinction for the already empowered elite. He notes that the linguistic

habitus of many people can and does lead to disempowerment through linguistic discrimination or symbolic violence, whereby people come to accept and even participate in their own marginalisation through the institutionalisation and banalisation of societal inequality based on their language practices (Bourdieu 1991).

On the other hand many socio-linguists, language activists and educators (for example, Joshua Fishman (1991) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2000)) also recognise the affective phenomenon that links people to languages and societies through the concept of identity. Within this paradigm language forms an intrinsic link between people in a society and plays a privileged role in communicating cultural knowledge across generations. Language support therefore is fundamentally a question of supporting the capacity for people to continue to maintain their socio-cultural practices so that they may, as fully as possible, enjoy and benefit from the language and society they identify with. But beyond this, languages form part of our emotional selves and become symbols of our connections with others – our family, community, ancestors, and all that they have produced to create the society we live in. In this way, we speak of languages as *mother tongues* and we conceive of our own identity (on some levels at least) as being affected by the languages we speak and the cultures they represent: I am Australian, I am Breton, I am French; and the Breton, French and (Australian) English languages in various ways, help make these identities meaningful.

So while our identification with a language can deeply represent our sense of belonging to a community, at the same time, languages are forms of political positioning and are the outcomes of the often inequitable application of political power. The emergence of formal, standardised languages reflects the capacity of elite interests to normalise their linguistic practice, and in doing so to entrench their status and capacity to maintain their prestige but these prestigious standards are also deeply symbolic and of great significance to many people, particularly when they are perceived to be under threat. For me Skutnabb-Kangas seemed right in claiming the fundamental importance and validity of the meaningfulness and experienced affectivity of one's mother tongue(s) (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) but so too seemed Pennycook in his analysis of the political, contingent and performative nature of

languages (Pennycook 2004). Languages were simultaneously important sites of identity and belonging, and sites of socio-political empowerment and disempowerment.

In Brittany, within the context of language activism, the relationship between Breton and French has frequently been represented in terms of a conflict (Vetter 1999; an Du 2000; Breton 2001). In this way linguistic diversity in Brittany is frequently represented as an inequitable relationship between a small, threatened but culturally significant Breton, and a dominant, politically powerful French. Clearly Breton is a significant and meaningful language for many people, and French is dominating Breton in many ways, however the linguistic context in which these two languages are in contact is far more complex than this polarised relationship implies. Breton too is a site of symbolic power and French is personally and culturally significance for many people. Breton, French as well as many other languages and forms of language intermingle, compete and complement each other both in Brittany and in the identities of Bretons.

Because of the complexity of the relationship between language, power and identity, it therefore became difficult to speak of essentialised notions of domination, subjection, repression, violence and simplistic notions of the source and agency of power in the Breton linguistic context. Rather notions of Breton and French and the way they articulate and reproduce relations of power became multiple and contingent. Forms of linguistic domination and sites of belonging exist within and across both Breton and French, as well as in the margins of these reified positions. To make a simple distinction between French and Breton ignores the ways in which linguistic contestation occurs throughout and across societies.

The purpose of thesis therefore is to explore Breton language activism, by which I mean work that directly and indirectly seeks to promote the practice of Breton, from a critical perspective, in particular looking at the ways socio-symbolic power and relations of power are engaged, challenged and reproduced in the field of language work and the ways in which activism operates at a discursive and ideological level. In this sense it seeks to critically explore and make explicit the ways in which

languages such as Breton act as sites for the contestation and mediation of social power and serve as meaningful and important vehicles for identity. In particular it seeks to identify the productive and different ways in which people express themselves within and between languages and the ways in which linguistic identities are called into being by their speakers. In doing so it uses a number of theoretical tools, including the notions of performativity and transgression adapted from queer theory (Butler 1990; Nelson 1999), as well as post-structural and post-colonial analyses of language policy and practice (Makoni and Pennycook 2005; Blommaert 2006), to critique and reconfigure notions of linguistic normativity, appropriacy and authenticity.

In chapter one I begin by presenting an overview of the ways in which linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages, is framed in the literature. I explore the epistemological and discursive terrain of minority or lesser-used language work to see the convergences and dissimilarities between different ways of representing the issue of language diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. I argue that while there are many different ways of representing linguistic diversity, a significant number of linguists and language activists working in the field of minority or lesser-used language activism employ similar discourses and “ideas about the connection between language, identity and power” (Jaffe 1999:39) in their work.

In discussing this issue I identify a number of ideological tropes that frequently reappear in language activism and suggest that these tropes are frequently reproduced at a discursive and ideological level in language initiatives. These tropes can be summarised as: the belief that languages are “finite, stable, standardised, rule-governed instrument[s] of communication” (Ricento 2006:14), or “real objects waiting to be discovered” (Pennycook 2004:3); the belief that languages express a fundamental link between a people, a territory and a sense of ethnic community or national identity; the belief that minority or lesser-used languages are in some way under threat, particularly from more dominant languages; the belief that something can actually be done to promote or protect minority or lesser-used languages; the belief that although languages are discrete, they exist in relation to one another

in systems of interconnection; and the belief that that the language theory and the disciplines through which issues of linguistic diversity are contextualised and represented is universal and therefore exists beyond ideology.

In this way I introduce the approach I am going to take to look at the Breton language context in detail. Ostensibly, this approach is one that identifies and problematises the language ideologies employed in the field of Breton language activism. In doing so I am asking a number of questions: what discourses and ideologies are employed? What epistemological traditions do these discourses and ideologies come from? How do they represent linguistic diversity and difference? How do they represent relations of power between people and between languages? What are the potential effects or consequences of employing these discourses in the case of Breton?

My intention is not to discredit these ideologies *per se*, but rather to make them explicit and to explore their conscious and unconscious effects on our understanding of language and linguistic diversity. In this way therefore it is important not only to look at the relationship between language, power and identity at an overt and explicit level – for example in terms of the relationship between dominant and dominated languages – but also, and especially at an implicit, discursive and ideological level – for example to question the ways in which we frame social power in terms of linguistic domination.

In this way, following Bourdieu (1990; 1991), Foucault (1991; 2002) and a large number of contemporary socio-linguists including May (2001) Ricento (1999) and Tollefson (2006), I argue that our understanding of what language is, what it represents and how it helps configure issues of identity and socio-symbolic power is not ideologically neutral, objective or factual, but is itself a part of the broader symbolic and political field through which social power is regulated and represented: our understanding of language and linguistic diversity is not beyond ideology but is a part of an ideology and therefore has particular political effects.

In this sense French is not just a linguistic code that confirms and represents the political power of France, it also embodies and forms a part of a powerful set of values, beliefs and attitudes about language in general and French in particular. These values, beliefs and attitudes – these language ideologies – frame the issue of language activism and diversity in particular ways and have particular effects on the way we treat issues of language diversity and difference.

Because of this, I suggest it is timely and useful to explore in particular the language ideologies employed in Breton language activism and the effects these ideological positions may have on the promotion of Breton and linguistic diversity more generally. Without this critical inquiry, the potential exists for language initiatives aimed at the promotion of a language such as Breton to reproduce ideas about language and linguistic diversity in a way that reinforces the power, privilege and dominance of major languages and the socio-political interests and relations of power these languages represent. This may lead to unintended and unproductive consequences for a language such as Breton and may limit the ways in which language activism can challenge the dominance of specific language ideologies.

The opening chapter therefore works through these issues and locate the thesis in a theoretical context. In doing so I develop a framework for critically analysing language diversity based around the emerging discipline of critical language studies. In particular this uses the notion of language ideologies as a way of exploring the way power operates through language at a discursive and epistemological level, as well as the notions of performativity and Deleuzian theory to explore different ways of configuring language diversity and difference.

Chapter two then provides an outline of the methodology used to undertake and analyse this research. Broadly speaking, it can be located within the discipline of critical ethnography and involves an analysis that is theoretically based. The research is multi-dimensional, focussing on a number of in-depth qualitative interviews, but also incorporates participant-observation and critical discourse analysis, primarily through a number of case studies. A second objective in this chapter is to locate myself within the research. It seeks to represent the research both as engaged with

the greater socio-political language movement and as a form of personal reflection and analysis in issues of identity and representation. As such the research, including the data collection and the writing up of the thesis can itself be seen as a form of critical activism, working towards a goal of promoting language diversity and the capacity for people to express themselves through valorised and valorising linguistic identities.

The third chapter focuses on Brittany and provides a socio-historical overview and contextualisation of the region and language. In particular it looks at language as a vector of identity and the ways in which the French symbolic field came to dominate culturally, politically and linguistically during the 19th and 20th centuries. It explores the way Breton language and culture in Brittany was marginalised in an explicit and deliberate attempt to create a sense of French national unity, primarily through the promotion of the French language as the sole and privileged vehicle to access modernity and socio-economic mobility. It describes the context that saw a collapse in the intergenerational transmission of the language and the ways in which this was not simply a form of linguistic oppression, but a powerful and complex change in the field of symbolic power that worked at a discursive and ideological level; a change that many Bretons were encouraged and were willing to participate in. It then explores the language and cultural revival that began in the 1960s and was informed by a new sense of Breton national identity.

Chapter four returns more specifically to the question of language and develops the analysis of questions of authenticity and language difference based on the Breton language revival and the promotion of a contemporary Breton language standard. At issue here are the ways in which Breton is being reconfigured within a new trope of activism through institutions such as the Diwan schools, and the perceived ruptures and disjunctions of the language due to a number of issues, including generational difference, a different social practice of the language, changes in perception of the value and status of the language and a perception by many that language reform was part of a political goal.

The fifth chapter focuses more specifically on the research data and the reasons why people wanted to learn and speak Breton, their desires for the language and the role Breton plays in their own personal identities. It argues that affective, personal motivations are fundamental when it comes to wanting to learn and speak the language, often as a way of better understanding older Breton speakers and establishing stronger personal links with them, and with Breton cultural heritage. The notions of conviviality and *Gemeinschaft* are then introduced as a framework for describing the way people wanted to practice Breton.

Chapter six develops this issue and explores the extent to which the desires of speakers are being addressed within the field of Breton language promotion. In particular initiatives of Breton language policy and planning through the Breton Language Office are compared to French language policy and planning initiatives. At issue is the extent to which the Breton Language Office reproduces a language ideology informed by foundationalist tropes and notions of normativity and legitimacy. It explores the potential consequences of such an ideology on the practice and popular support for Breton. In response to this, an argument is made in favour of a more post-structural approach to language diversity and difference that focuses on the emergent and performative practice of language as a site of identity, rather than on one tied to the accurate or appropriate reproduction of a pre-formed notion of Breton as a language and an identity.

The final chapter takes some of the issues relating to diversity, authenticity and identity raised in chapter eight and explores the ways in which Breton language activism is challenging notions of normativity and the foundationalist tropes discussed in previous chapters. This chapter is a critical reading of the ways in which language activism is being engaged at a discursive and ideological level, taking Breton music as a case study. This chapter explores the ways in which static, foundationalist notions of identity are reproduced, and in particular how, within music, questions of diversity, authenticity and identity are being challenged, particularly on a discursive and epistemological level. It then looks at the language work of a number of people who are engaged language activism that critiques, challenges, transgresses, appropriates, deterritorialises and subverts the relationship

between language, identity and symbolic power to create new ways of expressing Breton identity and language that open potentially new, liminal spaces within which language and identity can be practiced. As such it provides a look at different ways in which activism can be imagined and contextualised. This discussion and analysis provides an opportunity for exploring new directions in which to take language work into the future.

In general therefore, this thesis is designed to explore the way in which the relationship between language, power and identity is represented and reproduced, and the ways in which Breton, and linguistic diversity more broadly, is discursively and ideologically located, through a critical analysis of Breton language initiatives. Its objective is to develop a new critical dimension to language activism that can promote the practice of Breton through disrupting, transgressing and creating a critical awareness of many of the discursive and ideological tropes that have marginalised Breton in the past. Equally, its objective is to promote a sense of critical reflection within the Breton movement so that Breton language activism does not itself uncritically reproduce these tropes in ways that are disadvantageous to speakers of Breton, and to linguistic diversity more generally.

To conclude this introduction, it is worthwhile saying a few words about some of the language and terminology used in this thesis. One of the sublime difficulties of writing about language, particularly in a thesis that is theoretical and broadly post-structural, is in writing about language in a way that is clear and concise as well as sufficiently critically precise. This issue is made more complex because of my desire to deconstruct and critique a number of concepts that to some people may appear unproblematic such as the notion of a language as a discrete entity.

Throughout the thesis therefore I have endeavoured to be as clear as possible with using specific terminology and have sought to be equally clear in explaining my choices for using the terminology I have. Specific language will therefore be explained as it emerges within the thesis. Although it is neither appropriate nor necessary to get into a discussion on terminology and definition here, it is perhaps useful at the beginning of this thesis to discuss one phrase that I use throughout the

thesis to describe the object of language activism and the way it is frequently contextualised. Throughout the thesis I make use of the expression: “the promotion of linguistic diversity and of minority or lesser-used languages such as Breton”. This phrase, and its variations, is somewhat of a trope that encompasses a number of complex and contested concepts and relationships. I have adopted the term “minority or lesser-used language” as a convention from the literature, particularly as it relates to linguistic diversity in Europe. It is a term frequently used by many organizations, researchers and various language workers and activists, including the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, Mercator, UNESCO and increasingly in institutions including the European Union. As a convention it is designed to describe languages that are less-widely spoken, and particularly those that are perceived to be in danger or lacking in official support, without representing these languages as somehow marginal or less-useful. Overwhelmingly in such contexts, Breton is represented as a language under threat. Although this thesis seeks to problematise this relationship, and although such a term reflects many different languages and linguistic contexts that are quite different, clearly Breton is perceived by many as being a minority or lesser-used language, and therefore I will refer to it as such.

The second element within this phrase is the distinction between language diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. As I will argue throughout this thesis, while specific languages can be seen as examples of language diversity in many ways, in other ways, it is problematic to conflate the two ideas. The promotion of Breton in many instances may be antithetical to the promotion of linguistic diversity, for example in the way standardisation tends to regulate diversity and difference within Breton and Brittany. In distinguishing the notion of linguistic diversity from the Breton language, I am deliberately and consciously seeking to keep the tension between the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity explicit. This tension is a central element of this thesis and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Approaches to Linguistic Diversity

In the last 30-40 years, and in particular since the 1990s there has been a developing concern that global linguistic diversity is diminishing and many languages are in danger of dying (Crystal 2000). Equally, there is an acknowledgement that many smaller languages in the world are directly or indirectly under threat from the growing rise and power of dominant languages such as English. It is argued both that minority or lesser-used languages are important elements of cultural identity for many people and are also of enormous intrinsic value to humanity as a whole, since they are the primary repositories of human culture and knowledge (Fishman 1991; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Consequently there is a growing sense that humanity has an obligation to protect and support languages and many initiatives have been undertaken to protect, strengthen, safeguard or promote languages as elements of this diversity.

The debate over linguistic diversity and the support for minority or lesser-used languages occurs in a variety of contexts and domains. Diversity is of significant interest in Europe where many languages, both official and stateless, are spoken within the broader geo-political and socio-cultural context of developed, late-capitalist economies, and notably within institutions such as the European Union. This geo-political aspect is also evident in many post-colonial contexts, particularly in South Asia and Africa, where language has become an important feature in debates over national identity, political empowerment and cultural representation (Makoni 1998; Errington 2001). In such environments debates over linguistic diversity often occur on complex and difficult terrains, both masking and revealing deeper issues of cultural difference, social inequity and political empowerment. This occurs for example, in the way in which colonial languages such as English and French can serve both as empowering and disempowering forces in the ways they promote development but regulate privilege in the elite classes who have access to education (Pennycook 1994). In Asia and Africa, like the Pacific, the debate over linguistic diversity is also informed by an awareness that these are the parts of the world with the highest rates of linguistic diversity, but that many of these languages

are spoken by relatively few people and whose socio-cultural environments are in many cases vulnerable (Mühlhäusler 1996).

In other circumstances diversity is seen as a question of reviving languages or of performing remedial work on languages that have lost significant numbers of their speakers. This includes the Reversing Language Shift of Joshua Fishman (1991) as well as the work of a number of linguists, including Rob Amery, in Indigenous Australian, North American, and other environments (Amery 1988; Schmidt 1993; Lo Bianco and Rhydwen 2001). In many of these latter cases, such practices involve the documentation of languages that are considered moribund and are unlikely to continue to be spoken in the future.

The theoretical and epistemological terrain of linguistic diversity is therefore extremely complex. It cuts across issues of power and representation, culture, social identity, geography and politics. Language and linguistic diversity, therefore, are never issues that appear in isolation from a broader geo-political context. Because of this, the promotion of languages, as well as of linguistic diversity more generally, is never a neutral act: it is itself always political since it represents a desire to intervene to change the language practices in some way, for particular purposes (Ricento 2006).

There are many ways of approaching the issue of linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. Simply put, language represents different things to different people: for some it is an instrument of communication (Bloomfield 1958), for others an intrinsic and affective marker of identity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2004), a field of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991), or a secret to be guarded (Whiteley 2003:717). The choice of metaphor for describing language contact and shift illustrates the diversity of ways of conceptualising the issue: 'language safeguarding', 'linguistic conflict', 'language obsolescence' and 'linguicide' have all been used to describe the situation of Breton, but from very different theoretical, and political, perspectives (Ar Mogn (2002), Vetter (1999), Jones (1996) and Breton (2001) respectively). Clearly the framework, or approach, that is chosen reflects the specific perspectives of language advocates, but it also serves to reinforce ideas and

theories about what language is and how it works in society. For example, employing a rights-based approach to conceptualise language support will most likely lead to specific recommendations for action, whilst seeing language diversity as a question of linguistic conflict, might lead to very different responses.

For the purposes of this thesis, in order to cover the complexity of this epistemological terrain, it is possible to identify a number of broad approaches within which issues of linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or less-used languages are frequently contextualised. These approaches to linguistic diversity overlap, interject and at times contradict each other and are by no means comprehensive, but they do serve to illustrate the breadth of approaches and contexts within which issues of linguistic diversity are located. They are: an instrumentalist approach; an ethnocultural approach; an ecological approach; an ethical approach; an economic approach; a political approach; and a post-structural approach. In identifying and discussing these approaches, my intention is not to divide linguistic activism into discrete, classificatory and inevitably somewhat arbitrary subsets, but rather to explore some of the more common ways diversity is articulated within the literature.

There are several main reasons for exploring diversity in this way. Firstly it serves as a kind of sociolinguistic literature review as it relates to language activism on a theoretical level. Secondly, it provides a way of exploring a number of significant similarities and differences between approaches. Different approaches will inevitably lead to different readings of issues relating to linguistic diversity, that in turn may affect the ways in which linguists, activists and speakers respond to these issues; but there is also the question of to what extent all of these approaches may be informed by broader epistemological and meta-discursive contexts (Bauman and Briggs 2003). The third purpose in exploring diversity through an analysis of these approaches is therefore to begin to identify the epistemologies and theories of language informing activists and advocates of linguistic diversity and minority or lesser-used languages. In this sense then, the paradigms people use to conceptualise and articulate issues of linguistic diversity broadly reflect two things: firstly, the theoretical or epistemological background of the language activist – the way they theorise and

understand language, and secondly, the way they prioritise the different functional and symbolic roles of language within the context of their activism.

An instrumentalist approach

One of the most common frameworks of language diversity is that described by Peter Mühlhäusler, and many others, as *instrumentalism* (Mühlhäusler 1996). This model foregrounds functional aspects of language and represents languages as tools or instruments that can be deployed for symbolic or communicative purposes, for example for encoding and transmitting meaning through words and syntax, or indeed as the vehicle of national identity. In this sense, languages are formalised, structured and complex systems that have been, or can be, described through grammars and lexicons. Equally, it describes language work and linguistic interventions as instruments that can be deployed to effect changes on a language, for example in Reversing Language Shift (Fishman 1991) or in language preservation or promotion.

The notion of language as an instrument is widespread in both linguistics and sociolinguistics. In domains such as Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar (Chomsky 1975), Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1985) as well as earlier work on structural linguistics by Bloomfield (1958) and Saussure (1931/1974), the instrumentalist trope suggests that languages are complex codes that can be broken down into their various parts: morphemes, phonemes, lexical sets, verbs, cases and the like, and analysed. In sociolinguistics it implies that language activists or linguists can influence a language by implementing strategies or actions that directly affect the nature or status of that language. In other words, to affect linguistic change, it is possible and sometimes even necessary to do things to a language: for example to develop literacy practices, to describe languages through lexicons and grammars or to introduce status and corpus planning initiatives.

Within this instrumentalist model, languages are defined and delineated as discrete entities: as both objects of study and tools of communication, knowledge and carriers of information. Languages in turn are conceptualised as being like the languages of

original philological study: Latin, Greek and Sanskrit and by association and inference, dominant European languages such as English, French and German (Bauman and Briggs 2003). These languages are defined by their grammars, are capable of being written down, able to be studied and described through the discipline of linguistics, independent of their speakers, public and accessible to anyone, separated from broader socio-political contexts and generally uniform across a society, notwithstanding subordinated dialectal differences that may exist. Within such a model, languages tend to be described as discrete, rule-bound objects. Linguistic diversity therefore tends to be read as a plurality of discrete languages, a matter of the contemporaneous presence of a quantifiable number of languages in a particular place.

A good example of an instrumentalist approach to language diversity is that of Joshua Fishman who has been one of the most significant activists in the field of minority language work over the past thirty years. Fishman's ideas have been widely adopted throughout the world by language activists and socio-linguists looking for a way to explain and respond to the process of language shift. See Fishman (1991), Akkari (1998), Crawford (2000), Hoare (2000; 2001), Azuremendi, Bachoc et al (2001), Bourhis (2001) and May (2001) for examples and descriptions of Fishman's method. As Crawford states: "so far, no one has developed a comprehensive theory of this phenomenon – what causes language shift under varying conditions, what prevents it from happening, what can help to reverse it – although I believe Joshua Fishman (1991) has gone further than anyone else in doing so" (Crawford 2000:67).

Fishman coined the term 'Reversing Language Shift' (RLS) as a model for the (re)introduction of minority or lesser-used languages into functional and symbolic roles in society. He describes this as "the linguistic part of the pursuit of ethnocultural self-regulation" (Fishman 1991:452). This is located within a broader socio-political context that is "concerned with the recovery, recreation and retention of *a complete way of life*" (ibid, italics in original). Reversing Language Shift is a complex model used to describe societal changes in language use and is based on the premise that strategic intervention in a language community can have a positive effect on promoting traditional languages under threat from a more dominant

language. For Fishman it is not only a theory of language change, but RLS is itself a mechanism for reversing that change. At the heart of Fishman's thesis is the idea that the most crucial element in the successful maintenance of a language is an ongoing and stable inter-generational transmission of that language in a family context. He states: "...the family is an unexpendable bulwark of RLS" (Fishman 1991:94) and later: "without intergenerational mother tongue transmission ... no language maintenance is possible" (page 113). For Fishman then, languages are instruments both of communication and of the transmission of cultural knowledge across a society and inter-generationally. Indeed, because they represent the collective knowledge of countless generations, they are powerful and precious instruments, that need to be carefully managed and protected wherever possible.

Fishman's model of language contact is a clear example of an instrumentalist approach to the issue of language change: communities seek to protect and promote their languages and do so through targeted programmes or initiatives, for example, through developing minority language media, through schooling or intergenerational cultural initiatives. In this model, a language is a resource that can be called upon to serve a community. It is an object that can be acted upon: "there is no language for which nothing can be done" (Fishman 1991:12), and strategic intervention in key areas can achieve broad outcomes through promoting the use of a language to speakers or potential speakers. Often such programmes will be devised with the help of a linguist, with the goal of "tipping the balance of power" between minority and dominant languages (Jaffe 1999:41).

Although such approaches to language diversity are very common, an instrumentalist model of language has been critiqued by a number of theorists including Roy Harris (1981), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Peter Mühlhäusler (1996), Mark Fettes (1997;1999) and Alastair Pennycook (2004). Bourdieu criticised a number of linguistic theories, including Saussurian linguistics, which he believed failed to take into account the relationships of power that languages represented and reproduced. He argued against the inference that languages were politically neutral and specifically rejected "...the illusion of linguistic communism which haunts all linguistic theory" (page 43), in other words

the idea that all speakers have complete and perfect access to an entire language which is “universally and uniformly accessible and therefore excluding any form of dispossession” (ibid). For Bourdieu, languages were sites of political contestation as much as they were systems of communication.

Peter Mühlhäusler suggests the conceptualisation of linguistic diversity as a plurality of distinct languages belongs to a colonial, Eurocentric discourse that is not shared by many speakers in regions such as the Pacific. He criticises the way “arbitrary points on a linguistic continuum are made into discrete, abstract entities called ‘languages’, whereas all other reference points on the same continuum... become marginalised, dialectal deviations from the standard” (Mühlhäusler 1996:6). Sifree Makoni has made a similar point in describing the ways in which African languages were fundamentally ‘inventions’ of missionaries and colonial administrators (Makoni 1998). In this case both Makoni and Mühlhäusler are critical of the processes of linguistic mapping that turned complex poly-lingual environments with diverse socio-linguistic structures and relationships into a patchwork of discrete, describable languages; a process Romaine describes as “an artefact of classificatory procedures rather than a reflection of communicative practices” (Romaine 1994:12).

Pennycook meanwhile suggests instrumentalism is “deeply embedded within colonial projects of knowledge formation, one of the ‘cultural constructions of colonialism’ *par excellence*” (Pennycook 2004:2,3) and, paraphrasing Harris, argues that modern linguistics:

has profoundly misconstrued language through its myths about the autonomy, systemacity and rule-bound nature of language, its privileging of supposedly expert, scientific, linguistic knowledge over everyday understandings of language, its belief in the existence of homogenous speech communities, and its belief in a telementational model of communication (page 7).

In this way, while languages can be seen as instruments of identity and power, if approached uncritically, instrumentalism has the tendency to reify and formalise

diverse language practices into a language model that, whilst appearing to represent a universalising scientific method, is itself part of a broader trope of colonialism and cultural specificity.

Mark Fettes likewise is critical of the ways in which structuralism fails to address the needs and differences of individuals and their capacities to use language dynamically and creatively. He suggests: “we need a theory that explains language in terms of the interaction of knowing and purposeful speakers, rather than those based on premises of structural determinism” (Fettes 1999:1); and elsewhere: “a theory of language renewal must begin with the speakers, with people "doing language" together in meaningful ways” (Fettes 1997).

Whiteley (2003) similarly notes how language planning can be socially divisive within a community. Far from being neutral, it brings with it an epistemological specificity that may not be shared by all speakers. He discusses for example how many Hopi actively opposed the introduction of Hopi language and culture into the school curriculum because “these are more properly suited for learning at home and in private ritual contexts” (page 716) while others were strongly in favour. He illustrates his point by recounting the ejection of a linguistic researcher from a community when “he was discovered attempting to inscribe a lexicon and grammar of Towa” (the local language) (ibid). Whiteley argues this was “tantamount to heresy: Under no circumstances could [Towa] be written down and disseminated” (ibid). Whiteley’s discussion shows the socio-cultural specificity not just of languages but of broader discursive and ideological frameworks influencing understandings of language and regulating knowledge.

Broadly speaking, therefore, the significance of an instrumentalist approach to language activism is twofold: firstly in the equanimity with which it is presented as an objective and disencumbered representation of reality: not as a theory from a specific socio-cultural perspective, but as a universal and universalising truth, as if scientific linguistic study were the privileged way to understand linguistic difference and diversity in the world. Secondly at issue are the effects instrumentalism has on approaches to linguistic diversity, in particular in representing linguistic diversity as

a quantifiable number of languages interacting with each other. This has the potential effect of limiting the ways it is possible to think of the promotion of diversity and difference. Non-standard forms of a language, linguistic difference within a language, idiolects and para-linguistic forms of communication such as sign languages (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Austin 2005), may be subsumed under a model that privileges a normative, standardised code.

An ethnocultural approach

An ethnocultural approach to linguistic diversity is one that links languages with particular groups based on notions of ethnicity, culture or race. In particular for many minority groups, ethnicity remains a significant model for articulating community identity and difference. As Tove Skutnabb-Kangas argues, while “ethnicity has been proclaimed dead many times during this century.... ethnicity has refused to die” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000:165).

Stephen May proposes a definition of ethnicity, following Webber (1961) as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration” (May 2001:27). Further, he suggests that “ethnic identities are not simply representations of some inner psychological state, nor even particular ideologies about the world. Rather they are social, cultural and political *forms of life* – material ways of being in the modern world” (page 10, italics in original). Fishman suggests that ethnicity is “a kinship-based myth (a myth because it is more important to believe it than it be literally true)” (Fishman 2001:5).

The terms ethnicity and ethnocultural identity appear in a wide variety of contexts and often have diverse and dissimilar meanings. Ethnocultural identity is often employed in a positive sense within minority or lesser-used language contexts in describing specific communities with specific socio-cultural traditions, particularly in relation to more dominant cultures. However ethnicity frequently carries a pejorative sense as well, for example in the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ used to describe

violence in places such as Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s. Few people describe themselves, or their own cultures, as 'ethnic'. Rather it is a term that frequently marks a difference or deviation from a perceived cultural norm. Although a discourse of ethnicity can be used to describe the uniqueness and specificity of a minority group, such a term can also be a form of social disempowerment when it is used as a form of exclusion. This can be by a majority group defining the parameters of normativity, legitimacy and correctness and therefore excluding minorities through their difference, but it can also be used to promote the exclusivity or eliteness of a minority group through narrow or restricted definitions of group identity. In this sense ethnicity can be used as a way of regulating socio-symbolic power by creating a sense of socio-cultural or racial criteria of collective belonging, including some and excluding others.

In different political traditions, ethnicity has different connotations. In particular, in France, ethnicity often carries a strongly pejorative connotation. Within the Republican trope of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* [liberty, equality, fraternity], everybody is to be treated equally and discrimination in terms of colour, culture, or language, is disadvantageous both to them as individuals, and the nation as a whole. Bollmann argues that for France « [une] logique ethniste... serait non seulement la négation de son histoire, mais le scénario politique le plus défavorable à l'intérêt national » [an 'ethnist' logic... would not only be the negation of its history, but [also] the political scenario which is most unfavourable to the national interest] (Bollmann 2002:199). In this sense for Bollmann, ethnicity is divisive and denies the rights and universal principles of all people as individuals. Moreover ethnicity «contient les germes de graves rivalités» [contains the seeds of serious rivalries] (p.196) that potentially lead to ethnic conflict and Balkanization.

The fact that the French language and culture is positioned as the universalising vehicle (at least in France) for this egalitarianism and not in itself representative of a specific ethnicity or epistemology is rarely acknowledged in France, though a number of Anglophone theorists have made this case (Ager 1999; May 2001; Sonntag 2003). Such a positioning of ethnocultural difference has significant consequences for the many minority or lesser-used languages of France, Breton

included. In its weak form, Republicanism privileges the socio-cultural and linguistic products of the centre. In its strong form, Republicanism can be used to discredit the existence of ethnocultural or linguistic difference as divisive *communautarisme*, or to deny the existence of these communities entirely.

Within an ethnocultural model, a language therefore is often, though not always, seen as a fundamentally important element of ethnocultural identity and serves a privileged role, both as a vehicle for expressing one's identity, as well as a symbol of a broader community identity. Fishman argues this point more emphatically: "no language but the one that has been most historically and intimately associated with a given culture is as well able to express the particular artefacts and concerns of that culture" (Fishman 1991:21), and later:

The most important relationship between language and culture that gets to the heart of what is lost when you lose a language is that most of the culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Take it away from the culture, and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way. What would be left? When you are talking about the language, most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about. (page 116)

In the case of many languages under threat, therefore, there is an immediate and critical relationship between speakers, their language and this broader sense of ethnocultural identity. There is a perception that systemic language shift may hasten greater societal shifts that may in turn lead to the assimilation of separate ethnic or cultural groups into dominant hegemonies, with the loss not only of the language but potentially of the whole culture, collective memory and sense of community as well. Fishman notes that in most cases: "... when any of [a culture's] main props, such as the language, are lost, most other props are seriously weakened and are far more likely to be altered and lost as well" (page 17).

Severe linguistic disruption is both an indicator and a symptom of broader socio-cultural disruptions that often have significant detrimental effects on people and societies. Take for example the social and linguistic upheavals that occurred in Australia and the Americas, where the loss of indigenous languages often reflected, and was the result of, a corresponding loss of social and cultural identity and cohesion (Schmidt 1993; Mühlhäusler 1996). Conversely, many of those communities that have managed to maintain their language have also managed to maintain a degree of social cohesion and community identity (for example, Whiteley (2003), Christie (1995)). Promoting minority or lesser-used languages is therefore seen as one way of resisting cultural domination, but also of maintaining stable communities and avoiding social problems such as alienation and dislocation. This is not to say that successful language support initiatives will solve broader social problems, but rather that since language plays an important role in constituting ethnocultural identity, addressing issues of linguistic equity and access are necessary and important steps in promoting stable and balanced communities.

Despite the salience of an ethnocultural approach and the frequency with which it is employed by writers such as Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Joshua Fishman, the notion of ethnicity has been critiqued, particularly in post-colonial studies, as belonging again to a specifically Eurocentric, colonial discourse. While it might be deployed by groups wishing to emphasise their socio-cultural specificities, like instrumentalism, it belongs to an epistemology that was initially used to privilege specific European political ideologies and to legitimise the authority of colonial powers to dominate other societies.

Writers such as James Clifford (1988) and Renato Rosaldo (1993) have problematised the ethnographic tradition promoted by Emile Durkheim for the way it privileged the researcher as objective expert and the way it “depicted the colonized as members of a harmonious, internally homogenous, unchanging culture... against which Western civilization could measure its own progress and historical evolution” (Rosaldo 1993:31). For Rosaldo this “pass[es] altogether too lightly over processes of conflict and change” (page 33). Authors such as Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (2003), Joseph Errington (2001) and Lionel Gossman (2000) have similarly

traced the development of this sense of cultural and intellectual colonialism through the theories of Herder and the rise of nationalism in France, Germany and a number of other European countries during the 18th and 19th centuries.

One of the main functions of this discourse, as argued within post-colonial analyses, was to legitimise colonialism and promote an ideological epistemology that positioned Europeans as the most advanced and civilised race on earth whilst, conversely, subordinating to various degrees non-European cultures and peoples. The hierarchisation of difference along issues of physical traits, cultural practices, or judgements about social development is problematic, particularly in the ways it discredits indigenous practices through the tropes of Orientalism and colonialism (Solomon-Godeau 1989; Said 1995; McConaghy 2000). In this sense then, while many language communities are trying to resist colonial and universalising forces, the very model which is being proposed to defend their linguistic heritage comes itself from a specific tradition that theorises both language and community in very particular ways (Sonntag 2003; Blommaert 2006).

One of the consequences in promoting linguistic diversity through a discourse of ethnicity is the way certain languages, and therefore certain language speakers, are privileged as being somehow inherently and essentially linked to a sense of cultural identity or a territorial homeland. At issue is the question of whether it is therefore defensible to discriminate in favour of a linguistic or ethnic minority: to stop foreigners from moving to a region or to oblige them to assimilate by learning the language and other cultural practices. In places such as Quebec and Israel, regions hailed as Reversing Language Shift success stories by Fishman (Fishman 1991) among others, such practices are seen as defensible. Sarkar notes how, under Bill 101, immigrants to Quebec who send their children to state schools are in most cases required to enrol them in French language state schools (Sarkar 2003), despite the language skills of the child or their proximity to a school. Similarly, Shohamy notes the ways in which many migrants to Israel, particularly Russians, are discriminated against if they do not speak Hebrew (Shohamy 1994; personal communication).

However, there are a number of difficulties with such positions. As Sarkar points out, because French is officially privileged, and because it is widely practiced, French, like English is effectively a majority language in Quebec, even if there is a perception that English dominates on a national level. This is not therefore so much of a project of minority language support as linguistic nationalism, protecting the dominant language from another dominant language. At issue are the linguistic choices available to migrants, which are often restricted because of these more global linguistic concerns (Sarkar 2003:3).

Secondly, notions of discrete ethnic groups in many cases do not reflect a contemporary (or historical) reality of immigration, communication, intermarriage or multilingualism within and between communities. Socio-cultural, linguistic or physical differences may play an important part in identifying an ethnic group, but these groups in each case have permeable and osmotic boundaries and a large degree in internal variance. People enter and leave ethnic groups through immigration or marriage, and through their presence they change the nature of that group in many ways. Likewise many linguistic and cultural practices traverse and transcend such groups while other practices are not universally practiced but remain exclusive to specific subcultures within a community.

May is careful to assert that national and ethnic identities and languages are not essentialised positions but rather are *experienced* as significant and meaningful by their constituent members (May 2001; 2003). He notes that while the term ethnicity is problematic “it is the *perceived* usefulness of these cultural attributes in maintaining ethnic boundaries which is central” (May 2001:31, italics in original). In this sense, ethnicity, as May and Fishman acknowledge, is subjective and myth-based. And yet using ethnicity as a justification for the promotion of a language or the privilege of a section of society has particular political outcomes that are experienced in very real ways by people. Claims of ethnic belonging or even the existence of an ethnic minority are therefore highly political in the ways they regulate cultural boundaries and claim difference between groups. Conversely, the issue of ethnicity and assimilation is frequently adopted by political populists seeking to gain political capital through wedge-politics. The rise of anti-immigrant

and neo-national parties in many countries is an unwelcome outcome of a discourse of ethnicity for many people.

A further issue, as Sarkar and Shohamy show, is that the promotion of a minority or lesser-used language through an ethnocultural framework is not automatically congruent with the promotion of linguistic diversity. Indeed, the promotion of specific forms of language may occur at the expense of other languages. It may be that some speakers of a minority language want their language to be the sole official language of a territory, as is the case in Quebec: in effect for their language to become normalised and dominant. In such a position it is unclear how this may be promoting linguistic diversity within Quebec. Rather it is promoting French to counter the linguistic dominance of English at a national level. In such cases, paradoxically, a person's own capacity to express their own sense of linguistic diversity may be regulated and limited by the official desire to maintain diversity at a national level, through the promotion of a strongly privileged language as a counterweight to English. A monolingual or bilingual society is not linguistically very diverse if there is little room for other languages and forms of expression to exist.

An ecological approach

Haugen first coined the term *language ecology* in 1972 and described it as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen 1972; Mühlhäusler and Fill 2001). In the 1990s the notion of language ecology and eco-linguistics was developed and adapted by the likes of Peter Mühlhäusler (1996; 2000; 2001), Mark Fettes (1997; 1999) Nancy Hornberger (2002) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1994, 2000) as a response, in particular, to a growing sense that many languages in the world were being lost, and the links this had with a similar reduction in biological diversity. An ecological approach to linguistic diversity includes the deployment of environmental or biomorphic metaphors to argue or demonstrate perceived similarities between linguistic diversity and a loss in natural floral and faunal diversity, as well as the use of biological metaphors such as

‘language death’, ‘living languages’ and ‘mother tongues’ to locate languages in the ‘natural’ world.

In a more formal sense, the notion of linguistic ecologies, or eco-linguistics, has been developed by researchers such as Peter Mühlhäusler to describe the systemic and interdependent relationships languages have both with other languages, and with their broader socio-cultural and physical environments. According to Mühlhäusler, Eco-linguistics is concerned with “the complex interdependence between forms of human communication and the multitude of environmental factors” (Mühlhäusler 1996:8). It includes both an analysis of the ways in which languages can be located within linguistic ecologies or as natural phenomena, as well as the language with which we talk about nature, with specific emphasis on the ways in which specific discourses have profound effects on the environment through the ways they represent the relationship between humans and nature.

The first sense of eco-linguistics seeks to highlight the many ways in which linguistic diversity reflects biological diversity, and highlights the importance of inter-relatedness and symbiosis in the maintenance of healthy ecologies. For Mühlhäusler both languages and the environment operate as ecologies, and elements within these ecologies are interdependent. One consequence of this is that “the change in a single link in an ecological network can precipitate very considerable overall changes, the disappearance of one species [or language] typically leading to that of a dozen of others” (Mühlhäusler 1996:49). It is therefore in the interests of everyone, including a dominant species or language to promote and maintain a healthy, balanced ecological and linguistic environment.

Similarly, he argues that there is a direct relationship between linguistic and biological ecologies. In this way changes to the environment will have potential consequences for language use, just as changes to the linguistic ecology can have effects in the environment. For example deforestation in New Guinea might have a profound impact on language use by changing the physical environment as well as social networks and cultural practices of speakers. Environmental changes caused by migratory flows, industrialization, changing farm practices and urbanisation have

similarly transformed language practices in Europe and across the world. Clearly, whilst there may not be a direct causal relationship between environmental change and the decline of a language, the two issues are, in many instances, intimately related and occur as elements of a broader socio-political and socio-cultural phenomenon of language change.

As with instrumentalism and ethnicity, Mühlhäusler suggests the destruction of linguistic ecologies and natural ecologies is also primarily an effect of European colonial imperialism (Mühlhäusler 1996:311) and the imposition of a specifically Eurocentric view of both language and nature. Much of Mühlhäusler's work is focussed on the Pacific region which is rich in linguistic diversity and whose pre-colonial linguistic environments were, and to an extent still are, characterised by multilingualism and "chains of dialectal connections" (Mühlhäusler 1996:5) rather than discrete, definable, standardised languages. He is especially keen to debunk the particularly Anglo-centric, and Franco-centric, notions that monolingualism is normal or that linguists can map discrete languages onto territorial maps as if they were jigsaws to be pieced together (Mühlhäusler 1996:15). For Mühlhäusler "the trend toward monolingualism and monoculturalism is the problem... diversity itself is a necessary precondition of economic and social well-being" (Mühlhäusler and Fill 2001:312).

In this framework therefore what is important is not so much the analysis and promotion of any particular language, but rather an exploration of the functional relationships between people, their environment, and language. Mühlhäusler's analysis seeks to understand linguistic diversity as an integrated phenomenon involving the maintenance or restoration of a healthy system within which languages and communities operate. In this way, "...the aim of [language] maintenance is to enable the survival of a structured diversity rather than individual languages" (Mühlhäusler 1996:322). Clearly this is quite a different goal from the promotion of specific languages through an approach that seeks to strengthen or privilege particular languages, as is the case in Quebec, or through an RLS paradigm.

The second sense of eco-linguistics looks at the ways in which languages describe the environment and the effects this has on human behaviour towards nature. Specifically, of interest are the “ways in which languages other than the ones familiar to most Europeans emphasise and de-emphasize aspects of the environment” (Mühlhäusler 1996:3) and conversely, the ways in which, for example, European languages often represent the environment as a resource which can be mined, forested, fished and farmed (for example, the belief that Australia is a country *rich in natural resources*, or the lack of human agency, and therefore responsibility in terms such as “habitat loss” (Schleppegrell 2001:226)). The metaphors we use to talk about the environment say a lot about us as a community. In this sense, eco-linguistics is the way in which we talk about, and imagine the environment within our own particular discursive systems.

The strengths of the eco-linguistics paradigm lie in the ways in which such agencies are highlighted as contributing factors to language change, as well as the ways in which language diversity and the support for languages is seen in terms of interdependent relationships between language communities, rather than the promotion of specific language varieties in isolation, or in conflict, with other languages. In exploring language change within a post-colonial context, it highlights the ways in which Eurocentric language theories dominate and in which languages are seen as “...monolithic, abstract entities that modern science projects upon the linguistic world” (Fettes 1997:1). In arguing that linguistic diversity is a necessary condition for the well-being of all language varieties in a linguistic ecology, it provides a useful argument for convincing dominant language speakers to become more interested in the plight of their linguistic neighbours, and more conscious about the way their own language influences their perception of the world.

One potential limitation of an ecological approach to language theory is that in theorising the environment and language as similar phenomena, there is a risk of understating the socio-political aspects of language shift and diversity if this relationship is read literally. Crawford warns that using biomorphic metaphors like ecology, survival, death, extinction and genocide uncritically “...can lead us into semantic traps, and these traps have political consequences” (Crawford 1998:155).

One consequence of these semantic traps is, as Stephen May puts it, that:

in effect, biological metaphors reinforce, by implication, a widely held view that language loss is an inevitable part of the cycle of social and linguistic evolution. Thus one could view the loss or death of a language as simply a failure on its part, or its speakers, to compete adequately in the modern world where, of course, only the fittest languages can (and should) survive (May 2001:3).

Likewise, Skutnabb-Kangas is conscious of the risk of linguistic reification within an ecological framework. She suggests:

linguodiversity is not only valuable but necessary for the future of the planet, as is biodiversity – but at the same time, the relationship between them has to be conceptualised in ways which avoid what has been called biologism, and essentialism, and fundamentalism (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000:217).

In other words, believing that languages are natural phenomena that can be saved may serve to promote protectionist or segregationist views about languages and how they are used within societies. It would be absurd, for example, to think that languages could be put in linguistic sanctuaries along with their speakers and protected from the corrupting influences of modernity. Likewise it would be arrogant to believe that speakers of minority or lesser-used languages have a moral obligation to maintain global linguistic diversity in the interests of, among others, speakers of dominant languages. These speakers have no special obligation to English speakers to maintain their language, however they may well see the importance of doing so for themselves or their own community.

One risk is that ineffective or inappropriate strategies may be put in place to protect and preserve languages, underplaying the socio-political and socio-symbolic dimensions of language: for example in seeking to preserve a language in folkloric or ceremonial contexts rather than encouraging its use in a diversity of ways (Fettes

1997:12). Similarly, the belief that a language can be ‘preserved’ might conceivably lead to a belief that it is enough simply to record and describe a community language for posterity; that language support work is somehow separate from broader issues of social equity and access; or the idea that vernacular and oral languages are somehow more natural and therefore primitive, than the developed, written languages.

A language rights approach

Within a language rights approach, the protection and promotion of all languages is asserted as a moral and social obligation. Language rights can be seen in a number of ways, for example in terms of the right for people to be treated equally in society and not discriminated against, regardless of the language they speak, the official recognition of different languages, or the provision of language services and funding of education by the State. Marcías sees language rights as:

- (1) the right of freedom from discrimination on the basis of language; and
 - (2) the right to use your language(s) in the activities of communal life
- (Marcías 1979:41, cited in Crawford 2000:98).

The identification of a language as a right has also been made by a large number of governmental and non-governmental charters and resolutions, particularly in the years following the Second World War. For example, Article 2(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that:

everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as... language" (General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III), UN GAOR, 3rd Session, Resolutions, Part 1:71 (1948)).

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, provides that:

[i]n those states in which... linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other

members of their group... to use their own language. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, United Nations (1966), article 27).

The identification of access to one's language, and the respect of that language by others and by institutions as a right, is therefore a well-established position in the international community. Language is seen not just as an instrument for communication but also as an aspect of one's cultural heritage, way of life and identity. It assumes a symbolic status that gives it an intangible yet intrinsic value. In a rights-based approach to linguistic diversity, political institutions and policy is seen as a fundamental tool in the support of minority languages, as a feature of linguistic diversity.

For some, including Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1994; 2000; 2003; 2004), speaking one's first language(s) is considered to be an inalienable right and the protection of this right necessarily involves the protection or promotion of these languages. In this way, economic, political, cultural or linguistic domination is seen as a fundamental human injustice and societal language shift, as a result or process of domination, is therefore also unjust and morally indefensible. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson describe Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) in the following way:

- the right to positively identify with one's mother tongue and have that identification respected by others
- the right to learn the mother tongue, including at least basic education through the medium of the mother tongue
- the right to use [mother tongue] in official contexts
- the right to learn at least one of the official languages in one's country of residence
- restrictions on these rights may be considered an infringement of fundamental LHRs (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994:2)

However, despite the clear declarations of language rights by these various groups, it is frequently unclear what the application of these rights means in practice. For example, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson note how a clear, universal definition of Linguistic Human Rights is still elusive in many language contexts and they suggest the clarification of the concept is a necessary step in the promotion of these rights

(Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994:14). Pragmatically, in very few cases are the linguistic rights of minority or lesser-used language speakers fully acknowledged and supported. In the case of France, despite the entrenching of the rights of French into the French constitution and elsewhere, no references to such rights for minority or lesser-used languages are made in any constitutional or legal texts, despite the key role France played in drafting many of these universal declarations.

There is therefore often a significant gap between the idealised declaration of rights and the implementation of these ideals in a worldly context. For example, de Varennes suggests that while there is a moral obligation to recognise the language, and provide protection to it:

“...there now seems to exist a fairly widespread agreement that Article 27 (and indirectly the UN Declaration) does not by itself impose a legal obligation on states to provide financial assistance, in education as in other areas, to support specific activities aimed at minorities, including support for private or public schools using a minority language” (de Varennes 1997:17).

Thus, while there seems to be a broad engagement of the notion that a language is a right, the application of this notion is often far from its ideal. This is in part because the inability of institutions such as the European Union or the United Nations to enforce the application of these rights in the signatory nations.

A more significant issue however, is that in identifying access to a language as a right, there is disagreement as to whether this is an individual or a collective right, or both. Most declarations and charters on rights apply to the rights of individuals before, and sometimes to the exclusion of, any rights of communities. Indeed, one of the features of Enlightenment thinking, which gave birth to the idea of the notion of universal human rights, was precisely that individuals had rights above collectivities. In many cases, France being a notable example, communities have no rights at all: through a Republican, Jacobin logic, all citizens are equal and therefore discrimination or distinction by way of cultural, physical or social specificity is an impingement on this right to universal equality (Ager 1999; May 2001). In this

context, rights exist exclusively as a contract between the individual and the State. In one sense this can be read as a project of liberation from what was seen as the social and economic domination of feudal collectivities and, particularly, as a way to weaken the power of the church (Cole and Williams 2004). And no doubt it was, but the contemporary consequence is that collective rights are nowhere nearly as widely acknowledged as individual rights.

While one may locate language as an individual right, clearly languages are not only individual phenomena but collective phenomena as well. Magnet suggests:

The right to utilize a language is absolutely empty of content unless it implies a linguistic community which understands the speaker and with whom that speaker can communicate. ... Language rights are collective rights. They are exercised by individuals only as a part of a collectivity or a group. Legal protection of language rights, therefore, means protection of that linguistic community, that community of speakers and hearers, vis-à-vis the larger community which would impinge upon it or restrict its right as a group to exist (Magnet 1990:293).

Stephen May rejects the notions that community and individual language rights are incommensurable. He suggests:

Individual rights, which are associated with citizenship and the apparent neutrality of the civic realm, are valorised for their universalism, their protection of fundamental liberal freedoms, and their strict impartiality. Group-differentiated rights are viewed far more sceptically, often hostilely, by liberal commentators. They are most often associated with particularism and the potential illiberality that may result – some would argue, always results when one apportion rights differently between groups... My own position is that group-differentiated rights are defensible as long as they retain within them the protection of individual liberties (May 2001:11, italics in original).

However, within a rights-based framework, the broader issues of socio-linguistic fixity and of the reification of language remain problematic. May specifically critiques the Linguistic Human Rights paradigm, suggesting that it “...tend[s] to assume the identity of linguistic minority groups as given, the collective aims of linguistic minority groups as uniform, and the notion of collective rights as unproblematic” (May 2001:8) but it is equally important to acknowledge that a rights-based framework necessarily requires the language in question to be clearly and explicitly defined and delimited, which is rarely a straightforward matter. In a juridical or legal context, both the language and the language speakers need to be identified for rights to be acknowledged: precisely who (or what) has rights and what these rights specifically are needs to be legally established.

As a consequence, languages and language groups tend to become instrumentally represented as stable, definable and delimited entities. Subsequently, linguistic (or dialectal) difference within a language is frequently understated in order to avoid ambiguity about where rights exist. Simply put, because of the juridical context within which rights are asserted, to defend the right of a community to speak a language, a clear sense of what that language is, and is not, is necessary. This has the effect of focussing potentially diverse notions of a language around specific notions of linguistic fixity and normativity, in effect resuming the notion of linguistic diversity to that of the right to speak a specific language in specific contexts or places.

There are therefore a number of criticisms of a rights-based approach to linguistic diversity. One of the limitations of the language rights paradigm, as discussed, is the tendency for the language community and the language itself, to be represented as homogenous and stable. It has difficulty accounting for linguistic variation within languages and with other languages, for example migrant languages spoken in the territory of a linguistic minority, as well as the presence of personal plurilingualism and societal multilingualism. This issue is particularly prescient in non-European situations where community views on language and those informed by Eurocentric forms of linguistics do not always match (Mühlhäusler 1996; Makoni 1998). May is conscious of this criticism and argues for a “more pluralistic, open-ended

interpretation of language and identity – that is the opportunity or potential for holding multiple, complementary, cultural and linguistic identities at both individual and collective levels” (May 2005:337). He himself notes however that: “A key weakness of MLR [Minority Language Rights]... is a tendency still to discuss language rights in collective, and often uniform, terms, assuming in doing so that languages, and language groups, can be easily demarcated in the first instance” (page 338).

A more pragmatic criticism of linguistic rights is that it does not in itself address all of the issues through which language shifts occur. While it may be an honourable and ethical position within a liberal and humanist discourse, even people with linguistic rights are capable of neglecting and abandoning their language. If one has the right to speak a language, presumably one also has the right not to speak a language, or to speak a different language. Clearly in many cases language shift is a forced choice or the result of socio-political pressure, but in other cases too it is (also) a strategic choice by people. While linguistic rights are perhaps symbolically important, the linguistic decisions people make on a daily basis may not be based on such lofty ideals as universal linguistic equality. Willingly or otherwise, many people feel an economic, social or political imperative to speak a language and the acknowledgement of their language rights may be ineffective unless other major issues such as economic and political justice are also addressed. For others, their choice of language is not based primarily on their sense of linguistic equality but to the contrary, on a perception that in speaking one language over another, they will gain some concrete or symbolic advantage (more food, better pay, greater respect, increased opportunities, greater linguistic capital). In many cases language shift is the result of a perception of a competitive advantage gained by switching to a language of greater prestige. In these cases people may be choosing a language based on how it represents their superiority rather than their equality. Language shift may result, in part at least, from speakers’ desires to achieve a profit of distinction (Bourdieu 1991), rather than supporting their community.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the push for language rights emerged within a European theoretical and political context and therefore that a great deal of activism

within a rights-based approach is focussed on minority or lesser-used languages in Europe and in other developed countries. Given that human rights are routinely ignored across the world and that abuses are in some cases abetted by the very institutions and nations that claim to uphold those rights (Monbiot 2003), it is no surprise that many people struggling with poverty, hunger, war, debt and disease are not more active in asserting their language rights. Conversely, language communities across Europe are relatively capable of expressing their linguistic demands on a political stage, in terms of the resources needed for advocacy as well as the capacity to petition institutions without fear of political retribution. Such circumstances clearly advantage some language groups over others, demonstrating that the implementation of linguistic human rights has a long way to go in practice, even if they exist in theory. Whilst this is not a criticism of the paradigm itself, at issue is the willingness and capacity of societies to implement these ideals effectively and equitably.

An economic approach

As in many aspects of life, approaches to linguistic diversity are increasingly being framed within an economic paradigm. In this sense languages and linguistic diversity can be explained, and theoretically influenced, either through economic theory – that languages operate in economies of scale and linguistic marketplaces and that it is possible to manage a language with the application of economic principles. This paradigm often appears in debates over, for example, funding for language maintenance projects, but it also appears more discursively and metaphorically in describing language learning as an investment, or by looking at multilingualism as an expense because of the need for translations, duplication of services and the like.

While linguists research languages, bureaucrats and politicians usually administer projects and sign the cheques for language support initiatives. Often, particularly in a discourse of economic rationalism, the value of such initiatives is measured in terms of an economic cost or a return on an economic investment. Mühlhäusler notes how in the case of Papua New Guinea, language development is seen as being difficult

because of the sheer number of languages, over 800 by his estimation, (Mühlhäusler 1996:318). The problem, as it is articulated within an economic discourse, is in funding the development of all of these languages into modern, standard languages through literacy programmes, corpus planning and the like. Economies of scale preclude smaller languages from being economically sustainable, mainly because of the social and bureaucratic apparatus necessary to develop and maintain languages at such a level. The perceived solution is therefore either to promote a select few languages at the expense of other language varieties, or to “employ the ‘watering can’ approach and add a bit of what is perceived as missing to many languages” (ibid).

Sometimes within this paradigm, the rise of dominant languages, such as English and, in the case of Breton, French, are seen as positive outcomes in the development of mass and global markets. While these dominant languages are seen as desirable or essential prerequisites in order to fully participate in the market, smaller languages are subordinated and are considered hindrances to development and full participation in a global society. Mühlhäusler notes how the view that “diversity is a problem [to] be overcome” (Mühlhäusler 1996:312) was the premise of language planning theory until the 1980s and the view that diversity is a potential asset is comparatively recent. Thus in some contexts language diversity is seen as a deficiency, representing a barrier to the free flow of capital and information.

In this deficit model, the relative value of languages is measured by the economic effects they produce: languages such as English are considered advantageous and valuable while lesser-used languages are seen as uncompetitive and disadvantageous to speak or learn. In such logic, learning languages such as English, Japanese, Spanish and Chinese is considered a good investment in time and money, while learning minority or lesser-used languages is considered at best an optional intellectual luxury and at worst a waste of time and energy. François Grin (2003) points out that there are tangible economic consequences to language issues, such as the difference in wages that speakers of different languages can expect to receive in similar positions and the earning advantage some language speakers have over speakers of many other languages. Because speaking a minority language does not

appear to directly translate into economic advantage, and in the experience of many actually results in an economic disadvantage, common sense suggests that only learning a language that enables one to participate in a larger and more affluent economic market is a positive thing.

Grin (2003; 2006) is one of a small number of researchers who is seeking to critically engage an economic discourse in the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages, through his framework of Language Economics. His argument is that most language theories underestimate the significance of economics in the support of linguistic diversity. While rights and responsibilities are important, when it comes to language choice and use by speakers and policy planners, economics assumes a much more significant role. He suggests:

...one might ask how economic processes contribute to the demise of small languages, and whether economic forces are intrinsically responsible for this state of affairs, or whether these forces are merely a conduit through which independent language systems operate (Grin 2003:4).

Grin's aim is to introduce some of the tools developed to understand and manage fiscal economies into the field of socio-linguistics so that planning can be more meaningfully directed. Whilst he positions languages within an economic context, he is careful to steer clear of a reifying ellipsis:

...it bears repeating that a model is nothing but a form of discourse about reality... the rationale of this type of discourse is not to resemble, let alone to replicate reality, but to constitute a useful instrument helping us to reflect upon and understand reality (Grin 2003:11, italics in original).

This economic approach is useful in that it explicitly emphasises the links between language and the economy (in both a broad and narrow sense). One criticism of the model, however, is that it assumes the rational behaviour of language speakers. In other words, that:

... actors use their limited resources rationally by making choices regarding the allocation of these resources in such a way as to maximise their satisfaction (or in economic parlance, their 'utility') (Grin 2003:8).

This assumption of rationality suggests people always make the best possible choice for themselves when given the chance, which is not always the case. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, in cases of symbolic violence, people potentially make choices that are disempowering (Bourdieu 1991). Nor does it problematise the broader discursive field within which utility is measured: in other words despite Grin's warning, there is a tendency to accept unproblematically the hegemony and legitimacy of an economic paradigm. Similarly it tends to underplay the affective role of language in articulating identity. People often speak languages for highly personal reasons and employing an economic discourse is unlikely to speak to this notion of affectivity.

A political approach

Many theorists have sought to locate and make explicit the links between language and power through a number of disciplines. Pierre Bourdieu's 1991 collection of essays *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu 1991) has been highly influential in exploring the way power is produced and regulated in societies through language. He claimed that linguistic exchanges are "relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualised" (page 37). Michel Foucault has written extensively on power and the ways in which, in particular, state structures have been instrumental in controlling and regulating power (1976/2002; 1978/2002; 1983; 1991). Likewise Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have offered a poststructural critique of power in a number of texts including *Anti-Oedipus* (1989) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Others, including Freire (1970), Gramsci (1971), Illich (1971) and Habermas (1979) have explored the effects of power in society through Marxist and neo-Marxist theories (Tollefson 2006).

While these analyses, and the responses to the issue vary, each of these writers is interested in looking at the ways in which power is both masked and revealed in social relations. As Foucault put it: “we try to bring to light what has remained until now the most hidden, the most occulted, the most deeply invested experience in the history of our culture – power relations” (Foucault 1973/2002:17). Foucault traces this practice to Nietzsche and suggests that “behind all knowledge [*savoir*], behind all attainment of knowledge [*connaissance*], what is involved is a struggle for power. Political power is not absent from knowledge, it is woven together with it” (page 32).

Language therefore is identified by many as a key area of contestation for socio-symbolic power, both between individual speakers and between different language groups. Skutnabb-Kangas acknowledges that: “Language is not, and cannot, by definition, be a neutral, ‘objective’ disencumbered tool. It is always imperative and subjective, regardless whether those using it admit it or not” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000:134). Stephen May notes that:

the unavoidable historical and contemporary fact that the establishment of state-mandated or national languages is, in almost all cases, an inherently deliberate (and deliberative) political act and one, moreover, that clearly advantages some individuals and groups at the expense of others (May 2005).

May’s statement is true, of course, not just of state-mandated languages but any language that is represented as being the privileged vehicle of a national, or ethnic, identity. Stateless and minority languages are no less political, even though they may not have official support and political wherewithal of more powerful languages. While they may not have the capacity for linguistic domination the way languages such as English or French do in many circumstances, in many ways they are still being modelled on these languages. The difference in power is in their limited capacity to dominate, not in the way they articulate and represent socio-political power.

The issue of power is central to the question of language diversity because of the perception that such languages are themselves disempowered, or sites of disempowerment (and re-empowerment) for their speakers and because of their inequitable relationship to dominant languages or forms of language. In response to this, a good deal of language activism involves the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages in ways that aim to increase their socio-symbolic and/or political power, and to empower speakers through strategies aimed at increasing the status and prestige of languages, for example through language policy and planning initiatives (Tollefson 2006).

One way of analysing these broader relations of power configured and described through metaphor is with the notion of discourse. Foucault describes discourse as “an ordered set of polemical and strategic facts” (Foucault 1973/2002:3). Elwood suggests discourses are “webs of relatively coherent intersecting beliefs and practices with which subjects identify and which thus structure thought and behaviour.... Discourses fix norms, defining what is considered to be true at any point in time and place” (Ellwood 2004:1-3).

In this sense then discourses are the meta-textual ideas, beliefs, attitudes and frames of knowledge that inform texts and linguistic utterances. Frequently implicit, they are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Sarup 1993:64). In other words, discourses not only inform texts, they orient them, influence them and help construct texts by creating an ideological, ideational and epistemological framework through which they are rendered meaningful, and through which issues such as appropriateness and prestige are regulated.

In this way discourse is a site for the contestation, representation and reproduction of power. Fairclough makes the point that:

Discourse helps to constitute (and change) knowledge and its objects, social relations and social identity....Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies....The shaping of discourse is a stake in power struggles (Fairclough 1992:8-9).

Similarly, Pennycook argues that: “Discourses are indelibly tied to power and knowledge and truth, but they do not either represent or obfuscate truth and knowledge in the interests of pre-given powers...; rather, they produce knowledge and truth (they have knowledge and truth effects)” (Pennycook 2001:83). He suggests these discourses inform not only “our political view of society but our political view of knowledge” as well (page 85). In this sense therefore both knowledge and truth are located within discourse and not beyond it. In other words, “all knowledge is political” (page 43).

There is a significant amount of literature, particularly in recent decades, that seeks to prioritise the political and ideological nature of language activism in the promotion of linguistic diversity. A number of researchers have explored the relationship between language, politics and linguistic diversity through analyses of the nation-state and the development of liberal democratic systems of governance. Writers such as May (2001, 2003), Theisse (1999), Ager (1999), Loughlin and Peters (1997), Keating (1997), Blommaert (1996; 1999), Kymlicka (1995) and many others have sought to critically analyse the ways in which language and political power intersect in increasingly sophisticated state and corporate structures, and specifically how this relates to issues of national identity, including linguistic diversity and support for national, as well as minority or lesser-used languages. At issue for many is the role of the state in formalising political power and how language is used both as an expression, and as a way of mediating this power. In other words, how languages manifest political power and how power is manifested through language, particularly in a liberal-democratic ideological context that makes claim to represent equality, democracy and freedom.

For a number of writers, language activism is inseparable from political activism. It is both a tool for political identity and a site of political contestation and issues of linguistic contestation, discrimination or suppression symbolise the broader socio-political struggles being waged. The political dimension of language planning and activism can clearly be seen the work of people such as Eve Vetter in relation to linguistic conflict in Brittany (Vetter 1999) or the cases of Quebec (Heller 1999;

Sarkar 2003) and Catalonia (DiGiacomo 1999). In such situations where language contact is seen as a conflict or a part of an explicitly political struggle, language initiatives are frequently politically oriented, for example in the normalization and promotion of one or other language variety as a literal and symbolic feature of a political identity. Speaking a language therefore becomes a political act and a sign of allegiance, or separatism, depending on the context and point of view.

As DiGiacomo points out, however, the reverse is equally true: majority cultures and ethnicities are also political in their language acts, but these are less commonly explicit. Frequently highly political acts are implemented through language policy and through the regulation of prestigious forms of language by governments, with little acknowledgement of their ideological specificity. Indeed within France the particular set of beliefs about language that frames discussions on French is subsumed within a trope of universalism that purports to be beyond ideological partisanship, despite its own discursive and epistemological particularities.

One of the most significant writers to explore the relationship between language and power was Pierre Bourdieu, who sees language fundamentally as “an instrument of action and power” (Bourdieu 1991:37). For Bourdieu: “linguistic relations are always relations of power (*rappports de force*)” (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989:47). In this sense languages are tools that achieve, in particular, the regulation of power within a society through the production and legitimisation of prestigious linguistic forms.

Through his idea of linguistic capital and the symbolic field Bourdieu argued that language was not neutral or disencumbered within a society, nor between societies, but rather language was the site of continual contestations of power and the representation and reproduction of inequities of power: “utterances are not only (save in exceptional circumstances) signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth* intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (Bourdieu 1991:154-155, italics in original). In this sense formalised and high-status forms of language represented a profit of distinction for those people who were capable of using them but reflexively, these

prestigious forms of language were precisely those that social elites were most fluent and capable in.

There exists therefore a market, or *field*, through which linguistic capital is translated into different forms of symbolic capital, such as social or economic capital. For example the capacity to produce prestigious forms of language at appropriate times could confer status on a person or create for them an economic profit. In particular Bourdieu noted the role of education in conferring and reproducing linguistic capital, both in the ways it articulated social prestige and the way it focussed power around specific types of language that were promoted as linguistic standards: "...the educational market is strictly dominated by the linguistic products of the dominant class and tends to sanction the pre-existing differences in capital" (Bourdieu 1991:62). Schooling could be used therefore not only to confer legitimacy on some types of language, but to disempower other types, be they linguistic difference within the language or other languages that fell within the broader symbolic field of a society: for example, Breton in France through the educational system of the Third and Fourth Republics.

Bourdieu's analysis is useful in the context of linguistic diversity because of the way it critiques standardised languages as specific political positions rather than natural objects. While his theory has been criticised by some as being overly structuralist (Siisiäinen 2000), deterministic, or, somewhat unfairly, as "a celebration of (literally) mindless conformity" (Jenkins 1992:97), it remains significant for the way it locates the apparatus of the state at the centre of the debate on how some forms of language are promoted as prestigious national languages and others are reduced to the status of dialect or *patois*. One consequence of this theorisation is that it is no longer adequate to simply equate the promotion of specific languages with a broader issue of linguistic diversity, since the decisions about which languages, and which forms of a language, deserve promotion or official status are political ones.

Jan Blommaert (1996; 1999; 2006) is another theorist to foreground the political dimension of language. Through the notion of *language ideologies* he seeks to make explicit the political field within which issues of language and linguistic activism

operate. Blommaert is critical of the equanimity with which Eurocentric notions of language are reiterated and reproduced. He suggests that the notion of language ideologies “stands for socially and culturally embedded *metalinguistic* conceptualisations of language and its forms of usage” (Blommaert 2006:241 italics in original). Richard Watts describes language ideologies as “a set of communally shared beliefs about language” (Watts 1999:73). Alexandra Jaffe describes them as “dominant ideas about the connection between language, identity and power” (Jaffe 1999:39) and Lenora Timm suggests language ideologies “refer to notions regarding linguistic distinctiveness, value, “purity” and standardization, and the relation of these to the realities of language use...” (Timm 2000:147).

In this sense then language ideologies represent the political, discursive and epistemological context within which our ideas and beliefs about languages are formed and reproduced. They are “sites of power and authority” (Blommaert 2006:242) because of the way they regulate and reiterate notions such as linguistic appropriacy, value, status and norms.

These language ideologies are powerful beliefs about the nature of languages, what they are, how they work in communicating ideas or representing collective identities, and the effects they have on people and societies. Typically they are socially implicit and are often axiomatic, especially for monolingual societies and people. Frequently specific beliefs about language are presented with equanimity as common sense or objective knowledge.

One of the purposes of studying language ideologies therefore is to describe the ways in which particular beliefs about language emerged and are reproduced within a society across time. Of specific interest for a number of these writers is the critical analysis of the language ideologies informing linguistics and sociolinguistics, particularly the ways in which modern linguistics represents itself as being atemporal, apolitical and acultural, and therefore as an objective, neutral and scientific tool, rather than belonging itself to a specific ideological tradition. By exploring the discursive contexts of language theory, the notion of language

ideologies is used to explore language not (only) at the level of intercourse and linguistic production, but (especially) on a critical, discursive level.

Of particular focus for many of these writers are the ideologies of language that inform, and are informed by, European modes of thinking and practice, particularly in the contexts of colonialism, post-colonialism and late-capitalism. At issue is how these ideas came to dominate the intellectual and theoretical study of language, leading to quite narrowly defined ideas about what languages are and what they do, and also how they represent, regulate and reproduce power, prestige and privilege in society. Blommaert suggests:

The advent of print capitalism offered an instrument for the dissemination of language ideologies that attributed the highest prestige to an autonomous, structured, semantically transparent (written) language variety – an elite variety over which the educated (upper) middle classes had control, but which was now imposed on the whole of society as the (only) Language, as opposed to the “jargons”, “speech”, “dialects,” and other forms of “imprecise,” “vulgar,” or “confused” (oral) language of the less educated masses. It was the sort of language that would be laid out in grammars and dictionaries and then offered normatively, as a collection of strict rules, in the emerging national education systems (Blommaert 2006:242).

Blommaert, and a number of other post-colonial writers including Peter Mühlhäusler (1996), Sinfree Makoni (1998), Alastair Pennycook (2005) and Thomas Ricento (2006) note how this view of language was then deployed within a colonial project, sometimes as a civilizing tool and frequently as a way of asserting European authority and dominance. Blommaert acknowledges the effects that basic assumptions about the nature of languages “as a set of decontextualised rules and norms, and confined to *national* spaces within which they could become the emblems of national identity” (Blommaert 2006:242 italics in original) had on language diversity in many places. Similarly, Ricento is critical of the way linguistic homogeneity and official state monolingualism were frequently promoted and perceived as necessary, through the tropes of nationalism and language planning (Ricento 2006). Silverstein has described this as a “monoglot” ideology (1996)

which “rests on an ideologically configured belief that a society is *in effect* monolingual” (Blommaert 2006:243, italics in original) even though “societies are almost by necessity multilingual in the sense that many varieties, genres, styles and codes occur” (ibid).

Likewise writers such as Makoni, Pennycook and Mühlhäusler have noted how the project of linguistic enumeration, invention and hierarchisation was a feature of European colonialism, whereby diverse intellectual, linguistic and cultural practices were turned into “objects of European knowledge” (Makoni and Pennycook 2005:142) which “helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said 1995:1). Wiley describes the way “the colonizer’s model of the world” (Wiley 2006:140) was used to describe the languages colonists and missionaries ‘discovered’ and which were seen to be in need of ‘development’ through the creation of writing systems, literacies and standardisation as subalternised versions of their colonial masters (Blaut 1993; Mignolo 2000; Wiley 2006). Many other writers have similarly endeavoured to show how language policy, ideology and the “arrogant European epistemologies of the so-called Enlightenment” (Pennycook 2006:62) were themselves powerful tools of colonial domination (see also Hodge and Mishra 1991; Pennycook 1994; McConaghy 2000; Canagarajah 2002).

Within a post-colonial reading it can be argued that this Eurocentric language ideology was in many cases discursively reproduced at the time of decolonisation. When new nations-states were being formed, European nation-states were most often used as a political and ideological model. In this way, the goal was to develop and continue the same administrative, social and political institutions and frameworks as their former colonial masters, so that the newly independent states could continue the civilizing and modernizing work begun by the imperial powers. The aim, above all, was to avoid a return to pre-colonial systems of governance such as feudalism or tribalism, and rather to create stable, modern states that could take their place on the international stage of nations.

In a linguistic sense, these new nation-states, it was believed, needed their own codified, official national languages, be they prestigious local languages or, more frequently, the former colonial language, so that institutions such as the bureaucracy could operate and a sense of national cohesion and common identity could be achieved (Anderson 1996). In effect colonial languages often remained dominant in prestigious contexts such as higher education (Blommaert 1996; 2005) and remain the language of prestige in many countries, despite limited practice by most of the population.

The situating of language policy and planning within this nationalising trope has therefore led to issues of language diversity and difference often being located within a particular language ideology that represents both language and symbolic power in specific but frequently unacknowledged ways. This occurs as a regulation of linguistic difference around specific, reified forms of language and the promotion of specific languages through their political institutionalisation. It also reproduces specific ideas about the normativity, systemacity, and rule-bound nature of language as well as the homogeneity of the speech community (Harris 1981; Pennycook 2004). As previously discussed, writers such as Peter Mühlhäusler (1996) and Peter Whiteley (2003) show that within different intellectual traditions, language and languages can be understood quite differently.

While language ideologies refer to the broader linguistic epistemologies and discourses that inform views on language, the notion of language ideologies has equally been used to describe different ways of conceptualising and framing linguistic issues in more specific contexts as well. They therefore describe the way power is discursively constituted at both a macro level, for example in the way a language ideology informs a government's language policy, and at a micro level, in the way that policy is read and implemented by different groups and individuals in a society.

At this micro level, differences in the way languages are ideologically framed can also have a significant effect on language initiatives. For example, Jan Blommaert and Alexandra Jaffe explore the way language ideologies inform debates over

literature and translation in Corsica. Jaffe notes how in the 1990s there were two quite different debates about the translation of literature into Corsican. On the one hand translating popular French texts into Corsican can be seen as an important pedagogical tool and a way of opening Corsican literature to the world (Santarelli 1989 cited in Jaffe 1999:45). On the other, translation was seen as “a destructive force which prevents [Corsican literature] from finding its unique voice” (page 44). Two very different views on language thus lead to exactly opposite conclusions about the best way to promote Corsican literature. In relation to the translation of on particular novel *Knock*, Blommaert suggests:

The first ideology would allow translations of French works into Corsican to be seen as acts of “promotion” of Corsican... The translators [of *Knock*] argue that they are “expanding” the language, “proving” its expressive qualities, and so penetrating into domains of power hitherto exclusively reserved to French. Corsican is used as if it were a language of power – as if indeed it were French. On the other hand, the second ideology would see translations as an act of perversion, since only creative literature in Corsican would realise the ideal mapping of language and soul, whereas translations would bring a foreign “essence” into the language... Thus translations reinforce the “colonial”... linguistic power relations that hold between French and Corsican (Blommaert 1999:13, italics in original).

These two different language ideologies describe very different, if not incommensurable, ways of understanding and describing the relationship between language, power and identity. Blommaert identifies these as “an instrumentalist ideology in which language is seen as a tool for transforming ideas into new linguistic pattern... [and] a romantic ideology, in which language is an abstract idea inextricably linked with a people’s soul” (Blommaert 1999:13). Indeed one of the reasons why issues of language activism are so complex and sensitive is because of the contemporaneous presence of these, and other, language ideologies in language and identity debates and a lack of consensus about the nature or role of the relationship between language, power and identity.

One of the main criticisms of locating linguistic diversity within a paradigm of political or symbolic power is that it detracts from the important and strongly felt affective and personal links people have with a language, and express through a language. A touchstone for this issue is the notion of mother-tongue and whether the relationship between a person and their mother-tongue(s) is privileged and beyond a political critique. For Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, language, in the form of mother tongue, lies at the very heart of identity and issues of language promotion and rights. For her, the language-identity-ethnicity link is essential and inalienable and she is critical of the “undermining” of this link and the “postmodern detachment” shown by some theorists (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003:2). However, for others this relationship, expressed through the mother-tongue metaphor is “an invention of specific ideological apparatus” (Makoni and Pennycook 2005:141), or a “quasi-biological identity which links a particular group to a specific place” (Williams 1997:121). Recent debates in the literature have proved this to be a difficult, if not intractable, issue between those who represent the link between language and identity as inalienable, or fundamentally contingent and political.

The issue in many ways boils down to the centrality of the role a language is seen to play in articulating notions of group identity and belonging, but also it is a question of the transparency, or opaqueness, of the discourses and language ideology (Blommaert 1999; 2006) engaged. Somewhat ironically, both camps tend to view the other as being essentialist and failing to acknowledge their own ideological position: Skutnabb-Kangas accuses her unnamed opposites (though from the subtext it is clear that one of these is Alastair Pennycook) of not acknowledging the privileged position they speak from as educated, internationalised speakers of English and failing to appreciate the experience of someone whose mother-tongue is under threat and whose language rights are being denied (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003). Conversely, Skutnabb-Kangas’ own position has been viewed as belonging to a Eurocentric language ideology that, through terms such as Linguistic Human Rights and mother-tongue, position languages and speakers in specific ways that may not necessarily be advantageous (Makoni and Pennycook 2005, see also May 2005).

In relation to this debate, it is reasonable to take a position that for many communities at least, language plays a profoundly important role in articulating a sense of community, national, ethnic or collective identity, even if, for others, it is less important and that this in no way diminishes the important affective and symbolic role languages play for many speakers, in particular speakers of minority or lesser-used languages. Stephen May argues that:

while language may not be a determining feature of ethnic identity, it remains nonetheless a significant one in many instances... languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities. This is so, even when holding onto such languages has specific negative social and political consequences for their speakers, most often via active discrimination and/or oppression (May 2005:330).

In this sense then, while language clearly has a political dimension, focussing on a political analysis of language practice at the expense of the affective experience and perceptions of speakers tends to negate and marginalise the legitimacy of their own language experiences. Again May suggests:

In theory then, language may well be just one of many markers of identity. In practice, it is often much more than that. Indeed, this should not surprise us since the link between language and identity encompasses both significant cultural and political dimensions (page 332).

A post-structural approach

Linguistic post-structuralism describes a varied set of responses to language theory that broadly seek to critically engage with questions of language diversity and identity. Definitions of post-structuralism are problematic, however, Fuery suggests:

Part of the reason why post-structuralism is designated 'post' is that it claims to have superseded structuralism by challenging two of its

foundational claims. One is that structures are present in all spheres of human activity (from anthropology to economics to religion) and that by understanding such structures we gain a sense of ‘truth’. The other claim is that the structure of the sign (the signifier’s relationship to the signified) as devised by Ferdinand de Saussure is the systemic key to all processes of meaning and communication. Post-structuralism challenges these two concepts on the grounds that there can be no truth or truths (no ‘transcendental signifieds’ as Derrida calls them) outside the constructions of such sensibilities; furthermore it is imperative not only to reveal the artifices of such social structures but also to develop a more dynamic model of the sign (Fuery 1995:38).

In this sense then post-structural approaches to language studies, and issues of minority or lesser-used languages, work to problematise the assumption that languages exist as pre-existing and discrete objects that are transcendent of their speakers, but suggest rather that languages are called into being or are produced in a variety of ways through a complex nexus of power, identity, and diverse forms of linguistic and cultural expression. In this sense, language and a language is not a fixed or knowable object or a being, but a form of expression, an emergent effect or a process that is frequently contingent, performative, transgressive, and in a constant state of flux.

Post-structural readings of the language diversity issue are surprisingly uncommon and references to the issue of linguistic diversity and difference in post-structural literature are usually oblique and occur in passing. The exception to this is some of the work on post-colonialism discussed above and in particular Alastair Pennycook’s work on linguistic performativity and the disinvention of language (2004; 2006). In this reading, Pennycook critiques the way a Eurocentric, normative view of language as “a prior system tied to ethnicity, territory, birth, or nation” (Pennycook 2004:8) is reproduced axiomatically through the trope he describes as a “foundationalist framework for knowledge” (page 2). In particular he seeks to break down the privileged status of general and applied linguistics as objective and disencumbered tools of linguistic analysis, and rather relocates them within their specific epistemological contexts, as powerful vehicles of language ideology that represent

language in specific and highly political ways, with specific and highly political effects.

Pennycook makes this argument with Sinfree Makoni, through a critical historical analysis of language policy, planning and ideology during colonialism (Pennycook 1994; 2004; Makoni and Pennycook 2005). One of his objectives is to show the way notions of fixed, reified, normative languages that exist prior and separate to their speakers has been used to reproduce inequities of power in colonial contexts. He argues that this in many cases led to the invention of languages by linguists and colonial administrators who were keen to describe, and inscribe, their own view of the world onto these conquered lands, in order to consciously or unconsciously reproduce their sense of authority and power to govern.

In critiquing this colonial trope, Pennycook argues for the *disinvention* of languages, by which he seeks to make explicit the ideologies inherent in language studies disciplines through a critical historical analysis of their production (ibid). In doing so he uses the idea of performativity (Following Austin (1962) and Judith Butler (1990; 1993)), to argue against the “entelechiial assumption that languages are real objects waiting to be discovered” (Pennycook 2004:3). He suggests that “...languages themselves are better viewed from an anti-foundationalist perspective. By this I mean that the ontological status of languages and grammars as pre-given objects of study becomes suspect” (ibid). Pennycook goes on to cite Hopper (1998): “...there is no natural fixed structure to language.... Systematicity...is an illusion produced by the partial settling or *sedimentation* of frequently used forms into temporary subsystems” (Hopper cited in Pennycook 2004:19, italics in original). In this sense the very notions of grammar, as well as identifiable languages and linguistic identities, are rendered problematic. As Pennycook argues, this may allow us: “... to develop an anti-foundationalist view of language as an emergent property of social interaction” (Pennycook 2004:8).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have similarly been critical of instrumentalism and the structuralist language theory that linguists such as Noam Chomsky propose: “You will never find a homogenous system that is not still or already affected by a

regulated, continuous, immanent process of variation (why does Chomsky pretend not to understand this?)” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:103). In *A Thousand Plateaus* they deconstruct the Saussurian differentiation of *signifier* and *signified* to argue against a structural view of language and suggest that difference, through which meaning is experienced, is not structured or structural but radical: language is not a system of differentiation, nor does it represent meaning as the relationship of a set of signs, nor is it external to the individual or society, but is itself a series of events of difference. Meaning emerges from the interactions, the interconnectivities, and the transgressive and liminal spaces between people, rather than simply being located in an external and ideal reality or in the relationship between words, ideas and signs. Language is not prescribed or signified but emergent and immanent (Deleuze and Guattari 1989). As Colebrook explains:

...difference is not a set of relations. Difference is neither the relation between one identical thing and another (as in common sense), nor is difference the general system that creates a world of objects (as in structuralism). For Deleuze, sexual difference is itself different in each case (although we generalise and refer to men and women); genetic difference creates differently in each mutation (although we generalise and refer to species); visual differences are in each case different (although we generalise and refer to the colour spectrum). Life itself is difference, and this difference is in each case different (Colebrook 2002:27).

To this one could add: linguistic difference is in each case different, although we generalise and refer to languages.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari develop and discuss, among many other things, linguistic difference and the articulation of power in society (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). In critiquing structural theory, they develop the related notions of *territorialisation*, *deterritorialisation* and *reterritorialisation*¹ to describe the ways in which groups, entities and organisms are perceived to form and take on a

¹ The term territorialisation has been used in a different context to describe the presence of a language on a given territory. The Deleuzian sense territorialisation is quite different to this and does not directly engage with the geo-political sense of territory.

metaphorical body or substance, and which are then confronted and broken up, only to reform as different bodies or intensities. In the case of language, this can be used to describe the way an uninterrupted flow of difference becomes coalesced around certain ideas or loci of power, and which gradually emerge to be perceived as languages. An example of this is the babbling of a baby that is initially an undifferentiated flow, but which gradually becomes territorialised around the language of its parents, as it learns what sounds are linguistically meaningful and which are not. As it implicitly becomes aware of the laws and discursive regimes that prescribe correct usage or behaviour, it becomes territorialised, in the sense that it learns appropriacy and how to behave as a subject of the group.

For Deleuze and Guattari each territorialisation represents a reduction of difference, while each deterritorialisation represents a line of flight, or potentiality for the liberation of difference back into the “intense germinal influx” (Colebrook 2002:36) or undifferentiated flow, where it is consequently reinterpreted, and reterritorialised. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari seek to highlight the contingent and ongoing nature of this process. So, for example, language is continuously being deterritorialised: the perceived structures and legitimacy of a language being resisted and broken up; only to reform, or reterritorialise, in new and different systems, processes and dynamics. Meaning, linguistic structures and languages are not therefore enduring and transcendent entities but particular events or formations that appear solid only when located in a particular socio-historical context. Languages such as English, French or Breton are therefore ever-changing in how they articulate meaning, how they are spoken, as well as who they represent, what they represent and how they represent people and societies. Languages, such as we perceive them, are not therefore eternal but at best are “a snapshot... at a particular time and place” (Reagan 2004:44) of far more complex flows and confluences and coalescences of sociosymbolic and sociopolitical practice.

In order to describe structural and post-structural representations of power Deleuze and Guattari employ the twin biomorphic metaphors of the arbor and the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Arborescent power structures represent a stable hierarchical sequence. Schematically these relations are represented as a branches of

a tree, dividing at regular intervals. Examples of this schema include family trees and trees that describe families of languages, genus of species and the like. In such representations relationships and lines of power are clear and unambiguous, producing connections and affiliations, be they family, linguistic or biological that are discrete, clearly differentiated and systematic.

However, Deleuze and Guattari take umbrage at the structural order that represents languages as a series of predictable, describable divisions. Rather they argue for a rhizomatic metaphor, whereby change and difference occurs unpredictably, spontaneously, sometimes radically and transgressively, in the same way that grass grows as a rhizome, with no source, no trunk and no centre.

unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple... It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows... In contrast to centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:21).

As a critique of structuralism, the metaphor of the rhizome is an example of how dominant centres of power can be challenged on a discursive and ideological level, firstly by contesting the authority of the centre and secondly, by refusing to engage the very model that configures this power. In relation to languages therefore, not only is the authority of the dominant language rejected, so too is the whole logic of discrete and separate languages in hierarchical relation with each other.

In a different context, Deleuze and Guattari describe this territorialisation and reterritorialisation as a process of *molarisation*, which they contrast with the *molecular* and with *immanence* or *becoming*. Molarisation describes the coalescence, or the reduction of difference, around certain intensities or points of power: for

example the grouping of atoms to form a cell, the grouping of cells to form a body, the emergence of a social group from a group of bodies and the emergence of a standard language such as French from less-differentiated language, as a part of that society. Ellwood suggests “[the] process of molarisation or territorialisation imposes constraints so as to order reality and make it manageable” (Ellwood 2004:86). In other words French or English are molarisations in the way they order and limit linguistic difference within a grammar, lexicon and a field of appropriacy and linguistic capital.

In contrast to this molar plane, there is also a plane of immanence, on which desire is expressed, and where deterritorialisations occur.

On the plane of immanence there are always movements which resist the rigid structures which are a result of molarisation, and break with constrictions and repressions; that is, which ‘deterritorialise’ and follow ‘lines of flight’. Lines of flight are moves to escape the molarisation processes inimical to discursive production. They are the deterritorialisation which flees from the territorialising/reterritorialising effects of discourse (Ellwood 2004: 37-38).

Of interest here are the ways in which languages represent molarising forces and, particularly, the way in which linguistic standardisation can be equated with a reduction of difference. There are two ideas at play here in relation to the issue of minority languages such as Breton: firstly, the way in which a minority or lesser-used language can be seen as a deterritorialisation of the dominant discursive regime or language ideology and a line of flight away from the molarising force of a rigid and fixed notion of a language; and secondly the way the promotion of such languages may act itself as a reterritorialisation and molarisation along a new intensity: that of a newly reified national language or a language which is promoted as newly dominant in certain contexts.

Across these two molar planes are innumerable lines of flight, representing the desires of people to use language as forms of expression and identity in varying intensities of difference and coalescence. In this sense then Breton can be seen as

both a linguistic deterritorialisation and a reterritorialisation. Depending on the context, and the perspective, Breton can represent both a line of flight that promotes linguistic diversity in relation to a hegemonic French, but also a molarising force that limits more radical forms of linguistic diversity through the promotion of a linguistic standard. Within Breton too, there are constant deterritorialisations and transgressions that emanate from, cut across and undermine loci of power and the continually reterritorialising intensities. In this sense, the practice of Breton can be described not as the ordered and orderly expression of a linguistic standard but rather as chaotic and performative iterations, manifestations and expressions of diversity and difference that transgress, reproduce, invoke, subvert and recontextualise notions of normativity, appropriacy and identity.

Post-structural approaches to language diversity therefore seek both to critique the processes through which territorialisations and reterritorialisations occur, and to open up liminal spaces and new ways of approaching issues of linguistic diversity and difference. For example, rather than contextualising linguistic diversity as a plurality of inter-related yet separate languages, promoting the notion of linguistic diversity as one of difference within, between, across and against these common notions of language can provide new ways of understanding linguistic diversity, for example as linguistic disjunctures, transgressions, subversions, disfluencies and performatives. As Deleuze puts it: "...mobile relationships of force have taken over from the devices of power, cracks have replaced the segregations" (Deleuze and Parnet 2002:138). Whilst it might be premature to herald the death of structuralism, hierarchical power structures and the notion of a language, these cracks provide liminal points of entry, or lines of flight, that can potentially provide productive ways for people to represent difference and diversity in new and different ways.

This is what is being done, in a post-feminist and queer context, to notions of gender and sexuality by theorists such as Judith Butler (1990; 1993) and Cynthia Nelson (1999) who seek to challenge and subvert normative notions of gender and identity, in doing so weakening the power of the centre to ascribe these identities and opening up new spaces through which it is possible to express oneself in a meaningful and empowered way. Just as queer theory seeks to disrupt a societal discourse of het-

normativity, for example, a similar strategy is possible for language speakers for whom the dominant language society expects them to speak may or may not adequately represent their more complex, nuanced and personal linguistic identities and practices.

Post-structural, anti-foundationalist readings of linguistic diversity as forms of difference are slowly becoming more widespread, particularly through the emerging field of Critical Language Studies. Nevertheless, post-structuralism is either not engaged, or explicitly rejected by a large number of speakers and linguists. There are several possible reasons for this. One is in its theoretical complexity and its inability to produce neat and tidy responses to complex questions. In deconstructing or disinventing language, is a project that asks far more questions than it answers, even if it is important that those questions be asked.

A second reason is that it is arguing against a very powerful theory of language that is frequently reproduced within Anglo-European language studies and in the attitudes of many speakers themselves. Simply put, people commonly believe that they speak a language and that they speak the same language as their compatriots. They have little reason or desire to challenge this logic, or to believe that it is possible to think language differently. Moreover these ideas about language are constantly reinforced and reiterated by socio-political institutions such as schools and the media through which models of linguistic appropriacy are taught and displayed. Even though many people may feel linguistically dispossessed, it is easier to contextualise this linguistic inequity through a structural view of linguistic domination, conflict and dispossession, rather than to rethink and problematise their whole linguistic and epistemological framework. In other words, there is relatively little critical reflection of the epistemology and language ideology informing our understanding of language but rather, there is a belief or an assumption that the way we see language and linguistic difference is ideologically neutral and describes an objective truth.

A third reason is that for many people, and in particular many people who identify as speakers of minority or lesser-used languages, these languages are sincerely important markers of identity with which they have a strong affective relationship

(Skutnabb-Kangas 2004). People don't want to disinvent their languages any more than they want to disinvent their families or their communities. One of the limits of post-structural language theory is that it does not clearly speak to the important symbolic role of language and has to work against tightly held and emotive beliefs in many cases about the way a language constitutes a fundamental link between a person, a place and their sense of community.

A fourth reason is that the project of a significant amount of language work done by activists is not necessarily the promotion of all linguistic diversity in the broad sense of difference but rather through the promotion of their own particular language. Rather than seeking to promote linguistic differences, they are seeking to increase their own linguistic capital through the promotion of the value and prestige of specific languages and specific forms of those languages. In this sense then the objective of some activists may not be the promotion of a post-structural theory of language and the disinvention of languages, but real and concrete political gains for themselves through language activism. Given that in some cases language activism is fundamentally tied to a political campaign, for these people the issue of disinventing language is a red herring to the greater political project.

Whether or not languages are extant objects or sociopolitical inventions, as Stephen May notes, they are nevertheless *experienced* and *perceived* as real and significant identity markers by their speakers (May 2001; 2003; 2005). They play important roles in focussing notions of community identity and political power in societies and they also play important roles in the psycho-symbolic wellbeing of many people, articulating a bond between people through notions such as mother-tongue, as well as a shared culture and history. For many speakers of minority or lesser-used languages this affective, identifying role of language is far more important than theoretical debates over the ontological status of their language. Indeed, as discussed, challenges to this status are often greeted with suspicion and hostility, as if they were strategies by dominant languages and their speakers to further destabilise and discredit these languages (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003).

However, a critique of the reification of linguistic practice into distinct languages through a foundationalist trope is not a rejection of the notion of languages entirely. Nor is it a denial of the importance of languages in representing meaningful relationships between people. Rather it is an acknowledgement of the specific ideological context within which specific notions of languages are meaningful, and within which issues of linguistic diversity are contextualised. Exploring the ways in which diversity is represented and regulated at a discursive level can better help activists develop effective strategies through which languages can be used as a productive force in the promotion of linguistic diversity. One potential outcome of a post-structural approach to linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages is in developing strategies of critical language activism that respond not just to perceived inequities in relations of power between languages and language speakers, but also and especially engage in language initiatives designed to subvert, transgress and disrupt the reproduction of these relations of power at a discursive and epistemological level.

Developing the Theory

From this discussion of the various approaches to language diversity that are prominent in the literature, a number of broad issues emerge that intersect the representation and contextualisation of the field of linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. In particular there are a number of tropes that consistently appear across the instrumentalist, ethnocultural, ecological, language rights, economic, and to some extent political approaches to diversity. These broadly structuralist tropes inform and influence a significant amount of work promoting linguistic diversity and minority or lesser-used languages. These tropes emerge as a result of the post-structural readings of language and linguistic diversity and a critical analysis of ways in which issues of language diversity and difference are traditionally framed in the literature.

The first of these tropes is the view that languages are identifiable objects or natural phenomena that are independent and transcendent of their speakers at some level and

that exist in some real, discrete and objective sense, even if the boundaries between these languages are often unclear or contested. For example, languages are things that can be counted, can be saved, can die, can be taught, can be manipulated through planning and operate as instruments or tools of communication. They are “finite, stable, standardized, rule-governed instrument[s] of communication” (Ricento 2006:14), or “real objects waiting to be discovered” (Pennycook 2004:3) and they operate in complex socio-symbolic and socio-cultural systems and are themselves systemic; all languages have a lexicon and a grammar which are identifiable and describable. In this sense, in some way all languages are capable of being independently studied and acted upon by activists, linguists or speakers themselves. Moreover the method of linguistics, like the process of language activism, is something that can be applied to all languages equally, at least in theory. Linguistic diversity therefore is generally represented as a plurality of languages, albeit often in complex networks or ecologies.

Related to this is the notion that while languages may have high degrees of dialectal diversity, internal variation and change, and while they may be practiced differently by different people at different times and in different situations, the notion of a language exists and endures within a community across space and time. For example, Breton is believed to have been continuously spoken for more than a thousand years in Brittany (Timm 2003), and despite very different and changing practices of the language within the region and over the centuries, it is fundamentally the same language.

A second trope is that languages, and in particular minority or lesser-used languages, express a fundamental and often privileged link between a people, a territory and a sense of ethnic community or national identity. Languages are not merely systems of arbitrary signs or tools for communicating, but are also important vehicles of identity and symbols of inclusion and exclusion of a group. This is articulated particularly strongly through the discourse of ethnicity that is used to describe minority or lesser-used languages and their speakers. Conversely it is frequently understated or ignored by speakers of dominant languages, who tend to see their language in more normalised, instrumentalist terms (May 2005).

A third trope is that minority or lesser-used languages are in some way under threat or under potential threat, from external and internal forces: that they are in some danger of ceasing to be spoken. The common response to this is that these languages need, or can benefit from, support of one form or another. In other words such vulnerable languages need to be strengthened and promoted in key areas (for example rights, prestige, intergenerational transmission or education) to safeguard their ongoing practice and relevance in as many domains as possible. Rather than language change being seen as a constant and ongoing process, change is frequently represented as being caused by specific external issues or events, for example the domination of an occupying power or ideology.

A fourth trope is the belief that something can actually be done to promote or protect minority or lesser-used languages. That is, effective language strategies exist and linguists, activists or speakers have the ability to influence language use at a societal level. In other words, language policy, planning and activism is a legitimate and productive thing to do because languages are objects that can be controlled by speakers and acted upon. If this were not the case, if our ideology suggested that language loss were inevitable or beyond our powers of intervention, then there would be no point in working towards the support for languages and diversity.

A fifth trope is that languages exist in relation to one another and these relationships are ordered and describable. These relationships can be described as ecologies with a number of languages forming interrelationships, as a patchwork of languages, or as a hierarchy of languages, for example in the arborescent metaphor Chomsky uses to describe grammar and the notion of family trees of language used to represent common relationships between languages, as well as the view that they come from a common source. Languages can also be described in hierarchies of power and prestige, in terms of “asymmetrical power relations” (Ricento 2006:15) between dominant and minority languages, diglossic relationships between and within languages, as well as the distinction made between languages and dialects.

A sixth trope is that the language theory and the disciplines through which issues of linguistic diversity are contextualised and represented is both universal and objective. In this trope, disciplines such as socio-linguistics and sociology are seen as being neutral and disencumbered, when in fact they have their own historical and epistemological specificity and are very much the products of Eurocentric, enlightenment thinking, and discourses such as rationalism and colonialism, masked as universalism.

These tropes are extremely resilient and often appear axiomatically in language initiatives. The frequency with which they are expressed in the literature is partly due to the cultural and linguistic specificities of many of those in the field of language support: many language activists come from particular backgrounds and are, for example, highly educated people working in tertiary institutions, writing in academic journals in languages such as English and French and working in fields such as linguistics, education, sociology and anthropology. The various academic and research paradigms used therefore tend to regulate the types of research done on language, but also regulate the ways in which some language work is considered research, or activism, and other work is not. It is also partly due to the ways in which language ideologies reflexively validate their own authority by proving themselves to be the most suitable framework to study their own inventions.

These tropes inform a theory of language that can broadly be described as foundationalist, following Pennycook (2004), because of the ways in which they reproduce beliefs about the systematicity, normativity and prior ontological status of languages as discrete, reified, pre-formed objects. In contrast, post-structural approaches to diversity theorise language quite differently. In particular they reject the notion of a language as a prior system or code that exists independently of its speakers. Rather this position sees language as an emergent, contingent or performative expression and languages as particular political effects that regulate power in society. In this way languages are the *effects* of communication, not the privileged vehicles.

Both foundationalist and post-structural engagements with language diversity address issues of power, but they do so in very different ways. Foundationalist approaches tend to represent power within a hierarchical framework of dominant and subordinated languages. Because of this, responses to issues of political inequity tend to focus on the redistribution of that power through the empowerment, or strengthening of minority or lesser-used languages so that they can become more like the dominant languages, and therefore more capable of resisting the pressures of language shift. This is often done through language policy and planning initiatives that seek to introduce target-language education, language standardisation and literacy initiatives, the provision of target-language media, official recognition and other corpus and status planning initiatives.

In contrast, post-structural readings of language diversity engage with the issue of power at a more discursive, ideological and epistemological level. Within such approaches, language is still seen as a site of power and political contestation, but so are the symbolic and ideational structures that frame and contextualise linguistic diversity. In this way, linguistic ideologies are not separate from contestations of power, they are a crucial part of the process through which socio-political power is mediated, reproduced and regulated in society.

Post-structuralism therefore represents a very different language epistemology, one that includes discourse and language ideology as sites of linguistic expression and contestations of power; one that sees language as a productive effect of expression, rather than a prior form, even if through processes of repetition and sedimentation many language practices appear to have a sense of systematicity (Hopper 1998); and one that sees linguistic diversity as the expression of differences rather than, or as well as, a plurality or multiplicity of specific languages. While post-structuralism also frames language and linguistic diversity in a specific discursive context, in this case a post-foundationalist context, by challenging the axiomatic status of foundationalism, it helps create an awareness of the ways in which symbolic power is discursively reproduced. In doing so post-structuralism opens up the potential for a new space in which language activism can be situated, not just for minority or lesser-used language activists, but for those who may not feel sufficiently represented by

normative and polemical notions of languages and language activism and creates a new and potentially productive way of engaging in critical language work.

Critical language activism therefore works on disrupting and transgressing foundationalist assumptions so that, at the very least, the power structures that are implicit within these approaches are made explicit. Because of this, the engagement of activism is at a critical, discursive and ideological level, rather than at a corpus or status level. The question is not so much ‘how can minority languages be promoted’ but rather ‘how can linguistic diversity be rethought in ways that do not discursively disempower speakers whose language represents diversity and difference?’

While post-structural approaches clearly have their own limitations and may well reproduce inequitable relations of power in different ways, it is nonetheless worth exploring alternative ways of thinking about diversity that might reconfigure the sociolinguistic landscape in productive ways. The critical analysis of linguistic initiatives in languages such as Breton creates the possibility for developing a new focus of language activism: not (only) at a sociolinguistic level, exploring the promotion of languages and linguistic diversity, but (also and especially) at a discursive level, by challenging, disrupting and critiquing the ways in which issues of language difference and diversity are articulated, potentially opening up new possibilities for the expression and valorisation of linguistic difference.

The remainder of this thesis therefore seeks to address how questions of socio-political power intersect with issues of language diversity, difference and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. In particular I am interested in exploring the ways in which power is represented, reproduced and contested in the promotion of Breton as a minority or lesser-used language in foundationalist and post-structuralist ways, and the possible effects this may have on linguistic diversity in Brittany both in terms of the promotion of specific forms of Breton, as well as other languages and forms of linguistic diversity.

This thesis therefore will trace these two vectors of language theory across the linguistic and socio-cultural terrain of Brittany. It will examine the ways in which

particular notions of language have been reproduced and transgressed in the past, and the ways in which the Breton language can be read as an ongoing and performative site of language identity in the present. At issue are the ways in which notions of language, identity and power intersect and inform each other, and how a sense of Breton language and identity is produced, reproduced and contested. Grounding this research is the premise that while the promotion of linguistic diversity through Breton is important both for people for whom the language is important, as well as in the promotion of linguistic diversity more generally, to be effective and equitable, this promotion cannot be at the expense of diversity within Breton or the diversity of linguistic practices in Brittany.

Chapter 2: About the Research

It may seem strange to the reader that someone in Sydney would want to write a thesis about Breton, and about being Breton. To many, an Australian studying Breton language activism may seem like an incongruity. On the one hand of course Brittany and Australia have very little to do with each other: they exist in different geographical and cultural hemispheres. For many Bretons in particular, Australia represents a place of escape, a desire, a barely-real land at the ends of the earth. If, for Australians, Brittany is more accessible geographically, it is only because of our own desire, and need, to travel back to Europe to find our cultural roots and seek adventure. In any case, Brittany for the vast majority of Australians is still culturally distant. Most Australians' knowledge of that land is limited, subsumed as it is under broader notions and beliefs about French culture and identity.

On the other hand, there is something unexpected and surprising about the combination. Australia and Brittany are both lands that are oriented, physically, culturally and symbolically to the sea. In Brittany, like in Australia, we flock to the coast, and with our backs to the land we gaze at the water. Bretons like Australians are voyagers too, crossing those oceans in search of new horizons. The history of Australia, like Brittany, is one of constant flows and migrations. Few countries have benefited more from the exodus of migrants from many of the Celtic countries in the 19th century than Australia has and in Australia, as in Brittany, there is a growing consciousness and valorisation of a sense of shared Celtic heritage. If Australia and Brittany have until now said little to each other, it is not because they have had little to say but rather, they have had limited opportunity to develop a cultural dialogue.

Ostensibly, however, I was drawn to research Breton because of my Breton name and my family background. Since I was born and raised in Australia, my name has consistently been a point of interest, and of frustration, as time after time people struggled to spell and pronounce it. It was my paternal grandfather, Jules Le Nevez, who brought this name to Australia in the early years of the 20th century, as a sailor who fell ill and was left here. He was an enigma, a man of few words, the son of a

poor miller, and a person I never knew. In choosing to research Breton, I was also looking to understand my own sense of cultural and linguistic identity, and in a way to reconnect the link in a chain that stretches across a geographical and generational divide.

There is no irony in the fact that this personal motivation reflects closely the broader experience of Breton in recent history. For Breton speakers too the link has often been broken. And so too in Brittany there are thousands of people like me who are looking to reconnect with their forebears. We are looking for many, often similar things: meaning and purpose; an identity; a sense of community, place and *Gemeinschaft*; an acknowledgement of a past and a shared heritage; a rejection of values that seem to isolate us from each other and turn our lives into a series of acts of consumption. This thesis is therefore about how various notions of the Breton language and culture are invoked, expressed and imagined as a way of expressing community and personal identity.

This thesis is also therefore a record of a personal journey towards a better understanding and knowledge of my own personal heritage. Researching Breton has given me the chance to begin to learn the language and to visit and revisit the place, symbolically at least, I come from. It has also given me the chance to live in France and to develop my French linguistic and cultural skills. One of the great personal benefits of choosing Breton as the subject for my research was the opportunity to live in France and eventually to gain French citizenship. These cultural identities in turn have not replaced or diminished my sense of Australianness, but rather have augmented it, showing me clearly the ways in which culturally and emotionally I am linked to this land. Ironically, perhaps, while studying Breton has made me more Breton, it has also and equally made me more French, and for that matter more Australian too. Or perhaps it is better simply to say that it has helped me to know better who I am and where I come from.

Purpose and justification of the research

With an academic background in critical language studies, I am interested in language and its relationship to identity and power. This exists within a broader interest of alter-globalisation and the support of cultural, linguistic and ecological diversity, including the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages, as well as a humanistic interest in promoting the capacity of people to express themselves freely and creatively in ways of their choosing. In researching Breton therefore I am seeking to engage in a process of critical language activism, as a form of dissent against globalizing forces that threaten to subsume creative and diverse cultural practices within a discourse of economic rationalism and cultural hegemony. With the growing corporatisation of the developed world, minority or lesser-used languages occupy a precarious space. My goal is to reappropriate this space in the interests of diversity, difference and the possibility for creative and meaningful cultural expression.

This research specifically looks at the practice of Breton and the views of the language expressed by Bretons. In this sense it seeks to explore the way Breton is used to represent personal and collective identities and the symbolic and practical role it plays in articulating those identities. Moreover, it seeks to undertake a critical discursive analysis of the ways people articulate these issues, with a view to uncovering and exploring the ideological vectors of language.

The motivation for this thesis came from a realisation that while there are a number of critical streams in sociolinguistics and the research on minority or lesser-used languages (Ager 1999; Blommaert 1999; May 2001; Sonntag 2003; Timm 2003), little critical research has yet been published specifically in relation to the contemporary practice of Breton. In general, analysis of Breton language issues comes from a fairly narrow range of research methodologies. Comparatively little sociolinguistic and ethnographic research has been done on the Breton language from French researchers (that is, researchers who are not a part of the Breton linguistic and cultural movement and who write in French). The research done on Breton in the French language tends to focus on quantitative sociological analyses,

and linguistic studies, looking at specific elements of grammar or lexicon such as word order or linguistic mutations (Varin 1979; Le Dû 2001), or the changing demographics of Breton (Broudic 1999; ar Mogn 2002).

Most of the work written in French, in fact, comes from Breton researchers and activists who are themselves active participants in the Breton cultural and political milieu to varying extents. Reasonably comprehensive quantitative research has been done by the likes of the Breton Language Office (ar Mogn 2002), Fañch Broudic (1991; 1995; 1999) and Anna Quéré (2000), and significant qualitative research by a number of people, including Francis Favereau (1993), Ronan Le Coadic (1998) and Hughes Pentecouteau (2002). Whilst these studies have made a significant contribution to the literature, the extent to which these studies engage critically with issues such as identity representation and contestation on a discursive or ideological level is less certain. Whilst a number of studies explore the complexity involved in notions of Breton identity and the practice of Breton, the epistemological context of these notions is generally assumed.

A large amount of the research done on issues relating to Breton therefore comes from within the field of Breton activism: Bretons who actively and consciously seek to promote Breton within broader issues of social, cultural and/or political independence. Writers such as Roland Breton (2001), Claude an Du (2000) and Erwan Evenou (2000) have taken an explicitly political stance in relation to the promotion of Breton and contextualise language issues within broader political agendas. These writers frequently position Breton in a polemical relationship to French and see the relationship between Breton and French as one of domination.

There is a small amount of literature on Breton in English, and other languages, as well. Writers such as Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977), Lois Kuter (1989), Maryon McDonald (1989), Mari Jones (1996; 1998) and Lenora Timm (2000; 2001; 2003) have sought to explore the sociolinguistic effects of language shift and the role of the Breton language in articulating a Breton identity and the problematic issues associated with this. Others, including Michael Keating (1997), Alistair Cole (Cole and Loughlin 2003) and John Loughlin (Loughlin and Peters 1997) have looked at

Brittany from a political sciences paradigm, particularly in relation to issues of governance and regionalism. A number of other research projects have also been carried out by institutions such as UNESCO, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (2002) or Mercator (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003). In general these reports focus on demographic analyses of Breton as well as issues of language policy and planning.

These research projects provide important contributions to the sociolinguistic study of the Breton language and linguistic diversity in Brittany. As yet, however engagements with Breton on a critical and discursive level and from a post-structural viewpoint have been limited. While the discipline of critical language studies has begun to look at the issue of minority or lesser-used languages in some detail (Blommaert 1996; Jaffe 1999; Watts 1999; Timm 2000; Sonntag 2003; Makoni and Pennycook 2005), with the exception of Sonntag, who has discussed the role of Breton and the politics of regional activism in the alterglobalisation movement and Timm, who has done some work on Breton language ideologies, this critical gaze has not, as yet, been specifically turned to Breton. Nor has the discipline of critical language studies as yet comprehensively explored Deleuzian theory or performativity in an analysis of language and linguistic diversity.

Locating Breton activism in the broader language context

Throughout the research I was aware of the fact that, although the Breton language context and situation was unique, there were also a number of similarities between what was happening to Breton and to other languages. In particular, the situation of Breton is often compared by language activists to that of Irish, Basque, Catalan and particularly to Welsh, which is often promoted as an example of what is possible for Breton. There are close cultural, and linguistic, links between Brittany and Wales for example, and Breton, Basque, Catalan and other lesser-used languages of France face similar political challenges and obstacles. It is therefore unsurprising that culturally, politically and linguistically there is a great deal of communication and knowledge sharing between these communities.

A number of authors have undertaken comparative research with Breton and other languages, including Cole and Williams (2004) in relation to Welsh, Vetter (1999) and Boulbria (2001) in relation to Catalan and Favereau (1999), in terms of a comparative analysis of pedagogy, with a number of nearby regions. Several language initiatives have also been implemented at an intrer-regional level such as the 2001 *Ya d'ar Brezhoneg* [yes to Breton] programme, initiated by the Breton Language Office and based on a similar Basque initiative. Trans-nationally, some funding possibilities and initiatives are available to Breton language workers through various organizations and institutions including the EU, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, UNESCO, Mercator and the like. There are also innumerable informal and local networks between language and political activists across the regions, helping to develop communicative, strategic and cultural links between communities.

Breton language activists therefore tend, logically enough, to have developed closest links with their linguistic and geographic neighbours within, broadly, a European context. Generally, with the exception of Quebec, relatively few Breton activists appear to have developed networks outside of Europe, for example with American, Pacific or African language groups. While some language researchers I spoke to had personal interests in, for example, the languages of the Antillies or French Polynesia, there was little evidence of strong activist links with these overseas departments and territories of France. To the contrary, when asked informally, a number of activists were keen to make the point that the situation of Breton was dissimilar to that of indigenous languages. For them Breton was a prestigious European literary language like French rather than an indigenous or oral language.

In one way it would have been interesting to pursue this line of research to establish the extent to which views of race and ethnicity could be traced through language ideologies and views on the relative linguistic capital of Breton. Indeed, at one stage I was interested in undertaking comparative research with Breton and Yolngu, an indigenous Australian language, to explore the similarities and disjunctures in the different language situations. Ultimately I decided against this approach, partly for

pragmatic reasons including the difficulty of access to the field in Australia, but also because of my desire to avoid becoming embroiled in a problematic, racialised polemic. Simply put, a comparative analysis between Breton and Yolngu did not seem possible without engaging a discourse of racial politics on both sides and ultimately, in this instance, it is doubtful this would have been of much benefit to either community. While, clearly this is an extremely significant issue in language activism, it was not one I felt was necessary, or wise, to tackle in the context of this thesis.

The other option therefore was to undertake a comparative analysis with another language, for example French in Quebec or Welsh. Again, such possibilities were potentially very interesting, but limited by my access to the field. Fundamentally, however, I was more interested in exploring the relationship between language, power and identity through a critical and post-structural analysis of Breton language initiatives, rather than, in the first instance, exploring relationships between different languages. Ultimately, I decided that, for the thesis, it was better to focus on Breton, and to keep the possibility of a comparative study between Breton and Welsh or between the status and promotion of Breton and Berber or Romani for the future.

About the research project

This research is focussed on exploring and making explicit the political and linguistic ideologies informing Breton language activism and developing ideology and critique as a site of activism. This thesis therefore belongs to a research paradigm that can be described as critical language studies. It seeks to promote, as Illich puts it, “the maximum use, and the enjoyment of... personal energy under personal control” (Illich 1973:11-12); in other words, the greatest possible capacity for people to express themselves in the language(s) and identities of their choosing. Its goal is to help develop strategies that can empower people to resist linguistic and symbolic violence and dispossession that comes about when people are discriminated against because of the language(s) they speak or the socio-cultural traditions they identify with.

The thesis is based on the premise that because languages are sites of power as well as forms of communication, the promotion of languages such as Breton represents a diversification of power and therefore is of potential benefit to people seeking to resist symbolic domination and express themselves in meaningful and productive ways of their choosing. However, it is also based on the understanding that because inequities in linguistic capital occur within languages as well as between languages, the promotion of specific languages is not in and of itself synonymous with the empowerment of speakers. On the contrary, the reification and standardisation of a language may be disadvantageous to linguistic diversity and further promote linguistic inequity.

This thesis therefore takes the position firstly that the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages does not automatically equate with the promotion of linguistic diversity in its broader sense. Secondly it takes the position that the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages and a broader linguistic diversity are not incommensurable and can occur, not as a goal that can be achieved, but as a continuing *process* through which languages such as Breton are promoted as productive sites and practices of difference, diversity and identity.

In taking these positions, this thesis seeks to critique Breton activism to explore the extent to which language initiatives, and the ideological positions that inform them, promote diversity in the broad sense, rather than the narrow sense of the special interests of Breton language activists. In other words, it seeks to support initiatives that promote diversity between and within languages and argues against initiatives that, in promoting diversity between languages, reduces and devalues diversity and difference within a language. Equally it argues against initiatives that seek to promote a sense of radical linguistic deterritorialisation with scant regard for the languages and linguistic traditions of communities. It seeks to acknowledge the deeply important affective and symbolic role that language plays in articulating a sense of identity for many people and seeks to promote the ways in which these roles are acknowledged and valued across the diverse Breton-speaking community in language initiatives.

Based on this ideological position, the research project was designed to critically explore the ways in which the Breton language is currently being practiced in Brittany and the symbolic and functional role the language plays in articulating a sense of Breton identity. In other words, it was designed to explore the ways in which people use Breton in a variety of ways, including as a symbol of ethnic or national identity, as a vehicle for personal expression and identity, as a form of communication and a vehicle for activism and politics. Of interest were the different ways in which Breton is being used and the different effects this may have on people's perceptions and practices of the language.

The research project emerged out of an observation that Breton, as a language, had an uncertain future due to the decline of speaker numbers, and that despite the best efforts of language activists, not enough people were learning and speaking the language to halt this decline. This, it was hypothesised, was the result of a number of possible issues: the Breton language initiatives being implemented to promote the language were ineffective; the initiatives were effective but there was inadequate funding and support to see them adequately implemented; people no longer wanted to speak Breton; people were the victims of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991) or "domestication" (Thomas 1993:1) so that they had ceased to be aware of their own subjugation; research and language initiatives were too narrowly focussed and were not picking up new, changed practices of Breton; or a combination of these issues.

As will be argued in the following chapters, the promotion of Breton clearly suffers a lack of support from the French government and language activists have only a limited capacity to implement language strategies. A good deal of commentary on the promotion of Breton focuses on the lack of moral and financial support for Breton and argues for the implementation of a more comprehensive and supportive language policy (for example Le Coadic 2000; or Mogn and Hicks 2003). However, official recognition and support for a language does not in and of itself equate with an increased practice and promotion of the language. Irish, for example has enjoyed official recognition and privileged status for many years, but is seldom spoken and suffers from a lack of social prestige among many people who are obliged to learn it

at school, leading to “widespread resentment of the language” and a sense of “linguistic tokenism” (Carnie 1996:108).

In this sense then, it is clear that language activism can itself be of varying effectiveness and the promotion of a language does not directly equate with its maintenance or increased support. It is all very well to teach Breton, but the continuation of a language also relies on the willingness of people to speak it. In this sense, while a language strategy may provide a competency through obliging people to learn a language, in order to be effective it also needs to motivate people to speak that language, or create the context where expressing oneself with a language or languages is considered possible and desirable. At issue therefore is the extent to which Breton is being promoted in ways that appeal to people and fulfil their needs and desires.

In many cases the justification and rationale for promoting Breton is assumed. Within a language ideology that asserts a fundamental and inalienable link between a language and an ethnicity or nation, and a clear and unquestioned concept of what the language and the collective group are, the nature and role of Breton is clearly defined and the objectives of language activism are relatively straightforward. While these objectives vary between activists they can be summarised as: the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Breton as (one of) the language(s) of Brittany; the support for the language so that its relationship with French is at least stabilised; and the capacity for people to use Breton in public if and when they want to (for example Perazzi 1998; ar Mogn 2002, see also Fishman 1991).

However, this research takes a different approach. Rather than asking what can be done to promote and protect Breton, it asks firstly whether people want to speak Breton and why the language is important to them, and secondly what is being done to bring Breton towards people and encourage people to express themselves in creative and meaningful ways with the language. The difference between promoting the language and encouraging people to use a language is subtle but important. The first sees the language as the focus of activism with the speaking population the vehicle for achieving the perpetuation of the language. The second sees people as the

focus of activism with Breton being a vehicle for their own sense of expression and identity.

This project therefore began from a point that did not assume that people would support Breton regardless of the personal outcome language activism has. The issue was not therefore one of official recognition or promotion of the language as a powerful national symbol but rather, how to encourage people to see Breton as meaningful and valorising part of their identity. In this sense then one of the main objectives of the project was to evaluate the extent to which language activism relates to the needs and desires of speakers, the ways it represents Breton to speakers and potential speakers, and its success in encouraging these people to use Breton.

Given this different focus, the research project sought to ask a number of questions: how important was Breton to people and did it have the potential to become a meaningful part of their lives? What did people want from Breton and what did they expect from the language? Was Breton, and were language activists, in a position to fulfil these expectations? How effective were language initiatives at achieving their goals and how effective were they at engaging popular support for Breton? How was linguistic diversity within Brittany and the Breton-speaking community being addressed? In what ways could language activism be better targeted to promote linguistic diversity including the increased use of Breton for those who might want to speak it? While many of these questions are unanswerable in a definitive sense, or are beyond the scope of this thesis, the research project is designed to participate in an intellectual debate by asking these questions, to explore the extent to which such questions were being debated in Brittany and to explore the possibilities for a more critical approach to language activism.

As suggested in the opening chapter, the project was designed to explore the practices and perceptions of Breton at a discursive and ideological level. This was identified as an important level of critical engagement because of the powerful ways in which discourses and language ideologies frame knowledge, define language practices and regulate diversity along particular epistemological paths. It came from a perception that traditional approaches to language maintenance had seldom been

successful and when they had, this did not necessarily translate to a more equitable distribution of linguistic capital and the promotion of linguistic diversity within and across different languages, but often represented the promotion of one specific and newly privileged language (Sarkar 2003; Matthews and Polinsky 2005). If current approaches to the promotion of linguistic diversity and minority or lesser-used languages were ineffective, or of limited success, then perhaps it was timely to look at the issue from a different theoretical angle, one that sought to frame diversity differently.

In order to explore language diversity and difference in Brittany a research model with a critical focus was employed. This belongs to the tradition of critical ethnography employed by researchers such as Clifford Geertz (1988), James Clifford (1988), Del Hymes (1996) and particularly Renato Rosaldo (1993) whereby research is both critical and reflexive. As Jim Thomas suggests:

Critical ethnography is a way of applying a subversive worldview to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry. It does not stand in opposition to conventional ethnography. Rather it offers a more direct style of thinking about the relationships among knowledge, society, and political action (Thomas 1993:vii).

This ethnography is very different from a classical anthropological approach to fieldwork. I was not interested in creating a professional distance from the object of my research and harboured no illusions about the possibility or desirability of maintaining objectivity. To the contrary, the research sought to be engaged in the field and itself formed a part of the field of study through reflexive, critical analysis and participation in debates over the future of Breton from a critical point of view. In working to problematise foundationalism in language activism, I was equally interested in working against foundationalism and “monumentalism” (Rosaldo 1993:31) within the research process. The research itself therefore becomes an important feature of the process of ethnography. In this way I sought to locate myself within the ethnographic field, and also to use this research to develop new ways of thinking about language diversity and the promotion of Breton that can potentially be

useful and relevant both for myself and for people within the field of Breton language work.

This critical ethnography is also deliberately trans-disciplinary. I was reluctant to locate myself within any single discipline, such as sociology or anthropology because of the critical nature of the research project and the desire I had to work against received notions of method and the ideologies implicit within these positions. As Rosaldo suggests, “if ideology often makes cultural facts appear natural, social analysis attempts to reverse the process” (page 39). In this sense the research project was designed as a form of critical social analysis. It can best be described as belonging to the emerging and trans-disciplinary field of critical language studies, which itself appears at the intersection of disciplines and methodologies centred around the analysis of language as a site of socio-symbolic power. These include critical literacies (Gee 1990; Fairclough 1992), post-structuralism (Derrida 1973; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; 1989), feminism and queer theory (Butler 1990; Flax 1990; Nelson 1999) and post-colonialism (Makoni and Pennycook 2005).

This research incorporates a number of research methodologies. These include: participant observation through several research trips to Brittany; case studies exploring the ways in which activism is discursively and ideologically situated in language planning, education, literature and music; and qualitative interviews with a variety of people who speak or work with Breton, or for whom Breton forms an important part of their identity.

The first research methodology therefore is participant-observation and is recorded through documentation of three visits to Brittany made between 2001 and 2004. Through living in Brittany I was able to understand the context through which more specific linguistic and socio-political debates were engaged and framed. At times these were quite different to Australia, particularly in the way people engaged themselves in forms of activism and particularly too in the role intellectuals played in fostering and manifesting debate. Many nights were spent in bars listening to public forums debating the role and future of the language. Many nights too were spent

dancing in festoù-noz², to traditional (and not so traditional) Breton music. Days were spent at university studying Breton and speaking with students but also, on my second trip, cloistered from the wind and rain in the relative isolation of an old Bigouden farmhouse.

This research is therefore observational but also experiential and participatory and while there were many things distinguishing me from ‘the locals’ there were many others too that saw me living as an unremarkable member of the community. In this way I was able to observe a number of ways in which Breton linguistic and sociocultural identities were negotiated, expressed and contested, for example within Breton language classes or in discussions between students within bars or student residences. This research was documented through detailed noting of significant events and conversations.

In living in a student residence and taking classes in the Breton department on campus whilst I conducted my research, I was in a good position to meet many people and discuss issues related to Breton and my research. In many cases these conversations were illuminating and enjoyable but in the vast majority they did not lead to formal interviews. Nonetheless they were the source of the majority of my learning and understanding of the dominant issues and concerns that people had about their language and culture.

Speaking with these people also showed me that, to a surprising extent, many people were deeply interested and passionate about Brittany. This did not only apply to Breton activists, but to other people who identified as Breton but whose sense of Breton identity was expressed in less explicit and more measured ways. For almost all people I spoke with on the subject, a sense of Breton identity was important to them and they were certainly sensitive to the issue. For many, Breton culture was not something old fashioned and stupid (or charming) but an important and living part of their identity. While this identity was expressed in innumerable and complex ways, it

² Festoù-noz are popular evenings of entertainment featuring dancing and live music. Festoù-noz is the plural of fest-noz.

was both surprising and moving to see the seriousness with which many, and especially students, took the issue.

This element of the research project is therefore based on fieldwork. The field in this sense is not simply “a historically specific range of distances, boundaries and modes of travel” (Clifford 1997:58), but rather is constituted in a broader sense. In this critical vein, Clifford describes the field as “a habitus rather than a place, a cluster of *embodied* dispositions and practices” (page 69, italics in original). The field was the locations in which I conducted research: particularly Rennes, the capital of Brittany and the Pays Bigouden in the extreme west of the region, but in a broader sense the ‘field as habitus’ was constituted in a linguistic sense: the field was Breton and the way the language was invoked and expressed by people. I was interested in what was happening in, with, through and to Breton. Rather than simply a physical space, the field in this sense was also a social and linguistic space in the way it is “discursively mapped and corporeally practiced” (page 54). As such this was not a study of the practice of Breton in a language class in Rennes or a village in the Pays Bigouden, but rather an exploration of the ways in which the Breton language was used in diverse and different ways to inform the identity and habitus of people who felt themselves to be Breton.

The broadening of the field in this way had advantages and disadvantages. I acknowledge the difficulties involved with such a wide scope and the tendency for traditional research disciplines to seek to closely define the field of study in order to regulate some of the variables involved in qualitative research. Such a broad scope makes it difficult to draw specific outcomes from the research and is far from systematic. Then again the purpose of this research was not to make specific truth claims or definitive statements about the nature and the practice of Breton, but rather to explore the ideological and discursive contexts in which Breton was being used to articulate a sense of identity.

I decided against a more systemic approach to the research for a number of reasons. For one, the pragmatic limitations of my research (a limited time in Brittany and limited resources) meant that a comprehensive analysis across many different areas

of language practice was unviable. As a consequence pragmatically, I had the choice either of focussing on one or two key areas of research (for example, the learning of Breton in university or at night school) or deploying a broader approach that would cover more terrain, but potentially less thoroughly.

This was a difficult decision I pondered for a long time. In many ways it would have been easier to focus on one or two areas and perform a comparative analysis, but ultimately, this would have taken the thesis away from its original focus of the discursive and ideological framing of linguistic diversity across Brittany and the diverse debates relating to the promotion of Breton. It would have been difficult in such an approach, for example, to deal adequately with notions of diversity, difference and identity. Defining social parameters, however they may be chosen, has the potential effect of projecting boundaries and borders onto groups in ways that regulate difference and inscribe identity at least in terms of how research is approached and analysed. I was not that interested in choosing research participants according to my criteria of how Breton speakers could be identified, divided or segregated. This would have said more about my own ideology and theoretical perspective than it would the research subjects' and participants'. Rather I was interesting in seeing the ways different people used Breton and identified themselves in different ways, both explicitly and discursively. In this way it was decided that it was necessary to cast a wide net so that different voices and perspectives could emerge.

In addition, language practice is a complex phenomenon that cuts across different fields of study and activism. Focussing on Breton language in education, or language planning initiatives, for example, would have provided interesting data on these issues, but I was interesting in exploring the broader epistemologies and ideologies informing these loci of language work and whether similar ideologies were being engaged in different fields of language activism. In this sense I was not only interested in exploring the success of teaching Breton in schools, for example, but also and especially, the effects of locating Breton within an educational paradigm and the ways in which different and diverse ways of practicing Breton were being treated and acknowledged. Looking at one or two fields excludes many possible

productive forms of activism that may occur in other areas and that may potentially be applied and incorporated into different strategies.

It seemed clear to me from very early on that any successful language planning initiatives – and by this I mean initiatives that promote the practice of Breton in ways that are productive and meaningful to their speakers without compromising the language rights or capacities of others – would inevitably be complex and multi-dimensional. There were no silver bullets for solutions to such complex issues and the tendency to reduce these issues to more polemical or simplistic relations of power, for example as a conflict between two languages, was ultimately counter-productive to the promotion of diversity and difference, both in the ways in which issues of diversity and difference within languages were marginalised in the desire to represent diversity in particular ways, and also in the ultimate inefficacy of simplistic ways of theorising the link between language, power and identity to fully respond to these complex phenomena in appropriate and productive ways. In other words, it seemed likely that a simplistic approach to a complex issue would result in solutions that were unlikely to be successful.

Moreover, it became apparent early on that the promotion of Breton and linguistic diversity was not a goal but a process. Because of the political nature of language, its function as a site of symbolic capital and the continual changes occurring within languages through contestations of these relations of power, there would be no point at which it was possible to say that initiatives to promote Breton had been successful and were complete. Breton is in a continual state of flux and debates about what it is, what (and who) it represents, its legitimacy and the legitimacy of specific forms of the language and the authority of people and institutions to define, delimit, identify with and speak for the language demonstrate the fact that language activism is itself part of the ongoing process of contesting relations of power, working at a metalinguistic level to promote societal or systemic changes. These complex processes occurred across a variety of fields of language use and my desire was to explore the way Breton was configured in this socio-symbolic space across different fields.

Because of the theoretical aspect of this thesis, in particular the desire to deploy a critical discourse analysis and post-structural reading of the relationship between language, power, diversity and identity, it was important for me to work against the reifying desire to look for neat and tidy categories through which analyses could be conducted. I was interested in exploring the ways categories such as Breton language, identity and culture were being challenged and transgressed in Brittany and the ways in which Breton could be, and was being, reconfigured discursively as a site of critical identity work.

Participant observation therefore enabled me to become involved in these debates and political contestations as well as to observe them. In particular I was interested in developing a critical understanding of the socio-historical context within which Breton language activism and the promotion of Breton was occurring. What processes in the past affected the practice of Breton and in what ways did these practices inform current debates and responses to contemporary issues? This was not an issue that could simply be assessed through a literature review of Breton history. For one thing histories themselves form part of the discursive regime and language ideology of certain social groups (those who have the authority and capacity to publish histories) and are themselves part of the epistemological framing of knowledge that represents issues such as language diversity in specific ways. Nor could it necessarily be achieved simply through interviews with people. While their perspectives were important, their knowledge of past events and the ways these events informed broader contexts was often limited. Many participants, particularly those actively involved in activism may have brought their own ideologies and agendas to the interviews which, while important, needed to be treated circumspectly. Rather, it was necessary to use a range of methodologies, and speak to as many people as possible, to build up a multifaceted and diverse understanding of the socio-historical experiences of Breton language speakers and the ways in which this knowledge was being represented in diverse and different ways in contemporary contexts.

In casting my research net widely at first, I was able to develop a more nuanced understanding of the processes through which the Breton language was being

promoted. Using a post-structural theoretical approach I was then able to discursively analyse this broad research field. In particular I was interested in the discourses that were being engaged, the extent to which a language ideology informed by foundationalism was being employed and the extent to which this was being critiqued within diverse forms of language activism.

In this way I was able to identify a number of key sites that had become the focus of language activism and initiatives aimed at promoting Breton. This then provided me with a more specific field in which to focus my research and analysis. This occurred not because I had decided before hand that I was interested in looking at any particular site of language activism, but rather that, through having spent some time in Brittany and conducting research that involved participant observation, a number of sites of language activism emerged that were clearly important loci of language work by activists. These are not the only sites of language work, and nor are they discrete from each other, but having spoken with many people, they emerged as important areas of language work in the minds of activists and the broader public. As such, they became the focus of case studies of ways in which Breton language activism is being undertaken.

The second dimension to the research therefore were detailed analyses of three significant areas of Breton language activism. These were: language planning and the Breton Language Office; Breton language education and the Diwan schools; and Breton music. These sites of language and identity work were critically analysed for the ways in which they represent notions of linguistic diversity and identity through the discourses and ideologies they engage. In analysing these sites, I was interested in exploring the ways in which Breton is represented and the effects this might have on the objectives of the organizations involved, and on linguistic diversity more generally. The Breton language case studies emerge at different points in the thesis and are used in conjunction with the development of a theoretical argument or analysis of an issue. For example, Breton language policy and planning is linked to a discussion on language ideologies and Breton music is linked to the ways in which notions of authenticity and identity are being reproduced and challenged.

As a result of my participation in the Breton language milieu, in a number of cases I was able to organise a formal interview with people I had met. The third dimension to this research therefore were 23 in-depth qualitative and loosely guided interviews conducted with Breton speakers or those working in the field of Breton language and identity representation. This provided around 17 hours of data. The number of interviews was limited by the time I was able to spend in the field speaking with Breton speakers and activists, but was also a factor of spending this time focussing on gaining interviews with key players in the language field. In particular I sought out interviews with people who were involved with, and central to language work going on in the key areas of my case studies.

Having said this, I endeavoured to get a good balance of interviews with people who were both central to language initiatives, such as teachers and language planners, as well as those whom this language work was most likely to affect: for example Breton language students and older first-language Breton speakers. This was done in order to see the extent to which other Breton speakers employed a similar or dissimilar language ideology to key players in language promotion initiatives and also to explore the extent to which different desires and language goals were articulated and acknowledged across the spectrum of language speakers.

In these interviews I was interested in further developing my understanding of the context of language work in Brittany. In this way the interviews provided both illuminating accounts of the personal ways in which people create their own sense of identity through their practice of Breton, as well as a rich source of high quality data on the ways in which these people discursively and ideologically frame Breton and issues of language activism and the promotion of linguistic diversity. A chart profiling the respondents is presented in Appendix One.

Participants were recorded on minidisk, transcribed and, where appropriate, translated into English. Despite the difficulties associated with recording participants, and particularly the formalisation and “regularization of a speaker-listener relationship” (Fowler 1996:233), recording was an important part of the research process, since it permitted me to go back on what participants had said in

detail and to perform a close discursive and textual analysis of their comments. Such specificities, and my own personal language ideology, would have made note taking unreliable in such a situation.

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds. Specifically I was interested in speaking with people who were familiar with issues relating to Breton, for example, teachers, activists, students and those who were first-language speakers. In other words, I deliberately sought out people who were ‘doing things’ with Breton on a personal, pedagogical, professional and symbolic level. My first inclination was to do a comparative study between Breton teachers and students, however during the observation and participation phase of the research before the interviews commenced, I had the opportunity to meet with people from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and professions. Their stories were interesting and important in creating a sense of who worked with elements of the Breton language and culture beyond a pedagogic axis. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that the issue of Breton language education operated within a much broader context of identity politics that was necessary to acknowledge and address.

Participants brought a wealth of information and knowledge to the interviews. I was interested not only in how, when and with whom they used Breton, but also their attitudes towards it and their motivations for learning and/or speaking it (or not). In particular I was interested in exploring the ways in which they discursively sited Breton and articulated their own relationship with the language: how Breton formed a part of their own sense of identity. In this way, I was able to discursively analyse the transcripts of the interviews to explore the ways in which Breton was being invoked and the ways in which it formed part of a broader sense of social and linguistic identity for people.

To do so, the interviews were coded and compared across a number of significant issues. Apart from general biographical data on the recipients, the analysis of the interview data involved comparing the discourses and metaphors that people used to describe and discuss Breton and language initiatives and their perceptions and practices of the language. For example, responses were coded according to

participants' perceptions of Breton and of linguistic diversity more generally in Brittany, their views of the contemporary socio-political context of Breton and its relationship with French, their views of the past experiences of Breton and its future, its role in articulating social identities, their views on the responsibility for the maintenance of Breton, examples of their practice of the language, and their views on language change and diversity within the language.

These issues were deliberately not asked as direct questions, but emerged from a thematic and discursive analysis of the data. Indeed, while I explained the purpose of my research and the general methodology I was using, and participants signed an ethics consent form that outlined the critical nature of the project, the explicit detail of the methodology, in terms of a post-structural analysis was not discussed before the interview. This again was a deliberate decision on my part, firstly because it may have confused many of the participants, and secondly because I did not want participants consciously or unconsciously speaking to this theoretical position. Following the interviews I discussed my theoretical approach further with a number of participants who expressed interest in my work, particularly those in the academic field, such as Francis, Yann and Sylvestre.

This qualitative methodology yielded extremely rich data that offered the possibility of analysis in many different directions. Given the limitations of time and length, as well as the desire to focus on the critical perspective, I therefore was obliged once more to make strategic choices about how this data was analysed. It would have been interesting, for example, to conduct a more formally sociological analysis of participant attitudes to Breton based, for example, on gender or class. I have limited these analyses partly because of the focus on a critical analysis of language ideologies rather than broader sociological factors, partly to avoid mixing ideological and theoretical paradigms, and partly for pragmatic reasons of word-length and scope of the thesis.

It would also have been interesting to cross-reference the qualitative responses with quantitative data. However, because of the nature of the interviews and the fact that I wanted to avoid as much as possible formalising the interview process in order that

participants expressed themselves as freely as possible. Since few questions were standardised, and due to research constraints detailed follow-up research was not possible, a quantitative analysis was therefore not practical. However, this is one area in which future research could productively be taken.

Seven of the 23 interviews were conducted in English, with the remainder in French and this was done according to the personal preference of the respondents. Interviews were conducted in a number of locations, including Rennes, Brest, Morlaix, Plonéour-Lanvern and Sydney. It was particularly interesting to interview people in Sydney, where their sense of identity and language use was potentially quite different to, for example, a Bigouden farm. Three people who were interviewed in Sydney were living here, one permanently, while two others were interviewed whilst they were here for work. All of these participants strongly identified as being Breton. All also had a strong sense of personal mobility, in a physical, intellectual and sociological sense as well as in terms of identity, being well-educated, worldly and plurilingual. As they were outside of Brittany, and had travelled here internationally on a French passport, these people had all considered the issue of being Breton in some detail and their perceptions of what it means to be Breton were profound.

Interviewing people outside of Brittany was in keeping with the research methodology and notion of fieldwork, since I was interested in speaking to people about their linguistic habitus, language identity and relationship to Breton. Clearly this is a profound part of a person's identity and does not become less relevant because they happen to travel. Indeed the links between physical and linguistic mobility are interesting and highly relevant.

Participants were asked how they wished to be identified in the thesis. Many were happy for their real names to be used. Those that were not, or did not indicate a preference, have been given pseudonyms. A number of interviewees are academics or activists and in several cases these respondents are also cited as authors of referenced texts. This provided me with a conundrum: whether or not to differentiate the respondent from their published work. In such cases, for those whose real names

have been used I have differentiated between the published author and the respondent by referring to them by their family name in cases where they are cited as authors or when they were clearly speaking *ex officio*, and by their first name in cases where their personal views are expressed within the interviews. This helps maintain a level of distinction between the author as expert and the respondent as an individual practitioner of the language, although I acknowledge the extent to which these two positions overlap and intersect each other.

In particular I was looking to identify a number of key issues in the interviews, based around the practice and perception of Breton. One of these was to explore the motivations for people learning Breton. For many centuries Breton has not generally been considered to be a language with very much utility or prestige. And yet in recent decades the symbolic value of Breton has been inverted. For many Bretons, the Breton language is a prestigious marker of identity and difference. I wanted to understand this phenomenon and the reasons why Breton had become important to these people.

A second issue was to see the ways in which people engaged a Breton identity and in particular the way this was represented in relation to notions of other identities (French, Celtic, immigrant, foreigner). Specifically, I was interested in exploring the ways in which a sense of Breton identity was experienced and expressed in a performative sense: I was interested in exploring the ways people “did” Breton and how they hailed the notions of Breton language and their own sense of identity into being through their language practices (Butler 1999:120).

Thirdly, I was interested in the slippage between the notions of linguistic diversity and the promotion of Breton as a minority or lesser-used language and the ways in which people talked about Breton as a language. This relates to the ways in which they dealt with dialectal diversity within Breton and issues of standardisation, as well as how they represented and articulated the relationship between Breton and French. In a broader sense I was interested in looking at the discourses they engaged and the broader language ideologies at play. At issue was the extent to which particular

views about language and linguistic diversity were reproduced by people and the consequences this may have had for linguistic diversity.

Finally, I was interested to see whether, and how, participants' Breton identities conformed to normative notions and, conversely, ways in which participants transgressed and deterritorialised these notions through using Breton and engaging a Breton language identity. Specifically, I wanted to know what role, if any, the Breton language played in creating a broader sense of identity for participants and how this was configured in relation to other vectors of identity and belonging.

Negotiating researcher/participant status and identity in the interview process

The participants who were interviewed for this research project came from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of age, profession, education and language practice. As such they responded to being interviewed quite differently. Some, such as Yannick, a young, politically active Breton student, relished the opportunity to speak at length on the issue and were keen to have their views voiced. In contrast, a number of others were initially surprised to be asked to participate and at first expressed doubts about the relevance of what they had to say on the issue. Uriell, Marie, Christiane and Nolwenn (interestingly all women) each commented that they didn't know much about Breton, even though three of them spoke Breton, and I would be better off asking someone who knew more about the language or language activism than they did. At first it seemed that they saw my research as an information-gathering exercise rather than a qualitative analysis. However, once I had explained why I wanted to interview them, and why I valued their opinion on the matter, their reluctance diminished and they were pleased to participate.

I endeavoured to make the interviews as informal as possible, despite the fact I was using a minidisk, and sought to give the participants as much opportunity to speak their mind as they wished. Indeed, it was interesting for me to see the subjects that participants brought up and the way they addressed questions I had asked them, as much as the specific answers and opinions they provided. This style of loosely

guided interviews provided some unexpected discussions, many of which were highly informative.

For example, when I asked Nolwenn if she had heard of the term neo-Breton, she said she had. For me this term related to the contemporary standardisation of Breton, but for Nolwenn, as an architect, it referred to a style of housing. Nolwenn went on to tell me about an architectural style she loathed for its faux-traditionalism and conformity. She spoke of the ways in which the building industry and planning authorities mass-produced housing in a conservative and tightly regulated style in order to produce a particular built environment that on the one hand conformed to particular 'traditional' aesthetics but on the other applied principles of utilitarianism and which were, for her, ubiquitously « *très, très moche* » [*very, very ugly*]. In the context of this thesis, realising that stereotypical views about Breton culture had been appropriated and reproduced *en masse* in the built environment was enlightening for me and helped inform the broader context through which language revival efforts were being contextualised. Indeed, a parallel could be drawn between symbolic appropriation in architecture and in other fields, including language.

A number of respondents were clearly well versed in talking about Breton. These formed an 'expert' subcategory and included teachers, researchers, and professionals who worked in the field of Breton language activism and promotion. A number of them, including Francis, Yann, Dimitri, Olier, Jean-Pierre and Metig were very familiar with the major issues and major debates around Breton and were used to speaking as educators or experts. Many of these people appeared regularly on television or radio debating Breton language issues. In the interviews these people frequently spoke both as experts and as individuals. In other words they spoke both about their professional opinions on the language and their own practice of Breton. The exception to this was Olier, who was the Director of the Breton Language Office and provided little information of a personal nature.

The dual role of these respondents provided an ambiguity that was in some ways problematic but also created a number of research opportunities. It was interesting to observe the ways in which a number of teachers slipped into a teacherly discourse

and began to speak as experts by giving me information on Breton. This I can attribute to a number of factors: the fact that I was perceived as a foreign researcher who may not know much about Brittany; the possibility that I appeared relatively young and ‘studently’ to a number of the older participants; the fact that they were habitually used to speaking about Breton as experts; and the fact that I deliberately avoided asserting myself as a researcher and only loosely guided the interviews. It also reflects a potentially different research paradigm in Brittany and France where there is greater emphasis placed on sociology as a discipline and the authority of the researcher.

These factors created an interesting dynamic as both my research participants and I negotiated our identities and status. Several interviews were with acquaintances I had made through university connections, while others were organised through targeted requests, chance encounters or on the suggestion of other participants and colleagues. While the majority of the interviews were generally relatively equitable, a number of participants clearly assumed an authoritative posture in relation to the interview process. It became apparent that Olier in particular saw our interview as a research student asking for information from an expert. He gave long descriptions on the symbolic and practical functions of the Breton Language Office and ignored, or addressed only in passing, a number of my questions, preferring to set his own agenda for explaining the role of the BLO. Because I wanted to observe the ways in which he constructed his arguments and the discourses he engaged in speaking about Breton, as well as learning about the BLO, I was happy for him to dominate the interview in this way. Indeed, in the analysis of this interview it was interesting to see the way his authoritative approach was reflected in the broader work of the organization he represented.

In a number of instances the extent to which these participants were speaking *ex officio* or as individuals was unclear. In fact, they were often speaking from both positions concurrently. For example, Yann, a university researcher and lecturer, spoke eloquently on the need for a comprehensive Breton language policy that provided adequate Breton language education to those who wanted it, but he located this need within his own desires to speak Breton in ordinary situations with a variety

of people, and his own experience in the pleasure he gained in speaking Breton with close family members. If people such as Yann were speaking as experts, the expert knowledge they had was a result of years of a personal and professional commitment to the practice and promotion of the Breton language.

My identity as an Australian researcher of Breton origins also created an ambiguity that was productive for my research. There was a tension of my own inclusivity and exclusivity within the research, and more particularly in the ways in which I was included in and excluded from a broader sense of Breton identity and community that was continually at play during my research. This occurred within my own sense of identity and self-image as an Australian with Breton heritage, as well as from the perspective of my research participants, many of whom were curious about what had brought me there and my personal story. I was often asked how I came to be doing this research and my presence as an Australian Breton was a point of curiosity and interest for a number of people. This ranged from being invited to festoù-noz and concerts to having articles written about me, my research project and family history in a number of magazines and newspapers.

This thesis, therefore, is written from an unusual perspective. As an Australian I was in many ways an outsider to the issues and debates, particularly those around the politics of Breton. So much has been said and written about Breton, particularly in recent years and in support of the language, culture and its institutions, that as Francis quipped ironically “we no longer speak Breton, we speak about Breton”. In that sense then I came to the issue with a limited understanding of the various debates and positions within them, but I was also refreshingly free from the socio-political contexts of these arguments, and did not feel constrained or obliged to adopt a specific political agenda, for example on the left or right of French politics.

I was also separated from the debates by my own socio-political and cultural context. As an Australian, I came from a very different political tradition, where notions of community, multiculturalism, Republicanism, diversity and federalism had quite different connotations. Clearly, I have my own epistemology, language ideology and

my own vision of social and linguistic equity but this is in many cases different to many in Brittany.

As a first-language English speaker in Brittany I was also afforded an unusual perspective: I speak French well, but it was clear to all of those I met I was neither Breton nor French. Because of my language, my knowledge and my cultural experience, in many ways I was another foreign researcher come to do research and pass judgement on the Bretons and their language: another Brittophile who wanted something he saw the Bretons had: roots, traditions, culture, a sense of belonging and *Gemeinschaft*. Except that my name 'Le Nevez' was instantly identifiable to everyone I met as a Breton name.

This gave me an unusual position from which to conduct my research. To many I was 'the Australian Breton', some sort of long-lost cousin who was not necessarily a part of the community, but nonetheless welcome within it. Certainly coming to the research as I did helped me gain access to people and information that I otherwise may have had difficulty accessing. I was in the somewhat privileged position of being both within and beyond the community. At times it was important that I came from Australia: many people seemed surprised and flattered that someone would come so far to study Breton and for some this was evidence that the status of Breton was growing. At other times it was important that I had Breton origins, and many people seemed to be more approachable and open once they discovered my link to the language and culture.

The author as a reflexive participant in his own research: the thesis as activism

I have deliberately sought to write myself into this research project. While this practice that has not traditionally been accepted in the disciplines of ethnographic and sociolinguistic research, in more recent years has become more common (Clifford 1988; Rosaldo 1993). In doing so I am acknowledging that, within sociolinguistic research, particularly using the research methodologies I have used, it is not possible or desirable to be purely objective or absent from the research, and,

for me, it is disingenuous to pretend otherwise. I have no interest in distancing myself from the research subject. To the contrary, in many instances I have found myself squarely within the research focus. Because this research has a personal significance, it is important that I locate myself within it.

In many ways therefore this research project is self-referential. What I mean by this is that while I am exploring the practice of Breton language and identity, the valorisation of linguistic difference and the deployment of critical, transgressive and performative approaches to the promotion of minority languages and identities, I am also attempting to do this myself, performatively through this thesis. The thesis therefore becomes its own site of identity representation where I can express my own sense of identity, with its diverse and disparate cultural origins. It is about becoming Breton, just as it is about becoming French and becoming Australian.

What does it mean then to be Breton, to speak Breton, to belong to that idea and that identity? By what right can I claim membership of that group and by which criteria am I judged part of it, or apart from it, by Bretons, French or others? How are Breton, and other, identities legitimised? Cultural inclusion and exclusion is not a straightforward matter, but occurs in many contexts and issues in obvious, and subtle ways. This thesis is about exploring some of those issues with myself as the subject, through the broader discussions on language and identity.

In particular, the thesis is in itself a performative act of identity representation and a transgressive statement about resisting disempowering, normative discourses of identity and self. Being a Franco-Brito-Australian gives me ample opportunity to argue against essentialised views of ethnicity and belonging. Rather than asking which culture I truly belong to or which language is my mother-tongue, I am rejecting the discourse that asks me to choose. I am expressing a productive, creative, performative sense of identity, transgressing cultural and linguistic essentialism, disobeying the authorising discourses of cultural appropriateness and legitimacy, creating my own deterritorialisation of what it means to be Breton, French and Australian.

For me this is the thesis as activism. The purpose is not purely self-gratification, or the deconstruction of stable notions of identity. Rather it is a process of exploring some of the ways in which different ways of thinking and doing language and identity might, or might not, lead to meaningful outcomes that create new and productive ways of theorising and experiencing difference and diversity.

Chapter 3: A Socio-historical Overview of Brittany and Breton

The socio-historical context of Brittany and Breton

Brittany is a region of France with a distinct socio-cultural, linguistic and historical heritage. Located in the extreme west of France on the Armorican Peninsula, it juts out into the Atlantic Ocean. Brittany is often characterised as being on the edge of Europe, an “Atlantic Far West” (Pichard no date:3). The Westernmost department of Brittany is in French called *Finistère* (literally ‘Land’s End’), indicating its distance from the centres that exert power over it politically, culturally and economically.

However Brittany was not always peripheral. During the Middle Ages Brittany was at the centre of a dynamic region: it found itself at the fulcrum of a strategic trade route in the Atlantic, trading products such as flax, manufactured goods as well as cultural knowledge with the rapidly expanding powers of England, Spain, Portugal, Holland and France. Galliou suggests that:

Brittany was placed in the fifteenth century on an equal footing with sovereign states, often materially less powerful than the duchy.... There were few parts of western Europe where Breton diplomats, merchants, sailors, students and pilgrims did not visit.... (Galliou and Jones 1991:236-237).

It is important to remember that, prior to the development of railways, water, not land, was the primary means of communication, transportation and trade. The Breton name for Finistère is *Penn ar Bed*, meaning ‘head of the world’, demonstrating its geographical and socio-political significance.

Because of its location, its deep harbours and natural resources, Brittany has been the site of constant migrations and invasions since at least the time when Neolithic farmers erected the thousands of stone menhirs and dolmen that continue to dot the Breton landscape, through Roman occupation, the migrations of Celtic people from

the British Isles beginning in the 4th century AD, Viking invasions and eventual union with France.

The first written records of the region, then known as Armorica, come from the Romans. At that time five tribes inhabited the peninsula: the Redones, the Namnètes, the Coriosolites, the Osismii and the Veneti (Abalain 2000). A large naval battle between the Veneti tribe and the Romans around 56BC saw the Romans gain control of the region. Despite several uprisings, it is argued that Roman influence asserted itself primarily through peaceful means and particularly through “the acculturation of local elites rather than on brute force” (Galliou and Jones 1991:115). However, according to Tanguy:

En Gaule... la romanisation fut loin d’être uniforme. Si elle affecta, très tôt, dans les centres urbains et les lieux d’échange, elle ne pénétra que lentement les campagnes, où la religion nouvelle fut aussi longue à se répandre (Tanguy in Morin 2001:159).

[In Gaul... Romanisation was far from uniform. If it occurred very quickly in the urban centres and trading places, it only penetrated slowly into the countryside where the new religion also took time to spread.]

Following the collapse of Roman authority in the third century AD, little documentary evidence exists of life in Armorica until the arrival of migrants from Britain. This began in the 4th century and continued for several hundred years, and symbolically as well as culturally represents the origins of Breton society and language. Jones notes the similarity of toponymy between Brittany and Cornwall and Wales as an indication of the systematic transposition of communities with their cultural, religious and linguistic practices in this period (Galliou and Jones 1991:135).

The exact reasons for these migrations are unknown, but it can be assumed they were, in part at least, precipitated by greater migrations and population movements in the British Isles. Similarly, what these migrants encountered when they arrived on the continent is rather unclear. Falc’hun (1956) and Fleuriot (1980) have shown that

Gaulish was still being spoken in Brittany in the 6th century (Abalain 2000:21-22), suggesting migrating Britons encountered an indigenous population. It can be hypothesised that over time these people became integrated into the communities of the new migrants, gradually losing many of their markers of cultural difference. Falc'hun maintained, however that these original differences continue to produce an echo and a resonance through the language of differences between the north and the south, where migrations from Britain were far fewer.

This period of Breton history saw its culture flourish. Brittany was home to a number of important monasteries that produced a large number of manuscripts in Latin. This came to an end with Viking raids along the coast and up the rivers at the end of the 8th century, forcing many nobles and monks to flee with their precious documents. Clearly the Vikings came with their own languages and cultures, but their presence in Brittany is poorly recorded and generally presented as invasive rather than migratory. In the 10th century the Viking settlements were expelled and monks returned to Brittany. Cassard and Monnier (in Cassard and Le Quéau 1998) suggest this was due to support from a number of powerful French nobles.

One consequence of this was that Brittany was brought much closer into the sphere of French economic, cultural and military influence. Medieval Brittany was ostensibly a feudal system whose aristocracy derived its social and cultural values from outside the region, particularly from French royal court (ibid). This Breton nobility overwhelmingly spoke French. In contrast, the peasantry in Western Brittany were overwhelmingly Breton-speaking. The church maintained the use of Latin, particularly in its written texts, but Breton was still the language of ministry to the vast majority of rural Bretons who spoke no other language.

Throughout the Middle Ages, numerous kingdoms, particularly the English and the French, recognised the strategic importance of Brittany and jostled to woo or force the Breton Duchy into a union. When the Breton army lost to the French at Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier on July 28 1488, the Duchy had little choice but to accept French political authority. To formalise the union, on the 6th of December 1491 Duchesse

Anne de Bretagne and Charles VIII of France were married in the chapel of Anne's chateau in Nantes. Jones suggests that:

Although the final act of union was not pronounced until 1532 and measures were taken to preserve local administrative authority, with the French marriage Brittany ceased to exist as an independent and essentially sovereign state (Galliou and Jones 1991:252).

At the time of union/annexation, Brittany was a wealthy and vibrant, if regionalised and politically divided society. But while the marriage of Anne and Charles VIII guaranteed limited autonomy for the Duchy, its fortunes quickly began to fade. Once located at the centre of trade between the Atlantic kingdoms, its union with France shifted its cultural and geo-political centre away from the ocean and towards continental Europe, putting it on the periphery. Moreover, with the union, many of Brittany's most important trading partners were, in the course of the following centuries, the enemies of France, weakening the Breton economic and cultural base and frustrating its development.

With the increasing influence of French as the language of prestige, commerce and social mobility, the usage of Breton remained within rural communities in the west of Brittany. Poor communications, a strongly localised sense of identity (Jones 1998) and physical isolation discouraged the development of a pan-Breton linguistic standard, as did the lack of state mechanisms to promote such a standard, such as a bureaucracy, education system and a Breton-speaking bourgeoisie.

Breton from the Revolution to the Second Empire (1789-1870)

With the enlightenment and the French Revolution, Breton was further marginalised. Under the banner of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, and with a Jacobin lust for centralised power, Paris and the French-speaking bourgeoisie of Brittany further stigmatised Breton as being backward, anachronistic and an impediment to the universal values of Republicanism. While the promotion of French as a political and

ideological tool dates back to an edict by Saint-Louis in the 13th century to displace the authoritative power of Latin in diplomatic and legal documents (Ager 1999:18), it was only following the Revolution that the push to nationalise and normalise French as the language of France gained an ideological dimension:

Citoyens, qu'une sainte émulation vous anime pour bannir de toutes les contrées de France ces jargons qui sont encore des lambeaux de la féodalité et des monuments de l'esclavage !

Adresse de la Convention du 16 prairial an II (cited in Guinard 2001:episode 1).

[Citizens, may you be graced with a driving force to banish from all the lands of France this jargon which constitutes the scraps of the feudal system and monuments to slavery.]

Address to the Convention of 16 prairial, year II.

Il faut consacrer au plus tôt dans une République une et indivisible, l'usage unique et invariable de la langue de la liberté ! Il faut anéantir les patois, c'est à dire les autres langues que le français ! Citoyens, la langue d'un peuple libre doit être la même pour tous ! Il est important d'extirper ces idiomes grossiers, ces jargons locaux de six millions de Français qui ne parlent pas la langue nationale !

L'abbé Grégoire 1792 (cited in Guinard 2001: episode 1).

[The unique and invariable usage of the language of liberty must be consecrated as soon as possible in a single and indivisible Republic. Patois must be annihilated, that is to say the languages other than French! Citizens, the language of a free people must be the same for all! It is important to eradicate these gross idioms, this local jargon of six million French who do not speak their national language!]

For the first real time therefore, the French language was explicitly linked to political notions of national identity as well as intellectual and ideological notions of freedom and equality. French was a necessity to be a citizen: that is to receive and participate in one's rights and responsibilities as a free and equal person within the State.

At the end of the 18th century, French was still a minority language within the territory of France. In 1794, According to the Jacobin Abbé Grégoire only 3 million out of a total of 25 million spoke French as a first language (cited in Ager 1999:24). Nonetheless this was a minority with enormous political and cultural power. It proved to be a powerful way of constructing a semblance of political unity across an extremely diverse socio-cultural landscape. In the first decade of the nineteenth century it is fair to assume that millions of peasants would never have even heard of their ‘brothers’ in other regions of the country, let alone felt any sort of fraternity for them. What, precisely linked a Breton sabot maker to a Basque farmer, to a Corsican fisherman, to a Flemish merchant to a Parisian intellectual is far from clear, apart of course, from the will of a small but powerful political oligarchy in the Ile-de-France with their enlightenment ideology and a short Corsican officer by the name of Napoleon.

Before the Revolution it was relatively unimportant to the nobility what language the peasants spoke, as long as they behaved themselves, but with the rise of French nationalism, through the framework of Republicanism and Enlightenment theory, it became imperative that peasants speak and act like other French citizens. Moreover during the 19th century and into the 20th, Breton became aligned with conservatism, clericalism and traditional society. The church itself promoted the link between Breton and God: *Ar brezoneg hag ar feiz a zo breur ha c’hoar e Breiz!* [Breton and faith are brother and sister in Brittany] (Hélias 1978:337) and in some senses established the language as a site for the contestation with the State for the hearts and minds (and souls) of Breton speaking people. Relations between the church and state at this time were highly politicised and antagonistic and Breton became a language of resistance against new ideas such as unionism, republicanism and socialism (Guinard 2001). This can explain, in part, the vitriol with which Breton was pursued by French authorities:

Surtout rappelez-vous messieurs, que vous n'êtes établis que pour tuer la langue bretonne ! Il faut absolument tuer le breton !
Un sous-préfet de l'éducation nationale en 1845.
(cited in Guinard 2001: episode 1).

[Above all let me remind you, gentlemen, that you have only been established to kill the Breton language! Breton must absolutely be killed!]
A national education sub-prefect in 1845.

The message from Paris could not be clearer: France is a strong, modern and secular country, Brittany is inalienably a part of France, therefore the backward and superstitious customs of the land must be put aside and forgotten. “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, if they were to be interpreted as applying to individual citizens, required also that particularisms, deviations from the norm, should be unacceptable” (Ager 1999:23-24). In other words, only through French can one fully participate in French culture and society.

Indeed, ideologically the idea persisted that teaching French was liberating peasants from suffering, misery and backwardness. As such, it was part of a much broader colonial discourse reiterating specific ideas about the enlightenment and the capacity, and indeed the obligation, of dominant European societies and languages to represent and articulate their own political and linguistic ideologies for the benefit of humanity.

Nobody can suppose that it is not beneficial to a Breton... to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people – to be a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship... than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world.

John Stuart Mill (Mill 1972/1861:395, cited in May 2001)

The belief that France, and French, is a privileged vehicle for liberty, and sociocultural enlightenment continues to this day:

Il faut donc rappeler les conséquences positives de l'acquisition de la langue française, et de l'instruction, qui ont permis au plus grand nombre d'échapper à un contrôle social et religieux oppressant en pouvant partir, car partir est aussi un acte positif: connaître une promotion sociale en exerçant d'autres métiers, ouvrir largement le champ culturel et éprouver un sentiment de fierté d'appartenir à cette nation [la France] (Giblin 2002:6).

[It is important to remember the positive consequences of the acquisition of the French language, and of schooling, which allowed the maximum number of people to escape from an oppressive social and religious control, and to leave, because leaving is also a positive act: to experience social advancement through access to other trades, to open wide the cultural field and to feel a sense of pride in belonging to this nation [France].

Breton during the Third Republic (1870-1940)

The perceived need for a strong French state and a unifying cultural practice was especially pertinent after the defeat of the French army in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. This flew in the face of the myth of the natural territorial integrity of the French state and humiliated France economically, diplomatically and symbolically. As Holt argues, “after the defeat of 1870 at the hands of Prussia many began to doubt France’s cultural and diplomatic supremacy” (Holt 2002:104).

In the final decades of the 19th century the French government doubled its efforts to shore up potential weaknesses in its national defence and to reinforce, or invent, a sense of inalienable, common national identity as a way of protecting itself from fragmentation and dismemberment (Ager 1999:21). This fear was one both of external threat, through invasion, as well as internal secession from culturally dissimilar regions such as Brittany and political revolts such as the Paris commune.

Immediately following the war, France introduced compulsory military service of three years and in the early 1880s instituted compulsory, free and secular education for children, exclusively in French. Both initiatives were clearly aimed at defending the country in a physical and symbolic sense, constructing a fundamental unity where, until that time, social and cultural differences had outweighed the similarities (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). The consequence of both compulsory military service and education were to remove people from their immediate linguistic and geographical community and incorporate them into a broader socio-symbolic national identity.

The period of the Third Republic (1870-1940) saw a concerted effort to promote a sense of French nationalism and national identity. Many initiatives were introduced to strengthen the idea that France was a unified and coherent nation. For example, a number of national sporting competitions were established, including, in the first decade of the 20th century the Tour de France bicycle race designed to define and link the nation through its circumnavigation (Campos 2003). International competitions where competitors represented their country were also established. These include the Olympic Games and international football matches through FIFA. Both of these initiatives were French. At the same time, there was an enormous project of memorialisation and the building of monuments to French exploits throughout France, the celebration of French technological achievements culminating in the 1889 World Fair, as well as the invention of numerous national celebrations and public holidays, such as the celebration of Bastille Day on the 14th of July (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). These were all designed with the intention of promoting the notion of a national identity across the culturally diverse country (Ager 1999; Thiesse 2001).

In exploring the development of the French nation Anne-Marie Thiesse (2001) makes an important point in relation to diversity within France. While in many Breton circles there is an enduring belief of the unjust banishment of elements of Breton culture and language by a strongly centralised France that is “une et indivisible” – that the idea of a centralised, Republican, Jacobin France is antithetical to regional diversity and intolerant of cultural difference – Thiesse points out that

there is a historical tradition of the promotion of regionalism throughout the Third Republic. She argues that the development of a French national identity was achieved not through a repression of regional diversity, but through its promotion, albeit a promotion in specific ways. For example, the most significant classroom textbooks of the time was entitled the *Tour de la France Par Deux Enfants* [The tour of France by two children] by Augustine Tuillerie writing under the pseudonym of G. Bruno. The book, of which seven and a half million copies were printed, between 1877 and the First World War (Caradec 1977), saw two children travel around the country exploring regional differences within the hexagon. In their travels they came to understand that despite these differences, because of them even, they were all French.

Clearly for a society in the process of nationalising there was no point in denying the all-too-obvious cultural differences within France. Rather, the strategy was to embrace them, but to embrace them within a specific discursive framework that represented the French nation as the natural defining mechanism for articulating and delimiting that diversity. Children learned, for example that there were many different parts of France, many different cultural traditions, ways of dress and behaviour, but they also learned that these were constituent and natural components of France: France comprised a number of different regions, but France itself was not a region, it was an ideal, « une synthèse harmonieuse et parfaite de la diversité » [a harmonious and perfect synthesis of diversity] (Thiesse 2001:10) within an ethos of freedom, equality and fraternity. Metaphorically cultural diversity was described as a “perfect mosaic” (page 9), or as an orchestra in which each region plays its part in a harmonious collaboration (Langlois 1891 cited in Thiesse 2001). It was precisely the harmonious diversity, France’s ability to overcome cultural difference and conflict, that proved the civilizing power, the legitimacy and therefore the ideological superiority of the national project.

What was not discussed, however were the ways in which this sense of Frenchness as a natural and legitimate identity was itself an ideological construction, rendered normal and authoritative through specific social and political nation-building projects. In effect this notion of Frenchness privileged one specific region (the Ile de

France) and one group of people (an educated political and intellectual oligarchy based in Paris), whose own ethno-cultural, social and linguistic senses of identity were positioned as representative of the nation, while other socio-cultural traditions were subordinated.

France was never a federation of separate regions. Rather, the creation of a French national identity represented the transcendence of regionalism through the construction of a sense of national unity beyond the region. Therefore:

L'objectif visé n'était absolument pas la préservation des cultures populaires locales réelles. Ce qui a été célébré, c'étaient des identités régionales construites en relation avec l'identité nationale (Thiesse 2001:13).

[The objective was absolutely not the preservation of real popular local cultures. What was celebrated were regional identities constructed in relation to the national identity.]

While regionalism appears therefore in numerous contexts during the Third Republic, its discursive role is the facilitation and justification of an idealised notion of a French identity. Regionalism is not absent from nineteenth century texts and debates as is often assumed, but rather regional differences were employed to promote notions of French nationalism, whilst simultaneously being discursively positioned as inferior or subordinated elements of the ideal.

The socio-symbolic marginalisation of Brittany and Breton

During the period of the Third Republic, Brittany saw a declining population. Limited social opportunity and endemic agrarian poverty, particularly in the interior regions, forced many people to move away from their communities³. Families were often large, due to the moral influence of the Catholic Church and endemic poverty.

³ Chateaufeuf and Villerne on a research trip to Brittany, noted how, in their opinion, poor agricultural practices, relatively infertile soils, inequitable land tenure and a lack of willingness to adopt new farming technologies and techniques led to endemic poverty in many rural parts of Brittany (1850:151).

However, typically most if not all of these children could not, or would not stay on the land. Between 1872 and 1911, 330 000 Bretons emigrated, many to Paris to work as labourers or maids (Guinard 2001:episode1). Others moved to the United States or Canada or sought jobs at sea. This has accurately been described as an exodus, particularly from the rural parts of Brittany and especially from the interior (ibid) and reflects a similar phenomenon that occurred in Ireland and Cornwall.

The First World War also had an enormous effect on the region where out of a population of between 3 and 4 million people, between 100 000 and 250 000 Breton soldiers lost their lives on the front (Galliou 1991:285; Guinard 2001:episode 2). The soldiers who returned from the killing fields of Northern France and Belgium came back as different people. Not only had they worn a French uniform and fought for France alongside other Frenchmen, for many of them it was the first time they had left, not just Brittany, but their immediate local community. This exposure to modernity was in stark contrast to the life they returned to: one of small-scale manual farming, religious conservatism and often bitter poverty.

La Première Guerre Mondiale va jouer un rôle absolument fondamental non seulement en Bretagne mais dans toutes les campagnes françaises. Elle va transformer les paysans en des français. (Ronan Le Coadic in Guinard, 2001:episode 2)

[The First World War would play an absolutely fundamental role, not only in Brittany, but across the French countryside. It would transform peasants into Frenchmen.]

Loeiz Guillamont suggests that the returning soldiers came back with something new: « une richesse de plus, une panache supplémentaire » [an extra richness, some added panache] (Guinard 2001:episode 2). Little wonder many people began to admire and desire the benefits that could be gained by integrating more into the French economic and cultural system. Breton dress was abandoned, for “city clothes” (Hélias 1978:276) and with the increasing rate of literacy, traditional oral storytelling, like other aspects of Breton culture, became unfashionable. This period also saw the introduction of electricity to many towns and, importantly national

media in the form of newspapers and, in following decades the radio, which was tightly regulated by the state. As Henriette Walter points out, before radio, one only heard the neighbours and villagers speaking. With the radio, one heard all of France speaking (Guinard 2001:episode 2). While France was speaking, however, Brittany was not. Seldom was a Breton accent heard on the radio in the interwar years, let alone a regional variety of the language itself.

The role of schooling was another critical issue in the societal shift to a French linguistic standard. Compulsory schooling, introduced by the then minister for education Jules Ferry in 1881, not only challenged what until then had been a predominantly religious function, it endeavoured to give every French child the same educational foundation: that is to ‘form’ them as French citizens by teaching them French as well as by asserting and expressing the primacy of the State as a socio-cultural influence. While it sought to fulfil an ideological obligation to educate children, it was also an exercise in nation-building.

Children in all public schools were banned from speaking Breton in both the classroom and playground. A common punishment, instituted throughout France for speaking a minority language, was the use of *le symbole* or as it was sometimes called in Brittany *la vache*⁴ (Hélias 1978; Le Coadic 1998; an Du 2000; Association-Buhez 2001; Morin 2001). This was a small object hung around the neck of a child as form of punishment and public shaming for speaking Breton. The only way a child could rid themselves of *la vache* was to inform on one of their classmates when they spoke Breton. This had the effect of self-censorship on both an individual and communal level. Many older Breton speakers still speak of this as humiliating experience and the process certainly had a profound effect on their perception of the language (Le Coadic 1998).

Education, the First World War, transport infrastructure and the media all brought Bretons into unprecedented contact with others. Poverty, lack of opportunity and relative overpopulation provided the incentive to leave. Increasing rates of literacy meant greater access to information (in French) and increased mobility allowed

⁴ ‘The cow’ in French, so named because of the animal’s supposed stubbornness and stupidity.

people to easily travel large distances. In particular the railway allowed Bretons to migrate to Paris and facilitated both French tourists and returning Bretons to holiday in Brittany. By the end of the 19th century (and to this day) it was considerably easier and quicker to travel from Rennes to Paris than from Rennes to many parts of Brittany. All of these effects marked the end of isolation for Brittany and Breton speakers:

Dans cette société en sur-population chacun pense à l'avenir pour ces enfants et l'avenir, c'est le français (Guinard 2001:episode 1).

[In this over-populated society, each person thought about the future for their children and the future was French.]

This, combined with the strong political pressure brought to bear on Breton speakers through the ideology of Republicanism, had the effect of devalorising the symbolic capital of Breton, helping to produce a widespread view amongst Breton and non-Breton speakers that Breton language and culture was stigmatising (Le Coadic 1998; 2000; Pentecouteau 2002).

French representations of Breton language and identity during the Third Republic

During the 19th and 20th centuries Brittany was often negatively stereotyped from the perspective of dominant French culture. Bretons were characterised as poor and backward, or “stubborn and ignorant, rooted in superstition, irrationality and fanaticism” (Orwicz 1987:293).

In much the same way as the Irish were directly and indirectly demeaned by English culture and propaganda, including the use of humour to mock, so too Breton culture and identity was represented in the 19th and 20th centuries as being anachronistic within the context of Republican France. An often-cited image of the negative stereotyping of Breton identity is the cartoon character Bécassine. Drawn by Joseph

Pinchou and based on a story by Caumery, it first appeared in 1905 in “La Semaine de Suzette”, a magazine for young bourgeois girls (Tirefort 2001-2002). Bécassine tells the story of a charming and hard-working but naive and stubborn Breton maid working in Paris. She bumbles her way through numerous adventures and, significantly, in early cartoons had no mouth with which to speak. She is « l’image d’une Bretagne naïve, archaïque, servile, ridicule » [the image of a simplistic, archaic, servile and ridiculous Brittany] (Guinard 2001:episode 1).

Bécassine helped to popularise this subservient image of Brittany to French children during the Third Republic. Such images, Tirefort argues, worked “to anchor in young sensibilities the conscience of ‘Great France’”(Tirefort 2001-2002:102). In particular, it iterated a sense of French identity through the production of a colonial (or regional) other. In the case of Bécassine the promotion of a sense of French national identity was done not through an abrogation of Breton identity, as had often been argued for in revolutionary times, but rather via the production and representation of cultural stereotypes which asserted the awkwardness, recalcitrance and inappropriateness of being Breton in a French world. Bécassine was charming and popular with young children, but her role was not to make young Breton girls feel better about being Breton or speaking a different language. To the contrary, through humour Bécassine helped instil a sense of inadequacy and humiliation and served as a lesson to young girls about how to be proper French ladies.

Bécassine is symbolic of a much greater project of enculturation that was going on in France during the nineteenth century. As has been discussed, this saw a turn towards regional diversity and representations of regional cultural practice as subordinated difference. Breton identity and cultural practice became romanticised and idealised within a new frame of reference. Bretons were described as “ignorant and simple” (Chateaufort and Villerne 1850:150), but also as “pious”, “hardy” and “obedient” (pages 147, 150).

The appropriation of regional identities in constructing a sense of French national identity helped redefine Brittany. In the mid-19th century Brittany became fashionable and fascinating to the French. This occurred within a growing colonial

discourse of race and ethnicity (Orwicz 1987:296), and through a broader (re)invention of Celticism, ranging from the popularisation of the Arthurian legend to the folkloric recording of traditional poems, stories and songs by writers such as La Villemarqué (Le Saux no date).

Perhaps the most celebrated legacy of French appropriation of Breton cultural practice exists in the field of the visual arts. In the 1880s a number of Avant-Guard artists began leaving Paris and headed to places like Brittany for inspiration and with a newfound interest in traditional peasant practice in France. Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard were important members of one such artists colony in the little town of Pont-Aven in Brittany. The town was extremely popular for its cheap hotels, pleasant landscapes and ready supply of poor, willing inhabitants to pose as models. Pont Aven proved the ideal place for French artists and tourists to indulge their passion for exoticism and, through a classic trope of othering, to construct a simple, primitive folk through a paternalistic gaze. In March 1888 Paul Gauguin wrote:

I love Brittany; I find there the savage, the primitive. When my clogs resound on the granite soil, I hear the muffled, dull, powerful tone which I seek in my painting (cited in Orton and Pollock 1980:320).

Artists such as Gauguin and Bernard, as well as the public who were consumers of their art and who found fascination with Breton cultural practice, did so from their own specific ideological and epistemological tradition. This was not an adoption of Breton ways of being, but of an appropriation of these cultural performances as symbolic acts, which were to be interpreted through French discursive traditions. In very similar ways that France began to represent the orient in terms of its exotic other (Said 1995), so too, Breton identity became folklorised, positioned and reiterated from within a dominant French gaze.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau describes this effect, following Said, as *Bretonism* (1989:122). She argues that the appropriation, objectification and reinterpretation of Breton cultural practices was in part a response to the alienating aspects of modernity and the industrial revolution:

Bretonism fulfils a desire for the annihilation of what is deemed insupportable in modernity, which in turn requires that Brittany of Bretonism be conceived as feudal, rural, static and spiritual – the Other of contemporary Paris (ibid).

For this semiotic turn to be successful, Brittany needed to be constructed and represented as the antithesis of Paris: as a poor, pious, unsophisticated and agrarian place. But while Brittany may have been all of these things in part, it by no means was exclusively so. Orton and Pollock (1980) argue that Brittany was in fact a far more diverse, sophisticated and complex society than was represented in French discourses. For example, they point to the well-developed tourism industry that served the French holiday-makers and cultural voyeurs of the nineteenth century and the presence of modern local industries (page 325). Moreover, while some parts of the interior were relatively infertile, they argue that by the turn of the twentieth century, “Brittany had become one of the most profitable and productive regions” of France and the south of the region in particular, was “a rich, fertile and productive place” (page 323). In the space of fifty years, Brittany had developed and the agricultural problems, including a lack of access to agricultural technology and inefficient farming practices that the likes of Chateauneuf and Villerne noted in 1850 (Chateauneuf and Villerne 1850) were becoming less relevant. Rather than being a primordial place beyond time and the corruptions of modernity, Brittany was a modern, developing society, albeit one with a strong sense of local cultural specificity. And yet this Brittany was not described in French representations of the region.

A good example of the ways in which French interpretations of Breton cultural practice were dominant is in the representation of the lace *coiffes* [headdresses] that Breton women habitually wore until the latter decades of the twentieth century. Orton and Pollock suggest that “for many visitors in the nineteenth century Breton costumes were regarded as quaint and picturesque, and perceived as signs of the traditional and archaicness of Breton culture” (Orton and Pollock 1980:326). Images

of women wearing coiffes while participating in religious events figured prominently in the work of the Pont-Aven school.

There were many hundreds of different types of coiffe, each representing a locality. Each design also represented relationships within that locality, as well as broader social attitudes: the proper wearing of a coiffe conferred respectability and status on a woman within the community, but also a sense of fashion. Pierre-Jakez Hélias, in his autobiography *The Horse of Pride* writes about the starched coiffes of his mother in the 1920s:

There were eight or ten of them rolled together in two bundles, one consisting of her everyday coiffes, and the other, of those she wore on Sundays and feast days. The former were made of plain white linen, embroidered with stylised white flower motifs.... The second type were made of embroidered muslin or lace, embellished with extravagant decorative designs. True masterpieces, even for a region in which all girls were said to have been born with crochet hooks in their hands. Of course old women wore comparatively low coiffes, because after a certain age, they had stopped keeping up with the fashions of the day. But as the younger women's coiffes grew higher, the ribbons on them got wider and wider, and the designs, increasingly flamboyant. Girls found them irresistible, but their parents weren't always in a position to pay for them. Even then, many people were saying that they ought to wear "city clothes", which didn't cost nearly as much. And my mother groaned with indignation: "Really I am not going to walk around in a smock, wearing a bit of scarf on my head" (Hélias 1978:276, italics in original).

Orton and Pollock dispute the notion that Breton dress was traditional or archaic. They argue that, from a Breton perspective, following the French Revolution and the breakdown of class barriers, Breton costume and in particular the lace coiffes "came to signify region, locality, class, wealth and marital status within a *nouveau-riche* peasantry" (page 327). In other words, "it was a sign of class and social development. It signified contemporary Brittany but also marked it apart. The Breton

costume was a modern form of dress which at the time was still evolving but the urban population saw it as archaic, medieval” (page 336).

For the wearers of this headdress then, the lace coiffes, were not symbolic of historical tradition, but of modernity (Solomon-Godeau 1989:121): not French modernity, but Breton modernity. The needlework, the quality of lace and the precise height or shape of the headpiece said a lot about a woman’s social position, her wealth and her pretensions. But this point was missed entirely by Gaugin and his cohort of travelling artists who came to Brittany, intent on having their fantasies of primitivism and cultural naivety confirmed through images of bucolic landscapes and arcane practices, of which the wearing of the coiffe was a leitmotif. Rather than seeing Breton culture as a different and sophisticated form of cultural practice, they reinterpreted, or simply misread, practices such as the wearing of the coiffe as a symbol of tradition and conservatism.

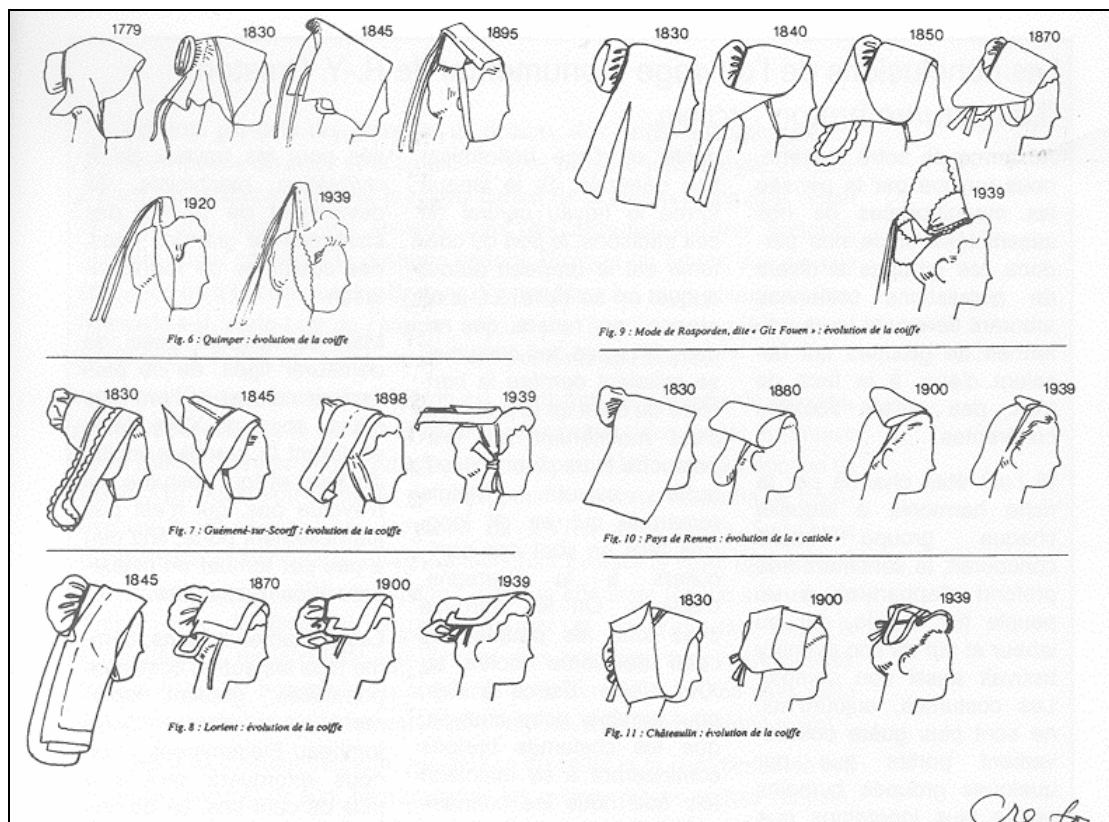


Figure 1 The evolution of the coiffe according to R-Y. Creston.

From Favereau (1993)



**Figure 2 Postcard of Bécassine,
Hachette Livre / Gautier-Languereau**



**Figure 3 Pégot Ogier, Soir de
Pardon, 1892, Musée de Lorient**



**Figure 4 Willumsen, J.F.,
Femmes bretonnes marchant,
1890, J.F. Willumsen Museum**

French representations of Breton culture reflect this objectification in the way they interpret and represent aspects of Breton culture from an external perspective. This occurs both in the ways Breton culture was stylised and stereotyped, as well as an erasure of many specific differences and relationships that were occurring in the scenes that were being represented. The paintings of Paul Gauguin and the Pont-Aven school of artists for example do not describe Breton society as much they describe Parisian perceptions of Breton culture and the often patronising gaze of the artists. The actors in the scenes are often little more than models for the preconceptions of the artists seeking their own sea change from the salons of Paris. Orton and Pollock ask, rhetorically: “whose Brittany do we confront in those representations?” (pages 329-330) and later:

What does it mean to paint Breton men and women in a manner derived from Japanese prints? What does it mean to medievalize and orientalize Brittany? Does it signify, for example, primitiveness, savageness, or simplicity of the region and the people? Or does the use of such stylistic devices assert the modernity of the artist, his vanguardness? (page 337).

What such images assert is an incapacity or unwillingness on the part of the artists to appreciate the sociopolitical context within which such practices were taking place in Brittany. The painters are not interested in the politics or social meanings of religious pardons or feast days, or the subtle semiotic differences in the so-called traditional costumes, but rather how these practices can be fertile subject matter for their own vision of the world: as “a source of picturesque rural motifs” (page 333). This view is saying, among other things, that Breton culture represents an idealised and innocent time. It is traditional, it is archaic and it is anachronistic in comparison to the modern, cosmopolitan world of the artist. In other words, while it may be fascinating and mysterious, it is also antithetical to (French) modernity and therefore destined to be condemned to history.

We may now ask what will be, for the Breton, the consequences of the new state of things which is rapidly advancing upon him? If, to the present time, sheltered by his mountains, he has been in some degree able to escape the movement around him, yet his isolation cannot last long; already new roads

traverse in several directions the rampart which has protected him, and civilization gains some new ground each day, advancing from the shores to the interior, and driving into a narrower and yet narrower space the manners, the language, and even the costume of the ancient Armorica (Chateauneuf and Villerne 1850:151).

The issue in relation to the changing linguistic and cultural practices of many Bretons is not that Parisians sought out subjects to paint in Brittany, nor even that they did so in ways that positioned these subjects within particular discourses and ideologies. Rather, it is the equanimity with which increasing numbers of Breton people accepted these specific views on their society, and on themselves, as being accurate and appropriate. This attitude was in no small measure instilled through the systemic education of Bretons to speak French and behave as French citizens. But many Bretons were also poor and they saw access to French, and to French cultural practices and ways of thinking, as vehicles for social and economic advancement. The belief that French offered them more than Breton led to a systemic devaluation of Breton cultural and social practices, often supported by teachers, parents and educated Bretons who saw little future in agrarianism and in localised identities and languages.

Bretons, as they adopted many of the French ideological and cultural ideas and practices, began to view their own cultural heritage in 'Bretonist' ways. For example, the wearing of the coiffe or the pardon began to be viewed as an old-fashioned or folkloric practice, rather than as an expression of a living culture, firstly by the Breton bourgeois who were keen to distance themselves from the poor peasant cousins, and subsequently by increasing numbers of rural Bretons themselves. Bretons began to reiterate the importance of speaking French, the backwardness of Breton society and to see themselves as "savage and primitive". They began to believe that French society was more modern, more desirable and conversely that the trappings of Breton culture, such as its costume and language, inhibited them from fully accessing these advantages.

Over time in Brittany therefore, there developed what Favereau (1993), Le Coadic (1998; 2000), Quéré (2000) and others describe as « une identité négative ». Erikson (1972) defines this negative identity as “l’existence de sentiments d’infériorité et d’une haine de soi morbide... [the existence of sentiments of inferiority and a morbid self-hatred] (Erikson 1972:324). Le Coadic goes on to argue that this period of Breton history can be identified as a ‘submission’ whereby, to use the language of Bourdieu, many Bretons experienced symbolic violence and participated in their own cultural marginalisation. As Pentecouteau argues:

Les conséquences psychologiques, l’utilisation de stéréotypes, les pratiques stigmatisantes, ont amené les Bretons à intérioriser une image dévalorisée d’eux-mêmes, image qu’ils peuvent éventuellement reproduire (Pentecouteau 2002:37).

[Psychological consequences, the utilisation of stereotypes and stigmatising practices led Bretons to interiorise a devalorised image of themselves; an image that they would eventually reproduce.]

This negative identity has been well studied. Le Coadic (1998;2000), Favereau (1993), Jones (1996), Hélias (1978), Lebesque (1970/2000) and others offer numerous examples of negative identification in relation to the Breton language and culture, particularly in the generations that experienced the silent revolution during much of the 20th century.

Le Breton n’aurait jamais dû exister, j ‘aurais préféré être mort plutôt que de vivre cette honte, nous étions comme une portée de poulets sans défense, on disait que cette langue était réservée aux vaches et aux cochons.

Cited in Carrer (1986:50) and Le Coadic (2003).

[Breton should never have existed. I would have preferred to die rather than live that shame, we were like a defenceless brood of chickens, it was said that the language was only fit for cows and pigs.]

The Breton revival movement

The devalorisation of Breton culture was widespread, but it was not quite universal. While the signs of Breton identity were mocked and marginalised throughout the 3rd Republic, a small number of Breton language and cultural enthusiasts sought to promote the status and usage of Breton and saw Breton identity as a source of pride. These groups were frequently made up of enthusiasts who were not Breton, or at least not Breton speakers from rural Brittany. Some were scholars who were interested in philology or folklore or conservative clerics who saw French Republicanism as a threat to the power of the church. Others were part of a new Breton middle-class emerging in the urban centres of Brittany and Paris. Many belonged to an educated elite who frequently saw Brittany through a lens of Romanticism and primordialism and passionately constructed a Celtic identity. Within this ‘Celtomania’ “certain Breton enthusiasts sought to establish Breton as the original human language and to assert the primacy (and superiority) of the Celtic ‘race’” (Timm 2000:148).

In Brittany this first rising of Breton national consciousness is commonly referred to as the *emsav* (sometimes written *emzao* and meaning ‘advantage’ and ‘movement’) (Lebesque 1970/2000; Favereau 1991). This movement marked the beginning of a sense of Breton nationalism and the first push for the unification of diverse cultural and social practices, including language, within a broader framework of pan-Breton and pan-Celtic identity.

One of the main objectives of the *emsav* was to take the notion of Breton culture out of the fields and create a prestigious form of the language and a sense of pride and strength in Breton identity. For the first time in centuries the Breton language was promoted as a literary language and, over the course of the century several efforts were made to create a literary standard. Reviews such as the Catholic *Kroaz ar Vretoned* and *Feiz ha Breiz*, *Dihunamb* and *Brug* as well as cultural organizations such as the Académie celtique (1805), the Association Bretonne (1843), the Union Régionalist Bretonne (1898) and political parties such as Le Parti National Breton

(1911) sought to promote both the Breton language and Breton interests, as well as their own political agendas such as Catholicism, political reform or social justice.

The criteria for participation in this new Breton identity did not belong so much with the average, local Breton people themselves but with the elites and the enthusiasts of Brittany who wanted to create a Breton identity of their own design. Through the *emsav*, Breton cultural and linguistic practice became focussed around specific ideological and epistemological positions. Practices and difference that were once meaningful at a local level became subsumed under a new sense of Breton identity that was articulated not by the people, but by specific, self-appointed elites and intellectuals.

The *emsav* was not the continuation, development or promotion of local socio-symbolic and cultural practices and representations of local identity and it did not emerge from a grass-roots movement within rural Brittany. Rather it was an appropriation of many local cultural practices within a middle-class sensibility deeply informed by French Republican values and ideologies, including a sense of nationalism and essentialised ethnocultural identity. Indeed, in many ways the first *emsav* contributed to the equanimity with which Breton culture was folklorised and devalued as a relevant, meaningful practice. Many of these organizations were guilty of the orientalisising (or Bretonising) “Celtomania” (Orton and Pollock 1980:326) that framed much of the interpretation of Breton culture. As Roger Leprohon argues in a 2001 television documentary on the Breton language, it was the conservative and elitist elements of Breton society, such as the wealthy landowners and the clergy who interested themselves in developing this new sense of Bretonitude or Breton nationalism through the Celtic trope (in Guinard 2001).

Le mouvement breton est celui d’une idéologie nationale bretonne. Amorcée par l’aristocratie, soutenue par le clergé, et la bourgeoisie, la volonté de conserver l’ordre social existant a cédé la place à une idéologie qui occulte l’intérêt de catégories sociales particulières. Les intellectuels ont joué un rôle déterminant dans la production d’un discours « conforme » à l’idéologie nationale, en produisant une histoire bretonne qui peut être parfois très idéalisée (Pentecouteau 2002:52).

The Breton movement [emsav] is that of Breton national ideology. Begun by the aristocracy, supported by the clergy, and the bourgeoisie, the desire to preserve the existing social order gave way to an ideology that overshadowed the interests of particular social groups. Intellectuals played a determining role in the production of a discourse that “conformed” to a national ideology, in the process producing a Breton history that was at times very idealised.

Leprohon rightly suggests that many Breton peasants, who were already viewing their regional language as a liability, may not have been disposed to listening to their landlord or urban intellectuals when they were told to be interested in Breton culture but rather they aspired more towards being ‘modern’ (Leprohon in Guinard 2001). For the peasants speaking and being Breton was normal and not something to reflect on, so they did not necessarily aspire to the conservation of these values.

One pro-Breton cultural movement that developed in the 1920s is of particular importance. Under the direction of Roparz Hemon, the first all-Breton literary review *Gwalarn* was published as a supplement to the French language *Breiz Atao* in 1925. Hemon’s charter for the Breton language was as ambitious as it was essentialised. In *Gwalarn* it was the first time in centuries anyone had sought to use Breton in such a prestigious academic context. They translated many texts into Breton and wrote about issues beyond Brittany in Breton. Hemon was politically motivated and saw the development of a Breton standard as the first step to developing a national language: to “lui donner une norme pour l’offrir un avenir” [give it a norm to offer it a future] (Guinard 2001:episode 2). As such he spent many years developing a standardised version of Breton that is commonly used today.

Hemon, however, was writing as a self-styled cultural and political leader, albeit one using the Breton language to express himself. Yves Le Berre suggests that:

L’idée c’était qu’une élite... devait prendre les choses en main et reconstruire un peuple breton parlant une langue elle-même reconstruite (cited in Guinard 2001:episode 2).

[The idea was that an elite... must take charge of things, to reconstruct a Breton people, speaking a language itself reconstructed.]

In this way, for the first time someone was proposing a language planning initiative to promote the use of Breton as a language of power and prestige. The idea was not so much to provide people with a choice of languages through the development of societal bilingualism but to use the Breton language as a vehicle for promoting a sense of Breton nationalism in contrast or opposition to France. In this sense then, Hemon's project ignored the needs and perspective of many ordinary Breton speakers as much as the French language policy did.

Hemon sought to assert the power of a Breton nation and develop the language as an apparatus of a Breton State. His nationalistic rhetoric is unequivocal:

Si nous choisissons notre langue, ce n'est pas parce qu'elle est « la langue de nos pères » et « notre langue bien-aimée », ni « la langue du cœur » ni toutes les inepties qu'on a coutume d'entendre de la part de gens qui ne savent rien faire sans s'excuser. Nous choisissons notre langue parce que nous voulons la choisir et nous abandonnons l'autre parce que nous voulons l'abandonner. Le breton est pour nous la liberté, le français l'esclavage (Roparz Hemon cited in Guinard 2001:episode 2).

[If we choose our language, it is not because it is “the language of our fathers” and “our well-loved language”, nor “the language of the heart”, not all of the nonsense that we are used to hearing from people who don't know how to do anything without making excuses for themselves. We choose our language because we want to choose it and we abandon the other because we want to abandon it. For us Breton is freedom, French slavery.]

It is interesting to compare Hemon's language here to that of the Jacobin revolutionaries, particularly in relation to ideas of language constituting a privileged form of liberation from slavery and the belief that societal monolingualism is desirable. It is an almost identical discourse and epistemology: that people must be

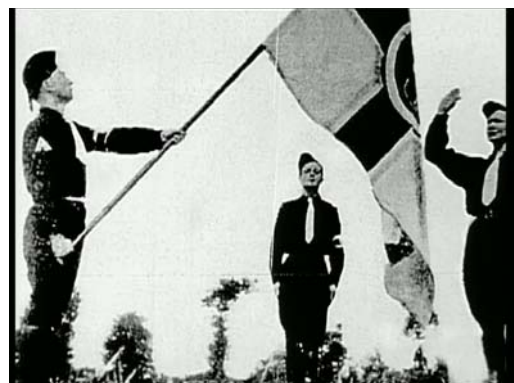
led to Freedom through the guidance of their political leaders. For Hemon, Breton is an ideological symbol, a standard to be borne, and any affective relationship one might have with their language, or with their specific linguistic identity, is viewed as weakness.

Hemon's motives may have been sincere, but through the 1920s and 30s, his politics became more and more politically extreme. Through organizations such as Breiz Atao, fascism developed as an important subtext of Breton politics during the 1930s. In some ways, given the conservative nature of Brittany, the development of fascist politics in this highly politicised era was much more likely than that of the left or extreme left and can be compared to the development of extreme right politics in Wales under Saunders Lewis. Nonetheless, in aligning himself and the broader issue of linguistic, cultural and political independence, with fascism, Hemon and his cohort positioned Breton at the extreme end of a political cline, far from the typical Breton speaker, and as a direct threat to Republican France.

During the occupation of France a small group of sympathisers set up the pro-fascist Conseil Nationale Bretonne. While the members of the CNB were few in number, and Nazi sympathisers were by no means exclusively Breton militants, the symbolism of their actions was profound.



**Figure 5 Fascist rally in Brittany,
From Guinard (2001) episode 2.**



**Figure 6 Fascist rally in Brittany,
From Guinard (2001) episode 2.**

When France was liberated, Paris did not waste time in seeking retribution, nor did it easily forget what it perceived as an act of treason. Immediately following the war, Breton cultural movements were either banned or stigmatised to the point where their appearance in public risked public derision and violence (Guinard 2001:episode 3). Hemon was forced into exile in Ireland, never to return. Indeed because of the stigma of collaboration, and the banning of all sympathisers from public broadcasts, it was over two years before Breton was again heard on the radio.

If at the end of the First World War Breton was marginalised because of the increased contact Bretons had with France, at the end of the Second World War it held absolutely no legitimacy. The fascist politics of Hemon and his collaborators did little more than reinforce the view that Breton was deeply stigmatising. As such, they were a terrible setback for the promotion of the language and created a legacy that took decades to overcome.

C'est surtout quand les Allemands sont arrivés, que les Bretons ont commencé à parler le français. Même les vieux faisaient un effort ! [...] Et puis on a été un petit peu contre certains Breiz Atao, puisqu'à l'époque ça s'appelait Breiz Atao. Et tous ces Breiz Atao-là, à 90% je peux vous dire, ils sont allés avec les Allemands. Respondent cited in Quéré (2000:41-42).

[It was above all when the Germans arrived that the Bretons began to speak French. Even the old people made an effort! [...] And then we were a little bit against certain Breiz Atao, because at the time it was called Breiz Atao. And all of these Breiz Atao, 90% I can tell you, they sided with the Germans. Respondent cited in Quéré (2000:41-42).]

Changes to the Breton social landscape following the Second World War

The Second World War, German occupation and the Fascist regime of Marshall Pétin had a devastating effect on France, nowhere more so than Brittany. Many Breton ports and cities, including Brest and Lorient, were destroyed by allied bombing and by the end of the war the regional and national economies had been

devastated. Immediately following the war, one half of all people in Brittany were agrarian workers, the standard of living was the lowest in France and 30% lower than the national average. Most farms had no electricity or running water and 90% had no tractor or mechanisation (Guinard 2001:episode 3).

However, France was about to undergo the most dramatic transformation of its society and economy in its history. The thirty years following the war was a period of unprecedented economic growth and social change. These changes occurred in almost every facet of life, from the construction of low-cost housing and urban renewal to widespread increases in car ownership, changes in work practices, the emergence of the wireless and electronic media, mass production and mass consumption. As Ross states, “before the war, it seemed, no one had a refrigerator; after the war, it seemed, everyone did” (Ross 1995:4).

For many of those who stayed on the land, modernity came in the form of agrarian reform. In Brittany the complex networks of hedges and copses characteristic of the countryside and known as « le bocage » were bulldozed *en masse* in favour of open fields that could be ploughed mechanically. Old houses fell into disrepair through a slow desertification of the countryside and traditional forms of cultural practice, such as collective harvesting and communal clothes washing were abandoned for the conveniences of technology. Broudic (1995) describes this as « une révolution silencieuse » [a silent revolution] (Broudic 1995; Guinard 2001 episode 4) and the term is apt. Not only did it silence Breton voices, but it passed in silence too, with few speakers appreciating the magnitude of the change nor the consequences for the future of the language.

Following the Second World War the intergenerational transmission rate of Breton also collapsed. Louis Elégoët states that while in 1946, 8 out of 10 children were brought up speaking Breton in Basse Bretagne, the traditionally Breton speaking area of western Brittany. Five years later only 2 out of 10 were. The following year only one out of 10 children in Basse Bretagne was brought up speaking Breton (Guinard 2001:episode 3).

Laurence Wylie writes in his foreword to Hélias's *The Horse of Pride*: "Wealth has little meaning in life. The basic virtue, which overcomes poverty and disaster, is a sense of human dignity..." (Wylie in Hélias 1978:xii). Clearly, for many in Brittany, the 20th century was a time when traditional Breton customs and practices were no longer sufficient for many people to maintain their dignity. Being mocked when they went to town for their dress or accent, punished for speaking Breton in school, being discriminated against when they were obliged to deal with a government official, not to mention the economic discrimination that occurred as a result of their social status was for many, a humiliating experience. It was a loss of dignity in the way they expressed themselves as Bretons that led to the broad adoption of dominant French forms of expression. Symbolic violence had rendered traditional Breton forms of expression illegitimate and it was only through adopting and mastering new forms of symbolic capital that one could hope to gain the respect of others, and often of oneself.

The greatest change in Breton society, including language use, customs, dress, music and all other forms of localised expression occurred during the 20th century. Before the First World War many people, particularly in Western Brittany, had little or nothing to do with the rest of Brittany, let alone the rest of France. A farmer from the Pays Trégor had little in common with someone from Rennes, Picardy or Marseilles. But by 1965 there was little separating them. In the space of 50 years France reinvented itself as a strong and centralised Republic, with a dynamic economy and powerful cultural industry.

La Bretagne ... est devenue une région française : les pratiques culturelles des Bretons ne sont pas très différentes des pratiques des autres Français (Pentecouteau 2002:31).

[Brittany... has become a region of France : the cultural practices of Bretons are not that different to the practices of other French people.]

It therefore not surprising that it was during this period that the number of Breton speakers collapsed and that the abandonment of customs and traditions was at its most intense.

C'est seulement à partir du moment où l'économie régionale est entrée dans une phase nouvelle de mutations radicales que la pratique du breton subit elle aussi une transformation qui va se traduire par un diminution de 80% du nombre total de locuteurs entre les années 1950 et 1990. À bien des égards, l'économique a eu plus d'importance que le politique.... Autrement dit, c'est le développement économique de la (Basse)-Bretagne et son imbrication croissante et irréversible dans le système économique français qui aurait pour conséquence la réduction de la culture bretonne au stade de vestige. La modernisation de l'économie bretonne est donc la cause, et elle a pour l'effet de condamner la culture régionale à la disparition à terme. (Broudic 1995:444).

[It is only from the moment when the regional economy entered into a new phase of radical mutation that the usage of Breton also suffered a transformation which would translate into a reduction of 80% of the total number of speakers between 1950 and 1990. In many respects, economic factors had more importance than politics.... In other words, it is the economic development of (Western)-Brittany and its increasing and irreversible interconnection with the French economic system that would have as a consequence the reduction of Breton culture to the status of [being a] relic. The modernisation of the Breton economy is therefore the cause and it has as an effect the condemnation of regional culture to its ultimate disappearance.]

In this sense then, broadly speaking, until the mid-20th century there were two symbolic fields (Bourdieu 1991) operating in Brittany – the relatively prestigious French field and the Breton one. This is to say that until this time many Breton people, especially those with poor French language skills or those living in agrarian 'peasant' rural conditions were effectively excluded from, or ignorant of, the cultural, social and economic world that French represented. Rather, they lived in their own local world with its own system of organization and symbolic capital that

conferred authority and was meaningful to people. Before the project of nationalisation undertaken during the Third Republic there was limited contact between rural people living in different local parishes in Brittany, and effectively very little contact with the wider world. Peasants lacked transport, mobility and were illiterate. In this world the vast majority of people spoke diverse forms of Breton and it still had significant linguistic capital within its own regional field (for example oral bards were admired for their storytelling skills and the church ministered in Breton). Breton was still useful in a communicative and symbolic sense and was essential for those excluded from the French field through their language capacities.

It was only when people living in the society came into closer contact with French society that the relative disadvantage of the Breton symbolic field became apparent. Whilst most peasants would have had some contact with French, through infrequent trips to town, dealings with the landlord or administrative matters, few would have thought it possible, or would have had the means or the desire to change their circumstances. It was only when locals began to aspire to become French and, through the vectors of nationalism, particularly French language education, had the means to become French, that these two societies began to be compared.

This process began in the mid-19th century. By the mid-20th century access to the French symbolic field was essentially available to all Bretons and in this field, traditional Breton cultural practices, including language, had no value. Indeed, it had a negative value and people would do whatever they had to, including speaking French, dressing differently and being 'modern', in order to disguise the fact that they were Breton. But this was a price they were prepared to pay, and it must be said, the French State did everything within its power to encourage their conversion.

The dominance of the French symbolic field occurred on every level of symbolic capital: linguistic dominance through the promotion of universal French schooling, economic dominance through the ability to modernise industry and agriculture and increase standards of living, cultural dominance through the development and promotion of national media and artistic practices, social dominance through the prestige and mobility one could gain through speaking French, environmental

dominance in the transformation of the landscape through agrarian reforms and the linking of Brittany to Paris through the development of transport infrastructure. One could also add that symbolic dominance extended to political dominance, through the conscription of soldiers, the punishment of dissent and the weakening of Church power.

The collapse of the Breton speaking population is indicative of a broader collapse in the Breton symbolic field and the absorption of Brittany into the more powerful French symbolic field. It is not just the traditional Breton language that disappeared, but the entire Breton way of life that this language helped represent, and was represented by. With the disappearance of this way of life, there was little reason and no perceived value in speaking Breton in public any more. Breton was still for many a language for communicating the deeply personal or sentimental – a language between husband and wife for example or between farmers working together, but in terms of prestige and public utility it was moribund.

The disappearance of Breton can therefore be read within a broader context of a specific language ideology that promoted French as the sole and privileged vehicle of modernity, national identity and social mobility, through the tropes of nationalism, Republican universalism and the myth of monolingualism. The integration of the Breton symbolic field into the French – of Brittany into France – was the explicit goal of the French State since the French Revolution. What Paris was asking for when it wanted Bretons to learn French and receive all of the advantages of the enlightenment was for them to give up their old cultural practices and become the same as the Toulousian factory workers, Provençal cheese makers and indeed the Parisian elite who presumed themselves to be already enlightened. In other words the intention was for all French people to identify around a single national identity through the use of a single language. Whilst clearly many differences would remain, these were treated not as positive additions to the diversity of French identity, but rather as deviations from its norm. Before the 1960s, it was undesirable, if not impossible, from a Parisian perspective at least, to be both Breton and French, even though this was the social, cultural and linguistic reality for several million Bretons.

Given the profound stigma attached to the Breton language and the enormous symbolic power of France following the Second World War, it appeared that there was no future for Breton, and no reason to mourn its passing. Just at that time when the last Breton monologots had passed away and the symbolic takeover of France appeared complete, from the ashes of traditional culture a new movement emerged once again reclaiming the right to be different and the value of Breton cultural products and identities.

The Rebirth of Breton

From the 1960s, and particularly following the protests of May 1968, an important Breton cultural revival began in which many of the negative views of Breton identity were inverted by a younger generation looking to promote Breton linguistic and cultural practices. Simon describes this as « le processus classique de retournement du stigmate en emblème » [the classic process of the appropriation of the stigma as emblem] (Simon 1999:19). Le Coadic describes it as « l'inversion symbolique » [the symbolic inversion] of the negative identity and sense of submission that was an integral part of the intergenerational collapse of Breton in the middle of the 20th century (Le Coadic 1998).

The impetus for this revival, as Le Coadic and Simon note, once again came not from older first-language Breton speakers, but from a new generation who were keen to revive the cultural traditions and practices considered stigmatising by many of their elders. Through this cultural revival, sometimes called the third *emsav*, following the movements of the 19th century and the inter-war years of the twentieth century (Favereau 1993:164), many of the values of French modernity and Republicanism were questioned by people who, for diverse reasons, sought to reengage with their “roots” or with traditional and local social structures and forms of cultural expression (Hourigan 2001; Gemie 2005).

Despite the overwhelming rejection of a politics of militancy and separatism by the general population (Le Coadic 1998:45), a renewed sense of Breton cultural identity

was embraced by many people, for whom being Breton was no longer a source of shame but of pride, honour and distinction. The young leaders of the new cultural movement were too young to remember the poverty and agrarian lifestyle of the past and were too young to remember the war and its stigmatising influence. They, like their parents, were products of their generation, but these were generations with very different values. The young had been brought up in a period of massive change and urban renewal, of development and consumerism and had begun to appreciate the social cost, banality and alienation that were often the effects of modernity.

In conjunction with New Social Movements in many other countries, including the hippy and protest movements in many Anglophone countries (Hourigan 2001), a new sense of Breton culture flourished. Traditional cultural practices were not reinstated, but rather specific elements from the past were appropriated and placed in new cultural contexts. There was no return to a golden age, but rather, elements of the past that were considered emblematic were reproduced and recontextualised in new ways. Through this process many forms of Breton expression found new voice, in particular within music and dance, but also architecture, literature and specific religious practices such as the *pardons* and pilgrimages popular with Breton Catholics (Favereau 1993; Le Coadic 1998:325-334; Guinard 2001; Lacombe 2001). Whilst some aspects of the cultural movement have their roots in the sentimentality of the past, many others have transformed these practices into creative and original cultural products and styles. Forty years later, while this movement has evolved in many ways, Breton cultural practices continue to play a powerful and important role in articulating a sense of Breton identity, representing the Breton language, and acting as a creative site of social difference and community in diverse and complex ways.

The Breton cultural and political revival that began in the late 1960s sought its bearings in the traditional practices that were still, sometimes, occurring in the remote Breton countryside. Despite the fervent desire of many revivalists to express their newfound and reclaimed sense of Breton identity, there was often a significant disjuncture with the elder generation. Unlike the young people, their parents and grandparents did remember the penury and shame associated with not being able to

escape their lifestyle and habitus. For many of these people, modernity represented an easier and better life. Buying a tractor or washing machine meant less manual labour and more free time. If the cost was less time spent in the fields or at the communal laundries, then all the better.

One difficulty Breton activists faced then was integrating these two very different practices of Breton life. In many cases older Breton speakers, artists and musicians were willing to help the revival, but in many other cases they were not. There was a perception among many older Bretons, and an anxiety among younger ones, that the cultural link had been broken and the revival was in many ways artificial or forced (Jones 1996; 1998; Timm 2001). This was nowhere more evident than in the language revival, where younger speakers wanting to learn Breton found it difficult. Few Breton teachers and few teaching materials existed and many older Breton speakers were unwilling to speak in public, let alone teach a younger generation their language. Moreover, while the practice of Breton by older first-language speakers was overwhelmingly oral, younger speakers were in many cases obliged to learn Breton from written materials. The lack of a widespread and well accepted literary standard further complicated their efforts.

While the Breton revival was a cultural movement, it was also a political movement. A number of small but vocal groups reclaimed Breton independence and there was occasional violence. This led to many French speaking and Breton-speaking people to view the revival as an unnecessary and unwanted radicalisation of politics, even if they supported the cultural movement, creating a further distance between militants and the general population. In effect, the revivalists faced a resistance from the French Republicans who viewed their cultural and political ambitions with extreme suspicion, as well as many local Breton people, who did not see the value or the purpose in reviving a moribund culture.

Pierre-Jakes Hélias, a popular Breton writer, media personality, story-teller, cultural critic and first-language Breton speaker, was deeply suspicious of the motives of militants who sought to mobilise such tropes for their own political and egotistical purposes. He remarked with irony on seeing rural Bretons throwing away their

furniture and cultural products, believing them to be worthless, only to see bourgeois Bretons and French people buying them up as antiques and icons of a bygone age (Hélias 1978:333-334). For Hélias there was a vanity and an affectation about Bretons who, having shed their cultural practices in disgust not long before, suddenly felt the need to clamour over the iconic vestiges of their culture, once they saw that it had become fashionable again (Hélias 1978).

In this way, for Hélias, the Breton revival was, in one sense, another event in a long process of dispossession for many poor farmers that began with their language and ended with their homes and furnishings and their very sense of community. They did not benefit from the revival, or not initially at least. Rather, it was the educated middle classes who came to reclaim their lost heritage and buy it from the country folk at knock-down prices who gained the most.

In 1975 Pierre-Jakez Hélias published his childhood memoirs in a book entitled *Le Cheval d'Orgueil* [the Horse of Pride]. The title comes from a quote from his grandfather Alain Le Goff:

Since I am too poor to buy any other horse, at least the Horse of Pride will always have a stall in my stable (Hélias 1978:v).

The book, originally written in Breton, was an enormous success throughout France and was translated into several languages, including French and English. Hélias wrote about his own experience growing up in the poor and undeveloped Pays Bigouden in the extreme west of Brittany with affection, humour and sincerity. The negative identity experienced and expressed by many of his generation was replaced with intimacy, dignity and a pride for the differentness of the region and its customs.

Iffig, one of the research participants in this thesis, and a first-generation Breton speaker, grew up very close to the birthplace of Hélias. Although he was a generation younger than the writer, he nonetheless recognised much in the description of life in a Bigouden village:

Moi, j'ai retrouvé dans le Cheval d'Orgueil mot pour mot tous les rites, tous les moments les plus précis de mon enfance.

[I found in The Horse of Pride word for word, all of the rites, all of the most accurate moments of my childhood.]

Hélias worked to invert the stereotypes and negative perceptions many Bretons had about traditional forms of Breton language and culture. He was part of a movement that popularised and revalorised Breton linguistic and cultural products, but this shift was not immediate, nor was it unproblematic. Many older first-language Breton speakers had been brought up internalising the belief that Breton was a devalued identity, only to have a younger generation of more urbane Bretons and French people tell them it was now important and intrinsic to a broader sense of national identity.

Such a sudden shift in the symbolic field of Breton was difficult for some older speakers and for others, it was accepted only slowly, once they had seen Breton become popular in the broader community. While he was well-known as a storyteller and was a popular figure on Breton radio, the fact that he represented his own upbringing with a sense of pride, not shame, was a confronting concept for many older speakers. According to Iffig, Hélias' autobiography only became valued by these Bretons following its success in France.

En fait les bretons se sont intéressés à lire ses livres quand ils ont vu le succès que ces livres ont eu dans les médias et chez les urbains dans les grandes villes. En fait c'est le succès qui, par retour, a incité les bretons à s'intéresser à son livre, et puis on a découvert dans ce livre-là qu'il a bien traduit la vie à la campagne et la vie en Bretagne du temps de son enfance.

[In fact the Bretons were only interested in reading his books when they saw the success that his books had in the media and with the urbanites in the big cities. In fact it was a return success which got the Bretons interested in his books, and there in his book we discovered there that he had translated life in the country and life in Brittany at the time of his childhood well.]

The return success Iffig refers to is evidence of the continuation of a complex and uncertain sense of cultural identity and self-worth discussed frequently in the literature (Favereau 1993; Jones 1998; Le Coadic 1998; Simon 1999) and elsewhere in this thesis. This insecurity meant that Hélias could only be fully celebrated and admired after his value had been confirmed in Paris, and by French-speaking Bretons.

Despite the complexity of these relations, or perhaps because of it, *le Cheval d'Orgueil* nonetheless marks a watershed in the way Breton culture was represented in the French media. Despite the risk of him being fetishised as, for example. « un saint laïc, symbole de la Bretagne populaire » [a lay-saint, symbol of popular Brittany] (Jean-Luc Germain, *Le Télégramme* 20/12/1999), and notwithstanding the criticism from many activists that he was overly sentimental or understated French cultural oppression (Winick 1995:348), Hélias both represents and articulates the changing attitude of Bretons toward their traditional culture in the 1970s.

The broader causes of this change are often debated. Yann, another respondent for this thesis describes the Breton revival as an act of mourning for a society that is in the process of dying: that of a peasant Brittany. It must be noted that the appreciation of Breton customs came initially from a generation who never knew the poverty that was often experienced before Brittany's integration into the broader French economic and symbolic market. Ironically, the very loss of culture also increases the value of what remains in the community. As Olier puts it:

Plus (...) la pratique de la langue décroît, plus le complexe qui était attaché à cette langue aussi disparaît. Et plus il y a un sentiment de perte et de manque qui est vécu dans la société.

[[the] more... the practice of the language decreases, the more the complex which is attached to this language also disappears. And the more there is a feeling of loss and of missing which is lived [experienced] in the society.]

In this way traditional Breton linguistic and socio-cultural practices become memorialised. There is a sudden realisation of its passing and a desire to remember as much as possible, so that the past can continue to inform the present and the future. Works such as those by Hélias become even more prestigious since they represent first-hand accounts of this disappearing world.

By the mid 1970s the process of cultural, social, linguistic and economic integration with France was essentially complete and Bretons found and asserted their place in the new world order. These cultural icons were then free to be rediscovered, not as vestiges of shame, but as lost treasures. Whether they appear in the form of furniture, traditional clothes or headdress, architecture, music, language or literature, their symbolic role has lost many or all of its potential negative connotations and it appears not as a continuation of traditional practice but as a cultural reference point. The subtle difference is important. The object or tradition becomes iconic rather than useful, venerated rather than practiced.

Take for example once again the lace coiffes Breton women wore. Once ubiquitous, they gradually disappeared over the course of the 20th century and are now no longer seen in public, except perhaps at cultural festivals. However in the homes of many Breton people I have visited, their mother's, or grandmother's, coiffe is often on display, framed and taking pride of place on the mantelpiece. Clearly these people are proud of their Breton heritage and traditions, but this pride is expressed not in a continuation of the practice of making and wearing the coiffe, but in its iconic representation of a bygone cultural tradition. The coiffe still represents a belonging to a heritage but not a participation in that cultural practice. It is no longer a public identifier but a private one and refers to a connection with the past and not the present.

It is this process of collective memorialising that the contemporary *em sav* is addressing in a significant way. But this is also a selective process. In memorialising and historicizing traditional Breton, and preparing Brittany for the era following the passing of the last significant generation of first-language Breton speakers, activists and planners are also reinterpreting the past selectively, remembering but also

forgetting. In this way Hélias is lauded, but Hemon's collaboration is forgotten or vilified by all but the most extreme of activists.

While this double movement of memory and forgetting is significant, it is also necessary to acknowledge the possible ways in which such memorializations are themselves sites of both inclusion and exclusion. Such practices configure symbolic power in specific ways that have the potential to exclude and marginalise as much as they promote and valorise specific practices and ideologies. In the desire to invoke and promote a newly valorised sense of Breton identity, it is relevant to ask how this may change the symbolic landscape of Brittany and who specifically may benefit from these changes. In the production and iteration of these "realms of memory" (Nora 1997-1999), through whose lens is history to be viewed and which practices are to be memorialised? In reterritorialising Breton identity, how may other forms of cultural expression and difference will be accommodated, incorporated or excluded?

Chapter 4: Linguistic Transformations of Breton

The territorial presence of Breton

Traditionally Brittany has been divided into two separate linguistic regions: Basse Bretagne (Lower Brittany) in the west, comprising parts of the departments of Côtes D'Armor and Morbihan, as well as all of Finistère, where communities speak variants of the Breton language; and Haute Bretagne (Upper Brittany) in the east, which traditionally spoke Gallo, a language similar to French and sometimes described as a French dialect (Morin 2001)⁵.

The relationship between Breton and French has historically been represented on maps as a frontier that has ebbed and flowed across the region over the centuries depending on the relative influence of the language groups. Generally this frontier takes the form of a line stretching roughly from Paimpol in the north to Vannes in the south and passing just east of Pontivy in the centre. The earliest known map showing a frontier between the two regions dates from 1588 (Morin 2001:162). More recent maps demonstrate the steady movement of the linguistic border to the west. See figure one as well as Abalain (2000) and Morin (2001) for more examples of these maps.

Although such maps may represent the historical limits of the presence of Breton speaking communities, based mainly on toponymic analysis (Morin 2001), the representation of this situation as a linguistic border has been criticised on many fronts as being too simplistic a model to adequately describe the historical and contemporary language diversity that exists in Brittany. Abalain points out that that there were from the earliest times 'islands' of Latin speakers to the west and

⁵ The history and future of Gallo is fascinating, but unfortunately it is one that this thesis is unable to address in any detail. Gallo was marginalised under similar conditions to Breton. However, perhaps because of its similarities to French, it has not been adopted as a cultural symbol by militants and intellectuals the way Breton has, except in very limited circles in Rennes, notably on the campus of Rennes II university. Thus it is ignored in most debates over language issues in Brittany and, indeed, is facing pressure from Breton militants looking to introduce and promote Breton in Upper Brittany as a national language.

Bretonnants to the east (Abalain 2000:28). Moreover, since the Middle-Ages there has been a fundamental linguistic divide within Basse-Bretagne between the countryside, dominated by small, agrarian Breton speaking communities, and cities and towns which were overwhelmingly French speaking. In this sense language use represented a social and economic difference, with peasants and people from the country speaking Breton and the bourgeois and nobility speaking French. This reflected their very different social, political and cultural orientations.



Figure 7 Representation of the linguistic frontier in Brittany. From Denez (1998:10).

In recent years, the territorial presence of Breton has changed significantly. Once the language of farmers and villagers in Basse-Bretagne, since the 1970s Breton has become popularised predominantly within an urban, educated, middle-class demographic. A number of educational poles have developed in urban centres, such as Brest, Vannes and Rennes; for example, the two main universities where Breton is taught are in Brest and Rennes. Younger Breton speakers may come from the countryside, but often also live on campus, and once they finish their studies they are likely to live and/or work in cities both within and beyond Brittany. While older,

first-language Breton speakers might typically live in rural environments in Basse-Bretagne, it is not possible to make such generalisations for younger speakers.

Breton and regional differences

Modern Breton is the general term for Breton spoken in recent centuries and distinguished from earlier Old Breton and Middle Breton. Breton is commonly divided by linguists and language activists into four dialects: Léonois, Trégorois, Cornouaillais and Vannetais (eg Morin 2001:163). For examples of dialectal differences see Broudic (1995), Abalain (2000), Guinard (2001) and Le Dû (2001). These dialectal variations are often significant, particularly between the north, known commonly as the KLT varieties (those of Cornouaille (Kerne), Léon and Trégor) and that of Vannes (Gwened) in the south, to the point where mutual comprehension is sometimes difficult. Such divisions broadly reflect the pre-revolutionary bishoprics of Brittany and indicate the important regional role the church played in education and social organization in previous centuries.

However these dialectal distinctions are themselves problematic and the extent and significance of dialectal difference is widely debated. For example, Pierre Le Roux in his *Atlas Linguistique de la Basse Bretagne* has identified 77 separate spoken dialects (cited in Abalain 2000). Conversely, in contemporary contexts the Breton Language Office makes little specific mention of regional difference in Breton, reiterating its promotion of a pan-Breton linguistic standard (ar Mogn 2002). At the same time, many educational institutions, including Diwan schools, endeavour to pay attention to regional differences whilst teaching what is essentially a written standard (Perazzi 1998).



Figure 8 Map of the four main dialects of Breton from Morin (2001:163)

The enormous diversity of Breton is indicative of its highly localised practice in the past and an absence of an historical pan-Breton standard. Falc'hun (1956) argued that from the earliest times there were significant differences within Brittany, particularly between the north and the south. This has led to many debates and arguments about the project of developing a standardised language and how inclusive and representative this standard may be of diversity within Breton, and particularly of the southern dialect.

Language differences in traditional settings followed complex axes of communication and influence between communities. These traced economic, social and cultural inter-connections such as religious festivals, regional markets and the routes of travelling musicians and oral bards. Within these networks there was no doubt significant difference as well, framed around family relationships, gender, generational difference, levels of education and the like. While regional differences in Breton were, and are significant, these do not sit neatly on a geographic map of Brittany but rather form part of a complex nexus of language practice and difference that is intersected by many vectors of identity, representation and symbolic power.

The Breton speakers

Relatively few quantitative studies of Breton have been undertaken to identify and count the Breton speaking population. Historically Breton was ignored by the French government, which refused to officially acknowledge the existence of minorities or communities within the Republic. Although in recent years this position has softened somewhat, the French State still does not include questions of language, nationality or cultural difference in census counts.

What statistical evidence that exists of numbers and location of Breton speakers comes mainly from church documents and more recently from surveys sponsored in part by the Regional Council, activists, academics and the European Union. These diverse surveys have been collected and described in a number of publications and theses, including texts by Francis Favereau (1993), Fañch Broudic (1995; 1999), Anna Quéré (2000), and most comprehensively, in a report published by the Ofis ar brezhoneg [the Breton Language Office] in 2002 entitled “Un Avenir Pour la Langue Bretonne?” [A future for the Breton language?] (ar Mogn 2002).

According to Favereau (1993:27), the Conquebert de Montbret inquiry in 1806 put the number of Breton speakers at around one million (out of a population of 1.4 in Basse Bretagne). This represents a figure of more than 70% of the total population. At the end of the 19th century Paul Sébillot estimated there were 679 000 Breton monolinguals, 663 000 Breton bilinguals and 60 000 – 80 000 non-Breton speakers (ibid) while Fañch Broudic estimated that in 1914, before the outbreak of the war that was to have such a devastating effect on the Breton-speaking population, there were 900 000 Breton speakers (who presumably were monolingual), 450 000 bilinguals and 50 000 non-Breton speakers (op cit:28).

During the early decades of the 20th century a phenomenon of language shift began whereby large numbers of first-language Breton speakers became fluent in French through, among other things, compulsory attendance of French-speaking schools. Following the Second World War intergenerational transmission rates collapsed and, with an aging population, the Breton speaking community began to diminish.

According to Favereau, in 1970 a survey across Brittany found that 270 000 people (or 11% spoke Breton (op cit:28), while a survey by RBO in 1983 found that 800 000 people understood Breton: 500 000 ‘very well’, 150 000 ‘quite well’ and 150 000 ‘a little’. Similarly, 600 000 people spoke Breton: 250 000 ‘very often’, 100 000 ‘quite often’, 250 000 ‘sometimes’ (ibid).

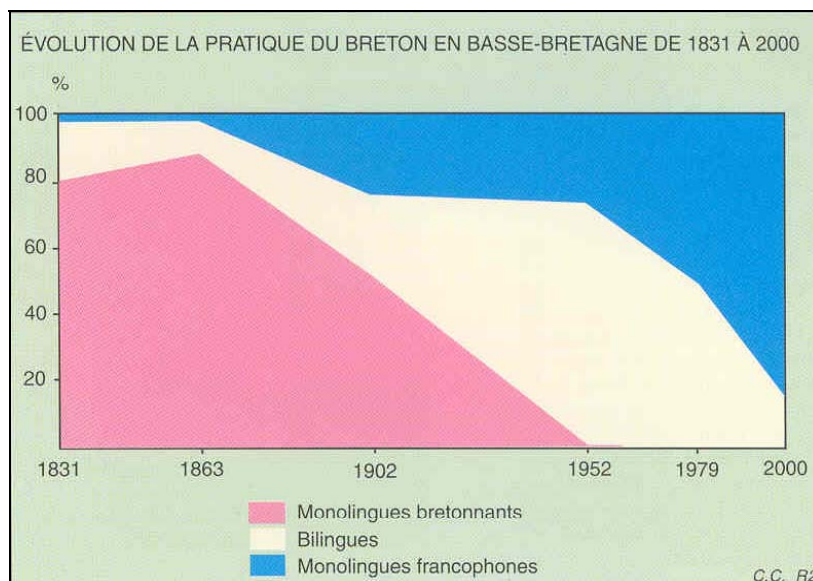


Figure 9 Evolution of the practice of Breton in Basse Bretagne from 1831 to 2000. From Morin 2001:19

More recently, the Breton Language Office cites three surveys in the 1990s: two, in 1991 and 1997, by T.M.O. Ouest and one, in 1992, by I.N.S.E.E. The results, plus those of previous surveys, are published in the report *Un Avenir Pour la Langue Bretonne?* and are reproduced below. This report acknowledges the variation in methodology, size and reliability of the surveys. While a number of questions remain, such as how a Breton speaker is defined, their language ability and the frequency with which they speak Breton, what can be gleaned from the figures is a reduction in the number of Breton speakers over the past century in the order of around 80%, with a corresponding increase in the population of Brittany in the order of 25%. This represents a profound linguistic and cultural shift.

Year	Breton speakers	Population of the 5 departments	Change in population
1886	1 982 300	3 136 600	-
1928	1 158 000	3 062 840	-6.4%
1952	700 000	3 072 378	+0.3%
1983	604 000	3 703 384	+20.5%
1991	250 000	3 847 821	+4.6
1997	240 000	3 847 821	-
1999	304 000	4 040 436	+5.0

Reproduced and translated from ar Mogn (2002:14)

Generational difference and the rise of a neo-Breton standard

Over the course of the 20th century, Brittany was transformed, physically, culturally, economically and socially. It is no surprise then that it was also transformed linguistically. This linguistic transformation saw a fundamental shift in first-language learning from Breton to French in the rural west of the region, with a corresponding collapse in the Breton speaking population. However there were, and continue to be other linguistic transformations. The increase in migration to France, and Brittany, in the latter half of the century saw cities across the country become increasingly complex linguistic spaces (Hargreaves 1995; Silverman 1999). So too, Breton itself is being transformed, both in a changing social practice of the language through a contemporary revival and a changing language corpus, through the modernisation and standardisation of Breton. Once the language of farmers and rural workers in the west of the region, today Breton is also the language of a small but growing number of educated, urban professionals.

However, these transformations have often been contentious. Not only is Breton practiced in very different contexts, it is in many ways a very different language and fulfils very different social functions. While there is a strong degree of dialectal difference between different regions of Brittany, nowhere are these differences

greater than between two quite separate language groups: those of the ‘traditional’, usually older, rural dwelling, first-language Breton speaker, and the ‘modern’, often younger, urbane speaker who has learned Breton in a school. Not only do these two groups speak markedly different Bretons, they also practice the language in different ways.

For well over a century linguists and activists have sought to create a prestigious linguistic standard of Breton. This was motivated by a perceived need for a language that could be used in literature and publishing, that could serve as a *lingua franca* between the diverse language regions, and that would represent Brittany in terms of its national identity. A number of scholars have endeavoured to achieve a standardisation that is both functional and acceptable to speakers of the various dialects, but none has fully been successful. Indeed, while many older speakers reject the project of standardisation for a number of reasons, linguists and activists have not been able to agree on which of several standardised forms of the language should be the official standard. McDonald (1989) notes that in past decades, a high degree of acrimony existed between Breton academics in the university of Haute Bretagne, based in Rennes and the university of Bretagne Occidentale, based in Brest, over the issue of whose orthography should be recognised as the Breton standard. Whilst this conflict appears to have significantly diminished in recent years, there are still three main, competing standards being published in Brittany: Interdialectal Breton, *Peurunvan*, or unified Breton and University Breton (Broudic 2001:138).

The most recent push for a universal Breton standard began in the 1970s. This was motivated by a recognition that, following the collapse of intergenerational language transmission rates after World War Two, if the Breton language were going to survive, two things were necessary: firstly, Breton would need to be taught in schools and secondly, for people to learn Breton through academic and educational institutions, it was necessary to develop pedagogic and linguistic tools that could be used systematically. However, it was also motivated by an ongoing perception by many activists that a standardised language is a necessary precondition to a more widespread reintroduction of the language in a modern, literate society and as a symbol of national identity. This occurred both through the development of the field

of Breton literature and through the creation of educational institutions where Breton could be learned in an academic context.

Despite a historically limited practice of Breton literacy, Breton literature has been a source of cultural expression for several centuries (Favereau 1991). Today it is an important site of language activism as well as cultural production. Le Coadic (1998:16) and Broudic (2001:135) both note the importance of the publishing industry in Brittany, with over 1000 titles published in the region every year, around 7% of which are in Breton or are bilingually Breton and French. Whilst many of these titles have relatively small print runs, the growth in Breton literature in recent decades demonstrates the growing importance of the written word in Breton cultural practices, as well as the growth of writing by activists and academics about Breton.

A strong Breton-language publishing industry is seen by many as an important signifier of the strength of Breton as well as evidence that it maintains the capacity to represent both high and low forms of societal diglossia. Francis, for example, noted how Breton has a literary heritage of over 1000 years and a number of other participants, such as Yann and Olier, were keen to assert the presence of a literary dimension to a language often represented as orally based. Despite this continuous and increasing presence of Breton texts, however, Le Coadic notes a paradox in the industry that limits its development:

Des auteurs de talent, issus de l'intelligentsia régionale mais rarement bretonnants de langue maternelle, écrivent en breton une littérature qui se veut universelle mais qui est à la fois inaccessible aux non-bretonnants parce qu'elle n'est généralement pas traduite et incompréhensible par les locuteurs natifs, puisqu'ils sont illettrés dans leur langue maternelle (Le Coadic no date).

[Talented authors who come from the regional intelligentsia but who rarely speak Breton as a mother tongue, write a literature in Breton that aims to be universal but which is both inaccessible to non-Breton speakers because it is generally not translated, and incomprehensible to native speakers, because they are illiterate in their mother tongue.]

Broudic similarly notes the limited readership of Breton books and journals, and the fact that:

Le breton ne serait ni beaucoup écrit, ni beaucoup édité si n'existait pas un noyau de quelques dizaines d'auteurs, d'une dizaine de périodiques et de quelques éditeurs fortement motivés (Broudic 2001:140).

[Breton would neither be widely written nor widely published if a kernel of several dozen authors, a dozen journals and a few highly motivated publishers did not exist.]

The scope of Breton literature is therefore relatively modest in whom it addresses and, to an extent, in the range of issues it engages. Breton-language texts therefore tend to be read by, and written for, a relatively small and select group of language enthusiasts and activists.

The second vector of the promotion of Breton as a prestigious, literary language is through the provision of Breton language education. The development of Breton language schools, in particular the Diwan schools, saw the teaching of a standardised form of Breton that has come to be known, somewhat pejoratively, as neo-Breton. The linguistic differences between traditional practices and forms of Breton and a standard, literary or neo-Breton are significant and have led to a good deal of inter-generational acrimony. Yann, a Breton language teacher and researcher commented:

Il y a une coupure en fait entre ce néo-breton (...) et le breton, tel qu'il est parlé et tel qu'il continue d'être parlé par les gens. Il y a un profond décalage en fait. Il y a les étudiants là qui parlent le breton entre eux ; ils parlent tout le temps le breton entre eux, et c'est très bien en fait mais ça n'a plus rien à voir avec le breton que je parlais avec mon grand-père.

[there is a rupture in fact between this neo-Breton... and the Breton that is spoken and continues to be spoken by the people. There is a wide gap in fact. There are students who speak Breton amongst

themselves; they speak it all the time and, well it is very good, but it has nothing in common with the Breton I spoke with my Grandfather.]

Timm (2001) suggests “...there is a fault line running between native and non-native speakers of the language (p.452)”. She makes the point that:

Omitting much of the rhetorical, aesthetic, and expressive richness of the traditional language in the process of “inventing” neo-Breton has resulted in a version of the language that the native speakers find “cold,” “colorless,” and even “chemical”. As a result, a communication gap between old and new speakers has emerged, rendering it very difficult for those L2 Breton speakers who desire to interact with native speakers to be able to do so; the latter, as noted earlier, quickly make judgments about the L2 speaker’s (lack of native) proficiency and switch to French (p.458).

One of the problems Timm notes is that in their ideological drive to Celticise the Breton language, activists have sought to eliminate many words of French origin that are used by older Bretons. She offers a number of examples of words in common parlance that were considered inappropriately French by activists and changed to Breton neologisms.

Neo-Breton	Traditional Breton	French	English
baleadenn	promenadenn	promenade	walk/stroll
abeg	rezen	raison	reason
palenn	tapis	tapis	carpet
stalioù	magazinoù	magasins	shops
gwalc’herez	machinalave	machine à laver	washing machine
baraerezh	boulangerezh	boulangerie	bakery

Adapted from Timm 2001:456.

Timm notes that these language planning initiatives go beyond lexical items and include significant grammatical and idiomatic shifts as well, so that while, on the one

hand, the lexicon is being divested of French ‘loan words’, deeper shifts are occurring with French structures and grammar entering the language. Timm cites the example of the changing use of personal titles when addressing people:

Aotrou and Itron correspond superficially to French Monsieur and Madame. But these terms have been extended to uses in neo-Breton that are unacceptable to traditional speakers, who reserve them for addressing persons of very high rank; Itron in particular is the respectful term of address for the Virgin Mary. When traditional speakers hear neo speakers addressing them (the traditional speakers) or each other, as Itron or Aotrou, the discordance is acute (Timm 2001:454).

At issue is not so much that Breton is changing, but the inclusiveness, and exclusiveness, of this process. One consequence of such acts is the potential alienation of older speakers from the project of language renewal, since it is promoting moves away from their own idiolects and language practices, towards a broader, universalised standard capable of fulfilling all of the functions of a national language. As Le Coadic notes, this has the potential to reproduce and exacerbate social distance between first- and second-language Breton speakers (Le Coadic 1998:244), particularly when such linguistic transformations are not understood by older speakers and when they are framed within discourses of nationalism and activism.

Timm (2000; 2001; 2003), Jones (1996; 1998), Vetter (1999), McDonald (1989) and a number of other commentators have made much of the conflict that has resulted from language policy and practice within the Breton speaking community. These divisions were also borne out in the research for this thesis, but not in ways that could be considered hostile or conflictual. In the research, little of the animosity between ‘traditional’ and ‘neo’ Breton speakers reported in some of these previous studies was noted. For the most part respondents acknowledged diversity within Breton, particularly inter-generationally, but did not see this as a significant problem, threat or insult.

Marie notes how her grandparents responded to her learning Breton:

They often teased me about the fact that the Breton I was learning wasn't exactly the Breton they were speaking, but I think they were proud of it and interested in seeing what actually we were learning, having a look at the books and comparing the Breton that we were doing at school and the Breton that people were actually speaking where I was living.

I asked Marie if she thought people from her grandparents' generation were hostile towards the Breton she was learning at school (probably some time in the late 1980s). She replied:

It wasn't hostility. It was more that they thought it was a bit funny and silly... they thought it was silly to try to create Breton words when people were already using words they had created based on the French.

Yannick, a Breton language university student, noted an unwillingness of his grandparents to adapt their Breton to his academic language.

Eux, ils n'ont pas fait autant d'effort pour essayer de se dire à quoi correspondait ce que je disais dans leur breton. C'est moi surtout qui ai fait l'effort d'adapter leur breton et de le voir dans ma tête (...). Et maintenant, du coup, moi je communique comme eux en fait.

[They didn't make a huge effort to work out what corresponded to what I said in their Breton. I was the one who made the effort to adapt their Breton and work it out in my head... And now all of a sudden I communicate like them in fact.]

If grandparents were unwilling, or cynical about the language their grandchildren were learning, this was not reciprocated by the younger generation. The desire to

communicate in Breton with older people was frequently cited as a motivation to learn Breton and the capacity to speak with local idioms was, for a number, clearly a sign of linguistic accomplishment and status. In a classroom full of Breton language students in Rennes, slipping in a linguistic regionalism you had picked up from your Grandparents on the weekend was a sign of linguistic and cultural fluency to be admired by your classmates rather than a social stigma (Yannick).

Intergenerational linguistic disruption

One of the consequences of a lack of intergenerational continuity in Breton is that young and old people communicate in Breton with each other infrequently. This reflects a phenomenon that McDonald (1989:255) has noted, of first-language Bretonnants speaking Breton mainly to their elders and mostly then within the family and close community, while preferring French when addressing their children and strangers, even if they know those people speak Breton.

Généralement un vrai Breton bretonnant ne parle pas avec quelqu'un qui apprend la langue (...) il voit pas pourquoi nous, les jeunes, on apprendrait le breton parce que c'était une langue sale auparavant.
(Solenn)

[generally a real Breton-speaking Breton doesn't speak it with someone who is learning the language... they don't see why we, the young people, are learning Breton because it was a dirty language before.]

Iffig suggested:

Nos enfants comprennent le breton, mais ils ne parlent pas le breton. Dans leur génération entre eux ils ne parlent pas le breton. Et nous, avec nos enfants on n'a jamais parlé le breton. Chose que moi avec mes parents on a toujours fait ; parler le breton entre nous. (Iffig)

[Our children understand Breton but do not speak Breton. In their generation between them they do not speak Breton. And us with our children we have never spoken Breton. What I always did with my parents ; we spoke Breton between us.]

[Parlant le breton] (...) c'est plus naturel quand on est avec les gens qui sont de notre génération, enfin des gens qui sont plus âgés, des gens âgés. C'est naturel. C'est naturel. Là c'est forcément du Breton réciproquement. C'est spontané là. (Iffig)

[[Speaking Breton]... it is more natural when one is with people of our generation, or with older people, elderly people. It is natural. It is natural. There it is really Breton which is used reciprocally. It is spontaneous.]

Later in the interview Iffig's wife Uriell entered the room and she and Iffig had a conversation about their own practice of Breton. Iffig said:

Je te parle rarement en breton. De temps en temps il y a une expression qui sort, sinon je te parle jamais en breton. De temps en temps une petite phrase ou quoi. Et elle n'accepte pas ça parce qu'elle me dit toujours « j'ai l'impression que tu parles à ta mère ou à ta grand-mère ».

[I rarely speak to you in Breton. From time to time an expression slips out but I never have a conversation with you in Breton. From time to time a little phrase maybe. And she doesn't accept that because she always tells me "I have the impression that you are talking to your mother or your grandmother".]

Uriell was in fact one of only two participants in the research who expressed negative sentiments towards Breton (along with Morgan). She suggested that Breton was « *dur* » [hard] and « *brutal* » [brutal] and unlike her husband, had not

reappropriated Breton as a positive identity marker. She clearly came from that generation for whom Breton was stigmatising and was conscious of the fact that Brittany had been considered backwards and under-developed. However, she was nevertheless proud to be Breton and proud of the way its cultural products were being valued across France.

The lack of willingness of the older generation to speak with younger people was also confirmed by Dimitri, a Dutch man who speaks French and learned Breton as an adult. He told me of the day he went with a friend to visit the friend's grandparents who were Breton speakers. His friend had been learning Breton for some time at university and was keen to speak Breton with his grandparents but they were reluctant.

...after two phrases, two sentences, they changed to French because they said 'well that would be easier for you and so we are sure you understand everything we say' and I think it is a shame because they don't understand, their grandchild wants to learn Breton and is only able to learn this speaking Breton with them. ... [But] this friend of mine, he told his grandparents... 'he is from the Netherlands... he doesn't speak French, he only speaks Breton'. So they were obliged, forced to speak Breton with me. So they spoke French to their grandchild who knew Breton very well and they spoke Breton to me, at times repeating in French.... And people like this, their grandparents, they always speak in Breton to each other. But if there are other people coming they speak French.

For the grandparents of Dimitri's friend, it seems little importance was placed on Breton, possibly because of a perception that it was unlikely to lead to successful communication or that it lacked utility or prestige. For these people it seemed that what was most important was that the message was understood. However, one can hypothesise that for Dimitri's friend what was important was not the message but the act of communing in Breton, of developing an affective relationship with his

grandparents in Breton. In contrast the grandparents did not value Breton in this role or saw it as an inappropriate language for the occasion.

There appears to be a significant generational distinction in both language practice and attitude. While older first-language Breton speakers speak Breton, it sometimes has negative associations and is often reserved for private occasions. Conversely, those who have learned Breton at school as a second language frequently see it as an important and prestigious marker of cultural identity. These people wanted to use Breton publicly but had very little opportunity to do so.

In addition, almost paradoxically, the language is supported and viewed positively by those who do not speak it. This inverse relationship between competence and positive attitude is supported by Mari Jones' 1996 research conducted in the parish of Plougastel-Daoulas in Finistère. In her analysis she noted that: "...those unable to speak Breton were more favourable in their attitude towards the language than their Breton-speaking counterparts" (citation of an informant in Jones 1996:63).

Jones suggests that these results can be explained by the number of older Breton speakers interviewed and the corresponding phenomenon of negative sentiment toward the Breton language: «tout ça, c'est le passé » [all that's in the past] (ibid). It also demonstrates the fact that for those who do not speak the language, Breton exists not as a functional form of communication, but as a symbol or marker of identity. What, precisely is the function of bilingual road signs, for example if, as Jones points out, everyone can read French? Clearly the role of Breton here is symbolic and not functional. Breton road signs are not there to help travellers find their way, but to state to visitors, and locals, that the Breton language is present on that territory. Anyone who was truly local wouldn't need road signs anyway.

This suggests that the symbolic role of Breton is very different for first-language speakers, second-language speakers and non-speakers. Elderly first-language Breton speakers have a complex relationship with the language – as a first-language it has an important role in expressing their identity. In diglossic terms it fulfils the low function, with French remaining the high language of prestige and public expression.

In contrast, for many second-language Breton speakers the Breton they have learned in schools is prestigious, public and standardised. However it is not a language they are able to use to connect and communicate with their elders. Apart from speaking Breton amongst their friends, in Breton language associations, and for some professionally, the opportunities for young people to use Breton in daily life are limited.

For non-Breton speakers, the language has a purely symbolic function, however these symbols become very significant. Because such people have a limited internalised sense of the Breton language, an externalised, public display is significant and is becoming an increasingly important site of language activism. Bilingual road signs are becoming more common, inside and outside Basse-Bretagne, and the new Rennes underground has bilingual signage at many stations. There is therefore a perceived need for Breton to be seen to exist « *une langue a besoin de s'afficher pour vivre. Ella a besoin de se voir* » (Yannick) [a language needs to be displayed to survive. It needs to be seen].

An example of the symbolic display of Breton is in the 2001 introduction of bilingual signage and ticketing in McDonald's restaurants in Carhaix and Morlaix. An article on page 25 of the daily *Télégramme* newspaper from the 7th of September 2001 proclaims: « McDo joue la carte bretonne » [Maccas plays the Breton card⁶].

Dans quelques semaines, les clients disposeront d'informations traduites en breton: la composition des menus, des produits... Même chose pour la signalétique des lieux: « Merci » sera écrit en breton sur les poubelles, ainsi que « au revoir » sur les parkings... De son côté, le vocabulaire spécifique à ce genre de restauration (big mac, menu best of, drive...) restera inchangé.

[In a few weeks customers will be able to read the menus and products in Breton... The same goes for the signage: “thankyou” will be written in Breton on the rubbish bins, as well as “goodbye” in the carpark. On the other hand, vocabulary that is specific to this type of food outlet (big mac, menu best of [sic], drive...) will not change].

⁶ A play on words with “la carte” meaning both “card” and “menu”

These restaurants are therefore highly complex linguistic environments, combining elements of French, Breton, English and trademarked terms. Within this, Breton occupies an interesting space. One can assume that Breton is not being put in these restaurants because of a need from older first-language Bretons who are incapable of reading French. Nor does it play a functional role for bilingual French and Breton speakers, since they can already read French. Rather Breton plays a symbolic role. For customers, both Breton-speaking and non-Breton-speaking, seeing the language displayed in a large multinational chain is a sign of validation: if McDonald's is using Breton then this is evidence of its modernity and prestige. However, for McDonald's, one suspects the motivation for using Breton is quite different: conscious of its negative reputation as a multinational serving "le malbouf" [junk food] (Bové and Dufour 2001; Sonntag 2003), and in recent years the target of a deadly bombing by Breton extremists, the company is clearly trying to localise its corporate identity and engender a loyalty to its product amongst younger patrons. Whilst it is potentially legitimising Breton by presenting it in a contemporary context, it is also, and especially, seeking to legitimise the presence of McDonald's in Brittany.

In the issue of signage and the public presentation of Breton, the symbolic role of the language is clearly more significant than any functional role. However, there is a hope, or an expectation, amongst younger Breton speakers and as described by respondents like Yannick, that the public representation of the language will lead to its increased use and therefore its utility. This is a perception that commonly appears among speakers of Breton as a second language, but it is far less frequent in first-language speakers who are more likely to perceive Breton as a tool for personal communication rather than any broader sense of Breton national identity (Jones 1996; Pentecouteau 2002:52).

Generational differences in the language ideology and practice of Breton speakers

Although a generalisation, in Brittany today it is possible to identify three relatively distinct generations of Breton language speakers. Each of these generations has faced the issue of the practice of Breton though a different socio-symbolic context, and although each generation is itself full of diverse and different individuals, each generation's response to Breton is in many ways contextualised by a broadly similar set of ideological, and discursive influences when it comes to representing the ways in which Breton forms a part of their language practice and identity.

The first of these generations are the final generation of traditional Breton speakers who learned the language from their parents as infants. This generation was born before about 1950 and typically lives in rural and small-town western Brittany. They are now becoming elderly and, as discussed, have a complex and often problematic relationship to the Breton language and a sense of Breton identity, practicing it in private contexts with close friends and family members of a similar age. Relatively few of these people are directly involved in the Breton cultural, linguistic and political movement.

The children of this generation, born following the Second World War, grew up speaking French, although they may have heard Breton spoken in the home. This generation is characterised by large numbers of people who have a limited, or passive knowledge of the language, and a small but influential minority of people for whom Breton is extremely important and who have made the conscious effort to (re)learn Breton. This is the generation of the language activists that became active in the 1960s and 70s. While many are the children of Breton speakers, others have come to the language from French speaking backgrounds. This generation were fundamental in the revalorisation, revival and appropriation of the language, and many of the cultural symbols of Brittany. They are a generation who saw the decline of Breton as both a cultural loss, as well as a deliberate strategy of enculturation on the part of the French state and promoted Breton within a new discourse of Breton national identity and socio-political activism. For this generation the revival of

Breton was therefore located within a broader discourse of protest against French centralisation and Jacobinism, and the frequent desire to see greater cultural and political autonomy for the region. As such many of the language initiatives they have undertaken have been designed to promote Breton in terms of its strength, prestige and socio-cultural importance, for example in the promotion of a literary standard.

The third generation of language speakers are the children of these militants, and those who have learned Breton as a second language at school. This generation, born since the 1970s, again relates to Breton in quite a different way from their parents or grandparents. For a start, thanks to the work of their parents, this generation has grown up with the possibility of learning Breton in an educational institution, albeit a language that is significantly different from their grandparents'. There are therefore several thousand young people who speak a standardised, literary Breton fluently as a second language. While many of these people are activists, or the children of activists, for an increasing number of people, learning and speaking Breton does not make the same political statement it does for their parents' generation.

In addition, this generation lives in a very different Brittany to that of their parents or grandparents. While in the past, Brittany was a region of the French state that practiced a strong degree of political and cultural centralisation and explicitly promoted specific notions of French identity through a discourse of nationalism, in recent years, the political, linguistic and cultural terrain of young Breton speakers has changed. Brittany, and France, is a part of the European Union and both are a part of a broader transnational political and symbolic economy. This is slowly reterritorialising political and symbolic power around new poles. This new generation has grown up far more exposed to socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, including the influence of English, the presence of large numbers of migrant communities and large numbers of international students, particularly through the Erasmus exchange programme. Moreover, this generation of Breton language speakers are frequently plurilingual, often speaking English, Spanish and other languages, and live in a far more multilingual environment than their parents.

These different generational practices of Breton discursively position Breton quite differently and often employ quite different language ideologies. In particular, first-language Breton speakers overwhelmingly practice Breton as a spoken language rather than a written one (Favereau 1993; Broudic 2001). This oral practice of Breton is itself of a more immediate, localised, performative nature: what is important is the speaking of Breton to certain people in certain situations. In this practice, idioms and local differences are important features of the language, since they distinguish local identity and community.

In contrast, the activism of the following generation focussed on the promotion of a prestigious Breton literary standard, both through design and necessity. Through a nationalistic discourse in particular, Breton is promoted as an inalienable language of Brittany and a strong signifier of identity. Because of the ways in which this language is learned through formal education, this Breton is overwhelmingly informed by literate language practices, even when it is spoken. Words have a symbolic presence that exists beyond their expression. Notions of correctness, standardisation and inter-comprehension are asserted and the Breton language is reified through its description in a grammar and lexicon. Breton becomes an object that is transcendental to its speakers. It is both conceptualised and practiced in far more foundationalist terms by second-language speakers than their elders.

The third generation has been deeply influenced by this language ideology, but it is also possible to see a number of different language ideologies emerging. Some young people such as Yannick, were clearly part of a new generation of language activists, for whom the Breton language was an explicit symbol of identity and difference. Others, however, such as Maël, used Breton in more subtle and nuanced ways. Maël spoke at least four languages fluently. As a Diwan graduate and Breton language journalist he practiced Breton daily but did not engage a discourse of nationalism during the interview. If he was an activist, it was through his practice of the language, rather than an explicit sense of language promotion and revival. Likewise, Fañch spoke Breton daily for his work as a translator but did not represent this practice in terms of militancy or nationalism. Others such as Christiane, Solenn and Marie spoke some Breton, but not fluently, incorporating elements of Breton,

French and other languages into their broader language practices and sense of linguistic identity. For many of these people then, the practice of Breton is strategic and contingent; Breton forms a part of a broader and multifaceted personal and sociocultural identity.

Exploring language ideology in terms of generational difference is, of course, a relatively crude way of describing language difference and diversity in relation to Breton. The practice and perception of Breton is far more complex and diverse than such a categorization suggests. What is useful, however, is to acknowledge the possibility that for many people, Breton occupies and articulates different aspects of their own personal and social identity, and that perceptions and practices of Breton are informed to a significant degree by the political, social and ideological context in which the language is represented in the broader community. As social attitudes to the language have changed, so too has the practice of Breton and the ways in which Breton is ideologically framed.

Breton Language Education

Given the lack of intergenerational transmission that has seen the number of Breton language speakers collapse over recent decades, education has become a critical tool in language policy and planning initiatives aimed at increasing the number of Breton language speakers and reintroducing the language into society. It is seen as necessary by many to introduce the language to a generation whose parents do not speak it, as well as to promote a form of language that is 'literary' and prestigious.

Education is without doubt one of the major sites of contemporary language activism and has also been one of the major sources of cultural and linguistic controversy in Brittany for over a century. Since the Ferry laws in the 1880s instituted compulsory, secular and free education across France, and exclusively in French, education has been at the forefront of ideological struggles over socio-cultural identity and national allegiance in Brittany. As many writers have noted, including Bourdieu (1974; 1977; 1991), Illich (1971) and Freire (1970), schooling and education are not socially or

politically neutral nor ideologically disencumbered, but rather are specific social tools for preparing and forming children to think and act in certain ways: for example to be loyal citizens of the French state, through a standardised curriculum and the development of socially acceptable values and ideals. In the case of France during the Third Republic, schooling played a critical role in creating and reproducing a sense of French nationalism, and creating the linguistic capacity for the articulation and reiteration of a national identity, particularly in regions like Brittany which were at the time culturally, socially and linguistically dissimilar to other regions and to Paris (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Thiesse 2001).

Language education is considered by many, including Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Joshua Fishman (1991), to play a profoundly important role in the protection and promotion of minority or lesser-used languages. This role is seen as even more critical in languages, Breton amongst them, where there are frequent ruptures in intergenerational transmission. For many activists therefore, the provision of adequate Breton language educational opportunities is of fundamental importance to the promotion of the Breton language. For people who did not grow up in a Breton speaking household, education is the primary means for learning the language and few possibilities for learning Breton outside of formal educational contexts currently exist.

The role of language in schooling is therefore an important site of identity politics. Because of French desires to promote national allegiance through language planning initiatives, Breton was banned from state schools from their inception in the 1880s until 1951. While Catholic schools accepted and in some cases supported Breton, the educational experience of most Breton speakers of that era was consequently overwhelmingly dominated by French, with Breton stigmatised, devalued and marginalised (an Du 2000; Breton 2001; Guinard 2001; ar Mogn and Hicks 2003).

From 1951, following the passing of the Deixonne law, Breton could be studied in a number of state schools, but resources that were devoted to its provision were derisory and classes were limited to a maximum of two hours per week (ar Mogn 2002:90). In practice Breton continued to be marginalised and public schools

continued to be essentially monolingually French (an Du 2000). In more recent years opportunities for children to learn Breton have improved somewhat, but there is still no comprehensive language provision and many children are not offered Breton as a subject at school. Generally demand for Breton language classes outstrips the capacity of schools to provide teachers and resources (Sylvestre). As of 2003 (the most recent data available) a total of 6703 students were studying Breton as a subject at school.

Currently there are three main streams of Breton language education that seek to teach Breton as more than a subject in school. These are *Div-Yezh*, a public school bilingual programme, *Dihun* a Catholic school bilingual programme, and *Diwan*, employing a Breton language immersion system, which will be discussed in detail below. In 2005 the Dihun stream had a total of 3,659 pupils (an increase of 11.38% on the previous year), with 3,851 students attending Div-Yezh schools (up 8.51%). In the same period Diwan, the third stream of bilingual education, had 2896 students studying from pre-school to high school (an increase of 2.19% from 2004) (www.diwanbreizh.org accessed 30/09/05). In comparison, the total number of students enrolled in the administrative Académie of Rennes area (covering the four departments of Brittany) in 2005 was 182, 015 (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003:34). Thus while increasing, the number of students who are studying in bilingual and immersion streams is very small as a percentage of the population. Moreover, the majority of these learn Breton in primary school, with relatively few pursuing Breton language in secondary school. Notably, Diwan is growing more slowly and has fewer students than either of the two alternative bilingual streams, despite being the oldest and by far the best-known Breton-language school system.

Despite its size, however, bilingual education, and particularly the immersion education of Diwan, has an extremely high public profile and is extremely contentious: few words in Breton, or French, attract quite the intensity of opinion that “Diwan” [literally “seed” or “sprout”] does. On the one hand it is seen by some to be the most effective teaching strategy for Breton and a model of a bilingual society, but others consider it highly politicised and ideologically driven and a

potential threat to the values of Republican France. Indeed since its inception, very little about the history and pedagogy of Diwan has been uncontroversial.

Diwan education

As a response to a perceived failure of the French state to provide an acceptable Breton-language education for their children, a group of activist parents decided to take matters into their own hands and create their own school. In 1977 the first Diwan school opened, with five pupils, in the small town of Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau. A media statement by these parents at the time read: « On ne croyait plus à la volonté du gouvernement français de faire enseigner le breton à l'école. Alors on a décidé de le faire nous-mêmes » [we no longer believed in the willingness of the French government to teach Breton in school. So we decided to do it ourselves] (cited in Perazzi 1998:15). At the time few people expected this experiment to survive more than a year or two. Nearly 30 years later Diwan has grown to be one of the most prominent elements of the Breton movement and is as well known for its politics as its pedagogy.

There are currently 31 Diwan pre-primary *maternelles* and primary schools in Brittany, five *collèges* (middle-schools) and one *Lycée* (high school). As of 2004, there is also one *maternelle* Diwan school located in Paris (www.diwanparis.free.fr accessed 30/9/05). Diwan schools are secular, open to any child, and free. They follow a charter that affirms the values and objectives of the association: notably the provision of quality education, through Breton, with a view to developing the linguistic and cultural competence of its pupils, and of Brittany as a region. The charter also affirms the ideals of democracy, equal access and solidarity, whilst maintaining its independence and support for diversity (Diwan Charter, reproduced in Perazzi 1998:125-126). A copy of the Diwan charter is reproduced in Appendix 2.

Diwan was created, and to a significant extent continues to operate, at a community level: « Une école Diwan est toujours le résultat de la mobilisation d'un groupe de parents qui s'est organisé localement, a trouvé les financements, les locaux et les

élèves... » [A Diwan school is always the result of a mobilisation by a group of parents which has organised locally, found funding, classrooms and pupils...] (ar Mogn 2002:118). While there is also a management and administrative structure, called Diwan Breizh, which provides organisational and pedagogic support, the responsibility for the creation and ongoing support of the schools to a large extent rests with the parents of the pupils, teachers and the wider community. This reflects the objective of the association to respond to a pre-existing need in the community. It also promotes links between the school and the community and articulates a pedagogy that sees parents and the community playing an important role in the holistic education of children.

Pedagogically and socially Diwan is very different to other schools in Brittany. It was modelled on a Basque programme called *Seaska* and has the objective of preparing students who can understand Breton by the end of pre-school and who are fully bilingual in Breton and French by the end of primary school (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003:7). In pre-school and primary school Breton is used almost exclusively in the classroom, with French being gradually introduced in later years. Both Breton and French are used at different times as teaching media for subjects at high school, where English and a number of other languages can also be studied and in some cases are also used as teaching languages (Perazzi 1998).

Diwan is proud of its academic achievements and frequently makes mention of the strong results achieved by its pupils. In 2005, 97.5% of Diwan students who sat for their *baccalauréat* succeeded (compared to 80.2% nationally). Perazzi has previously noted that Diwan students achieve scores above the national average in mathematics and French in *baccalauréat* results (Perazzi 1998:22). This last fact is particularly useful in countering an argument made by some opponents of Diwan that using Breton as the early-childhood vehicle of communication is disadvantageous to their learning French.

Maël, a research participant who was a student at Diwan in both primary and high school, suggested one of the reasons Diwan put so much focus on academic achievement was in response to a Republican attitude that bilingual language

learning was disadvantageous for children. If Diwan were to be a success, in terms of its social goals of educating pupils in Breton, then it would also need to be irreproachable academically, since it had many opponents looking for a reason to criticise it. While the reasons for the academic success are certainly more complex than the single issue of bilingualism, and are no doubt also influenced by factors such as class sizes, the socio-economic backgrounds of the pupils and the commitment of the teachers and greater school community to the ideals of the school, there is considerable evidence that bilingualism is of benefit to children's intellectual development in many ways and French authorities are slowly accepting this fact (Akkari 1998; Hélot 2003).

The current funding arrangements for Diwan schools are rather problematic and likely to change. Diwan's goal of being acknowledged and funded as part of the public system has been blocked by the French Conseil d'État, which ruled that Diwan does not conform to the Toubon Law of 1994, where French is declared to be the obligatory language of teaching in state schools. Diwan therefore receives funding as an associative school (Erickson 2005), but new schools must wait five years to receive any money. What this means in practice is that while the State pays the salaries of the teaching staff after five years, all other costs, including the maintenance of buildings and the provision of teaching materials are borne by the school community. Consequently, Diwan has been through many financial crises over the years and relies to a great extent on the support of local communities and charity fundraising for its finances.

The politics of Diwan

From its inception, Diwan has been seen by its many supporters as fulfilling a vital and neglected role in Breton society. Its many detractors see it as divisive and ideologically driven. Fundamentally Diwan was created by militant parents who wanted their children to have the opportunity to learn, and to learn in, Breton. It therefore carries twin objectives: the provision of quality, accessible bilingual schooling to children which promotes values of respect, equality, creativity,

tolerance, and allows children to reach their full intellectual potential; and the promotion of Breton as a natural, living and modern language (Diwan web site <http://www.diwanbreizh.org> accessed 4/08/05).

It is the second of these goals that has proved to be the most contentious since it goes against the tradition of French monolingual education and is seen by many as a direct challenge to the Republican dogma of equality and national unity. There are many vociferous critics of Diwan, most of whom frame their argument within a Republican discourse. They do not see why Breton language education is useful, necessary or desirable and are affronted by the challenge that French state education is not good enough for some French people. They are deeply suspicious of the motives of these activists and see Diwan as an indoctrinating arm of an autonomist movement which seeks to « reléguer le français au rang de langue étrangère » [relegate French to the rank of foreign language] (Richard 2003).

A number of vitriolic examples of an anti-Diwan stance can be found on the internet. For example, Gilles Mercier suggests Diwan is an “ultraminority” school that teaches a language invented in 1941 by a Nazi collaborator [Roparz Hemon] (<http://www.perso.wanadoo.fr/echanges/diwan.htm>, accessed 08/04/05) and claims « Diwan est le vecteur idéologique et linguistique des antirépublicains... [qui] ne bénéficie d’aucun soutien populaire » [Diwan is an ideological and linguistic vector of anti-republicanism...[which] has no popular support”] (ibid). The website Observatoire du Communautarisme suggests the integration of Diwan into the public school system is a threat to the Republic and even « le cheval de Troie du dynamitage de l’État-Nation » [the Trojan horse of the destruction [dynamiting] of the Nation-State] (<http://www.communautarisme.net> accessed 4/8/05).

While such arguments may be easy to dismiss as irrational or based on ignorance (for example Mercier claims Diwan bans the use of French which is not the case), they do represent the view of members of the French public, including many Bretons. Whilst many people support Diwan, many others oppose it on political and ideological grounds. Clearly Diwan is a touchstone for passionately held views on greater issues such as Breton identity and the nature of the French political state. And clearly too,

many supporters of Diwan are Breton militants who view the relationship between France and Brittany, articulated through educational, political and linguistic policies, as one of inequity, violence and repression.

In her research on the language attitudes of first-language Breton speakers, Mari Jones describes a number of cases where first-language Breton speakers express negative or hostile attitudes to Diwan:

Only about one in ten informants favoured the Diwan system and indeed many informants stated most categorically 'certainment pas Diwan'... Diwan was generally perceived to promote Breton nationalism and separatism and it was reiterated that politics should be kept out of the movement for language maintenance (Jones 1996:66-67).

This suggests a significant difference between the views on Breton between first- and second-language Breton speakers. It also possibly reflects a communication gap between the two generations, with older speakers reacting to the more overtly political elements of Diwan education.

None of the respondents interviewed for this thesis expressed hostility to Diwan, however and Erickson's recent research on Diwan suggests that while militancy is an important factor for some parents of Diwan students, many other parents chose Diwan for pedagogical reasons rather than ideological, cultural, or even linguistic ones (Erickson 2005). This is an indication that Diwan schools are becoming better accepted in broader Breton society as a pedagogical alternative rather than primarily a political movement, particularly as the demographic of Breton language speakers swings inexorably towards the younger generation.

Despite the potential softening of the public perception of Diwan, in their own literature Diwan maintains a clear ideological and linguistic agenda: the promotion of the Breton language and sense of Breton identity through pedagogy.

Diwan est un mouvement de parents et d'enseignants faisant le choix de faire vivre une culture par le moyen de l'école prenant comme support principal

de cette culture la langue bretonne, outil moderne de pensée, d'expression et de communication. (Diwan web site home page <http://www.diwanbreizh.org> accessed 4/8/05)

[Diwan is a movement of parents and teachers making the choice to give life to a culture through schooling, taking the Breton language, a modern tool of thinking, of expression, and of communication, as the principal support for this culture.]

Face aux irréductibles défenseurs du monolingualisme, ou du « français, langue de la République », des militants bretons se battent avec conviction et ténacité pour sauver de morte lente et annoncée une langue : la leur. Et démontrer par l'exemple que son sauvetage passe par un enseignement bilingue proposé dès l'enfance (Perazzi 1998:13).

[In the face of the incorrigible defenders of monolingualism, or of "French, the language of the Republic", Breton militants fight with conviction and tenacity to save a language from a slow and painful death: their own. And demonstrated by the example that its safeguarding will occur through bilingual schooling offered from childhood].

The official website of Diwan Breizh lists the linguistic and cultural objectives of the association as follows:

La réalisation d'un système d'enseignement permettant l'utilisation du breton comme langue véhiculaire de la maternelle à l'université afin de :

- donner aux enfants de Bretagne une éducation et une formation en breton.
- d'entretenir et de développer un sentiment d'appartenance et d'enracinement culturel à travers la connaissance et la maîtrise de leur langue, de leur histoire, de leur culture.
- de donner à la Bretagne une école moderne, ouverte sur l'avenir, capable de préserver et de développer son identité. (<http://www.diwanbreizh.org>, 4/08/05)

[The realization of a school system that allows for Breton to be used as the vehicle of communication from pre-school to university with a view to:

- giving to the children of Brittany an education and a training in Breton
- maintaining and developing a sense of cultural belonging and rootedness through the understanding and mastery of their language, their history and their culture
- providing Brittany with a modern school, open to the future, capable of preserving and developing its identity]

Clearly there is a strong ideological element to these statements. The school has clear linguistic goals that are different to the state's educational objectives and there is a strong discourse of nationalism. Diwan becomes the method for articulating and reproducing a collective identity through establishing an apparatus that can teach children about their language, history and identity. In particular, the phrase « [les] enfants de Bretagne » [the children of Brittany] suggests a filial relationship between children and Brittany and carries an echo of the Republican « [les] enfants de la patrie » [the children of the fatherland] sung symbolically in the first line of La Marseillaise, the national anthem of France. Likewise these statements make reference to cultural roots and talk about *their* language, *their* history and *their* culture, as if these were all objects or states that one could participate in or belong to and that others were excluded from. The notion of Breton identity is also reified and formalised: it becomes an object or entity that can be known, preserved, fought for and developed.

Diwan language ideology

There is somewhat of a paradox surrounding the way Diwan addresses issues of linguistic diversity and the ideology it officially engages. On the one hand, Breton is described within a foundationalist model of language: there is a discrete and codified language called Breton that exists and can be taught to children; this language is bound to a territory (Brittany); it exists through time as an enduring symbol of cultural identity; it exists in relation to French where it is threatened and must be

defended; and it plays an important symbolic role in articulating a sense of regional, if not national identity.

On the other hand, however, in contrast to many languages, and particularly to French, Diwan consistently asserts the importance of regional difference as a constituting feature of the language. There is a strong sense of the value of diversity when it comes to teaching Breton. Article six of the Diwan charter explicitly states:

Diwan déclare son hostilité à toute uniformisation linguistique et est attaché aux diverses formes d'expression culturelle, affirmant que seul leur complémentarité est source d'unité, d'enrichissement mutuel et collectif. Le breton enseigné dans les écoles maternelles Diwan est celui utilisé dans leur environnement géographique et humain.

[Diwan declares its hostility to all linguistic uniformization and is supportive of diverse forms of cultural expression, affirming that only in being complimentary can they be a source of unity, and of mutual and collective enrichment. The Breton taught in the Diwan preschools is that used in their geographic and human environment.]

In Diwan therefore there is an explicit acknowledgement of the need to communicate in, and teach, the regional specificities of the language, at the same time as a prestigious written standard is taught. This acknowledgement of diversity is significant, and shows an ideology that is not simply a mimesis of the French language ideology employed in state schools in the past.

However in practice, what the Breton students actually learn is quite different from traditional forms of Breton, and is spoken in very different ways to the older generations. Indeed, this acknowledgement of diversity as dialectal pluralism is mostly symbolic for a generation of speakers who are in most cases neither tied to the land, nor to local cultural practices. While the linguistic experience of previous generations may historically have been linked to place, this is less and less the case, particularly as students and young professionals travel to continue their studies and

to work. Moreover it is unclear which Breton it is that is used in the geographical and human environment of a child in Rennes or Paris.

In this sense the assertion that Diwan pays attention to local language diversity is part of a language ideology asserting a clear link between the historical practice of Breton, as a local language tied to a place and regional specificity, and the contemporary practice of Breton as a modern language capable of expressing anything. In this way, the claim of acknowledging regional specificity helps Diwan's linguistic project claim authenticity by rhetorically being linked to a sense of local practice. In demonstrating a continuous connection to the past, Diwan is able to build a defence against the criticism made by opponents, many of whom are local first-language speakers, who claim the language it teaches is rootless and alienated from the traditional language.

Maël was critical of this attitude expressed by some older Breton speakers who don't see the point of modernizing Breton:

Mostly they are the ones who don't see the point of still speaking Breton... they say a language has to be useful and Breton is not a language to work with because that was what they were taught in school. You can't work with Breton, you can only talk to animals on the farm.

For Maël it was unreasonable to complain that the language was not useful and then to complain that it was artificial to develop the language so that it could become useful. He suggested this paradox could be put down to the fact that many first-language Bretons still had a negative complex about speaking the language: "*some [people] really still feel bad about speaking Breton, it feels wrong*".

While Diwan addresses the past practices of Breton speakers, its focus is clearly on teaching the language and creating a linguistic capacity for the future. As such, the language it teaches, and the political position it takes, are quite specific to its time and its new demographic. Because of the historical lack of a linguistic standard,

Diwan has been central in developing and teaching a lexicon capable of reflecting the modern needs of its pupils. Young people may still want to talk to the animals in Breton, but they want to do a lot more besides this and in order to broaden the scope of Breton it has sometimes been necessary to create terminology.

Whether this project of corpus planning is seen as an artificial invention, or a positive development is influenced by the way in which language change is approached through different language ideologies. Within an ideology that reclaims an intrinsic link between a language and an ethno-cultural identity, dramatic language changes may be seen to have potentially unwelcome consequences for language speakers, particularly those who do not actively participate in these changes or who disagree with them. On the other hand, language change can also be seen as a positive and necessary development for a culture that is alive and developing. Likewise, language change can be seen to be advantageous in the promotion of Breton as a language of utility and prestige in the modern world but such language work may also be seen as unwelcome and unnecessary if Breton is primarily seen to be a tool of close personal communication rather than a public language and a national symbol.

In effect, differing views on the work of Diwan emerge not only on the organization's political activism but also from differing language ideologies and attitudes towards Breton amongst different groups of Breton speakers. McDonald goes so far to argue that:

...the militant world and the popular world have different 'Bretons'. They are not talking the 'same' Breton; they are not talking about the same thing in commentary upon Breton; they do not have the same social value of Breton; they do not share the same level of education or the same linguistic and social sensibilities and competences. They are not, we might say, speaking the same 'language' (McDonald 1989:279, cited in Jones 1998:136).

Significant differences in attitude to Breton language activism, including Diwan, occur across a number of psychological, ideological and linguistic vectors.

Approaches to the work of Diwan are therefore informed by a number of factors: the initial psycho-symbolic viewpoint from which Breton is seen, for example the degree to which Breton represents a positive and empowering sense of identity to speakers, or otherwise; the language ideologies through which Breton is represented, for example the extent to which the Breton language is a fundamental marker of identity, a communicative tool, a symbol of national identity; and in particular the attitude speakers have to language change, for example whether change represents the development of the language or its perversion. One of the points of contention between many older first-language Breton speakers and Diwan is the quite different views on the nature and function of Breton that these different groups have and the fact that many older speakers have not participated in the changes to Breton that have resulted from the work of Diwan. This perceived lack of inclusiveness and a failure to address differing language epistemologies and ideologies has resulted in a lack of communication between different groups of Breton speakers, potentially compromising the effectiveness of language initiatives through excluding a significant number of speakers whose views on Breton may be quite different.

Is Diwan achieving its goals?

The introduction and development of Diwan over the last 30 years has had a significant effect on the promotion of Breton in Brittany. Before Diwan, it was virtually impossible to learn Breton in an educational institution in any meaningful way. Today around nine thousand children are learning Breton through bilingual and immersion streams. This represents a significant achievement, and while Diwan cannot take direct credit for the growth in the State and Catholic Breton school systems, indirectly it is responsible for Breton language education being on the political agenda and for the sensitisation of the greater Breton (and French) public to the issues of Breton language education and support. It seems unlikely that without the direct action undertaken by parents, other institutions would have initiated similar programmes themselves. The simple fact that Diwan has survived and grown in a politically and economically problematic environment is surely a sign that it has been successful to some degree. However, Breton language education remains tiny in

comparison with the Francophone state and Catholic systems, and is now less popular than Dihun and Div-Yezh.

Diwan has a number of political and linguistic goals that are extremely ambitious: the development of a comprehensive Breton language education system; the promotion of Breton as a normalised and realistic language choice for Bretons; and the articulation and promotion of a Breton identity that is, in many ways, defined by its difference to French and its similarities to other Celtic cultures. Clearly these goals have not been reached: most people in Brittany cannot speak Breton and are not active in the Breton language movement. It seems unrealistic, given the current political climate in France, that any major social or political reorganisation will occur, which would enable these goals to be achieved. And yet Diwan cannot be considered a failure. Rather, these goals remain as unfulfilled and idealised objectives and which serve as rallying points in an ongoing political, cultural and linguistic movement. As a process, Diwan continues to play an important role in the articulation, representation and practice of Breton.

To many activists Diwan represents a success story for grass-roots activism. Somewhat ironically, however, as the Diwan experiment becomes more widely accepted within Brittany and as it evolves over time, a potential tension emerges with regards to the twin goals of the provision of an institution providing a Breton-language educational alternative and the maintenance of the spirit of activism that gave birth to the movement. In particular, there is the possibility that the more successful Diwan becomes, and the more it attracts people from the mainstream of Breton society, the less militant the association becomes. Erickson suggests “the concern of some families that the original values that defined Diwan are being weakened by a less committed generation of Diwan parents” (Erickson 2005:5). He notes how many parents are now putting their children into Diwan schools primarily for pragmatic or pedagogical reasons, for example because they see an intellectual benefit in bilingual education, smaller class sizes or better educational outcomes for their children.

On the one hand, of course, this wider acceptance of Diwan is exactly what its founders wanted, but on the other, it means Diwan is becoming less radical in the minds of many and less true to the original cause. Many of the newer generation of Diwan parents seem less interested in the political and nationalistic discourses espoused by the early activists and less willing to go to the barricades in defence of them. For an increasing number of people a Diwan education does not necessarily equate with political activism or militancy.

It is therefore an important time for Diwan to evaluate its goals and objectives to see whether the 1970s model of direct activism is still suitable in the 21st century and whether the success of Diwan will itself force a reorientation of priorities and principles. Whether Diwan chooses to remain fundamentally an activist organization or whether it becomes a less political and more widely accessible educational alternative remains to be seen. So too, the challenge to strike a balance between these two positions, whereby Diwan represents a form of activism that is inclusive and continues as the provider of quality education, continues.

Whilst the number of pupils in Diwan schools are a tiny fraction of the overall student population in Brittany, the significance, reputation and symbolism of Diwan is large. Diwan is a touchstone for a number of issues: language, education, identity and political autonomy, and finds itself near the centre of an ongoing and vociferous debate on the future of Breton and the nature of Breton identity. Diwan also provides high-quality education within a pedagogical model that is student-centred, and an organizational model that is devolved and associative. In both pedagogy and activism there are competing elements, some promoting diversity and difference and others exclusivity and homogeneity.

Organised, institutional education is by its very nature ideologically and structurally normative: it tends to standardise and hierarchialise linguistic practice, promote appropriacy and reproduce social norms and values (Bourdieu 1991). However, Diwan represents one of the most community-oriented pedagogies in France. It achieves this through its associative model of organization, with the important influence of parents in the establishment and ongoing running of the schools and of

the community in fundraising and broader support for the needs of the students. Many of these fundraisers are local affairs, for example festoù-noz, raffles, working bees and other local initiatives. This helps to promote a sense of community and local support for the schools and potentially helps counter views that Diwan is an overtly radical or separatist movement.

Maël suggested that although the lack of funding from the state meant that Diwan schools had to become resourceful and self-reliant. He noted how parents, teachers, students and members of the community all helped build the school he went to, creating a convivial, supportive atmosphere. *“I think that that kind of spirit was part of the Diwan thing. That’s why we felt very well in that school... Because it was very difficult and the state didn’t help us very much, I think that kind of energy and motivation [made it] a very nice school”*.

In the promotion of a viable and successful alternative to the French and Catholic school systems, Diwan has shown that education can successfully be managed at a local and regional level. In educating students who are in most cases multilingual, Diwan provides students with an effective way of developing a sense of *Gemeinschaft* through Breton, with their classmates and the wider Breton-speaking community. In this sense, Diwan does a remarkably good job at deterritorialising the French state’s apparatus of education and reterritorialising around a model that is both community driven and student centred. The fact that Diwan is attracting parents who see the schools as the best educational choice for their children, is evidence that Diwan is beginning to be seen as more than primarily a political cause or movement exclusively for activists.

At a time when the last generation of first-language Breton speakers is passing, Diwan finds itself at both an enviable and a difficult position. As a form of activism it has been successful in sensitising the wider public to the issue of the future of Breton and issues of regional identity, notwithstanding the fact that many people do not support their political position. As an educational institution it has been successful in forming well-educated, multilingual students. But the success of Diwan poses the greatest challenge to its future. Since it seems unlikely that the French state

will initiate a comprehensive bilingual or multilingual educational policy in Brittany, Diwan will assume an even greater responsibility in the promotion and support of Breton. It will be a challenge to do this with limited resources whilst maintaining the spirit of activism and community that brought it into being.

Whilst it is important for many Diwan parents to promote Diwan as the vehicle for a broader cultural and linguistic revival and socio-political change, it seems unlikely that large numbers of Bretons will follow an agenda they perceive as radical or divisive. Conversely, if Diwan becomes depoliticised in order to attract greater numbers of students, there is a risk that the creative and social impetus that led to its success may become diminished. If Diwan were to become normalised and widespread, those elements of the school that are seen by many as its greatest strengths: community involvement, the involvement of parents and a holistic approach to school life, risk becoming diluted.

The challenge for Diwan therefore, is to build on these elements: promoting community interests and local identities in creative and inclusive ways; retaining the sense of purpose and immediacy that helped it become successful; staying true to its principles in its practice, not just its rhetoric; promoting Breton as a meaningful and legitimate language, but not one that holds privilege over any other; and doing this in ways which include as many as possible and exclude as few as possible. This is a difficult and ongoing process, but one which, should it be achieved, could bear fruit for Breton language speakers and the community at large.

Chapter 5: Perceptions and Practices of Breton

Breton linguistic and socio-cultural identities

The question of identity is central to this thesis, as it is to the issue of Breton more generally. Identity, like other terms such as language, culture and power, is a highly complex and contested notion. Identity is a term that resists a precise definition and has been theorised differently in different epistemological contexts. Bonnie Norton (Pierce) offers a definition of social identity as “the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, social services and law courts” (Norton 1997:420). Thiessen suggests identity is:

the dynamic interaction between the fixed identity categories that are applied to social groupings (such as race, gender, ethnicity, language, and other, more subtle representations that are activated in certain discourse settings) and the way individuals think of themselves as they move through the different discourses in which these categories are salient (Thiessen 1997:488).

Pavlenko and Blackledge describe identities as “social, discursive and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives” (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004:19).

In many senses identity is multiple. Blommaert (2006) suggests that “identities are best seen not as one item, but as a repertoire of different possible identities, each of which has a particular range or scope and function” (page 245) and argues that the practice of reducing difference through ascriptive labels such as a national language or a national identity “has led to rather simplistic associations... [which] overlook

(and render invisible) the multiplicity and complexity of identity-work on the ground” (pages 245-246).

Despite these different conceptualisations and applications of the notion of identity, a number of features remain in common: identity describes the process of interaction of a person, or a group, with the larger world and it describes and expresses their perceived and experienced place within that world in relation to others. Moreover it is a process through which power, both physical and symbolic, is internalised and is regulated and negotiated socially and publicly.

Identity refers both to the outward expression of inclusion and exclusion as well as the reflexive inward beliefs that these negotiations and positionings have on a person’s sense of self and self-worth. Personal identity, in post-structural readings, is generally considered not to be fixed and unchanging but is in a constant state of contestation, negotiation, performance and flux. For example, through life one’s identity changes as we grow older and take on new social roles and responsibilities, but it can also be experienced more radically through strategic, performative acts, and public forms of expression (Butler 1993). These days it is possible to inhabit many diverse and contingent identities simultaneously.

At issue in this thesis is the way identity, and notions of identity and linguistic identities are invoked, contested and performed in relation to Breton and the Breton language, and in particular how the notion of identity is being invoked and used within the broader language debates. Participants for the thesis expressed strongly held, and strongly felt, views about language, culture and identity and the issue of Breton identity and its relationship to other linguistic, social and cultural identities. This chapter seeks to explore some of the salient issues to do with the way Breton is invoked as a meaningful linguistic identity.

The development of a Breton identity

Brittany is a region with a long and chequered past. As an historical entity it has existed for over 1000 years. The notion of a pan-Breton ethnic or national identity however is far more recent. While many people today reclaim the notion of a Breton identity as a fundamental and undeniable fact, and while the notion of Breton identity is deeply significant to many people, the rise of a popular pan-Breton sense of identity can be traced to the 19th century where it appeared both as a reflection of the values and judgements of France towards the region and reflexively in the way people from Brittany began to see themselves as having something in common, despite their regional differences, particularly through a discourse of nationalism.

A number of writers and researchers have maintained that historically, social identities in Brittany were configured primarily at the local level, rather than the regional or national level (Hélias 1978; Favereau 1993; Jones 1998; Moch 2004; Le Saux no date). Indeed in Breton society great emphasis was placed on symbolic regional distinctions: for example through differences in dress, music, customs and language. In recent decades, with the increasing influence of French cultural products, many of these differences have become less significant. However local identity still plays a very important role for many people, particularly for the older generation and on a symbolic level.

Ellen Badone suggests in relation to contemporary representations of identity in Western Brittany that “internal, local boundaries are emically of greater significance in the construction of cultural boundaries” than external boundaries (Badone 1987:161). In this way, traditionally, and for many to this day, “belonging to a locality, far from being a parochial triviality, is very much more of a cultural reality than is association with gross region or nation” (Cohen 1982:10 cited in Badone 1987:162). For Iffig, a respondent who was a farmer living in the Pays Bigouden (near Pont L’Abbé), there was little doubt when he was younger:

*On était d’abord Bigouden. Breton : c’est quoi ça – Breton ? Non, on
était d’abord Bigouden. Ah oui, absolument !*

[We were first of all Bigouden. Breton – what’s that? We were first of all Bigouden. Yes, absolutely!]

In more traditional contexts then, regional differences within Brittany were a mark of distinction to identify the inter-regional community one belonged to. People lived locally and few travelled. Iffig noted that his grandparents made the trip to the regional capital of Quimper once every five or ten years (it was less than 20km away). The only exception to this relative isolation was when people travelled to attend religious *pardons* and other festivals, which often drew large numbers of pilgrims from across the region. In such situations accents and vocabulary were as important as differences in dress and custom in enabling people to place each other in their complex social structure.

The importance of local identities is supported by Mari Jones who suggests that “[for] native dialect speakers, the notion of identity is based firmly at the level of commune, which is where they are able to identify those elements which make them different from others” (Jones 1998:133). Jones argues that regional linguistic differences are significant enough to inhibit comprehension between Breton speakers of different regions and this is symptomatic of an absence of a pan-Breton linguistic and cultural identity amongst older first-language Breton speakers. For many Breton “is highly fragmented and used only by a minority of inhabitants for whom the term “Breton”, it could be argued, is no more than a concept for foreigners, and has little bearing on what they perceive is their own identity” (ibid).

The widespread consciousness of a sense of pan-Breton identity amongst younger generations and in language maintenance initiatives is therefore not historically grounded. Like the development of a pan-French national identity in the 19th century (Ager 1999; Thiesse 1999; 2001), the development, or invention, of a Breton identity emerged as the outcome of two interrelated issues: firstly the reduction of isolation of people through migratory movements, improved transportation and communication and the development of tourism; and secondly the emergence of the ideology of nationalism.

During the 19th century, France underwent massive changes in almost every aspect of life. The French Revolution had transformed the political landscape and the Napoleonic era had seen French military influence stretch from Russia to Africa. French explorers travelled the world and France established itself as a major colonial power and a major player in international relations. Later in the century France underwent an industrial revolution that brought millions of people to work in factories in the cities and transformed its economy. Within France a strong sense of nationalism developed, asserting the identity of the nation through discourses of Republicanism, rationalism and universalism, promoting France as a political entity in which every citizen was free and equal. As discussed in the previous chapters, during the Third Republic in particular this nationalising drive had profound effects across the country, nowhere more so than in Brittany where people found themselves under increasing pressure to assimilate into this newly found and highly promoted sense of French national identity.

These wide-reaching changes marked the end of isolation for Breton speakers who were brought into the sphere of French symbolic power and encouraged, or obliged, to adopt and internalise the symbols of French national identity: to become French. Faced with this new world order, local people had relatively few choices. One was to turn their backs on France and the social pressure to assimilate and remain within their traditional milieu, working the land and living a precarious life, often in a state of near-penury. While many people remained on the land, this practice increasingly became devalued and peasants found themselves to be marginalised. As the effects of modernity multiplied, this position increasingly became untenable for many people, many of whom sought the advantages that French culture offered.

A second possibility was for people to rid themselves of their vestiges of Breton culture and assimilate as much as possible, or as much as necessary, into a French cultural identity. This was the preferred option of many people who considered signs of their local culture to be stigmatising and demeaning. French linguistic and cultural practices were therefore viewed by a large number of Bretons as a way of escaping poverty and backwardness. While the French State was vociferously promoting a

project of national cultural and linguistic assimilation, this project was only successful because of the participation of large numbers of Bretons.

Ce qu'il ne faut pas ignorer c'est que cette persécution, parce que c'est une persécution... elle n'était pas cependant imposée. Je veux dire, les Bretons aspiraient à la françaisation. Profondément. (Roger Leprohon in Guinard 2001:episode 2).

[What mustn't be ignored is that this persecution, because it is a persecution... it wasn't however imposed. What I mean is, Bretons aspired to becoming French. Deeply.]

Similarly Henri Giordan argues:

L'adhésion à la culture unitaire de la nation fut contrôlée par la force, mais aussi, et surtout, elle a été vécue comme un choix libre des citoyens (Giordan cited in Quéré 2000:42-43).

[The adhesion to the unitary national culture was controlled by force, but also, and above all, it was lived as a free choice of citizens.]

As a consequence of these profound social changes, large numbers of Bretons left their local community and migrated to one of the larger cities in Brittany, abroad and particularly to Paris. Often working in poorly paid and menial jobs, and often with limited French language and education, these people were collectively marginalised as being backward, their particular regional differences subsumed within a broad definition of Breton through stereotypes such as Bécassine, as discussed previously.

Many immigrants to Paris sought to divest themselves of their signs of difference and assimilate into French society as quickly as possible, but for others this was more problematic. Many people were in a bind. They were alienated from traditional, local forms of culture and society because they had left the land but were, initially at least, frequently excluded from modern forms of culture and a sense of Parisian or French identity because of their habitus (Bourdieu 1991) and the attitudes of others.

In the bars and bistros of Montparnasse and St Denis, Bretons from many different regions gathered to socialise and to share their experiences of exile and otherness. Whilst in Brittany their identities may clearly have been linked to their *pays* and their local community, in Paris these differences were quickly marginalised. People gave up traditional dress and learned to speak French. Compared to the profound experiences shared by fellow immigrants, the subtle differences between them became relatively insignificant and were all but invisible to the French.

As a response to this double movement of exile and exclusion, increasing numbers of people developed their own sense of community and collective identity based on this mutual sense of otherness and on the common features of their diverse cultural traditions. In this way, people developed a sense of community and cultural identity that was neither local nor French but Breton. As Jean-Pierre, one of the participants in this thesis and a musicologist argued: « *C'est à Paris que le sentiment d'appartenance à une collectivité est né. Ce n'est pas en Bretagne, c'est à Paris* » [it was in Paris that the feeling of belonging to a collectivity was born. It was not in Brittany, it was in Paris].

In both positive and negative ways, therefore, people identified with, and were identified as, belonging to this new socio-cultural group. While many of these people felt themselves to be Breton, their cultural identity was very different to that of their cousins and parents who remained on the land. If and when these migrants returned from Paris and other big cities to visit, they brought with them a sophistication and worldliness unknown in the rural communities. Few, it is reasonable to assume, would have envied the lifestyles of those who had remained behind, regardless of the difficulties they faced in the cities. To the contrary they had escaped the poverty and conservatism that was endemic in many parts of Brittany and they appeared glamorous, sophisticated and successful to their families.

A sense of Breton identity therefore developed from two directions. The first was the negative and patronising view of Breton society that Republicanism promoted and the French saw through the work of people such as Gauguin. In this view, all of the differences within the region were resumed to a few crude stereotypes. People in

Brittany were then told by the French they were Bretons and were made to feel embarrassed about this. This negative sense of Breton identity also came from those who had left Brittany and adopted the manner and customs of modern France. In many instances the view of Breton culture from this new bourgeoisie was even more negative and patronising than the French.

However, a new sense of Breton identity was also being asserted by Bretons who had moved to the big cities, or been in the army. As these people became more worldly, erudite and successful they turned back to the culture of their past and began to view it in a more positive light. Leslie Moch (2004) notes how in Paris during the 3rd Republic a Breton bourgeoisie emerged that rejected the stereotypes of Breton culture and became socially and materially successful. She argues that two poles of Breton expatriates emerged: a middle-class community around Montparnasse who were fast becoming integrated into French society, who held skilled and semi-skilled jobs and who were more likely than not to marry outside of the community; and a working class community in St Denis who had lower levels of education, a lower standard of living and who tended to marry within their community. While this latter group found themselves marginalised by their language and education, the middle class quickly became successful, integrating into French society but retaining a sense of cultural difference and a network of social and business contacts within the community. With this success, many of the stigmas associated with being Breton became less important and in time this identity was reclaimed by many who did not want to divest themselves completely from their cultural heritage.

Moch's analysis is interesting for the way she represents the Breton expatriate community as a diffuse group who had many different backgrounds, aspirations and attitudes rather than a monolithic mass of peasants who came up to Paris. In this community many sought to divest themselves of their Breton habitus, but others were keen to retain and promote their difference as a sign of difference. As Moch notes: "Breton clubs thrived, but not every Breton belonged to one" (Moch 2004:14).

This new sense of Breton identity that was both pan-regional and positive emerged through the rise of a Breton middle class in cities such as Paris and Nantes, for whom

being Breton became a strategically useful, if not positive identity. The rise of a Breton consciousness in the late 19th century, like the cultural revival in the late 20th century, came initially from those who had become successful and comfortable enough to resist the domination and symbolic violence of French culture. With this success, many of the stigmas associated with being Breton became less important and in time this identity was reclaimed by many who did not want to divest themselves completely from their cultural heritage.

In general then, the less isolated Brittany became, the more people saw their local specificities as signs of regional belonging, rather than differences. People still belonged to their local *pays*, but increasingly they saw this within a more global and hierarchialised perspective: they were Bigouden, they were Breton and they were French but they were also middle-class Parisians.

Contemporary representations of Breton identity

The study of Breton identity has been the focus of a number of studies in recent years that seek to describe and explore the sense of socio-cultural difference that Bretons continue to reclaim. These investigations cover diverse theoretical and methodological terrain and many are comprehensive. In particular recent studies by Francis Favereau (1993), Ronan Le Coadic (1998) and Hughes Pentecouteau (2002), as well as a 5-part television documentary produced for France 3 entitled *Brezhoneg: un siècle de breton* (Guinard 2001) have covered the issue thoroughly. Rather than repeat these arguments and analyses, many of which are discussed elsewhere in this thesis, I will focus on an analysis of the interviews conducted for this thesis in exploring the ways in which a sense of Breton identity was represented by the research participants.

A sense of Breton identity was clearly important to each of the participants, and in each case the Breton language seemed to play an important role in the respondents' identities, even when those people spoke little or no Breton. Many participants, particularly students, told me similar facts and anecdotes about Breton: for example

that Breton was once forbidden in schools, the use of *le symbole* to shame Breton speakers, the failure of France to ratify the European charter on minority or lesser-used languages, and the mythic linguistic frontier that divides Haute and Basse Bretagne. These were in many ways leitmotifs of Breton suffering at the hands of the French administration and a revindication of the right for Bretons to redress past injustices.

Solenn, a young Breton university student, suggested:

[À l'école] (...) l'enfant qui était pris à parler le breton avait un sabot autour du cou. C'était pire que tout. Dans les écoles, c'était affiché : « interdit de cracher et de parler le breton », donc cracher était au même niveau que parler breton. C'était la langue de la saleté. Et maintenant, de nos jours il y a une sorte de rébellion. Les jeunes veulent reparler breton, veulent se sentir breton.

[[In school] ... the child who was found to be speaking Breton had a clog hung around his neck. It was worse than anything. In the schools notices were posted: 'spitting and speaking Breton forbidden', so spitting was at the same level as speaking Breton. It was the language of dirtiness. And now these days there is a sort of rebellion. The young people want to speak Breton again, want to feel Breton.]

These anecdotes emerged most often as people sought to represent Breton as a language that has been unfairly treated by the French authorities and was victimised. They also served as a justification or motivation for a militant stance and served to distinguish the respondents as Bretons in a land dominated by French. In particular the leitmotif of Breton being repressed in public schools is a powerful factor in contemporary Breton identities. As Pentecouteau argues:

Pour les militants, le symbole constitue un élément important de la revendication en faveur de l'enseignement du breton... Le symbole est dénoncé comme une pratique dégradante légitimant d'une réparation

culturelle. Il est ainsi devenu un instrument politique (Pentecoteau 2002:33).

[for militants the symbole constitutes an important element in arguments in favour of the teaching of Breton... the symbole is denounced as a degrading practice that legitimises cultural reparations. It has therefore become a political instrument.]

Despite the belief that French cultural and ideological practices were damaging to Breton speakers in the past, this did not translate to a rejection of France or a French identity entirely. Solenn resented what she felt was a patronising attitude to Brittany by the French: that they were considered backward or stubborn. «*Ce que je n'accepte pas, c'est qu'on nous prenne pour des cons* » [What I don't accept is that we are taken for fools.] She had clearly thought about her own sense of identity and how different socio-cultural aspects of her sense of self were nested:

Je suis française, mais je suis bretonne avant tout. C'est pareil, c'est ce qui a de proximité. Je suis de Rennes, qui appartient à la Bretagne, donc je suis bretonne, et la Bretagne appartient à la France, donc je suis française. Je pourrais dire que je suis européenne. Je suis d'abord française et après européenne. C'est comme des poupées Russes en fait. (Solenn)

[I am French but I am Breton before everything. It is the same thing, it is what is close. I am from Rennes, which is a part of Brittany, so I am Breton, and Brittany is a part of France so I am French. I could say that I am European but I am first of all French and after that European. It is like Russian dolls in fact.]

Lenaig also expressed this sense of relativity and reflexivity when talking about her identity. Lenaig was an exchange student from Rennes, living in Sydney for one year when I interviewed her. For her identity was both a matter of how she felt and how she could meaningfully portray herself to others. I asked Lenaig if she felt she was more Breton than French while living in Australia.

I would say I am French if I meet someone, but simply because ... not many people know about Brittany here. ... I have got no sense of being proud of being French for example... [but] if people attack France or say, 'oh the French are like that and like that', it makes me laugh. I don't feel attacked at all. I don't feel part of it really. I feel a bit on the side. But if she says something about Brittany – there I get upset. But when I am in France definitely I am Breton. That is sure.

I asked Marie, who was a Breton speaker living in Australia, whether there was a contradiction in being both Breton and French:

No, no, no you don't have to choose. Some people would. What I mean is that some people would be proud of being Breton on top of being French and some people they would be French above all. But they can't really forget or ignore that they are from Brittany because anyway, people will remind them.

In this sense Marie was conscious of the ways in which identity is a site of symbolic power. For her it was not simply a personal choice, but also involved the ways in which Breton identity was externally ascribed. In this way, identity can be read as the product of “the identity people themselves articulate or claim... [and] the identity given to someone by someone else” (Blommaert 2006:238).

Maybe it is not so much that Brittany has a sense of being different. Sometimes I feel more like it is France that sees Brittany as being different. For better and worse. (Marie)

Francis, a Breton language teacher and researcher was familiar with the question of Breton and French identity and saw no contradiction. He commented that asking whether one felt more Breton than French was akin to asking ‘do you prefer your father or your mother’ and suggested that most people would respond that both elements were important to them. When pushed though he suggested:

Historically I would be French first Breton next. In my heart, it depends very much. Mostly Breton first. But there are situations and contexts in which sometimes I don't like this or that so I find it not so bad to be a French citizen. It depends... it can be very paradoxical.

Christiane, a young student also talked about this:

My dad always says I am Breton and I am French. Not French before. It is like Breton and then French. I belong to France, but it is so different. I mean I am so different from people from the south of France for example or people from the east of France.

People like Francis, Solenn and Lenaig were able to choose the extent to which they publicly displayed their sense of being Breton and could use their identity repertoires strategically, as signs of belonging. All three were well-educated, internationalised and displayed a strong sense of cultural literacy: in certain circumstances they were Breton while in others, French. There was often a sense that while French was an inhabited or ascribed identity, something they were born into and had no choice or control over, Breton was something more personal, more affective and intimate, and something they actively chose to participate in and identify with. As Solenn said: « *Ce n'est pas parce que tu es né en Bretagne que tu es breton. Être breton pour moi, c'est vivre sa culture* » [it is not because you are born in Brittany that you are Breton. For me to be Breton means to live its culture].

Importantly, it seemed that to a large extent these respondents were in control of how they were perceived by others; they were the ones to choose whether they were strategically Breton, French, or remained culturally ambiguous and how these identities were constituted. In this sense their identity was achieved. This is in contrast to the experience of many older first-language Breton speakers who were positioned by external forces as Bretons and did not have the linguistic or cultural skills either to express these identities in a pro-active or empowered way, or to

choose how they appeared to others selectively. For these people being Breton was frequently an ascribed identity, the prestige of which was set by others.

In the past this ascriptive definition of Breton identity came from the French but also the Breton bourgeoisie and those who aspired to be French. In more recent years, an ascriptive identity has been promoted by some activists seeking to appropriate the notion of Breton identity and invert its symbolic meaning within a nationalist discourse. While this identity is promoted as being prestigious, it is also frequently prescriptive. In both cases, being Breton is a disempowering, ascribed identity that displayed a lack of status and symbolic power for many first-language Breton speakers. Their identity was first defined by the French and then by activists, but in neither case is this deliberate and empowering the way it was for Lenaig, Francis or Solenn. Neither a strongly negative nor a strongly positive Breton identity expresses the experience of many older Breton speakers for whom being Breton is often complex and contradictory.

Yann, a university lecturer, had clearly thought about the relationship between Breton and French identities. For Yann no single element constituted one's own sense of personal identity. For him:

L'identité, elle est multiple. Quelqu'un dont l'identité se résume à un seul élément, c'est quelqu'un qui est fou en effet. Quelqu'un qui n'a qu'un élément d'identité, il est fou. Et le raciste, c'est qui ? C'est celui qui voit chez celui qu'il regarde... il ne voit qu'un élément de son identité : sa couleur, sa religion, sa langue (...). C'est-à-dire qu'on réduit l'identité d'une personne à un élément. Mais on ne peut pas réduire l'identité de quelqu'un à un élément. Donc l'identité bretonne, c'est plein de choses en fait. Elle est multiple. Elle est variée.

[Identity is multiple. Someone who resumes their identity to one single element, well it is someone who is mad in fact. Someone who only has one element of identity is mad. And a racist is what? It is someone

who sees in others only one element of their identity: their colour, their religion, their language... In other words someone's identity is reduced to one element and you can't reduce the identity of someone to one element. Therefore Breton identity is in fact many things. It is multiple. It is varied.]

Several respondents talked about the necessity to live Breton culture: that being Breton was an active expression of identity. What was important was not only that Breton existed in an abstract or idealised sense, but that they could actually live their lives with Breton. Not surprisingly this desire increased with their fluency in the language. I asked a number of respondents whether it was necessary to speak Breton to be Breton. All replied that it wasn't, but those who could speak Breton often added that it was a very important element in their own Breton identity and provided them access to something – a sense of belonging or knowledge about the physical and cultural environment – that was only available through knowledge of the language.

I asked Metig if she thought it was important to speak Breton to have a sense of Breton identity. She replied:

La langue bretonne est pour moi un symbole très fort et fait partie de l'identité de la Bretagne. Maintenant quand quelqu'un de St Malo, ou de Nantes vient me dire « je suis breton », oui, moi je l'accepte très bien sans qu'il parle le breton. Ça c'est possible. Mais c'est un plus de savoir la langue celtique qui, je pense, est un petit peu le drapeau, l'étendard actuel de la Bretagne.

[The Breton language for me is a very strong symbol and is a part of the identity of Brittany. Now if someone from St Malo or Nantes comes to me and says "I am Breton", yes, I accept that person very well without them speaking Breton. This is possible. But it is a plus to know the Celtic language, which I think is a little bit the standard flag of Brittany at the moment.]

Marie also thought that speaking Breton was an important part of a greater sense of Breton identity:

It is not necessary, but I think it makes a difference. Yes, I think it makes a difference... I think it makes you more complete. And then if you know the language you can go back to the source and read the Breton literature and understand the culture through the language.

Unsurprisingly, none of the respondents who did not speak Breton felt that the language was fundamentally important to their sense of Breton identity. Indeed, 80% of the population of Brittany do not speak the language, but most of these people still consider themselves Bretons. Serge was adamant about this: “*Yes I am Breton. But I am a French-speaking Breton. I consider that I am totally Breton. I consider myself as Breton - as Breton as a Breton speaking Breton*”. He rejected the idea that Breton was somehow obligatory or a privileged vehicle of a Breton identity. As he states: “*Anne de Bretagne is the most popular personality of Breton history. She never spoke Breton. She never knew Breton, she never spoke Breton*”. Likewise Lenaig argued: “*I don't think that a strong feeling of Breton identity has to be linked with speaking the language*”.

For all of the participants interviewed for this thesis, their relationship to the Breton language was different. This was because of differences in the way Breton was conceptualised, their different language ideologies, the different ways in which it represented notions of Breton identity, the personal psychology of each person, as well as the different capacities people had in speaking the language. For each person therefore, Breton was something personal and represented something different.

In some ways this represents a tension at the heart of issues of language and identity: a language like Breton represents both similarity and difference, inclusion and exclusion, proximity and distance simultaneously. It distinguishes Bretons from French but also distinguishes Bretons from each other in a myriad of ways. It operates as a symbolic field through which symbolic power is mediated and contested, but it is also a deeply personal marker of belonging.

In terms of identity, Breton can represent a broad sense of community or national identity, as the language of Brittany, and it can also play an important role in articulating an individual's own sense of personal identity; how Breton influences and frames how they see themselves and who they are. If the national sense of Breton is marked by its prestigious standardised form and goal of official recognition, the latter, personal aspect of Breton is marked by its individuality, variance, difference and personal relevance. This sense of Breton is far more contingent; it can be seen as an idiolect, but also as a site of identity construction, representation and expression. It is a linguistic criterion through which people identify themselves and identify with as a group.

Again these two different ways in which language and identity are constitutively linked reflect different language ideologies: the first reflects a broadly foundationalist view of language as the symbol of an abstract, imagined community (Anderson 1996), the second a view where what matters is the act of communication, or of communion, between people at a personal and local level. From a post-structuralist perspective, this can be read as a performative ideology. Fundamentally it is a practice of Breton, a way of doing Breton that creates the meaning of the language in its utterance: talking about the weather, or the neighbours, or speaking one's mind. It is a Breton that is contextualised in the act of utterance and the moment, rather than a broader, grander project of speaking a nationalised and nationalising language. Clearly, these two ideologies are at play concurrently for most speakers, in stronger or weaker forms. At issue is not whether one more correctly or more accurately describes the linguistic experience than the other, but rather, it is a question of the way the differences and potential tensions between these different ways of experiencing a language are treated and reconciled.

In order to differentiate this latter sense of performative linguistic difference from the more foundationalist sense of a language, it is perhaps useful to use the term *linguistic identities*. In this sense, following Skutnabb-Kangas:

linguistic identities are... multiple and flexible, processes and relations more than characteristics, more or less focused and salient, depending on the

situation, fragmented and dialogic, contextual, nomadic and negotiated, becoming rather than being; they involve border crossing, hybridity and diaspora (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003:11).

In relation to Breton, linguistic identities can be read as all of the ways in which Breton, in its diffuse and various forms, is invoked and engaged by people in expressing their own sense of self and community. In a performative sense it describes the ways in which people *do* language at a personal level as well as the ways in which they inhabit and achieve their identities in an ongoing and productive way through language. Linguistic identities represent the “fine shades of identity often articulated ... by moment-to-moment evolving variation between *varieties* of language, including accents, registers, styles” (Blommaert 2006:245) as well as capacities to produce meaningful utterances and the symbolic importance of a language for a person.

The notion of linguistic identities helps describe the complex ways in which language and identity are connected and inform each other. Such views of language are difficult to represent within more polemical approaches to language activism, for example in the promotion of a prestigious linguistic standard or the claim of a privileged link between an ethnocultural group and a specific language. It therefore provides a useful way of exploring linguistic diversity and difference as a productive feature of personal and social identities and provides a potentially useful way of reconfiguring language activism away from foundationalist tropes and the promotion of normative, standardised languages, towards a more personal and local practice of language.

Because the notion of a linguistic identity is personal and performative, it is therefore possible for a person to have a Breton linguistic identity even though they may speak multiple languages, an atypical dialect of Breton, or they speak Breton ‘badly’, or even if they speak only a few words. In this way, speaking Breton is not synonymous with the expression of a correct or standardised form of the language, but rather in the ways in which Breton forms a significant functional or symbolic part of peoples’ own sense of identity.

Why do people learn Breton?

It is reasonable to suggest that relatively few first-language Breton speakers had much choice in learning Breton, since they learned it as infants. For many of these people speaking Breton is a fact and not something that had to be consciously done. What is significant however is their willingness, or otherwise, to speak it in different contexts and their role in communicating Breton to new speakers, as teachers, mentors or parents. For many first-language speakers, Breton remains a private language that constitutes a localised sense of community identity. At present, relatively few first-language Breton speakers are pro-actively involved in language activism and many are suspicious of these initiatives (Jones 1996; 1998).

It is also reasonable to suggest that there is a reason why most people who speak no Breton, or who have a passive knowledge of the language are not learning it. It is difficult to imagine that many Breton people could be unaware of the Breton language. Such people may not be sufficiently interested or motivated to make the effort, they may not see the point of learning a minority or lesser-used language, they may see French as sufficient for their needs, they may not have access to the appropriate resources, they may see Breton as a form of radicalism, or they may have other personal reasons for not wanting to learn it.

All of those interviewed for this thesis who said they did not speak Breton also added that they would like to or would have liked to have learned it. Some regretted not speaking it.

...my ignorance of Breton is – I am very conscious that I should have learned Breton. I should have learned Breton (Serge).

Maintenant avec le métier que je fais [journaliste](...) il est évident que ça serait un plus que de parler le breton. C'est vrai que c'est un peu une occasion manquée (Alan).

[Now with my job [as a journalist]... it would be an advantage to speak Breton. It is true that it is a bit of a lost opportunity.]

Gwenaël said he would make the effort to learn Breton if he had a child. Lenaig said she had begun Breton classes at university but had to drop out because she was unable to regularly attend. She also suggested she would like to learn Breton to better understand the lyrics of *kan ha diskan*⁷ music. Nolwenn, who was interviewed in Australia, said « *Le jour ou je m'installerais en Bretagne, c'est sure que (...) j'apprendrais le breton* » [*the day I settle down in Brittany... I will learn Breton for sure*]. While such responses may have been influenced by the context of the interviews, at the very least they demonstrate a reflection on the role of Breton in articulating a sense of Breton identity in the minds of these participants.

Sylvestre, one of the participants who is also a teacher of Breton, described such people as 'potential' speakers: people who do not identify as being Breton speakers but have either a latent capacity in the form of an understanding of the language (especially those with a passive understanding of the language gleaned from hearing their parents speak Breton) and also those for whom Breton is an important symbolic marker of identity. The term 'potential' speaker is interesting in that it identifies a target group to whom language initiatives might be effective and also recognises a latent linguistic capacity in the community which could be engaged in the future.

Because these interviews were conducted with people already involved in a Breton linguistic or cultural milieu, it is not surprising that most were sensitised to the issue. Indeed, according to Broudic, only one percent of the population of Brittany speak Breton regularly (Broudic 1999). Clearly large numbers of Breton people are not actively involved in learning or promoting the language. However, a 1992 TMO Ouest survey commissioned by le Conseil Général du Finistère found that 92% of respondents answered yes when asked whether Breton must be saved and 82.5% supported the teaching of Breton (Abalain 2000:123). Similarly a 1997 survey for the

⁷ A popular form of Breton-language music, so-called because of its technique of "call and answer". In traditional Breton culture it served as a form of entertainment, but also of social and political commentary and a call to action that would frequently be modified and rewritten according to the events of the day (Le Saux no date).

daily newspaper Le Télégramme and the television network FR3 found 88% of Bretons thought it was important to save Breton (Le Télégramme 28/9/01). Whilst few people actually learn and speak Breton, there is widespread support for the language.

Nevertheless an increasing number of people are learning Breton as a second or subsequent language. According to the Breton Language Office, in 2001 a little over nine thousand adults were learning Breton, while, as discussed in the previous chapter, around 16 000 school children were learning the language in a variety of schools in 1999/2000 (ar Mogn 2002:131, 176) and 624 students were studying Breton in university (ibid:161). This group of second-language Breton learners is in some ways the most interesting in terms of language promotion, because most have consciously made the effort to learn the language, or had parents who enrolled them in early-childhood education. They are sufficiently motivated to make the effort to learn a language that is considered by many to be an optional extra, peripheral or lacking in social utility in the broader French linguistic field. If Breton is to become a more widely taught, and spoken, language, it is important to understand what motivates speakers to undertake the difficult and time-consuming task of learning Breton.

From an analysis of the interviews, three main reasons emerged as motivations for learning Breton. The first is affectivity: a desire to speak Breton for personal, emotional or familial reasons, as a way of identifying with a community or of finding one's roots. The second reason is through an intellectual or professional interest or as a way of achieving something, such as access to employment opportunities. The third is that which in French is described as *militantisme*. In English this can be translated as 'activism' or 'militancy', though an exact translation is problematic.

Affectivity

Many participants directly and indirectly referred to the notion of affectivity, or an emotional link with the language, as a primary motivation for wanting to learn and

speak Breton. Breton was described as a “language of the heart”; as a personal, and in some cases private language; as a language that engenders a sense of belonging, and on several occasions as a way of better understanding and communicating with preceding generations, specifically grandparents.

Deux personnes qui parlent en breton ont des rapports beaucoup plus proches qu'en français. (Yannick)

[Two people who speak in Breton have a much closer relationship than in French]

Pour moi [le breton] c'est la langue du cœur (...). Moi, ça ne m'intéresse pas de faire des maths en breton, ça ne m'intéresse pas du tout. Ce qui m'intéresse c'est de pouvoir parler avec des gens et d'échanger les sentiments en breton avec des gens. (Yann)

[For me [Breton] is the language of the heart ... It doesn't interest me to do maths in Breton, it doesn't interest me at all. What interests me is to be able to speak with people and to exchange sentiments with people in Breton.]

Similarly, Aziliz, a Breton teacher, suggested her main motivation for learning Breton was « *pour des raisons personnelles et affectives (...); c'est pour des raisons humaines, des relations humaines* ». *[for personal and emotional reasons... for human reasons, for human relations].*

A number of younger respondents associated speaking Breton with their grandparents. In this way Breton is seen as an intergenerational cultural link, and a way of re-establishing a cultural and familial link that was disrupted particularly in the years following World War Two.

I was looking at my grandparents and I thought, well we are losing something. They were speaking and talking Breton and my parents

were only understanding. They couldn't speak it. And I was like, the next one and I couldn't either understand or speak and I thought even for my grandparents I have to know this language. (Christiane)

En motivation principale, je pense qu'il y a une envie de se rapprocher de son entourage, de ses grands-parents, souvent. (Aziliz, speaking of her students)

[As a principal motivation I think there is a desire to get closer once again to those around them, to their grandparents often.]

Jusqu'à ce que j'apprenne le breton, je trouvais vraiment ringard mes grands-parents, parce que je comprenais pas leur culture. Et depuis que j'apprends le breton il y a plein de trucs, les petits détails qui faisaient justement le côté ringard de mes grands-parents, qui sont pour moi maintenant les trucs vachement importants parce qu'au quotidien tu sens la langue bretonne, même si tu parle en français. Dans tout ce qu'ils font, tu le sens. (Yannick)

[Until I learnt Breton I found my grandparents really old-fashioned because in fact I didn't understand their culture. And since I have been learning Breton there are heaps of things, little details, the things which made up the old-fashioned side of my grandparents which are now for me the really important things. Every day you sense the Breton language even if you speak in French. You sense it in everything they do.]

Yann was reflective of the desire to re-enforce this intergenerational identity link:

Pour moi le breton est la langue que je parlais avec mon grand-père et que je parle avec ma fille (...). Pour moi c'est la langue du cœur. (Yann)

[For me Breton is the language that I spoke with my grandfather and which I speak with my daughter.... For me it is the language of the heart.]

Thus in these instances the Breton language is seen as a carrier of identity and a link between generations. Tudual, Francis, Yannick and Solenn used the metaphor of reestablishing a broken link in a chain between older first-language Breton speakers and the younger generation.

La chaîne a été rompue quand même. On est peut-être en train de la reprendre, parce qu'il y a des familles qui apprennent le breton et des parents qui apprennent le breton dans les cours à la fac et qui parlent le breton à leurs enfants. (Yannick)

[The chain has been broken all the same. We are perhaps in the process of rejoining it because of the families that learn Breton and parents who learn Breton in classes and who speak it to their children.]

Solenn suggested :

C'est un lien affectif. Il y a des choses qu'on exprime en breton qu'on n'exprime pas en français.

[It is an emotional link. There are things that can be expressed in Breton that cannot be expressed in French.]

In this sense, Breton is seen as a way of connecting and reconnecting generations and suggests these respondents are conscious of a responsibility to perpetuate or carry on to the next generation the culture they were born into. Francis, a university lecturer in Breton describes what he hopes to achieve through his language teaching, research and activism:

My goal would be in a general way to maintain the language as best we can and to sort of... surrender it, surrender is not the right word, to give it back to new generations in as good a situation as we found it say 30 years ago. The general aim would be... a link in a chain. This is how I view it.

The metaphor of the link in a chain suggests a sense of social continuity in which Breton plays an important part. This can be contrasted with the discourse of modernity that dominated French and Breton societies in the first two thirds of the 20th century where Breton was seen as something to escape from, and progress something to covet and seek. In this way, the desire to maintain and articulate a sense of continuity in Breton culture and identity through the language is one of the main reasons for learning Breton.

For many people, such as Francis and Yann, there is also therefore a sense of stewardship: that as Bretons they have a responsibility to be the guardians of the Breton culture, including the language, and to take care of this for the next generation. This points to the strong oral focus of Breton in previous generations and the absence of a literary standard that can serve as an archive for the language. There is an echo of a different, more orally-based way of thinking about Breton here: it is the ongoing practice of Breton that will perpetuate its use and meaning in society and is paramount.

Creating a link to the past through Breton, and in doing so perpetuating reinterpreting the practices and traditions that help constitute a sense of Breton identity for people, is therefore a strong motivating factor for many who have learned Breton and one of the main areas in which Breton is perceived by many as being symbolically important. For example, Serge, a historian, suggested that Breton can serve as a link between the past and the present, particularly through an understanding of toponymy. Yannick went further, arguing:

La langue bretonne laisse quand même une sacrée empreinte dans la géographie, par exemple, enfin les noms des lieux-dits. On la trouve

(...) dans les noms de villes, pas les noms des rues mais dans les petits noms pour les communes, les fermes et tout ça. Et c'est vrai que (...) dès le moment où tu maîtrises la langue et que tu comprends les noms des lieux-dits, c'est comme si tu venais d'ouvrir une porte sur un super jardin et que tu voyais juste la grille avant.

[After all the Breton language leaves a sacred imprint in the geography, for example in the names of localities. It can be found in the name of the towns, not the names of streets but the names of the places, the little district names and the farms and all of that. And it is true that as of the moment that you master the language and you understand the names of these localities, it is like if you manage to open a door to a fantastic garden and you only saw the front gate before.]

A number of respondents compared their experience of learning Breton to learning English and suggested that a motivating factor was the affectivity and closeness brought about by learning a local language. Many suggested that languages such as English and French are more useful languages than Breton. Among those who do not speak Breton, a perceived lack of utility is often cited as a factor in deciding not to learn the language:

Intérêt financier, il n'y a pas, intérêt politique, il n'y a pas non plus. C'est une question de choix personnel, je pense. (Yannick)

[A financial interest well there isn't one. A political interest there isn't one either. It is a question of personal choice I think.]

It doesn't help you to live. (Christiane)

I think there is no doubt about it. I think Breton is not very useful, even in Brittany. (Lenaig)

Tu n'as pas besoin de parler le breton pour faire tes papiers, tu n'as pas besoin de parler le breton pour aller acheter ton pain. (Nolwenn)

[You don't need Breton to have your [official] papers, you don't need Breton to buy your bread.]

So on the one hand there is a phenomenon whereby the language is seen as not useful, or only useful in extremely limited circles and specific milieux. But on the other hand there is considerable support for the language as Broudic (1995; 1999) and others have noted.

Clearly one of the main roles of Breton in contemporary society is in promoting a sense of affectivity. In this role Breton serves as an interpreter of social identity and, precisely as explained by the respondents, as an intergenerational cultural and linguistic link from the past through the present and into the future.

The disjuncture between notions of utility and personal meaningfulness is interesting and reflects a phenomenon Stephen May, and others, have noted that while majority languages are frequently positioned instrumentally in terms of their utility, minority languages are more likely to be seen as having “sentimental” or affective value (May 2005:333). Some people are suggesting Breton is not very useful but worth keeping. In this sense its value is symbolic: as Francis said, what matters is that it exists, not that it is spoken. For others though, particularly those for whom Breton has a strong affective dimension, the value of the language is not measured by its utility but by the way it creates and describes relationships. Yann described this as the difference between high and low diglossia, although these terms do not, perhaps, fully describe the complexity of languages and linguistic identities as they are practiced performatively. On the one hand Breton serves a role as a symbol (for the nation, the people, the cultural and linguistic heritage) but this is in many ways a red herring for those who want to speak Breton as a personal, experiential practice. This may be described as a low diglossia, but it is one that is extremely important and highly valued by many language learners and is by no means less significant or important than the normative symbol. Indeed it is here that Breton is actually spoken, where it

articulates a linguistic identity and expresses affectivity and personal meaning. It is here that Breton in a performative sense is called into being. Even if it is spoken badly, approximately or in an unorthodox way, this “doing” of Breton is of great importance because it represents the creative, living expression of the language.

This (re)appropriation of Breton as a personally important, achieved and performative identity is significant and was particularly expressed by a younger generation of Bretons who were currently students or newly out of university. Learning and speaking Breton was a conscious choice they made. There was no sense of this being a linguistic conversion or rejection of French, but rather Breton became an important symbolic and personal part of their linguistic identities.

Intellectual and professional interest

Several respondents cited factors for learning Breton that were associated with practical, pragmatic or intellectual goals. Dimitri, a Dutch national, became interested in Middle Breton through studies of Celtic history and at the time of interview was teaching Breton at Rennes University. For Dimitri the interest in the language is primarily an intellectual one, having no familial or historical connection to the region. When asked why he decided to learn Breton he suggested: *“I am just interested in languages, in culture, in history...”* but through the course of the interview it became clear that he enjoyed speaking the language in both a social and professional context. He also appeared to enjoy the ambiguities of a multilingual Dutch person speaking Breton.

Many others expressed either an explicit or an implicit intellectual engagement with the language, often through their employment as teachers, researchers or students. Contrary to the opinion of Christiane, Nolwenn and Alan who thought the language to be not very useful, others like Yannick, Aziliz and Metig saw either the opportunity to work using the language or were actively using the language in their employment. In total six respondents were Breton language teachers or academics, two worked in Breton language media, one in language maintenance and planning

and one was a Breton language journalist. All of these people used Breton daily in their work, but all of these jobs were directly related to the teaching or promotion of the Breton language, with the possible exception of journalism. Only Iffig said he used Breton in his professional life in a different context, as a farmer, and the extent to which he did this was unclear.

Sylvestre and Francis both stated that their original motivation for learning Breton was through intellectual curiosity in languages.

C'est d'abord mon travail (...). Mais en fait en travaillant en breton, je travaille peut-être pour le breton mais aussi pour une façon différente de voir la langue, et quelle langue on parle, et la liberté de parler des langues, et le fait qu'il y a des diversités de langues en France aussi. (Sylvestre)

[Firstly it is my work... but in fact in working with Breton I'm working maybe for the language but also for a different way of seeing the language, and which language, and the freedom to speak languages and the fact that there is a diversity of languages in France as well.]

I was brought up in the eastern part of Brittany where Breton is not spoken – just by a few people around my family that knew it. I was interested, I was puzzled, I wanted to know. I was 14 or 15 and I tried so pretty quickly I came to understand. (Francis)

Similarly while Yann spoke passionately about his hopes and fears for the language, he noted that part of his interest in Breton comes from an intellectual and professional perspective: « *En fait c'est mon travail, je suis enseignant/chercheur et évidemment c'est ce qui m'intéresse* » [in fact it is my job. I am a teacher/researcher and this is what interests me obviously]. Olier, who worked in the Breton Language Office was also conscious of the potential for Breton to be a useful language in some instances, such as teaching, increased work in translation and the media.

Tudual also spoke of the need to develop this aspect of Breton:

Le jour où tu peux gagner ta vie avec le breton, tu as une motivation pour apprendre le breton. Tu dis, « tiens, il y a des places de profs là, ça m'intéresse. Là, je vais bosser mon breton pour devenir prof ». Mais si c'est simplement pour le plaisir, c'est plus difficile. (Tudual)

[The day when you can earn your living with Breton, you have a motivation to learn Breton. You say to yourself “hey, there are jobs for teachers. That interests me, I will work on my Breton so I can become a teacher”. But if it is simply for pleasure, it is more difficult.]

In general many of the respondents had an intellectual interest in Breton, including some like Alan who could not speak the language. No one cited exclusively intellectual reasons for learning the language, and if the initial motivations were intellectual ones, other factors had also quickly come into play, since all were active in the greater social and cultural life of the Breton speaking community to some extent. Most had become interested in the language through the affective connections they had with their family or community. This clearly had sparked their intellectual interest, just as an intellectual curiosity had also helped bring out affective relationships with, and through, the language. Sometimes, though not always, a combination of these elements – the heart and the mind – led them a political position in favour of the language, one of advocacy and political action.

Militantisme

Militantisme is a term often used in debates and discussions of the *emsav*, or Breton revival movement. Its closest translation in English seems to be ‘militancy’ but in French the term also carries the connotation of ‘activism’ and indicates a political engagement in a cause. There is not an automatic association with violence or organised resistance that the term ‘militant’ might suggest in English. Because of the

ambiguities of translating the term I will not translate the term where it has been used by participants.

In the responses, *militantisme* was used to refer to everything from the violent Breton separatist organizations, to those interested in linguistic research, to cultural groups involved in promoting aspects of Breton identity. None of the respondents actively identified themselves as *militants* however, suggesting perhaps a latent belief that the term had negative associations with radicalism and separatism. Nolwenn was keen to point out that for her *militantisme* was something positive: « *C'est bien d'être militante. Je pense que c'est bien de s'engager à un moment donné dans sa vie* ». [*It is good to be militant. In any case I think it is good to engage yourself at certain times in your life*] but she was equally as keen to explain that: « *Non, je ne suis pas militante* » [*no, I am not militante*].

A number of respondents were clearly more politically engaged than others when it came to issues of Breton and the question of militancy. When asked what was needed to safeguard the Breton language, Metig replied: « *Il faudrait un grand bouleversement au niveau politique en France et une décentralisation véritable* » [*a big shake-up is needed at the political level in France, and a real decentralisation*]. Metig was also somewhat *militante* in her use of Breton at work, preferring to speak Breton first and then to repeat her statement in French in meetings with colleagues. She suggested that this annoyed some of her French-speaking colleagues but that « *je ne vois pas pourquoi j'aurais à parler que français parce que tout le monde parle le français* » [*I don't see why I should only speak French because everyone speaks French*].

Solenn explicitly linked her motivation for learning Breton with creating a reactionary or oppositional identity to France, and particularly to Paris. « *[Le breton] est la langue de ma région. Je pense que c'est un critère d'identification. C'est peut-être pour me venger des esprits malveillants de la bourgeoisie parisienne, on peut dire* » [*Breton is the language of my region. I think it is a criterion of identification. Maybe you could say it's a way of avenging the malicious spirit of the Parisian bourgeoisie*].

Having stated what I assumed to be a rather militant position, I asked Solenn whether she was a militant. She replied:

Non, je ne suis pas nationaliste. Non, pour moi la Bretagne ne deviendra jamais libre. Ce n'est pas possible... Non, je ne suis pas nationaliste.

[No, I am not nationalist. No. For me Brittany will never be free. It is impossible,... No, I am not nationalist.]

Interestingly, Solenn equated *militantisme* with nationalism and the various independence movements, which she was quick to disassociate herself from. However many of her comments were clearly politically engaged and her motives were not only affective or professionally inspired, although her passion in expressing her Breton identity was also clearly close to her heart.

For Solenn being Breton was clearly an identity she wore with pride. Speaking Breton was also clearly a matter of her desire to be associated with this regional identity. Somewhat paradoxically however, she explained that she was from Fougères, which is in Haute-Bretagne, and her family was Gallo-speaking. Gallo was not taught at any of the universities in Brittany and, with the exception of some attention paid to it by the Breton club at the University of Rennes, in my time in Brittany I perceived no public evidence of its existence, although as with Breton, in private it may have been spoken. What was curious to me, however, was that Solenn identified with and supported the Breton language and not Gallo, which was the first language of her Grandmother. I asked her if she would like to study Gallo if she had the chance and she replied: “*yes of course*” but soon after she stated:

Quand on parle de la Bretagne, aussitôt les bretons [disent] « les bretons parlent le breton ». On ne dit jamais « les bretons parlent le gallo ». Je suis sûr que tu n'as jamais entendu ça. Même pour nous, je suis sûr qu'il y a des gens en Haute-Bretagne qui ne savent pas que la langue de la Haute-Bretagne est le gallo. Je suis sûr qu'il y en a

beaucoup qui croient qu'historiquement tout le monde en Bretagne parlait le breton, ce qui est faux. Jamais la Haute-Bretagne n'a parlé le breton. Jamais. Donc, non, ce n'est pas un problème que le breton devienne la langue de la Bretagne, puisque tout le monde le croit.

[When one speaks of Brittany, straight away Bretons speak Breton. We never say 'Bretons speak Gallo'. I'm sure you have never heard that. And even for us, I am sure that there are people in Haute-Bretagne who do not know that the language of Haute-Bretagne is Gallo. I am sure that there are many who believe that historically everyone in Brittany spoke Breton. Which is false. Never did Haute-Bretagne speak Breton. Never. So it is not a problem that Breton becomes the language of Brittany, since everyone believes it.]

Solenn described how Gallo was the language her father and grandmother spoke together at home and clearly it was important to her on an affective level. However it was important to her that she learn Breton so that she could participate in a sense of Breton activism. For Solenn, Gallo lacked the necessary political cachet to serve as a public Breton identity, as a way of distinguishing herself as being different from « *les parisiens, les gens qui n'ont pas de culture* » [*the Parisians, the people who don't have any culture*] and who she described as « *fade* » [*insipid*]. She took comfort in the fact that Breton brought her into contact with a culture of difference that marked itself clearly as different from the French mainstream.

For Solenn, it was important that she spoke the language that Brittany was known for. It is possible to read in her comments the idea that if Gallo could not be a language of Brittany, then better Breton rather than French. But more to the point, it is doubtful whether Solenn had seriously considered Gallo as a possible national language. For her, it seemed to occupy a far more private and personal domain. Solenn mentioned how her father would speak Gallo with his mother and she would listen, or how her Grandmother would be embarrassed if a Gallo word would slip out in conversation. In this sense Gallo shares many of the symbolic difficulties that

Breton holds for first-language speakers, who perceive it as a devalued and stigmatised language to speak.

However, unlike Breton, Gallo has not been through a period of revival and has not been adopted and reconfigured by a political or cultural movement. While the symbolic value of Breton has been inverted by the *emsav* and the new cultural revival, Gallo has remained the poor cousin of both Breton and French. For Solenn, Breton was a far more prestigious language than Gallo, even more so because of the way in which it could represent an identity of difference from French. While Gallo was seen by many as patois or ‘bad’ French, Breton was clearly, for her, a different language and an empowering identity she could inhabit. For Solenn, as a young woman on the campus of a Breton university, within her milieu, it was a prestigious identity to be associated with.

Solenn therefore had a complex linguistic identity, with Gallo, French and Breton playing different roles in her life.

Il y a des choses que je préfère dire en breton et pas en français. Quand je parle d'une fête, je vais parler en breton, parce que pour moi fête égal breton en langue bretonne. Par contre, si je vais parler d'un texte administratif ou d'un texte grave, je vais parler en français. Parce que pour moi le français est une langue riche, et c'est une bonne expression, ou quoi. Pareil, le gallo pour moi, il y a des choses que je n'exprimerais pas en breton, que j'exprimerais en gallo. Je pense que chaque langue a une spécificité.

[There are things I prefer to say in Breton and not in French. When I speak of a party, I will speak in Breton because for me ‘party [fête]’ equals ‘Breton’, in the Breton language. On the other hand, if I had to speak about an administrative text or a heavy text, I will speak in French. Because for me French is a rich language and it is a good expression. In the same way Gallo for me, there are things I wouldn't

express in Breton which I would express in Gallo. I think that each language has its own specificity.

While many respondents saw militancy or activism as a valid political tool, they were less supportive of it when it was applied to a linguistic context, particularly if it was perceived to intrude on their own linguistic identity and the personal and affective relations they experienced, and expressed, through Breton. Lenaig spoke about some fellow students she considered *militante*:

I know some people who are active in the Breton milieu, especially in Rennes, and that are very angry and who ... always take a chance to feel attacked and to – I don't know, I don't think it is a very constructive attitude.

Yann was critical of the way some located the issue of the Breton language in a broader debate over political power and their authority to represent a constructed national identity with which they gain « *les pouvoirs financiers ou symboliques* » [*financial and symbolic power*].

A number of other respondents talked about the issue of learning Breton through *militantisme*. Yannick suggested:

C'est vraiment difficile pour quelqu'un d'apprendre n'importe quelle langue par militantisme seulement, en fait. Ça veut dire que quand il aura changé d'idée ou quand son militantisme sera un peu amoindri, quand il aura plus autant l'envie de se battre pour ses idées, la langue bretonne – pareil, il l'apprendra plus, il la parlera plus. Terminé.

[it is really difficult for someone to learn any language only through militancy. I mean, when they change their ideas or when their militancy lessens, when they are not so keen to fight for their ideas, well it will be the same with their Breton. They will no longer learn it they will no longer speak it. It'll be all over.]

Aziliz thought that *militantisme* was a motivating factor for some of her students. She equated the term with « *la sauvegarde d'une langue, n'importe quelle langue* » [*the safeguard of a language, no matter which language*], as well as being associated with the Breton political movement. But she was sceptical of the efficacy of learning Breton through *militante* motivation, at least in the beginning: « *Je pense vraiment que si les gens ont un lien personnel humain, les choses vont se déclencher. C'est très important. Il ne faut pas se déraciner de ce lien humain* » [*I really think that if people have a human link then things will begin to spark. It is very important. One mustn't uproot oneself from this human link*].

Dimitri recounted his experience of learning Breton in an intensive class at a time when his French was not very good. Many of his more militant classmates were impressed that a man from the Netherlands would want to learn Breton but some saw this very much in a political way, suggesting he give up learning French and “*should just learn Breton for Brittany*”. For Dimitri this idea was absurd and narrow-minded. He was learning Breton because it interested him and gave him pleasure, he was not interested in being recruited into an ideological battle by an activists with a chip on their shoulder, who thought that the fewer languages you spoke, the better, as long as they were the right ones.

Solenn spoke of a friend of hers who found militancy so off-putting he moved to Ireland:

[[Il] était contre la Bretagne et contre les bretonnants. Il en avait marre. Il était saoulé par le breton parce que chez lui tout le monde rabâchait « non, il faut parler breton, pas français » et lui, il disait « attendez, doucement, ou quoi ». Donc lui, il était complètement anti-breton, alors qu'il était brestois.

[[He] was against Brittany and against Breton speakers, He was sick and tired of Breton because at his place everyone nagged him “no you must speak Breton not French” and he said “hold on, take it

easy". So he was completely anti-Breton even though he was from Brest.]

In this sense militancy or activism served to alienate this man from his Breton-speaking cohort. For him, it can be hypothesised, Breton was not, or was no longer a positive sign of affectivity, or community: it had the potential to represent radicalism, division, exclusivity and elitism. It did not give him the independence to define his own relationships and sense of identity in ways that were meaningful for him, so he turned his back on the whole culture. If such experiences can be extrapolated on a broader level, it is clear that militancy, in a strong form at least, has the potential to exclude the very people who offer the most significant hope for Breton: potential speakers and those for whom Breton could conceivably be an affective marker of identity.

It is, of course, unusual for the three fields of affectivity, professional and intellectual interest and *militantisme* through which people expressed their desire to learn and speak Breton to exist in isolation from each other. Much more likely is that someone will learn Breton for a variety of reasons, including affective, intellectual and political ones. It would be unusual to be a Breton activist, having no personal connection to the language or culture, just as it would seem strange to learn the language without becoming sensitised to its problematic status and uncertain future. It is through a combination of these three categories perhaps that the many of the respondents have become motivated to undertake the not insignificant task of learning the Breton language. Metig put this nicely:

Pour moi, dans ma vie de tous les jours, c'est quelque chose de pratique. C'est ma langue, je communique avec, je travaille avec, mais en plus, pour moi c'est important. Donc je m'investis dans ma vie privée pour essayer de faire avancer les choses. J'en suis là aujourd'hui. Parce que la langue ne se sauvera pas toute seule. Il faut des gens pour un petit peu pousser les choses (Metig).

[For me, in my daily life it is something practical. It is my language. I communicate with it, I work with it. But more than this, for me it is important. So I invest myself in it in my private life to try to advance things. I am there at it today. [Laughs] The language will not save itself all by itself. So there must be people to push things a little bit.]

Nevertheless, as most second-language Breton speakers showed, personal, affective and emotional reasons were central to their motivation, even as this affectivity segued into other motivations. Even though affectivity might not be enough to sustain a motivation to speak Breton, this affectivity gave a sense of meaning and purpose to other motivations. Clearly each person learning Breton was doing so to add something to their lives – an extra layer of meaning, a closeness to a person or an idea, a sense of community or feeling of participation and belonging for example.

What do people want from Breton? What do they want for Breton?

The ambitions respondents had for the Breton language were varied, from rather modest desires to live in a society where Breton could be spoken and heard, to the reintroduction of Breton as a widely spoken and prestigious language throughout the region. Of course one of the criteria for selecting respondents was that they demonstrated some interest or association with the Breton language, culture or identity. In this way, it is not surprising that respondents were conscious of the language and generally interested in speaking it.

Amongst those who spoke Breton both personal outcomes for Breton and broader community goals were identified as being important. Yann summed up the desire of a number of speakers:

Moi, ce que j'aimerais, c'est pouvoir aller acheter mon pain et pouvoir discuter du beau temps ou du mauvais temps avec le boulanger [en breton], qui est actuellement impossible.

[I would like to be able to go and buy my bread and talk about the weather with the baker [in Breton], which at the moment is impossible.]

For Yann this was a real and personal desire but as a leitmotif of daily social interaction in France, it was also representative of what he saw was a need for a broader linguistic policy that provides the opportunity to learn Breton for all who wish it. In other words, a movement of the language away from special interest groups and the intellectual domain, towards a more locally engaged and broad-based community representation. For Yann the issue was not simply that Breton is not the language of daily life, but that there was a perception amongst French-speaking Bretons that Breton represented militancy, elitism or intellectualism and belonged in that domain. There was a risk, he suggested, in providing « *beaucoup de breton pour peu de personnes* » [*a lot of Breton for few people*]. In other words, that the responsibility for the perpetuation of Breton be seen to rest exclusively with activists and a motivated sub-culture and therefore not be the responsibility or practice of the general population. His fear was that this would result in « *une espèce de ghettoïsation* » [*a kind of ghettoisation*] and suggests rather that « *une véritable politique linguistique ça serait peut-être moins de breton mais pour tout le monde* » [*a real linguistic policy would be maybe less Breton but for everyone*].

Indeed for many their hope is not explicitly that everyone speaks Breton, or that Breton replace French in significant domains. Francis suggested such an idea is absurd: “*it is like saying replace English by Yiddish in New York*”. Rather he offered the hope that additive bilingualism would become generalised so that large numbers of people could speak both Breton and French. Others also hoped to see this normalisation of the speaking of Breton and express a desire that Breton becomes better accepted within the community, more accessible and also depoliticised, or at least less directly linked to explicit political positions. In other words, that speaking Breton ceases to be a symbol of militancy, radicalism or cultural separatism, and instead becomes a normal part of daily life.

Many respondents, such as Yann, Olier and Metig argued that Breton needed to be acknowledged by the French state and supported, through funding for education and an introduction of a comprehensive linguistic policy. Official recognition was also seen as necessary symbolic step in a process of reconciling some of the perceived past injustices inflicted on Breton speakers at the hands of French policy: for example in the social humiliation and a sense of linguistic apartheid that existed in many schools and towns. For people like Yannick official recognition of Breton by the French state was an important but many, including Solenn, despaired that Paris would ever come to the rescue of Breton. For her, the “safeguarding” of the language was primarily at the regional level. Many respondents also expressed optimism that Europe would play a stronger role in the future in promoting and supporting regional languages such as Breton.

Metig used similar symbolism to Yann’s desire to buy bread in Breton in suggesting she would like everyone to be able « *d’acheter ses timbres en breton* » [*to buy their stamps in Breton*]. She identified this as part of a broader recognition of language rights, specifically from the French government. She argued what was needed was to « *créer les outils pour pouvoir être éduqué et vivre en langue bretonne* » [*create the tools to be able to be educated and live in the Breton language*].

The difference between Yann and Metig’s metaphors is subtle but profound. While the former is a daily, social act, the latter involves direct contact with the state administration. For Metig it was not simply an issue of doing her daily chores in Breton, but also that the state recognised and provided for her needs through offering Breton in administrative contexts. Moreover, while Yann expressed his desire to shop in Breton as a personal desire, something he wanted to do himself, Metig expressed her desire for linguistic normalisation in a more ambitious and far-reaching collective sense: that it was something she wanted for all Breton people, not just for herself or in specific local contexts. To a greater extent than Yann then, Metig located the current status of Breton within a process of social justice and political discrimination by the French State. She saw official recognition and broad support for Breton from the French state as fundamental rights they were being denied. Metig resented the fact that people who want to see Breton represented had

to take an aggressive or militant stance and even break the law to assert their rights in « *un pays dit démocratique* » [*a so-called democratic country*]. She illustrated her point with the example of a long campaign of vandalizing road signs that led to bilingual signs being erected in some instances:

Quand on demande les choses calmement, on n'entend personne. On dit, « non, c'est pas important, on a le temps, ça va se voir après » etcetera. Donc, de temps en temps, certaines personnes vont un peu plus loin, se mettent en colère, barbouillent les panneaux, et puis au bout de quelques années, les autorités prennent ça un petit plus au sérieux, et on voit une amélioration. Mais c'est pas normal [souponne].

[When one asks for things calmly, no one is heard. They say no, it's not important this time, we'll see later etcetera. So from time to time certain people go a bit further, they get angry, they graffiti the signs, and at the end of several years the authorities take it a little bit more seriously and we see an improvement. But it isn't normal [sighs].]

The sigh at the end of Metig's statement said a lot about her frustration and fatigue at the difficulties facing militants who wanted to (re)position Breton as a normalised, legitimate language in Brittany. She had been active in militant circles for several decades and had won a number of small victories, such as bilingual road signs and a modest representation of Breton on regional public television, but her broader objective was still far from complete.

This frustration expressed by many militants at the slow pace of change comes from two directions. Firstly it is a frustration at the intransigence of the French state which, despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary, remains at best culturally myopic and at worst actively opposed to the Breton language, at an ideological level. The likelihood of France supporting Breton in any broad, comprehensive way remains extremely slim.

Secondly, and this frustration is harder for many to admit, is that despite the modest successes of Breton activists and a general support for the Breton language, the general population has not risen to demand their rights and reclaim their linguistic heritage: they remain passive spectators. While several tens of thousands of people are actively sensitised to the issues, are learning the language, are involved in language initiatives, activism and advocacy, or are simply speaking their language, several million others remain passive in the struggle for the future of the language. They are not sufficiently motivated, and not in sufficient numbers, to effect a major cultural change. Given the intransigence of the French government, a broader popular language revival seems to be the most likely way Breton will become more widely spoken but currently, while many of the achievements of activists have been significant, they have generally failed to engage the broader public in their work.

Despite the inertia of the general population, in most cases activists continue to respond to language issues in broadly foundationalist ways, in the hope that a critical mass will soon be reached.

Si on va se donner les moyens pour que la langue bretonne reste vivante, pouvoir faire des véritables plans de développement et se dire en 2010, ce n'est plus 7000 enfants qui [sont dans les écoles bilingues], c'est 10 000 et en 2015 ce n'est plus 10 000, mais c'est 50 000 etcetera. Et si on pouvait vraiment avoir les moyens de faire de telles choses, on pourrait vraiment bâtir un vrai espoir pour cette langue. (Olier)

[If we are going to give ourselves the necessary means for Breton to remain a living language, to be able to make real development plans and to say to ourselves in 2010 that it is no longer 7000 students who [are in bilingual schools] it is 10 000 and in 2015 that it is no longer 10 000 but 50 000 etc. If we could really have the means to achieve such things, we could really build a true hope for this language.]

Broadly speaking, the more militant the participant was, the more ambitious they were for Breton to be (re)introduced and promoted as a visible, public language through a broad language policy. This militancy, or activism, can take many forms but in general the most outspoken activists I interviewed – for example, Olier, from the Breton Language Office, and Metig from regional television – invoked a discourse of nationalism when talking about Breton and their visions for the future of the language. They sought to articulate a strongly reified notion of the language and its place in contemporary Breton society. Olier talked about the “rectification” and “normalisation” of Breton spelling. Metig saw the need for the political empowerment of the Breton language through political devolution and a comprehensive Breton language policy.

Generally speaking for these people action was required at a political level to promote and safeguard Breton: that the Breton language would be valorised and promoted as a legitimate national language. Their stated goal was not that Breton be exclusive and replace French, but rather that every Breton become officialised in an administrative, educational and commercial context. The assumption was that if activists had the capacity to implement these objectives, a more widespread practice of Breton would follow. However, it is unclear how this would occur. Since there is no tradition of using Breton in official contexts, effectively this would mean creating the means whereby, for some people at least, Breton could displace French as a high public language in a diglossic situation. Whilst this would no doubt be a positive step for many activists and Breton speakers, it does not directly speak to the affective desires of many people and does not explain why less politically engaged people would speak Breton in situations where they have habitually used French.

This ambitious, broader view was generally absent, or expressed in a far weaker form, by many of the other less militant respondents. In contrast, for people like Yann, Aziliz and Sylvestre what they desired was that their relationship with Breton would continue and that their own Breton linguistic identity could be affirmed and fulfilled in their daily life, for example, in talking with their loved ones or in grocery shopping. In other words, while they may have seen a need for increased support for Breton, in terms of funding, education and the like, they saw the social presence of

Breton not primarily in political terms, as a language right or a tool of nationalism, but rather through a sense of affectivity, conviviality and *Gemeinschaft*: that for them speaking Breton in daily life was affirming, enjoyable and gave them a sense of personal fulfilment and empowerment.

Il faut que ça soit une langue de l'amour, une langue de l'amitié, une langue de la famille... (Sylvestre)

[It has to be a language of love, a language of friendship, a language of family...]

Je pense que les gens qui sont bien partis avec la langue bretonne, c'est les gens qui l'ont appris par le cœur en fait ; parce qu'ils ont vraiment envie. (Yannick)

[I think the people who have the right idea with Breton are those who have learned it with their hearts; because they really want to.]

Ça devient une espèce de trésor qu'on va chercher chez les gens, auxquels on n'avait pas pensé auparavant. (Aziliz)

[[Breton is] a kind of treasure you go searching for in other people that you hadn't thought about before.]

Again, the difference between these positions is in the language ideology that is invoked. It forms a critical point of departure for the issue of language promotion, in questioning the extent to which language activism should be contextualised within explicitly political or nationalistic frameworks and the extent to which Breton could be promoted as a form of personal, affective expression. For some Breton is the language of Brittany, but for others it primarily represents their own personal linguistic identity that allows them to commune with others.

An important question therefore is whether it is possible to promote a sense of affectivity for people through militancy, the implementation of a comprehensive project of linguistic normalisation, or institutionalised practices such as schooling. Sylvestre is clear about the role of schools and the desires and expectations of many people who learn Breton:

Quelque part, ils veulent deux choses : ils veulent le breton écrit, standard, parce qu'ils savent que ça existe, ils admettent que ça existe, quelque part, ils y croient, et d'une autre, ils voudraient retrouver l'aspect affectif de familiarité, d'intimité qu'il y avait dans le breton, donc qu'ils ont entendu, ou qu'ils ont parlé éventuellement quand ils étaient plus jeunes. Et c'est pas possible. C'est pas possible d'avoir les deux en même temps, forcément. Avec l'école, on n'est pas en famille autour d'une cheminée et on ne le sera jamais. Et là il y a quelque chose qui est difficile à admettre, mais si on demande à l'école de transmettre le breton, on va avoir quand même un breton scolaire.

[Somewhere along the way they want two things: they want a standard, written Breton because they know that that exists, they admit that that exists, they believe in it, and on the other hand they want to retrieve the intimate, emotional, familial aspect of Breton they have heard of or that they spoke when they were younger. But it's not possible. It's not possible to have the two at the same time. With school we are not sitting around the family hearth, and we will never be. That is something that is difficult to admit, but if we ask the school to transmit Breton then we will nevertheless have a scholarly Breton.]

There are two issues at play here. The first issue is one of the expectations of learners and parents over the capacity of schools to provide comprehensive language teaching, and the corresponding reliance on education to promote Breton. Clearly if a language is only learned in a school, its broader social practice will be influenced, and potentially limited, by this relatively formalised practice. The more diverse and

widespread one's language practices are, the greater capacity one will have to use Breton for different reasons and in different domains. This provides a strong argument against the assumption that the provision of comprehensive language education is enough to promote and support the Breton language. It is all very well to learn Breton but people also need to speak it, and enjoy speaking it, in a variety of situations, if that practice is to become meaningful and sustainable.

The second issue relates to the ways in which institutionalised language education teaches specific forms and registers of Breton and promotes specific models of language. Schools are good at promoting a fixed and foundationalist sense of a language but, for Sylvestre at least, are unable to replicate or represent the more affective roles of language.

In particular the French academic tradition follows a pedagogy that regulates difference and power in specific ways (Bourdieu 1974; 1991), for example by promoting normativity and academic knowledge over experiential learning and personal, creative expression and by privileging formalised and literary forms of language over affective and performative linguistic identities. Clearly, within such a pedagogy the project of creating affective connections between people through language is problematic. It represents a very different language ideology and a very different type of learning.

However, this is not so much a question of schooling as it is one of pedagogy: schools may well be able to provide some degree of personal connection and affectivity as well as teaching an institutionalised form of the language. Diwan is an example of how a more holistic educational approach is being implemented. As Maël discussed, although it teaches a form of 'neo-Breton', it creates a close-knit environment where students form close bonds with each other, their teachers and in the broader community. In this way it provides opportunities for people to learn Breton in a ways that go far beyond the academic.

In this sense schools are not in and of themselves obstacles to the learning of language in a holistic sense, it is rather the specific pedagogies they employ that

orient language learning in particular ways. In a different context, with the promotion of critical pedagogies and more holistic approaches, schools may well provide new, creative, experiential opportunities to learn and speak diverse languages in diverse ways.

The desire for Breton to express conviviality

From the research, it is clear that personal and affective reasons are strong motivating factors for people to learn and speak Breton. The role the Breton language plays in articulating this affective link and sense of Breton identity varies in each case and therefore the practice of Breton is in each case different. Each respondent has their own sense of linguistic identity: how they use Breton, the symbolic role Breton plays in their lives, and how Breton links them to their community in a literal and symbolic sense.

Having said this, there are significant differences in the perception of the language at a symbolic level between first- and second-language Breton speakers that are in many ways generational. For second-language speakers, Breton plays an important role in the articulation of a sense of community, identity and belonging. It is seen as an important way of connecting with antecedents and a sense of place and of iterating a notion of cultural and social difference. For people who are learning Breton, the language is seen in a positive light and while issues of dialectal difference and standardisation are acknowledged, generally these are not seen as overly problematic.

For older Breton speakers Breton was also described in terms of affectivity, but in very different ways. Despite a lived experience of Breton that was, at times, difficult, and despite enduring latent beliefs that Breton was « *brutal* » (Uriell), devalorising (Iffig) or inadequate for the modern world (Morgan), their practice of Breton was marked by a different but equally strong sense of affectivity. Breton between many older first-language speakers is spoken between husbands and wives, close friends of the same generation, small communities and in personal contexts. Despite the

negative sentiment attributed to this generation towards Breton, or perhaps even because of it, their particular practice of Breton has remained local, decentered, between friends and confidants. Breton is a highly personalised, often private language, one that many people do not want to share with outsiders, even from different regions of Brittany and from different generations. It is deeply personal and affective. The irony here is that it is this form of language practice that many younger speakers most desire, but the one valued least by the older generation. Moreover, it is the language practice least achievable through many foundationalist strategies that aim to produce a different, more prestigious, public and normative Breton.

While activism was important for many second-language speakers, it was clear for many, such as Aziliz, Yann and Sylvestre that this could not be at the expense of affectivity. Even those who were explicitly political in their actions, such as Metig and Olier, acknowledged the importance of Breton in representing a personal experience. While for many people there were a number of complex factors motivating them to engage a Breton linguistic identity, in every case affectivity played a principal role. People desired to speak Breton as an intergenerational link, as a way of maintaining or creating connections with their broader community and their elders and as a form of personal identity. However, while all those interviewed had a strong sense of their own identity as a Breton, these were in each case articulated quite differently. For each person, Breton meant something different.

It is possible to argue that what many people wanted to do with Breton was to live a normal life, speaking Breton when they desired, with whom they felt the desire, in ways that were sociable, meaningful and not explicitly political, polemical or confrontational. Many of the more militant people I interviewed, were frustrated and tired by their activism. Metig in particular seemed fed up with fighting for years for tiny concessions such as a bilingual chequebook or road sign. Whilst clearly some activists gain a sense of camaraderie from joining with fellow activists to protest and plan actions, many others, like Metig, are activists because they feel obliged to oppose a perceived injustice. Militancy did not create a sense of affectivity, but was a

step that needed to be taken to achieve a situation where they could speak Breton as they desired. If and when this would occur, such acts would no longer be necessary.

Even the most radicalised militants then wanted Breton to form a positive and practical part of their linguistic identity that would be accepted by others, including the state. In this sense, official recognition is seen as important on a symbolic level, but equally important is the personal freedom and pleasure to express themselves in their language as they desire. However, framed through different language ideologies, people's ideas about how this could occur were quite different. For some it was enough to buy bread. For others, a far broader political project was necessary.

In this sense, what many people desired in their practice of Breton was to create a sense of *Gemeinschaft* that articulated a more personal and intimate society. This can be described as the desire for a convivial practice of Breton. This sense of linguistic conviviality represents the desire people have to express themselves through language in a way that is positive, productive, affirming and that creates a sense of shared experience with others. It represents the affective pleasure and support people share in using a language, and in expressing their linguistic identities.

Ivan Illich argued in favour of promoting social conviviality. He suggested that: "A convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favour of another member's equal freedom" (Illich 1973:11-12).

In a linguistic sense, this implies the capacity to practice a language and to express a linguistic identity in creative, productive ways. Moreover it rejects the reifying, foundationalist trope that seeks to regulate and molarise difference, diminishing the language practices of some for the advantage of others through a field of linguistic capital. In other words, while conviviality is the promotion of linguistic diversity, it does so through the valorisation of linguistic identities across, within and beyond normative notions of language, rather than simply the promotion of specific languages.

Conviviality is performative in the sense that is constituted differently for each person. It is not about gaining pleasure or power at the expense of someone else, but rather working together for mutual pleasure and benefit, even if, and particularly as, those pleasures and benefits will be different for each person. It is about mutual respect, empathy and support for the needs and desires for others in the community.

It is possible to take this notion of conviviality as a productive way of representing the desires of many people who speak minority or lesser-used languages, and of representing these languages in ways that promote local and individual linguistic identities and practices over more polemical and foundationalist notions of language. In the context of this thesis, conviviality can be seen as a language ideology that seeks to promote and valorise those aspects of a language that promote social and community interests, without reifying symbolic power in a way that discriminates against other language practices that may be different. It may not be apolitical, but it explicitly avoids normative or nationalist polemics of identity or belonging.

Clearly, the desire for conviviality is a motivating factor for many people in people wanting to learn Breton and in the ongoing practice of Breton by those who speak Breton. In older generations Breton is used mostly in highly personalised and private contexts, to express a bond and a sense of shared experience within their cohort. Younger generations see learning Breton as a way of creating a link to this generation and their cultural practices. For second-language learners Breton is symbolic of a sense of belonging – to a place, a people and a cultural tradition. It represents a willingness to participate in a sense of Breton identity, albeit one that resists simplistic categorisation and description.

While the term conviviality was seldom used in the interviews, the desire for conviviality, in terms of communicating affectivity, local identity and difference, a sense of community, of belonging and of personal fulfilment is clearly apparent. This is epitomised by Yann's desire to be able to buy his bread in Breton – to live Breton as a meaningful daily practice with others. While Breton is by no means the exclusive means of developing and expressing this sense of conviviality, and other languages and linguistic identities can equally express this desire, Breton is

nonetheless significant in the way it articulates an ongoing sense of community, with all of its difference and ambiguities, and a relationship to place, as a historical language that continues to have an echo, and a resonance, through the toponymy and the practice of the older generation.

Having said this, there is a frequent discrepancy between people's desires for the language and the strategies they believe appropriate to achieve this, as articulated by Sylvestre. Many people want to be able to speak Breton in a normalised way, and they want Breton legitimised, for example through official recognition and the implementation of a comprehensive language policy, but these are in many ways quite distinct issues. The widespread, normalised public practice of Breton will not come about (only) because of the provision of sufficient classes and the implementation of corpus and status planning initiatives, as the case of Irish attests (Carnie 1996). Rather it (also) requires significant numbers of people to feel the need, or the desire, to speak Breton together. A language is not something that is spoken by a nation, it is something that is spoken *by* people, together in innumerable and diverse ways.

Breton is a language that is close to the hearts of millions of people, even though for each person this notion of Breton is different. As such it is diverse and affective. If Breton is to be promoted by activists, educators and linguists as a language, it makes sense to build on these strengths: to promote the role of Breton as a meaningful and diverse tool, or process, of conviviality and as a way of re-establishing and re-articulating social links between people across space and time. Conversely, it does not make sense to build on the weaknesses of Breton, its lack of utility compared with French, as a radicalised political statement or a reified and fixed identity articulating a strict and rigid view of the world. Such projects appear unlikely to motivate people to learn the language or to build intergenerational and inter-community communicative networks that can develop the linguistic capacities already present in Brittany. Given the importance of affectivity and conviviality to Breton people, it seems sensible to promote language strategies that maximise a sense of conviviality and belonging.

Chapter 6: Policy, Planning and Language Ideology in Brittany

The previous chapter explored the practice of Breton amongst the research participants and identified affectivity and conviviality as important factors motivating people to learn and speak Breton, and to incorporate Breton into their linguistic identities. This practice of Breton and the desire to express a sense of *Gemeinschaft* is in contrast with more foundationalist approaches to Breton that seek to represent the language as a strong, normative symbol of an ethno-national identity. This chapter compares this affective desire to current Breton language promotion initiatives, in particular in the field of language policy and planning. It explores the way Breton is discursively contextualised in these initiatives and the extent to which such strategies speak to the desires of the participants.

Language Policy and ideology in France

A number of writers including Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Thiesse (1999; 2001), Ross (1995) and Ager (1999) have sought to track the development of the French nation over time. Nations, they argue, are not timeless, but the products and expressions of “a very specific political and ideological process” (Blommaert 2006:239). Lenora Timm suggests that “it is commonly accepted that notions of nationhood are to a significant degree constructed or invented by a people – typically its well-educated elite – to promote the collectivity’s welfare and to foster a sense of loyalty to it” (Timm 2001:448). Likewise, Anne-Marie Thiesse argues:

Nations are much younger than their official histories would have us believe. No nation in the modern, that is political, sense of the word existed before the ideological revolution that began in the 18th century and conferred political power on "the people"... This powerfully subversive concept opened the way for entry into the age of democracy; but if it was to succeed... disparate population groups had to be convinced that despite their

obvious differences they shared an identity that was the basis for a collective interest (Thiesse 1999:1).

In exploring the way a sense of French nation has been built over the centuries, many of these writers have looked at the ways in which language has been a constitutive factor in inventing or imagining France. The general position taken is that because of its Republican and Jacobin political and ideological traditions, France has continually sought unitary, centralised, instrumentalist approaches to issues of national identity and central to this project is the promotion of the French language as both an embodiment and a vehicle of that identity. In this way, language policy has been used as an explicit and deliberate apparatus of the state, promoting the French language as the privileged and sole vehicle for access to public life and corporate citizenship. As Dennis Ager argues:

[French policy-makers]... have a strong conviction that language is a matter of state; that governments and the political community are right to intervene in all the areas of language planning from defining the relative status of French, other languages and language varieties, to planning the corpus or form that approved language should take and to ensure that language teaching for the young reflects the priorities of society. (Ager 1999:206)

The political desire for linguistic unity has a long history: “since 1539 French has been the language of the law, since 1793 the language of education and since 1803 the language of administration” (Hélot 2003:263). The official insistence that all French people speak French, and the need for the direct involvement of the State in achieving this was motivated by what Dennis Ager describes as a “fear of dismemberment” (1999:21) of the nation through invasion or internal disunity and secession, as well as a belief in the moral superiority of French as “the language of reason and clarity” (Lodge 1993:165) and a desire to spread the French language, along with the values and ideologies it represented, across the world (Ager 1999).

Ager therefore describes the linguistic unity of France as “the longest-lasting objective of the French state” (1999:18), made all the more important because of the distinct lack of linguistic unity as well as an enduring focus on regional identity, and

linguistic diversity that continues to be an important feature of the French cultural and linguistic landscape (Favereau 1993; Riffault 1994). Indeed, the very need for such a strong and ideologically driven language policy comes about fundamentally because linguistic and cultural unity in France has little historical precedence.

Over the years a number of organizations and institutions have been established in order to promote and maintain the status, power and privilege of French. These include language planning organizations within France, such as *Le Conseil supérieur de la langue française* and the *Académie Française* with their role in institutionalising French and creating a culture of French linguistic elitism (Hoare 2000; Bollmann 2002), and externally with the promotion of French language and culture through the *Alliance Française* and the organization of Francophone nations known as *La Francophonie* (Ager 1996).

These institutions are designed to promote and encourage a view of French as a universal language, representing values and ideas of the Republic that can, and should, be spread throughout the world: « la mission civilisatrice » [the civilising mission] of French (Kasuya 2001:240). Simultaneously they also position French as being a privileged and inalienable part of French identity. Although these dissimilar notions of the role of French sit uneasily together, they help to produce a dual argument that “France *is* the French language” (Braudel, cited in Sonntag 2003:45) and “French is universal” (Ager 1999:11), leading to the notion of *L’exception Française* [French exceptionalism] (Salmohamed 2001) and the “belief in the universality of standard French, in its innate clarity, precision, logic and elegance, and in its superiority over any other language” (Ager 1999:23).

In more recent years, according to Ager, French language policy: “has been marked by a defensive, protectionist approach aimed at maintaining and defending the territorial, cultural and social integrity of France and French against internal fragmentation through a revival of regionalism and against external attack, particularly in recent years from Anglo-American” (page 18). This fear of internal disunity comes from the ideological specificity of Jacobin Republicanism and the fact that the creation of the unitary state as a vector of political power has always

been opposed by groups within France, including the Girondins in Republican times, as well as the Church and more recently regional minorities. This fear has also increasingly become apparent through the post-war migrations of large numbers of people from France's former colonies and an anxiety that they do not assimilate (Hargreaves 1995; Silverman 1999). Note for example the recent Stasi Law banning of ostentatious religious symbols in school, mainly aimed at Muslim girls (Gemie 2004), and the riots of November 2005 over issues of race and the exclusion of North Africans from mainstream society, even when they were born in France.

Because of the polemical way in which French is represented as *the* defining characteristic of French identity, a desire to speak Breton, or Arabic, is therefore configured as a desire not to speak French, and therefore not to *be* French. In relation to the revival of Breton, Béatrice Giblin, writing from a strongly Republican perspective, is critical of regional activism, seeing it as politically motivated and divisive. She states:

...la langue de communication existe, c'est la langue nationale. Alors on est en droit de se demander à quoi sert véritablement la création de ces nouvelles langues régionales? ...c'est vouloir affirmer une spécificité culturelle régionale (Giblin 2002:11).

[...the language of communication exists, it is the national language. So we have the right to ask ourselves what does the creation of these new regional languages really serve? ... it is the desire to affirm a regional cultural specificity].

The Republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, are therefore positioned as being available to everyone, but accessible exclusively through French. Accepting linguistic and cultural difference is not so much seen as acknowledging the right to be different, as it is avoiding inequity and discrimination by suppressing division. In this way, for Republicans it is essential that France avoid opening « la boîte de Pandore du communautarisme ethnique » [the Pandora's box of ethnic

communautarianisme^{8]} (Viaut 2004:45) by weakening language policy to acknowledge and accept the rights of other languages.

The myth of the inherent superiority of French and its monopoly on articulating French identity has led to a pernicious belief, implicitly supported by this Republican language ideology, of the positive, or even necessary, role of societal monolingualism, or *unilingualism* (Cole and Williams 2004:554) in promoting national unity (Silverstein 1996; Ricento 2006:14). The emphasis on the value of societal monolingualism has been criticised by many language theorists. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) in particular argues that the notion that monolingualism is normal, desirable, sufficient or inevitable is a myth and points out that the majority of the world's population is multilingual. Other writers such as Gogolin (2002), Sarkar (2003) and particularly Crawford (2000) also argue that monolingualism as a policy, or "monoglot ideology" (Silverstein 1996) is itself an ideological position, aimed at constructing and re-enforcing a sense of nationalism through a strong central government and using language as a tool for securing social and political power (Blommaert 2006).

As a response to Republican fears about the future of French, a number of legislative acts have been passed to reinforce the privileged status of the language. The most significant of these is the 1994 Toubon Law (Law 94-665, 4/8/1994), enacted to ensure the public usage of the French language in the domains of education, employment, audio-visual media, commerce, and public meetings (Ager 1999:10). Article One of the Toubon Law, states that:

French is a fundamental element of the personality and heritage of France. It is the language of teaching, work, (commercial) exchange and the public service. It is the privileged link between the states constituting the community of Francophonie. (cited in Ager 1999:10 and Hélot 2003:263)

⁸ Social divisions based on the perceived refusal of ethnic minorities to integrate into mainstream French society

The purpose of the act was “to guarantee to French people the right to use their language and to ensure that it is used in certain circumstances of their everyday and professional life” (Toubon cited in Ager 1999:8) and was drafted following an amendment in 1992 to the French constitution in which the privileged position of French was formally asserted through the proclamation: « La langue de la République est le français » [the language of the Republic is French] (Cole and Williams 2004:558). These laws were a response both to the rising fear of *communautarianisme* but also, and especially, as a response to France’s greater integration into the European and international community and as a response to the increasing dominance of English both in international contexts, as well as in French popular culture.

This legislation guaranteed the privileged status of French in France within a clear legislative framework but, as Harold Schiffman notes, mostly formalised beliefs and rhetoric about the role of French in France that already existed in the public domain (Schiffman 2006). Until this time, Schiffman argues, surprisingly few laws had been passed to protect and privilege French, although there was an enduring belief in France that the privileged role of the French language was legally enshrined.

Even though the Toubon Law may not have represented a major change of thinking in French language policy, it did have significant political and legal consequences for minority or lesser-used languages such as Breton. What was until this time a symbolically strong but juridically weak language policy suddenly became active in deciding the legality and capacity of the state in supporting minority or lesser-used language initiatives. For example, the 1992 constitutional amendment was used as a pretext for France refusing to ratify the European charter of minority or lesser-used languages (Bollmann 2002). In effect this has meant that the Diwan Breton language immersion schools have been excluded from the public education system on the legal grounds that they do not teach in French and therefore public support for them would be unconstitutional (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003:9).

Institutions such as *le Conseil constitutionnel* [the Constitutional Council], which confirmed the illegality of France ratifying the European Charter on Regional or

Minority languages in a 1999 decision, have thus become proactively engaged in implementing a specific language policy that is in many ways problematic for speakers of minority or lesser-used languages. The Constitutional Council later qualified its statement by saying that although the Toubon Law imposed French as the official language for everyone, this usage did not have to be at the expense of other languages (Locatelli 2002:167). However, in practice, the language act specifically, and the language policy generally, marginalises languages such as Breton by excluding them from the public domain and rhetorically it reinforces the myth of the superiority of French, both in articulating national identity and universal values.

Language Policy and ideology in Brittany

Researchers such as Michael Keating (1997), Dennis Ager (1999), John Loughlin (2000), Alistair Cole (2003) and Harold Schiffman (1996; 2006) have discussed the impact of language policy, and in particular the French political ideology through which these policies are formed, on minority or lesser-used languages in France. Although their methodologies and research disciplines vary, there is a general consensus that the institutionalising and ideological forces of French Republicanism have had a profound and negative effect on regional languages in France through the promotion of French as the sole legitimate public language.

Whether by accident or design, regional languages were both a major cause and a casualty of the process of nation building... The principal objective of French republicans was arguably to promote French – not to suppress regional languages – but the effect was the same: to use the full power of the state to promote unilingualism (Cole and Williams 2004:555-556).

Because of this official language policy, there is no state institution directly working for the promotion of the Breton language (Cole and Williams 2004:567). Although in recent years there has been a slow acknowledgement of the existence of regional languages and, in certain circles, a recognition that these languages are of intrinsic

value to the cultural heritage of the region and also of France (Aillagon 2003), state support of Breton comes in the form of modest budgets to fund cultural activities, mostly through the Regional Council, and some political rhetoric by politicians who know that whatever they say, the Constitutional Council, will stymie any initiative that seeks to give the language statutory authority.

In response to the influence and impact of French language policy, in Brittany a number of associations and institutions have been set up by activists to promote Breton, to engage in language planning initiatives, or to act as language advocates in the interests of the Breton language. The most significant of these is the *Ofis ar Brezhoneg* [Breton Language Office] but others such as the Brittany Cultural Institute and the Brittany Cultural Council also play a role (Cole and Loughlin 2003; Cole and Williams 2004:567). A number of researchers, including Cole and Williams and Sonntag (2003) have noted that, in the absence of an official structure for language policy and planning, “a constellation of individuals, semi-official agencies and voluntary associations” (Cole and Williams 2004:566) has evolved, addressing the issue. Sonntag suggests “it is more of a “network” than a movement, characterised by tendencies (in the plural), diversity and polemics, particularly in its linguistic rendition as disputes over who speaks “real” Breton raze” (Sonntag 2003:43). Both suggest this lack of political cohesion is problematic for the development of planning initiatives. According to Sonntag, “the movement’s diversity is undoubtedly one of the sources of its political weakness” (ibid), although, as argued, a more unitary approach to Breton language activism is also potentially problematic in the way it promotes difference.

In many of the interviews conducted for this thesis, participants were asked what, if anything, they thought needed to be done to support or promote language diversity generally, and the Breton language specifically, and whose responsibility this was. Frequently people expressed a view that the promotion or protection of Breton was the responsibility of various levels of government. Nolwenn, Yannick and Solenn suggested government at a national or regional level was primarily responsible for ensuring Breton continued:

Je pense que [la responsabilité] est surtout avec les élus de l'État français (...). C'est eux qui ont les institutions pour pouvoir sauver, mettre à disposition ou au moins prendre les mesures principales. Ils savent, on sait, très bien comment sauver la langue bretonne. (Yannick)

[I think [responsibility] is above all with the elected members of the French State... They are the ones who have the institutions with the power to save, to provide, or at least to take the major steps... They know, we know very well how to save the Breton language.]

Olier also saw a clearly articulated language policy and well-supported planning initiatives as fundamental to the future of Breton. He also saw the French State and the Breton Regional Council as playing a fundamental role in this, but wanted the Breton Language Office to be the official body to implement this: in other words, that Brittany develop its own elite language planning and policy-making body, similar to the Welsh Language Board.

Others, such as Anna, Yann, Marie, Fañch and Aziliz suggested there was a hierarchy of responsibility or that there was a shared responsibility between the state and individual speakers. Yann noted how in effect, almost all Breton language planning initiatives were directly or indirectly funded by the French state:

Qui est-ce qui paie les enseignants bretons, qui est-ce qui paie les institutions régionales qui s'occupent du breton, qui officialisent le breton ? C'est l'État. (Yann)

[Who is it who pays the Breton teachers? Who funds the regional institutions which look after Breton, which officialise Breton? It is the [French] State.]

He argued, however that this funding was inadequate, as was the lack of a comprehensive linguistic policy and a genuine political will that would put the

necessary mechanisms in place to promote the language. This being the case, « *si c'est plus l'État [qui va favoriser le développement du breton], si c'est pas la région, alors c'est les personnes* » [if it is not the State [that will promote the development of the language], if it is not the regions, then it is the people]. Anna similarly suggested: “*the problem is that the French government is not very keen on promoting Breton ... so it is coming from the part of the people... we know we can't count on Paris for that.*” Likewise Fañch thought that officialisation of Breton was important, but this was not in itself enough to guarantee the future of the language, it also depended on people wanting to speak, and having the opportunity to speak the language. In particular, while he thought funding was important, it was equally as important that people had control over how policy initiatives were implemented: « *les gens ne cherchent pas à ce qu'il y ai un dirigisme sur la langue, mais c'est au moins soutenir en fait toutes les créations qui peuvent se faire* » [People aren't asking for dirigisme from the French state, but at least that it supports all the things they want to with the language].

In this sense then there is the idea that since the government won't do it, the people are forced to act, but in this idea is the belief that in the first instance the government can and should do something to promote and protect Breton. There is a latent belief in the power and responsibility of the state to directly affect the future of Breton in a positive sense and the capacity of language planning and policy to promote Breton as a spoken language, through the provision of education, its official recognition or the ratification of the charter of minority or lesser-used languages.

Metig also saw a hierarchy of responsibility, but for her, this was bottom-up. She suggested: « *Dans la société je pense qu'il y a des responsabilités à chaque échelle. Petite échelle mais aussi très haute. Et c'est d'abord celles aux bretons eux mêmes* » [In society I think that there are responsibilities at each rung. Little rungs but very high ones too. And first of all it is up to the Bretons themselves]. For her, the practice of Breton was a grass-roots phenomenon that relied on the practice of individuals and was not only, or even primarily, the direct responsibility of the state. Serge similarly thought that the most important thing to promote Breton was to “*speak Breton*” rather than operate at a corpus or status planning level. In other words, what

was important was that people continue the practice of the language, rather than plan its future.

Francis suggested that “*in a centralised country like France you can’t take it for granted that the language would survive in its own way*”, but he then qualified this statement: “*Language planning, plannification and normalization as they have it... I’m not sure it is very useful*”. For Francis the French model was ineffective in the case of Breton: “*it is not very productive to try to do for Breton what is being done or has been done for French... we must have a more pragmatic [approach]*”. For Francis what was necessary was a diversity of approaches offering not just a choice of language, but also a choice of how to learn Breton and of pedagogical methods, depending on people’s motivation.

Frequently, though not exclusively, therefore, when asked about language policy and planning, many research participants saw the State as playing a key role, if not a primary one, in directing initiatives. This was expressed as a perceived need for officialisation and funding as a part, often a significant part, of a broader planning context that created greater possibilities for Breton to be spoken.

While there was some diversity of opinion on what should be done to, or for, Breton, there was nonetheless a consensus that it was useful or necessary for something to be done. While a number of the participants, particularly Yann, Francis and Sylvestre, who were also Breton academics, noted the complexity of the issue and argued against unilateral responses to diversity, none of the participants sought to approach diversity from a critical or post-structural perspective. Rather, responses were directed at providing more effective interventions at a status and corpus level through, for example, the development of opportunities to use the language in public and particularly through the provision of Breton language education.

*Il faudrait mettre en place une véritable politique linguistique (...)
qu’on puisse avoir des cours de breton pour ceux qui le désire. (Yann)*

[A real linguistic policy has to be put into place... so we can have Breton classes for those who want them.]

In both the research and the broader literature therefore, there is a frequent reiteration of the important role officialization, institutionalisation and policy play in the promotion of Breton. This applies both to the way in which state policy was perceived to have caused language shift through prescription and the stigmatisation of the language (an Du 2000) as well as to the ways in which institutions at a regional, national and supra-national level now have the capacity to support and promote Breton through policy and planning initiatives. One of the most significant and high-profile of these institutions is the Breton Language Office.

The Breton Language Office: a case study in Breton language planning

Ofis ar Brezhoneg, or the Breton Language Office, was created in 1999 for the purpose of « l'étude, la définition et la mise en œuvre des actions à entreprendre afin de promouvoir et de développer l'emploi de la langue bretonne dans tous les domaines de la vie sociale et publique » (ar Mogn 2002:5) [the study, the definition and the undertaking of actions to promote and develop the usage of the Breton language in all areas of social and public life.] It was set up as an association, under a 1901 law designed to legislate, and regulate, the rights of French citizens to form collective organizations, and receives funding principally from the Conseil Régional de Bretagne [the Breton Regional Council] as well as a number of other public and private sources. While it receives funding from the State, it is not itself a public institution and does not hold official status. As Cole and Williams note: "its tools are those of persuasion rather than obligation or constraint, since the Breton Language Office has no powers of compulsion" (Cole and Williams 2004:569). Nonetheless, the Breton Language Office plays an important role in sociological research and language advocacy and promotes itself as the primary linguistic organization for work on both the corpus and status of the Breton language.

The Breton Language Office has four sites: in Rennes, Nantes, Ploemeur and Carhaix. These locations reflect to an extent the focus and priorities of Office: Rennes, as the capital of Brittany (but traditionally not Breton speaking); Nantes the former capital and largest city, but since the Second World War no longer a part of the administrative region of Brittany (and not traditionally Breton speaking either); a small office in the town of Ploemeur in Morbihan; and Carhaix, a large town in central Finistère, representing a traditional base of Breton speakers.

The research of the Breton Language Office is divided into five main areas: A sociological *observatory* of the Breton language, working to gather statistical information on Breton; *language heritage* working on the historical context and preservation aspects of Breton as well as the “normalisation” of toponymy; the service of *terminology*, or work on the language corpus, including the definition and promotion of a Breton standard; *translation*, providing a service to the public and private sector; and a *development agency* aimed at promoting the Breton language through initiatives and campaigns (ar Mogn 2002; www.ofis-bzh.org).

The Office aims, therefore, to be a comprehensive site of information on the Breton language and to offer services designed to promote the language. It maintains detailed statistical information on Breton and strives to disseminate this information through regular publications and via its website: www.ofis-bzh.org. In addition it offers translation services and language support to public and private organizations that are seeking to develop the usage of Breton in their enterprises, often as a commercial activity. The Office also maintains close contacts with a number of other organizations aimed at promoting minority or lesser-used languages in Europe, most notably in the Basque country and Wales, as well as the European Bureau of Lesser-Used Languages and a number of other advocacy organizations. These diverse agencies and organizations frequently share resources and expertise, and follow a similar intellectual and ideological approach to the issue of minority or lesser-used languages in Europe.

In an interview given during the research for this thesis, the director of the Breton Language Office, Olier Ar Mogn, outlined his vision for the work of the Breton

Language Office. His hope was for « *une société bretonne réellement démocratique qui assurerait le droit de tous citoyens, d'avoir la vie la plus complète possible dans la langue de son choix* » [*a Breton society which is truly democratic which would assure the right of all citizens to live, to have the fullest life possible, in the language of their choice*]; in other words, a normalised and legally protected societal bilingualism.

Ar Mogn's vision for Breton was broad and ambitious:

On travaille pour donner un avenir à cette langue. Ce qu'on fait aujourd'hui, on le mesurera dans vingt ans, trente ans, cinquante ans : si on a pris la bonne voie, ou si on s'est trompé, si on a pris les impasses, on verra.

[we work to give a future to this language. What we are doing today we will measure in 20 or 30 or 40 years, if we have taken the right path or if we have been mistaken, if we have taken dead ends, we will see.]

It was clear that Ar Mogn saw the role of the Breton Language Office as preparing both the Breton language and public for the time when the last generation to have learned Breton as a first language has passed away and to ensure that strategies and programmes were in place for Breton to be adopted by new speakers in new contexts. This meant, ostensibly, a reorientation of Breton away from traditional, rural contexts, towards new generations in urban centres. For example, Ar Mogn noted that in future decades the greatest population growth in Brittany will be on an axis between Rennes and Nantes and that this would become an important site for the promotion of Breton in future language initiatives, despite the fact that this is a part of Brittany where Breton was not historically spoken.

In this capacity the BLO sees itself as playing a significant role in developing corpus and status planning initiatives designed to modernise and strengthen Breton. Its objectives are not simply the protection of Breton, but developing the language by

introducing it into new, prestigious domains and raising its image and status of the language so that symbolically and functionally it became a natural part of the identity of Brittany.

While the Breton Language Office primarily produces public information, and while a number of its services are aimed specifically at generating broader public awareness and support for Breton (such as the Development Agency's 2001 *ya d'ar brezhoneg* [yes to Breton] campaign), its main focus is towards providing services and information which will be used primarily by institutions, activists and other groups with specific interests in Breton. Ar Mogn, described the role of the Office in terms of an intermediary between Breton speakers, the many diverse groups of Breton activists, and political institutions, including the Regional Council and the French State:

Le ministère de la Culture très clairement souhaitait avoir un interlocuteur bien déterminé, bien identifié sur cette question des langues régionales. Un interlocuteur, je dirais « sérieux ».

[The minister of culture very clearly wished to see a well determined, well identified interlocutor on this question of regional languages. An interlocutor I would call 'serious'.]

The Breton Language Office therefore plays a pragmatic role as a quasi-legitimate spokesperson for Breton linguistic affairs. In undertaking “serious” research it provides a politically acceptable face to Breton language affairs and serves as a moderating influence between more radical political positions. It aims to be, in short, a professional organization that activists, governments and the private sector can do business with.

The Breton Language Office therefore claims both to be a serious, scientifically rigorous research institute and the peak advocacy organization for the language. Indeed, it represents the corpus and status planning of the language as an objective, scientific process that is beyond the sphere of partisan politics. However, these roles

of investigator, intermediary and advocate are sometimes problematic for the Office. From a Republican viewpoint, the Office is a clearly politically motivated, representing a vector of *communautarianisme* and as such is antithetical to the interests of France. On the other side of the coin, many language activist groups are also critical of the way the BLO represents itself as a quasi-official, and therefore legitimate institution, noting in fact that it has the status of a cultural association rather than an official body. As Sonntag (2003) pointed out, there is significant division within the Breton language movement and the BLO is not above political disputes, despite its rhetoric.

A more salient criticism about the agendas of organizations such as the Breton Language Office, however, comes from Lenora Timm (2001; 2003). Although she does not single out the office for particular attention, she is broadly critical of the way the contemporary Breton language movement pays scant attention to older first-language speakers and traditional practices of Breton. She suggests activists are “engaged in corpus planning, moulding and shaping a new form of Breton in conformity with their ideas about what Breton as a national language should be” (Timm 2001:450) and which is designed to “renovate Breton to make it capable of expressing anything” (Timm 2003:36, see also Sonntag 2003). Timm is critical of the significant changes that have occurred to Breton in the name of standardisation and linguistic purification, through corpus reforms aimed primarily at controlling the development of the language and eliminating French loan words. She contrasts this with traditional Breton practices and suggests that activists “had in mind a rather complete overhaul of Breton grammar and lexis which were judged to be too deficient and French influenced to serve as a proper basis for renovation” (Timm 2000:148). The effect of language planning for Timm has therefore been an increased sense of social distance between speakers of ‘neo-’ and ‘traditional’ Breton.

This argument was borne out in the research done on the Breton Language Office. Breton has always been a language of diversity and difference and this extends to place names and the ways in which they are written. However, in response to a number of orthographic inconsistencies, the Breton Language Office had embarked

on a project of toponymic « *rectification des autographes* » [*rectification of spelling*] in which the spelling of place names would be rationalised according to a linguistic standard. For the Breton Language Office:

Il est évident que la chose qu'il faut faire c'est écrire [un] mot correctement, selon les règles de l'orthographe bretonne (...) On travaille, on lutte pour faire comprendre qu'il faut écrire une chose une seule fois, et cette idée progresse aussi dans les mentalités en Bretagne (...). La langue bretonne a ses règles propres, c'est une question de statut déjà, c'est de faire passer l'idée qu'on n'a pas à habiller la langue bretonne avec les habits de la langue française : que la langue bretonne a ses propres règles et ses propres habits. (Olier)

[it is obvious that what has to be done is to write the word correctly according to the Breton rules of orthography... we are working, we are fighting to make it understood that something must be written only once and that idea is also developing in people's minds in Brittany... Breton has its proper rules, it is a question of status, it says that we have not dressed the Breton language in the clothes of French: that the Breton language has its own rules and its own clothes.]

In response to the argument that this would prove an imposition to locals who were used to their own orthography, Ar Mogn commented:

Évidemment quand vous avez dix mille personnes qui habitent dans un quartier donné qui sont habituées à écrire leur nom de quartier d'une certaine façon, et que d'un jour à l'autre on leur dit 'non, c'est plus comme ça, c'est comme ça maintenant', donc ce n'est pas facile, il faut expliquer ce qu'il faut faire passer.

[obviously when there are ten thousand people who live in a neighbourhood who are used to writing the name of their

neighbourhood in a certain way, and from one day to the next we say, 'no it is no longer like this, it is like this now'. Well it is not easy, we have to explain what has to happen.]

For Olier this rationalisation was necessary because many of the place-names in question used variations of spelling or had been transformed by the French rules of orthography. This, he suggested, created confusion, but it can also be seen to be detracting from the ontological status of the language as a national symbol. The fact that locals were used to writing the name of their village a certain way or that these differences had in some cases existed for centuries did not overrule this linguistic principle. In this sense it can be argued that in the normative policy of toponymic rectification, the amenity and habit of the local population is considered less important than the overarching principle and ideology: the creation of a consistent, prestigious linguistic standard free of unwarranted French « *aberrations* ». Clearly here there is a large social and ideological difference between the Language Office and the daily lived practice of locals, both Breton-speaking and non-Breton-speaking who may or may not share the socio-linguistic and socio-political goals of the Office.

The issue of normativity and the promotion of a prestigious language standard is also evident in the 'terminology' service known as TermBret. TermBret's ultimate goal is the production of a standardised Breton language, something that hitherto has not been universally accepted. It works on the corpus of the language by standardising orthography, as well as coining new, specialised or technical terminology that may not have existed in traditional contexts. In an informal interview, an employee of the Breton Language Office described to me the process through which standardised Breton is produced. Firstly a number of linguists collate examples of a term and make a recommendation based both on historical precedence and terminology in other languages, particularly Welsh and French. This recommendation is put before a board known as the *Commission de Travail de TermBret*, which is an open group of interested Breton speakers, for comment. If agreed, the word is recommended to a body known as the *Conseil Scientifique*, made up of language experts, for approval. If there is serious disagreement the term is sent back to the Breton Language Office for further debate and research. Those terms that are accepted by the *Conseil*

Scientifique are then published in a volume known as the *Geriaoueg al levraouegoù* [library vocabulary] that is sent to schools and libraries and is considered, by the Breton Language Office at least, to be the definitive standardised form of Breton.

In many ways the Breton Language Office seeks to equip Breton for the modern world, in particular in terms of creating a linguistic standard, and producing a lexicon that is not derivative of French or English, but in doing so, there is a tendency for this to appear prescriptive: that an oligarchy of linguists, language planners and experts is in the best position to decide what constitutes the Breton language and what should be done on behalf of it and the Breton people. Decisions, such as the rationalisation of the spelling of place names and lexicon, are made in many instances on behalf of speakers and are deemed to be for their own good. Whilst it can certainly be argued that this is in itself a necessary project which will promote the possibility of new Breton speakers to fully and naturally express themselves in that language in the future, this does not fully acknowledge the lived practice of Breton by many speakers who do not contextualise the language issue in similarly political or nationalistic ways. Although many Breton language learners may appreciate the work, it is doubtful that traditional first-language speakers will change their habitual linguistic practices to reflect this new language. To the contrary, there is the potential for these linguistic differences to exacerbate the generational language “fault line” (Timm 2001:452) between first and second-language speakers, if such changes are perceived as flagrant or unnecessary (Jones 1996).

Despite its explicit rejection of French linguistic influence into the Breton language therefore, the irony of the Breton Language Office’s project of promoting Breton as a prestigious linguistic standard through clearly defined policy and planning objectives is itself deeply informed by, if not mimetic of, Republican French language ideology (Timm 2003:36). This implies a view of diversity that sees the need for Breton to become stronger, more reified and more normative, so that it can compete with French as a relevant and complete language of Breton society. Discursively, it frames the issue of linguistic diversity and the promotion of Breton in ways that are strongly prescriptive and authoritative: it sees the institutionalisation of Breton and the

intervention of a peak language body in policy and planning initiatives as language as an appropriate and necessary strategy.

Clearly this desire comes from a concern for the future of the language and the capacity for Breton people to remain in touch with their linguistic heritage, but as a cultural practice, and a language epistemology, it is very different to more local, traditional, grass-roots language ideologies. Diversity and difference within the language may still be valorised in a symbolic sense, but only to the extent that they do not inhibit universal intercomprehension within the language, and only to the extent that it remains true to a codified set of rules that, among other things, seeks to divest Breton as much as possible of French influence. In this way, many of the subtle differences and localisms that characterised traditional Breton are being lost in an ideological drive to modernise and develop Breton as a high prestige language. One danger of this is that in creating a prestigious norm, and then excluding much of the traditional language practice from this norm, the marginalised status of local forms of Breton is simply reinforced. In turn this does very little to encourage people to the language.

It is not surprising that activists frequently frame the issue of diversity in ways that reflect mainstream French views, given the strong socio-symbolic influence that France has in the region, as well as the fact that practically all Breton speakers are French speakers and were educated in the French school system where these Republican values were taught. What this does underscore, however, is the need for a critical engagement in the issue, so that such ideological orientations can be brought into the open.

Problematising foundationalism in Breton language activism

Language ideologies are not just ways of thinking about language, but also important sites of symbolic power that discursively orient and position the way language diversity is represented and understood. Through language ideology symbolic power

is regulated and reproduced. However, unless these ideologies are made explicit, it is very difficult for this power to be critiqued and contested.

In a great deal of language activism, including work done by the Breton Language Office and Diwan, the promotion of Breton is effected to a greater or lesser extent through discourses of nationalism and foundationalism, through the desire to see Breton promoted as a reified, normative and privileged language. This being the case, it is important to explore the potential effects and consequences of employing a foundationalist language ideology in the promotion of Breton. In revisiting the six tropes explored in chapter one with specific reference to Breton it is possible to begin to approach the issue more critically.

The first trope is that languages are promoted as “finite, stable, standardized, rule-governed instrument[s] of communication” (Ricento 2006:14). On the one hand this allows Breton to be identified as a discrete language, not a patois or dialect of French and a language that is itself complete and possesses the full range of linguistic functions that other languages do. This suggests that Breton can be a strong language like French, and its equivalence, given the right circumstances.

On the other hand, however, as discussed, this has the potential to devalue and marginalise non-standard forms of Breton and more diverse forms of linguistic difference. This has the possibility of reproducing a socio-symbolic field of linguistic capital in which the language practices of some speakers are considered far more worthy and valuable than others. To paraphrase Pennycook, although such arguments may be preferable to blinkered views that take the dominance of French as the norm, they nevertheless remain caught within the same paradigm (Pennycook 2006:69-70). In this way, they reproduce the discursive framework that promotes a formalisation and hierarchisation of language practices, seeking to promote Breton as the high-diglossia, rather than seeking to challenge the more profound ways in which the trope reproduces relations of power in language.

A second issue, as discussed, is that promoting the status of Breton through the development of a prestigious, standardised form does not necessarily reflect the

desire many people have to speak Breton for affective and personal reasons, particularly when Breton is represented in such a foundationalist way. While for some, a sense of language strength is important, for others, it is more important that a language create a sense of local, personal community and affectivity. Languages can be both prestigious and local, both high and low languages in diglossic situation, but in focussing language initiatives at promoting a prestigious and, in the minds of many a socially decontextualised norm, many local speakers may feel unrepresented and marginalised, particularly when their own personal linguistic identities are criticised for being overly influenced by French.

The second foundationalist trope is that of the privileged link between the language and a national or ethno-cultural identity. This allows Breton to be seen as the privileged vehicle of an ethno-national identity, an inalienable part of Breton cultural and linguistic heritage and permits activists to argue that speaking Breton is a fundamental right. It also mobilises the political discourses of nationalism and the notion of a Breton people.

This can act as a powerful site of identity construction and help promote a sense of imagined community, but it can also lead to notions of ethnic purity and particularism that are unhelpful. As Timm (2001), Betros (2001) and Jones (1998) all argue, the politicisation of language, particularly when it is promoted through a hegemonic sense of national identity, does not often translate into popular support. To the contrary, there is evidence that the promotion of Breton as a national language may alienate many people and may seem unimportant to many others. Cole and Loughlin (2003) note that most Bretons consider themselves French as well as Breton, and while there is a strong sense of regional identity: “this is not considered as being in opposition to an overarching French nationhood. Regional identity is not a surrogate nationality... Bretons are proud of their region within the French nation” (Cole and Loughlin 2003:273). Likewise, Yann argued:

Au sein du Mouvement Nationaliste Breton, le grand modèle c'est les catalans (...) il y a une volonté de normalisation comme en Catalogne. Donc normalisation, c'est à dire, remplacer le français

par le breton, c'est à dire modifier la pratique linguistique. Et ça, par contre, la population, elle n'est pas du tout prête à suivre ça. (Yann)

[At the heart of the Breton Nationalist Movement, the big model is the Catalans... they want [linguistic] normalisation like in Catalonia. Normalisation means to replace French with Breton, to modify the linguistic practice. But, to the contrary, the population is not at all ready to follow this].

One major drawback of the deployment of this trope then is that the belief that Breton is the privileged language of the Breton people does not reflect the linguistic reality of those Bretons who do not speak the language, but nonetheless feel themselves to be Breton. A Breton from St Malo, Rennes or Brest is not less Breton for not speaking the language.

Moreover, the promotion of a privileged link between a prestigious, standardised Breton and Brittany does not necessarily equate with the promotion of diversity and can actually represent the promotion of linguistic unilateralism. This has consequences not only for non-standard varieties of Breton, but migrant languages and other linguistic identities that are not directly represented by state and regional language policies. The explicit linking of a language to a territory and a people ignores or devalues the breadth of language diversity that exists in any place. As Fañch states:

Une langue, un territoire, non, surtout pas ! La France va parler le français, la Bretagne va parler le breton, la Corse va parler le corse. Non, personnellement je suis absolument contre. Il faut parler le maximum de langues partout dans le plus de lieux possibles. En Bretagne il n'y a pas que le breton, il y a le français, il y a le breton, il y a la question du gallo aussi qui est évoquée. Il y a la question même de plusieurs formes du breton qui sont parlées. Donc c'est un enrichissement. Cette volonté d'uniformiser le breton et de l'imposer après à toute la société bretonne, c'est exactement le même

raisonnement qu'a la France et l'Académie Française en uniformisant le français sur tous les coins de la république (...) c'est une grave erreur. Si on tue le français on tuera le breton en même temps si on l'uniformise (...). Ça sera une catastrophe linguistique et sociale.

[one language on one territory, no certainly not! France will speak French, Brittany will speak Breton, Corsica will speak Corsican. No, personally I am absolutely against that. We must speak the maximum number of languages in as many places as possible. In Brittany there isn't only Breton, there is French, there is Breton, there is also the question of Gallo. There is even the question of many forms of Breton which are spoken. So it is enriching. To try and standardise Breton and to impose it afterwards to the whole Breton society is exactly the same reasoning that France and the Académie Française had in standardizing French in every corner of France ...we will kill Breton if we standardize the language. It would be a linguistic and social catastrophe.]

In particular the issue of social equity is important when it comes to migrants and speakers of other languages, including French. In recent times Brittany has seen an influx of migrants from many parts of the world who have brought their own language skills and linguistic identities. This too is a part of the linguistic diversity of Brittany but one that is usually ignored in this trope. How do Breton language policies treat such languages? Is the promotion of Breton a part of a more general multilingual or poly-lingual environment or is it the promotion of Breton as the privileged language of a territory? As recent anti-Muslim violence in Corsica suggests, minority or lesser-used languages do not always represent ideals of equity and social justice, but can also mask issues of xenophobia, isolationism and racism. Is writing “Arabi fora” [“Arabs out” in Corsican] on the wall of an immigrant family’s home really a sign of successful language promotion or of the promotion of intolerance, isolationism and hatred (Chemin 2004)?

The third trope is that Breton is under threat, specifically from French. Clearly Breton language speakers have historically been marginalised and discriminated against and an aggressive French language policy played a large role in this. Clearly too, the number of Breton speakers has collapsed in the past century. This is the basic thesis of Eve Vetter's book *Plus de Breton: Conflit linguistique en Bretagne rurale*⁹ (Vetter 1999). In it she suggests that there was, and is, a fundamental conflict between Breton and French in rural Brittany.

One problem with this trope is that representing diversity as a conflict between two antagonistic, separate languages is rather polemical: people speak *either* Breton or French and the two codes should not mix. In particular this encourages defensive, protectionist strategies that can be isolationist and sees issues of loan words, blending and *metissage* between languages as a dangerous threat rather than a productive possibility. However, the linguistic identities of many people include many diverse elements of both languages unproblematically. Older speakers are often comfortable using some Latin-based words, and younger speakers frequently use French idioms and grammatical structures (Timm 2001). Neither group is less authentic for bringing in elements of other languages, rather their practices are different and reflect the different linguistic identities of the speakers.

The fourth trope of foundationalism is that something can, or should be done, to Breton and for Breton, and that language activism in the form of planning and policy is a legitimate initiative to undertake with some possibility of success. Initiatives are therefore put in place to support the language and encourage people to speak it. These can involve corpus and status planning as is being carried out by the Breton Language Office, as well as acquisition planning, particularly through the introduction of Breton language education, including bilingual and immersion streams and diverse other forms of language advocacy and representation.

As discussed, such a view makes assumptions about the ontological prior status of a language and the capacity and legitimacy of activists to effect change. It engages and

⁹ The translation of the title is difficult because of a deliberate ambiguity, meaning both 'More Breton' and 'No More Breton': linguistic conflict in rural Brittany.

reinforces the belief that languages are instruments that can be manipulated through the judicious use of interventionist policy and planning initiatives, much like a Keynesian economist can manage the economy by pulling the levers of government and industry. Again this reiterates the relevance and importance of a standard, normative language and the power of the language planner to manage a language.

One issue in this logic is that it is very difficult to measure the success, or otherwise, of these initiatives. Olier acknowledged that the time frame through which language shifts can be measured is one of decades, far beyond the funding frameworks of Breton language initiatives and the duration of governments. Partisan politics, and particularly the opposition of Breton language support by some Republicans, means that the ongoing support for any initiatives is not guaranteed (Cole and Williams 2004).

A second issue is that the efficacy of many initiatives is debatable and difficult to measure. Language initiatives might be deemed to be a success if they slow, but do not stop the decline of speaker numbers, but they might equally be ineffective or in fact promote language shift. In a number of countries where languages have been promoted and protected through officialisation and the implementation of a comprehensive language policy, outcomes are still very poor. Mendel and McDonald both note the ironic situation in Brittany that, following the creation of a separate Breton language option in high schools in 1978, the number of students who enrolled in Breton the following year actually decreased by 50% at *collège* and 30% at *lycée* (McDonald 1989:62; Mendel 2004:71). Although there were no doubt many contributing factors to lead students not to pursue Breton, there is strong evidence that the shift of Breton to this more formal context played a major role in the decline of its popularity.

One problem with this is that if it is seen as the responsibility of the authorities to protect and promote Breton, then this diminishes the responsibility of ordinary people to keep the language alive by learning and speaking it. Yann notes this issue:

On laisse ça aux militants parce que ça arrange tout le monde. Ça arrange la population, comme ça, ça lui permet de faire le deuil de la langue, ça arrange les militants parce qu'on leur confie les pouvoirs financiers ou symboliques, ça arrange les décideurs politiques parce qu'il y a quelqu'un qui s'en occupe, mais on ne s'intéresse pas aux locuteurs, on ne s'intéresse pas au breton en fait. (Yann)

[We leave it to the militants because it suits everyone. It suits the population because it allows them to mourn the language, it suits the militants because we grant them financial or symbolic power, it suits the political decision makers because there is someone who is looking after it, but we are not interested in the speakers, we are not interested in Breton in fact.]

The paradox of this trope is that, while everyone thinks something should be done, everyone is expecting someone else to do it. As a metaphor to describe complex and changing language practices, the idea that Breton is a discrete language under threat from French, or some other enemy, abstracts the responsibility people themselves have for practicing a language. Meanwhile, the diminishing language practices of first-language Breton speakers in private contexts, goes on outside this intellectualised debate and with very little acknowledgement or support. In other words, public and official practices of Breton tend to be privileged because of their greater symbolic status while private practices remain marginal to the interest of activists seeking to promote Breton as a strong, privileged and normative language.

The fifth trope suggests that languages exist in relation to one another and these relationships are ordered and describable. In the case of Breton this relationship is also one of “asymmetrical power relations” (Ricento 2006:15) and socio-symbolic inequity: Breton is a minority or lesser-used language that exists in a vulnerable relationship to a dominant French. Through this trope the argument is made that Breton needs support and funding to be protected and needs strengthening to become more like French. As Jean-Pierre Thomin argued in relation to minority or lesser-used languages in France: “We must push for a language... fund to help the weakest

languages converge towards the stronger languages” (quoted in Rivallin 2005). In this way languages such as Breton are as good as French, just smaller or more marginalised.

While such a position acknowledges political inequities, such arguments tend to reproduce the view that languages need to be strong and clearly defined in order to compete with their more powerful competitors. In this way, while language is being identified as a site of symbolic power, discourse and language ideology are not. The equanimity with which Breton is positioned uncritically as a lesser-used equivalence of a language like French or English therefore reinforces the notion that foundationalist language theory is objective and axiomatic, rather than a position that promotes specific discourses and specific views on language. In not acknowledging the socio-cultural and socio-political specificity of this language theory, language activists are ignoring the profound ways in which language theory itself is an ideological vehicle used to promote specific interests (Blommaert 1999; Timm 2000; Bauman and Briggs 2003).

In particular, at issue is the way in which employing a foundationalist model of language in relation to minority or lesser-used languages discursively reiterates the value and prestige of dominant languages as the most useful, and most powerful languages. In desiring to assert the relevance and strength of Breton for example, activists are also asserting its marginal or minority status in society, notwithstanding arguments that Breton should be, or could be a powerful language or one that fulfils the practical and symbolic needs of its speakers. For many Bretons who do not speak Breton the constant reiteration of Breton as a minority language under threat may not actually encourage them to learn the language.

The problem with identifying a language like Breton as an equal yet lesser-used language like French is that it tends to promote the socio-symbolic roles of language that French is already very good at, and marginalises those roles that Breton may be of greater significance. For example, a foundationalist model of language valorises the utility of languages by promoting standardised forms of language as efficient vehicles of communication. Likewise, difference within a language is seen as an

impediment to communication. In this sense, for many people, French is clearly seen as a much more functionally useful language than Breton in many aspects of daily life. Conversely those aspects of language in which Breton might have an advantage – in communicating affectivity, conviviality and community – are relatively understated in a model of language that privileges standardisation and universalism.

In this case then it is easy to see Breton as a language that is primarily deficient in terms of broad social utility (certainly less useful than French) rather than being advantaged in terms of personal affectivity, personal fulfilment and the promotion of local identities. As chapter three has shown, there is a large amount of evidence to suggest that this was in fact the case for Breton in the 19th and 20th centuries when French was adopted by many Breton speakers because of a perception that it was more useful, more widely used, more erudite, and therefore better. Take for example the words of Pierre-Jakez Hélias, reflecting on the comments of his grandfather in his own autobiography:

“With French you can go everywhere. With only Breton, you’re tied on a short rope, like a cow to his post. You have to graze around your tether. And the meadow grass is never plentiful” (Hélias 1978:135).

By positioning Breton as a direct alternative to French, it is being placed on clines of utility and prestige with French. Does modern, standard Breton have the linguistic capital to compete with French in the minds of Breton speakers, and potential speakers, in terms of utility, prestige and identity? Clearly, speaking Breton is an important identity marker for a large number of Bretons. But for the vast majority who do not speak the language, it seems less important. For example a 1994 survey showed only 5% of parents in the department of Finistère wished to send their children to a bilingual school given the opportunity (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003:14). Similarly Cole and Loughlin note that in a survey they conducted in Brittany “support for expenditure on regional languages was very low down on the list of popular priorities” of future regional expenditure (Cole and Loughlin 2003:271). While many Bretons profess a desire to see Breton maintained as a regional language (Broudic 1999; Abalain 2000), they do not believe it is their responsibility to do it.

In this sense then the trope that Breton and French are separate languages in relationship to each other has the potential to reiterate the idea that this relationship is a subordinate one. Consequently, if speakers wish to avoid subordination they are better off speaking French. This trope therefore uncritically reproduces the logic that saw French come to dominate Breton in the 19th and 20th centuries.

As discussed, if Breton is to be promoted by activists, educators and linguists as a language, it makes sense to build on its strengths, for example to promote the role of Breton as a meaningful and diverse tool, or process, of conviviality and as a way of re-establishing and re-articulating social links between people across space and time. Conversely, it does not make sense to build on the weaknesses of Breton, to promote it as an alternative to French, as a radicalised political statement or a reified and fixed identity articulating a strict and rigid view of the world. Such projects are unlikely to motivate people to learn the language or to build intergenerational and inter-community communicative networks that can build on the linguistic capacities already present in Brittany.

The final trope is that the epistemology through which language diversity is theorised and represented is both universal and objective, and therefore ideas about Breton, including foundationalism, are not specific political ideologies. In this way activists and planners claim that they are not being politically partisan but are representing diversity with objectivity and equanimity when they are promoting Breton.

Take for example the comments by Hervé Le Beq who was the director of Radio Kreizh Breizh (RKB), a community Breton-language radio station, quoted in an article by Gaëlle Dupont in the newspaper *Le Monde* on August 12 1999:

Attention ! Nous parlons breton, cela n'a rien à voir avec la politique... On n'en parle jamais à l'antenne. RKB n'est la radio ni d'un groupe, ni d'un parti... Elle défend un pays, une culture, une langue. (Dupont 1999)

[Listen! We speak Breton, it's got nothing to do with politics... We never speak about it on air. RKB does not belong to one group, nor one party... It defends a country, a culture, a language.]

Similarly Maël argued that Diwan was “*non-political, [it is] just fighting for the language*”. He noted how one of his teachers was a nationalist, but that he never brought his personal political opinions into the classroom. Maël suggested this was a deliberate strategy to distance Diwan from more radical elements in the Breton movement: “*they wanted to separate themselves from the terrorists*”. To this effect, article three of the Diwan Charter states:

Diwan est indépendant par rapport à toute formation philosophique, confessionnelle, politique, syndicale, etc. En conséquence, Diwan affirme que son combat exige que soient respectées les convictions religieuses, philosophiques ou politiques de tous ses membres, quel que soit l'éventail de celles-ci et tant qu'elles ne sont pas contraires à la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'homme. Cette indispensable tolérance conduit Diwan à défendre la laïcité dans son enseignement et à se porter garant de la liberté de pensée de chaque personne. (see appendix 2)

Diwan is independent of any philosophical, religious, political, syndicalist, or other conviction. In consequence, Diwan affirms that its struggle requires that the religious, philosophical and political convictions of all of its members be respected, whatever their scope, as long as they are not contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This indispensable tolerance leads Diwan to defend and promote a secular character in its teaching and to guarantee the liberty of thought for each person.

In both of these arguments the act of political activism is separated from that of language activism and the defence of Breton is seen as being apolitical. Clearly, however, language is a vector of politics, both in the ways it represents symbolic power, as well as the way in which it is used as a political tool of the state and other centres of power. As Ager suggests: “Language policy derives, like any other form of policy, both from the social, political, economic and cultural environment, and also from the policy priorities of political groups in power” (Ager 1999:14). Indeed language ideology is an incredibly effective way of reproducing symbolic capital and relations of power because of the way in which it tends to be reproduced uncritically

across the socio-political spectrum. Obliging Breton-speaking children to speak French was a political act and so too is seeking to legitimise the practice of Breton in new contexts or promoting dirigiste language policies. Rather than being apolitical, this trope hides the political agency of language activism. The consequence of this, once again, is that strategies that reproduce dominant tropes about the nature and status of Breton unproblematically, are fated to reproduce the political ideologies and inequities implicit in those tropes.

A further issue with presenting linguistic diversity through a language ideology informed by these foundationalist tropes is in the way broader senses of language diversity and difference is represented. There are many other forms of diversity and many other language identities that are not acknowledged through these tropes. While the issue of linguistic diversity is often represented by activists and linguists as the maintenance and promotion of Breton as a minority or lesser-used language in relation to a dominant and threatening French language, other people in Brittany may see the issue of linguistic diversity through a different language ideology, resulting in a different set of responses.

An Algerian migrant in Rennes for example, might see diversity in terms of her own language practices and the limited opportunities to speak Berber or Arabic. A French-speaking student might see diversity as the chance to learn Spanish. A Republican might see diversity as a threat to the principle of equality and their own linguistic capital. An historian might see diversity as the changing practice of Breton over time. A deaf person might see diversity as the greater acknowledgement and support of teaching sign languages. A post-structuralist might see diversity as the radically different ways in which people do things with different languages, the productive and performative hailing of the subject into being through language (Butler 1999:120; Pennycook 2004:17). An older first-language Breton speaker might see diversity not in terms of the relationship between Breton and French, but in terms of their own capacity to express themselves, as well as the differences between their Breton and the Breton of someone from a neighbouring *pays* or the differences between their Breton and the Breton their grandchildren are learning at a Diwan school. A grandchild might see diversity as the chance to create a closer bond

with her grandmother through Breton. Indeed, all of these diverse views are themselves aspects of linguistic diversity.

Each of these views represents a potentially different way of understanding language diversity and difference and of framing issues of language, identity and power. However, in the debate over the promotion of Breton, particularly through policy initiatives based on status, corpus and acquisition planning, many of these views of diversity are to a large extent marginalised or ignored.

Many Breton language activists are critical of “the strange defence of French which claimed it was in danger of suppression by greater political and economic forces when it had itself been responsible for ferociously suppressing regional languages on exactly the same grounds” (Ager 1999:160). It makes sense therefore to ensure that this hypocrisy is not unintentionally (or intentionally) reproduced by activists in their own work: that the promotion of Breton does not discriminate against speakers of other languages or non-standard varieties of Breton. In many examples of language planning, including the Breton Language Office, there is the potential for this to occur through an uncritical reproduction of a language ideology that seeks to regulate symbolic power around ideas about the nature and value of specific languages.

In much of this logic, what is being challenged is not the epistemology that configures power inequitably, but the right or ability of one language to be more powerful than another. In fact, because of the ways in which language activists frame their activism, they are reproducing these foundationalist tropes. Because of this, language activism that is not critically aware of its own discursive, epistemological and ideological framework is unlikely to be effective in breaking down or transgressing these tropes.

In this sense then, a foundationalist language ideology, articulated particularly through language policy and planning, promotes Breton, but does so in particular ways that do not necessarily have a resonance with many speakers. The promotion of Breton as a strong, normative and prestigious language and the positioning of Breton as part of a broader political movement has motivated a number of people to learn

Breton and become involved in the Breton language revival. However, many more have been left on the sidelines, either because the movement has failed to motivate them or they have felt marginalised.

To summarise this argument then, there are a number of potential negative consequences of promoting Breton as a strongly reified, normative, quasi-national language. The first is that such a project is likely to engage a small, highly motivated group of people, but either fail to engage, or actively dissuade a far larger section of the population, both Breton and non-Breton speaking, who do not share this particular language ideology and have different needs, desires and attitudes towards Breton. This has the potential to result in the linguistic ghettoization and isolationism that Yann feared. Moreover, it seems highly unlikely that such a position could convince large numbers of people to adopt this new language ideology, nor convince the French State of the necessity of supporting broad language initiatives aimed at promoting Breton in this way.

A second consequence is the way in which such an ideology is inclusive, or otherwise, of linguistic diversity within Breton and across the region. The formalisation and privileging of a prestigious Breton standard in effect marginalises non-standard language practices, be they different forms of Breton, other languages, or different language ideologies. Such an ideology can be criticised as being hypocritical and, again, is unlikely to engender broad support beyond the clique of language activists already engaged in such work.

In essence therefore, while such a language ideology is a deeply meaningful and strongly felt for many activists, the project of promoting a standardised, normative notion of Breton as the privileged vehicle of an ascribed national identity is alienating or unconvincing for many others who do not share their political or linguistic ideologies. Consequently, it is timely to explore ways in which language activism can become less dogmatic – less focussed on the need to change people's minds to see the issue of the promotion of Breton, and linguistic diversity more generally, the same way as many militants do under the belief that this is the only way of promoting a language – and more inclusive of the different ideologies of

different language speakers. This means becoming more focussed on appealing to the diverse needs and desires of people: not promoting Breton *per se* but promoting the capacities of people to speak the languages of their choice. In other words, rather than endeavouring to make Breton stronger and more powerful as a strategy for language promotion, and rather than opposing a perceived linguistic dominance with equally dominant language to act as a counterweight, it is timely to explore the ways in which Breton language activism can work on a critical level, in transgressing and subverting dominant power structures, including dominant and axiomatic language ideologies, rather than reproducing them.

Post-structural approaches to language activism

From this analysis of the foundationalist language tropes then, two main limitations emerge when they are applied to Breton language activism. The first is the way diversity within Breton and within Brittany is regulated and marginalised within a hierarchy of prestige and power. Simply put, the promotion of Breton is not necessarily empathetic to the promotion of language diversity and replicates the systems through which dominant languages marginalise other forms of linguistic diversity. The second is that framing the promotion of Breton in foundationalist terms is not necessarily effective, in the ways it fails to engender broad support through a focus on elite language practices. In general, while activism works hard to achieve concrete language goals, it discursively positions itself in either a subordinate or elitist position to French while marginalizing difference within and across Breton and alienating many speakers and potential speakers.

In response to this, it is timely to look beyond foundationalism to see how different language ideologies engage the issue of diversity in alternative and potentially productive ways. In particular, a post-structural approach offers possibilities for reconfiguring questions of language diversity and difference in ways that might avoid the problems of foundationalism, or at least help develop ways of engaging with the issues with more critical awareness. To paraphrase Pennycook, the debate is not about *whether* language activism is political, but about *how* it should be critical

(Pennycook 2001:43). This critical language activism “is not concerned with producing itself as the new orthodoxy, with prescribing new models and procedures for doing applied linguistics [in this case promoting linguistic diversity]. Rather, it is concerned with raising a host of new and difficult questions about knowledge, politics and ethics” (page 8).

One strategy of activism that is of particular interest is the promotion of transgressive acts aimed at disrupting the logic and axiomatic status of a foundationalist language ideology. This is the development of a sense of critical social activism, working to engage with the links between language, power and identity at a discursive, ideological and epistemological level, rather than (and as well as) in more explicit and direct ways. This post-structural approach is broadly informed by queer theory and activism, through which notions of normativity, appropriateness and ascribed, stable identities are both appropriated and transgressed to upset the ways in which they reproduce relations of power and privilege in society (Butler 1990;1993; Dollimore 1991; Warner 1991; Nelson 1999). For example, in the way a number of queer theorists have reappropriated pornography and sado-masochism as productive and creative sites of identity expression and empowerment (Califia 1994). One of the significant features of queer theory and activism is the way in which it is frequently creative, performative and publicly engaged, particularly in the fields such as literature, film and performance art.

In terms of Breton language activism, ‘queering’ Breton would mean working to critique and challenge the ways in which normative notions of Breton are positioned and reproduced within Breton and French discourses and appropriating them in new and productive ways. In other words, challenging orthodox views about what Breton is, what it represents, who it represents and how it represents them. To paraphrase Cynthia Nelson, this “shifts the focus from gaining civil rights to analysing discursive and cultural practices, from affirming minority sexual [language] identities to problematising all sexual [language] identities” (Nelson 1999:373).

Within such activism all of the beliefs and ideas relating to Breton are challenged, particularly the ones that feature most prominently in language debates. The

objective is not to dismantle these ideologies and replace them with a new set of beliefs, but rather to turn these tropes and ideologies into active sites of identity representation, critique and socio-political contestation; places where the Breton language is *done* and where Breton language identities are called into being. This is a performative rather than an orthodox or foundationalist language ideology.

In this way, Breton (or French for that matter) is not constituted as a prior category or entelechial object that people must compare themselves to and be judged against, according to how well they reproduce the signs of value and appropriateness that these normative notions embody. Rather it is a performative iteration of language and identity in which the very notion of what Breton is emerges from the *doing* of Breton through the diverse expression of people's linguistic identities (Butler 1993; Nelson 1999; Pennycook 2004; Makoni and Pennycook 2005). Seeing language in this way creates a liminal space in which atypical forms of Breton are not (necessarily) judged according to standards. It is a way of experiencing diversity that encompasses not just a diversity of languages, not diversity within a language, but diversity in a broader, more radical sense of all of the different language practices and linguistic identities expressed in relation to Breton and Brittany.

One productive way of working towards this transgressive, performative and post-foundationalist view of language and identity is by reappropriating the term 'minority' which has until now held largely pejorative connotations in debates over Breton. This means reclaiming the notion of a minority, not as a peripheral position, a failed (or nascent) majority, or an identity lacking the power and prestige of the centre, but rather as a deterritorialisation, a line of flight that disrupts the identity and ideology of the centre. This is the appropriation of difference as a productive and transgressive force. It is an immanent process (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:20), always in a state of becoming and continuously transforming. It is a rejection of the language ideologies that have marginalised these identities by representing them as minor, not by seeking to move towards the centre or to be accepted by it, but in disrupting the authority and logic through which centres and peripheries are established and maintained ideologically and ontologically.

In using Deleuzian and queer theory in this way, the notion of ‘minority’ is reclaimed and reappropriated. It becomes an agent for change and action rather than an externally imposed and ascribed identity. In this sense identity formation is liberated from pre-existing categories and prescribed criteria. As Colebrook puts it: “the task... is to think difference positively” (Colebrook 2002:63). Pennycook (2004) describes this as the disinvention, and reinvention, of language.

This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean by *becoming minoritarian* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987): actively seeking ways to deterritorialise languages by seeking to promote their more minoritarian and less-standard forms, and doing so as a continuing *process* of linguistic transformation rather than a *project* to establish that language as a majoritarian form.

That is why we must distinguish between: the majoritarian as a constant and homogenous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming. The problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant. There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian (page 105-106).

Becoming minoritarian is therefore a constant movement away from molarising forces and powers. It is a performative that calls new subjectivities into being (Pennycook 2004:22). In this sense, the notion of performativity, like that of deterritorialisation, is a useful way of problematizing foundationalist language ideology. It also offers a number of productive possibilities for moving beyond foundationalism, to develop new perspectives and new approaches to language diversity that encompass the diverse language experiences of speakers and that articulate linguistic identities in different, more emergent and contingent ways.

This is the promotion of the notion of diversity as linguistic difference. It is a form of language activism that is focused not on the future outcomes of initiatives that aim to promote or support languages, the way much work on planning and policy does, but rather it is activism focused on the immediate and ongoing expression of languages

and forms of linguistic difference as an act of diversity. The focus is not on what diversity will be like in 20 years time, but rather how diversity and difference may be practiced now as an expression of identity and difference. In this sense it is language activism that does not work towards a clearly defined goal (reversing language shift to a specific point, the creation of a certain number of speakers or the institutionalization of a language in certain domains), but rather focuses on the creative and immediate *doing* of language as a form of cultural and linguistic expression, since it is in this ongoing creative practice that languages and linguistic identities are created, inhabited and rendered meaningful. It is activism focused on language speakers rather than languages.

In this way critical language activism can work towards transgressing normative notions of Breton through promoting local linguistic identities and putting a focus on the productive advantages of diversity and difference. By promoting diversity and difference and speaking with a voice that critiques notions of appropriateness and correctness, Bretons who do not feel their linguistic identities are adequately valorised through a linguistic standard, for example, are more able to reject the ways in which they are marginalised and hierarchialised through a language ideology informed by foundationalist tropes.

One of the aims of critical language activism therefore is to critique the dominant, orthodox language ideology where it tends to reify or regulate difference to promote some forms of language practice as more prestigious or appropriate than others. In Brittany this works in at least two ways: firstly in the way that many local first-language speakers reject the notions of appropriateness and normativity in relation to the promotion of a neo-Breton language standard, opposing a language ideology informed by discourses of instrumentalism and nationalism while seeking to practice Breton in their own ways. Secondly it explores the way speakers of neo-Breton can work against the marginalizing tropes of older speakers who tell them their language is ‘cold’, ‘colourless’, ‘chemical’ or otherwise inauthentic because it is not local enough or they are speaking the wrong Breton. Such languages are not less appropriate because they were not learned around a family hearth, just as first-language Breton speakers’ use of French is not less appropriate than a Parisian’s

French, even though the Bretons learned it as a second-language at school. The legitimacy of an old farmer's French is not questioned, so why should the Breton of a young Diwan student be? Both speak the languages they do because it is the language they know, because they want to and because it is meaningful, useful and fulfilling for them to do so. In this way it argues against an ideology informed by a romanticised ethnocultural tradition that devalues change and innovation.

Rather than engaging in a polemical and ultimately futile debate over whose orthodoxy is the most appropriate or accurate in the traditional/neo-Breton language debate, a post-structural approach to language diversity rejects the logic of the ideology that suggests there is only one correct way to be Breton, or that some forms of Breton are better than others. It therefore becomes possible to be Breton in many different ways. Breton identity is therefore productive not reductive.

Of course, to express one's own difference in a positive performative way, people need clear understanding of the ways in which dominant centres and ideologies seek to position speakers. This involves a high degree of critical awareness, strong critical analysis skills and confidence in their own sense of self and identity. This critical capacity is not simply assumed and is in fact problematic in its own way, particularly since access to these skills is often limited to the highly educated and those who have already had a high degree of symbolic capital.

One potentially productive way of being an activist then is not so much working to promote a language such as Breton, as it is working to promote critical ways of thinking about language and the ways in which language, identity and power are discursively interconnected. Cynthia Nelson for example writes about how queer theory can be used in the classroom to disrupt notions of heteronormativity and build capacities for students to work around reifying tropes informing their own particular sense of gender and identity (Nelson 1999). As such students can develop a greater sense of their own identity and develop a greater capacity for differences they observe and experience in others. This does not mean emancipating a repressed or suppressed "essential, unique, fixed and coherent core" (Norton 2000:124 see also

Ellwood 2004), but rather to work towards new ways of articulating identity beyond these structuralist and foundationalist discourses.

A similar approach is possible in Brittany, working not just on promoting Breton, or even specifically promoting Breton linguistic identities, but rather promoting, teaching and demonstrating ways in which it is possible to resist discourses and ideologies that serve to limit diversity, difference and people's sense of personal power. While building critical capacities in Brittany is not a simple or easy task, this new way of approaching Breton is nonetheless a potentially productive and useful way of engaging in language activism.

This approach to Breton language activism is itself diverse and multifaceted. It involves education – particularly the promotion of critical analytical skills and developing capacities to identify and challenge the ways in which symbolic power is discursively and ideologically configured – as well as the provision of pedagogies that promote diversity and difference in language and in language speakers. For example, this means both the provision of diverse opportunities to learn Breton through different educational streams, as well as the broader development of societal multilingualism, encouraging people to learn as many languages as they can in order to subvert myths about the normalcy and value of monolingualism or bilingualism. In a multilingual society it is harder for any single language to dominate and in this multiplicity, there is a greater liminal space for diverse and different linguistic identities to be expressed.

Beyond this, critical language activism involves advocacy in terms of arguing in favour of language policies and strategies that promote diversity in a broad sense and arguing against ideologies that promote pernicious myths about the value of particular languages over others, or particular forms of language in terms of prestige. This is not necessarily an advocacy against standardisation but a promotion of an awareness of the ways and means through which linguistic standardisations configure power and the effect this may have on people. In this way, for example, strategies may be implemented that do not promote normativity at the expense of diversity.

Critical language activism also involves direct action in terms of activism: viewing language and activism as a performative, ongoing expression of identity. This involves, for example, developing language initiatives that involve transgressing dominant ideologies through the creative practice of linguistic identities and challenging normative and foundationalist assumptions about language. This may mean creating texts that challenge received notions of Breton language and identity, using Breton strategically in ways that promote different ways of thinking about or using the language, or participating in debates over the future and nature of Breton in creative and productive ways. In effect, critical language activism, as it relates to the Breton context, involves critically and reflexively questioning and challenging the language ideologies, be they foundationalist or post-structural, that inform language activism and language practice, with a view to exploring and acknowledging the needs and desires of people in terms of expressing their linguistic identities in ways that are creative and productive.

Clearly such a form of language activism is both risky and complex. Disrupting ideologies and challenging received notions of language and identity is likely to confront, and possibly offend, some people, particularly those who have a strong emotional or political investment in promoting Breton in particular ways. I am not suggesting that critical activism necessarily needs to be confrontational or aggressive; indeed, the more any critical engagement alienates people, the less inclusive it is and therefore the less effective it is likely to be. Likewise, I am not suggesting that it is a project that could be carried out alone or even by a small number of people. To the contrary, such a form of activism requires the engagement and motivation of large numbers of people. Moreover, it is an engagement that is, for each one, different. Indeed, successful critical activism would involve people expressing themselves and engaging linguistic identities in ways that are diffuse, multiple and even contradictory, but which respect the dignity and legitimacy of the other.

Chapter 7: Identity and Activism in Breton Popular Music

The previous chapter explored the role of language policy and planning in promoting the Breton language, and the ways in which the language ideologies informing policy and planning initiatives influence the way the Breton language, and Breton linguistic identities more broadly, are represented. Having discussed a number of limitations in uncritically reproducing a language ideology based on foundationalism, it looked to ways in which language activism could move forwards, particularly through the development of strategies of critical language activism through a performative, post-structural language framework. Clearly education plays a key role in this, both in teaching languages and in particular in teaching critical analytical skills. However, such activism is not restricted to education. In a number of areas language identity is being worked on as a site of critical engagement, where the relationship between power, language and identity is being challenged and reconfigured in different ways.

One important area in which language and identity are being worked on in new ways is the music industry. Music has become a significant site of identity expression, contestation and activism and while it is a form of entertainment, it is also a powerful medium for ideas and ideologies. Music is a genre where the emotional, the affective, the creative, the intellectual and the political coexist and interplay in many different ways. On the one hand music represents strong traditions and links to the past, but on the other, there is a long tradition in musical performance of creative innovation, *métissage* and appropriation (Looseley 2003). As such, music provides fertile grounds for identity expression that is both orthodox and performative. It demonstrates one's loyalties and traditions, but frequently provides the opportunity for self-expression in new and creative ways, informed but not restricted by the past.

Music therefore provides a good example of the ways in which Breton identity has been expressed and reconfigured through and across the socio-cultural transformations that occurred in Brittany during the 19th and 20th centuries. Through looking at the development of Breton music it is possible to track the «double mouvement paradoxal» [paradoxal double movement] (Favereau 1993:119) of the disappearance of traditional practices and styles and their reinvention and

appropriation in new and different contexts so prescient in contemporary debates over issues of identity and legitimacy. As such it serves as a useful case study for the ways in which notions of authenticity, identity and representation are reproduced and challenged.

The origins and development of Breton music as a site of identity representation

As in all cultures, music has always played an important role in Breton society. As a folk practice, music was intimately related to the daily lives of Breton people and served both as ritual and entertainment. Music marked celebrations such as weddings and religious festivals and it provided people with a chance to meet and socialise with their neighbours and broader community. Music also played an important role at harvest times, when groups of people would get together and sing as a way of creating a rhythm with which to work and as a way of making the experience more pleasurable (Gwenaël). Le Saux (no date) notes the role that travelling musicians and singers played in telling the news of the region through song. Because they operated outside the traditional poles of socio-political power – the state and the church – travelling musicians played an important role in commenting on social and political issues, often critically. In communities that were isolated and illiterate, such performances helped frame public opinion and kept people informed of what was happening in neighbouring regions.

Developments in Breton music in the recent century and a half closely reflect that of other forms of Breton cultural production. The 19th century saw a revival of folk traditions across Europe, including the documentation (and sometimes appropriation) of many oral and musical traditions of so-called folk cultures by people such as La Villemarqué in his collection of folk poems, ballads and songs published as *Barzaz Breiz* (Postic 2001:100). As discussed in chapter three, this project was initially configured in Brittany within a French context, as a way of idealising and folklorising difference through discourses Romanticism, ethnocultural essentialism and primordialism (Orton and Pollock 1980; Thiesse 2001; Bempéchat no date).

In a musical sense the configuration of a Celtic identity had a number of effects. In particular, for the first time a pan-Breton and pan-Celtic genre of music was created and promoted as a symbol of a common ethnic identity (Winick 1995:335). As with languages this had consequences for the highly localised practices of Breton music with their strong regional specificities, especially in the way specific forms of music were promoted. New instruments were introduced into the repertoire for example, including the Irish harp as well as the Scottish bagpipes, reconfiguring and recontextualising the way music was performed and valorised as an authentic manifestation of ethnic and national identity.

In the mid-20th century the notion of a Celtic identity expressed through music was promoted by Polig Montjarret through his *bagadoù* [marching pipe bands] (Kuter 1981; Winick 1995). These bands, based on the massed pipes and drums of Scottish military regiments, were designed to be far more than mere entertainment. Rather the bagad “was intended to be a character factory, a sort of Breton boy scouts aimed at fashioning Bretons out of the boys of Brittany” (Winick 1995:344). In this way these bagadoù played a sociological role promoting a sense of Breton identity in ways that were explicitly nationalistic.

Our goal isn't just to make Breton music but, especially, to make pipers into true Bretons. A piper, as we conceive him, must be a complete Breton, interested in everything that is Breton and ready to defend all of the interests of our compatriots, including the Breton language... A piper must be a total Breton whom his land can count on” (Polig Montjarret cited in Kuter 1981:22-23).

While this Celtic trope helped to articulate a new sense of pan-Breton and pan-Celtic national identity within militant circles, at a local level diverse forms of Breton music were being transformed by French and other European musical influences, particularly during the Third Republic. In the 19th century the diatonic accordion was introduced and modern, French forms of music became popular with locals. More traditional forms of music, such as the travelling pair of *sonneurs* comprising a *bombarde* (a double-reeded oboe) and a *biniou* (high-pitched Breton pipes) found it

increasingly difficult to compete against new bands playing French music. « Peu à peu accordéons, clarinettes, saxos, jazz band, fox-trot, valse, tango remplacent binious, bombardes et gavottes » (Guinard 2001: episode 2) [little by little accordions, clarinets, saxophones jazz bands, fox-trots, waltzes, tangos replaced binious, bombardes and gavottes]. In this sense, the same factors that saw other forms of Breton cultural practice, including language, put under pressure by French modernity during the Third Republic equally applied to traditional forms of music, which lost status and credibility with many people.

Traditional music might have died out in Brittany but for a small number of highly motivated individuals. Activists and musicians such as Polig Montjarret were responsible to a large extent for bringing together the last few remaining *sonneurs*, around a dozen mostly very elderly men, and creating networks and camps where people could learn Breton music (Kuter 1981; Jean-Pierre). Loeiz Ropars also worked to collect and develop local music, songs and dances that were quickly disappearing (Winick 1995; Gwenaël). During the 1950s and 1960s Breton music was further kept alive by small but growing numbers of enthusiasts in cultural associations, including *Circles Celtiques* [Celtic circles] (Winick 1995:339). Breton music slowly developed as an important site of cultural practice and identity representation and played an increasingly important part in the gradual reconfiguring of the status of Breton cultural products during this time. Little by little, Breton music grew in popularity as increasing numbers of people saw it as a fun, and socially acceptable, form of entertainment. At this time therefore, new genres and styles, including the *fest-noz*, developed through the transposition of traditional musical forms into more modern contexts.

With the folk revival of the 1970s and the development of a Breton recording industry, the popularity of Breton music increased dramatically. This was not just a revival, it was a renaissance. As part of the broader revival of Breton cultural practices, including language, Breton music found itself as a popular and accessible way of expressing a sense of Breton cultural identity and became a powerful vector of identity and politics.

In particular performers such as the harpist and singer Alan Stivell came to prominence. For Jean-Pierre, a musicologist and Breton music festival director, he was « *le détonateur de quelque chose qui était en gestation* » [*the catalyst of something that had been brewing*] and astonished Bretons with his national and international success. Jean-Pierre noted how, for the first time, Breton music could be heard on the radio and appeared in juke-boxes. More than any other musician, Stivell became emblematic of the revival of Breton culture and the reappropriation and revalorisation of Breton identity (Winick 1995; Gemie 2005).

Stivell was a musician with many ambiguities. Despite being born in Paris he rejected, in his early years at least, the influence of modernity and French music on traditional Breton music. He sought to promote the local and the traditional, particularly through *festoù-noz* but performed a blend of traditional and contemporary music within a pan-Celtic genre and sense of cultural identity. Stivell also consciously and deliberately deployed a nationalistic discourse throughout his music that was both a form of entertainment and socially engaged activism. He formed the vanguard of a movement known as *chanteurs engagés*, best translated as “protest singers” (Favereau 1993). This was not just a revival of Breton music, but a deliberate form of political commentary and activism expressed through music.

For Stivell the notion of a Celtic identity was fundamental and inseparable from that of a Breton identity. The notion of being *Celtic* was more than a musical genre, it was a real, discrete and describable musical and cultural tradition and a symbol of an ethnic identity.

At the moment the Celts have something very important to say. That is why I wanted to reexpose the Bretons to their own culture, if I want to make Celtic culture known to the whole world, it is not only because the melodies are beautiful (Stivell cited in Winick 1995:337).

In this sense Breton music constitutes a form of Celtic music that is linked stylistically and culturally to other subsets of the genre, for example Irish or Scottish music. Many singers took part in the movement “aimed at the creation of a Breton

cultural identity through music” (Winick 1995:334) that was marked by its difference to Anglo-American pop and French musical styles such as chanson. Singers such as Glenmor, Yann-Fañch Kemener and Loeiz Ropars looked to more local musical styles such as *kan ha diskan* and traditional songs that had been recorded and were kept alive by a dwindling number of local artists and put them on a new stage, literally and metaphorically. Symbolically they were expressions of Breton cultural heritage, signs of Breton identity and a vehicle for political commentary on the nature and status of Breton culture and identity.

As with language therefore, music reflects the growing influence of France in the 19th and 20th centuries and the revival and resistance to French symbolic domination through the promotion of a new sense of Breton identity and cultural difference. As with language, many of the responses to this domination, including the bagadoù and Stivell’s early work, sought to develop a strong and clear sense of Breton music that was differentiated and separated from France and was symbolically and strategically aligned with other Celtic movements. However, at the same time music became an important site of personal expression through which people sought to express themselves in creative and innovative ways. For many musicians, the explicit linking of essentialised notions of Breton identity with particular forms or styles of music was a political project and was less interesting than creating music that expressed their own sense personal and cultural identity in more subtle and personal ways (Gwenaël).

Authenticity and activism: Festoù-Noz and the Festival Interceltique

Throughout the twentieth century, music has been an important site of identity politics as well as cultural practice and many contestations have occurred, in particular, over the notion of authenticity. At question in these contestations is the degree to which innovation is a legitimate part of the living practice of Breton music and the degree to which this innovation is informed by external influences, thus taking the music away from its traditional origins. This debate is complex and occurs on a number of vectors. Debates of authenticity are configured, for example, in terms

of local versus national and pan-Celtic identity; traditional versus modern instrumentation; acoustic versus electric performances; the appropriateness or otherwise of French influences in Breton music and whether music needs to follow a specific tonal structure or style to be described as Breton or Celtic.

These debates have regularly occurred throughout the music scene. However, in the context of this thesis, the issue of authenticity can be examined through looking more closely at two important areas of Breton music that developed in the latter half of last century: the fest-noz and *le Festival Interceltique de Lorient* [the Interceltic festival of Lorient]. Both have become very popular manifestations of Breton identity, in very different ways, and both articulate many of the ways in which issues of authenticity and identity are configured and challenged.

Almost anyone who has spent time in Brittany will have been to a fest-noz. These “night dances” are usually organised locally, featuring live Breton music that people dance to. The music played at festoù-noz varies enormously, as does the instrumentation, but in general there are always some similarities: the music is generally informed by traditional Breton rhythms and styles; there is often a combination of instrumental groups and singers who perform both in Breton and French; there is always something to drink; and people come to dance, many of these dances involving the idiosyncratic ‘needle and thread’ practice of the whole audience linking fingers and dancing in a long chain that winds itself around the room.

Festoù-noz were particularly important in the Breton music revival, both for the way they came to quintessentially represent Breton culture, and their popularity in local grass-roots settings and across generations. Traditionally a fest-noz was a chance for villagers to “meet, dance, eat and drink with neighbours” (Winick 1995:347) in an informal and convivial way. In the 1950s however, this highly localised practice was developed by musicians and activists such as Loeiz Ropars into a more formalised evening, where singers and bands would play, often on a stage, with people dancing in unison to their music.

These days the term fest-noz describes both the highly local dances that still occur in villages across Brittany, as well as the more organised and professionally run events that can be found in cities and towns involving hundreds or thousands of people. Many festoù-noz are organised as local fundraisers, for example for Diwan schools, but they can equally be large festivals featuring dozens of bands. Yaouank, one of the larger fest-noz organised in Rennes every year entertains many thousands of fans, while the annual Cyberfest-noz from Quimper is streamed via the internet to link with events organised around the world, including Sydney.

Festoù-noz have been credited with helping to perpetuate and revitalise many traditional songs, dances and musical styles and in introducing younger generations to Breton culture in ways that are positive and participatory. They have become enormously popular and have played a fundamental role in representing Breton as a living culture, even among many people who are not Breton speakers or activists or are politically ambivalent. Whilst they have a clear sense of pride in expressing Breton cultural identity and are a focal point in the Breton political and cultural movement for the way they express a popular sense of regional difference, festoù-noz are not in and of themselves generally considered to be forms of activism or political statements. Rather they are social occasions and ways of having fun.

Nolwenn, a young architect, was strongly against Breton militancy, but she loved the experience of attending festoù-noz. She compared going to a fest-noz with going clubbing:

C'est beaucoup plus convivial d'aller à un fest-noz (...) tu te sens en sécurité là. Tu es là pour danser avec les gens (...) tu danses avec tout le monde (...). La musique est assez forte et puis le fait aussi d'entendre les pas sur le sol à 300 ou à 1000, c'est hyper fort, et tu fais parti d'un ensemble. Je l'adore, je l'adore.

[It is much more convivial to go to a fest-noz... you feel safe there. You are there to dance with people... you dance with everyone.... The music is quite loud and then you can also hear the footsteps of 300 or

1000 [dancers] on the floor, it's really loud, and you are a part of a group. I love it. I love it.]

For Nolwenn what was significant was not the issue of authenticity or the militant symbolism of Celtic music, but the personal pleasure she gained dancing with others and socialising in a community atmosphere. Her interest was first and foremost an affective, convivial one, not an ideological one.

These days festoù-noz are a well established part of Breton popular culture but in the 1960s and 70s there was considerable debate about the authenticity or cultural appropriacy of festoù-noz. This debate in particular occurred between traditionalists who wanted to see the fest-noz stay faithful to its origins as a small, local practice featuring specific songs, dances and instruments of each region; and more progressive musicians and activists who wanted to bring new influences and instrumentations into the genre. Some traditionalists saw modern festoù-noz as inauthentic inventions which brought bands from many different areas together, many of whom were electric and featured unconventional line-ups. As opposed to the purely local, low-key affairs of the rural festoù-noz, the modern form was seen as “a corruption... [which] has resulted in a crossing, melding, and to some degree homogenisation” (Winick 1995:347) of regional specificities. Alan Stivell claimed that “[in a] real fest-noz... something happens there, a communion that cannot be found anywhere else... one finds direct contact with the tradition” (Stivell cited in Winick 1995:347). In this way the true tradition of Breton culture, which was its regional specificity, was being diluted through a blending of inter-regional dances and songs, as well as external influences, particularly from France.

This argument followed a similar logic to that espoused by the folk-music and hippy movements that occurred in many countries. These movements explicitly rejected modernity as a trope and sought to reinvent society in ways that were far more politically decentralised, in touch with their environment and self-sufficient. The Breton cultural revival can therefore be contextualised in broader social changes occurring in many developed countries at that time. The rise in ‘new social movements’ (Hourigan 2001:78) developed as a response to the perceived excesses

of capitalism and in France had its defining moment in May 1968 with the student and worker protests that gripped France and caused a fundamental re-evaluation of many aspects of society, most notably the dirigisme espoused by Gaullism (Feenberg and Freedman 2001). Bert Klandermans argues:

New social movements do not accept the premise of a society based on economic growth. They have broken with the traditional values of capitalist society and seek a different relationship to nature, to one's own body, to the opposite sex, to work and consumption. (Klandermans 1989:26)

Although the new Breton folk-movement that musicians such as Stivell were a part of promoted traditional music, they were not themselves traditional. Stivell was not the son of a farmer who worked his own land by hand, but grew up in Paris where he was classically trained. Many other musicians of this generation were young, educated and motivated and sought to promote traditional culture as a new form of practice. In contrast, for many local Bretons, and in particular older Bretons living in the rural west of the region, Breton identity markers were still stigmas they were trying to shed.

In this sense then, by the 1960s a symbolic inversion was taking place. Modernity and capitalism had become the traditional orthodoxy and it was the development of a Breton folk-music movement that valorised traditional, local music that was the new, modern, or post-modern idea. Taking what was considered old-fashioned and revalorising it within a new socio-cultural context was radical: it was not traditionalism but neo-traditionalism, opposing the logic at the time that Breton cultural symbols were stigmatising, creating a new form of activism and a new model of social organization. The desire to promote and valorise regional specificities therefore was a promotion of the traditional, but it was promoting the traditional in a new and transformational way. The logic of this generation of activists was an inversion of their parents' values and ideals. In this way, modernity and progress became old fashioned and tradition became *de rigueur*. It is easy to confuse this neo-conservatism with orthodoxy, indeed, many traditionalists sought to conflate these two notions, but in fact the two are quite different. While the folk

revival of the 1960s and 1970s was certainly informed by traditional practices, the broader socio-political and cultural context of the music, as well as the music itself, are contemporary interpretations of tradition rather than the repetition or continuation of earlier practices.

In more recent years the debate over specific issues of authenticity has waned. For many Bretons today the fest-noz is first and foremost a form of entertainment: issues of appropriateness, authenticity or identity politics, whilst still present, are often less significant than those of dancing, drinking and socialising. If there is a blending of styles and creative musical licence apparent in these larger events, this is usually viewed in a positive light, as evidence of the openness of Breton music to external influences and of “tradition in motion” (Pichard no date:3).

This shows a confidence and maturity in the way the fest-noz articulates a sense of cultural identity. Some festoù-noz are still politically engaged, and many people who attend festoù-noz are either activists or sympathetic to the promotion of Breton culture, but primarily they are seen as social occasions, not as vehicles for militancy or part of a political rallies. Gwenaël, a professional musician in a number of Breton ensembles suggested:

Je ne suis pas militant quand je fais de la musique. Je le fais parce que j'aime ça (...). La majorité [de gens qui jouent] font ça pour le plaisir, voir par professionnalisme (...). C'est pas par militantisme, ils font ça pour gagner leurs vies.

I am not militant when I play music. I play because I love it... The majority [of musicians] do it for the pleasure or even as a profession... it is not because of militancy/activism, they do it to earn their living.

As a violinist Gwenaël played Breton music, but he could not speak Breton and was not interested in becoming an activist. He was glad that the music industry was developed enough that his political ambivalence was considered normal. For

Gwenaël this was a sign of the strength of the industry, as was the diversity of styles, genres and line-ups performing. His own band played “traditional” music but comprised a diatonic accordion a biniou, a violin and a bass saxophone and for him there was no sense of conflict or lack of legitimacy in this.

Breton festoù-noz therefore are important sites of identity representation, not (only) because they represent an expression of Breton culture, but (also and especially) because of the way in which they have been accepted and adopted by many people as a living and meaningful part of their own sense of identity and cultural practice. Festoù-noz are places where people can express themselves and participate in an activity that involves a sense of community identity and shared experience that is not prescriptive or overtly political, but is participatory and performative. People who attend festoù-noz are there for many different reasons. While some may be there to wear their Breton identity on their sleeve with pride, others are there simply for the convivial experience. Nor are they there to perform traditional dances in a folkloric sense for tourists, they are there to have fun and be a part of something.

In this sense festoù-noz are excellent examples of the vibrancy of Breton culture and they show the extent to which the public is willing to support and participate in forms of cultural and identity expression when they find them meaningful, accessible and personally fulfilling. Festoù-noz are forms of cultural activism in that they were, and continue to be, promoted and valorised as sites of particular forms of Breton cultural expression, but the identity politics that contextualise festoù-noz are usually implicit and remain relatively unimportant for many people. Festoù-noz do not construct a notion of appropriacy and a form of Breton identity or culture that people are then asked to perform, in the way, for example, a language standard is prescribed as an appropriate form of expression. Rather, festoù-noz provide a space where people can create, express and inscribe their own sense of being Breton in a productive and performative way. This sense of participation, inclusion and diversity is very important in encouraging people to become involved and express their own sense of being Breton within a context that accepts and valorised their differences, rather than seeking to measure them against a standard or a pre-existing notion of what Breton culture and identity should be.

Le Festival Interceltique de Lorient

As with the festoù-noz, the Festival Interceltique de Lorient is a good example of the ways in which issues of identity and authenticity are played out in public spaces. As the name suggests, this festival brings together musicians and artists from across the Celtic diaspora, as a kind of ‘gathering of the clans’. As the promotional material claims: “It is not only the great annual showcase of ancestral Celtic traditions and customs, but it is, at the same time, an overflowing of the joy of life turned towards the future” (Pichard no date:2).

The festival began in 1971, having moved to Lorient from Brest, and has grown to be one of the largest cultural festivals in Europe. In recent years each festival has featured around 4500 artists from many different Celtic countries and over 600 000 spectators (Pichard no date). Performances range from small gigs in pubs, to stadium concerts and competitions for pipe bands and bagadoù. Bands and singers come from many different countries to perform and play a wide variety of music, from the traditional to the experimental. The festival is not restricted to music and also features literature, cinema and other creative arts.

The Festival Interceltique de Lorient therefore has a focus both on tradition and on innovation. As discussed in relation to the fest-noz, these two issues have, at different times in the past, sat together problematically over debates about culture, appropriateness and authenticity in representations of Breton culture and identity. Within this field, for example, the bagadoù have been positioned both as an artificial invention of a cultural practice, having been created by people like Polig Montjarret after the Second World War and to a large degree mimicking the Scottish pipes and drums, and also as authentic symbols of Breton identity and examples of the enduring vibrancy of Breton culture. Likewise the notion of Celtic music can be seen both as part of an ancient tradition, and an invention of modern record company marketing. Similarly, traditional music has in the last century been considered by various groups as modern, old-fashioned, contemporary and traditional, depending on the circumstances and the generation.

The two issues of tradition and innovation, or authenticity and invention sit uneasily together, but it is often the friction between them that creates the dynamic spark that makes the festival interesting. Indeed it is precisely because the festival provides a forum for these debates to occur and for these boundaries to be tested, that it has remained a vibrant and creative enterprise. For Jean-Pierre Pichard, the director of the festival since 1972, this dynamic movement was very important and is one of the main purposes of the festival. For him the Breton musical heritage was not grounded in a static, timeless past but was itself a constantly evolving phenomenon: « *au cours des siècles, la musique vivante, c'est une musique qui s'est sans cesse renouvelée* » [*through the centuries, living music is a music that never ceases renew itself*].

The Interceltic festival therefore finds itself in a complex space in relation to the issue of authenticity and representations of identity. It has a clear and explicit goal of promoting Breton music within the rubric of Celtic identity and has been extremely successful in creating links between Brittany and other Celtic nations, but many of these links have little recent historical grounding. They are based either on a mythical notion of primordial pan-Celtic culture as invented by the 19th century Romantic movement, or on very recent assertions of commonality and identity based around the revival of traditional practices and, in the case of music, the development of a modern popular genre of Celtic music.

In fact while the festival uses the trope of Celtic identity for maximum publicity, it is also clearly conscious of the lack of historical authenticity of this identity. A publicity brochure for the festival describes “the minorities of this Atlantic “Far West” who called themselves Celts, but who never thought of joining together culturally” (Pichard no date:3) and suggests that before the Interceltic festival “the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, the Galicians and the Asturians had very little contact with each other... and most of them had no idea where Brittany was” (page 9).

Indeed, the promotion of Breton culture through the vehicle of this Celtic identity was, for Jean-Pierre, a strategy aimed clearly at promoting Brittany and was a form of political and cultural activism, more than a statement of belief in the cultural authenticity of the Celtic people. He suggested that Breton and Celtic identities were

fundamentally inventions. Deploying such tropes in promoting the festival was therefore a conscious and deliberate act designed to bring the experience of foreign musicians to the Breton musical industry, to open up markets for Breton music in different countries, to take advantage of the cultural and economic momentum being experienced in the Celtic countries in recent decades and to position Brittany within this cultural field, not beyond it.

Pour moi c'était une logique stratégique parce que les écossais jouaient mieux de la cornemuse que nous, les irlandais jouaient mieux du violon que nous (...) donc au début pour moi c'était à la fois de la logique... on a appris beaucoup de choses avec eux, et puis c'était du marketing parce que l'idée a été inventée artificiellement. Je me suis dit qu'à plusieurs minorités, on serait moins minoritaire. (Jean-Pierre)

[For me it was a strategic logic because the Scots played the bagpipes better than us, the Irish played the violin better than us... so in the beginning it was both logical... we learned a lot from them, and also it was marketing because the idea was artificially invented. I said to myself within several minorities we will be less of a minority.]

In this sense then the festival used the symbolic and economic power of the Celtic nations and deliberately sought to promote Brittany as one of the equal players in that identity. It was a way both of promoting Brittany in Britain, Ireland and northern Spain, and promoting the cultural distinction of Brittany in contrast to French culture. Indeed, hosting the peak festival of Celtic cultures each year asserts the central role Brittany plays in expressing a culture that is Celtic. The increasing popularity and success of Celtic cultural products made it an important bandwagon to be attached to.

For Jean-Pierre Pichard then, the Interceltic festival was not just a cultural activity, but an important site of identity politics. While on one level the festival promotes the cultural vibrancy of Brittany, at a deeper, discursive level this is a powerful form

of political activism, positioning Brittany in the minds of Bretons, Celts and French alike as being part of a historical and cultural tradition that is not-French: « *les écossais, les irlandais et les gallois (...) jouent au football et au rugby contre la France. Ils ont le statut de nation. Et nous, si on forme artificiellement une famille avec ces gens-là, on va exister à travers eux* ». [*The Scots, the Irish and the Welsh... play football and rugby against France. They have nation status. So if we artificially form a family with these people, we will exist through them*].

This ideology, were it to be stated in explicitly political terms would be unacceptable to many Breton and French people, within the context of Republican politics. However through music and the Interceltic festival it is not as such a direct statement of ideology or politics of separatism. Rather it is a deliberate yet subtle repositioning of a sense of Breton identity away from a French sphere of influence towards a Celtic sphere. Its effect is to change the orientation of Brittany in the minds of many people from being a region in the single and undivided French Republic, to being a region with many different cultural contacts and historical traditions, some of which may be French. Because this message is expressed through music, conviviality, and a cultural celebration, it is very difficult to argue against and this makes it a powerful form of subversion.

This form of critical cultural activism was for Pichard « *quelque choses très réfléchie* » [*something very conscious*] and came in a number of guises. One year as part of the festival for example, a competition was created for local people to perform music from their local *pays*. Regional heats across Brittany were held, with the finalists performing at the festival. On one level of course, there is nothing very political in this. However, for Jean-Pierre, there were a number of critical objectives in this exercise, both cultural and political. One was to perform an ethnographic collection of local music and songs from across the region: a project that, had ethnographers had to go into the field to each location would have been difficult and time consuming. This therefore formed an important part of recording and documenting the cultural heritage of different regions of Brittany. A second goal, according to Jean-Pierre, was to help break down the complexes people may have still had about Breton culture, particularly amongst the older generation. By creating

a competition, local community spirit was harnessed, people were encouraged to perform songs, many of which were traditional, in front of an audience, with the winners going to an international cultural festival where they would perform on stage in front of thousands of people. This demonstrated the cultural value of people's knowledge to the communities themselves and brought original, local music to the festival straight from the source.

There was also a more political objective as Jean-Pierre explained. The French State at one time (he did not specify a date but it was probably during the 1980s) funded the collection and archiving of the cultural heritage of Brittany in the form of songs and stories collected from local people and community elders, but it did not directly fund the teaching or performance of that heritage on the ideological grounds that this was a matter for private individuals and public support for ethnic particularism was antithetical to the interests of the Republic. Creating a popular competition was therefore a way of promoting and spreading Breton music and positive representations of Breton identity across the region.

Ça faisait mal à personne de faire du collectage. Tu collectes, tu mets ça pour les générations futures, et ça ne gêne pas. Mais l'apprentissage, c'est déjà beaucoup plus subversif. Et la diffusion, c'est encore plus subversif. Donc le ministère de l'époque ne subventionnait que le collectage et pas le reste (...). Donc on l'a monté dans tous les coins. Tu avais des gens de 80 ans et d'autres de 8 ans qui venaient pour faire les concours ».

Collecting [music and songs] didn't hurt anyone. You collect, and you put that [away] for future generations and it doesn't bother anyone. But teaching, that's already a lot more subversive. And diffusion, that's even more subversive. So the minister of the time only funded collecting and not the rest... So we put it on in every corner [of the land]. Some people were 80 year olds and others 8 who came to take part in the competition.]

For Jean-Pierre, the competition was therefore a way of circumventing the restrictions placed on musicians and activists by the French State and creating an underground, grass-roots cultural movement that was inclusive, representative of local difference and regional similarities as well as being non-dirigiste. Activists were not out there telling people what their traditional music should sound like or promoting Breton music through a rubric of national pride or political ideology. The activism was there, but it was subversive, and worked to effect change on a discursive and subtextual level, rather than in terms of direct action. They were there bringing out the stories and songs deep inside people's own sense of identity and cultural consciousness, getting people first to present their cultural knowledge to their neighbours and friends, and then promoting this knowledge on increasingly large and prestigious stages. In doing so, they were subtly reorienting the way people related to this knowledge, particularly amongst the older generations. People began to value their cultural knowledge more highly and they were drawn into the sphere of performance and cultural identity representation in ways they may not have originally anticipated.

All of this occurred in a convivial, social and light-hearted way that avoided the polemical political debates over the promotion of a Breton identity in opposition to a French identity. While clearly there is a political element to forms of culture such as music festivals or festoù-noz, there is nevertheless a qualitative difference between this localised form of social identity and broader, more outspoken ideologies of nationalism or of institutionalised power. The challenge in terms of critical language activism therefore is not to depoliticise Breton culture, but rather to take these convivial, personal and local elements and use them to subvert territorialised power in creative, personal and diverse ways. This is precisely a political strategy, but one that aims to subvert these territorialisations rather than to reproduce or reform them around new cultural and political centres.

Transgression and performativity in Breton music

During Breton cultural revival of the 1960s and 70s the issue of the nature of Breton identity came into sharp focus. For musicians and singers who were politically engaged, the expression of a notion of Breton, and in some cases Celtic, identity through their music was frequently explicit and deliberate. They were not just playing music, they were doing something for Brittany. As the Breton folk scene developed the inevitable questions of language arose. For many performers who saw themselves within a Celtic paradigm, it was important that the Breton language be used since it was itself a Celtic language and an important symbol of that identity. Other musicians and singers, however, did not speak Breton, performed music that came from Gallo and French speaking parts of the region, or for a variety of reasons wanted to perform in French or another language. Nevertheless, they considered themselves to be performing Breton music and expressing their own particular sense of Breton identity.

One particularly significant group to emerge at this time was Tri Yann. During the 1970s, when the debates over authenticity and the folk movement were at their most intense, Tri Yann distinguished themselves by performing Breton music in French and achieved considerable success in Brittany with a style of music that was a fusion of rock and folk music, of Breton and French, of militancy and entertainment. Their music promoted a view of Breton identity that did not conform to traditionalist views of authenticity, but still asserted a positive sense of Breton identity.

In particular, contrary to many in the Breton folk music scene at that time, who identified the Breton language as an important aspect and vehicle of this neo-traditional identity, Tri Yann maintained the right to be French-speaking Bretons and were critical of the linguistic double standard apparent in much of the Breton language activism of the time. They asked:

Is it the fault of the inhabitants of this “Gallo” country if the Breton language never extended as far as Rennes or Nantes, and if there cultural heritage is therefore expressed in French...? Is there something shameful in

that, and do these Gallo-Bretons have to deny their past, thus encouraging a cultural genocide equivalent to the one for which the central power has been so justly accused vs-à-vis “bretonnant” culture? (Tri Yann cited in Winick 1995:351)

In their album, *La Découverte de l’Ignorance* (Tri Yann 1976) they present a critically engaged response to the issue of linguistic identities in Brittany. Not only was this album stylistically eclectic “blending their Breton, American folk and Irish influences with a healthy shot of electric guitar, bass and drums” (Winick 1995:351), it well and truly challenged the way notions of authenticity and identity were being reconfigured in the Breton folk-movement around pro-Celtic and anti-French dichotomies. It sided neither with the neo-traditionalists nor the more mainstream orthodoxy but rather sought to explore the liminal spaces between these polemical identities as ways of expressing themselves.

While I was interviewing Solenn, a young Breton student in Rennes, I noticed she had the lyrics to the title track of this album posted on her wall. This song was clearly important to her on a symbolic and personal level for the way it resonated and articulated her own sense of identity. She frequently made reference to it and gladly made me a copy of the words:

Le breton est-il ma langue maternelle?

Non. Je suis né à Nantes où on ne le parle pas.

Suis-je même breton ?

Vraiment je le crois, mais de « pure race »? Qu’en sais-je et qu’importe ?

Séparatiste? Autonomiste? Régionaliste? Oui et non, différent.

Mais alors vous ne comprenez plus; qu’appelons-nous être Breton et d’abord

Pourquoi l’être ?

Français d’état civil, je suis nommé français; j’assume à chaque instant ma situation de français.

Mon appartenance à la Bretagne n’est en revanche qu’une qualité facultative

Que je puis parfaitement renier ou méconnaître.

Je l’ai d’ailleurs fait; j’ai longtemps ignoré que j’étais breton.

Français sans problème, il me faut donc vivre la Bretagne en surplus ou pour

Mieux dire en conscience.

Si je perds cette conscience, la Bretagne cesse d'être en moi.

Si tous les Bretons la perdent, elle cesse absolument d'être.

La Bretagne n'a pas de papiers; elle n'existe que si à chaque génération

Des hommes se reconnaissent Bretons.

A cette heure des enfants naissent en Bretagne, seront-ils Bretons ?

Nul ne le sait.

À chacun, l'âge venu, la découverte... ou l'ignorance.

Tri Yann: La Découverte de l'Ignorance (1976).

[Is Breton my mother tongue?

No. I was born in Nantes where it is not spoken.

Am I even Breton?

I truly believe it – but of pure blood? What do I know and what does it matter? Separatist? Autonomist? Regionalist? Yes and no: different.

But now you don't understand any more: what do we call “being Breton”?

And first of all, why be Breton?

French of civil state - I was named French; at every moment I live the fact that I am French.

My belonging to Brittany on the other hand is only an optional quality

Which I can easily deny or reject.

Indeed I did - for a long time I was ignorant of the fact that I was Breton.

To be French is no problem. So I have to live Brittany in addition

Or to put it better, to live it consciously.

If I lose this consciousness, Brittany ceases to exist in me.

If all Bretons lose it, Brittany will cease to exist completely.

Brittany has no papers: it exists only in so far as each generation

Of people recognise themselves as being Breton.

At this very hour children are born in Brittany. Will they be Bretons?

Nobody knows.

To each, when the time comes, discovery or ignorance...]

For Tri Yann, the question of how to be Breton stands as an invitation, and a challenge, to all people who feel themselves to be Breton. Set sparsely to music, and in particular the haunting sounds of the bombarde and biniou that follow the spoken word lyrics, the text has a profoundly emotive edge that is difficult to ignore.

La Découverte de l'Ignorance marked a watershed in the Breton music scene, both in the way it managed to 'cross over' these different genres and issues, and for its popularity. For the many French speaking Bretons who may have felt excluded by the Celtic revival, or found it inaccessible or overly polemical, Tri Yann offered an affirmation that French speaking Bretons were no less Breton than their Breton-speaking cousins. It clearly spoke to the several million Bretons who don't speak Breton, but who felt themselves to be Breton in many different ways and it demonstrated the possibility for people to reclaim and express their own sense of identity. This sense of inclusivity was important in the way it resisted the promotion of neo-Breton as a neo-national language, as well as the way it brought many thousands of non-Breton speaking Bretons to the musical scene, increasing support for local forms of music more generally, and promoting a diversity of those forms.

La Découverte de l'Ignorance remains significant for many Breton people, in particular for the way it promotes a sense of Breton identity that is negotiated and experiential. I later discovered *La Découverte de l'Ignorance* is an adaptation of a passage from the Morvan Lebesque book *Comment peut-on être breton?* [How can one be Breton?] (Lebesque 1970/2000:18). For both Tri Yann and Lebesque, at issue are the ways in which "being Breton" is possible. For Lebesque Brittany was « une nation secrète que nous portons en nous » [a secret nation we carry within us] (page 154) because of the political dominance of Republican France, but also because of the notion that for Breton to exist, it must be lived. His treatise sought to reconcile left-wing political activism, and its long tradition of Republicanism, with his own sense of cultural specificity and difference, arguing for an engaged Breton left, rather than a left-wing in Brittany that followed the ideology of Paris.

Lebesque's book has been extremely influential in articulating this paradox of Breton identity within Republican France, arguing against essentialism from within the movement at the same time that it argues for a political engagement around the notion of a Breton cultural and political identity. Lebesque's question of how one can be Breton is a criticism of the ideological dominance of the Republican trope and its unwillingness to even acknowledge a Breton identity within its discourse of universalism. However, it is also a question of how notions of Breton identity are

represented within the community and how these configurations are rendered meaningful and passed on through the generations.

Within the lyrics of the song *La Découverte de l'Ignorance* there are a number of points worth exploring. One is the invocation to belong to a place, and a political entity. It is a call to people to acknowledge and embrace a Breton identity and political struggle: to acknowledge a political consciousness. The political engagement is first and foremost one within each person: an acknowledgement of a common identity and a national cause but one that, to be meaningful, must find its resonance individually.

A second point is the omnipresence of France and a French identity. This omnipresence has a psychological dimension in the way the authors look to reconcile Breton as a symbol of a nascent nation, and their own linguistic experience as first-language French speakers. It is an argument that they are not less Breton for speaking French, but it is significant that, in the context of the cultural revival, this justification seemed necessary. At the same time there is a physical and political inevitability of French. French is a physical, psychological and political reality that cannot be denied. The French language and state exist and, for better or worse, they exist as part of the authors' identities. As Sylvestre put it:

Que le territoire sur lequel vit la majorité des gens qui se sentent bretons soit sous l'autorité d'un État qui s'appelle La République Française, c'est un fait, c'est un fait, ce n'est pas une idée, c'est un fait. C'est comme ça.

[That the territory where the majority of people feel Breton live is under the authority of a state which is called the Republic of France is a fact. It is a fact. It is not an idea, it's a fact. That's how it is.]

Like Sylvestre, both Lebesque and Tri Yann see no choice about being French. But what is most interesting in the context of this discussion is the way a Breton identity is “an optional quality” that is lived “consciously” and that the continuation of a

sense of Breton identity is located not in an historical mythology or political institution but in the enduring acknowledgement and lived experience of people. Breton identity here is therefore negotiated, experiential and additive to a French identity. This is a performative identity: what is critical is the *doing* of Breton or *being Breton*: the act of acceptance and the process of living that identity consciously. Because, perhaps, Brittany has no political authority, the experience of being Breton and the collective articulation of this sense of community must be localised and personalised. The Breton heritage that the authors invoke belongs in the hearts of Bretons and not in their cultural or political products. It is an identity that is experiential and dynamic and, conceivably, different for each person.

In this sense Breton can be read as a deterritorialisation of French on both a political and a linguistic level. Breton is a minoritarian identity here in the ways it is being used both to disrupt normative notions of Frenchness, but also the way it disrupts the foundationalist trope of nationalism and fixity. Breton is not constituted as the replacement of French in a Breton nation, nor is such a political nation necessarily invoked. The authors are not saying: “since Breton is the language of Brittany we should all learn Breton”. Nor are they simply saying “Breton and French are the languages of Brittany”. Rather the authors refuse to state their political position in clear, unambiguous and foundationalist terms. In answer to the rhetorical question of whether they are separatists, autonomists, or regionalists, they offer an oblique answer: “yes and no, different”. They answer the question by sidestepping it, complicating it, turning it back upon itself.

This is a powerful act of identity politics, rejecting the capacity and the legitimacy of both Republicans and Breton nationalists to speak for them, to define them by external criteria and to set the agenda for how these social categorisations are to be made. It is a rejection of being asked to decide and in deciding, to accept categorization. In this sense it creates a line of flight away from these essentialised identity positions towards a more strategic and achieved sense of identity. In this way, being Breton is a creative expression of belonging, in an ongoing, emergent and performative sense.

Being Breton, and the Breton language are also minoritarian in the sense that they disrupt notions of language and nation on a discursive level. It can be argued that the authors have a strong sense of an achieved Breton identity (one that they themselves claim authority to define) but the role language plays in this resists essentialising and is deliberately ambiguous. Not only do the authors claim to be French-language Bretons, they refuse to state categorically what role Breton plays in their linguistic identities. Lebesque claimed he spoke Breton badly and not well enough to write in and Tri Yann sing in French, Breton and English.

Claiming such a voice as Breton, in French, is a powerful form of transgression. It is activism from within, destabilizing and disrupting the sense of what the French language and identity are (symbols of allegiance to the state for example) and in the way it critiques and disrupts and deterritorialises the dominant trope. Equally, it is a deterritorialisation of fixed and reified notions of Breton and Celtic identity. It is arguing against the mimetic logic of many Breton activists that Breton is necessarily the language of the Breton nation and those who speak Breton, are born into Breton, are somehow more authentic than others. Rather this is rejecting the right for others to define and prescribe a person's identity. This is saying; 'the place you are born, the language you speak or the political and cultural environment you find yourself in do not define you. If you are Breton, it is for you to decide and come to understand what these associations mean'. In this sense, the Breton nation, such that it exists, exists within those who feel themselves to be Breton, and not in some reified, transcendental space, or the institutionalised tools of state.

Tri Yann's response to Breton activism is transgressive in the way it addresses the question of the nature of Breton identity. Their response is not to seek to specify this nature, as if it existed in an abstract and concrete sense, but to challenge the questions. « pourquoi être Breton ? » [Why be Breton?] and « comment peut-on être Breton ? » [how can one be Breton?] as Lebesque originally asked. Such questions engage the notion of identity at a discursive level and reject the notion of prior categorization in favour of a performative, emergent expression of identity. At issue are the ways one can *be* Breton. Rather than seeking a definition of Breton identity along ethnic, racial, cultural or linguistic lines, the text opens up the question of how

Breton identity may be a lived practice or a consciousness. In this sense it is just as critical of Breton revivalists who seek to promote Breton in essentialised and prescriptive ways as it is of the past French practices of domination and Republican ideology.

Critical language activism and transgression such as this can be seen in a number of other musical practices as well. Gemie notes the origins and meteoric success of the Les Vieilles Charrues music festival held near Carhaix each year.

The Vieilles Charrues festival began almost as a type of joke. During the 1980s, students in the small inland village of Landeleau organised parties every summer. Suspicious, even resentful, of the success of maritime festivals during the summer, their celebrations took a satiric form, celebrating the 'maritime culture' of their land-locked commune. In July 1992, 300 guests participated in the first celebration of the 'Vieilles charrues' (the old ploughs), which included a regatta of ploughs (Gemie 2005:113).

Clearly the 'maritime' theme of the festival is ironic, but it is also transgressive, bringing into question the nature of Breton identity as it is commonly represented and the new stereotypes of Brittany as a land surrounded by sea and full of rugged beauty and tradition.

In the past decade the popularity of the festival has grown exponentially. It is now reputed to be the largest contemporary music festival in continental Europe, with over 165 000 people attending in 2003 (Gemie 2005:114). The festival now comprises an eclectic mix of local Breton, national and international acts in a variety of genres, from folk music to post-rock and electronica. The festival is no less Breton even though it is full of young people from Brittany and elsewhere taking drugs and partying for days on end. It doesn't need to have a fest-noz or a Celtic harp to be Breton, even though such symbols are equally likely to be present.

In this way the festival is deliberately challenging and subverting received notions of Breton identity. This represents a maturation of the ways people are themselves

responding to the issue of Breton identity and to the question of how to be Breton. There is little of the anxiety of Breton identity and a fear of loss of culture that previous generations feared. Rather there is a sense of possibility and opportunity about expressing a sense of Breton identity in diverse and creative ways.

Indeed, today there are many ways to be Breton: innumerable ways, some of which are traditional, and others that are completely new. For many young people today being Breton is not a question of feeling threatened, dominated or defensive. Even if such issues may inform their sense of who they are, such transgressive expressions of Breton identity show that people do not feel subjectified by these identities the way many in the past did. If their grandparents were discriminated against for being Breton, and their parents reacted against this injustice with a sense of militancy and opposition, the new generation is finding ways to reconcile their Breton, French and other heritages in ways that are strategic, additive and performative. Being Breton these days is often more contingent and negotiated than in the past. It forms part of a person's identity repertoire rather than a definitive characteristic. It describes people as much as it defines them.

In many different ways therefore, music has been highly successful in transforming the way in which Breton cultural products has been valued by local people, in particular because of the convivial, community atmosphere in which music is experienced, the diverse and creative possibilities it offers people and the affective links it engenders. Particularly in recent years, rather than seeking to represent Breton identity in a definitive way – that is, to make statements about the authenticity and specific nature of what Brittany and Breton music is – Breton music, through its diversity and difference creates a space where issues of identity are played out and expressed in a performative sense. Rather than being a form of identity representation, it is a site of identity expression, where people, both musicians and audience members can express their own sense of personal and cultural identity in diverse and inclusive ways.

The Breton music industry has evolved into a diverse and mature market with a strong focus on live performance. In this cultural space there is not the same need to

demonstrate or claim authenticity as there was in previous decades and the notion that Breton music can be many different things contemporaneously has become more widely accepted. Indeed, in recent years Breton music has been marked by its significant difference and its interest and curiosity in combining elements of different genres and different cultural traditions. Denez Prigent, for example has blended modern and traditional songs with electronica and Manau have pioneered Breton hip hop. Given the considerable success of these performers, it is difficult to argue that they are not promoting notions of Breton language and identity in meaningful and creative ways, even if an older, more conservative generation of musicians and activists disapprove or do not understand. The mosh pit of a Manau concert or the drum and bass of Prigent might fit uncomfortably with Stivell's harp playing, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, this can be read as a sign of vibrancy of Breton cultural practice and its enduring relevance for a younger generation who have taken stewardship of the culture and left their own mark upon it.

The Breton music industry has therefore been in a constant state of flux, with different generations of musicians seeking to challenge the orthodoxy of those who came before them. French modernity replaced traditional local Breton music in the early 20th century. In the mid-20th century new forms of music including the bagad were introduced to explicitly articulate a new sense of Breton identity. This was challenged by the folk movement who saw the bagadoù as inauthentic inventions. Both the bagadoù and the folk movement were challenged by a generation of musicians who sought to overcome the idea that an essentialised musical or cultural identity was necessary or possible and rather sought to promote diverse forms of Breton music. These views have been carried on by a new generation who are both musicians by profession and artists who are internationalised and who continuously seek to reinvent their music through the incorporation of many different styles and influences. These changes in the symbolic landscape of Breton music have not occurred discretely or sequentially, but exist across time and intermingle in complex ways. So, for example, the bagadoù are still very popular, as are local festoù-noz, international festivals and small gigs in bars. However these days it is rare to hear someone claim one form of music represents legitimacy or a more accurate sense of

Breton identity. Rather each style, in its way, forms a constitutive part of a broader, diffuse and multiple sense of Breton identity.

If there is, however, one enduring feature of Breton music, it is the capacity for this music to change, to accept new ideas, to adapt to the fashions of the day and to reflect the desires and interests of the performers and the audiences. The development and maturation of the Breton music scene exemplifies the notions of change and movement that have characterised Breton culture for at least a century. It is an industry that is in a constant state of creative renewal, informed by the past but open to the future.

The history of the Breton music scene is in many ways a microcosm of many of the broader issues facing Bretons in terms of language, identity and society. Various styles and various languages jostle for the attention of the public and compete for symbolic capital in a region acutely conscious of, but until recently not completely confident of, its own sense of place and being. In the Breton music industry there are many who are passionate supporters of the traditions that inform contemporary society, but the ways this support is manifested are as diverse as the songs that are sung. Contemporary Breton music is significant for the way it has been able to capture the imagination and support of the broader public and for the way it accommodates diversity and difference within it. As such, it provides a good example of new ways in which it is possible to express diverse identities in meaningful and creative ways.

The strength of Breton music is in its immediacy, its diversity and the way it can engage people. It can range from the massive Interceltic festival in Lorient, through various genres and styles, to the most local performances and practices of individuals. It is a massed bagadoù, but it is also the whistle of a farmer in her field and the stomp of a foot on the earth at a festival. In each case Breton music represents something important to people: a positive sense of community, a sharing of a cultural practice, a feeling of connection to each other and to the past.

In terms of more specific language activism, Breton music provides a good framework to explore issues of the promotion and practice of diverse forms of Breton and diverse Breton linguistic identities. The strength of the Breton musical scene in Breton, French, instrumentally and in other languages, is its diversity, its creativity and its relevance to ordinary people, not just militants or musicians. Stylistically and linguistically it takes many of its reference points from traditional practices and yet these practices are not reproduced statically or as formulas for cultural appropriacy. To the contrary it is the diversity of musical practices, the differences within the scene, the sense of affectivity it engenders and the creative appropriations that occur that make Breton music relevant to different people. It creates a sense of cultural community, but one that is inclusive of difference, not exclusive.

Clearly, listening to music is different to speaking a language in many ways. Learning a language involves a commitment of years, while dancing at a fest-noz takes far less effort. In many ways participating in a fest-noz is a safe and easy way of being Breton. Learning a language or using the language in creative and transgressive ways is far more difficult. However, music and language are both pathways that potentially lead people to a greater sense of who they are and their place in a community. Music and language also have the capability to engage people at an emotional as well as an intellectual level; they can provoke passions, rouse spirits and awaken yearnings. As Aziliz put it, a love of Breton music can create an “echo” that carries on in other parts of a person’s life and can develop into a deeper interest in the language and culture. On this level both music and language have the capacity to touch people in profound and transformational ways. In terms of cultural performance, learning to play music is similar to learning a language. It takes commitment and practice, but in the end it allows people to express themselves and help define their sense of community.

The experience of the Breton music scene shows that there is a sustained and passionate interest in diverse forms of Breton culture and identity from large sections of the community. While this participation is frequently passive, there are many instances in which it is also active: learning to dance, learning to play the bombarde

or guitar, learning to sing *kan ha diskan* and the like. One of the reasons why Breton music is successful is that it provides opportunities for people to participate in creative, diverse and socially rewarding ways. While some activists might take solace from the knowledge that they are promoting a specific sense of ethnocultural identity through music, for others this discourse is not relevant. For many going to a fest-noz is not a political declaration, it is a social event linked with friendship, conviviality and community participation.

The issue is not that Breton language activism should, or could, attempt to replicate the cultural practices embodied in, and articulated through music. However, the success of the Breton musical industry and its capacity to represent inclusivity and diversity through creative performance shows that, given the right context, people are enthusiastic supporters of Breton cultural forms. In terms of language activism it makes sense to build on the positive sense of affectivity and community that music engages and to look at ways in which music can provide a site of critical activism.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to critically explore the ways in which issues of language, power and identity are represented, contextualised and engaged in relation to Brittany, and to the promotion of the Breton language as a form of linguistic diversity in particular. It came out of a desire to understand the changing practices of Breton and the desire to see Breton continue, both as an example of linguistic diversity and as a site of diversity and difference.

This thesis also came out of a concern that although Breton was being promoted by many activists in a variety of ways, this activism was only having limited success and had failed to engage the imagination and participation of the broader Breton public. As a minority or lesser-used language, Breton was being spoken by many old people and a few younger people, but they were rarely speaking with each other. There was a disjuncture between the generations and it seemed that the younger generation was in many ways missing out on the most fundamentally important language resource of all: the opportunity to speak with and learn from the last generation of first-language Breton speakers. This thesis was therefore a way of understanding how people could have such different views and practices of a language that they found it difficult to speak with each other. In this sense then its goal has been to track the ways in which Breton had been positioned and configured in different socio-historical, ideological and socio-political contexts and to work towards developing new, productive ways of imagining Breton and of promoting Breton language practices and linguistic identities.

Throughout this thesis I have sought to develop and apply a critical approach to language work that engages with issues of language and linguistic diversity at a discursive and ideological level. This critique has not been designed to discredit the important work of language activism, but rather to help develop strategies through which activism can become more effective. I argue that because symbolic power is constituted at a discursive and ideological level, it is necessary and important to develop a critical awareness of how beliefs about language(s), attitudes to language(s), and discourses informing language ideologies affect the practice and

promotion of languages such as Breton, and linguistic diversity in Brittany more generally. Developing this awareness increases the capacity of activists to work within, across and against many of the tropes that discursively inform the field of language work and position language practices in particular ways. It develops possibilities for resisting discourses that reiterate and promote the value and prestige of more powerful languages through ideological tropes such as the pre-eminence of reified, normative language standards, and works towards strategies that may potentially lead to new forms of language activism that are aimed not at the promotion of a language so much as challenging the dominance and authority conferred on major languages through this discursive field.

Through a post-structural analysis of the field of language work, I sought to identify and critique the axiomatic status of a set of values, assumptions and beliefs about language I have described as foundationalism. In this analysis, I explored the ways in which power is not simply expressed through the inequitable relations between languages, for example in the dominance of French over Breton, but is also, and especially, conferred through the reiteration of these language ideologies within the field of language activism.

In this way while Breton language activist might seek to challenge the dominance of French, for example, without a critical awareness, they may employ discourses and a language ideology that reiterates and confirms the symbolic power and status of French, for example in reiterating the value of prestigious linguistic norms over local diversity and the value of convergence, whereby minority or lesser-used languages need to develop to become more like powerful languages such as French and English.

In contrast, I have argued that it is ultimately antithetical to the promotion of linguistic diversity and minority or lesser-used languages to seek to make lesser-used languages more like their larger, more powerful counterparts. When activists seek to make Breton more like French – more powerful, more prestigious and with a strong, normative standard, and when they employ a language ideology that is broadly mimetic of French and that forms a part of the field of French symbolic power, then

this has profound consequences for the ways in which Breton is discursively positioned and valued by its speakers and potential speakers. In seeking to promote Breton as an equal but separate language to French, Breton is being compared to French using a language ideology that values those aspects of language and linguistic capital that French is already very good at. In doing so this discursively reiterates the power, authority, utility and value of French and the minority status of Breton.

Such a strategy is unlikely to be effective, I argued, for a number of reasons. One is the way in which it positions Breton as a minority or lesser-used (and by implication a peripheral and less useful) language to speakers and potential speakers. Another is the way in which it reproduces a language ideology that discursively marginalises difference and diversity within a language in the interests of the promotion of a strong, linguistic standard. At issue here is the effect of promoting a strong Breton standard on diversity within Breton and the consequences of reproducing a diglossia in which one form of the language is promoted as more prestigious than many other forms.

I argued that one outcome of this ideology is the lack of engagement, and potential alienation, of speakers of non-standard forms of the language, in particular many first-language Breton speakers whose linguistic identities are marked by strong regional and generational differences. A second outcome is the ineffectiveness of such a strategy in encouraging potential speakers towards the language. While such a form of language activism is appealing to a relatively small number of highly motivated and politically conscious people, many others are not becoming directly involved in the practice of Breton. For some Breton represents an explicit political ideology they are not willing to become involved in, others may be insufficiently motivated to become involved and still others may not know how to become involved. Unlike music, where there are many ways for people to participate in creative and diverse expressions of Breton identity, such possibilities are currently limited in Breton language. A focus on promoting a prestigious, standardised and normative form of Breton that is frequently explicitly linked to an ideology of Breton nationalism has meant that relatively few opportunities exist for Breton to be practiced by speakers and potential speakers in local, personal and convivial ways

that promote the notion of *Gemeinschaft*, or local, intimate community. Those opportunities that do exist are not particularly valued within the language ideology of many activists and, frequently, continue to be subsumed under an ideology that seeks to promote the strength and power of Breton and the elitism and privilege of their particular practice.

In exploring some of the motivations for people to learn and speak Breton, I argued that one of the most important factors is the way in which Breton promotes an affective and convivial sense of community and *Gemeinschaft*. While people had many different reasons and desires for speaking Breton, creating personal relationships with people and reiterating a sense of cultural continuity to the past were primary motivations for the vast majority of those who had learnt Breton as a second or subsequent language. While some people, particularly those directly involved in language activism, had other objectives for learning and speaking Breton, these were in addition to, and not separate or exclusive from, these affective desires.

Given this critique of language activism that deploys foundationalist tropes, and frames issues of linguistic diversity and the promotion of minority or lesser-used languages such as Breton uncritically, I sought to explore the field of Breton language activism from a critical perspective, identifying and discussing the discourses and language ideologies informing a number of key sites of language activism. In doing so I was interested firstly to see the ways in which dominant discourses and ideologies were being reproduced, and secondly, the ways in which these were being challenged within the field. The three areas of language work I chose to explore in detail were Diwan schools, The Breton Language Office and Breton music. Through these case studies, I identified a number of discourses that were being engaged, including nationalism and the foundationalist tropes first discussed in chapter one.

These discourses and ideologies were explored for the ways in which they were being reproduced, but also in the ways they were being critically challenged, transgressed and positioned in new and different contexts. Within these three case

studies a range of ideologies were identified, suggesting that there is no one, single epistemological position informing Breton language activism, but a collection of diverse and different desires, viewpoints and attitudes to the promotion of Breton and of linguistic diversity. Having said this, it was clear that some positions were far more critically aware than others and were therefore in a more informed position to engage with issues of language activism at a critical, discursive level.

In particular, those positions that sought to promote the authority, strength and normativity of Breton, such as the language planning of the Breton Language Office, tended to reiterate a language ideology deeply informed by foundationalist tropes, without a great deal of reflexive critique or discursive analysis. In contrast, those initiatives that sought to promote Breton and diversity in Brittany, in less normative and more diffuse and oblique ways, such as through the promotion of music, were often less prescriptive when it came to language initiatives. Many forms of language activism, including education, planning, advocacy and music, encompassed a variety of positions and perspectives. In this way education or music, for example, were sites both of strongly normative and nationalistic approaches to language activism, as well as less dirigiste approaches to the promotion of Breton and language diversity.

Given the potential limitations of promoting Breton uncritically, this thesis took an approach that activism at a discursive and ideological level is a relevant and potentially productive approach to the promotion of language diversity in Brittany. Such a strategy not only seeks to challenge the pre-eminent status and power of French (or Breton) but also seeks to challenge the language ideology and discursive regime through which this power and privilege is conferred. It does so through a critical analysis of the way linguistic diversity in Brittany and France has been discursively and historically located and sought to problematise the way in which symbolic power has been configured, contested and reproduced at this subtextual and ideological level. From here it explored a number of strategies for reframing or challenging the ways in which language, power and identity are discursively linked and constituted. It argued for a performative rather than a foundationalist view of language, and explored ways in which language activists can productively and

creatively promote diversity and difference in Brittany through deterritorialising and transgressing received notions of Breton language and identity.

This is itself quite a radical ideological and epistemological shift in terms of theorising language diversity and difference. This post-structural approach to language questions the notion, for example, that the promotion of reified, standardised minority or lesser-used languages is synonymous with the promotion of linguistic diversity and it challenges the privileged and pre-eminent status of Breton as the language of a people. As such, it may appear controversial to many language activists. However, rather than rejecting outright these notions, this thesis seeks to locate such beliefs within particular language ideologies and challenges the ellipsis by which they are represented as objective or self-evident truths. It is not a rejection of uncritical language work but rather aims to develop ways in which activism can be more effectively engaged in the future.

In this sense, one of the potential outcomes of critical language work is a reframing of the issue of linguistic diversity and the way Breton is promoted. Rather than seeking to promote the strength and power of Breton as a prestigious and normative language within a language ideology informed by foundationalist tropes, in challenging the ways in which Breton is discursively positioned, it argues for a form of language activism in which Breton is promoted as being less like French rather than more like French. In other words, rather than promoting Breton as a language as good as French, it seeks to promote new ways in which diverse notions of Breton can act as the site of meaningful and productive relationships between people and become a significant, though not privileged, part of the linguistic identities of many people. In doing so it does not simply reproduce dominant language ideologies but creates the possibility for these ideologies to be challenged, subverted and transgressed and engaged with critical awareness. In this way new, different and diverse ways of thinking and doing Breton can be acknowledged and promoted. Activism therefore becomes not so much the promotion of a specific language, as the promotion of different and diverse ways of using a language and expressing one's linguistic identity.

As I have argued, there are a number of reasons why such an approach is useful. For one, the belief that there is a language called Breton, that exists independently of its speakers, that serves as a privileged link between a people and a territory, that is under threat from external forces and that can be saved through the judicious implementation of language policy and initiatives, is seldom effective in promoting the status and practice of a language, and when it is, there are significant consequences for the way diversity within a language and a territory is acknowledged and valorised. Moreover such strategies do not reflect the linguistic experiences and desire of many people in Brittany. Chapters five and six explored the motivations for people to learn Breton and the acute disjuncture between their desires to see it as a personal, affective and convivial language, and the frequent promotion of Breton as a strongly reified, normative standard.

In addition, Breton is not, or is no longer, in a diglossic relationship with French in France, but forms part of a far more complex nexus of linguistic and identity issues for many people. Brittany is a linguistically diverse and multilingual space and many Bretons speak a number of different languages. In recent decades in particular, many people have become far more capable of expressing their own sense of a multi-faceted achieved language identity through which they express themselves, rather than an ascribed identity, whereby one was judged according to the language one spoke and notions of correctness, appropriateness and linguistic capital were externally imposed. The promotion of strategies through which people can develop an achieved sense of language identity is a clear goal of critical language activism.

One of the questions this thesis began with was whether the Breton language is disappearing and whether linguistic diversity in Brittany is diminishing. Through this research then it is possible to say with confidence that there continues to be a large amount of linguistic diversity in Brittany, both through the promotion of new forms of Breton and the increasing multilingual practices of the community. In this way, diversity is not diminishing but it is changing and is being reconfigured in new ways. The challenge for activists therefore is not to stop or reverse this change but to create and promote opportunities for people to engage with Breton in new and different ways that are meaningful and fulfilling in this changing context.

There is little argument that the traditional practice of Breton is decreasing: in particular the language as spoken by older first-generation Breton speakers in rural Basse-Bretagne is disappearing. As the last generation who grew up speaking Breton and who lived their lives on the land in close-knit communities passes away, so too does a way of life and the language practice that describes it. But in its place a new society has emerged that is no less evocative of Breton society, and representative of Breton identity than this one. This new society has a new and very different set of linguistic tools and new ways of expressing itself.

There are a number of profound differences between this traditional Brittany and the Brittany that followed it. The first Brittany is marked by local practice, insularity, limited opportunity and a profound and deep knowledge and attachment to the land, not in the sense of a nation, but in the sense of « le terroir », the land. It was poor, agrarian, conservative, deeply religious and had little or no sense of national consciousness. It was a world where, in the 19th century those who spoke Breton seldom spoke French. In the 20th century it became a world where, thanks to education, increasing numbers of people learned French and became bilingual, speaking both a language of prestige and a language of shame. It was therefore a world which people often sought to abandon, through need or desire, as quickly as possible.

The Brittany of many language activists came about following the deep cultural and linguistic schisms brought on by modernity and the project of French nationalism. This was a Brittany that was marked by a complex and difficult relationship to the past. For young people born after the Second World War it was a Brittany still marked by the stigma many of their parents felt, but also and increasingly by a desire and a passion to reinvent themselves and to reconnect the links to the past. This Brittany was created by a small number of deeply committed individuals and groups who sought to retain and restate their sense of cultural difference and their sense of cultural continuity with the past. Just because they had not been able to learn Breton did not mean they felt less Breton and nor did it mean they did not reclaim the right to speak Breton. This was a generation who were politically informed, motivated and frequently angry about the ways in which the traditions and practices of their

forebears had been treated with disdain and contempt. It was a generation that had the confidence, the cultural and linguistic fluency and the wherewithal to oppose the notion of French hegemony that existed in the post-war era.

This was the generation that, more than any other, saved the cultural practices and specificities throughout Brittany from oblivion. Through their deep personal commitment and determination, they collected the oral stories, they relearned the music and they reappropriated the notion of being Breton as a positive, valorising and different identity. Without the efforts of this generation, it is likely that only vestiges of Breton culture would remain.

This was a generation who lived Breton in a way that was different from their forebears, but also in a way that had a deep sense of purpose and personal meaning. However this was also a generation deeply informed by their upbringing as French men and women. They spoke French and had developed many of the values and beliefs taught through the education system and promoted through the media and public life. Whereas their parents and grandparents may not have had a sense of the Breton nation, for example, this ideology became very important for many activists who, in seeking to represent Breton cultural practices, did so through the ideologies and epistemologies they had learned as children in France. In this way, since France was represented as a united nation despite its differences, do too Brittany was imagined as a united nation: “a Breizh une et indivisible” (Jones 1998:129). Since French was represented as a powerful, normative and privileged language, so too Breton was promoted as a language that needed a powerful and prestigious norm to act as the linguistic standard for the nation. If Breton were to become a language with a future, it would need all of the tools and capacities that French had, and it would need to be represented and valorised as the equivalence of French.

In this way promoting the Breton language the way it has been promoted has helped to create a sub-culture of highly motivated people who practice the language amongst themselves but have little dialogue with first-language speakers and potential Breton speakers. While this sub-culture is continuing to practice Breton and is the guardian of a vast amount of invaluable cultural knowledge, unless it is able to

find ways to share this with the wider community in ways that are inclusive and non-didactic, it seems unlikely that the wider community will participate in this project and therefore that Breton will become anything more than an elite practice or a cultural curiosity.

The difficulty for this generation is that they are caught between the desire to see Breton become a more widely spoken language and the fear that without planning and control it will disappear or be bastardised. Many activists have a clear sense of what Breton is and what needs to be done, for example, official recognition, more money for education, better language policies even though they may disagree about how these goals should, or could, be achieved. However, there is a fear that if it were not planned and protected, the Breton they hold dear would disappear or would be transformed in radical and undesirable ways, most likely becoming much more influenced by French.

However, just as the generation of Bretons born after the war were born into a fundamentally different social, linguistic, cultural and physical landscape from their parents, so too the children of this generation have inherited a very different world. Many of the structuralist ways of thinking and the dirigiste and polemical approaches of the post-war generation are simply no longer relevant to the children of the activists and those who are too young to remember the stigma of the language and the battles their parents fought to challenge and change these perceptions.

Linguistically, Brittany has changed a lot in the three decades since militants took to the streets in defence of the Breton language and since Diwan was created. On the one hand there are fewer and fewer first-language Breton speakers alive; the pendulum is swinging inexorably towards a practice of Breton that is first learned academically. On the other hand there are more people learning Breton now and participating in Breton cultural events than there have been for many decades. One of the most significant changes in the practice of Breton is in the way linguistic and cultural diversity in Brittany, and of young Bretons, is configured.

In recent decades France and Brittany had changed a lot both culturally and linguistically. The increasing presence of migrant communities in France has brought a profound change in notions of French identity, even if this is uncomfortable for some French people to accept. Despite its official policy of assimilation and its rhetoric, France has become a multicultural nation both in the presence of regional minorities and of large and diverse groups of immigrants. France has also become more multicultural through the increasing impact of the European Union. Programmes such as Erasmus send tens of thousands of students to live in different countries every year and as tourism and inter-European migration continues to grow, this diversity is only going to increase. Cities like Rennes and Nantes are now complex, diverse and sophisticated multicultural and multilingual spaces.

The Brittany young people live in is an interconnected, globalised, multi-dimensional place where the local, the national, the transnational and the virtual jostle and compete for their attention. If the last generation of first-language Breton speakers is marked by their complex and often negative attitude to the Breton language and the linguistic identity it ascribed, and their children's generation is marked by its reappropriation of Breton as a positive identity and site of political activism, at least amongst those who have become engaged in the Breton movement, then the children of these activists, and the greater public more generally, are marked by the possibilities and choices they are faced with in terms of social and linguistic identities. This generation is no longer faced with the choice of Breton *or* French that their grandparents were, or even the possibility of Breton *and* French that their parents fought for. These days young people face a smorgasbord of choice when it comes to language and identity, not only in the languages that they learn but their own sense of identity and belonging.

In such a world many young Breton speakers are multilingual. Many Bretons who are the children of migrants speak other languages at home. Many young people have a highly developed sense of intercultural awareness. Most people are no longer bound to their language, and bound within their language, the way they were in the past. Education and plurilingualism have given them possibilities to express themselves in diverse and multiple ways. People enjoy speaking different language

and moving between linguistic identities. All Breton speakers are bilingual, and many are plurilingual. Nor are they bound territorially. While many young Breton speakers live in Western Brittany, many others live in Rennes, Paris, New York or Sydney. They keep in touch through email and via blogs. They follow festoù-noz via webcasts and fly home for Christmas.

With this increased linguistic capacity comes a confidence and increased sense of linguistic mobility. Identities become multiple, contingent and adaptable. Languages become elements and aspects of identity rather than polemical categories. It becomes possible to be Breton and speak English, Spanish and Khmer as well as French (and Breton). Breton becomes a way of informing one's identity, just as one's identity is informed by the past practices and values of that language.

While this sense of linguistic globalisation suggests a convergence of languages and can be seen as a potential "linguistic McDonaldization" (Jack Lang cited in Sonntag 2003:45), for those who already speak several languages and have a strong sense of intercultural and transcultural awareness, the opposite is also a possibility. Indeed, in a globalised world, the local, far from becoming irrelevant, can also become highly valued and significant. In a world of choice, mobility and multiculturalism that young Bretons face, the notion of *Gemeinschaft*, of local community and belonging, becomes even more meaningful and necessary. In a complex multilingual and multicultural landscape where many languages are spoken, the convivial, local and idiosyncratic nature of Breton can be seen as an asset rather than a disadvantage. In a world full of languages competing for utility and power the small and the local become highly valued and precious for many people. In a multilingual Brittany, Breton can provide a way of connecting people to the land and culture, not in a nationalistic sense, but as a cultural point of reference and a way of creating a sense of place and community.

It makes sense therefore, to develop the ways in which the language helps articulate this sense of the local, and of convivial relations between people within this new paradigm of multilingualism and diversity. One way in which this is possible is to work against the ideology that France is a monolingual country and that Brittany is,

or should be a monolingual or bilingual region, through the valorisation, acknowledgement and development of the linguistic skills of people in Brittany and in France. The greater the linguistic capacity of people in France, and in Brittany, the less tenable it is to maintain the myth that ‘France is French and French is France’. In a multilingual society there are more languages competing for speakers, perhaps, but there is a greater acceptance that plurilingualism is normal and desirable and there is therefore a greater liminal space within which languages such as Breton can find relevance and meaning.

As a discussion on language activism in Brittany, this thesis has sought to explore and argue for the development of a critical engagement with issues of discourse, ideology and the many implicit and subtextual ways in which symbolic power is socially and linguistically regulated and reproduced. It has sought to show that although critical approaches to language activism are not widespread, they are being used by some activists in diverse ways and offer potential in new forms of activism.

As a site of critical language activism I have sought to use this thesis as a way to work through, and assert, my own complex sense of language identity and as a forum through which critical approaches to linguistic diversity and difference can be promoted. As such, the next step in this activism is to return to Brittany and bring some of these ideas to public, private and academic debates. I anticipate they will be controversial and not always well received, but also useful and productive in promoting language activism, the practice of Breton and linguistic diversity and difference in Brittany.

My goal in this thesis has been to think Breton differently, not (exclusively) as the language of a people that was discriminated against and sent to the wall by Republican Jacobinism, nor the privileged link between a people and place across time, nor a reified and privileged language in its own right, nor the language of a nation in waiting, but rather, as the ongoing and performative practice of an identity that is meaningful for those who engage it. In acknowledging and valorising this “doing” of Breton, it is possible to explore many new ways in which the language, in all of its diversity and a part of a greater sense of linguistic difference, can be

promoted and engaged; ways that do not slip into discourses that regulate and prescribe legitimate usage and appropriateness. The possibilities for this practice of Breton are limited only by the creativity and willingness of those who speak it.

Appendix One

Name	Sex	Age (approx)	Occupation	Interview language	Breton	French	Rural	Urban	Breton at work
Alan	M	40s	Journalist	French	-	L1		•	
Aziliz	F	30s	Academic	French	L2	L1		•	•
Christiane	F	20s	Student	English	L2	L1		•	
Dimitri	M	30s	Academic	English	L2	L2		•	•
Fañch	M	30s	Translator	French	L2	L1		•	•
Francis	M	50s	Academic	English	L2	L1	?		•
Gwenaël	M	30s	Musician	French	-	L1		•	
Iffig	M	60s	Farmer	French	L1	L2	•		•
Jean-Pierre	M	50s	Festival director	French	L2	L1		•	?
Lenaig	F	20s	Student	English	-	L1		•	
Maël	M	20s	Journalist	English	L1	L1		•	•
Marie	F	30s	Admin	English	L2	L1		•	
Metig	F	40s	TV producer	French	L1	L2		?	•
Morgan	M	80s	Retired farmer	French	L1	L2	•		•
Nolwenn	F	20s	Architect	French	-	L1		•	
Olier	M	40s	Language planner	French	L1 or L2	L1 or L2		?	•
Serge	M	40s	Historian	English	-	L1		•	
Solenn	F	20s	Student	French	L2	L1		•	
Sylvestre	M	30s	Academic	French	L1	L1		•	•
Tudual	M	50s	Academic	French	L1 or L2	L1	•		•
Uriell	F	60s	Farmer	French	L1	L1 or L2	•		•
Yann	M	30s	Academic	French	L2	L1		•	•
Yannick	M	20s	Student	French	L2	L1		•	

Note: L1 = first language, L2 = second or subsequent language. In cases where there was no definitive response, either 'L1 or L2', or '?' have been used to indicate the most likely response.

Appendix Two

La charte des écoles Diwan

- 1.** L'association Diwan est ouverte à toutes les familles désirant assurer une éducation de leurs enfants en langue bretonne, sans distinction socio-professionnelle, philosophique ou politique. Les écoles sont gratuites et ouvertes à tous.
- 2.** Diwan existe du fait des carences d'une Education Nationale ne donnant pas sa place à la langue bretonne, mais réclame la prise en charge de ses écoles dans un service public d'enseignement démocratique et rénové en Bretagne, permettant l'utilisation du breton comme langue véhiculaire de la maternelle à l'université dans tous les domaines de l'enseignement.
- 3.** Diwan est indépendant par rapport à toute formation philosophique, confessionnelle, politique, syndicale, etc. En conséquence, Diwan affirme que son combat exige que soient respectées les convictions religieuses, philosophiques ou politiques de tous ses membres, quel que soit l'éventail de celles-ci et tant qu'elles ne sont pas contraires à la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'homme. Cette indispensable tolérance conduit Diwan à défendre la laïcité dans son enseignement et à se porter garant de la liberté de pensée de chaque personne.
- 4.** Diwan instaure un enseignement démocratique avec la collaboration effective des parents, des collectivités locales et des enseignants. Diwan demande aux parents de créer au sein de la famille, un climat propice à l'expression en langue bretonne dans la vie quotidienne.
- 5.** Diwan s'engage à promouvoir l'usage du breton au sein de l'association à tous les niveaux; par ailleurs, Diwan promeut un développement culturel en langue bretonne donnant à chaque enfant le maximum d'atouts pour forger lui-même son avenir et permettant aux enfants de Bretagne de prendre en charge leur environnement naturel, social et économique.
- 6.** Diwan déclare son hostilité à toute uniformisation linguistique et est attachée aux diverses formes d'expression culturelle, affirmant que seul leur complémentarité est source d'unité, d'enrichissement mutuel et collectif. Le breton enseigné dans les écoles maternelles Diwan est celui utilisé dans leur environnement géographique et humain.
- 7.** Conformément aux droits inaliénables des peuples à s'exprimer par leur propre culture, Diwan appelle toutes les personnes éprises de démocratie, les organisations culturelles bretonnes, les organisations syndicales notamment d'enseignants, à lutter avec elle pour plus de justice et contre toutes les formes de domination culturelle.
- 8.** Diwan se déclare solidaire de tous les peuples qui luttent pour leur identité culturelle, en y insérant les travailleurs immigrés, affirmant que leur diversité concourt à enrichir le patrimoine humain.

Sourced from <http://diwanbreizh.org> accessed 25/08/05

The Diwan Charter

- 1.** The Diwan association is open to all families who want their children to receive an education through the Breton language, without socioprofessional, philosophical or political discrimination. The schools are free of charge and open to all.
- 2.** Diwan exists because of the deficiencies in the National Education system which does not give its proper place to the Breton language. It demands that a democratic and renewed public education service in Brittany takes charge of the schools, allowing the use of Breton as the language of teaching from preschool to the university in all areas of learning.
- 3.** Diwan is independent of any philosophical, religious, political, syndicalist, or other conviction. As a consequence, Diwan affirms that its struggle requires that the religious, philosophical and political convictions of all of its members be respected, whatever their scope, as long as they are not contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This indispensable tolerance leads Diwan to defend and promote a secular character in its teaching and to guarantee the liberty of thought for each person.
- 4.** Diwan establishes a democratic teaching methodology with the effective collaboration of parents, local collectives, and teachers. Diwan asks parents to create a climate conducive to expression in the Breton language in the daily life of the home.
- 5.** Diwan takes upon itself the encouragement of the use of Breton within the association at all levels. Additionally, Diwan promotes cultural development in the Breton language, giving each child maximum opportunity to forge his or her own future, permitting the children of Brittany to take charge of their natural, social and economic environment.
- 6.** Diwan declares its hostility to all linguistic uniformization and is supportive of diverse forms of cultural expression, affirming that only in being complimentary can they be a source of unity, and of mutual and collective enrichment. The Breton taught in the Diwan preschools is that used in their own geographic and human environment.
- 7.** In conformance with the inalienable rights of people to express their own culture, Diwan calls on all people who support democracy, Breton cultural organizations, and unionized groups, especially of teachers, to fight with it for greater justice and against all forms of cultural dominance.
- 8.** Diwan declares its solidarity with all peoples who fight for their cultural identity, including immigrant workers, affirming that their diversity contributes to the enrichment of human heritage.

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