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# "National Language" and its Discontents: A French Debate in European Context

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ABSTRACT: The author posits the concept of language communities, as opposed to that of national language, as a more adecuate categorization in explaning the development of European language policies. Using the case of French, he argues that globalization and the current migration waves render the distinction centre / periphery, in terms of dominat vs. regional or subordinate languages, meaningless, since what have been traditionally considered national languages are being exposed to constant instances of creolization. Such a phenomenon, far from empoverishing these languages' cultural idiosincracy, enriches them by enlarging their communicative effectiveness.

*Keywords*: National language, creolization, language communities, migration, regional languages, globalization.

RESUMEN: Utilizando el caso del idioma francés, el presente artículo explora el concepto de comunidad lingüística, en contraste con el de lengua nacional, como una categorización más adecuada para explicar el desarrollo de las políticas lingüísticas europeas. En el contexto actual de la globalización y los movimientos migratorios intraeuropeos, las distinciones entre centro y periferia, en términos de lengua dominante y regional o subordinada, carecen de sentido, ya que lo que se han considerado tradicionalmente lenguas nacionales se ven sometidas a procesos constantes de mestizaje. Este fenómeno, en lugar de empobrecer la idiosincrasia cultural de las mismas, las enriquece debido a que amplía su efectividad comunicativa.

*Palabras clave*: Lengua nacional, mestizaje, comunidad lingüística, emigración, lenguas regionales, globalización.

At a time when a supranationalist Europe is slowly being formed, and the continent is often encouraged to "speak with one voice" on the globalised arena, an equivalent, social Newtonian force is arising: that of regionalism and polycentrality. Intranational regional variations are marked across a range of issues. In the 2002 French Presidential elections, votes for Jean-Marie Le Pen were particularly high in the south and the northwest (*Élection présidentielle*, 2002), and studies of obesity in the country show significant differences between the extreme north (highest) and Bretagne (lowest).[1] In the case of language policy, however, supranationalist directives depend still on statist national language strategies, and these latter abstract from the historical patterning of language use across Europe in general. Such abstraction is evident both within nations (some of which date back little more than a century, and others which have pronounced regional identities), and in the light of the more recent emergence of separate nations (the Czech and Slovak republics). Ernest Renan observes in his seminal 1882 Sorbonne lecture *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, "la considération ethnographique n'a donc été pour rien dans la constitution des nations modernes", but it is this ethnographic factor which is of primary significance in the "constitution", here taken in its legal sense, of a *supra*nationalist Europe. Given the background of increased regionalism within and across nation states in Europe, this present paper, as does the 1996 UNESCO *Declaration on Linguistic Rights*, "takes language communities and not states as its point of departure" and argues that the strengthening of the former across Europe is a current consequence and future hope not only of language policy but also, and more fundamentally, of current migration patterns, even if these are short-term and for non-traditional (i.e. not exclusively work-related) reasons.

Patterns of trade, war and persecution have long implanted settler groups across Europe, and these groups have retained their own cultural, spiritual and linguistic bonding after migration. In the late seventeenth century, the Walloon community in Thorney, Cambridgeshire, England resented French-speaking pastors from the French Church in London, but wanted their clergy who spoke their own language. Given the influx of trained, Huguenot/Calvinist drainage workers, and their importance in creating the contemporary fenlands of East Anglia, the combination of Walloon, Dutch, French and English in major towns of the area, not least the regional capital Norwich, made for a multi-lingual,

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1. The North and the Parisian Basin have the highest (some 14%), while the rest of France is around the 10% mark. (Enquête ObEpi, 2003: 4). In their *Géographie du surpoids,* G. Salem, S. Rican, and M.L. Kurzinger found equivalent regional variations, and added that "Une géographie de plus en plus fine se révèle" significant local differences (as between the Moselle valley and Lorraine). Their research "milite donc en faveur de comportements régionaux, ce que de trop rares études sur les specificités dans le boire et le manger ont montré" (Salem et al., 2005: 2).

multi-cultural, if ostensibly homogenous religious community in the area, a micro-region within Europe,[2] long before more recent immigration from further afield (Trudgill, 2002: 97; Schreier, 2005: 109-10). This is a pattern, of course, which can be reproduced throughout Europe, and is constitutive of the making of its regions. Centralisation, such as the "Plan Magellan" in Belgium, or to a certain extent the notion of "belgitude", will often confront an opposing social Newtonian force: the manifesto for Wallonie, for example. In his 1882 Sorbonne lecture, Renan notes:

> Si la politique suivie de la maison capétienne est arrivée à grouper à peu près, sous le nom de France, les territoires de l'ancienne Gaule, ce n'est pas là un effet de la tendance qu'auraient eue ces pays à se rejoindre à leurs congénères. Le Dauphiné, la Bresse, la Provence, la Franche-Comté ne se souvenaient plus d'une origine commune. Toute conscience gauloise avait péri dès le IIe siècle de notre ère, et ce n'est que par une vue d'érudition que, de nos jours, on a retrouvé rétrospectivement l'individualité du caractère gaulois.

More than a century after his speech, the "vue d'érudition" has become populist, and has led to contention that that which Renan sees as a singularity is multiple (perhaps "*des* caractère[*s*] gaulois"). In the face of what Brigitte-Lange (1996: 200, 245-46) describes as a now technocratic notion of "une langue analytique bien faite" - and which, one might add, extends to the pan-European institutional level also - there are compelling democratic reasons for the attendance to such multiplicity, especially when these take account of changing demographic patterns also. In terms of its cultural politics and search for identity, such a latter-day view has nothing to do with linguistic "erudition", but much more to do with the complexities through which aspects of a fractious "*proto*-European" history are levelled in the overriding interest to assert a working hypothesis for an otherwise equally fractious *pan*-Europeanism (Aiello and Thurlow, 2006: 158). While an updated Parsonian theory of general action informs much of the latter debate, the multiplicity of role-sets, occasional and provisional, formed through implicit negation, is often overlooked in the formulation of language policy. Such formulations are devised in defiance of a view, as advanced by Florian Coulmas (1997: 41), that there is "no stable, objective existence" to a language "outside the people who speak it", so much so that "no categorical distinction between language and dialect or between mother tongue and foreign language can be justified". In such statements, both by Renan and Coulmas, the inevitability is

2. The notion of "region" here then should extend for part of the city's history at least to include notional ("imagined") communities across the North Sea, and not to be confined as a near synonym of "provincial" in the British if not the Latin sense.

embedded of that conceptual lacuna, so intrinsic to both historical and socio-linguistics, between observer and informer, or between meta-description (even if based on empirical data) and actual language use, that which Coulmas, reapplying to it Renan's famous phrase, calls "un plébiscite de tous les jours".

Such a lacuna is evident in recent activism about linguistic regionalism and tradition in France. In October 2005, close to 10,000 people (Joan-Pèire, 2005) demonstrated in Carcassonne for what he calls a "manifestation pour la [sic] langue d'oc". David Grosclaude, the President of the Institut d'estudis occitans said that an aim was to gain a commitment to a "generalised opportunity to study Occitan". Clearly demarcated against a hegemonic Francophonie, the name in which the activism prevails is still contentious, and itself subject to local and regional manifestations. "Le provençal", claims the Insitut, "est la variété d'occitan parlée en Provence, le languedocien en Languedoc, le gascon en Gascogne, l'auvergnat en Auvergne, le limousin en Limousin"; "Lo provençau es un dialècte de l'occitan" (*Institut d'etudis occitans*, 2005). Yet such a statement merely pastes over, by strong assertion, that which, experientially, structurally and lexically, are widespread divergences, and which have been long-standing issues. The term "occitan" is here conceived, in an extension of that offered by Schlieben-Lange (1996: 63), in two quite separate dinomic relations: the relation of the historical *langue d'oc* to the *langue d'oïl*; and its own contested status with regard to other descendants of the former, some of which of course may share an inheritance with neighbouring languages, particularly towards the southwest. For this context, then, perhaps *multi*nomia is a preferable term to dinomia, with its essentializing positioning of dominant and subordinate (Saville-Troike, 2003: 46). Indeed, as René Nelli (1978: 31) has pointed out, "Le provençal est de l'occitan [here the former relation - *oc* to *oïl* - applies], mais l'occitan n'est pas le provençal [here the latter]"; only if "l'Occitane accèderait à l'autonomie interne" might arise a "sorte de langue commune", this perhaps the dialect of Montpellier. Yet, given the subjectivity of this cultural mosaic, a Toulousien would not want to shake off the hegemony of Paris to fall under that of Montpellier. The Provençal groups did not wish to "créer une langue occitane qui serait le plus petit dénominateur commun de tous les locuteurs de Bordeaux à Briançon, mais bien d'œuvrer en faveur de tous les parlers issus de la langue des troubadours, qu'ils soient provençaux, auvergnats, gascons, limousins ou languedociens" (*Une manifestation*, 2005).

The roots of the demonstration at the regional-national interface force this vitality, complexity and variety into a conceptual gridlock of a unique, singular representation so that it can be reproduced on the national level; in turn, this seems a continuation of the oral/literal divide, still very much experientially valid post-

Derrida, and which Schlieben-Lange (1996: 35)[3] traces, in her section on Louis Maggiolo's literacy research stretching back some two centuries from the Second Empire, as a central concern of the Revolution. If the higher order, other-directed regard (Occitan/French), is perhaps necessary, it is of course also a legacy of French regionalism since the 12th century at least, or the divisions of the state in the Second World War, but it risks making the object of its defence a static object of analysis, thus degrading both it and the spirit of the defence. "In the absence of the political community, contemporary or past", claimed Max Weber (1978: 393), "the external delineation of the group [is] usually indistinct". Given that the precise delineations of the linguistic community involve a projection complicated by negotiations with history and present purpose, their outline and strategy are also subject to negotiation, both external and internal.

In his 1999 report to two French ministries, Bernard Cerquiglini outlined more than a dozen languages spoken in France, ranging from those derived from the *Langues d'oc* and *d'oïl* to those, non-Romance (or even non-IndoEuropean) associated with the extended periods of migration and mobility. 1999 figures provided by Philippe Blanchet, Louis-Jean Calvet, and others[4] found that in Provence (that is, to be clear, the administrative region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, including the Département des Alpes-Maritimes), four languages were habitually spoken by around 100,000 people each (that is, just over 2% of the total population each). Of these - Italian, Spanish, Arabic and Provençal - the last named was spoken by the least number. Indeed, English was spoken by over 4%, close to 200,000 people.

General figures for Occitan have chronicled its decline by about ten per cent a decade for much of the twentieth century, to a current one or two million, mostly older speakers. (Paden, 1998: 340-342). Yet Yves Rouquette's (in Paden, 1998: 342)[5] prediction that "la seule chose [of Occitan] qui mourra pas, c'est [...] notre trace" is offset by the extension of the trace of other languages into Occitan: in 1996, a slim volume of Seamus Heaney's poems appeared in Puèglaurenç (Puilaurens) with a rather cheeky foreword, asking why one would translate ("revirar") his works into Occitan (apart of course because he had just been

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3. "On pourrait avancer la thèse que la Révolution Française est un moment historique de "ré-oralisation", peut-être le dernier en Europe" (Schlieben-Lange, 1996: 35).
4. A report originally for the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE) and transmitted to the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED) and the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France and reproduced in *Marges linguistiques* no. 10 (Nov. 2005: 65-87. In reproducing the article, the *Marges* editors say that although they use the term *provençal* for the "parler roman local en Provence" (65), they have reservations about its validity in the light of the information generated by the survey.
5. Two million (let's be optimistic) is a small number, to be sure, relative to the size of France, but in some ways comparable to the population of the region at the time of the troubadors (albeit that France was the most populous country in Europe in the medieval period, much of this was in the north).

granted the "passaport" to translations in the world's languages, the Nobel Prize): "Seriá un pauc cortet de responder "Perqué pas?" [...] l'occitan es pas encara una lenga mòrta, que sache!" (Coste-Rixe, 5). One might add that around 1750, Thomas Richards (1815: vii) made the claim that since the Welsh language had "continued for such a long series of Ages past", there should be no doubt that "it is the Divine Will that it be preserved to the End of Time, as we have the Word of GOD most elegantly and faithfully translated into it".[6]

Jacques Derrida (1998: 30) warns of a "new soteriology" which would, by saving a language, confine its speakers to a subaltern technological and economic position: "on this earth of humans, certain people must yield to the homo-hegemony of dominant languages. They must learn the language of the masters, of capital and machines; they must lose their idiom in order to survive or live better". The masters become the saviours, who would enter the lost domain of an atrophying language and rescue the survivors (they "save some humans lost in their language"), taking them to the safety of a language with better long-term prospects. One might here, paradoxically perhaps, detect a voice, if muted and however ironic, of metropolitan France, or even of the cosmopolitan audience which is the context of and vehicle for postmodern critique. Such a view finds a haunting resonance in a 2000 paper by Jean-Pierre Puissochet who argued that for "une Communauté [European] unie et dynamique, capable d'interventions rapides et efficaces," "un traitement égal de vingt langues" is "indubitablement impropre à porter", especially so since "parmi ces langues, il y a, depuis 1973, l'anglais". (Yet what would be the state of affairs if the UK and the Republic of Ireland had not joined, to which nations, of course, one could add Malta and Cyprus?).

That a language serves no other purpose than as a *lingua franca*, as a means of getting things done, has been written into the socio-political agenda of many kinds of states, and is a part of the imperialist rhetoric E. M. Forster parodies in *A Passsage to India* (1924) in the figure of Mrs Turton who had learned Urdu "only to speak to her servants", therefore just "the imperative mood" (*A Passsage to India*: 62). Such is prevalent across a range of ideologies, and, in France, is traceable to the defence of the new republic in the 1790s, and particularly to the equation, itself very much in the enlightenment tradition, of connecting the regional with the barbaric and backward, and the peripheral (Breton, etc.) with the anti-revolutionary and seditious. This can be seen, throughout Revolutionary rhetoric, as an extension of what Mona Ozouf (1984: 32) calls its "fiction du

6. The Welsh Bible appeared in its standard version in 1620, and was in use until the end of the last century, when a new translation appeared. For an ironic twist, one might note the claim made by James C. Scott (1999: 54) that "Illegibility [...] has been and remains a reliable resource for political autonomy".

même, au double sens du terme: l'illusion et la fabrication à la fois". Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, in his well-known 1794 report for the "comité de salut public" makes the connection unmistakable: "l'idiome appelé bas-breton, l'idiome basque, les langues allemande et italienne ont perpétué le règne du fanatisme et de la superstition, assuré la domination des prêtres, des nobles et des praticiens, empêché la révolution de pénétrer dans neuf départements importants, et peuvent favoriser les ennemis de la France".

While however the French language was considered threatened within the nation, it had proceeded to develop elsewhere. Four months later and two months before Thermidor, in his *Rapport* [to the Convention nationale] *sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser la langue française*, the Abbé Grégoire asked one of the most supremely rhetorical questions in the debate: "cet idiome [French], admis dans les transactions politiques, usité dans plusieurs villes d'Allemagne, d'Italie, des Pays-Bas, dans une partie du pays de Liège, du Luxembourg, de la Suisse, même dans le Canada et sur les bords du Mississippi, par quelle fatalité est-il encore ignoré d'une très-grande partie des Français?" There is, of course, an answer: those who were ignorant of such means of globalisation were (and in some cases are still considered to be) the very people to whom it had not been communicated, or who had chosen to remain insouciant of its benefits. French defines a nation, a state, and thus (and only arguably and demonstrably thus) a "language"; the others are "dialects" or "patois" (with the exception of German in the Bas-Rhin, "Italian" on Corsica, etc.) and are to be *anéantis*, annihilated. Whatever the laudable antecedents to the call in the Abbé's clerical (even Jansenist) background (Bell, 2000: 123), and the relation to the policies of the report's audience, the term is that of linguistic genocide.[7] Some one-fifth (six million) people within France were "ignorant" of the national language, with the figure less than three million for those who could write it correctly. By a *circulus vitiosus* not taken, it is logically revealing that very minority base for the Revolution which was to become so crucial in the coming months, in that those who stand by the revolutionary zeal for literacy (by which of course is meant political awareness without critical interpretation), form around one-tenth of the population.

Yet learning other "patois" was above all a needless *economic* impediment to a Convention which needed to be in a hurry to achieve its transient and increasingly unrealizable goals. In an argument hauntingly prescient of those of Puissochet, who argued that a "pression budgétaire", especially "le coût de

7. From the very title alone and in its clear pre-Thermidor zeal, Grégoire's *nécessité [...] d'anéantir les patois* sits uneasily with Renan's claim in his *Nation* lecture that it is "un fait honorable pour la France" that "elle n'a jamais cherché à obtenir l'unité de la langue par des mesures de coercition".

la traduction", would act as "le frein linguistique" to integration, and of Lord Marlesford, in the present-day British House of Lords, which I will consider later, the Abbé remarks that it would "multiplie[r] les dépenses" and "ralentir" the assimilation to the new codes if one were to merely translate French into the "patois": "ajoutons que la majeure partie des dialectes vulgaires résistent à la traduction ou n'en promettent que d'infidèles". Some forty years later, in his polemical retort to the "comité d'arrondissement" of Cahors (Lot, Midi-Pyrénées) which had proclaimed against "patois" in its territory, Charles Nodier (1834-35) protested against both the view of local languages as barbaric ("infidèle"), and the "imperious" projection of the "unité du langage" in all parts of the country: "On parlera long-temps après vous le languedocien qui vous déplaît, le basque et le bas-breton [...] qui ont l'avantage de posséder des grammaires très bien formulées". The "unité" would be "incompatible avec l'influence inappréciable des localités". Here are meant the rural localities, perhaps, since national education and urban networks were gradually extending the acquaintance with French. A half century later, Gaston Paris proclaimed that learning ("la science") had broken down the "imaginary wall" (Maggiolo's line perhaps) dividing north and south, and had extended "une vaste tapisserie dont les couleurs variées se fondent" (*Les parlers*, 1888).[8] The legacy of the regional language is an accent *of French*, an artwork which can be appreciated since it is static, finished, and removed from lived experience.

That vernaculars also evolve (Bailey and Ross, 1992: 530), are constructed "primarily in face-to-face interaction with peers" (Labov, 2001: 228), are conditioned by working and power relations (Habermas, 1971: 53), and across borders (not only contiguous ones, but, on occasion, across considerable distances) rather than subject to centralised authority within one country (Leith, 1997: 157), are salutary reminders of the hardiness of the local in the face of such centripetalism (today accelerated and taken to a supranational). Indeed, the virulence of central opposition to the use of a particular language may in fact increase its oppositional power, as in the case of Breton historically, moves to reduce Occitan transmissions, or the Plan Magellan in Belgium. Since an amendment in 1992, French is written into the 1958 Constitution as the national (and in this case also official and juridical) language of the Republic of France, but - in a move which nods to the supranational European charter - since 2001 the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France at the Ministère de la culture et de la communication has recognized that "les langues de France sont notre bien commun, elles contribuent à la créativité de notre pays et à son rayonnement culturel" (*Langues de France*, 2006). In general,

8. The echo of Baudelaire's "Correspondances" is perhaps accidental.

and in consideration of post-revolutionary history, the decline of the French language internationally is an institutional psychosis, more a continuation of the concern for centralization and unity within borders than an abstract constituent of language policy alone. Such fears remain implicit in a state wavering for about a century between republic, empire and monarchy, and suffering from a surfeit of constitutions.

An elaboration on language policy is absent from the immediate post-revolutionary rhetoric, with its accent on general liberties. The 1791 Constitution claims that "tout homme" has the liberty "de parler, d'écrire, d'imprimer et publier ses pensées, sans que les écrits puissent être soumis à aucune censure ni inspection avant leur publication". Resistance to censorship according to language of articulation is here implicit, alongside that according to content. Some years later, with the beginnings of the siege mentality of the middle and late 1790s, the emphasis shifts to the indissoluble integrity of the nation at a time when this was under threat, and when certain areas - most of the periphery of the nation - might follow linguistic rather than political allegiance. While, from 1793 for almost a century, language was not foregrounded in the various Constitutions, the view of the 1793 version, which in its laconicity at least might be a model for the 21st-century,[9] that "La République française est une et indivisible" implies linguistic homogeneity also, making later precision redundant. Picking up on some of the most celebrated terms of the era, the post-Thermidorian 1795 Constitution speaks of legislation as "la volonté générale, exprimée par la majorité ou des citoyens ou de leurs représentants". Here, of course, we have the tension between a simple, a qualified (pre-established) and a rational majority, since the "general" is hardly the "majority" in mere arithmetical terms; later the term will be pleonastically and tautologically altered to "volonté nationale". Such conflicts inform the assessment of that populism which, more myth than reality, underpinned the Revolution and which, gradually, let enter that rhetoric which was to permit a questioning of this unity.[10] In the 1848 (Second Republic) Constitution, the adjective "démocratique" is added here, to become, in the 1946 (Fourth Republic) much more prolix version: "La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale". The composition of the social and the linguistic contours of democratic interaction can easily be turned into unsettling concessions to the much cherished, yet much feared national

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9. The European Constitution draft (2004-??) in contrast, with its lengthy sections about office bearers and committee rights and duties, seems much more like an Imperial document (for example, the 1804 Constitution).
10. Generalising on this, François Furet (1983: 53) has opined that "l'idée de la Révolution" has served to "cimenter [l']unité politique" around "[des] conflits".

diversities which in turn, in regard for language policy, are the targets of statist intervention and rectification.

The 1946 Constitution "garantit l'égal accès de l'enfant et de l'adulte à l'instruction, à la formation professionnelle et à la culture". The 1958 (Fifth Republic) Constitution expands on this version, inserting after "République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale" the assurances of equality under the law of "tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion" of respecting all "croyances". Yet this was apparently too much, since "croyances" can only with difficulty be maintained independent of the language of their articulation, and again an act of limitation was thought necessary. The 1992 Constitutional Law, pertaining mostly to France's perceived role after Maastricht, inserts into the Second Article of the 1958 Constitution the contentious "La langue de la République est le français" before the flag, anthem, motto, and the principle - or rather the expression of a homage - of "gouvernement du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple". So, again a sense of exfoliation - the law refers to the envisaged "franchissement des frontières extérieures des Etats members" - is offset by a defensive move, an isolationist, prophylactic measure which would project a vision of solidarity across the French borders.

As in constitutional law, so in educational policy. The 1951 "Loi Deixonne" (Loi # 51-46) established Chairs in regional languages at several universities (three for Occitan) and required that "les meilleurs moyens" be found to "favoriser l'étude des langues et dialectes locaux dans les régions où ils sont en usage".[11] Again, an accommodation of language diversity is limited, in this case by the nebulous conceptualisation of the *Sprachraum* in the spatial reference to the local, defined historically rather than in the light of shifting demographics. The "best means" would include the use of "parlers locaux dans les écoles primaires et maternelles chaque fois qu'ils pourront en tirer profit pour leur enseignement", and this, however, "notamment pour l'étude de la langue française". In the Revolutionary period, such informants were to be used to expound Conventional wisdom through French, such that over more than a century and a half the local has been called to serve central planning, just as, on the twenty-first century supranational level, the European Committee for the Regions was asked to take a more active role in "explaining" the forlorn European Constitution project, itself of course a rhetorical exercise (a draft) which would claim to be more.

The model is that of the language community as posited in the first article of the 1996 UNESCO Barcelona Declaration: "any human society established

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11. The French law (#2005-380) of April 23rd 2005 extended the scope of teaching of the "langues et cultures régionales" "tout au long de la scolarité" and yet specified the spatial limitation: "les collectivités territoriales où ces langues sont en usage", <http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2005/18/MENX0400282L.htm>.

historically in a particular territorial space, whether this space be recognized or not [...] The term *language specific to a territory* refers to the language of the community historically established in such a space". The "Loi Deixonne" therefore skirts the issue of what the UNESCO Declaration calls "a *language group*": "any group of persons sharing the same language which is established in the territorial space of another language community but which does not possess historical antecedents equivalent to those of that community. Examples of such groups are immigrants, refugees, deported persons and members of diasporas". Immigration here is implicitly considered permanent and non-rescindable; across Europe today, the pattern is complicated by short-term or seasonal migration, which needs more generally to be considered for the undeniable long-term and daily effect it has upon languages in contact.

In an expansion of both the "Loi Deixonne" and Article 2 of the French Constitution, the "Loi Toubon" (#94-665, 4th August 1994) on the use of French stipulates that it is "la langue de l'enseignement, du travail, des échanges et des services publics", and that (Article 11) it must be used in education except when justified otherwise, including by "les nécessités de l'enseignement des langues et cultures régionales ou étrangères". Economics however has an impact on policy. In a move which might limit Francophony where the lucrative business of higher education is concerned, there is implicit provision for courses in English, since "Les écoles étrangères ou spécialement ouvertes pour accueillir des élèves de nationalité étrangère, ainsi que les établissements dispensant un enseignement à caractère international, ne sont pas soumis à cette obligation" (*Loi n° 94-665*, 1994). It seems a matter of negotiation how much of a university's teaching need have an "international aspect" before it is free from the law. There is then concern with both the micro- and the macro-region, and French is uneasily located: defended against incursions in the former while welcoming the latter. Yet again the cosmopolitan masks an attempt to encourage the national, in the sense that "un enseignement à caractère international" is at least being conducted on French soil.

The concern about *encroachment* in its most contemporary form has not of course escaped the legislators. On the 10th November 2004, northern, UMP senator Philippe Marini noted that the "Loi Toubon" favoured "l'intégration des populations à la République grâce à une langue commune" (Marini, 2004). He then proposed to the Senate that an addition be made to its article 2 which had specified that French was obligatory in documents dealing in whatever respect with offers of goods and services, including bills and receipts. In the form sent from the Senate to the Assemblée nationale in November 2005, Marini's amendment would revise the line which states that all "publicité écrite, parlée ou audiovisuelle" by adding "audiovisuelle ou par voie électronique". William

Labov's (2001: 228) "conclusion" that language is not "systematically affected by the mass media" can find no favour here.

One can feel comforted, one can feel threatened by the assiduous care taken to legislate all aspects of language use in the mediafied twenty-first century context. The "Loi Toubon" is in spirit close to the statist view of language in which a citizen has the right to address an institution of the European Union, as envisaged for example in the postponed European constitution/Lisbon Treaty (articles III-128 and IV-448). The common principle - one language one nation - is however a simplification of states both larger and smaller, which are all a patchwork of regional identities, dialects and languages. In various situations, the principle of monolingualism, religious belief and culture is ingrained in a more popular imagination. For example, in exploring ethnic identity in the multi-ethnic community formed around a nuclear power plant in Lithuania, Kristina Šliavaitė (2002) came across an informant who - when she noted that some Russians were Catholics - responded with "*if they are Catholic, how they can be Russians?*" A "subjective choice", she concluded, "of one's ethnic and national belonging was also accepted widely".

While language politics has varied over the past two centuries, two common traits are detectible for the present: first, the notion that a "langue régionale" is rustic, even pagan, fixed (and there isolated from the main, which is a bad thing for the globalisers). Second, their adherents are demoted as uncivilized, even savages, recidivist, dreamy, even dangerous; such tendencies are reinforced by attitudes towards events such as Le Pen's relative strength in Provence and Alsace-Lorraine in the 2002 Presidential elections,[12] other kinds of extreme nationalism in the South of France, torching holiday homes in Wales, and various kinds of separatist activities. Such recognition of subordination is given a positive spin by Lucien Febvre, from whom Fernand Braudel borrowed a phrase to open his *L'identité de la France* (1986): "que la France se nomme diversité". Yet, as Henri Mendras (1988: 214) comments, such a claim is only the "contrepoint" of a more insidious focus on national unity, including "la centralisation capétienne"; such a counterweight, one might add, is dialectically inevitable and equivalent to such political centripetalism. Such diversity has temporal viability, Braudel claims, as long as "le village est la société la plus élémentaire [...] la plus ancienne, antérieure". Expanding on this point, Mendras (1994: 230) has claimed that "Pour les Français la démocratie directe du village est la seule vraiment légitime". That which is of abiding status, then, is the trace

12. *En passant*, one might note that although not an exact correspondence, the relations between traditional marginality, abstention, and the vote for Le Pen can generally be asserted, as is shown in maps composed by the group of teachers of history and geography of the académie de Toulouse, <http://pedagogie.ac-toulouse.fr/histgeo/citoyen/pres02/presid0.htm>.

of the local, the dialect, and habitation over time in a place defined by tradition if not by individual experience.

Given the specific situatedness of everyday life, its ontological Heideggerean *Geworfenheit* ("thrown-ness"), a complex, provisional interrelation of "cultural resources" is continuously elicited, by which process "no resource is unequivocally destined to serve in a given situation; and every situation is in need of interpretation" (Friese and Wagner, 1999: 109). Immigrants become enmeshed in this givenness, through which the negotiation with the local becomes the common, yet greatly varied, experience of the new arrival. If an arrival comes to a locality with a large, established, similar community, the imposed task of learning the national language confronts this situatedness, and legislation will likely increase rather than decrease alienation, that is produce the very opposite of that which it is intended to create. With regard to the target language, the local may be mapped in several ways, or not at all, onto the national language**,** as it radiates out, and forms a subset modality. The term "local" is a relation, and has no independent conceptual status, yet it is the primary relation.

Between 2000 and 2005, the population of France grew by some 2%, among the highest in Europe, some eight times that of Germany and one and a third times that of the United Kingdom (if less than half that of the Republic of Ireland). While the influx into Ireland, many from Eastern Europe and the Baltics, is not likely to have much impact on the state of Irish (although it might, over time, influence Irish English), an equivalent influx into Provence may both increase the interest in Occitan and decrease that in French, especially if the former is accompanied by an upsurge in interest in the "Pays des Cathares" etc. Mendras' chapter heading, "renouveau du local", hints at a fundamental demographic principle that underlies the upsurge in interest in the dialect and "patois". Two additional factors here to be identified are the movement to the periphery, even further away than the "dormitory town", and the movements across Europe.

Transnational deurbanisation is perhaps a middle-class, even middle-age phenomenon, and in some respects undermines the coherence of the local community (the "democracy of the village"). Yet such immigrants move to a particular location within a country, and thereby show an intrinsic interest in it; this would extend to the language they hear around them. In countries with marked regionalisms, this language is likely to be the regional language, and therefore cultivating this interest with evening language classes and such is one means of keeping up the language, even though it will change because of accentual differences, issues of code switching, mixed language interference, and so on. Yet such changes are inevitable for the national language also. For two or more centuries movements *within* national borders, the transportation infrastructure that made them possible and the movement towards national curricula which followed their growth, established the hegemony of the dominant region or capital in the

provinces. As Braudel (1986: 81) comments, "les mélanges de population jouent plus d'une fois en faveur de la pénétration du français". In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, such transnational migrations lead both to linguistic change at the "national language" level and to a possible widening of interest in the local language. While this migrant population offers then a useful corrective to simplistic statist models of language use and regional subordination, that connection which Braudel (1986: 83; my emphasis) draws, between language (through toponomy, etc.) and "*notre* passé" is disrupted by a divergent framework of belonging. Whether this divergence greater exceeds, or is akin to, that gradual loss of the past across generations cannot be easily assessed through generalist sociocultural parameters.

In the present style of globalisation (global mediafication), it is surprising how little it takes for the world's attention to be shifted to a smaller state. Once considered endangered languages, and/or proscribed, the study of Welsh, Occitan and Lithuanian can be considered export-markets for universities in Lampeter, Montpellier and Vilnius respectively.[13] Cost-benefit analysis needs here to be extended to personal, life-enhancing aspects, those which any university now increasingly projects in order to develop its attractiveness. The stagnation, uniformity and levelling of globalisation retreat in the face of such minute particulars as regional dialects of these languages, toponymics and spiritual practices which engage the self-selected newcomer. One is not talking of large student numbers, but, with falling birth rates, increased longevity and an increase in lifelong learning, and with the proper kinds of courses, such university programmes can and will flourish. One effect perhaps of the number of Lithuanians in the UK and the Republic of Ireland may well be increased interest in their language, particularly if - as is of course likely - a percentage marry and settle down there.

It is often, and lightly said of many a global metropolis that many languages are there spoken. The national, or official language is fragmented, both in its general use and in the specific forms of utterance, and often governmental policies are designated to reinforce it. Yet what is irretrievably lost, and this is true for both a world language (English, Spanish, French) and an endangered one, is the specific historical grounding and sentiment, and this loss in turn can fuel rightist, anti-immigration opinions; in the 2007 French Presidential elections, some 10% voted for the Front National candidate. His 16,9% showing on the 2002 poll (up from 14,4% in 1988) was described by the public opinion/market research IPSOS site as "la réaction d'une France exaspérée" although they were

13. Additionally, the tourist potential of language, culture and craft courses in such places as Porthmadog, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and Nida can be developed.

not "tous des sympathisants d'extrême droite ou du Front national" (*Le vote Le Pen*, 2002). Since his high showing coincided with a high abstention rate (and indeed, this was higher than the percentage of votes for him)[14] indifference to and disengagement from the centralised office were expressed both actively (by a vote for Le Pen) and passively (by abstention). Contributory causes are however the same: a dissatisfaction with political rhetoric, its disengagement from the lives of those particularly in the peripheries, whether (or mainly) geographical or linguistic. The register of political debate can be a significant factor in cynicism and non-action. Norman Fairclough (2002: 124-125) has deconstructed the UK New Labour's promotion of "substantive dialogue" as merely apparent, and Jean-Pierre Chevènement (2005: 10) described the language of the European Constitution draft as "remarquablement obscure". The debate over the European Constitution is as much a fight over the control of the idiom of politics as it is about either policy or temerity over the fulcrum of Europe shifting east.

In the wake of the Madrid and London bombings and French riots, intense debates about immigration, integration and multiculturalism are hallmarks of the incipient century. As in several German states, the Netherlands, and prospectively Australia, potential citizens are to be examined in their knowledge of and acquiescence to cultural norms and institutional proclivities. The tests are of course understandably controversial, and many natives would get the answers "wrong". Yet the implication of such tests is that the new citizen show a knowledge of the national language, wherever, for example, in the language and dialect mosaic of Bavaria or New South Wales, the intended settlement. Here the national language serves as a hegemonic *lingua franca* or *Sammelbegriff* which mediates between the new arrival, competing ideologies (both internationally and within the nation's own civil society), and actual, everyday language use.

The Dutch government's film *Naar Nederland* is meant to screen out immigrants whose ideas might conflict with those – here almost transcendent or clichéd – of the Dutch; famous – from some *European* perspectives, outrageous – aspects of Dutch society are to be shown, as that the Dutch can "zich vrij uiten", lie around on the beach practically naked, etc. Since some countries outlaw the depiction of such goings-on, however, the Dutch have kindly and appropriately censored the film (but not the questions?) for those countries. You can order the film in a number of languages (those just south and to the east of the Mediterranean, and with predominantly Muslim populations, dominate) but must answer in Dutch. For the language examination, speaking and hearing alone are required; you

14. In the Presidential election of 1988, Le Pen garnered some 4,3 million votes (and was eliminated in the first round); abstentions were 18,65%. In 2002, he garnered 4,8 million votes, with 28% abstention, and was the second-placed candidate.

don't need to read and write. This part of the examination lasts 15 minutes, and the only practical guidance for preparation given is that one can buy books and tapes, etc., and watch Dutch films - even if one wonders if these would be widely available. Even in Brasil, such films (and Dutch TV, also mentioned) are not very abundant, and in many of the source countries such grammars are likely to be costly. Would a phrasebook suffice? Given that many Europeans learn a language for their holiday, and claim this self-study as knowledge, should this not also satisfy the Dutch? The Abbé Grégoire includes in his survey questions about the prevalence in the given patois of indecent terms, of those likely to incite the corruption of morals or to excite to anger; all of which, implicitly, can be more easily policed in French. An opposing situation prevails with the Dutch, it would seem, since they expect the new speakers of the host language to accommodate their perhaps more sedate ways to the rambunctious, easy-going (from the Dutch perspective at least) lifestyle.

Increasingly then the economic value of a language impinges upon public discussion at the national and "supranational" levels. In the UK House of Lords, Conservative Lord Marlesford argued that local authorities should encourage immigrants to learn English, rather than have materials published in a variety of languages. His argument was utilitarian: he noted the "considerable resources" spent, and that English was "a priceless economic asset" (*Hansard*, 11 May 2006). A week later, in the same venue, Liberal Democrat Lord Dholakia opined that "citizenship means much more than learning English"; what was important was "the process of communication" in order to achieve "social inclusion, tolerance and a diverse society where human rights flourish" (*Hansard*, 19 May 2006). On the one hand, there is a rather undemonstrated view of language as an economic good;[15] on the other, there is an equally opaque concern for "communication" as a "process". Yet behind each, and as the generator of this economic process, is language education, which is conceived as the front-line of contact and social assimilation of the immigrant, the provider of a *lingua franca* as a *sine qua non* of social integration. And yet this significance should not be limited to fears about social cohesion alone: with much infrastructure (unlike other businesses) paid for by the taxpayer, mobility across Europe, and increased longevity, higher education can be seen as a high income generator. Even that much feared population decline should, demographically if not economically, mean that there are more housing units available relative to population size, thus a decline in property prices in relation to income, and thus an increase in disposable wealth.

Education, the reinforcer of the national language, can also be the vehicle for the wider transmission of the local, and the movement from centre to

15. This is clearly seen, perhaps, in the administration of teaching it, if not the activity of teaching itself.

periphery, and internationally can serve as catalysts for increased interest in the supposed marginal. The "sensibilisation" courses in Occitan (often one hour a week) from which some 50,000 schoolchildren benefitted in 1999-2000 (Sibille, 2003: 188)[16] could easily be extended to include recent arrivals and those interested in the heritage and the patrimony of the region in which they have settled, especially since trans-European migration patterns are to a region, or even a small locality, rather than to a nation as such. With mobility across Europe becoming so widespread, with nations increasingly making a knowledge of the national language a necessity for employment and immigration, one might refine this process a little, the paradigm of which is that kind of "sensibilisation" provided by language requirement classes at North American universities, so that an immigrant to Naples will be versed in Napulitàno, to the Scottish Lowlands in Lallans/Scots, not to mention Catalan in Barcelona, etc. Yet not even Catalan was recognised in article IV-448 of the 2005 draft European Constitution. A language of mobility, of real contact across Europe, is not therefore in this sense an "official" language. The social Darwinian perspective on language change, evolution and change is fraught not only with linguistic problems but with those imported from the Darwinian model itself, no more so than in the view that a language in decline is suffering from the "law" of Darwinian survivalism. While however the inherited paradigm, formed before very recent migration patterns, would bear testimony to parts of this perspective, it cannot be retained after such patterns themselves have become the norm. They also of course have problems with a view of synchrony-diachrony that would see the written text as a repository of past forms which can become active under certain conditions, whether these forms be citational, structural or even "whole" languages (of which, *mutatis mutandis*, contemporary "Old" Irish, Welsh and Hebrew can serve as examples).

Outside Europe, cultural representation, language study and - in some cases - technical collaboration are organized through such quasi-independent, quasi-governmental bodies as the Alliance française, the Instituto Cervantes and the British Council. Strategic and/or economic interests dominate the choice of location. In July 2006, the Instituto Cervantes opened in Beijing, and is housed in a building of some 3.000 square metres (*Inaguración*, 2006). The British Council shuts offices in Africa, and opens in Siberia and Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan. In language learning, the ideological and - as in Lord Macauley's 1835 "Minute on Indian education" - the technological conjoin, even if, under certain circumstances, students may appear at a *British* Council class because they want to understand *American* movies better.

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16. Sibille mentions that in 1998 2.354 students were offered Occitan as a subject in the "bac".

There are clearly demarcated reasons why people learn a language, and these may be quickly categorized as follows:

- Pedagogical, curricular;
- Technocratic;
- Related to migration;
- Related to heritage;
- Touristic.

Of these, perhaps only the third would give an impetus (backed by family visits and intergenerational complicity) to an assured knowledge which could in most events become well-matched against "native speaker" competence. Here, of course, the terms are loaded: knowing a language and being a native speaker are often a matter of self-image. Given however that in no case can we learn a *langue*, we always learn a singular set of *paroles* (in the normal French sense) and series of mapping functions or *norms* in Eugenio Coseriu's sense (of that which is habitual),[17] which are as distinct from real language use as are the theorems of mathematical learning, since attitudinal choices are always in play whatever the relation of the "speech island" (here taken as the immediate context of the learning experience) to the notional, or often national context. Language is always and today increasingly *cultural* rather than *hereditary*. As definitions of all the above terms (langue, parole, norm, culture and heredity) are in constant, and infinitely variable and nuanced change, any language policy must be equally nuanced, especially when it takes into account the realities of face-to-face interaction across contemporary Europe. Will the declension and gender markers of German outlast the 21st-century, or will they be collapsed (as for the past century or so in Berliner German) with the increasing influx of those who hear "das" and oblique "der" as /də/? With its accent classes, case proliferation and clearly marked declensional varieties, Lithuanian is one language for which EU-related eventual settlement patterns could signal increasing radical morphological and certain lexemic changes.

*Sprachraum* debates, of course, are not new; neither are they unique to France. Historical linguistics, dialectology, creolization all confront language use which can only be examined *in situ* but which is subject to usual migration patterns and continuous change. At no time is this more the case than in contemporary, expanded Europe. In 1992 the Council of Europe devised the European Charter

17. The norm is a "sistema de realizaciones obligadas", not "lo que "puede decirse"", but "lo que ya "se ha dicho" y tradicionalmente "se dice" en la comunidad considerada" (Coseriu, 1958: 31). See also Coseriu (1952).

for Regional or Minority Languages, which France has signed but not ratified. Article 12 of this charter envisages that parties will "encourager l'expression et les initiatives propres aux langues régionales ou minoritaires" on "le territoire sur lequel de telles langues sont pratiquées". Certain terms here are nebulous, as in the French debate considered earlier: the source of the "initiatives"; the meaning of practicing a language; and the *Sprachraum* itself. Because the Council is distinct from the Union, strong support for the latter does not run against denial of the provisions of the former, and thus the smaller entity here can mitigate the centripetalism of the larger.[18]

That to lose one's language is to lose one's land is somewhat affective, even sentimental; but one could not change the word "country" here to "state" or "supranational actor". The loss of minority languages affects us all because it reduces the range of responses to the lived environment, and although social Darwinism would be hard pressed to equate biodiversity with linguistic diversity except in the most generic terms, recent moves to relegate Pluto to less than planetary status have some resonance with debates about national language, regional language and dialects: it has been so often left to the experts to decide. National languages, some now global, are often *koines* or impacted, coalesced and almost undifferentiated creoles, communication through the lowest common denominator, or most embedded structural features. Similarly, a small state is likely, linguistically, to be outward-looking, even if (or especially if) it is the product of colonialism, in this respect at least, that it will learn a major language or adapt its own idiolect/dialect/language to fit the main. The mixture and gradual creolisation of the languages work against the dominance of the centre over the periphery or the simple groupings (American vs. British English; "Latin American" Spanish, etc.).[19] In this latter respect, *all* Englishes are new, especially at a time when the second wave of recent immigrants to the UK (from continental, and especially after 2004 Eastern Europe) has added linguistic nuance, accent and a proclivity to those of the first wave, from the Commonwealth. While Braj Kachru and others might look for such new Englishes in the former colonies, it makes equal sense to look in Norwich or London itself, and for new Francophonies in Montpellier or Paris. We are all, and always - in the English sense of the word, if not so drastically in the Spanish inflection - losing our "idiom", our way of speaking, and always, at every moment of every day, gaining another.

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18. The European Constitution would envisage that the Union cooperate with the Council on cultural issues, one of which is surely language (Article III-280).
19. See, for example, Brigitte Schlieben-Lange (1977: 87).

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