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Abstract

In this article we compare and contrast the very different approaches adopted towards 'regional' languages in Wales and the French region of Brittany. Consistent with our interest in the dynamics of devolution, decentralisation and regional governance, we focus principally upon the interplay between institutions, actors and opinion at the meso-level, using structured interviews, documentary evidence and survey material to back up our findings. In their own way, the Breton and Welsh cases both demonstrate the resilience of national paths and the effects of institutions on political outcomes.

Language is a highly sensitive issue. In most cases of bilingual or multilingual societies – of which France and the United Kingdom are two exemplars - there is a tension between, on the one hand, an official administrative language, and, on the other, a plurality of spoken languages. There are powerful pressures pushing for unilinguism: state policies, economic globalisation and bureaucratic necessity all press in the same direction. Even where there is no constitutionally based recognition of linguistic uniformity, most nation-states are predicated upon a single administrative language. A belief in unilingual efficiency is such that it justifies exclusionary policies in respect of minority languages. Both France and the United Kingdom have produced (rival) world languages, whose domestic hegemony has been built in part upon internal linguistic domination tending to unilinguism. In both cases, however, administrative pressures towards unilinguism have not completely eradicated indigenous regional languages. As regions with closely related minority Celtic languages, Wales and Brittany, the focus of this article, face directly comparable problems of regional language policy.

There is a strong argument that recent moves to more differentiated forms of regional and local governance are likely to encourage linguistic pluralism (see, for example, Keating, Loughlin and Deschouwer, 2003). In countries such as Spain, Belgium and Italy, the move to enhanced regional self-consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s was associated with a rediscovery of the value of lesser-used languages and cultures and the adoption of new policy instruments to plan language revival. In the age of 'think global, act local', language can exercise a useful signalling function, demonstrating clearly the distinctiveness and value-added identity of specific regions. Taking lesser-used languages as its central focus, we set out here to compare and contrast the very different approaches adopted towards regional languages in Wales and the French region of Brittany. Consistent with our interest in the dynamics of devolution, decentralisation and regional governance, we focus principally upon the interplay between institutions, actors and opinion at the meso-level, using structured interviews, documentary evidence and survey material to back up our findings.

We are concerned above all to provide answers to the research questions provoked by three intertwined lines of enquiry. The first set of questions relate to identity and language. How are identities and language linked? Is language the critical marker of identity? Are feelings of identity strongly correlated with language competence? The second set of questions concern institutions and language. What is the impact of public policies on the state of the language? How far do institutions matter for the promotion of language? Have the new devolved (decentralised) institutions supplanted the importance of language as an identity marker? A third set of questions relate to language and institutions. What is the relationship, if any, between (lesser-used) language competence and attitudes towards regional governance (devolution and decentralisation)? Finally in reversing the logic of our language-institutions relationship, we may ask does language matter for the development of institutions? These complex questions allow us not only to elucidate opposing views towards language planning in France and the United Kingdom, but to contribute to our understanding of the differential dynamics of devolution in Wales and decentralisation in the Brittany region.

We begin our interpretation by presenting the overarching state context of lesser-used languages in the UK and France. Next, we focus upon institutions and language planning in Wales and Brittany. In our analysis section, we compare and contrast public attitudes towards language policy in our two regions. We conclude by confirming the resilience of national paths and the effects of institutions on political outcomes.

France and lesser-used languages: the case of Breton

As a result of centuries of determined effort by public policy-makers, the unity of the French language is unparalleled in Western Europe and elsewhere. There has been an explicit French language policy since

at least the sixteenth century. The role of the French language in nation-building has been exhaustively commented upon. The French language was one of the weapons of the state in building modern French identity and in imposing cohesion upon a divided society. Whether by accident or design, regional languages were both a major cause and casualty of the process of nation-building. The Catholic Church, deeply rooted in areas such as Brittany where regional languages prospered, opposed the untramelled spread of French throughout the nineteenth century. Once the Republicans won back control of the (3rd) Republic in the late 1870s, they determined to break the power of the Catholic Church. The Ferry laws of 1882 created a system of universal, lay primary education that was primarily aimed to promote national unity and combat obscurantism, but which also had a devastating effect on regional languages. The Unity of the Republic passed by the political pre-eminence of Paris and the linguistic domination of French. 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. In addition to active government policy, the disappearance of regional languages can be traced to economic change in the 19th and 20th centuries and to the impact of the First World War, which forged a unified French national consciousness. In spite of centralising tendencies, the French nation remained extremely diverse prior to the Second World War and French remained a minority language in some regions until the 20th century.

There are a number of regional languages in France today and a larger number of dialects. The main regional languages are: Alsatien, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corse, Occitan and Creole. There are many dialects, and several linguistic registers between dialects and languages. Certain languages have disappeared, or survive only as dialects. This is the case, for example, for the dialects of the langueoïl: gallo (in Brittany) picard, poitevin, saintongeais, normand and morvandiau. The main languages that survive are those which enjoy geographical density. Breton is spoken in the west part of Brittany and is taught throughout Brittany, including in several cities outside of the region such as Nantes and Paris.

The various languages that are taught in French schools are Alsatien and Breton (both of which now have publicly funded teacher training programmes), Basque, Catalan, Créole, Flamand and Corsican. Each language has different characteristics and a different relationship to French. A number of these are 'border languages'; this is the case for Alsatien (close to German), Flemish (spoken across the border in Belgium) and Catalan (vigorously supported by the Catalan autonomous government in Spain). Others – such as Corsican and Creole – are island languages. Breton falls into none of these categories; it is a romano-celtic language that is separated from the British Isles from which it originated.

At the turn of the twentieth century there were c. 1.5 million Breton speakers according to Broudic (1983) and Gourvil (1952). Humphreys (1991) has estimated that by 1962 this figure had dropped to c. 686,000 speakers. In our survey, conducted in 2001, around 200,000 people claimed to speak Breton fluently, to which we can add 100,000 who are able to speak and understand quite well.[i] This represents 10 per cent, at most, with any sort of Breton language competency. Whether these figures are accurate or not is another matter; it is notoriously difficult to establish accurate figures from polling data in this area. Some previous estimates of the number of Breton speakers have been too low, because some native Breton speakers are reluctant to reveal their fluency to pollsters. However, these figures would appear to be broadly consistent with other recent surveys (Gemie, 2002, Télégram de Brest, 2001). Apart from the total number of speakers, the demographic and age structure together with the geographical profile is deeply pessimistic for the future of the language. The majority of Breton speakers are to be found in the upper age groups, the average age being c. 65 years old, and are likely to live in a narrow triangle in the western-most part of Brittany (in-land Finistère and the western half of the Cotes d'Armor). Almost no-one under 40 today was born and brought up in a Breton-speaking household. At this current rate, there will be no first language Breton speakers left in two or three decades. The only finding offsetting this rather sombre picture lies in the somewhat broader geographical spread of Breton, along with evidence that there is some revival of Breton amongst the younger age groups. More pupils are today

following Breton language classes at school than ever before and adult training courses in Breton are thriving (for details see Mercator 2003). When we asked our language interviewees whether they were optimistic or pessimistic for the future of the language, a standard response was one of 'pessimistic activism'. Members of the language advocacy coalition are not optimistic, but they remain very active.

The literature on the Breton language insists upon the existence of strong incentives *not* to use Breton. These incentives had their root in the spread of universal primary education in the late nineteenth century. In the public schools, various punitive measures were introduced to discourage Breton schoolchildren from speaking in their own language, ranging from physical chastisement to moral humiliation. Even more than overt repression, however, was the symbolic association of the Breton language with backwardness, conservatism and poverty. The identification of the French language with the Republic involved more than simply tying the new political institutions to a single unifying language. The French language symbolised modernity and upward social mobility. For the poor Breton peasantry, this was a crucial argument in favour of French. The French language was an economic currency, facilitating upward social mobility through the education system. The extreme poverty of Brittany until the 1950s induced most native Breton speakers to protect their children from speaking Breton, in order not to disadvantage their future prospects. Such attitudes remain in conservative Finistère, where many older Breton speakers will not admit their fluency. The institutionalisation of the language concerns only the French language. Breton speakers were induced to feel a sense of shame at not being able to communicate in the 'universalistic' French language.

The regulatory framework of language governance in France is hardly propitious to the diffusion of regional languages (Poignant, 1998, Denez, 1998). As France has become ever more deeply embedded in multilateral and international structures, French state structures (more than politicians) have sought to defend what they deem to be the core of French sovereignty: namely the French language. There was an

explicit linkage between identity and language in the Maastricht referendum of 1992, where France simultaneously committed herself to an enhanced degree of European integration and to the codification of French as the official language of the Republic. The proclamation in 1992 of French as the official language of the Republic was purportedly a means of defending French as an international language against English. In practice, the reformed Article 2 of the French constitution has mainly been used to stifle the development of regional languages. Any proposals deemed to threaten the official unilingual policy have been declared as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Council (the highest constitutional authority) or the Council of State (the arbiter of France's system of administrative law).

The Maastricht referendum provides the backdrop for France's continuing inability to ratify the European Charter of Lesser Used Languages, which was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992. France initially abstained, though the Jospin government rallied to the charter in 1997. Article 7 of the Charter set out several general principles with which France's state-centric institutions could take offence, most notably the public use of another language apart from French. [ii] The Council of State ruled in 1996 that France could not ratify the charter. There was no problem with the teaching provisions (article 8), as long as there was no element of compulsion. But the Council of State challenged articles 9 and 10 of the European charter, namely the right to use a lesser-used language in dealing with administrative and judicial authorities. This provision was deemed unconstitutional in the light of Article 2 of the amended French constitution ('the language of the republic is French'). In 1999, the Constitutional Council declared the European Charter of Regional Languages to be contrary to the French constitution. The Council justified its decision by the preface to the Charter, which guarantees the right to use a minority language in public as well as in private. The Constitutional Council identified other articles of the Charter as being against the French constitution. Consistent with the French model of citizenship, the Council argued that to bestow specific rights on regional groups would run against the

principle of the 'indivisibility of the French people'. But the inside view was that the public use of another language apart from French was what really worried the council.

The French language itself might have an interest in supporting regional languages. As a world language French is suffering; though it is deeply rooted in France and the African sub-continent, elsewhere it is in decline. French ought to have a better comprehension of the fate of regional languages now that its future is in some doubt.

The United Kingdom and the Celtic Languages: the case of Welsh

The British 'Union State' was never quite as hostile to forms of regional distinctiveness as the French unitary and indivisible Republic. A unilingual language policy was not pursued with quite as much ideological fervour in the United Kingdom as in France. The history of the movement to maintain the vitality of the Celtic languages during the twentieth century in the UK may be summarised as a struggle for survival, recognition and equality. By the end of the 20th century the infra-structural developments necessary to enable Wales, if not Scotland and Northern Ireland, to function as a bilingual society had been assembled. Yet the Celtic languages are still very threatened, despite significant moves to improve their status following devolution as detailed below.

Welsh - the most widely spoken of all the Celtic languages[iii] - faces severe difficulties in being recognised as an essential language even within its own national territory. The twentieth century witnessed the collapse of Welsh as a dominant medium of communication in most parts of Wales. The 1901 census recorded 929, 824 of the population as able to speak Welsh and 1,577, 141 as able to speak English. Successive inter-censal decline has characterised Welsh-speaking from its peak in 1911, when 977,400 persons were returned as able to speak Welsh, 190,300 of whom were monoglots, to the 1991

low of 590,800 hardly any of whom were adult monoglots. This decline from 43.5% of the population in 1911 to only 18.7% in 1991 represents a loss of 24.8%. Explanations focus on the inter-war period when stigmatisation, a collapse in confidence and depression-induced population out-migration encouraged widespread language shift. 1921-1939 was the crisis turning point as a generation was denied the opportunity to learn Welsh. Parental rejection of the language and an unresponsive education system reproducing imperial values and attitudes concluded that Welsh was irrelevant in a modernising world order. Such convictions have waned since the 1950s as the rate of decline has been more moderate, reflecting a reversal in the language's fortunes (Williams, 2000). Changes between 1981 and 1991 were minimal while the current bilingual population is stable and likely to grow. The 1991 census revealed significant increases in the 3-15 age group, a consolidation of the 16-44 age group and the expected decline in the two older age groups.

The first results on the Welsh language in the 2001 census were reported in March 2003 (National Statistics, 2003). The census found that there were 576,000 Welsh speakers aged 3 and over (or over 21% of the population) which represented a 2% increase since 1991. The proportion of people in Wales (aged 3 and over) who can speak, read and write Welsh increased from 13.6% to 16.3% (1991-2001). A further 138,000 (5%) said they understood Welsh but did not speak it. In all, it is estimated that 662,000 (or 24%) of the population reported one or more skills in the Welsh language, with the highest figures for the unitary authorities of Gwynedd (76%), Anglesey (70%), Carmarthenshire (64%) and Ceredigion (61%) (Higgs et al. 2004). The highest percentage of Welsh speakers were among children aged 5 to 15 years, though figures included in the Wales Spatial Plan estimate that only 6% of primary school children speak Welsh at home (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003b). Finally, the overall geographical patterns from previous censuses of 1981 and 1991 were retained in 2001, with only Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire having over 50% of their populations who can speak Welsh.

These overall trends are likely to be maintained in successive decades, which suggest that the demolinguistic future of Welsh is brighter than at any other time in recent history. Having said that severe doubts remain as to its primacy as the first language of choice within many communities.

In broad socio-economic terms, Welsh has expanded its usage considerably in the past two decades and the language is now used widely in education, the media, leisure and selected public services. Language survey data suggests that social context, family language transmission and exposure to formal bilingual education are the key factors in language reproduction. In the case of Wales, community and family are less powerful agents of language reproduction than they were previously, but formal bilingual education and language planning has slowed the rate of absolute decline. Analysis of family/household composition patterns by Aitchison and Carter (1997) show that an extremely high proportion of Welsh speakers is linguistically isolated within their home environments. Many communities of the northern and western heartland seem to be fragmenting irretrievably, threatening the transmission of the Welsh language. Welsh is not secure as a community language despite its official status. The education system is the pre-eminent means by which most Welsh speakers gain access to the language, rather than the home or the community. This extra-familial growth reflects parental determination to press for bilingual education at primary and secondary level; the securing of Welsh as a compulsory subject in the National Curriculum; the vitality of Welsh cultural movements (the local, national and youth eisteddfodou in particular); the passing of the Welsh Language Act of 1993; the success of language resource centres (mentrau iaith); the development of Welsh language schemes for public institutions, together with an increasing use of bilingualism by business and the economy.

The structure of the Welsh language community is geographically specific. It has traditionally been concentrated in the rural north and west of the country. In the 1920s and 1930s, support for Welsh was synonymous with the defence of isolated rural communities. The case for the Welsh language has

shifted. Today, Welsh is becoming far less geographically distinct – and more and more people are speaking Welsh in the south-east and north-east. On the other hand, the culturally predominant Welsh communities of the west and north are becoming less autonomous and cohesive. While the demand for Welsh speakers has been strongest outside of the traditional heartlands, the latter have had to cope with an influx of in-migrants. The challenge to the heartland poses a threat to the long-term survival of the language. Even with modern communication techniques, the survival of the Welsh language needs several regions within Wales to exist where Welsh is the dominant language. Herein lies the justification for a spatial-planning process that safeguards Welsh- speaking communities.

The greatest boost to the popular and technical use of Welsh was the inauguration of the television service, Sianel Pedwar Cymru on the 1st of November, 1982. Some thirty four out of 145 hours per week are transmitted in Welsh, mainly at peak time. The programmes reach a relatively high percentage of their target audience. S4C is a commissioning rather than a production body, and in consequence has spawned a network of independent film makers, animators, creative designers and writers who can turn their original Welsh language programmes into English or 'foreign' languages for sale in the international media market place. Cardiff ranks second to London as a UK media-production centre in the UK.

We should also signal the vitality of the cultural movement. At a voluntary level there is a network of eisteddfodau (competitive cultural festivals) which nurture school-based and community-based performances of Welsh plays, or plays in translation, of musical items, poetry, craft work, art and design and scientific projects. This network starts at the local level and the successful competitors progress through intervening stages to reach the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd (youth) National Eisteddfod. The Eisteddfod has acted as a vehicle for national culture, setting both the themes and the standards of popular representation of Welshness. The revival of Welsh has also been due to the spread of adult

learning of Welsh through Wlpan and related schemes that are geographically widespread and well

subscribed. Thus most of these initiatives reflect an organic, bottom-up, approach to language policy.

Unlike Catalonia or Quebec, Wales does not enjoy a detailed specification of linguistic rights or an

historically strong legislative apparatus to regulate language-related reforms.Under devolution this is

beginning to change. However, the regulatory frameworks for language management differ in most

respects between the United Kingdom and France. A formal bilingual policy in Wales contrasts with a

constitutionally entrenched unilingual policy in the case of Brittany. We now contrast institutionalisation

and language promotion normalisation in Wales and Brittany.

Successful interventionism? The case of Welsh language policy

Some observers of Welsh politics have argued that institutions, rather than language or culture, underpin

modern Welsh identity. Important institutions have given substance to the idea of Wales. These

structuring institutions include the national university, museum, library, the Welsh Office and, most

recently, the National Assembly for Wales. The Welsh language has performed an important, if not

primordial, role in this process of institution building. The passing of the Welsh Courts Act of 1942

rescinded the provisions prohibiting the use of Welsh by the Acts of Union 1536-1543. Further legal

recognition was given in the Welsh Language Act of 1967, which offered an initial definition of equal

validity of English and Welsh in Wales. During the sixties and seventies a number of statutory and

non-statutory bodies called for greater state support for the language. One initial response by the Welsh

Office was the establishment in 1977 of the short-lived Cyngor yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language

Council). There was some limited financial support for Welsh language activities, both in the public

arena and in education via specific provisions in two government acts passed during the latter part of the

1970s. Under section 26 of The Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, the Welsh Office provided

support for Welsh language social activities, most importantly the work of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

(The Welsh Nursery Schools Movement) founded in 1971, <u>Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru</u> (The National Eisteddfod of Wales), <u>Cyngor Llyfrau Cymraeg</u> (The Welsh Books Council) and via <u>Menter a Busnes</u> (Business and Enterprise), concerned with the promotion of a new spirit of enterprise in rural Welsh speaking Communities. The Education Reform Act of 1988 set up a National Curriculum for Wales, with Welsh becoming a core subject in Welsh medium schools.

The Welsh Language Act of 1993, the major piece of language-related legislation in the 20th century, went even further. The 1993 Act provided a statutory framework for the treatment of English and Welsh on the basis of equality and inaugurated a new era in language planning. Its chief policy instrument is the re-fashioned and strengthened Welsh Language Board, established on 21 December 1993 as a non-departmental statutory organisation. The Act detailed key steps to be taken by the Welsh Language Board and by public sector bodies in the preparation of Welsh language schemes, designed to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality. Since 1995 over 200 language schemes have been approved, including all 22 local authorities.

In over ten years of existence, the Welsh Language Board has fulfilled five core functions. It has promoted and facilitated the use of the Welsh language. It has advised UK central government, the National Assembly and other public sector bodies on issues relating to the Welsh language. It has initiated and overseen the process of preparing and operating language schemes. It has distributed grants for promoting and facilitating the use of the language. It has maintained a strategic overview of Welsh language education. The Welsh Language Board's primary goal is to enable the language to become self-sustaining and secure as a medium of communication. To this end, it has set itself four priorities: to increase the numbers of Welsh-speakers; to provide more opportunities to use the language; to change the habits of language use and to encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities provided, and to strengthen Welsh as a community language.

The strategy for Language revitalization in Wales has involved institutionalisation and normalisation. Institutionalisation refers to embedding languages in key strategic agencies of the State (the law, education, and public administration). Parallelism or normalization refers to extending the use of the languages into the optimum range of social situations as a normal medium of communication, especially in the private sector, entertainment, sport and the media. The strategy for institutionalisation and normalisation preceded devolution. We now consider three manifestations of institutionalisation: language enterprise agencies ('Mentrau Iaith'); Language Resource Centres and Linguistic *Animateurs.*

'Mentrau Iaith' are voluntary sector language enterprise agencies. The original Mentrau Iaith, dating from 1991-1993, were established in predominantly Welsh-speaking communities. There are now 22 of them, corresponding to the 22 unitary local authorities. The 22 'Mentrau Iaith' aim to stimulate the development of Welsh within a wide social context. 'Mentrau Iaith' serve as a focus to create a new set of partnerships between the National Assembly, the Welsh Language Board, local government, statutory public bodies, health trusts, voluntary agencies and private companies. In their core mission statement, 'Mentrau Iaith' encourage community ownership of the Welsh language. They pledge to increase the opportunities available for people to use Welsh and work for the promotion of Welsh in business and in the community at large. They aim to promote bilingualism in the workplace, to improve the command of fluent speakers and to offer practical assistance to adult learners and pupils who are learning Welsh as a second language. In this latter capacity, they lobby training agencies to prepare professional bilingual and language-friendly materials and disseminate information about local Welsh-medium education and training.

The 'Mentrau Iaith' are assisted by county-level and an all-Wales language resource centre based within the Welsh Language Board. The central resource centre is a language planning support agency with

responsibilities for marketing the language, overseeing the development of the translation profession, monitoring and initiating IT software developments, creating a central data base of Welsh information, statistical analysis and interpretation, providing a language support help-line and operating as as a focal centre for international networking. Selected local authorities, such as Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd County Councils, have also developed language resource centres which serve both the statutory needs of the authorities and those of the community. Linguistic *animateurs* are individuals charged with the special responsibility of promoting the use of the language. They operate at three levels, with varying degrees of financial support and authority. At the local level, selected social workers, nurses, health visitors and mid-wives employ more Welsh whilst discharging their responsibilities.The most successful illustration of this trend is the TWF (2003) project launched in March 2002 whereby expectant mothers in their routine conversations with mid-wives and maternity clinics are introduced to the cognitive and social advantages of rearing their children bilingually.[iv] A significant proportion of these contacts translate into a commitment to send their children to Welsh immersion education. Within a county or a specific region, a fledgling network of linguistic *animateurs* promote Welsh use in hitherto under-used services, such as the, local authorities or the health trusts (Williams 2000).

Devolution and the Welsh Language

The National Assembly is the final institutional block. The creation of the National Assembly for Wales as a bilingual chamber drove further forward the bilingual agenda. Despite severe criticism in its first years of operation, the Assembly has now undertaken a major commitment to construct a bilingual society in Wales. It seeks to do so through the twin pillars of education (which lies beyond the boundaries of this article) and language planning. Neither language planning, nor Welsh-medium education had to await devolution, but both have been given a boost by the National Assembly.

The Government of Wales Act 1998, which established the National Assembly for Wales, makes several references to the Welsh language. The most significant and potentially most far-reaching is in section 32, which states that '*The Assembly may do anything it considers appropriate … to support the Welsh language'*. The Act also established Welsh and English as the working languages of the Assembly, and to date, despite some initial difficulties, the Assembly has operated as a bilingual political institution committed to implementing several important aspects of language policy. The Assembly has looked to the Welsh Language Board to ensure regulatory compliance in areas such as bilingual education and bilingual service provision in the public sector, especially in local government.

The Assembly has been active in its pursuit of a bilingual policy. In its most comprehensive elaboration of its language policy, made public in 2002, the Assembly advocated, *inter alia,* the further development of bilingual education and the normalisation of bilingual service provision in local government, health and social services. The Assembly declared itself committed to developing economic policies and regional development initiatives which seek to stabilise predominantly Welsh-speaking communities, to create employment, and to promote bilingual working opportunities. The Assembly also declared the urgent need to give consideration to the interests of Welsh language and culture as they are impacted upon by town and country/structure planning and improvements to the transport system.

The Culture Committee of the National Assembly created some controversy in its 2002 report *Our Language: Its Future* (National Assembly for Wales 2002a) by recommending limiting in-migration into Welsh-speaking areas, one of the areas of investigation in our poll. The criticism has also been raised that resource-scarce local authorities have invested large sums of money in Welsh language schemes that are relevant to only a handful of Welsh speakers. The Welsh Assembly Government's policy statement, Dyfodol Dwyieithog: Bilingual Future (2002b) reiterated that the Assembly Government was 'wholly committed to revitalizing the Welsh language and creating a bilingual Wales'.

It committed the Welsh Assembly Government to provide strategic leadership to sustain and encourage the growth of the Welsh language 'within a tolerant, welcoming and open Wales'. It advocated the need to mainstream the Welsh language into the work of the Assembly Government and its agencies. The National Assembly has already had a major role in disseminating Welsh, as well as providing employment for Welsh speakers. It pledged support for communities, including primarily Welsh-speaking communities, by pursuing policies that seek to create economically and socially sustainable communities. It promised to ensure that effective structures are in place to enable people to acquire or learn Welsh.

In December 2002, the Assembly Government produced a comprehensive document, *Iaith Pawb* ['everyone's language'], which provides a National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales and outlines how the Assembly Government would seek to increase bilingualism and strengthen Welsh.[v] The Action Plan sets out measures to be assessed against a number of key targets, chief of which is to increase within ten years the overall percentage of people in Wales able to speak Welsh by 5 percentage points from the 2001 Census baseline. The National Assembly has political responsibility for devising the broad parameters of policy but it has delegated the detailed implementation to the Welsh Language Board, which is engaged in four different types of language planning. The first of these - 'acquisition planning' – focuses on learning the language, primarily through the family or through education. The Board supports various initiatives to foster language transmission within the family and pre-school education, primarily through sponsoring the work of *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin*. This voluntary body, comprising over 1,000 community groups, promotes Welsh-medium nursery education.

The second activity is that of 'usage planning', referring to developing and increasing the use of the language by its speakers. To this end, the Welsh Language Board provides financial support for a range of organisations, including the 22 language enterprise agencies ('mentrau iaith'), the Wales Youth

movement ('Urdd Gobaith Cymru'), which is a voluntary organisation dedicated to promoting the use of Welsh by young people, and the National Eisteddfod of Wales. From the perspective of the Language Board the main future priorities are those of developing the private sector, promoting the use of Welsh by young people, and persuading Welsh speakers to use the language in every aspect of their lives.

The third activity is that of 'status planning', dealing with the promotion of the status of the language in society. From the Board's perspective, status enhancement will come about primarily through statutory work on Welsh language schemes, which have increased both the utility and the purchase of bilingual skills. The fourth activity is that of corpus planning, which deals with the development of terminology, with translation issues, with Information Technology and software development. The Board has created a Centre for Corpus Planning, operational since 2003, which will create a national terminology database, and develop various electronic aids for translators and other users.

How does this compare with the situation in Brittany?

Brittany: The Institutionalisation of Breton?

We observed above how institutionalisation has transformed the fortunes of the Welsh language. The regulatory frameworks for language management differ in almost all respects between Wales and Brittany. A formal bilingual policy in Wales contrasts with a constitutionally entrenched unilingual policy in the case of Brittany. Despite such structural dissimilarity, we can observe the beginnings of an institutional strategy for rescuing Breton. However, this strategy lacks a single unifying focus. The Breton equivalent of the Welsh Language Board had no regulatory authority and survives thanks to the political support of a committed individual in the regional council whose future is in doubt after the regional elections of 2004. The Breton regional council itself has adopted an ambiguous and inconsistent

stance towards the Breton language. On the other hand, the powerful Breton cultural movement, while not explicitly focussed on language issues, has done much to revive interest in the Breton language, as Breton is the medium for much traditional folk and dance music.

If it is impossible to detect any single actor, we can identity a constellation of individuals, semi-official agencies and voluntary associations, gravitating for the most part around the Regional Council. These agents form part of a language advocacy coalition that draws its strength not from institutionalisation, but from shared beliefs and from the capacity to mobilise the powerful Breton cultural movement. This advocacy coalition includes actors within local and regional authorities, semi-autonomous agencies such as the Breton Language Office (Ofis ar Brezhonneg) and the cultural federations regrouped in the Brittany Cultural Institute and the Brittany Cultural Council. On the basis of our opinion poll findings, as well as our elite survey, these language activists are not fully representative of the ageing and diminished group of native Breton speakers today.

If Breton is beginning to make headway in public administration, this is largely as a result first of local government inititives and latterly of Ofis ar Brezhonneg action. Bilingual signposting has become the norm in areas such as Cornouailles and Trégor, where there are sizeable populations of Breton speakers. Local and departmental authorities have pursued this policy vigorously, notwithstanding run-ins with local prefects and administrative authorities. Even in the regional capital, Rennes, bilingual signposts have begun to appear, though Breton has never been spoken in Rennes/Roazhen. Bilingualism has become fashionable. The city of Rennes has, for example, created a Consultative Committee for the Promotion of Breton that brings together local educational and cultural associations, as well as representatives of the Rennes agglomeration. In the traditionally non-Breton speaking part of Brittany, support for Breton associations must compete with the renewed interest displayed in Gallo, the dialect spoken in the eastern half of Brittany.

Local government is involved in other respects too. While there are no comparable planning dilemmas for Breton officials as for their Welsh counterparts (Breton having no statutory existence) sympathetic councils have adopted a range of measures to promote the language. These range from the symbolic (sign-posting) to the eminently practical, such as providing buildings for DIWAN schools, or, in two precise cases, providing land for a Breton enterprise zone (Carhaix) or a Breton cultural district (Quimper). A dense tissue of cultural associations throughout Brittany depends for its survival on the energy of its activists, but also on financial assistance from public authorities. Councils sometimes provide buildings for adult training courses in Breton, which have traditionally been provided on a voluntary basis. Councils also provide buildings for continuing education and professional training in Breton by organisations such as STUMDI and ROUDOUR. This support for Breton has been pushed furthest in Carhaix, a commune in central Brittany that elected an 'autonomist' mayor in 2001. Itself a small town of 12,000, Carhaix also dominates the wider inter-communal structure in its outlying district.

Though business stands apart from this advocacy coalition, Breton firms are rarely hostile to the language, which, as we have seen, forms an important part of the overall Breton identity that firms seek to utilize. The main Breton economic associations – <u>Produit en Bretagne</u> and <u>Création en Bretagne</u> – have not openly espoused the cause of Breton, however, producing some tension with language activists. These associations of Breton employers contain within their midst the most important employers in the main economic sectors in Brittany: transport, agro-alimentary, electronics, banks and insurance companies. Interviewees from these organisations emphasised their support in general terms for the Breton language, but repeated their resolute opposition to any formal bilingual policy. Breton businesses will employ the language if it is in their commercial interest to do so. Thus, some banks in Breton-speaking areas have begun to employ Breton-speaking clerks to deal with older clients. Others have adopted internal bilingual policies, and have even used the language to secure competitive

advantage. We can identify in particular two rather different types of business network. One – DIORENN– is based on using Breton in international business circles as a means of facilitating communication between Breton employers and providing a business use for the language. The other – the Association of Breton-speaking firms – consists, as its name suggests, of a group of small and medium sized businesses in western Brittany which have adopted provisions for bilingual use within the workplace.

Most of the drive towards institutionalization has come from the Brittany regional council. Its critics amongst the language advocacy coalition are deeply ambivalent about the regional council. On the one hand, the main cultural and language associations depend upon the region for most of their financial support. On the other, these associations, by their very nature, want the region to go further than it is prepared to. The regional council is, to a large extent, obliged to operate within its regulatory environment. Unlike in Wales, for example, there has been no effort, even symbolic, to use Breton in Regional Council proceedings. As it stands, such an act would be illegal. The Region provides grants to the Breton-medium DIWAN schools and to a host of Breton cultural movements. The Region has been active in the pursuit of the interests of the Breton language in other ways. The 1994-99 State Region plan created a publishing company – TES – whose responsibility is to disseminate teaching and learning materials in Breton (books, but also CD Roms). The agreement between DIWAN and the Education ministry in 2001 was followed by the signing of an additional convention to the 2000-2006 State-Region plan, which provided various new sources of finance for promoting the Breton language, including for teacher training.

The warming of relations followed the exceptional circumstances of the 1998 regional election in Brittany. The Centre-Right (UDF-RPR- DL) list only held onto the majority as a result of a deal struck with four autonomist-minded independents, led by Jean Yves Cozan, a UDF dissident from the Finistère

department. Cozan was offered a new portfolio – Breton Identity. Occupying a pivotal position within the Regional Council, Cozan used his influence to increase the culture budget (to 5% of the total) and to create a set of institutions to promote the use of the Breton language. The creation of the Breton Language Office (Ofis ar Brezhoneg) in 1999 heralded the new priority adopted by (or imposed upon) the Brittany Region in favour of the Breton language. Increased budgets for Breton language and culture followed.

The Ofis ar Brezhonneg is the most important institutional innovation. It is not, strictly speaking, a language board with statutory powers. Its tools are those of persuasion rather than obligation or constraint. But it has been very active in promoting the cause of the Breton language, notably through its commercial technical translation service, its bilingual sign-posting activities (for local government, hospitals, schools) and the advice it provides to firms, agencies and individuals on all Breton language issues. The Ofis has its main office in Carhaix, the cultural and political capital of Breton language activists, with sub-offices in Rennes and Nantes. It is financed by a major grant from the Brittany regional council, by lesser grants from other sub-national authorities and by the commercial service it provides. The Ofis sees its work as mainly technical, a tool at the service of public and private users. It looks to the Welsh Language Board and other language agencies for inspiration. The Ofis seeks to divorce the language debate from issues of identity or culture. Ideally, language planning should concern issues of planning permission, building regulations or obligatory education. Here we meet concerns that although mainstreamed in Wales are of much much more limited relevance in Brittany.

In spite of the best efforts of the Region, the future of the process of institutionalisation is uncertain. The budgetary line specifically allocated to the Breton language represents around 10% of the Region's cultural budget - or 0.5% of the entire Regional budget. This is less than that accorded to the Breton

Orchestra. On the other hand, much larger sums are invested in the two principal Breton cultural networks (ICB and CCB), and the Ofis, as well as through grants to Breton associations and schools.

Having completed our overview of the institutionalisation of language policy in Wales and Brittany, we will now investigate how the general public relates to these concerns.

Language and Identity: Comparative Analysis and Results

How do the questions on language and identity raised at the beginning of this essay resonate in the attitudes of Welsh and Breton residents? The following section compares and contrasts attitudes to language policy options in Wales and Brittany, using findings from a mass survey we commissioned in 2001.[vi] The aim of the survey was to investigate the general public's evaluation of devolved policy in respect of education, training and language matters. Here we report only on the language-related aspects of the investigation.[vii]

In Table One, we present attitudes to language on behalf of public opinion in Wales and Brittany.

---Table One around here ---

Table One reveals similarities and differences between the Welsh and Breton samples. In both Wales and Brittany, there is strong symbolic support for the cultural heritage represented by the regional language (as expressed by the general question on identity). In both cases also, opinion becomes far more polarised as soon as precise public policy options to support the language are mentioned. As a general rule, there is more support in Wales than in Brittany for interventionist public policies, which we can attribute to the relative success of active public policies in setting the agenda in Wales during the past

decade. In Brittany, the parameters for public policy action are far more narrowly prescribed. In both cases, however, we can identify a range of positions within public opinion.

In both regions, there is a strong element that is indubitably Welsh/Breton, but does not speak the language and resents attempts at compulsion/coercion. In the case of Brittany, we are inclined to the view that the minority language is no longer the diacritical marker of regional identity. Most Bretons support the Breton language (associated with identity) but are averse to the measures of language planning likely to achieve this. There is an overwhelming rejection of any compulsory Breton language teaching. While over 80% support the principle of Breton language teaching as a good thing in principle, hardly any (7%) believe that learning Breton should be obligatory at school. The number of Breton speakers is very limited and they are heavily over-represented by age (most Breton speakers are over 60) and differentiated by locality (most live in a small north-western triangle of Brittany). Unlike in Wales, in Brittany there has never been a strong Breton autonomist movement using language as an expression of regional identity. While the Breton cultural movement has been very powerful, it has built its regional advocacy on cross-partisan support and has avoided politicising language issues. If there is widescale general support for the Breton language as a symbol of the region's past, interventionist public policies to sustain Breton are not widely advocated. There is only minority support for policy solutions that have been experimented or openly envisaged in Wales, such as reserving employment for bilingual speakers or training more Breton speakers to take up new employment opportunities. On the other hand, measures perceived to assist the Breton cultural movement are widely approved, with strong majorities agreeing that Breton-medium cultural associations and media should be part-financed from public funds.

Identity with a language does not necessarily presuppose an ability to speak that language. In the case of Brittany in particular, declining language use coexists with high levels of support for the symbol of the language as part of a cultural heritage. Following this reasoning, there can be a strong identification with

the language as a collective good – but an individual reluctance to invest the resources necessary to learn the language. In Brittany, the most positive attitudes towards the language are those which do not imply coercion and which valorise the symbolic aspects of language. This is in contrast with Wales, where active language policies have succeeded in influencing the behaviour of self-interested private actors.

The evidence for Wales is rather more mixed. If anything, support for the symbolic role of Welsh is rather less deeply rooted than in Brittany. The role of Welsh is more divisive because active public policies have been pursued vigorously since the passage of the Welsh Language Act in 1993 and have been given new momentum since the creation of the National Assembly. The Welsh population generally accepts that the Welsh language should be seen as a symbol of Welsh identity. Public opinion is far more polarised in relation to specific public policies that have been openly canvassed by certain segments of the Welsh political community. A majority accepts that Wales needs to train more Welsh-language speakers to occupy new posts, this demonstrating public awareness of the employment opportunities that have resulted from a decade of vigorous bilingualism. On the other hand, a majority is opposed to the two most controversial policy options: namely that certain jobs in Wales should be reserved to bilingual speakers and there should be restrictions on in-migrants buying property in mainly Welsh-speaking areas. More detailed analysis demonstrates great variations within Welsh public opinion according to locality[viii], age[ix] and political preferences[x], far more so than within Brittany.[xi]

In the case of Wales, these findings suggest that language remains a contentious issue, with public opinion divided over the best way forward for the language. Promoting the Welsh language is not yet a bipartisan, geographically neutral process. Unlike in Brittany, the Welsh language has been closely associated with a successful regionalist party – Plaid Cymru – with traditional strongholds in the Welsh-speaking heartlands in the north-west and western parts of the country. Though the Welsh language is now espoused by all political parties, and though Plaid made a major breakthrough in the

1999 Assembly elections in the non-Welsh-speaking Valleys, the latent association between language and partisan affiliation remains to blur the issue of identity and language. Language remains a potent symbol of a particular version of Welsh identity.

We sought further to draw distinctions between our Wales and Breton samples through a series of correlations. To facilitate cross-national comparison, we identified four equivalent variables, drawn from identical or functionally equivalent questions asked in our comparative surveys. We label these variables as identity[xii], institutional preference[xiii], language competency[xiv] and support for interventionist language policies[xv]. This method enabled direct comparisons to be drawn between Wales and Brittany. In Tables Three and Four, we present the main correlations between our four variables of identity, institutional preference, language competency and support for interventionist language policy.

----Tables Three and Four around here ----

We identify the following findings from the data presented in Tables Three and Four:

1). *Feelings of identity are strongly correlated with language competency*. There are strong positive correlations in Brittany (.182**) and especially in Wales (.281**) between competency in Breton (or Welsh) and a sense of Breton (or Welsh) identity.

2). *A strong sense of regional identity produces support for interventionist language policies.* In both Wales (.175**) and Brittany (.196**), our correlation matrix reveals a significant positive correlation between feelings of identity and language preferences.

3). *Institutions matter for language in Wales, not in Brittany.* While we observed a strongly positive correlation in Wales between institutional preferences and support for interventionist language policies (.227**), we could establish no such relationship in Brittany (-.111**)

4). *Language matters for institutions in Wales, not in Brittany*. In Wales, there was a strongly positive correlation linkage between language competency and institutional choices (.164**). Those who speak or understand Welsh well or fairly well are more inclined to support enhanced devolution. In Brittany, there is a slight negative relationship between language competency and support for independence or for enhanced forms of devolution (-0.80*). There is a lingering sense of shame amongst native Breton speakers (concentrated in the oldest age categories) and an over-compensation of loyalty to France and the French state.

How best can we interpret these findings? In both Wales and Brittany there is a strong sense of regional identity, that is heightened amongst Welsh and Breton speakers. The Welsh case stands apart as one of institutionalisation of language policy, which facilitates an identification of language policy issues with a political institution, namely the National Assembly. In Brittany, the lack of statutory responsibility for language policy on behalf of the regional council produced a de-coupling between language and institutions. Though language could be viewed in terms of (cultural) identity, it was disassociated from the broader enterprise of regional governance and building political institutions. The French State has been remarkably successful in its quest for linguistic purification and in promoting an instrumental, rather than identity based version of political decentralisation. In Wales, the institutions of devolution are to some extent supplanting the role of language as the critical marker of identity.

Conclusion

There are very important differences between Welsh and Breton, relating both to their different regulatory environments and to their level of penetration amongst the population. But both languages face similar challenges due to their spatial concentration, their differential comprehension by different generations and (in the case of Wales at least) the partisan affiliations of the language. The Welsh Language is viewed through the conceptual lens of enhanced regional governance. No such relationship exists in Brittany, where language appears to be dissociated from regional political institutional preferences. Breton language speakers are not particularly prone to sentiments of enhanced regional autonomy. This should not surprise us. Given that most locutors are over 60 and have been raised in the belief that Breton is archaic and French modern, there is no strong theoretical reason to expect them to favour regional autonomy. The lack of institutionalisation in the Breton case is testament to the success of the French state building exercise, including within the sub-consciousness of Bretons themselves. In their own way, the Breton and Welsh cases both demonstrate the resilience of national paths and the effects of institutions on political outcomes.

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[i] In Brittany, we commissioned Efficience 3 to undertake a mass survey on our behalf in June 2001, based on a representative sample of 1007 individuals. The quota method was used, with quotas based on social class, sex, age and locality. The survey was financed as part of the ESRC-funded project on Devolution and Decentralisation in Wales and Brittany (ESRC grant L219252007). In our survey, 6.5% of respondents claimed to speak and understand Breton 'very well' and 5.5% fairly well. Likewise, in Wales we commissioned Market Research Wales to carry out a mass survey in June 2001 based on a representative sample of 1008 individuals, with quotas based on social class, sex, age and locality. The surveys are now in the public domain (Cole, 2004).

[ii] The charter advocates the recognition of lesser-used languages as a source of cultural richness. It encourages the written and oral use of the language in public and private life. It advocates linkages between groups of minority language speakers within one state. It argues that there must be a provision of adequate teaching and pedagogical materials for learning the lesser-used language. It supports research on minority languages in research institutes. It promotes international exchanges.

[iii] What is the state of the Celtic languages in the UK and Ireland today? The census for the Irish Republic taken in 2002 showed a population of 3,917,336. The most recent number of Irish speakers recorded was that enumerated in 1996 showing 1,430,205 speakers of whom 353,663 declared greater fluency. Hence the number of actual Irish speakers in all Ireland lies between 300,000-400,000 or about 6-8% of the population. The number of Manx-Gaelic speakers is 1,689 or 2.2% for 2001.

The most recent estimate of Breton speakers is 304,000 for 2002. Cornish unfortunately is still not enumerated (there are 300 estimated speakers).

iv Details of the TWF project may be found on the Welsh Language Board web site www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk and a recent evaluation of the project may be consulted within document 65/4 of the publishe dpapers of the WLB meeting held at Cydweli, 30:1:2004.

v For a detailed critique of this policy see Williams, C.H. (2004).

vi See note 1.

vii Our comparative surveys both involved representative samples of the Welsh and Breton population, compiled on the basis of a telephone survey using quotas of age, gender, locality and socio-economic group. The datasets are divided into socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. The socio-demographic variables are those of region, locality, gender, occupation of the chief income earner, level of education, country of birth, intended vote in a general (parliamentary) election, intended vote in an Assembly/ Regional Council election; working status; time spent in Wales/Brittany; age; marital status; children in full time education and level of interest in politics. Most of the survey material is in the form of detailed analysis of attitudinal and opinion variables on matters relating to decentralisation, Welsh and Breton identity and attitudes (preferences) towards issues of the Welsh and Breton languages, education and training. Specifically on language, we investigated general attitudes to the Welsh and Breton languages; public policy preferences towards the Welsh and Breton languages; preferred decision-making arenas and the Welsh and Breton languages; language competency and the role of the Welsh and Breton languages in schools.

viii There was a marked distinction, for example, between North-West and South-East Wales in relation to support for the proposal that 'certain jobs should be reserved to bilingual (Welsh and English) speakers'. In the North-West, the proposition was supported strongly, or supported by a majority of respondents (61.2%). In South-East Wales (excluding Cardiff and the Valleys), the proposal was supported strongly, or supported by only 35.8%. Support (strongly agree and agree) for the proposition in other regions within Wales was as follows: South-West and Mid-Wales: 53.4%; Cardiff, 45.9%; North-East Wales: 42.9%; Valleys, 40%.

ix The youngest age cohorts (16-17, 18-24) were more enthusiastic supporters of the proposition than their elders. The figures were as follows (combined strongly agree and agree): 16-17: 61.5%; 18-24: 56.4%; 25-34: 48%; 35-44: 48.3%; 45-54: 38.3%; 55-64: 40.3%; over 65: 43.9%.

x In terms of partisan support (measured by intended vote in the next Assembly election), there was a very marked division between intending Plaid Cymru voters (70% strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposal that certain jobs should be reserved for bilingual speakers) and those of all the other parties (Conservative: 42.8%; Labour: 40.6% and Liberal Democrat: 38.9%).

xi As in Wales (but much less so) younger age cohorts in Brittany were more favourable to an interventionist language policy than their elders. The figures were as follows (combined strongly agree and agree): 16-17: 51.5%; 18-24: 49.2%; 25-34: 46.2%; 35-44: 44.4%; 45-54: 36.9%; 55-64: 36.4%. As in Wales, the over 65s were more favourable (42.4%) than those aged 45-64. As far as locality is concerned, differences were narrower than in Wales, ranging from 50.9% strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposition in the Morbihan, 45.8% in the Cotes d'Armor, 39.7% in the Finistère and only 35.4% in the eastern Ille-et-Vilaine. In terms of intended vote in a regional election, there was a very large distance between the few avowed supporters of the Breton regionalist party (UDB), who were 80% favourable to the proposition, and those of all other parties (Communist: 36.4%; Socialist: 37.1%; Green: 45.5%; UDF 42.3%; RPR, 32%) who were in their majority opposed.

xii We used the Moreno identity question, asking respondents to situate themselves on a five-point scale: Breton/Welsh, not French/British; More Breton/Welsh than French/British; As Breton/Welsh as French/British, more French/British than Breton/Welsh; French/British, not Breton/Welsh.

xiii We asked respondents in both surveys to choose between several options for the future of their regions. These ranged from abolishing the devolved institutions to full independence, with limited devolution and a Scottish-style parliament as intermediary positions.

xiv We used a scale approved by the Welsh Language Board. This ran as follows: 'I can speak Breton/Welsh fluently; I can speak and understand Breton/Welsh fairly well; I can speak and understand some Breton/Welsh; I can say and understand a few basic words in Breton/Welsh; I can not speak or understand Breton/Welsh at all.

xv We had several options, but decided that the proposition 'certain jobs in Brittany/Wales should be reserved to bilingual speakers' was the best measure to indicate support for interventionist language policy.