

Factors which contribute to language shift

As Baker (1993:35) points out, "Bilingual individuals do not exist as separate islands". Individuals are conditioned by the sociolinguistic context in which they find themselves and the political, economic, social, educational and religious variables which affect that context. Due to the innumerable possible combinations of variables involved, it is, obviously, unrealistic to create a generic model which fits all situations of language shift. Given the space which this Guidance Booklet allows, however, we may investigate some of those variables which can have an impact on and cause this linguistic process generally.

Denison (1977: 21) illustrates language shift in the following formula:

$$1. A \rightarrow 2. AI / BII \rightarrow 3. BI / AII \rightarrow 4. B$$

In the above formula, A and B represent different languages and I indicates a higher language competence among speakers than II.

Despite appearing to be a rather simplistic model of the process of language shift considering the range and complicated interaction of factors involved, it does, however, provide a clear outline of the process in terms of its *incremental* stages. Whereas both Stages 1 and 4 represent monoglot societies and the completion of the total shift from one language to another, Stages 2 and 3 could be related to the permutations which Fishman (1980) presents in terms of bilingualism and diglossia as described earlier. The model does also seem to indicate the possible (some would say inevitable) role of the 'acquisition of bilingual proficiency' stages (stages 2 and 3) in the eventual death of a language. Depending on the status of a language in relation to another and the *subtractive* or *additive* context in which it exists, the acquisition of *bilingual* proficiency amongst speakers can signal its demise:

...when all its speakers become bilingual, the penalty is death. (O' Rahilly: 1932)

As mentioned previously, language shift is often caused by the contact of two languages which do not share the same levels of status or vitality, whether that contact is international (that is, across sovereign states) or intra-national. In the process of examining the relative status of languages and the possible subordination of one to another, we earlier adopted terminology such as *high* and *low* languages, *diglossia* (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1972) and *additive* and *subtractive* contexts (Landry, Allard & Th  berge, 1991). Subordination is a common characteristic of lesser-used languages in contact with 'major', more powerful or more widely-used

languages, or languages which exist within a context of political hegemony.

Reference was made earlier to Khleif (1980), who shows how the power relationship between Wales and England has operated within a political framework of “internal colonialism” as expounded by Blauner (1969), Wales being England’s first colony. Khleif (1980) discusses socio-political aspects of ethnicity and national identity, of which language is an essential component, and examines dimensions such as *integrationist* autonomy and *separatist* autonomy, referring also to the relationship between a “Gesellschaft” and a “Gemeinschaft” (Shils, 1957) and Geertz’s (1973) concept of “epochalism” as opposed to “essentialism”. It provides an illustration of the *macro* socio-political hegemonic contexts in which minority languages often exist and also (despite the trappings of legislation) the various assimilative dimensions which can impinge on linguistic vitality, thus contributing, overtly or covertly, to the process of language shift.

As mentioned previously in relation to frameworks adopted to discuss factors considered to underpin linguistic *vitality*, language shift (being the other side of the same coin) can, of course, be largely due to the *absence* of such supporting factors. Issues presented within a negative paradigm in the following discussion will, therefore, only serve to reinforce and enrich one’s understanding of the various components which are integral to linguistic vitality.

Mackey (1962) describes the status of a language as “the sum of what you can do with a language legally, culturally, economically, politically and demographically”. This not only emphasises clearly the factors highlighted earlier in our examination of frameworks of linguistic vitality e.g., Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977), but also encompasses a whole gamut of parameters within which languages operate.

Legal status does, of course, provide a language with the constitutional support which makes its status explicit and officially recognised. However, legal status does not necessarily ensure language vitality. The current status of Irish illustrates this clearly, being legally the official language of Ireland but spoken by relatively few, whilst the vast majority of the population seem to favour English.

Although Canada is *officially* a ‘bilingual’ country, French having equal status with English, nevertheless, French is only spoken by a small minority (less than 15%) in nine out of ten provinces. Despite the fact that

Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec are supposed to be officially bilingual, in reality Quebec is essentially monoglot French and New Brunswick bilingual. As Edwards (1994) points out, Canada, therefore, rather than being generally 'bilingual' has moved towards a form of 'twinning' unilingualism. Effectively, this amounts to '*territorial diglossia*' with Quebec rejecting bilingualism. Edwards (1994: 88) states:

"A socially-engineered policy - which is how some have described the Canadian arrangement – must ultimately, it seems, be reconciled with widespread, popular perceptions of social reality and self-interest."

On the other hand, there are plenty of examples, of course, where languages are denied any form of legal status but where vitality is unquestionably strong.

With regard to public perception, however, (and the crucial factor of human behaviour), status is not always interpreted in terms of legal structures but rather in *symbolic* terms. Language also has a symbolic value as well as a communicative purpose i.e., 'tribal' and identity aspects (Shils, 1957). Whereas language as a manifestation of culture and identity on the one hand, and language as a means of everyday communication on the other, are usually perceived by speakers of major languages as being unified, yet, in countries undergoing a process of language shift they are often perceived as *separate* entities.

We can, therefore, have allegiance to culture and/or identity as opposed to allegiance to language. In the wake of a substantial historical language shift, this seems to be the case currently in Ireland, described by Edwards (1994:114) as being "...a situation of reverence without cost".

In our discussion of diglossia and bilingualism, we referred to how Fishman (1980) illustrates four linguistic societies by creating various permutations. Whereas minority languages or languages of a subordinate status can be stable within some contexts, Fishman (1980) argues that societies which are fully bilingual (bilingualism without diglossia) will prove to be unstable in the long term. Since, in practical terms, fully bilingual citizens do not need to use *both* languages for *all* domains, Fishman maintains that one of the two will eventually become dominant and serve more purposes, the other consequently decreasing in its range of functions and status. Edwards (1994:102-3) refers to this as "a sort of linguistic Gresham's Law at work", a reference to a sixteenth century merchant who argued that the concurrent use of two forms of exchange

would only lead to the inevitable disappearance of that which proved more expensive:

“...so the cheap all-pervasive language will drive out its intrinsically superior but harder-to-maintain competitor.”

Haugen (1981) argues that:

“Wherever two languages come into contact, there will be competition between them. The most useful language and the one that costs less to the speaker (in terms of effort, social status, economic advancement) will always be the most successful.”

This again brings us back to the crucial role of human behaviour in the process of language shift. Such a shift may well be due to a range of political, economic, social pressures and initiatives; however, it is ultimately *how people react* to those pressures and initiatives which matters. Human reaction will be seen to underpin our discussion of many issues which follow.

In reaction to various political, economic and social pressures, for example, people can exchange languages because they believe there are certain advantages in speaking one rather than another. These can include:

- social advantages
- educational advantages
- economic advantages

“They adopt the majority language as their regular vehicle of communication, often mainly because they expect that speaking that language gives better chances for upward social mobility and social success.” (Appel and Muysken, 1987: 32)

To these we can also add *cultural* advantages because some languages are seen as having kudos and prestige and being directly associated with certain cultures, lifestyles and sophistication (and, therefore, indirectly with wealth, education and social mobility). As Pool (1975: 15) states with regard to the historical decline in Cornish speakers: “... they turned to English for reasons of practical convenience or social snobbery.”

Other languages, therefore, lacking similar associations inevitably suffer when in contact with such prestige languages. Dorian’s (1981) account of the decline of Gaelic in East-Sutherland in the Highlands of Scotland

illustrates how people began to associate the Gaelic language with old-age, poverty and an old-fashioned lifestyle. In Wales, research by Brinley Thomas (1987) showed that young people living in a traditionally Welsh-speaking village (Pontrhydyfen, Richard Burton's birthplace), tended to socialise outside their community due to a lack of people of their own age. Since 1981, 70% of homes in Pontrhydyfen had had no residents below the age of 15 years, 25% of residents being of pensionable age. In this particular situation, it seems that being Welsh-speaking almost inevitably became associated with the way of life of an older generation, lacking the social status and vibrancy attached to the English language and Anglo-American culture respectively.

Whereas stating that status can affect language growth or decline seems to be a rather obvious truism to those involved in such areas as language planning, less obvious perhaps to many is the fact that there is a clear link between the way languages are *perceived* by the public in terms of status and prestige and the contexts in which languages are adopted and *used*. Loss of status can, consequently, cause their *functions* in historical and traditional *domains* to change and diminish. Boundaries which separate the functions of two languages are never permanent. In a bilingual context the choice of language used within various domains is often influenced or dictated by various factors. Investigation of domains shows, however, how they exist on different *societal levels*. For instance, each of the factors listed below represent parameters to which we could easily attach domains where (within a national context) the use of a particular language *would be expected*, namely, the *high* language:

- **Economic:** e.g., French-speaking minorities in Canada and ethnic minorities in Britain needing English for employment:

Immigrants who want to get ahead in society place a high value on speaking the majority language.
(Appel and Muysken: 1987: 33)

- **Political:** civil-servants in Ireland required to have a knowledge of Irish Gaelic
- **Educational:** The tradition of teaching Latin historically in British Grammar Schools
- **Religious:** Muslim children learning their faith in Arabic in Britain.

Reference was made earlier to the process of *assimilation* and how one could differentiate between 'structural' and 'cultural' assimilation. One

can also, arguably, link such differentiation to the levels of language shift to which various domains are susceptible since people's choice of language is usually influenced (or dictated) by the parameters of *officialdom* within which they find themselves. Whereas, *cultural* domains (including the cultural activities and traditions attached to them) can provide a form of resistance to the process of language shift, structural assimilation usually means adopting the use of the 'high' language in 'official' domains, even though this may, in certain cases, involve a gradual 'voluntary' but unavoidable transition from one's mother tongue to the adoption of a wholly new language in the face of irresistible external pressures.

There are many examples quoted by academics which give accounts of historical shifts in minority language use due to the pressure of *official* domains as a result of making contact with more powerful languages or those of a higher status. The following quote from the 'Language Clause' of the Act of Union of England and Wales in 1536 presents an example where officialdom becomes oppression:

"... from henceforth no Person or Persons that use the Welsh Speech or Language shall have or enjoy any Manner Office or Fees within the Realm of England, Wales, or other the King's Dominion, upon Pain of forfeiting the same Offices or Fees, unless he or they use and exercise the English Speech or Language."

However, whereas the above example represents a process of *involuntary* assimilation of speakers of a 'low' or lesser-used language with a 'higher' and more powerful neighbour, there are innumerable other examples where this process has been, to a large extent, *voluntary*. Pool (1975) gives an account of the indifferent reaction of the Cornish to their native language:

"... it just faded away over the centuries, the main reason being simply that the Cornish did not care enough for it and turned to English." (Pool: 1975: 15)

Dressler & Wodak-Leodolter (1977:7) refer to the historical situation in Brittany when Bretons had to exchange their native language for the more lucrative French in order to get jobs:

"... It is necessary to present oneself as a member of the national majority to acquire positions (like jobs, official functions and educational facilities)."

Earlier we described the ‘driving forces’ (Lewin, 1951) to which languages are continually susceptible as being generally of a political, economic, educational and cultural nature. Those general parameters do, of course, subsume innumerable sub-dimensions, all of which we cannot possibly encompass in a guidance booklet such as this. It is arguable that compressing those subdimensions into neat categories could be an unprofitable task since it would sometimes appear like disentangling a can of worms, many subdimensions being so inter-related and involving variables which defy the laws of cause and effect.

For instance, whereas it has been argued that human behaviour has an obviously crucial role in the plight of languages with regard to the way people *react* to external forces (the former being the effect and the latter the cause in this instance), we must also consider the extent to which human behaviour can *create* such forces, thus also being part (if not the whole) of the cause. For example, with reference to the above comment made by Pool (1975) on the indifference of the Cornish, could not such indifference, arguably, be seen as a (negative) ‘driving force’ by failing to act as a (positive) ‘restraining force’ in the process of language shift? In referring to the historic plight of the Irish language and the shift to English, Fennell (1981) states:

“... the lack of a will to stop shrinking is an intrinsic characteristic of a shrinking language minority. Consequently, any attempt to ‘save’ such a community must begin by arousing in them the will to save themselves.”
(Fennell: 1981: 30)

Trying to separate the variables from each other on the basis of a *causal* relationship can, therefore, often appear like solving the problem of ‘the chicken and the egg’. As a minority language weakens, it will have fewer functions and be adopted for fewer domains. Fewer opportunities to use a language can, in turn, cause speakers to question its value, thus resulting in even further attrition in the number of speakers and domains. Languages which exist in ‘subtractive’ contexts, therefore, are susceptible to a downward spiral which can be very gradual or even dramatic.

The extreme complicatedness and often two-sidedness of the process of language shift is crystallised in Edwards’ (1994) question of whether languages are *murdered* or *commit suicide*:

“In this way, we might resolve the murder-suicide matter (if these terms must be used at all) by considering the social pressures under which suicide occurs. In personal suicide, stress is involved: people do not kill themselves on a whim.

Usually, the pressures are varied, although there sometimes exists a significant ‘other’ who in some sense has caused the suicide. In linguistic suicide, on the other hand, there is always a significant ‘other’ (language) which creates the pressures leading to a language shift and decline; there is always a murderer. But, just as a person may cause another's suicide without being a murder in law, so a language can bring about another's demise without directly and actively planning to do so. Very rarely, in fact, is linguistic demise so carefully planned that one can invoke the label of murder.”
(Edwards, 1994: 104)

It is here that it seems appropriate to apply the metaphor of ‘two ways of killing a frog’ (as adopted, for example in Daniel Quinn’s 1996 novel, ‘The Story of B’) which effectively delineates oblivion or apathy in human behaviour in the face of gradual and imperceptible change, as in the process of language shift and, ultimately, possible death; the first method being to place the frog in a saucepan of *boiling* water, to which it will react immediately by jumping out. However, a more devious and effective method is to place it in *cold* water and to bring the saucepan slowly to the boil. By this method, the frog will remain in the saucepan, totally oblivious to the change in its environment, until it dies.

The question of language murder or suicide leads naturally to issues of policy-making. Language policy-making (or, in many cases, attitudes towards languages, since *policy-making* suggests deliberate action with which ‘laissez-faire’ approaches or apathy do not fit) can, arguably, be plotted on a continuum ranging from energetic promotion on the one hand to wilful ‘murder’ on the other. Language policies often reflect a fundamental political ideology as is illustrated by Baker (2017: 388-89) when referring to Bourhis’ (2001) typology of political ideologies and Wiley’s (2002, 2015) typology of language policies. As will be discussed again when investigating models of so-called ‘bilingual’ education, Bourhis’ (2001) typology of political *ideologies* in relation to the use of languages reflects a continuum, but are categorised as:

- pluralist
- civic
- assimilation
- ethnist

However, as Baker (2017: 388) seems to suggest, these can also be partly coupled with Wiley's (2002)) typology of language *policies*, described as being:

- *promotion-oriented* (corresponding to a pluralist ideology)
- *tolerance-oriented* (corresponding to a civic ideology)
- *repression-oriented* (corresponding to an ethnist ideology).

Whereas Wiley (2002) does not refer to a language policy corresponding to assimilation ideology, (a surprising omission considering that such a policy is so prevalent and widespread in countries which adopt major languages, such as the USA and the UK as will be discussed later), however, in a later publication, Wiley (2015) refers to *restricted-oriented* language policies which can facilitate linguistic assimilation.

The USA is an often-quoted example of such an ideology which expects linguistic pluralism to be subjected to the American 'melting pot' and the adoption of a single 'lingua franca', English, in order to maintain social cohesion. Speeches by Presidents Roosevelt and Regan have, in the past, emphasised this political philosophy most clearly:

“It's absolutely wrong and against American concepts to have a bilingual education program that is now openly, admittedly dedicated to preserving their native language, and never getting them adequate in English so they can go out into a job market and participate.”

(President Regan, 1981, quoted in Crawford, 2000).

Baker (2011: 384), in discussing linguistic policies and attitudes to language diversity in the USA and the promotion of English as a socially cohesive power, quotes President Roosevelt's well-known speech in 1917:

It would be not merely a misfortune but a crime to perpetuate differences of language in this country... We should provide for every immigrant by day schools for the young, and night schools for the adult, the chance to learn English; and if after say five years he has not learned English, he should be sent back to the land from whence he came. (quoted in Gonzalez, 1979 and cited in Baker, 2011: 384).

As can be seen, it reflects the highly ethnocentric attitude being adopted towards multilingualism in that earlier period of American history due to the political need to linguistically (if not culturally) assimilate people of diverse racial backgrounds.

However, language policies also often reflect a more *covert* ideology, albeit unconsciously or sub-consciously, as opposed to an entrenched and overt political standpoint determined to ensure or promote social cohesion. Stubbs (1991) cynically refers to such language-planning policies in England and Wales as “multicultural rhetoric and assimilationist assumptions”.

Williams (1991) mentions varying ‘environmental’ attitudes to linguistic diversity, namely:

- the **evolutionist**, which fundamentally reflects a Darwinian ‘survival of the fittest’ attitude towards language vitality, perceiving language shift and, possibly, ultimate death as an inevitability in the face of unavoidable adverse economic, political and social pressures
- the **conservationist**, which adopts a positive approach reflecting a belief in the need to conserve and to revitalise languages under threat by providing them with special status in order to regain vitality. The establishment of the ‘Gaeltacht’ in Ireland reflects this position
- the **preservationist**, which adopts a more protective, conservative approach in relation to the *status quo* rather than the more positive and promotional stance of the conservationist.

In elaborating on these aspects, Baker (2017:45-46) links this ‘environmental’ approach to languages with three themes expounded by Hornberger (2006) within a perspective of language ‘ecology’. Furthermore, Garcia’s (1992) ‘language garden’ analogy provides a strong warning of the disastrous consequences of ignoring the current threat facing languages throughout the world.

Despite referring above to the fact that there are many subdimensions (subsuming innumerable factors) which contribute to language shift and which act as ‘driving’ forces, we shall, however, highlight some issues which are acknowledged in the academic field as being major contributors.

Modernisation

Modernisation is generally interpreted as a ‘positive’ aspect of economic growth. Such growth has an obvious international dimension since commerce and business usually and increasingly operate on a global scale, thus making less ‘robust’ languages vulnerable to language shift

by further strengthening the vitality of existing international languages as well as, possibly, creating others.

Economic changes, including industrialisation and modernisation, can, therefore, cause people to *choose* between languages. In less industrialised societies, minority languages are known to have been consequently ‘left behind’, seen as old-fashioned, useless and diasadvantageous in terms of upward social mobility, and associated with ‘backward’ rural traditions rather than forward-looking urban modernity. Historically, O’Rahilly (1932) seems to have been already aware of this issue. However, considering the powerful force of modernism and the alternatives, such a stance as the following, arguably, generates more questions than answers:

...when a language surrenders itself to modern idiom,
and when all its speakers become bilingual, the penalty
is death. (O’Rahilly, 1932)

Educational reasons

Modernisation is usually followed by an increasing demand for state schools and a centralised education system, the developments of which “favour the emergence and expansion of standardized national languages and disfavour the use and even the very existence of minority languages.” (Dressler & Wodak-Leodolter: 1977:7)

Educational policies, in keeping with respective national language policies generally, usually reflect political ideology, which again brings us to the issue of power relationships between minority and majority rights. However, whereas the formulation of some damaging educational policies at the highest national (or even local) political levels can often go undetected by an unsuspecting public, educational *language* policies, due to their *direct* effect on large numbers of parents, can engender widespread political reaction. Ruiz (1984) refers to three political dimensions which underpin bilingualism generally, but which are often highlighted when it comes to *educational* provision:

- Language as a right
- Language as a problem
- Language as a resource

It will be seen that the first two are diametrically opposite to each other. What some groups consider to be rights can be perceived by others as problems. This again often reflects issues of cultural and structural assimilation or separatism for example, and aspects of national cohesion. However, the third perspective which presents language as a *resource* to be exploited economically, politically, educationally and culturally can be

seen to reconcile such opposition, presenting bilingualism as a positive advantage (and, ironically, *also* as a possible source of social cohesion). We have recently been forcibly reminded by the British Academy of the negative economic consequences of not adopting a more positive attitude to language learning in the wake of a substantial reduction in the take-up of modern languages amongst secondary pupils in the UK.

Education through the medium of a minority language is a key component in the language's viability and sustainability. Lewis Jones (1981) similarly maintains that *literacy* in a minority language is a strong indicator of its stability, whereas lack of literacy amongst speakers reflects the increasing influence of a majority language and a definite step towards language death. The way a language can accommodate dialectical variants in its *spoken* form usually reflects its strength as a living language and a means of further propagation since such *oral* variations can be unified by a widely acknowledged *standardised written* form. This is evidenced by the strength of standardised written English throughout the world (with very minor occasional deviations, as in the USA) alongside the *acceptance* of major dialectical varieties, (unlike the French perhaps, who tend to scorn the language of the Quebecois). On the other hand, a *lack* of written reinforcement, due to illiteracy amongst *native-speakers*, can result in a proliferation of grammatical and dialectical variation which can contribute to widespread instability. The fact that a language, consequently, does not have a common *spoken* nor a standardised *written* form can undermine a language's vitality as well as its status in the perception of the speakers themselves, resulting in an almost inevitable tendency to adopt (in a bilingual or diglossic context) the alternative language which *does*. Further attrition, due to a diminution of language domains accompanied by negative aspects of *language loss* such as lexical and syntactical interference from the more dominant language, can lead to eventual language death.

Education, therefore, as a means of breaking the 'vicious circle' of attrition in the relationship between loss of speakers and domains and the consequent deterioration in levels of literacy and quality of language, is widely recognised as a crucial component in language revitalisation and reversing language shift. In Wales, for example, Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools (referred to as "agencies of language revitalisation" by Khleif (1980)) are not only considered to have made an extremely positive contribution to an increase in the number of Welsh speakers amongst the younger generation (as recorded in the language census of 2001 and 2011), but have also led to further Welsh-medium

education developments at *university* level with the establishment of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

However, evaluating revitalisation only in terms of growth in the *number of speakers* can also ignore *other* linguistic issues on which there is often divided opinion amongst language activists. Efforts to resist language shift by increasing the number of speakers cannot always guarantee a correlation in language *quality*. The two do not necessarily go hand in hand and can even progress in opposite directions.

With regard to the substantial increase in the number of pupils from English-speaking homes who have attended Welsh-medium schools during the last half-century, Mathias (not dated) draws our attention to the creation of a particular brand of Welsh amongst pupils due to the interference of the mother-tongue. What appears to be ‘proficient’ fluency can often be at the expense of accuracy. Unlike aspects of *language loss* which characterise the language of native speakers mentioned above, the negative linguistic characteristics of this ‘group’ (interlanguage, fossilisation etc) reflect a *lack of language gain*.

“If the education system is now the primary means of Welsh language transmission, the issue of the maintenance of ability becomes even more important than previously, as the ability of those who have become second language (L2) speakers through the influence of the education system may well not be as firmly established as the ability of the home language speakers.” (Jones, 2008)

We might differentiate, therefore, between the two linguistic groups by maintaining that in the case of first-language speakers it reflects language *deterioration*, whereas in the case of second-language speakers it reflects language *change*, a difference of perspective which has been a topic of debate amongst linguists and sociolinguists alike.

Whether it is more valid to come down on the side of linguistic deterioration (as language ‘purists’ do) or on the side of change (or language ‘development’), what is of greater significance is that such instability (as well as the discussion surrounding it) becomes an *additional* contributory factor to language shift.

Such instability, inevitably, has an additional significance in the context of languages under threat. The ensuing debate over language standardisation can *in itself* be a further weakening factor and perceived as reflecting division and uncertainty which is uncharacteristic of major languages whose vitality is expressed in the acknowledgement of

widespread and common linguistic standards. Standardisation has also proved to be a stumbling-block in the revitalisation of Cornish in the United Kingdom (Lowe, 2010), being, of course, a well-known example of a language which historically suffered the process of language shift and ultimate death.

Language obsolescence is an important area of research as shown by M. Jones (1998). However, any loss of language due to a reduction in use *within* certain domains must be differentiated from a circumstantial change *of* the domains themselves. George Rizkalla (quoted in Crystal, 2000: 25), lamenting the gradual loss and use of the Aramaic language to Arabic amongst the younger generation in villages outside Damascus, refers to how moving to the city is accompanied by linguistic deterioration:

“There [in Damascus] they cannot see goats or trees or peasants working in the field. So all the words for these things are forgotten because they hear such words maybe once a year. In this way the language gets poorer and poorer.”

One can relate this, of course, to loss in the use of words amongst the younger generation appertaining to a way of life and traditions of which they have no experience *or which they do not find relevant*; the corollary being that language vitality also depends a great deal on a language's ability to penetrate those domains which they *do* experience and consider to be relevant; that is, to modernise (see above).

Globalisation is a phenomenon which increasingly seems to suggest that certain domains are the preserve of only a relatively few languages, as illustrated for instance by the instructions found in a limited number of languages when one buys an electrical utensil. Major languages such as English currently dominate the domains of science and technology, for example, as well as the fields of international commerce and economics. Furthermore, even *within* this linguistic hierarchy, there is evidence that English is becoming increasingly the international ‘lingua franca’ to the detriment of other major and previously dominant languages. For example, there are signs that European universities seem to be adopting English increasingly as a means of instruction in a number of disciplines either as well as or instead of their national languages. Therefore, with a view to safeguarding the use of the national language within a *bilingual* education system alongside English, certain language activists have adopted slogans such as “Einstein was not educated in English!”

Stemming the dominance of English in key domains, however, not only necessitates the *use* of an alternative language such as the respective national tongue, but also the assurance that a language is equipped with the necessary terminology to deal with such new developments. This is particularly true in the fields of technology and science which are continually susceptible to innovation. Related to the need to secure sufficient ‘corpus planning’ is the fact that certain countries have been very defensive of the purity of their own language and the encroachment of others, particularly English. Kaplan & Baldauf (1997), in discussing ‘corpus planning’ as a key component of language planning, refer to the specific role of academies in various countries in lexical modernisation; some, like the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, having been established as early as the sixteenth century.

Demographic reasons

As was previously seen, demography was considered a key component of linguistic vitality in the framework of Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977). Demographic changes can significantly effect a minority language’s prosperity:

“... where both numbers of speakers and social prestige are overwhelmingly weighted against a language (variety), its survival must be seen as problematic.”
(Denison, 1977: 16)

Immigration issues have been prominent in the wake of European legislation which has allowed free passage to EU citizens across the continent, with the result that many geographical contexts have become more noticeably multilingual.

However, such an arrangement has not deprived languages of their official status within their respective countries so that a ‘territorial principle’ is legally preserved. Migration has a greater effect on minority languages in countries which are part of a larger sovereign state and which, whether they have official status or not, share a diglossic existence alongside another major language. Despite quite recent heated political debates regarding immigration in the United Kingdom which has been alleged to undermine the country’s social cohesion, this, of course, has in no way affected the vitality of the English language. To the contrary, it has ironically strengthened the perception of English as being an inexorable assimilating force on both structural and cultural dimensions (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977), (see above). However, the in-migration of non-Welsh-speaking workers to the coal districts and steel towns of South Wales at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century contributed significantly to the anglicisation of what were previously

monoglot Welsh-speaking communities, as shown by Davies (1993). A repeat of such a migratory phenomenon from England into what remained of the Welsh-speaking heartlands in the 1980s and 1990s also had a devastating effect on the language, dramatically reducing the number of communities where 70% of the population spoke Welsh from 92 in 1991 to 54 in 2001. This led to a specific target being incorporated in a national language strategy “*Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003) with the aim of ensuring that “the decline in the number of communities where Welsh is spoken by over 70% is arrested.”

Both Jones (2010) and Morris (2010) bear testimony to the multi-faceted sociolinguistic effects of this phenomenon, such as the demand for second or holiday homes from outsiders which affected house prices, thus causing the indigenous Welsh-speaking population to seek cheaper residence elsewhere. The in-migration of outsiders in parallel with the out-migration of the native population has, therefore, caused a significant language shift in terms of an increased monoglot English-speaking population, similar to the way the historical in-migration of tin and fish merchants had a significant impact on the use of English in Cornwall. Official statistics analysed by Jones (2008) showed that, whereas the already significant percentage of the population born outside Wales in 1991 was 23%, it had increased to 25% by 2001 and was projected to be 29% by 2021 due to in-migration alone. However, unlike the assimilative power wielded and imposed by countries with major languages, in-migration in Wales has been characterised by low levels of linguistic integration with only 9% of those born outside Wales able to speak Welsh.

In-migration and out-migration has also reduced the levels of endogamy and has increased exogamy within the Welsh-speaking population. This seems to be a very significant factor in the transference of the language across generations. The national census in 2001 showed that, in families where *both* parents spoke Welsh, the language was transmitted to 82% of children aged 3-4 across Wales despite some geographical variation. However, in families where only *one* parent spoke Welsh, this percentage fell to 40% of children aged 3-4. As has already been stated rather obviously, a causal factor in language shift is the geographic proximity of a minority language community to a community using a language of higher prestige and status. However, such proximity is also more likely to produce linguistically mixed marriages, which in turn lead to a language shift within the home. Therefore, a further target specified in “*Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003) was for the percentage of families where

Welsh is the principal language of conversation to be increased by 2011. This target reflects what Fishman (1990) considers the most crucial step of all (Stage 6) in his Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to promote a process of language revitalisation (see below).

However obvious the importance of maintaining cross-generational language transmission seems to be in withstanding any process of language shift, nevertheless, parental choices and decisions are always susceptible to other macro-economic and political considerations which adversely affect any existing desire amongst minority language speakers to pass on their native language to their children:

“We can say that there comes a point when multilingual parents no longer consider it necessary or worthwhile for the future of their children to communicate with them in a low-prestige language variety.” (Denison, 1977: 21)

A significant statistic offered by Jones (2008) was that the under-16 age profile was projected to fall from 19.4% in 2004 to 17.8% in 2011. Falling levels of young people in *statutory* education could also undermine the possibility for the school system to generate Welsh speakers. Such a reduction in the percentage of members of the younger generation (of which younger *Welsh-speakers* are only a sub-group) goes hand-in-hand with an ageing population. We have already referred to the research by Thomas (1987) which showed that young people in the village of Pontrhydyfen in South Wales (where, by 1981, 70% of homes had no residents below the age of 15 years) were more likely to socialise outside their community because of a lack of people of their own age. Furthermore, there was a danger of associating the language with an ageing population.

Lack of institutional support

As seen previously, institutional support is also one of the key-components in the linguistic vitality model of Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977). A language's lack of presence in everyday institutional domains such as the mass media, religion, governmental and administrative services and education tends to be perceived and interpreted as a signal that a language has no status or use in public life, thus reinforcing speakers' tendency to succumb to the influence of other 'driving forces' and a willingness to relinquish the use of a minority language in favour of another.

Symbolic identity

Reference was made earlier to the fact that language is often considered an essential component of one's ethnic identity and that cultural autonomy, in which language plays an essential part, can be

accommodated (or tolerated) within a wider hegemonic political context of integrationist autonomy (Khleif, 1980). Where languages become largely moribund however, people's identity often continues to be expressed in *symbolic* rather than linguistic terms. Edwards (1994: 114) refers to this as:

“...a situation of reverence without cost, ...for some declining languages the task of activists is to suggest to the wider public that what has become, or is becoming, a symbolic quantity can be revitalized into a normal medium.”

Edwards (1994:111) (Reading 3) gives an account of the historical and current position of Gaelic in Nova Scotia as an example where *symbols* of Scottishness become adequate expressions of identity in the event of the loss of one's mother-tongue. Resisting language shift or revitalising a language can, therefore, be difficult in a context where *symbolic* cultural allegiance is considered to be sufficient. However, with regard to the above quotation, it has been said that "what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember." Marcus Lee Hansen (1952) once drew our attention to the fact that those who established societies in America were often third-generation citizens (Edwards, 1994: 112, 229-30).

Mass media

Today the mass media (e.g. publishing, television, radio, internet) pervade nearly every home throughout countries of the First and Second World, the language of communication adopted being mostly (or only) the respective majority language and usually to the detriment of a minority language. The mass media, therefore, have an immense capacity to cause language shift. It is for this reason that language campaigners consider the use of a minority language by the mass media to be crucial to the process of withstanding language shift and to language revitalisation.

Religion

If access to religion is only available through the majority language, this can also cause language shift.

Whilst the decision not to translate the prayer book and the Bible into Cornish is recognised as a key factor in the language's eventual death (Pool, 1975), the translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588 by the Archbishop William Morgan is acknowledged as being a crucial step in the future survival of the Welsh language and, furthermore, in providing a standardised written form. In the same way as the Koran today acts as a source of knowledge of classical Arabic for Muslims, as well as serving

its primary religious purpose, the Bible in Wales has also been a source of widespread literacy and linguistic vitality over the centuries due to the country's strong Christian traditions.

Government and administration

Governmental services at both local and national levels are generally perceived as high-status domains of language use. Whilst the availability of a wide range of services in one language serves to promote a 'high' language perception amongs the general public, conversely, within a bilingual or diglossic context, the lack of availability in another language can only encourage a contrary perception of being a 'low' language. The availability of governmental services through the medium of the majority language only, therefore, diminishes the usefulness of the minority language. Again, the use of minority languages in official governmental and institutional public domains has been the target of language activists in various countries since those domains are seen as being crucial components of both language vitality and the process of resisting language shift. Whereas the provision of such services can often be nothing more than a cosmetic gesture of goodwill on the part of a government or a means of maintaining political equilibrium, it can also be enshrined in legislation.