

LANGUAGES IN CONFLICT

As language communities come into contact in a multilingual world, the need arises for bilingualism, translation and the use of lingua francas. Proximity, necessity and convenience also lead to borrowing and interpenetration among languages. Also, however, it is quite apparent that languages in contact can become languages in conflict. The force of circumstance – 'natural' or contrived – can cause a group to abandon its original language for another; 'big' languages like English or French or Spanish can push smaller ones around and can contribute to their demise, and competition can exist among smaller varieties as they jostle for position, sometimes in the shade of an acknowledged and seemingly unassailable giant. If we are to study the contact, competition and conflict among languages and language varieties, and if we are, further, to consider the reasons behind these phenomena – and their relationships with, and influences upon, social life and group identity – it might be useful to begin by looking at evaluative reactions of a rather more decontextualized nature.

LINGUISTIC HIERARCHIES

In the introduction I noted that members of the élite have historically never shied away from saying which languages were the 'best' or the most appropriate in given circumstances; in so doing, I suggested, they were usually reflecting dominant linguistic attitudes derived from preferences and prejudices attaching to the *speakers* of various languages. When Richard Carew (1555–1620), for example, saw English as 'excellent', Italian 'without sinews', French 'delicate' and Dutch 'manlike', he was, in effect, giving us a picture of foreigners painted by an educated Englishman of the sixteenth century. When Antoine de Rivarol (1753–1801) observed that French was synonymous with clarity, and that English, Greek, Latin and Italian were mediums of ambiguity, he gave us the same picture, redrawn by a Frenchman two centuries later.¹ Language attitudes, then, are better understood as attitudes towards the members of language communities

and, as in these two instances, are often allied with powerful protective sentiments for one's own group. I shall return later to this specific matter of protection and prescriptivism; I want to begin this chapter by asking more generally if evaluations can be fairly made of languages themselves, if 'better' or 'worse', 'stronger' or 'weaker', 'beautiful' or 'harsh' are linguistic labels that can be objectively placed.

Is it the case, for example, that one language can be seen, in some sense or other, as better, more logical or more expressive than another? Is this perhaps more reasonable to ask if the languages being compared are not relatively close to each other (e.g., French and German) but are, rather, somewhat farther apart (e.g., French and Yup'ik)? Is one somehow more primitive or less developed than the other? The idea has appealed to many in the past and has contemporary adherents too. However, as implied earlier, it is quite clear that no language can be described as better or worse than another on purely linguistic grounds. Given that language is an arbitrary system in which communication rests upon agreement among members of the speech community, it follows that the only 'logic' of language is to be found in its grammar (i.e., a logic of convention). What is grammatical in French (e.g., the use of two elements to express verbal negation) is not in English (where only one is used), but this surely says nothing about the relative quality of the two systems. And, even if we compare the language of a technologically advanced society with that of an 'undeveloped' one, we find the same different, but not deficient, relationship.

Linguists may not agree on much, but on this matter there is broad agreement. One writer put it as follows: 'Could it be that some languages require "less mature cognition" than others, perhaps because they are still more primitive? In recent years this notion has been thoroughly discredited by virtually all students of language.'² Languages are best seen as different systems reflecting different varieties of the human condition. Although they may be unequal in complexity at given points, this does not imply that some have, overall, greater expressive power. To put it another way, we could say that not all varieties have the same capabilities: different social, geographical and other conditions determine what elements will be needed and, therefore, developed. All are, however, potentially functionally equivalent. Languages differ in many aspects of complexity – lexical, grammatical, phonological – and bilingual speakers will often (as we have seen) prefer one language to another for specific purposes. But, the question of overall language 'goodness' is spurious, unless we were willing to define, compare and judge the goodness of situations, contexts and milieus.

Some *have* been willing, of course, but recent social-scientific tradition has more frequently rejected what is often labelled as simple ethnocentrism, in favour of a cultural and linguistic relativism. Cultural relativism has

been a received notion within social science for some time and, it must be said, represents a welcome and logical change from the ethnocentrism which had been prominent, even in intellectual circles. Reading old anthropological accounts of the 'savage' mind, of 'debased' cultures, of 'primitive' languages, is to recapture something of a European world-view that was pervasive and respectable. Nowadays, cultures and languages only *differ* from one another and we realize that some universal yardstick against which all could be measured and ranked does not exist. At the same time, a thoroughgoing relativism, with its blatantly non-judgemental stance, does present problems. Are we to accept such things as rigid caste systems, brutal treatment of women, religious intolerance, cannibalism, slavery and prostitution as merely alternative ways of ordering societies?

Ernest Gellner maintains that, although cultural relativism cannot be logically refuted, it nevertheless can be questioned: 'It is worth noting that it is intuitively repellent to pretend that the Zande belief in witchcraft is as valid as our rejection of it, and that to suppose it such is a philosophical affectation which cannot be maintained outside the study.'³ He holds that some cultures are better than others in terms of any common-sense evaluation of the broad satisfaction of human needs; one simply has more freedom and less trauma in some societies than in others. For Gellner, the most important argument against relativism is that, while it holds that cultures cannot be judged one with the other, or against themselves at different times, societies have always, in fact, engaged in such evaluation. Social evolution involves judgement, repudiation and change. Implicit in progress is the notion that change is for the better, that the society of a later time is superior to itself at an earlier one. The scientific society is pre-eminent here because it is the product of such evolution and because it permits (though by no means ensures) greater individual freedom. It is also generally the only one which regularly criticizes itself for being ethnocentric and supports a culturally relativistic view of other cultures – which, themselves, are often more closed and intolerant.

These sorts of critical observations on out-and-out relativism seem to me very well founded. They do not, however, apply to all features of societies, and the rejection made here of the 'primitive-language' thesis still stands.⁴ The general point, I suppose, is that cultural relativism is itself a relative matter. While a fully-scaled yardstick is impossible, a rougher instrument which points to extremes is possessed by many. I take it for granted that a society which condones female circumcision and believes in witchcraft is inferior, *in these respects*, to one which does not. I do not see that this constrains me to accept, as well, that language A is superior to language B, even if B-speakers eat their enemies while A-speakers turn the other cheek. It is a very large and vexing question as to why some societies do not 'develop' as much as others, why 'cultures are extremely unequal in their cognitive power'. Physical environment is doubtless the most important

distinguishing feature here, promoting or retarding social evolution. But we must recall that although cognitive capacities are differently developed, the same underlying potentials are found in all cultures. My conclusion is that linguistic relativity is unshaken as a basis for understanding language variation precisely because – whatever the degree of development of other cognitive skills in other areas – the development of adequate *language* is a universal.

The particular matter of linguistic relativity received further attention in the work of Edward Sapir and his pupil, Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941), and it goes hand-in-hand with a linguistic determinism. The 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis',⁵ bluntly stated, is that different languages carve up, and allow perception of, reality in different ways and that, therefore, the language one speaks determines the way one thinks. This hypothesis is not generally accepted. Although languages do differ in their grammar and lexicon, we can obviously translate (imperfectly perhaps) among them, and speakers of one variety whose circumstances change can learn another.

If we find that the Inuit talk and think about snow in a much more fine-grained and engrossing way than do Italians, we should simply accept that important features of the environment are very different for the two groups. If we discover a desert tribe whose colour vocabulary is much more limited than our own there is no reason to expect some permanent cognitive inability to perceive and talk about 'green' once they have all struck oil and moved to Surrey. What we do note here is that a 'weak' form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – that language influences our *customary* ways of thinking – is both reasonable and unsurprising.

A little end-note here: Geoffrey Pullum's recent book *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax* makes it clear that the shop-worn example of the Inuit having many different words for what we refer to simply as *snow* is not simply tired, it is false.⁶ They do not, after all, have distinct words for 'snow on the ground', 'fallen snow', 'slushy snow', 'snow drift', etc. In fact, Pullum shows how the list of such words has grown, in some writer's minds, to as many as 400! He also notes that the whole idea, though it would be trivial even if it were true, has captured hearts both within and without linguistics. The truth? According to an authoritative Inuit dictionary there are only two relevant roots – *ganik* (snow in the air) and *aput* (snow on the ground) – although many words can be derived from these, much as the English *snow* can lead to *snow-fall*, *snowflake*, *snowstorm*, etc.

It is, thus, a common observation among linguists, anthropologists and others that languages are always sufficient for the needs of their speakers. This was formally stated by von Humboldt in the eighteenth century and by Joachim du Bellay in the sixteenth. 'All languages are of a like value ... to each man his language can completely communicate every doctrine';⁷ it is not true that 'diverse tongues are fitted to signify diverse conceptions, some the conceptions of the learned, others those of the unlearned'. A recent

attack on this stance has, however, asked how speakers in 'primitive' groups can cope with higher mathematics, or Wittgenstein, or biochemistry; further, if all varieties are adequate for group needs, could we not claim that groups lacking the necessary vocabulary do not *need*, for example, modern technology or medicine?⁸

In both cases there is confusion between concepts and words. If a group, for example, begins to take an interest in simple arithmetic and, 500 years later, develops a theory of quantum mechanics it is surely reasonable to expect that words will grow with increasing sophistication. This is, in fact, what happens. There is, as well, no need to look at 'primitive' societies (in whatever sense 'primitive' is construed) here: consider our own intellectual and linguistic development. Second, and relatedly, it is the lack of the prerequisite conceptual understanding which prevents a group from possessing modern medical procedures. Words themselves are only indicators. Thus, the real meaning of a statement like 'language is adequate for its speakers' needs' refers to the fact that language keeps pace with conceptual advancement, which in turn determines the very needs of which speakers can even be aware.

While there must obviously be a finite lag between new ideas and new terms, this lag varies inversely with the general importance of the idea. How long did it take for *astronaut* to catch on? And, even while it was still to make its entrance, there were all sorts of other descriptive terms to fill the temporary void (we no longer hear *spaceman* very much). Description, albeit rough, is always possible. Thus, while the scientist searches for the word *laser*, he or she is perfectly able to convey the *idea* of what the word represents to others; in fact, if this were not possible, the new word itself would be empty. All of this rests upon accumulated conceptual advancement, and we have not, so far at least, had an instance of such a gigantic leap forward that description has proved impossible.

If popular attitudes about the superiority-inferiority of *languages* are resistant to change, despite the weight of linguistic evidence, then those concerning styles, accents and dialects are even more deeply ingrained.⁹ *Ain't* is always wrong, as is a double negative (in English); saying *dese*, *dat* and *dose* is uneducated (at best) and slovenly; a Cockney or Joul variety departs from both accuracy and propriety; and so on. Vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar which are at variance with a received 'standard' are regularly dismissed, and a great divide is thus perceived between such a standard and all other 'substandard' forms. In fact, however:

just as there is no linguistic reason for arguing that Gaelic is superior to Chinese, so no English dialect can be claimed to be linguistically superior or inferior to any other. ... There is no linguistic evidence whatsoever for suggesting that one dialect is more 'expressive' or 'logical' than any other, or for postulating that there are any

'primitive', 'inadequate' or 'debased' English dialects.¹⁰

A very good demonstration of this was provided by William Labov. He studied Black English in the United States, which makes an excellent 'test case' for dialect validity since it had for so long been rejected by the white middle class, and since its speakers were victims of a prejudice that went well beyond language alone. If it could be shown that Black English was not some debased variety, this would go some way towards establishing linguistic integrity for all. There were three central strands to Labov's work. First, he justly criticized earlier studies which had elicited Black English from youngsters through interview techniques which were both unfamiliar and intimidating; these were hardly likely to produce normal, conversational samples. Second, Labov reminded us of what casual observers had known for a very long time – the Black community is verbally rich and, like other 'oral' cultures worldwide, supports and rewards those who are particularly linguistically gifted. Third, and most important of all, Labov demonstrated the regular, rule-governed nature of Black English.¹¹ Rules, as we have seen, are an essential feature of language, and if it were possible to show that Black English *had* grammatical regulations – not necessarily, of course, exactly the same ones as other dialects – then charges of inaccuracy and sloppiness would become groundless, and it could not be dismissed as some 'approximation' to 'proper' English.

Here, as an example, is one of the rules Labov described for Black English, a practice called 'copula deletion'. In sentences like:

She the first one started us off.
I know, but he wild, though.
We on tape.

the *is* or *are* is not present. Does this mean that the Black speakers who produced them are unaware of this verb form? Consider, next, these statements:

I was small.
She was likin' me.

Here the past tense of the verb *to be* appears. How is it that the verb appears here but not in the former sentences? Labov's studies reveal a regularity governing this linguistic behaviour: in contexts in which Standard English can *contract* (e.g., *They are going* can become *They're going*), Black English can *delete* (e.g., *They are going* can become *They going*). We have, therefore, a rule – different from the one obtaining in the standard but no less logical.

The regularity is further evidenced by the fact that where Standard English *cannot* contract, Black English *cannot* delete. Thus, a sentence like *He's as nice as he say he's* is, according to the rules of the standard variety, incorrect; contraction is not permissible in the final position. Labov notes

that it is, likewise, incorrect to say in Black English, *He's as nice as he says he*.

The import of this sort of work is clear: there are no *substandard* language varieties. There are, in many languages, standard dialects and so it follows, logically, that all others are non-standard; but, this term is not a pejorative one in any technical linguistic sense. A standard dialect is, roughly, that spoken by educated people and is the form usually found in writing. Its power and place derive from history and convenience, and from the social standing of its speakers. If York instead of London had been the centre for the royal court, then BBC newsreaders would sound different and school teachers would be promoting another form of 'correct' English in England.

It has also been suggested that, although dialects may not be judged *linguistically* as better or worse than one another, perhaps they differ in *aesthetic* quality. In 1932, Standard English was defended as 'one of the most subtle and most beautiful of all expressions of the human spirit'¹² and, two years later, Henry Wyld (1870–1945), a linguist at the University of Liverpool, wrote:

If it were possible to compare systematically every vowel sound in RS [Received Standard English – i.e., what we now more usually call RP, Received Pronunciation] with the corresponding sound in a number of provincial and other dialects, assuming that the comparison could be made, as is only fair, between speakers who possessed equal qualities of voice, and the knowledge how to use it, I believe no unbiased listener would hesitate in preferring RS as the most pleasing and sonorous form, and the best suited to be the medium of poetry and oratory.¹³

I need hardly say that such sentiments are not restricted to those speaking in and for English. The question is, can we put to the test the belief that dialect A is more 'pleasing' than dialect B?

Recent studies have, in fact, compared an 'inherent value' hypothesis with an 'imposed norm' one; the former suggests, as Wyld did, that aesthetic qualities are intrinsic, while the latter holds that they are attached or imposed by the listener who, in hearing a standard (say), considers it mellifluous because of the status of its speakers.¹⁴ In one investigation, Welsh adults listened to European French, educated Canadian French and working-class Canadian French voice samples. Asked to rate the pleasantness and prestige of the voices on nine-point scales, the judges, who were almost entirely ignorant of French, did not single out any one of the varieties. In Quebec, however, earlier studies had shown a clear preference among French speakers for European French accents in aesthetic terms. In another experiment, British undergraduates who knew no Greek evaluated the aesthetic quality of two Greek dialects, the Athenian and the Cretan. The former is the prestige standard form, while the latter is a non-standard

variant of low status. As in the first investigation, no significant differences between the two dialects were found. In fact the small, non-significant differences which did occur revealed a tendency for the British judges to rate the Cretan variety as *more* pleasant and prestigious than the Athenian.

The important element in these demonstrations is that the judges were unaware of the social connotations possessed by the different varieties in their own speech communities. The implication is that, if one removes (experimentally) the social stereotypes usually associated with given varieties, aesthetic judgements will not be made which favour the high-status standards. Anyone who watches a film or a play in which accents and dialects figure, in which (for example) a woman dressed as a duchess speaks with a Cockney accent, will appreciate the effects achieved. Equally, we can see that someone in the audience who had an understanding of English, but not of the subtle intralinguistic variations and conventions, would miss a great deal. The norms are 'imposed' by those in the know, the stereotypes which link beauty, or harshness, or comedy to a set of sounds are unavailable to others.¹⁵ None of this, of course, rules out purely individual preferences; I may think Italian sounds the most attractive, you may believe that Gaelic is unrivalled, but we can both agree to differ on a matter of subjectivity.

There is one final, and rather neat, example I wish to provide here. In England, speakers of RP do not pronounce the postvocalic *r* – as in the words *cart* and *mar*. Thus, the absence of this feature is associated with high accent prestige. In New York, on the other hand, exactly the reverse holds. The higher the social status of the speaker, the more likely he or she is to use postvocalic *r*. The figures in table 4.1 represent percentages of possible postvocalic *r* pronunciations *actually* used by speakers surveyed in New York and Reading. We see that what is high class in New York is low class in Berkshire, and vice versa.

It seems clear, in summary, that having dismissed arguments for dialect superiority of either a linguistic or an aesthetic nature, we should agree that evaluations are *not* based upon intrinsic qualities but rest, rather, upon social conventions and preferences. These, in turn, are most obviously related to the prestige and power possessed by speakers of certain

Table 4.1 Percentage of postvocalic *r* pronunciation in New York and Reading¹⁶

	New York	Reading
Upper-middle-class speakers	32	0
Lower-middle-class speakers	20	28
Upper-working-class speakers	12	44
Lower-working-class speakers	10	49

'standard' varieties. Although I have largely restricted myself to discussions of English here, a general moral seems to be this: when social stratification is associated with linguistic variation, arguments will be made for the grammatical, lexical or phonological superiority of the variety used by those in power.

There are two exceptions to this rule, and they occur at opposite ends of the status continuum. Extremely high-status varieties may seem affected and generally 'over the top'. Opposite to this is the 'covert prestige' possessed by working-class speech, with its positive associations of masculinity.¹⁷ Research in Britain, for example, has found that both working-class and middle-class males *claimed* to use non-standard forms even when they did not customarily do so. The actual use of such forms, by generally standard-speaking individuals, is most likely when the speaker wants to appear forceful, direct and unambiguous. A friend of mine, a middle-aged, upper-middle-class American university professor (male), was being pressed by colleagues (also male) on an academic matter. He ended an inconclusive discussion by smiling broadly and saying, 'Ain't no way I can do it!' All-male social gatherings, as at least half the readers will know, are often likely to produce such examples. Overall, though some forms of upper-crust braying may be very unpleasant to most ears, and though lower-class non-standard speech may have an attractive, rough-and-ready quality, the general moral remains potent and applicable across a wide range of social settings.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

If we reject linguistic and aesthetic arguments for dialect superiority we have, in a sense, only cleared away some annoying underbrush. It is very useful to know that the basis for language evaluation rests upon social convention, but we should also enquire further about the more detailed manner in which language varieties are assessed and scaled. We come then, to language attitudes.

The concept of attitude, a cornerstone of traditional social psychology, is not one about which there has been universal agreement. At a general level, however, attitude is a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects. This disposition is often taken to comprise three components: feelings (affective element), thoughts (cognitive element) and, following upon these, predispositions to act in a certain way (behavioural element). That is, one knows or believes something, has some emotional reaction to it and, therefore, may be assumed to act on this basis. Two points may be made here. The first is that there often exists inconsistency between assessed attitudes and actions presumably related to them. In a 'classic' study of attitude-behaviour inconsistency, a Chinese couple (accompanied by the experimenter) toured the United States in the early 1930s.¹⁸ Visiting

some 250 hotels and restaurants, they were refused service only once. When the investigator later wrote to the places visited, he found that more than 90 per cent said they would not serve Chinese. Although not without some methodological problems, this study demonstrates that what people think and feel may not always be reflected in what they do. There are, of course, a great many reasons why this should be so, ranging from immediate self-interest, to the desire to avoid embarrassment, to a difference between views of an abstraction (members of a given ethnic group, for example) and of concrete instances.

The second point is that there is sometimes confusion between belief and attitude; this is particularly so in the domain of language attitudes, and often shows up clearly on questionnaires and interviews designed to tap them. *Attitude* includes *belief* as one of its components (as just noted). Thus, a mother's response to the query, 'Is a knowledge of French important for your children, yes or no?' indicates a belief. To gauge *attitude* one would require further probing into the respondent's *feeling* about her expressed belief: for example, she might believe that French is important for her children's career success; yet, she may loathe the language. Thus, many 'attitude' questionnaires are, in fact, 'belief' questionnaires.

In his 1934 monograph (see above), Wyld hinted at a problem in comparing language varieties. If I wish to find out which of two dialects is the more pleasant, and if I therefore record a speaker of each and have the voices judged by listeners, how do I know if any differential ratings are due to features of the dialects themselves? Might they not be, at least in part, reactions to quite individual qualities of voice – tone, pitch, rhythm, pace, and so on? A way around this difficulty was devised in the 1960s by Wallace Lambert and his colleagues in Montreal. In their 'matched-guise' method, judges evaluate a tape-recorded speaker's personality after hearing him or her read the same passage in each of two or more languages, dialects or accents.¹⁹ The fact that the speaker is, for all 'guises', the same person is not revealed to the judges (who typically do not guess this). Judges' ratings, along various dimensions, are then considered to be reflections of their stereotyped reactions to the language variety concerned, since potentially confounding individual variables are of course constant across voices.

The matched-guise technique has been criticized, most importantly for its alleged artificiality. That is, judges hear a series of disembodied voices all speaking the same words and are asked to rate the speakers on various personality scales. Do the judges, who generally comply with requests to assess speakers in this way, nevertheless feel that it is a pointless task? How would the judgements stand up in the light of more information about the speakers? The matched-guise technique *does* appear useful, however. Employed in many different contexts, it seems to provide a modest addition to, rather than a distortion of, our understanding of speaker evaluation through speech.

Finally, it is worth recalling exactly what the matched-guise methodology aims to elicit; it is not the speech *per se* which is being evaluated, but rather the speaker. The speech sample serves as a convenient identifier, facilitating the evoking of those stereotypes which, in turn, lead to language evaluation. A study by Lambert and his associates considered reactions towards French and English guises in Montreal. English-speaking judges generally reacted more favourably to English than to French guises; more interestingly, French-speaking evaluators *also* rated English guises more favourably. Thus the findings demonstrated not only favourable reactions from members of the high-status group towards their own speech but also that these reactions had been adopted by members of the lower-status group. This 'minority-group reaction' is a revealing comment on the power and breadth of social stereotypes in general, and on the way in which these may be assumed by those who are themselves the object of unfavourable evaluation.

Although the number of personality dimensions judged by listeners has varied across studies, some consistency has also been found, in the form of broad groupings of individual rating-scale assessments. Thus, some dimensions (e.g., intelligence, industriousness) are seen to reflect a speaker's *competence*, some (e.g., helpfulness, trustworthiness) reflect *personal integrity* and some (e.g., friendliness, sense of humour) underlie *social attractiveness*. The interesting thing about these broader evaluations is that speakers of high-status varieties do not fare equally well on all of them. In fact, although standard accents and dialects connote greater prestige and competence, some non-standard regional accents may evoke a greater sense of integrity or social attractiveness. Perhaps the speech patterns of non-standard speakers are seen as quaint or down-to-earth, but we have already noted the 'covert prestige' phenomenon as well. Besides, it does not take much effort to appreciate that those whose speech suggests competence, intelligence and status may not necessarily be those we can most readily identify with, trust and get on with. However, since personal competence is a factor of some importance, one might consider that the non-standard speaker, with a regional or class speech style, comes out somewhat the worse in the exchange – particularly in vital areas of life like school and employment. This matter becomes even more interesting when we recall the 'minority-group reaction' noted above, when we realize the general tendency for non-standard dialect speakers to accept the often negative stereotypes of their own variants.

Some years ago, BBC Television broadcast a series of six half-hour programmes entitled *Word of Mouth*.²⁰ The series considered a number of British accents and dialects (those of Glasgow, Edinburgh, London and Liverpool among them) with their historical and social associations. In the course of this, many individual speakers were presented; some of their comments were directly relevant to the issue of perceived prestige. For

example, two Cockney families, resettled in a suburban area of Essex, provided personal views of their speech style. They noted that many regarded it as 'common' and that it sounded 'funny' to those who speak 'properly'. Reference was also made to a perceived link between language and occupational chances. One speaker remarked of another, 'You won't end up on the Board of Directors with a voice like that.' Overall, it was quite apparent that not only were these speakers aware of the *general* stereotypes associated with Cockney English, but also that they had personal and direct experience of such views. Again, this is only a formal example of something well understood.

Accents and dialects are not assessed in a unidimensional way. At the top of the heap, as it were, comes the standard, followed by others – rural non-standard forms usually fare better than those associated with the urban poor. But this pyramid changes if, instead of considering status and competence, we enquire about the warmth or the integrity of the speaker. As with the 'general moral' noted above, this pattern holds good in many language settings.

One further complicating factor is that among those languages having a standard form – not all do – there may be more than one standard. Common, for example, are regional standards, and perhaps a good example of this is found in the United States where an educated Texan variety of English and an old Bostonian one may each be the vernacular of educated standard-bearers and, at the same time, be viewed as non-standard from another perspective. One would expect that evaluative studies in such cases would be strongly affected by the region *within* the overall speech community.

This situation also seems to apply in Canada, where a student and I recently conducted a study in which English speakers from four places – mainland Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Island, Newfoundland and Massachusetts – were evaluated by listeners on the three dimensions of competence, integrity and attractiveness (this was not a matched-guise study, incidentally, since different speakers provided the speech samples).²¹ The mainland variety was associated with the greatest competence, but no important differences were detected in evaluations made of the four varieties on the other two personality dimensions. This suggests that the mainland Nova Scotia speakers were seen to possess a *regional* standard status, inasmuch as they evoked the prestige and competence associated with standard dialects *and* – because of their local character – did not lose ground to the others on the two dimensions typically related to non-standardness.

By way of summary here, an 'organizational framework'²² has recently been suggested in which there are two broad determinants of language perceptions: *standardization* and *vitality*. A standard (as already noted) is one whose norms have been codified and is associated with dominant social groups. Vitality (see below) refers to the number and importance of

functions served, and is clearly bolstered by the status which standards possess; it can also be a feature, however, of non-standard varieties, given sufficient numbers of speakers and community support. There are also two main evaluative dimensions: *social status* and *solidarity*, the latter including the integrity and attractiveness continua already discussed here. Finally, the authors suggest three major measurement techniques: *content analysis* and *direct* and *indirect assessment*. The first of these is seen to include historical and sociological observation, as well as ethnographic studies. Direct assessment usually involves questionnaire or interview methods, while the 'matched-guise' approach is the best example of indirect measurement of language attitudes.

A similar attempt has been made to regulate the sorts of scales used in speaker assessment. The three-dimensional model first outlined by Lambert seems quite robust, however. A 'speech dialect attitudinal scale' developed in the 1970s has also revealed three dimensions underlying specific evaluation scales; they are called *socio-intellectual status*, *aesthetic quality* and *dynamism*. The first two cover the items previously accounted for under competence and attractiveness/integrity (taken together) while the third apparently taps some action-loudness-forcefulness qualities. In the 1980s another measure, the 'speech evaluation instrument' *also* found three broad dimensions, *superiority*, *attractiveness* and *dynamism*.²³ The differences among these approaches are partly due to the variations possible (and acceptable) in the mathematical exercises which 'reduce' a large number of personality-evaluation scales to a smaller set of more basic dimensions. However, it will also be apparent that, in exercises of this sort, what you get out depends very much on what you start with. If 'dynamism', for example, did not achieve prominence in the early studies, it was because scales relevant to it were not presented to listeners. Still, technicalities and 'input' problems aside, we can see that, over three decades, researchers have continued to find important language judgements made of speakers' competence, prestige and status, on the one hand, and of their warmth, integrity and attractiveness, on the other.

We have now seen something of the detailed way in which social stereotypes and views of social stratification affect reactions to language varieties. Readers will not need to be told that the attitudes here can be of considerable importance, whatever their provenance and however illogical they may be, in our dealings with individuals and groups. More illumination could be provided if further work attended to the attitude-belief distinction I alluded to earlier. Consider, for example, a case in which speaker A sounds more intelligent to judges than does speaker B. Might it not be valuable to probe further, to attempt to find out something of the reasons for the choice, to try and add the affective element to the belief component already assessed? Research along these lines would not be wholly original; it could profitably draw upon earlier work: for example, the view that non-

standard varieties evoke less favourable reaction has typically been discussed in terms of speakers' differential status or prestige. It would be useful to confirm this, from the *judges'* point of view, by asking them the bases for their evaluations. This is especially interesting given that non-standard varieties do elicit positive ratings along some dimensions, and that more standard varieties sometimes are viewed positively in terms of solidarity and attractiveness. Also of interest here is the phenomenon of covert prestige. It is surely sensible to gather as much information as we can from the actual judges in language studies, as well as imposing theoretical interpretations upon their responses.

MURDER AND SUICIDE

It is one thing – and an important thing – to be able to rule out of court arguments that some language varieties are intrinsically better or more aesthetically appealing than others; it would be quite another to think that in the field, as it were, there are not bigger and smaller, more attractive and less attractive varieties. As one linguist observed: 'Only before God and the linguist are all languages equal.'²⁴ There are too few deities and linguists – and the two should never be confused – around these days, and consequently languages continue to be under the same pressures with which they have always had to cope. The solidarity function already discussed is, of course, a strong support for languages at risk. *All* varieties, even those associated with low speaker competence and status, have this function, and convey culture and tradition. Added to this are the perils associated with attempting to shift; years ago a French-Canadian moving to English could be labelled a *vendue*, and his or her Spanish-American counterpart a *vendido* – both terms meaning a 'sell-out', a defector to the other side. For members of groups who are visibly distinguishable from the 'other side', a shift may also be virtually useless if the intent is to acquire the status of the 'others', and for *all* the danger of 'marginalization', of falling between stools, of quitting one group yet not seamlessly fitting into the other, is a constant unwelcome possibility.

None the less people do shift, do move completely from one variety to another (i.e., without retaining the first in some bidialectal or bilingual accommodation). Many members of groups whose speakers are under pressure to shift are naturally dismayed at the process, having the understandable feeling that a large and unpleasant language is undermining their small and attractive one. They perceive, in other words, a sort of linguistic Gresham's Law at work.²⁵ Where the sixteenth-century London merchant – whose 'law' was only popularized three centuries later – had argued that the concurrent circulation of two forms of exchange would lead to the disappearance of the more valuable (because, given equal nominal value, payments will naturally be made in the medium which is

cheaper to produce), so the 'cheap', all-pervasive language will drive out its intrinsically superior but harder-to-maintain competitor. Thus does English threaten Irish, French loom over Breton, Spanish worry Galician, and so on. A linguistic equivalent to Gresham's economic law was provided by the Irish dialectologist O'Rahilly, who observed in 1932 that 'when a language surrenders itself to modern idiom, and when all its speakers become bilingual, the penalty is death'.²⁶ Well, we have seen that bilingualism *can* be a stable phenomenon, but we also have more than enough evidence of the transitional variety to be able to agree with O'Rahilly.

Yet another metaphor has been applied to languages in conflict (and it builds naturally upon the 'organic' one noted in the introductory chapter), and it is a criminal one. Languages may die: are they murdered, or do they commit suicide? Writers have discussed linguistic demise in these very emotional terms and, as one would expect, varying conclusions have been reached. Many have felt, for example, that languages do not die 'natural deaths' but are killed by those wishing to destroy the nation. Thus, Irish was murdered by English. Others have held, if not the suicide view, a perspective somewhat more complex than the linguistic murder approach. Thus, a 'persecution' theory²⁷ was seen by some as unable to explain the dramatic decline of Irish, and although the presence of English was clearly central, it was felt 'impossible to stamp out a language which the people are determined to keep alive'.²⁸ Others still expanded on this and held the Irish responsible for a linguistic suicide (as did Flann O'Brien, noted in chapter 1). The whole issue of 'murder or suicide' is muddled, of course, by ideological leanings. Those supporting the encouragement, restoration or revival of a threatened language are likely to hold the murder view; this can have the effect of simplifying things into an 'us-and-them' format in which oppressors and oppressed are easily separable and in which, furthermore, the presence of a 'victim' makes quite clear which side has the moral advantage.

The factors in the decline of languages are many and varied, and I shall be turning to them in some detail below. 'No single cause'²⁹ explains language loss; a 'chain of events'³⁰ is involved. One linguist has recently suggested that *both* murder *and* suicide occur – murder when dissimilar languages are in contact and where a high-prestige variety extends across domains, and suicide when *similar* languages come into contact but where, again, one possesses higher status; the suicide here involves the ever-increasing borrowing from the prestigious form.³¹ However, it seems that both forms of decline ultimately involve suicide in the sense that, at some point, a new variety is adopted. This is the view of another linguist who notes that the *direct* cause of language death is lack of transmission to children. This occurs because a community 'sometimes "decides", for reasons of functional economy, to suppress a part of itself'.³²

It is possible, however, that a community does not see the process as

one of self-suppression, but rather of simple alteration. 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 language shift and decline; there is always a 'murderer'. But, just as a person may cause another's suicide without being a murderer 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.

LANGUAGE SPREAD AND LANGUAGE DECLINE

For languages to come into conflict, they must first come into contact, and this involves either an existing contiguity or the spreading of one or both varieties. We have already seen something of the ways in which multilingualism comes about, but we should consider in a little more detail some of the mechanisms at work in language spread.³³

Ronald Wardhaugh has recently outlined a dozen or so reasons and most are interrelated within a nexus of power although, particularly in earlier times, simple geographical opportunity was also important. Even so, geographical limitations will be conquered if the power base is sufficient, and oceans and mountains have never, in themselves, stopped expansionist policies if the will and the attraction were strong enough. If the Romans built Hadrian's wall, and if they only eyed Ireland from Anglesey, we should not conclude that they could not have crossed the frontiers. Language spread was always closely allied to trade, to imperialist military ventures and to hopes for religious conversion and proselytism. Some cultures have had more explicit policies here than have others – compare, for instance, the *mission civilisatrice* of the French with the more pragmatic attitude of the English – but all imperial powers have, directly or indirectly, made their languages attractive and sometimes necessary to conquered or colonized groups. Because of power, and because of opportunities available to those who learn their languages, expansionist regimes often become associated, over time, with a cultural prestige which co-exists with the simple trappings of dominance and which often long outlives them. This is a factor in the continued adherence to European languages which exists in former colonial areas (though it is not the only factor nor, perhaps, the most central one).

Beyond these obvious matters, one or two other points should be made. First, and already implied, is the fact that the reasons for language spread

in the first instance need not be those which maintain and further it. English, for example, spread initially through trade and military action. This was reinforced by political unification of an imperialist nature. But, once Britain's dominance declined, the language which it had established overseas – notably in North America – took on new and greater global significance, again animated largely by commerce and technological exigencies. Second, the degree to which a language community is open to the use of 'its' variety by others is often important. Consider, again, the differences between the English and the French. The latter have traditionally been much more possessive of their language and, while working hard to bring it to those unfortunate enough not to already speak it, have also been zealous in protecting its 'purity', even among themselves. *Québécois* speakers are often looked down on in France, but they should not feel uniquely affronted; almost any French speaker outside Paris is liable to feel patronized when visiting the capital. English, on the other hand, has not been treated in the same guarded way. We see books on the 'New Englishes'³⁴ and there is a journal entitled *World Englishes* – but there are no such volumes for French. English is becoming truly international in a way that French is not, at least in terms of accepted local varieties, and a language once tainted by imperialism is rapidly becoming 'ours' in many parts of the world. A power base once firmly centred in one small island has shifted to North America, and the antipodes, and on from there. India provides perhaps the best example of a developing and accepted indigenized model of the language.

A third and related point in the linguistic expansion of competing varieties is the position taken by 'third parties'. Again, English and French provide good examples. As the former became more and more international (through trade and empire), it found that French, as the established language of diplomacy, was still endorsed by others for important conferences, negotiations and treaties. Particularly after the Second World War, however, the shifting sands of global policies and alliances tended to favour English, and it now became increasingly favoured by others. Today, not only is English the dominant diplomatic vehicle, it also holds sway in the worlds of science and technology, finance, popular culture and so on. It has consolidated an across-the-board superiority which no language has ever achieved before.³⁵

Finally, we should remember that the spread of one language is at the expense of the other (saving bilingual accommodation). Given that *all* languages are potentially capable of filling all roles, it is easy to see that those whose languages are eclipsed or threatened by others often feel understandably aggrieved. Their language, after all, has not been pushed aside because of any inherent defects, there is no fatal linguistic flaw here which might have to be grudgingly acknowledged. Rather, the power of a competing variety derives from the strength of its community and it is this

which ultimately must give the most pain, especially to those who were once dominant themselves. On the other hand, the lack of intrinsic flaw and the changeability of global power structures might give a glimmer of hope. Few people could have predicted the present scope of English in 1500, when it had only 4 or 5 million speakers (well behind German, Spanish, French and Italian), and perhaps, in another half-millennium, some currently unlikely contender will predominate. It is the case, however, that so far we have not seen the re-emergence of a 'world' language once eclipsed.

One language gains, another loses; we move from spread to decline.³⁶ In many ways, of course, we find ourselves looking at opposite sides of the same coin, and a simple reversal will often give a factor relevant to language *maintenance*; still, the progression adopted here is dominance and spread, to decline, to revival. The first and most important point to be made (or, rather, remade) is that the fortunes of a language cannot usefully be considered in isolation from those of its speakers. To put it another way, language phenomena are social phenomena and all are intricately interwoven. I begin the discussion here with an examination of Gaelic in Nova Scotia.³⁷

Scottish emigration to Nova Scotia began in the 1770s and continued until the 1850s; it was first on a voluntary basis – if any emigration is completely voluntary – and later was a result of the Scottish Highland clearances. At the end of the nineteenth century more than 80,000 spoke Gaelic in the province, this representing the largest overseas concentration of any Celtic language. It is estimated that in *this* century Gaelic decreased by about 50 per cent every ten years and the number of people who now understand it is probably less than 1,000, of whom fewer than 100 are fluent speakers. This dramatic decline has not meant, however, the decline of 'Scottishness' *per se*, although some would see most current manifestations as commercially driven; the fact that a provincial ministry calls itself the Department of Tourism and Culture is telling. None the less, there is a strong sense of being Scottish-Canadian and a much greater sense of identity based on past and place than exists in most Canadian regions. For most people, this is now completely unrelated to the original language and, while there is a fund of passive goodwill towards Gaelic, there are few who are actively committed to it. Even the main Gaelic society, on Cape Breton Island, holds its meetings in English and, with some lingering sadness perhaps, most are reduced to praising Gaelic in the language of the *Sasannach*.

As noted above, a language is in decline if it is no longer passed on to children; it comes to be the preserve of middle-aged or elderly people who no longer see any point in transmitting it. While a minority often do still try to have the language taught – either informally or at school – a common complaint is the lack of interest among the younger generation. In fieldwork carried out in the mid-1970s only a handful of very elderly Gaelic

monolinguals were found and only a few instances of active language transmission to children. Within a few years *no* monolinguals survived and among a group of Gaelic speakers surveyed the average age was 69, among Gaelic society members it was 61 and among a small group of learners of the language the average age was 57. It is of further interest that, when asked why they were studying Gaelic, no one in this last group actually mentioned speaking the language. Although classes in Gaelic are regularly held in several places in Nova Scotia and although there exist 'immersion weekends' and Gaelic playgroups, an experimental programme of Gaelic at school was recently concluded.

It is important to note that although external pressures bear heavily upon parents' decisions not to have their children learn a language, there is also a good deal of acquiescence in a shift which is – rightly or wrongly – thought to be a stepping-stone to mobility and advancement. This voluntary component takes on greater force when we realize that on other, non-linguistic matters the same population which abets language shift can resist strongly. In Scotland itself, for example, crofters were quite capable of challenging the establishment on land matters. It would be wrong, furthermore, to imagine that those taking a more docile position on language shift were without affection for their maternal variety; on the contrary, the evidence from many settings shows that a painful struggle exists between what is considered to be progressive and what is viewed as a cherished but increasingly burdensome linguistic inheritance.

Languages in decline are often confined to rural areas, and associations are made between the language and an unwanted past (and present). One observer of Nova Scotia Gaelic said that the language was one of 'toil, hardship and scarcity'³⁸ while English was the medium of 'refinement and culture'; another observed that, from the earliest emigrations, the settlers 'carried with them the idea that education was coincident with a knowledge of English'.³⁹ These sentiments were almost exactly echoed by a writer on Irish, who said that in *its* rural fastness, it became a language of 'penury, drudgery and backwardness'.⁴⁰ It becomes very difficult for a language to shake off these associations when the very rurality which gives rise to them also provides the firmest, perhaps only, foothold. It is, indeed, the case that the isolation which – sometimes for a very long time – protected and sustained a 'small' language takes on an albatross-like quality once avenues to a larger world emerge. In the same way the richness and immediacy of an oral language become an embarrassment in the face of literate forms. The language preserved in the country is forgotten in the town; and this process, which first can work within the language area itself only accelerates when even more distant attractions become available. Secondary emigration from Nova Scotia to other parts of Canada and, more importantly, to the 'Boston States' at once weakened the language and became more and more irresistible as local prospects diminished. We see, again, painful dilemmas.

The lack of concentration of speakers in heartland towns and cities is common, for while they could obviously provide a modernized and commercial base they are unlikely to do so because modernization and commercialism are part of the very threat. It is true that strong maintenance and revival movements are usually urban phenomena but their supporters, precisely because of their residence, are often atypical of the unselfconscious speakers they have in some sense left behind. The interest in Scots Gaelic in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the networks for Irish in Dublin cannot be denied but, equally, they should not be overvalued as permanent contributors to a language maintenance which, if successful, emanates from within the core community. So, while we can applaud the urban efforts of those who are recapturing a linguistic heritage that has dimmed, we should also remember that the voluntary and conscious efforts of 'secondary bilinguals' are not of quite the same vitality as the more 'natural' ones of native speakers continuing to talk their mother tongue, in all domains, to their children. How much more significant it would be, then, if Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, were a Gaelic-speaking town.

There is, unfortunately for language maintenance, a rather dreary sameness in the attempt to promote a variety in an urban context, by committed individuals, and then to somehow expect this to prop up an original heartland which continues to decline. Indeed, not only is there a self-consciousness in these efforts which, while in no way reprehensible, have an artificial and temporary air, but also there is often a large element of romanticism and hazy nostalgia which is founded on urban affluence and which works best when the 'real' community is somewhere else. In the heyday of the Irish revival movement, for example, most of the leaders were Dublin-born upper-middle-class intellectuals, for whom Irish was an acquired competence rather than a maternal one, and for whom the idealized *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking area) was conveniently removed on the other side of the country. A place to praise and to visit, to be sure, but not a place to live in. Gellner has observed that 'genuine peasants or tribesmen ... do not generally make good nationalists'⁴¹ and, were it not so tragic for the language, one could discern some comedy here: committed and well-meaning outsiders propping up, in their mind's eyes at least, a bucolic homeland which continues to shrink, whose inhabitants, real bearers of the linguistic torch, are forced by both circumstance and their own volition to shift, linguistically and otherwise.

It may reasonably be asked if this situation can be arrested, if linguistic support can be provided in the very place where the dwindling community still exists. The short answer is that, in the absence of dictatorial methods, the pressures which threaten the language and which rest upon historical and social evolution – not necessarily planned, especially with regard to language *per se* – are very powerful. More importantly, perhaps, they are pressures which have always existed, for all groups, and the changes they

lead to, while certainly causing distress and upheaval, are not easily dismissed by most populations. We are talking, in a word, of social dynamics which swirl around language as they do all other things, and which are ultimately resisted only by those willing to tolerate self-segregation. A practical example of the difficulties here is the desire of the government to assist in the economic life of the *Gaeltacht*. It was quite clear that, if nothing were done, this Irish heartland would continue to decline for it was both rural and poor. Drawing up official *Gaeltacht* boundaries and providing extra assistance to firms and individuals within them has not, however, stemmed the loss of Irish. More than half the families, for example, now bring up their children in English. The 'paradox of the *Gaeltacht*' (and similar enclaves elsewhere) is this: a vital homeland, if left to normal social and economic forces, will shrink, being constantly encroached upon by external influence; if, on the other hand, things *are* done, then the enclave becomes artificial and those within it can take on the appearance of fish in a bowl. Also, it was found in the Irish case, that those just *outside* the *Gaeltacht* borders but equally impoverished were resentful of the special attention their Irish-speaking neighbours received. Successes in the government efforts also tended to attract outside interest, investment and even immigration and these in turn served to dilute the language base.

This, in fact, makes another interesting point. When there is strength in the heartland, or part of it, the language may suffer through in-migration of others rather than through the more traditional haemorrhage of out-migration. We see that industrialization in Brittany, for example, has attracted French speakers from the rest of the country, as well as foreign workers – Portuguese, Algerian and others – who will almost certainly learn French and not Breton. In Wales, too, anglicization followed the industrial revolution in the coalfields (though initially they actually attracted a concentration of Welsh speakers). In the Basque country, Bilbao attracts diluting elements, as does Barcelona in Catalonia. And so on, in many other contexts.

The brutal fact here seems to be that, once the numbers and concentration of speakers have fallen below a certain threshold, attempts to stem the decline of the language are extremely difficult. No one knows, of course, what this magic threshold is, but it is obviously very variable, and to a certain extent at least only has meaning within given geographical and political space. Six hundred thousand speakers of Breton no doubt feel more immediately threatened than do the 250,000 speakers of Icelandic. It would be a mistake, though, to imagine that simply creating a state to coincide with a perceived nationality would solve all the difficulties. Irish, for example, is the only Celtic language to have its own country and yet – if we consider Manx and Cornish to be effectively dead or at least moribund – it is in the weakest position of all. Other sovereign states, too, have begun to see that linguistic pressures cannot be legislated away easily, and do not

vanish at the customs post. This is a process which can be expected to accelerate as the world gets smaller and English gets bigger. It is already responsible for a new galvanism in efforts to bolster smaller languages and, especially, smaller languages without a state, or state protection. In essence, though, it is simply a dramatic enlargement of age-old pressures; the avenues connecting languages have changed in form but not in influence, and what was once urban and secure has become a new type of rurality in the overall geolinguistic milieu.

It follows from points already made that some bilingual accommodation might now be the best hope of small languages. Indeed, this is recognized in many countries and by many minority groups within them. However, we have already seen that permanent bilingualism, or diglossia, depends upon a continuance of domains for each variety; this condition is less sustained, when languages come into contact, than it is eroded. One variety increasingly overtakes another across the social spectrum. I have already quoted O'Rahilly to the effect that bilingualism is often an ominous marker of things to come, and his own Irish case, that of Gaelic in Nova Scotia, and many others around the world, support the observation.

Many years ago, beginning to work on a French-English bilingual programme in Vermont, just south of the border with Quebec, I was told that elderly French-speaking people had recently started to make their religious confessions in English. At the time I did not fully understand how important this was. Here was a community which – unlike most other immigrant groups in America – had easy access to its homeland. Nevertheless, it had largely become bilingual (and many of its children knew no French at all, making their bilingual education rather poignant), and had in most outward respects embraced an American way of life. Under these circumstances one expects that private language behaviour will be a hardier survivor than more visible linguistic distinctiveness – it can be maintained, after all, with little 'cost' and does not attract the attention of others, which experience suggests is not always pleasant or beneficial. Yet here were these older men and women deciding, themselves, to engage no longer in one of the most private and important activities in their mother tongue. It was a telling indication of how far the influence of English and its associations had spread.

Once a language has surrendered, or has been forced to cede, domains of use, they are difficult to recapture. We can of course *create* settings, and we can rather self-consciously reintroduce the threatened variety but there are domains and domains. The central ones are the *domains of necessity*, which are least susceptible to the interventions of language activists. One is tempted to frame an iron law in these matters: people will not indefinitely maintain two languages when one will serve across all domains. Echoing O'Rahilly, a more contemporary linguist stated that 'to choose bilingualism is to choose the road ... to decay and extinction'. Diglossic possibilities

aside, this harsh view is often correct, but I would point out, in light of all the pressures involved, that *choosing* bilingualism is often little more than Hobson's choice. This may suggest a regularity, almost a naturalness – particularly if we take the long historical view – but it also trips too easily over a transition which is painful. We may have no choice, in practical terms, but this does not necessarily mean a happy acceptance of the course embarked upon.

As implied above, *active* desire to prevent or arrest decline is usually found only in a small number of people, and they are generally not the ordinary souls whose language is at risk. There are obvious reasons for this, most of them having to do with pressing economic and pragmatic issues affecting ordinary daily life. Thus it often proves difficult or impossible to translate what may be a rather inert goodwill into something more dynamic. Revival efforts (see below) are typically characterized by a small group of activists nervously glancing over their shoulders to see how much of the population they claim to represent is following them, and how closely behind them it is. There are also less obvious reasons for the difficulties involved in arresting decline. One is that the leaders of the struggle may not, despite various protestations to the contrary, actually make much real effort to engage a broader sympathy; another is, of course, that these leaders – as we have seen in the Irish case – are usually atypical of those for whom they presume to speak. If the pure linguistic heartland is to be maintained at an almost mythological level of purity and authenticity, then it helps if one does not actually go there very often. The homeland of the 'true Gaels', the noble savages uncontaminated by modernity, was in reality a depressed area – of considerable natural beauty, certainly, as homelands always are – from which many were driven to escape. In the eternal battle between some ecological manifestation of political correctness and the grubby but life-sustaining processes of development and change, the truism that 'you can't eat the view' is a major stumbling block.

In Nova Scotia the pattern is similar, and even those learning the language show few signs of larger activity on behalf of Gaelic. One writer, discussing Gaelic in Scotland, observed that there exists a 'lightly regretful pragmatism which gives rise to general protestations about the regrettable loss of the language unaccompanied by efforts to halt that loss' and this is also applicable in Canada and other settings. Further, it has been suggested that, because of their unfortunate associations (above), languages in decline often evoke negative attitudes. We might imagine, then, that the 'regretful pragmatism' is found among those who remain sympathetic, while the negativity exists among a broader segment of the population. However, in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere, there exists, in fact, a broad *positive* attitude. Similarly, research in Ireland has shown that symbolic support for the language, regret over the continued decline, pessimism about its future, support for some governmental maintenance efforts, desire to see a place

for Irish at school and a lack of personal interest in restoration activities all co-exist. This package can be interpreted as one of passivity, hypocrisy, lack of leadership or betrayal; it can also be seen as the reflection of an often poorly articulated accommodation of opposing pressures, a rather poignant indicator of conflicting sentiments which the speakers of unthreatened varieties, secure in some linguistic mainstream, may find difficult to appreciate or, worse, may ridicule.

There is no question that activities in support of threatened languages often produce an increase in the number of people knowing the language. This is sometimes temporary, however, and, as already noted, often rather selfconscious. Where the activities have some longer-term success, and where (for example) a place is found for the language in schools, we still must realize that 'secondary' bilinguals are less vital elements for the continued life of the language than are native speakers. The numbers game that is often played to show how an imperilled variety is making headway also often involves confusion between those who *can* speak – and the degree of fluency is clearly important here too – and those who *do*. In the 1971 Irish census about 800,000 reported themselves as Irish speakers. This was 28 per cent of the population, the greatest proportion in a century. In fact, the reported Irish speakers in 1861 formed only 24 per cent of the total. But that quarter were speakers in a sense not applicable to the later quarter. What has happened is a steady decline in native Irish speakers and, with school Irish compulsory since 1922, a great increase in more cursory competence. Outside the *Gaeltacht* today perhaps 2 or 3 per cent use Irish with any regularity; inside it, although this proportion is much higher, the language base also continues to contract. There is simply no equivalent substitute for normal, uninterrupted domestic language transmission. If this can be sustained there is always hope; if it cannot, then all other interventions remain terribly vulnerable.

A 'cultural loyalty' is often more widespread than a narrower 'language loyalty' and this is understandable in the light of what has already been mentioned. It may be seen as another perspective on the tension between old and new, tradition and change in that, while acting to support a declining language may be risky, stigmatizing and unproductive, retaining (or developing) an interest in other cultural manifestations is easier. It has been argued that 'what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember'⁴² – that is, immigrants who 'lose' their culture in the second generation regret this, and wish to recapture it in the third; the notion can be extended to all who seek this sort of 'return'. While there is a great deal of truth to this idea and while it is equally true that people – like the modern-day Scottish-Canadians with their kilts, Highland Games, bagpipes and dance – will try to ensure that the 'return' stabilizes; it is *not* generally true that a desire to learn the ancestral language is central.

Non-linguistic evidences of a continuing groupness are important, in my

view, precisely because they illustrate a mechanism by which tradition and change can be reconciled and by which one's heritage can be openly acknowledged. Of course there are excesses and anomalies – the annual kilted golf tournament in Antigonish, for example – and of course commercialism, government grants and tourism blur the images of continuity. But a continuity is being represented none the less, and it is for those directly involved to draw the lines which separate culture from photo opportunities, and traditional music from money.

A respondent in a recent survey of Gaelic in Nova Scotia said:

The continuance of Scottish culture should not be promoted on Gaelic language. . . . For the Scots many other aspects of their culture are near and dear to their hearts. Emphasis on the Gaelic language will, I feel, bring small returns. Studies in Celtic history . . . are very important . . . music . . . all this is part of the make-up of our culture.⁴³

This is not, of course, any comfort for those wishing to stem language decline, but it is not impossible to imagine that a broader and more accessible cultural base could itself provide a platform from which language activities could be renewed. A small example: the vibrant and growing Gaelic music tradition in Cape Breton has led – admittedly in a small way – to performers and others wanting to understand the words used and, if their interest extends beyond a simple page of translated lyrics, to explorations of the language itself.

What is at work here is a stronger cultural element bolstering a weaker one. A classic example is the association between religion and language. There are two related aspects to this particular linkage. The first is simply that, given a continuingly strong religion, it makes sense to exploit this strength and to suggest that it is uniquely expressible through the threatened language. The second is the belief that the language is inextricably intertwined with the religion anyway and that there is a natural and mutual reinforcement.

The one who is taught the Gaelic acquires knowledge of wisdom and an understanding of truth and honour which will guide his steps along the paths of righteousness, and will stay with him for the rest of his life. The Gaelic is a powerful, spiritual language; and Gaels who are indifferent to it are slighting their forefathers and kinsmen.⁴⁴

This is a general expression of the spirituality inherent in one's most intimate language. Others have been rather more pointed. In the battle with English – and the modernity it represented, which was so disliked by leaders of the movement to support Irish – the secularization and 'sordid soullessness' of that language were frequently stressed. That language was 'the casket which encloses the highest and purest religion that any country could boast of since the time of the twelve apostles';⁴⁵ Irish was 'the

instrument and expression of a purely Catholic culture'.⁴⁶

It should be noted that this sort of position could be seen as a reaction to earlier Protestant efforts at proselytism, often through the medium of Irish. In a sentiment that has echoes in other contexts, Daniel Dewar observed in 1812 that supporting Irish would hasten its decline, since suitably instructed people would obviously come to see the advantages of English; Dewar was, more pointedly, eager to see Irish used as a vehicle to convert the peasantry from the 'errors of popery'.⁴⁷ Christopher Anderson (in 1818) also bluntly stated that:

the great object . . . of teaching the reading of Irish, etc. is not to make those who are to be the subjects of that instruction a learned, or what may be called a reading people . . . but almost exclusively to bring them acquainted with . . . Christianity.⁴⁸

Finally here, consider the words of Henry Mason in 1846:

The primary object [of the Irish Society] was not proselytism from any particular sect; yet, as it was foreseen that the result of the study of divine truth would be the abandonment of human error . . . it was resolved, that this Institution should be brought into close connection with the established [church] of Ireland [i.e., Protestantism] and that none but its members should be eligible to serve on the Committee.⁴⁹

Linking language and religion is no longer done in quite the same way, of course, but the idea of the linkage itself remains strong. A related question worthy of study is that of whether and/or when secularization contributes to language decline.

Language loyalty can become a less-focused cultural loyalty when the status of the language itself changes. The distinction I have in mind here is that between language in its ordinary *communicative* sense and language as a *symbol*. For 'mainstream' speakers of strong languages these two facets co-exist; the language you do your shopping in is also that which carries your culture and history. However, the two aspects are separable, and a symbolic value – as Irish now arguably possesses for most Irish people – can be sustained indefinitely after communicative language shift has occurred. This leads to a situation of reverence without cost and one can see that, 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; the thrust of the discussion indicates how difficult this will be in many circumstances.

The examples I have cited in support of the preceding generalities have been European ones but much, if not all, of the discussion is applicable in a wider context. In an earlier book I reviewed a large number of language situations around the world and, although there were, of course, many

differences, I was struck by recurring themes. Those who claim that the phenomena associated with language maintenance and decline are not well understood are right at a detailed level but, in general terms, these matters are not difficult to account for. We note, for example, a powerful concern for linguistic practicality, communicative efficiency, social mobility and economic advancement. These are the greatest advantages possessed by dominant varieties and the greatest disadvantages of smaller ones. Coupled with nationalistic demands, linguistic practicality often suggests bilingualism but, in many areas, the progress of group aspirations and sociopolitical factors make this an unstable condition, particularly in the long term. Furthermore, although competence in more than one language is required in many settings, this is often restricted to highly specific situations. Formal language planning itself (below) can do little to stem the usually desired processes of urbanization, modernization and mobility – and these are the factors which *have* caused language shift and which will continue to do so. To put it simply: a decline in the existence and attractions of traditional life styles also inexorably entails a decline in languages associated with them.

Relatedly, language decline can become exacerbated when *many* languages (not just two, as in the cases I have cited above) exist within state boundaries. It is common (and sensible), therefore, to adopt a lingua franca – either a strong internal variety or a prestigious external one. The latter is usually one which has historical associations with the area, even though this can also mean a continuing reminder of colonial status. Supra-ethnic or 'neutral' varieties are often chosen to reduce possible ethnic antagonisms and it is sometimes possible for these forms to become indigenized, as it were. Kenyans are attempting to promote a particularly Kenyan Swahili, for example and in other contexts, local Englishes emerge.

Standardization and modernization efforts associated with many 'small' languages, not just with those in imminent danger, are always theoretically possible, but not always practical. When 'small' languages *are* developed to national-language status (Somali, Guaraní, etc.), the process rests upon a complex of historical variables which are not, and have not been, manipulable in any isolated fashion. There is, therefore, obvious scope for language planning here, but only in the sense of adjustments to linguistic phenomena made possible themselves by forces quite outside the boundaries of conscious planning. Furthermore, even where indigenous varieties have achieved a developed status they are still not necessarily equal in all senses to external languages. Standardized Guaraní and Somali are still much less useful, in a broad perspective, than are Spanish or English, particularly given the desired social mobility and modernization which now seem to be global phenomena.

We should recall that, historically and linguistically, change rather than

stasis is the norm. Environments change, people move, and needs and demands alter – and these broad social currents have a great, almost inexorable, influence upon language. In this sense, the term 'language loss', which is often found in discussions of declining linguistic fortunes, is perhaps less accurate than language *change*. People are never, after all, at a point without any language. Language decline is often a *symptom* of social-group contact between populations of unequal political and economic status. That is, decline is an effect of a larger cause, and it follows that attempts to arrest it are very difficult. One does not cure measles by covering up the spots. The logical approach is to unpick the social fabric which has evolved, and which has caused language decline and shift, and then reweave it in a new pattern. This is difficult, given that those concerned with stopping language decline usually want only *some* reworking of social evolution, not wholesale revolution or re-evolution.

Finally here, it has become apparent that, for many ordinary people, pragmatic and economic concerns are – have to be – paramount and that it is *these* social forces, above all, which underpin language decline and bedevil attempts to halt it. Nancy Dorian, well known for her work on the declining fortunes of Scottish Gaelic, has pointed out that 'language loyalty persists as long as the economic and social circumstances are conducive to it, but if some other language proves to have greater value, a shift to that other language begins'.⁵⁰ One can appreciate that the reduction of language shift to essentially economic motives is not a popular position among linguistic nationalists or supporters of minority languages generally. While it may be that 'language allegiance is firmly rooted in the economic order rather than in any independent cultural order',⁵¹ some have protested against 'economic reductionism' and one can easily see that talking about language in the same breath as economics is very distasteful in some quarters.

My view is that economic considerations are of central importance, although there *are* cases in which they seem irrelevant. Consider, for example, groups in which language is indissolubly tied to a central pillar of life – religion being the obvious example. The retention of religious beliefs has been so vital for some groups that they have been willing to undergo privation, suffer persecution and even make the ultimate sacrifice. This is surely 'uneconomical' of them. However, if we substitute 'pragmatic' for 'economic', then the argument still holds, since even these sorts of groups are obeying what, for them, are practical imperatives. Given sufficient strength of religious belief, what could be more practical than to obey *its* tenets when these are in conflict with purely temporary and mundane considerations? Such groups, however, are increasingly rare; and even historically, despite much glorious rhetoric, we find other-worldly considerations to be completely compelling for only a minority within the group itself. Recent reports indicate, for example, that even the self-

segregating Pennsylvania 'Dutch', the Amish and the Mennonites are all under pressure.

There is a second and more common instance in which economics does not seem to apply to language matters. Groups and individuals can be found who support the retention of linguistic and cultural markers, where this does not materially advance them and where there is no link to something as central as religion. This is uneconomical, and there is not even some metaphysical pay-off. How can it be explained? The important feature here is that such retention may not contribute to material improvement but, equally, it does not lead to material loss. Groups in this category are secure enough to have, as it were, some psychological and economic capital to spare. Sociologists and historians have noted, generally, that cultural pluralism appeals primarily to those who are strongly positioned within society, that 'nativistic tendencies will be strongest in those classes of individuals who occupy a favored position'.⁵²

Large socioeconomic factors can often influence language decline indirectly, through such things as speakers' attitudes and loyalties and this fact suggests a more subtle operation of that influence than some oversimple 'selling-out' process. Many have struggled with this subtlety within the bounds of nationalism and culture. Leaving aside Marx's well-known contributions, we find Max Weber noting in 1910, for example, that 'the fervor [of nationalism] does not, in the main, have an economic origin'⁵³ – but, he goes on, 'it is based upon sentiments of prestige'. This surely only pushes matters back a level, and we might reasonably want to know how 'prestige' itself originates and is assessed. Antonio Gramsci felt that economics was the major influence on culture, but he also observed that culture can itself activate emotions and sentiments which are, thus, only indirectly related to economic well-springs.⁵⁴ In a paper discussing the shaping of nationalism and its priorities, Hugh Trevor-Roper and his interviewer, George Urban, seem to agree:

When the chips are down, national sentiment, the call of tradition, feuds and irredentism – that is to say, irrational, visceral factors – tend to determine the amount of peace we can have among nations. . . . Left to themselves, nations seem to have a curious order of priorities: independence first, prosperity second, internal freedom and democracy only third.⁵⁵

To complete this circle, consider Gellner's view that: 'Men do not in general become nationalists from sentiment or sentimentality, atavistic or not, well-based or myth-founded: they become nationalists through genuine, objective, practical necessity, however obscurely recognised'.⁵⁶

One gloss on all of this might be that nationalism is based upon practicalities (or, at least, upon perceived practicalities) but, once it exists, operates in an irrational manner. Another might be that economic and

pragmatic concerns *are* central but may become buried under ever-increasing layers of culture and tradition. Given this bedrock, it follows that the mutability of language (and other markers of groupness) makes sense, given sufficiently altered social conditions. Applying, then, a 'cost-benefit' metaphor to language decline can be seen as appropriate. It does not reflect, however, any cold-blooded, formally articulated analysis, and it certainly does not indicate any eagerness to change for change's sake.

LANGUAGE REVIVAL

If language decline is complete, or nearing completion, we may see attempts made to inject new life by concerned and committed individuals and groups. It will have become clear how difficult this can be and yet there are some apparently successful cases which serve to sustain morale among revivalists. Indeed, Weinreich observed in 1953 that: 'Many "obsolescent" languages have received new leases on life through a rejuvenated language loyalty among their speakers and have made the prediction of the death of languages a hazardous business.'⁵⁷ On the other hand (with reference, perhaps, to really 'obsolescent' cases), it has sometimes been bluntly stated that dead languages stay dead; revival is impossible, once a variety has gone to that bourn from whence no traveller returns. Thus, Osborn Bergin, the Irish philologist and grammarian, noted that 'no language has ever been revived, and no language ever will be revived'.⁵⁸ Still, languages are not people – and Bergin is no Hamlet – and the 'organic metaphor' for language which I discussed in Chapter 1 is not entirely accurate.

Of course, languages are in some sense parasitic upon their human hosts, and *we* die, right enough. For the death of a language, however, it would seem that an entire group of 'hosts' must perish, either literally or by way of language shift. But, even if all its hosts die, does a language entirely succumb? Surely so long as some record of it exists, a language is not dead. A recent criticism of modern 'revived' Cornish held that it is 'self-evident that there is no way by which the pronunciation of a language that no one now living has ever heard spoken can be recovered in anything more than an approximate form, if that'.⁵⁹ Well, yes, although some modern, Holmes-like linguists have presented rather compelling cases concerning the sounds of now unspoken varieties (poetry often provides a good spoor). Pronunciation aside, however, the presence of written material suggests a continuing life of sorts, a life for which the parasite no longer needs its hosts. Besides, there is always the possibility of new hosts arriving who will, however imperfectly, take the language out of the library and back into oral society.

If determining the point of death is tricky, then *revival* itself begins on rather uncertain terrain. However, to restrict too much the use of the term through adherence to its Latin root (*vivere*) is to be unwarrantably severe.

Revival does not simply and solely mean a restoration to life after death; it can also refer to reawakening and renewal, to the restoration of vigour and activity, to a return to consciousness and to the arresting of decline or discontinuity. All of these dictionary connotations have applicability for language and, therefore, the term *revival* is entirely appropriate – if rather general – in virtually every linguistic context in which its use has been debated. For example, more than sixty years ago, Michael Tierney contributed to the arguments about Irish the observation that:

Analogies with Flemish, Czech or the Baltic languages are all misleading, because the problem in their cases has been rather that of restoring a peasant language to cultivated use than that of reviving one which the majority had ceased to speak.⁶⁰

While it is true that the Irish and Flemish cases are not analogous, this is not because one is a 'restoration' and the other an attempted revival. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that the *type* of revival differs in the two instances.

There is a considerable number of accounts – widely scattered both temporally and by discipline and rigour – of specific language-revival efforts, and so one might find somewhat surprising Moshe Nahir's observation that there has been little scholarly reporting.⁶¹ He suggests on the basis of his own definition of revival (see below) that this is due to the small number of revival attempts themselves. In fact, however, there have been quite a few; Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn, in a rather flawed survey,⁶² remind us that many groups have suffered some form of language pressure and have struggled against it. They themselves discuss twenty examples, ranging from Albanian to Korean. I think, rather, that the key word in Nahir's statement is 'scholarly'; that is, there is a dearth of rigorous and dispassionate studies. It follows that there is also a lack of general or theoretical material on the dynamics of revival *per se*.

It goes without saying, of course, that the most-discussed example – which in several ways is quite atypical – is that of Hebrew in Israel; it has cast a large shadow over all revival literature. Indeed, many treatments of revival are essentially descriptions and analyses of the Hebrew case. The Irish revival, generally seen as the unsuccessful counterpart to Hebrew, is also quite widely referred to.

Nahir points out that revival presupposes the existence of a language with which a group (or nation) identifies. The *will* to renew the language is thus the first major factor. Where does this originate? One presumes a specific linguistic interest, of course, but the language itself is clearly a desired marker of groupness, and possesses symbolic value in addition to its alleged communicative function. The observation, then, that revival is a radical step⁶³ and an 'extralinguistic' one seems correct: a radical step inasmuch as a significant change to the *status quo* is envisaged, and a extralinguistic

one in that, apart from the necessary technical processes, revival centrally involves social considerations. Relatedly, it should be clear that revivalist intervention in the social fabric is in the service of group *identity*.

The will to revive a language rests, then, upon a desire to alter or reorientate group and individual identity. It follows that the strength and scope of that will are vitally important in revival efforts, and the leaders of these typically devote considerable attention to the mobilization of public opinion. In many language and cultural matters, general public sentiment is, as we have seen, often uninformed and passive and the leadership is often atypical.

The main difficulty here was neatly captured, at the height of the Irish revival effort: 'Without scholars [the revival] cannot succeed; with scholars as leaders it is bound to fail.'⁶⁴ Eighty years later it was concluded that 'the lack of will to stop shrinking is an intrinsic characteristic of a shrinking language community'⁶⁵ – a rather gritty problem. It is a problem related, of course, to the two powerful factors already discussed: first, the contact between unequal social-political systems, and second (and relatedly), the economic and social changes produced by this contact, changes which lead to altered linguistic behaviour. I say nothing here about the *morality* of this contact which, in any event, need have little practical relevance for attempts at revival. For, on the one hand, it could be argued that *every* language revival effort presupposes an unjustified incursion of one language upon another; on the other, if it were allowed that a language had declined more because of the benign neglect of the larger system, and the relative acquiescence of the smaller (as has sometimes been claimed in the context of the British Isles) – and not because of some more blatant or outrageous suppression (Tsarist Russification policies, say) – well, this would still not necessarily mean an easier course for any planned revival.

If revival is radical, it also often involves a curious desire for stasis (once perceived inadequacies have been rectified) or, indeed, for some type of psychological 'return' to a better time. This notion of 'return' is often disputed by students of revival and nationalistic movements generally, and it is clearly not a *necessary* feature of the revival process. However, stressing such things as 'behaviorally implement[ing] ... traditions'⁶⁶ and 'remaking social reality' is surely suggestive, as is the recent observation that those active in the attempt to reverse language shift are 'change-agents on behalf of persistence'. In the Irish case at least, the conservative and romantic side of nationalism and revivalism actually veered towards a new zealotry, a 'strident authoritarianism' in fact, in which were reflected 'romantic nationalism, second-hand racialism, European radicalism, middle-class frustration and cultural awareness'.⁶⁷ This rather heady mixture is probably inevitable in any small-is-beautiful, past-is-purer, smallness-equals-morality approach (which, incidentally, probably drives further wedges between 'committed' leaders and the presumed beneficiaries of revival).

Language revivals often seem belated, and there are probably good reasons for this. For example, where populations are governed by conquering groups, attending to the linguistic practices of the natives (indeed, showing them much of an enlightened face at all) often comes as a later afterthought of the political master and is really only officially countenanced once political hegemony is felt to be secure and once interest thus develops in firmly and eternally assimilating the resident population. A second and more general reason here has to do with the antiquarian interests animating many revivalists and the relatively late realization that a dwindling group of native speakers might somehow be related to these: as I have already pointed out, the 'last' Cornish speaker, the legendary Dolly Pentreath of Mousehole, died in 1777 but the formalized concern for Cornish took another century to gear up. Sometimes, too, purely literary interests are *never* accompanied by much concern for native speakers. Recall Matthew Arnold's deep concern for Celtic literature *and* for a rapid disappearance of spoken Welsh and the full assimilation of all Celtic populations. Perhaps a more basic point needs to be underlined here, too: we cannot assume, from our own perspective, that there has always existed a great concern for minorities and their languages, nor should we ignore the fact that the upsurge in this concern in the nineteenth century was intimately connected with other large-scale social and political developments. Nor (to repeat myself again), should we be unwilling to entertain the thought that the study of languages safely dead, or on the way to extinction, or whose remaining speakers are at some remove, is altogether a neater scholastic exercise than is actually coming to grips with breathing speakers.⁶⁸ Although, for example, there were still many speakers of Irish by the time the revival effort began, the literary researches of the revivalists were not inconveniently challenged: by the 1880s, only about fifty people were literate in Irish.

It is, then, common to hear the cry, 'If only we could have started sooner.' In fact, a cynical view might hold that the very existence of a revival effort is an indication of some ultimate or penultimate chapter in a linguistic history. It is also unfortunate that, even at this critical stage, internal squabbling among revival rivals weakens an already feeble position. Thus, one observes the lack of agreement in the Irish situation, and a recent description of the Gaelic difficulties in eastern Canada in the 1930s also reveals internal strife and wrangling which held back potential government support.⁶⁹

It all seems a tale of woe: strong external linguistic pressure, insufficient or enfeebled popular will, estranged or decontextualized leadership, the transitory nature of bilingualism. It *is*, in fact, such a tale; language revival is very problematic. However, most of the difficulties discussed here have to do with revival in the sense Nahir has described: 'An attempt to turn a language with few or no surviving native speakers back into a normal means of communication.'⁷⁰

In line with earlier remarks about the definition and application of the term *revival*, it should be clear that the sense adopted by Nahir and others is not the only one possible. Revival efforts need not, perhaps, stand or fall on the matter of wide revernacularization alone. Before considering some successes, however, we might briefly turn to the possibility that even failures can succeed.

For a few days in September 1904, James Joyce lived in the famous Martello Tower in Sandycove, near Dublin, which is now his museum. With him were Oliver St John Gogarty and 'an Englishman named Trench'. While Gogarty is well known to be the model for Buck Mulligan in Joyce's *Ulysses*, it is not so generally perceived that Trench was the model for Haines. A few pages into the book, the following exchange occurs:

- Is it French you are talking, sir? the old woman said to Haines. Haines spoke to her again a longer speech, confidently.
- Irish, Buck Mulligan said. Is there Gaelic on you?
- I thought it was Irish, she said, by the sound of it. Are you from west, sir?
- I am an Englishman, Haines answered.
- He's English, Buck Mulligan said, and he thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland.
- Sure we ought to, the old woman said, and I'm ashamed I don't speak the language myself. I'm told it's a grand language by them that knows.⁷¹

In any event, Trench (Haines) was a descendant of Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench (1807-86), who published such nineteenth-century bestsellers as *On the Study of Words* and *English Past and Present*. This linguistic background reappeared, briefly, with the later Trench's only published work, a pamphlet entitled *What is the Use of Reviving Irish?* In it, he listed five reasons for reviving the language: its moral contribution to native self-respect, its intellectual value, its social concomitants, its economic benefits and, finally, its psychological significance (i.e., its status as a marker of national growth and independence). Although many others expressed similar sentiments at the time - often to a platitudinous degree - Trench concluded with the observation that even if it *failed*, the Irish revival would prove a salutary and bracing exercise.⁷²

It is interesting, then, that eighty years on, Nancy Dorian proposed the 'value of language-maintenance efforts which are unlikely to succeed'. Her three major points - that such efforts can improve native-speaker attitudes, could create a healthy awareness of tradition and may have useful economic consequences - were anticipated by Trench. While none of Trench's and Dorian's points is inevitable, they are all both possible and worthy features of a revival which fails at revernacularization. Dorian makes the useful point, for example, that: 'Not all Irish, adults or children, are especially

interested in their Celtic heritage. The point is, however, that if they should be, there are no obstacles whatever to learning about it.'⁷³ Making accessible, on a voluntary basis, aspects of a heritage which may otherwise be quite unfathomable seems a worthy objective, and any revival effort which accomplished it could hardly be judged an utter failure.

There are, as well, other aspects of success in the Irish case which are germane in other contexts. They include ensuring that everyone is given at least a thin wash of the language at school and forming an 'intellectual identification' with the culture. This is to omit entirely the associated literary revival and the important relationship between linguistic and more overtly political activism. In their rather jumbled survey of the Czech, the Icelandic, the Indonesian and (seventeen) other examples, Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn manage to demonstrate the great variety of possibilities and 'successes' legitimately considered under the general heading of *revival*.

All of this may suggest the appropriateness of some revival typology. It would allow retention of a useful term and would help in keeping out near-synonyms, unnecessary neologisms and sundry hair-splitting exercises. (When is a revival not a revival? When it's a restoration/rebirth/renewal/renaissance/rejuvenation/revitalization/reintroduction/resurrection/reversal of shift. At least they all start with r.) A rough classification of revival scenarios could look like this:

- 1 a language with few or no speakers, where no written or taped records exist;
- 2 the same, except that some written material exists;
- 3 the same, except that written *and* taped material exists;
- 4 a language with some native speakers remaining, but where none are monolingual;
- 5 the same, but where some at least are monolingual;
- 6 the same, but where monolingualism and *normal family transmission* of the original language occur;
- 7 the same, but where substantial numbers of speakers are monolingual, where there is language transmission, and where the original variety retains important domains (especially outside the home and family).

This is a very rough outline; in fact, I am not sure that much further detail would be useful, since we would be moving into so many specificities that the exercise might dissolve. The scheme is intended only to show that, while all the situations can be subsumed under the heading of *language revival*, there are varieties. Specifically, there are degrees of difficulty, and I have arranged things such that the relative ease of revival increases as one goes from 1 to 7. Irish in Ireland, and Gaelic in Nova Scotia, for example, would both fit in category 4, while many of the European examples discussed by Ellis and mac a'Ghobhainn fall in category 7.

The term *revival* is really all that is necessary to cover a variety of

situations which, while admittedly different in important ways, do not require further and apparently endlessly debatable terminology. Also, many existing formulations of revival do not come to grips sufficiently with the powerful underpinnings of *will* and *socio-political pressure*. The whole question of language revival is inextricably associated with what might be termed the *internal manifestations of external influence* and, on that basis alone, is complex and fraught with difficulty.

However, success is available, and the challenge is to find goals which are both desirable and reachable (for some of these, in fact, wide-ranging popular support is *not* vital). To return for the last time here to the Irish situation, we can find all manner of opinions of its success or failure, ranging from 'astounding' to the request that we 'remove our gaze from the terrible failure of Ireland'.⁷⁴ Clearly, those most closely involved must determine what action to take and what is to be aimed for. But, at the end of the day, it is ordinary people who will live with the decisions and processes, who will (or should) ultimately be the assessors and judges.