

Multilingualism, conflict, and the politics of indigenous language movements

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Abstract

Experts know that multilingualism is not the aberration or minority phenomenon supposed by many English speakers. It is, on the contrary, a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world's population. Because languages and dialects are often powerful symbols of class, gender, ethnic and other kinds of differentiation, it is easy to think that language underlies conflict. Yet disputes involving language are really not about language, but about fundamental inequalities between groups who happen to speak different languages. It is for this reason that language has been an important focus for various kinds of social and political movements around the world. This paper examines the politics of multilingualism as expressed in the phenomenon of indigenous language movements in various parts of the world. It is not surprising that one of the demands of indigenous language movements are towards some form of bilingual education in the minority language. At the same time demands for state resources for support of the language, often undermine its position further and intensify conflicts between majority and minority.

Key word: multilingualism, conflict, politics of multilingualism, indigenous language movements.

Resumo

Os expertos saben que o plurilingüismo non é a aberración ou o fenómeno minoritario que moitos falantes anglo-saxóns supoñen. Pola contra, é unha necesidade normal e corrente para a maioría da poboación mundial. Xa que as linguas e os dialectos son con frecuencia poderosos símbolos de clase, xénero, etnia e outros tipos de trazos diferenciadores, é doado pensar que a lingua serve de base ó conflito. Aínda que as disputas que implican á lingua non son en realidade acerca da lingua, senón que están baseadas nas desigualdades esenciais entre grupos que por casualidade falan diferentes linguas. É por esta razón pola que a lingua ten sido unha cuestión importante para diversos tipos de movementos sociais e políticos ó redor do mundo. Neste artigo examínase a política do plurilingüismo a través do fenómeno dos movementos lingüísticos autóctonos en diversas partes do mundo. Entre as súas demandas, non é sorprendente a solicitada polos movementos lingüísticos autóctonos cara a algún tipo de educación bilingüe na lingua minoritaria. Ó mesmo tempo, as demandas cara á obtención de instrumentos do estado que apoien a lingua, con frecuencia socavan a súa posición e intensifican os conflitos entre a maioría e a minoría.

Resumo: plurilingüismo, conflito, política do plurilingüismo, movementos lingüísticos autóctonos.

1. Introduction

Experts of course know that multilingualism is not the aberration or minority phenomenon supposed by many English speakers. It is, on the contrary, a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world's population. Yet popular misinformed views on the subject are still commonplace. In 1994 media mogul Rupert Murdoch made a

speech on Australian radio about the negative effects of multilingualism. His gist was that multilingualism was divisive, and monolingualism, cohesive. Multilingualism was in his view the cause of Indian disunity, and monolingualism the reason for the unity of the English-speaking world.

It takes but little reflection to find the many flaws in Murdoch's reasoning and to come up with cases where the sharing of a common language has not gone hand in hand with political or indeed any other kind of unity. Northern Ireland is one such example from the English-speaking world, which comes readily to mind. But there are many others from other parts of the globe. Certainly, the attempt at Russification of the former republics of the Soviet Union did not ensure unity in that part of the world either. Indeed, one of the first political acts undertaken by the newly independent Baltic states was to reassert their linguistic and cultural autonomy by reinstating their own national languages as official.

Because languages and dialects are often potent symbols of class, gender, ethnic and other kinds of differentiation, it is easy to think that language underlies conflict. Yet disputes involving language are really not about language, but instead about fundamental inequalities between groups who happen to speak different languages.

A headline in the *New York Times* (April 18, 1981) reported that police shot and killed two rioters in Bangalore after a movie star told a rally that the Kannada language should be used in all classes in Karnataka state schools. In 1951 Frisian language activists were involved in a street riot in the Dutch town of Leeuwarden protesting the inadmissibility of the Frisian language spoken by many of the members of the major indigenous minority group, in Dutch courts. Language here is a symbol of a much larger struggle for the recognition of minority rights. In this paper I will look at the role demands for bilingual education play in indigenous language movements, concentrating in particular on the case of the revitalization of the Hawaiian language in Hawai'i in section 3. First, however, I will take a brief look at some other cases where language has played a key role in a group's struggle for cultural and political distinctiveness and examine some of the reasons why education is a critical area of concern.

2. The role of language in struggles for political and cultural autonomy

Language has been an important focus for various kinds of cultural, social and political movements around the world. Take, for instance, the activities of the Gaelic League founded in 1893 and the prominence given to Irish earlier in this century as part of the struggle to establish the Irish Free State. More recent examples can be seen in the attempts of the Basques, Welsh, and the French population of Quebec to establish autonomous rule. The respective languages concerned have been part of the battle. The Basques, once forced to operate their language schools secretly for fear of reprisal under the Franco regime, are now able to campaign more openly for maintenance of their language. In Quebec the controversial law which required all signs to be in French only represented the symbolic ability of the Quebec government to control and maintain the Frenchness of Quebec in the midst of a predominantly anglophone Canada. Anglophones in Quebec and elsewhere felt that the signs represented an assault on individual rights. The Canadian Supreme Court indeed ruled against such signs in French only in 1988 regarding them as a violation of Quebec's own Charter of Human Rights. There has also been violence in Wales over the presence of English signs.

Not surprisingly, signs carry a lot of symbolic freight. They do more than identify places and things. They reveal social hierarchies. Jerusalem's political history is encapsulated in the city's multilingual signs. Trilingual signs with English on top and Arabic and Hebrew underneath date from the period when Palestine was ruled under British mandate. When the Jordanians conquered the Old City, their use of Arabic-English signs with Arabic on top signaled the political pre-eminence of Jordan. The absence of Hebrew in effect declared Jewish claims as illegitimate. When the Israelis captured the Old City in 1967, they put up trilingual signs, this time with Hebrew on top, and English and Arabic underneath (see Spolsky & Cooper, 1991).

Languages and language varieties are always in competition, and at times in conflict, as the case of Quebec and Jerusalem illustrates. The boundaries of modern nation-states have been arbitrarily drawn, with many of them created by the political and economic interests of Western colonial powers. Many indigenous people today like the Welsh and Basque find themselves living in nations that they had no say in creating and are controlled by groups who do not represent their interests and in some cases, actively seek to exterminate them, as is the case with the Kurds in Iraq. More than 80% of the conflicts in the world today are between nation-states and minority peoples (Clay, 1990). All nation states, whatever their political ideology, have persecuted minorities in the past and continue to do so today. While not all states are actively seeking the eradication of minorities within their borders, they pursue policies designed to assimilate indigenous people into the mainstream or dominant culture. Many of the disputes currently going on in the former Soviet Union concern peoples' rights to an autonomous state within which they can govern themselves.

When such movements towards cultural and political autonomy ideologize the use of a particular language as part of their struggle for equality, we can justifiably speak of an indigenous language movement. Such language movements, which are often aimed at reviving or propping up the use of a threatened language, are, however, rarely conducted for their own sake. All efforts at language engineering serve political, social and cultural ends. The reintroduction of native languages on many American Indian reservations, for example, has been accompanied by the revival of traditional customs, beliefs, dress, etc. Similarly, the fight for French in Quebec is symptomatic of the struggle against anglicization of French culture and institutions. Above all, however, it is an attempt on the part of Francophones to gain control over their own affairs, to exist as a people with their own identity and culture, and language.

Each group will have certain features which it regards as core factors, e.g. certain foods and patterns of dress, religion, distinctive physical appearance, etc. Language may or may not be among those, depending on the group (see Smolicz, 1981, on the notion of language as a core value). Some cultural groups have consistently stressed their language as the principal carrier of their culture and relied on it as their main defence against assimilation. Sir James Henare, a Maori leader who died in 1989, expressed such sentiments about the Maori language: "The language is the life force of our Maori culture and mana ['power']. If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people who are we?" (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986: 40). This statement shows the power of language to perform an act of identity (see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985): You are what you speak.

Even if language was not traditionally a prominent symbol of a particular group identity, it can become one at any time. There was, for example, virtually "no language question" in Ireland during the late 18th and early 19th centuries; practically all politicians

accepted that the future of the Irish people lay in the English language (Hindley, 1990: 13-14). It is almost ironic that attention is often turned to language so late, that its use has been eroded nearly beyond repair. Norwegian immigrants to the United States, for example, gradually abandoned their language as their contact with American culture and its institutions increased. By the turn of the 20th century, however, they were worried about how they could preserve the language of their ancestors and pass on to their children the treasures it contained (Haugen, 1953).

Yet, there are some good reasons for this phenomenon which is part of what Fishman and others have called the 'ethnic revival' in the US. Political scientists had widely assumed that by the third generation when an originally immigrant population had reached the point where its members were native Americans born of native American parents, all traces of foreign ethnicity would have disappeared. This has not been the case. Nevertheless, while there was certainly a heightened awareness of languages other than English, there is little evidence that their actual number of everyday users increased. There do not appear to have been any language movements or any concerted move beyond ethnic consciousness to actual long term gain in language use. By the late 1970s, in any case, the ethnic boom appears to have subsided (Fishman, 1985).

The third generation is able to exploit language as an ethnic marker from the relative security of having attained upward social mobility. Their parents and grandparents on the other hand were brainwashed into thinking that their languages and cultures were inferior and therefore had to be abandoned for the sake of being American. The widespread assimilation of minorities in this way in democratic countries such as the US is generally assumed since it is assumed that assimilation is voluntary and not coerced.

Ethnicity also grows stronger when actively denied, oppressed or repressed. Throughout its 74 years of existence the territory once called Yugoslavia has been a powder keg of ethnic rivalries which go back centuries. The country that has been dissolving these past few years was an artificial creation of conflicting cultures held in check by a centralized Communist government until 1980. Once the old regime crumbled, old tensions could surface leading to the unravelling of the country. The virtual collapse of the economies of the former Soviet bloc countries has shown the difficulties of centralized planning which rides rough shod over the regional and ethnic affiliations. As I mentioned earlier, the Baltic Republics have insisted that Russian be replaced with their own ethnic languages as official languages as part of the process of reclaiming their national and cultural autonomy.

These examples illustrate that the degree of prominence a group gives to language will depend on the social and political context. This means we must be careful in accepting Edwards' (1981: 37) view when he says we do not have unequivocal evidence for active policies of bilingual education for maintenance purposes or for cultural pluralism from various ethnic groups. There is nothing surprising about this. Colonized peoples often have limited understanding of their own hegemonized position, and opportunities for resistance may be severely constrained, as they were, for example, in the former Soviet Union. The success of colonialism depends partly on the extent to which the majority can get the minority to accept their own view and to acquiesce in their subjugation. It is well known that one of the effects of the ideology of dominant groups is to impose the referential perspective of the dominant culture and language as the only legitimate one. Anglophone proponents of US English, a group lobbying for a constitutional amendment which would make English the official language of the United States, have used as part of their propaganda statements from Hispanics who have joined their ranks.

While the existence of distinct cultures within one nation has often been seen by the powers that be as a threat to the cohesiveness of the state, it can easily be shown that denying people the right to their own language and culture does not provide a workable solution either. When large portions of the population are denied forms of self expression, the nation's political and social foundations are weakened. This is not to deny that there are considerable problems, particularly where the traditional patterns of behavior of a minority group conflict with those of the dominant culture in a society. A nation that incorporates cultural and linguistic diversity is also richer than one which denies their existence.

Having seen why language can come to play a prominent role in political movements, we need to see briefly how bilingual education figures into the goals that particular groups are trying to achieve. It is easy to see why education is a major issue in indigenous language movements. Education is the primary societal institution through which legitimation for the state's dominant language is sought. This means that far from providing the means for liberation and equality, schools reproduce the status quo and limit the ability of minorities to transmit their culture. It is not surprising that demands for some form of bilingual education emerge when a group feels it is being discriminated against on other grounds.

Studies of language shift have shown time and time again that schools are a major agent of cultural and linguistic assimilation. Formal education is often the first point of contact children have with the world outside their own community. English schools were destructive to Dyirbal-speaking children in Aboriginal Australia on at least three counts. The very fact that Dyirbal has no presence in the school is a signal that it is seen as a useless language. Schools also provide a major context for the use of English and exposure to English-speaking children. By being immersed into a totally English environment, the Dyirbal child is denied the opportunity of learning in Dyirbal.

Just over one hundred years ago many Dyirbal-speaking people were shot and poisoned by European invaders. From 1910 on the Queensland government attempted to round up the remaining Aborigines and put them into the Anglican mission across the bay from Cairns or at a government settlement on Palm Island. On Palm Island children were separated from their parents, placed in locked dormitories and punished if they were heard speaking their own language. Those who managed to survive have lived as barely tolerated tenants on their own land, their culture and language ridiculed. In the 1960s their remaining forests were cleared by an American company and their sacred sites have been destroyed, along with the rare trees and vines in the rain forest whose medicinal properties are known only to the Aborigines. Nowadays, they are dependent on white man's beef and bread. Although they still hunt to some extent, they no longer prepare traditional vegetables which required long preparation procedures. There were as many as 600 tribes like the Dyirbal at the time when Europeans invaded the Australian continent in the 18th century. Now only a handful still have their traditional languages (see Dixon, 1972).

To take a European example illustrating the negative effects of schooling on minority language maintenance, most older Sami in Finland have been indoctrinated by the school system into believing that the speaking of Sami even at home weakens the child's knowledge of Finnish (Aikio, 1984). In my work in Britain I encountered parents from various south Asian minorities who had been told similar things about the bad effects of using their own languages to their children and thereby risking their learning of English (Romaine, 1995). The research evidence shows otherwise, but most of the so-called experts who offer such advice are monolinguals and think of bilingualism as a problem in need of

remediation. Let me now turn specifically to the revitalization of Hawaiian culture and the role which bilingual education has played in it.

3. Hawaiian language revitalization

Historians such as Stannard (1989) recorded massive depopulation in the Hawaiian Islands in the years after Captain James Cook arrived in 1778. The decline was caused by many factors, among them spread of foreign diseases to which Hawaiians had no immunity, and dispossession from their homeland. Estimates indicate that as many as 800,000 to a million Hawaiians lived there in the late 18th century. Yet, by the turn of this century when Hawai'i became a territory of the United States, Hawaiians made up only 26% of the population.

The present ethnic composition of the Hawaiian islands reflects the diversity of the different waves of foreign labor imported to work on sugar plantations from the 1850s onwards. Hawai'i is the only US state in which an Asian/Pacific population is the majority, 61.9% of a total population of 1.1 million, according to the 1990 US census. Currently, those of Caucasian ancestry account for 33.4%, Japanese for 22.3%, Filipino for 15.2%, Chinese for 6.2%, and Others for 10.2%. These figures do not include native Hawaiians, who make up 12.5%, with fewer than 8,000 full-blooded Hawaiians (The State of Hawai'i Data Book, 1995, 31; 35)¹.

Although local mythology has it that everyone gets along in this unique melting pot, there is considerable tension among the different ethnic groups, particularly as native Hawaiian demands for sovereignty have become more vocal. The Hawaiian people today fare far worse than any other ethnic group on most statistics relating to health, social welfare, education, etc. For example, they have the shortest life expectancy in a state with the highest life expectancy for the whole US. They have the highest incidence of heart disease, diabetes and cancer, the lowest median income among the four major ethnic groups, the highest proportion of the population in low-status occupations, and the highest unemployment. Only 6% of students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa are of Hawaiian ancestry. Only a few hundred Hawaiians today are monolingual in Hawaiian, most of them living on the privately owned island of Ni'ihau, the westernmost inhabited island in the Hawaiian island chain.

This dramatic shift in welfare of the Hawaiian-speaking population occurred in the context of sweeping changes in society as result of contact. Like the Maori language, Hawaiian was unwritten until Christian missionaries, who arrived in 1820, devised a writing system and began to teach the people in an effort to convert them. Within ten years of their arrival the missionaries had enrolled one third of the population (mostly adults) into schools and were teaching them to read in Hawaiian. In 1840 the Hawai'i legislature passed a law which made school compulsory, but since the Hawaiian chieftains were already being

¹ The US Census population statistics are controversial and problematic for a variety of reasons. Due to shifting categorizations of different ethnic components of the population, it is difficult to trace demographic trends with precision. In 1960, for example, the first census after statehood, the US Census Bureau listed Hawaiians under the category of 'Others'. In more recent censuses, Hawaiians have been relegated to a racial category labeled "Asian and Pacific Islander", of which they have comprised only 3 percent. Blaisdell (1992: 183) considers it probable that the most recent 1990 census left approximately 34% of the Hawaiian population uncounted. In 1997 a petition was made to the Office of Management to categorize native Hawaiians as 'native Americans' in the federal census, a move which would qualify Hawaiians for programs earmarked for 'native Americans', a category comprising native Alaskans and American Indians. Although this was denied, a new listing will count Hawaiians under the heading of 'Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander'; native Hawaiians are expected to comprise 60 percent of those so listed.

educated in English medium schools by this time, there was pressure for English schools, particularly from the rapidly growing non-Hawaiian population comprised mainly of Europeans and an Asian population which would continue to grow as plantation owners needed to import cheap labor. In 1853 the Hawaiian legislature appropriated money for the establishment of English medium schools for Hawaiians. Even in 1864 Matai Kekuanoa, who was appointed by King Kamehameha to head the Board of Education, warned the legislature that the substitution of Hawaiian by English in the schools was dangerous to Hawaiian nationality and was useless in promoting the general education of the people. He said, “if we wish to preserve the kingdom of Hawai‘i for Hawaiians, and to educate our people, we must insist that the Hawaiian language shall be the language of all our National Schools” (Kaponu, 1995:13).

Nevertheless, English speakers continued to consolidate their power in matters of education and religion in Hawai‘i until they managed to persuade the king to allow foreigners to purchase land. This enabled foreign capital to be invested in sugar plantations and economic interests of foreigners to be consolidated, particularly after the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876. This allowed sugar produced in Hawai‘i to be exported into the United States duty free. Meanwhile, more foreign labor from various parts of Asia continued to be imported.

After the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, English became the official language. Long before, however, it had already virtually replaced Hawaiian as the language of economics and politics. By the time Hawai‘i became incorporated into the United States as the 50th state in 1959, the process of assimilation was so far advanced as to convince politicians that Hawai‘i was sufficiently Americanized. In the decades prior to this, Hawai‘i's diversity was widely seen as an obstacle to statehood. In arguing against statehood, for example, a senator from Missouri condemned Hawai‘i's mostly non-Caucasian population as “a lot of non-descript Asiatico-Polynesian ignoramuses” (Bell, 1984: 33).

Contemporary efforts undertaken on behalf of the Hawaiian language have rightly concentrated first on the youngest generation in an attempt to create a sheltered environment in which they can learn the language. The New Zealand model of providing a so-called 'language nest' (*Kohanga Reo*) for immersion in the traditional language has been exported to Hawai‘i, where the problems facing the Hawaiian language are similar. After more than 80 years of neglect, a program of Hawaiian immersion preschools was set up in 1984 called Pūnana Leo, the first indigenous language immersion program in the US. At that time there were fewer than 1,000 Hawaiians in the state speaking the language. Fewer than 30 of those were under 18. It is only recently that it was legally possible to use Hawaiian as a medium of instruction in Hawai‘i's public schools. In the 1978 constitutional convention Hawaiian and English were declared official languages, but it was not until 1986 that provision was made for the Hawaiian language to be used in special Department of Education programs. This enabled a bilingual program to be set up for children living on the island of Ni‘ihau, the last stronghold for Hawaiian as a native language. There students who enter kindergarten and the first grade are taught first in their home language before later making a transition to instruction in English.

It was decided to expand immersion education vertically rather than horizontally in order not to lose any students. When the Hawaiian language immersion program was introduced into two elementary schools in Hawai‘i in 1987, they were the first elementary indigenous language immersion classes in the US. The first students who attended differed widely in terms of their knowledge of Hawaiian. Only two out of 34 had spoken Hawaiian as

their first language from birth. Others had minimal or no knowledge of it. Some who had attended Pūnana Leo schools had good proficiency.

An outside evaluation of the program commissioned by the Department of Education concluded that the schools' instruction in Hawaiian had been successful on a number of grounds (see Slaughter & Watson-Gegeo, 1988). It had been conducted with no apparent loss to the children's English language skills. Parental support and involvement were also exceptionally high. The evaluators recommended that the program should be extended to the sixth grade, with total Hawaiian immersion through the third. English would be introduced gradually after that until it occupied 50% of the teaching day in grades four through six.

Parents who enrolled their children in the program did so because they were convinced of the importance of maintaining Hawaiian language and culture. As part of the evaluation of the immersion program, parents were given an opportunity to comment. One parent said: "My kids already understand that without the language, we'll die as a people, without the language we'll lose our culture and history" (Slaughter and Watson-Gegeo, 1988). The teachers and aids spoke only in Hawaiian. At one school parents who were Hawaiian language teachers provided reading instruction to first graders. At both schools parents volunteered from time to time, and a grandmother helped out in one of the schools.

One parent, whose son knew no Hawaiian when he came to school, was pleased because the child became "fluent enough to converse with his grandparents and maternal great grandmother" (Slaughter and Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Another mother commented that her daughter's grandfather recovered his Hawaiian through talking to his granddaughter. Several of the parents are now actively studying Hawaiian.

When asked whether their children were happy to be participating in the program, there were positive responses. One mother said the program had contributed to her daughter's concept of herself because many of her older cousins had made positive comments about her ability to speak Hawaiian. All of the parents wanted their children to continue in the immersion program and would enroll their younger children too. They praised the teachers for the caring atmosphere they had created in the classroom and their dedication. One mother said that her daughter loved going to school and she noticed the "Hawaiian spirit of life is being learned. (...) learning to love, share what you have, and helping others. It shows at home as well as in the classroom". One parent wrote, "This is only the beginning of what can be a very successful and innovative program for Hawaiian people, culture and language" (Slaughter & Watson-Gegeo, 1988).

The philosophy of Hawaiian medium education is similar to that embodied in other programs of indigenous education. It is based on the recognition of the people's right to conduct full lives in their native language and the basic right of a language to flourish in its homeland. Belief in the traditional power of the Hawaiian language is expressed in the proverb: I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola; i ka 'ōlelo no ka make ('In language rests life; in language rests death').

The biggest problem faced by teachers of minority languages similar in status to Hawaiian is lack of teaching materials and qualified teachers. In Hawaiian the problem was particularly acute because the language had not been used in education since the last century. At one school the teacher borrowed library books, translated them and pasted Hawaiian print over the English text, a practice which continues today. In 1989 the State Legislature established Hale Kuamo'ō at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, which acts as a support center for Hawaiian language and culture in the medium of Hawaiian. It provides a wide

variety of Hawaiian language materials, coins new vocabulary, and coordinates in-service training programs for teachers. Materials for Pūnana Leo are produced by a support center called Hale Kāko‘o and funded in part by a federal grant.

Despite many setbacks and a continual struggle for funding, immersion opportunities continue to expand and demand for immersion education grows steadily. In 1993 enrollment at all 7 Pūnana Leo schools in the state was 162 children. In that same year Ni‘ihau parents living on the neighboring island of Kaua‘i requested Hawaiian medium education for their children through the 6th grade. Parents boycotted a local school when their request was denied. In 1994 they received funding from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to start a public immersion kindergarten through 6th grade. By 1995 immersion preschool enrollment climbed to 181 at 9 preschools throughout the state. In that same year an intermediate/high school program began at Nāwahīokalani‘opu‘u school on the island of Hawai‘i, and there are currently about 60 students there in grades 7-11. Despite the lack of a library, science lab and a range of course offerings equivalent to what is found at nearby Hilo High School, each student scored above the statewide average on college admission tests. In 1996 the state Board of Education approved a site on O‘ahu as the state’s first total immersion school from kindergarten to high school. Enrollment in Hawaiian classes has increased steadily at the university level too. At the University of Hawai‘i it has increased 500% over the past 10 years.

In 1997 the state legislature approved the establishment of a Hawaiian Language College at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo which will strengthen and expand the Hawaiian Studies Department, already the most highly developed program in an indigenous language in the US. The new college will initially offer an M.A. in Hawaiian studies, the first graduate program in an indigenous language in the US.

4. Conclusions

What are we to conclude then about the importance of bilingual education in indigenous language movements? Evidence suggests that it is essential, but not sufficient. There is no doubt that absence of schooling in one's own language can make maintenance difficult. In a study done of 46 linguistic minorities in 14 European countries, the clearest link to emerge between language and schooling is that a minority language which is not taught tends to decline (see Allardt, 1979).

However, school is only one and probably not the most important of all the societal institutions that contribute to and are responsible for language acquisition and maintenance. It would be wrong to leave the picture unduly rosy. Provision of schooling in a minority language will not automatically safeguard its future. Maintenance programs, even well funded ones, are all too easily invoked as the solution to language loss. Furthermore, while it may seem a great opportunity for children to be schooled in their own language, such schools may attract adverse criticism if financed from tax funding of the majority's government, particularly under times of economic hardship. This is what we are seeing now in Hawai‘i, where immersion is supported as part of the state's education budget. This is why Fishman (1991) argues that language maintenance efforts must begin in the community itself through voluntary efforts and be financed through community resources in the early stages.

Nowhere have language movements succeeded if they expected the school or state to carry the primary burden of maintenance or revival. A prime example of this can be seen in the Irish language. Probably no government in the world has undertaken to support a

declining language to the extent that the Irish government has. While virtually all children study the language at school for a number of years, they do not constitute a critical mass. As Ó Riagáin (1988: 48) observes:

“These new recruits to the Irish language networks are typically persons who learned Irish at school rather than in the home; they are scattered through English-speaking communities; they do not command any domains of language use, except in some homes and schools; and they do not, by and large, reproduce bilinguals for the next generation”.

Meanwhile, the language is dying among its last stronghold of native speakers along the west coast, as those who acquired the language traditionally at home are no longer passing it on to their children. Although there appears to be ample community support for the study of Irish for its symbolic value, this is not sufficient for the restoration of the language to full communicative use.

That is not to absolve the state of responsibility for providing resources for language maintenance where there is desire for it, but financial aid comes at a price. Dependence on state resources undermines the minority's responsibility and right to control its own affairs. The greatest danger posed to Maori language revitalization is that in the name of equity and biculturalism the Maori language may be removed from control of the Maori people, and that proficient Maori speakers may be predominantly Pakeha in both ethnicity and ancestry. A similar phenomenon has affected the struggle for education in Sami in Finland. Even outsiders obtain qualifications in the language more easily than insiders and as a consequence Sami people are afraid of using their own language because only a few are deemed to be qualified (Aikio, 1984). In Ireland Hindley (1990: 213-3) notes a considerable amount of hostility to non-native language enthusiasts among native speakers, who resent the appropriation of their language by anglicized middle class outsiders in Dublin, who decide what is correct.

In so far as a minority language represents an alternative point of view, which is potentially in conflict with that of the dominant culture, bilingual education is a threat to the powers that be. It is no accident that minority groups who have retained control over their schooling such as the Old Order Amish in Pennsylvania have shown greater language maintenance than those who have not. At the moment in Hawai'i efforts are being directed toward transferring the administration of Nāwahīokalani'opu'u school from the Department of Education to the new Hawaiian Language college.

Many indigenous people realize, however, that there are some benefits arising from increased interaction with the dominant society, but at the same time they want to preserve some autonomy for themselves and to have some say in determining their own fate, as well as the right to educate their children in their own way. Yet, if integration is seen in this way as something that only the minority group has to do and can choose to do or not to do entirely of its free will, the minority can be held responsible for the results. The retaining of ethnic identity and lack of integration are seen as their own fault and can be used as a legitimation for an unequal division of power and resources.

In 16th century France the possession of a common language was seen as the key to the egalitarian aims of the French Revolution. Speaking French meant being able to participate on equal terms in the newly established French nation-state. The idea of national unity was that France was to become bound together by common goals, administration and culture. The French language was and still is symbolic of this unity. Since the revolution French nationalists have seen the persistence of non-French speaking groups and their

cultures as threats to the stability and persistence of the union. However, even by 1863 at least one fifth of the population was not French-speaking.

As late as 1922 the General Inspector of Schools was to declare linguistic war on Bretons who persisted in speaking their own language:

“It is of first order importance that Bretons understand and speak the national language: they will only truly be French on that condition... It is Frenchmen that are needed to Frenchify the Bretons, they will not Frenchify themselves by themselves”. (Kuter, 1989: 77)

A few years later the Minister of National Education said that “for the linguistic unity of France, the Breton language must disappear” (Kuter, 1989: 78). Even today some of the modest attempts to give Breton a limited place in the education system have been resisted by those who feel that any concessions to Bretons will inevitably lead to political separatism. While Mitterand's Socialist government has issued a cautious recognition of France as a multicultural nation, it still advocates the fusion of cultures. Ironically, Mitterand has seen the resurgence of interest in regional language and culture as an effective force against the increasing influence of American popular culture.

Even when it is overtly acknowledged that the minority has something to contribute to society at large, it is the majority who decides what that contribution consists of. Distinctive food, dress, song, etc. are often accepted and allowed to be part of the mainstream. Language rarely is. Language and the rest of culture is seen as part of the private sphere. However, the same attributes in the majority population are not seen as part of their private ethnicity. No one questions that majority schools should maintain majority pupils' language.

One big question as far as the case of Hawaiian is concerned, is whether the attainment of some form of political sovereignty will secure the future of the language. This is a complex issue because it is by no means clear what form sovereignty will take, if attained, and the extent to which it may be accompanied by favorable economic conditions, e.g. the settlement of land claims, etc. Based on his consideration of the case of Ireland within the context of European minority language maintenance, Hindley (1990: 242-3) is convinced that there is not a “single example of the restoration to a majority position of a language which lost its own well defined territory”. While Hindley's use of the term 'territory' can be understood here in both a geographical and political sense, he adds that political autonomy seems able to secure a language only if it has survived strongly until autonomy has been achieved.

This does not mean that language maintenance programs unlikely to restore a dying language to everyday use are not worth funding. As Dorian (1987) observes, support for a language can serve as an important psychological corrective in a climate, where negative attitudes and outright hostility have eroded a people's confidence and self-esteem. Likewise, the need for culturally appropriate teaching materials usually results in the recovery and dissemination of information about a people's history and traditions which results in a greater self-awareness. Indeed, it is clear in the comments I cited earlier from parents whose children participate in Hawaiian immersion that these positive benefits are already in evidence. Moreover, the programs themselves create employment opportunities.

Although I have focussed here on one particular case, similar stories could be told for other parts of the world, like Papua New Guinea, where there are similar issues, but of course many more indigenous languages at stake.

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