

Sell ase ur gudenn dit : A comparison of two minority language communities in France¹

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0.0 Abstract

Since 1970, cultural changes in France have allowed for a softening of the country's formerly destructive language policy, though this is happening at a time when both Breton and the *langues d'oc* have shifted from dominant monolingualism in the regional languages through bilingualism to French monolingualism in just three generations. Despite similarities in usage and attitude patterns, the language maintenance efforts for Breton and Oc have occurred in very different forms.

Brief profiles of Oc, Breton, and the language policy situation in France are given before moving into a discussion of the characteristics the two language communities have in common. Each language community and its attributes are then discussed, with particular attention being drawn to the different characters of the revitalization movements. These situations are then discussed in terms of recognized linguistics theory, including the work of Fishman, Dorian, Gal and others. Finally, the prospects for the future of Breton and Oc are evaluated in the context of the hope placed on schooling as the new site of language transmission, with examples like that of Gaelic in Ireland serving as comparison points.

Though it relies on the work of Breton linguists like Timm and Broudic and Occitan/Oc linguists like La Font, Blanchet and Dompmartin, this paper is unique in that it compares these two French regional languages in a comparative and contrastive discussion of their linguistic situation and language maintenance efforts. This work also incorporates the newest data in a discussion these languages' long-term prospects for survival.*

¹ The title of the thesis means "Now there's a tangle for you" in Breton.

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1.0 Introduction

‘Traditionnellement, et comme allant de soi et de droit, la théorie politique et la science juridique lient l’usage de la langue française et sa défense à la souveraineté française. L’unité de la nation implique l’unité de la langue.’² – Jean Marc Varaut

The importance of the phrase *liberté, égalité, fraternité* for the French government in the conduct of domestic policy is well known and well documented. With particular emphasis on *égalité*, throughout each of its governments both pre- and post-1789, France has strived to create a nation that is equal and unified, both in terms of culture and law. In a process typified by the world’s shock in 2005 as riots in the immigrant-dominated *banlieues* made the world’s headlines, in recent decades France has been forced to recognize the diverse composition of its territory and its citizens, including their races, the gender of the people they wish to marry, their conceptions of the government’s role in employment regulation and the languages they speak. Among these languages are Breton and Occitan, two languages historically spoken in the northwest and south of France respectively. Though a complete treatise of the sociopolitical implications of the French sense of unity is beyond the scope of this paper, the cases of two of France’s regional languages illustrate the complexity and provocative nature of the regionalism debate in a country that has linked a strong defense of its ‘native’ language to its very identity and sovereignty for centuries. Breton and Occitan lend themselves particularly well to such a study because they are languages native to regions within France and do not have an overt connection to speech communities outside of France, unlike Catalan, Basque, or Alsatian—though, as will be shown, Occitan has certainly benefited from the Catalan nationalist movement. Additionally, unlike the *langues d’oil* (for example, Gallo) spoken in the northern half of France,

² Varaut 2001. (Traditionally, self-referentially and legally, political theory and juridical science link the usage of the French language and its defense to French sovereignty. The unity of the nation implies the unity of the language.)

Breton and Occitan do still have somewhat large and palpable numbers of speakers and visible, if not universally supported, language maintenance movements.

Both Breton and Occitan are in an extremely precarious position, having seen significant drops in speaker numbers in the past century (Broudic 2002b, 2002c, 2002d; Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter 1977; Jones 1999; Research Centre of Wales (RCW) 1995, 1996; Timm 1973, 1980). In terms of the raw number of speakers, Breton and Oc fit within grade 1 (*critically endangered—very few speak the language*) or grade 2 (*severely endangered—a minority speak the language*) out of 5 grades (UNESCO 2003). Since the rebirth of regionalism in France (and throughout Europe) in the late 1960's, efforts have been made to restore usage of both languages, though they have yet to make measurable progress. Nonetheless, Breton and Occitan differ strikingly, from the sense of identity constructed around the language (Breton is linked closely to identity in Brittany, while the very idea of a unified Occitanie across the south of France will be argued to be a fallacy) to the interest in education shown by speakers (hard-won by Breton language activists and now exploding, in comparison with a much smaller proportion of students learning Occitan in a much larger area). Why is it that the efforts to preserve Occitan seem to have been less effective than those to preserve Breton?

A key goal of this paper is to compare and contrast the two speech communities, including historical and current situations, to understand their similarities and to account for the apparent difference in optimism about language revitalization. Each movement will be discussed in terms of its relationship with the French central government and the sociolinguistic work done on the language. Using comparative data — for example, that of Gaelic in Ireland — predictions about the potential effectiveness of the activist movements will be discussed.

1.1 Language profile: Breton

Breton is a P-Celtic language. Along with Cornish and Welsh, it is a member of the Brittonic sub-group, which differs slightly from the Q sub-group containing Scots, Irish and Manx Gaelic (Timm 1973).³ The traditional area in which Breton is spoken is the peninsula at the northwestern corner of France, including five historic provinces that today have been grouped by France into the four that form the administrative *région* of Brittany; the fifth *département* is Loire-Atlantique, to the east of the other four and considered as having less Breton character.⁴ The large cities of Brittany include Nantes (Naoned in Breton), Saint Nazaire (Sant Nazer), Rennes (Raozhon) and Brest; the *départements* are Finistère in the west, the Côtes-d’Armor in the north, Morbihan in the south and Ille-et-Vilaine to the east.

The population in historic (i.e., current administrative *région* plus Loire-Atlantique) Brittany is 3,847,663, of which 15% live in rural areas, 28% in semi-urban situations, and 35% directly in urban areas. Only about 27,000 residents of Brittany are not French citizens, but 23% of historic Brittany’s population was born elsewhere in France. Despite the apparent movement within France, though, only about 5% of the present population of areas that were traditionally Breton-dominated comes from a non-Breton heritage speaking background. Overall, Brittany is not among the most economically prosperous areas of France; its standard of living is below the national average, and “it is frequently remarked that the most strongly Breton speaking areas are also the poorest” (RCW 1995).

1.1.1 History

³ The languages are divided in this manner because of the way the Celtic languages divided concerning Proto-Celtic [k’]; it became [p] in some dialects and [q] in others. (Schmidt 1988, Hale 2001).

⁴ In general, throughout the rest of the paper, ‘Brittany’ will refer to the *région* + 1 — that is, the current administrative division that includes four *départements* and the Loire-Atlantique. Care will be taken to make a distinction when discussing only the administrative *région*.

The Breton language is generally understood to have been brought to France by an immigration of Armoricans and Celts from Britain around the 5th century A.D; these peoples were driven out of Cornwall and Wales during the Anglo-Saxon invasions that began once the Romans relinquished control of Britain. The indigenous language at the time would have been Gaulish, which interacted with the invaders' language, as they quickly became the dominant force in the peninsula. The Bretons took control of the area from the Gauls, spreading from the north and west towards the south and east. The primary vehicle for language dissemination was religion, which Breton preachers performed in the local dialect, and Breton rapidly became the dominant language everywhere except in the south of Brittany, which resulted in the southern dialect of Breton being the least mutually comprehensible with the others (Timm 1973). An alternative theory of Breton's development holds that it developed directly from Gaulish instead of being imported from Britain (Jones 1999).

The influence of the Bretons spread eastward until they made contact with the Normans, effectively delimiting Bretagne into the "*région + I*" of today. Brittany, at the time a duchy, was incorporated amicably into France under François 1 in 1532, and Breton was in use as the vernacular language through about the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Latin, however, was in use as the language of administration until it gave way to French in the Edict of Villers-Côterrets in 1539. Breton, in fact, never truly served as a written administrative language, though it has been written in at least some form—often at the very minimum in religious texts—since at least the late 7th century (Denez 1998). Brittany was administered as a province until 1789, when it was incorporated into the French state under the *département/région/commune* system that was standardized throughout the country.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Breton was losing ground as a language, but the Jesuit religious order took up its cause in the 17th century. Père Maunoir is credited as being particularly committed to the cause of Breton; it is said to be due to his influence that “a favorable attitude towards Breton became a veritable cult ... in his mysticism, Maunoir did not distinguish between the faith of the Bretons and their language” (Timm 1973: 287). Breton thus gained the status of having a mysterious, unexplained link to the Catholic faith, leaving the church to serve as one of the fundamental strongholds of the language well into the 20th century. Breton usage peaked in the earliest years of the 20th century, and it began a sharp drop in usage that has continued to today.

1.1.2 Dialects

Linguists generally agree that Brittany can be divided into four dialect regions that corresponded to ancient ecclesiastical divisions and very roughly correspond to four of the five historic Breton *départements*: Léon (L) in the northwest, Kernev (K) in the southwest, Trégor (T) in the north and Gwened (G) in the south. (See Appendix, section 8.1, for a map). Speakers of any of the first three can understand one another quite well, leading to a tendency to group the languages together as KLT. Gwened is the most distinct dialect and is on the verge of being mutually incomprehensible with the other three (RCW 1996).

1.1.3 Usage by the numbers: speakers and demographics

Though a fuller treatment of the sociolinguistic situation of Breton appears later in this work, it will serve to give a brief overview of usage of Breton. Before 1999, the French government never asked questions about languages other than French on censuses, so until that year there were no official studies of the spread of Breton. Independent organizations, however, commissioned studies.

The official French survey, conducted in 1999 by the INSEE (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Study) and published in the institute's journal in Brittany, *Octant*, puts the number of Breton speakers over the age of 18 in Brittany at 257,000, or 12% of the population of Brittany (Isabelle Le Boette, cited in Broudic 2002d). When all of France is included, the number grows to 297,000. By comparison, 20% of Brittany is polyglot; 112,000 residents, or 5.2%, speak English, the third most widely spoken language (after Breton and French), while insignificant numbers speak Spanish, German, Italian and other languages.

The INSEE numbers, which were based on a survey sample size of 40,000, are consistent with privately commissioned surveys. A TMO-Régions study in 1991 suggested that 21% of the population over the age of 15 in Basse-Bretagne (Lower Brittany) could speak Breton, making the figure approximately 250,000 people. The survey was repeated in 1997 and 2001 and put current speaker numbers relatively close to those of the INSEE at 240,000 (Broudic 2002a). The TMO surveys demonstrate one of the key attributes of Breton, however: it is a language spoken by older people. Between 1991 and 1997, the number of speakers stayed relatively constant, but not because of youth learning the language—“c'est essentiellement – ainsi que nous le verrons – en raison de son vieillissement⁵” (Broudic 2002c). Three of four Breton speakers are over the age of 50, while a full 50% are over the age of 65. Though these figures alone cannot be assumed to be indicative of language shift, as Susan Gal (1978) pointed out by suggesting that a language might simply be a language that is used in old age, the incredible drop in the number of speakers—from well over a million at the turn of the 20th century—seems to permit that conclusion to be drawn.

⁵ 'It's essentially—as we see—because of the aging [of Breton speakers].'

Another key feature of Breton is that although it used to be transmitted naturally in the home, that is no longer the case. The school has replaced the home as the site of language transmission, a feature that is the subject of much discussion, particularly as it relates to optimism or a lack thereof about the future of the language's usage. Nonetheless, of those who speak Breton in Brittany, seven of eight still learned Breton in their family, while only one of 17 English speakers learned that language in the home (Broudic 2002d).

One final feature is that Breton is strongest in smaller, poorer rural areas, as the Research Centre of Wales (1996) points out: "a majority of residents in towns of less than 10,000 residents in inland Lower Brittany can at least understand the language. There is no evidence for any intergenerational transmission of the language anywhere but in the rural areas, except in the case of a handful of particularly committed urban families." Nevertheless, as France continues to industrialize, these rural areas are disappearing; 40% of those under 25 who are born in such *communes* leave the Breton-speaking stronghold behind to move to another area.

Breton, then, is a language spoken by approximately 250,000 people in Brittany, who make up approximately 15% of Lower Brittany or 6% of historical Brittany. When it is spoken, it is done so primarily in rural areas by aged individuals. After French, Breton is still the language most spoken in Brittany, though finding a Breton monolingual at the present time is likely an impossible task.

1.2 Language Profile: Oc

While Breton is easily identified as a language composed of four dialects spoken in a well-delineated region, there is much more debate over the definition of Occitan. In its broadest sense, "Occitan" is used to refer to a continuum of Romance languages spoken across the southern third of France, stretching from Bordeaux in the west across into Italy in the east. This

was the viewpoint most commonly defended by both linguists and language activists after 1945 and particularly after the rise of sociolinguistics in France after 1970. Nonetheless, recently—since the early 1990’s in some cases but only in earnest in the past few years—there has been a shift towards a belief that there is not one Occitan language but rather a collection of five languages that are very similar—namely, Gascon/Béarnais in the southwest, Occitan-Languedoc in the central south, Provençal in the southeast, Auvergnat in the central north and Limousin in the central northwest.

The debate over the classification is complex and will be discussed later in this work, but for the purposes of this paper, and since the sociolinguistic situations in the different regions are so different, we will stick with the current scholarly trend in the field and use the term *langues d’oc* to denote all five languages. The name derives from the fact that the languages in the north of France proceed from a common Romance language ancestor used the word *oïl* for ‘yes,’ while the word for ‘yes’ in the south was *oc*—thus, *langue d’oc* or *Occitan*, which is traditionally used to refer to the most central of dialects in the south and which loans its name to the *département* of Languedoc-Roussillon, an area that has served as a stronghold of usage. In the rest of this paper, therefore, *Occitan* should be understood to refer to the regional language spoken in the Languedoc-Roussillon region; when general trends of the five languages are being discussed, the term *Oc* will be used, with the caveat that since a large deal of the linguistic work between 1970 and 2004 was done on a theoretical unified Occitan, this distinction has the potential to be blurry.⁶

⁶ A map showing the general language boundaries of the French south is included in the Appendix, section 8.2. These are the boundaries as assumed in the body of this paper.

1.2.1 Usage data

As with Breton, due to the lack of official data but also due to the language identity debate, Oc has been very hard to quantify. Field (1980: 39) notes that the languages are “sociolinguistically enigmatic” due to the “clear transitory nature of the present situation and ... the simple lack of hard data regarding the numbers and distribution of speakers of Oc.” Estimates vary widely, with the Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana (ISC) (1996) extrapolating a 1992 survey to figure that approximately three million people can hold a brief conversation and two-six million use it from time to time, “a rough estimate of some six million people who have some command of the language which would enable them to pick up the language fairly easily again if they needed to do so” while admitting that “the absence of reliable data make it difficult to determine the number of speakers” (ISC 1996). Walter (1993: 118) cites a 1970 SOFRES study that estimated two million fluent speakers and eight million who could understand at least some. Some research done on individual regions is a bit more reliable.

Oc, then, covers approximately a third of France, including Monaco, the Alps area in Italy and some of the Aran Valley in Spain (ISC 1995). That accounts for 31 of France’s approximately 100 *départements*, encompassing approximately 13 million people. The composition of this area is more fluid than that of Brittany; approximately 20 percent of the population left to seek work elsewhere, particularly between 1963 and 1975, but population is up overall because an ‘influx has resulted mainly from the creation of new industries and the development of tourism and reached its peak during the period from 1975 to 1993. French is foremost among the languages spoken by the newcomers, followed by the languages of immigrant communities (Arabic, Berber, etc.)’ (ISC 1996). Economically, as in Brittany, the

French south has a standard of living slightly below the national average and shows a “disproportionate reliance on agriculture” (ISC 1996).

1.2.2 History

As a Romance language, Oc developed as a daughter language of Latin, existing as a vernacularized form in diglossia with Latin across the south of France before 1300; the Euromosaic project notes that “in the Middle Ages, Occitan (traditionally referred to as *langue d’oc*) was unquestionably a great language of civilization and the means of expression of an original human community and of an important culture” (ISC 1996). French developed around 1300 and gradually displaced Latin as the language of government and administration before the 16th century. From that time through the 1700’s, the two languages existed in a stable diglossic situation “characterized by the oral, everyday use of Occitan and the literate, official use of French” (Schlieben-Lange 1993: 213). French then began to spread itself into more and more speech situations, and after the French Revolution in 1789 Oc became “a purely oral, non-intellectual language” and was gradually displaced by French (Schlieben-Lange 1993: 215). As with Breton, Oc never gained significant usage as a written administrative language.

1.3 A brief history of French language policy

At this point, it will serve to put the usage of Breton and Oc into the context of French language policy, since the government’s attitude towards the usage of regional languages has a colored history and has likely had a strong impact on the attitudes of Bretons and Oc speakers.

As France became unified under François I in the early 1500’s, each region tended to use its own vernacular; Latin served as the official administrative language in many areas. Timm (1973) cites Brunot (1967: 250) as saying that “as early as the tenth century, only French was spoken in the chateaux, and French was, at that time, too, the official language of administrative

and court matters.” François, in an attempt to unify the territory under his control, issued the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539 that installed French (as opposed to Latin) as the official language of government, including documents and ordinances. Despite this imposition, the use of vernacular continued unabated throughout France through the 16th and 17th centuries. French remained the language of the elite and the language of government; most citizens, especially those in rural areas, had no need to speak French, and that posed no problem to the government.

The discourse at the national level would change along with the revolution in 1789; the rise of a central state in Paris that had a stronger conception of national identity was concurrent with the emergence of Jacobinism. Ensuring that France had but one language for one nation became a top priority of the new government, and as such the government developed a policy that was extremely hostile towards the usage of regional languages. Stigmatization of Breton and Oc, along with the other *patois*, thus occurred at the official level in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s.

Many political sociologists have linked the French obsession with its central state and central identity to a fear of instability that recognition of internal diversity would bring. Dealing with the *de facto* conditions of diversity within a given national space while dealing with *de jure* equality is a tension that the French state has fought for hundreds of years and continues to fight to this day, as McDonald (1989: 2) observes:

France has also tried to define its way over the same period through two monarchies, one consulate, two empires, five republics, one definitive revolution, the Paris Commune, the Vichy regime, and May 1968. Faced with this succession of external threat and internal upheaval, Paris has never been sufficiently sure of the integrity of France to wish into existence other identities within it.

It is logical, as Varaut argues in the piece from which the quote that opens this paper was taken, that linguistic xenophobia would follow such concerns. McDonald (1989: 5) notes that “French

has since [1789] been regularly invoked, internally and externally, as the face of France and of Frenchness itself.”

Unfortunately for the government, though, France was not sufficiently modernized for a governmental position to stamp out the regional languages effectively at the time of the revolution. France did not have mandatory education until much later on, and as such could only truly force citizens to use French in rare, specific situations when they had to deal directly with the government. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence of governmental oppression of Breton and Oc; for example, a Préfet of the Côtes-du-Nord/Finistère wrote in a letter to the Minister of Public Education that “Il faut détruire le langage breton”⁷ (Jones 1999: 68).

As Schlieben-Lange (1993: 215) succinctly states, “we have reason to believe that the decisive event in the marginalization of Occitan was the introduction of obligatory schooling by Jules Ferry in the Third Republic [i.e., in the 1870s and 1880s];” that statement is easily true for Breton as well. Free, mandatory education—suddenly viewed as a necessity by the French government, which blamed its defeat by the Prussians on the superior Prussian educational system, according to McDonald (1989)—meant that the government finally had an effective way to control language usage in the Hexagon; students caught speaking in Oc or Breton in school were ostracized and punished. A student caught speaking Breton, for example, might have to clean the latrine, or would be made to carry an infamous object, possibly a small piece of wood or another identifying object, known as *le symbole* with him or around his neck. The student would have to report another student speaking Breton before the end of the day or be forced to conjugate French verbs after school (Timm 1980). This official stigmatization begat social

⁷ ‘It is necessary to destroy the Breton language.’

stigmatization; parents began to realize that “at best, Breton might be considered an obstacle to social advancement; at worst, a terrible stigma of inferiority” (Timm 1980: 30).

The government’s policy of language unity continued well into the twentieth century. Roparz Hémon, a Breton language activist, alleges that government propaganda depicted Breton as “a poor, gross patois, without unity, incapable of expressing an abstract idea, of putting itself on a level compatible with progress, etc.” (Hemon 1947:49 qtd. in Timm 1980). The turning point for regional languages came in the late 1960’s; though “traditional sociological models would have predicted an increase in centralism and a decrease in regionalism,” according to Rogers (1996: 550), a student uprising in 1968 brought Paris to its knees and resulted in a national general strike not unlike those that were feared over the *Contrat première embauche* in the spring of 2006. Though the country’s revolt was not specifically related to languages or regionalism, it marked a small rise of progressivism that sought to undo years of enforced cultural oneness. Similar movements, some of them inspired by socialism, took place at approximately the same time in the United States, Germany, Italy, Argentina, the eastern bloc countries and Spain, though McDonald (1989) credits the Algerian War and economic reasons for exacerbating the specific situation in France. 1970 marked the beginning of a softening of France’s language policy. Though private schools were permitted to teach regional languages after the passage of the *Loi Deixonne* in 1951, it was after 1970 that language maintenance movements began to truly gain strength. This was a gradual process, however; in 1972, President of the Republic Georges Pompidou is alleged to have said that “il n’y a pas de place pour les langues régionales”⁸ (qtd. in Jones 1999: 68). Nonetheless, regionalist movements garnered momentum; *Sav Breizh (Breton Power)* was created in 1968, and Timm (1973: 292) notes that

⁸ ‘There is no place for regional languages.’

“it is only since 1968 that BZH (Brittany) stickers began appearing on the backs of local cars, paralleling the European tradition of labeling cars according to nationality.”

1.4 French language policy today

The last issue that remains in the domain of language policy is the current legal status afforded to regional languages in France, both in terms of public usage and education. In fact, in 1992, the French government passed a constitutional amendment stating succinctly that “la langue de la République est le français.”⁹ It is generally a given that no language apart from French is suitable for usage in any official context, though some *mairies* in areas with a lot of non-French speakers may have bilingual staff to assist in legal matters in French.

1.4.1 Europe and regional languages

Interestingly, the European superstructure is often viewed as a potential regional language savior; the EU will add Irish as its 21st national language for document publication in 2007, and, in fact, in 1999, the Council of Europe (CoE) passed the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages. This instrument sought to guarantee speakers of regional or minority languages in the member states of the CoE the right to practice their language in both the public and private spheres.

Though France signed the charter, when it came time for ratification, President Jacques Chirac ordered the document to be sent to the French *Conseil constitutionnel* to determine whether its terms were acceptable given the French Constitution and juridical practice in France. The Conseil issued a decision that spoke plainly as it ruled that the charter was contrary to the French constitution. The Conseil (1999), noting that “le principe d’unicité du peuple français, dont aucune section ne peut s’attribuer l’exercice de la souveraineté nationale, a également

⁹ ‘The language of the Republic is French.’

valeur constitutionnelle,”¹⁰ argued that “ces principes fondamentaux s’opposent à ce qui soient reconnus des droits collectives à quelque groupe que ce soit, défini par une communauté d’origine, de culture, de langue ou de croyance.”¹¹ The decision reiterates that no group within France may receive special status, which the right to use another language beside French would constitute:

La Charte reconnaît à chaque personne “un droit imprescriptible” de “pratiquer une langue régionale ou minoritaire dans la vie privée et publique” ... considérant qu’il résulte de ces dispositions combinées que la Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires, en ce qu’elle confère des droits spécifiques à des “groupes” de locuteurs de langues régionales ou minoritaires, à l’intérieur de “territoires” dans lesquels ces langues sont pratiquées, porte atteinte aux principes constitutionnelles d’indivisibilité de la République, d’égalité devant la loi et d’unicité du peuple français.¹² (Conseil constitutionnel français 1999)

France was ultimately only able to sign the charter; it has not been able to ratify the charter and put it into effect.

1.4.2 *The Cerquiglini report*

Though France failed to ratify the charter, the revitalization of regional languages around Europe and the discussion at the Council of Europe inspired France to take stock of its regional languages. The task fell to Bernard Cerquiglini, a linguistics professor (at the time at the Université de Paris-VII Diderot and the Université libre de Bruxelles and currently at Louisiana State University) who wrote a 1999 report called *Les Langues de France*. Cerquiglini (1999)

¹⁰ ‘The principle of the unity of the French people, of which no one sector can claim the right to exercise national sovereignty, has equal constitutional value.’

¹¹ ‘These fundamental principles are opposed to those rights that would be recognized as collective group rights by whatever such group would define itself, be it on the basis of origins, culture, language, or belief.’

¹² ‘The Charter guarantees to each person ‘an inalienable right’ to ‘practice a regional or minority language in private and public life.’ Considering that the combination of terms of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, in as far as it confers specific rights to ‘groups’ of regional or minority language speakers in the ‘territories’ in which these languages are spoken, is in conflict with the constitutional principles of the indivisibility of the Republic, of equality before the law, and of the unity of the French people.’

viewed his task, not completed in France since the days of Robespierre (1758-1794) thus: “Il se permet de suggérer que la France se donne l’intention et les moyens d’une description scientifique de ses langues, aboutissant à une publication de synthèse. La dernière enquête sur le patrimoine linguistique de la République, menée il est vrai dans un esprit assez différent, est celle de l’abbé Grégoire (1790-2).”¹³ Working within the framework of the definitions and recommendations made in the same 1999 European Charter, Cerquiglini created a list of 75 languages in France.

It is telling, though, how Cerquiglini carefully played with the definitions to walk a fine political line. He notes that “la mission confiée au rapporteur, telle qu’il l’a comprise, concerne les savants, et non les militants”¹⁴ (Cerquiglini 1999). The report tips Cerquiglini’s hand with regards to the Oc issue; he identifies eight separate *langues d’oïl* but lumps the *langues d’oc* together under the heading of Occitan. While the report is generally good at including the languages spoken by immigrants (i.e., Berber, Yiddish, Romani Chib, Western Armenian), Cerquiglini fails to truly apply a single standard in selecting languages, because he carefully structured the definition of languages to include those that have been deprived of a defined territory but that still contribute to France’s heritage, leading to frustration on the part of partisans of the regional Oc languages (see section 4.2.2 below). Cerquiglini’s report nonetheless constitutes a giant step for France in the recognition of its regionalism, and it of course occurred contemporaneously with the 1999 INSEE survey that provided France with actual estimates of speaker numbers.

¹³ ‘It is permitted to suggest that France has shown the intention of having and the means for a scientific description of its languages, culminating in a summarizing publication. The last study of the linguistic heritage of the Republic, though it was undertaken in a very different spirit, was that of Abbé Grégoire (1790-2).’

¹⁴ ‘The mission given to the report’s writer, as far as he understands it, concerns speakers, not activists.’

1.4.3 Education

One of Cerquiglini's recommendations was that the French government work within the existing legal framework to incorporate minority languages, starting with education. The *Loi Deixonne* provides for some regional language instruction, but the government has just begun—very slowly—to support the regional languages as optional subjects in school. As such, there can be several types of regional language instruction: monolingual instruction in a private 'militant' school like Diwan (Breton) or a Calendreta (in "Occitan"), with some teachers being funded by the central government; monolingual or bilingual instruction in a Catholic private school; limited instruction in a public school. The government wields its control over the public school system primarily by controlling the number of teachers granted certification to teach regional languages, often only granting the CAPES to one or two posts a year. The battle for recognition of Diwan schools is a superb case study in the relationship of the French government with regional language communities and is discussed later in this work.

Nonetheless, education in regional languages has exploded in France. Currently, more than 38,000 students are taking true bilingual education; instruction in the Basque region grows by 10% per year, and Alsace there are already 12,000 such students even though the program has only existed for 15 years (Gorce 2005a). Overall, in 2003-2004, 352,204 students were receiving some instruction in a regional language—261,000 of them in primary schools and the rest in secondary (Gorce 2005a). Gorce (2005a), a writer for French national daily *La Croix*, notes that "la demande des familles bretonnes, basques ou alsaciennes dépasse les milieux "militants.""¹⁵ Note the exclusion of Oc from this list; Oc speaker response to the educational movement differs from that in Brittany and will be discussed later. It seems fair, though, to conclude that regional

¹⁵ 'The demand of Breton, Basque, and Alsatian families has passed 'militant' levels.'

languages are working within the growing space given them by the French government to increase their influence in education.

1.4.4 A continuing debate

It is important to note, though, that the increased visibility of regional languages since 1970 is not universally approved in France. The passage of the 1992 constitutional amendment and the *Conseil constitutionnel*'s decision in 1999 should evidence as much. But the regional language debate continues to take place for the nation's scholars. Two letters to the editor published in national daily newspapers in the past five years demonstrate diametrically opposed opinions about the use of regional languages.

Xavier Darcos, a former minister of *enseignement scolaire*, wrote to *La Croix* to defend the role played by regional languages in the French educational system. While admitting that there are practical difficulties to integrating minority languages, including deciding which languages are worthy of receiving increased status and how to redistribute time in a secondary school day that is already packed with instruction, Darcos (2005: 5) says that "le contexte a heureusement changé dans le bon sens depuis les premières reconnaissances dans les années 1980, en passant par les directives que j'avais signées en 1995."¹⁶ He also notes that the immense territory in which Oc is spoken can be a serious handicap: "Il existe une conscience de l'identité par la langue plus forte en Alsace qu'en Dordogne [en Périgord en Occitanie]"¹⁷ (2005: 5). More tellingly, though, Darcos does not view the instruction of regional languages as necessarily being against the principles of the French Republic. In fact, he sees such programs as potentially being an asset on the issue: "Puisque l'école veut toujours être l'unificateur de la nation, elle doit,

¹⁶ 'The context has happily changed, in a good way, since the first recognitions [of regional languages] in the 1980s, and including the directives that I had signed in 1995.'

¹⁷ 'There is a conscience of identity involving language that is stronger than in Alsace than in Dordogne.'

partout où elle le peut, encourager les cultures et les langues régionales ... C'est une manière ... d'éviter que s'exacerbent les revendications séparatistes ou identitaires qui porteraient précisément atteinte à l'unité de notre pays"¹⁸ (Darcos 2005: 5).

By contrast, in 2001, a letter by a lawyer named Jean-Marc Varaut was published in conservative daily *Le Figaro*, arguing that preserving the regional languages in France can only exacerbate regional tensions and undermine national unity. Though Varaut notes that it is a human right to conserve regional languages, Varaut (2001) expresses the chauvinist view often associated with attachment to the French language in implying that French is a superior language to Breton and Oc and that it is linked to France: "Cette dogmatisme de Jack Lang qui menace la primauté du français, langue de raison et de la sociabilité, langue du progrès, car dans notre pays langue et conscience nationale sont indivisiblement mêlées." Varaut (2001) further implies that encouraging increased usage of regional languages like Breton or Oc will open the door for the recognition of immigrant languages, exacerbating an already simmering tension that might further divide France:

Le soutien apporté, de l'Alsace à la Corse, aux langues régionales ne peut qu'être une arme pour justifier et revendiquer le communautarisme des minorités nationales. Il n'y aura aucune raison pour refuser aux langues arabes et berbères la même reconnaissance et le droit à un développement séparé. Ce qui sera renier le grand héritage: la nation française n'est pas une association de communautés mais une communauté de citoyens dans le cadre historique et linguistique d'une nation.¹⁹

¹⁸ 'Since schooling aims to be the unifying force in the nation, it must, wherever possible, encourage regional cultures and regional languages... It's a way ... to avoid exacerbating separatist revendications or identity revendications that would, in fact, damage the unity of our country.'

¹⁹ 'The support given to regional languages, from Alsace to Corsica, can be nothing but a way to justify and give strength to the communitarianism of national minorities. There will be no reason to refuse Arabic and Berber languages the same status and the same right to separate development, which would deny the great heritage: the French nation is not a grouping of communities, but rather a community of citizens in the historical and linguistic structure of a nation.'

The debate over the use of regional languages remains an issue that divides France today, though France has clearly come a long way since the days of actively pursuing its regional languages with the goal of erasing them from use. In terms of the UNESCO report on Language Vitality & Endangerment, France's linguistic policy has passed from grade 0 (*prohibition*, on a scale out of 5) through grades 1 and 2 to what can be construed as grade 3 (*passive assimilation*) or grade 4 (*differentiated support*) depending on the language in question (UNESCO 2003). Reminders of the implications of the historical and current policies will be seen throughout the discussion of the sociolinguistic situations of these languages.

2.0 Breton and Oc: trends in common

Before examining the Breton and Oc language communities to attempt to discern the differences between them, it is well worth examining the features that the two communities have in common and how they exemplify existing theoretical linguistics work. Three primary diagnostics of language shift can be extrapolated from among the areas that will be highlighted in this work: speaker decline, domain restriction and stigmatization. Grenoble and Whaley (1998: 24) propose a typology of language endangerment based on that of Edwards (1992) that uses a matrix of "perspectives by which human groups can be characterized" and "the scope over which [these variables] can be applied: Speaker, Language, and Setting." They also highlight three important factors to consider in language shift: economics, access and motivation (Grenoble and Whaley 1998). The UNESCO report on Language Vitality and Endangerment also provides rubrics to determine language vitality. Though the discussion of Breton and Oc in this work is not structured specifically along the lines of the diagnostics provided in either of these works, all of the issues they raise are treated in depth.

2.1 Intergenerational transmission

Both Oc and Breton have exhibited severe drop-offs in spontaneous intergenerational transmission. In both languages, the shift from being monolingual in the regional language to bilingualism in the regional language and French to being monolingual in French occurred almost completely in the 1900's in two generations. For many families in 2006, this means that, counting from the present generation, the fourth generation (counting backwards from the present) is the last to have fluency. This makes both languages *severely endangered*, or grade 2 (on a scale from 0-5, with 5 being *safe* and 0 being *extinct*) on the ranking proposed by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). A grade 2 language “is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up” (UNESCO Ad Hoc 2003).

The INSEE study in 1999 suggested that family transmission of regional languages has dropped to 6% from 60% in the 1920s (Broudic 2002d). According to that study, Breton speakers have literally been decimated in the last two generations, while Alsatian only saw a decline of 1/3 and Basque, 1/2 (Broudic 2002d).

2.1.1 Breton

In summary, as McDonald (1989: 7) notes, “the number of Breton-speakers peaked before the First World War, then began a steady decline, and has fallen off more sharply in the decades since the Second World War.” As was suggested by the TMO-Régions study, Breton is undergoing a rapid decline—“entre les deux sondages TMO, la repartition par tranches d’âges s’est en effet considérablement transformée”²⁰ (Broudic 2002c). McDonald (1989) estimates a

²⁰ ‘Between the two TMO surveys, the division [of speakers] by age groups in effect changed considerably.’

62% drop from 1870 to 1970; Jones (1999) cites the following (admittedly incomplete) table proposed by Hewitt (1974: 69).

Table 1. Breton intergenerational transmission.

Year	Br Speakers	% population	% lower Brittany	% monoglots
1806	967,000	43		
1878/86	1,298,000	42		50+
1914	1,300,000		90	
1926				15
1928	1,200,000		85	
1936	1,200,000	41		
1952	1,100,000	36.6		9
1974	685,250		44.3	

The downward trend continued past 1974, as confirmed by the 1995 Euromosaic survey, which cited a 12.6% decline in the number of speakers who say they could understand the language in 10 years (RCW 1995). The distribution of speakers by age and by location is striking: 82% of individuals 75 years of age and older can speak it, while 100% of rural dwellers over 65 can speak it (RCW 1995). Overall, only 50% of 50 year olds and 3.5% of 15-19 year olds can speak Breton (RCW 1995). As will be discussed in greater detail later in this work, elderly individuals in rural areas are the last group likely to speak Breton natively; the younger speakers tend to be individuals who have learned Breton in other contexts—in school in cities, for example.

The TMO study noted that in 1991, the percentage of speakers of Breton who were over 60 was 45%; in 1997, that number increased to 67%, a gain of 22%. These numbers suggest that the average age of Breton speakers is getting higher, meaning the language is not being transmitted to the younger generation. 15-19 year olds only make up 0.5%, or 13,000, of the Breton-speaking population (Broudic 2002c).

The Euromosaic survey neatly shows the generational shift. 89.4% of those surveyed had grandparents who spoke Breton “very good or quite good”, but those same grandparents only

spoke French very good or quite good at a rate of 45.9%. In contrast, 97.7% of their parents spoke Breton and 87.8% spoke French; 90% of their children interact only or mainly in French (RCW 1995). The monolingual-bilingual-monolingual pattern is highly evident in these numbers, and the survey report comments that Breton is a “language which, by reference to language use in the home, is in a process of rapid decline, the family failing to operate as an effective agency of language reproduction” (RCW 1995). The last generation, the monolingual children of newly monolingual French-speaking parents, however, are those reaching middle age now, and it is they who are the first to truly feel the effects of having lost a language.

2.1.2 Oc

The lack of historical data on Oc means that it is difficult to find the same breadth of surveys to confirm the drop in intergenerational transmission in the French south. Nonetheless, the Euromosaic survey performed in 1996 around Toulouse (Occitan-Languedoc) showed similar trends to those apparent in Brittany, though the numbers clearly cannot be applied to the rest of Occitanie. The Euromosaic survey, performed by the Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana (ISC), found that the monolingual-bilingual-monolingual pattern was not as clearly defined as for Breton but that the drop in transmission was highly evident. The grandparents of those surveyed spoke French at a rate of 83.1% and Oc at 76%. The tide turned with their parents, 96.6% of whom spoke French while only 65% spoke Oc. By contrast, only 39% of the partners of those surveyed and 36% of their siblings spoke Oc, and only 16% use some Oc with their children. (ISC 1997). Since fewer than 10% of those surveyed had lived outside of the Oc speaking area, these numbers suggest that “the majority of respondents were raised in families where French was the sole language, though the use of Occitan with grandparents is stable” (ISC 1997). Walter

(1993: 118) confirms this lack of transmission: “partout, les parents ne parlaient que le français à leurs enfants.”²¹

Oc, then, is in a similar position to Breton, having seen its greatest drop in intergenerational transmission only in the last few generations. Occitanist sociolinguist Robert LaFont (qtd. in Field 1980: 40) noted that the language was finally giving in to the pressure applied to it by French: “Cette longue pression aboutit aujourd’hui à la disparition à peu près totale du monolinguisme Occitan, à un monolinguisme français majoritaire en milieu urbain (avec usage fort general d’un français regional à substrat Occitan)²² et à une diglossie complexe tant en milieu urbain que rural.”²³

2.2 Language shift

Extensive work done to track language shift in Brittany sheds light on the factors that inspired and catalyzed the switch from Breton to French, and it is likely that the trends can be applied to the French south as well. The shift is a complex issue of economic, social, educational, and other factors:

Beginning with the late 19th century the main causes of the francification of Celtic Lower Brittany have been obligatory elementary schooling, universal conscription, and the modernization of the economy and communications closely linking Brittany to Paris. Since World War II the decline of the Breton economy, the depopulation of the countryside, geographic and social mobility, the impact of the French mass media and accelerated tourism have provided further impetus toward francification. (Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter 1977: 33)

²¹ ‘Everywhere, parents only spoke French to their children.’

²² The influence of Oc on French in the south is a phenomenon discussed briefly below in section 4.4.5, but it deserves further study, particularly in the way in which it restructures pride in Oc identity.

²³ ‘This long-lasting pressure eventually resulted in the almost total disappearance of Occitan monolingualism today, with a shift to a dominant French monolingualism in urban areas (with strong general usage of an Occitan-based regional French) and to a complex diglossia as much in rural areas as in urban.’

As was mentioned earlier, efforts to eradicate the use of regional languages in France occurred following the French Revolution in 1789, but the gap between stigmatization and actual impact on language practice in this case ranges approximately 100 years, to the late 1800's. According to sociologist Charles Tilly²⁴ (1967: 26-7, qtd. in Timm 1973: 288), Brittany lived apart from the central French state, "both administratively neglected and socially isolated," with large disparity between the rural countryside and the prospering cities. The infrastructure in Brittany was dismal enough that French's "circular assault on Breton, penetrating from the coast and from the eastern frontier" kept Breton's status as the language of choice for everyday life (Brunot 1967: 536-40 qtd. in Timm 1973: 289). Until the factors aligned, however, language shift would not occur: "Des lois linguistiques, ou plus exactement dans le cas présent, des lois qui sont censées avoir des implications en termes d'évolution linguistique, ne produisent leur effet qu'à terme, avec retardement et en cascade, et à partir du moment où de multiples autres facteurs sont réunis pour constituer une conjonction favorable"²⁵ (Broudic 2002b).

Several forces came together in the late 1800's to cause change. In 1875, military conscription in France became uniformly enforced; education became free and obligatory in 1886 (Timm 1973). Before that time, the Catholic Church was the dominant force in education; according to Timm (1973: 288), "the Church, that great competitor of the State, saw the fostering of localism as a means of ensuring its influence and efficacy among the people; this it did with ease in Breton country." At the same time, France was undergoing rapid industrialization and

²⁴ Tilly is currently a professor at Columbia University. The research cited in this paper was published when he was a professor of sociology at the University of Toronto.

²⁵ 'Laws on language, or, in the present case, laws that are alleged to have linguistic implication, only produce an effect in the long term, delayed and in waves, from the moment where several other factors are reunited and create a situation favorable to those effects actually occurring.'

modernization, allowing Bretons to interact with their countrymen at an increased level. This new dialogue highlighted the need to abandon the use of Breton for French: “As the Breton citizenry began participating in national life on a scale as never before, they inevitably came into contact with the national language; and they soon found it expedient to speak French instead of, or in addition to, Breton” (Timm 1973: 290).

Studies universally suggest that the years around World War II were the decisive ones for language shift, both Breton and Oc. It was in those years that parents made the conscious choice to raise their children speaking French, not the regional language. A survey in Trégor in Brittany noted that “la coupure entre les générations les plus bretonnantes et celles qui le sont le moins se situe autour de ceux qui ont actuellement 50 ans ... Sur l’ensemble de la Basse-Bretagne, les années décisives se situent au lendemain de la dernière guerre: c’est à ce moment-là que les familles font massivement le choix d’élever leurs enfants en français et non plus en Breton”²⁶ (Broudic 2002c). Broudic (2002c) further cites a survey of individuals born in Brittany between 1904 and 1925 that found the respondents: tended to have parents who exclusively spoke Breton, though the father likely had learned French in school; the respondents were solidly bilingual; and the respondents’ children spoke only French, though they likely had passive knowledge of Breton. The authors link economic progress with the language shift: “Les parents font globalement le choix d’élever leurs enfants en français ... au moment précis où s’enclenche, à

²⁶ ‘The dividing line between the predominantly Breton-speaking generations and those who speak it less is situated approximately around those who are currently 50 years of age ... for the whole of Basse-Bretagne, the decisive years occurred around the period after the last war: it is at that moment that the families overwhelmingly chose to raise their children in French and no longer in Breton.’

partir de 1950, le plus vaste processus de modernization de l'économie qu'ait jamais connu la Bretagne"²⁷ (Broudic 2002c).

Housewives are credited with being the instigators of the language shift in France, making the choice to raise their children speaking French in the middle of the twentieth century, though it is important to note that it is difficult to determine whether parents or the children themselves assured the language shift. The two cannot truly be separated, since the parents play a fundamental role in forming their children's opinions about which language is accepted or preferred in usage. Broudic (2002c) notes that "les jeunes filles en particulier considèrent ceux qui parlent le Breton 'un peu comme des arriérés.'"²⁸ Broudic (2002c) also gives several sociolinguistic factors that drove this choice, including: mothers understood that speaking French was the only way to gain access to education; they wanted to prevent their children from the difficulty of having to adapt to French later in life, i.e. in the military if drafted; they wanted to conform to the trends in villages and towns, which shifted to French earlier; and, lastly, they made the choice as a rejection of the peasant identity traditionally associated with their regional language. That women should lead this change is not surprising, as Susan Gal (1978), discussed in section 6.0, showed for Hungarian speakers in Oberwart, Austria.

2.3 Literacy

The story of literacy in Breton and Oc is a long and complex one, and the issues involved in the question of Breton and Oc literacy today are equally controversial and complex. Both

²⁷ 'Globally, the parents are making the choice to raise their children in French ... at the precise moment that the vast process of modernization that Brittany had not experienced was beginning in the 1950s.'

²⁸ 'Young women in particular considered those who spoke Breton to be 'a little behind the times.'

languages have a literary history, though Oc's is better known than Breton's because of the troubadours associated with the development of Oc as a daughter language of Latin and because of the Félibrige movement of the late 19th century. There are writing systems that exist for Breton and Oc today, though the issue of orthography is one that has the potential to be divisive—see sections 3.3.4, 3.3.5, 4.4.2 and 6.0 for more information. As will be shown, though, most native speakers of the language (the same group that tends to be elderly and to live in rural areas) are unable to read or write, though they are overwhelmingly literate in French; the literate speakers are those who have learned the new standard Breton or Oc in recent years.

The lack of literacy in Breton and Oc can be attributed to a wide variety of factors, and the relationship of these speakers to the written versions of their language merits further study. In general, the orthographies discussed in this work are designed to be accessible to speakers of the language for which they are targeted. Those efforts notwithstanding, the degree of dialect variation within Breton or among the Oc languages may well mean that while most Gascons can read a given text, speakers from other Oc languages might not be able to. Likewise, the debate over the selection of standard orthographies has been so polarized and has occurred on such an academic and urban level that many speakers may have become inclined to assume that “their” version of the language has been left out.

More generally, though, the lack of literacy in the regional languages seems to be due to a lack of necessity. Breton and Oc were never languages that were approved for widespread administrative or educational use; those were tasks left first to Latin and then to French. It seems likely, though not specifically documented, that the illiteracy in the regional languages was used by French speakers as an argument to prove that the regional languages were backwards and unadaptable to modern times. It would not be surprising if such an argument had been used; Ong

(1988: 174) discusses the assumptions inherent in the words *orality* and *literacy*: “The terms are somewhat like the term ‘illiterate’: they identify an earlier state of affairs negatively, by noting a lack or deficiency.” Ong (1988) cites Lévi-Strauss’s 19th century work *La Pensée sauvage* as one example of a work that defends such a viewpoint. Apart from some examples of writing—e. g., religious texts in Brittany or Félibrige poems in Provence or the few journals or works that were published by intellectual elite from time to time—these languages, like most of the world’s languages, have been oral first and foremost. Denez (1998) even documents the presence of an otherwise unknown but significant amount of oral (recited and sung) literature in Breton that arose in the 19th century.

2.3.1 Breton

The 1995 Euromosaic survey found that almost all respondents could “understand” Breton and most were able to speak it. By contrast, 82.2% could write little or no Breton, while only 3.3% of respondents were unable to read or write French (RCW 1995). The TMO-Régions survey confirmed these numbers, with 75% of the speakers interviewed claiming to know how to read, but with the majority admitting that they could only read “with some difficulty” or “with difficulty” (Broudic 2002c). That survey showed that only 8% of speakers could write Breton, but only a fifth of those who can write say they do it well (Broudic 2002c). Further, less than 10% of those surveyed who can read do so regularly or often (Broudic 2002c). Breton, then, is by and large spoken; literacy in the language is extremely low.

2.3.2 Oc

The situation in the French south is very similar. As part of the Euromosaic survey, 74% of the sample said their comprehension of spoken Oc is “very good” or “quite good.” 59%,

however, can read little or no Oc, and 71% can write little or no Oc. On the other hand, 99% of those surveyed understand French, and all of those speakers can write French (ISC 1997).

These numbers suggest that where Breton and Oc exist today, they are oral languages, existing alongside with full literacy in the French language.

2.4 Retraction of usage domains

Both languages are characterized by an extreme restriction of domains in which the regional language is used instead of French. Though the languages never had official status in the legal sense of the word, they were once daily languages used for communication in every aspect of public life; usage has now become limited to private networks, most often in a family situation among older people or perhaps in a café with lifelong friends who both speak Oc.

Both of the languages seem to fit under grade 2 of the UNESCO scale of language vitality for domain and function, defined as:

Limited or formal domains (2): The non-dominant language is used only in highly formal domains, as especially in ritual and administration. The language may also still be used ... at ceremonial occasions where these older members of the community have a chance to meet. The limited domain may include homes where grandparents and other older extended family members reside, and other traditional gathering places of the elderly. Many people can understand the language but cannot speak it (UNESCO 2003).

Again, this number is scaled out of 5, suggesting that the domains are quite restricted, even though Breton and Oc used to be used at a grade 4, or *multilingual parity* level (UNESCO 2003).

2.4.1 Breton

Breton seems only to be utilized in very limited situations. Even both parties knowing the language is no guarantee that it will be selected over French in a given conversation; the Euromosaic survey summarizes that:

the number who claim that the interlocutor speaks Breton but that they choose to use French is high ... the potential use of Breton is limited to those services provided in the immediate community, and even there it is not guaranteed ... evidently, while Breton continues to serve as a community language its potential for language production is limited and would appear to rely upon the kind of specific network knowledge (i.e., that Breton usage is accepted or even preferred among a certain group of people) that might facilitate a reproduction role. (RCW 1995)

That survey identified that, among those able to speak the language in a given context, Breton speakers make the choice to speak Breton in large numbers only in a bar or with their local councilor. With, for example, the police (56.8%), making a theatre reservation (59.3%), sports (74.3%), in a library (73%) and with a lawyer (72.6%), the vast majority of speakers acknowledge that they are capable of using Breton but consciously choose not to use it (RCW 1995). Even though café/bar situations or with intimate friends/family are the only situations with elevated usage of Breton, French still is the dominant language chosen, over half the time.

The TMO-Régions study found that 77% of Breton speakers speak Breton less often than French, confirming that Breton usage occurs only along private networks where all individuals are capable of interlocution. In 80% of instances, in a group where everyone can speak Breton, the conversation will be in Breton; by contrast, if there is even one person who is unsure about his or her Breton ability, French will be used in 90% of the cases (Broudic 2002c). It is clear that French has become the default language for interaction.

Age of interlocutor also correlates with language usage. Youth, the all-important indicator of language vitality according to Fishman, use French among themselves, not Breton, and when speaking to youth French is the only acceptable language. Timm quotes Hémon (in Timm 1973: 291) as saying that “In many areas the young men and even more the young girls speak only French to their friends. To speak Breton to children ... is close to appearing a monstrosity. If you ask a peasant why he speaks French to his children, he will always answer,

‘He should learn French. He will always have time later on to learn Breton.’ Though Hémon is generalizing an anecdote in this case, survey data seems to confirm the truth of what he says: With younger people, 95% of Breton speakers use French, while 85% of Breton speakers speak Breton to those older than them (Broudic 2002c).

2.4.2 *Oc*

Oc has undergone a very similar domain restriction process. In the past, those surveyed as part of the Euromosaic project said they heard *Oc* often spoken in the streets at a rate of 73%; those who claim to hear it often now make up only 26% (ISC 1997). In no instance do a majority of those surveyed view themselves as being capable of speaking *Oc*; those who can and do choose to use it do so in elevated numbers only when speaking to their local councilor or a café manager or while shopping (ISC 1997). As with Breton, *Oc* is a language for visiting friends or talking in a café or bar; “the unavoidable conclusion is that the public use of Occitan is highly restricted” (ISC 1997).

Kremnitz identifies six factors that determine who might use *Oc* and in which instances they would do so. Men are more likely to speak *Oc* than women, because the women want “to give their children the benefit of having French as a mother tongue,” nonetheless, “young men in rural environments are expected to know *Oc* as a matter of personal pride.” (Kremnitz qtd. in Field 1980: 41). The older generations are more likely to speak it than the younger; the working class is more likely to use *Oc* than the bourgeoisie; smaller municipalities are more likely to serve as pockets of *Oc* speakers; isolated communities are more likely to hold speakers than those in contact with others; and those who had parents who grew up in the *Oc* speaking regions are more likely to speak (qtd. in Field 1980: 41). For Maurand (qtd. in Field 1980: 43), “l’occitan est la langue du domaine du travail agricole” and “la langue du monde rural”, “la langue de la

population masculine ... des relations familiaires,” while “le français est la langue du domaine des institutions officielles ... la langue des étrangers ... la langue de la promotion sociale.”²⁹

Overall, then, public usage of Breton and Oc has practically disappeared. The languages are utilized only in highly restricted, private networks where all speakers present are confident in their speaking abilities.

2.5 Language attitude

It seems obvious to say that the decline of public usage of Oc and Breton is in large part due to the stigmatization of regional languages that occurred on both an official, governmental and an unofficial, social level, but the speakers’ lack of esteem for their own regional languages reaches shocking levels. The term by which most speakers know their language is *patois*, a pejorative term in popular usage in France that implies a language is not fully suitable or fully developed. The speakers have been taught, thanks in large part to their experiences in the educational system, that regional languages are leftovers from an agrarian society, inferior to French and not suitable for use in the modern world.

The complexities of the attitudes of speakers (and non-speakers) towards their regional language will be treated in depth in section 3.2 (for Breton) and for individual Oc languages throughout section 4.0, but it suffices to give limited examples here. Timm (1973: 291), for example, states simply that “for many years Breton speakers have held their language in low regard.” The majority of Oc speakers see their language as a sign of inferiority (ISC 1997, Schlieben-Lange 1971, others), positing Oc as “la langue de la grossièreté et de la moquerie”

²⁹ ‘Occitan is the language of the domain of agricultural work,’ ‘the language of the rural world,’ and ‘the language of the masculine population ... of familial relations,’ while ‘French is the language of the domain of official institutions ... the language of foreigners/strangers ... the language of social promotion.’

while labeling French “la langue de la distinction”³⁰ (Field 1980: 43-4). It seems clear, then, that most speakers of both languages—especially the older native speakers who grew up speaking it in a hostile environment—hold their regional languages in very low esteem, particularly relative to French.

2.6 Subjectivity in discourse about minority languages

Before delving deeper into the issues surrounding the usage of these two minority languages of France, it is necessary to shed light on one more trend Oc and Breton have in common: the discourse used to discuss both languages, both by linguists and lay people alike, is heavily subjective. Sometimes the bias in an article is obvious—a dyed-in-the-wool Occitanist should be expected to make a historical morphological argument attempting to show that there are not separate Oc languages but one language with slight speech variation, for example. Other times, though, the bias is less obvious. Some linguists wrote early work relying on second-hand data that was organized for them in a biased way, and some linguists take a positivist approach when making broad judgements about the career work of a colleague. Within both Oc and Breton revitalization movements there are different groups that accuse the other of having been Nazi collaborators, or of being in bed with the French central government, or of some other linguistic-political sin.

This problem will be discussed in depth in section 6.0 and tangentially in the sections on each language, but it is worth noting here that the subjectivity of materials is common to both languages. In writing this paper, the author has attempted to remain aware of this bias and work around it.

³⁰ ‘The language of uncouthness, of mocking’ while French is ‘the language of distinction.’

2.6.1 Conclusion

Breton and Oc share many social usage characteristics of endangered languages. Despite their commonality, though, Breton is often presented as a more high-profile case of a battle to reverse language decline, likely as a result of the well-publicized battle for and the subsequent success of Diwan schooling in Brittany (cf. Gorce, who writes that, in comparison, Oc has a problem not only of means but of demand³¹).

3.0 The Breton language community

As was mentioned in section 2 above, Breton counts approximately 250,000 speakers in historical Brittany and about 300,000 throughout all of France. All surveys done on Breton, however, point to several key trends: practice of the regional language has become only occasional and continues to regress; literacy in the language is extremely low; Breton speakers live in areas with very low demographic and economic vitality; and speakers of Breton are, on the whole, quite elderly (Broudic 2002a). As far as attitudes are concerned, however, Breton speakers do seem to show some positive opinions about their language—though they recognize that it is not going to rival English or French as a language of international communication, they value it as part of their cultural and regional identity and would overwhelmingly like to see it

³¹ “L’occitan qui est, en volume, la langue la plus parlée (2.5 millions de locuteurs) est éparpillé sur un très vaste territoire qui va de Bordeaux à Nice en passant par l’Auvergne et le Dauphiné... les bassins de familles demandeuses d’un enseignement de langue régionale sont donc souvent insuffisamment denses pour permettre l’ouverture de filières bilingues ou le maintien de l’option langue régionale. L’occitan est aussi affaibli par ses divisions en de multiples dialectes et l’absence de forme écrite standard” (Gorce 2005: 4). (Occitan, which is, in speaker numbers, the most spoken language (2.5 million speakers) is spread across a vast territory that stretches from Bordeaux to Nice, passing through Auvergne and Dauphiné ... the reservoirs of families demanding regional language instruction are often insufficient to allow for the opening of bilingual programs or for the maintenance of the regional language option. Occitan is also weakened by its division into multiple dialects and the lack of a standard writing system.)

saved. The only potential issue: for most speakers, the best avenue for Breton revitalization seems to be schooling, which does not guarantee that the language will regain its foothold as a language used organically in the home. This tension is particularly exacerbated for Breton because of the gap between the new, urban, middle class and, often, activist speakers and those, often poor and living in rural areas, who have traditionally spoken the language.

3.1 Breton usage data

Breton, as we have already seen, is a language whose usage is decreasing over time with its domains of usage being restricted. Broudic (2002c) confirmed this with a 2000 survey in Trégor, “incontestablement le pays le plus bretonnant de Bretagne.”³² The study encompassed 1000 individuals over the age of 15 and found that one out of three can express himself or herself in Breton if necessary. Though the average age of speakers in Trégor was slightly lower than the Brittany average—52% were over 60, as compared to 66% for the region on the whole—the disparity is clearly evident. Further, only 4% of those aged 15-19 are capable of speaking Breton (against an average of 1% for all of Brittany). Those who have moved to the area speak less Breton than Brittany natives, though interestingly none of those from Paris or the Île-de-France region spoke Breton, while 7% of those from abroad or from other *départements* were capable (Broudic 2002 c). These numbers suggest that language shift is perhaps slightly less advanced in Trégor. Despite the area’s relative strength in Breton, however, the usage data still is quite damning, especially since, educational efforts aside, the Breton speaking population is likely to continue aging due to the lack of intergenerational transmission.

³² ‘Incontestably the most Breton-speaking area in Brittany.’

The Euromosaic study of Breton gives a good picture of *how* Breton is used. It is rapidly becoming a language disappearing from public life—for example, 95.0% of those surveyed heard Breton being spoken “often” in the streets in the past; only 66.8% said so for the present (RCW 1995). The decreases are even more striking for shopping and in church, where Breton used to be heard “often” by 68.5% but only by 10.8% nowadays (RCW 1995).

The Research Centre of Wales (1995) suggests that “Breton has become very much a private, personal language, in retreat from most aspects of community life,” and the numbers bear out this claim. Even those who are able to speak Breton fluently often choose to use French in a given situation. The more formal or official the situation, the less likely it is for a speaker to select the Breton code: Breton speakers most often can and do use Breton in bars (36.9%) or with talking to their local councilor (56.0%). By contrast, as was noted earlier, speaking with the police (56.8%), making a reservation for the theatre (59.3%), playing sports (74.3%), at the library (73%), talking with a lawyer (72.6%) or working with a travel agent (58.1%) are all dominantly viewed as situations where, although one is capable of speaking Breton, the language of choice is French (RCW 1995). The traditional link of Breton to the church (cf. section 2.0 above) has also been ruptured—only 22% of those surveyed regularly attend church, and those who do predominantly hear French, not Breton (RCW 1995).

It seems, then, that there is a growing disjunction between the ability to speak Breton and the *occasions de parole* in which a speaker judges it acceptable for usage. 53.5% of those surveyed said that more than half of their friends can speak Breton; 70.5% said all or most of their neighbors can speak. With these individuals, 46.1% use an equal amount of Breton and French or more Breton with friends and 59.8% do with neighbors (RCW 1995). The Research Centre of Wales (1995) analyzes this data as follows: “The number who claim that the

interlocutor speaks Breton but that they choose to use French is high... the potential use of Breton is limited to those services provided in the immediate community, and even there it is not guaranteed.”

Breton’s last stronghold, then, is in personal relationships where both parties are aware that the other speaks Breton. Interestingly, this data suggests a high degree of grouping among Breton speakers in neighborhoods, further strengthening the image of Breton as a private language.

A 1971 *Ouest France* survey in Trélévern, a rural village in Brittany, provides the clearest picture of the age stratification and language shift of Breton. The following table of results is reproduced in Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter 1977: 34, with emphasis added:

Table 2. Age stratification and language shift in Brittany.

Language	Age				
	>70	50-70	20-50	<20	
Use only Breton	11 = 19.29%	4 = 2.5%	0	0	15
Use Br and Fr equally	32 = 56.14%	126 = 78.75%	147 = 65.6%	20 = 9%	325
Know Br, but predominantly use French	6 = 10.5%	12 = 7.5%	26 = 11.6%	17 = 8%	61
Understand Br, but never speak it	4 = 7.01%	2 = 1.25%	29 = 12.9%	51 = 24%	86
Do not understand Br	4 = 7.01%	16 = 10%	22 = 9.8%	129 = 59%	171
	57	160	224	217	658 (of 899 residents)

The table illustrates that youth constitute the largest portion of those who do not speak Breton, and the elder portion of the population those most able to speak it, passing through the middle generations with their bilingual usage.

Séverine Choquet (personal communication), a non-profit communications specialist in Paris who currently works as an administrator of a study abroad program for American students, offers confirmation of this data on the level of personal observation. Choquet's grandparents moved from Finistère to Paris in the early 1950's; her family neatly shows the language shift: her grandparents spoke Breton, though her grandmother made the family switch to French as they raised their children, making those children (Choquet's parents) and the subsequent generation at best passive speakers: "Du coup ni ma mere, ni ses frères et soeurs ne parlaient le Breton même s'ils le comprenaient approximativement"³³ (Choquet, personal communication). Even today, though, Choquet says that even the part of her family that never left Finistère uses Breton in a manner consistent with the surveys of the area:

Beaucoup des cousins et cousines de ma mère (ils ont entre 70 et 80 ans) qui sont restés toute leur vie en Bretagne peuvent parler le Breton mais ils ne le font que rarement, même entre eux. Ils ne parlent Breton que quand ils racontent des histoires de leur jeunesse où leurs parents et les adultes qui les entouraient, parlaient Breton. C'est marrant d'ailleurs, car quand ils me racontent ça, ils le font aussi en partie en Breton, alors que je ne comprend que quelques mots !³⁴ (Choquet, personal communication)

It seems, then, that the characterization of Breton usage as being extremely restricted is borne out by the data and by personal observations. Breton is no longer a widely spoken language, and it has ceded most of the occasions in which it might be the code selected by speaker to the dominant language, French.

³³ 'Neither my mother nor her brothers and sisters speak Breton even if they can somewhat understand it.'

³⁴ 'A lot of my mother's cousins (between 70-80 years old) who have lived their whole lives in Brittany can speak Breton, but they only do so rarely, even among themselves. They only speak Breton when they tell stories about their youth where their parents or the adults around them spoke Breton. It's funny, though, because when they tell me that, they do it partly in Breton, and I can only understand some of the words!'

3.2 Breton speaker attitudes

The historical situation of French official stigmatization of Breton and the precipitous drop in speaker numbers suggest that more careful examination of the attitudes of the speakers—what they think of their language, whether they feel it can be adapted to modern use, whether they feel it is part of their identity—is in order. In general, Breton speakers view their language very positively and do posit a connection between Breton and their identity, though the effects of the negative opinion of Breton in education has certainly left its mark on the speakers.

3.2.1 *General attitude*

The impact of official neglect of the Breton has most clearly resulted in speakers viewing Breton as a backward language, but its public opinion has recently become markedly improved. The Euromosaic study concludes that the language’s disappearance “derives from the negative identity associated with a prolonged period not only of neglect but of hostility on the part of a state which has been constructed on the basis of a normativity that systematically fails to accommodate any sense of bilingualism that draws upon its internal cultural diversity” (RCW 1995). In a comparison of TMO-Régions studies, Broudic (2002a) finds that the positive attitude towards Breton has increased: those who feel it must be saved numbered 76% in 1991, 88% in 1997, and 92% in 2001. On a scale of 1-10, with ten being the most important, Brittany residents rated Breton at a 5.5; 23% completely agree that it would be a crime if Breton were to disappear, while 31% somewhat agree (Broudic 2002a). In the more localized Trégor survey, Broudic is able to tease apart some of the different trends in opinion. Though attitudes are positive, Broudic (2002c) posits that the language is not necessarily an object for activism on a personal level: “Ceux pour qui le breton est une véritable priorité représentent 7% de l’échantillon. Sans que l’on puisse établir de relation directe entre des données de nature différente, il convient de noter

cependant que ce pourcentage n'est pas éloigné du score de certains partis autonomistes ou régionalistes lors des dernières élections municipales ou cantonales."³⁵ Seeing Breton saved is viewed as good thing, but not a personal thing.

Breton is viewed as “une langue ancienne” by 94%, and the negative opinions inherent in the post-positioned *ancienne*, carrying the connotations of outdatedness, are attested to by many linguists. Jones (1999: 71) notes that “such negative attitudes have clearly left their impact upon the Breton speech-community who, seeing their language denigrated and even mocked, have been eager to disassociate themselves from it and the negative connotations that it now came to hold for them, as a marker of backwardness and ignorance, singling them out as peasants.” Rogers (1996: 553) says that “in the areas which remained Breton-speaking, many of those who had become parents during the 1950s and 1960s had received so clearly the message that ‘Breton = backwardness’ that, although they continued to converse with their elders and their peers in Breton, they had ceased to speak it with the younger generation.” This choice of language use in the home clearly affected the next generation’s choice of language, leading to a drop in regional language use.

Rogers’ observation points out a key characteristic of the pro-Breton population: it is primarily those between the ages of 20-60 in the middle class who watched the language disappear around them that feel the most positive towards Breton. Both Jones and Broudic observe the instance of this trend, with Broudic (2002c) noting that it is “les plus jeunes (les 15-

³⁵ ‘Those for whom Breton represents a true priority represent 7% of those surveyed. Though it’s impossible to establish a direct relationship with data of a different type, it is relevant to note that this percentage is not far from that of the score of certain autonomist or regionalist parties in the last municipal/*cantonal* elections.’

19 ans) et les plus âgés (les plus de 75 ans) sont, par exemple, ceux qui se sentent les moins concernés”³⁶ (Broudic 2002c).

This trend is not surprising: the eldest generation is the one who had the language forcibly beaten out of them in school, as Jones (1999: 77) observes: “[The shift is] clearly attributable to the way in which these informants were punished during their youth for speaking Breton in school and inculcated with the belief that French was the language of progress and modernity and that Breton was the language of peasants, better to be abandoned if one wanted to succeed.” Choquet observes that stigma in relation to her grandmother, noting that she chose not to pass the regional language on to her children “car quand ma grand-mère était petite, elle a été très marquée par son entrée à l'école où le breton était interdit mais comme elle parlait très mal le français ça a été très dur”³⁷ (Choquet, personal communication). As for the younger generation, though the data is not definitive, the relatively low support is likely due to a youthful lack of militancy stemming primarily from an underdeveloped consciousness of their identity as Bretons. But, in order for the language to reproduce itself and gain usage again, Breton will have to capture the support of that youngest generation.

Attitude towards Breton, then, can be said to be generally quite positive, though language activism is more of an issue that is generally supported rather than being a cause for personal devotion. There is also a divide among ages, with the 20-60 age group being the most positive, though ironically that is the generation least likely to be able to speak Breton.

³⁶ ‘The youth (15-19 years old) and the elderly (75+ years of age) who, for example, are the least concerned.’

³⁷ ‘Because when my grandmother was little, she had been quite influenced when she went to school, where Breton was prohibited. But since she spoke French very poorly, it was very hard.’

3.2.2 *Education and language treatment*

What do Breton speakers view as the future of their language? In general, though people seem aware of the decreased usage of their language, they view the language as best saved (and in fact, perhaps already saved) through the medium of schooling. They also view the language as an archaic or old language that is not as well suited to the modern world as French or English.

The majority (64.3%) think that Breton is disappearing, suggesting that speakers are generally aware of the precarious state of their language (RCW 1995). Asked whether Breton is a modern language, 72.5% disagreed with the statement “Breton has no place in the modern world” (RCW 1995), though the dominant majority of those who feel Breton should not be saved say they feel that way because of its “inutilité” (Broudic 2002c).³⁸ Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977: 36) found that “typically, older Bretons as well switch to French with they speak about progress ([‘progre’]).” These value judgments (must be considered, however, in the context of the language environment in France; the relationship between negative attitude towards a language and a surrounding culture that encourages a negative attitude is complex, and direct causality (or culpability) in either direction should not be assumed.

There is overwhelming support for increasing language usage by increasing Breton’s presence in schools. 67.4% of those surveyed in the Euromosaic project agreed that it is essential for children in Brittany to learn Breton (RCW 1995). The interest in compulsory education is lower—64% somewhat or completely disagree that Breton can only be saved through mandatory education—but those who feel Breton is somewhat of a priority remains at 53% (Broudic

³⁸ In her 1973 work Timm discusses several of the works that have argued for Breton’s inadequacy for the modern world, including Strowski (1952) who sought “to demonstrate the ‘archaism’ of Breton on the basis of its supposed inability to generalize as well as for its lexical inadequacies,” and Hardie, who alleged that Breton is primitive because it does not distinguish between blue and green.

2002a). Asked what to do to promote the language in an open-ended question, the most common response was education (at 28%), while only 4% thought it was important for children to speak Breton at home (Brodic 2002a).

Consistent with the characterization of Breton as somewhat unsuited for modern use, though, Breton was only the fourth most popular response when people were asked what languages they think children should learn in addition to French. Breton was given by 43% of respondents, trailing English (96%), Spanish (67%), and German (55%), though the next most popular response was Italian at 5% (Broudic 2002a).

Slightly disconcerting are figures that view the Diwan/bilingual education initiatives as having already secured the salvation of Breton. 42% held the opinion that Breton will save itself in 1991; that number increased to 72% in 1997 (Broudic 2002a). Again, these figures suggest a general feeling of approbation of Breton, one that is being satiated by seeing the success of Breton educational efforts without being overly concerned about the retreat of actual usage of the language. Breton speakers seem to be at least somewhat realistic in their judgments about their language; while they are at least somewhat attached to its usage, they remain cognizant of the economic pressures on language choice that have grown as a result of globalization.

This data shows that, while Breton is viewed as being among the languages on an ideal wish-list, in the context of a globalization and the Europeanization of France, Breton is not viewed as being sufficiently useful to make it a true priority in language education. Nonetheless, education is overwhelmingly the most commonly suggested avenue for saving Breton.

3.2.3 The Breton language and identity

Breton evidences an absolute connection between the language and regional identity. It seems that there is a very powerful congruency between the identity of the Brittany region and its

indigenous language. In the 2001 survey, Broudic (2002a) writes, 82% agree that Breton is “notre langue régionale,” and in the Euromosaic survey 80.9% agreed that Brittany would not be Brittany without Breton-speaking people (RCW 1995). The survey analyzed by Broudic (2002a) further confirms this data; 68% somewhat or completely agree with the statement that “Si le Breton disparaissait, la Bretagne perdrait son identité.”³⁹ In the Euromosaic survey, 94.6% of respondents identified themselves as Breton, while 80.1% identified themselves as French (RCW 1995). Those who spoke Breton were characterized in the Trégor survey as being more attached to their commune, Trégor, their *département* and to Brittany than non-speakers (Broudic 2002c).

This data suggests, then, that residents of Brittany retain a strong sense of Breton identity. While this does not preclude them from identifying as French as well—in fact, Jones (1999: 78) found that some were put off by the central-state rejecting philosophy of Diwan, noting that “Diwan was perceived by many as a symbol of separatism and, as such, frowned upon, with informants offering comments such as ‘on est français aussi’”⁴⁰—the Breton identity is powerful and may at times even trump French identity.

Breton identity, then, is inevitably linked to the use of the Breton language, and most residents in Brittany seem to show a strong identification with such an identity. Feeling that way, though, does not necessarily entail a rejection of French national identity; Breton identity is a supplemental creation “added on top.”

3.2.4 Conclusion

In summary, attitudes towards Breton in Brittany can be generally construed as very positive. Residents feel that the Breton language, which is an important part of their essential Breton identity, is worth saving. Nonetheless, they view education as the road to saving Breton,

³⁹ ‘If Breton were to disappear, Brittany would lose its identity.’

⁴⁰ ‘We’re French, also.’

and they in large part feel that such salvation will occur naturally as a result of these efforts. A true passion about the language is tempered by a realization that there is greater utility in learning “global” languages of communication, most notably English. As Jones (1999: 76) describes it, “there was evidence among the younger generation, however, that the school was gradually replacing the home as the main means of language transmission, although the limited number of pupils seems unlikely to stem the decline in terms of sheer numbers alone.” The potential effectiveness of such education will have to be proven by time, not just public opinion.

3.3 An attempt at language revival: the *néo-bretonnant* movement

3.3.1 Introduction

For over a century, but in earnest only since the rise of regionalism in France since the late 1960’s, attempts have been made to restore the Breton language’s usage and status, often through political efforts to gain more Breton instruction in schools. The *néo-bretonnant* movement is also characterized by a shift in speaker demographic; the next generation of Breton speakers is not rural agricultural workers, but rather an urban middle class. Rallying behind the language has also meant selecting a standard variety or dialect, the choice of which adds a political and linguistic dimension that has complicated efforts and alienated native speakers from those who are seeking to revive it.⁴¹

3.3.2 History of the Diwan movement: Hep Brezhoneg, Breizh Ebet⁴²

The most well-known aspect of the *néo-bretonnant* movement is the Diwan school network that immerses students in Breton, then introduces French later on. There are currently 33

⁴¹ The selection of a standard is the fundamental issue that characterized the Occitan movement; see section 4.0.

⁴² “Without Breton, no Brittany.”

primary schools, 3 *collèges*, 2 *collèges-annexes*, and 1 *lycée* in the Diwan network; 2761 students were enrolled in 2003-2004 (Diwan Breizh 2001). At the present time, the Diwan network functions with semi-private status, not integrated to the French public school system but having its teachers certified and, for a certain percentage of posts, paid for through the government.

The battle that was fought to gain such a status for Diwan is an excellent case study in French regionalism and center-periphery relations. Timm (1982: 1) traces Breton language militancy back to 1870, with the first movement to give the Breton language some presence in the French-dominated school system, noting that “by the early 20th century, however, it is easy to sense the urgency and sometimes militancy on the part of Breton advocates that show a deep concern over the future of the language.” One public school teacher, Yann Sohier, gained infamy for teaching Breton in a school in Lower Brittany in the 1920’s and 30’s, and a first effort to open a private Breton language school in 1942 was haltingly successful.

The Diwan movement’s struggle, detailed by Rogers in a seminal 1996 article, begins in earnest in 1977 with the establishment of the first private preschool. An early attempt to incorporate the school into the French public education system was made as part of the writing of a Breton Cultural Charter in 1978, but the failure of that document—it was modified both by Paris and by lower-level bureaucrats that were supposed to be supporters of the Breton cause—would set the tone for the next twenty years. Diwan, which was going ahead with plans for expansion, had high hopes for the Socialist government under Mitterrand that replaced the Giscard d’Estaing administration in 1981. Cultural Minister Jack Lang, a Socialist often lauded for his commitment to culture and pluralism, wrote a report that “emphasized that it was the responsibility of the government to engage in the active promotion of cultural pluralism” (Rogers

1996: 558). The first official document to come out of the new administration, however, did not fulfill expectations: the Savary Circular, which united all existing education statutes in one document, did not include treatment for Breton.

Diwan did win an agreement that the government would cover approximately 20% of its budget for the 1983-1984 school year, which Diwan accepted reluctantly, knowing the funding was not sufficient for the expansions that Diwan was undertaking. In the run-up to the 1986 elections, a hunger strike by the Diwan founders and the involvement of Brittany's members of Parliament (MPs), along with an expectation that the Socialists would be censured by the electorate, led to the government reaching an agreement to integrate Diwan (Rogers 1996).

The Parti Socialiste (PS), in an attempt to avoid making the issue any more high profile and in an attempt to avoid exacerbating party tensions over what a model of cultural pluralism should look like, tried to 'sneak' the bill through Parliament by attaching it to a finance bill. The Conseil constitutionnel examined the bill and deemed the maneuver improper, thus nullifying the agreement. Diwan was granted some integration as an appeasement in early 1986, but with the election of the Chirac government, Diwan's hopes again would fade; the new government chose to knock the number of teachers being covered from 31 down to 12. Diwan, again, was forced to accept what it was offered, knowing that it was better than nothing as the school network continued to expand and run itself further into debt (Rogers 1996).

At this point, the Chirac government began to hint that it was beginning to reconsider the entire issue of integrating Diwan, and it was at that moment that "Diwan's predicament began to take on a symbolic value, representing a more universal battle for the preservation of cultural identity itself, and thus transcending conventional, party political divisions" (Rogers 1996: 564). The *régions* and *départements* involved in the Breton cause began to get involved in the battle,

and the Christian right and the PS joined forces on the issue. The Finistère council decided to assist Diwan with a subsidy, and members of the European Parliament (Euro-MPs) and other European institutions began to exert their influence in the issue on the side of Diwan. Negotiations began to be productive, though they were bogged down in the number of hours to be devoted to French—at some point, the difference is rumored to have been as small as 20 minutes. Nonetheless, an agreement was reached in 1987, thanks to the fact that “the local authorities in Brittany were now starting to become directly involved in the issue of Diwan’s viability, with the regional council, in the form of its President, taking a major coordinating role” (Rogers 1996: 567).

The new agreement put more of the onus for supporting Diwan on the regional and departmental level, but the step was positive. Nonetheless, following the whole PS debacle in 1986, Diwan was left on the sidelines as Basque, Catalan, Oc and Corsican were granted agreements for total coverage of their language education programs in November of 1989. Though Breton speakers cried foul, the move was likely because the PS had overreached its bargaining power (Rogers 1996).

As the last decade of the 1900’s arrived, the Breton regional assemblies began to demonstrate more and more aggravation over Paris’ inaction on the Breton issue, though Paris claimed that it was staying hands-off because the enormous debt Diwan had accumulated with its never-stopping expansion—for example, the first collège had been opened in 1988. Diwan and the government agreed to a plan in 1990 that eventually aimed to completely incorporate Diwan. When the PS lost the election in 1993, Diwan was taken to court for the debt. According to Rogers (1996: 573), “Diwan deliberately allowed itself to fall into debt on a scale which would be tantamount to committing financial suicide, unless the authorities stepped in to save it.” On

the 20th of July in 1994, however, Diwan's legal position was fixed: it was given official private status under the Loi Deixonne, and the state assumed responsibility for 69 more teaching posts. The teachers were also treated equal to other lay teachers for the first time, and the debts were mostly forgiven by the national treasury (Rogers 1996).

Though Diwan has grown rapidly—its numbers have doubled since 1994—the battle did not turn out perfectly. Diwan would have preferred public school status; the private status deprives the schools the right to use public facilities like food facilities. Additionally, the government has managed to control the number of bilingual classes in the mainstream public system by limiting the number of CAPES certifications it awards in regional languages each year; without such certification, a teacher cannot teach that given subject. For instance, only four such posts were created between 1992 and 1995 (Rogers 1996).

Diwan and the movement for bilingual Breton education can be regarded as a success. Diwan children actually had better scores than the French average in French (12.06 versus 10.56 in 1990, 14.48 versus 12.1 in 1991), and 100 percent of them passed the Cambridge Preliminary English Test in 1991 (Rogers 1996). Currently, 56 schools in Brittany have equal instruction in Breton and French as part of the public program; the numbers grow each year, passing 10,000 in 2005 (Gorce 2005: 3). The first of those schools was begun in 1983, and each year grows by about five sites, according to Paul Molac, president of the association for parents of students for bilingual instruction in public schools, Diù Yezh (Gorce 2005: 3). Breton instruction in Catholic schools began in 1990 but grows by 15% per year; Jean-Claude Le Ruyet, head of bilingual education in the Diocese of Rennes, explains that “Au début, il fallait vraiment aller à la pêche

aux parents. Aujourd’hui, la demande n’est pas encore spontanée, mais quand on fait la proposition, un tiers des familles suivent”⁴³ (Gorce 2005: 3).

Who are the parents sending their children to these schools? While Diwan immersion programs are admittedly more aimed at activists, the public schools have a wider audience. Gorce (2005: 3) cites the example of Dolorès Casteret, who has two children in a bilingual school in Rennes although neither she nor her husband speaks Breton: “Dans la classe de mon fils de 9 ans, aucune famille ne parle Breton à la maison. Nous ne sommes pas des militants et, si nous sommes attachés à renouer avec nos racines culturelles, on ne voulait surtout pas d’un milieu marginal.”⁴⁴ There is some suspicion of elitism or special treatment on the part of parents whose children follow more traditional paths, particularly because the regional language classes are smaller (Gorce 2005). But Yannig Baron, president of the Brittany Catholic Parent Bilingual Association, alleges that his movement is not a “jacobinisme absurde” because “ce n’est pas une culture contre une autre, c’est une culture en plus”⁴⁵ (Gorce 2005: 3). Baron claims that such programs are simply following European guidelines that wish to see each European citizen fluent in two languages aside from their mother tongue.

It does not seem so strange, then, for Breton speakers to be so positive about the possibility of revitalization of their language through the educational system. The Breton bilingual education movement has a long history, has fought for what it believes in, and is gaining strength. Again, though, the question of whether a language can be saved just through educational efforts is a fundamental one that is not easy to answer.

⁴³ ‘At the beginning, it was a hard sell with the parents. Today, demand is not quite spontaneous, but when the proposition is made, one third of families accept it.’

⁴⁴ ‘In my nine year old son’s class, not one family speaks Breton at home. We’re not activists, but if we are dedicated to reconnecting with our cultural roots, we especially wouldn’t want a marginal place.’

⁴⁵ ‘This is not one culture against another; it’s an additional culture.’

3.3.3 Rise of the Breton-speaking urban middle class

It is the urban middle class that is sending its children to bilingual schools and learning Breton in night classes, trying to revive a language that was driven out of its parents by force just a generation or two earlier. The Euromosaic study (RCW 1996) notes that “what growth is present is in urban-based ‘revived’/ ‘retrieved’ Breton speaking families, such as those behind the Diwan movement since 1977;” Jones (1999: 86-7) defines these *néo-bretonnants* as being overwhelmingly “predominately middle-class, urban dwellers who have learnt Breton as a second language and who have championed the Breton cause;” Timm (1980: 32) notes that their “numbers have been increasing steadily in the past decade due to conscious efforts to promote the ethnic language and a more permissive attitude about regional languages on the part of the central authorities.” The fact that the Breton movement is “dominated by, and largely made up of, educated and sophisticated people” who are mostly the product of the French-language based school system is somewhat humorously ironic (McDonald 1989: 88).

For this *néo-bretonnant* segment of the population, the usage of the Breton language is paramount in order for one to be accepted. Breton pride is well and good, McDonald (1989: 87) found in her attempt to establish a monograph of the pro-Breton activists, but the language is the driving force:

[The *néo-bretonnant* movement] is self-consciously ‘militant,’ predominantly left-wing, and united by an assumption of common oppression, articulated by some through economic arguments and by all as a defence of the language and culture of Brittany. Since the Breton language is of prime importance, learning Breton is an important part of becoming a Breton militant. You may learn Breton dances (in a *Cercle celtique*) or blow up the palace of Versailles (like the FLB) and call yourself part of the Breton movement; you will not be taken seriously, however ... if you do not speak, or at least seriously aspire to speak, Breton.

Also, the new class of speakers is aware of their unique situation of choosing a language for their children to learn that they do not speak and which they do not often hear being spoken

in ‘the real world’: Casteret (in Gorce 2005: 3) notes that “la seule grand-mère qui parle Breton n’ose pas le faire avec ses petits enfants de peur de les braquer. Or si on ne parvient pas à créer un lien affectif avec cette langue, son apprentissage restera un travail scolaire.”⁴⁶ Casteret is taking a night course in the language, but the question then becomes: what Breton are she and her children learning?

3.3.4 *Internal diglossia: the new H variety of Breton*

The creation of Breton classes on such a widespread, united level has meant that the selection or invention of a standard dialect and orthography has become necessary. This means that the Breton being taught and learned across all four former dialect regions may not resemble the language that is natively spoken there.

As far as spoken language is concerned, the *Léon* (that is, north central) dialect has been selected, making it a prestige dialect that is viewed as “proper” or “standard” Breton, “*le breton des livres*” (Timm 1983). Despite the selection of such a standard, its usage in public life in organic contexts is limited to official situations, like in the *mairie* or oral popular media (Timm 1983).

The issue that arises is the gap between this literary standard and the native, vernacular Breton that is still used by the few remaining individuals with Breton as a mother tongue. This tension is aggravated by the fact that H Breton is a planned language, meaning that its politically minded organizers were able to take pains to reject French influence on the language because “the néo-bretonnants ... are often embarrassed by or contemptuous of the French-studded

⁴⁶ ‘The only grandmother who speaks Breton doesn’t dare to do it with her grandchildren for fear of unsettling them. But if we don’t manage to create an effective link with the language, learning it will remain an academic task.’

lexicon of the native speakers” (Timm 1983: 3). Jones (1999: 93-4) sums up the situation nicely, noting that there are two Bretons:

On the one hand, dialect Breton, showing French influence in its lexicon but not in its syntax, predominately spoken by an ageing, dwindling, rural population in Lower Brittany and, on the other hand, a spoken form of standard literary Breton, with French influence in its syntax and, to a certain extent, its morphology and its lexicon (although there is a conscious attempt to avoid the latter), which is spoken by a small, yet growing, young, urban population all over the region, including Upper Brittany, an area which has traditionally been outside its indigenous territory.

The new diglossia situation is aggravated by the fact that the H variety is “likely to be incomprehensible to most native speakers” (Jones 1999: 88). Even though *a priori* the native speakers have been taught to reject their own language, the frustration they feel at not recognizing their own language in its revitalized form has formed a huge gap between those saving the language and those who speak it natively. Jones (1999: 87) notes that “although appearing to potentially offer the lifeblood of which Breton is so greatly in need, the *néo-bretonnants* have not been embraced by traditional speakers of the language from whom, in many ways, they stand apart both in terms of their positive attitude towards the language and in terms of the variety they speak.” Presented with the new, standardized dialect of Breton, native speakers often look upon their organic variety as inferior—one such speaker characterized his language as “*deformet eo toud*” (‘it’s all so deformed’), then realized that he had just used two French loanwords (*deformé* ‘deformed’ and *tout* ‘all’) and rephrased the sentence as “*mesket eo kentoc’h*” (McDonald 1989: 285-6). Timm (1980: 33) cites Gwegen’s conceptualization of the new speakers as “*avant-garde pionnière* ... They are invariably located in cities, in contrast with the ‘*arrière-garde routinière*’, who speak Breton in front of their children through force of habit rather than by design, and who are invariably located in the countryside.”

McDonald (1989: 279) suggests that the gap between the heritage speakers and the avant-garde runs so deep that the distinction is not between two varieties of one language, but rather two separate languages with completely different values and socializations: “We can say that the militant world and the popular world have different ‘Bretons’. They are not talking the ‘same’ Breton; they are not talking about the same thing in commentary upon Breton; they do not have the same social value of Breton; they do not share the same level of education or the same linguistic and social sensibilities and competences.”

At the best, native Breton speakers may have a hard time understanding the new variety of Breton learned by a city dweller who tries to affect a mix of regional accents to gain the appearance of being a heritage speaker;⁴⁷ at the worst, that speaker may be offended by the idea that the Breton he or she speaks is not as good as the one learned by someone who has lived all of his or her life in relative economic prosperity in the modern world. Considering that some of these speakers have had the inferiority of their language pounded into them since their youth, the situation is volatile: “The non-literary dialects suffered, as a result, a kind of double “*patoisement*”—the first imposed by the French educational system, the second by the Breton literary movement” (Timm 1983: 5).

3.3.5 Orthography

Though the Léon dialect seems to have universally corresponded to the prestige dialect used as a standard for Breton, the system used to write Breton has been an issue of debate for decades. Timm (1983: 4) posits the existence of three different standard Breton orthographies: “As matters presently stand, then, there are three Breton orthographies currently in popular use:

⁴⁷ The best such example of a misunderstanding in the literature is likely that of the difference a non-native speaker failed to make between *kelloù* and *keloù*, or ‘testicles’ and ‘the news’. (McDonald 1989: 285)

zedachek, O.U., and *vannetais*.” Vannetais is the writing system used in the dialectal oddball region; OU is the standard orthography used in education; and zedachek is a system of writing often used by writers (Timm 1983). Zedachek is the system proposed by Breton activist Hémon, who attempted to strengthen the Breton dialects by establishing a writing system that incorporated dialectal variations among them. This effort was most salient in uniting words pronounced with [z] in the KLT regions with [h] in the G region as one written “zh”; i.e., *Breiz* (KLT) and *Breih* (G) collapsed to *Breizh* (McDonald 1989).

Unfortunately for Hémon, the creation of the Loi Deixonne gave the national government reason to call for the creation of a new standard orthography to be used in now-sanctioned private education. This call led to the creation of *L’Orthographe Universitaire* (OU), which was proposed in 1953 and adopted two years later (McDonald 1989). The debate over the usage of the two orthographies has not been resolved, particularly because two of the universities that teach Breton—Rennes and Brest—adopted different standards. Students from Rennes, which uses Hémon’s system, still get into arguments with Brest (OU) students over the issue—McDonald (1989) recalls seeing two such partisans throwing punches at one another during a Breton language festival. One more orthography was proposed in an attempt to unite the dialects without the political baggage associated with zedachek, but it gained no support.

Orthography remains a somewhat divisive issue in Breton, though the differences seem less salient than those in the Occitan debate (see section 3.3.4). It may even be the case that the debate over spelling is so high profile that speakers are aware of the differences between the two and can switch between them. Still, the issue shows that even the Breton movement has, at times, been harmed by internal disagreement. The challenges of creating an orthography for use in an

endangered language community have been documented by Grenoble and Whaley (2006) and Hinton and Hale (2001). Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 137-8) note that

The importance of sociological factors cannot be overstated ... the creation of a writing system by an outside linguist or single community member acting independently, without continual local feedback, easily leads to a failed orthography... similarly, it is important to recognize that the various groups invested in the culture and language of a local community – professional linguists and anthropologists, aid workers, missionaries, and native speakers of the local language – may have competing motivations for representing a language in a given way.

In the situation of Breton (and with Oc), the competing motivations of different groups in the creation of an orthography have led to divisions that, at times, have exacerbated tensions and possibly undermined the language revitalization efforts.

3.3.6 The Future

Still, the hope for Breton lies in those families whose children are learning the language in schools. If they can turn Breton into a language with true avenues for daily usage, they may one day replace the last speakers who are taking the natively spoken language to the grave with them as they begin to die in the coming decades.

Choquet (personal communication) offers some hope that the positive attitude about Breton might one day correlate with an increase in actual usage. She recounts her surprise at seeing two siblings speaking fluent conversational Breton to each other on a train:

Mais on recommence à croiser des jeunes parlant breton entre eux et si c'est toujours surprenant, c'est de moins en moins rare : dans le train, l'année dernière, deux enfants, frères et soeurs visiblement, 12 et 8 ans à peu près, ils ont parlé breton tout le long du trajet alors qu'ils n'étaient que tous les deux, c'était visiblement pas un exercice mais bien leur langue de communication.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ 'But, people are beginning to see more and more youth speaking Breton among themselves. Even if it's always surprising, it's less and less rare: on a train last year, two children that were obviously brother and sister, aged about 12 and 8, spoke Breton throughout the whole train ride

She cites the example of an uncle who returned to live in Brittany and dedicated himself to learning Breton: “Il pouvait finalement le parler couramment même s'il n'en avait pas l'occasion tous les jours”⁴⁹ (Choquet, personal communication).

With time, then, Breton may find that the positive attitude about the language will align with the new Breton being spoken. To do so, though, will mean suffering the alienation of the native speakers who cannot understand the new prestige dialect and will mean overcoming the challenges of finding useful and relevant situations in the modern world in which it can be spoken

4.0 The Oc language community: Is it true that “a language is a dialect with an army and navy?”⁵⁰

It would have been absolutely predictable for Oc to undergo a similar shift and revitalization movement after the growth of regionalism in the late 1960’s in France, and to some extent that is true. In contrast with Breton, however, there is much less of a correlation between the Oc languages and regionalism—or, more aptly, the degree of correlation depends on who is being asked.

For a large number of language and regional activists, there is only one language in the south—“Occitan”—and its usage does equate to an area that would ideally have a central character, permitting the reestablishment of regionalism in a manner similar to that in Brittany. Leaving the linguistic issue of defining dialects versus languages aside, knowing that that

since it was only the two of them. For them, it was clearly not an exercise, but rather a real language for communication.’

⁴⁹ ‘He finally was able to speak Breton fluently, even if he didn’t have the chance to do so every day.’

⁵⁰ A saying attributed to Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich.

question ultimately reflects speaker attitudes anyway, that movement has failed to gain strength comparable to that of the Breton movement precisely because the different areas that compose the proposed Occitania are quite diverse—in the languages they speak, in their perceptions of that language and the identity they associate with it.

4.1 The confusion over nomenclature

The debate over naming the *langues d’oc* has been recognized as a fundamentally confusing and divisive issue for centuries. As Schlieben-Lange (1971: 299) admits, “L’Occitanie est loin d’être un domaine linguistique coherent ... même les domaines où des parlers occitans sont encore bien vivants ne sont pas de régions unilingues.”⁵¹ Field (1980) and Belasco (1984, 1990) both note that speakers often do not know which language they are speaking, particularly when they realized that they often had an easier time understanding Catalan or Italian speakers than French speakers. Belasco (1990) gives a further example of the difficulty of determining which dialects are mutually comprehensible: one set of Oc speakers from villages nine miles apart couldn’t understand each other, but a speaker from 100 miles away was able to understand one of the two dialects. This situation highlights the subjective and often asymmetrical relationships that exist between related dialects that makes the situation in the French south even more difficult to quantify. Schlieben-Lange (1993: 217-8) further laments the lack of fieldwork attempting to understand better the diverse makeup of the area where Oc is spoken: “Little is known, for instance, about the differences between Occitanophone regions ... it is clear that neither the investigators nor the investigated have a clear notion of what ‘being an Occitan speaker’ means.”

⁵¹ ‘Occitania is far from being a coherent linguistic domain. Even the areas where Occitan speakers remain are not monolingual.’

In a 1980 article, Belasco attempts to separate the linguistic areas of the region to some degree. One clear attribute of Oc is that it is viewed as having some sort of relationship with French, both by French speakers in the north and by Oc speakers, though the exact nature of that relationship depends on perspective. Belasco (1980: 7) notes that “from a Parisian, the usual reply is that Occitan is a dialect spoken in the south of France. Questioned further as to whether it is French, his answer is usually in the affirmative.” On the contrary, though, Belasco cites Descazeaux as arguing that Oc is closer to Spanish and Italian than it is to French.

Clearly, the identity of Oc is not even something linguists can agree on: “*Occitanistes* such as Jules Ronjat, Charles Camproux, Robert Lafont, and Pierre Bec (all linguists) have claimed that Occitan syntax differs substantially from French syntax. Statements in the last century by eminent scholars such as Gaston Paris would have it otherwise” (Belasco 1980: 10). Belasco himself (1980: 9) seems at first to support the diversity argument—both in terms of distance from French and internally—noting that “as far as individual differences in pronunciation are concerned there is much variation—not only between inhabitants of neighboring towns and villages but sometimes between speakers within the same hamlet.” He defends this view by observing that only one area (Occitan-Languedoc) uses a personal *a*,⁵² that only Limousin has a mandatory subject *ieu* and with a claim that Oc has 31 tenses as compared to French’s 14.⁵³ Belasco (1980) even mentions the differences among linguists in defining dialect areas for Oc, noting that some three-way systems distinguish nord-occitan, l’occitan méridional and gascon, while others distribute Arverno-Mediterranean in the north, Aquitano-

⁵² The difference is parallel to that of Sp. *Ellos atacan al rey* versus Fr. *Ils attaquent le roi*—personal *a* languages require the conjunction *a* (‘to’) before a direct object that is a person.

⁵³ While likely true, the ability of Belasco to use this linguistic argument as a determining factor of how far apart Oc is from French is certainly somewhat suspect because of potential ambiguities in the way he counts tenses. Most of the extra tenses are *surcomposé* tenses or use only an extra “de” to shade meaning (Belasco 1980: 11).

Pyrenean in the south, and a complex central continuum. Nonetheless, the historical morphological and phonological differences among the languages are reasonably well documented in Belasco's 1990 article.

The difficulty of defining Oc is evidenced in the sociolinguistic work on the languages; the literature between 1970 and the present suffers from an extreme dearth of hard data, focusing instead on conceptualization and theorization of the diglossia situation in the French south. While such work has made a major contribution to linguistics, it comes as no surprise that both linguists and demographics experts have until recently been utterly unable to make consistent and accurate estimates of the number of Oc speakers.

It is no surprise, then, that *fragmentaire* is a word that appears constantly in work on Oc. This situation typifies what Blanchet (2004) identifies as the internal-external debate that, although at heart linguistic, quickly becomes sociological and political: how does one define distinct languages? Should the task be left to speakers themselves to self-identify (internal) or to those who do research on languages to make a linguistic argument and tell the speakers whether they are speaking the same language? Numerous cases throughout the world (Punjabi/Urdu, the languages of China, the Nordic language continuum) show that sociopolitical implications can cause speakers whose languages are mutually intelligible to claim to speak differing languages but can also cause speakers who cannot understand each other to claim that they speak closely related dialects of one unified language. Trudgill (1980: 4) discusses the complex issues of mutual intelligibility of dialects, concluding that "mutual intelligibility will also depend, it appears, on other factors such as listeners' degree of exposure to the other language, their degree of education and, interestingly enough, their willingness to understand. People, it seems, sometimes do not understand because, at some level of consciousness, they do not want to."

The following section will demonstrate the sociolinguistic and political ideology that came to dominate work on the Oc languages for the period 1970 to the present was one that sought to unify the whole of the French south under one language umbrella. Nonetheless, as this movement seemed to be less than overwhelmingly successful and an artificial construction, the balance has shifted back towards a description of markedly different language communities, which, ironically, Schlieben-Lange (who was influenced by the Occitanist movement even though she was exterior to the sociopolitical nationalist debate) had suggested in some of her earliest work on Oc (1971: 301): “C’est très rare de rencontrer des sujets parlants qui se déclarent ‘occitans.’ La communauté linguistique qui constitue la conscience linguistique des occitans comporte rarement plus d’une région bien délimitée, et souvent ce ne sont que quelques villages qui forment la communauté à laquelle les occitans déclarent appartenir.”⁵⁴ Before we shift back to internal definition, however, it is necessary to understand the Occitanist movement.

4.2 Fundamental differences: the Occitanist theory debate

The Occitanist approach to the *langues d’oc* was the theme of the 2004 issue 169 of the *International Journal of the Society of Language*, which took the format of examining and rejecting the “one language” approach, instead offering analyses of the differing regions of the south in France where *langues d’oc* are spoken. Blanchet and Schiffman, who wrote the introduction to that issue (2004: 1), posit that “the actual sociolinguistic situations of the various regional languages and communities (instead of the putative unified ‘Occitania’) are very different from one another.” This section aims to present the arguments offered by those linguists

⁵⁴ ‘It’s very rare to find language informants who declare themselves “Occitan.” The linguistic community that forms the linguistic conscience of Occitan speakers no longer comprises a well defined region, and often it is no more than a group of a few villages that make up the communities to which Occitan speakers claim to belong.’

and to put them into the context of examples from Occitanist works. The individual characteristics of each of several areas within the proposed “Occitania” will then be discussed in order to give a portrait of the diversity of the way in which the *langues d’oc* are spoken.

4.2.1 Creation of Occitanism: motivations and goals

4.2.1.1 Motivation for adopting one language

One key feature of the Occitanist movement is that it alleges that the dialects of southern Gallo-Romance are one unified Occitan language. The Occitanist movement was also linked to political goals; those who helped to achieve greater status for the regional languages in France in the last thirty years essentially believed that it would be easier to gain momentum and support for their movement, and that it would have greater force, if there were not plural *langues d’oc* but rather only one *langue d’oc*: “The unspoken hope for this language was that it could be somehow unified in order to reverse a situation of diglossia perceived as a conflict with French, and to replace French in all its official and social functions, within a single large region called ‘Occitania’” (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 1). This choice was also affected by other factors, however. There had, in fact, been other language movements for *langues d’oc* before, the most famous of which was the Mistralian movement, a primarily literary renaissance that occurred around Provençal in the late 19th century. The Mistralian movement, led by poet Frédéric Mistral, is known as the Félibrige; it gave way to a movement for the Provençal language that never gained much influence.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, when it came time to found a new language movement in the late 20th century, the Occitanist movement had to choose between adopting the standard language and framework of the Provençal revival; they choose instead to establish a movement as “a reaction

⁵⁵ See section 4.3 for a more detailed discussion of Mistral and Provençal.

against the two previous main movements [i.e., Mistralianism and Provençalism]” (Manzano 2004: 70). The Occitanist movement was also shaped by the sheer diversity of the zone in which Oc is spoken; the French south is the country’s largest and most diverse linguistic zone (diversity which becomes even more staggering when Catalan and Basque are added), and as such it made finding a single best-fit solution even tougher. There was also an urgency to the movement; it was painfully obvious that the regional languages of France were in danger of dying out, and putting a stop to that trend had become an issue that would not allow for the time it would take to organize separate and distinct movements to save five individual languages. The Occitanist movement also arose specifically to combat the French language with a new, cohesive and comprehensive identity, “opposant ainsi la *lingua occitana* à la *lingua gallica* qui désignait le français”⁵⁶ (Manzano 2004: 71).

4.2.1.2 The creation of Occitan nationalism

As was mentioned, one key aspect of the Occitan movement was that it was not just aimed at restoring the usage of a language; the movement had political aspirations as well. Given the political climate in Europe in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, it is not surprising that Occitanists borrowed their sociolinguistic theory and nationalist model from their geographic and linguistic neighbors to the southeast, the Catalans. On the one hand, this is a natural choice; Catalan sociolinguists and nationalist activists have the most experience with a very similar situation, where Catalan was brutally repressed under the Franco regime and the separatist movement still has strength today. Catalunya also represents a stable diglossia situation, something to which Occitanists aspired for their “language,” which was rapidly passing from

⁵⁶ ‘Thus opposing the *lingua occitana* and the *lingua gallica*, or French.’

diglossia to death. The difficulty, of course, is that the Occitan region is rather more diverse (and much larger) than the area where Catalan is spoken.

Nonetheless, Occitanist linguists argued that there could be one Occitan identity that could be parlayed into sentiments of nationalism. Field (1980: 37), squarely within the Occitan tradition in 1980, writes that although southern France is “far from homogenous,” its residents “share ... the consciousness of belonging to a distinct ethnic domain, whether as individuals they speak the *langue d’oc* or not.” Schlieben-Lange (1993: 225) notes that “Occitanist discourse is irreconcilable with French national discourse.” The Occitanist movement became a matter of ethnicity or nationality in addition to linguistic, as Gardy and LaFont (1981: 85), two of the most patently Occitanist linguists, note: “[Le mouvement pour l’occitan] n’arrive pas à bâtir, ni meme à concevoir vraiment les conditions objectives, qui ne sont pas seulement linguistiques, mais sociaux et politiques, de realization de ses espérances, ainsi demeurées vagues.”⁵⁷ Gardy and LaFont posit that, since the social structures in place will not afford Occitan a foothold from which it can displace French, the Occitan revival *cannot* be solely a linguistics matter and, presumably, must fall to political activism that will invert the social order: “La seule chance de dépasser la diglossie est d’agir du côté de la dominance sociale: la linguistique peut suivre le social, non l’inverse. Mais cette tâche n’est plus celle des linguistes”⁵⁸ (Gardy and LaFont 1981: 87).

⁵⁷ ‘[The Occitan movement] does not manage to build, nor even to form a conception of, true objective conditions that are simply linguistic; these objectives are social and political, of the realization of its goals, which remain vague.’

⁵⁸ ‘The sole chance to overcome diglossia is to act from the angle of social dominance: linguistic change can follow social change, but not vice versa. But that task no longer belongs to linguists.’

4.2.1.3 Marxism

The Occitanist movement, a true product of its time, is also uniquely characterized by the usage of Marxist language and theory. Marxism of the kind that was highly in vogue in Europe at the time and that has resulted in the paradoxical mass marketing of Che Guevara t-shirts was the logical extension for a movement that had identified itself as wanting to subvert the dominant order that was forcing its language into a subservient position. Blanchet and Schiffman (2004: 4) trace the causes of such Marxist ideology to the French student uprising of 1968:

The ideological context of the time in France and western Europe had a profound influence on these developments. The end of colonialism engendered and promoted the idea of the rights of people to self-determination, together with the idea of the protection of minorities. More or less Marxist and left-wing liberal ideas (we mean here ‘liberal’ in its English meaning) were in the air after the French little ‘revolution’ of 1968.

In fact, two of the terms most popular in describing the sociolinguistic situation of Occitan—*false consciousness* and *alienation*—are borrowed directly from Marxist discourse (Schlieben-Lange 1993: 224). In discussing this appropriation of discourse, Schlieben-Lange (1993: 224) says: “in my opinion, language conflict between Occitan and French is characterized by the large gap between linguistic behaviour and discourse on language(s).” This gap seems to be due to the fact that the terms used to discuss Occitan have been borrowed and inappropriately abstracted both by language activists and linguists so much as to no longer accurately reflect the attitudes and practices of those who actually speak the language.

4.2.1.4 Conflictual conception and theoretical approach to Occitan

Nonetheless, Schlieben-Lange’s use of the term *conflict* highlights another characteristic of the Occitan movement: in the conception of diglossia, the definition of nationalism and the linguistic policy goals borrowed from Catalunya, the idea of conflict between the dominant and dominated languages is central.

As Schlieben-Lange (1993: 210) notes, “the thesis developed by Catalan – and later, Occitan – sociolinguists is that the presence of more than one language in the same geopolitical space necessarily leads to linguistic conflict ending with the substitution of one language for the other.” With this sort of all-or-nothing approach, it is easy to see how Occitanists viewed it as necessary to “up the stakes,” denying the existence of different dialects and refusing to be limited solely to linguistic efforts in the battle for Occitan.

Gardy and LaFont (1981: 75) advanced perhaps the most developed theory of the Occitan situation as being a site of life-or-death-pick-one conflict in a seminal 1981 article, *La diglossie comme conflit*. They sought to expand the work of Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1967) on diglossia to focus specifically on “le caractère continu du processus diglossique.”⁵⁹ For them, a diglossic situation is a constant battle, in which the dominated language is put under the control of the dominant language, effectively made to perform on demand: “Toute performance occitane s’effectue sous le contrôle du français, et, en dernière analyse, sur les marges de celui-ci”⁶⁰ (Gardy and LaFont 1981: 75). As the A (dominant) language grows stronger in stronger in the battle, it develops an “image idéale” for the B language, taking away its value, putting it “hors circuit” and fetishizing the language by giving it specific “occasions de parole” in which it is symbolically allowed to be spoken (Gardy and LaFont 1981: 76). These speech situations are “fragmentées, décentrées, elles deviennent de plus en plus virtuelles, exception faite des lieux où l’occitan, à la suite d’une démarche volontariste, se recrée un territoire”⁶¹ (Gardy and LaFont: 77). The French government’s regulation of language, then, serves to “officialise[r],

⁵⁹ ‘The continual character of the diglossic process.’

⁶⁰ ‘All Occitan performance is carried out under the control of French and, according to the latest analysis, on the margins of French.’

⁶¹ ‘Fragmented and decentralized, they become more and more virtual, with exception of those places where Occitan has created a territory for itself thanks to voluntary action.’

sanctionne[r] le rejet de la langue dominée comme institution, comme véhicule d'organisation du pouvoir social" (Gardy and LaFont 1981: 79).

The natural extension of this process is effectively an embalming process of the B language, leading to the denial of the language's status qua. For Gardy and LaFont (1981: 83), this denial is clearly evidenced by the tendency to refer to regional languages in France as *patois*, "puisqu'il signale implicitement que la langue dominée ainsi désignée n'existe pas en tant que langue."⁶² Gardy and LaFont conclude by arguing that sociolinguistic work needs to begin to be conceptualized in this manner of conflict and ideology rather than being rejected as *extra-linguistique*. But the discourse used by Gardy and LaFont, bordering on psychoanalysis at times, is not the only such conception of the sociolinguistic situation of Occitan. The terms "ethnic alienation," "diglossic neurosis," and "blocages d'ordre psychologique" are all used to explain away the potential resistance of those Occitan speakers who do not readily identify themselves with an "Occitan" identity (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004, Moreux 2004). The diglossic situation in the south of France was thus conceptualized by the Occitanists as being not only a linguistic issue, but rather one of psychological and sociopolitical conflict with heavy positivist influence—though, of course, such a theoretical framework is consistent with the "upping the ante" theme consistently present throughout Occitanist linguistics.

Theoretically, the Occitanist movement thus seeks to create a broad definition of the Occitan language; to link that language to a new Occitan national identity; and to subvert the social order by reclaiming the *occasions de parole* of French in order to displace it and regain its status in everyday usage (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 7). Blanchet and Schiffman (2004: 7) further summarize the tools borrowed from Catalan: "the ... model of (i) national affirmation as it was

⁶² 'Since it signals implicitly that the dominated language no longer exists as a language.'

elaborated between 1850 and 1950; (ii) linguistic norms (Occitan-adapted standardization and spelling) as it was elaborated by P. Fabra; and, finally, (iii) language policy as it was elaborated and applied in Spain from the 1970s onward.” This characterization of the Occitanist movement held true as it was elaborated from 1970 through the present.

4.2.1.5 The selection of a standard

As was mentioned earlier in the work, the Occitanist movement selected the dialect of Occitan-Languedoc as its standard for both spoken and written usage. (See Appendix section 9.2 for examples of standard Occitan orthography and Provençal orthography.) This was motivated by several reasons, including the need to select a “central” dialect and a desire to reject and undermine the Provençal movement that had developed its own orthography much earlier. The Occitanist movement was characterized by “systematic opposition to Provençal intellectuals and language promoters... opposition to the Provençal renaissance from the nineteenth century onward, and its related characteristics (spelling, writing, linguistic norms, activities, etc.), and even more, to Provençal language and identities themselves” (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 9). Why was Provençal identified as a threat? Firstly, it had already undergone a semi-successful revival, meaning that unless it was squashed, it might become a rival to Occitanism. Also, to Occitanists who were attempting to win a pitched battle against the French language, Provençal’s proximity to French was viewed as a liability—both because Provençal is viewed as being closer to French than other Oc varieties and because Provençal speakers have better adapted to creating a double French-Provençal identity for themselves⁶³ (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). The standard Occitan would become the one used in official contexts, including in the Calendretas language schools.

⁶³ See section 4.3.

Despite the selection of the Languedocien Occitan variety as the prestige variety for standardization, success has not been achieved as its proponents might have hoped. Blanchet and Schiffman (2004: 7-8) note that 95% of contemporary Provençal writers still use the Mistralian standard orthography, and the created model of Occitan “ended up being so strange and complicated that ordinary speakers could not even recognize nor read the language that was supposed to be their own.” Nonetheless, with a model language and all encompassing plan in hand, the Occitanists had a solid base from which to work.

4.2.1.6 Occitan: becoming a political chameleon

Despite the theoretical framework that posits Occitan to be in strict opposition to the French language and power structure, in the past thirty years, the Occitanist movement has been characterized more by its ability to maneuver politically to form a close alliance with the French central government and to undermine its opponents’ credibility than by revolutionary tactics—though it may be argued that Occitanists have shown more political savvy than Breton activists by acting in such a manner.

Occitan has formed a close alliance with the central government, in large part due to its ability to paint itself as a centralist, uniting movement that rejects the too-fragmentary regionalism that would characterize individual language movements for Provençal and Gascon, for example (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). Two of the heads of the government’s premier linguistic body, the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (DGLFLF) are members of the overtly Occitanist Institute of Occitan Studies (IEO); the Occitan movement has used its influence to dominate official channels, thus gaining power over, for example, the legal status granted to regional languages. The 1999 report by Cerquiglini, for instance, recognizes several *langues d’oïl* as separate languages with full legal status (i.e., franc-

comtois, wallon, picard, normand, gallo), but when it comes to the south, only one Occitan is recognized, with Gascon, Languedocien, Provençal, Auvergnat-Limousin, and Alpin-Dauphinois listed under one umbrella.⁶⁴

Occitanists have also demonstrated a mastery of propaganda and political innuendo, often managing to depict their rivals as having been Nazi sympathizers. For example, “by opposing the Félibrige, the IEO [Institut for Occitan Studies] is opposing ‘those nostalgic of the regime of Vichy’” that cooperated with Nazi Germany during the occupation of France in World War II (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 11; they cite LaFont and Armengaud as examples of Occitanists who have made such implications). Those who would not join the Occitanist cause or were not sufficiently enthusiastic were labeled as dissenters and were dropped from the movement; the political witchhunting that became popular in France after World War II made this task quite easy (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). The irony is that one of the founders of the Occitan network, Lois Alibert, was a known Nazi collaborator, and the SEO (the predecessor of the IEO) actively supported Pétain’s Nazi puppet government (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). In rewriting history in this manner, the Occitanist movement has navigated political channels to gain further strength, thus dominating all official language policy avenues to prevent regional movements from regaining strength—even though the Félibrige movement at least publicly expelled its Nazi sympathizers (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). The Occitanist battle would not just be fought in terms of opening language schools or advocating for better status for the regional language; the stakes were made much higher.

⁶⁴ Interestingly, though, Cerquiglini recognizes Francoprovençal as having full language status.

4.2.1.7 Occitanist sociolinguistics

For post-Occitanist linguists like Blanchet and Schiffman, one of the biggest travesties perpetrated by the Occitanist movement is the manner in which it dominated all sociolinguistic work in the field for years. As has already been mentioned, such influence is patently obvious in the literature.

Blanchet and Schiffman (2004: 5) assembled an exhaustive list of works that have promoted the Occitanist cause, many of them well-recognized sociolinguistic works: “The fundamental confounding of both sociolinguistic studies and militant ideas that is characteristic of the widely distributed and well-known papers and books published about ‘Occitan’ by occitanists from the 1950s (e.g. Lafont 1951, 1954, 1967, 1971a, 1971b, 1973; Bec 1963; Armengaud and Lafont 1979; Kremnitz 1981; Sauzet 1988; Boyer 1991; Boyer and Gardy 2001).” For them, the Occitanist movement unjustly and perhaps unethically neglected scientific objectivity for sociopolitical goals, forming a “vicious circle of an ideology-driven sociolinguistic research and a research-supported political activism” (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 5).

As was previously mentioned, Occitanist ideologues had allied themselves with the central French government, putting themselves in places through which they could control the direction of research on Oc and of language policy. By giving their movement official authority through seemingly non-biased organizations like the Institut d’Estudis Occitans, of which many of the researchers cited were members (and, in fact, LaFont was the president), those promoting the language effectively controlled all discussion about the *langues d’oc* (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004). Potentially more damaging, though, was that researchers outside of France came to rely on the literature and information published by the Occitanists as authoritative, or at

least they were not fully aware of the biases in the sources they were using. Some of those linguists relying on such literature have been cited in this work, including Schlieben-Lange:

The audience of the Occitanist position, due to an efficient political strategy and to the absence of any other important centre of sociolinguistic research in France until the 1980s, was so wide that many people, including sociolinguists and minoritologists in various countries used these works as major sources of information and reference (e.g. Schlieben-Lange 1971; Kremnitz 1981; Ager 1990). (Blanchet and Schiffman: 7)

Such influences are quite obvious in some of the relevant works; it will serve to cite some particularly telling examples here. Field (1980: 37-8) observed the connection between the Occitanist language and the political movement, noting that “for the first time the regional movements in France are pairing cultural and economic remonstrances in such a way as to capture a degree of political support that was unthinkable only fifteen years ago” and positing “an explosion of regionalist activity in nearly all areas of sociocultural endeavor” (Field 1980: 37-8). For Field, it seems that the optimism inherent in the Occitanists’ ability to appropriate linguistic work for their needs was striking. On the other hand, those still working directly with the diverse *langues d’oc* show more subtlety in their comprehension of the situation. Belasco, for example, devotes most of a 1984 article to defining the differences between French and Oc. His argument, however, relies on the diversity of the languages he is discussing, because he is essentially listing several Oc languages and ignoring the apparent differences between them to focus more on how different they are from French. Belasco (1984: 17) later slips into referring to Oc as one single language, saying that “[in Occitan] we find all the characteristics normally ascribed to speakers of a major language.” Belasco (1984: 18) ends the article with a call to arms: “The answer to the question: *l’occitan qu’es aquò?* cannot be: *es un dialecte francès*. It must be, *de segur, una lenga romana diferenta*. In that case, *visca l’occitan!*” In structuring such an argument, Belasco focuses so much on positing the differences between French and Oc—

which are not generally called into question by Oc speakers—that he assumes the different languages he have just discussed must fit into one generic Occitan identity.

Potentially more injurious, though, is the theoretical work of linguists who were working on Occitan only tangentially, using it as an example to extrapolate general linguistic trends and theories. It is going perhaps too far to allege that all of this work is undermined because of the somewhat disingenuous nature of the underlying idea of a unified Occitan identity, but the diversity of the languages in the Oc continuum certainly should have merited closer attention. Schlieben-Lange is one such sociolinguist who relies upon the Occitanist approach in her attempt to theorize an Occitan linguistic consciousness. She writes that: “La conscience linguistique de l’occitano-parlant est *totale* comme toute conscience linguistique. C’est là un trait général que tout individu parlant se declare membre d’une unite linguistique bien définie,”⁶⁵ even if the speakers have problems identifying themselves as having a unified Occitan identity (Schlieben-Lange 1971: 301). For Schlieben-Lange (1971: 301), “la conscience des sujets parlants tend à s’orienter vers un *nouveau centre*.”⁶⁶ The particular problem of making such a generalization is that it interprets the fragmentary nature of speakers of Oc as shifting towards a new Occitan center, with the reason for the fragmentation being the psychological result of years of French propaganda that allegedly caused the speakers to have “blocages d’ordre psychologique” (Moreux 2004: 45).

The Occitanist movement was so successful as to come to dominate sociolinguistic work, thanks in large part to its control of official channels, but also due to its influence on theoretical linguistics work. From the 1970s onward, the Occitanist viewpoint proved quite strong at

⁶⁵ ‘The linguistic consciousness of the Occitan speaker is complete, as with all linguistic consciousness. There, all individual speakers identify themselves as a member of a well-defined linguistic unit.’

⁶⁶ ‘The consciousness of the speaker subjects is tending to orient itself towards a *new center*.’

controlling all discourse around the Oc community, but the speakers of the dialects of Oc, from Bordeaux to Nice, never joined their voices in a greater demand for Oc language revitalization or education. The very fragmentary nature of the French south, cited by Occitanists as evidence of the need to create such a superregional language and identity, served as a block to the ultimate success of the Occitanist movement.

4.2.2 Rejection of Occitanism and a return to regionalism

As the Occitanist movement spread the new, standardized Occitan language throughout the supposed Occitania, a problem became apparent: the people speaking the language that was supposed to be saved by the language maintenance movement did not seem to understand the goals of Occitanism; worse still, they sometimes couldn't even recognize or understand the language they were told was their own. Though the Occitanists refused to admit the reality of the diversity of the issue they were fighting, "people could not even recognize that it was *their* language that was supposedly being dealt with, because of the strange name ("Occitan"), the strange spelling, and the strange ethnonationalist ideology, which was so different from what they were living and wanting" (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 15). Such a disjuncture led to Occitanism failing to truly gain popular support across the whole of Occitania, leaving room for a counter movement. In addition, as the 1990s arrived, the refusal of French southerners to accept the identity being imposed on them was compounded by the fact that some researchers, linguists, and institutions knew better than to accept the theory that there is one Oc language and had finally begun to express their dissent in the issue.

This counter movement is characterized by its diversity—the linguistic situation of Auvergnat is very different from that in Provence, and as such the attitude towards language preservation is very different—but is united in its desire to reject Occitanism. Linguistics work

and sociopolitical language activism are now undergoing a decentralization process, with power being returned to each region: Gascon/Béarnais, Occitan-Languedoc, Provençal, Auvergnat and Limousin. Such a conception is a more natural fit for the region, since “more local names such as *Gascon, Béarnais, Rouergat, Auvergnat, Nissart*, or even patois have of course always been the most frequent – and often the only – names used by the speakers themselves.” (Blanchet and Schiffman 2004: 3).

These regional movements have an uphill battle to fight, particularly because the Occitanist movement alienated as many as it united, and may have in fact caused some Occitan speakers to abandon their language over the confusion, as Blanchet and Schiffman (2004: 15) point out: “The failure of the Occitanist intellectual system, analysis, and strategy ... did not interrupt, or even diminish, but rather accelerated an ongoing language shift, because it did not have any forceful effect on people.” Nonetheless, it seems that this counter movement comes at as good a time as any. As the relative success of the Diwan movement gains national headlines, and as European institutions move to grant greater status to otherwise suppressed elements of regionalism within countries, the realization that the *langues d’oc* are disappearing but can benefit from language activism is beginning to set in. In particular, those who have seen first hand the effects of the post-World War II language shift are beginning to realize that with the loss of their language comes the loss of a part of their heritage: “[the ‘third generation’ is] ... now in a position to feel the loss and/or regret the lack of their family language(s) and starting to take action to recover it” (Blanchet and Schiffman 17). One particular example of revitalized activism for a specific *langue d’oc* is that of the Béarnais/Gascon region. Movements for the specific languages have existed for over ten years—since 1993 for Gascon in general and since 1995 for the more specific Béarn region located in the southwest corner of France (Moreux

2004). The two movements have joined their influence in an attempt to throw off the chains of Occitanism, and, in fact, “the head of the largest publishing company specialized in Gascony now regularly uses Gasconist spelling, thereby ending the quasi-monopoly of Occitanist spelling in publishing, in textbooks in particular” (Moreux 2004: 46). This victory, though small, represents the growth and more natural, more organic nature of micro-level language activism.

The issue is not as simple as just replacing Occitanism with movements for each individual language, however. Moreux (2004: 55) cautions that adopting a positivist conception of the situation that means one movement must vanquish and destroy the other borrows too much from the Occitanist position: “The relationship between Béarnists and Occitanists must not be seen solely in terms of conflict. After all, both battle for the *language*, even if they go about it in very different ways, as different as the realities and ideas and attitudes that they associate with the word *language*.” In fact, the debate between the two movements continues, and is sometimes heated, as Mark Abley (2005) describes in his memoirs of travels amongst endangered languages.

During his time in Provence, Abley experienced first hand the tension between Occitanists and those who feel that emphasizing the individual character of Provençal is more important. On the one hand, Jan-Glaude Roux is a language teacher and Provençalist, arguing that Provençal is a language distinct from Occitan that needs to develop (or redevelop) its own heritage and pride in its language. Roux does not see Provençalism as being part of Occitanism; he says that “what we [i.e., Provençalists] want is for Provençal to be officially recognized as a regional language of France, in exactly the same way that Breton and Basque are indisputable regional languages” (Abley 2005: 136). Abley finds, though, that when he travels just a small distance within Provence, he meets Patric Choffrut, a language activist and Occitan professor.

Choffrut, whose family is from Auvergne and Provence, laments that “the French have split us up into so many different units” (Abley 2005: 141).

When Abley asks Choffrut to explain the nomenclature problem with Occitan, he inspires a passionate reaction from Choffrut that perfectly parallels almost every aspect of the Occitanist movement discussed above:

[A book on European regionalism] describes the idiom of his own region in less elegant terms: “Provençal Occitan-Oc language.” When I asked Choffrut to explain the wording, he was forthright: “Provençal is not a language. It’s a dialect of Occitan.”

“But when I was talking to Jean-Claude Roux...”

Choffrut exploded. “Roux and his friends say that Provençal is a separate language, but this is linguistically stupid. It’s also political suicide. These people are right-wing, rural, narrow-minded – they’ve frozen Provence in the nineteenth century. They’re *passéistes*. What they’re doing, those assholes, is weakening us just at the time when we’re fighting for recognition from France. (Abley 2005: 139)

In Choffrut’s outburst, the characteristics of Occitanism are clearly visible: a linguistic argument that there is only one language; a necessary linkage of Occitanism to politics; a portrayal of the Provençalists as having undesirable political associations; and the allegation that, in choosing not to join the Occitan movement, the Provençalists are undermining language efforts. Choffrut elsewhere remarks that “there is only one language of Latin. The difference in language is a difference in our heads,” further implying a sense of unity (Abley 2005: 140).

Though the post-Occitanist rise of regionalism has gained some strength, the debate over how to classify the language—and, consequently, what to do about saving it—remains a divisive issue that can spark passionate debate from both sides. Having described the Occitanist movement, the next task is to attempt to understand each of the Oc language communities, both for differences in usage patterns and in attitude towards language, to quantify the differences that

have undermined attempts to impose a universal Occitan language on the whole of the French south. While none of the data for any given language community is as dense as that for Breton—except perhaps for the data on the variety spoken in the Occitan-Languedoc area—there exists enough sociolinguistic work to suggest general trends that distinguish one region from another.

4.3 Oc profile: Occitan-Languedoc

Languedocien, or Occitan-Languedoc, was utilized by Occitanists as the new standard for Occitan—not surprising given that the language’s name reflects its identity as the *langue d’oc*. Languedocien is the most central variety of Oc, spoken in the middle of the south of France, abutted by Gascon/Béarnais to the west, Provençal to the east, Auvergnat and Limousin to the north and Spain in the south. Occitan-Languedoc is generally characterized by the same features that were observed in the introduction: low rate of intergenerational transmission, domain restriction, low literacy and stigmatization.

4.3.1 Description of usage

Usage numbers for Occitan-Languedoc are hard to discern, partially because the numbers provided between 1970 and the late 1990’s have been for the whole of Occitan, meaning such figures represent an estimation of those who are capable of speaking any Oc language. The Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) cites the impossibly low figure of 5,000; given the Occitania estimate of approximately 2-3 million, about half of those are probably Occitan-Languedoc speakers by this author’s estimate.⁶⁷ Manzano (2004) claims that 22% of those surveyed can speak well and 17% can speak some Occitan-Languedoc, while 70% of those use Oc occasionally as opposed to only 18% that make daily use. Most important, though, is that speakers are generally aware that

⁶⁷ Taking the wider definitions of language ability, that makes approximately 500,000 for Provençal, 150,000 for Gascon/Béarnais, and unknown numbers for Auvergnat and Limousin—though they are likely not any more widely spoken than Gascon/Béarnais and certainly not more so than Provençal.

language use is in decline; 66% of those surveyed think that Occitan-Languedoc use is decreasing, while only 13% think it is increasing (Manzano 2004).

A major characteristic of Occitan-Languedoc seems to be that although passive comprehension of the language is widespread, French is widely preferred. More so than with Breton, speakers seem aware that Occitan-Languedoc can be spoken but instead choose to converse in French. The Euromosaic study (which used the term “Occitan” but was focused solely on the Occitan-Languedoc region) found that “almost half ... perceive themselves as living in neighbourhoods where the majority are able to speak Occitan ... almost a third of respondents are of the opinion that the majority of their friends speak Occitan ... [but] fewer than 20% ... claim that Occitan is used at least as much as French in such contexts” (ISC 1996). Passive understanding of Occitan-Languedoc is thus widespread, though such comprehension has not translated into easily quantifiable numbers about speaker strength.

Intergenerational transmission, though, seems to be on the decline; as was mentioned, the Euromosaic study noted that 76% of grandparents speaking Occitan translated to 65% of parents understanding it, but only 36% of the respondents’ siblings (ISC 1996). Manzano found smaller numbers—48% of grandparents down to 40% of parents—but, as has been mentioned, the present generation seems to be the one undergoing the critical shift because it is they who are monolinguals in French and, at best, have very passive understanding of Oc. Nonetheless, of those who can still speak Oc, almost all learned it from their families—only 5% learned it by themselves, and only 2% were taught Occitan-Languedoc in school.

Thomas Roman, a political science researcher in Paris who also directs a study abroad program with Choquet, who was quoted above, described similar trends. Roman is a native of Narbonne, a city located in the center of the Occitan-Languedoc region. He attested to the trend

of the disappearance of language transmission, noting that: “Je ne le parle pas, ni mes parents mais ma grand-mère maternelle le parle un peu. Elle a 78 ans ... autrement dit, la pratique me semble être restée vivante pour les gens de la quatrième generation”⁶⁸ (Roman, personal communication). Occitan-Languedoc usage thus seems to parallel the disappearance that has been posited for France’s regional languages on the whole.

4.3.2 Domain restriction

Occitan-Languedoc usage has undergone severe domain restriction; though it was once a common vernacular language, in natural practice it has become only a private language, used among friends in perfect, confidential networks.

Manzano (2004) notes that Occitan-Languedoc is a language for friends, family, the elderly and possibly with peasants. The regional language never appears in public or official contexts, most often being used in the home (21% of the time), cafés (21%) or in the countryside or villages (15%) (Manzano 2004). Even in these situations, Occitan-Languedoc is only used when the interlocutors are aware of their shared fluency in the language, a phenomenon Manzano refers to as *language confidentiality*: “Occitan is only spoken with well-identified speakers (with the village or canton, with relations, etc.) and rarely with strangers, should they be Occitan speakers themselves” (Manzano 2004: 76). Further, Occitan-Languedoc speakers perceive their language as not having relevance for the modern world at 64%—and, more tellingly, as lacking relevance even for everyday life at 58% (Manzano 2004: 76). Roman confirms this data; his maternal grandmother does not often use the language, but: “disons qu'elle

⁶⁸ ‘I don’t speak [Occitan-Languedoc], nor do my parents, but my maternal grandmother speaks a bit. She’s 78 ... otherwise said, usage seems to me to be alive for people in the fourth generation.’

le comprend parce qu'elle a longtemps parlé avec des personnes âgées dans son travail”⁶⁹ (Roman, personal correspondence). His mother, who works as a nurse in the Occitan-Languedoc area, observed that Occitan-Languedoc is used solely by elder individuals in smaller villages: “Ma mère est infirmière et travaille aussi beaucoup auprès de personnes âgées (entre 80 et 100 ans). Je viens de l'appeler et elle me dit les mêmes choses : il n'y a vraiment que les personnes très âgées, dans les petits villages, qui parlent encore occitan entre elles”⁷⁰ (Roman, personal communication).

The domains in which Occitan-Languedoc is spontaneously used, then, are highly restricted. It is no longer a language suitable for public domains or for official contexts; at best, it is used sporadically in rural contexts by aged individuals—leaving aside, of course, any “new wave” revivalist speakers.

4.3.3 Literacy

Occitan-Languedoc also shows a strong trend of becoming restricted to the oral domain. Manzano (2004) posits that only 45% of speakers can read easily or without a lot of difficulty, and 74% of speakers are unable to write. Even those who can read, though, do not have regular occasions to do so—only 12% of those who can read Occitan-Languedoc do so on a daily basis (Manzano 2004). The language, then, is truly only a language that is used orally, between aged speakers who are aware that they both are capable of speaking it.

⁶⁹ ‘We say that she understands it because she spoke it for a long time with older people as part of her work.’

⁷⁰ ‘My mother is a nurse and also works a lot with elder people (between 80 and 100 years of age). I just called her and she told me the same things: it is only really those who are very old and who live in small villages that still speak Occitan-Languedoc amongst themselves.’

4.3.4 Language Attitude

French propaganda against speakers of regional languages had a powerful effect on Occitan-Languedoc speakers, leading them to believe that their language lacks value and is inferior to French. Manzano (2004: 65-6) posits that the attitude around Occitan-Languedoc has consistently been low, being viewed as “a relic, a hindrance to development, in other words, an insignificant and outmoded way of speaking (a patois) that people generally wanted to get rid of as soon as one would want to get rid of faded worn-out finery.” One Occitan-Languedoc speaker lamented the strength of the call for his language to disappear, describing how such efforts were undermining a language that was spoken by his ancestors: “La lenga occitana aici es apelada a desaparèisser, quicòm que, en definitif, es le mesprètz de nòstres ancians. Parce que nòstres ancians ... parlavan pas qu’aquela lenga.” (La langue occitane ici est appelée à disparaître, quelque chose que, en définitif, est le mépris de nos ancians. Parce que nos ancians ... ne parlaient que cette langue)⁷¹ (Field 1980: 45). Field (1980: 45) states simply that “the feeling that most often accompanies the usage of Oc is shame,” citing a speaker who says that “Òm diria que la lenga occitana, que le patoès, le que parla aquò es un imbecile.” (“On dirait que la langue occitane, que le patois, celui qui parle, ça est un imbecile.”)⁷² In addition to the fragmentation suffered by Oc speakers, then, as in Brittany, the Occitan-Languedoc language is clearly associated with backwardness, with a rural farming identity that lost its prestige in the wake of industrialization in the 20th century, thanks in large part to the stigma attached to regional languages in the educational system.

⁷¹ ‘Here, the Occitan language is called to disappear ... something that is, definitively, the betrayal of our ancestors, because those ancestors ... spoke nothing but that language.’

⁷² ‘People would say that the Occitan language, or the patois ... someone who spoke it was an imbecile.’

4.3.5 Identity

The negative attitude of Occitan-Languedoc speakers is perhaps no more clearly seen than in the way the language speakers view their language. Unlike in Brittany, where there is a clear correlation between Brittany identity and the Breton language, the situation in Languedoc is much more complex. The term most Languedoc-Occitan speakers use to describe their language is not *Occitan*, but rather *patois*, the French term referring to an inferior dialect. This highlights the fact that, because Oc is a Romance language, the implication that Oc is nothing more than an unsuitable version of French is an easy one to make. The Occitanist movement further created a gap between the idea of a united Occitan identity and the feelings that speakers associate with speaking their regional language.

Manzano (2004) found in a 1991 survey that the term most often used to refer to the language spoken in the Languedoc-Roussillon region is *patois*, at 36%, followed by *Occitan* at 19%. Asked to name the language family, the results of the Occitanist movement are clear: *Occitan* was cited at 39%, *langue d'oc* at 22%, and *Languedocien* at 19% (Manzano 2004). The disparity between those saying that the language itself is actually *Occitan* and those who say it belongs to the *Occitan* family may imply that, despite militant Occitanist efforts telling people they speak *Occitan*, they continue to view it negatively as a *patois*; as Manzano (2004: 81) notes, “considering oneself as ‘Occitan’ is very different in this region from ‘being fond of Occitan,’ ‘speaking Occitan,’ etc.” These figures begin to show that the militant movements to create a unified, southern France-encompassing identity around a nationalist movement have failed.

The Euromosaic survey, carried out in the Midi-Pyrénées region (to the north of Languedoc-Roussillon but still in the Occitan-Languedoc area), confirms this hypothesis. The research found that 71% of those surveyed claim French identity, 65% a local (i.e., commune)

identity, 59% *régional* (i.e., Midi-Pyrénées) identity, and only 48% an Occitan identity (ISC 1996). This trend is in stark contrast to the numbers taken at the same time for Breton, where an overwhelming majority identified Breton as their first identity (RCW 1995). The Euromosaic survey concludes that “clearly more respondents claim French identity than any other. For many, therefore, any other dimensions of identity are subordinate to that of the state. It is also interesting that more regard themselves as not being Occitan than those that do. That is, the idea of a relationship between the language and the space called Occitanie does not overlap” (ISC 1996). That relationship at a national level has not been established, even though Oc speakers seem aware that there is a large community of speakers in southern France who speak at least somewhat like they do: Field’s source explains that

I a una banda de departaments aici que, mème que le parlar siasque pas exactament le mèma, òm pòt se comprèner...Cada departament i a de diferéncias ... I a pas a calcular. Es estendut plan aquela lenga, es plan estenduda.” (Il y a une série de départements ici que, même que le parler ne soit pas exactement le même, on peut se comprendre... Chaque département, il y a des différences... il n’y a pas à calculer. C’est bien étendu cette langue, elle est bien étendue.)⁷³ (Field 1980: 44)

It seems, then, that the idea of language activism rallied around an identity based an artificial sub-central state nationalist level is repugnant to Oc speakers. In fact, despite the fact that 46% of speakers are somewhat or strongly attached to the language, Manzano (2004) concludes that the very idea of language activism is even offensive to native regional Occitan-Languedoc speakers. Still, the awareness of the disappearance of the language and the shift in French language policy seems to have inspired a desire for language maintenance efforts at a

⁷³ ‘There is a series of departments here that, even though the speech is not exactly the same, one can be understood... each department, there are differences... it’s not to calculate. It’s quite well dispersed, this language, it’s well spread out.’

level below that of full-blown sociopolitical activism. As with Breton, the Languedoc speakers who are nostalgic for their regional language see the route to saving it as the school system.

4.3.6 Education

The trend among Languedoc-Occitan speakers is that, although they have limited interest in relearning Oc themselves, they would overwhelmingly like their offspring to be given the chance to learn it in the school system. In the survey cited by Manzano (2004), asked “at school, would you like the possibility of learning Occitan to be given to everyone?,” speakers responded in the affirmative at a level of 80%. Though 74% have no interest in taking courses to improve their own ability to speak Oc, 48% claimed that they would like their children to learn Oc in school, and 5% already have children enrolled in such a program (Manzano 2004). This confirms that the hope for the future of Oc is, as with Breton, placed in the school system.

Do the facts about Oc schooling bear out these attitudes? On the level of raw data, it seems that the numbers are quite positive. Both the number of Calendretas, Occitanist bilingual schools like Diwan, and the number of students enrolled in bilingual classes in the public school system have exploded since the early 1980’s. The number of Calendretas went from six in 1982 to 34 in 1999, and the number of students being educated in Oc progressed from 12,712 in 1984 to 33,142 in 1993-4 (Manzano 2004). These numbers, clearly more advanced than those for Breton by approximately threefold, suggest that the option of Oc language instruction has been taken up by many families.

The issue, though, is whether such schooling actually translates into positive attitudes and increased usage. Put another way, does schooling result in Oc’s being viewed as a usable, modern language? Data cited by both Manzano and Dompmartin, who performed a landmark study of the language attitudes of students studying Oc in schools in 2002, suggest that the

efforts have not had the desired effect: the language is viewed as a relic, a language of memory not suitable for practical everyday usage.

Manzano (2004) notes that youth were most likely to associate Oc with “old age and death” in 58% of cases and with folklore in 26% of cases, while only 10% viewed the language as being related to history or heritage. Roman bears out this data, noting that “concernant l'enseignement, il est très peu répandu : il y a des cours d'occitant au Collège et au lycée, en option, mais très peu de personnes y vont. La pratique relève donc plutôt d'une coquetterie intellectuelle dans certains milieux culturels et artistiques : littérature, festival, musique. Mais il s'agit là de petits groupes”⁷⁴ (Roman, personal communication). For only 6% of youth is Oc a possible language of public life (Manzano 2004).

Domp martin’s study, centered in the southeast suburbs of Toulouse, sought to understand further quantify these trends and understand the motivations behind such language attitudes. The focus of the study was students graduating from Calendretas at age 11, going on to be integrated in the French public school system where they would have the opportunity to continue learning Oc as part of language classes, though students who had not been in Calendretas were also allowed to take such classes. As these *Calendrons* matured and were faced with classmates who had never been exposed to Oc, how would they respond?

Domp martin’s study revealed complex but not altogether positive results. Students who had not studied Oc before predictably viewed the language highly negatively, saying that it was a “langue de vieux” or “pas marrant” and that “c’est ridicule” and “ça sert à rien!” (Domp martin 2002). This stigma rubbed off anew on the students who had grown up bilingual thanks to the

⁷⁴ ‘Concerning education, it’s not very expansive : there are Occitan courses in the collèges and in the lycées, as an option, but very few people take them. The practice thus consists instead of intellectual coquetry in certain cultural and artistic venues: literature, festivals, and music. But there only small groups are concerned.’

Calendretas; Occitan⁷⁵ rapidly became a language that was used in the classroom to respond to the teacher. French was the code used outside of the classroom context. “A la récré, non ... on parlait en français,”⁷⁶ one 14-year old *collégienne* noted, explaining that students would respond to professors in Occitan or French but would speak amongst themselves only in French (Domp martin 2002: 40). A 13-year old male classmate confirmed this view, saying that “en classe, on parlait tout le temps Occitan, mais sitôt dehors, on parlait pas trop occitan”⁷⁷ (Domp martin 2002: 40). As these students matured, Occitan was thus no longer valued as a language that could be adapted for everyday use; it became nothing more than an academic task.

Outside of the collège, one eight year old Calandron said that “si je la [la maîtresse] rencontre dans la rue, si elle me parle en Occitan, moi, je vais lui répondre en français, parce que c’est pas l’école”⁷⁸ (Domp martin 2002: 41). Their teacher confirmed this child’s observation, noting that “certains me répondent en oc, surtout les filles... [mais] Il y a une sorte de honte vis-à-vis des copains”⁷⁹ (Domp martin 2002: 43).⁸⁰ Certainly, for some, “la particularité du bilinguisme est ressentie comme une richesse, un plus que les enfants formulent”⁸¹—one student

⁷⁵ In deference to the fact that the Calendretas are militant schools teaching the standardized version of Oc, I use the term Occitan here.

⁷⁶ ‘At recess, no ... we spoke in French.’

⁷⁷ ‘In class, we spoke Occitan all the time, but as soon as we were outside, we hardly spoke Occitan.’

⁷⁸ ‘If I saw the teacher in the street, if she were to speak to me in Occitan, me, I would respond to her in French, because it’s not school.’

⁷⁹ ‘Certain ones respond to me in Oc, particularly the girls ... [but] there is a sort of shame as far as their friends are concerned.’

⁸⁰ Particularly when considered in light of the preeminence of women in language shift, the gender difference observed by the teacher here is a provocative one. As women and potentially as mothers, will these girls encourage the use of Oc by their children later on in life? Or, as Domp martin fears, will the negative attitudes of their peers keep them from reversing the shift? This question deserves further study.

⁸¹ ‘The particularity of bilingualism is viewed as an asset, one plus that the students noted.’

said, “je me disais: C’est bien, voilà! Je suis bilingue, c’est rigolo!”⁸² (Dompmartin 2002: 41). But, on the whole, Occitan seems to suffer the same sort of shame once imposed on it actively by the same government, leading the young speakers to view their language as nothing more than a positive mental attribute. Dompmartin (2002: 49) observes that the students “savent que la langue est minorée dans ce nouveau contexte, comme elle était minorée les années précédents dès qu’ils sortaient de l’école.”⁸³ For these students, in the worst of cases, learning “une matière non ‘prestigieuse’ aux yeux du groupe”⁸⁴ singles them out and marginalizes them (Dompmartin 2002: 49). Despite the growing availability of Occitan schooling and the seeming growth in interest, it appears that there has been no true societal attitude change to give Oc the prestige necessary to truly flourish as a reborn language.

The students observed by Dompmartin seem acutely aware that they are learning a language that had been marginalized, and they have difficulty seeing its application in the modern world. Dompmartin (2002: 52) concludes by formulizing this fact:

Le problème majeur pour ces adolescents ... c’est de trouver des lieux où la langue minorée reste “utile” et légitime, une fois que l’école n’assure plus cette fonction, dans la mesure où la maison et la famille ne le font pas non plus, pour beaucoup d’entre eux, et dans la mesure où la rue et la sphere culturelle ne le font que marginalement dans le secteur urbain et périurbain.⁸⁵

How, though, is it possible to reconcile this disjunction with the seeming interest in bilingual schooling?

⁸² ‘I said to myself—It’s great, voilà! I’m bilingual, it’s funny!’

⁸³ ‘They know that the language is minoritized in this new context, as it was marginalized in earlier years when they would leave the Calendretas.’

⁸⁴ ‘A matter that lacks prestige in the eyes of the group’

⁸⁵ ‘The major problem for these adolescents ... is to find situations where the minority language remains “useful” and legitimate, once the school no longer assures that function, given that the home and family no longer do it either in many cases, and given that the street and the cultural environment do so only marginally in the urban/near-urban sector.’

Domp martin’s work, which included some discussions with parents, seems to suggest that families enroll their students for primarily non-militant reasons, most often simply for the benefits in intelligence that bilingualism is reputed to offer. Some parents made no secret of this fact, expressing that although their children were becoming bilingual, they were frustrated by their children’s original enthusiasm for a language that they (the parents) do not themselves speak: “Certains parents sont meme quelquefois irrités de l’emphase avec laquelle les enfants valorisent l’occitan”⁸⁶ (Domp martin 2002: 42). One parent noted that: “Elle [ma fille] m’énerve des fois quand elle la ramène avec son Occitan et quand elle veut pas croire ce que je lui dis à propos du français ou de n’importe quoi d’autre d’ailleurs! [rires]”⁸⁷; another joked that “ils sont un peu endoctrinés”⁸⁸ (Domp martin 2002: 42). Bilingual education is certainly viewed as a positive thing, but likely for the benefits of bonding and methods offered in the small classes than for the language itself. Asked about their attitudes linking education and Occitan, Domp martin (2002: 46) observed that many parents use “strategies d’évitement” to duck out of answering the question.

In the Languedoc region, it seems that schooling, although certainly a popular option that has increased significantly in the past decades, cannot be blindly linked to support for language militancy. Occitan bilingual education fails in its goals to make Occitan a language of value that can be used in a daily context, and as the students who have grown up bilingual reintegrate themselves to the world of their French speaking peers, they suffer stigmatization not unlike that suffered by their grandparents or greatgrandparents years and years earlier.

⁸⁶ ‘Some parents are sometimes even irritated by the emphasis that their children give to valuing Occitan.’

⁸⁷ ‘She [my daughter] sometimes makes me angry when she comes home with her Occitan and she doesn’t want to believe what I tell her about French, or whatever else! [laughs]’

⁸⁸ ‘They’re a little indoctrinated.’

4.4 Oc profile: Provençal

The situation in the language area to the east is, by comparison, much more positive in terms of the cohesiveness of language identity and the link of language identity to regional identity. Provençal, a language with a long, proud history of usage of what was felt to be a distinct language, was (along with Gascon/Béarnais) the language to fight the most visible pitched battle against the Occitanist movement. In addition, Provençal seems to be the Oc area with the least problematic relation to the French central state—its speakers have no problem reconciling their Provençal identity with their French identity.

4.4.1 *Aurenja becomes Aurenjo: the Provençalist battle against Occitanism*

Blanchet, who specializes in Provençal linguistics, has done extensive work on the Occitanist movement in Provence, highlighting a conflict that Abley demonstrated in the disagreement between Roux and Choffrut in *Spoken Here*. Blanchet (2004: 130) notes that the Occitanist movement's attempts to embed itself slyly in the linguistic power structure in Provence caused “a lively debate about the status of Provençal [to be] carried out in a very public venue.” When it came time to decide whether to link the Provençal language movement to the Occitan train at the official level, Blanchet (2004: 131) posits, “no expert of this linguistic area who does not share the Occitanist view [was] consulted.” In fact, many of the government experts cited in the French shift towards recognition of regional languages happen to be Occitan militants, as was the case with Cerquiglini. For example, Occitanists managed to gain influence on the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, one of the EU institutions dedicated to regional languages, then used their influence to make Occitan the recognized language, rendering it very difficult for Provençal to gain status as an additional, separate language (Blanchet 2004).

Nonetheless, Provençalists have begun to turn the tide. Blanchet claims that many periodicals and media outlets in France, particularly in Provence, have always respected Provençal as a separate language. Though many linguistic sources have traditionally listed Provençal as separate from Occitan—including the *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005), the *Conseil supérieur de la langue française* and the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* (Wurm 2001)—it is the battle for recognition within France that highlights the Provençalist efforts to “take back” ground from the Occitanist movement, a development that Blanchet (2004) terms “a process of clearer recognition of Provençal” in the process of gaining more strength. Political activism is actually a characteristic of such efforts: “Many politicians, especially Provençal MPs, mayors, members of the regional or local councils, and even ministers, support the recognition of Provençal as a distinct language. 74% of the 58 Provençal MPs officially asked the government to recognize Provençal as such and not as a dialect of Occitan” (Blanchet 2004: 132). The president of the Provence regional council has also asked for separate status. Such efforts have also gained popular support; 10,000 protestors gathered in Arles on 30 September 2001 to support the maintenance of *Provence* against *Occitania* (Blanchet 2004).

4.4.2 *Mistralianism and a distinct orthography*

One of the key points of the Provençal identity is the existence of the Mistralian literary standard. Though the Félibrige movement did not gain widespread success in terms of guaranteeing widespread usage, it produced a literary renaissance that left the *Mistralienne* orthography as its legacy. The Provençal or roumanillienne orthography, which differs from the standard Occitan orthography because it is more phonetic and is “calqued on the French orthographic system” serves to mark Provençal as distinct from Occitan (Belasco 1990: 1003).

The Provençal standard, written such that “the average northern French speaker would be easily understood by a speaker of Provençal if he were to read ... by applying the rules of French spelling” is a visible marker that serves to distinguish Provençal from Occitan orthography, which “attempts to unify the writings of all Occitan dialects in a standardized form that reflects the etymological source of the words⁸⁹ (Belasco 1990: 1003-4).

Blanchet (2004) notes that, of Provençal’s proud literary tradition that produced one third of all Oc writers in the 19th and 20th centuries, 98% of its writers used the Provençal standard—backed up by 90% of cultural associations and 100% of all official usage that was not affected by the Occitanist movement. In fact, of those official channels once dominated by Occitanist spelling, Provençal has begun to displace them. Abley, in fact, cites one such example—during his stay in Provence, a road sign originally said *Aurenja* (Occitanist spelling). However, “a conservative party won the next election and within a few weeks, egged on by Roux, it changed the sign to Mistralian spelling: Orange/Aurenjo” (Abley 2005: 144). The Provençal orthography thus stands as a clear symbol in the battle against Occitanist influence, and it is apparent that the counter-reform in Provence enjoys rather widespread support.

4.4.3 Usage (incl. intergenerational transmission and domain restriction)

As with all the *langues d’oc*, Blanchet finds it difficult to summarize speaker numbers for Provençal. From synthesized sources, he suggests that there are 500,000 active fluent speakers, of which roughly half use the language regularly (Blanchet 2004). Additionally, there are 500,000 passive speakers, though a full two million Provençals claim to have had parents who spoke the language, suggesting a transmission rate of one half for that generation (Blanchet 2004). It is interesting to note that this rate, though far from ideal, is much higher than that

⁸⁹ See Appendix section 9.2 for examples of the differences in Mistralian and Occitan-standard orthography.

posited for Breton, for example. Nonetheless, Provençal speakers show the same age stratification of other regional language speakers; 80% of them are over the age of 50%, and in the present generation transmission is estimated to have dropped to between zero and five percent (Blanchet 2004). Schlieben-Lange (1977: 105) confirms this trend, noting that the traditional monolingual-bilingual-monolingual pattern was highly evident during her fieldwork, complete with the regret of some of the monolingual speakers that their heritage language had been lost:

Children, in general, no longer have any practice in speaking Provençal, but they do not share the need of their parents to renounce their vernacular and their rural origin. On the contrary, sometimes they reproach their parents for having withheld something from them. Some of them even try to reinforce their contact with the grandparents or with their relatives in the country.

Domain restriction to private networks in an agricultural setting is also apparent; Provençal “is confined completely to the rural context and is maintained in town only when there is a connection with rural life” (Schlieben-Lange 1977).

Thus, the positive trend that appears to be suggested by the “less steep” drop in Provençal must be taken with a grain of salt, it seems—though the data in Provence may suggest slightly more optimistic trends for the language, Oc as spoken there has undergone the same intergenerational shift and domain restriction as the rest of the languages in this work.

4.4.4 Women and children first! : women at the vanguard of language shift

Schlieben-Lange found that strong correlations between gender and language shift in Provence during her fieldwork, published in 1977. These observations confirm Labov’s theorizing and the conjectures about general trends in France made earlier in this work; women control the linguistic environment in the home and do so in a manner to eradicate the usage of

the regional language in favor of French, despite the fact that men maintain the use of Provençal in the agricultural sphere:

Men continue to speak Provençal during work, at the market, playing “boule”, and during their conversations in the cafés. Men also try to continue to speak Provençal in the family, particularly to their parents, but also to their wives. It is quite astonishing that there are men who are almost completely monolingual (Provençal). Women, on the other hand, generally deny that they ever speak Provençal; they deny ever having learned or even having heard of it. If men try to introduce Provençal into family conversation, women forbid them to do so. They are very concerned that children learn correct French in order to prepare them well for school. (Schlieben-Lange 1977: 104)

In Provence, then, the role of gender in language shift is quite pronounced, confirming that women represent the leaders in the shift away from regional languages towards French.

4.4.5 Attitude

Though Provençal has what can be posited as slightly more of a positive attitude than the other Oc languages—particularly vis-à-vis French—it seems to follow Breton in the trend of its speakers having been convinced of the inferiority of the language through corporal punishment. According to Blanchet (2004: 137), Provençal is “felt to be less prestigious, useful, and legitimate than French.” One of the elderly speakers in Abley’s book bears out this opinion; though she has recently come to appreciate the value of having once spoken a language with a rich literary history, her mother suffered the stigma of speaking a language called a patois. Abley (2005: 131) writes: ““True Provençal came to a stop in the time of our parents,” she said, meaning (I think) the early twentieth century. “My mother told me how they ridiculed her language. It was a terrible thing. The teacher would strike a child across the knuckles with a ruler if the child was caught speaking Provençal.”” Provençal did not escape the influence of the French educational system.

Still, Blanchet (2004: 137) posits the existence of two contradictory opinions held by Provençal speakers that immediately recall the situation in Brittany: he writes that there is “the positive one, which holds that they are rich in an appreciated culture and well integrated into local society; the negative one holds that they are older lower-class people using an old-fashioned dialect.” The idea that Provençal is the inheritor of a rich literary tradition is not lost on those in Provence, who expressed a positive opinion of Provençal at a rate of 85% in 2001 (Blanchet 2004). Provençal, then, seems to have somewhat weathered the storm of the stigmatization of both the French educational system and the Occitanist movement: though its fourth generation speakers suffered negative opinions of their language that led to a language shift, a positive opinion of Provençal has regained the majority at the present time.

4.4.6 Identity

This positive opinion can also be explained in terms of the way Provençals conceive of their regional identity, even given the existence of several dialects—there is the Alpin-Dauphinois Provençal spoken in the Alps to the east, and there are also the artificial or standardized varieties of Provençal that arose from language maintenance movements. In this multiglossia situation, natively spoken Provençal is viewed as the prestige dialect. The native variety of Provençal that has been allowed to interact naturally with French influence is referred to as *néo-provençal*; this variety, spoken by young speakers, exhibits a high degree of infusion from French, including of syntax, idioms and lexicon. *Néo-Provençal* contrasts with, of course, Occitan, but also with *néo-provencitan*, the standardized, artificial variety of Provençal that is proposed and used mostly by language activists and militants. Much like *néo-breton*, this version of Provençal takes pains to specifically reject all French influence as it mixes inspiration from both Occitan and *néo-provençal*.

Overall, though, Provençals demonstrate a high degree of endogamy. Provençals refer to their language as “Provençal” or “patois provençal” at a rate of 90 to 100%, systematically refusing to identify their language as *langue d’oc* or *Occitan* (Blanchet 2004). According to 98%, “Provençal is an independent language and not a variety of another one” (Blanchet 2004: 136). Blanchet (2004: 136) refers to this unified self-identification as the *polynomic approach*, “[meaning] that [the language] is identified as a whole with no ‘standard,’ all social and local varieties accepted, according to the will of the speakers and the refusal of domination by any group.” For these speakers, “the sociolinguistic status of Provençal is clearly linked to its identity and vice versa” (Blanchet 2004: 135). Schlieben-Lange (1977: 106) notes that “it is striking to see that the question of speaking Provençal or not is one which arouses a lot of emotions. Even those who pretend not to be interested in the question tend to react highly aggressively.” Schlieben-Lange (1977) further provides three main reasons for the positive connotations associated with Provençal: nostalgia for the older, simpler ways of living that Provençal is associated with; a reaction against the central authorities of Paris extending their influence in the region; and Provençal as a proud marker of regional identity, particularly for Pied Noir immigrants to the area.

The last wrinkle in the Provençal identity is one unique across the regional languages discussed in this paper: its positive relationship to French. Such a condition likely arises from the fact that the variety of French spoken in Provence is extremely marked, so much so that, in this author’s own experience, students in a high school French classroom in America will be able to identify the pronunciation of *oui* as *ouais* as being distinctly Provençal. Blanchet (2004: 138) quotes Molinari as recognizing the power of this accent: “this linguistic marker of Provençal identity is the most famous one in France and even abroad.” Within Provence, in fact, the

Provençal accent is more prestigious than standard Parisian French. Though the “Provençal variety of French works both as a complement and as a direct rival of Provençal itself,” it is given very important symbolic status as the ideal bridge between Provençal identity and French national identity, supported by 80% of the population and even 50% of non-natives (Blanchet 2004: 138). Provençal thus demonstrates a resilience of identity and willingness to accept pluralism in identity that is not commonly seen.

4.5 Oc profile: Auvergnat

To the northwest of Provence lies Auvergne, an Oc-speaking region that is, linguistically and socially, more under the influence of Paris than of Oc-speaking Toulouse. In Auvergne, social conditions have created an atmosphere in which negative attitudes about the language have resulted in a situation that is effectively the polar opposite of that of Provençal: its speakers, focused on their economic troubles rather than language militancy, would just prefer to leave their language alone and let it disappear.

4.5.1 Usage

There is very little or no data on Auvergnat, as it is an area generally neglected by linguists and even Occitanists. The Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) posits a 2004 speaking population of 1,315,000; this number, if accurate, likely includes passive speakers as well as active. It is worth noting, however, that Auvergnat is very close in its sounds to Brazilian Portuguese, with “overabundant use of palatals and extremely lax vocalic and articulatory mechanisms” that have alienated Auvergnat from the other languages in the French south because it sounds so different (Soupel 2004: 102).

4.5.2 Identity and attitude

Auvergnat speakers lack any cohesive *Auvergnat* identity; here, “it is a common opinion that every community or village has its own ‘patois’ irreconcilably different from that spoken elsewhere” (Soupel 2004: 95). In addition to this fragmentation, Soupel (2004: 94) notes, “Auvergnat, “locally known as ‘patois’ and possessing a strong rural connotation, is justifiably regarded as having little relevance to today’s high-tech universe.” Auvergnat has undergone a history of stigmatization and is regarded as essentially an oral language (Soupel 2004: 94).

The strongest characteristic of the Auvergnat region, however, is the social isolation that Auvergnat speakers want for themselves. Soupel (2004: 97) posits that the general economic depression of the area has become irreversibly tied to the Auvergnat language:

The Auvergne has long suffered from an image of poverty, miserliness, retardation, dirt, remoteness, rough weather conditions, indifferent means of communication, and so forth—and this negative representation has been “internalized” by people who have developed a kind of inferiority complex, such that a degree of reservedness has grown among them. (Soupel 2004: 97)

Such an internalization of negative connotations of the Auvergnat language and the historically isolated nature of Auvergne have led Auvergnat speakers to abandon their language and its associations, leading them instead to look towards Paris for hope of progress and improving conditions. Noting that it takes longer to get from Clermont-Ferrand to Toulouse than to Paris, Soupel (2004: 97) says that “if anything, today’s Auvergnats who commute to Paris by plane or fast train are much nearer to envisaging themselves as virtual Parisians.”

This desire to modernize, gain economic prosperity and reject the rural associations of Auvergnat has led speakers in this region to reject Occitanism, but has also meant that “the average Auvergnat ... is ... little likely to accept the linguistic claptrap of a new sort of conditioning based on a southern rewriting of history hostile to France – the habitual wailings

about the unfortunate Cathares cuts no ice in Auvergne” (Soupel 2004: 97). Because of their desire to be linked to Paris, “the collective mind of Auvergne does not reject and has never rejected the notion of centralized France” (Soupel 2004: 98). The political connotations of Occitanism hold no water in Auvergne.

As far as the linguistic efforts to revive “Occitan” in Auvergne, the region’s natives prove themselves equally apathetic. Attempts to Occitanize this section have never caught on in Auvergne; here, the renaissance of positive attitude towards regional language has not gained strength because the negative associations of the language are so strong. Importing Occitan teachers would not work, because of the difference in the languages, and, according to Soupel (2004: 95), “today’s parents, with a few notable exceptions, do not really encourage the learning of Auvergnat: for one thing, they are, as a rule, unable to speak the language themselves, and their own parents and grand-parents are not inclined to contradict their offspring’s negative approach.” In fact, the failure of the Occitanist movement is so complete that, to Soupel (2004: 102) as a linguist, “it is fundamentally reassuring to see how few Auvergnats are even vaguely aware of the existence of an Occitanist movement.”

For the speakers of Auvergnat, “learning English, not patois, is in demand” (Soupel 2004: 94). The negative attitude surrounding the regional language is so complete, so well-engrained and so tied to a historical sense of inferiority that Soupel (2004: 95) is forced to conclude that “little hope is to be entertained as to the survival of spoken Auvergnat beyond the early decades of the twenty-first century.” Auvergne is the opposite situation of Provence; here there is no historical pride in the regional language, no positive connotations, and no energy left to put into rejecting the Occitan movement—particularly considering that Auvergne is focused on a higher priority of ridding itself of its backward image.

4.6 Oc profile: Gascon/Béarnais

In many ways, the Gascon/Béarnais language situation sits between that of Auvergne and Provençal. Though Gascon and Béarnais, here referred to as one language area because of their proximity and because linguistic work has tended to be done on both simultaneously, are viewed more positively by their speakers than Auvergnat, there is no historical language identity or regional pride that has given the language the ability to overturn Occitanist influence. Still, there is plenty of vitality left in the regional languages, and though Occitanism managed to exert its influence on the area, there is some hope that Gascon and Béarnais will continue to gain strength and perhaps throw off the Occitan chains.

4.6.1 Usage

Gascon and Béarnais underwent the same stigmatization in the inter-war period that led to the language shift after World War II that has universally marked the regional languages of France (Moreux 2004). Béarn and Gascon prove consistent with the hypothesis that women led the language shift because of their desire to ensure that their children were brought up speaking French to avoid the assumptions of inferiority inherent in speaking a regional language, according to Moreux (2004: 32): “In Gascony they [women] were the first members of the family unit to valorize French—attempting, by their own example and in collaboration with schools, to inculcate their children at a very young age,” and currently women make up only about a third of the expert speakers.

As far as current usage is concerned, a survey showed that 16% of the residents over the age of 14 in Béarn (a small area in the southwest corner of the Gascon area) can speak the language well, and another 14% can speak a bit, bringing the total to about 75,000 Béarnais

speakers (Moreux 2004). Given that half of the population of Béarn is native to the area, that means that a slight majority of native speakers are able to speak the regional language; Moreux (2004) proposes that 40% of the native population know Béarnais as passive speakers. 42% of its speakers use Béarn daily (Moreux 2004). Meanwhile, in Gascony and Aquitaine, a much larger area that envelops Béarn, the percentage of speakers varies greatly depending on demographics—with the trend of rural areas holding more speakers holding true. In Bordeaux, for example, three percent of the population can speak Gascon, as compared to 35% in the Haute-Pyrénées; throughout the rest of the region, about 20% of the population (34% of those over the age of 14) is able to speak Gascon, for a total of approximately 500,000 speakers between Gascon and Béarnais (Moreux 2004). The average age of speakers is slightly lower than that in other areas but is still highly elevated; 50% of speakers are over 64, while 7% of those aged 15-24 can speak (Moreux 2004). The situation of the language shift in Gascony/Béarn is thus still definitively pessimistic, though many of the numbers are somewhat more positive than those of other regions.

4.6.2 Domains of usage

Consistent with the language shifts seen elsewhere in this work, Gascon and Béarnais have undergone a palpable domain restriction. These regional languages are only to be spoken in closed networks where they can be guaranteed the competency of the interlocutors. Gascon and Béarnais are not languages that have public usage or status; Moreux (2004: 37) describes “the esoteric use (in the etymological sense) that speakers make of their language,” concluding that “Béarnais is spoken only in closed networks.” Tellingly, it is only older speakers who have the confidence to feel comfortable to use the language in such situations; Moreux (2004) alleges that

most speakers under the age of 50 or 55 do not feel comfortable enough to use the regional language in such networks.

4.6.3 Identity

The attachment to a Béarnais or Gascon language identity is present, though the issue is made complex once again by the tendency to identify with patois and the negative connotations inherent in the word. Relying on work done after 1994, Moreux (2004) notes that a vast majority of speakers in Aquitaine and Haute-Pyrénées identified themselves as speaking patois, followed by “Occitan or langue d’Oc” (at 27% in Aquitaine and 8% in Haute-Pyrénées), then Gascon or Béarnais. In the Béarn stronghold, however, a slightly majority (52%) said they spoke “Béarn,” then patois (32%), then Occitan or Gascon (Moreux 2004). Such data suggests that the identity inherent in selecting the term Béarnais or patois is more widely recognized and more of a provocative choice, while Gascon or Occitan are more general: “Whence a sociolinguistic identity value that is no longer that of a recognized ethnic group as such, but of a social group (or rather, part of a social group) strongly attached to the past, which, for several decades now, has transmuted formerly experienced humiliations into nostalgia, or even into a cause for pride and revenge” (Moreux 2004: 27). Moreover, given the choice to choose between Béarnais, French, or Béarnais/French identities, 2/3 of Béarnais speakers chose Béarnais, while only 13% of non-speakers did (Moreux 2004). More so than for Gascon, it seems that Béarnais speakers are attached to their language and are proud of such an identity; nonetheless, such an identity does not necessarily translate into activism, as the influence of Occitanism in the area has shown.

4.6.4 Language attitudes

Particularly for Béarnais, the resurgence of regionalism in France seems to have translated into a sense of pride in Béarnais identity. The region certainly suffered the effect of

regional language stigmatization, as the language shift demonstrated, and it is clear that “the local population has long associated French with progress and therefore with social advancement,” as occurred elsewhere throughout France (Moreux 2004: 32). Moreux (2004) found that speaker numbers roughly corresponded to those surveyed who have positive attitudes about the regional languages, at around 35-40% of those surveyed. A matched-guise experiment in Gascony even served to confirm the different perceptions of Gascon versus French: the Gascon speaker was identified as likeable, but the French speaker was said to have social and intellectual skills (Moreux 2004).

This suggests that, though usage has declined, as official propaganda against the regional languages has disappeared a sense of pride in the regional languages has returned to Gascony and Béarn. Regional language speakers in this area, far removed from the influence of Paris, have slowly come to identify themselves as having pride in their language. Moreux (2004: 27) argues that they have “a sociolinguistic identity value that is no longer that of a recognized ethnic group as such, but of a social group (or rather, part of a social group) strongly attached to the past, which, for several decades now, has transmuted formerly experienced humiliations into nostalgia, or even into a cause for pride and revenge.” How, though, have Béarn speakers translated this newfound pride and attitude into improved status for their language?

4.6.5 Occitanist influence in Gascony/Béarn

Unfortunately for Gascon and Béarnais speakers, who, as we have seen, overwhelmingly identified themselves with their region instead of with Occitan, the Occitanist movement was extremely successful at controlling official public discourse on language in this region. In fact, the Occitanist movement took over the official channels of language maintenance in a way that was quite pervasive.

Unlike in Provence, there had never truly been a region-specific language revival movement in Gascony or Béarn. There was, however, what Moreux (2004) terms a “mini-Félibrige” movement that arose around a literary standard based in Pau, known as Fébusian. The Fébusian movement did not spread very far, though, and when the IEO established several branches in the Gascony region in the 1960s, it did not take much for the Occitanist movement to spread wider and gain more influence than the Fébusian revival had. As such, “in 1995, when Fébusian militancy was rekindled, Occitanism had already succeeded in occupying all of the institutional, associative, and media space that the French central government and the various regional governments had granted to militant linguistic movements in Gascony” (Moreux 2004: 41).

Such Occitanist dominance meant several things for the Gascony/Béarn area. First, the regional language being taught in schools was Occitan, not the more local Béarn or Gascon. Secondly, the bureaucrats appointed to control language policy in the area were almost universally Occitanists. Additionally, in 1984, the Fébusian movement was forced to bow down to standardized Occitan orthography (Moreux 2004). Thus, the Occitan orthography spread throughout all official channels in the region, further assisting in the *languedocinization*—both lexical and morphological—of the variety of Oc being spoken by language learners and being taught to young speakers.

As far as education is concerned, then, the language learned is often Occitan, not Béarn or Gascon. Levels of interest in education vary throughout the region, from as little as 1% of students taking classes in the language in some areas to 11% in the Pyrénées-Atlantique in 1999-2000, meaning approximately 4,000 children were learning Occitan in that region that year (Moreux 2004). In fact, additional data from education shows that the language shift, though

continuing to progress, has not been complete: one study showed that a full 11 of 24 students understood simple sentences in Béarnais well or perfectly in 1984, while only one of 23 could do so in 2001—but in both cases there was only one student in the class with absolutely no knowledge of Béarnais (Moreux 2004).

Parents generally look favorably upon the instruction of Oc in schools in the Béarn/Gascony region, according to Moreux (2004). Still, though, the demand for Occitan (or Béarnais/Gascon) instruction is not viewed as a priority: conscious of the demands and opportunities of globalization, parents are more likely to wish for their children to learn English than Béarnais or Gascon (Moreux 2004). As seen elsewhere, activism for Gascon and Béarnais is not as strong as the sociopolitical Occitan movement; nonetheless, since the mid-90s, there has been a rise in region-specific language movements, here manifesting themselves as the rebirth of the Fébusian movement. For example, the largest Gascon-specialized publishing company has recently returned to a Gascon orthographical standard, thus “ending the quasi-monopoly of Occitanist spelling in publishing, in textbooks in particular” (Moreux 2004: 46).

Though this new rejection of Occitanism is in its infancy stages relative to Provençalism, Moreux (2004: 53) views Béarnism as particularly strong in the way it reinforces regional identity but remains conscious of the complexities involved in such a movement, leading it to attract a wide base of support:

Béarnism is able, therefore, to unite two seemingly different trends. On the one hand, being a sociocultural movement with a major impact on the rural environment, including all of its occupations and classes, it reinforces the visceral attachment to apolitical local tradition concerned mainly with its own survival. On the other, it represents a universalistic openness to post-modernity and its related political issues (regionalism, exaltation of identity and heritage), advocates militant action in this direction and, therefore, attracts educated urbanites.

Gascon and Béarnais thus stand at the middle—or, more accurately, slightly on the positive side—of the continuum of Oc languages. The languages' speakers have managed to move past the negative connotations engrained in them by years of marginalization, but as they have done so they have been forced to contend with a new dominant force: the Occitanist movement. Though there is no literary heritage or historical linguistic identity to give the Béarnais/Gascon movements the kind of resilience that Provençal has shown, the two languages have shown that they have begun to shake off Occitanist influence. This is certainly cause for optimism, but the overall language situation remains the same: speaker numbers are down, intergenerational transmission is low, literacy is almost gone, speech domains have been greatly restricted, and there is a long history of language stigmatization to overcome.

4.7 Oc profile: Limousin

As much as Auvergnat has managed to shield itself from the prying eyes of linguistic inquiry and activism, one other Oc language has accomplished that task in an even more striking manner. Limousin, the northwestern *langue d'oc*, is the Oc language spoken in the region furthest from the Oc stronghold in the Languedoc-Roussillon region. Limousin, quite frankly, is more famous for its cattle production than for its regional language, though it sometimes unwittingly gains prestige because Limousin was one of the names used to refer to the medieval Troubadors' language from which modern Oc proceeds. The Limousin of today—so named because of the prominence of the city of Limoges—is the only major Oc language that was not the subject of study of a section of the Blanchet-Schiffman directed journal issue; painfully little linguistic data exists on the language.

Despite the lack of awareness, however, it is a fact that the version of Oc spoken in Limousin had the same usage characteristics as the rest of the regional languages discussed here—Limousin was a regional language whose use as a mother tongue continued well into the 20th century. The only accessible study of usage in the Limousin area is a 1980 study in Château-Chervix performed by Henriette Walter.⁹⁰ Château-Chervix is a *commune* of 1,000 inhabitants 30 kilometers south of Limoges with a somewhat dominant agricultural character (Walter 1993).

Walter (1993) found that the Limousin language was quite alive in Château-Chervix, a relatively rural agricultural area that should be predicted to serve as a stronghold for Limousin. Of the 93 respondents, 53 were farmers or the (otherwise professionless) children of farmers, and 59 of them had only been schooled up to age 12. Of that 93, a staggering 83 were able to speak Limousin, and of the 10 who couldn't, 6 were born after 1960 (Walter 1993). Further, all of those surveyed understood Limousin, with the exception of two (Walter 1993). This example serves as an archetypal example of the ability of an Oc language to retain its grip in a rural area that has not seen much motivation for a language shift to French.

Still, Château-Chervix exhibits many of the language shift characteristics above assumed to be inherent to Oc and Breton. Over one third of those under the age of 31 could not speak Limousin, as compared to the overall figure of 83 out of 93 (Walter 1993).

4.7.1 Domain restriction

The data provided by Walter is some of perhaps the most telling (and amusing) of any sociolinguistic work cited in this paper. A full 100% of speakers use Limousin with elderly

⁹⁰ In addition to the fact that this was the only available survey, its methodology and small scope make its conclusions somewhat questionable. The data is based on a survey was distributed to 350 individuals, but only 93 chose to return it. Also, the *commune*'s small size and rural nature must temper the positive-seeming trends in the data. Ironically, this area was originally founded by Celtic language speakers—a neighboring commune is named Vicq-sur-Breuilh.

people, 93% do so with neighbors, and 84% identify Limousin as the language of choice when speaking to animals (Walter 1993). On the contrary, though, only 37% use the regional language with their children; the percentage drops to 30% for youth in general (Walter 1993). Limousin usage also correlates to the *commune*; 32% use Limousin when speaking to residents of neighboring villages (Walter 1993).

In terms of domain restriction, Limousin thus exhibits the “disaffection progressive des jeunes pour leur langue vernaculaire”⁹¹ and the restriction of domains that is so characteristic of the other *langues d’oc* discussed above (Walter 1993: 126).

4.7.2 Language identity

The only other (highly anecdotal) evidence available on Limousin comes from the tourism website for Issaure, a group of three *communes* that includes Château-Chervix. There, the regional language is identified as “La langue Limousine (nord-occitan)”, which suggests a clear identification of both the language’s individual identity and its relation to the Oc languages found further south (Communauté de communes de l’Issaure 2006). The site notes that Limousin “était jusqu’au milieu du siècle la langue “officielle” le français n’étant qu’une langue “administrative.” La désertification, le “bannissement des vieilles langues” ont eu raison de ce parler. De nos jours ce parler chantant subsiste dans les parties de chasse, foires et bien sur dans notre comice agricole. Cette langue, parlée essentiellement, ne s’écrit pas comme le français”⁹² (CCI 2006). Here, the regional language is overtly characterized as being rural and agriculture in its usage; nonetheless, there remains significant pride in usage.

⁹¹ ‘Progressive disenchantment with their vernacular’

⁹² ‘Was the “official” language until the middle of the century, French only being an “administrative” language. The abandonment, the “banishing of the old languages” had its effect on this language. In our days, this sing-song way of speaking lives on in hunting parties, marketplaces, and of course in agriculture. This language, essentially spoken, is not written in the same way as French.’

Conclusion

Walter's study cannot be extrapolated to make generalized claims about Limousin, nor can the identify posited by the tourism website for this specific area in Haut-Limousin be assumed to hold true for the entire language zone. Nonetheless, these citations show that Limousin as a language with its own identity and its own speakers remains alive at least in the areas most likely to harbor regional language speakers, at least up until the 1980s.

5.0 Synthesizing data on Breton and Oc with linguistic and sociological theory

Before moving on to draw conclusions and make comparisons about these two language communities, and before a discussion of their future can begin, it serves to put the language shifts discussed in this paper in the context of recognized sociological and linguistic theory on culture shift, diglossia and language shift; in addition, parallels between the cases of Breton/Oc and some of the best-documented examples of language shift will be discussed.

5.1 Culture shift

Language shift cannot be isolated from the fact that such a change is, underlyingly, a case of culture shift. As the correlations between language and identity have shown in this work, language usage is essentially a cultural phenomenon that is necessarily connected to a vast network of social factors, be they economic, educational, or otherwise.

Timm (1973), citing Herskovits (1967), posits that culture change phenomena can occur in two different categories: shifts motivated by external forces, and shifts motivated by internal forces. The nationalization of France that took place from the 16th century until the early 20th century essentially boils down to an external factor, an acculturation process that is one of "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or

both groups” (Redfield et al 1936, qtd. in Timm 1973: 281). This is the change that allowed Breton to disseminate across Brittany, picking up Gaulish influence; it is also the change that occurred when Bretons and Oc speakers came in contact with those from the center of France who were seeking to unite them under one national banner.

Internal factors can have an impact on culture shift as well. Take, for example, the fact that, despite the official effort to stamp out regional languages in France that began in 1789, they remained vital for over a hundred years, well into the 1900s. While part of the ultimate shift is due to external factors like industrialization, it is not hard to argue that it was ultimately and definitively the internal choice of families to raise their children in French instead of a regional language that conclusively made language shift a reality. To join the rest of France and to reap the economic and social benefits of speaking French, regional language speakers were aware that they needed to shift their language. Dorian (1981: 67) cites Horowitz’s (1975: 124) theorization of this change:

To be “eligible” for incorporation [merger into another group which maintains its identity], the group to be merged ... will probably be required to demonstrate its acceptability by modifying its behavior in advance so as increasingly to assume the modal attributes of members of the incorporating group.

As France has industrialized, agricultural groups who once saw now desire to merge with Francophone France have come to view the national language as desirable. That it should be the regional language speakers who retain power over when this shift occurs has been seen throughout this thesis: the national authorities were able to make French usage desirable and make regional language usage undesirable, but the definitive shift cannot be forced; it must come from the regional language community’s desire to be assimilated.

Of course, internal and external factors most often work in concert, as is the case with the very conditions in the 1960s that allowed for the rebirth of regionalism in Europe, as Green

(1993: 3) notes: “The emergence of a new political order and the rise of European federalism have created conditions strongly favouring the resurgence of ‘oppressed’ minority languages and regional varieties that can now be harnessed as vehicles for autonomist aspirations.” Without this more general cultural shift, language revitalization movements would never have been possible.

5.2 Language shift and diglossia

No names are more famous in diglossia theory than those of Ferguson and Fishman, the grandfathers of sociolinguistic theory on language shift. In 1959, Ferguson first proposed the idea of diglossia as a situation in which two varieties of a language functioning in distribution with one another. His definition has been expanded over the years, most notably by Fishman starting in 1967; it was Fishman who proposed that diglossia could also be characterized by the functioning of multiple languages in the same space, rather than just interrelated varieties.

As Romaine (1996: 34) writes, “Ferguson notes nine separate areas in which H and L may differ: namely, function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, grammar, lexicon, and phonology. As Fishman (1980a: 6-7) puts it, this is a societal arrangement in which individual bilingualism is not only widespread, but institutionally buttressed.” The language situations discussed in this work reflect two of the different general configurations of diglossia—in each, H is the written/formal language, but in the case of Breton as the L vernacular, the less prestigious language is not genetically related to the dominant one. This is the case for Oc; it has been shown in this work that the closeness of Oc to French has at times directed linguistic debate and perhaps made it easier for French purists to marginalize Oc speakers as having an “impure” version of their language as a native tongue. Such purists still exist today—The New York Times’ William Grimes recently published a review of a 483 page work by Jean-Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow entitled *The Story of French* that seeks to provide

a history of the French language and defend its “surprisingly robust international presence” (Grimes 2006).

Fishman’s 1967 work is also unique in the way in which it links “the relationship between change or stability in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes on the other, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other;” these processes are then used to see how they motivate the choice for one language over another (Timm 1973: 283). The analysis of Breton and Oc is intractable without the social and cultural context that gives us all-important insight into the psyches of speakers and the question of identity, as proven by Labov and as summarized by Green (1993: 13) as follows: “well-disposed speakers accommodate to the linguistic usage of their interlocutors to the extent that the modification does not undermine their own chosen identity or bring them too close to the linguistic behaviour of a social group from which they have intentionally distanced themselves.”

Discussing the motivation for language change, of course, returns us to the all-important role of women in the language shifts discussed in this work and summarized nicely by Timm (1980: 36):

As such it is spoken more by rural men than women, not only because the men are more involved in outdoor agricultural work than women but also because Breton *paysannes* have for decades been consciously rejecting the ethnic language as the very symbol of their rurality and backwardness. Given the alternative—which, as bilinguals, they possess—women born since WW II evidently prefer to bestow on their children the language associated with modernity, upward mobility, and sophistication.

Cueing into the manner in which women are the vanguard in language shift necessitates a discussion of Susan Gal’s (1978) landmark study of the language shift in Oberwart, Austria. Oberwart, on the border of Austria and Hungary, had a stable diglossia situation similar to that of

Oc or Breton, distinguished by the official or exterior use of German (i.e., French) and the vernacular language used to identify the community, Hungarian (i.e., Breton and Oc). As Fasold (1996: 219-220) explains, just like in the case of France between 1789 and World War II, “in spite of the higher prestige of German, the low social status of the peasant class, and their widespread individual bilingualism, there was no shift: Hungarian was the linguistic symbol of group identity for the Oberwart peasants and German was merely a language to be used for dealing with outsiders.” After World War II, however, “the social identity associated with the German language became desirable,” just as the French identity did, resulting in a language shift from German to Hungarian spearheaded by women (Fasold 1996: 220).

Gal (1978) explains that women were able to influence directly and indirectly the language patterns in Oberwart by refusing to speak in Hungarian, thus rejecting the peasant identity associated with the language. The women, striving for the new Austrian identity and the economic prosperity associated with it, married German-speaking workers, leaving the peasant men to marry German monolinguals and raise German-speaking children (Gal 1978). This situation, though slightly different from the situation in France in that the Oc/Breton situation is more often linked to a conscious choice for children rather than marriage, reflects that of Oc and Breton but also that of Auvergnats who still reject their patois in favor of French. Schlieben-Lange (1977: 104-5) also documented this phenomenon in Provençal (see section 4.0 above), noting that

It is striking to see that in all recent investigations dealing with maintenance of dialects or languages, we find that women – who, some fifty years ago, were considered particularly conservative in regard to their speech habits – now tend to abandon the vernaculars as soon as possible, in speech behavior or, at least, in attitude.

The other seminal case of language shift is that of East Sutherland as documented by Dorian (1981), particularly relevant to this discussion because the language in question was Scots Gaelic (East Sutherland Gaelic, or ESG), a language related to Breton. In the Scottish highlands, official attitude towards Gaelic usage was as in France: negative and marginalizing, though recently shifted to encouraging (Fasold 1996). As with Breton and Oc (and Hungarian in Oberwart), until World War I, “the small-language community had coexisted with a higher-status language for decades without a substantial shift away from it ... social and economic changes had brought more speakers of the dominant language into the areas and had increased the possibility and desirability of identifying oneself as a member of the majority sociocultural group” (Fasold 1996: 226). The Scots Gaelic case has an additional twist not blatantly obvious in Oberwart, however: in the case of East Sutherland, “the local variety of the Low language is at once a source of embarrassment and a strong symbol of ethnic loyalty” (Fasold 1996: 227). This situation runs parallel to the contradiction inherent in the two cases in France, where the embarrassment of the native speakers at being fluent in a patois is in close contrast with the recently reborn pride associated with regional identity.

In her book on ESG, Dorian (1981: 105) summarizes the essential characteristics of language shift as demonstrated in the cases of Hungarian to German in Oberwart, ESG to English East Sutherland, Oc to French in the French south, and Breton to French in Brittany:

The home is the last bastion of a subordinate language in competition with a dominant official language of wider currency. An impending shift has in effect arrived, even though a sizable number of speakers may be left, if those speakers have failed to transmit the language to their children, so that no replacement generation is available when the parent generation dies away. The pattern of the shift is almost monotonously the same in diverse settings: the language of wider currency is recognized as the language of upward mobility, and as soon as the linguistic competence of the parents permits, it is introduced into the home.

Dorian's characterization of language shift is key in that it reflects the fact that the simple presence of speakers must not be conflated with unbridled optimism about the language's continuing use. The key factor is not sheer numbers, but rather the attitude towards language: once a different language has been identified as socially valuable, it displaces the other language in the home, quickly undermining the former language's ability to reproduce. It should now be relatively clear that the claims made in this paper by both the author and the theorists cited are consistent with the approaches—though they have evolved over the years—to the sociolinguistic dimension of language shift.

6.0 No longer speaking the same language: linguistic subjectivity and minority languages

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of writing a work of this genre is contending with the subjective biases inherent in practically every source available. Before conclusions about the general patterns of Oc and Breton can be drawn, some attention should be focused on the issue of the inconsistencies in the discourse used to discuss minority languages, particularly those in this book. The guide to understanding the differences between Occitan and Provençal orthographies, for example, snidely notes that “l'orthographe provençale qui permet d'avoir une idée précise de la prononciation à un endroit donné et qui est la plus employée en Provence. ... L'orthographe dite 'classique,' qui permet de retrouver les mêmes mots prononcés différemment ailleurs en langue d'Oc, employée par une minorités [*sic.*] d'intellectuels”⁹³ (Stécoli and Matiàs 1997); Belasco (1990: 1003) hints that “the second orthography [that is, Occitan] has definitely gained the upper hand in recent literary publications.”

⁹³ ‘The Provençal orthography allows for a precise sense of pronunciation in a given place and is the orthography most often used in Provence ... the so-called ‘classical’ orthography, which allows the same words to be pronounced differently elsewhere in Oc, is used by a minority of intellectuals.’

Good and evil, positive and negative, helpful and unhelpful—which one you choose depends on the perspective in the literature available on Breton and Oc that you happen to have at hand. It is very tempting to write a story of one regional language that is being saved because it correlates to regional identity and another regional language that is dying because of internal strife, of Occitanist linguists who rolled over regional differences and opinions in the greater goal of achieving political unity for a cause that should never have become more than linguistic in scope. These are the stories that some linguists and some data would lead one to write, and in fact they are the stories that some have written. But things are never as black and white as they seem.

In Brittany, for example, the debate over orthography—*zedachek* versus OU—is a heated battle between Rennes and Brest that has led to disagreement and even violence (McDonald 1989). It is also important to remember that, just because Brittany is a smaller region dominated by three dialects that are mostly mutually comprehensible does not mean it has not experienced the same painful divisions and forced unification that Oc underwent. Regionalists and militants like those advocating for Diwan have been the ones dominating discourse about Breton, not Vannetais speakers; the Breton language does not equate as neatly to Breton identity as we might like to think: “Breton is unlikely to have implied politico-geographical or conceptual unity of the kind now demanded of it, and was probably, as it is today for the majority of its speakers, a medium in which internal social differences were expressed” (McDonald 1989: 128). It just so happens that there is enough mutual intelligibility, enough positive attitude in the region to make the negative aspects of such unification seem less striking than those in the south.

For the Oc movement, however, the most challenging aspect of subjectivity in the literature is the disagreement and the constant generalization that occurs back-and-forth between

linguists. Blanchet and Schiffman, as quoted above, would have one believe that, for example, Robert LaFont was a shameless Occitanist and Brigitte Schlieben-Lange used data on Oc to produce diglossic theory without being aware of the Oc versus Occitan debate. For her 1977 article, however, Schlieben-Lange did actual fieldwork in France, and she remains aware of the debate, actively choosing to use the term *Provençal*. LaFont, also, was not the monolithic proponent of Occitan he is often made out to be: Belasco (1990: 10001) notes that “[Lafont] conceives of normalization in terms of several *norms*—in effect, six: 1. *Un provençal commun normé*, 2. *Un languedocien commun normé*, 3. *Un gascon commun normé*, 4. *Un limousin commun normé*, 5. *Un auvergnat commun normé*, 6. *un alpin commun normé*.” It is, in fact, a coincidence that LaFont is positing the same five or six dialects used in this work (leaving aside Alpin)—the author was not aware of that categorization by LaFont until the very late stages of writing.

Belasco himself is an example of the fact that a linguist should not be judged by one work. Though his 1984 work ends with somewhat dubious, bordering on propagandistic calls to put aside differences and celebrate Occitan as one language, in a 1990 article he clearly states that “considering, however, the richness of expression characterizing each region, the gain obtained from adopting a standard form of Occitan would hardly compensate for the loss resulting from the elimination of those features which endow each dialect with a unique identity that interweaves with the others to make this language a truly harmonious blend” (Belasco 1990: 1001-2).

Throughout this work, the author has done his best to present each work in the most objective light possible. These few examples go to show the degree to which all discourse on France’s minority languages is somehow biased or politically charged.

6.1 Giving new meaning to “language Nazi”

In a country that has only recently come to terms with the events that took place in World War II, it is somewhat shameful but altogether unsurprising that accusations of Nazi collaboration have become a common insult in France, often used when one is quickly looking to devalue and undermine the legitimacy of an opponent in a political argument. The debates over Oc and Breton are not an exception to this trend, as has been noted above; the counter is often to accuse the rival regionalist movement of being in bed with the French national government. Each side in the Occitanist debate, for example, seeks to link the other to the Vichy regime, to Pétain, or directly to Nazi Germany. That each side should have been supported by Germany is actually not surprising: seeking to undermine French national unity, the Germans were known to give support to regional languages, including to Breton (McDonald 1989). Still, though, cries of “Nazi sympathizer” are commonplace in language debate, down to the small issue of orthography in Breton: “OU users taunt Rennes with the collaboration of the last war, and ‘ZH’ users retort with accusations of collaboration with the French authorities” (McDonald 1989: 132). A full discussion of post-Nazi discourse and an investigation into the actual relationship between Germany and regional languages is well beyond the scope of this paper. Given its prominence in debates like this, though, it certainly deserves more study.

7.0 Conclusions

The sociolinguistic situations of Breton and Oc and the movements undertaken to restore their usage show many of the same features, but the two movements—the Bretonnant movement and the Occitanist movement and subsequent Oc regionalist movements—also exhibit several key differences. In both situations, languages that were once widely spoken vernaculars have

undergone rapid decline in usage in the 1900's, with the turning point coming as a language shift spearheaded by women in the post-World War II years as a response to widespread official and social stigmatization of the regional languages of France. In both of these language shift situations, trends well identified as being consistent with language death are highly evident, including drop-off in spontaneous intergenerational transmission, domain restriction, disappearance of literacy and language stigmatization. In response to such negative factors, both languages have seen language revival movements thanks to a political climate conducive to a resurgence of regionalism in the last thirty years.

It is in the language resurrection movements that the two languages (or, in the case of Oc, language families) differ. In Brittany, activists capitalized on a strong link between language group identity and regional identity to give the language status in the French educational system, pinning hopes for language maintenance primarily on a *néo-bretonnant* urban middle class that had witnessed the language shift and wished to preserve the language as a necessary part of their regional Breton identity. Such efforts seem to have been successful, though their long-term results remain to be seen. In the French south, however, the diversity of languages spoken and the diverse sociodemographic composition of the various regions motivated language activists to build a theoretical supraregional structure that linked linguistic goals to sociopolitical action and a new nationalist identity under the banner of Occitania. For Oc, this structure borrowed heavily from Catalan linguistics in its attempt to posit the existence of a unified consciousness across several language areas in which speakers failed to support the movement because their own conception of identity did not fit with the one being imposed on them. The Occitan movement's loss of steam in the 1990s allowed the reemergence of sub-Occitania regionalism, revealing a diversity of sociolinguistic situations.

Across the Oc-speaking area, there are language communities that have effectively abandoned any interest in preserving their language, focusing instead on a rejection of the negative connotations of the patois in hopes for a better economic future. There are also languages that have managed to shake off the weight of Occitanism, breathing life back into regional movements that correlate very well to a pre-existing sense of regional identity. Lastly, of course, there are languages in between, where the demand for a revitalized language identity is not as it might be in Provençal, but where the atmosphere is much more optimistic than that of Auvergne. Overall, on the rubric provided by UNESCO, the attitude of members of these minority language communities towards their languages seem to raise from grade 4 out of 5 (*most* members support language maintenance) for Breton down the scale to grade 1 (only a *few* members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss) (UNESCO 2003).

Presenting the facts in this manner should not be interpreted as an overt condemnation of the Occitan movement. In the radical political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, activists faced with a tough battle to attempt to return power to a diverse set of regions made a choice to unite all of the languages. Without the Occitan movement, it might be argued, Auvergnat might have totally disappeared by the turn of the new millennium, or the Occitanist movement might have breathed sufficient air into the lungs of Gascon to allow it to survive to the pluralistic, language activist atmosphere of recent years. On the other hand, Occitanism may have alienated so many speakers with the imposition of an artificial identity that they may have given up hope for their language earlier than they otherwise would have.

It is worth noting as well that with language maintenance movements comes a new diglossic situation—that of the standardized prestige dialect that must be adopted for use in

language instruction and usage in official contexts alongside common parlance. The creation of this H form may be quite necessary, but it runs the risk of alienating the dwindling community of native speakers, who may suffer anew the shame of dialect stigmatization when they feel that they do not speak the language of learned individuals. This is an issue faced by both Breton and Oc—humorously, Moreux (2004: 43) writes that “the local belief [in Gascony] is that Occitan, an “espèce de langue compliquée” that requires serious study, appeared only recently – no one seems to know from where, somewhere to the east, from around Toulouse or even Catalonia”—but it illustrates a tension that can drive away the speakers whose very language is the centerpiece of maintenance. By far the most poignant case in all of the literature on the subject is one cited by Jones of a Breton speaker who, excited at the prospect of being able to purchase Breton language records for the first time, went out and did so, only to find that he was unable to understand the new standard Breton being sung.

Recognition of the complex issues involved in language maintenance in these two cases is a synthesis that is fine unto itself, but the ultimate question becomes the most potentially pessimistic: is it possible to save these languages, particularly given that both Breton and Oc speakers have unequivocally pinned their hopes on education?

8.0 The future of Breton and Oc

Languages are traditionally passed on spontaneously through the home, so is it possible to save a language just with educational efforts? Dorian notes that, while most cases suggest pessimism, there may be hope:

Because the dynamic picture, insofar as it is recoverable, is the rather familiar one... there may seem to be a certain inevitability about the outcome. I think it is important to realize that this is not actually the case ... Most of the cases of linguistic resurgence [she cites Czech, Finnish, Turkish and Latvian] are

associated with political movements, and it is not surprising that the major thrust to halt the decline of Welsh and of Scottish Gaelic has come from the respective Nationalist political parties of those regions (Mayo 1974; Edwards et al. 1968). (Dorian 1981: 110-1)

Ironically, though, both Breton and Oc linguists agree on this point: teaching children (or even adults) a language in school means nothing if there is no context for actual use of that language in daily life. Domp martin (2002: 35) cites Hamers and Blanc (1983): “Pour que cette education bilingue ait des resultants positives, il faut d’abord que les deux langues de la communauté soient valorisées par le milieu et par l’enfant.”⁹⁴ Timm (1982: 3), on the other hand, channels Breton language activist Yann Sohier: “It is equally clear that even should [Breton] be allowed to penetrate well into the school system this would not ensure its continuation as a vernacular: the language must find support in the world outside the classroom. Yann Sohier saw this clearly a half-century ago: “Brezhoneg er skol, ya! Met brezonheg er gêr gentân!” (Breton in school, yes—But Breton at home first!)” Both movements seem well aware that with no social context, educational efforts, be they in Calendretas, Diwan, or public school, will be for naught.

Linguistic theory backs Timm and Domp martin on this issue. Romaine (1996: 43) noting that Fishman emphasized the importance of intergenerational transmission in language shift reversal in lamenting the perennial failure of bilingual education, writes that “only when a language is being passed on in the home is there some chance of long-term survival. Otherwise, other efforts to prop up the language elsewhere, e.g. in school or church, may end up being largely symbolic and ceremonial.” Positive attitude and the existence of a regional language school network cannot generate Breton or Oc’s winning back of usage domains as long as Calendrons who are integrated to the public school system find that their schoolmates mock them

⁹⁴ ‘For bilingual education to produce positive results, it is first necessary that the two languages in the community in question be valued both in the environment and by the child.’

and their parents are unable to find practical connections for the language. In noting that “schools tend to reflect society and not lead in change” (Romaine 1996: 285), Romaine (2006: 282) writes that “we expect unrealistically that marginalized schools can guarantee maintenance of a language ... 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.” Ultimately, though, there is not enough data on the results of bilingual schooling to definitively suggest whether such reversal is possible.

The best existing case is the less-than-optimistic example of Irish Gaelic, which demonstrates that extensive government funding and general positive attitude about a language do not a language shift reversal make. In Ireland, the goal of restoring Gaelic as a practical, everyday language for communication has been a government priority since 1960, but “bilingualism is more a feature of the schools than of life outside them” (Ó Huallacháin 1970 qtd. in Fasold 1996: 180). Of those who studied the language through primary school to age 14, a recent study showed that 27% had absolutely no knowledge of Gaelic, while only 9% were fluent or fairly fluent, while 63% had some notions (Fasold 1996). Of those who studied Gaelic through post-primary school, 6% still claimed to have no knowledge, while only a third were at least somewhat fluent (Fasold 1996). It is somewhat disheartening to think that the 27% and 6% had studied Gaelic for at least several years.

Outside of speakers’ self-assessments of ability, though, has Gaelic education translated into language use? Brucher and White (1979: 65, qtd. in Fasold 1996: 284) suggest that in spite of the educational programs and in spite of positive attitude towards Irish, ability only declines: “In a large proportion of the population, despite stated language preferences for Irish, ability in Irish tends to decay over time, after people leave the school system in which Irish is learned.”

Speaker ability decreases as age increases, from 33% of 15-24 year olds being fairly fluent down to 8% of 65+ year olds (Fasold 1996).

Such a decline comes even though attitude towards Irish is overwhelmingly positive. Fasold (1996: 284) writes that Brucher and White found that “attitudes about Irish were generally positive, highly structured, and internally coherent. However, they found that reported attitudes had little effect on whether or not a person used Irish.” An overwhelming majority—76%--still approve of teaching Irish in primary school (Fasold 1996).

How can a language that is viewed so positively still manage to be in decline? Dorian (1981: 106) is well aware of the problem, which has become only more common in the wake of the rebirth of regionalism in Europe. In fact, the disjuncture between attitude and increasing usage numbers can even be used as a weapon against those trying to save a language:

It is common enough for the native speakers of a dying language to state that they value their mother tongue greatly, while doing nothing to ensure its survival—that is, while failing to pass it on to their children. Because of this “acquiescence” in the death of the language on the part of the speakers who alone could foster a succeeding generation of native speakers, some scholars have spoken of “language suicide” rather than “language death” (Denison 1977; see also Greene 1972).

Attitude, then, does not necessarily correlate with language revitalization. The positive attitude towards Irish is relatively consistent with the numbers for even the languages in France where the speakers have the most optimistic attitude, and they are disturbing in that they suggest that even the attitude of wanting to see the language succeed does not equate to its actually doing so.

The question of gender is equally important in this matter, and it is equally understudied. Dompmartin (2002) observed that the young girls in Oc language classes in school were most likely to be attached to using the regional language. Will these girls grow up to reverse the language change, retaining Oc and encouraging their children to use it? Or, on the other hand,

might they be influenced by the negative attitude of their peers (and, in some cases, their own mothers) to treat Oc as a subject they once studied in school rather than a language of communication? Additionally, the slightly more positive attitude towards language use in Brittany may also mean that young girls in Brittany would be more likely to avoid the injurious effects of negative opinions toward Breton, allowing them to be more likely to retain the regional language for later transmission to their own children. This potential subtlety in the differences between the two languages could have long-term effects.

Of all of the language areas discussed in this work, Breton, Provençal, Occitan-Languedoc and Béarnais are in the strongest positions, roughly in that order. Nonetheless, in none of the French cases are positive attitudes greater than those shown for Irish; combined with speaker insistence on the usage of the educational system for language maintenance and the admittance of speakers in several regions that learning international languages of communication like English is a higher priority than learning the regional language, it seems very hard to be optimistic about the future of Breton and Oc.

8.1 Ecolinguistics

Explaining the puzzling disconnect between language enthusiasm and actual progress in increasing the speaker numbers is one of the goals implicit in a relatively new branch of linguistics—ecolinguistics. Pioneered by Haugen (1972), ecolinguistics seeks to unite linguistics, ecology, sociology and psychology as it studies language usage as an integral part of environment. Rather than study pure sociolinguistics that views any given language as a unit in and of itself, ecolinguists argue, it is important to realize that a language and the environment around it are inseparable.

Ecolinguistics was originally referred to as language ecology when defined by Haugen (1972: 325 qtd. in Mühlhäuser 2003: 2) as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment.” This theory has developed over the past thirty years, drawing on McRae’s work on territoriality (1975) and Halliday’s conception of functional and applied linguistics to become a veritable field of linguistics in the last decade, of which the Australian Mühlhäuser is one current proponent. Ecolinguistics is relevant in the analysis of endangered minority languages like these because it represents a new manner of thinking that holistically integrates study of the language and the factors that it lives with. Mühlhäuser (2003: 1) defines such thinking “in terms of a number of parameters, including: awareness of the dangers of monoculturalism; both system-internal and wider environmental considerations; awareness of the limitations of both natural and human resources; long term vision; and awareness of those factors that make for the health of ecologies.” This manner of conceiving language usage rejects the “diglossia-as-conflict” approach of Gardy and La Font, seeing a language and its environment as a problem of limited resources that must be distributed.

The ecolinguistics movement is perhaps most useful in its implications for language planning. Under such an approach, rather than focus on grammar standardization, activists must consider the holistic environment in question and adopt a reform plan that takes the ecology of that environment into account, as Mühlhäuser (2003: 9) explains: “In Haugen's view, such [language] planning cannot be a mechanical problem of: (a) lexical modernization; (b) standardization of grammar; and (c) provision of a writing system. Rather, one needs to take into consideration the relationship of the language to be subjected to planning with other languages, attitudes and other factors.” Put another way, revitalizers must seek to make a home (fitting with the Greek root of ecology) for a language before they attempt to make a language that conforms

to a pre-defined home, as those who have created the literary standards for Breton and Oc have done.

This manner of conceiving of ecolinguistics has been utilized implicitly for years yet, at the same time, explicitly ignored. Clearly, the Occitanists had the environment of the language in mind when they realized that language promotion would not be enough; they were aware that they needed to work within the greater environmental context of Oc if they were to have success. On the other hand, though, it is clear that they went about their ecological approach the wrong way—rather than describe an environment that would be amenable to five species of language, they posited the existence of only one then brazenly attempted to overhaul the language environment to make Oc healthy.

In the future, then, ecolinguistics would suggest that language revitalization efforts must make a complete commitment to considering carefully the state of a given language and the conditions that surround it before proudly claiming that the battle is won and lost. As with those Bretons and Oc speakers who knew their languages must be valued and spoken outside the home before educational efforts will pay dividends, it must become painfully clear to any observer that, up to this point, efforts to restore Breton and Oc usage have not taken a sufficiently ecological approach when they focus solely on education. The Occitanist approach, while more holistic in scope, invented a false conception of the ecology in the French south before beginning its work. Something needs to change if Oc and Breton are to be maintained.

8.2 Conclusions

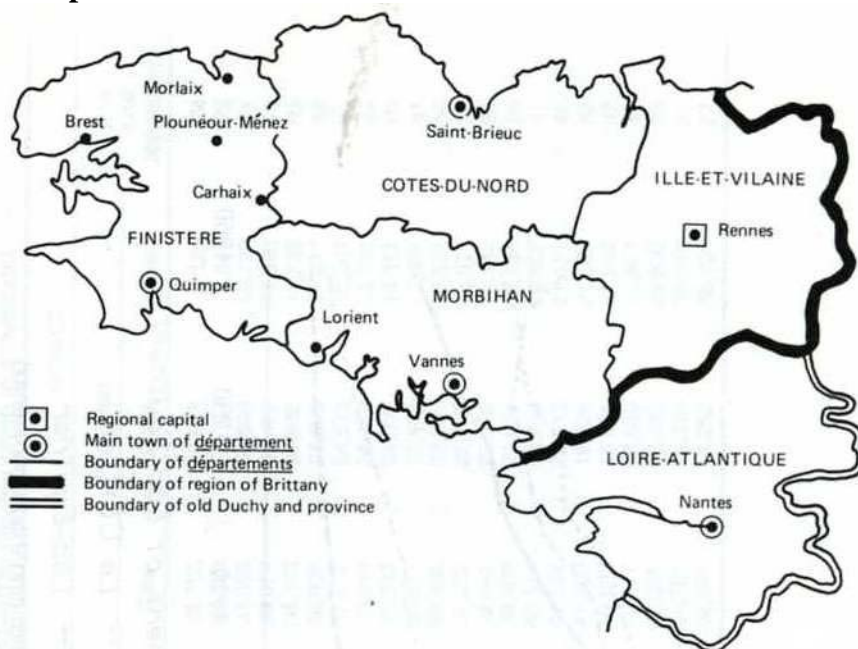
Still, the language revival movements in France are relatively new, and they have only recently gained the legal status necessary to claim a permanent foothold in the educational and legal system. It is not completely outside the realm of conception to believe that *néo-bretonnants*,

for example, may begin to transmit the language in the home again—recall, for example, Choquet’s example: “Mais on recommence à croiser des jeunes parlant breton entre eux et si c’est toujours surprenant, c’est de moins en moins rare: dans le train, l’année dernière, deux enfants, frères et soeurs visiblement, 12 et 8 ans à peu près, ils ont parlé breton tout le long du trajet alors qu’ils n’étaient que tous les deux, c’était visiblement pas un exercice mais bien leur langue de communication” (Choquet, personal communication). Perhaps language maintenance is not yet hopeless—and there are certainly examples of success, the most well known of which being Hebrew, though that language benefited greatly from a strong religious and national identity and the creation of a new political structure.

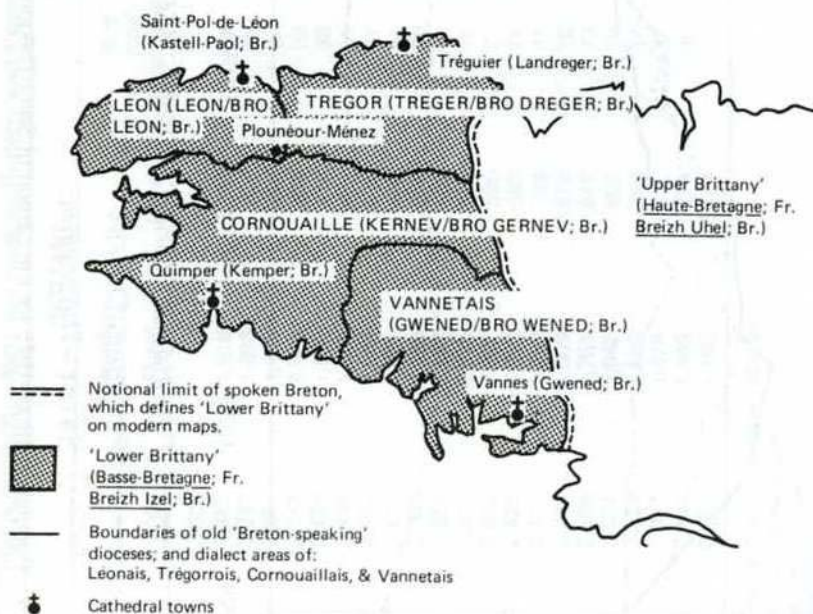
What is certain is that the battles for these languages are being fought as the last of their native speakers are disappearing, meaning that soon there will only exist speakers of a language who learned an inorganic variety through schooling. Time will be the only true determiner of the future of Oc and Breton.

9.0 Appendix

9.1 Maps



Map 1 Map of Brittany, showing *départements*



Map 2 Map of Brittany, showing old 'Breton-speaking' dioceses and the dialect areas

Maps are from McDonald 1989: 302. The first shows the present-day administrative regions of Brittany; the latter shows the four dialect regions of Brittany—KLT and G, each of which roughly corresponds to a historical diocese.

Map of Oc-speaking areas



Limousin: name of the present administrative region

Limousin: name of the regional language

- Marseille : Town

Figure 3. *The regional languages of the South of France*

Map showing the general areas in which the *langues d'oc* are spoken in the south of France, as per Blanchet and Schiffman 2004.

9.2 Orthography

Examples from Stécoli and Vadembòs 1997:

English	French	Orthographie Classique (Occitan)	Orthographie Provençale (Mistralian)
Yes	Oui	Òc	O, vouei
Hello	Bonjour	Bònjorn	Bon-jour
How's it going?	Comment ça va?	E, coma va?	E, coumo vai?
The man	L'homme	L'òme	L'ome
How much does that cost?	Combien ça coute?	Quant còsta?	Quant costo?
Platform	Le quai	Lo cai	Lou quèi
Police	La police	La polícia	La pouliço

Examples from LaFont 1972, as cited in Belasco 1990. The French glosses are his; the English glosses are this author's own.

Orthographie Provençale

Orthographie Classique

French

English

- Uno fes que li dinado e li soupado di troupeu soun arrestado*
Una fes que lei dinnadas e lei sopadas dei tropèu son arrestadas
 Une fois que les dîners et les soupers des troupeaux sont terminés
Once the herds have finished their dinners and suppers
- e bèn marcado, li baile arribon dins lis Aup ounte cadun*
e bèn marcadas, lei bailes arriban dins lei Aups onte cadun
 et bien marqués, les maîtres-bergers arrivent dans les Alpes où chacun
and been counted, the master shepherds arrive in the Alps, where each one
- vai reconouisse lou campèstre de soun arrentamen. Entremen*
vai reconóisser lo campèstre de son arrentament. Etremens,
 va reconnaître le terrain de son bail de ferme. En attendant,
goes to scout out the terrain of his farm land. While waiting,
- eilalin, li troupeu sarra coume li pèu de la tèsto, s'avançon*
ailalin, les tropèus sarrats coma lei peus de la tèsta s'avançan
 là-bas, les troupeaux serrés comme les cheveux de la tête, avancent
over there, the herds, tightly packed like hairs on a head, advance
- plan-plan, buto-tu, buto-lèu, li fièr menoun en tèsto! Oh! Li*
plan-plan, buta-tu buta-leu, lei fièrs menons en tèsta! O! Lei

doucement, poussant, ça et là, les fiers boucs-châtrés en tête! Oh! Les
softly, hastily, here and there, the proud, castrated goats in the lead! Oh! The

6. *poulits escabot!*
polits escabòts!
jolies bandes de chèvres et de brebis.
pretty groups of goats and sheep.

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