Chapter 6

Breton Language Maintenance and Regeneration in Regional Education Policy

TADHG Ó hFEARNÁIN

Introduction

While the number of Breton speakers continues to decline, there are at last incipient signs that loss is now showing signs of reversal and a new dynamic in favour of the language is becoming established. This chapter focuses on aspects of the intergenerational transmission of Breton and the production of new speakers in the context of Brittany's Regional Council Language Policy. It considers specific complexities of Breton language revival, particularly the critical impact of the division between traditional and revivalist Breton, and the experiences of a generation of Breton language activists who are at the forefront of attitude shift and language regeneration in Brittany in mediating between the two varieties.

Breton is an Insular Celtic language, spoken in France, closely related to Cornish and Welsh, though not intercomprehensible with them in the modern period. Breton was probably never spoken as a community language in the east of Brittany. Gallo is spoken there, a language derived from Low Latin in parallel to the other langue d'oil varieties from which modern French emerged. Both Breton and Gallo are now minority languages spoken by bilinguals. Despite centuries of marginalisation and official suppression, particularly since the French Revolution (Broudic, 1995; Lachuer, 1998), Breton was still a majority language in western Brittany in the first half of the 20th century but went into rapid decline after the end of World War II. Particularly since the 1980s, France has gradually become more tolerant of its linguistic minorities in the educational and cultural spheres (see Oakes, Chapter 5, this volume) but has taken few concrete steps to redevelop the languages. The work of language activists during the periods of intolerance and minoritisation...
has, however, recently been supplemented by language promotion policies by local and regional administrations, particularly in Brittany.

The chapter is also illustrated by data from semi-structured interviews carried out individually and in small groups in autumn 2009, with 17 informants whose primary professional work is with the Breton language. All those interviewed are in the age group 29–45 and work as primary or secondary school teachers, in language development agencies, in the media or in music and entertainment. All live in the historically Breton-speaking part of the Department of the Côtes d’Armor. Interviewees were specifically chosen because they were brought up speaking Breton themselves in an area where Breton was spoken traditionally or had learnt Breton from their immediate family and neighbours in childhood. The one exception had learnt Breton at a later stage but was well integrated with people of that profile, and their partner also had such a background. Breton language professionals with such a personal history offer particularly valuable insights into the nature and potential of language policy as many of them are employed by public agencies (or those in receipt of public money) but have themselves come from a language activist background which has often positioned itself as a form of resistance to the dynamics of the state. As all also had higher education in Breton, entailing the learning of reading, writing and speaking of a ‘literary’ or ‘standardised’ form which they use, to some extent, themselves, they are also well aware of the often-posted divide between traditional Breton and that of the revival movement, the latter caricatured in academic studies as a synthetic variety (Le Dû, 1997) or a variety which is redundant for older traditional speakers (Jones, 1998b: 134).

Our sample of Breton language professionals is particularly useful since it aligns well with the new image Breton speakers enjoy in the public mind, promoted by the media, which reflects the energy of those engaged in the promotion of the language and cultural activities. As Broudic (2009: 88) notes, most of these media-friendly people live in urban centres spread throughout Brittany, are responsible for bilingual schools and evening classes, are publishers and singers, are theatre performers, speak on the radio and appear on television and in newspapers. But he cautions that this image does not correspond to the most common profile of the Breton speaker which emerged from the major 2007 survey conducted by TMO-Régions (Broudic, 2009). That speaker is most likely a married woman over 60 years with no formal education, living in a small rural community. The participants in this study lie somewhere between these sociolinguistic poles and have a part in both realities, if two realities do exist.
The Geographical and Social Demography of Breton

It is usual in sociolinguistic descriptions of Brittany to refer to traditionally Breton-speaking Lower Brittany (Breizh Izel/Basse Bretagne) in the west and to Gallo and French-speaking Upper Brittany (Breizh Uhel/Haute Bretagne) in the east (see Figure 6.1).

Loth (1883) considered that Breton was spoken as the community language around the 9th century west of a line which ran approximately from the border with Normandy at Mont Saint Michel southwards to the River Loire at a point near Saint Nazaire. By early modern times, the Breton-speaking area was probably further west, more or less where Sébillot (1886) identified its boundary as a line from Plouha in the north to a point on the southern coast east of the city of Vannes. Timm (1983) reinvestigated the extent to which Breton was spoken along Sébillot’s line in 1976 and described Breton surviving in islands in a widening sea of

Figure 6.1 Brittany: Modern department boundaries and historical linguistic frontier
French speakers. She suggests that this interpretation still holds but should better be conceptualised not geographically but as social networks or communities of practice (Timm, 2009: 716). While numerically strongest in the Finistère department, Broudic (2007, 2009) highlights concentrations of speakers, particularly in rural communes with small populations in the Trégor region in the Côtes d’Armor, in Central Brittany from around Callac in the Côtes d’Armor to Carhaix in Finistère, with some pockets of strength in Cap Sizun and the southern coastal Bigouden country in Finistère.

Although one should now be cautious about defining a linguistic boundary, there is no doubt from the survey data available in the last 15 years that Breton is still much more present west of Sébillot’s line than in the east and that ‘traditional Breton’ has some presence in all of the territory of Lower Brittany from areas where there are considerable numbers of speakers to others where the population still has a strong identification with a language that is now hardly spoken (Le Coadic, 1998).

The most comprehensive studies on the numbers, profiles and practice of Breton speakers were carried out by TMO-Régions in 1997 and 2007 at the behest of Fañch Broudic (1999, 2009), with financial support from the Regional Council and some of the departments. The sampling technique (Broudic, 1999, 2009) has been shown to be statistically robust by independent large-scale surveying by national agencies in 1999 (Le Boëtté, 2003).

The total number of people who claim an ability to speak Breton ‘very well’ or ‘quite well’ in the whole of Brittany in 2007 is 206,000 (5.5% of the population). The 1997 study found 246,000 speakers for Lower Brittany, but by 2007 this figure had fallen to 182,000. Of these 172,000 are over 15 years old (13% of the population), and a further 10,000 are under 15 years and attend bilingual/immersion schools (Broudic, 2009). There are 22,500 speakers in Upper Brittany, who all say they speak it ‘very well’ (1% of the population) and 1500 in bilingual schooling. While 13% of Lower Bretons claim to speak Breton, only 5% (67,000) speak it ‘very well’. Inside Lower Brittany, the percentage of speakers is highest in the Côtes d’Armor (19% of the population, 7% speaking it very well), with 15% in Finistère (6% very well) and 8% in Morbihan (just 3% very well). Despite these low figures for ability, some 49% of the people of Lower Brittany claim to understand at least some Breton, something that reflects how recently the language was quite widely spoken and also an important fact for language policy managers to bear in mind with regard to linguistic heritage. The decline in speaker numbers from 1997 to 2007 can be almost entirely explained by cohort depletion due to natural death.
(Broudic, 2009: 71–76) and by a small amount of emigration. Ageing also explains the depletion in each age cohort between 20 and 74 years, together representing a loss of almost half the proportion in each cohort in 10 years, as shown in Table 6.1.

The most remarkable feature of this profile is that the number of speakers in the 15–19 age group has reversed the trend – with a quadrupling in only 10 years, albeit from a very small base. These young speakers are still small in number, but of these 9000 or so, three quarters claim to speak Breton ‘very well’, which is a higher proportion than any other age group, and 70% said that neither parent spoke Breton. This clearly demonstrates the emergence of a new group of speakers who have learnt Breton from the schooling system, which is not surprising, as all surveys have shown that intergenerational transmission of Breton has been declining very rapidly in each generation, especially in the last 50 years.

One should, however, be cautious before concluding that the Breton spoken by the young is uniformly of a learner variety and that there has been a clean break with the traditional varieties. The personal histories of all the Breton professionals interviewed for this chapter illustrate this. Active Breton speakers in their age group are in a small minority. The 2007 survey suggests only 2% in the cohort 20–39 speak the language and that 58% of their parents could not speak Breton. One informant, brought up on a farm, explained that she had a strong passive knowledge of the language and knew many songs and stories from her early childhood. Tradition bearers, but not language or political activists, her parents spoke to her in French (and she adds that she was teased at school for not having very good French) but always spoke Breton among themselves and with her grandparents who lived in the adjoining house, where she

Table 6.1 Breton speakers by age cohort in Lower Brittany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15—19</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20—39</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40—59</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60—74</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Broudic (2009: 66)
had her own bedroom. She only became an active Breton speaker in later childhood when she took up traditional singing on stage and started to learn 'literary' Breton at school before studying Breton at university.

Another interviewee was the son of activists in the Breton cultural and political movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Remarkably, given their political views, although both Breton speakers from childhood (another interviewee commented that they both had 'beautiful' Breton), they did not speak it to their children. Despite this, the participant spent two months each summer with his grandparents, where only Breton was spoken around him. He believes he only became conscious that he could actually speak Breton when about 10 or 11 years old during a large family meal after the harvest at his grandparents' house when some Parisian cousins who did not know any Breton kept asking him to translate what everybody was saying. He took a correspondence course in Breton while at secondary school to learn to read and write it. Although he spoke Breton with his grandparents, his parents only recently started to do so.

A third example illustrates a slightly different scenario. The interviewee's mother had two older brothers who started school in the 1950s with no French and had a very hard time academically and socially. She was some years younger and when still a baby the teacher came to the house to tell her parents to speak to her in French to help her at school, which they did. However, she rebelled against being the only person to whom French was spoken in the house and became a Breton speaker. This early character forming played its part in her becoming one of the founders of the Breton immersion school system known as Diwan (see also below). The informant's father was not brought up speaking Breton, but got a job working outdoors in a fairly strongly Breton-speaking community and took up speaking the language like all the men of his age in that area. She was among the first cohort in Brittany to have experienced Breton-medium schooling from preschool through to the end of secondary education. Her grandparents found it difficult to accept that her parents spoke Breton to their children and often reproached them for doing so. Only in the last few years have they come to accept that it was a good decision, that she makes a living in and from the language, and that she can speak French well too.

She acknowledged that she became aware very early that she used what she describes as two varieties of Breton – 'that spoken around me' (at home and among the neighbours) and 'that spoken by those who grew up with me' (at school and in her peer group). She sees big advantages to both varieties, the first being idiomatic and 'authentic' in accentuation and syntax and the school variety being better adapted to
modern living. She tries to find a middle course between them in her professional and non-professional life and feels that she has an advantage in being able to move easily among revival speakers and older rural people, with whom she also works as a folklore collector.

**The Divide between Revived and Traditional Breton**

Jones (1998a: 302–304) sketches an account of the linguistic differences between ‘néo-breton’ and traditional varieties, the language of revivalists being influenced by French syntax and prosody and the pronunciation of certain consonants and clusters, the absence of native interrogation patterns and a range of defective grammatical features in verbal phrases, prepositional pronouns and initial mutations (both grammatical and by elision). One of Timm’s (2001) informants suggests that many learners have a tendency to resort to French lexemes rather than established loanwords when they do not know the ‘néo-breton’ word, making their speech seem inauthentic, while Jones (1998a: 316) notes that revivalists see the acquisition of some local features as a goal, self-consciously cramming their speech with regionalisms from the four corners of the country and ending up with a mix that baffles traditional native speakers. Le Ruyet (2009a, 2009b) is the first to have studied a spoken corpus of bilingual secondary school pupils’ Breton. Drawing on this, he identifies four problem areas for teaching spoken Breton, highlighting especially the lack of attention paid to pronunciation (particularly in the question of suffix elision, so important to native speakers) in textbooks and the way that the standard orthography does not properly represent it.

These observations do not reflect the nature of a standardised variety designed as a target language per se, but are similar to those in all revived language situations, where learner and native varieties coexist and interact, both showing signs of language contact and obsolescence. The prominence of the controversy in Breton has its roots in stances related to the perceived ideology of language revival.

The early 20th century language movement was bound up with Breton nationalist/separatist sentiment. Roparz Hemon, one of the movement’s foremost leaders, and his colleagues wanted to create a ‘brand new’ Breton to unite the country and forge into modernity, but in so doing may have actually created two languages, one dialectal, spoken by the people, and the other literary, attached to the movement (Le Coadic, 1998: 248–249). In their career of contributing to this issue, Jean Le Dû and Yves Le Berre (cf. 1996) propose that for generations native Breton speakers have perceived their language in terms of ‘badumes’ (from ba du-mañ – ‘around home’)
with a local function, have acknowledged the existence of a standard, mainly that used historically by the church, but have attributed outside functions, including education, to French. In such a scenario, a revived Breton 'national' standard has had little place. Researchers in the 1990s and earlier found native speakers to be ambivalent about promoting Breton and unsympathetic to revivalists. Older, traditional speakers' ambivalence is born out in their non-transmission of the language to younger generations. To some extent, this might be attributed to speakers' internalising of the national authorities' discursive construction of Breton as being of the traditional, rural past and as a hindrance to modernity and improvement. However, by 2007 a complete shift in attitudes had occurred (Broudic, 2009: 149–152). Support for maintaining Breton increased to 89% in Lower Brittany, while actual policies to promote Breton were backed by 76% of Breton speakers and 56% of non-speakers.

The shift in majority opinion corresponds to the decoupling of the Breton language school movement from overtly engaged political and cultural activism. It parallels the mainstreaming of Breton language policy and is echoed in many other parts of Europe in the early 21st century where marginalised languages have become the object of positive planning by public authorities. Moal (2009) points to the diversification of the social and professional profiles of bilingual school pupils’ parents since the mid-1990s. The ideologically driven quarrels between supporters of the three orthographic systems for Breton have also subsided. Of these, the ‘completely unified’ peurunvan system, developed by the nationalist movement and codified in its final version in 1941, is by far the most widely used, regardless of ideological stance.

The contemporary schooling situation has nevertheless inherited many aspects of its radical roots in its language choices. Although it is not the case in all schools, Favereau (2009: 128) laments the fact that whereas Basque children use the local dialect in earlier schooling and learn the Batua (unified standard) later, Bretons are still obsessed with the ideological aspect of the orthography and standardisation question and have chosen to use the peurunvan in early schooling, only learning variation from that norm towards the end of primary and in secondary education to the detriment of young children being able to converse with their elders and neighbours. Bringing native speakers and learners closer is one of the policy challenges identified by Ofis ar Brezhoneg (2003: 24) and has led to language schemes such as Klaskerien ha Treizherien soñjou ['collectors and transmitters of memories'], which gets school children to collect stories from community elders in an effort to bolster learner-native contact.
While recognising a divide between the two varieties, the 2009 informants’ experience does not lead them to believe that there are now two separate speech communities within Lower Brittany, as portrayed in much of the scholarly literature. They see their own position as somewhere on a spectrum between the traditional variety and the revived standard version, with the need to position themselves towards one end or the other depending on the setting and their interlocutor(s). Several participants questioned whether learners who only acquire a ‘school variety’ could actually function as Breton speakers once they leave education and pointed out that however many people come through the schooling system, for the moment at least, there are many more native speakers than second language speakers in Brittany. However ‘néobreton’ their learning, the participants here do come from and work in their home communities, or nearby, and a characterisation of their speech as a xenolec due to their professional functions, or their membership of a revivalist speech community, is not so clear-cut.

**Regional Language Policy in Brittany**

When considering regional language policy for Breton, it is important to note that while Brittany is made up geographically of five French departments, only four – Finistère, Côtes d’Armor, Morbihan and Ille et Vilaine – are recognised by the French state as the Brittany Region (Région Bretagne) with an elected Regional Council. In the south, the fifth department – Loire Atlantique – has not been part of the Région Bretagne since the region’s creation some 60 years ago, but is involved as an additional partner in nearly all aspects of the cultural and linguistic policies of the region.

On 17 December 2004, Brittany’s Regional Council adopted a document entitled *Une Politique Linguistique pour la Bretagne* [A Language Policy for Brittany]. The policy document sets out broad objectives to develop Breton and Gallo, with emphasis on supporting Breton-medium education in the three forms in which it is currently available to Breton children: (1) bilingual classes in public schools (supported by the Div Yezh association), (2) bilingual classes in private Catholic schools (Dihun) and (3) the independent immersion schools (Diwan). As Oakes (Chapter 5, this volume) explains, the varying status of these different bilingual programmes in the eyes of the French state has often been very fractious. The inclusive attitude of the region towards them is in marked contrast to the attitude of the Ministry of Education since their emergence in the late 1970s and early 1980s (cf. Perazzi, 1998). The 2004 policy couches its
proposals cautiously in a discourse that seeks to allay any fears in the population, or in Paris, that promoting Breton would be at the expense of French but instead favours bilingualism with a view towards multilingualism. It states that policy should encourage rather than oblige the learning of Breton and that the language belongs to ‘the whole Breton population not just to a handful of enthusiasts, whatever their merits may be’ (Conseil Régional de Bretagne, 2004). It asserts that its objectives should be understood in the context of international practice in support of cultural diversity and protection of linguistic minorities, citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It highlights in particular the 2004 debate on French constitutional reform, which eventually led in 2008 to Article 75-1 of the French Constitution recognising the ‘regional languages’ as part of France’s heritage.

The region’s policy actions are, however, limited by its powers of implementation. It states, for example, that the Regional Council officially recognises Breton and Gallo as languages of Brittany, alongside French. This was a very strong statement from any level of French administration in 2004, but it does not, of course, mean that Breton and Gallo have become official languages in any legal sense. With cross-party support, the Regional Council has called for the transfer of powers for bilingual education to the region but has been very slow to reach an agreement on structured development of the sector with the French education authorities. This is despite the fact that precedent now exists for such practical arrangements elsewhere in France, for example the agreement on the teaching of Catalan and Occitan in the Languedoc-Roussillon region which was finally signed in December 2009. In its 2004 policy aims, Brittany’s region had to content itself with ‘seeking the greatest cooperation among its partners, and especially the five Breton Departments, to perpetuate Breton language and culture’. To achieve this, it divided its action into three main areas: (1) passing on the language (concentrating on schooling, family usage, adult learners and publicity campaigns), (2) developing language usage in social and public life (with emphasis on the media and language plans at local level) and (3) encouraging cultural production (especially in publishing, theatre and song). The plan was accepted unanimously by the Regional Council at the start of Jean-Yves Le Drian’s first term as president in 2004, in a socialist-led alliance which was re-elected in 2010. Further proof of this dramatic change in Breton’s profile in the public space since the 1980s and the supporting consensus is seen in 86% popular backing among the
Breton population for teaching Breton in schools (Broudic, 2007). In addition, the ways to productively implement language policy, rather than any opposition to it, were among the themes of the political campaigns for the March 2010 regional elections (Broudic, 2010).

**Applying the Regional Council's Language Policy in Education**

While a Regional Council Language Policy Committee reports each year on the implementation of the language policy, more critical, constructive analysis is carried out regularly by Ofis ar Brezhoneg/Office de la Langue Bretonne, established by the region with the support of the Ministry of Culture in 1999 to help design and implement Breton development strategies for public bodies and Councils. The Ofis' own plan for Breton by 2015 (Ofis ar Brezhoneg, 2003) provided much of the impetus for the Regional Council's document. A central pillar of the region's 2004 policy aimed to have 20,000 pupils in bilingual classes by 2010, meaning an average 12% increase each year. At the start of the school year 2009–2010, a total of 13,035 pupils were at some stage of schooling (Ofis ar Brezhoneg, 2009): 5424 were in bilingual public school classes, 4444 in Catholic Dihun and 3167 were in the independent Diwan immersion schools. Diwan, after the difficult years of its failed attempt to integrate with the state system (see Oakes, Chapter 5, this volume), is now growing again thanks to the support of the region and departments. Dihun continues slow but steady expansion, and proportionally there are now more bilingual classes in Catholic schools than in the state sector. It is in the state sector that progress has been slowest but where the potential for expansion has always been greatest. Ofis ar Brezhoneg (2009: 28–29) highlights the fact that expansion only occurs where parents have relentlessly pressed for the opening of bilingual classes in the face of resistance from the Rectorat, the local branch of the central Ministry of Education which determines school policy. The current rate of growth in the state sector remains the same as that which occurred before the Regional Council policy commitment. Despite regional support, several interviewees in October 2009 saw continued state opposition to learning Breton and petty power play in educational authority decisions. One interviewee, a secondary teacher, asked for two years running to create new Breton classes in a particular secondary school, but this request was denied despite overwhelming demand from the school, pupils and parents. Other informants related that parents in one village had been campaigning for a state sector bilingual class for more than 10 years...
without success until a Diwan school opened in a neighbouring village, causing the Rectorat to rush to open a bilingual school in the same catchment area. Whether or not there is still residual resistance in the state apparatus to the extension of Breton language teaching, the lack of engagement with a structured approach to the issue thwarts the policy objectives and reinforces resistance in many quarters.

Schooling and Generating New Speakers

The Regional Council policy targets bilingual schooling and adult education and has expanded to offer bursaries and support to the study of Breton and Gallo in higher education. However, remarkably, it does not mention the teaching of Breton as a subject in other schools, which are attended by over 98% of Breton children, and where provision of Breton as a subject is limited. This lacuna was mentioned in the major analysis of the first year of policy implementation by Ofis ar Brezhoneg (2004: 49) but is hardly referred to again in Ofis ar Brezhoneg’s analysis of the regional policy in subsequent years. In emphasising the development of bilingual and immersion schooling and regularly publishing maps showing the catchment areas of the schools, policy-makers and analysts have directed public opinion and debate in that direction. A participant in this study mused that if one were to believe the media, only Breton-medium classes and schools were opening in Brittany and that within the next 20 years no French-medium schooling would be available in rural areas.

The concentration of language promotion policy in such a highly focused area that only currently touches a small minority of the population is not unusual in contemporary minority language management. It is possible to understand emphasis on immersion as the most effective way to produce new speakers and also as an area in which public bodies can have a defined space to act, but it is important to realise its limitations.

Despite some successes internationally, it is rare for schooling to lead to revitalisation or revernacularisation. In a study of language use and attitudes among a group of past pupils of Calandretas (Occitan immersion schools), Roquette (2005: 83) reports that they did not use Occitan to any significant degree in their daily lives after leaving school. Alén Garabato and Boyer (2005: 75) conclude that in the absence of any institutionalised expansion of the social usage of the language, the schools may actually reinforce the language shift to French by exposing the language’s lack of social utility. In such circumstances, the role of the school in language revitalisation could be ambiguous. There have been no studies on the language habits of graduates of Breton bilingual/immersion schools.
The two participants in this study who had attended Diwan schools thought that their situation was probably different to that of younger cohorts. In their 30s, they were among the first cohorts of Diwan graduates. Small in number, having known each other since early childhood and from activist families who were involved in founding their schools, they felt that they had a particularly strong bond that might not be shared in years to come: 'We were born in the midst of demonstrations, but parents of the current children don’t have the same motivations'. They stated that among their ex-school friends they would always speak Breton now, but that some of these had never had the opportunity or inclination to make the adjustment to living among the wider Breton community and 'knew their limitations in the language'. Nevertheless, most of their friends were now working in a variety of professions all over Brittany and were doubtless among those referred to by Broudic, above, as being the new faces of the language to the wider public.

**Conclusion**

While all the interviewees recognised the value of Breton-medium education from pedagogical and identity-building perspectives, they were less unanimous about the direct connection between the schools and language maintenance – with implications for the Breton Regional Council's current language policy emphasis on bilingual schooling. They point out that when they were young in their rural communities in the 1970s and 1980s, nearly everybody had the same linguistic background – their grandparents spoke Breton all the time, their parents were able to speak it but had mixed attitudes to it, and their peers were all able to understand the language. While a change in public attitudes has certainly swept the country, the interviewees believe there must still be a dormant yet huge passive knowledge of the language among the parents of most of the school children in rural Lower Brittany. Yet, that generation is unlikely to be touched by regional language policies unless they are among the small minority who decide or who have the opportunity to send their children to a bilingual/immersion school. Despite this, in each interview participants believed and stated independently of one another that there has never been a better or easier time to learn Breton, whatever one's background, because of the change in attitudes among older native speakers, the general public and institutions and because of the facilities that were now available.

Three informants in particular were still cautious about the future. They believed that despite public demand and support, the main work of
language promotion and teaching still fell on a very limited number of highly skilled speakers like themselves who alternate between traditional dialect, innovation and standard in a wide variety of professional domains exercised in a complex linguistic setting. One participant visualised modern language activists as a spider’s web spread across Brittany, all interconnected yet fragile. Public opinion may now make learning Breton more unremarkable and perhaps in a generation support might slide away again, but they believe that there will always be a core of Breton activists who will be given a central role by wider society, whether those individuals want that role or not.

Spolsky (2008: 158) says that language education policy can be a valuable focus for mobilisation of an ethnic movement, producing useful rhetoric to support it, an appeal to human rights, and a clear set of programme steps that lead to employment opportunities for those who are closest to their heritage. It can also, at the very least, create or reinforce a passive knowledge of the language that will contribute to a sense of identity and connection to tradition, which can in turn lead to a pool of expertise that can be tapped when conditions for successful reuse can be established. He suggests that even such a modest success is a very positive development. Institutional Breton language policy has a strong focus on bilingual schooling which has clearly helped to reverse, in a historical context of accelerated decline, language loss in the youngest generations. Yet this type of education will remain a minority stream for years to come. The major challenge for language policy is not simply to expand the bilingual school sector and adult education but also to extend social usage of the language beyond schooling, integrating the participation of the far more numerous but ageing traditional speakers, younger ‘passive speakers’ who have acquired what Breton they know from the traditional speech community and children who are outside immersion education.

Note
1. All translations from French and Breton, including the comments by informants, are by the author.

References
Chapter 7

Language Policy in Spain: The Coexistence of Small and Big Languages

DAVID LASAGABASTER

Cuanto más local es algo, más universal resulta.

[The more local something is, the more universal it turns out.]

Joan Miró

Introduction

Although Spanish is the only official language of Spain as a whole, the Constitution enacted in 1978 acknowledges that regional languages can become co-official languages if they are recognised as such by their specific regional Statutes. This is the case of Basque, Catalan and Galician. The Constitution recognises the right to self-government of the different nationalities and regions and, as far as language is concerned, it establishes the following:

(1) Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State. All Spaniards should be able to communicate in it and are entitled to use it.
(2) The other Spanish languages shall also be official in the respective self-governing communities in accordance with their Statutes.
(3) The wealth of the different linguistic forms of Spain is a cultural heritage which shall be especially respected and protected.

Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities and these regional governments are responsible for health, culture, justice, transportation, social services and education, among other areas. There are currently six Spanish autonomous communities with two official languages (their own language and Spanish): the Catalan-speaking Balearic Islands, Catalonia and the Valencian Community; the Galician-speaking Galicia; and the Basque-speaking Basque Autonomous Community (BAC henceforth)