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# 1

## Conceptualisation, Data and Method

### SECTION I CONCEPTUALISATION

#### 1 Introduction

Minority languages are constructed as non-normative objects that lie outside of the normative context of the state. The language-object relates to an epilinguistic activity that correlates historically with the emergence of the modern state. During the past two centuries, the state was premised upon universalist principles involving linguistic uniformity, so that the agencies and institutions responsible for the reproduction of most language groups remain unquestioned.<sup>1</sup> A consideration of the ability of different European minority language groups to reproduce themselves must make institutional agencies explicit within an explanatory framework.

Sociology and Linguistics are meta-discourses rather than knowledges that lead to truth or reality. Both incorporate the interests of the state in constructing their theories and concepts, and speak from the place of the state in elaborating societal subjects and objects. Concepts were based upon the legitimacy of a normative order that left little room for deviation, and relied upon a homogenous conception of the relationship between citizens, culture and language. Both were part of the supporting meta-discourse that legitimated non-normative language groups as deviant and pejorative. Sociology was also the mainstay of a particular conception of liberal democracy, becoming the ideological means of incorporating the individual in the consent that sustained the legitimacy of the state. The social science disciplines assumed radical political perspective, but failed to develop such a radicalism without speaking from the place of the state.

Orthodox sociology developed the methodological individualism of liberal theory. The social is a stable element relevant to all human populations, where the general will is the sum of individual opinion. Each individual rationally seeks her own individual interest, and the general will becomes the consequence of that which allows collective good to be maximised

through serving the advantage of the individual. All interventions of intermediary bodies isolated from this ideal, and the local effects which clarify the 'ideology' – conceived of as the adhesion of false or doubtful ideas – can simultaneously be viewed as part of this intermediary body. The question is one of theorising global society in terms of the normative model which conditions its effective functioning, and dysfunctions become artificialities. The social sciences, as practices, systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972:49).

It is now common currency to regard this fundamental philosophy as wrong. The shift accommodates a broader conception of equal treatment, opening the space for a re-evaluation of the value of diversity. However, the apparatus continues to operate as the effects of a discourse premised upon these ideas. To that extent the philosophy is not 'wrong'. We can still maintain that it is not 'right', but how can we give an account of European minority language groups if we maintain that such an account can be no more than discursively constituted? How can it lay claim to any superior sense of truth or reality if we deny the link between the social sciences and such truth and reality? If the two main frameworks which account for the nature of language in society lack their claimed interpretive scientific status, what can replace them in describing and accounting for the nature of language in society?

The answer lies partly in considering how minority language groups can reproduce themselves. The language-object and the associated subjects must be constituted in particular ways within the order of discourse. The state plays a central role in this respect, and the different European states have been subject to different conditions by reference to the production and reproduction of the minority language groups within their territory. If a model of how languages in general are reproduced is available, then we can elaborate the extent to which these circumstances pertain to the various minority language groups. We can establish how the minority languages are constructed as objects within the discourses on the social forces relevant for language production, and the implication of such construction for the speaking subjects which constitute the minority language group. This does not refute the independent existence of subjects and objects, but claims that they are brought into play not through the rational action of human behaviour, but by the relationship between the individual and the discourse into which s/he is interpolated (Williams, 1999a). Different discursive formations construct different meanings for the same objects, and meaning is always a contested field.

Different discourses convey different statuses through the way they relate to institutional settings that convey different degrees of power. The official discourse, including discourses on social policy and public management, carries institutional legitimisation, assuming a position of dominance. It extends across all of the areas which will be discussed in the following

chapters. It organises all the objects of the discourse, not merely language. The analytical model does not seek to encounter a 'truth', but merely serves as a template against which the circumstances of each language group can be compared. It can legitimately be claimed that the model of the official discourse and its effect upon social and economic process presented below is far too general, or that it rests on a conception of the state as intervening in the planned economy rather than emphasising the market economy, and, in this respect, it is not 'up to date'. In the democratic, interventionist model which informs this analytic model, the market and the state are distinguishable in the sense that the state involves the organisation of economic practice and the distribution of profit as sociopolitical practice within the context of liberalism. It can be argued that the process of globalisation, the emergence of the Information Society and the evidence of the New Economy renders the model obsolete. However, the concern is with the discourses which have shaped the current situation.

While there has been an increasing tendency for the modern state to appropriate private space into its domain, culminating in the welfare state and the predominance of public sector employment, minority language groups have been excluded from the discourse on public policy, administration and the economy. Regardless of the language of the home or the community, the state insures that every citizen masters the state language. Yet language groups whose languages are restricted to the private sphere are unable to reproduce themselves. This observation informs the model of language production and reproduction.

This relationship between the state and public order on the one hand, and social reproduction on the other, informs how the various institutional structures of society play a role in language production and reproduction (Williams and Roberts, 1982). The discourse which sustains the normative order incorporates the centrality of social institutions involved in highly formal planning orientations. Language plays a central role in this structure. The normative interpolates individuals as subjects which operate within the context of the institutions. The stabilisation of these discourses is fragmentary, but is sufficient to accommodate both social change and continuity within the overall process of social reproduction. While the state effectively regulates the economy, education, social administration and other functions which influence the lives of individuals, it constitutes the social groups through the effects of discourse. It is the progress of the *demic* to the point where it is virtually all inclusive. It is reinforced and sustained by the meta-discourse of the social sciences. The private sector can contest the *demic* by constituting *ethnos* in rejecting how the political constructs the 'us'/'them' opposition. Traces of prior discourses constitute subjects and objects which influence meaning systems that relate to contemporary discourse. The symbolic nature of language is important in this respect, since it conditions difference, and also highlights the 'other' of the 'us'/'them'

relationship. The struggle over normativity is an essential feature of minority existence.

The relationship between *ethnos* and *demos* involves different discursive formations which speak from different places, constructing subjects and objects in different ways. State discourse constructs *ethnos* as all inclusive, the 'us' pertaining to every citizen, not one of whom can lie outside of this subject position, and whose border overlaps with the state's territorial border. The same is true of communities, the sum of which, within the state discourse, constitutes the state. In contrast, the minority language group-will speaks from a place which is self-ascriptive, in that it speaks in the name of the entire group. It contests the all-inclusive ascription of the state discourse by laying claim to an 'us' which is internal to the state, and which contrasts with the 'them' which is also internal to the state, but which is opposed to the 'us' of the language group. This may or may not result in polarisation, since the possibility of an overlap of the two forms of 'us' is possible. This largely depends upon the space that the discourse of democracy allocates to accommodating plurality and diversity. There is a strong dialogical polarity, where the author of the same concrete referent – the 'people' – involves two modes of apprehension, involving the oppositions 'people/government' and 'people/stranger', as unrecognised. The normative order constructs 'the people' in the same way, as the same subject, whereas the discourse of the minority language group constructs them as different subjects. The mode of understanding is discursively heterogeneous, and the resultant polarity involves 'bifurcation' where the symbolic unity of the people, which is assumed in the subjacent notion of 'nation', may or may not overlap with the state. Where this involves labour-market segmentation there can be considerable conflict. The boundary between 'us' and 'them' pertains to language within a state which constructs all of the 'people' as uniform.

A reflexive position whereby we understand how language groups have been constituted as minority groups, and how the associated practices have become institutionalised, is required. We must place the language groups that are addressed in the context that constructs them, involving how modernist society is constituted. The goal is to investigate the empirical nature of the constitution of minority language groups within the society in which they are located. Such state societies involve describable institutional structures – education, the family and so on. The first task is to evaluate the extent to which minority language groups have been accommodated into these structures, or have been eliminated from them, by different state discourses. That is, to consider the nature and extent of the space that opens up for minority language groups within modernist Europe. We then consider the implications for language use as a measure of institutionalised language behaviour. This obliges a discussion of society by reference to the orthodox parameters of modernism, for it is here that we witness both

how society is constituted and how it operates within the modern state. No claim is made about the superiority of this account over any other of how minority language groups are produced and reproduced. It is one way of ordering ideas about how modernity operates by reference to society. As a sociological account it is open to the critique outlined above.

Sociologists often assume that social groups exist outside of discourses, as things that are already there to be studied. Yet Marx claimed that capitalism organised the relationship of production so that the individuals involved in these relations occupied similar places that opened up for them to move into (Tucker, 1972:146–200), and this similarity of positions gave the commonality of the social group. In structural terms the individual had no choice other than to be assigned to the class position, but the subjective relationship was the consequence of assuming or rejecting that place. Language groups are constituted in the same way. The space opens up for the individual to either take in charge by responding positively, or to reject by not responding. These subject positions, however, are not separate from other subject positions and objects within the same discourse. Thus the subject position of the minority language speaker clearly relates to the language as an object, but it may also relate to gender or social class and the associated multiple identities. The individual evaluates whether or not ‘taking in charge’ the relevant subject place is desirable. Within stable discursive contexts this happens without reflection, and the context is institutionalised as common sense or the taken for granted.

The model involves three related processes. First, the legitimisation of language groups involves the extent to which language and the associated group is incorporated into the state’s discourse on social policy, or the extent to which the minority language group is incorporated into the democratic process as a language group. This would involve a democratic pluralism that opens the space for minority language groups to be constructed as normative. The extent of this development is, of course, limited in that language planning (LP) marks the language group as deviant, even if it is acceptable.

The structures which exist to allow a language group to be reproduced partly derive from policy in that it involves the willingness of the state to make the necessary resources available. It also involves civil society and the state, since some of the agencies of language production and reproduction exist in civil society. Unless these agencies of language production and reproduction can operate effectively, the language group is unlikely to survive. Here we refer to the family, the community, the economic order, education and the media. Each pertains to a discursive formation which constitutes a particular meaning of ‘language’.

The extent to which language use is institutionalised within the society to which the language group pertains involves language use as social practice. The rules of formation for the language object involve what Foucault

(1972:45) calls the space which articulates 'institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques. Types of classification, modes of characterisation.' It involves Foucault's concept of 'orders of discourse', or the sum of discursive practices within any society, and the relationship between them. The interdiscourse which spans the structures, integrate the different discursive formations associated with each structure. While each discursive formation plays a role in constituting the language object within each of the different structures or domains, institutionalisation refers to the relationship between the interdiscursive and language use as social practice.

These three processes provide an indication of prevailing diversity in Europe. They indicate the nature of the democratic process, and the associated structures which exist across the respective states. For linguistic diversity to prevail within democracy, the language object and the associated subjects must be constructed in particular ways within the order of discourse. In the subsequent chapters I construct a picture of the relevance of each of these processes for the different European minority language groups.

## **2 The production and reproduction of minority language groups**

What follows is not a quest for 'truth', but an attempt to develop a model of how the orthodox discourse of the state involves a specific understanding of society, the economy and social policy. It is a model that accommodates significant variation and exists at a high level of generalisation. It also considers the relationship between the state and civil society.

The analytic model draws heavily on the biological analogy of social and cultural reproduction, common to the meta-discourse of Economics, and involving a metaphor with the social body as a 'global society' having a formal structure that implicates the state as a social apparatus which is self-evident in the discourse (Achard, 1982b). This flows over into discourse on education and on society in general. There is a direct link between the social policy and economic management of the official discourse and the disciplines of Economics and Sociology in that the meta-discourses of the two disciplines condition the application of public management. Sociological theory is metaphorical, deploying an ontology of collective subjectivism, with 'society' being constructed as a living, conscious being. Its organicism combines materialism and idealism, society being portrayed as a collective organism capable of displaying collective consciousness. It also emphasises an evolutionism that is held to be common to all life. The epistemological structures of Sociology and Economics have been at the heart of the state's legitimisation of social policy. However, within the discourse of Economics, the 'economy' involves a continuous process of economic restructuring, and the structure and dynamics of labour-market organisation. The same claim

is made of conceptions of social change. This link between the state and society involves treating language groups as social groups, without reifying language and disassociating language from social action.<sup>2</sup>

The focus involves how a social group is reproduced or not reproduced, and how social change influences language groups as social groups, something that is often taken for granted by reference to language. However, treating minority language groups as non-normative within the relevant discourse means this is not possible, since the language group changes demographically. The implicit is made explicit. Our concern is with the dynamics of the relationship between production, reproduction and non-reproduction processes, which may well coexist by reference to the same language group. This is schematically represented in Figure 1.1.

This model allows us to consider the relevance of different agencies for production and reproduction. These are institutions conditioned by the function that is assigned them by the modern episteme. Some of them are unique to one process rather than the other, whereas other agencies serve both processes. Despite the universal competence of nuclear family members, it may be that the family plays no role in reproduction, but that other agencies such as education are capable of ensuring that reproduction takes place. These processes also relate to the more general processes of social and cultural reproduction. This is clear if we recognise that a language group is only one among several social groups which overlap in relation to membership. Each social group has the capacity to serve as the basis of social identity, individuals being interpolated as subjects of the various social groups, either as individual or as overlapping components. Culture is the means whereby meaning is a structured, symbolic constitution relying upon such structuring. It has relevance for the reflexive process associated with language use.

This links with economic restructuring and economic change, including globalisation. Between this higher order process that determines social change and the local community is the policy framework. This involves a much broader context than that of LP. Indeed, there is a grave danger in isolating LP from more general social policy prerogatives and processes, since language groups fit into the more general processes of social change which LP rarely addresses.

Changes in the language group relate to the more general process of economic restructuring. Globalisation and the Single Market limits state regulation, realigning the relationship between the state and its economy. There has been a profound shift in the meaning of the spatial components of the discourse of economic regulation. 'Regional' development no longer refers to state regulation and a labour market no longer pertains to a single state. Labour markets now assume local and regional configurations. A dynamic factor of this development involves the relationship between the public and the private sector, a dynamism that has particular significance for minority

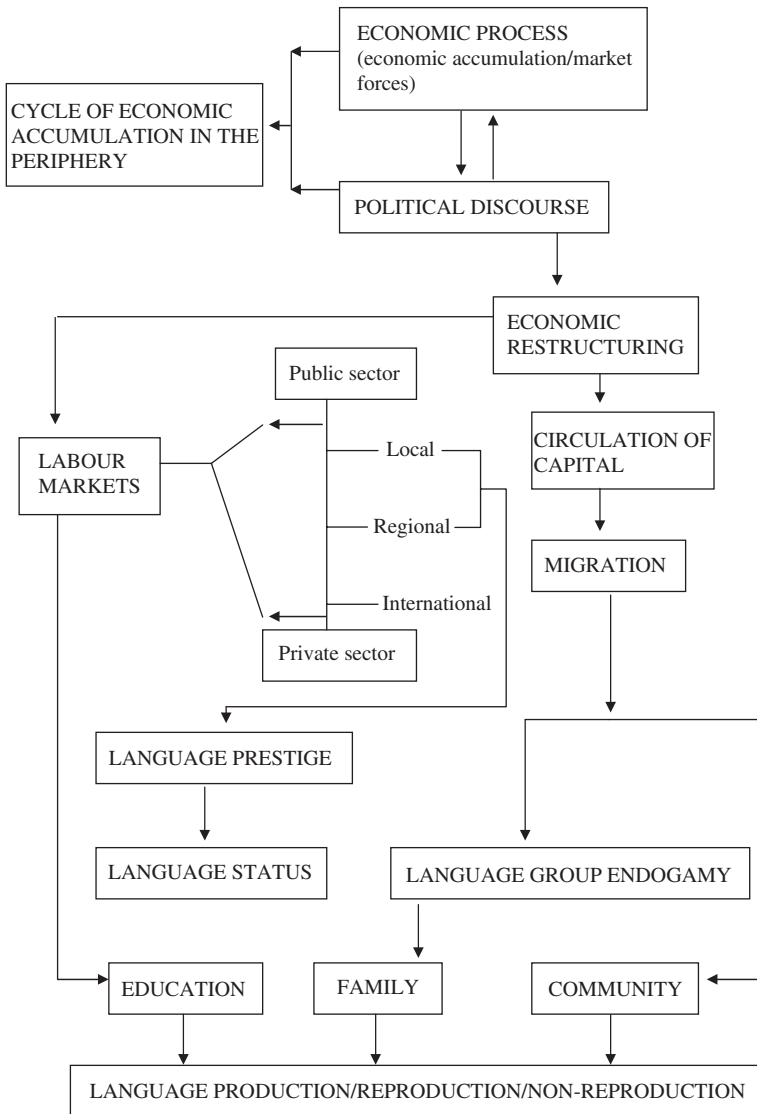


Figure 1.1 Schematic representation of language production, reproduction and non-reproduction

language groups as a consequence of how LP is conceived of as a feature of social policy.

Language prestige is introduced to designate the value of a language for social mobility. This is the primary motivating force for those interested in

language production, as well as reproduction. Constructing language as an object that has relevance for economic gain maximises the likelihood that the individual will take in charge those situations where the subject place involves the use of that language. This does not only involve the speaker of this language. The commodification of language makes it desirable in the sense that it signifies a positive value. Prior discourse has linked language and economic position since the importance of standardisation – ‘good’ language, ‘good’ thinking and educational success – was formalised through compulsory education and its relationship to economic success. It is far less tangible by reference to the state language which the individual speaks than it is by reference to another language which can be ‘gained’ by learning it, or by insuring that one’s offspring learns it.

The centrality of individual mobility and self-improvement within the modernist discourse gives social mobility a particular importance within Western society. It constitutes economic actors as subjects with possibilities for action. These subjects’ places are reflexive in that they involve a life trajectory within which the individual assumes different, but related, subject positions associated with the concept of ‘career’. The opening of the subject position pertains to the individual’s relationship to the institutions that are an integral feature of the entire structuring of the relationship between the social and the economic order. These institutions provide the objects that are valued positively by reference to the economic transformation of the individual’s life chances. They include language which opens up subject places for the individual. The state’s emphasis upon standardisation and literacy plays an important role in the constitution of language as an economic object within its discourse on development and progress. Together with its regulatory powers, the state has resorted to language as a means of establishing boundaries between labour markets. Since capital does not recognise state boundaries, *lingua franca* transcend individual labour markets. Language and the labour market are linked by language prestige. Different languages hold different relevance for different labour markets, English being of primary importance for the international labour market, the state language for state labour markets, while minority languages may have a significance for local and regional labour markets. The importance of reason and its relevance for progress unifies language and linguistics within the economic order. The interdiscursive reveals what Foucault (1972:57) refers to as concomitant fields which link the different discursive formations where these objects achieve meaning.

Where all members of the labour force speak the same language, that language becomes the means whereby each individual takes in charge the various subject positions that constitute interaction in the workplace, but only when everyone has the same competence in a single language and only one language is used within the labour market. Within the workplace, constraints on interaction are imposed by language competence. The relations

of production, and their relationship to language use and language group membership, become relevant. This involves the cultural division of labour, where there is a restriction of specific social places within the economic order to subjects who pertain to one language or culture group, and others to a different language or cultural group. It also involves how the economic discourse divides geographical space.

The insistence on the free mobility of labour, together with the spatial division of labour, links the circulation of capital and the circulation of people. Social policy in the form of regional planning and regional development relates the variable process of economic restructuring and the variation in these mobilities over time. The profound influence which the immigration of non-speakers into the autochthonous territories of minority language groups has upon language group reproduction derives from the different cycles of economic change. In-migration influences language group endogamy and, in turn, the ability of the family to serve as an agency of language reproduction. It also has a profound influence upon the relevance of community as an agency of both production and reproduction.

Within the current process of social and economic change, the family is the social unit responsible for economic subsistence. It shares with the educational institutions the responsibility for socialising the individual into the social and economic order. How the economic and educational discursive formations operate in constructing the language object influence how the family also is constituted. Individual freedom encourages the individual to select a partner on the basis of factors independent of family interests or local interests. The 'partner' as subject is constructed in a particular way. How society organises interaction on a local basis results in highly localised marriage patterns, while the economic discourse and its relationship to subcultures also determines the interaction that leads to union. How the social discourse sanctions language group endogamy is less evident. Populations from outside of the autochthonous territory influence the rate of language group endogamy. Of course, even a high rate of language group endogamy does not guarantee a high incidence of language use within the family. However, the focus of interest is upon the structures which make language use possible.

Community often remains a major agency of both the production and reproduction of the minority language group. The normative context of language use and its institutionalisation in community activities allow immigrants to learn the minority language. However, there are considerable differences in the demographic, institutional and language competence structures across the communities in Europe. How these structures relate to the other agencies, especially to family and education, is important in understanding the processes of language production and reproduction.

In all states, regardless of the home language, the school is the main agency whereby the production of the state language is guaranteed. This

universal function of education can also apply to the production and reproduction of minority language groups. The interrelationship between this agency and those of the family and community is emphasised. The function of education has always been both to inculcate a sense of normativity associated with state nationalism, and an adequacy in relation to the economic needs of the state. Thus the entry of minority languages into the labour market is paralleled by their entry into formal education. Viewing education as a primary agency of language production and reproduction also links with how economic process is achieved within the schema. The extent to which the minority language is incorporated into education is indicative of the different meanings that accrue to the language object.

### 3 Language use as social practice

The focus thus far is on the process of generating 'ability' or competence. The relationship between ability and use is of a different order. Much of Sociolinguistic theory, such as it is, focuses upon the issue of motivation and use, rather than on the structuring of language groups as social groups. It is conceptualised by reference to two key variables – institutionalisation and legitimation.

Every language group is subject to planning and social management. Public management is where the state encounters the interface between the government and the citizen. Through language planning or other forms of social policy, both the minority language and its speakers are constituted as subjects and objects in specific ways within the discourse on public management. The language is constituted as an object within a sphere of legitimacy that derives from the state. The speakers are constituted as subjects which carry status. The legitimacy of the language partly exists to insure the continuation of this status.

Legitimation incorporates constitutional and social policy, and different political levels (Williams and Morris, 2000). Neo-liberalism involves 'enabling' principles, and the freedom to pursue certain forms of action rather than the rights-based emphasis of legislation. It involves educational policies and the differing extent of the legitimation of language use in the public sector, where the policies of the different authorities play such a significant role.

Institutionalisation refers to non-reflexive, patterned behaviour. It pertains to the stabilisation of discourse. Language use becomes the taken-for-granted use of one language rather than the other within a bilingual setting. 'Institutionalisation' rather than 'domain' is used because it extends beyond the relationship between context and use to encompass both interactional capacity, and 'taken for granted' behaviour. From the individual's viewpoint, the subject position does not pertain to any marked feature of the associated discourse (Williams, 1999a:209). Thus meanings will tend not

to be contested. The concept rejects action as being conditioned by the centred human subject, and involves how social practice exists at the point where the human subject is constituted in and through discourse. It is the relationship between institutionalisation and legitimation that plays the main role in transforming structure, ability and motivation into actual language practice as stabilised social practices.

Institutionalisation involves language behaviour as part of the common sense of life within the community. This taken for granted is destabilised in social change, and the associated symbolic elements are reorganised. This is not a reflection process where whatever happens at the behavioural level is a manifestation of social change as a reified process. Institutionalisation is not only manifested in language use, it is also stabilised in language. Language is so complex that it is impossible for any individual to be reflexive about every word stated, how it is said and when it is said. There are recurrent pieces of discourse which bear a direct relationship to social practice. These often rely upon prior discourses which become stabilised in current language practice as traces of prior practice in relation to prior social contexts. The relationship between object (language) and subject (speaker) within these discourses is stable. The use of different languages does not relate to a reflexive code-switching premised upon rational action nor to such static concepts as domain or diglossia, but is linked to institutionalised behaviour associated with discursive structures. It is part of the social and institutional context. Language is social behaviour. The respective use of one language or another depends not merely on ability, but on how language use is institutionalised or stabilised as language practice.

Institutionalisation is not a normativity where social norms are automatic processes associated with consensus between rational actors. Normativity is ingrained with power, and there are different struggles over normativity. At the local level, the process operates in a way different from the link between the state and normativity. Language use within the community involves how meaning is socially constructed as institutional behaviour, and how social change undermines the social and institutional contexts supporting stabilisation. There is a symbolic component to language which signifies meaning within social practice, and the use of one language rather than another becomes part of that signification. The social constructivist view of social reality replaces the passive, perceptual models of the subject-object relationships of positivism.

The institutionalisation of language use is understood as activity that is structured in and through language by how different subject positions in relation to different objects produce specific meanings, of which 'Welsh' or 'language' is one. Thus it conditions the use of language as stabilised discourse, but always with the possibility of destabilisation of the relationship between subject positions and language as an object among other objects.

## 4 Conclusion

Most of what has been said above pertains to the production of competence rather than language use. The relationship between the structure responsible for the generation of competence, and the use of that competence in social life is questioned. A Sociology which sets store both upon elaborating the social as patterned behaviour which transcends face-to-face interaction and upon the actual implementation of the same behaviour between social actors is problematic. Outlining how competence is generated within society before elaborating how individuals become social actors through the resolution of the ambiguity of meaning in interaction provides the solution. The generation of competence and the conversion of the individual into a social being are both inherently linked to discourse. The decentred approach of social action theory links with a structural approach that is equally decentred (Boutet, 1994).

The following describes the context of language use rather than language use itself. It allows a demonstration of where use is possible and where it is not, making tentative suggestions concerning the link between that possibility and the tendency to use the minority language, at least as it is reported by those using the language. The normative effect, or how people report what they feel they should say, is resolved by asking respondents to report on what happened in concrete situations.

## SECTION II THE DATA AND METHOD

### 1 Introduction

The data drawn upon to explore the extent to which the different European minority language groups are capable of being reproduced derives from the EC-commissioned Euromosaic study (European Commission, 1996). Such a comparative survey was obliged by constraints of time and resources to adopt an empirical approach, obliging the researcher to ensure that the measures deployed derive from a basis and orientation that is common to all cases.

The objects of the study were autochthonous minority language groups – language groups which claimed a territorial base that links language and society. This raises the question of what are the entities to be compared. The acceptance of one linguistic form as a ‘language’ and another as a ‘dialect’ is a political and not a linguistic decision. Linguistics has sought to appropriate this issue, using linguistic theory to establish typological systems of form involving categories and subcategories, including language and dialect. The meta-discourse of Linguistics constructs a language as an object by reference to certain parameters, while the relevance of such a construction for social practice is constrained by the political discourse and how it con-

structs language as an object which may, or may not, relate to the object constructed by Linguistics.

Some state languages vary in form, but are still classified as a single language, for example German in Germany and Switzerland. Their distinctiveness is addressed by reference to the political, which precludes their being classified as variants or dialects of a single language, independent of political affiliation. Dialects of a state language within one state might be included as a language in another. The political element is not static. The realignment of political space within Europe means that forms which, hitherto, might have been regarded as a dialect of the state language suddenly become promoted as regional languages. The overlay between language and politics that is based upon the principle of difference is clear.

Distinctions between 'national', 'official', 'regional', 'lesser used' languages and the like are social constructs. Negative connotation of such classifications had to be set aside. 'Lesser used languages' allows powerful state language groups, such as Irish or Luxembourges, to be compared with extraterritorial state language groups such as German or French, or a variety of stateless languages including Ladin, Welsh or Catalan, each with different degrees of power and a vast range of language density and numbers of speakers.

'Language group' viewed as a social group was a defining criterion. Language can structure aggregates of individuals into a self-conscious social group which involves a commonality of orientation or perspective within the overall social system. Each state has a single society so that a language group in one state, even though it uses the same language as a social group in another state, is regarded as a distinctive social group. There are several German language groups within Europe.

The state might seem an unambiguous concept involving the various Member States of the European Union. On the other hand the extent of political function that is allocated to regions within federal systems in Spain or Germany means that institutions and legislative bodies which are of relevance to the minority language group are prescribed by reference to these 'autonomous governments' rather than the central state. As referents to which the social groups pertain we consider these as 'societies'. Thus the Catalan language group in Spain is fragmented into different language groups which are located in Catalonia, Valencia, Aragon or the Balearic Islands. The power to legislate by reference to the institutions and agencies relevant to the language and the language group lies with the regional government.

## **2 Data sources**

The goal was one of collecting valid and reliable comparative data associated with the different variables that derive from the concepts which formed the corner-stone of the study, and with the various hypotheses that derived from

using these concepts. The fewer the number of respondents contributing any single piece of data, the more difficult the task of establishing reliability and validity for that data. Once these fundamental principles of empirical research can be guaranteed the investigator is in a position to move to a consideration of data sources.

Five main sources were exploited in collecting relevant data and information:

*1 Secondary sources.* The studies in the various minority language data banks can be of a very high quality but, unfortunately, most of them provide little reliable data. Even when reliable empirical studies are available, the theoretical, philosophical and methodological context might be removed from those of the Euromosaic study. Nonetheless, such secondary sources do have some value.

*2 The official authorities in the Member States.* These include the permanent representatives of the Member States of the Commission, the various consulates, and local and regional governments or authorities. They completed a specially designed questionnaire which covered official policy, data sources and factual information about the various language groups. This represents the official position *vis à vis* the language groups.

*3 Language group correspondents.* For each language group, one regional researcher was allocated the task of gathering a diverse nature of data based on another questionnaire. Each language group correspondent was asked to provide 'key witnesses' who were experts in the various fields which the questionnaire addressed. These 'key witnesses' were, in turn, asked to answer a lengthy and detailed questionnaire that was standardised across the various language groups.

*4 Other experts and well-informed professionals.* In order to check the validity and reliability of the data collected a range of other contacts were exploited, these people being asked to complete yet another questionnaire and to comment on the various pieces of information collected.

This data set was employed to generate measures for each language group on the analytic variables and to create a series of reports for each language group. These reports constitute the most detailed and up-to-date information concerning the various language groups currently available.

*5 Language-use surveys.* The fifth source of data consisted of a series of empirical field language-use surveys on a carefully selected sample of speakers for 18 language groups. The focus was on the institutionalisation of the respective languages within the different societies.

It is surprising how few language-use surveys have been constructed by reference to the rigour of survey research. They tend to be a check list of

language-use contexts, sprinkled with questions concerning attitudes which are not adequately contextualised. They are characterised by intuition and induction, partly because of the inability to conceive of such groups as social groups.

Resource limitation restricted the language-use surveys to 18 language groups and to 300 interviews in each case. This constitutes a particular problem in that the margin of error is drastically reduced compared with the customary sample size. This is partly accommodated by restricting the analysis to frequencies and by restricting the variables so that the number of cases in the relevant cells is adequate. Careful attention had to be given, first of all to the selection of cases, and then to how two quite different sets of data could be related in order to create valid empirical measures for all language groups.

The selection of the 18 cases was based upon common-sense principles:

- The best of the language-use surveys that had already been undertaken – the Frisian language group in the Netherlands, the Irish and the Basque language groups in the Autonomous Community, Navarre and France – were not replicated. While the interview schedule of these surveys was by no means identical to our own, the topics covered in the surveys and the statistical validity of the data was such that they could, nonetheless, be used as valuable data sources for our purposes.
- No more than two cases were chosen from any single state.
- Survey work allows the investigator to generalise from a large population while also permitting the investigation of a range of issues. It would have been futile to deploy the large-scale method of survey research for small language groups.
- There were also good reasons for avoiding the more contentious cases – the limited time scale, the newness of the approach and so on.

Age, gender, social class, and different sampling points informed the sampling frame. Decennial census data for Wales and Scotland and a prior survey of 40,000 respondents for Galicia were used to develop proportional, representative, quota samples. Elsewhere the 300 cases were distributed into ten locational subsets, with cases then being selected by reference to the social variables. The locational quotas were randomly selected.

The interviews were undertaken by a supervised, trained, team of native speakers. Each interviewer was allocated a randomly selected quota within the location for which they were responsible. This is time consuming, but is an essential prerequisite. The interview schedules were coded, data entered and analysis undertaken.

Each interview took between 45 minutes and an hour and covered basic demographic information, information about language use by reference to family, education, work, community activities, leisure, religion and related

contexts. It sought to cover most of the interpersonal contacts which most people within the various communities would encounter. These items were constructed to provide measures on the relevant variables. Opinion and attitude scales referred to the degree of commitment of various agencies, institutions and social actors by reference to the language in question and items were based on the Semantic Differential Scaling Technique. Each respondent kept a week-long diary of contacts about the context of the contact, language use and the nature of the relationship with the contact. This covered the normative factor (Achard, 1993).

### **3 Scale construction**

The variable nature of the data made comparison problematic. The subjective data for the language group reports had to blend with the more objective data of the language-use surveys. Qualitative data had to lie with the quantitative data. The use of scales for comparative research facilitates abstracting from a series of data sets to develop single scales across all cases. Properly designed and employed they enhance comparison. However, they do demand attention to a number of technical issues relating to design and validity.

Among the fundamental principles of scaling considered were the following:

- The scales had to be sufficiently broad to encompass the entire range of cases to be included.
- The distance between the respective scores had to be uniform.
- The scales had to be internally consistent.
- Some measure of validity and reliability had to be incorporated, both by reference to the scales themselves, and by reference to the scores that derive from their use.
- For the scales to be integrated, the same range of scores had to be deployed for each scale, and no more than one scale could be employed for each dimension of the integration.
- Only one scale could be employed for each dimension, but more than one dimension for each variable was possible, leading to sub-scales which had to be correlated by reference to the degree of relationship between them.

This made it possible to score each language group on the key variables, and, by adding these scores, to generate an overall score for each language group. This process was undertaken independently by several analysts, the comparison producing measures of inter-rater reliability for each scale and each case. These measures were then employed in order to generate reliable figures. Disagreement was resolved by discussion and arbitration. Content validity was established with colleagues.

Generating universal scores for each case does overlook variation within the territory of each language group. This was the source of much of the disagreement among those responsible for creating the various scores. The highly general nature of the scales is inevitable given the need for comparability, and the level of generalisation must be similar across all cases. Each person responsible for allocating the various scores did so by reference to the same information sources which consisted of the various language group reports and the 18 language-use surveys. The relationship between these two data sets is important. For the 18 cases we had two sets of data, and these were the cases where there was the greatest degree of agreement among the evaluators. The 18 cases served as a standard against which the others were measured by, first of all, scoring the 18 cases from the survey data on each of the scales, and establishing a satisfactory level of agreement by reference to these scores. Second, by independently scoring the same 18 cases on the same scales, using the respective language reports as the basis for this task, and establishing agreement on these scores, it is possible to compare the respective sets of scores on all scales. We were then able to evaluate the level of comparability of the two data sets. Where comparability was low, it was possible to ascertain the reason for the lack of comparability, and to build this knowledge into our general approach to validity and reliability across all of the cases.

#### **4 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the decentred approach as the basis for the subsequent analysis. The analytic model focuses on the conditions necessary for minority language groups to be reproduced. The focus was on how subjects and objects are constructed in discourse. It has also discussed the analytic data that derives from an already completed study (European Commission, 1996). The present work involves a re-evaluation of this data. This involves recursivity and recursive reading (Seriot, 1996; Valku-Poustovaia, 1997), involving the contextualisation/decontextualisation of any discourse, thereby admitting the multitude of possible contexts. Valku-Poustovaia (1997:86) defines this as an:

operation of localisation (positioning) of a point of view of the observer, allowing a reconstitution (a calculus) of a series of discursive events, recontextualising this or that discourse.

(1997:86; my translation)

The recursive reading of a text presupposes an earlier reading which it questions, and recentres the viewpoint of the reader from a supplementary knowledge of that text and its conditions of production. Involved is a consideration of the orthodox discourse on social policy, public management

and economic development by reference to the implications for the production and reproduction of minority language groups in relation to this official discourse. This observation of a particular object of study rests in a more or less stable management paradigm. The analytic reading of a research is an act of discourse that reactivates prior work.

In the following chapters the various strands of data are considered by reference to the various topics which, together, constitute the interdiscourse of public management and the relationship of language use to this order of discourse. The next chapter considers the issue of legitimation. The data for this chapter derives not merely from the information gathered in the various language group reports, but also from a close analysis of those cases which do indicate a degree of incorporation of minority language groups in the social policy principles of the respective legal authorities.

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