

## Basque and the regional-languages question in France

### 1. The regional-languages question in France

#### 1.1 The traditional autochthonous languages of francophone Europe

Of the so-called regional minority (Extra and Gorter, 2001) or ethnic (Baylon, 1996) languages spoken in France, Basque (Euskara) is one of four non-Romance languages<sup>1</sup> showing any degree of vitality within metropolitan France (Figure 1).

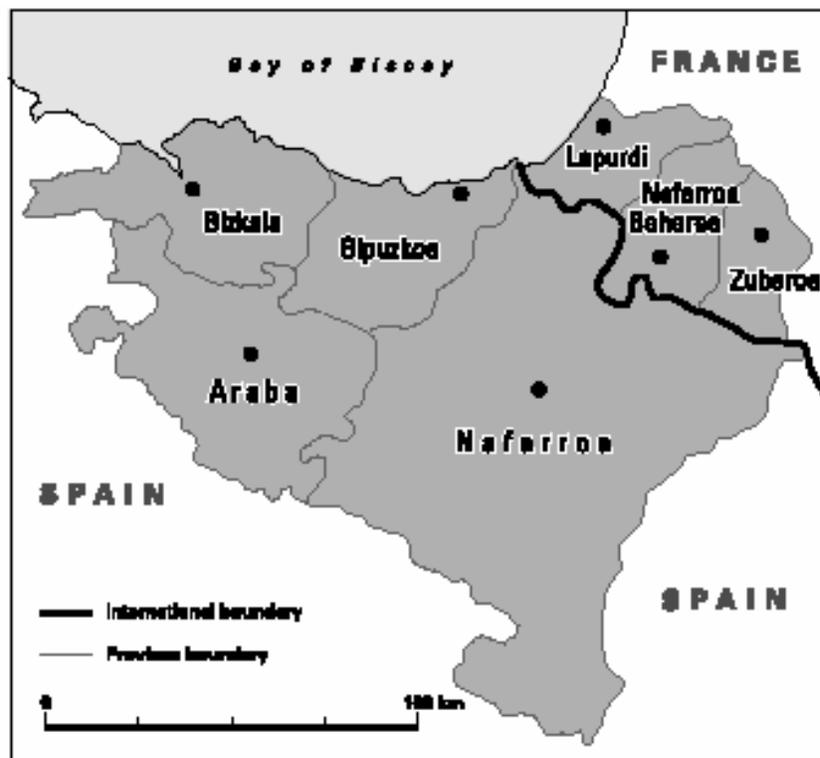
Figure 1. The traditional autochthonous languages of francophone Europe.



<sup>1</sup> The others are Breton, Flemish and the regional languages of Alsace-Lorraine.

As will become clear in Section 2.2, the inventory of regional languages was greatly extended in the final years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to include not only distinctive ancestral Romance languages such as Catalan, Corsican and Occitan, but literally dozens of languages spoken in French Overseas départements and territories not to mention varieties traditionally considered to be dialects of French, i.e. the *Oïl* languages and Franco-Provençal.

**Figure 2. The traditional Basque provinces.**



Of the regional languages of metropolitan France, Euskara shares<sup>2</sup> the distinction of being spoken (and indeed, from the historical perspective, actively suppressed) within the territory of two nation states, corresponding approximately to the traditional provinces

<sup>2</sup> With Flemish, and the regional languages of Alsace-Lorraine. Unlike Flemish, which is a dialect within a continuum of varieties heteronomous to standard Netherlandic, and the regional languages of Alsace-Lorraine, which are sometimes considered simply as varieties of German, although in the form of Mosellan and under the label of Letzebürgisch, it enjoys recognition as a national language in Luxembourg. Euskara has no greater degree of recognition than that of regional language.

shown in Figure 2. As is the case with all traditional ancestral languages, Euskara is subject to dialect fragmentation as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Dialect areas within the Basque country (Zuazo, 1998)**



There is, however, some disagreement as to the number of dialect areas. Allières (1979) recognises seven dialect areas corresponding more or less to the so-called Basque provinces (Euskal Herria), four of which – Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Araba and Nafarroa (collectively known as Hegoalade) – are situated within Spain and three – Lapurdi (Labourd), Baxanafarroa (Lower Navarre) and Zubereroa (Soule) (collectively known as Iparralde) – within the French nation-state (Figure 2). A tradition allegedly going back to the work of Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte in the 1860s divides both upper and lower Nafarroa into two distinct dialect areas, whereas much more recently Zuazo (1998) has argued for six dialect zones: four on the south side of the Pyrenees: the Mendebalekoa

(western) which includes Bizkaia, Araba and a small part of Gipuzkoa; the Erdialdekoa (central) which covers the greater part of Gipuzkoa and western Nafarroa; Nafarrera (main part of Nafarroa) and Ekialdeko Nafarrera (eastern Nafarroa) and to the north: Nafar-Lapurtera (Lapurdi and Baxanafarroa) and the Zuberera (Zubereroa) (Figure 3).

## 1.2 Republican ideology in France

The principles enshrined in the French Constitution date from the time of Revolution of 1789, although these form part of a centralist tradition of state intervention in matters relating to regional languages, which can be traced back to the reign of Louis IX (1214-1270) (Szulmajster-Celnikier, 1996: 39). It was at this time that the first of a number of royal decrees was issued – the most famous of which were the Ordinances of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539 – requiring that French be used in courts of law and in the administration of justice throughout the territories under the rule of the King of France (Ager, 2000). While its immediate aim was to abolish the use of Latin, it effectively made French the official language of the state, and had, apparently as a largely unforeseen and unintended consequence, the relegation of local and regional languages from most formal situations of use as well as the recording of legal processes.

Unlike the so-called Old Regime, however, the government of the Revolutionary Convention, once the Jacobins became dominant, was not content to allow France to continue as a multilingual country with French-speaking and bilingual elites, with the uneducated (and largely rural) majority continuing to use a ‘wealth of tongues’ (Weber, 1979: Ch. 6). Rather it considered the universalisation of the use of French as a crucial factor in creating (a secular) national unity. Although the concept of the ‘linguistic nation’ formulated in the Age of Enlightenment (Haarmann, 1999) is by no means unique to France, it was in France that a ‘one language-one nation’ ideology was developed and most clearly formulated and applied with ‘unusual intolerance’ (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998). Moreover, it was to a considerable degree through the medium of French that such ideas spread to other parts of Europe, e.g. Bivona (2001); Salema (2001).

In recent public debate about regional languages, reference has often been made to the founding principles of the ‘one and indivisible French republic’ perhaps most clearly encapsulated in two documents published in 1794. Firstly, there is Barère’s speech to the

Committee of Public Safety (27<sup>th</sup> January, 1794) (De Certeau *et al.*, 1975) in which he declared with regard to French:

- the language of a free people must be one and the same and for all
- the finest language in Europe, which freely consecrated the Rights of Man and Citizen, and which has the duty of transmitting to the world the most sublime thoughts of liberty and the grandest speculations of policy
- the first laws of education must prepare citizenship; now, in order to become a citizen, one must obey the law, and in order to obey, one must know the laws ... we have revolutionised government, laws, customs and habits, costumes, commerce and even thought; so let us revolutionise language, which is their daily instrument
- federalism and superstition speak Breton; emigration and hatred for the Republic speak German; counter-revolution speaks Italian and fanaticism speaks Basque. Let us smash these instruments of damage and error

What might now appear to be a flouting of human rights, was at the time construed as deliverance from feudalism and the bestowing of the means of acquiring such rights, not to mention access to modernity and the ideas of the Enlightenment, or as Weber (1979: 3-22) recounts it, the civilising of savages, particularly through education. The denigration of regional languages, through what Grillo (1989) labelled the ‘ideology of contempt’, was undoubtedly motivated in part by fear of counter-revolution and distaste for traditional religious practices and the unfrancofied social nexuses which they might foster.

Secondly, this ideology of contempt was expressed with equal vigour in Abbé Grégoire’s report of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1794, entitled *Sur la nécessité d’anéantir les patois et d’universaliser l’usage de la langue française*. This report was to become the basis for the decision to change a policy of bilingualism – pursued since 1791 – whereby laws were translated into local languages. Grégoire dismisses as patois – micro-dialects spoken over a limited area – all regional languages and dialects (listing over 30), however similar to or differentiated from French. Grégoire’s report was based on a sociolinguistic survey in which he asked local notables to report on the vitality of local languages and the penetration of French into different parts of France. From the 49 responses received, Grégoire concluded that of a population of 25 million people, only 3 million (about 1/8) used French as their everyday

spoken language. Twice that number knew no French at all (mostly southern peasants) and another 6 million knew very little.

The chosen instrument of frenchification was education. The state took over all existing schools and imposed French as the medium of instruction. Since the desired goal of setting up a school in every local administrative area (*commune*) was out of reach in the 1790s, certain regions were targeted for the appointment of teachers in all *communes*, namely those where highly differentiated languages were spoken, in which anti-revolutionary conspiracies would go most easily undetected: Brittany, Alsace-Lorraine, Corsica, the Nord (Flemish), Alpes Maritimes (Provençal) and the Basses-Pyrénées (Basque).

Among the earliest reforms introduced by the Revolutionary regime (in 1790) was the reorganisation of the geographical and administrative divisions of the country (Schultz, 1982). These orographic changes abolished the Old-Regime provinces, many of whose names were redolent of traditional ethnolinguistic identities, and replaced them with *départements* which were mostly named after natural features such as rivers and mountain ranges. This legislation complemented an educational policy whose aims were the eradication of regional languages in public use. In short, these measures were intended to obliterate any related ethnolinguistic identity based on territoriality. Neither measure has never been rescinded nor widely and openly called into question until fairly recent times. Yet in one way it was not Grégoire's intention that the past should be consigned to oblivion – he openly encouraged local scholars to undertake studies of local customs and linguistic varieties – rather his overriding priority was that social praxis should be transformed.

### **1.3 1800 to 1950**

Since the Revolution, governments of all political complexions have more or less actively pursued a policy of linguistic centralisation, seeking to eliminate regional languages through education. Views of the implementation of this policy range from the caricature of a legitimate enterprise successfully accomplished, thanks to the assiduity of the 'hussards noirs de la République' (primary-school teachers during the Third Republic which lasted from 1870 to 1944), to one of colonisation or glottophagia (Calvet, 1974; 1987) or 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1982). Chanet (1996), analysing the details of inspectors' reports, teachers' news letters and school text books, comes to a more nuanced conclusion,

particularly regarding the relative weight of the teachers' contribution, and the humane fashion in which they taught their young charges. Use of humiliating punishments, especially the infamous token<sup>3</sup>, for speaking Basque, were quickly abandoned, and local languages were used to explain, for instance, French grammar, and to report on children's progress to their parents. In the Basses-Pyrénées, where school regulations in force in the early 1870s prohibited the use of 'patois', translation exercises were recommended to make Basque children acquire French (Weber, 1979: 312). Weber notes too the considerable difficulties of school teachers who were unable to communicate in Basque. Many primary teachers also fulfilled the less remembered aspect of the Grégoire report, becoming largely self-taught experts in local culture, history and speech forms. Non-Romance languages, however, were from the outset regarded with the greatest degree of suspicion. Therefore, the three Basque provinces, Brittany, Corsica, Alsace and Flanders were from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century prioritised for teacher appointment and school development (De Certeau *et al.*: 1975: 11). Moreover, pedagogic practice appears to have treated for instance Occitan less harshly than the non-Romance tongues (Ozouf, 1996: 11). The declared Revolutionary policy of providing a school for every *commune* could not be implemented, however, until the enactment of the Ferry Laws (1881-86), which made (secular) state primary education compulsory and free for all. Whilst Chanet documents some variation of opinion among education ministers and school inspectors regarding the exclusive use of French, even the most tolerant advocated the primacy of French and the most influential, such as Carré, insisted on the sole use of French (hence the term Carré method, later known as the direct method).

The education system not only sought to instill the rather abstract notion of national patriotism but also the love of one's local area, the *petite patrie*, but always articulated through republican orography and the French language. That Basque resisted so stoutly until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century is attributable partly to the Church, which taught the catechism in Euskara (although, generally speaking, Church schools were as much instruments of

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<sup>3</sup> Since official education policy insisted on exclusive use of French on school premises, some teachers adopted the practice of giving some object of shame, sometimes known as the *symbole* or *sabot* to any offender who used the local language in class or in the playground. Depending on the region, the object in question might be a cardboard ticket, a bar, a stick, a plank, a peg, a paper ribbon, or even a brick to be held at arm's length. The object could be passed on to another pupil caught out within the same school day.

frenchification as state schools), but more importantly to the continued viability of the main traditional ways of earning a livelihood in the region: agriculture, shepherding and fishing. It may be that the education ministry's policy of urging primary teachers to influence young people to stay in the area in which they grew up and to foster a love of and interest in its history and natural beauty also exerted some influence.

Thus, while successive governments were undoubtedly pro-active in promoting French through education, to the great detriment of the regional languages, other factors proved at least equally and perhaps more crucial: 1) urbanisation; 2) improvement of communications; 3) compulsory military service for men; 4) the two world wars. All these developments and events created greater mobility among increasing proportions of the population. Even in Grégoire's time, the dichotomy of the French-speaking town contrasting with the local language speaking rural hinterland was so often repeated that it remained largely unquestioned (De Certeau *et al.*, 1975; Weber, 1979). Towns are acknowledged to be linguistic melting pots, where speakers of different varieties come together sometimes modifying the way in which they speak a common language (Milroy, 1992) or shifting to a language of wider currency (e.g. Calvet, 1994; Juillard, 1995). Compared to Britain and Germany, urbanisation in France was slow, the urban population not equalling the rural until the 1930s. The rural population was actually increasing in absolute figures until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although progressively decreasing as a percentage of the overall population (Mayeur, 1985). From the advent of the Third Republic to World War One (1870-1914), military service brought men of different backgrounds together for a period that varied over these four and half decades between two and five years. The use of French was imposed during World War One when a number of regional regiments had been so decimated that they had to be re-formed with survivors from various regions (Weber, 1979). The large-scale displacement of populations caused by both world wars undermined and broke up communities which had been the cradle of transmission for local languages. In the years following the Second World War, the mechanisation of agriculture saw the end of traditional peasant farming (Barral, 1978), which had been the most frequently encountered economic base acting to sustain communities where a regional language was the usual means of

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At the end of the day, the child left holding the token would be punished, e.g. by being made to clean out the latrines (Weber, 1979: 313).

everyday communication. Indeed, the community-based use of such languages seems limited to the primary sector, e.g. agriculture (Auzanneau, 1998, 1999), pastoral communities (Ott, 1981), fishing (Floc'h, 1981; Léonard, 1991, 1998) or secondary sectors such as mining (Hornsby, 1996) or textiles (Pooley, 1996; 2003). The decline of traditional activities which provided the economic stability necessary to the maintenance of traditional communities contributed to the abandonment of traditional language varieties, as young people were forced to leave home to find work. Faced with the dominance of a city and services-based economy and the greater attractiveness of urban life-styles, the regional languages have been unable to shake off their contingent historical association with traditional forms of employment, reinforced by the stigma of backwardness deliberately inculcated by the national education system. Moreover, any opinion voiced in defence of regional languages was all too readily construed, if not as propounding political separatism, at least as threatening to undermine national unity.

#### **1.4 1951-1998 – legislation and educational provision**

Just when the policies advocated by the Revolution and fully implemented from the 1880s seemed to have achieved their declared aim of eliminating the regional languages, voices raised in favour of these varieties actually began to be heard. In 1951, the first piece of legislation favourable to these idioms for a century and a half was passed – the Loi Deixonne. This was a permissive act which gave formal status to four autochthonous languages: Basque, Breton, Catalan and Occitan. Although it could be described as favourable to the regional languages listed, it by no means envisaged active support. Its main provision was the allowing in state schools of non-examinable and optional classes, outside of a full timetable, in the appropriate regional language, where there was a teacher willing to teach and pupils prepared to learn. No provision was made for teacher training, higher education or research support. Moreover, no resources were made available until 1970 when a ministerial circular, published in 1969 came into force (Ager, 2000: 31). It was at this time that a test in a regional language was first permitted to count for the *baccalauréat* and that the first *écoles associatives*: private regional-language medium schools were set up, mainly under foreign impetus (Wales for Breton; Spain for Catalan and Basque).

By the late 1970s and particularly in the presidential campaign of 1981, the regional languages question could be construed largely as a Left-Right issue with the Socialist opposition attacking the Right for their inertia and promising positive action if elected. The first Mitterrand government, which swept to power in 1981, sought to tackle the question. A circular bearing the name of the then education minister, Alain Savary, was published in 1982, establishing three important principles: firstly that the state should be responsible for the teaching of regional languages; secondly, that the languages should be taught from nursery to university but as a separate discipline rather than a medium of instruction; thirdly, that classes should be offered on the basis of the expressed wishes of both teacher and pupils (or their parents). A further circular in 1983 provided for the teaching of other subjects in the regional language. Teacher training programmes were introduced and university research centres were set up and encouraged to collaborate with voluntary associations and local government bodies.

In 1982, the Giordan report (commissioned in 1981) was published and a *Conseil National des Langues et Cultures Régionales* was created. Unfortunately, the Council met far too infrequently to be effective (Giordan, 1992: 138-9). After the hiatus of the period of cohabitation (1986-88), the second Mitterrand administration, elected in 1988, began on a positive note by redefining the teaching of regional languages and publishing in the same year syllabuses which are, by and large, still in force (*Loi d'orientation* dated 10th July 1989). The list of beneficiary languages did not correspond to those approved under the Deixonne Law and its extensions. In particular, several local varieties of Occitan were recognised (Gascon, Nissart, Provençal etc), as was one *Oïl* variety (Gallo) as well as Alsace (from 1991 Alsace-Moselle) regional languages plus languages spoken in Overseas *Départements* and Territories (Tahitian and four Melanesian languages spoken in New Caledonia) (Table 1). It even became possible in some parts of the country, including the Basque region, to take the history and geography examination for the *baccalauréat* in the regional language.

An agreement contracted in July 1994, acknowledging and regulating the enhanced status of teachers in private regional-language medium schools, meant that they were paid by the state and their qualifications were formally approved. Circular 95-086 (1995) defined the principles and provisions of the teaching of regional languages. It contained a clear

commitment to preserving what was coming to be increasingly acknowledged as part of the national heritage. In the state sector, all teachers at the primary level were encouraged to instill a degree of awareness of the regional linguistic and cultural heritage, and a number of subjects could be taught in the local language. Indeed, the setting up of bilingual sections was permitted, provided that the full allocation of hours attributed to the teaching of French was maintained. In secondary schools, the teaching of the regional language could be continued for at least three hours per week with the possibility of taking other subjects in the language in the 11-15 age group (*Collèges*). For upper secondary students in the 16-18 age group (*Lycées*), a regional language could be taken as an option in the *baccalauréat*.

### **1.5 1992-2002 – the regional languages and national and international politics**

The intention of the Council of Europe Charter for regional and minority languages, published in 1992, was to preserve the traditional indigenous (or autochthonous) linguistic (and cultural) heritage of Europe, much of which was under threat in a period of emerging globalisation of trade, mass communication and the geographical expansion and increasing political power of the European Union. The Charter invites member states to sign up to a set of commitments regarding the use of minority languages in the following areas of public life: education, law, public services, the media, culture, economic and social life. Signatory governments must endorse a minimum of 35 articles out of 98, taking at least one from each of the six areas listed. Even within individual articles, however, there may be considerable choice, as with Article 8 - 1a on pre-school education, where the government may choose to deliver pre-school education wholly or partly in the regional or minority language or provide pre-school education in the regional or minority language where sufficiently large numbers of parents request it (Carcassonne, 1998: 63). Another intention of the Charter is to protect threatened languages which, in traditional terms, are unarguably distinct from the national language, as opposed to dialects or sister varieties. It was clearly conceived, too, to protect the linguistic and cultural patrimony of long-standing autochthonous minorities within geographical Europe which would exclude, for instance, the culturally non-European languages of French Overseas Territories.

Also in 1992, the signing of the treaty of Maastricht prompted France to amend Article 2 of the national Constitution, which henceforth stipulated that the language of the Republic is French. The purported reason for the amendment was to boost the use of French in international organisations, since successive governments have been acutely aware of the loss of ground to English on this front and have reasoned that as an official language of a member state, French was more likely to be chosen as a medium of communication in international fora.

An apparently unforeseen consequence of this change was to stir up public opinion in defence of regional minority languages, particularly those perceived to be self-evidently differentiated from French in the areas where they are spoken. An association known as the *Collectif pour la langue* co-ordinated a campaign for the recognition of the special status of these languages, frequently abetted by regional deputies who raised the matter a number of times in the National Assembly. The Toubon Law of 1994 formulated to shore up the position of French in public life, particularly in business and the workplace, where some signs of vulnerability had begun to appear, rekindled the debate and showed that the political community was clearly divided on the issue. Although the 1994 Law merely serves to affirm the traditional centralist position, the then Minister of Culture himself whose name it bears was prepared to concede that regional languages, if only by their contribution to French lexical stock, were part of the national heritage. This meant that they were part of the wide variety of local colour and folklore but in no way could their speakers hope to use them as means of expression in, say, local councils or in the press (except for the odd local-language column).

The Right-wing Chirac-Juppé government elected in 1995 requested in the following year an opinion of the Council of State regarding the constitutionality of the European Charter on minority languages and received a negative answer. Following the Socialist victory in the legislative elections of 1997, the incoming Prime Minister Lionel Jospin undertook to review the regional-languages question by commissioning a report on the issues, which was commenced by the Basque-Country deputy Nicole Péry and completed by the Breton Bernard Poignant (1998). The Poignant report recommended signature of the Charter but requested a legal opinion as to whether a change to the Constitution would be necessary for that to happen. That opinion was provided a few months later by Carcassonne (1998) who

used an argument first put forward by Giordan (1982) and taken up by Toubon in 1994, namely, that the regional languages were part of the national heritage. In other words they were 'langues de France'. Moreover, in Carcassonne's opinion, the French government could sign up to no fewer than 50 articles without constitutional change. It was on this basis that in May 1999 France signed the Charter, having selected 39 articles. The second stage of adherence to the Charter – ratification, i.e. stating which languages would benefit from which articles assented to by central government – was the subject of a report by Cerquiglini (1999). At the time of the signature President Chirac asked the Constitutional Council to express an opinion on the compatibility of the Charter with the Constitution. A little more than a month after signature (June 1999) the Constitutional Council announced the result of its deliberations, declaring the Charter to be unconstitutional. This provoked a heated debate among politicians and the general public which was not entirely along the lines of the familiar split between centralist Right wingers and regionalist Left wingers. In particular, the Socialist Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement eventually left the government because of his centralist views, while the National Front often sided with the regionalist cause. The debate, however, resulted in stalemate with President Chirac opposed to any change to the Constitution, while Prime Minister Jospin, pressed by more immediate concerns, resigned himself to not pursuing that particular avenue.

The stalemate did not, however, result in stagnation. The Matignon agreements, concerning Corsica signed in 2000 with implementation planned for 2004 not only conceded a hitherto unprecedented degree of autonomy to any region of France, but also made commitments to provide for the teaching of Corsican to all school students, unless they (or their parents at primary level) chose to opt out. In the event, these agreements never came into force because by 2004, a change of government brought with it a change of strategy with regard to the island (see below).

In 2001, the then education minister, Jack Lang, put forward a proposal to integrate associative schools into the national education system. The proposal regarding the Breton-medium *Diwan* sparked off a wave of protest, particularly from a (secular) republican teachers' organisation who successfully appealed to the Constitutional Court (the verdict was given in mid-2002) on the grounds that a language other than French could not be allowed to be the main medium of teaching in state-funded schools.

Meanwhile, the regions where markedly differentiated regional languages are spoken – Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées, Langue-Roussillon, Provence, Alpes, Côte-d’Azur, Alsace and Brittany – have appointed administrators, e.g. as in Aquitaine a *Chargée de mission pour les langues et cultures régionales*, to oversee the approval and financing of language and culture-related projects, more or less anticipating ratification of the European Charter. At a national level, however, the campaign and results of the presidential and legislative elections underscored the socially and politically marginal character, in national terms, of the regional-languages question. Lionel Jospin, whose government had completed with commendable vigour two decades in which Socialist administrations sought to pursue policies favourable to regional languages, made no attempt to make political capital of the regional-languages issue during the election campaign. Not that any political commentators would claim that this contributed to his being squeezed out of the presidential run-off by the Far-Right candidate, Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose appeal resides in a certain kind of traditional nationalism and the Gaullist, Jacques Chirac. To be sure, the administration appointed by Chirac with Jean-Pierre Raffarin as Prime Minister, sought to tackle regional issues by introducing a law on decentralisation in the spring of 2003, whose aims lay within the economic and administrative spheres and in no way focus on the linguistic questions affecting principally the seven regions listed above. Monsieur Raffarin, along with the Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, proposed a referendum on Corsica, which was held in July 2003. The aim was to allow the Corsicans to decide on whether their island should enjoy a new form of special status called ‘collectivité unique déconcentrée’ but despite ministerial, and even, albeit minimalist, presidential support for a ‘yes’ vote, the ‘no’ camp pulled off a narrow, but significant victory. The immediate outcome is that the current two *département* administrative arrangements will be maintained. As regards any efforts to promote the Corsican language, the campaign from its inception was an unwanted distraction.

Not that the Raffarin administration (2002-2005) made no positive overtures towards the regional languages. In October 2004, the then culture minister, Jean-Jacques Aillagon, addressed a gathering called the ‘assises’ for regional and minority languages:

il n’y a pas de contradiction entre la politique en faveur de l’usage du français et un engagement sans pudeur, sans crainte déplacée, pour les langues régionales.

He expressed support for a framework law to clarify the situation and status of the regional languages and hinted at a possible tweaking ('retouche') of the Constitution. Nothing had been done by the time Raffarin was dismissed in mid-2005, to be succeeded by Dominique de Villepin, the attention of whose administration has been very much elsewhere.

### **1.6 Issues arising from the Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini reports**

As already mentioned, under the Jospin administration (1997-2002) three major reports on the 'regional-languages question' were commissioned: Poignant (1998); Carcassonne (1998) and Cerquiglini (1999). Although none of the authors of these reports calls into question the founding principle of the Republic of unity in uniformity, all three, unlike the Revolutionaries of the 1790s, recognise that the regional languages represent no danger to the hegemony of French. Nonetheless, undoubtedly for political reasons<sup>4</sup> the principle of the primacy of the national language in public life, e.g. in education and courts of law, is vigorously restated. Poignant insists that the teaching of regional languages should in no way be allowed to detract from the teaching of French. Nor do any of the authors envisage any change which could be remotely described, to use Lafont's (1984) phrase, as the 'unravelling of diglossia'.<sup>5</sup> Carcassonne sees no need to allow, for instance, Basque speakers (or any other minority-language speakers in metropolitan France) to testify or defend themselves in court in their native tongue or through an interpreter, as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages permits, although this was necessary in the past and arguably still is in certain DOM-TOM, e.g. parts of French Polynesia.

As Table 1 demonstrates, the inventory of recognised regional languages grew considerably over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since the passing of the Deixonne Law, partly through ministerial circulars but significantly more through the reports of Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini. The fundamental principle of the exclusive use of French in public life, however, has barely been qualified, let alone questioned. The expansion of the inventory can hardly be regarded as helpful to Basque, which having

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<sup>4</sup> It is widely recognised that Poignant, Carcassonne and Cerquiglini were as favourable as they could fairly be expected to be without provoking a stinging republican backlash.

<sup>5</sup> In French 'retrousser la diglossie'.

been recognised as one of four regional languages in 1951 now finds itself half a century later as one of 75, as the reporters expanded the list of candidates languages to be accorded recognition under Part 2 of the Charter. The main cause of this expansion was of course the recognition of languages spoken in French Overseas *Départements* and Territories and secondarily the inclusion of the *Oïl* languages (traditionally regarded as dialects of French), not *en bloc* as in Carcassonne (1998) but individually in Cerquiglini (1999). Moreover, by including what would be generally considered to be immigrant languages and dialects of the national language (Pooley, 2004), Cerquiglini seems to be going both against the spirit and the letter of the Charter in two ways. Crucially, the Charter was drafted with a view to preserving minority languages which were perceived as clearly distinct from the official language(s) of the nation state(s) where they are spoken, while it stipulates that these languages should not be dialects of the national tongue.

From the Basque perspective, this is exacerbated by the fact that Cerquiglini goes on to argue that the Deixonne Law forms the basis of the inventory of languages to benefit from the measures laid down in Part 3. Such languages must have both written historicity (thereby eliminating, for instance, Creoles) and current vitality (thereby excluding for instance at least some *Oïl* languages). The more practical benchmark for metropolitan France of the *loi d'orientation* of 1989, however, clouds the argument in two ways: one *Oïl* language, Gallo, is taught as a regional language in Upper Brittany and Occitan, although recognised as a single language by Deixonne, is taught in several forms. Such inconsistencies tend to obscure and marginalise any efforts in favour of Basque. What is more, Basque speakers, whose local/regional language is unarguably highly differentiated from French, might, like Gaelic speakers in Ireland in reaction to the promotion of Ulster Scots (Nic Craith, 2000), understandably feel aggrieved that their native tongue is being downgraded by the inclusion of varieties traditionally considered to be dialects in the inventory of autochthonous languages.

**Table 1. Inventory of the languages of France, 1951-1999**

Source	Languages
Loi Deixonne , 1951	Basque, Breton, Catalan, Occitan.
Décret 16/01/74	Corsican.
Décret 12/05/82	Tahitian.
Loi d'orientation 10/7/89	Languages to be taught in schools listed as: Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Auvergnat, Languedocien, Limousin, Nissart, Provençal, Vivaro-Alpin, Tahitian, Gallo, Alsace regional languages.
Décret 7/9/91	as above + Moselle regional languages
Décret 20/10/92	Melanesian languages (New Caledonia) : Ajië, Drehu, Nengone, Paicî.
Poignant Report (1998)	Alsacien-Mosellan, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Occitan. Creole languages (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Réunion). Tahitian. Melanesian languages: (New Caledonia) : Ajië, Drehu, Nengone, Paicî.
Carcassonne Report (1998)	As in Poignant + <i>Oïl</i> languages (undifferentiated). Oc languages (subsumed under Occitan). Flemish. 6 Amerindian languages of Guyana. Non-territorial languages: Yiddish, Romany, Berber.
Cerquiglini Report (1999)	As in Carcassonne + <i>Oïl</i> languages listed as Franc-Comtois, Walloon, Picard, Norman, Gallo, Poitevin-Saintongeais, Bourguignon-Morvandiau, Lorrain. Non-territorial languages; Chib Romany, Dialectal Arabic, Western Armenian. DOM: Creoles of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Réunion. Amerindian languages of Guyana: Galibi, Wayana, Palikur, Arawak, Wayampi, Emerillon. Hmong (refugee community from Laos) In addition to French-based Creoles as above, Anglo-Portuguese-based Creoles: Bushinenge Saramaca, Aluku, Njuka, Paramaca, Aluku, Njuka. TOM: Tahitian + Marquisien, Tuamotu and Mangarevienne languages. 3 languages spoken in South Sea Islands Ruturu, Ra'ivavae, Rapa. Walissien, Futunien. New Caledonia: 28 Kanak languages, + 4 languages spoken in Loyalty Islands: Nengone, Drehu Iaai, Fagaavea. 2 languages spoken in Mayotte: Shimaoré, Shibushi.

Carcassonne's argument that the regional languages are part of the national heritage and not the patrimony of a particular region effectively undermines both the major arguments for ethnocultural specificity – language and territoriality, e.g. Allières (1979: 3). In fact, both the terms 'regional language' and 'minority language' are deemed out of place in a country that has vigorously sought to present itself as a single undivided nation with a common national territory. Moreover, the principle of equality requires that both language and territory be considered part of the national heritage. To accord special favour to specific regions, by organising language classes not available in other places would violate that principle. Poignant and Cerquiglini argue that, for instance, Basque classes may be offered in any part of France provided that there are enough students and teachers. In practice, this means that Basque can be offered in the three Basque provinces and certain large cities, notably the

university towns in the Bordeaux *académie* (education area of which Iparralde is a part), i.e. Bordeaux itself and Pau. One would also imagine that take-up of courses might be sufficient in Paris.

As for ethnicity, the Constitution recognises only *le peuple français*, although early in 1999 Lionel Jospin used the term *le peuple corse* on national television. The Press was soon speculating about extending the principle to the Breton people which might have produced a cascade effect to include the Basque people had the debate on the ratification of the European Charter not foundered. Although people from Iparralde campaigned for the *pays basque* to be recognised as a *département* and thereby render the ethnolinguistic heritage of the region orographically visible for the first time since 1790, they met with only limited success. The *département* of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques was not divided, although the Basque region (with a population 250,000 or 43% of the *département*) was granted a *Conseil de Développement Régional* to deal with its specific needs. Common usage further undermines the linguistic and territorial basis of ethnicity. For example, Carcassonne when he referred to members of the French World Cup winning football team of 1998, described two of them as Basque, Bixente Lizarazu (whose parents' language is Basque according to Carcassonne) and team captain Didier Deschamps whose family were in-migrants from another part of France. Both uses of the term 'Basque' are based on territoriality and divorced from language, although in the case of Lizarazu the historical linguistic heritage is at least acknowledged.

Carcassonne uses another football example to extend the notion of regional language to tongues of non-European origin and without a specific territorial base in any part of the Republic including the Overseas *Départements* and Territories (DOM-TOM). The star of that same highly successful French football team, Zinédine Zidane, was born in Marseille of Berber-speaking parents. Although having no official status in its homeland of the Maghreb at the time (part of which was annexed into France between 1830 and 1962), Berber is the first language of many French citizens. If Berber were to be recognised as a 'minority language', then why not Chib Romany, Dialectal Arabic and Western Armenian, which have no specific territorial base either (Table 1)? The application of the Charter to Melanesian and Polynesian languages spoken in the DOM-TOM would be regarded by some as intentionally subverting the objectives of the European Charter which was

conceived to safeguard indigenous European languages. Others, e.g. Extra and Gorter (2001: 2), emphasise the (sociolinguistic) similarities between regional and immigrant minority languages:

- issues of spread, domestic and public vitality
- processes and determinants of language maintenance and shift towards dominant languages
- relationship between language ethnicity and identity
- status in the education system.

Cerquiglini also undermines the distinction between autochthonous (regional) and allochthonous (immigrant) minority languages by arguing that there is no non-arbitrary way of deciding how long a language has to be spoken within a territory for it to be considered indigenous. Furthermore, all languages, including French itself, were imported into what is now French territory, and it matters little whether that occurred a few decades ago as in the case of Berber, or millennia ago as in the case of Basque. The number of languages listed by Cerquiglini is also far too great for all or even most of them to benefit from the provisions of Part 3 of the Charter. Cynics might be tempted to think that the highlighting of such great diversity seems designed to lead public opinion into recognition of the necessity of re-affirming the historical centralist position. Moreover, by interweaving the regional-languages question with sensitive issues of immigration, Cerquiglini, intentionally or otherwise, may have alienated a significant part of public opinion from the regionalists. Both Poignant and Cerquiglini took the view that the teaching arrangements introduced in 1988-9 (*Loi d'orientation*, 1989) already fulfilled (at least for the most part) the requirements of the Charter. Indeed, they are willing, in particular Poignant, to concede that the different types of educational delivery on offer could be better co-ordinated, especially as regards the integration of associative schools, such as the Basque *Ikastolak*, into the mainstream education system. That said, the unfortunate demise of Jack Lang's proposal for the Breton *Diwan* in 2001, suggests that such discourse, however high-sounding and well intentioned, will ultimately prove vacuous, as any attempted implementation founders on some form or other of republican backlash. In the French context, emphasising the points which traditional autochthonous languages and recently established allochthonous languages have in common, is to overlook the crucial

distinguishing features rooted in a living community, which may be bolstered by a territorial base outside France and readily perceived ethnic and cultural differences within. Both sets of demarcative traits have been persistently undermined and suppressed in the case of the regional languages, which now have fewer speakers than some of the immigrant languages (Héran, Filhon and Deprez, 2002). Away from the media spotlight of national newspapers and television news, however, the Cerquiglini inventory was accorded discreet recognition in 2001, when the *Délégation Générale à la langue française* (DGLF) was renamed the *Délégation Générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (DGLFLF). The scientific arm of the DGLFLF, the *Observatoire Linguistique des Pratiques Langagières*, encourages serious investigation of sociolinguistic situations, although the well conducted surveys of 1991 (Aizpuroa, 1995) 1996 (Basque Government, 1997) and 2001 (Basque Government, 2003), along with the comparatively positive experience of revitalisation plans in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain, already provide a sound basis for concrete proposals to promote positive action (see Léonard, 2004).

## **2. Diglossia, vitality and transmission**

### **2.1 Diglossia as conflict**

For Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1971) the notion of diglossia was a descriptive tool which could be used to account for the occurrences of use of two (or indeed more) varieties within a given speech community. While in the early formulations, diglossic communities were regarded as essentially stable, Catalan linguists, e.g. Badia i Margarit (1976), Aracil (1983), Ninyoles (1972) and Vallverdú (1970), followed by their Occitan counterparts e.g. Lafont and Gardy (1981); Jardel (1982); Kremnitz (1982; 1987); Boyer (1986), used the term 'diglossia' to characterise a situation of conflict – whether overt or latent. Diglossia, thus interpreted, is the result of actual or symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1982), which gives rise to a situation of hierarchical bilingualism, where the H language (French) enjoys precedence in the prestigious functions and the L language (Basque) is initially confined to informal oral use and gradually squeezed out as universal literacy eliminates virtually all situations where Basque is a communicative necessity.

According to Lafont and Gardy (1981), the imposition of French confronts minority-language speakers with a stark alternative: either acculturation-assimilation or normalisation. To apply their reasoning to the Basque case, Euskara speakers can either allow themselves to be assimilated linguistically and culturally into the national mainstream or learn and adopt a common (normalised and written) variety which would permit the undoing of diglossia since it is usable for H functions hitherto reserved for French and open the way for a non-essentialist formulation of Basque identity. Lafont (1984) proposes a fourfold strategy for normalisation (adapted here for the case of Basque in France):

- through serious writing
- through use in administration
- by using Basque as a medium of instruction
- through use in the audio-visual media

Ten years later, Lafont (1994) acknowledging the undeniable reality of the continued erosion of vitality of Occitan, retrenches to a considerably more pessimistic (and limited) position, where he refers to windows of opportunity ('créneaux d'histoire'):

- in serious writing
- through education
- network of active nostalgia

In endeavouring to implement these strategies, minority activists find themselves caught in a double bind of the necessity of having to maintain their language's vitality while seeking to enhance its status. Serious writing undoubtedly enhances the status of Basque but runs the risk, as Jones (1995, 1999) has argued so cogently for Breton, of distancing the normalised variety to a greater and greater extent from the ordinary spoken forms acquired by natural transmission. While educational standards in the associative schools are generally regarded as excellent, the *Ikastolak*, as is the case for their counterparts in other regions, are not teaching enough children in relation to the whole school population of the region to have any socially significant impact (see Table 11). Lafont refers also to the network of active nostalgia among people of mature, not to say advancing, years, many of whom now hold positions of influence at a local/regional level and who perhaps share in a certain perception of past injustices that need to be righted. Lafont appears to have recognised, however, well before Poignant confirmed it, that

historical reparation was not to be on any French government's agenda. Lafont's disillusion regarding the possibility of regional languages being used in administration seems amply justified by the government's choice of clauses from the European Charter, for instance, in Article 9.3 (justice) and Article 10.2c and d (administration and public services) which stipulate that the most important legal texts and all official local and regional texts will be made available in regional languages. Moreover, the implementation of a bilingual toponymy enshrined in Clause 10.2g while largely discounted as tokenism by Lafont, may be construed more positively as does Fishman (1991) who deems it to be progress in planning the linguistic landscape.

## 2.2 The vitality of regional languages in France

**Table 2. Demographics of regional minority languages in France: cited in Ball (1997) and adapted from McConnell (1984), Kloss, McConnell and Verdoodt (1989), European Commission (1986) and Nelde et al. (1996) and Héran, Filhon and Deprez (2002)**

Language	Number of speakers with percentage of population		
	Ball (1997)	Nelde <i>et al.</i> 1996	Héran <i>et al.</i> 2002
<b>Oil Languages</b>			570,000
Norman	700,000 (23%)	–	
Picard	2,000,000 (36%)	–	
Franco-Provençal	30,000 (2%)	–	
Southern Romance			
Auvergnat	500,000 (38%)	–	
Occitan	1,500,000 (12%)	2,100,000	610,000
Corsican	150,000 (60%)	125,000	122,000
Catalan	200,000 (56%)	150,000	132,000
Non-Romance			
Frankish (Mosellan)	200,000 (50%)	–	78,000
Flemish	100,000 (29%)	20-40,000 (Dutch)	
Alsatian	1,000,000 (62%)	1,800,000 (German)	660,000
<b>Basque</b>	<b>90,000 (39%)</b>	<b>86,000</b>	<b>44,000</b>
Breton	600,000 (40%)	180-250,000	280,000

Table 2 contrasts firstly two sets of by no means concordant figures collected mostly in the 1980s (Ball, 1997; Nelde *et al.*, 1996) with statistics based on data gathered in 1999 by researchers from the *Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques* (INED) (Héran,

Filhon and Deprez, 2002). In the 1980s, in contrast to the receding linguistic boundaries within Spain, Basque was theoretically at least maintaining its traditional territorial space within France, although its reproductive capacity, according to Nelde *et al.* was deemed to be considerably lower (D as opposed to B on a scale of A to E). The D rating puts it on a par with most other minority languages in metropolitan France (only Alsatian fares better) and a proportion of speakers of around 40% of the population appeared, in relative terms at least, favourable, although Basque does not enjoy such a benign dispensation as Corsican in Nelde *et al.*'s (1996) rating. A detailed sociolinguistic survey (1,440 points of enquiry throughout the Basque Country) conducted in the northern Basque Country in 1991 (Aizpuroa, 1995) (cf. Tables 3 and 4) broadly confirmed the reliability of the number of Basque speakers at that time. The results of both the Basque government and the INED surveys point to marked reductions in speaker numbers during the 1990s – around 12% in five years. The 2001 Basque-Government survey (Table 3) suggests a far higher degree of maintenance or as Urteaga (2005: 175) puts it, a significant deceleration of loss, characterised by a marginal decrease in professed active bilingualism, compensated by a slightly greater increase in passive bilingualism.

**Table 3. Proportion of Euskara speakers in Iparralde based on Basque Cultural Institute surveys of 1991, 1996 and 2001 (Aizpuroa, 1995; Basque Government, 1997; 2003)**

	1991	1996	2001	Numbers (2001)
Non-Bascophones	59%	64%	63%	140,600
Bascophones	41%	36%	37%	81,000
of whom				
monolinguals		0.7%	negligible	
active bilinguals	33%	26%	25%	54,700
passive bilinguals		9%	12%	26,300

The geographical distribution of speakers within the two dialect areas defined by Zuazo (1998), Nafar-Lapurtera and Zuberera, show that the most populous coastal region of the former, particularly the mostly high urbanised area around Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz, has both the lowest proportion and highest number of Basque speakers compared to the

inland areas (Table 4). Overall, the age profile of Basque speakers shows that use of the language is largely in slow decline. Basque shows the least vitality in purely demographic terms in the most urbanised and heavily populated coastal areas which have seen the greatest degree of in-migration, e.g. tourists, retirees, although the 2001 figures show increases in the numbers of passive bilinguals in that least favoured zone.

**Table 4. Proportion of Basque speakers in three regions of Iparralde (Basque Government, 1997; 2003)**

	% 1996	% 2001	Nafar- Lapurtera (Coast)	Nafar- Lapurtera (Inland)	Zuberera and Baxanafarroa
			<b>1996-2001</b>	<b>1996-2001</b>	<b>1996-2001</b>
Non-Bascophones	64	63	87 – 83	69 – 57	24 – 24
Bascophones	36	37	13 – 17	31 – 43	76 – 76
of whom					
monolinguals	0.7	negligible			
active bilinguals	26	25	9 – 9	29 (2001)	64 – 61
passive bilinguals	9	12	4 – 8	14 (2001)	12 – 15

**Table 5. Favoured language of active bilinguals by age (Basque Government, 1997)**

	%
French-dominant	35
Balanced	33
Euskara-dominant	32

While Table 5 suggests a very even distribution French-dominant, Basque-dominant and balanced bilinguals among those claiming proficiency in both Basque and French, it also points to the fact that Euskara is the perceived first language for only a minority of its speakers. If, as Wanner (1993) argues, first acquisition or favoured status (the language of the heart?) is the one great advantage that a minority language enjoys over a dominant language, then the figures, merely serve to spell out the modalities of obsolescence. The 2001 survey points to a drop in first-language speakers (to 25%), although this is considerably higher than for the Basque Country as a whole (17.3% in 2001) (Coyos, 2005: 210). Overall, however, this is compensated by the increase in respondents claiming two first languages (up from 3% to 5% between 1991 and 2001), although Iparralde shows a slow decline on this point (7.7% to 6.1% over the same period).

**Table 6. Age profile of Euskara speakers as percentage of population in Iparralde (Basque Government, 1991; 1997; 2003)**

Age	% 1991	% 1996	% 2001
65+	34	35	36
50-64	38	31	30
35-49	32	27	23
25-34	25	14	12
16-24	20	11	12

One may nonetheless point to two slim rays of hope in the 2001 figures. Firstly, there is a 1% increase in the proportion of bilinguals in the 16-24 age group who for the first time, match the proportion of their immediate elders (25-34 year olds). It seems as if the increase in the knowledge of Basque noted among primary-age children in the mid-1990s, as a result of teaching the language, has started to affect older adolescents and young adults. Secondly, an (admittedly small) increase in the profession of bilingualism among people of 65 and over can be noted. It may be that, barring some somewhat odd tendencies in mortality rates, people of retirement age are more willing to claim a knowledge of Basque. The greater longevity of the older generation, compared to their predecessors would be a genuine cause for hope in a sociolinguistically more favourable situation since they could provide an active practice ground for the younger children who have acquired the language in the classroom.

Although in no age group do Euskara speakers represent a majority, they clearly constitute a greater proportion among people aged 50 and over (Table 6). Viewed from another perspective this older age group makes up 59% to 64% of Euskara speakers in Iparralde (Cenoz, 2001). At the other end of the age spectrum, transmission rates are significantly higher in families where both parents are Basque speakers (72%) while they drop to 11% where only one parent speaks Basque. Although this steady if not rather rapid rate appears to be perceptible to people living in Iparralde, it would be difficult to claim that they are overwhelmingly in favour of promoting the ancestral language, since fewer than half claimed to be very interested (37%) or expressed a highly favourable attitude (49%), while a significant minority declared little or no interest (24%) or affirmed open hostility (13%). A number of regional language surveys carried out in various parts of France, but mostly in the *Oc* regions, suggests that informants may profess to occupy the middle ground to avoid

giving offence to the investigator. Yet crucially, their apparently good intentions are rarely if ever translated into action. The steady decline, further emphasised by the alleged proportions of French- and Basque-dominant bilinguals (Table 7), of Euskara among people of working age (25-64) continues.

**Table 7. Age profile of the different types of bilinguals in Iparralde (Basque Government, 2001; Aurnague and Durand, 2003: 110)**

	65+	50-64	35-49	25-34	16-24
French-dominant	30	34	52	61	66
Balanced	36	48	32	31	32
Euskara-dominant	34	18	16	8	2

The socio-economic structures giving support to Basque are becoming fragilised. Basque ethnicity depends on geography, i.e. being born in or of parents born in Iparralde and in particular in the inland regions. The inland areas have by and large maintained more extensive networks of Basque usage – family, friends and even in public places such as churches, markets or bars. Significantly, much emphasis in sociolinguistic work has been placed on top-down measures (most famously Lafont, 1984; 1994) which are seen as the key measures to ‘unravel’ this diglossic situation. Such a view receives more than a degree of corroboration from Nelde *et al.* (1996) whose *Euromosaic* model emphasises the importance of the reproductive capacity of a linguistic community and also recommends the introduction of top-down measures, e.g. by government and regional authorities to help maintain the speech community. In contrast, the language-shift model proposed by Fishman (1991) measures the degree of attrition and advocates a bottom-up strategy for attempting to reverse such shift. The instrument for calibrating shift known as the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Table 7) has been used by a number of linguists (e.g. Caldwell, 1994; Marley, 1995; 1999; Pooley, 1998; and by Coyos, 2005 with respect to Basque) to evaluate levels of vitality of minority languages spoken in France.

**Table 8. Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Fishman, 1991)**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1	some use of Xish in HE, government, media (but without the additional safety provided by political independence)
2	Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in higher spheres of either
3	use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of Xish community) involving interaction between Xmen and Ymen
4	Xish in lower education that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws
5	Xish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy
<b>6</b>	<b>attainment of intergenerational informal oracy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement</b>
7	most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but beyond child-bearing age
8	most vestigial users of Xish are socially isolated old folks and Xish needs to re-assembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults

In the traditional diglossic situation which obtained prior to the introduction of compulsory primary education (1881-86), all the autochthonous regional languages of France can be placed at Point 6 on the GIDS scale corresponding to ‘attainment of intergenerational informal oracy and its demographic concentration’. ‘Institutional reinforcement’ lay largely in the traditional economic bases of communities dependent on primary and secondary sector activities (Section 1.3). Significantly, Caldwell’s (1994) evaluation places no language at what might be aptly called the historical Point 6, but deems that some have regressed because of lack of transmission of traditional oracy, while others have ‘advanced’ to Point 5 because of a significant degree of literacy, albeit without ‘extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy’ (Table 9).

**Table 9. Assessment of vitality of the autochthonous regional languages of metropolitan France on GIDS scale (Caldwell, 1994) and Euromosaic reproductive capacity rating (Nelde et al. 1996)**

Languages	GIDS Rating (1-8)	Reproductive capacity (A to E)
Corsican	5-4	D
Alsace regional languages	5	B
Basque, Catalan	5	D
Breton	7	D
Flemish	7	E
Occitan or <i>Oc</i> languages <sup>6</sup>	8-7	D
<i>Oïl</i> languages, Franco-Provençal	8	Not considered

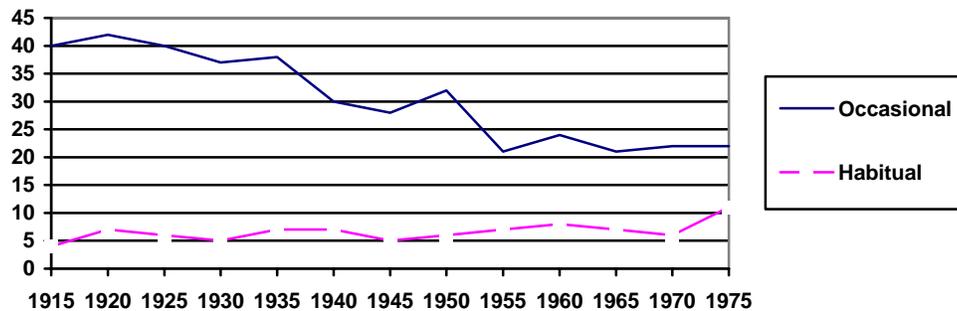
Applying the two instruments for calibrating vitality, there is little more than broad-brush congruence between the high degree of interruption of intergenerational transmission and the generally low ratings of reproductive capacity. That Corsican became an increasingly crucial factor in the resolution of the political conflict in Corsica after 1996, suggests that a relatively optimistic GIDS rating of 4-5 is nearer the mark than a pessimistic D rating by Nelde *et al.* The high rating for the reproductive capacity of Alsatian-Mosellan in *Euromosaic* may be due in no small measure to the fact that that piece of research considered the reproductive capacity of German rather than the ancestral Germanic languages spoken in Alsace-Lorraine (Table 2). In contrast, even the language referred to as Flemish in Table 9 is awarded the lowest possible rating for reproductive capacity, although the GIDS rating of 7 would indicate some survival of a community base. As for Euskara, Caldwell's placing at Point 5 on the GIDS scale would suggest positive progress from the historical Point 6, although other evidence already considered (Tables 5, 6 and 7) suggests Basque literacy in home, school or community cannot apply to the majority of the population of the French Basque region. Compared to the other languages located at Point 5 on GIDS, Basque is less favourably rated on the scale of reproductive capacity, although not necessarily in France (identical ratings to Catalan). For the two languages also widely spoken within the Spanish nation-state, the *Euromosaic* ratings underline the relatively favourable social climate south of the Pyrenees. Indeed, Catalan with its A rating is the

<sup>6</sup> Some scholars would vigorously reject the subsuming of *Oc* languages such as Provençal under the heading of Occitan, e.g. Blanchet (1998).

beacon for other autochthonous minority languages throughout the EU, while the B score for Basque in Spain is significantly healthier than the D in France. Of course, the descriptor of Point 5 refers to institutional support – an issue discussed more fully in Sections 3 (for teaching) and 4 (the media).

Indeed, as Coyos (2005: 210) appositely observes, while Fishman's studies (1991; 2001) which specifically use the example of Basque in the BAC insist on the absolutely crucial role of family-based transmission, linguistic policy on both sides of the Pyrenees has tended to overlook it in favour of measures higher up the GIDS scale, despite the clear indications that it has been diminishing (Tables 3-7), although analysis of the 1999 census data (Urteaga, 2005: 177) point to a possible reversal of the trend (Figure 3).

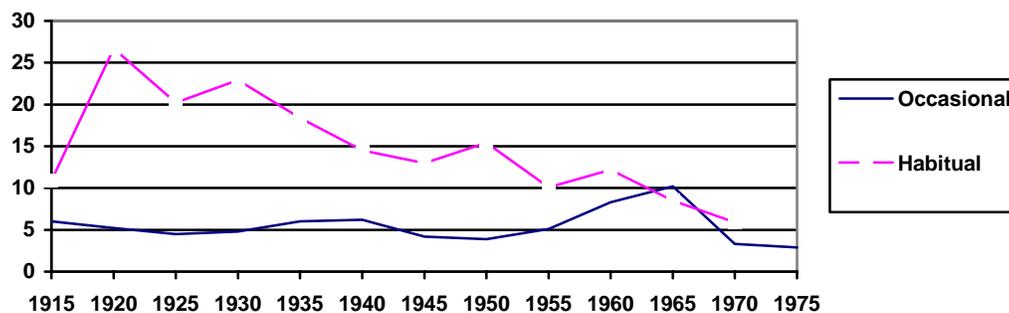
**Figure 3. Family-based transmission of Basque to respondents in 1999 census by quinquennium of birth**



This graph shows the rates of occasional (higher black line) and habitual (lower red dotted line) transmission by respondents' parents according to the formers' quinquennium of birth (from 1915 to 1975). For occasional transmission, there has been a steady decline from interwar levels of 40% or more to just over 20% for the generation in their early to mid-20s around the turn of the century, with a brief peak in the 1950s which seems to be a levelling out of the trough resulting from the hiatus of World War Two. The rate of habitual transmission turned out to be highest among the youngest generation of respondents, where it reached 10% for the first time since World War One, as opposed to hovering around or just above 5%. This finding has to be somewhat tempered by the fact that these same

respondents do not show the same patterns of transmission with their children as their parents did with them (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Transmission of Basque by respondents to their own children in the 1999 census (based on Urteaga, 2005: 178)**



What is remarkable about Figure 4 is that it is the reverse of Figure 3. For the respondents themselves, habitual transmission has always been considerably more frequent than occasional transmission and indeed their own parents' rate of except for the most recent age-band. It is habitual transmission that not only has shown a steady decline since 1920s but seems to be continuing on its downward trajectory. Occasional transmission for the respondents shows a very similar pattern to habitual transmission for their parents, hovering around 5% through the century with a recent peak but which seems to have occurred a quinquennium or two earlier.

Another indicator of vitality is the choice of methodologies adopted by linguists. The relative abundance of studies based on subjects' perceptions and professions about their use of minority languages, contrasts starkly with the relative small number of analyses of actual language behaviour. The anonymous observation of code-switching in public places is largely limited to Alsatian (Gardner-Chloros, 1985a, 1985b, 1991; Girardot-Soltner and Salmon, 1991; Vassberg, 1993). Moreover, Alsatian stands out through the number of (relatively recent) studies based on the view that it is/might be a source of potential interference for the acquisition of French, e.g. Hatterer (1985), Schilling (1985) and Stoecklé (1985). While such studies imply a significant degree of functionality of family-based language transmission, Jaffe (1999, 2000) studies French-Corsican selection and switching based on classroom learning.

The conclusion to be drawn from such a picture is that centralist language policies have consistently starved other autochthonous languages of status-enhancing social space, thus steadily and progressively undermining their community base. That Alsace and Corsica should emerge as partial exceptions may to be explained a considerable degree by the facts that the former was wrested from French jurisdiction for a not inconsiderable period in fairly recent history while the latter has seen the most vehemently determined form of nationalism within a confined and geographically separate space. Regionalists in France do not appear to have grasped the significance of Fishman's (2001) observations regarding the reversal of language shift. By concentrating on high-level measures (in terms of the GIDS scale), such as normalisation, in the hope of undoing the long-standing diglossic situation principally through language teaching and serious writing, they have tended to underplay the necessity of nurturing bottom-up initiatives which generally have to be self-help measures conceived and implemented by the community itself. To take up Fishman's terms, normalisation and unravelling diglossia are too close to 'shooting for the moon' if the fundamentals of creating space for social interaction outside the home and the classroom within the local community are neglected. While it has to be recognised that the socio-cultural climate is less propitious, Iparralde has much to learn from Hegoalde (the Euskara-speaking regions of Spain) (Azurmendi, Bachoc and Zabaleta, 2001) and Wales (Williams, 2001).

### **3. The teaching of regional languages in metropolitan France**

#### **3.1 Overview**

Table 10 indicates that overall numbers of students studying regional languages in state schools and private schools under contract to the state. Although the overall numbers seem to indicate a sharp fall followed by a partial recovery, there are grounds for greater optimism. Figures in the mid-1990s were skewed by the inclusion of (standard) German as a regional language in Alsace and Lorraine. Those reported for 1998 to 2001 suffer from gaps in the reporting back to the DGLFLF from certain regions (NR). Taking due account of the fact that as reporting becomes more efficient, the overall situation can always be made to appear to be improving. As figures for Alsace and Moselle shown for 2001-2 refer to regional languages rather than standard German learned as a modern foreign language, the overall

total of students studying a regional language has undoubtedly increased significantly. That said, Table 10 points to one (fairly big) loser (Occitan-Langue d'Oc) and a number of (very modest) winners compared to the mid-1990s (Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican and Gallo). The number of school students taking Basque increased by a multiple of nearly 3.5 between 1994 and 2002. Without exception, a significant majority of the pupils concerned are in the primary sector (69% for Basque, compared to 68% overall).

**Table 10. Numbers of pupils studying regional languages in state schools and private schools under contract to the state in France (1994-2002) (DGLF, 1999; 2003; 2004)**

Language	1994-5	1996-7	1998-9	2000-1	2001-2
<b>Basque</b>	<b>2,727</b>	<b>3,769</b>	<b>6,958</b>	<b>8,969</b>	<b>9,351</b>
Breton	9,872	13,764	17,851	20,657	16,576
Catalan	12,861	6,557	8,631	8,907	11,175
Corsican	23,465	27,230	21,632	27,875	30,784
Creole	NR	NR	NR	NR	16,028
Gallo	1,154	765	886	921	1,761
Occitan	82,704	67,460	72,592	71,612	67,549
Sub-Total	132,485	115,686			
Alsace RL	191,306	188,652	NR	NR	83,159
Moselle RL	NR	NR	NR	5,823	4,454
Tahitian	NR	NR	NR	NR	8,928
Melanesian	NR	NR	NR	NR	483
<b>Overall</b>	<b>323,791</b>	<b>304,338</b>	<b>131,280</b>	<b>152,257</b>	<b>250,258</b>

**Table 11. Numbers of pupils studying regional languages in bilingual streams (Enseignement bilingue à parité horaire) 1994-2002 (DGLF, 1999; 2003; 2004)**

Language	1994-5	1996-7	2001-2
<b>Basque</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>1,632</b>	<b>5,143</b>
Breton	839	893	4,451
Catalan	78	204	644
Corsican	51	229	1,580
Occitan	609	1,088	1,596
Alsace RL	4,865	6,164	8,703
Moselle RL	NR	NR	2,660
<b>Overall</b>	<b>7,882</b>	<b>10,210</b>	<b>27,039</b>

Table 11 shows significant increases in numbers of students studying regional languages in bilingual streams (enseignement bilingue à parité horaire) where students study part of the curriculum in their regional language. In the Basque Country, the subjects studied are

Basque and history and geography.<sup>7</sup> That more students should be entering bilingual streams than those which aim only at initiation or awareness is a positive sign, given the findings of Lobier (1992) who, having compared children studying Occitan in the Nîmes area, suggests strongly that only bilingual or immersion streams instill positive images of the minority language. Awareness sessions actually, on the other hand, all too often have a negative effect, since they tend to confirm traditional prejudices based on historical contingencies, particularly that the regional language used to be spoken in their home area. According to Behling (1997) again in a study based on the Occitan area, students enrolling on regional language classes at the level secondary tend to have had contact with the language concerned through their (not necessarily nuclear) family background. The net effect is to slow down the rate of attrition, given the generalised breakdown of the parent-to-child transmission process. Apart from the bilingual primary schools, the associative schools are the only educational operations that contribute to the reversal of language shift by enabling young children whose parents are not, say bascoophone, to acquire fluency in and a positive image of the minority language. For all their widely acknowledged successes, however, the regional-language schools are recruiting too few students, despite moderate increases in enrolment to have a major social impact (Table 12). Well under 5% of the total population study a regional language and fewer than 1 in 6 in the regions directly concerned.

**Table 12. Number of pupils in private ('associatif') regional-language medium schools 1998-99 (DGLF, 1999; 2003)**

Language	1998-9	2001-2
Basque ( <i>Ikastolak</i> )	1,705	1,945
Breton ( <i>Diwan</i> )	1,996	2,634
Catalan ( <i>Bressoles</i> )	229	355
Occitan ( <i>Calandretas</i> )	1,522	1,627
Alsatian	544	
Overall	5,996	6,561

<sup>7</sup> History and geography are combined in the French education system

### 3.2 The teaching of Basque in France – history and evaluation

As already mentioned, the Deixonne Law of 1951<sup>8</sup> permitted optional and non-examinable classes outside the main school timetable in four regional languages, one of which was Basque. It was not until 1959, however, that the *Ikastola* association dedicated to the development of Basque teaching within the existing system, was set up (Héguy, 1996). Even then, very little positive action seems to have taken place before 1970, mainly because the Ministry of Education was dilatory in publishing circulars crucial to the implementation of even the modest measures set out by the Deixonne Law.

In 1969, two organisations were created by regional activists on a voluntary basis: 1) *Seaska* which launched the idea of private Basque-medium primary schools, *Ikastolak*, the first being set up in Arcanges that same year; 2) *AEK* whose aim was to introduce Basque classes for adults. For the first time, itinerant teachers gave classes in Basque in both state and Catholic schools. It was not until 1983, however, that the first bilingual sections were put in place initially in state schools to be followed later by Catholic schools. Basque teaching sanctioned by diplomas (*DEUG, licence, maîtrise*)<sup>9</sup> was introduced at university level together with an agreement on the status and working conditions of Basque teachers. There is now an inter-university department of Basque in Bayonne with branches in Pau and Bordeaux. To this was added a postgraduate teaching qualification in 1993, with various options which about 8 students a year have obtained since 1995 (DGLF, 1999:144). In 1994, the French Ministry of Education signed an agreement giving official recognition to schools run by SEASKA – *Ikastolak*. Figures cited by Coyos (1999) suggest that enrolments in Basque were on the increase (+14%) in bilingual sections and *Ikastolak* – in 1997-8 compared to the latest official figures available for 1996-7. While these figures (8.6% of school population in 1996-7) are, proportionally speaking, relatively high for metropolitan France – apart from Corsica – they are considerably lower than in Spain where the creation of the HABE<sup>10</sup> institute has ensured steady funding and thorough professionalisation of the teaching of Basque. A complete basic curriculum has been developed to enable beginners to become socially

<sup>8</sup> Now repealed and replaced by the *Code de l'éducation*

<sup>9</sup> Diplomas sanctioning two, three or four years of higher education respectively.

<sup>10</sup> HABE (Helduen Alfabetatze eta Bereuskalduntzerako Erakundea) is Basque-government funded institute whose specific role is to teach Basque to adults.

functional in Euskara. The number of hours devoted to teaching (average 10 hours a week with many intensive residential courses available) shows the earnest of the Basque Autonomous Community. The latest figures available (1999) show that HABE-affiliated centres had more than 40,000 enrolments, which far outstrips anything available north of the Pyrenees ([http://www.habe.org/hn\\_habeeuskalduntzea/indice\\_f.htm](http://www.habe.org/hn_habeeuskalduntzea/indice_f.htm)). By way of comparison, there were 1,244 adult learners in Iparralde in 1998 (<1% of population) and lower in terms of absolute numbers than any of the four traditionally Basque regions of Spain.

#### 4. Media

##### 4.1 Television, radio and the regional languages of France

Clearly, television, radio and the Internet have considerable potential for resocialising, i.e. recreating a sense of community, which breaks the vicious circle of localisation and the contingent but apparently indissoluble marriage of regional languages and traditional rural (and of course outmoded) life styles. The contributions in Viaut (1996a) combined with those published by the DGLFLF (2003), however, show a picture of marginalisation on television (FR3) that is being slightly attenuated (Table 13).

**Table 13. Time devoted to regional languages on France 3 1990-4 and 2003 in hours (Cheval, 1996; DGLFLF, 2004)**

Language	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	2003
Basque	5.5	5.25	28	6	6	30.3
Provençal	23	22.75	131 *	27.33	20.33	31
Corsican	15.46	17	*	6.83	20.47	110
Breton	70	64	52	102	61	59
Catalan/Occitan	34	33	34	34	28.67	28
Alsace regional languages	87.82	78	59	136.25	92.33	74
Total	235.78	220	304	312	235.8	332.3
Year on year	-10.6%	-6.7%	+38.2%	+2.6%	-24.4%	+40.9%

\* Figures for Provençal and Corsican combined in 1992

Source: *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel*.

In 1997 the same channel broadcast 260 hours in regional languages (*Libération*, 1st October 1998). Both in terms of programme hours and market penetration, the Alsace

regional languages show significantly greater vitality than any other autochthonous varieties. More recently, initiatives taken by the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* on local television channels tend to favour large centres of population (Cheval, 1996) and only privately run cable and satellite channels from Belgium and Spain seem to offer any hope of genuine re-socialisation. Gardy (1996) deplores the predominantly past-oriented and language-centred character of *France 3* regional programmes, whereas Euskal Telebista already broadcasting 12 hours a day in Euskara (Haritschelhar, 1996) in the 1990s and has now expanded to 4 channels (ETB1; ETB2; ETBSAT; CANAL VASCO;), enabling anyone who wishes to watch programmes in Euskara more or less round the clock.

Local radio stations may well represent the best hope to focus vitality and a sense of community. Cheval (1994, 1996) reports that between 20 and 25 radio stations in Aquitaine use regional languages ranging for time slots from half an hour a month to virtually exclusive use of Basque by three stations covering the three dialect areas within France. Cheval, Grosclaude, Cheval and Viaut, Gardy and de la Brétèque (1996) all point to the difficulty of producing quality material in sufficient quantity given the number of competent native speakers and the generally parsimonious budgets available. These factors go a long way to explaining the low impact and high mortality rate of such stations.

The DGLFLF (2003) is noticeably discreet about the precise number of hours broadcast in regional languages on France-Bleu but it is described as 'stable' but nothing like the service provided by RFO (Réseau France Outre-Mer) which had air time of between 5,413 and 7,300 hours in the DOM-TOM with between 60% and 70% in the local language.<sup>11</sup> The Basque Cultural Institute has set up a sound archive which will help to fill air time. In the Basque Country, the reach of Euskal Telebista from Spain with such radio stations as Euskadi Irratia, Radio Euskadi, Radio Vitoria, Radio ETB and Euskadi Gaztea, although they are by no means exclusively Basque-medium are certainly sufficient to ensure that potential listeners north of the Pyrenees can be more or less constantly listening to Euskara, if they so desire.

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<sup>11</sup> In Guadeloupe, for instance, 5,100 hours (69.86%) were recorded as being broadcast in Creole in 2003

## 4.2 Culture

Although Coyos (1999) considers that there are few newspapers and magazines in Iparralde, he deems the quality of cultural life to be rich and certainly significantly different from the outmoded folklore the quaintness of which is often exploited to titillate tourists. The relatively immobility of the traditional pastoral society served to preserve the Basque language better than the much more mobile industrial and postindustrial societies, which, with apparent innocuousness, provoke phenomena of in-migration and diaspora to the point where Basque speakers are now a minority in all three provinces of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa.

While in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sense of ethnic and cultural identity was undoubtedly felt more strongly on the south side of the Pyrenees than on the north (cf. Rudel, 1985), this was by no means the case historically. Throughout Euskal Herria, there has been a common desire, manifested by a number of violent confrontations mainly against unwelcome fiscal measures (<http://perso.club-internet.fr/baskhise.html>).<sup>12</sup> to maintain the traditional degree of autonomy that the region had enjoyed within both the kingdoms of France and Spain. In 1794, 4,000 Basques from Lapurdi were deported (with many dying) to camps in other parts of southern France for refusing to fight against their fellow Basques in the war between Spain and France. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in contrast to the Basque regions of Spain, which benefited from industrialisation and active groups of intellectuals such as the *Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País* (founded 1765), Iparralde was economically dependent on the primary-sector activities of agriculture and fishing. As with many comparable labour markets, local job opportunities were insufficient to provide employment for all those who were born and bred in the region. Many Basques were therefore forced to leave their native region to gain their livelihoods. Of those who stayed, some like fishermen from ports like St Jean de Luz had for centuries ventured far across the Atlantic in search, for instance, of Newfoundland cod, while others led a rather insulated existence in remote rural areas. South of the Pyrenees the traditional autonomy – as manifested in the customary laws known as the *fueros* – was maintained far longer and motivated significantly political choices, like, for instance, the decision to espouse the Carlist side against the Republicans through most of

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<sup>12</sup> I am grateful to the anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this website.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Basque National Party founded early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and which emphasised the ethnic distinctiveness of the Basques in relation to the Spanish won what was to be a short-lived autonomy in the 1930s. Since the death of Franco, the Basque country has been granted a degree of autonomy that would have hitherto been unimaginable in France, where Basque nationalism has largely been a minority even a marginal preoccupation of various small and highly fragmented groups, which failed to achieve electoral breakthroughs (Jacob, 1994).

If within Iparralde, there is arguably a greater sense of a common Basque identity or culture (e.g. *Libération*, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2000) than there has ever been, the one recurring political question that it raises has rumbled on since 1790, that of the *département basque*. The French authorities have never been willing to make that concession, possibly fearing that it would lead to greater demands. As already mentioned (Section 1.6) they have preferred to fudge the issue, by setting up a regional development council. Regional bodies have shown themselves to be far more favourable than central government, which has so far ignored calls from the *Syndicat intercommunal de soutien à la langue basque* (e.g. 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2004) for Basque to be recognised under the Constitution. A bill proposing an amendment to constitutional law was put forward by the deputy of the *département* of the *Pyrénées-Atlantiques* to which the northern Basque Country belongs, Daniel Mach around a year later (9<sup>th</sup> September 2005). The proposal called for the implementation of the European Charter on regional and minority languages but was, not altogether surprisingly, rejected. At a regional level, however, some progress has been achieved, albeit with considerable reliance on the BAC government. The BAC contributes significantly to the funding of the *ikastolas*, since the French authorities use the Falloux of 1850 to limit contributions to year-on-year budgets to 10% with no help at all for capital projects. The French authorities have not, despite the theoretical monopoly of *Télévision de France*, objected to the installation of 40 transmitters for *Euskal Telebista 1* on French territory, although the maintenance of only 14 is funded by public monies from north of the Pyrenees. While on the one hand, Basque is in a privileged position among French regional languages to be in receipt of foreign funding, it has been construed in some quarters as ‘colonisation par l’argent’ (Coyos, 2005: 214).

This is by means a majority view. The Council of the *Pyrénées-Atlantiques* started to recognise the need for a language policy in the late 1990s, and created a post of *Chargé de*

*mission* (for regional languages)<sup>13</sup>, a post replicated at regional level (Aquitaine) some time later. As part of the regional plan (Aquitaine) a five-year convention specific to the Basque Country was set up. Although the body has no power to liaise formally with the BAC or associations in the northern Basque Country, it can finance projects, some of which may be cultural/linguistic in character. In 2004 another body the *Office public de la langue basque* recognised as a GIP (*groupe d'intérêt public*) with the specific purpose of pursuing the linguistic aspects of the plans supported by the *Convention spécifique Pays basque*.

Its aims are ambitious and include:

- defining and implementing a linguistic policy in favour of Basque
- raising funds and influencing the use of monies already made available for projects favourable to Basque
- co-operation with the ministry of education to co-ordinate the teaching of Basque and the recruitment of teachers
- promoting the use of Basque in the workplace, support of media companies willing to use Basque, translation services
- establish formal relations with BAC, Navarre and with appropriate bodies in other regions of France, where regional languages are spoken

The success of their activities is constrained by a limited budget and the theoretical powers of veto of both the regional council and central government.

While France has had to wait until the last few years for such ideas to be given formal expression, Spain appears in contrast as a model of regional tolerance having granted a degree of autonomy to Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia and created regimes of support that French regionalists can only look upon with envy. Catalonia indeed is the first model which comes to mind when one thinks of a Europe of regions within a federal structure. An international euroregion would both afford the benefits of belonging to a large political entity (health, defence etc) and subvert separatist demands by granting a greater degree of local self-determination and giving concrete manifestation to a common *natio* (without the need for a state) based on ethnic, linguistic and cultural commonalities.

In the BAC, Basques are taking on board the need to create and preserve socio-functional space for their language, by openly advocating English-Spanish-Basque trilingualism from

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<sup>13</sup> For the *département*, this means Basque and the Gascon and Béarn varieties of Oc.

an early age (Cenoz, 2000; Lasagabaster, 2000) to help preserve the active use of Basque within the context of a nation state and a globalised network of exchange. Such proposals would be anathema to too many people in positions of influence in France to be put forward without provoking, as did several other far less controversial propositions, a centralist republican backlash. While France has been a prime mover in advocating an EU-wide policy of plurilingualism (e.g. Legendre, 1998), it has gone as far as to change its constitution to protect the international role of French, primarily as the principal *lingua franca* within the EU (cf. Wright, 2000) and on the home front to reinforce legislation which gave the country the dubious distinction of being the only state to introduce fines for organisations contravening linguistic laws (Thody, 1995). As Oakes (2001) has argued, the policy of plurilingualism has had unforeseen consequences with member states speaking lesser used national languages pushing for enhancement of their newly found recognition, while France itself is by no means above the suspicion that learned trilingualism will produce more L2 speakers of French as the second most studied foreign language (Ball, 1997; Eurobaromètre, 2000). What is more, the policy is largely honoured in the breach even within the EU (Wright, 2000) but with French maintaining a greater international role than in multinational companies (Hagège, 1996). Nor does such trilingualism benefit local or regional languages as much as it might. Whilst recommending the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools, the Legendre report (and this point has been widely disseminated) advocates the avoidance of English, which will (have to) be acquired anyway later in life. Not only are relatively few parents heeding these recommendations, such a policy introduces competition into the crucial space of socio-functional acquisition enjoyed for centuries exclusively by Basque, which is now rivalled not only by English but other European languages not to mention immigrant tongues.

The very positive developments in the BAC contrast with the more reluctant and budget-constrained support for Euskara in the traditional bascophone region of Navarre.

### **4.3 A common language**

Euskaltzandia (Basque Language Academy) was set up in November 1918 with three major aims:

- to fix a common orthography

- to develop a common literary language
- to rid Basque of foreign words

While the attitude of the Euskaltzandia towards loan words had become more tolerant by the 1960s, the other aims were reinforced and amplified at the Congress of Aranzazu held in 1968 to mark the 50th anniversary of the first deputation. The common literary language came to be known as *euskara batua* or unified Basque, which was created to replace the four traditionally used literary dialects of Labourdin and Souletan (France) and Guipuzkoan and Biscayen (Spain) (Coyos, 2005: 208). Based on the geographically central dialects, *euskara batua* has gained wide acceptance, although it has alienated some speakers of local varieties particularly in Bizkaia, since there is no intercomprehension between speakers of the geographically more peripheral varieties without formal instruction in the standard variety. North of the Pyrenees, as Coyos (1999) suggests, this normalisation has led to a kind of diglossia within Basque since the lexis of *euskara batua* does not appear to be widely known nor is it taught at primary level even in *Ikastolak*. Since the creation of the BAC (Basque Autonomous Community) in 1978, linguistic work has made considerable advances mainly through funding from within Spain for work on codification – dictionary, grammar and modern terminology – as well as on onomastics and a dialect atlas. A spoken standard of *euskara batua* is used on the BAC television channel, *Euskal Telebista I* whose transmitters reach into France, although officially it was not until 1995 that the authorities gave recognition to the Academy as being of ‘utilité publique’ north of the Pyrenees.

The Euskal Kultur Erakundea (Basque Cultural Institute) was set up in 1990, although an analogous institution known as the Basque Country Cultural Centre had been created in 1984. Founded in the wake of the early impetus given by the regionalist promises made by François Mitterrand in the 1981 presidential-election campaign, it was disbanded in 1988 after repeated rifts and in-fighting (Héguy, 1996). Today, the aims of the Euskal Kultur Erakundea are to organise and facilitate the organisation of events and exchanges which promote Basque language and culture:

- promotion of the Basque language
- publishing and literature
- theatre and traditional improvised singing

- audiovisual production
- dance, singing, music
- visual arts
- environmental heritage
- Basque sports
- to promote cultural activities in
  - ◇ artistic creation
  - ◇ distribution of artistic output
  - ◇ organisation of cultural events
  - ◇ training of cultural administrators
- to manage cultural facilities and provide technical assistance to local authorities

It is to be applauded that the Institute not only lends support to serious cultural events as opposed to novelty regionalism to attract tourists but also publishes a children's magazine *Xirrixta*.

## 5. Conclusions

The evaluation of the position of Basque in France clearly depends on one's perspective. In comparison to the other regional languages of France, one can point to a number of indicators of relative strength. It has been included in every project so far put forward involving the implementation of measures to promote and maintain these languages. Public debate about the signature and ratification of the European Charter should not, however, lure anyone into thinking that this would be a panacea. The application of the articles signed would promote the maintenance of Euskara and other beneficiary languages rather more than at present but not necessarily to a significantly greater degree. While some encouragement may be derived from the relatively high proportion of pupils in bilingual streams and *Ikastolak* compared to those proposing only language awareness, the number of students concerned is still barely 10% of the school population in the respective age groups. When Basque speakers are considerably fewer than half of the population of the so-called Basque provinces, the net result would be at best to slow down the process of attrition. According to Fishman (1991) the key issue is that of the family-based transmission of informal oralcy and the partial restoration of written functions, while giving an indication of vitality that appears to rank higher on the GIDS scale, it cannot pretend to do so for the whole of the community. Although French-government policy includes maintenance of

regional languages as one of the specific aims of the educational measures introduced, keeping up current levels of proficiency in Basque would necessitate measures designed to bolster and maintain the socio-functional space of Basque outside and beyond the classroom.

While the traditional Basque-speaking areas within the French state have remained unchanged for several hundred years, other elements of Basqueness usually lumped under the heading of culture are firmly confined to what one might describe as a form of cultural diglossia, despite the best efforts of the Euskal Kultur Erakundea. Culture, however, may be subverted in various ways: either as the acceptable face of ethnicity construed as the basis for more overt political aims or trivialised as folklore to catch the attention of tourists. As tourism is a crucial factor in the economic viability of the region, it is important that a cultural policy that enhances Basque identity be maintained.

In relation to many other European minorities, the Basques in France are in a relatively weak position, not least in comparison to their counterparts in Spain. While recent French governments no longer pursue a policy of eradication of the regional languages, their policy line represents a softening rather than a reversal of the traditional position, regarding which one could say that the objectives set out by Grégoire of eradicating regional languages from public life while preserving them as objects of historical and cultural erudition, are drawing ever nearer to complete realisation. Even though the authorities can point to much teaching activity, neither they nor many Basque speakers – with the notable exception of the *Ikastolak* – are promoting measures favouring the self-managed planning<sup>14</sup> of socio-functional space at a local level as is the case in the BAC.

In the 1990s there was much talk of a Europe of regions for which Catalonia constituted the role model. No doubt, a cross-frontier Basque euroregion had its attractions, but it has been doubly superseded by events. Firstly, cross-frontier regions were set up on the basis of common economic interest with cultural diversity perceived as a virtue (cf. Pooley, 2004). Secondly, the European Union has become a union of nation states, each with its own languages and culture(s). In the context of the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, already dominant nation-state languages are likely to take on more of the regional-identity role

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<sup>14</sup> i.e. aménagement linguistique.

traditionally assigned to autochthonous non-nation-state languages, as the expanded EU increasingly adopts English as its *lingua franca*.

In contrast to the BAC which has implemented policies devised to create social space for Basque in a region where a generation ago, family-based transmission was proportionately less frequent than in the Basque Country, French policy towards the regional languages is predicated on the assumptions that the sociolinguistic space is irretrievably lost (and not likely to be conceded) and that the teaching of the languages is accorded some kind of point through cultural productions that use them as a medium of expression (songs, literature, drama and audiovisual media) performed and watched largely in a rarefied atmosphere set apart from the mainstream. To quote the DGLFLF report of 2006:

Le ministère de la culture se donne pour rôle premier d'encourager la création artistique en langues de France, quel que soit le moyen d'expression : littérature, chanson, théâtre, audiovisuel ... Pour des langues dont la transmission n'est quasiment plus assurée sur le mode traditionnel (par la famille et le milieu) et dont la fonction de communication passe au second plan, les œuvres de culture représentent en effet la valeur primordiale et, avec l'école, la meilleure garantie d'avenir.

As already observed, this is the benign face of policies set in train by Abbé Grégoire. They resemble far more the morphine of pain management than the oxygen of revitalisation being administered south of the Pyrenees.

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