

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TOWARDS REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN FRANCE AND THE UK¹

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Introduction

Most of these differences of approach are due to historical and political factors, but not all: the problem of whether or not to codify and standardise the RLs, and how to proceed is an internal matter for each language. I shall start with the historical and political factors and end up with some of the problems appertaining to codification.

1. *The first thing which comes across in terms of the differences of approach between the two countries is the **apparent indifference** of British governments towards the RLs compared to the **near hysteria** they tend to provoke in France. **Why this difference?***

(i) I think this is partly due to the **disappearance of the English dialects**. If we look at a map of the UK, there appear to be no RLs in England. Whereas in France the **langues d'oïl**, long thought of as dialects of French, have fought hard for their recognition as languages in their own right, particularly in the build-up to the signing of the ECRML, none of the English dialects did. **Why this difference between England and France?**



¹ A couple of footnotes are added as a result of further discussion after the paper was given.

One possible reason was the much earlier **break up of rural England** which dates back to the **Enclosures policy**, which started mainly in the 14th century and continued at varying rates until into the 19th. The early creation of the Public schools, which were originally just that, were also a factor in the acquisition of a socially 'acceptable' form of English, rather than the local dialect. **Industrialisation** further disrupted the countryside by siphoning off its population.

In France, on the other hand there were no 'enclosures', no 'public schools' and **industrialisation came later**. The **end of 'peasant France'** only came in the **1950s**. Indeed a recently published book based on the 14th century archives of **Sisteron**, which was a small bishopric in Provence before the Revolution, shows that to this day half of the family names remain the same. In a village the percentage would be even higher.

To this stability of the rural population, must be added the fact that **Frenchification** did **not** take place so much **by pushing back the boundaries of the old languages**, as by percolating from the **elites** downwards. This means the **RLs continued for a much longer period to be spoken in daily life by a largely bilingual population**. Occitan, for example, only started to recede in urban contexts at the beginning of the 20th century and in rural contexts after World War II.

Since the rural population in **England** did **not enjoy the same degree of stability**, English dialects **ceased to be used by the population as a whole at a much earlier period**. And this seems to have been readily accepted by the population. For example if you look up **Kentish dialect** on the web under tourist information for **Kent**, you will get a lengthy entry stating that it was **one of the dialects from which standard English developed** but that **as a language it was no more**. This is followed by an excellent 45-page glossary of common Kentish words. And that's about it! This is a **far cry** from the discourse of the French **langues d'oïl** activists. It is this absence of activists in England which partly explains the present-day **indifference of both English authorities and by extension British governments towards RLs**.

(ii) **The other reason for this indifference** is that British governments have always adopted a **pragmatic approach** towards RLs. They fought them when they seemed to present a danger, but nowadays they don't appear to care **as long as they don't intrude** (but more about this later). This means that **British governmental bodies** see no problem in **publishing documentation in whatever language** is required be they immigrant languages or RLs. To give an example, the Police are allowed to give cautions in Wales in Welsh as from 1st February 2008.

This would be **unthinkable in France**. This is because in centralised France, the French language is hailed as the **corner stone of the French nation-state**. This attitude goes back to the French Revolution when the centralists, called **Jacobins**, won against the federalists. As a result the State is against all RLs **on principle**, in the name of **equality**. As a result, whereas Britain was able to sign and **ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** without there being so much as a murmur in the press, **signing the Charter in France** unleashed such an **outcry** that the Charter has still not been ratified.

But there is now, across Europe, a move towards **decentralisation**, and, since the **Constitution** guarantees **freedom of speech**, there is now a conflict between the two

revolutionary ideals of **equality and freedom**, with equality still ruling the day, to the disadvantage of the RLs. But the idea fact that freedom of speech could, in the future, win one day, sends governmental representatives into a **real spin**, as they see this as leading to the **balkanisation** of France. Hence the hysteria.

2. Let's now examine the languages concerned. We shall see that their labelling throws up some interesting problems.

(i) I would like to start with some terminological clarifications because of the problems involved with the use of the word **dialect**. This is because **dialect** implies **subordination** to a higher entity called a **language**. *Estuary English, for example, in relation to English, which is fine in this context.* But when the label is applied to what is felt to be a **language in its own right** the term is seen as **derogatory**, as when *Scots is described as a dialect of English.* It is to avoid this problem that the French have coined in recent years the term '**collateral language**' to describe **two languages which have developed differently from a common origin**. The term was coined originally to describe the *langues d'oïl*, traditionally described by their detractors as mere 'dialects of French'. Using this terminology, *Scots* may be described as a **collateral language** of English, and vice-versa.

A **language** -be it collateral with another or not- may be made up of a group of dialects, which may, or may not, be dominated by a higher, **supra-dialect**. *Corsican for example is made up of different but equal dialects.* In this case there is no supra-dialect and the use of the term **dialect** is fine but it is now in competition with the term '**different varieties of a language**'. It must be noted that the term '**dialect**' highlights **differences**, whereas '**variety**' insists on **sameness**. The use of such terms is never neutral.



(ii) Having clarified my terminology, I shall start with the French RLs, since there is considerable **disagreement** about their **assignments and** consequent **labelling**. This is because everything depends on whether closely related **dialects** are considered to form one language or separate entities. A few present **no major problems**, such as **Basque, Catalan, Breton, Western Flemish, Corsican and Franco-Provençal**. But the other three RLs are described by more than one label, the **prize for complexity** probably going to the languages spoken in Alsace and Moselle. Thus in Alsace, **Alemanic** is spoken in the southern part, and **Franconian** is spoken both in the northern part and in Moselle. Most linguists would agree on that. But **Alsatian** is sometimes used to refer just to Alemanic and sometimes to refer to all the Germanic varieties spoken in the Alsace and Moselle areas. Franconian is also often replaced by **Mosellan, Francique or le Platt**. So far the multitude of labels is just confusing.

There is a more profound problem, however, which is the establishment of their **link with German**. Are they **languages in their own right** or are they simply **variants of German**? This too is reflected in their terminology. Thus the Ministry of Culture and Communication used, in 1999, the term '*dialectes allemands d'Alsace et de Moselle*'. But since **allemand** could cause offence it was later replaced by *dialectes germaniques d'Alsace et de Moselle*. But *dialectes allemands d'Alsace et de Moselle* with (*alsacien et francique mosellan*) in brackets has reappeared in 2008 documents. Whichever label is chosen, the link with German is plain.

In educational reports, they appear as **langues régionales d'Alsace & des pays mosellans**. But what is taught is in fact **German** plus a bit about the area and the dialects. This means that the most taught '**RL**' in France is **German**. The mind boggles! But the reasons for this is that many of the dialect speakers- and they always use the term **dialect**- state that **German is the official written form of their dialect**- which remains a purely oral means of communication within the home. In this case, **diglossia** is warmly embraced, which, as we shall see, is not helping their survival.

The '**langues d'oïl**' are also problematic. The term appears in the **plural**, in the **singular**, and replaced by the neutral **domaine d'oïl**. There is a problem because their defenders say they are languages which are **collateral with French**, whereas their detractors say they are no more than **dialects of French**, whereas their defenders say they are **collateral languages** of French. What is certain is that these languages, being close to French, rapidly fell into **decline** after the proclamation of the **edict of Villers-Cotterets** in 1539 which made French the **compulsory language of law and administration**. They were soon derided and denied a separate existence until quite recently, when it was discovered they had **far more speakers** than expected. One of these languages, **Picard**, has a strong **literary past**, which **always helps in defining a language**, but problems occur when linguists try to list the others. Are they to be listed as separate **langues d'oïl**? Or are they merely **dialects of the langue d'oïl**- used in the singular? The term *domaine d'oïl* avoids the problem but does not constitute a solution. **Much work needs to be carried out in this field.**

Occitan illustrates a different phenomenon. Once an international language with a **rich literary tradition**, it fell into decline after **in 1539**, since the edict of Villers-Cotterets led it to occupying a **secondary position**. As a result it became broken up into **dialects**, and then *patois*, which continued to be spoken in rural contexts until the 1950s. Matters have now changed and these more or less mutually intelligible varieties of language

have come once again under **one label, Occitan, or langue d’Oc**, although some – only some – vociferous speakers of **Provençal**, prefer to claim a **separate linguistic status** for their variety, on the grounds of what they call *droit de chef-d’oeuvre*, i.e. literary superiority because one of their writers, Mistral, was awarded a Nobel prize for his work in Provençal in 1904. This tendency to **stand apart** is echoed in new **decentralised France**, by the fact that the **regional assembly** for the Provence area, the **Conseil régional PACA**, is **unwilling to join** the regional assemblies of the other areas where Occitan is spoken in their efforts to revive the language, thus unnecessarily **weakening** the overall position of Occitan.

If we go back to the map of the UK, there seem far fewer problems, though some remain. One seems to be **defining Scots** in such a way that it could be included in the **national census**. There is also the problem of **Ulster Scots**, defined officially as a **variety of Scots**, but which some wish to see as a **separate language**. As far as **Gaelic** is concerned, well you can tell me! But I was told in 2002 by an academic at the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye, that they were in the habit of receiving students of Irish from Northern Ireland who came to practice their Irish in Scotland! I was most surprised but I have since been told, by equally competent people, that this cannot be the case.² So what is the link between Irish and Gaelic? I would have thought the term **collateral languages** could be useful in this context.

3. I would now like to turn my attention to another related problem, which is that of data collection, since France and the UK are so different in this respect.

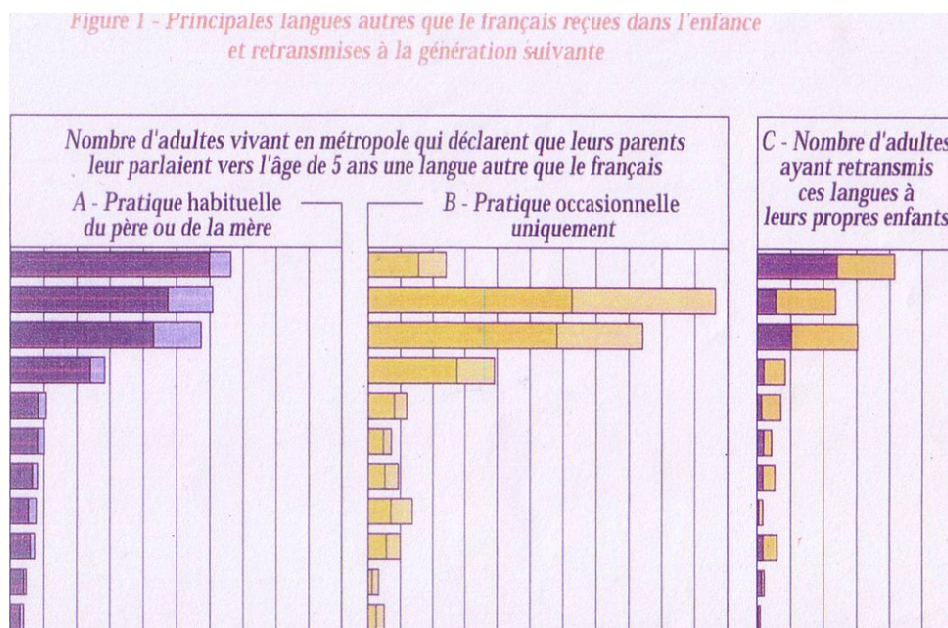
(i) The aim today is to find out **how many people, of what age, gender, socio-economic group** etc still speak a language, in order to determine means to ensure its survival. Our techniques in the **UK** are now quite sophisticated, with distinctions being made between **written and spoken** language, and between **comprehension and expression**. This is particularly important in the context of the **British census forms**, which started asking linguistic questions extremely early. The first time a linguistic question was asked in a census was in **Ireland in 1851**, albeit in a footnote. The reason was the creation of the National Schools, which were to function only in English, and the consequent need to know how many children would be attending with no knowledge of English. Then came the **1881** census which contained a question about **Gaelic** and the **1891** census which contained a question about **Welsh**. An advantage of the British surveys is that they often correspond to administrative constituencies which means that it is possible to draw maps indicating percentages of speakers of a particular language in a particular area. It is then possible to see at glance where languages have **receded** or **improved their position**.

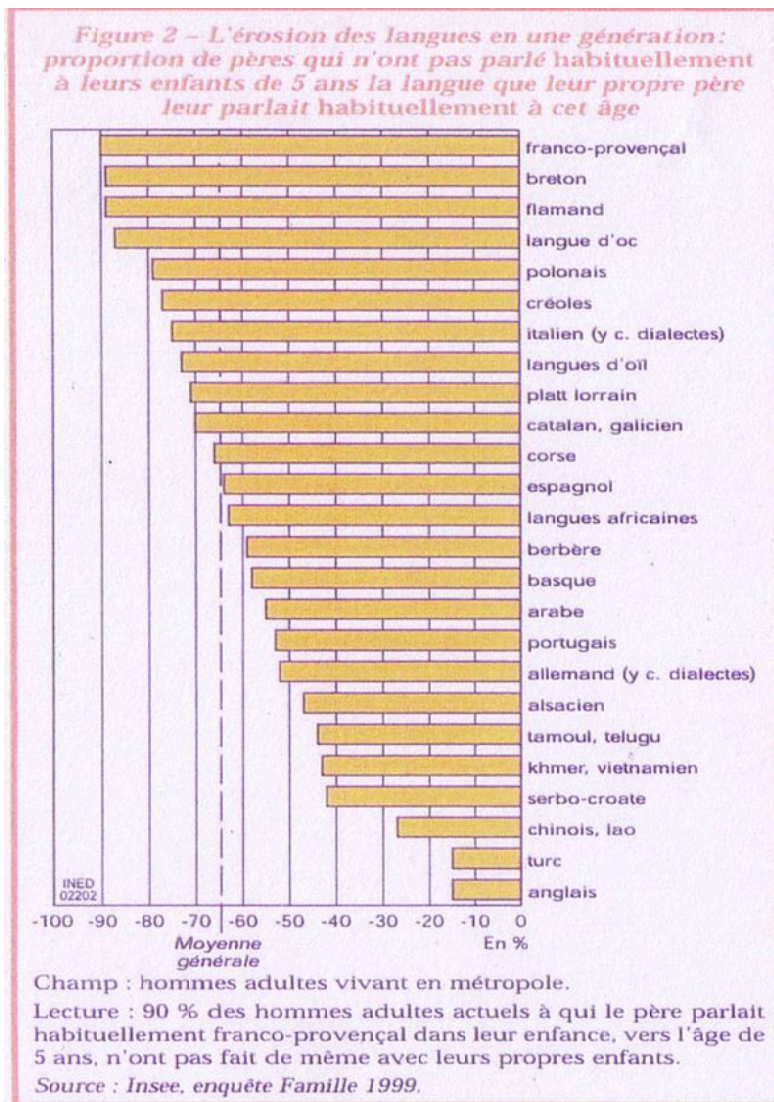
Despite this progress, it is still very difficult to assess the number of speakers of a RL mainly because of the **self-evaluative nature of censuses and surveys**, with all this implies. Disparities may also occur **depending on how the questions are worded**, e.g. asking somebody whether they ‘can’ or whether they ‘do’ speak a language may lead to quite different responses. Finally, slightly different wording in the various censuses make **comparability** sometimes problematic.

² It has now been explained to me that the said college (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig) lays on courses in Gaelic specifically for Irish speakers.

(ii) Despite the problems presented by UK censuses, they remain a subject of great **envy** for French linguists, since no linguistic questions may be included in the national census. Interestingly one of the reasons given in Britain for the inclusion of questions on matters such as language, race and religion is to ensure **fairness of treatment between the various communities** which make up Britain's multicultural society. In **France** such questions are **illegal** since the **Constitution** forbids recognition of any sub-groups, be they in terms of origin, race or religion. Moreover, the **French language** itself is untouchable **since it is one of the unifying pillars of the nation**. Not surprisingly, given the absence of any hard evidence on a national scale, **wildly different figures** have been advanced, in the past, for the number of speakers of the RLs, Occitan varying from ½ a million to 6-7 million!

But then, in 1999, a **loophole** was found which enabled a **large scale survey** to take place. What happened was that an **Family Survey** was conceived by the *National institute for demographic studies* and carried out by the *National institute for statistics and economic studies*. It consisted of a questionnaire distributed to 380 000 people, with various questions, including 2 on language. But instead of asking whether a person spoke a particular language, it **concentrated on language transmission**. The first question asked was whether the respondent, when he/she was about 5 years old, was spoken to in a language/dialect or patois other than French by his/her parents. And if the answer was Yes the next question was whether the respondents **had transmitted this language to their own children**. The results were as follows:





As you can see, **Table 1** is encouraging in terms of people having experienced a RL since 26% of the interviewees remembered hearing a language other than French in the home. But **Table 2** is catastrophic since it shows hardly any transmitted these language to their children. Not in particular the case of Alsatian. With foreign languages such as German and English doing so much better.

From a data collection point of view, wonderful as it is to have these figures, they are plagued with the **same problems as those encountered in the UK since the survey is self-evaluative**. Moreover although this is a large survey by survey standards, it is very **small** compared with a national census. Consequently, the French have to **rely** more on **figures** such as those of **attendance in RL classes**. But since not all are taught (Picard for example) the results are bound to be very patchy.

Despite problems of labelling and shortage of data, it is noticeable nowadays that where there is a **general consensus in terms of local identity**, and the French **regional assemblies tend to have embraced their cause**. But they are hampered by a shortage of cash: the **central government has delegated its linguistic problems** - among others- to

*the regional assemblies, but **not the funds**, which is a cheap way out for what remains a **Jacobin state**.*

4 I shall now outline the actual impact of Jacobinism on the RLs.

(i) I would like to start by pointing out that although it was the **1539 edict of Villers-Cotterets** imposing French in all administrative and legal contexts, which marked the beginning of a **rapid decline** for the RLs, it was not until the Revolution that they were persecuted in the name of **equality** and **national unity**.

When the **Abbé Grégoire** in 1792 carried out the first (**and last**) linguistic survey of France, the aim was to determine how many people spoke French, and would be able to understand the laws of the new regime. The answer was very few. As a result, the Revolutionaries set about **eradicating the RLs** in favour of French - some even wanting to make knowledge of French a condition for getting married! The RLs became forbidden in all public life, and it was not until the **1951 Deixonne Law** that they were allowed into the classroom, albeit in most cases only as an **adjunct to the teaching of French**.

(ii) It was around the same period that it was becoming plain that the RLs were on verge of extinction, and a movement in their favour started to develop. Education seemed the only solution, and a loophole was found in the **1901 Law on Associations** which **indirectly allowed the creation of private immersion and bilingual schools**. The first was a Basque speaking kindergarten in **1969**. The movement gained so much strength the RLs started to be taught in the State system, and Andrew Lincoln, representing the Breton *Diwan* immersion schools, went so far as to ask for the **integration of the Diwan immersion schools into the state system**. The socialist Minister for Education, Jack Lang, signed such an agreement in **May 2001**. But some Breton militants feared this could lead to loss of freedom and **appealed to the Conseil d'Etat**, which, being suitably Jacobin in spirit, declared the agreement **illegal**.

(iii) Now in contrast with disagreement as to the wisdom of integrating RL private schools into the state system, there was general agreement on the need to obtain **legal status for the RLs**. But the incorporation into the Constitution in **1992 of Article 2**, which states that *French is the official language of the nation*, meant this would require either **interpreting the article non-exclusively** or **changing the Constitution**. It should be noted, however that the inclusion of Article 2 was originally meant purely for the protection of French from **encroachments from English**. It was not meant to be anti-RLs, but that is what it has turned out to be.

The first linguistic law aimed at protecting French citizens from being faced, as consumers and employees, with texts written solely in English **predates Article 2** of the constitution, since it was a law called the **Bas-Lauriol Law** which was passed in 1975. Many **non-linguistic laws** were also passed which **included a linguistic dimension** such as the 1979 law on the **code of ethics for doctors** which required all medical certificates, prescriptions etc to be in French although a translation into the language of the patient was authorised. The **1994 Toubon law** is the latest law aimed at imposing the use of French in France, but this time the law contains an article stating it was **not meant to be prejudicial to RLs**, which shows the progress they had made in terms of public opinion.

(iv) It was around the same time, the RLs were **gaining ground, within the European Community**. The **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** was drawn up in **1992**, and Mitterrand and other politicians – particularly but not exclusively Socialists – made numerous and largely un-kept promises to help the RLs, including signing the Charter. There was, it is true, a major constitutional problem since the **Constitution** states that **France is one and indivisible**, which prevents recognition of territorially based sub-groups in France. To avoid this problem, the RLs were presented as **non-territorial languages** belonging to the nation as a whole. A treasure for all to enjoy! This ploy seemed to work and the Charter was duly signed on **7 May 1999**.

So far, so good, but after the Charter had been signed the government detailed a linguist, Bernard Cerquiglini, to draw up a report of the linguistic state of France, in order to decide which languages would be listed under Parts II & III.. Unfortunately the **Cerquiglini Report** took into consideration not only the metropolitan RLs but also those in *Départments et Territoires d’Outre-Mer*, and there are 28 for New Caledonia alone! Were also included all those **MLs** (Minority Languages) spoken in France but not official elsewhere, such as Dialectal Arabic and Berber. The end result was that the number of languages to be protected by the Charter would have been **75!** To be fair to the Report, it was not intended that all of the languages should come under Part III protection, but the figure of **75 was paraded** in the press and the whole business of the signing of the Charter was turned into **ridicule**. The **outcry** this engendered led to the *Constitutional Council* being consulted, and – oh surprise!- it declared the Charter **incompatible** with the Constitution, and in particular with **Article 2**, which states that French is the language of the nation..

The end result is that the RLs are now in legal *impasse*. This may be illustrated by an article I have just read in *Setmana*, a weekly Occitan paper, according to which a suggestion made in the Senate to **legalise the use of Polynesian languages** in the **Polynesian Regional Assembly**, with simultaneous translation into French, was turned down on the grounds that this was already the case in practice and that to try to legalise it would attract the unwanted attention of the *Conseil d’Etat*, the rottweiler of the RLs scene. In other words let sleeping dogs lie!

Nowadays the RLs and the MLs are classified as *langues de France* and have been declared ‘national treasures’. They are also officially recognised since the *Délégation générale à la langue française* became in 2001 the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France*. On the other hand, French has been repeatedly described as ‘*the cement of the nation*’, which is an altogether stronger claim. The 2007 report to the Parliament on the state of the French language states in its very first sentence that *the French language is at the heart of our identity*. But none of this stops the **Charter** becoming gradually **implemented**, particularly in terms of education. But every little victory has to be fought for tooth and nail, and financial disappointments are numerous, particularly in terms of the number of teaching posts created for the RLs in the state system.

(v) Despite no such dramas in British political life, and the fact that on the surface matters may seem very different, I am not sure that they are that different fundamentally. After all, the 2005 **British Citizenship test** demands knowledge of the **English language** and British institutions, with the possibility, it is true, of proving

knowledge of British institutions in **Welsh** or **Gaelic**, but I wonder to what extent the inclusion of these two RLs is more than **lip service** to a cause? And what about the **other RLs**? Moreover, at a time when Gordon Brown is seeking to define Britishness, he is hardly likely to welcome a strong revival of the RLs. British governments have, after all, gone to equal pains to suppress the RLs, even if not using the same high principled rhetoric as the French. Let us not kid ourselves: indifference can constitute a powerful form of rejection. The Cornish militants know all about that!

And it has been recently suggested by a minister that translating all documents into the languages of immigrants may slow down their acquisition of English, or impede it altogether.

*5. I shall now turn to a problem which does not entail differences of approach between Britain and France, but between the LR_s themselves. It is the matter of codification of the RL_s: is this desirable and, if the answer is Yes, what form should it take?*³

(i) Progress for the RLs in terms of **education** and the production of **official documents**, normally demands some degree of codification and standardisation. In some cases, such as **Welsh** and **Gaelic**, which have strong **literary traditions**, codification does not present a problem, a consensus having been reached pragmatically, very early on. All that is needed from time to time is modernisation to reflect language change.

Things were not so easy for **Irish**, although it too used to have a written standard form. But when the language fell into decline, its dialectal divergences increased making codification after independence very difficult. There were no less than **three areas of disagreement**: one about the **font**, Irish or Roman, one about the creation of a **standard supra-dialectal official norm** to be created from the three surviving dialects, and one about **spelling**, felt to have become be archaic. It took from the 1920s to the 1960s to come to an uneasy agreement.

Cornish represented an **even greater challenge**, since although it just about survived into the 20th century in its written form, its spoken form had to be recreated. There are, in such cases, two approaches possible: *the modern approach* which tries to pick up where the last speakers left off, or *a revivalist approach* which tends to go back to a better known, safer **literary tradition** and build up from there. Both approaches were adopted, giving two systems, which were further 'improved', giving birth to new systems. But I am told that '**Modern Cornish**' is now very close to **Unified Cornish Revised**. So it seems that success is close at hand.

Scots too has a **literary** past, which means **some degree of codification** was achieved and has been maintained ever since. But the rise of English precluded Scots from

³ This section is mainly meant to introduce different approaches to codification in France, since the various approaches in the UK are presumably well-known, particularly the pros and cons of the different spelling conventions chosen for the different Celtic languages. Another fascinating area of debate not even mentioned here concerns how to fill lexical gaps and, particularly where languages are being 'brought back from the dead', adapt them to modern life. Again different approaches have been adopted between the RLs, and even within them when rival but equally justifiable proposals have been put forward. This is particularly clear in the case of Cornish.

achieving full standardisation, and subsequently went back to its **original dialectally fragmented state**. What we now have is a continuum from **thin Scots** to **dense Scots**, with Hugh McDiarmid's **supra-dialectal Lallans** aiming at being an **elevated all embracing form of Scots**. There is also now a **Civil Service Scots** which aims at being more down to earth. **This is all rather confusing so what is taught** – when it is taught! – is the local variety, with an introduction to others, on the grounds of *respect for the language children bring to school*. In other words, there is **some codification**, but at the spelling level only. It can however be argued that this is as it should be. This is an area of debate.

Problems are more complex for **Ulster Scots**, partly because it is still in the process of elaboration, and partly because there are conflicting approaches to spelling, some favouring the traditional Scots form of spelling, while others wish to set up a different form. This is definitely a work in progress!

(ii) In France (and Spain) the traditional approach to codification has been to set up an academy comprising representatives of the various dialects, their mission being to create a **supra-dialectal** variety, to be used in all official contexts and in education. This has been successful in the case of **Basque** and **Catalan** since their supra-dialectal forms are well accepted, but less so in the case of **Breton** which has four main dialects which were codified early on by the Church. The problem was how to end up with just one, particularly since one of the dialects, Vannetais, is quite different from the others. The result at present is messy: if one looks at the variants used in publications, 2/3 are in the so-called **unified system**, 1/4 in the **university system**, and the rest either in the **interdialectal system**, which combines the two others, or in **Vannetais**.

Another approach is to **limit codification** to a **supra-dialectal writing system**, which leaves the dialects relatively untouched i.e. the same writing will be read differently by different dialectal speakers. This is the case for **Occitan**, which uses a **supra-dialectal spelling system** based on **historical orthography**. Teaching materials allow for dialectal variation within a unified whole. Unfortunately for the progress of Occitan, this system is in competition with the **Mistralian orthography for Provençal**, which is **phonetic** and not transferable to other dialects of Occitan.

Another solution is the **polynomic and polygraphic system**, first developed for Corsican. In this case **dialectal fragmentation is fully retained**. It is in fact *turning the Scots problem into a solution*: the local variant of the RL is taught in the local schools, but with the teacher gradually adding at least passive knowledge of the nearest or more popular variants. Different spelling systems are also accepted, as long as they are internally coherent.

Finally, some militants in **Alsace** and the *domaine d'oil* go even **further**, stating that **small languages do not need codification**, and that the past tradition of **writing down the dialects more or less phonetically, using French spelling conventions**, was perfectly satisfactory since such spellings are easy to decipher and help preserve dialectal charm. But such **fragmentation** may prove unhelpful in terms of their survival.

To summarise the various solutions are: (i) **codification by an academy** but there may be quarrels between **partisans of different systems**, (ii) **codification limited to**

spelling, but there may be conflict between the principle of a phonetic system based on the conventions of the dominant language, which has the advantage of being **easy** to read, and (iii) a **literary based** system which **avoids fragmentation**⁴. Finally the **polynomic and polygraphic system** is non-conflictual, and may constitute a first step in terms of language revival –particularly if it hasn't got a **unified literary past**. But it may not be enough in the long run.

To conclude briefly:

The British and French governments seem to have adopted different approaches towards the RLs, with the **British government** appearing **indifferent** while the **French government** remains committed to a **Jacobin** approach.. Both countries face some **labelling problems**, but these are far **more severe in France** because of the French **constitutional limitations on data collection**, and also to **the official recognition of RLs**, which do not exist in Britain. On the other hand, **Britain's apparent indifference has had just as negative an effect**. For some it may be **genuine** but for others it may simply be a **ploy**.

In both countries the future of the RLs is now down to **decentralised or devolved governments**. This process being more advanced in Scotland, it will be interesting to see **how far the Scottish government goes**, both in relation to Gaelic and Scots. **Wales** has already proved its **full commitment**, as progress in the last census has shown. But what about the future of Scots, spoken by so many, and that of Cornish, working so hard for a revival? In France all is down the relatively new **regional assemblies** (the *Conseils régionaux*), but their commitments may vary from RL to RL. Finally, the problem of **how much and how far to go in terms of codification and standardisation** has brought some interesting new ideas to the fore, which may or may not constitute solutions to the problem, but should at least help advance the debate.

⁴ Or indeed a historically elaborated system which relies more on the phonetics of the language, such as Welsh, and a morpho-phonological one such as Gaelic or Irish.