

5

Bilinguals and bilingualism

Language socialization

Children acquire language and social skills together. Their sensitivity to the social uses of languages is already apparent in their early learning of different varieties. Even while they are still in the babbling stage, many children have a different way of addressing small objects (animals, toys, other babies) from the way they address adults. If they do this, they are showing that they have learned that babies are talked to using a different variety. This register that is used to speak to babies is called **baby talk**, and has been shown to occur in many languages. From an early age, children learn that there is more than one variety of language.

There are in fact a vast set of social rules about language that a child must acquire to be successfully socialized. One is the rule for conversational organization. Knowing when to speak and when to be silent, how to enter a conversation, when to speak quietly, and when clearly, are all part of the conversational rules that children have to learn. Equally confusing at first are the pragmatic rules, such as comprehending that a question may be a request. We may be frustrated when speaking to child on the phone. 'Yes!' he answers when we ask 'Is your mother there?', making no effort to fetch her. Children have to learn the social conventions for language use. Learning these social conventions is a key component of socialization.

One of the most revealing opportunities for studying language socialization is in the case of children growing up bilingually, for they manage not just to keep the two languages separate, but to learn quickly which language to use to which person. They also

realize which people can be addressed in a mixture of the two languages. In this way, bilingual children can be said to develop control over three distinct varieties of language. The study of bilingualism provides an excellent laboratory for learning how a child can learn to be a member of two (or more) distinct societies.

The description of bilingualism

While it is the case that even speakers of a single language (putative monolinguals) control various styles and levels of that language, it is very common that people develop some knowledge and ability in a second language and so become **bilingual**. The simplest definition of a bilingual is a person who has some functional ability in a second language. This may vary from a limited ability in one or more domains, to **very strong command of both languages** (which is sometimes called **balanced bilingualism**). The assumption that there must be a single definition leads to confusion, such as when one person is talking about the highly skilled multiple-domained balanced bilingualism of an expert translator and interpreter, and the other the uneven skills of a recent immigrant. Additional confusion is caused by the common use of the term bilingual to refer to a socially-disfavoured minority group: in Texas, for instance, it is restricted to Mexican-Americans.

Rather than worrying about definition, it is more useful to consider what is needed to describe the nature of an individual's **bilingualism**. Clearly, the first (and not necessarily easy) element is to **identify each of the languages**. We will often need to clarify which variety is involved: to distinguish between Cantonese and *Putonghoa*, or between Egyptian and Moroccan Arabic, or between High German and Swiss German.

A second important feature is the **way each language was acquired**. It is useful to distinguish between mother (or native) tongue learning, second (or informal) language learning, and foreign (or additional) language learning. Each of these suggest different possible kinds of proficiency. It is useful also to note the age of learning and the time spent using the language. We describe two bilinguals in this way: 'X is a native speaker of Cantonese and learned English in school.' 'Y grew up speaking Moroccan Arabic, but was educated in French and has lived in Paris since the age of 15.'

Another set of distinctions is that of **skill**—reading, writing, speaking, understanding speech. It is not uncommon for people to speak one language and read and write another. Many Navajos use their own language in conversation, but read in English. Until the literacy campaigns of recent times, Ethiopians who spoke Amharic were more likely to read Gi'iz than Amharic. The receptive skills of reading and understanding speech are often stronger in a learned language than are the productive skills of speaking and writing. Many people obtain reading knowledge of a language at school, but cannot speak it.

In describing the bilingualism of an individual, another set of differences is often evident in the performance of certain internal functions. Bilinguals usually prefer one language for functions such as counting, doing arithmetic, dreaming (some people dream in language, others don't), cursing, or praying silently.

Another useful way to describe bilinguals is by describing the external functions they can perform in each language. These might be expressed as 'can do' statements: X can read a daily newspaper, can carry on an informal conversation, can give a lecture. One special ability (not true in the case of all bilinguals) is the skill of translation from one language to the other. Another useful approach to describe a bilingual's language use is by domains rather than by functions.

A domain, as we have discussed above on page 34, is an empirically determined cluster consisting of a location, a set of role-relationships, and a set of topics. Just as this notion was useful for identifying the use of registers, so it is useful for considering bilingualism. For each of the domains, a bilingual is likely to have a preferred language. Here are some examples of domains:

Location	Role-relationships	Topics
Home	Mother, father, son, daughter, etc.	Domestic, personal, etc.
Neighbourhood	Neighbour, shop-keeper, street-cleaner	Weather, shopping, social greetings
School	Teacher, student, principal	Social greetings, educational
Church	Priest, parishioner, etc.	Sermons, prayers, confession, social

Bilinguals have a repertoire of domain-related rules of language choice. The home-school or the home-work switch is probably the most common, with one language learned at home from parents and the second learned at school and used at work. When there is a language shift in progress, certain traditional domains may remain favoured for the use of one language. For the Maori people, before the recent language revival activities began, the *marae* where traditional ceremonies and meetings took place remained the strongest bastion of Maori language use. The bilingualism we mentioned earlier in Swiss adults is domain-related, with High German used in the work domain and Swiss German in the home and neighbourhood. In his study of Puerto Ricans in New Jersey, Fishman noted strong Spanish maintenance in home, neighbourhood and church, and strong English usage at school and at work. It is normal for immigrants to continue to use their original language in the home and in religious domains, while using the new language in work, education, and public domains.

Because domains are composite concepts, there is the possibility of conflict and therefore marked choice between languages. Thus, two people who normally speak the standard language at work might use their home language there to signal either a change of role-relation (family member or friend rather than co-worker) or topic (a home or neighbourhood topic) while still being in the same location. We shall take this up again later when we talk about switching. At this point, the important notion is that a bilingual's use of his or her two languages is likely to vary considerably according to domain.

Bilingual competence

We have been describing so far the language use or **performance** of a bilingual. The description makes clear why it is that it is rare to find equal ability in both languages. Assume a bilingual immigrant who grew up speaking Language A, but was educated formally in Language B. Such a person might well have all the conversational skills in Language A, but be quite weak at dealing with academic matters in it. Misunderstanding of this possible difference in **competence** often leads to educational problems: teachers might assume, for instance, that a child who has reasonable conversational ability also has the full basis for academic work in the language.

The nature of bilingual competence is a topic of considerable interest and importance for the psycholinguist as well as the sociolinguist. How are the two languages organized in the bilingual brain? For a number of years, there was an attempt to distinguish between **compound bilinguals** whose two languages were assumed to be closely connected, because one language had been learned after (and so through) the other, and **co-ordinate bilinguals** who had learned each language in separate contexts, and so kept them distinct. Over-simplifying, co-ordinate bilinguals were assumed to have two meaning systems each with its own set of words, while compounds had a single system with two sets of words.

Co-ordinate

English concept 'table'	Navajo concept 'table'
English word 'table'	Navajo word <i>bikáá adaáni</i>

Compound

Mixed concept 'table'	
English word 'table'	Navajo word <i>bikáá adaáni</i>

The problem that a compound bilingual would face is that the two words in fact refer to a different set of concepts. Underlying this is the question of whether for the bilingual the knowledge of the two languages develops independently or together. The notion of domain difference suggests the different kinds of experi-

ences most bilinguals have in each of their languages, implying a common core of knowledge with subsequent differentiation. Recent neurolinguistic research suggests that paired words are stored in the same place in the brains of those who are bilingual from infancy, but in non-overlapping places in those who develop bilingualism later.

However explained neurophysiologically, the phenomenon of bilingualism is the prime example of **language contact**, for the two languages are in contact in the bilingual. This contact can lead to **interference**. A compound bilingual who has learned the meaning of words in another language by attaching them to the words of his or her first language demonstrates semantic interference. There can be interference in all aspects of a language, from the sound system (having an 'accent') to conversational rules (interrupting or saying 'please' in the wrong way).

The phenomenon of interference, especially when it involves using the two languages together, has led to the study of code switching.

Code switching and code mixing

Bilinguals often switch between their two languages in the middle of a conversation. These code-switches can take place between or even within sentences, involving phrases or words or even parts of words. The switching of words is the beginning of **borrowing**, which occurs when the new word becomes more or less integrated into the second language. One bilingual individual using a word from language A in language B is a case of switching, but when many people do, even speakers of B who don't know A are likely to pick it up. At this stage, especially if the pronunciation and morphology have been adapted, we can say the word has been borrowed.

There are various kinds of **code switching**. Immigrants often use many words from their new language in their old language, because many of the people they speak to know both languages. In situations like this, bilinguals often develop a **mixed code**. In such a case, we might want to distinguish between code switching of the two languages and the mixed variety. The history of English shows many such mixed codes, as first Danish and later Norman

words were added by bilinguals. The various contemporary Englishes, such as Jamaican English or New Zealand English, can be seen as mixed codes, with the addition of local lexicon as their most obvious feature.

For a bilingual, shifting for convenience (choosing the available word or phrase on the basis of easy availability) is commonly related to topic. Showing the effect of domain differences, a speaker's vocabulary will develop differentially for different topics in the two languages. Thus, speakers of a language who have received advanced education in a professional field in a second language will usually not have the terms in their native language. Scientists trained in an English-speaking country giving university lectures in their own language often mix in English words or even switch to English phrases and sentences.

More interesting effects are achievable by shifts concerned with role-relationships. It is important to note that each of a bilingual's languages is likely to be associated not just with topics and places, but also with identities and roles associated with them. In the midst of speaking about work matters in Language A, a sentence or two in Language B will be able to show that the two speakers are not just fellow-employees but also fellow members of an ethnic group. The use of tags and expressions from Language B while speaking Language A enables a speaker to make this kind of identity claim easily. This kind of shift, called **metaphorical switching**, is a powerful mechanism for signalling social attitudes or claiming group membership or solidarity.

The selection of a language by a bilingual, especially when speaking to another bilingual, carries a wealth of social meaning. Each language becomes a virtual guise for the bilingual speaker, who can change identity as easily as changing a hat, and can use language choice as a way of negotiating social relations with an interlocutor.

The bilingual individual thus provides a rich field for sociolinguistic study. A full understanding of bilingualism, however, depends on a deeper understanding of the nature of the speech communities in which they operate. In the next chapter we will look at societal multilingualism.

6

Societal multilingualism

Multilingualism

The discussion of speech communities and repertoires in Chapter 2 foreshadowed our detailed consideration of the interest that sociolinguists take in bilingual and multilingual societies. Bilingualism and multilingualism, whether in an individual speaker or in a social group, are the most obvious and salient cases of variation to observe. With stylistic or dialectal variation, identifying each variety is harder and open to dispute, but with distinctly recognized languages, there is generally agreement on the varieties and their names. We can study how two or more languages intertwine and separate without first being forced, as we are when we talk about stylistic variations within a single language, to establish the criteria for difference. It is both the salience and the commonness of multilingualism that has led to its being so well studied.

Monolingual speech communities are rare; monolingual countries are even rarer. Even a country as linguistically homogeneous as Japan has its linguistic minorities like the Ainu and the Koreans, marginalized as they might be. True, many countries have developed an explicit or implicit language policy as though they were monolingual, but it is rare (and becoming rarer) for linguistic and national borders not to overlap in various complex ways. Most countries have more than one language that is spoken by a significant portion of the population, and most languages have significant numbers of speakers in more than one country.

Historically, multilingual communities evolve in a number of ways. One is as a result of migration, the voluntary or involuntary

movements of people speaking one language into the territory of people speaking another. When the Hopi Indians permitted or encouraged a group of Tewa Indians to move from the Rio Grande area to the Arizonan mesas (each group has a different version of the story), they produced a bilingual village, Hano, among nine that were Hopi-speaking. Mutual distrust and a ban on intermarriage that lasted into the beginning of the twentieth century kept the villages socially distinct. Later, the bilingual villagers of Hano added Spanish and Navajo to their language repertoires, and after the introduction of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, joined the rest of the Hopi in shifting towards English use.

Involuntary migration or forced movement of population was common in the ancient Middle East, as is recorded in the Biblical account of the Babylonian exile, and has continued to be a significant force accounting for multilingual communities. In the nineteenth century, the British policy of bringing indentured Indian workers to the Fijian sugar plantations led to Fiji's current division between speakers of the indigenous Fijian dialects and Hindi-speaking descendants of the original plantation workers. The African slave trade moved large numbers of native speakers of different languages into the East and West Indies, and led to the formation of the pidgins and creoles (to be discussed in a later section). In the twentieth century, the Soviet policy of forced movement of populations assured that many of the newly independent post-Soviet countries are saddled with a challenging multilingual problem. In the Baltic states, it is the Russian immigrants, once the rulers, who are faced with the challenge to learn the now dominant Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian.

In the years after the Second World War, Northern European countries, too, enhanced their multilingualism by encouraging guest workers from the Mediterranean areas. There are significant Turkish minorities in many parts of Europe, and Greek, Spanish, Algerian, and Italian immigrants moved north in the same way. In a response to the social and linguistic problems produced, a new Norwegian multilingual policy is intended to cope with (and encourage the maintenance of) nearly a hundred languages.

Voluntary migration has produced major changes in the

linguistic make-up of many countries in the world. While some of its multilingualism was produced in other ways, the United States, as the world's foremost receiver of voluntary immigration, grew quickly into a multilingual society, constantly assimilating large numbers of the immigrants through a melting-pot policy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the United States absorbed large communities of speakers of German, Norwegian, Greek, Italian, Yiddish, Polish, Ukrainian, Japanese, various Chinese languages, and Spanish. The rate of absorption was slowed down after 1923, when strict immigration laws were passed. There was some relaxation of this policy in the post-war period, including an influx of South East Asian speakers of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and other languages, and a recent wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Most of these groups have acquired English, and many have given up on their traditional languages. Throughout this period, continued immigration, legal and illegal, especially of Spanish-speakers, and the rise of ethnic awareness have been threatening to upset this comfortable monolingual trend.

Migration from the countryside or from small towns to the large metropolitan cities that have grown everywhere in the twentieth century is another major cause of multilingual communities. In the Third World as much as in the developed countries, this movement to the cities is creating huge megalopolises, conurbations with populations in the millions, attracting complex patterns of multilingualism, and producing major problems for social, economic, and political development. As African cities expand at an ever-increasing rate, they too become highly multilingual.

Multilingualism has also historically been created by conquest and the subsequent incorporation of speakers of different languages into a single political unit. The incorporation of Brittany, Alsace, and Provence into France submerged the languages of these regions. The spread of English power over the British Isles produced multilingualism and led to the loss of some Celtic languages. The growth of the Russian empire under the Czars, continued under Soviet rule, made the Soviet Union a multilingual country. The conquest of Central and South America by the Spaniards and Portuguese eventually produced countries with

large indigenous minorities, some still speaking many Indian languages. The occupation of New Mexico and Texas and the incorporation of Puerto Rico by the growing United States included new Spanish-speaking populations within territorial limits.

Colonial policies also led to multilingual states. While the Moslem Empire largely replaced the indigenous languages with Arabic, pockets of multilingualism remained—the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, the Aramaic speakers in Syria, the Copts in Egypt, the Berbers in Algeria and Morocco, to mention a few—and the language mixes led to the great variations in the spoken Arabic dialects held together by the general acceptance of an overarching Classical Arabic. When Spain conquered Latin America, it created countries where Spanish dominated a mixture of marginalized indigenous varieties, including some, like Mayan, that had previously had their turn as the dominant language in a multilingual empire.

When the major European powers divided up Africa in the nineteenth century, they drew boundaries that left most post-independence states without a single majority language, and usually with languages that had many speakers outside as well as inside the new state borders. They thus opened the way, wittingly or not, for a tendency to adopt the colonial government's metropolitan language as a needed *lingua franca*. Newly independent states like India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Singapore also faced complex language policy decisions that were heavily weighted with effects of colonial policies.

Many of these former colonies might be considered cases of forced federation. More rarely, there has been voluntary federation. One classic case is Switzerland where speakers of French, German, Italian, and Romansch formed a multilingual state. Another is Belgium, where Walloon speakers of various French dialects, Flemish speakers of various Dutch dialects, and some speakers of German dialects added to the package, now form an uncomfortable but working French-Dutch bilingual state. Other federations, like the Serbo-Croatian union in Yugoslavia, or the Czech-Slovak union, brought into existence in the halcyon days of the post-First World War spirit of tolerant democracy and held in place in the post-Second World War period by Soviet power, have proved to be unstable after the collapse of the Soviet empire.

These diverse historical circumstances have produced many different kinds of multilingual mixes, sometimes stable and sometimes volatile and short-lived. The most common result of this **language contact** has been **language conflict**, producing pressure from one language on speakers of other languages to adopt it. This pressure, whether the conscious result of a planned policy or the effect of a multitude of unplanned factors, has produced challenges to social structure that many people have begun to worry about. The study of **language maintenance** and of **language shift** has thus become a central concern of sociolinguists interested in multilingual societies.

Language loyalty and reversing language shift

Many people nowadays have become troubled by the extinction of various species of animals and birds, and lists of endangered species are regularly publicized. Linguists have noticed that languages too are in danger of dying, and for some time have been studying **language loyalty**, the ability (or lack of it) of speakers of a language to stand up to the pressure of more powerful languages. They have expressed distress at the threatened fate of **endangered languages**, languages that are no longer being passed on to children as native languages, but are spoken by a contracting and aging group of adults.

One early major study looked at what happened to the immigrant and indigenous languages of the United States when faced by the inexorable power of English. Most American immigrant languages were slowly sapped of their strength as younger speakers shifted to English not just in the public domains, but also in their own community and homes. Some factors appeared to speed up the process or slow it down. The greatest resistance to language shift was found in groups that chose to isolate themselves both linguistically and culturally from the mainstream. Two clear cases were isolationist Mennonite Christian groups (especially Hutterian and Old Order Amish) and the ultra-orthodox Hassidic Jews, both of whom rejected not just the language but also the dress and social conduct of their new country. In these cases, the isolation was self-imposed.

A second group that maintained their languages were those

who were segregated and isolated by the outside society and whose access to the easy social mobility that other immigrants enjoyed was obstructed by social discrimination. The clearest cases here were the indigenous Native Americans and the various Spanish-speaking indigenous and immigrant groups. When they were denied access to jobs, housing, and education, they were at the same time cut off from easy access to the English that was assumed to be the way to assimilation.

Language shift has been studied in many parts of the world. There are groups that have worked actively to reverse the seemingly inevitable language shift that occurs when small weak languages, or the languages of marginalized groups, comes into contact with large powerful languages used and favoured by the majority or dominant group. There have been many attempts to correct this loss of linguistic diversity. A commonly cited case is the national effort to revive the use of Irish in Ireland, a nationalistically inspired and state-supported initiative to preserve Irish in the western areas (the *Gaeltacht*) where it was still spoken, and to teach it through the schools in the other areas where there were few speakers left. In the English-speaking areas, students continue to learn Irish at school, but to use it very little outside school or afterwards. Even in the *Gaeltacht* there has been a continued loss, largely because of the failure to combine social and economic planning with linguistic. At first, the continuing poverty of the area led Irish speakers to move away to the cities or emigrate, in both cases switching to English; later, economic development plans brought in English speakers looking for jobs.

More successful was the **revitalization** of Hebrew, a strong ideologically based process realized between 1890 and 1914, mainly in Ottoman Palestine, by returning Zionists who were looking to build a new nation using an old language. In agricultural settlements, in new towns like Tel Aviv, and in communal settlements, Hebrew was revitalized. It had the component of **vitality** or natural intergenerational transmission restored after some 1700 years during which it had only been learned as an additional language. Building on the widespread knowledge of the continually enriched written language, and driven by the force of their ideological commitments, the revivers were successful in establishing modern Hebrew as the language used for all purposes in Israel today.

Activities aimed at **reversing language shift** are sometimes private and small (as with the few hundred enthusiasts working to revive the Cornish language) but often public and political. The efforts to save French language, culture, and identity in Quebec threaten to divide the province from the rest of Canada. In Spain, the post-Franco policy of granting semi-autonomy to the regions has led to strong government-supported campaigns for Basque and Catalan. In the Baltic States, the collapse of the Soviet Union has permitted the restoration of the power of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian. We shall return to discuss this issue later when we talk of language planning and policy.

Language and ethnic identity

Why does multilingualism and language contact entail so much emotional reaction? The answer lies not in the practical communicative realm, but in the symbolic function of languages and varieties. One of the most common ways of identifying a person is by his or her language. Because language is inherently involved in socialization, the social group whose language you speak is an important identity group for you. There are other markers of ethnic identity, such as food or clothing or religion. But language has a special role, in part because it organizes thought and in part because it establishes social relations.

Multilingual societies inevitably face conflict over language choice. Some aspects of concern for language choice can be explained practically, politically, or economically. The speakers of a language are in a stronger position when their language is used for national or international communication, or for government, or for trade and commerce, or for education. But the role of language in establishing social identity adds an additional, non-material dimension to the conflict.

Ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features. There are some groups, like the Frisians in the north of the Netherlands, who are hard put to find other features that distinguish them from their neighbours. Commonly, the name of an ethnic group and of its language are the same. Most ethnic groups believe that their language is the best medium for preserving and expressing their traditions.

One of the paradoxical effects of this connection of language and ethnicity may be understood by looking at the case of post-Franco Spain. With the granting of some degree of autonomy to the provinces, Catalan and Basque have once again been recognized as official languages in their own autonomous regions. The result of this new territorial policy has been to create problems for people who are ethnically Basque or Catalan but live outside the regions, and for people who are Castilian speakers but live within them.

As we will note in the next section, conflict over choice of language often accompanies the development of a new nation.

Language and politics

Language is regularly used in the exercise of political power. A government can attempt to control its minority groups by banning their language, as Turkey bans the use of Kurdish by one its larger minorities. By requiring that voting material be made available in Spanish and other minority languages, the US Federal Voting Act tried to increase minority participation in government. By offering extra pay to federal Civil Servants who knew both English and French, the Canadian government attempted to weaken the demand for Quebec separatism. By requiring all its citizens to pass examinations in Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian, the newly independent Baltic states attempted to redress the balance of power for indigenous citizens over the large Russian minority populations that were dominant during the period of Soviet rule. The issue of language choice is most critical in the case of a newly independent state, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

There are more subtle uses of language in politics. The use of a regional or a social dialect by a political leader is often a claim to a specialized ethnic identity. South American politicians sometimes claim greater regional identity by using more Indian features in their Spanish. Labour-party politicians in England have sometimes used regional accents to mark a dissociation from middle-class speech and values. Anwar Sadat backed away from Pan-Arabism by using more Egyptian vernacular in his speech when the norm for Arab public speech is the Classical language.

Language rights

The issue of language or linguistic rights provides an opportunity to attempt to take an ethical rather than a scientific view of language contact and conflict. There are a number of possible approaches. One, favoured by some linguists, puts emphasis on the right of a language, like any other endangered species, to survive. Because every language incorporates some unique features derived from the rich and varied experience of human beings, **language loss** (i.e. the loss of all its speakers) is seen as serious as the loss of an animal or bird species. There are two possible ways of dealing with this. Most commonly, anthropological linguists have worked to preserve, in a grammar, dictionary, and collections of texts, as much of the language as possible while there is still one speaker alive. More recently, linguists have provided support to the speakers of the language in their efforts at reversing language shift.

The second approach is to focus not on the rights of the language as an abstraction but on the rights of the speakers of the language. Here, we may distinguish between the rights of the speakers of a language to use it, and their rights to maintain it by teaching it to their children.

The first of these issues concerns the rights of linguistic minorities or of individuals who do not speak the national or official languages of a political unit. To the extent that a state recognizes the right of its citizens and other inhabitants to access to work, health care, housing, education, justice, and democracy, so it must take care to deal with the potential lessening or blocking of these rights for those who do not speak, read, or write the official or national language or languages. There are several ways this right may be recognized. One is the provision of adequate instruction in the official or national language or languages to all who do not control it—not just children, but new immigrants and temporary foreign workers. A second is the provision of interpreting and translating services to those who have not yet had the opportunity to learn the national language. This first language right, therefore, is the right to learn the national language, and in the meantime, to be assisted in dealing with those situations where lack of control of it leads to serious handicaps.

A second right is not to be discriminated against, in access to work, education, justice, or health service, on the basis of being identified as a member of a group speaking another language or variety. This refers to the way in which linguistic minority members, however competent they may be in the standard language, are often classified as 'bilinguals' and afforded lower status. It also refers to the way in which speakers of an unfavoured dialect or accent or other variety of a language are automatically recognized as 'different' on linguistic grounds, and discriminated against. It should be noted that this right is part of the larger right not to be discriminated against on the basis of group membership, religion, gender, ethnic group, or other factors irrelevant to the matter being decided.

A third right concerns the right of a group of speakers of a language to preserve and maintain their own favoured language or variety, and to work to reverse any language shift to the status or prestige variety. Here, there are some more complex issues. One is the potential conflict between the rights of individuals and groups. A group may wish to preserve its language, but individual members may prefer to shift to the dominant language, which is generally a language more able to deal with modern life and economic success. Another is the issue of who should pay for the reverse shift efforts. Should it be the language community, and should it be provided outside the regular school system? Examples of this are the Greek and Chinese afternoon schools in the USA and some other countries, the Jewish Day School movement that has grown up in the USA, Canada, Australia, Latin America, and elsewhere, and the international schools that operate in many countries. Or should it be the state, in programmes to provide bilingual education to as many minority groups as possible? In this issue of linguistic minorities, it is generally accepted that indigenous minorities, like the Native Americans in the United States, have a higher claim to maintaining language, religion, and culture, than do immigrant groups who came by choice.

Considering language rights takes us into major issues of language policy, which will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

Pidgins and creoles

A second aspect of language contact is the development of distinct varieties of language. A **pidgin** language is one that evolves in circumstances where there are limited relations between the speakers of different languages, such as a market, or where there is a special situation of power relations, being typical of the kind of master-slave relation on a plantation. It is a variety of language that is marked by the fact that it is not a native language of anyone, but is learned only in contact by people who normally continue to speak their own language inside their own community. The complexity of a pidgin varies according to the communicative demands placed on it; as there are increasing functional demands, there is a growth in the power and complexity of the pidgin to meet them.

A pidgin is a social rather than an individual solution. There are cases where individual speakers acquire only a limited control of a language in which they need to do business. Such, for instance, was the limited knowledge of Navajo developed by white traders. Each speaker made his own mistakes and compromises. The term pidgin is better kept for social varieties with established norms.

A pidgin involves the mixture of two or more languages. Sometimes, the grammatical system is based more or less on one language and the vocabulary is largely taken from another. In all cases, the grammar is simplified, that is to say certain features of the base language are dropped. Many different pidgins have been identified and described, including, to name a few, Nigerian Pidgin English, Papuan Pidgin English, Vietnamese Pidgin, French, New Guinea Pidgin German, Kenya Pidgin Swahili, Fanalago (a pidgin based on Zulu), and Chinook Jargon.

In many social circumstances, pidgins have become quite stable over time. Spoken only as second languages, and functioning in limited domains as **languages of wider communication**, they are learned informally in contact and used especially as trade languages. In multilingual areas where each of the existing language groups maintain their distinctiveness and do not intermarry, the pidgin continues.

In many cases, there is a further development. This occurs when, as a result of intermarriage of a couple whose native

languages are different but who both speak pidgin, the pidgin is spoken at home and learned by children as a first or mother tongue. In the terms of contemporary linguistic theory, this leads to some fundamental changes. Children acquiring the language do so in the same way that children acquire any other language, and it is believed that this involves the same appeal to innate linguistic capacity and universals that accounts for first language acquisition. New features emerge as a result both of this and of the growing complexity of the social circumstances in which the language is used. It is no longer just a contact language, with limited social functions, but is called on to deal with an increasingly wide range of social needs. The process is called **creolization**, as the language expands and develops, displaying greater phonological and grammatical complexity.

Some of the better-described creoles are Haitian Creole, Tok Pisin (a creolized version of a New Guinea Pidgin English), and Hawaiian Creole English; some of the most recently recognized include Berbice Creole Dutch and Palanquero (Colombian Creole Spanish). These creoles appear to have much the same grammatical complexity as other natural languages, although they of course show many of the characteristics of their original pidgin status, such as the blended phonology, and the existence of two or more grammatical and lexical bases.

A third stage of development can occur when speakers of a creole or pidgin are introduced, usually by education, to the standard language on which the creole or pidgin was originally based. There can ensue what has been labelled a **post-creole continuum**, in which the various levels of social and stylistic variation may be filled by a version of the standard language at the upper end and of the creole or pidgin at the lower end. A Jamaican may, in various social situations, choose the creole called Jamaica Talk or one of the various intermediate levels, or a standard Jamaican version of English, or may switch from one to the other as in other kinds of code switching.

One controversy in sociolinguistics has been over the origin of the variety of English associated with the speech of Afro-Americans. For many years, it was assumed to be a non-Standard social dialect, similar to and based on the Southern regional dialects of American English, and reflecting the social isolation

and inadequate education of the former slaves. Some psychologists pointed to certain features, such as the absence of the copula (the verb 'to be') in the present tense, or different rules of verb agreement, or the use of the double negative, as evidence of linguistic inferiority and therefore justification for discrimination against speakers of the variety. Linguists pointed out that these features are common in standard languages (Russian and Hebrew do not use a copula in the present tense, French negatives are usually double), and show that these and other features support a theory that **Black English**, as they labelled it, derives from an original creole like the Gullah still spoken in some communities. From this, others argued for its status as a separate language, and called for its recognition and maintenance. The controversy over what is variously called Black English, Afro-American Vernacular English, or Ebonics has raged in American educational situations for at least thirty years.

Because of their lack of formal recognition, pidgins and creoles are often treated just as a local jargon and linguistic aberration. It is only recently that they have become an area of great interest to linguists interested to learn about universal tendencies in languages and to study language status, attitudes to language, and the importance of language to group identity. There are still many controversies about how to describe them and how to explain their creation and development. But it is their very marginality that makes them interesting to sociolinguistics, for they are most open to social influences and, lacking academies and educational establishments, the least likely to be formalized and restricted by normativistic rule-making.

Diglossia

A third aspect of language contact relates to the issue of functional allocation. With a handful of languages, two distinct varieties of the same language are used, side by side, for two different sets of functions. The term **diglossia** (modelled on the word *biligual*, and using Greek rather than Latin forms) was coined originally to label this phenomenon. In the Arabic-speaking world, there is the contrast between the Classical language and regional dialect. The same pattern, more or less, occurs in the German-

speaking cantons of Switzerland with High German as the standard language and Swiss German as the vernacular, in Haiti with French and Haitian Creole, and in Greece with the literary variety, *katharévusa*, and the vernacular, *dhimotikí*. While there are somewhat different historical reasons for each, and while the functional distribution is somewhat different, they share a set of distinctions. In each case, the standard (or H, from Higher) variety is used for literacy and literary purposes and for formal, public, and official uses, while the vernacular (or L, from Lower) for informal conversation and daily use. Paralleling the differences in use are differences in form. The grammar of the L variety is generally simpler. For instance, fewer distinctions in the L variety are marked by the use of grammatical suffixes. There are also major differences in the vocabulary of the two varieties.

One of the major differences is understandably in the prestige of the two varieties. The H language is associated generally with a body of important literature and carries with it the prestige of a great tradition or religion. It is more stable, being protected from change by its association with written texts and by an educational system. It is also likely to be used over a wider region and thus can serve some unifying purpose. The L varieties are more localized and show dialectal variation and the tendency to change of unwritten dialects.

While developed originally to apply to cases of two varieties of the same language, the notion of diglossia can also be applied to the way in which two (or more) distinct languages come to divide up the domains in the linguistic repertoire of a speech community. In colonial situations, for instance, the language of the government takes on many of the attributes of an H language, while the various vernaculars fit the definition of an L language. For Navajo Indians, English fills the H function and Navajo the L. Another classic case is Paraguay, where Spanish is the H variety (used in literacy, education, and government, and associated with city life) and Guaraní is the vernacular, spoken in the villages and used in the cities as a mark of informality and Paraguayan identity.

Diglossia thus refers to a society that has divided up its domains into two distinct clusters, using linguistic differences to demarcate the boundaries, and offering two clear identities to the members of the community. It is important also to note the political

situations in which diglossia often occurs, with the H language associated with power. Educational pressure is normally in the direction of the H variety, and those who cannot master it are usually socially marginalized. At the same time, the L variety maintains value as a marker of membership of a peer or ethnic group.

While the classical diglossic cases have been stable for a long time, sociopolitical changes are starting to have their influence. Reference has been made to the possible emergence of an intermediate variety of Arabic, a kind of Educated Standard Arabic. In many countries, too, the globalization of English has introduced a third significant language, so that triglossia or polyglossia is starting to emerge. This tendency confirms our central theme, the close intertwining of social and linguistic structure, so that changes in one are reflected in changes in the other.

Language policy and language planning

The very centrality of language to social life, the value of language as a means of access to power and influence, and the symbolic value of language in establishing social class and ethnic identity, all produce conditions where people want to engineer language or language choice itself.

In this chapter, we will look at a number of kinds of language planning or policy activities. These terms represent fashion rather than other differences. When sociolinguists started to be involved in the 1950s and 1960s, they preferred the term **language planning** as the term for any effort to modify language form or use. In the late 1980s, the regular failure of national planning activities seems to have encouraged the more neutral seeming term, **language policy**.

Exactly where these activities arise depends in large measure on the perceived language situation of the social organization involved. For instance, in a situation where there are seen to be two or more languages available, any attempt to set up norms or rules for when to use each is what is called **status planning**. A decision to make one language official, or to ban another from use in school, or to conduct church services in a third, are cases of status planning. The most studied cases are in deciding on official or national languages for a newly independent state.

Once a language has been fixed as appropriate for use in a specific situation (i.e. as the official language, or in printing books, or in schools), any effort to fix or modify its structure is called **corpus planning**. The coining of new terminology for languages coping

with modernization, or the Young Turk policy to remove Arabic words from Turkish, or the French efforts to rid the language of English words, or the Dutch decisions to change spelling, are all cases of corpus planning.

One aspect of corpus planning is the process of **language standardization**, which consists of attempting to standardize grammar and pronunciation towards some norm that is discovered or invented by some officially appointed or self-proclaimed group of language guardians. This process may be called **normativism** or prescriptivism by linguists who study it, or 'keeping the language pure' by those who carry it out.

A language status decision often produces a situation that some people need learn a language that they do not normally speak. In Finland, for instance, the decision to recognize both Finnish and Swedish as official languages means that Finns must learn Swedish and Swedes Finnish. Sometimes called **language acquisition planning**, this process of **language education policy** is also involved when a government decides which foreign languages are to be taught in school or through other means. Similarly, a national policy to develop literacy in a language might be considered a kind of language acquisition policy.

For various reasons, a country or other social group may wish to encourage other people to learn their language. **Language diffusion policy** is sometimes associated with religious missionary work, as Islam spread Arabic, or with the national concerns of imperialist powers, as in Soviet activities to spread Russian throughout the USSR and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, or the French policy to spread *la francophonie*.

In countries where there is clear recognition of the existence of two or more respected languages and associated ethnic groups, such as Belgium, Switzerland, or Canada, status planning is an important activity. This is also the case in newly independent states where there exists a myriad of languages that must be chosen between, as in post-colonial India, Indonesia, or Nigeria. In a country where there is believed to be only one important language, and where other indigenous languages tend to be marginalized, the principal activity tends to be some aspect of corpus planning, such as the purification of the standard language.

Status planning

Status planning typically becomes an important activity when a country becomes independent, but it has probably already been a central concern of the nationalistic activities that preceded the actual independence. As mentioned earlier, nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalist movements generally included a choice of a national language in their ideological package. Thus, newly independent Norway proclaimed its freedom in moving away from Danish power and language influence, but became involved in a bitter and continuing struggle as to what form of language to use; its eventual compromise has been to recognize the official equality of two varieties, called Riksmål and Nynorsk. The Irish nationalist movement took the restoration of Irish as its goal. The Zionist movement at the turn of the century proclaimed its interest not just in peoplehood and territorial regeneration, but in the restoration of Hebrew as a national language.

The decision is particularly harsh in a post-colonial state with a selection to be made among a number of indigenous language. In India, the costly and still uncertain solution was to recognize seven languages in the constitution. In many new African states, with the lack of congruence between language boundaries and the political borders that had been drawn as the colonialist powers carved up the continent, the choice among competing ethnic and tribal languages was part of a struggle for central power.

In these cases, the decision has often fallen on the colonial language as the official language for the new state. This is especially likely to be true in those cases where colonial policy was most successful in imposing belief in the value of the metropolitan language, and where the colonial language is only spoken, perhaps imperfectly, by a small educated elite. Such a policy was followed by France in all its territories and by Portugal in its colonies.

Issues concerning status planning continue to make headlines. New Zealand has finally agreed that the Treaty of Waitangi by which it obtained sovereignty over the Maori in 1840 requires it to recognize Maori as an official language alongside English. Post-apartheid South Africa ponders a language policy that will provide appropriate status alongside Afrikaans and English for

the many languages spoken by the African majority, recalling no doubt that it was a language issue—riots in Soweto by African school children who were upset by a government decision to have them learn in Afrikaans rather than English—that may be considered the beginning of the successful campaign to destroy apartheid.

Language-status policy is by its very nature a political activity. Linguists are sometimes consulted, but decisions are made by government or elected parliament and sometimes form part of the constitution. The status decision determines which language or languages are to be used in various public functions, by government, the legal system, the media, and the educational system.

Sometimes there is an explicit policy spelled out by constitution or law. As mentioned earlier, the Indian constitution lists the seven constitutional languages and lays down their use for official and educational purposes. A recent French law (ruled unconstitutional by the constitutional court) attempted to make it illegal for public meetings (including international scientific congresses) to use languages other than French. The Soviet Constitution proclaimed that all languages were equal. The Quebec government passed a law requiring that all public signs and advertisements should appear only in French, and another that laid down that any child whose parents had not themselves gone to an English-language school in the province must have French-medium instruction.

In other cases, questions of language status are determined by national, regional, or local law, or are left to local practice. Present United States policy is a mixture of some local laws, some court-inspired recognition of language rights (see earlier discussion), and various local practices. Recently, however, a political campaign has begun to make English the only official language. In Israel, while Hebrew and Arabic are formally recognized as official language for certain purposes, there is *de facto* recognition that most public signs are in English as well.

While the term official language suggests governmental recognition, it is worth determining what precisely this status implies. In Quebec, the official status of French determines language use in signs and in education. In New Zealand, the official status of Maori effects mainly a requirement that government bodies

adopt a Maori translation for their name and include it in their otherwise English announcements. In the respective Spanish autonomous regions, the new official status of Basque and Catalan involves a wider range of activities, including support for major government agencies concerned with the diffusion of the language. In the United States, the Voting Rights Act required the use in electoral ballots of major minority languages. In the constitution of the State of New Mexico written after its incorporation into the USA, there was a requirement for pharmacists to be bilingual in Spanish and English. In countries with recognition of the need for second language knowledge, there is often a requirement or a salary supplement for officials with the favoured competence.

Religious bodies often have significant language status policies. The decision of the Roman Catholic Church to change the language of the Mass from Latin to the local vernacular echoed a decision made four centuries earlier in the Reformation by the Protestant Churches. Hinduism, Orthodox Judaism, Islam, and Greek and Russian Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, all have language policies which support maintenance of the status of a sacred language.

A political decision on the status of a language, if it is in fact to be implemented, usually leads to other activities. Often, a language whose status has changed needs to be modified in some way. This is corpus planning. And often it will need to be taught to people who do not speak it: this involves various kinds of language-diffusion policy, language-acquisition planning, or language-education policy.

Corpus planning

When it has been determined that the status of language is to be moved to a more elaborate level of standardization or to an expanded set of functions, the task of corpus planning begins. One of the most common processes is the need for modernization and elaboration of vocabulary. The rapid increase of concepts associated with the modern world, and the expansion of terminology needed to label all the new objects involved in modern technology, set a major challenge for all languages.

One obvious example is the *computer* I am working at now, which is a *laptop* or, to be more precise, a *sub-notebook*. I just had to have a new *motherboard* put in, as the old one would not accept the *PCMCIA card* that is supposed to be used to connect my *diskette drive*. But my *double-spaced hard drive* offers me a *megabyte* of *memory* (not to mention the 16-K RAM that my *programs* can access) and my *trackball* or *mouse* makes it easy to control my *passive matrix* screen. Most of the words I have italicized are ones that were not needed in English a decade ago, or have taken on new meanings quite recently. The problem facing any language that wishes to deal with the modern world is that it must keep up with the new developments.

There are some obvious choices. A language can simply take an old word (like *drive* or *screen*) and give it a new meaning. A *computer* in the Oxford English Dictionary (1933 edition) is a *person* who does calculations. A *mouse* still seems a quaint word to most of us for a pointing device. To say that a computer has a *memory* as a storage device is a pretty obvious metaphor (and so I suspect is *storage device*).

Another technique is to coin a new term, like *trackball*, *diskette*, or *megabyte*, by combining existing words or morphemes into more or less transparent forms. For many languages, the simplest technique would seem to be borrowing from another language where the term is in use because the concept or object has already been invented.

English is one language that has borrowed freely. From its beginnings in regular contact with first Danish, then French, its lexicon was constantly being enriched not just by coinages but by borrowing. During the periods of scientific and technological development, English freely coined new words based on Latin or Greek (or even, to the horror of Classical purists, with elements of both).

As part of his policy of unifying France, Cardinal Richelieu encouraged the establishment of the *Académie Française*, one of whose principal charges was to be to maintain the unity and purity of the French language. This it still continues to do, protesting regularly the tendency towards *Franglais* and the use of words like *le weekend* and *le biftek*.

One of the earliest kinds of corpus planning, called for as a

language takes on official, standard, and educational functions as a result of changed status, is the developing of an **orthography**. Writing has not been invented very often, but more commonly it has been borrowed and adopted from one language to another. Most recent orthographies are slight modifications of other alphabets. The roman alphabet is most commonly used, under the influence of European languages. The Stalinist policy of linguistic centralization involved also changing the orthographies of many languages in the Soviet area of influence from Roman or Arabic orthography to the Cyrillic in which Russian and related languages are written. A major component of the Turkish Westernization movement was to change from Arabic to Roman script. Romanization has been proposed for Hebrew and Chinese, but with no success, for the weight of tradition has been too strong. The cost of maintaining a non-Roman alphabet is not small, as those who tried to develop a typewriter for them discovered, but computers are simplifying things.

But to develop an orthography is only a first step in the process of standardization and modernization; later, we will look at the related task of developing mass literacy.

Normativism and prescriptivism

When in 1970 a programme was started to teach Navajo children to read their own language, one of the first inconveniences was the absence of a typewriter that could produce the special diacritics and letters (a French acute accent, a Czech cedilla, and a Polish slashed *Ł*) that the developers of the Navajo orthography chose. (Incidentally, one of the few corpus planning decisions the Navajo Tribal Council made was to spell the name of the tribe in English with a 'j' rather than an 'h'.) A new problem soon turned up.

The first reading book one of the assistants wrote was a story of a cat, for which the writer used the Navajo word *mósi*. A little later, another writer included a cat in a book, but chose rather to write it *mási*. The Navajo dictionary, which had been written some thirty years before, listed both spellings. The Navajo linguist who had collaborated in writing the dictionary and was now a lecturer in the language at the Navajo Community College

backed the dictionary, saying that he always told his students to write words as they and their family pronounced them. The spelling *mási* was therefore used in the second book, with a note for teachers in the back of the book that some people used *mási*, while others said *mósi*. The teachers were unhappy with this decision. They had been trained in English where there is usually only one correct spelling, and considered it wrong to be called on to teach rules that allowed too many choices.

In this attitude, they reflect the point of view of most Western-educated people who assume and expect that language rules are set, clear, unambiguous, and to be enforced. Some teachers of English as a foreign language complain in the same way about differences between British and American usage. This idea of 'correctness' is a mark of developed literate societies. In pre-literate societies, one regularly finds notions of 'a good speaker', by which is meant someone who has power to speak persuasively in public, but seldom the notion of 'correct' speech and spelling.

If you look at an Elizabethan book, you will note that printers were not concerned about 'correct' spelling, varying the spelling of the same word on a single line if it made the words fit in better. As printing and education spread, however, the notion of correctness became increasingly important. In the absence of an Academy legally charged with the task, dictionary and grammar-book writers took it upon themselves to describe and define what they considered standard and correct usage, and to prescribe these standards as required. Even when the description was clearly labelled as an arbitrary choice of one out of a number of varieties, it was generally accepted in a society seeking methods of gate-keeping as the mark of education and acceptability. George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (or the musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady*) is a touching and accurate account of how changes in speech and dress permitted a Cockney flower-girl to move into the high society from which she was otherwise barred.

Prescriptivism, therefore, is an understandable development in a mass-education system where successful learning of prestige speech styles is a first step in social upward mobility. It is, however, unfortunately accompanied by a mistaken belief that speakers of non-standard varieties of a language are less intelligent, or less inherently capable than standard speakers. When linguists

argue that all languages are equally good, they are attempting to fight the common prejudices that assume that standard languages and their speakers are inherently superior to non-standard languages and their speakers. Every variety, they maintain, has the potential to handle all tasks, and there is no evidence that people who speak a non-standard language are intellectually inferior to people who speak a standard language. At the same time, the normal association of the standard language with literacy and with formal education means that a key goal of many systems is to provide access to the standard language to the largest possible section of the population.

Language acquisition planning or language education policy

Teaching the standard language to all is one of the first tasks of most educational systems. In traditional religious education, the task of the religious school is usually to develop literacy in the language of the sacred texts: Hebrew for Jews, Classical Arabic for Moslems, Sanskrit for Hindus, Old Church Slavonic for Russian Orthodox, Giiiz for Ethiopian Christians and Jews. In secular education, the equivalent first task is developing control of the written standard language.

The task is regularly complicated by the fact that the spoken language of the home is commonly not the standard written language of the school. In the case of languages of religious texts, this was usually obvious. Teachers in ultra-orthodox Jewish religious schools find it natural to teach Yiddish-speaking children in Yiddish to read texts written in Hebrew. In diglossic situations like those mentioned earlier, the problem is made more difficult, for the teachers and pupils sometimes have no respect for the L variety they actually speak, and claim or pretend to be speaking the H variety.

The first task of a formal educational system is usually, therefore, the teaching of the national standard language, with emphasis on literacy in it. Depending on social and political pressures, the system aims at students acquiring other varieties too. Especially in countries which recognize more than one language as part of the national tradition, there may be a programme to

teach the other official language or languages. As noted earlier, for example, in Finland, all Finnish speakers are expected to learn Swedish and all Swedish speakers to learn Finnish. Similarly, in Quebec, all English speakers learn French and all French speakers learn English, and in Israel, Arab children learn Hebrew and Arabic is in turn compulsory for Hebrew speakers.

Language diffusion policy or linguistic imperialism

Political and military conquest have been major causes of language spread. Aramaic in the ancient world, Greek in the Eastern Mediterranean, Latin in Western Europe, Arabic in the Middle East and North Africa, Mayan in Central America, Manding in West Africa are all cases. In these cases, the rulers did not follow an explicit policy of requiring the conquered to learn their languages, but essentially left the choice open. Similarly, when a language has been spread by trade (as for instance Swahili in Africa), the diffusion has been more or less unplanned. Even languages spread by missionary activity have not necessarily been the result of direct planning, for missionary groups commonly accept that the sacred texts will need to be translated if they are to be understood. It is for this reason that missionary activity so often leads to the development of vernacular literacy.

It is important to distinguish between this kind of unplanned language intervention, where altered circumstances encourage conquered or converted or commercialized populations to learn the language of their conquerors, missionaries and traders, from a planned **language diffusion policy**. In the first, we are dealing with the kinds of language shift we have talked about earlier; in the second we have a deliberate policy of a government or other institution to change language acquisition and use.

Language-diffusion policy may be internal or external. When a country decides that all its inhabitants, whatever their home language, should learn and use the national language, we have a case of internal diffusion. When New Zealand started teaching all its Maori pupils in English in 1870; when the British required English in Welsh schools; when France would not allow Occitan, Breton, or Basque in its schools; when Stalin pushed for the use

and higher status of Russian in all Soviet schools; or when China assumes that all pupils speak and should learn *Putonghua*, these are all examples of language-education policy that involves conscious and planned internal diffusion of a standard or official language.

Policy in conquered lands or colonies is both internal and external diffusion. Because the territory concerned is now under the control of the imperial rulers, it is not unnatural that they want to make governing easier by encouraging some at least of the colonial subjects to learn their language. Colonial language education policies have varied in their commitment to language diffusion. There have been, and continue to be, policies of language diffusion beyond national and even imperial boundaries. One of the earliest and strongest of these has been a French tradition of encouraging the spread of the French language beyond its national and colonial borders.

More recently, Germany has taken up language diffusion activities in its support for the Goethe Institute. A number of other countries work through the cultural attachés in their embassies or through semi-governmental bodies to encourage the diffusion of their national languages. Teaching the national language, as well as teaching about the national culture, is sometimes seen as an effective way of spreading influence and developing international interest in trade and tourism.

The spread of English—imperialism or hegemony?

The recent world-wide diffusion of English, so that it now looks set to become a world language, has raised not just concern among speakers of other languages, but controversy among sociolinguists. To what extent, they argue, is it the result of conscious planning by the governments and experts of English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Australia, and to what extent is it the result of a large array of factors connected with modernization and globalization?

A closer look at the process by which English has in this century developed into a global language suggests that in fact the demand

has continually exceeded the supply. Language diffusion efforts of English-speaking countries have tended to be attempts to exploit world-wide desires to learn the language. There has been little need to fan the interest. The association of English with modern technology, with economic progress, and with internationalization, has encouraged people all over the world to learn English and to have their children learn it as early as possible. The more this has succeeded, the greater the reason for others to want to have access to the power and success assumed to be a result of knowing English.

The demand is not new: as early as the 1920s, Japanese and Chinese business leaders were starting to value knowledge of English. And it is deeply entrenched: even at the height of the Cultural Revolution in China, when there was deep suspicion of modernity and foreign influences, Chairman Mao continued to speak in favour of teaching English.

From the point of view of many observers, this growing linguistic hegemony of English is dangerous and harmful, and it is not unnatural to seek someone to blame. But whatever the cause, the spread of English is producing a new sociolinguistic reality, by threatening to take over important functions from other major languages, and by furthering language shift. It is an important task of sociolinguistics to understand this process.