CURRENT BRITISH-IRISH CONVENTIONS ON IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Colin H. WILLIAMS
Cardiff University, UK-CF10 3XW, Cardiff, Department of Welsh, P.O. Box 910
e-mail: Williamsch @cardifff.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The present brief is to identify issues and trends which influence the role of language, identity and political negotiation in Irish-British relations, and relate these to broader European considerations. Successive parts of the argument emphasise geolinguistic and political issues before highlighting the need for appropriate infra-structural developments if language choice is to be realised at citizen and European Community level. Prescient questions are raised in relation to the interaction between territory, identity, language, and public policy in the UK and Ireland. The final section suggests fruitful areas of European co-operation with regard to community language policy.

Key words: role of language, identity, Ireland, United Kingdom, European co-operation

CONVENZIONI ANGLO-IRLANDESI VIGENTI SULL'IDENTITÀ, SULLA DIVERSITÀ E SULLA COOPERAZIONE TRA GLI SPAZI TRANSFRONTALIERI

SINTESI

Il presente saggio ha come obiettivo l'identificazione dei temi e delle tendenze che influenzano il ruolo della lingua, dell'identità e della negoziazione politica nelle relazioni anglo-irlandesi, con riferimento a considerazioni di più ampio respiro a livello europeo. Rientrano successivamente nel discorso anche tematiche geolinguistiche e politiche atte ad evidenziare il bisogno di sviluppi infrastrutturali adeguati dovendo effettuare scelte linguistiche a livello individuale e Comunitario. Vengono inoltre sollevate domande in merito all'interazione fra territorio, identità, lingua e politica pubblica nel Regno Unito e in Irlanda. Infine la parte conclusiva propone aree fertili per la cooperazione europea relativamente alla politica linguistica della Comunità.

Parole chiave: ruolo della lingua, identità, Irlanda, Regno Unito, cooperazione europea

INTRODUCTION

As I revise this essay for publication David Trimble has been reinstated as First Minister of the Northern Irish Assembly, the Ulster Loyalist marching season is in full swing, violence once again stalks the streets of Belfast, the Good Friday Agreement is hanging by the thread of decommissioning and the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages came into force in the UK on 2 July 2001. Barely a few months ago the situation seemed so much more promising as a semblance of normal politics had returned to a devolved Assembly in the north of Ireland. This essay charts one of the more significant threads in the normalisation process, namely British-Irish cross border co-operation within the EU context. The essay, in four parts, begins with a summary of the key issues from my perspective. Part 2 addresses the relevance of European and International Conventions and summarises several trends in European language affairs. Part 3 draws on the experience of community integration and language planning as practised in Ireland and Wales before applying some lessons to the Northern Irish context while Part 4 highlights some practical considerations for the Irish-British Council in the light of the above.

THE BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL: KEY ISSUES

The key issue in British-Irish relations is to promote understanding, develop transport and trade relations and where possible harmonise activities within an expanding EU. A major innovative arrangement to promote joint-problem solving as regards the 'troubles' of Northern Ireland was the British-Irish Council (sometimes known as the Council of the Isles). This was designed to give both the Irish and British state (and their devolved partners in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) a more formal role in the development of political life in the British Isles. It is a 21st century re-working of an old theme, the governance of the isles, but it also meshes well with similar regional-level developments in the so-called 'New Europe'. As regards cross-border community co-operation and the operation of the fledgling British-Irish Council, I submit that there are at least eleven issues worthy of special consideration, as follows:

1.1. The recognition, role and resourcing of Irish, Ulster Scots and the languages of various ethnic communities.

1.2. Implementing the various conventions ratified by government in relation to language and cultural diversity, with a central focus on the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

1.3. Assessing the impact of trends within Great Britain, especially as regards the Welsh Language Act, 1993, the Government of Wales Act, 1997, the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales 1999; and the campaign for a Secure Status for Gaelic and the promotion of Scots.

1.4. The changing nature of the interaction between individuals, committees and government agencies at all levels of the hierarchy from the local to the international.

1.5. The huge gap between ratifying an international treaty recognising the <u>right</u> to language choice and the investment, resourcing and socialisation of key individuals within particular domains to ensure that such rights can be exercised as a matter of course, not of privilege and not in exceptional circumstances only.

1.6. The prioritising of energy, political will and resources into key areas of action, namely education, public administration, health and welfare services, the media and most critically of all, community development.

1.7. The need to question the debate surrounding the de-politicisation of the language issue so that languages become less symbols of resistance and a relatively fixed, closed identity into vehicles for communication in a more open, plural society. The need to relate community language choice in Northern Ireland to the European context whereby one form of bilingualism may be necessary at the local level and a different form at the international level. The need to address whether the relatively disadvantaged in the future will be the monolingual English-speaker, or can English hegemony hold sway in an increasingly globalized world?

1.8. The empowerment of citizens to choose and develop skills is the key to good language planning based upon holistic perspectives.

1.9. The relationship of Irish with a) other networks of Irish-language speakers outside Northern Ireland; b) other Celtic languages; c) other lesser-used languages.

1.10. The relationship of Ulster Scots with a) Scots; b) variants of English; c) Diaspora communities worldwide; d) other lesser-used languages.

1.11. The relationship of Irish, Ulster Scots and English with each other in terns of borrowings, codifications, idiomatic expressions, syntax, and more critically shared experience in the domain of education and the whole issue of subtractive versus additive bi- or tri-lingualism in Northern Ireland.

Cardinal Principles

Two hundred years ago the rallying call for many was *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity.* As we enter the new millennium we need to supplement these ideals with a new set of principles by which humankind may manage its remarkable linguistic heritage. Recently the Lingua-

phere Project, directed by Dafydd Dalby, suggested that *Unity, Variety* and *Choice* should be embraced as pointers on the uncertain road towards a safer and more just planetary society (Dalby, 1998). For those of us involved in the Linguasphere Project these three principles structure the way in which we believe major international organisations such as those represented here today, should influence language awareness. Let me rehearse aspects of these principles.

"Unity, because justice, mutual aid, security, health, research, education, economic development, finance, energy, transport, and management of the environment, will all need to be co-ordinated at a global level, if our descendants are to have an improved chance of reaching the end of the new century, let alone the new millennium.

For this, an *auxiliary language of global unity* will be indispensable, a language which is taught and developed:

- as a shared resource and equal heritage of every community,
- as a standardised interface between any pair of languages in the world,
- and as a universal key to a rapidly expanding reservoir of common knowledge and technology,
- but not as the privileged possession of a handful of nations, nor as the vector of a dominant monolingual civilisation.

Variety, because the physical and mental health and the political and cultural evolution of humankind depend on preserving and developing diversity without animosity; both within and among the individual speech-communities which make up our ultimate globalized community.

For this, the rich variety of language throughout the world-together with that of literary, musical and artistic creation-must be protected and promoted, involving:

- the development of literary creation and publication in any language where the need and motivation exist,
- the urgent video-recording, sub-titling and archiving of all endangered languages, and
- the development of all transnational languages, including at least one *alternative language of global unity.*

Choice, because a balance between the rights and needs of each person and the collective rights of each community - linguistic or religious or national - can be more readily achieved if individuals have the maximum degree of freedom of information and choice among the communities whose language and/or culture they may wish to share.

For this, our modern means of telecommunication and transnational journalism, of distance education and global travel need to be employed to present the widest possible range of linguistic and cultural options to a world-wide audience, including:

- the provision of subsidised or free study for individual languages and cultures e.g. via the Internet - not a huge investment for any reasonably sized speech-community,
- the increased exposure of children to alternative languages and cultures, including the freedom for an individual child to choose and study a particular language via distance education,
- the twinning not only of towns in different countries (as already in Europe, for example), but also the 'twinning of tongues" between smaller language communities in different parts of the world, with the pooling of experience and resources,
- the development of sub-titled video-clips of short poems and traditional songs in the languages of the world,
- the availability of computer hardware and free software for children throughout the world, and the encouragement to use the computer keyboard creatively from the earliest possible age,
- the concentration of censorship in one area where it is fully justified - in banning the propagation of violence and intolerance.

For each of us, language provides a program to format our conscious thoughts, to communicate with others, and to define where and who we are within human society. These three functions of language are inseparable, since personal thought, interpersonal communication and self-identification are overlapping aspects of finding and maintaining our individual place in the world.

Language as a personal and social activity is therefore permanently balanced between two forces - between the pressure to conform and to be understood more widely, and the desire to be distinct, both as an individual and as part of a specific community and of our own generation".

Nowhere is this more acute than in several cross-border situations, such as characterises the Slovene population or the Irish population.

Over the past three decades the nation-state has been challenged by a number of forces both from above and below. Two trends influence the capacity of ethnolinguistic minorities to re-negotiate their role in the European division of labour. The first is the weakening of national economic sovereignty and the transfer of economic powers from state legislatures to the European Commission. Despite current difficulties with the E.R.M. and post-Maastricht, post-Niece negotiations, the EU has developed an integrated management of its constituent economies with new policies on competition, trade, monetary exchange rate, science and technological research, and to a lesser extent, its foreign policy. At the regional level agreements such as the Four Motors programme linking Baden-Württemberg, Rhones Alpes, Lombardy, Catalonia together with Wales and Ontario,

help to sustain an element of additional political-regional dynamism. For lesser-used language speakers in Catalonia and Wales more economic autarky can slow down out-migration and language shift, thereby easing one of the key determinants of inter-group antagonism. More formal concordats such as the one agreed between the Catalan Generalitat and the National Assembly for Wales in the Spring of 2001 represent a broader structural pattern wherein actors seek to by-pass well-defined aspects of central state authority and build-up regional-level power. We may not need to establish a *de jure* Federal Europe if regions increasingly operate as members of a *de facto* Federal Europe.

The absolute nature of the territorial nation-state can no longer be sustained as if it were a closed system, because conventional political authority is increasingly shared among a number of units within the political system. Pooled sovereignty, permeable borders, Community-wide socio-economic and environmental policy making, freedom of movement and to a lesser extent shared foreign policy through inter-related agencies such as the Western European Union, NATO, and the OSCE, all characterise the contemporary state system and render it more inter-dependent, both with respects to member states and to subordinate constituent regions. However, increased integration and mutual dependence is not without its own structural strains, which pose new challenges to cross-border communities and authorities, which we shall examine. Interest groups and local authorities in Catalunya, Euskadi, Ireland, and Wales, have come to recognise the effect which planning decisions have on cultural reproduction and are now developing their own priorities for incorporating language-related considerations within the structure planning process.

A more immediate fear is that autochthonous language groups, such as the Basques, Bretons, Irish and Welsh might be further marginalized in an increasingly complex and competitive social order. Their only hope seems to lie in establishing regional bilingualism as the dominant pattern. Limited success in introducing bilingual practices in education, public administration politics and the law, offer some cause for celebration, especially as in the Celtic cases at least, these have been accompanied by a Parliament for Scotland, a National Assembly for Wales, a Northern Ireland Assembly and a reinvigorated approach by the Irish government to strengthen the bilingual character of the state through a new Irish Language Act and the appointment of a Language Ombudsman.

Ironically some groups are witnessing the erosion of their traditional strength in heartland areas and key cities whilst simultaneously harnessing the potential of mass communication and electronic networking. Taking advantage of such radical means of communication may engender popular support but they are unlikely to weaken the dominant - language hegemony, no matter how innovative new policies are in delivering bi/multilingual services.

A more virulent expression of such tensions will be the continued importation of non-European conflicts into the multi-cultural cities of the European Union. Globalisation implies that the safety valve of relative insulation from other countries' problems and issues no longer operates in a 'nationally bounded' manner. Ethnic mobilisation is so often a surrogate for issues such as political struggle, economic deprivation and psychological adjustment that the salience of identity is likely to increase as Western Europe avers a more open, pluralistic society. A major challenge is interpreting the disjuncture between the inherited formal political units and the actual social behaviour of increasingly autonomous and individualistic citizens

We have yet to determine the particular balance of the combined national, federal, regional, racial and other bases of identity within new European contexts. Neither do we know what effect the enlargement of the EU will have on the management of ethno-linguistic and regional issues. The role of English in Europe has been strengthened by the admission of Nordic members, and German economic activity and communication networks have reacted positively to new opportunities and challenges in the new European order, but there is no general agreement as to whether other major languages are necessarily weakened by enlargement and technological advances. One of the great fears, of course, is that the pace of change and increasing alienation will occasion systemic violence, internal unrest and inter-group discord. This is well documented in the case of Northern Ireland and it is more especially true in relation to selected societies straddling the fault-line between the EU and Central Europe. From within the EU are raised queries as to how permeable will be the new frontiers of an expanded EU and what effect will EU enlargement have on the internal management of its constituent ethno-linguistic groups and nations, let alone the extent to which border tensions will spill over both into and from non-EU states. Specifically what role will intractable ethnic conflicts play in triggering major regional clashes and how will the new security architecture of Europe react to such conflagrations? Such questions preoccupy strategists and macro-economic theorists engaged in current enlargement plans and in advising Russia and its former satellite dependencies on their likely position vis à vis the EU in the coming decade. The crucial question is to what extent systemic change will be able to cope with the effects of the grand design of 'opening up' the frontiers of Europe? Following the EU Heads of State meeting at Gothenburg (14/15 June 2001) and the Bush-Putin summit (16 June 2001) at the mansion of Brdo pri Kranju, there is a more concrete multilateral dialogue between the EU, Russia and the USA, but no one can

know for sure where these negotiations will lead.

A more certain and measurable illustration of inter-regional trends which have accelerated since the demise of centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe, is trans-border co-operation. New connections have transformed previously suspect or fragile strategic regions into pivotal nodes in an expanded European network of communication and trade, emphasising how geography and place are periodically reinterpreted and transformed. Vulnerable, strategic minorities, such as the German-speakers in the Alto Adige/South Tyrol, are now in a stronger position to re-build their relationship with geographically contiguous majorities to the north. Once again they can serve as a bridge between the Romance and Germanic culture areas and trade regions. Similarly the Friulian-Slovene corridor now offers a strategic gateway to Central Europe as it did in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Whether economic development will re-invigorate the Friulian and Slovene languages in that borderland region, or the more powerful neighbouring languages will eventually displace them is an open question. Certainly recent cross-border institutional co-operation between Ulster and the Republic of Ireland have revitalized interest in the question of Irish identity and language provision. Either way the dominant nation-state paradigms are beginning to give way to more flexible multicultural and pluralist paradigms, at least in the rhetoric of leading political figures.

From this perspective the centralising state seeks to re-cast its multilingual and multicultural ideology as an expression of open, inclusive and plural governance. This serves the interests of government itself for it was born at a time when the integrity of that political system was under threat from political challenges to the future of Europe. However, it is equally clear that other powerful interests and indeed new sets of actors will emerge to challenge the salience of multiculturalism. But for the short-term, institutional multiculturalism will deepen the coming generation's experience of social life. From my perspective the critical features determining how vibrant this period will be is a combination of structural reform, demographic sustainability and democratic accountability in an enlarged Europe.

Cumulatively these trends will enhance the productive capacity of European economies, but they will also challenge the conventional integrity of civil society and strain the finances of responsible local and regional government. During economic downturns the refusal to honour any of these initiatives is likely to antagonise those groups who anticipate that they are an integral part of the realisation of a multilingual Europe, but are not being sufficiently recognised as such in the public policy making process.

In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, a key question relates to how conventional political policies based upon a tradition of state consolidation can cope with identities derived from new social movements incorporating gender, race, place, ecological and alternative life-style principles. Should these alternative markers of group identity achieve salience, will conventional state citizenship as a base for social cohesion strengthen or decline in reaction to greater political-economic integration?

Trends such as accelerated European integration, the implementation of structural action, especially regional policy funds, the incorporation of regions at the meso-scale of European decision-making and the emergence of the new regional actors constitute for some the dawn of a 'Europe of the Regions.' The pre-conditions may have been established but the trigger factors have yet to be put in place. To reduce potential conflict within cultural pluralism, we need a political agenda which adopts a more holistic, post-disciplinary stance on the following issues.

Power struggles are inherent in competitive ethnic and language contact situations. But we need to know far more about the influence of the international state system on constituent language groups, including the effects of periodisation, that is the analysis of temporal rhythms of opening and closing when fresh initiatives are launched usually following the aftermath of mass destruction through warfare.

When minority rights principles and language concessions are allowed we need to know how effective is their application within all socio-economic domains not just within the symbolic constitutional and legislative aspects of particular states.

We need constant monitoring of the role of super-structural agencies such as the EU, the Council of Europe, NATO and the OSCE, in influencing the definition, legitimisation and resolution of persistent ethnic/national and language -related grievances.

We need incisive scrutinies of the tensions inherent in the contrast between dynamic trends, such as language switching, population mobility, telematic advances in information technology and mass entertainment/sport and the far more conservative ethno-linguistic claims to preserve the character of threatened historical homelands. The contrast between openness at the international level and closure at the local regional level is a major structural feature of Europe's political economy. The defence of minority interests is riddled with ambiguity and duality in respect of the appropriate role for both 'majority' and so-called threatened languages in multilingual societies. We need to differentiate between purely linguistic issues and broader political/cultural features, which are subject to erosion by hegemonic groups.

All the above require intense analysis of the complex relationship between globalism and localism in most spheres of social interaction within the constituent regions/nations of Europe. Comparative analysis between and within the so-called under-represented regions is in-

sufficient, for such studies often compare typological constructs rather than shared realities. We thus need far more rigorous multi-level analyses of all European regions.

The state-nation remains dominant and is likely to gain further prominence if it becomes the filter through which increased regional-level mobilisation from below is mediated, or alternatively the instrument by which top-down regional development and social equalisation policies are enacted within an enlarged European framework. Such is the tenacity of the state apparatus that ironically both expanded super-structural organisations and regional-level actors are contributing to the renewal of a reformed, decentralist state-nation posing as the only truly representative political instrument in a multi-cultural world order. The challenge facing civil society is how well it can absorb the material and political advantages of enlargement and globalisation without sacrificing the identities and ambitions of constituent minorities on the altar of political-economic integration. In that one respect Europe need not allow itself to be permanently divided, if it can harness some of the energies it has diverted to preparing for war to be expended on a vigorous re-reading of the relationship between science, conscientious capitalism and democracy. The one virtue of nineteenth century nationalism that has been dimmed by today is its trust in the resilience of the human spirit to shape a better world through communitarian political action. The one all too tragic vice which nationalism has bequeathed is that untold violence can be both unleashed and justified because it is being committed on behalf and in defence of, the nation. As compensation we may be able to trust in the regulatory power of international conventions and binding multilateral declarations which aim to promote minority rights and cross-border harmony.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The improvement in the treatment of minorities and the resultant constructive dialogue between representatives of the various interest groups and governmental agencies at all levels in the political hierarchy of Europe obviously offers more hope for the enactment of minority rights. This improvement presupposes that the state is in some way responsive to the legitimacy of minority demands. Historically the recognition of linguistic-minority demands is a very recent phenomenon (Williams, 1993a). In accordance with the resolutions proposed by European Parliamentarians, such as Arfé (1981, 1983), Kuijpers (1987); and Killilea (1994), the European Commission since 1983 has supported action to protect and promote regional and minority languages and cultures within the European Union. The past decade has witnessed an improvement in the formal position of many lesser-used languages. The most significant devel-

opment was the establishment of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages in 1984. Located in Dublin and Brussels, this small but effective organisation has sought to co-ordinate and nurture inter-linguistic experience and transfer good practice from one group to another (O'Riagain,1989; Williams, 1993c). However, it is currently being restructured in accordance with EU practice of consolidating its central operations at Brussels and the closure of the Dublin office in June 2001 was a body blow rendering Irish initiatives less significant in the constitution of the organization. In 1996 some 4 million ECU's was expended on European socio-cultural schemes (budget line B3-1006 of DGXXII). Equally significant we have a raft of recent legislation and declarations upholding the rights of minorities to use their languages in several domains (Minority Rights Group, 1991; Plichtova, 1992; Declaracio de Barcelona, 1996).Other initiatives involve the Conference on Local and Regional Authorities of Europe with its Charter on European Regional and Minority Languages. Politically the most important reinvigorated actor is the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which has increased its involvement in minority group rights since 1989. Although still evolving as the re-constituted Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) it has detailed the rights and obligations of both minorities and host governments throughout Europe (Williams, 1993a).

Most recently the British Government agreed to sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and as part of the Northern Ireland Settlement the role of the Celtic languages and of Ulster Scots is figuring more prominently there and in the deliberations of the British-Irish Council. Thus at both the European level and within these isles, inter-agency discussions on which languages for Europe and the appropriate resourcing of bi- and multi-lingual education and public administration will have a higher profile.

The well established set of international conventions which enable a super-structure of language rights to be recognised, specified and monitored is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for language survival. This is because recognising freedom from discrimination and neglect is one thing, implementing the freedom to promote one's own preferred language of choice within the infra-structure of the local state is domains such as education, public administration, the media and the legal system is quite a different challenge. I append below the five most significant conventions of the latter half of the nineties.

1. Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, 1998.
2. Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, 1998.

3. Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, Barcelona, 6/6/1996.
4. The Council of Europe: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1998.
5. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1998.

The most significant of these is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1998, the preamble of which includes a very good explanatory introduction. Philip Blair, Deputy Director, Private Office of the Secretary General, Council of Europe, has provided a cogent argument for the application of the Charter to the Northern Irish situation (Blair, 1998). The preamble and Philip Blair's interpretation may be combined to provide a commentary on the Charter as follows:-

The basic issue is that the framework of the Charter is cultural, for unlike the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, it concentrates on the issue of language.

The Charter has 5 parts.

Part I. General Provisions are matters of definition, the international context, practical arrangements and obligations.

Part II. The Objectives and Principles by which the Parties are required to frame legislation and practice in respect of regional and minority languages used within the territories.

Part III. This is the core of the Charter and concentrates on Measures to Promote the Use of Regional or Minority Languages.

a. First, Part III applies only to those languages specified by each state at the time of ratification.

b. Secondly, each contracting state may choose which provisions of Part III it undertakes to apply to each of its minority languages, provided it accepts a minimum of 35 paragraphs.

c. Some of these paragraphs contain various options from which the Parties must choose in respect of the language in question. There are 7 articles in Part III, as follows:- Article 8, Education; Article 9, Judicial Authorities; Article 10. Administrative Authorities and public services; Article 11, Media; Article 12, Cultural activities and facilities; Article 13, Economic and social life; Article 14, Transfrontier exchanges.

Because of the wide divergence of geo-linguistic situations in Europe the Charter is said to have an *a la carte* character whereby each state at the time of ratification may select certain aspects of the Charter only, but Ó Riagain would prefer to think of it as a *table d'hôte* because elements must be chosen from each section (Ó

Riagain, 2000), including at least three paragraphs or sub-paragraphs from Articles 8 and 12 and a minimum of one from Articles 9,10,11, And 13.

The Charter is characterised by its inherent flexibility and dynamism, it is designed to protect and promote, to recognise and change the inherent relationship between language groups by providing an overarching framework by which structural reform of linguistic diversity might be calibrated.

Implementation and Monitoring is done by periodical reports prepared by the States which assess the measures adopted under the provisions of the Charter and interpret current policies and future objectives. Such reports are to be made public.

The reports in turn are examined by a Committee of Experts whose members are appointed by the Committee of Ministers from lists of candidates proposed by the Contracting Parties.[1]

Committee of experts prepare draft reports for consideration by the Committee of Ministers to make any necessary recommendations to the government concerned.

Every two years the Secretary General has to present a report to the Parliamentary Assembly on the application of the Charter. Over time European case-law in the field will be developed.

APPLICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTHERN IRELAND

The Charter came into force in March 1998 and part II has clearly influenced several aspects already of the Good Friday Agreement in three respects:-

a. Key phrases are similar in both documents e.g. the British Government's undertaking "to take resolute action to promote the [Irish] language " and to "facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand".

b. The commitment "to remove, where possible restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language: is related to the anti-discrimination clause of Article 7 (2).

c. The provision for liasing with the Irish language community is related to Article 7 (4).

In this respect Part III of the Charter offers a far greater challenge to decision-makers and the authorities in Northern Ireland. Ó Riagain believes that the monitoring mechanisms are effective and are far stronger than was initially anticipated (Ó Riagain, 2000).

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1 NGOs may propose certain items for the specific consideration of the Committee of Experts.

Since the Charter has now been ratified Irish is recognised as an international language spoken in two states. This Charter constitutes part of the wider structural changes in European public policy and social affairs, and the ability of local communities to liase with a set of institutions which will enable them to build functional networks and provide opportunities for using their chosen language both within the economy and the public institutions of society. But on what principles should our attempt to create a more coherent European language policy be based? How are we to achieve the aims of creating a European public forum accessible to all citizens? How can we stimulate transnational cultural and intellectual exchange which is so essential to an integrated Europe? The answer in part must be given at each local cross-border situation. Let me develop the Northern Irish example by reference to both the Irish and Welsh experience, as these are the two precedents upon which Northern Irish policy will be constructed.

Contemporary Language Policy in Ireland

In the 1991 Census of Population, some 1,095,830 persons (32% of the population) were returned as Irish speakers. However, national percentages mask wide regional and class variations. The designated Irish-speaking areas, the Gaeltacht, contain only 2.3% of the state's population, but 45% of all Irish-speaking families. The only real signs of growth were in the North where the language has shown an increased vitality and has been incorporated as a significant feature of the Good Friday settlement and subsequent arrangements for the operation of the Northern Irish Assembly. (For details see Williams, 1999; Mac Póilin, 1999). The critical agency for language reproduction is the state education system. Ireland, at the end of the twentieth century, had 260 voluntary Irish medium playgroups serving 2,500 children; 120 Irish medium primary schools, and 26 post-primary schools serving some 22,000 children outside the Gaeltacht.

If the Irish language is to be used more intensely both within the public and the private sectors then clearly greater attention needs to be paid to the quality and range of Irish-medium education. To date too little effort has been expended on the professional and vocational elements of Irish medium education, and educationalists constantly raise the issue of the decline in standards of written Irish with a particular concern being aired as to the authenticity of expression. This is not merely the special pleading of language purists, but the normal reaction of an older generation faced with the frustrations of dealing with a younger generation whose whole language repertoire is deeply influenced by the dominance of English.

The principal features of twentieth century language policy may be summarised in the following manner.

Table: The Main Provisions for the Maintenance of the Irish Language (Ó Flatharta, 1999; Williams, 1990; 1999b; 2000).
Tabela: Glavni predpisi namenjeni ohranitvi irskega jezika (Ó Flatharta, 1999; Williams, 1990; 1999b; 2000).

1913	Irish became compulsory for matriculation to the National University;
1922	Irish was designated the 'national language' and competence in it became compulsory for entry to the civil service, police and army;
1926	The Official Gaeltacht was defined and demarcated;
1937	The status of Irish was reaffirmed in the Constitution;
1943	Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge was funded as a coordinating agency for voluntary language organisations;
1952	Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge was established to supervise the allocation of funds for the publication of books in Irish;
1956	State Department for the Gaeltacht was established; (Now the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and Islands);
1956	Gaeltacht Areas Order redefines the Gaeltacht to cover c.1860 sq miles, 7% of land surface of the country;
1957	Gaeltarra Éireann, a semi-state industrial development agency for the Gaeltacht was established by the authority of the Gaeltacht Industries Act;
1972	Radió na Gaeltachta, an Irish language radio station was established;
1973	On joining the EU, the Irish Government requested a "treaty" status rather than an official language status for the language. As a consequence the primary treaties are translated to Irish as well as giving other rights to the language;
1978	Bord na Gaeilge, a state body for the promotion of Irish was established;
1979	Údarás na Gaeltachta (the Gaeltacht Authority) replaced Gaeltarra Éireann;
1986	Board na Gaeilge published 'The Irish Language in a Changing Society';
1997	TnaG, a national television station was established;
1998	A new Irish Language Act is prepared for submission to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The need for a national action plan was spelled out in the late-eighties by Board na Gaeilge (Board na Gaeilge, 1988). The strategic policy initiatives identified

then are still valid now, albeit within the context of a healthier Irish economy. It was reported that only c.5% of the Irish citizens use Irish extensively in their homes, neighbourhood or at work, although a further 10% of the population use Irish regularly if less extensively. Weak rates of language reproduction lead the authors of the report to suggest urgent remedial action along the following lines. The state should take the initiative in changing the operating context of Irish usage and in changing the popular consciousness about Irish identity. In essence the state should recreate an ideological basis for Irish language loyalty and learning. To this end it advocated that Board na Gaeilge be given wider powers to counter the generally marginalised position of Irish within other government agencies. It argued that central government itself, through its discourse, sense of complacency and lack of leadership, was one of the key agencies militating against promotional measures on behalf of Irish. Secondly, the report called for a popular cultural movement, both to resist provincialism and the downgrading of Irish, and also to act as a fulcrum for the re-creation of virile Irish-medium social networks. In contrast to the Welsh and Basque experience, where the social movement and the authorities were in open conflict the one with the other, the Irish case suggested a complementarity between popular demands and interventionist state action. Thirdly, the basic rights of Irish speakers in their dealings with state agencies needed much greater specification. While Article 8 of the Bunreacht na hEireann set out the constitutional standing of both official languages, there was little in the Irish system which set out the detailed practical legislative provisions. Calls for a revised Irish Language Act, then as now, have been welcomed but very little political commitment has been forthcoming. A further need was for infrastructural provisioning and planning, what I take to be the key element for the realisation of any relatively free language choice in a multilingual society. Four other needs were identified, that to give legal effect to the concept of the bilingual state; that to strengthen Irish in the public service; that to increase the visibility and usage of Irish in the state-sponsored media and that to arrest the decline of Irish in the Gaeltacht (Bord na Gaeilge, 1986).

Since then the main government agencies the Department of the Gaeltacht, Udaras na Gaeltachta and the Bord na Gaeilge have been accused of failing to achieve a high degree of policy integration. While it would be fair to say that co-ordination between and within organisations has not always been as smooth as might have been expected there is a genuine consensus that the chief issues which still need to be tackled today are the following:-Irish language speakers outside the Gaeltacht; migration and the Gaeltacht; language learning; traditional conceptions of the role of the Irish language in society and economy; television and the media occupying an important niche; T na G, TV Station; Irish as an economic resource; and the work of Gaelscoileanna

"It is now clear that the 'broad brush' Gaeltacht language policy has failed, that reliance on the schools has failed to halt Irish decline, and that accurately targeted major industrial investment in the real Irish-speaking core of the two principal Gaeltachtai has been accompanied by intensified decline" (Hindley, 1991, 93).

Despite the efforts of many countless hundreds volunteers, community activists, agencies and government the task of revitalising the Irish language has proved greater than the resources and commitment hitherto shown. The basic fault seems to have been an over-optimistic assessment of the capacity of state intervention to restore Irish as a national language without a concomitant investment in socio-economic planning to bring about the necessary conditions to regulate the market forces which encouraged widespread Anglicisation. The Irish experience is a very good example of the clash of discourses, which have been analysed in relation to Welsh by Williams and Morris (2000). They argue that language planning intervention from a market perspective is a highly irrational activity in "the orthodox conception of language planning, where planning is viewed as the intervention of the state in order to overcome market forces on the ability of the group to reproduce itself. Language planning also seeks to conform with a conception of rational organization, but given the opposition between planning and the market, the implication is that the market system is irrational as least insofar as it acts in opposition to the idea of a democratically elected government rationally to control the destiny of those who-presumably on rational principles-have elected it into office"(Williams, Morris, 2000, 249).

A belated concern with holistic language planning now characterises the Irish experience. But for far too long it was assumed that dedicated language initiatives, based in part on good will and in part on a symbolic adherence to Irish as a token of national identity, would suffice. Too often in the literature related to lesser used languages, the Irish example is quoted as a missed opportunity, or as an illustration of how difficult it is for government top down planning to initiate processes of language revitalization. The reality, of course, is far more complex and we accept Ó Riagáin's view that language policies "cannot be treated as an autonomous, independent factor" (Ó Riagáin, 2000, 283). They must be related to other trends and initiatives, grounded in the socio-economic context of every-day life, but always with the force of State legislative power and redress if public organisations and state institutions are to respect the language rights of citizens.

Much of the hopes of Irish language planning today rest on the reinvigoration of the public sector through the passage of a new Irish Language Act. It is a much-needed reform for there is little 'parity of esteem' be-

tween the services offered through the medium of English and that of Irish. Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge (1998) argues that there is a need for a new Language Act so as to give practical effect to the existing language rights of citizens. It recommends that the new Act should:

"Define and set out the State's duties and obligations in respect of the Irish language and give effect to the rights of citizens in relation to that language."

It also advocates that the new Act will provide for:

"1) Institutional arrangements concerning the implementation of the said rights and duties.

2) Amendments to existing legislation and Government schemes to ensure that they are in accordance with the status of Irish as the 'national language' and the 'first official language'.

3) Institutional arrangements to ensure that all legislation enacted in the future is in accordance with the status of Irish as the 'national language' and as the 'first official language".

4) The establishment of structures that will be responsible for the execution and implementation of the Act and for ensuring that State services through Irish are freely available to Irish speakers and Gaeltacht communities" (Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge 1998, 27-8).

The proposed Act should define the state's duties in relation to the Irish language, in relation to citizens' linguistic rights and in relation to the provision of Irish-medium public services. The appointment of an Irish Language Ombudsman together with an *Oifig Choimisinéir na Gaeilge* (Office of the Irish Language Commissioner) with functions similar to the Employment Equality Agency, should enable the new Act to be monitored and implemented more effectively. At the time of writing Éamon Ó Cuiv, T.D. *Aire Stáit, Roinn Ealaíon Oidhreachta Gaeltachta agus Oileán,* the Cabinet Minister responsible for Irish language matters is seeking to present a Language Bill before the Houses of the Oireachtas. His principal justification for such a move is so that State organisations themselves may be convinced that Irish-speaking citizens have Constitutionally guaranteed rights to receive public services in Irish. He acknowledges that many of the fine policy proposals over the past decades have simply been ignored, for State organisations have been lukewarm in their implementation of guaranteed bilingual services.

"It seems that non-legislative guidelines must be replaced by a formal constitutional system which will oblige the state system to grant the Irish language community their rights. I accept of course that a major change of mentality will be required in the public sector (Ó Cuiv, 1999).

His judgement as to the reticence of public officials in implementing acknowledged language rights is a major feature, not only of the Irish but also of the Welsh and Northern Irish situations. However, while within the

Republic there may be great deal of reticence in advancing the cause of Irish as a language of governance, there is no lack of support for a closer involvement of the south in the affairs of the north, at least in so far as promoting issues of identity and language are concerned.

A Welsh Precedent

Following the passage of the Welsh Language Act (1993) and the establishment of the statutory Welsh Language Board, Welsh is increasingly identified with government support being designated a co-equal working language of the National Assembly, which promises to be the most important instrument for democratic representation in Welsh history.

Central to the whole process of language struggle has been the role of education as a key agency of socialisation. Initially Welsh-medium education was marginal to main-stream interests, but following two decades of success the promotion of both the Welsh language and of Welsh-medium education at all levels became part of central government policy. In the Education Reform Act of 1988 a National Curriculum for Wales was established alongside a National Assessment Programme. The National Curriculum is composed of four core subjects and eight foundation subjects. The core subjects are mathematics, science and English. Welsh is a core subject in schools where Welsh is the main medium of instruction, and it has been given a more obvious place within the school timetable of all schools in Wales. This has two implications. The granting of core status recognises the reality of bilingualism in Wales. The diffusion of Welsh as a subject in all schools makes it more likely that all children will have experience (and for many some real competence) of the language as they enter adulthood. This is a vital step in the reduction of language-related conflict and suspicion and I would argue that educational reform, alongside media and other developments has paved the way for a more tolerant and supportive attitude on behalf of the majority toward the notion of inhabiting a bilingual country (see Williams, 1994, 2000).

The current challenge is to realise a fully functional bi/multilingual society through creating new opportunities for language choice within the public, voluntary and private sector of the economy. Legislation has been critical, not only in authorising linguistic rights, but also in establishing the infra-structure wherein such rights can be exercised without let or hindrance. Too often individuals and groups have a titular right to certain services, but such rights are held in abeyance because of a lack of commitment to honour language choice rights at the point of local contact. I recognise that currently policy-advisers in Northern Ireland dare not suggest strong legislation to alter language-related behaviour, but ulti-

mately it will come down to specifying in law what exactly are the rights of Irish and Ulster Scots speakers if any semblance of language equality is to be established as a permanent feature of society.

The Welsh Language Act 1993 provided a statutory framework for the treatment of English and Welsh on the basis of equality. Its chief policy instrument is the refashioned and strengthened Welsh Language Board, established on 21 December 1993, as a non-departmental statutory organisation. It is funded by a grant from the National Assembly for Wales, which in the year ending 31 March 2000 totalled £5,900,000. It has three main duties:

1. Advising organisations which are preparing language schemes on the mechanism of operating the central principle of the Act, that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.
2. Advising those who provide services to the public in Wales on issues relevant to the Welsh language.
3. Advising central Government on issues relating to the Welsh language.

The eleven Board members are appointed by the National Assembly for Wales and they devote two days a month to its activities.[2] The day to day work of the Board is undertaken by 30 staff members divided into seven areas of responsibility, namely Policy, Public and Voluntary Sector, Grants and Private Sector, Education and Training, Marketing and Communication, Finance, Administration.[3]

The Welsh Language Act 1993 details key steps to be taken by the Welsh Language Board and by public sector bodies in the preparation of Welsh language schemes. These schemes are designed to implement the central principle of the Act, that is to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality. Since 1995 a total of 67 language schemes have been approved including all 22 local authorities. In 2000 notices were issued to a further 59 bodies to prepare schemes. As it is difficult to be precise in measuring the effect of such schemes on ensuring that appropriate services are provided the Language Board has recently embarked on a monitoring scheme to audit this part of the Act.

The WLB view is that " the main thrust of the Welsh Language Act is that it makes provision for the delivery of public services through the medium of Welsh by placing a duty on public bodies which provide services to the public in Wales to prepare Welsh language schemes. As a consequence of the Act, the Welsh-speaking public in Wales can expect much more from providers of public services in terms of Welsh-language

provision than ever before" (WLB, 1995, 6).

Under the spirit of the 1993 Act the Board has also developed partnerships with the 22 Unitary Authorities through Rhwydwaith (Network), with the Welsh Consumer Council, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action and with a range of private sector organisations. During the financial year 1997-97 grants totalling £2,254,792 were distributed under the Board's main grants scheme to organisations as varied as the National Eisteddfod, the Welsh Books Council and Shelter Cymru (Welsh Language Board, 1998).

The Board also has the right to extend its remit in other sectors covered by the Act, and has given priority to education and training. By June 1998 the Welsh education schemes of two local authorities had been approved and a further 15 were being developed (Welsh Language Board, 1998). Further and higher education colleges, together with Welsh-medium pre-school provision have also received attention. The Board is now implementing its strategy for Welsh for Adults, whose National Officer was transferred by the Welsh Funding Councils to the WLB in August, 1998. In total grants of £2,027,000 were distributed in the year 1997-98 to local authorities to promote Welsh language education.

Aims and Objectives

The Welsh Language Board's primary goal is to enable the language to become self-sustaining and secure as a medium of communication in Wales. It has set itself four priorities; 1) to increase the numbers of Welsh-speakers; 2) to provide more opportunities to use the language; 3) change the habits of language use and encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities provided, and 4) to strengthen Welsh as a community language,

In order to meet its first aim of increasing the numbers speaking Welsh it has focused its efforts on normalising the use of Welsh among young people by seeking to:

- ensure that the provision of Welsh-language and Welsh-medium education and training is planned in conjunction with the key players, to ensure an appropriate level of provision for young people to obtain Welsh language education services;
- discuss and formulate policies and effective initiatives for promoting the use of Welsh among young people, in conjunction with relevant organisations;
- ensure the proper provision of public and voluntary services for young people through the medium of

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2   The current author was appointed a Member of the Board through open competition by the National Assembly for Wales in the Spring of 1999, prior to that he had been an advisor to the Board.
3   Currently the Board is restructuring its departments to allow a greater emphasis on integrated language planning and more flexible working arrangements.

Welsh (in conjunction with public and voluntary bodies);
- provide grants for initiatives which promote the use of Welsh among young people.

The Board's second objective is "to agree measures which provide opportunities for the public to use the Welsh language with organisations which deal with the public in Wales, giving priority to those organisations which have contact with a significant number of Welsh-speakers. provide services which are likely to be in greatest demand through the medium of Welsh or have a high public profile in Wales, or are influential by virtue of their status or responsibilities".

In order to increase opportunities the Board proposes to:
- agree Welsh language schemes with organisation in accordance with the stated objective;
- encourage providers of public services to regard the provision of high quality Welsh-medium services on a basis of equality with English as a natural part of providing services in Wales;
- encourage Welsh-speakers through effective marketing initiatives to make full use of the services available through the medium of Welsh;
- work closely with the voluntary sector in formulating and implementing Welsh language policies, particularly in relation to the delivery of child- or youth-related services and special needs;
- promote and facilitate the use of the language in every aspect of the education and training and ensure that appropriate provision is made for persons who wish to learn Welsh;
- maintain an overview of the strategic educational plans and schemes of all education authorities and establishments, and to work in partnership with the agencies concerned to improve provision where appropriate;
- ensure that planning of provision for vocational education and training takes account of potential increases in demand from employers for Welsh-speakers;
- promote the authorisation and standardisation of Welsh-language terminology, in conjunction with relevant academic and professional bodies;
- encourage professional training and recognised standards for translators working with Welsh;
- ensure that appropriate Welsh-language software continues to be developed to meet the needs of users;
- encourage increased provision of Welsh in the private sector.

A third objective is to change the habits of language use and encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities provided. This is done through an innovative marketing campaign, including attractive bilingual public display signs, the development of a Welsh spell-checker and on-line dictionary, a direct Welsh Link Line

for queries regarding the Welsh language and language-related services, a language in the workplace portfolio/file, a Plain Welsh campaign with excellent guidelines for writing Welsh prepared by J.Elwyn Hughes and other improvements to the infra-structure so necessary before a real language choice can be made by the general public.

The WLB's fourth objective is "that Welsh-speaking communities be given the facilities, opportunities and the encouragement needed to maintain and extend the use of Welsh in those communities". The Board has committed itself to:
- undertake research into the linguistic make-up of Welsh-speaking communities and the social and economic factors which affect them;
- identify the main threats to the Welsh language within Welsh-speaking communities. and formulate effective action plans for addressing potential problems in conjunction with key players across all sectors;
- discuss and develop with unitary authorities, especially those in the traditional strongholds, their role in terms of administering language initiatives and co-ordinating language policies;
- promote co-operation between communities to foster mutual support, encouragement and understanding;
- assess the effectiveness of existing community-based initiatives (such as 'Mentrau Iaith') as a means of promoting the use of Welsh and their usefulness as a model for facilitating the creation of new locally-run initiatives;
- facilitate the establishment of local language fora to promote Welsh language initiatives, to create opportunities for using Welsh and to motivate and encourage people to do so;
- promote the learning of Welsh by adults (including the provision of worthwhile opportunities to use Welsh outside the classroom and other ancillary support);
- provide grants to support activities to strengthen Welsh within the community.
- an information pack which deals with the principles and practice of language planning and which includes detailed examples of both 'good practice' and 'bad practice', together with worked examples of successful and unsuccessful language planning;
- a comprehensive analysis of the formal responsibilities which all agencies have in connection with the promotion of Welsh, together with the names and addresses of key contact personnel in the local target area, so that effective networking can be initiated from the beginning of the appointment of any *animateur*;
- in-service training at a national level for all linguistic *animateurs*. Experience of comparative and contrasting European examples would also be required

in the training. Such instruction could be the shared responsibility of specific academic institutions, whilst input would also be drawn from respective Language Boards, the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages and the European Union.

There is a need to extend the boundaries of bilingualism within the community, in the institutions and agencies which maintain the quality of life and offer better ways of coping with the myriad social problems which beset our age. The challenge facing us in Wales is to create partnerships which will enable us to share and benefit from each other's experiences. The ability to choose the language in which we would prefer to be served is but an extension of this personal and social empowering. But securing the possibility of choice is itself dependent upon national and international political underpinning.

The realisation of language rights is dependent upon how responsive public bodies are to the implications of the Welsh Language Act and the Government of Wales Act on the one hand and to social pressure on the other. The reaction of unitary authorities to the need to devise a language plan is in part dependant upon their decision to allocate finance for its provision and the reaction of the people who will ultimately be affected by it, namely the electorate. Without a positive reaction on its part, it is unlikely that local authorities will give priority to a high profile framework for Welsh. To a great extent, the probable success of the Language Act will be determined by how much use is made of the bilingual provision it has occasioned. It is thus a matter of some urgency to encourage the public to use the new opportunities to their full potential and to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements.

A Language Policy for the National Assembly of Wales

Since its inception in May 1999 the bilingual National Assembly for Wales has sought to establish a distinctive Welsh form of official decision-making and Assembly scrutiny. It offers a useful model for subsequent developments in Northern Ireland, yet as we shall see the relative strength of Welsh in Wales, vis à vis Irish and Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland, renders any comprehensive transfer of experience from Cardiff to Belfast highly unlikely as regards language policy. Nevertheless there remain significant sectors which can be developed within the British-Irish framework to good effect.

Perhaps the most important, hitherto unresolved post-devolution issue is the division of responsibilities between the Assembly and other arms of the UK government. In this respect. Clause 33 of the Act needs careful scrutiny. For example, how may responsibilities for the Welsh language and culture be divided between the Assembly and the Department of Heritage in Whitehall?

The National Assembly is currently recruiting and training additional translators and proficient bilingual administrators. There is a real worry as to the bilingual capacities of senior administrators, and a presumption that there will be a continued unevenness in the quality of the bilingual service provided within different sections of the Assembly's work. It is feared that this unevenness will derive both from the relative commitment of the Committee Members to operating in a bilingual fashion, and also from the standard of fluency displayed by key officers in different departments.

A central issue will be the extent to which Welsh can become a cross-cutting medium of governance and administration and not limited to its own Committee for the Welsh language and culture. i.e. not become commodified and separated out as a 'problem area'.

A second issue is the degree to which establishing a bilingual Assembly will influence the language-choice behaviour of the public. Critics sympathetic to the promotion of Welsh have observed that local authorities have invested heavily in statutory language schemes which in reality are of little interest to all but a handful of Welsh speakers. It would be regrettable if the Assembly's commitment were not matched by the public's adoption of Welsh as a language of interaction with national government. Surely again the Assembly may use its position as an exemplar, a testing ground, an educator and a significant actor to influence behaviour in this regard.

A third issue is the supply of specialists to operate the Assembly. Critics have warned that just as the development of a bilingual media (c1985-1997) drew mainly on the talented professionals of Welsh-medium high schools and chapels, so the fresh opportunities afford by the Assembly and its associated domains will pose a second threat to the staffing levels of the education system. This is a major challenge to the university sector which as a matter of urgency should provide training courses and bilingual specialist diplomas in matters related to a range of functions which fall under the remit of the Assembly.

Two significant features will influence the development of language policy. The first is the more accurate specification of the relationship between the National Assembly and the Welsh Language Board (Williams, 2000) which will be known towards the end of 2002 as the Assembly considers the findings of an independent inquiry it commissioned. The second is the review of the Welsh language currently being undertaken by the Culture Committee of the National Assembly, due to report in the Spring of 2002. A central feature of both reviews will be how the Assembly's revised language policy will impact upon the private sector, both directly and indirectly. Calls by some for a new Welsh Language Act to cover commercial and economic activities are countered by opposite arguments which attest that we do not nec-

essarily need additional legislation as making current policy more effective could suffice for the private sector in the short term.

The Assembly has recently committed itself to the construction of a bilingual Wales. This is a major task. At present there is a fairly thin patina of bilingualism in place. What trigger factors can the Assembly influence which will deepen the whole process of operating effectively within a bilingual context? If the Assembly can be seen as operating an effective bilingual policy it could bring a great deal of benefit in normalising the language. The Assembly *can* remake a bilingual Wales but it will rest largely on the expertise and sensitivity of those in government. It can also directly influence related organisations by the manner in which it exercises its fundamental commitment to operating as a bilingual institution, including the comprehensive televising of key debates, selected committee meetings and the adoption of sophisticated tele-communication systems to disseminate information.

The Assembly's recruiting policy and training programme could also impact on the public sector and especially local government. Currently there is an acknowledged shortage of competent accredited translators, experienced language tutors, and skilled bilingual administrators and technical specialists. The training infra-structure for a bilingual workforce is woefully inadequate. Consequently special attention should be paid to how the Government's training agencies, such as the TECs are resourcing or failing to resource the required training programmes for an increasingly sophisticated, bilingual economy. The skills gap in the workplace needs to be addressed urgently if the relationship between the Assembly and the rest of the public sector is to operate harmoniously. The necessity to produce bilingual legislation will also have a direct impact on the development of a Welsh language legal community to match that of the media community as co-equality of language use becomes a situational norm in many domains. It is imperative therefore that both the University system and professional training of legal specialist take due regard of this trend and attend to the very real employment and training needs of the profession forthwith.

Within the Celtic nations the Assembly's commitment to bilingualism could be a significant precedent to the development of stronger policy for all the other languages. Let me warn by reiterating that legislation provides the framework for action, it empowers and enables. Thus we need to consider together what we can do at the European/international level to develop the potential offered by the formal recognition of lesser-used languages, as suggested towards the end of Part II of this essay.

The contrast between Wales and Scotland in the approach to and result of the respective referendums pointed to Wales' dearth of a 'civic identity'. The success of the National Assembly must be judged to a certain extent on how far the Welsh citizen relates to it as an institution and feels a sense of 'ownership'. There needs to be a distinction between the rules made for bilingual practice within the Assembly and the development of language policy by the Culture Committee of the Assembly latter will depend on the political priorities of the first National Assembly. With this in mind it is important the Language Board has an arm's length relationship with the Assembly so that the strategic implementation of Welsh language policy can take place at a remove from the immediacy of political debate. It should, however, remain directly accountable to the National Assembly and the Assembly must determine the broad direction of Welsh language policy (Thomas, 1998).

If we conceive of Wales as a community of communities then the chief challenge facing language policy makers is providing an appropriate community and national infra-structure wherein a genuine language choice may be exercised. A related challenge is normalising Welsh so that it is in fact used as vehicle for normal communication in the widest possible range of domains. But this involves much more than the provision of opportunity and an ancillary right to language choice. It involves investment, training, encouragement and political conviction. The development of a comprehensive bilingual society is a project in social-engineering. Unitary authorities and central agencies like the National Assembly and the WLB have a critical role as legitimising agencies constructing new forms of partnership through statutory obligations and pump-priming initiatives.

Language policy - in Northern Ireland

The 1991 Census indicated that 142,000 people in Northern Ireland had some knowledge of the Irish language, the vast majority of whom came from the nationalist community where the language is taught in most Catholic secondary schools. Unlike the Celtic languages of Scotland and Wales there is no unbroken tradition of its use as a first language in specific geographic communities. In that respect the Irish language movement is essentially revivalist, although it should be recognized that in the past a significant contribution to its standardisation, and cultural enrichment has been made by Protestants, especially Presbyterian intellectuals (Blaney, 1996). Even today there are a small number of determined groups of Protestant second-language learners of Irish (McCoy, 1997). However, most nationalists would have limited interest in using the language themselves but many have an affection for it as a symbol of identity and they would support the rights of those who wish to use it.

Partly as a reaction to the Irish language movement a campaign emerged in recent years for recognition of the Ulster Scots linguistic tradition. The recognition of Scots as a language for purposes of Part II of the Council of Europe Charter on Regional or Minority Languages to-

gether with the decision to include an Ulster Scots Agency within the Language Implementation Body led Government to announce its decision to recognise Ulster Scots under Part II. The North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) Northern Ireland Order 1999 provides that Ulster Scots is to be understood as the variety of the Scots language traditionally found in Northern Ireland and Donegal.

There are no agreed figures for the numbers of Ulster Scots speakers although the Ulster Scots Language Society estimates the number of speakers in Northern Ireland at 100,000. The numbers involved in the Ulster Scots language movement are very small but it has attracted a sympathetic response from many Unionists as a symbol of identity.

Neither are there definitive figures for those speaking ethnic minority languages. The largest ethnic minority linguistic group is believed to be Chinese (mostly Cantonese speaking, with some Mandarin). There are also Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu speakers and a wide range of European and other languages represented. DCAL monitored closely the work of the Interdepartmental Group Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) which focused on ethnic minorities.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) is also working with the Equality Unit of OFMDFM on a range of related issues. The Equality Unit has agreed to fund research into the experiences and expectations of ethnic minority groups in the Northern Ireland education system. DCAL (Linguistic Diversity Branch) is now represented on the Interdepartmental Working Group on Ethnic Minorities which is taking forward the recommendations of the PSI report.

The DCAL has lead responsibility for developing agreed language policies and for providing advice, support and guidance on language issues to colleagues in other Departments within the Executive. Linguistic diversity is a relatively new policy area for Northern Ireland and has emerged following the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement does not specifically mention British and Irish sign languages but the Minister has given a commitment to include these, in the broad context of seeking to encourage tolerance, respect and understanding for linguistic diversity. DCAL recognized that work is needed to develop a coherent policy.

For historical reasons to do with education British sign language is more commonly used by the Protestant community and Irish sign language by the Catholic community. An issue for both linguistic communities is the training and provision of interpreters. As a first step in developing policy the department some time ago contacted the lead Whitehall department, the Department for Education and Employment. In response to pressure from the deaf community there DFEE is currently exploring the position of sign language in relation to the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minor-

ity Languages. No ratifying state has yet included sign language as a language to which the Charter will apply. DCAL has also contacted relevant Northern Ireland Departments (DHSSPS/DE) to obtain basic information on the situation of both languages. Meetings have also been arranged with groups representing users of British and Irish sign language. The Department has declared that it will take views from other appropriate parties in due course before producing policy proposals.

The Belfast Agreement

The Agreement commits the Government to:
"recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic minority communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland."

"In the context of active consideration currently being given to the UK signing the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it:

- *take resolute action to promote the language;*
- *facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand;*
- *seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language.*
- *make provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints;*
- *place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education;*
- *explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland;*
- *seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland; and*
- *encourage the parties to secure agreement that this commitment will be sustained by a new Assembly in a way which takes account of the desires and sensitivities of the community".*

Progress in implementing the Belfast Agreement

The implementation of the Belfast Agreements has serious implications not only for the communities and their political representatives, but also for the Northern Irish Executive who were unaccustomed to dealing with

such far-reaching attempts to 'normalise' the various target languages. The following elements derive from the Agreement: the Linguistic Diversity Branch established; North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) Northern Ireland Order 1999 in force; the North/South Body established and functioning well; Film and TV production pilot; Council of Europe Charter signed and ratified; Charter Implementation Group in place; Translation Service - work underway to set it up; East/West links strengthened re Gaelic and Scots; Language planning exercise begun; NSMC language format has met twice; Links established on ethnic minorities; substantial funding made available for promoting Irish and Ulster-Scots; work has begun on strengthening links with the Department of Education on the role of education in languages; research into attitudes to and demand for services in Irish and Ulster-Scots.

The Linguistic Diversity Branch

A new Linguistic Diversity Branch began work in February 1999.[4] The Branch has responsibility for providing policy advice, support and guidance to the Minister and colleagues on linguistic diversity which includes Irish, Ulster Scots, the languages of the ethnic minority communities and, more recently, British and Irish sign languages. The Branch has a total of eight staff. It does not currently have a grant making capacity.

North/South Language Implementation Body

The Language Body was established by the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) Northern Ireland Order 1999 which came into operation at devolution. The North/South Language Body is known in Irish as An Foras Teanga and in Ulster Scots as Tha Boord o Leid. The Body has two separate agencies, Foras na Gaeilge and Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch. The Body has the following functions in relation to Irish Language
- Promoting the Irish language;
- Facilitating and encouraging its use in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand;
- Advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- Undertaking supportive projects, and grant-aiding bodies and groups as considered necessary;
- Undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations;

- Developing terminology and dictionaries;
- Supporting Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish.

The Body has the following functions in relation to Ulster-Scots language and culture:

Promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island.

The Irish Language Agency (Foras na Gaeilge) has its headquarters in Dublin (7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2). It will have a small regional office in Belfast. The Ulster Scots Agency (Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch) has headquarters at Franklin House, 10-12 Brunswick Street, Belfast, BT2 7GE. It will have a small regional office in Donegal and will consider an office in Edinburgh in due course.

The Language Body has 24 Board members, including the two joint Chairpersons. The Chairperson of the Irish Language Agency is Maighread Bn. Uí Mhairtin. The Interim Chief Executive of the Agency is Mr Micheál Ó Gruagáin. The agreed staff complement for the Foras is 65. There are 45 presently in post and staff numbers are being built up by degrees. The Chairperson of the Ulster Scots Agency is Lord Laird of Artigarvan. The Interim Chief Executive of the Ulster Scots Agency is Mr John Hegarty. The staff complement is 8 and there are presently 6 in post.[5]

North/South Language Body Corporate Planning

The Foras na Gaeilge indicative programme of activities for 2001 is envisaged in terms of four main sectors:
1. Development of planning and policies over a wide range of areas
2. External funding of organisations and projects
3. Projects and partnerships of the *Foras*
4. Administration and personnel.

The main elements involved in each sector are as follows:

(1) *Development of planning and policies*
It is intended to submit the strategic development plan, and detailed organisational structure of the Foras for approval at a meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in late 2001.
(2) *External Funding*
It is estimated that An Foras will allocate over £5.79 stg in 2001 to external funding of:

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4   Much of the detailed policy proposal is still underway, such is the delicacy of the language issue both in the transitional programme and the current unstable situation following the resignation of David Trimble as First Minister (1st July, 2001) and the consequent reinstatement.

5   This compares with a current staff complement of 31 for the Welsh Language Board with an annual grant of c.£6 million.

- Irish language organisations where a funding agreement is already in place.
- Projects (community projects in particular) which are already in operation and which will require further funding in 2001.
- New projects which will seek funding between now and 31.12.01.
- A new pre-school organisation (estimated cost IR£750k) and new arrangements for Irish language newspapers and journals (estimated cost IR£400k) are also included in the allocation.

(3) *Projects and Partnerships of the Foras*

These would include projects and schemes run by the Foras itself eg communications programme, book publishing and distribution, projects in partnership with other agencies eg part funding of Irish language officers and statutory functions eg terminology, dictionaries, provision of textbooks and research.

(4) *Administration and Personnel*

The main elements involved are (a) the increase of staffing from 45 to 65 as quickly as possible (b) establishing a permanent office in Belfast and completing an upgrade of headquarters office; (c) implementing the new structures and arrangements in the corporate plan (d) establishing new IT and accounting systems and (e) a substantial training programme for new and existing staff.

The funding for the year 2000/2001 was £7.2m stg. DCAL provided £1.8m stg of this. The estimated provision for 2001/2002 is £10.12m stg. DCAL will provide £2.53m stg of this.

Ulster-Scots – Corporate Plan

The NSMC at its meeting on language format on 5 December 2000 approved the Ulster-Scots Heid Ploy (Corporate Plan). Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch released its Heid Ploy, on 2 January 2001. The aim of the plan is to 'promote the study, conservation, development and use of Ulster-Scots as a living language'. The Plan supported four major themes at a total cost of £1.45 million. They are:

- Supporting Ulster-Scots as a living language and promoting its use and development.
- Acting as a key contributor to the development of the Ulster-Scots culture.
- Establishing partnerships with the education and community sectors to promote the study of the Ulster-Scots language, culture and history.
- Developing the public's understanding of the Ulster-Scots language and culture.

The funding available for the year 2000/2001 was £667k stg. DCAL provided £500k stg of this. Indicative provision available to Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch in 2001/2002 is £1.3m stg. DCAL will provide £0.97m stg of this. Prior to devolution no public sector funding was

available for language promotion as such. Resources were made available for projects with a language dimension which met the objective criteria of a range of mainstream programmes. Such projects are still eligible to be considered for funding from those sources. For example, in the year prior to devolution (1999/2000) Government support in Northern Ireland for projects with an Irish language dimension grew to over £10 million. This amount includes funding of £8 million for Irish medium education. In the same period funding for Ulster-Scots was £118k. In 2000/2001 funding of £7.879m sterling was agreed for the Language Body. The Irish Language Agency will receive approximately £7.2m and the Ulster Scots Agency £0.7m. (Northern Ireland will provide £1.803m of this) In 2001/2002 indicative funding of £11.42m will be available. The Irish Language Agency will receive £10.12m and the Ulster-Scots Agency £1.3m. (Northern Ireland will provide £3.5m of this.) Funding is also available from mainstream funding programmes, for objectives other than promotion, provided that applicants meet the criteria.

Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

On 4 June 1998 the UK Government announced its intention to sign the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

On 2 March 2000 the UK Government signed the Charter recognising Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Scots and Ulster-Scots for Part II. It thereby committed itself to apply the general principles and objectives of recognition and non-discrimination.

In a letter issued by both British and Irish Governments on 5 May 2000, Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern pledged that the Council of Europe Charter would be ratified by September 2000, and would publish within six months an action plan for implementing the Charter. The Charter was ratified on 27 March 2001. The Charter came into force on Monday 2 July 2001.

In Northern Ireland, Interdepartmental Charter Steering and Working Groups were set up to decide how to implement the Charter for Northern Ireland and, specifically, to identify which provisions of Part III could be applied to Irish. The Groups represented all Northern Ireland Departments, the NIO and the NI Courts Service. DCAL (Linguistic Diversity Branch) co-ordinated the work, helped by an expert advisor who is a consultant to the Council of Europe.

The First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the NI Assembly notified the Foreign Secretary of those provisions relating to devolved matters which may be included in the Instrument of Ratification in respect of Irish. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Office have also advised the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the provisions relating to

non devolved matters which are the responsibility of Central Government and these which may be included in the Instrument. Upon ratification, the UK Government specified Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic for Part III of the Charter – *Measures to Promote the Use of Regional or Minority Languages in Public Life* It will fall to the NI Executive to ensure that the Charter is observed and implemented in Northern Ireland in respect of devolved issues and to inform the Foreign Secretary. DCAL chairs an Interdepartmental Charter Group to co-ordinate implementation of the Charter. The remit of the Charter group is to provide advice on the preparation of annual Departmental and Executive action plans and progress reports, monitor implementation of the Charter, advise on resource implications and develop guidance for Departments. The aim is to publish the action plan within 6 months following ratification.

Irish medium broadcasting

The Good Friday Agreement contains undertakings that the Government would:
- explore the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge (TG4) in Northern Ireland.
- seek more effective ways to encourage and provide support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland;

Responsibilities for Telecommunications, including television broadcasting is a reserved matter and rests with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in Central Government. Technical discussions on the steps required to further extend TG4 reception in Northern Ireland are ongoing.

LDB have met with representatives from the Irish language broadcasting communities to discuss the pilot and listen to their views.

A two year Irish language TV and film production pilot scheme will start by April 2001.

An action plan for the pilot project was produced by Don Anderson, ex head of ITC, a media consultant and author of the report 'How to Broadcast the Irish Language in Northern Ireland: Irish Language and the Belfast Agreement'. The plan is entitled "A New Beginning for a New Age - Irish Medium Production Training". The objectives of the pilot project are:
- To identify priority training requirements and liaise with training providers to develop suitable training courses and a pilot course leading to NVQ 2/3, or equivalent for a specified number of applicants.
- To help put together a support package to ensure production of a number of Irish language films/ television programmes. (This would involve identifying additional non-Government funding possibly from the Media II programme. The Language Body might also have a role to play).

- To produce a report with recommendations for draft strategy and action plans for future development of the Irish medium sector.
- Funding for the broadcasting pilot for 2001/2002 is subject to final approval by the Minister.
- Work is underway to put arrangements in place to implement the recommendation of the Anderson Report.
- Irish speakers represent 9.4% of the population of Northern Ireland. The project envisaged is small in comparison with the work being done in other countries. In Scotland - where Gaidhlig speakers are 1.4% of the population, £8.5m per year is available for Gaidhlig language programming. Wales, with 19% Welsh speakers, spends £74.86m on Welsh language broadcasting and has a dedicated TV channel S4C.

The availability of TG4 broadcasting from the Republic is of cost advantage to Northern Ireland.

Education

- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 places a duty on the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish medium education. The Department is currently funding 8 Irish Medium schools (7 primary and 1 secondary) with approximately 1,600 pupils. There are also 2 grant-aided Irish-medium primary units and the Department has approved a further 2 Irish-medium primary units and 1 secondary unit with effect from September 2000.
- On 11 February 2000 the Minister for Education, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA announced his intention to establish a new advisory body on Irish medium education to be known as "Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta". The new body was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 9 August 2000 and will have charitable status. The new Body has met on several occasions.
- A new trust fund - "Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaiochta" is in the final stages of being established by the Department of Education. It is awaiting the granting of charitable status by the Inland Revenue. This fund will support the development of Irish Medium education and the initial funding from the Department of Education is £1.25m.
- The Minister for Education announced a reduction in the viability criteria for Irish medium primary school from 18 December 2000. The revised criteria are: initially an intake of 15 pupils for new urban schools and an intake of 12 pupils for new schools in rural areas. There will also be medium term targets of an intake of 20 for urban schools and 15 for rural schools. Schools must satisfy these medium term targets in order to be eligible for capital funding.

- There are no current demands from within the school system for Ulster-Scots to be taught as a language. There is scope within the statutory Northern Ireland curriculum for the study of Ulster Scots and any school can include this on a voluntary basis where there is demand.
- There are opportunities for schools to introduce aspects of Ulster Scots language, literature and culture in the curriculum as part of the Cultural heritage and education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) cross-curricular themes.
- At tertiary level, Queen's University offers undergraduates studying for a degree in English the opportunity to study the Ulster Scots language as part of a module in Irish/English. A similar opportunity exists in the MA course.
- The Ulster-Scots Agency (Tha Boord o Ulster Scotch) and the University of Ulster opened the world's first Institute of Ulster-Scots studies on Wednesday 3 January 2001. The new Institute represented a joint initial start-up investment of £300,000 and will be based at the University of Ulster's Magee College.

Translation services

- Demand by Departments and associated bodies for translation and interpreting services has increased dramatically since devolution. It is anticipated that this is likely to continue. New arrangements are being developed to meet actual and anticipated need. Key considerations are quality, timeliness and cost-effectiveness. DCAL has established a central language translation service to meet the needs of all Departments. Translation requests are submitted through DCAL's Linguistic Diversity Branch who allocate them to quality controlled translators. All Departments will be expected to co-operate with DCAL and contribute funding for the project and running costs of the service. The project has looked at models of good practice from Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland and will consider options for a strategic approach involving Foras na Gaeilge for the Irish translation service. The Department has agreed with the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Ulster-Scots Language Society that translations into Ulster-Scots will be handled through the Agency. The Department has had a preliminary meeting with the Equality Commission and meetings are scheduled with minority ethnic communities. The aim is to discuss key language issues, including about lack of quality translation and interpreting services. Interpreting and translation services for users of British and Irish sign languages will be discussed at meetings which have been arranged with the British Deaf Association and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

The LDB commissioned research by Professors into demand for the use of Irish in official business. The study gathered views from service users, the general public, activists and officials. Their research identified four category of service users, namely:

1. activists, some of whom may claim the right to identical provision in Irish and English in every written and spoken interaction with Government in all business areas.
2. sympathisers, who will welcome a degree of public recognition for Irish eg in posters, signage, forms and who may use services;
3. tolerators, who can accept public use of Irish, perhaps in some venues only, or provision of some services, but would not wish to use them;
4. opposers, who are antipathetic to the concept and practice of using Irish in the public sector in any form and in any location.

The LDB will work closely with the Ulster-Scots Agency to ensure that research needs for Ulster-Scots language are identified, prioritised and addressed in a coherent manner. DCAL will also work with the agency as required to help them develop criteria, performance indicators and targets. The Department has developed its own arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the Agency's performance. The LDB along with the Research Branch (OFM/DFM) commissioned a consultant to work with the Ulster-Scots Language Society to develop their strategic planning capability, and focus their resources and present the case for Ulster-Scots language views more effectively to Government and other interests. Mr John Edmund's findings were presented to the Minister on 21 February 2001.

There was no question on knowledge of Ulster-Scots in the 2001 Census held on 29 April 2001.[6] However DCAL is in discussion with the Ulster Scots Agency and other interested groups to establish research priorities to support the development of the language which will include consideration of a question on Ulster-Scots in future censuses.

No comprehensive language planning has ever been undertaken in Northern Ireland. On 11 March 2001, the Linguistic Diversity Branch held the first major language planning exercise. This involved drawing on the experience and expertise of eminent sociolinguists and

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6   In recognition of the Government's desire to provide support to the language, an information leaflet accompanying the Census form (translated into Ulster-Scots as well as a number of other languages) was made available to members of the public on request. The translation which has been produced with the assistance of the Ulster-Scots Agency is of value to those who wish to learn more about the census in Ulster-Scots.

academics from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Catalonia and Australia.[7] It is anticipated that over the next eighteen months firm policy proposals will be laid before the NI Assembly as to how best to promote the linguistic diversity of the society. At the March meeting I argued that the following suggestions were capable of implementation both by indigenous linguistic communities such as the Slovenes, Basques and Welsh and by selected historically-migrant communities within the multiethnic contexts of European cities.

1. Joint venture projects by European Union agencies and the respective Language Boards, e.g. in the sharing of resources on language promotion and social motivation campaigns, language marketing and advertising campaigns.

2. The preparation of a Community Language Planning and Policy Handbook for the European Union.

3. The promotion and exchange of technological information for community language development. e.g. co-operation on spellchecker software and on-line dictionaries/ thesauri between language groups and in co-operation with major international software houses [e.g. Microsoft/AppleMac], thereby taking advantage of economies of scale in the production of such facilities.

4. The development and exchange of progressive, successful, stress-free, holistic teaching methods for community language education, especially for new speakers and those whose skills need to be boosted.

5. Marketing strategies to convince the general public of the material relevance of learning both international and lesser-used languages in selected societies, for example, by adding a commercial and economic justification to the more common cultural based reasons for language promotion.

6. Within the statutory domains of most bi-or multilingual societies, language representation should be a vital consideration in the following areas:
- in education at all levels and for all age groups;
- in the workplace generally;
- in incorporating the interests of the target language within public administration, the legal profession and senior civil service and developing professional competence of its usage within these key sectors. This is particularly acute if we wish to realise a truly bi/multilingual civil society, wherein the communities in question may be served in the language of their choice by a professionally trained service provider.

- in incorporating the interests of the target language within the regional development and physical planning system.

7. Facilitating community development activities which are not necessarily dependent upon government support, but reach out to other agencies and to the commercial sector. There is a real danger in tying in the future of individual communities to the largesse of the local state. How one maintains the relative autonomy of community level action is one of the most profound challenges influencing the vitality of contemporary democracy.

8. To initiate practical strategies which will relate aspects of community language planning in a more focused manner than hitherto to economic and regional development programmes.

9. To focus on the training of multipliers (language *animateurs*) in the community who would:
- develop practical aspects of policy,
- drive implementation and innovation
- offer specialist assistance to target groups with acute/special needs.

10. To devise multilateral action-research projects wherein the interests of community language planning is one consideration among many. An over concentration on linguistic issues rather than upon social and contextual issues may fragment rather than integrate community interests - the medium must not become the message.

11. To foster collaborative policy initiatives with agencies such as the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions; selected Regional Assemblies and Parliaments; and NGO's so that language considerations become embedded in all aspects of policy, where relevant, rather than being considered as add-on measures reserved primarily for the educational and commercial sectors only (Williams, 2000).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

In the light of the above submission there remain clear implications for language development in Northern Ireland.

1. The commitment to a new politics based upon equality, mutual respect and pluralism implies that Northern Ireland will need to re-orientate the traditional axis by which it compares itself with the Republic in the south, Scotland to the east and the British government in all other respects. Northern Ireland has much to learn

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7　The current author was privileged to be involved in these and earlier discussions relating to preparations for and consequent developments from the Good Friday Agreement. He wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Pat McCallister and her colleagues from the Linguistic Diversity Branch of the Northern Ireland Executive whose briefing notes from the basis of the detailed discussion herein on Northern Irish Language Policy deliberations.

from four other contexts where these issues have a long history, viz. Canada, Catalonia, Euskadi and most profitably Wales.

2. The British government's attitude to and support of the Welsh language community and its associated culture has changed markedly in recent years. The cardinal truth is that as a result of oppression and neglect the language was conventionally a marker of resistance and of opposition. With recognition and support the language has become a social medium of communication able to be embraced by all Welsh residents, and increasingly large sections of the former Anglicised population are opting for a bilingual future. To a large extent with cross-party support and consensus the language has been taken out of politics of conflict even if the politics has yet to be taken out of the language struggle. The working of a bilingual National Assembly is sufficient testimony as to how far we have travelled this road.

3. In order for Irish, and to a lesser extent Ulster Scots, to flourish as vehicles for the communication of ideas, skills and a pluralist culture, it is essential that new networks and a new set of institutions be established which enable that language to be embraced by all in society should they so choose. Thus issues of the development of Irish-medium schools, attractive texts and resources, the training of teachers, the introduction of optional (or mandatory) Irish lessons in all state-funded schools need to be tackled afresh, with a great deal of respect for the existing institutional arrangements based within Roman Catholic networks. However, logic alone suggests that if Irish is always to be associated with Catholic cultural imperatives it will not serve as a bridge or a platform upon which more cross-cutting networks can be established. Historically in Wales, the language struggle was associated with the nationalist cause for very understandable reasons, but after three decades of legitimisation and institutionalisation of the language, no one today seriously believes that by sending children to bilingual schools they are boosting the interests of any political party of sub-section of society. Thus it is imperative that DENI re-consider the whole issues of language choice within the educational system, including the training of teachers and the location of resource centres. This is critical so that a free choice may be offered to every non-Irish -speaking citizen to benefit from a bilingual experience either for themselves in adult education or more probably for their children. In similar terms, although I envisage it being much harder to conceive as an integrated system, the exposure to elements of Ulster-Scots should be widened within the remit of the education authorities.

4. Community development experience in Wales suggests that individuals need direct government support to enable them to establish and maintain certain community networks which enhance the vibrancy of a bilingual heritage. This could take the form of language en-

terprise agencies as described above, the creation of a more visible bilingual landscape through public signs, the development of resource centres, the adoption of stress free teaching methods for adult learners, media developments and collaborative projects with colleagues in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

5. Within Northern Ireland itself there have been several initiatives and analyses of practical ways forward. For example, Andrew has focused on the need to create new Irish-language institutions in the universities (Andrew, 1993). A recommendation, at least worth serious consideration, is that *ab initio* Irish language courses at Celtic Studies, QUB and Irish Studies, UU should be combined and research facilities developed to become the basis for an Irish-language research, training and teaching institute with an Irish-language resource centre. Initially such an institute would be concerned with the effective teaching of Irish in higher education. Then it would expand its activities to cater for the needs of teachers and learners alike. Schools, institutions of further education, ELBs, teachers' centres, broadcasting organisations, business interests, cultural groups and individuals could all avail of a public resource and its high calibre services.

6. At the level of the community basic research should be undertaken into patterns of Irish and Ulster Scots language use to ascertain existing processes and problems, as in the case of Wales above, before short term palliative measures are announced on the basis of fragmented and partial insights. This would focus on youth activities and on the specification of the relationship between bilingualism and the economy so that employment prospects might be considered in tandem with socio-cultural considerations.

7. Finally, it is imperative that the Northern Ireland Assembly and the civil service declare clear, consistent and realisable roles for all the languages represented here, and prioritise its action plans and policies so that the interested public is convinced that pragmatic medium term goals are being set. Equally vital is that legitimate attempts are being made to monitor the progress achieved by various departments and agencies in realising such goals.

Difficulties in implementing agreed plans

A range of difficult choices face language planners and users of government services in Northern Ireland.

1. Statutory obligation or good will only? There is a critical need for statutory obligations in the medium term, difficult though it may be at present to conceive because good will is not enough if a thoroughgoing choice of language service is the aim of the policy.

2. Holistic versus Sectoral Language Planning. 'Joined up thinking' within and between government departments and their partner agencies in the commu-

nity is essential. 'Holistic language planning' can so easily become 'sectoral language planning', consequently far easier to loose heart and assume that no real social impact will ever be made to sustain long-term practice of language choice.

3. Symbolic or Practical Language Schemes? Agreed language schemes, whether at Assembly level or level of local authorities, can very often be symbols of good intent rather than genuine services at point of local demand/contact. Critical need to monitor the actual working of the schemes. Hence the need to tackle the twin issues of adequate resourcing of LP schemes and target community implementation. Processes of empowerment, ownership, participation and partnership are far easier to assume as given rather than work on as part of infra-structural development of LP.

4. Institutional or Individual Language Rights? In whom are basic rights vested? Individual citizens or institutions implementing an equal opportunities policy?

5. Public Sector or Plural Sector Approach? For very obvious reasons initial language policy schemes are targeted at public sector institutions and educational domains. However, to be truly useful, language schemes should have a medium term aim of influencing language rights behaviour in most socio-economic contexts.

6. Top-down or Bottom-up Planning? How does the partnership between central and local agencies, vital community initiatives, the voluntary sector and the world of work, mobilise and reflect society's language-related energy to reinforce the central thrust of language schemes?

7. Tension between Instrumentalists and Analysts. In all cases of language revitalisation there is an acute tension in realising language schemes between advocates of front-line services and language teaching requirements, and those who in addition recognise that sound planning requires accurate trend and impact analysis. One of the chief dangers of putting plans into practice within difficult resource constraints is the temptation to neglect the audit and monitoring function of language planning. Consequently little firm analysis of the effect of the language schemes, other than anecdotal or partisan information, is available to inform subsequent discussions and policy initiatives.

8. Priorities of Linguistic Diversity Branch. Is it essentially a grant disbursement operation or also a genuine language planning and policy unit? As so much of the budget of the LDB will be targeted to social partners and staffing costs, little resources are made available to sustain genuine LPLP function. Critical need therefore to recognise adequate budget to employ specialist 'planners and forecasters' who can anticipate need and save the LDB from the trap of being essentially both a whipping boy and a post-box for the distribution of public monies to target audiences. LDB needs to direct change (policy) as well as service the existing needs of government and constituent citizens (practice).

9. Internal reticence within the civil service. In many cases where lesser used languages are incorporated into the machinery of government and administration, the biggest stumbling block to the implementation of worthwhile and comprehensive language schemes is the reticence and general attitude of civil servants not directly concerned with LP schemes. Two temptations loom large: a) to view all language-related issues as being the special responsibility of a Linguistic Diversity Branch only; (the ghetto approach) and b) to refuse to accept the legitimacy of cross-cutting language issues within key functions of the local state e.g. economic development, environment, health and social services (the head in the sand approach).

WHAT ARE THE BRITISH LESSONS TO BE SHARED WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS?

Ireland

Import: Experience of handling European regional development schemes and language promotion plans.

Export: Community development experiences (Mentrau Iaith); adult teaching methods; pragmatic bilingual working practices in government and business; innovative language marketing schemes (Welsh Language Board); greater involvement with Irish-British Council to boost inter-regional networking, tourism, transport and, of course, the Ulster contribution to devolution and cross-border relations in Ireland, north and south.

Brittany

Export: bilingual education teaching methods and systems; bilingual media and communication software developments; innovative language marketing schemes; language transmission in the family schemes.

Euskadi

Import: methods of recording and analysing official language statistics; good practice derived from HABE's adult teaching of Basque; several private commercial initiatives to boost bilingual working practices, e.g. microplans for SMEs.

Export: bilingual education teaching methods and systems; language transmission in the family schemes; linguistic animateurs.

Catalonia

Import: research-based methods for normalising Catalan; mechanisms for targeting key strategic domains; social inclusivity and co-responsibility for bilingualism through the *Consell Social de la Llengua Catalana*; General Language Normalisation Plans; methods of promoting bilingualism within the economy, trade unions and health and social institutions; operational remit of *Direcció General de Política Lingüistica; Consorci per la Normalització Lingüistica; TERMCAT; INDEXPLA* (a software programme measuring use of Catalan in organizations and providing data base for periodic evaluation of language plans); political experience of influencing European-level public policy.

Export: Mentrau iaith and community development initiatives; local enterprise agencies; language transmission in family schemes; linguistic animateurs; Spring 2001 Catalan-Welsh Concordat a firm basis for sustained dialogue.

Lesser Used Language Regions of EU

Import: EU wide initiatives on exchange of experience between regional and immigrant language groups; building of coalition networks to maintain linguistic diversity.

Export: bilingual education teaching methods and systems; bilingual media and communication software developments; innovative language marketing schemes (Welsh Language Board); language transmission in the family schemes; joint initiatives by Language Boards to influence EU policy; bilingual training for professionals e.g. CETSW.

EU generally

Import: better language teaching methods; social inclusion of minority in EU legislation; institutional sensitivity to bilingualism, multilingualism and multiculturalism; student exchange programmes which emphasise applied aspects of multilingual skills development in target discipline/subject area.

Export: ideas and experiences for the development of a common language policy for EU and European Parliament; greater recognition of inter-dependence of economic and cultural factors; greater awareness of previous Welsh contributions to common European thought and practice.

Central and Eastern Europe

Export: bilingual education teaching methods and systems; teacher training methods and curriculum design; bilingual media and communication software developments; innovative language marketing schemes (Welsh

Language Board); language transmission in the family schemes; bilingual training for professionals e.g. CETSW. Policy advice on 'Enlargement'-'Harmonisation'.

Canada

Import: experience of operating a bilingual judiciary and appeals system; the operation of high quality bilingual government services (despite recent criticism of lack of leadership and commitment); consideration of need for Commissioner of Official Languages; language of work practices in the federal public service; immersion education experiences with culturally plural citizens and an increasing rate of immigration.

Export: community development experiences (Mentrau Iaith); innovative marketing of bilingualism and regional development initiatives for Maritimes.

New Zealand

Import: distance–teaching practices for Maori; models of bilingual Maori+language of wider communication schooling as in Rotoroa High School;

Export: pre-school language initiatives (MYM); bilingual education teaching methods and systems; innovative language marketing schemes (Welsh Language Board); Community development experiences (Mentrau Iaith); bilingual training for professionals e.g. CETSW.; publishing and curriculum design experience for promotion of Maori.

Africa and Asia

Export: bilingual education teaching methods and systems; bilingual media and communication software developments; bilingual/multilingual training for professionals e.g. CETSW.

Commonwealth Legislatures

Import: bilingual working conventions for civil servants; translation and recording procedures; complaints and appeals systems; interactive IT methods of direct digital democracy in preferred language of citizen; inter-parliamentary initiatives on equal opportunity and human rights issues.

Export: pragmatic, evolutionary bilingual working practice and initiatives on language policy and language planning based on consensual politics.

CONCLUSION

The British-Irish Council has only made a faltering start on its work. Future policy could contribute both a theoretical and a practical element to language planning and language policy in the UK and Ireland. It could

monitor the character, quality and success of the international conventions and institutional language policies of the newly established political assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It could investigate the complex nature of bilingual educational and administrative systems in Wales together with regional specific systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It could re-assess the role of cross-border arrangements for the increased recognition of Irish on the island of Ireland, together with Northern Irish, Gaelic and Ulster Scots links with Scotland. The British – Irish Council could become a real force for co-operation, and political bargaining at the UK/Irish and wider European level, together with bilingual education, civil rights and group equality issues in Northern Ireland. As a new political forum its role and impact should influence the deliberations of European Committee of the Regions and several other international bodies.

In time it could gauge the degree to which the information technology and media opportunities developed in connection with the National Assembly of Wales and the Northern Irish Assembly are capable of sustaining a wider range of bilingual practices in public life.[8] It is possible that both Assemblies will have a similar impact in relation to the information society as it relates to matters of public administration, education, legal affairs and the voluntary sector.

It could analyse the economic demand for a skilled bilingual workforce in several sectors of the economy; determine to what extent bilingual working practices, for example in Wales, offer a model for subsequent parallel developments within a range of multilingual contexts within other regions e.g. either in respect of several European languages or selected non-European languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Hindi or variants of Chinese languages of wider communication.

It should investigate what effect will the arrangements for the bilingual servicing of the National Assembly have on the legitimisation of bilingualism as a societal norm. Later it would be prudent to assess how the experiences generated within the National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly will impact on the plurilingual character of educational and public administrative services, together with the local government and legal system.

Given that the European Charter has now become law it should analyse the extent to which European Union and Council of Europe language initiatives related to both the Regional Minority and Immigrant Minority Languages are adopted in the various political contexts, which comprise the UK and Ireland.

Most importantly the British-Irish Council should seek to promote a permanent dialogue between the Linguistic Diversity Branch and the key language planning agencies within the UK and Ireland; and at a second stage seek to participate with UK, Irish, Catalan and Basque language planning agencies to develop realistic co-operation in key areas, for example, issues of language transmission within the family, issues of community language planning initiatives, Adult language teaching methods, technical and linguistic innovations within the various Resource Centres for Standardisation and Terminological Development (e.g. Termcat, Centre de Terminologica).

By so doing it is logical to investigate to what degree the institutionalisation of Celtic languages vis à vis the established dominance of English can be a model for the relationship of other lesser-used languages worldwide in their interaction with English. Potentially this issue is of global significance if one can transfer several of the lessons to be learned from the survival of the Celtic languages to multilingual contexts as varied as contemporary India, and much of Sub-Saharan Africa, let alone the evolving European political system.

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8   It is noteworthy that the development of Sianel 4 Cymru, and to a lesser extent the Gaelic medium television service in Scotland, has created a self-confident and pluralist bilingual workforce which sustains a wide range of media activities.

BRITANSKO-IRSKE KONVENCIJE O IDENTITETI, RAZLIČNOSTI IN ČEZMEJNEM SODEL OVANJU

Colin H. WILLIAMS

Cardiff University, UK-CF10 3XW, Cardiff, Depar tment of Welsh, P.O. Box 910
e-mail: Williamsch @cardifff.ac.uk

POVZETEK

V pričujočem eseju avtor analizira novejše britansko-irske konvencije o jeziku, kulturni različnosti in čezmejnem sodelovanju. Poudarek je na ključnih vprašanjih, s katerimi se ukvarja Britansko-irski svet, ustanovljen kot rezultat Belfastskega sporazuma (Belfast Good Friday Agreement), ki so ga leta 1999 uveljavili na Škotskem, v Walesu in na Severnem Irskem. Esej na osnovi evropskih in mednarodnih konvencij izpostavlja vrsto načel, po katerih je mogoče zgladiti spore med etničnimi skupinami, in aplicira poglavitne nauke na položaj, kakršen obstaja na Severnem Ir-skem. Sodobna socialna in jezikovna politika na Irskem in v Walesu je ponujena kot precedens in šablona za po-dobne ureditve na Severnem Irskem. V luči uresničitve Belfastskega sporazuma je podana kritična ocena prvih razmišljanj o razvoju jezikovne politike na Severnem Irskem. Esej nadaljuje z obravnavo implikacij za čezmejno so-delovanje in ponudi sedem predlogov o jezikovni politiki na osnovi primerjalne analize manj uporabljanih jezikov-nih kontekstov. Esej se konča s rezimejem poglavitnih lekcij, ki se jih lahko naučimo iz evropskih in mednarodnih okvirov, kar zadeva izmenjavo idej in metod v razvoju multikulturnega političnega sistema, ki spoštuje osnovne jezikovne in kulturne pravice.

Ključne besede: vloga jezika, identiteta, Irska, Združeno kraljestvo, evropsko sodelovanje

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