

**On the Role of Literature and Translation  
in Language Maintenance**

**Ray Harlow**

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

*University of Waikato*

[rharlow@waikato.ac.nz]

**Abstract**

The paper investigates the actual and potential role which is played by the promotion of traditional and innovative literature in efforts to maintain minority language under threat from a dominant language. The arguments advanced in the controversy surrounding the incorporation of translated material in a minority language's corpus are discussed, and the view represented that the appropriateness or otherwise of translating material into a minority language depends on the (sometimes implicit) ideological goals of the maintenance movement. Fishman's (1991, 2001) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale provides a framework for this discussion.

**Introduction**

In recent decades, there has been greatly increased interest in the issue of what is now called Reversing Language Shift (RLS), as groups of people all over the world struggle to maintain their own languages in the face of pressure from dominant, even international languages. These efforts have in many cases been going on for a long time,<sup>1</sup> but the coordination of effort, the realisation that there are things to be learnt from other groups' experience, and the development of theoretical approaches to these efforts are more recent phenomena.

Two milestones in this development are two books by Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift* (1991), and its sequel and review, *Can threatened languages be saved?* (2001). In these, Fishman and other writers make use of a Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) of eight stages (see *Figure 1*), which facilitate assessment of a minority language's position, and help to identify targets for language planning and RLS activities.

These are not seen primarily as stages which one must achieve in succession. Rather they are diagnostic, allowing the assessment of a language's situation. Further, it is made clear that activities and achievements aimed at various stages may well contribute to improvement of a language's position with respect to other stages whether higher or lower on the scale. For instance, promotion of a language through the public media (levels 1 and 2) can have an impact on the extent to which it is reinforced as a community language (level 6). This notwithstanding, Fishman is insistent that stage 6 is crucial; without this, activities directed at higher stages will have little permanent impact in promoting use and maintenance of a threatened language.

Nor should one think that a stage once achieved cannot be lost. Māori has been a minority language in New Zealand for generations, but disruption of stage 6, intergenerational transmission within a community, has occurred only in the last 60 years.

**Figure 1:** Fishman's (2001, 466) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

<p>STAGES OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT: SEVERITY OF INTERGENERATIONAL DISLOCATION (read from the bottom up)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nation-wide levels.</li><li>2. Local/regional mass media and governmental services.</li><li>3. The local/regional (i.e. non-neighbourhood) work sphere, both among Xmen and among Ymen.</li><li>4a. Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular and staffing control.</li><li>4b. Public schools for Xish children, offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control.</li></ol> <p><i>II. RLS to transcend diglossia, subsequent to its attainment</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.</li><li>6. The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community: the basis of mother-tongue transmission.</li><li>7. Cultural interaction in Xish primarily involving the community-based older generation.</li><li>8. Reconstructing Xish and adult acquisition of XSL.</li></ol> <p><i>I. RLS to attain diglossia (assuming prior ideological clarification)</i></p>
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I do not propose to go further into the individual stages here. Readers who are interested in an assessment of the position of Māori in this respect, should consult Fishman's chapter in *RLS* (1991, pp. 230-51) and the Bentons' chapter in Fishman (2001) (Benton & Benton, 2001).

Rather I want to draw attention to the two captions provided in the scale. The lower set is labelled: *I. RLS to attain diglossia (assuming prior ideological clarification)*, and the higher: *II. RLS to transcend diglossia, subsequent to its attainment*

The keyword here is 'diglossia'. Originally used in English by Ferguson (1959) to designate the situation where two distinct forms of the same language are used in a society with distinct, societally determined roles, the term 'diglossia' is now used more widely to refer to the existence of different languages within a society, each with its own functions. In the present context, it refers to the juxtaposition of a minority language whose functions and roles are constrained and a dominant language which is the default language for any function. Aiming to achieve this position (label I) and aiming to transcend it (label II) are both possible goals of language planning for minority languages and represent the ideologies called by Keegan (to appear) 'domainist' and 'total-immersionist'.<sup>2</sup>

Domainists advocate that the focus of Māori language revitalization efforts should be on the home, the marae, and in other areas of Māori community life which recently as a generation ago Māori still had a foothold. Māori already has established vocabulary (although subject to some dialectic (*sic*) variation) in these areas. It is clear that domainists do in fact support the use of Māori in school especially in communicative environments and in subjects such as language and the arts where there is sufficient traditional Māori vocabulary. However,

they are likely to suggest that subjects such as the sciences and technology should be taught in a majority language. Authors such as Chrisp (1997) and Benton and Benton (1999) perhaps could be regarded as ‘domainist’.

Total immersionists, on the other hand advocate that as in the nineteenth century, Māori is capable of being used in all environments, including academic and technical contexts. All that is required to effect the use of Māori in all situations is the creation of new Māori terminology and suitable resources both human and material. Thus, tens of thousands of new Māori words are required in order to allow a full curriculum to be taught in Māori and to be able to use Māori in the sciences, technical areas and in new domains such as cyberspace. Groups such as kura kaupapa Māori and Te Taura Whiri, as evident by the propagation of catch phrases such as ‘*kōrero Māori i ngā wā katoa, i ngā wāhi katoa*’ literally ‘speak Māori at all times, in all circumstances (places)’ can be regarded as total immersionists.

Another expression for the broader goal here is ‘normalisation’. This is a term used for policy goals in a number of European minority communities and refers to the establishment of the particular language as the norm for everyday use. That is, instead of being the marked choice conditioned by the content or setting of a linguistic exchange, the language becomes the default language. Its use is normal.

Notice that this does not entail that it will be used for all conceivable functions. Particularly, intergroup functions, functions as *lingua franca*, or special areas of international contact, e.g. air travel, scientific publishing and conferences, involve very few major languages, and increasingly as time goes on, only one.

‘Normal’ functions are all those which take place in everyday life within a community. This would of course include all the functions proper to the minority language under the diglossic model, but would further include many otherwise fulfilled by the dominant language as well, such as higher education, official transactions, courts, broadcasting, etc.

Cutting across these ‘stages’ is the familiar dichotomy of language planning as corpus planning and status planning. Defined by Kloss (1969, p. 81), who introduced the terms:

- **corpus planning** refers to all actions aiming at modifying the ‘nature of the language itself’; e.g. terminological work, development of a standard, establishment of a uniform writing system.
- **status planning** is concerned with changes to the language’s social status, e.g. extension of its domains of use, raising the language’s prestige.

These might look like discrete activities, but in practice and even in theory, they are mutually dependent. A little thought will show how both corpus planning and status planning activities correspond to any of the levels of Fishman’s GIDS.

### **Minority Language Literature**

Within this whole spectrum, what I am particularly interested in is the role of literature, and the question of translation into the minority language. How can and does the promotion of traditional literature and the encouragement of modern production contribute to the goals mentioned above? What is the place of translations into minority languages?

Under literature I mean here not only any traditional literary genres which may be recorded or indeed still practised within a language, but also continuing use of the language for literary purposes, including new genres.

How far literature these days should including material produced for ephemeral media like television, rather than the printed format, I will leave open. Probably similar things can be said about the role of imaginative broadcast material as about literature in more traditional printed form.

Under translation, I intend all translation of documents into a minority language, including literary translation, but also translation of other documents, especially official papers, notices, pamphlets, etc.

In this discussion, I will draw in large part on the cases of Rhaeto-romansh in Switzerland, Galician in Spain and Māori in New Zealand.<sup>3</sup>

All three cases, though differing in detail, are situations of a minority language under pressure from a major language (German in Switzerland, Spanish in Galicia and English in New Zealand). In all three instances, there is a considerable body a recorded traditional literature and modern production, as well as a history of translation activity, so that the questions of interest here arise in fact as well as theory.

### **Māori Literature**

Until some 150 years ago, Māori 'literature' was entirely orally transmitted. It consisted of a great variety of both prose and verse genres. Among the prose genres are to be found genealogy, history, cosmogonies, legends; verse genres, all sung, have their own particular typology.<sup>4</sup>

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, considerable volumes of this orally transmitted material was committed to writing, in large part by Māori themselves. Some of the oral genres are still very much alive today, especially *karanga*,<sup>5</sup> oratory and the transmission of tribal histories. Song, both in traditional styles and the more modern 'action song' and *haka*<sup>6</sup> are still practised but usually with texts composed on paper.

Among more modern genres, childrens' literature, both translated and original, predominates, as a consequence of the initiatives in immersion education in recent decades (see Benton & Benton, 2001). There is also some poetry now composed on paper for reading, as well as written prose narrative, especially the retelling of traditional material and invention within traditional themes.

### **Galician Literature<sup>7</sup>**

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Galician enjoyed an importance never paralleled since, as a vehicle of courtly lyric. With the political ascendancy of Castile, however, the

language entered a period of effective silence, called *os séculos escuros* ('the dark centuries') until the *Rexurdimento* ('resurgence') of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, personified by Rosalía de Castro. Her initiative in publishing lyric in Galician was quickly followed by others, and since that time, there has been a flood of publication in all genres, especially lyric and novels. The production of literature suffered a setback during the time of the centrist regime of Franco and the Falange, but since the introduction of a new, federalist Spanish constitution and of greater regional independence and autonomy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, literary creativity in Galician has flourished, not least owing to substantial support from the Xunta de Galicia, the government of the autonomous region.

### **Rhaeto-romansh Literature<sup>8</sup>**

There is substantial evidence of a long oral tradition of legends, fairy stories and folksongs, before the beginning of written literature. Folk drama is also a genre which seems to go back some considerable time. The earliest written literature of any size stems from the time of the humanists and reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century) and consists mostly of religious material. Creative literature is in evidence really only since the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of romantic movement, but has flourished since that time with a steady stream of poetry, prose and dramatic compositions.

### **The Role of Minority Language Literature**

Despite the different histories of these cases, there are two general points to make about literatures of languages in a minority position:

1. Literatures written in minority languages in contexts where the minority language's speakers (at least the adult population) are bilingual always sees itself consciously as defending and promoting the minority language. To write in Māori or Rhaeto-romansh is a political act as well as a cultural one. One's potential readers are in general literate in the dominant language and are exposed to literature in that language to a much greater extent than in the minority language.

To write in French and hope to be read is a form of optimism. To write in Corsican and cling to the same hope is to dream in vain. (Rochiccioli, 1982, p. 9, cited in Jaffe, 1999, p. 42)

However, there is a wide-spread view that a literature in a language enhances its claim to a right to exist.<sup>9</sup> Certainly a literature in a language helps to establish that language's existence as both an *Ausbausprache* (language by development) and an *Abstandsprache* (language by distance of distinctness). These terms are also from Kloss (1969). While less relevant in the case of Māori or say Welsh, which are self-evidently languages, these factors are important in many other cases, where a minority language has to compete with a closely related and rather similar dominant language, similar to the extent that the minority language is often regarded as a dialect or 'degenerate' form of the dominant language, e.g. Galician vs. Castilian, Rhaeto-romansh vs. Italian.

At the very least the promotion of literature both by encouraging production and by ensuring its study in schools helps establish the autonomy of the minority language.

2. In any minority language situation, especially one characterisable as diglossic as above, the minority language will have associations. Trivially, for instance, use of Māori in New Zealand has associations with Māori culture and identity. Rhaetoromansh in Switzerland has associations with rural settings, with mountains, farming, local community, concrete vs. German, which is seen more as global, industrial, sophisticated, abstract.

Production of literature or promotion of existing literature which fits these stereotypes and associations is called 'parallellism' (Haas, 1978) and is often looked upon as 'appropriate' and 'language-friendly', while literature produced in the minority language but outside these stereotypes (termed by Haas *disparegliaziun* 'discrepancy') is often accused of disrespect for the language or dialect. However, literature produced in accordance with the stereotypical associations of the language in fact serves to reinforce these and to confirm the existing diglossia.

On the other hand, literature of this sort, whether traditional literature or recently produced literature in the same vein, can serve a very useful purpose in socialising children or even adults into the culture and ethnicity. This sort of function goes along with the ideological position widely held among people speaking minority languages that language, culture, ethnicity and identity go together. Let us note in passing, however, that this is not a necessary connection, and that this position is arguably a result of the western European ideology of the last two or so centuries underlying the equation of nationality and language (see for instance Jaffe 1999, p. 40).

Applied to New Zealand, this is the question whether Māori is a necessary part of Māori identity and culture. There is much rhetoric which asserts that it is, and that is indeed the motivation for efforts to preserve Māori and to promote its position within New Zealand. However, the fact remains that the majority of people who identify as Māori are monolingual in English, and that in a recent survey of attitudes, a majority disagreed with the statement that you have to speak Māori to be a real Māori (Boyce to appear).

This notwithstanding and whatever the ideological origins of the view, it is now widely held, especially within movements to preserve minority languages, that the respective minority language is an essential part of identity, and thus is inextricably tied in with other components of culture, many of which are transmitted through the traditional literature. Views such as 'Without Romansh stories and without Romansh songs in childhood, there are no true Romansh people'<sup>10</sup> point in this direction.

However, restricting one's literature to just this type of traditional material, as has been noted, serves only to confirm the status quo of the minority language in its relationship with the dominant language.

Thus to the extent that language planning goals aim at normalisation as above rather than simply maintenance or even establishment of a permanently diglossic situation, encouragement of literature of all kinds, including trivial, Mills & Boon, thrillers, comics, on wider themes than the stereotypical should be a policy item.<sup>11</sup>

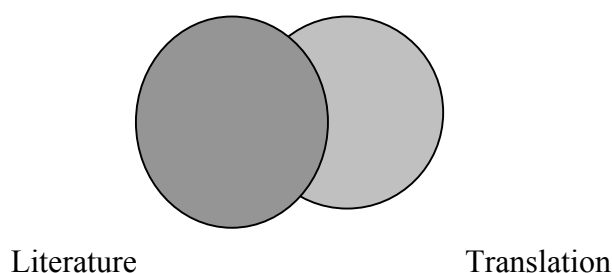
This relates not only to status planning, but also to corpus. The point is frequently made that the extension of literary production into new genres and new themes is an

effective means of language expansion. It develops new ways of expression, new vocabulary, confidence that the language is in fact capable of uses outside its original range (Haas, 1978, p. 56).

### Translation

An issue which intersects with that of literature, is translation. Not all translation is literary, and not all literature, even in minority languages, is translated (*Figure 2*). Nonetheless, there is an overlap: literary translation, and in fact, much of the same considerations apply to any translation activity into a minority language, as seen with respect to literature generally.

*Figure 2: The overlap of literature and translation*



What is striking is the level of translation that has been and still is carried on into some minority languages, but at the same time the fact that this is controversial.

In general, translation from one language to another serves the purpose on making available to the speakers of the target language a text which serves a particular function but to which they would not otherwise have access. This function may be to inform, to educate, to entertain, to persuade, to regulate. This was the role of translation for instance in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in New Zealand. Texts in Māori were created so that monolingual Māori speakers could have access to biblical, legal, instructional, etc. texts. The first real items in Rhaeto-romansh literature were biblical translations, done at the time of the reformation and counterreformation, to make these texts available to monolingual speakers of Rhaeto-romansh, in line with the view that scriptures should be available in the vernacular.

This is still true of translation of say French literature into English; this is done to make these works available to English speakers with insufficient French to read the original.

However, in many minority language situations, including all those discussed here, this is not the motivation in the present. There are no adult monolingual speakers of Rhaeto-romansh, all have good German as well. There are no adult monolingual speakers of Māori, all have English as well, and likewise *mutatis mutandis* for Galician *vis-à-vis* Castilian. Thus, translation, if it occurs, is not done because people would not otherwise have access to functionally equivalent documents in the dominant language. On the contrary, the resultant documents actually have a narrower range of readers/receivers than the original, and in fact, the range of reception for the original includes entirely that of the translated version. That is, all adults who could read the Rhaeto-romansh version of a document could read a German original, but not vice versa.

This is in fact one of the arguments advanced against translation into a minority language.

Thus, in many cases, translation into a minority language does not have a utilitarian motive. Rather, as with the production of original literature under these circumstances, the motive for translation is political (Jaffe, 1999, p. 43). Those who support translation do so because of their view of its implications for the status and corpus of the language. Thus the debate about translation fits into language planning in both aspects.

It is a debate in which the positions are adopted intuitively and in which much of the argument is by assertion. However, the idea I want to develop is that while there is perhaps no right or wrong in this matter, the issue of favouring translation versus regarding it with suspicion correlates with one's ideological position on the goals for the minority language as above (maintenance of diglossia, or normalisation).

Before returning to the types of argument expressed and to this general point, I want briefly to address the questions of what sorts of things are or have been translated into the minority languages discussed here, and by whom.

#### **Translation into Māori**

Much of the earlier translation into Māori was done by Pākehā, especially biblical and religious texts.<sup>12</sup> In 1858, *The Laws of England* were translated on orders of the then Governor-General, Gore-Browne, in order to make these available to HM's Māori subjects.

A little earlier,<sup>13</sup> Henry Tacy Kemp translated *Robinson Crusoe* and *A Pilgrim's Progress* on the instructions of George Grey. No preface gives the reason for this, but the choice of works is perhaps not insignificant, *Robinson Crusoe* being set on a Pacific island, and *A Pilgrim's Progress* an improving story about the Christian life.

Later appearances are a *Native School Reader* prepared in English by James Henry Pope and translated into Māori by Mrs Emily Way (1887), containing stories along the lines of Aesop's fables. This occurred at a time when Māori was no longer used in schools, so its translation cannot have been for the purpose of resourcing Māori tuition in schools.

Later, further legislation was translated, especially if of relevance to Māori, e.g. the *Māori Land Act 1909*.

More recently, two striking exercises in translation are literary, by Pei Te Hurinui, who translated Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* as *Te Tangata Whai-rawa o Weneti* (1946).

In the preface, Te Hurinui gives his reason for the translation:

Tuatahi: He aroha ki tō tātou reo Māori;

Tuarua: He hīkaka nō te ngākau kia mātakitaki tahi ngā mea o tātou kāore anō i whakarere i te reo o ngā tūpuna ki ngā kōrero whakapaipai o te reo Ingarihi.

...he reo hoki e taea ana te hopu ki roto ngā kōrero nunui o ngā iwi o te ao.

(Firstly out of love for our language;

Secondly, out of a desire that those who have not yet abandoned the language of the ancestors should have access to the works of art of English

[Māori] is a language in which it is possible to capture the great literatures of the world.)

In 1975, Te Hurinui's translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* as *Ngā Rūpai'aha a Ōmā Kai'ama* in dual-text format appeared. In his scholarly preface about the original, Te Hurinui makes no reference to his reasons for producing this translation.

With these we are now in the territory of translation not required for utilitarian purposes. Despite what he says in his preface to the former work about access for Māori speakers, Te Hurinui's prime purpose is to make a point about Māori.

Much more recently, of course, there has been a lot of translation of informational and official documents, primarily from government sources. Again though, this is unlike the translation of the *Laws of England* in 1858, because access through English is available to all. The reason for making these translations is otherwise.

Finally, two recent literary translations deserve mention, both of them works originally written in English by Witi Ihimaera: *Pounamu Pounamu* and *Whale rider* have appeared in separate translated editions (Ihimaera, 1986, 1995).

### **Translation into Rhaeto-romansh**

Translation of biblical and other religious material, as already mentioned, formed an important first step in the development of written literature in Rhaeto-romansh. In 1560, Jachiam Bifrun published his translation of the *New Testament*. This exercise encountered considerable opposition and in his preface Bifrun defends his action against arguments, such as that:

- Rhaeto-romansh is not a written language;
- his translation is no good;
- he did young people no good turn in providing a *New Testament* in Rhaeto-romansh for them to read, instead of encouraging them to learn German, Latin or Lombard.

Since then there has been much translation of biblical and religious material, and especially throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, translation of all kinds of literature has been going on, particularly of German works, but also from Italian, and to a lesser extent from other languages. Dante has been translated at least four times. It is estimated that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 30% of the novels, 16% of the stories, 49% of the children's literature, and 41% of the plays published in Rhaeto-romansh are

translations, over 2/3 from German, though the rate eased off towards the end of century (Riatsch, 1998).

**Translation into Galician:**

Since the *Rexurdimento* (late 19<sup>th</sup> century), a great deal of translation into Galician has been done, not just of Castilian works but from a range of European and American literature. This activity has been strongly supported by the regional government, the Xunta de Galicia. To gain an impression of the volume and range of works being translated into Galician, it suffices to look at the list in the following table (Table 1) of the translated works whose full texts are available for downloading at [www.bivir.com](http://www.bivir.com):

**Table 1:** Works translated in Galician available at [www.bivir.com](http://www.bivir.com)

Irving, Washington	<i>A experiencia do estudante alemán</i>
Flaubert, Gustave	<i>A lenda de San Xulián o hospitalario</i>
Irving, Washington	<i>A lenda de Sleepy Hollow</i>
Wells, Herbert George	<i>A máquina do tempo</i>
Palamás, Kostís	<i>A morte do Palicari</i>
Balzac, Honoré de	<i>A obra mestra descoñecida</i>
Bellamy, Edward	<i>A Parábola do depósito de auga</i>
Halle, Adán de la	<i>A peza da enramada</i>
Halle, Adán de la	<i>A peza de Berto e María</i>
Andersen, Hans Christian	<i>A sombra</i>
Zola, Émile	<i>Acuso</i>
Bunin, Iván Alexéievitx	<i>Alamedas sombrías</i>
Thevet, André	<i>As singularidades da Francia antártica</i>
Maupassant, Guy de	<i>Bóla de sebo</i>
Bunin, Iván Alexéievitx	<i>Balada</i>
Perrault, Charles	<i>Barba Azul</i>
Alcoforado, Mariana	<i>Cartas de amor</i>
Shelly, Mary	<i>Conto do mortal inmortal</i>
Grimm, Xacob e Wilhelm	<i>Contos</i>
Maupassant, Guy de	<i>Contos</i>
Capek, Karel	<i>Crime nunha casa labrega</i>
Longo	<i>Dafnis e Cloe</i>
James, Henry	<i>Daisy Miller</i>
Boccaccio, Giovanni	<i>Decamerón</i>
Flaubert, Gustave	<i>HERODÍAS</i>
Rilke, Rainer Maria	<i>Na vida</i>
Balzac, Honoré de	<i>O coronel Chabert</i>
Maupassant, Guy de	<i>O Horlá</i>
	<i>O mundo conforme el vai</i>
Bunin, Iván Alexéievitx	<i>O outono frío</i>
Diderot, Denis	<i>O sobriño de Rameau</i>
Voltaire	<i>O touro albo</i>
Rilke, Rainer Maria	<i>Pluma e sabre</i>
Irving, Washington	<i>Rip van Winkle</i>
Cicerón, Marco Tulio	<i>Sobre a amizade</i>
Cicerón, Marco Tulio	<i>Sobre a vellez</i>
Vinyoli, Joan	<i>Son home só</i>
Poe, Edgar Allan	<i>Tres domingos nunha semana</i>
Flaubert, Gustave	<i>Un corazón simple</i>
Swift, Jonathan	<i>Unha humilde proposta</i>
Caillié, René	<i>Viaxe a Tombuctú</i>
Stendhal	<i>Vittoria Accoramboni, Duquesa de Bracciano</i>
Rilke, Rainer Maria	<i>Wladimir, o pintor de nubes</i>

A similar picture is given by, for instance, an index of translations done in 1996:

- 15 novels including *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *I promessi Sposi*, novels by Poe, Dickens, Huxley, Scott;
- Poetry including the *Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyam*;
- Drama including works by Yeats, Pirandello;
- Considerable volumes of children's literature including Asterix, Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, Gulliver's travels, works by Roald Dahl, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Despite this activity, it is clear that translation is not uncontroversial. In the case of Rhaeto-romansh and Galician there has been considerable discussion in the literature on virtue of translation, as well as elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> In all the cases I have encountered the participants in the debate are committed to the health of the language and are themselves users of the language, but they differ in their view of the value for the language of the incorporation of translated literature. The debate tends, as said above, to be carried on by assertion and counter-assertion. This is I believe because the positions reflected in the debate arise from differing ideological positions comparable to the divisions in Fishman's GIDS. That is, they stem from different, sometimes not consciously held views of the goal of RLS.

### **Some of the arguments against the incorporation of translated literature**

1. Translation is wasted effort,<sup>15</sup> since everyone can read the major language. Using Fishman's (1991) code of 'Xish' for the minority language and 'Yish' for the respective dominant language, this then applies not just to works originally in Yish but also to works from other languages of which there exist Yish translations. According to some commentators this is behind an observed drop-off in translation activity into Rhaeto-romansh in recent times (Cla Riatsch, personal communication), and a 'laziness' among Galician speakers in using the literature translated into their language (Anxo Tarrío Varela, personal communication; Dasilva 1999).

2. Translated literature introduces foreign content and thought. This is implicit in, for instance, discussion about the curriculum documents in Māori in New Zealand. It is alleged that they are translations of the corresponding English documents. In fact they are not, but were prepared by separate committees. However, the mere fact that the idea of their being translations is seen as somehow negative is telling. It goes with the position that the content of the English documents is foreign and somehow not appropriate for use in Māori-medium schools. Other instances of this sort of position include: 'it damages our language and oppresses our spirit and our character' (*fetschian donn al lungatg e smasiën nies spért e nies caracter*. Riatsch & Walter, 1993, pp. 349ff.); 'Better bad and indigenous, than good and foreign' (*pli bugen schliet agen, che bien jester*. Giger 1983); '[translation is] imported foreign philosophy, the reproduction of outside identity' (Jaffe, 1999, p. 44).

3. The actual quality of translations does the language no favours (Giger, 1983). This point is of course not an argument against translation in principle but against some examples actually done. It is valid however to the extent that, unless a translator is very careful and highly skilled the result can be a work which is influenced by the original language to the extent of providing bad models of the minority language. A

good example of this is a trap that the translator of *Pounamu Pounamu* (Ihimaera, 1986, p. 26) fell into:

‘He thinks he’s the cat’s whiskers’ appears in the Māori as ‘E pōhēhē ana ia ko te pāhau o te ngeru ia, nē?’ (literally, ‘he mistakenly believes that he is the beard of the cat, doesn’t he?’)

4. Translation from the dominant language acknowledges its control as source language of a text (Jaffe, 1946). That is, the minority language is seen as subservient to the dominant language, in that the dominant language ‘owns’ the text. This then serves to reinforce the subordinate position of the minority language. This argument was advanced in a discussion of the value of translated French works into Corsican. In the same debate, the translators and their supporters in fact turned the argument round, as below.

#### **Arguments used in favour of translation**

1. Non-literary: why translate government publications and laws etc. into the minority language? Surely, this is an area where there is definitely no point in translation. All adult speakers of Rhaeto-romansh, Galician, Welsh, Māori are at least equally literate in the dominant language of their countries and thus have equal access to information.

Such translation is very much part of the status of a minority language. Again quoting the Corsican debate, ‘...translation of official and legal documents as a way of asserting [the] right to cultural and linguistic difference and the government’s responsibility to legitimize [the] language and culture’ (Jaffe, 1999, p. 43). Others have put it this way: translation out of a language recognises its right to exist; translation into a language recognises its capacity (corpus) and worthiness (status) to carry the contents in question (Meyer, 1998).

Many commentators represent the view that translation into a language is an important part of corpus development, confronting the language with new content and asserting its ability to cope, as well as developing that ability through the act of translation (Haas, 1978; Meyer, 1998; Riatsch, 1998; Riatsch & Walter, 1993).

2. Literary. In the case of literary translation, at its strongest in Galicia among the groups I have seen, though Rhaeto-romansh is a close second, an important motive for translation is to use the minority language as a means of access to the literary treasures of the world. Particularly in Galicia, where literacy in Castilian is very high (relatively speaking; apparently Spaniards as a whole do not read a great deal), translation is done so that Galician may assume the role of providing access to the classics (Latin and Greek)<sup>16</sup> and literatures of other languages. At the same time, the point is constantly made that translation of all sorts enriches the host language. In particular, translation of foreign literature serves not only to enrich the language by confronting it with content not perhaps usually dealt with in that language, but also to enrich the literature of the minority language itself by introducing new genres.

#### **Conclusion**

All of these arguments both positive and negative have merit, and in fact are consistent with a position that wants to see the respective minority language survive.

However, it seems to me that though the views are opposed, one cannot simply refute one or the other position by asserting its opposite. Both sets of views are right in that they follow from the premises assumed. In particular, it seems to me that arguments against incorporating translation into a literature or even translating generally are consistent with the diglossic ideology, which sees the goal of language maintenance as the confirmation of the minority language as the language of particular domains and content. Pro-translation arguments on the other hand go more with an ideology which sees the goal of language planning for the minority language as its normalisation.

To the extent that this is true, one could anticipate that views about the desirability or otherwise of translation will vary from individual to individual depending on their implicit aims for their language, but also from language community to language community depending on how a language measures up in terms of the GIDS. If its status is largely characterised by features in the bottom set, and its representation above the line is weak, then language maintenance efforts and goals will aim initially at consolidating a diglossic situation. Activities will be encouraged which emphasise the special and different nature of the language and culture in contrast to that of the dominant language.

Where however the goal, whether explicit or implicit, of language planning is normalisation, then there will be conscious efforts to expand the language's domains into areas previously carried by the dominant language. It may thus be that there is no right or wrong answer to the question whether translated literature has a place in a minority language's culture. Rather both positions are appropriate, depending on the stage at which a language finds itself and the ideology driving maintenance.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See for instance the cases of Welsh and Rhaeto-romansh, where the consciousness of the need to preserve these languages against the inroads of English and German respectively finds expression already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> The adoption of one or the other of these goals will depend partly on a thorough assessment of what is achievable, given the present status of the minority language in terms of the GIDS, but also partly on ideological considerations, such as one's view of the role of the language in establishing ethnic identity and defining the other.

<sup>3</sup> For summaries of the situations of these languages within their respective environments, see Harlow, 2000a and Baur, 1996 for Rhaeto-romansh; Xunta de Galicia, 1998 for Galician; and the chapters referred to above in Fishman, 1991 and 2001 for Māori.

<sup>4</sup> On traditional Māori genres and for examples of these types, see, for instance, Biggs, 1997; Harlow, 2000b; McLean & Orbell, 1975; Ngata, 1959; Ngata & Te Hurinui, 1961, 1970; Orbell, 1968, 1977, 1992; Thornton, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Highly structured calling performed by women on specific occasions such as the encounter of guests and hosts during a welcome ceremony.

<sup>6</sup> Often glossed as 'dance', *haka* is a range of verse genres accompanied by often vigorous bodily gestures, see Kāretu, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Tarrío Varela, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Deplazes, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for instance, the well-known claim of P. Linsel, *Ūna lingua po comprovar seis dret d'existenza be tras ūna litteratura originala* ('A language can prove its right to exist through an original literature'), widely cited, see for instance Riatsch, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Rina Steier, former editor of *Pagina da Surmeir*, a Rhaeto-romansh newspaper, cited in Deplazes, 1991, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance arguments for this position in Haas, 1978, pp. 57-60.

<sup>12</sup> For a good picture of early texts in Māori generally, see Williams, 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Appearance dates: 1852 and 1854 respectively, though actual translation work started in 1848 cf. Kemp, 1989, pp. 83-4

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Jaffe, 1999 for an account and interpretation of controversy surrounding translations from French into Corsican.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Giger, 1983

<sup>16</sup> See especially the series *Clásicos en Galego* published by the Xunta. A wide range of works of classical antiquity has already appeared. See Pociña, 1997.

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