

*Official Languages*

just as French, and that for many reasons but none of them dealing with linguistics.

For a linguist, English and French are not more important than any of the 3,000 other languages spoken in various parts of the world. Moreover, no language has the monopoly of universal knowledge.

This is why Milton urged the English people to learn Italian, which was the most widely used language then, and in which Queen Elisabeth and Mary Stuart published edicts.

The postwar era saw thousands of people going to foreign countries in order to find temporary jobs. The countries they found more attractive, such as Switzerland and Germany, welcomed a great number of foreign workers because of their lack of manpower.

It is estimated that in Switzerland, right now, more than 10 per cent of the population is made up of workers and people from abroad. It follows that because of their work requirements thousands of Italians, Spaniards and other foreign labourers have become bilingual.

It is reckoned that the United States alone had more than 20 million bilingual people before the postwar influx.

How long does a community stay bilingual? The duration of bilingualism varies greatly. But what is important is not the political border but the linguistic one, and they are seldom the same, except when they correspond to certain natural elements such as oceans, mountains or deserts which can prevent the spreading of language. A quite important difference in the linguistic border and the political one can bring about the existence of a bilingual country such as Switzerland and Belgium.

Historic events can also upset the geographic distribution of bilingualism. Historic events alter national borders and political groups.

On the political level, federalism has promoted bilingualism in Malaysia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The number of unilingual people in each of those linguistic communities is a determining factor for the importance of bilingualism.

If Ireland, in spite of strenuous efforts is still one of the least bilingual countries, it is largely because unilingual Englishmen exceed bilingual Irishmen in a ratio of 50 to 1.

If on the contrary, South Africa, where 73 per cent of the population can pride themselves of speaking both languages, is the most bilingual country in the world, it is largely

because the unilingual people for both official languages is almost equivalent, 15 per cent for English and 11 per cent for Afrikaans.

The larger the difference in number between two linguistic communities, the higher the percentage of bilingual people in the minority community, provided however, that other factors do not intervene to change the order of things.

In Wales, 82 per cent of Welshmen are bilingual at 12 years of age, as against 4 per cent of Englishmen.

Around 740 A.D., the slaves of the Arabic army had to learn Arabic. In Britain, after the Norman conquest, the Normans occupying nearly all the key positions contributed largely to the establishment of bilingualism among a good number of Anglo-Saxons and kept French alive until the Hundred Years' War. We all know what influence these generations of bilingual people had on the English language, which is still replete with French terms.

On the other hand, the Romans never tried to impose their language, nor did the Greek, although both their imperialisms were founded mainly on language and not on race or nationality. The language was not imposed on the population; rather it was offered as a privilege. As the language became more uniform and standardized, it gained more converts. The standardization and the diffusion of the language were due to a network of schools.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that in Canada also, through teaching, which can, it is true, help the ascendance of a language, we could increase the influence of a tongue by including it in the curriculum. For instance, the use of English was forbidden in the British schools in the thirteenth century.

If prosperity can destroy a language, poverty can bring the same result. A period of economic recession in the area where the minority language is spoken can bring about disastrous effects.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, almost all the Irish Gaeltacht was affected by a famine led to massive emigration. In the course of one generation, the language, which was that of half the country's population, became that of a small minority.

The predominating language in Luxembourg, where a Teutonic dialect is spoken, is alive perhaps only because the national economy requires the existence of a trade treaty.