

Languages in Competition: Dominance, Diversity and Decline, (The Language Library, ed. David Crystal), by Ronald Wardaugh, London: Basil Blackwell and André Deutsch, 1987, paper, 280 pages, \$26.50 CDN, ISBN 631-15745X.

This appealing book comes as a timely reminder - if need be - that language is more than a simple code, and more than a mere instrument of literature. Language evolves in a complex social, political, ethnic, historical, functional and communicative context, and it is the dynamics of this context which Ronald Wardaugh examines, devoting central attention to the parallel yet contrasting histories of English and French. In particular, he studies the ways in which English and French have competed for preëminence as communicative and social forces, both in their colonized territories and in the modern world generally. Today, English remains on the ascendant, while French learns how to manage its steady decline. Given its dominant theme - conflict and competition between languages of unequal strength - Languages in Competition ranks as a prime candidate for adoption in university courses of the 'Language and Society' genre.

This book suggests answers to such questions as: What makes a language 'important?' How do languages compete? By what means do some languages gain the upper hand, and what happens to those they eclipse? What are the advantages that speakers perceive in languages on the rise? Can minority and second languages be effectively preserved by those eager to defend them?

Chapter 1, 'Language Dominance,' poses the problem of strong vs. weak, dominant vs. recessive languages, and describes the factors involved in language spread and language decline. Chapter 2, 'Language Diversity,' deals with problems of linguistic pluralism within a single territory or state. Wardaugh explains how minorities and minority languages are handled so as to minimize internal conflict and discontent. Chapter 3, 'Ethnic Group, Nation, and State,' presents ethnicity, nationalism, and 'statemaking' as potent factors in the historical establishment and subsequent maintenance of official languages.

In Chapter 4, 'Great Britain,' the author describes the historical rise of English, and the ways in which it came to dominate and virtually extinguish its indigenous Celtic competition. Typically, the competition of languages cannot be separated from the conflict of distinct societies and ethnic groups, not even within a 'United' Kingdom. Chapter 5, 'France and Spain,' details the emergence of two other imperialistic nation-states, and their

imposition of an official language to the detriment of other idioms sharing the 'national' territory: Occitan, Breton, German, Flemish, Basque, Catalan and Corsican in France; Basque, Catalan and Galician in Spain. Though French may today dominate France more effectively than Spanish does Spain, the historical forces of social control, nationalism, and centralization are essentially the same in both countries.

Chapter 6, 'Promoting English and French,' is perhaps the most interesting chapter in this book. Here, Wardaugh maintains that English - a language associated with notions of power and influence, progress and modernity, usefulness and plurality of functions - is steadily gaining ground throughout the world, with no serious linguistic competition in sight. It is through this chapter that one can better appreciate the current position of the English language, and its probable role in the twenty-first century. French, by contrast, is struggling to maintain its former glories as a world language, even to preserve its integrity within France itself. La francophonie, a loose alliance of French-speaking nations designed to safeguard French economic interests, to promote French prestige, and to arrest any further decline of the language and culture, seems unlikely to enjoy more than limited success. The international linguistic tide has turned decisively in favour of English, and French is being left high and dry on the shore, along with all other contenders for the role of global lingua franca. Perhaps more than ever before, the strength of a language and its culture is linked to its ability to capture those who are willing to learn a second language. In this respect, no language has more 'acquired speakers' than does English. It is perhaps not accidental, then, that English-speakers are generally tolerant of linguistic diversity, while francophones - by and large - cling to more traditional notions of linguistic norm.

In Chapter 7, Wardaugh takes a searching look at 'English and French in Sub-Saharan Africa,' an area where both languages at least stand a theoretical chance of attracting new recruits. He outlines the pre-independence period, describes colonial language policies, and weighs the current residue of English and French against the prevalence of indigenous vernacular languages. Noting that many Africans are multilingual and quite willing to add more languages to their repertory, Wardaugh concludes that the linguistic future of Sub-Saharan Africa remains uncertain: not only is there considerable variation from state to state in the influence of English or French, there is also strong local resistance to both. Chapter 8, 'Competition from Arabic and Swahili,' describes current linguistic challenges to the eventual hegemony of French and English as languages of the African continent. Having been spread through North Africa along with Islam, Arabic has long played an important

role there. For a while, French replaced it as the language of administration, law, education, and international business. But now that the French have been forced to leave, the Arabic language is reclaiming its historic territory, not without difficulty. As the countries of North Africa attempt to arabize, they nonetheless cleave to French, since it continues to offer them economic, educational, technological, and cultural advantages. In several East African countries, serious attempts are afoot to replace English with Swahili as an official language. Against this trend, English remains attractive as an instrument of socioeconomic mobility.

Chapter 9, 'Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada,' describes the fate of languages obliged to cohabit within the confines of a single nation-state. Here, major themes are the tensions created by de facto bilingualism and the desire for linguistic territoriality. These three countries provide highly instructive case-studies, in the sense that ethnicity, history, territoriality and economic factors all interact within their frontiers to produce linguistic and social tensions. Belgium is often cited as the best example of a country which could easily fall apart because of its precarious linguistic balance. Switzerland, by contrast, presents a model in which the major language-groups have worked out a stable political and territorial arrangement in which no collectivity feels seriously threatened. In Canada, where personal bilingualism has long been touted as a national virtue (especially when francophones bear the burden), the French-speaking minority is earnestly seeking to recapture political and economic control of its own territory, now defined as Quebec province.

The concluding Chapter 10, 'Old States, New Pressures,' deals with the mobility of populations as a factor in language maintenance and resistance to established national languages. Increasingly, immigrants insist on retaining their native idiom in their country of adoption. In this context, multilingualism (and multiculturalism) may be endorsed as social and political virtues. Obviously, a sense of ethnicity is at work here, compensating to some extent for the absence of effective political control. It is clear that some countries have more difficulty than others in coping with this situation. States that seemed well on the way to developing a linguistically homogeneous society have suddenly found themselves faced with a diversity of minority languages and cultures, yet have no real plans for dealing with them. Countries such as France and Germany differ psychologically from the United States, Canada, and Australia, in the sense that they hold strong assumptions about immigrants who are desirable, and those who are essentially personae non gratae. The last-named countries, by contrast, are immigrant societies at base, nations built through sustained immigration. These have tended to develop mechanisms to facilitate linguistic transfer at a comfortable pace. Even in the immigrant societies,

however, traditional patterns of language loss continue unabated, and the concept of a multilingual and multicultural society appears to be more an impossible dream than a workable reality. The author examines the situation of immigrant groups in each of the aforementioned states, and in the United Kingdom, whose language and culture has been only marginally challenged by immigration since World War II.

Serious students of linguistics will want to add this book to their library, along with two of Wardaugh's earlier monographs, published in the same series, i.e., How Conversation Works (1985) and An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (1986). Assuming that Languages in Competition will become a standard textbook in courses dealing with socio- and ethnolinguistic themes, instructors may nevertheless wish to deviate from the order in which Wardaugh presents his subject-matter. Granted that the themes of Chapters 1-3 - linguistic unity and diversity, dominance and regression, ethnicity and nationalism - are best studied first, one may find it useful to move next to the case-studies of 'Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada' (Chapter 9), since these examples of linguistic conflict and competition are immediately relevant to the Canadian student's experience. Then, one could read Chapter 6, 'Promoting English and French,' since this chapter poses the problem of linguistic 'strength' and 'weakness' with almost embarrassing acuity. While reading this chapter, the instructor will surely want to emphasize the fact that the 'strength' of a language is directly connected to its perceived usefulness. Such usefulness increases in direct proportion to the number of roles a language plays and the benefits - material or abstract - that it confers on the user. The instructor will also wish to stress that the 'importance' of a language is synonymous with the 'importance' of the societies which use it.

Next, bearing in mind that many Canadian students of language and linguistics come from immigrant stock themselves, one may wish to move promptly to Chapter 10, which characterizes the reactions of five major nation-states when faced with significant waves of immigration. Having first examined the general problem of 'languages in competition,' and having looked more closely at English and French in competition with other languages, the student should be ready to tackle the sociolinguistic history of Great Britain, France, and Spain (Chapters 4 and 5) and, finally, to consider the present state and possible future of English and French in continental Africa. To add zest to any course of the type, 'Language and Society: Dominance, Diversity, Conflict, and Competition,' one could hardly go wrong by making use of two videotape series. For English, we have 'The Story of English' (nine superb sixty-minute tapes, MacNeil-Lehrer-Gannett Productions/BBC, available from the Visual Education Centre, 75 Horner Avenue, Unit 1, Toronto Ontario

M8Z 4X5) and, for French, the well-conceived production: Moi aussi, je parle français (13 half-hour tapes focussing on different parts of the francophone world, available from TVOntario).

Though Wardaugh's treatment of language competition is certainly adequate as far as French is concerned, his presentation of English-language data seems much more substantial and persuasive. An instructor with students literate in French might very well wish to try, as a counterbalance to Languages in Competition, Jacques Leclerc's Langue et Société (Chomedey, Laval: Mondia, Editeurs, 1986, pp. 530), reviewed in depth by Alain Thomas in CJL 32:425-30 (1987). Though heavily laden with statistics and comparative studies of the ways in which dozens of states cope with linguistic diversity and the unequal distribution of political and socioeconomic power, Leclerc's analysis nonetheless brings the contemporary plight of French into sharper focus.

This reviewer is persuaded that students, professional linguists, and the educated individual will learn a great deal from reading Languages in Competition. More abstractly, this volume is an important contribution to the literature of linguistic allegiance and language conflict. Without question, it marks linguistics as a social science of considerable humane value.

Noel L. Corbett
York University, Toronto