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Language diversity in the United Kingdom: a synthesis of the UK Census 2011 and the Language Rich Europe report

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Introduction

In this paper, I explore the question of language diversity in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (henceforth UK) on the basis of two sources:

1) The UK Census 2011.

The UK Census 2011 was an official government document published by the UK National Office of Statistics. This was the first census undertaken in the UK to include questions relating to language. The results of the census as regards language use in the UK are presented below.

2) The 'Language Rich Europe' report Extra & Yağmur 2012, 2013).

The 'Language Rich Europe' report (henceforth LRE) was published by the British Council in 2012 with the support of the European Commission. The report presents the results of a 260-question survey filled in by respondents in 24 countries from November 2010 until March 2013. The report does not include all European states (such as Belgium and Germany), but does include the UK, France, the Netherlands and Italy as well as some major regions, such as the Basque country, Catalonia.

1 This paper was presented on as part of the seminar series « Politiques linguistiques en Europe » coordinated by José-Carlos Herreras, Université Paris Diderot, 27 March 2015.

Importantly for this study, the LRE report includes some interesting data on the four constitutive 'countries' of the UK, as discussed below.

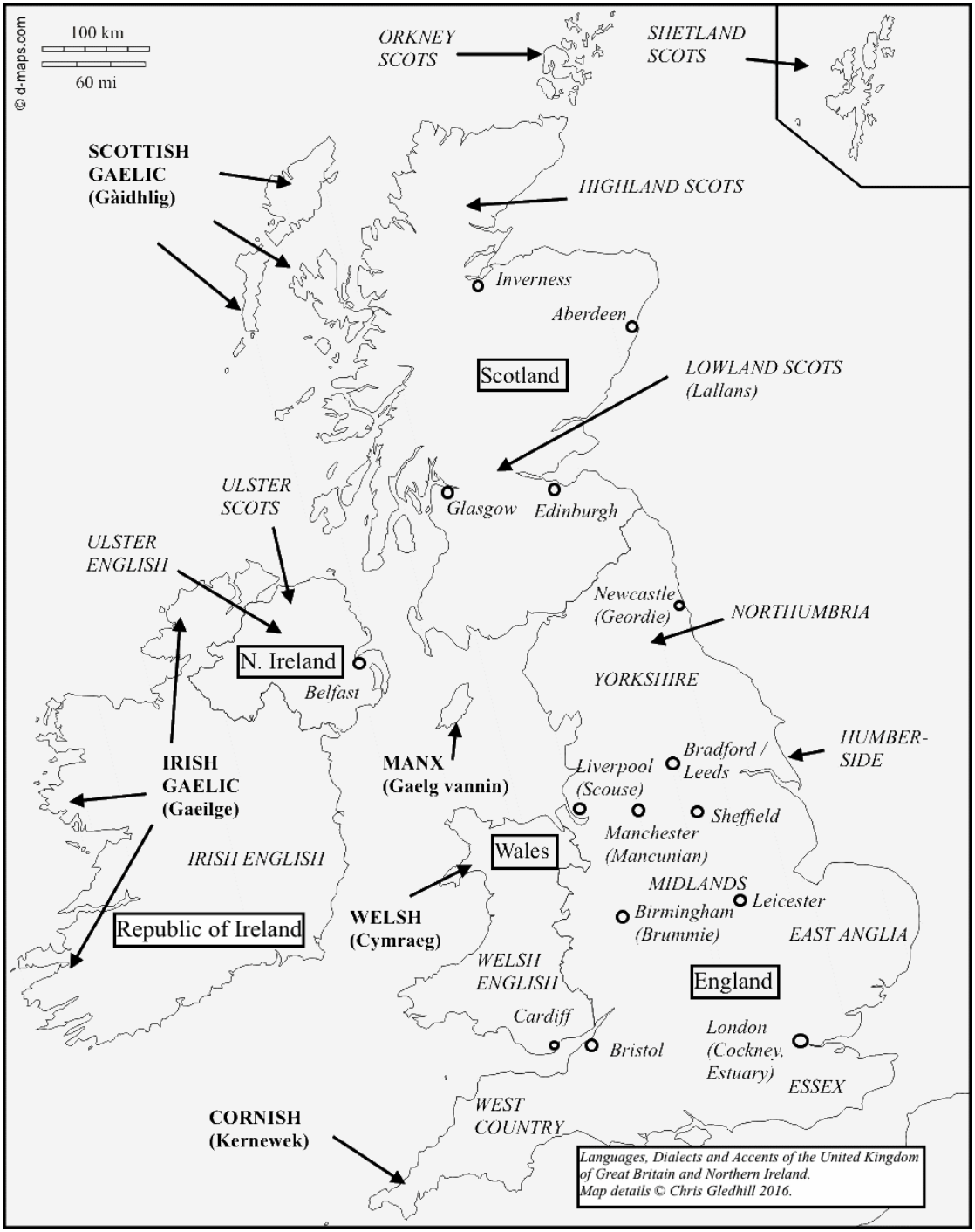
The aim of this paper is to examine the linguistic situation of the UK in the light of the UK census 2011 and the LRE report, as well as some of the standard works on language diversity in the UK (Stubbs 1985, Hughes et al. 2005, Kortmann & Upton 2007). The rest of this paper is consequently divided into two broad sections: in the first half (parts 1-3), I look at the general linguistic situation in the UK in terms of geography, demographics and political context. In the second half (parts 4-6), I examine some of the specific findings of the LRE survey on language diversity in the UK, notably concerning language policy, languages in education, and language diversity in the media, public services and business.

1. Language diversity in the UK: geography

It is important to have a visual representation of the UK's main regional and urban centres. Map-1 (below) is based on dialect and accent surveys carried out by Hughes et al. (2005, 70) and Kortmann & Upton (2007, 59). The map presents three main features:

1. areas in capitals (such as MIDLANDS) give the names of ancient kingdoms or other political areas in which some of the main regional varieties of contemporary English can still be recognised,
2. areas in italics (as in *Manchester – Mancunian*) give the names of urban areas (and in italics the popular name for some well-known local varieties of English),
3. areas in bold capitals (as in **WELSH**) name the five Celtic languages which are still used in the western parts of the five countries represented on the map.

Map 1. Languages, Dialects and Accents of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.


© d-maps.com
100 km
60 mi
ORKNEY SCOTS
SHETLAND SCOTS
SCOTTISH GAELIC (Gàidhlig)
HIGHLAND SCOTS
Inverness
Aberdeen
Scotland
LOWLAND SCOTS (Lallans)
ULSTER SCOTS
Glasgow
Edinburgh
ULSTER ENGLISH
Newcastle (Geordie)
NORTHUMBRIA
N. Ireland
Belfast
YORKSHIRE
HUMBER-SIDE
Bradford / Leeds
Liverpool (Scouse)
Sheffield
Manchester (Mancunian)
IRISH GAELIC (Gaeilge)
MANX (Gaelg vannin)
IRISH ENGLISH
Wales
MIDLANDS
Leicester
Birmingham (Brummie)
EAST ANGLIA
Republic of Ireland
WELSH (Cymraeg)
WELSH ENGLISH
England
Cardiff
London (Cockney, Estuary)
Bristol
ESSEX
WEST COUNTRY
CORNISH (Kernewek)
Languages, Dialects and Accents of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
Map details © Chris Gledhill 2016.

Following the system set out in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (see also section 2.0), I refer to the ECRML's four main categories of language plus one extra category ('Non-Territorial') to discuss the linguistic geography of the UK:

1.1 English as the National Language (NL)
1.2 English varieties as Regional / Minority Languages (R/ML)
1.3 Celtic Languages as Regional / Minority Languages
1.4 Immigrant Languages (IL)
1.5 Foreign and 'Non-Territorial' Languages. (FL)

These different categories are presented in the following subsections.

1.1 English as the National Language

Is there really any language diversity in the UK? One enduring stereotype about the UK is that there is only one language spoken across the whole country. This feeds into another stereotype, which is that the English (as the dominant population of the UK) are only capable of learning one language. Unfortunately, as discussed in the LRE report (see section 5 below), there is still some evidence to support the idea that many English are 'language layabouts'. Nevertheless, it is perhaps surprising to learn that in the UK 2011 census 'only' 93% of the UK population claimed to speak the national language, English, as their main language. This is an interesting result, but it is also misleading: it does not say anything about the extent to which regional or non-standard varieties of English might also be used alongside **Standard English (ENG[2])**. As has often been pointed out, it is not common practice for Anglophone countries to seek any form of legal or academic protection for the English language, and specialists on the subject (from lexicographers such as John Sinclair to pundits such as David Crystal and Steven Pinker) have usually taken a very critical position of any attempt to police the language or impose prescriptive norms. Most statements on the language are thus made largely in descriptive terms (for example the Oxford dictionaries are concerned with representing the historical development of spelling, and it would be misleading to see them as purely normative). Similarly, there has been until recent years little or no legislation regarding the official status of the language within the UK (however, this situation has changed somewhat, especially regarding R/ML varieties of English, as discussed below).

2 Here I use the standardised three-letter language codes proposed by ISO 639-3. Where no code exists, I revert to abbreviations commonly encountered in the literature.

Where does English come from? Before we discuss language diversity in the UK, it is crucial to understand how one language, English, became the dominant tongue across what were originally several kingdoms. In historical terms, Old English or **Anglosaxon (ANG)** is considered to have diverged from the other Germanic languages around 400-500 CE (common era), when Angles, Saxons and other invaders from north Germany and later Scandinavians migrated and gradually displaced the indigenous Celtic inhabitants of England and Scotland. According to popular tradition, the Anglo-Saxons originally founded the 'Seven Kingdoms' of *Wessex*, *Sussex, Essex, Kent, East Anglia, Mercia* and *Northumbria* and it is on the basis of these areas that the main modern geographical dialects of English were said to have formed. Some linguists have since challenged this view, pointing out that modern dialects and accent isoglosses do not consistently correspond to the ancient boundaries, most notably in the Midlands (Upton 2006). In any case, after the Norman invasion of 1066, **Middle English (ENM)** began to develop markedly away from its Germanic origins, partly through phonological and grammatical 'levelling' between various related Germanic dialects, but also through the lexical influence of French and Latin. During the renaissance (1450-1600), Latin and French were still important vehicular languages in the UK and Europe, but by the early modern period (1600-1750), a form of English based on the variety spoken in the southern Midlands and London ('selection of form') had begun to replace Latin and French for administrative and scientific purposes ('elaboration of function') and there was a consequent need for a standardised spelling system and for increasingly comprehensive dictionaries ('codification'). It is significant that the spelling and vocabulary of **Early Modern English (EME)** were developed at roughly the same time as several major changes in pronunciation were taking place (including the Great Vowel Shift, approximately 1400-1600), thus giving standard English one of the most inconsistent writing systems of the major European languages. This complexity notwithstanding, by 1750, the standard form of **Modern English (Mod ENG)** as we recognise it today had spread from London to other parts of the UK (and beyond).

What happened to the many dialects of English in the UK? Generally speaking, by the mid 1950s, the traditional regional dialects had mostly disappeared. This process was accelerated by the industrial revolution and universal education. In particular, the parallel processes of industrialisation and urbanisation saw many agricultural workers vacate their original settlements and migrate to the new urban areas, such as Greater London in the 1700s, or Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, etc. in the 1800s. But although the traditional dialects have today all but disappeared, there remain many recognisable local accents with traces of the original regional varieties. Indeed, many observers have noted that there is more accent variety per square kilometre in the UK than in other major English-speaking countries, including the US (Kortmann & Upton 2007). As a consequence, it is important to note that few people in the UK speak with *no* regional accent, and many people have features of pronunciation that are audibly

‘Southern’, ‘Midlands’ or ‘Northern’. These accents are sometimes just as distinct as those varieties of English found in Scotland, North Ireland and Wales (as discussed below).

Is there a term we can use for the national language in England? Almost all observers still see ‘English’ as the national language of England and the UK, but there is nevertheless a problem with this word. This comes from the fact that English is a now a firmly established pluri-centric language, with several communities that can be seen as norm-providing (from the original ‘inner circle’ English with Scottish, Irish, American, South African and so on, to the ‘outer-circle’ English with Indian, Nigerian, Singaporean, etc.); not to mention the many hundreds of millions of ‘expanding circle’ speakers of **English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)**, from China, Iran, Poland… these speakers may– one day – refer to a supra-national global standard that corresponds to none of the above-mentioned forms (Kachru, Kachru & Nelson 2006). The very existence of these ‘World Englishes’, or at least the debate about them, suggests that we need more specific terms to define the various forms of English encountered in the UK. Some linguists have used ‘Anglic’ in order refer to the ‘English of England’, but the term has not caught on. Traditionally, institutions and observers have used the term ‘Received Pronunciation’ (RP, Hughes et al. 2005, 36). More recently, observers have referred to ‘Standard British English’ (SBE). Still others refer to popular or journalistic terms such as ‘the Queen’s English’ or ‘BBC English’. Such terminology may still have value, for example in countries where ‘British usage’ (i.e. the standard English from England) has a long tradition of being taught as a second or foreign language – and not just in former colonies of the UK; I am thinking of the *Directorate-General of Translation* in Brussels, which favours ‘British usage’ as mentioned below (DGT, 2016, 7).

However, I would suggest that in the UK itself, terms such as RP, Standard British English, and so on have lost much of their validity over past few years, especially since the political process of ‘devolution’ (discussed in section 3 below). Over recent decades, this progressive decentralisation has served to promote the regional varieties of English, and to demote such forms as upper-middle class RP. In such a climate, it is no longer thought appropriate to refer to British English, when one might need to specify ‘the English of England’, ‘the English of Scotland’, ‘the English of Wales’, etc. In addition, as many linguists have observed, since the 1960s there has been a process of ‘status levelling’, also known as ‘informalisation’, in which traditional normative attitudes to language have eroded. Thus, in the UK, regional varieties in the media have been promoted over the traditional standard, so that for example on BBC radio and television it is quite normal to hear relatively marked regional and local accents. Since modern global media also expose English speakers in the UK to many varieties of non-UK English (American, Australian, etc.), there is also a tendency to accept several possible varieties as valid forms of the language. In this respect, the relatively permissive, pluri-centric approach to English in the UK

contrasts with the tendency for a normative, unitary approach to the national language in states such as France.

1.2 English varieties as Regional / Minority Languages

The UK consists of four 'countries' (also known as 'nations' or 'regions' depending on one's historical, legal or political point of view): England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. As well as other regional and minority languages, each of these areas has its own varieties of English. The English of England (as mentioned above, called 'Anglic' by some linguists) is by far the most well-known variety, although this includes many distinct sub-varietiies (notably Southern, Midlands and Northern English, divided roughly by two lines going through Bristol / London for the southern variety, and Liverpool / Sheffield for the northern variety). Within the boundaries of England, it is important to recognise the value that many English still place on their own local variety. In this regard, as can be seen on Map-1 (above), it is significant that some of the better-known urban accents in the main cities of the UK have their own names. Many of these are associated with traditional working-class varieties spoken in industrial centres, such as 'Brummie' in Birmingham, 'Cockney' in London, 'Geordie' in Newcastle, 'Scouse' in Liverpool, etc. Although well-known and part of the popular culture, these varieties have changed quite radically over past few years, partly because of the shifting demographics of major cities such as London. For example, Cockney was for many centuries seen as a characteristic variety of the 'East End' of London, but it was displaced by new incoming populations of immigrants in the 20th century. In its place, a milder form of London speech developed, known as 'Estuary English', and it is this variety that has spread out much further east than the traditional boundaries of London, and has possibly even had an effect on other urban varieties in the UK (Upton 2006). Within other areas of London, globalisation and changing migration patterns have led to the formation of even more recent speech-styles, known as **Multicultural London English (MLE)**, including 'Amerifaican' or 'Jafaican' – in other words, hybrid styles of speech inspired by popular culture ('hip-hop') and language blends such as American / Jamaican English or Jamaican / African English.

Outside England, perhaps the best-known and most distinctive variety of English is that of Scotland. As can be seen on Map-1, Scottish English involves at least two main geographical varieties: (1) Lowland Scots (sometimes called 'Lallans'), a variety spoken since the early middle ages in the southern regions of Scotland (roughly south of a line from Glasgow to Aberdeen), and (2) Highland Scots, a variety spoken in the mountainous regions of the north. It is perhaps surprising to note that Highland Scots is much closer to the English of England than Lowland Scots: this is because the Highland variety spread across the northern areas of Scotland at a

much later period than Lowland Scots. The establishment of Highland Scots in this area is associated with the 'highland clearances', a form of colonisation in which the indigenous Gaelic-speaking populations were ousted by landlords who were predominantly or speakers of Scottish English. The settlement of northern Scotland by lowlanders and other newcomers is traditionally said to date from the Act of Union between the kingdoms of England and Scotland in 1707.

According to the 2011 census data, 23% of the population in Scotland claim to use Scots. As I discuss below, this is only a very small proportion of the UK population (just under 2%)[3] and it is not clear whether the respondents to the 2011 census were answering as users of **Standard Scottish English** (that is, English spoken with a more or less marked Scottish accent, abbreviated as Scot. ENG) or **Scots** (a variety which is grammatically, lexically and phonetically distinct from Standard British English, and whose ISO code is SCO). In short, there are no reliable linguistic figures about the numbers of people who use Scottish English. Most observers would agree, however, that throughout many areas of Scotland, there is an 'acrolect' variety of Scottish English (Standard Scottish English spoken with a local accent) and a 'basilect' variety (a local dialect of Scottish English which is quite 'broad' or 'marked', such as Buchan or Doric in the North East, or Dundonian and Glaswegian – also known as 'Glesga'; these are varieties spoken in the urban areas of Dundee and Glasgow respectively).

The status of English in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is clearly dependent on the different historical and political relationships of these areas with England. For example, whereas the Lowlands dialect of Scotland evolved in parallel with the other English dialects during the early middle ages (roughly 600-1200 CE), the presence of English in Highland Scotland, Northern Ireland (as with the rest of Ireland) and Wales was essentially the product of progressive waves of conquest and settlement during the late middle ages and extending into the early modern period (1200-1800 CE). In most cases, English came to replace the indigenous Celtic languages, although this took place at different points in time, and at different levels of intensity. Thus Welsh English is the product of successive waves of conquest and colonisation that date from the 13th century onwards in Wales. Irish English and Northern Ireland English (or 'Ulster English') developed some time after the 15th century. There was a further wave of immigration in the 17th century, when Scottish immigrants (who spoke a variety of Lowland Scots) settled in Northern Ireland, thus leading to the development of Ulster Scots. As mentioned above, the Highland clearances after 1700 account for the relative homogeneity of Highlands English and the retreat of Scottish Gaelic to the western periphery of this area. In more recent times, as discussed below, both Scots in Scotland and Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland have gained some official

3 These figures need however to be interpreted in the light of the UK census 2011 data presented in section 2, below.

recognition as regional / minority languages (R/ML), and there is a campaign to make Scots one of the three 'national' languages of Scotland.

1.3 Celtic Languages as Regional / Minority Languages

The Brythonic branch of the Celtic language family is historically related to but distinct from the Germanic languages. After the Germanic invasions, as mentioned above, the Celtic peoples and their languages were either absorbed or displaced to the western peripheral zones of the British Isles and Ireland. As testified by early Welsh poetry, gospels written in Old Irish and so on, the history of these languages is particularly influential in terms of European history, perhaps surprisingly so given the small numbers of speakers and the fact that their languages were banned by the English crown. There now remain five recognised Celtic languages in the UK, namely: 1) **Cornish** (COR), also known as 'Kernewek' in south west England, 2) **Manx** or 'Gelg vannin' (GLV) on the Isle of Man[4], 3) **Welsh** or 'Cymraeg' (CYM) spoken mainly in the north and west of Wales, 4) **Scottish Gaelic** 'Gàidhlig' (GLA) in the west and islands of Scotland, and 5) **Irish Gaelic** 'Gaeilge' (GLE) with pockets of speakers on the western coastal areas of Ireland. Finally, it is worth pointing out the Celtic languages are not the only indigenous languages of the UK: there are traces of languages that pre-date the Celtic family, such as 'Pictish', and there are still also several insular languages such as Norn (a Germanic language spoken in Shetland) and Anglo-Norman (a variety of French spoken on the islands of Guernsey and Jersey). Both of these are practically extinct or functionally restricted, although there have been movements to reintroduce and promote them as 'heritage languages' (Stubbs 1986). There are also other 'non-territorial' languages which have probably been in the UK for centuries, but for which there exist scant records (as mentioned below).

Although less than 1% of the UK population speaks a Celtic language as their main language (UK 2011 census), all of these languages have gained some degree of official recognition. The Welsh language in particular was recognised as the co-official language of Wales (together with English) in the mid-20th century, and speakers of Welsh have recently been given the same legal privileges as English in UK courts (see section 3.3 below). This is quite a remarkable achievement, given that the language is spoken by 0.7% of the UK population as their main language (18% of the Welsh population). In a parallel development, Scottish Gaelic (spoken by 0.2% of the UK population) and Irish Gaelic (0.09% of the UK population) have been recognised as regional / minority languages in Scotland and Northern Ireland

4 Officially, the Isle of Man is not part of the UK, but is a crown territory. The ECRML charter was nevertheless signed by the UK government on behalf of the Isle of Man in 2001.

respectively (thus at the same time as Scots English and Ulster Scots were recognised by the regional assemblies of Scotland and Northern Ireland).

It it worth adding here that while the numbers of first-language speakers of Celtic languages are very low (and in most cases in decline), the languages have been introduced as second languages or as languages of content-instruction in immersion classes in an increasing number of schools in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. As discussed below, these languages enjoy a considerable amount of cultural prestige, and so while the number of first-language speakers is in decline (this includes those born in monolingual environments and young children who have no choice but to acquire the language), many adult learners appear to actively learn the language as a symbolic marker of identity. The case of 'Irish' (a term that implicitly refers to the Gaelic language) is a good example of this: Irish Gaelic is alongside English the official national language of the Republic of Ireland, and since 2007 it has been an official language of the European Union. Since Irish Gaelic is taught as part of the national curriculum in Ireland, it is possible to compare the census figures for those who speak the language as their main language directly with the figures for speakers as as a second language: in the Republic of Ireland, 140 000 claim to people speak Irish Gaelic as their main language (2.18% of the Irish population), while 1 167 940 claim to have second-language proficiency (18.25%).

1.4 Immigrant Languages

According to the 2011 census, 5% of the UK population speak an immigrant language (henceforth abbreviated as IL) as their main language (in the UK it is also common to use the term 'community language' for this category). In the UK, various aternative terms are used to refer to IL, often emphasising the status of its speakers in relation to broader society ('Asset language', 'Community language' 'Heritage language' etc.) Generally, ILs are more widely used than the traditional Celtic and regional languages, especially in England. Yet unlike the R/M languages, as the LRE report observes, ILs receive little or no official support in terms of educational funding or legal status in the UK.

On Map-1 above, I have made no attempt to represent ILs. However, in reality all the major cities in the UK have large immigrant populations, and since the 1960s the proportion of IL speakers from outside Europe has been particularly high in the industrial areas of England. One of the best-known examples of this is Punjabi (ISO code PAN), a language from north west India whose speakers settled in towns such as Bradford (pop. 500 000). While it is not unusual to encounter a language from one of the British Empire's former colonies in the UK, it is perhaps more surprising to learn that a Slavonic language such as **Polish** (POL) is the third-most widespread language in the UK (according to the 2011 census, English is in first position, and Scots has

second position). Polish has in fact been spoken in the UK for some time. The first wave of Polish speakers came after the Second World War, especially in towns such as Slough (pop. 120 000). This was part of a resettlement programme in 1946 in order to help Polish prisoners after the war (but even at that time, the unions in the UK were worried that Polish workers would compete with locals for jobs). Since the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004, a new wave of Polish immigrants settled in the UK, and this is reflected in the census figures. However, since Brexit (the 'British' decision to 'exit' the European Union after a referendum on 23 June 2016), the freedom of Poles and other EU citizens to continue to live and work in the UK has become uncertain. Thus in the future, the large number of Polish speakers living in the UK is not likely to grow, and indeed it may have already begun to decline.

Finally, it is important to note that over the past 25 years, some areas of the UK, especially cities such as Bradford, Leeds, Leicester, Sheffield have grown very significantly in population, to the extent that they have grown larger than traditional regional capitals such as Birmingham or Manchester. For example, the Bradford-Leeds urban area now has a population of 2 393 000 (as big as Birmingham). According to the 2011 census, 26.83% of Bradford's residents have Asian origins, thus making this city sensitive to the issue of immigrant languages.[5]

1.5 Foreign and 'Non-territorial' languages

This final category incudes many different types of 'foreign', 'non-territorial' and other unconventional types of language which are often overlooked in traditional surveys. I discuss the status of Foreign Languages (often known as Modern Foreign Languages in UK educiational circles) in the later sections on the LRE report. It is also important briefly to mention languages belonging to communities such as the disabled, especially **British Sign Language** (BFI), which are often not counted as using a recognised variety of language. In fact, BFI has recently been give some provision in the UK thanks to a law passed by the Scottish Parliament (including potential support also for a Scottish variant of BSI)[6]. Among more 'conventional' non-territorial languages, it is also interesting to note the continued presence of **Yiddish** (YID) in the UK, as well as languages spoken by formerly nomadic groups (**Romani** ROM, **Shelta** STH etc.). Finally, I fint it relevant to include in any survey of language diversity the many people who promote and disseminate languages as well as use them in their everyday lives: this includes not only professional linguists,

5 The 2011 Census data for Bradford is available here: <http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/government_politics_and_public_administration/2011_census>

6 The Scottish Parliament voted to extend its support and guidelines on the use of British Sign Language in publicly funded institutions in 'the British Sign Language(Scotland) Act 2015', see: <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/82853.aspxp >

but also amateur activists who promote auxiliary languages such as **Esperanto** (EPO), or enthusiasts who construct and learn fictional languages such as Dothraki, Elfish (**Sindarin** SJN, **Quenya** QYA), **Klingon** (TLH), and so on. Although the pastimes of preserving or constructing languages are often dismissed as marginal, those who study them often take an academic interest in their subject which goes well beyond the competencies of many casual observers, and they are often active in the promotion of other indigenous or endangered languages. Furthermore, given the general lack of opportunities for learning foreign languages in the UK (as mentioned in section 5 below), I suggest that any interest in learning a language, whether territorial or non-territorial, conventional or unconventional, is in itself an enriching exercise in language awareness, and may also be a welcome addition to the complex picture of language diversity in the UK.

2. Language diversity in the UK: demographics

In the preceding section, I briefly described the geography and history of language diversity in the UK. This should help us to contextualise the population statistics which were made available by the UK census 2011 (UK National Office of Statistics).[7] It is significant that in 2011, for the first time in its history, the UK census included two questions about language. In particular 'Question H18' asks about a respondent's typical language use:

H18	*What is your main language?*
	- English
	- Other, write in (including British Sign Language)...

Question H18 is rather vague, and this may have been deliberate. H18 does not ask for example about 'home language', which may be seen as too restrictive in function, or 'first language', which may target a respondent's origins rather than their language use. It is notable also that question H18 was asked in a slightly different way in each of the four main countries of the UK, as we see in the following discussion.

The next question, H19, asks the respondent to assess his / her level of English:

7 UK 2011 census data became available from 2013 at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/>.

H19	*How well can you speak English?*
	- Very well
	- Well
	- Not well
	- Not at all

Such self-assessment is evidently subjective. The interpretation of such questions can also become quite complex, especially when cross-referenced with other census data, for example, on national identity (question H15), ethnic group (H16) or religion (H20). However, if we restrict our observations to the questions H18/H19, they reveal the following overall findings (NB the census figures are extrapolations, and thus are given only to the nearest 1000):

Table 1. UK census 2011: English or Other language?

UK Region	*Language*	*Speakers*	*Percentage (for each UK region)*
ENGLAND (pop. 53 012 000)	English	49 808 000[8]	94%
	Other language	3 204 000	6%
NORTHERN IRELAND (pop. 1 810 000)	English	1 681 000	93%
	Other language	129 000	7%
SCOTLAND (pop. 5 118 000)	English	4 740 000	93%
	Other language	377 000	7%
WALES (pop. 3 063 000)	English	2 309 000	75%
	Welsh	562 000	18%
	Other language	192 000	6%
UK total (pop. 63 002 000)	**ENGLISH**	**58 538 000**	**93%**
	OTHER LANGUAGES	4 464 000	7%

8 The figures cited here date from the UK census 2011. The population figures for 2001 were: England 51 800 000, Northern Ireland 1 800 000, Scotland 5 220 000, Wales 3 000 000.

For the sake of comparison, here are the 2011 census results for London:

LONDON (pop. 8 173 000)	**English**	**6 083 000**[9]	**74%**
	Other language	2 090 000	26%

I comment on the results for H18 in the appropriate sections below. The results for question H19 are more complex, but have been summarised by the UK census office[10] as follows:

- In England and Wales, 4.2 million (7.8%) respondents had a main language different from English, of whom the majority (3.3 million) could speak English well or very well.
- Less than 5% of the population aged 3 to 15 had a main language other than English, and could not speak English well or at all. The five local authorities with the highest proportions were all in London.
- Around 300 000 residents aged 3 and over in England and Wales could not speak English well or at all.

Let us now turn to the 'other language' mentioned as a possible response to question H18. The following Tables (2 and 3) set out the census 2011 results in relation to the overall UK population (estimated at 63 002 000). In each case, I have categorised the languages into families depending on the historical language family or the country of origin:

9 The figures for London are also included in those for England.

10 This analysis has been adapted from the UK Census 2011 website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011>.

Table 2. UK census 2011: what is your main language (regional / minority languages)?

Language Family	*Language*	*Speakers*	*Percentage (for total UK population)*
GERMANIC	English	58 538 000	92.9%
	Scots	1 225 000[11]	1.94%
	Ulster Scots	34 000	0.05%
CELTIC	Welsh	431 000[12]	0.7%
	Irish Gaelic	104 000[13]	0.2%
	Scottish Gaelic	57 000[14]	0.09%
	Manx	1 800	0003%
	Cornish	464[15]	0.0007%
UK total		**59 707 000**	**94.7%**

11 These figures are from the Scottish census 2011 website: <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/standard-outputs.html>. The figures for Scots cannot be directly compared to the other figures in this table, because they represent responses to a supplementary question.

12 The figures for Welsh are available from the Welsh Census office (2011): <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/qs207wa>. Note that the number of speakers of Welsh has declined since the census of 2001 (the figure was 582 000).

13 The figures for Irish Gaelic and Ulster Scots are from the Northern Ireland Census office (2011): <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=136&themeName=Census%202011>.

14 The number of speakers of Scottish Gaelic has declined since the census of 2001 (the figure was 92 000).

15 The figures for Cornish are based on the UK Census 2011 made available by the Council of Cornwall: < https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/data-and-research/data-by-topic/2011-census/2011-census-cornish-identity/>.

Table 3. UK census 2011: what is your main language (immigrant languages)?

Language Family	*Language*	*Speakers*	*Percentage (for total UK population)*
EUROPEAN: Slavonic	Polish	546 000	0.86%
EUROPEAN: Latinate	French Portuguese Spanish Italian Romanian	147 000 133 000 120 000 92 000 68 000	0.23% 0.21% 0.19% 0.15% 0.11%
EUROPEAN: Baltic	Lithuanian	85 000	0.13%
EUROPEAN: Germanic	German	77 000	0.12%
ASIAN	Chinese	141 000	0.22%
	Tagalog / Filipino	70 000	0.11%
AFRICAN	Yoruba Somalian	190 000 86 000	0.30% 0.13%
INDO-PAKISTANI	Punjabi Urdu Bengali Gujarati Tamil	273 000 269 000 221 000 213 000 101 000	0.43% 0.42% 0.35% 0.33% 0.16%
MIDDLE-EAST (various language families)	Arabic	159 000	0.25%
	Turkish	99 000	0.15%
	Persian	76 000	0.12%
UK total		**3 166 000**	**5.02%**

Overall, the figures from the 2011 census demonstrate that the UK as a whole enjoys a considerable degree of language diversity. The figures above also show that many immigrant languages, even when taken individually, clearly outnumber the traditional R/M languages in the UK. This diversity is most visible in urban areas, especially London. Although IL speakers have traditionally been thought to come predominantly from former British colonies or Commonwealth countries (Asia, India, Pakistan etc.), the figures show that there are an equivalent number of speakers of European languages in the UK. More generally, the fact that 7% of the population currently

claims to use a language other than English as their main language goes some way to contradict the stereotype of a homogenous 'English-only' society, even though of course English is still clearly dominant.

However, the census figures cannot be taken entirely at face value. As mentioned above, many languages such as Irish Gaelic are learnt by more second-language learners than native speakers: this kind of data is simply not accounted for in the census. In addition, the census questions inevitably run into trouble when they enquire about people's perceptions of language. This is particularly the case for Scots. In Scotland, the 2011 census included not only a question about the respondent's 'main' language, but also a separate question on Scots, (known as 'Q16') to which 1 225 000 respondents stated that they could 'speak, read and write Scots', as shown in Table 2 above[16]. However, as mentioned above, I would suggest that there may have been possible confusion about which of the several possible varieties of English the question refers to. In theory, the term 'Scots' can refer to:

- *Standard Scottish English* (a prestige accent, and not very broad)
- *Scots* (a dialect form of English, associated with a particular town or area of Scotland)

To add to this complexity, it is also important to consider the political context in 2011. Before the census, the Scottish National Party – a party that was to soon also call a referendum on Scottish independence – as well as other organisations[17] campaigned to encourage Scottish respondents to say 'yes' to Q16 and thus claim that they speak Scots in the census results. We have to assume that such lobbying was conducted in good faith, but even so it is not clear how it may have affected the final result: there is still the suspicion that some respondents could have used Q16 as a way of signalling their support for the SNP, or some form of Scottish independence. Nonetheless, it also has to be recognised that if many Scottish residents claim that they use Scots, a variety with this name has gained a degree of popular support in Scotland. In other words, however we might define Scots from a purely linguistic perspective, from a political point of view, the results of the 2011 census suggest that many Scottish people identify themselves as speakers of a category of language that is not 'the English of England'.

16 The question in the 2011 Scottish census was: "Q16 Which of these can you do (tick all that apply) … Understand (English /Scottish Gaelic/ Scots), Speak (English /Scottish Gaelic/ Scots), Read (English /Scottish Gaelic/ Scots), Write (English /Scottish Gaelic/ Scots) or None of these."

17 For example, the Scots Language Centre: <http://www.scotslanguage.com/books/view/2/> and the 'Eye Can' campaign (<http://www.ayecan.com/>), whose aim was to help Scottish respondents decide whether they could say 'yes' to using Scots (based on short on-line written and spoken comprehension tests).

A similar problem can be seen in the census results for the Welsh language. As noted in Table 2 above, the number of Welsh speakers appears to have declined markedly in recent years (from 582 000 in 2001 to 451 000 in 2011). While this looks like an absolute decline, it has to be remembered that the figures in the census are an extrapolation based on a sample of the population, and are thus all relative to the group of respondents included in the survey. Thus the relative decline in the number of Welsh speakers may be partly explained by the growing number of immigrants to Wales – according to the LRE report 25% of the population of Wales was born outside Wales in 2001, compared with 20% in England (Extra & Yağmur 2012, p240). In other words, the census 2011 may have identified a real drop in the number of Welsh speakers, but it is possible that such a decline is not absolute, but may also reflect the fact that the population represented in the 2011 census includes relatively more speakers of languages other than Welsh.

Finally, some of the figures on IL speakers (Table 3 above) may also be open to multiple interpretations. For example, 260 000 respondents stated that they use **Urdu** (URD) as their main language. Urdu is the official language of Pakistan as well as of some states in India, but it is generally considered to be a high-status variety in these countries: Urdu is thus an 'acrolect' which is used in formal written contexts and education, but in everyday life other vernacular or 'basilect' varieties are used in these countries. Thus although many respondents named Urdu as their main language in the 2011 census, it may be that that this reply represents a 'symbolic' use of the language rather than a more specific reality. Finally, as mentioned above, Table 3 clearly suggests that Polish is the third most widespread language in the UK (after English and Scots). But this figure also has to be interpreted carefully. There is evidence that as many as 63% of Eastern European immigrants stay less than 12 months in the UK (as reported by the Migration Policy Institute, cited in Doward & Rogers 2010). There is thus for some communities a fairly constant turn-around of speakers, and this may make the statistics for some language communities less stable than for others in the 2011 census. This picture is further complicated by the fact that communities such as the Polish include both permanent settlers (as mentioned above in towns such as Slough) and more temporary residents.

3. Language diversity in the UK: current political context

Until very recently, language diversity has never really been seen as a hot political topic in the UK. However, since the 1990s these issues have been increasingly linked to the twin problems of national identity on the one hand and immigration policy on the other.

The problem of 'Britishness' and the politics of language in the UK have been discussed extensively by previous publications in this series (Crichton & Templeton

2012, Leclercq 2012). For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to indicate the main reasons why the situation has changed, especially since two major recent historical turning points:

1) 1997, the year of 'devolution'

On 2 May 1997, a Labour government came to power on a platform of devolution: a promise to de-centralise administrative functions and powers away from London towards the non-English regions of the UK. 1997 represented a watershed year, with a 10% swing from the previous Conservative government: the Labour party was therefore committed to far-reaching reforms not only within England, but right across the UK. As far as language diversity is concerned, the overall effect of devolution was to gradually improve the legal status of all of the main regional / minority languages, although this has taken place at different speeds, as discussed below.

2) 2016, the year of 'Brexit', the British referendum to exit the EU

On 23 June 2016, a Conservative government organised a referendum on whether the UK should remain or leave the European Union. The UK as a whole voted narrowly to leave the EU (52% to leave, 48% to remain): at the time of writing, the effects of this decision on language policy in the UK and the EU are still unknown. However, as we shall see below, this decision may lead to new policies towards language diversity in each of the UK's constituent countries, as well as a more normative approach to English as both a national language and as a marker of citizenship in the UK. It may even have an effect on how the English language is viewed in the EU as a whole. Let us look more closely at these issues, as they relate to each of the UK's component countries in turn.

3.1 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the period of acute sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants (known as the 'troubles' 1969-1998) began to subside at more of less the same moment that the Labour party came to power in 1997. Both the preceding Conservative and Labour governments had been keen to establish negotiations for local power-sharing, and part of their strategy was to associate the fate of a proposed Northern Ireland Assembly with the two other proposed assemblies for Scotland and Wales. As far as Northern Ireland was concerned, negotiations between the UK government, the Republic of Ireland and the main political parties (including notably Ulster unionists and Irish nationalists) culminated in the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. This led to a referendum in the same year (in Northern Ireland 74%

voted in favour, in the Republic of Ireland the vote was 94%). This subsequently led to the creation of an intermittently functioning Northern Ireland Assembly, and to the establishment of several cross-border cooperative bodies, most notably two agencies for the promotion of Irish Gaelic (*Foras na Gaeilge*) and Ulster Scots (*Tha Boord o Ulstèr Scotch*).

However, after the early success of the peace process, there has been a resurgence of the old sectarian and political rivalries. This is mainly reflected in the struggle to get unionists and nationalists to work together in the Assembly (with Sinn Féin and the SDLP on the nationalist side versus the DUP as the main party on unionist side). As reported in Dunbar (2017), one consequence of this has been arguments about petty language issues, with unionist officials and councillors often reacting against the symbolic introduction of Gaelic by their nationalist counterparts (for example the renaming of a ship from Gaelic back to English, or withdrawing funding for an Irish language bursary scheme, and so on). In addition, as part of the peace agreement, the Assembly is meant to enact a number of general 'executive' laws. As part of the process, every detail has to be negotiated between the different parties, and as far as the current set of talks are concerned, it is significant that both sides have used language as part of their negotiating strategy: for the nationalists this involves an insistence on an 'Irish language' act (to support Gaelic), but this has so far been unacceptable to the unionists, who will only consider a much broader 'Culture' bill (to ensure the inclusion of Ulster Scots). Finally, the waters have been further clouded by the 2016 Brexit referendum result, which not only emphasised the deep-rooted differences between the communities (with many unionists voting to leave the EU, and many nationalists voting to remain), but also tested the resolve of the Irish and UK governments. Indeed, the Brexit may mean that the existing arrangements made to promote cross-border cooperation on Gaelic and Ulster Scots will require further re-negotiation or at worst be abandoned. Gaelic has long been seen as a symbol of Irish nationalism but this was not an inevitable result: it is not automatically the case that Gaelic speakers are Catholics or nationalists, and it is sad to see how this language (and Ulster Scots also) may become even more increasingly embroiled in this on-going drama.

3.2 Scotland

Since the act of union (1707) Scotland and England have been joined constitutionally and politically. However, Scotland always maintained its own particular educational and legal systems, and since the early 20th century there had been increasing calls for a renewed Scottish Parliament. When the Labour government came to power in 1997, a referendum was held across Scotland, and a Parliament was established in Edinburgh in 1998. The Scottish Parliament was given considerable autonomy,

including the ability to legislate on language policy. In 2005 the Parliament passed the Gaelic Language Act, with the aim of securing official status for both English and Scottish Gaelic. The Scottish Parliament has more recently adopted policies to promote the Scots language, although as pointed out by Crichton & Templeton (2012), funding for Scots only represents a fraction of that allocated to Gaelic. As mentioned above, the Scottish National Party (SNP) campaigned vigorously for the inclusion of a Scots proficiency question in the 2011 census. This was part of a more general campaign in order to promote the referendum for Scottish independence (held in 2014). Although the SNP lost the referendum (45% voted for independence, while 55% voted to stay in the UK), the continued popular strength of the SNP means that there may still be political support for the Scots language in the foreseeable future. As mentioned above, although Scots is still not recognised as an official language, and there is currently still no right to education in Scots (as has been recently granted for Scottish Gaelic[18]), the Scottish parliament has developed a national Scots language policy in response to the results of the 2011 census. Finally, it is important to note that during the Brexit referendum of 2016, Scottish voters voted strongly to remain within the EU (62% vs. 38%), whereas the majority of people in England and Wales voted to leave. As a consequence of this, the Scottish nationalists have moved to propose a new referendum on independence, since they believe that Scottish foreign policy is now at odds which much of the rest of the UK. In the long term, it is likely that the twin issues of independence from the UK and Scotland's role within the EU will provide further impetus for Scotland to develop a divergent set of education and language policies from the rest of the UK.

3.3 Wales

Wales was the first of the non-English countries to be integrated into the English crown, and its level of political and economic integration in the UK may explain why nationalist parties (such as Plaid Cymru) have never gained the support of a majority of electors: instead, Wales has until recently been dominated by the Labour and Liberal parties. Broadly speaking, Wales can be divided into two main demographic areas: the northern areas and valleys are traditionally Welsh-speaking, while the eastern borders and south have long been settled by the English and immigrants from elsewhere. Despite the relatively precarious position of the Welsh language even within Wales, Welsh is still the most widespread Celtic language in the UK, and promoters of the language have been successful in pushing through language reforms, largely through the UK Parliament in London. Consequently, although there has been

18 A right to an education in Gaelic was enshrined in a law adopted by the Scottish Parliament in 2016 ('Education (Scotland) Act 2016', <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/contents/enacted>) .

a decline in the number of people who speak Welsh over 20th century, official recognition of the language has increased. After the 1960s, the language was granted legal recognition through a series of Welsh Language Acts (1967, 1993), which notably created a Welsh Language Board *(Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymrae*) for the promotion of the language within local administration, as well as allowing the language to be used, at least in theory, in court proceedings in the UK. In 1997, as part of its devolution policy, the Labour government organised a referendum on the creation of a National Assembly, although with fewer powers than in Northern Ireland or Scotland. Despite this rather circumscribed status, the National Assembly for Wales has been able to enact a series of important language policies, most recently the Welsh Language Measure 2011 which has replaced the Welsh Language Board, redefined the role of Welsh Language Commissioner and instituted a series of 'standards' to ensure equal treatment between users of local authority services in English and Welsh. Finally, it is worth pointing out that, as in many areas of England, the people of Wales voted narrowly to leave the EU in the 2016 Brexit referendum (52% vs. 48%): as in Northern Ireland, there appears to be a correlation between demographics and voting patterns, with those voting to remain in the EU being largely concentrated in the north-west, notably in the less densely-populated areas of Ceredigion and Gwynedd: these happen to be two of the three areas where, according to the 2011 census, Welsh is spoken by more than half the population.

3.4 UK language policy

In the preceding paragraphs, I have briefly sketched out the main political context in the non-English countries of the UK, but there have also been a number of developments across the UK as a whole. Perhaps the most important policy change in recent years (as mentioned in Leclercq 2012, 459) has been the withdrawal of obligatory second-language learning across the UK. Generally speaking, this has caused a marked decline in the languages traditionally studied in the UK, especially at primary and secondary level (French, German, Spanish, Boyd 2001). I return to this issue in the LRE survey below (part 5). In addition, there has been a general tendency in political debate to equate language proficiency with underlying concerns about immigration as well as national identity. One high-profile example of this has been the controversy over proficiency tests in English. On 29 November 2010, the Conservative government passed the '*English language requirement for partners of British citizens*' order, which obliges citizens of non-EU countries who are partners of UK citizens to pass a language test before becoming a resident of the UK (the *Secure English Language Test,* SELTS). In a country where there has traditionally been little or no official legislation on language, this has been seen both as a symbolic move to protect the general proficiency of English (a first in the UK) as well as an attempt to

limit immigration, albeit in a very indirect way. Following the Brexit referendum of 2016, it is likely that future EU-citizens may be faced with a similar obligation, and the SELTS test may encounter further controversy.

A similar debate has surrounded the testing of non-UK residents working in the civil service or the National Health Service for proficiency in English. And as can be seen in the following statements, members of both the Labour and Conservative parties have suggested that the UK should adopt more stringent measures on language proficiency:

> "We can only converse if we can speak the same language. So if we are going to build One Nation, we need to start with everyone in Britain knowing how to speak English. We should expect that of people that come here. We will work together as a nation far more effectively when we can always talk together." (Ed Miliband, Labour) [19]

> "You only have to look at London, where almost half of all primary school children speak English as a second language, to see the challenges we now face as a country. This isn't fair to anyone: how can people build relationships with their neighbours if they can't even speak the same language?" (Theresa May, Conservative)[20]

Until recently, few UK politicians would have dared to make such a reference to the language proficiency of immigrants for fear of provoking accusations of racism, and few politicians would have felt it necessary to defend the role of English as a unifying feature of the 'nation'. But it is possible to see how this new debate about language diversity (as a negative idea) has been adapted to fit the increasingly negative view among many residents of the UK towards the European Union. As many observers have pointed out, in 2014 the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) gained a larger number of votes (27.5%) than any other party in the EU elections, and it was this result that provoked the Conservatives into calling for the 2016 Brexit referendum. The refugee crisis of 2015 also played its part in pushing many in the UK to vote protest against the EU, and more generally against the tolerant policy of 'multiculturalism' that once characterised local and national politics in the UK. But while most observers have been concerned about what the UK thinks of the EU, it would be instructive to see how this debate affects how the UK is perceived in the EU, and even how the English language itself will be perceived by Europeans in the

19 Ed Miliband, 12 Dec. 2012 "English Language Integration", *The Guardian* <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/dec/14/miliband-english-language-integration>

20 Theresa May 12 Dec. 2012, "Keynote Immigration Speech" *Policy Exchange* <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/modevents/item/theresa-may-keynote-immigration-speech>

future. To what extent will Brexit have an effect on current language policy and on the image of English as the lingua franca of EU?

It is worth mentioning in this respect is that the campaign for the UK to leave the EU may already have had a negative effect on the status of English among the EU's institutions. As mentioned above, the EU currently recommends the use of both British English and Irish English in its official documentation, as stated by the *Directorate-General of Translation*:

> "For reasons of stylistic consistency, the variety of English on which this Guide bases its instructions and advice is the standard usage of Britain and Ireland (for the sake of convenience, called 'British usage' or 'British English' in this Guide." (DGT 2016, English Style Guide, p7).[21]

The reference to 'Ireland' appears to be a diplomatic gesture: in the rest of the document it is clear that the variety of English to be used is the English of Britain (that is to say, the UK). When one considers the increasing discrepancy between the EU's need for a neutral lingua franca and UK's generally negative attitude towards cooperation with the EU, it will be interesting to see whether the EU's implicit preference for British English might in the future be discreetly dropped for another variety (perhaps 'Euro-English'?).

4. The LRE report

In the final sections 4-6 of this paper, I present the main findings of the Language Rich Europe report (LRE, Extra & Yağmur 2012). This covers three main areas:

4.1 UK official language policy,
4.2 Languages in UK education, and
4.3 Language diversity in the UK's media, public services and business.

Where appropriate, I provide some comparisons with the data presented above, and I also point out aspects of the LRE report which may leave room for improvement. The main document which I refer to here is the original English version of the LRE (Extra & Yağmur 2012), although different language versions exist (for French, see Extra & Yağmur 2013).

The first section of the LRE report presents a comparison of the official language policies adopted by the four constituent parts of the UK (England, Northern Ireland,

21 The DGT style guide is available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf>.

Scotland, Wales) as well as 20 other countries or regions discussed in the report.[22] As mentioned above, the LRE survey uses a four-part language classification adopted by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML, drafted in 1992). These categories are set out in Table 4:

Table 4. LRE Language categories[23]

NL	National Language(s) 'official languages of a nation-state'.
FL	Foreign Language(s) 'languages that are not learnt or used at home but learnt and taught at school or used as languages of wider communication in non-educational sectors'.
R/ML	Regional / Minority Language(s) 'languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population'.
IL	Immigrant Language(s) 'languages spoken by immigrants and their descendants in the country of residence, originating from an infinite range of (former) source countries'.

The UK government ratified the ECRML in 2001. Of the 18 states covered in the LRE survey, only 11 have so far signed the ECRML charter, a situation that can often be explained by varying constitutional or political considerations, depending on the country. As mentioned in section 3 above, the Labour government of the time was keen to improve its declining popularity in the non-English regions of the UK, and thus was in favour of ratifying the ECRML charter. The UK's ratification had the net effect of providing official recognition for two regional English dialects: Scots and Ulster Scots, and five Celtic languages: Cornish, Irish Gaelic, Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh.

In the following discussion, I use five-letter codes for these regions (as per the International Standards Organisation codes, ISO 3166), and three-letter codes for languages (as per ISO 639-3).

22 The LRE survey includes many European countries, but not all. For example, the federal states of Belgium and Germany apparently present too many complexities to be covered in detail or included in the comparative tables.

23 Definitions given in the LRE report (Extra & Yağmur 2012: 21).

Table 5. ISO 3166 Country Codes

GBENG	England
GBNIR	Northern Ireland
GBSCT	Scotland
GBWLS	Wales

Table 6. ISO 639-2 Language Codes[24]

CYM	Welsh (*Cymraeg*)
ENG	English
GLA	Irish Gaelic (*Gaeilge*)
GLA	Scottish Gaelic (*Gàidhlig*)
COR	Cornish (*Kernewek*)
SCO	Scots English
SCO-Ulster	Ulster Scots

Tables 7 and 8 below show the first main pieces of information set out in the LRE report. These concern the presence or absence of a language policy and official documentation on languages (0 = absence of policy, + = presence of policy):

Table 7. Language legislation and official language policy documents (LRE, p29).

Region	*National / regional legislation on languages?*				*Policy documents for the promotion of language learning / teaching?*			
	NL	FL	LR/M	IL	NL	FL	LR/M	IL
GBENG	(0)	(0)	+	(0)	+	+	+	(0)
GBNIR	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(0)
GBSCT	+	+	+	(0)	(0)	+	+	(0)
GBWLS	+	+	+	(0)	(0)	+	+	(0)

24 Note that two-letter ISO codes do not exist for some varieties, such as Ulster Scots. Also, as the LRE report does not concern itself for Manx, this language is not discussed here.

Table 8. R/M Languages recognised (LRE, p30).

Region	*R/M languages recognised, protected and / or promoted by official country documents / legislation or in the ECRML*
GBENG	Cornish (COR)
GBNIR	Scots (SCO), Scottish Gaelic (GLA)
GBSCT	Irish Gaelic (GLE), Ulster Scots (SCO Ulster)
GBWLS	Welsh (CYM)

These tables (and other data in the LRE report, p29-33) show that the four countries of the UK are typical of many other European countries in that they do not have explicit policies on ILs (immigrant languages), the exceptions being Austria, Denmark, France, Spain, and Switzerland. Similarly, and like many other countries, ENG leaves policy on foreign language teaching (the FL category) to local and regional administrations. Also like many other countries, GBENG, SCT, NIR and WLS all have 'official nation/region-wide data collection mechanisms' on NL and R/ML categories, most notably though municipal records and a national census, as mentioned above. Finally, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that GBENG (and the UK as a whole) does not itself have any specific legislation on the English language itself, an apparent lack of concern for the national language which, according to the LRE report, is shared only by Italy.

5. The LRE report: languages in education in the UK

A great deal of the information set out in the LRE report concerns language learning and teaching, at all levels of education (including pre-school). Rather than summarising all of the different findings, in the following section I concentrate on those aspects where the regions of the UK differ in some way from each other, or from general practice elsewhere in Europe.

At pre-school level, the four component countries of the UK provide for testing in the NL (English) and also make some provision for the teaching of the Celtic R/ML languages (CYM, GLA, GLE, COR). No provision however is made for the main varieties of English (coded here as SCO, SCO Ulster etc). Neither is provision made systematically for FL or IL categories (LRE, p36). But this is not exceptional: according to the LRE survey, only seven other European countries provide FL teaching at this level, and this usually includes English and sometimes another major European language.

At the start of primary and secondary education, GBENG, NIR, SCT and WLS use diagnostic tests in order to test for a pupil's language skills in the NL (LFR, p39). Particular provision is made at primary level for the Celtic languages. Thus in WLS, more than 20% of children are taught in Welsh-medium classes, and all primary school children are taught Welsh (coded CYM) obligatorily as a second language (LRE, p242). According to LRE, the Cornish language (coded COR) is taught in 30% of schools in the Cornish region of England. But while these languages (belonging to the R/ML category) appear to receive privileged treatment, the FL and IL categories are relatively neglected. In addition, the authors of LRE state that in many cases less that half a day per week is assigned to languages other than English (LRE, p44). The report also points to a lack of specific training among language teachers at this level, with FL classes in the UK often being taught by non-specialists (LRE, p45). Table 9 below also shows that there are also significant differences in the range of FL languages taught at this level:

Table 9. FL languages taught at primary school level (LRE, p41).

GBENG	One optional FL (German DEU, Spanish SPA, French FRA, or occasionally: Italian ITA, Japanese JPN, Urdu URD, Chinese ZHO)
GBNIR	One optional FL (German DEU, Spanish SPA, French FRA)
GBSCT	One optional FL (Spanish SPA, French FRA)
GBWLS	None

These data are of course dependent on current education policy. For example in 2012 the UK government discussed re-introducing obligatory FL teaching for under seven-year olds. However, in the long-term, and given the relative scarcity of language provision at this level (especially from the point of view of IL communities), it is not surprising that much pre-school and primary level language teaching is undertaken privately (this is referred to in LRE as the 'Complementary Sector', p234).

At secondary level, the situation appears to be even worse that at primary level. The LRE survey shows that there are vanishingly few opportunities in the UK to learn languages belonging to any category (FL, R/ML or IL) in secondary schools (to support this, the LRE report cites a study by Boyd, 2001). The table below shows that GBENG, NIR and WLS only make one FL obligatory at Lower Secondary level, and this obligation disappears at Upper Secondary level (Greece is the only other country to allow students to abandon FL at this level). Perhaps worst of all, in the Scottish system no FL is obligatory at either Lower or Secondary level:

Table 10. Numbers of compulsory FL languages taught at secondary school level (LRE, p48).

	Two FLs	**One FLs**	**Zero FL**
Lower secondary	(Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France...etc.)	England, Northern Ireland, Wales	Scotland
Upper secondary	(Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France...etc.)		England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales

It may be that the restrictions on FL provision at secondary level are due to low budgets and lack of trained staff, but they may also more generally reflect a low level of demand for FL classes across the UK. Unfortunately, the situation for the R/ML and IL categories is hardly any better. In GBENG, the LRE authors state that there is no obligatory teaching of RM/L (outside Cornwall) or IL, although some community languages are available as options (Arabic (ARA), Chinese, Urdu). Once again, the Celtic languages fare a little better. In SCT, Scottish Gaelic is supported, but subject to a minimum number of five students (5), while a slightly different set of ILs are available (Chinese, Russian RUS, Urdu). In NIR, Irish Gaelic is supported, but subject to ten students (LRE, p51-52). In WLS, 16.7% of pupils are taught in Welsh as their first language in Welsh-medium schools. The other 83.3% are obligatorily taught some Welsh, although 'the level of achievement is low' (LRE, p243). This comment on the actual results of language teaching is very telling, and puts the rest of the survey (with its focus on the theoretical availability of policies, self-assessment documents, and so on) very much into perspective.

The LRE authors go on to mention that for the UK as a whole, the number of pupils taking the GCSE school certificate in a FL at age 15 (after 4 years of teaching) fell from 78% in 2001 to 48% in 2011 (LRE, p235). This decline has not affected the number of students who choose to study languages from ages 16-18, although it would appear that students who follow language courses at secondary level belong to an increasingly restricted social elite, as the authors state:

> "At ages 16-18, the numbers studying languages have remained steadier. This relative success is mainly due to the maintenance of language learning in independent schools, which educate around 7% of the school population in England, but account for 40% of Advanced level entries in languages. This reveals a key concern for the future of language teaching in England – that of social inequality." (LRE, p235).

The LRE report also points to various other deficiencies in UK language provision at secondary level. None of the UK regions link their attainment targets to CEFR

framework (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, table 29 in the LRE report, p54). In addition, there is a general lack of qualified language teachers for NL, FL and R/ML categories, especially in GBENG and GBSCT. Tellingly, the LRE authors state that "only in Estonia and Northern Ireland do general classroom teachers teach foreign languages" (LRE, p54). As mentioned in section 6 below, a further factor that may depress the demand for language skills in the mainstream education system is that when language skills are required in professional contexts, it is likely that employers will turn to people from bilingual backgrounds (i.e. belonging to an IL or FL community).

The picture for language diversity in the UK's higher education system is not quite as bleak as for the secondary system. However, this area is much more difficult to evaluate than for primary and secondary education, since in the UK and many other countries, universities and further education colleges are generally regulated at a regional rather than a national level. Looking at Europe as a whole, LRE therefore restricts its survey to a sample of three universities (not named) and three Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions from each country. By way of illustration, the overall findings for the UK's VET colleges are set out in the following table:

Table 11. Comparative overview of mainly R/M FL and IL languages in VET institutions (LRE, p58)[25]

Country / Region	*R/ML*	*FL*	*IL*
GBENG	(0)	FRA, DEU, Greek (ELL), ITA, Rumanian (RON), RUS, SPA, TUR	ARA, URD, TUR, ZHO
GBNIR	GLE, SCO-Ulster	FRA, DEU, ELL, ITA, JPBN, POR, RUS, SPA	ARA, TUR, ZHO
GBSCT	(0)	FRA, DEU, POR, ITA, SPA	(0)
GBWLS	CYM	FRA, DEU, ELL, ITA, SPA, ZH	ARA

If these data are typical of the whole system, then they suggest that many more FL languages are offered at university and on VET programmes than at secondary level, especially in relation to tourism or business courses. The report mentions that there is surprising lack of availability of IL provision (i.e. Community Languages), notably Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali and Chinese. However, once again, the situation for Welsh is relatively positive. In the 1960s and 1970s, Welsh nationalists successfully lobbied for more Welsh-medium secondary schools, and this has led to a steady number of students who continue their education in one of the Welsh-language universities

25 GK = Greek, PO = Polish, PT = Portuguese, RO = Romanian, RU = Russian. Most of the other two-letter ISO codes have been glossed in Table 9.

(Bangor, Aberystwyth or Carmarthen, as stated in the LRE report, p243). Thus R/ML languages appear to have a relatively privileged position in the UK higher education sector (comparable perhaps to Catalan in Catalonia, for example). Overall, however, the LRE authors are generally pessimistic about the sector as a whole:

> "The concentration of languages in the older universities, the narrow student class profile of language undergraduates, and the low incidence of courses combining languages with scientific and technological subjects are additional concerns in the sector" (LRE, p236).

6. The LRE report: media, public services and business in the UK

The LRE report also attempts to identify outward signs of language diversity in three areas of everyday life: the media, the public sector and business. In terms of audiovisual media, the LRE survey looks at various factors:

- the 'panorama' of languages available on radio and television
- typical practices in cinema and television subtitling
- the presence of R/M languages outside their specific regions
- policy towards sign language
- the availability of newspapers and other printed matter in a variety of languages

Generally speaking, the results of this part of the survey are unsurprising. For example, even before devolution, most of the R/ML (Celtic) language areas had extensive sign-positing and public information, as well as publicly-funded radio stations, including in the case of Scottish Gaelic provision for local dialects. In 1982, Welsh also had its own independent television station *Sianel Pedwar Cymru*. Similar channels (although on a smaller scale) now exist for Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic. As the LRE report states, there is not much exposure to these languages outside these regions in the national media, or in other contexts (but see my comments on the co-official status of Welsh in the UK, section 3.3). As far as the visibility of FL is concerned, most areas of the UK (especially urban areas and capital cities such as London and Edinburgh) provide support for a selection of major languages, whether in relation to tourism or basic municipal services. Finally, as far as FL films and other cultural products are concerned, the LRE report restates the well-known fact that subtitling as opposed to dubbing is the norm for most cinema and television productions imported into the UK, a practice that is similar to other northern European countries such Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands.

A more original but idiosyncratic feature of the LRE report concerns the observation of different languages in 'kiosks and train stations' (LRE, p70). Other than giving a brief picture about what languages are on offer on one particular day at

one particular newsagent's stand, it is not clear how the availability of newspapers and magazines in various languages may teach us much about how these different languages are actually used, or how people interact in a multilingual environment. But the railway kiosk example does raise some intriguing questions about the nature of language diversity, especially in the midst of an on-going 'information revolution'. For example, it is now generally the case that internet users no longer have to navigate though different languages to get to the content they want. So what happens to language diversity in this case? And even when it is possible to find clear instances of language diversity on-line (given the ubiquity of on-line translations and localisation, it is now rare to encounter more than one language on the same web page, except perhaps in certain social media), how can we assess the impact of this diversity on individual users?

Turning to the area of public services, the LRE survey examines a similarly wide range of issues:

- availability of services and documents in languages other than the NL
- availability of the website in other languages
- use of interpreters and translators in other languages
- inclusion of languages as part of job descriptions
- availability of training courses in languages
- recruitment of persons speaking other languages
- recognition of employees' multilingual skills

The findings from this part of the survey prove to be more systematic than those on the media, especially since the questionnaire involves a sample of cities / towns from each of the regions. The particular UK cities chosen for the survey are summarised in table 12:

Table 12. UK cities involved in the LRE survey (p24)[26]

Country / Region	*Largest City*	*City from Region 2*	*City from Region 3*	*Official languages*
GBENG	London	Sheffield	-	ENG
GBNIR	Belfast	-	-	ENG
GBSCT	Glasgow	Edinburgh	Aberdeen	ENG, GLA
GBWLS	Cardiff	Swansea	Newport	CYM, ENG

26 It is not clear why only two cities were involved for ENG and one for NIR.

The choice of these cities is not arbitrary. As the report states (LRE, p63), the city of Sheffield was chosen because of the city's active policy of inclusiveness in relation to community languages. But the case of Sheffield is not unusual: many municipal councils in the UK as well as other institutions, notably the National Health Service, translate or produce administrative and educational material in the languages of major IL communities. However, these practices have recently been questioned in the light of the recent debate about proficiency in English (mentioned in section 3.4 above). Indeed some politicians, most notably the Mayor of London, have openly condemned the translation of documents from English.[27]

The LRE report asked its surveyors to contact town halls and other municipal services in the cities mentioned above. Not all of the data can be summarised here, but the following table sets out some of the more outstanding results (this includes all the cities contacted, not just those in the UK):

Table 13. Reported language strategies and policies in participating cities (LRE p64).

Areas of activity	*'Widely practised'*	*'Occasionally practised'*	*'Not practised'*
Institutionalised strategy for promoting multilingualism	20	25	19
Website presence in other languages	15	10	39
Use of interpreters and translators	35	24	5
Recruitment of speakers of other languages	11	30	23

Whereas the active use of language strategies appears to be fairly balanced between 'widely practised' and 'not practised', it is interesting to see how many institutions rely on the services of translators and interpreters. This points to an *ad hoc* approach in which language skills are generally out-sourced to specialists, rather than seen as core activities for all employees. Unfortunately, LRE does not specify which cities fell into the 'not practised' column. However, the report does conclude that cities which have a cosmopolitan profile or a high level of tourism, such as Barcelona, Cracow, London, Milan and Vienna show a much larger degree of language diversity than others (LRE, p64). This observation raises a more serious point about how

27 Boris Johnson, the Conservative politician and former Mayor of London stated that "it is 'complete nonsense' that official documents in Britain should be translated into many languages." This statement, quoted in the Evening Standard (6 January 2015), unexpectedly attracted support – but also demands for more funding! – from the National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults: <http://www.natecla.org.uk/news/794/Boris-demands-English-for-all-migrants>.

representative the sample used by the LRE survey may actually be. The authors of the report appear to recognise this themselves, since they state that:

> "Our focus is on languages in public services and spaces at the city (council) level, that is at the central city level, not at the decentralised level of different neighbourhoods [...]" (LRE, p63).

In other words, the LRE survey concentrates on high-level exemplary activities such as 'policy documents' and 'sign-posting'. There are clearly logistical and practical reasons why the authors only looked at these aspects. But it is a shame that the LRE report was not able to examine areas of cities where in fact there may be much more interaction and linguistic diversity. To study language diversity in a city like London, for example, without looking at what is going on in 'the inner city' (i.e. the working-class districts) seems at best very limited.

A final aspect of the LRE report involves languages in business. The LRE survey sent a questionnaire to 484 companies across Europe, covering topics such as:

- existence of an explicit language policy in the company
- emphasis on language skills during recruitment and promotion procedures
- availability of internal mobility, training courses, and other facilities to encourage language skills
- use of interpreters and translators in other languages
- recording of staff language skills
- use or language training networks
- awareness or use of EU programmes and funding opportunities
- use of the common European reference in language training
- use of multilingual documents at the place of work or on Intranet
- use of different languages in software and on websites

Looking at the general results for Europe, the authors state that:

> "[…] a quarter of companies in these sectors have an explicit languages strategy in place, and over half take languages into account when recruiting new staff. A quarter regularly encourage mobility of staff for language learning and development of intercultural awareness. However, 70% do not keep a record of staff language skills, and very few take advantage of EU programmes for language learning." (LRE, p67).

In other words, companies are good at making policies on language, but they they do not worry too much about practical results.

Finally, the LRE report also includes useful data on external communication for each of the different companies, as set out in the following table (covering three language types: National Language NL, Business English BE, Other Languages OL):

Table 14. Languages used by companies in external communications: percentage of 484 companies (LRE, p68).

Type of communication	*'Widely practised'*			*'Occasionally practised'*			*'Not practised'*		
	NL	BE	OL	NL	BE	OL	NL	BE	OL
Annual Business Report	92	38	11	2	11	5	6	51	84
Marketing Materials	95	40	19	2	17	11	3	42	70
Corporate Branding	92	48	22	5	24	19	3	28	59
Company Website	92	61	30	2	5	5	6	34	65

While it is unsurprising to find that Business English (BE) is 'widely practised' in around half of business communication, it is interesting to note that Other Languages (OL) are used in around a fifth of cases, with a slight increase in presence on websites. These date concern all of the 24 countries involved in the survey. In the specific section of the LRE report on England, it is stated that less than a third of the 21 companies surveyed there have general or internal language strategies, while around a third of the same companies use other languages in their external language strategy (LRE, p238). The survey concludes with a discussion of how language skills are perceived among UK businesses. Among the 40 companies surveyed for the UK as a whole, the list of 'prioritised languages' includes (from the most to the least frequent languages cited by UK companies): French, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Catalan, Swedish, Danish and Finnish (LRE, p69). As we have seen in the use of translators and interpreters in the public services, in theory most UK companies claim that language skills are important for their employees, but in practice this does not extend much further than the national language, and for FL and IL companies tend to outsource these language skills and thus rely heavily on the educational elite (i.e. bilinguals who happen to belong to the 'right' FL or IL community, or failing that, the small number of UK graduates who specialise in languages).

Conclusion

Given the preceding discussion, it is possible to make a small number of generalisations regarding language diversity in the UK:

a) Contrary to the popular stereotype of a monolithic monolingual country, the UK enjoys a rich diversity of languages, dialects and accents, with – by virtue of *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML) – two officially recognised **National Languages** across large parts of the UK's territory (English and Welsh), plus seven officially recognised **Regional / Minority languages** (Cornish, Irish Gaelic, Manx, Scots, Scots Gaelic, Ulster Scots, as well as but not counting Welsh). The symbolic status of these languages (including the many regional varieties of English) has improved since the devolution of power to the four main 'countries' of the UK in 1997. However, in terms of actual speakers many of these 'heritage languages' have declined or are on the point of dying out.

b) **Immigrant languages** are highly present in most UK cities, and as such they contribute greatly to language diversity across the country. There has been considerable tolerance of these so-called 'community languages', which traditionally used to receive support at the local and institutional level. However, the political climate has changed recently, especially following the UK's decision to leave the European Union. The UK's political discourse has at times moved from tolerant multiculturalism to a less inclusive approach to speakers of immigrant languages, amid politically-motivated worries about proficiency in the national language (and perhaps also the more traditional regional/minority languages), as well as more or less justified concerns about the 'balkanisation' of language provision in the larger cities.

c) **Foreign Languages** generally have a peripheral role in UK education and business. Rather than promoting language skills among all citizens and employees, many organisations out-source language work to specialists, either members of immigrant communities or the educational elite. This 'language deficit' results partly from a lack of strategic direction, but it stems more generally from a culture in which language skills are often seen as an expensive luxury.

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