Endangered Languages
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Second lecture (02/03/2015)

Language endangerment

Questions of the first lecture

- How many languages are there today?
- Where can we find information about the languages of the world?
- Where is the greatest linguistic diversity?
- Why are there so many languages in the world?

- Is linguistic diversity a good thing?

Where to find information about the world's (endangered) languages

- www.ethnologue.org
- *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. (Laura, Misut) http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/
- Endangered Languages (Karol, Jaime) http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/
- SOROSORO (Bernard, Keita) http://www.sorosoro.org/
- Enduring Voices (Olga) http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/enduring-voices/
- www.languagesindanger.eu

Questions for today

- Is linguistic diversity important? For whom?
- When is a language endangered?
- How does it happen?
- How can endangerment be measured?

Linguistic diversity:
the Yolngu point of view

The website www.12canoes.com.au informs about the Yolngu people in Australia.

Watch the clip about language and answer the questions:

- How is the origin of different languages explained in the legend?

- Why are there so many different languages in Australia?

- Why are Australian languages different from European languages?

- Why are the languages important to the people?

In the words of the UNESCO Expert group:

The extinction of any language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world. Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions in the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems. Above all, speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity […].

(http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf)

What do you think:

- When is a language endangered?

- When is a language safe?

*„No single factor alone can be used to assess a language's vitality […]"* (UNESCO)

(all quotes from the paper „Language Vitality and Endangerment", online at:

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf)

„We identify six factors to evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment,

two factors to assess language attitudes and

one factor to evaluate the urgency of the need for documentation.

Taken together, these nine factors are especially useful for characterizing a language's overall sociolinguistic situation." (UNESCO)

Factors that determine language vitality (UNESCO Atlas)
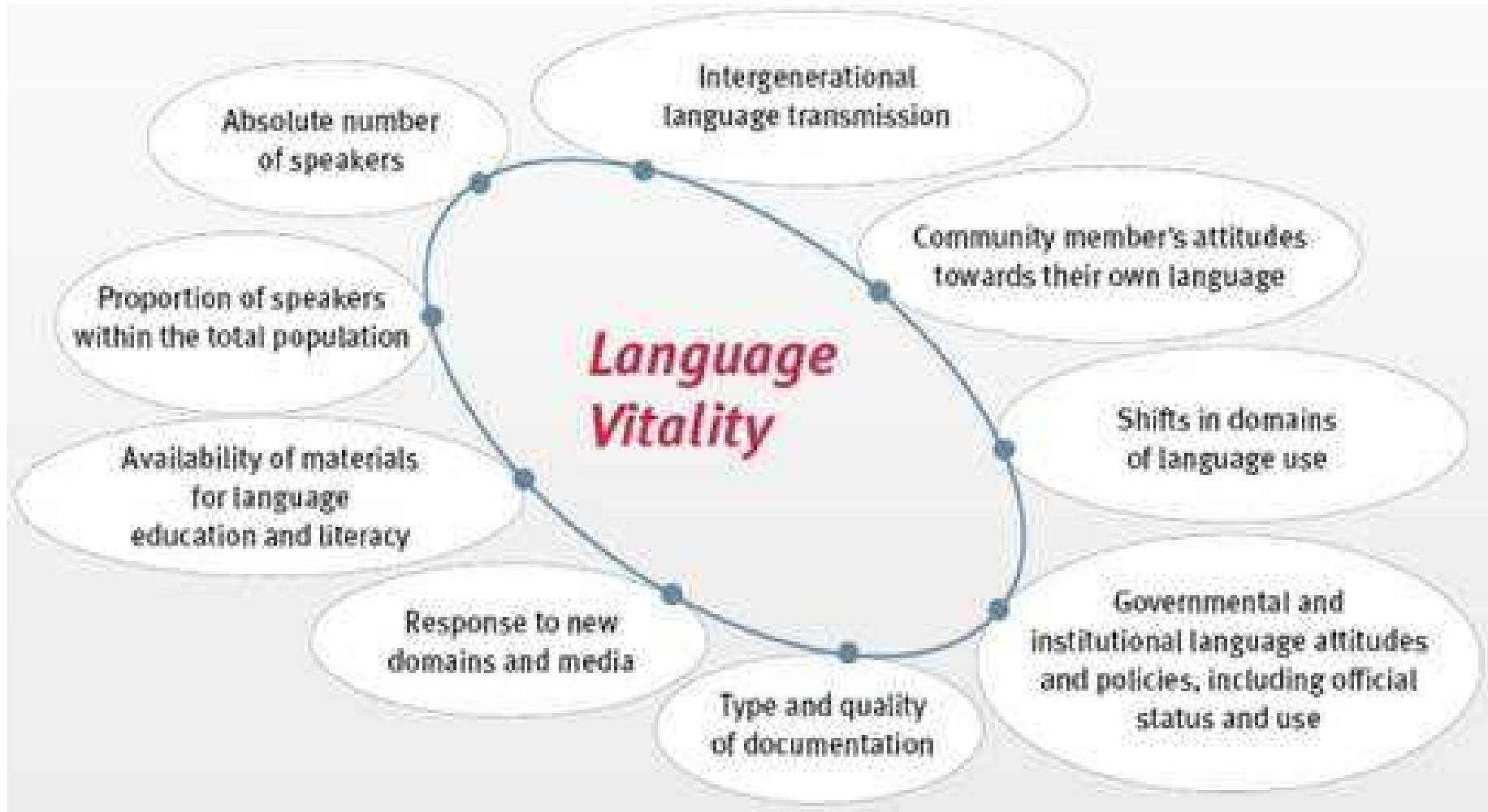
UNESCO grades of vitality / endangerment

5	safe
4	unsafe / vulnerable
3	definitely endangered
2	severely endangered
1	critically endangered
0	extinct

F1. Intergenerational language transmission

5	The languages is spoken by all generations.
4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
3	The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. It is used by the parental generation and up.
2	The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; the parent generation may still understand the language.
1	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.

Example: Yurakaré (Bolivia)

"Roughly speakers of Yurakaré can be divided into three generations. The oldest generation (I), around 40 years and older, speaks Yurakaré well and often. Amongst each other they generally prefer to speak Yurakaré. They also have good knowledge of Spanish, so if a non-Yurakaré speaker is present, they switch to Spanish easily. The next generation (II), roughly between 20 and 40, speaks Yurakaré well, but not as well as the older generation. Amongst themselves they often prefer Spanish. The youngest generation, finally (III), 20 years and younger, has a passive knowledge of Yurakaré and generally does not speak it." (Van Gijn 2006: 14)

Factor 2: Absolute number of speakers

Factor 3. Proportion of speakers within the overall population

5	All speak the language
4	Nearly all speak the language.
3	A majority speak the language.
2	A minority speak the language.
1	Very few speak the language.

F4. Shifts in domains of language use

5	Universal use: The language is spoken in all domains.
4	Multilingual parity: Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
3	Dwindling domains: The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
2	Limited or formal domains: The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.
1	Highly limited domains: The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.

Factor 6: Availability of written material

5	There is an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.

Factor 7: Official attitudes and policies

5 **Equal support**: All of a country's languages are valued as assets. All languages are protected by law, and the government encourages the maintenance of all languages by implementing explicit policies.

4 **Differentiated support**: Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.

3 **Passive assimilation**: The dominant group is indifferent as to whether or not minority languages are spoken, as long as the dominant group's language is the language of interaction. No explicit policy exists for minority languages.

2	Active assimilation: The government encourages minority groups to abandon their own languages by providing education for the minority group members in the dominant language. Speaking and/or writing in non-dominant languages is not encouraged.
1	Forced assimilation: The government has an explicit language policy declaring the dominant group's language to be the only official national language, while the languages of subordinate groups are neither recognized nor supported.
0	Prohibition: Minority languages are prohibited from use in any domain. They may be tolerated in private domains.

Factor 8: Speakers' attitude

5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Most members support language maintenance.
3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.

Example: Miyako (Japan)

- Watch the clip with Isamu Shimoji talking in and about the Miyako language and read the text in English. (http://languagesindanger.eu/book-of-knowledge/list-of-languages/miyako/)

- What signs of language endangerment / vitality are mentioned in the text? Try to assess the grade of endangerment according to the UNESCO scales.

Homework

Read this chapter to broaden your understanding of today's topic: http://languagesindanger.eu/book-of-knowledge/language-endangerment/

Find an endangered language which you want to present in class. Additional sites worth consulting:

- http://dobes.mpi.nl/ (go to „Documentation projects")

- http://www.elar-archive.org/index.php

- Or browse the List of Languages here: http://languagesindanger.eu/book-of-knowledge/list-of-languages/

- Or consult this book (e-book available through the library): Brenzinger, Matthias, ed. 2007. *Language diversity endangered*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.