

Daniel W. Hieber

Rosetta Stone

February 27, 2012

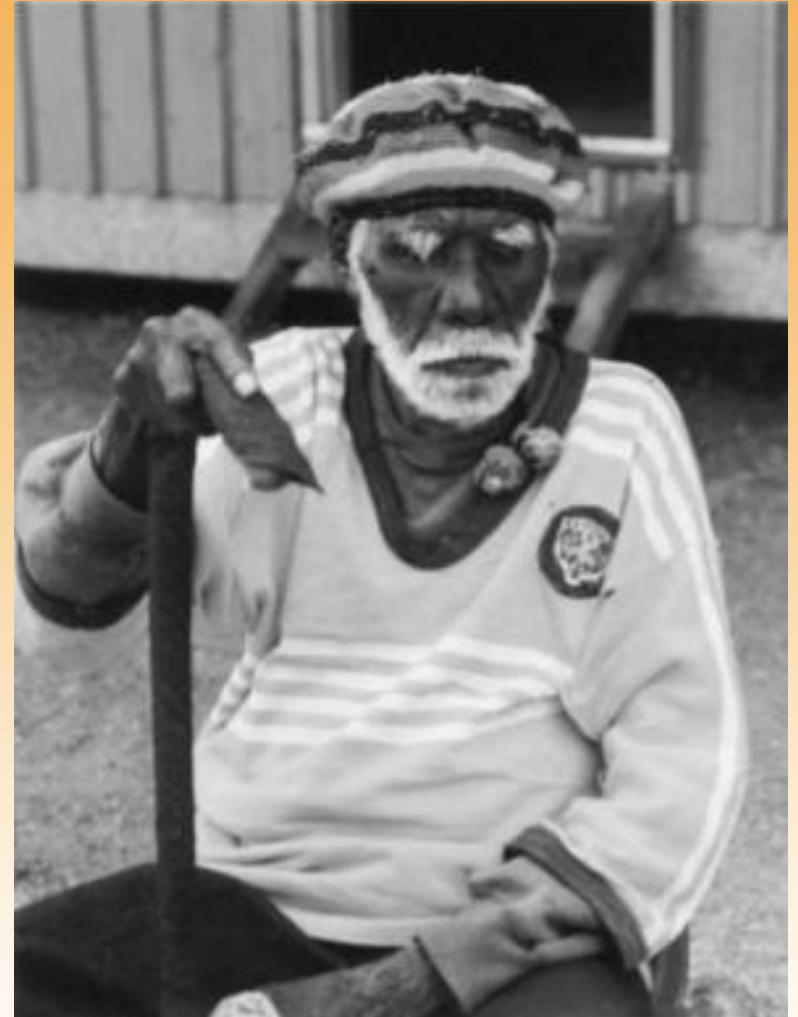
Language Endangerment & Nationalism



Hieber, Daniel W. 2012. Language endangerment & nationalism. Invited talk co-sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program and the Arts & Sciences Lectures Committee, The College of William & Mary, 27 Jan 2012.

Pat Gabori

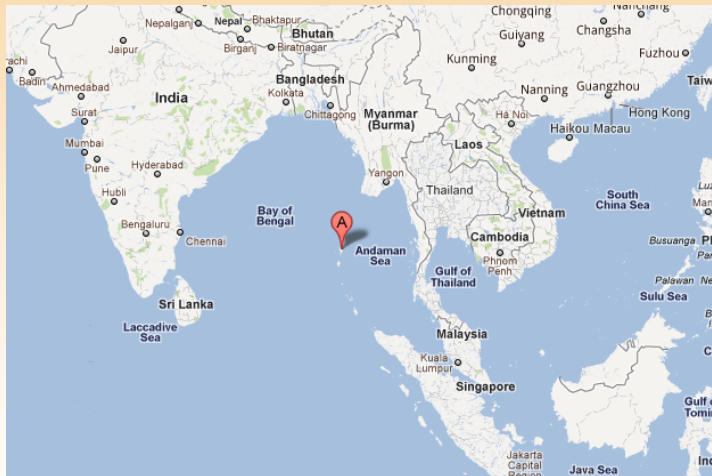
- One of the last 8 speakers of Kayardild
- Passed away in 2009



Evans, Nicholas. 2010. *Dying Words*.
Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Boa Sr

- Last speaker of Aka-Bo
- Passed away in 2010, at age ~85



Great Andamanese Languages

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| • Aka-Bo | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Bea | • Extinct |
| • Akar-Bale | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Kede | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Kol | • Extinct |
| • Oko-Juwai | • Extinct |
| • A-Pucikwar | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Cari | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Kora | • Extinct |
| • Aka-Jeru | • 7 speakers (2006) |

The Last Speakers of Chitimacha



Photos courtesy of the National
Anthropological Archives



Question:

How does somebody become a last speaker?

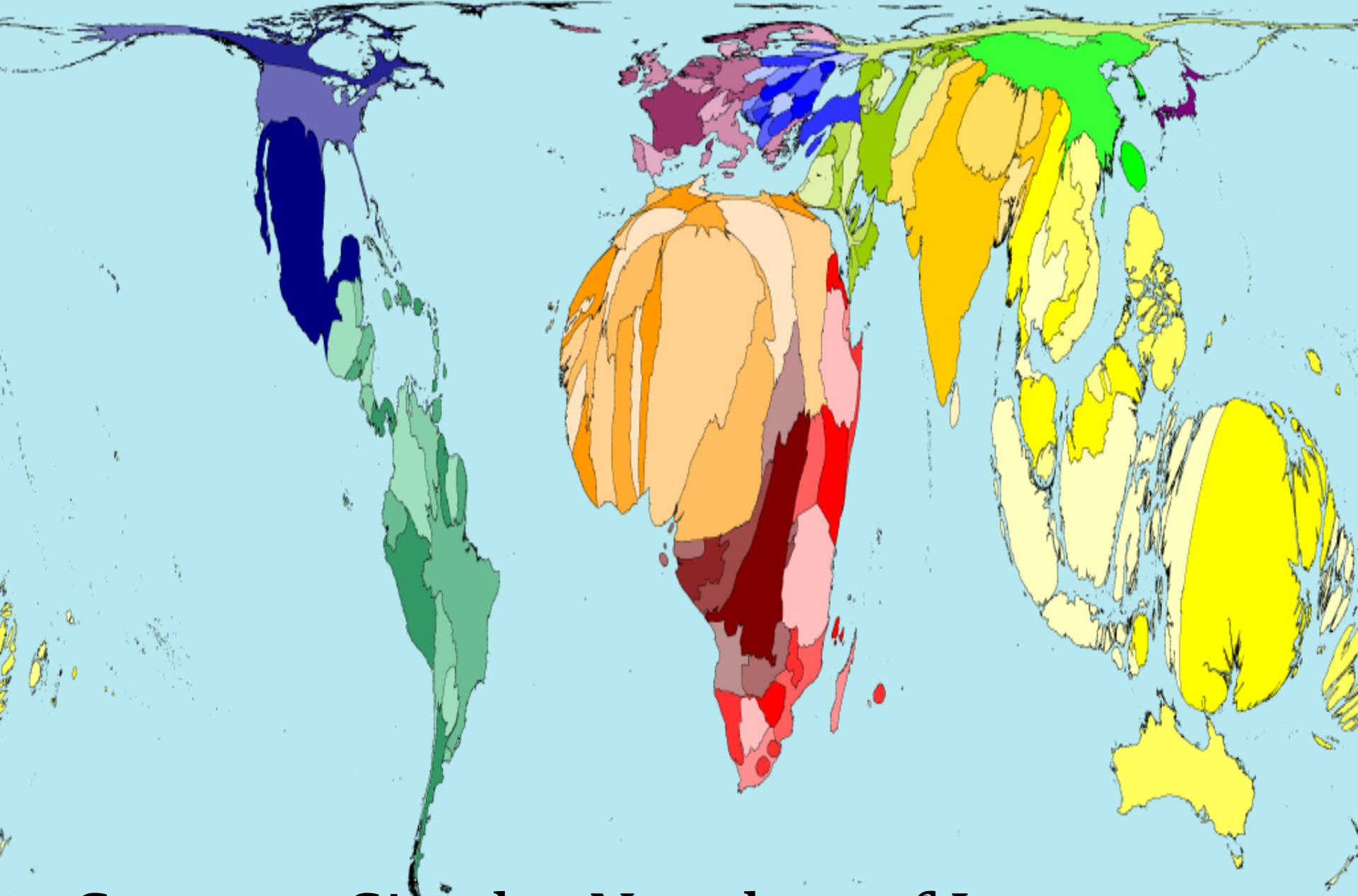


More Questions (to think about)

- Is this a recent phenomenon?
- Should we care more now than previously?
- Is it simply that we have the *luxury* of caring more now?
- Is there something qualitatively different between language endangerment today versus in the Neolithic?
- Is this a difference in kind or magnitude?



THE STATE OF LANGUAGES TODAY



Country Size by Number of Languages

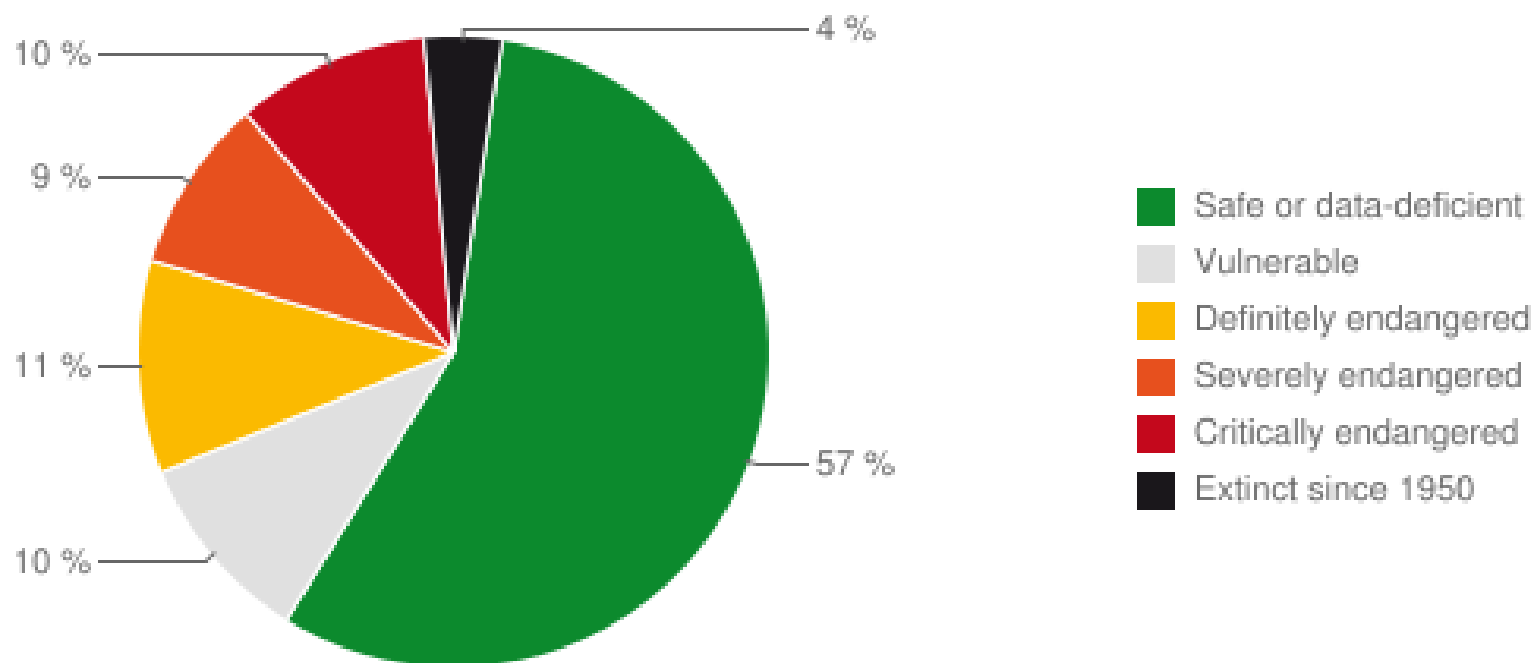
Image courtesy of Worldmapper.com

Critically Endangered Languages



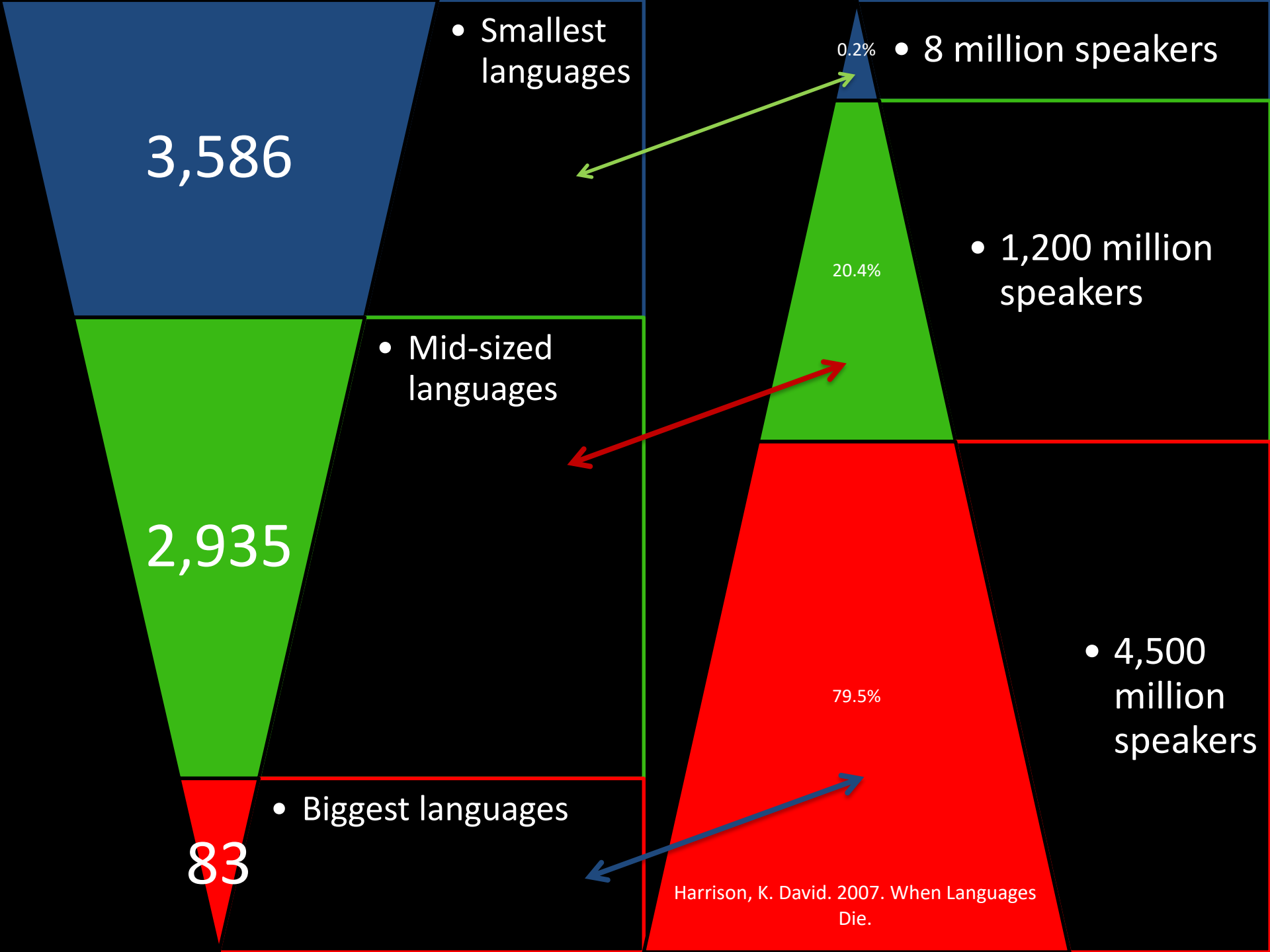
Languages by Vitality

RosettaStone®



UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in
Danger





• Smallest languages

• 8 million speakers

3,586

0.2%

• 1,200 million speakers

20.4%

• Mid-sized languages

2,935

• 4,500 million speakers

79.5%

• Biggest languages

83

Harrison, K. David. 2007. When Languages Die.



THE ORIGINAL STATE OF LANGUAGE

The Original State of Language ante 8,000 BCE

- Language itself is 50,000 years old (at least)
- Population estimate, dawn of Neolithic: 10 million
- Size of communities is capped at several thousand until 5,000 BCE (city-states in the Fertile Crescent)
- Most languages had fewer than ~500 speakers
 - Kayardild – probably never more than ~150 speakers
 - Gurr-goni – stable 70 speakers for as long as anyone remembers
- Number of languages peaked 10,000 y.a.
 - ~ 5,000 – 20,000 languages

Krauss, Michael. 1998. The scope of the language endangerment crisis and recent responses to it. In Kazuto Matsumura (ed.), *Studies in Endangered Languages*. Tokyo: Hituji Syobo. 101-113.

Evans, Nicholas. *Dying Words*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.





THE HISTORY OF LANGUAGE DEATH

The Agrarian Revolution

8,000 BCE – 5,000 BCE

- Shift to sedentary communities
- Speaker communities became larger
- Decrease in # of languages offset by population expansion
- Renfrew-Bellwood Effect
 - Decrease in deep-level diversity, i.e. the number of unrelated stocks or deep lineages
 - Decrease in number of language *families*
- First massive extinction of languages
- Didn't happen everywhere
 - Papua New Guinea still fits the pre-Neolithic model

Languages Outgrow Their Borders

3000 BCE – 1500 ACE

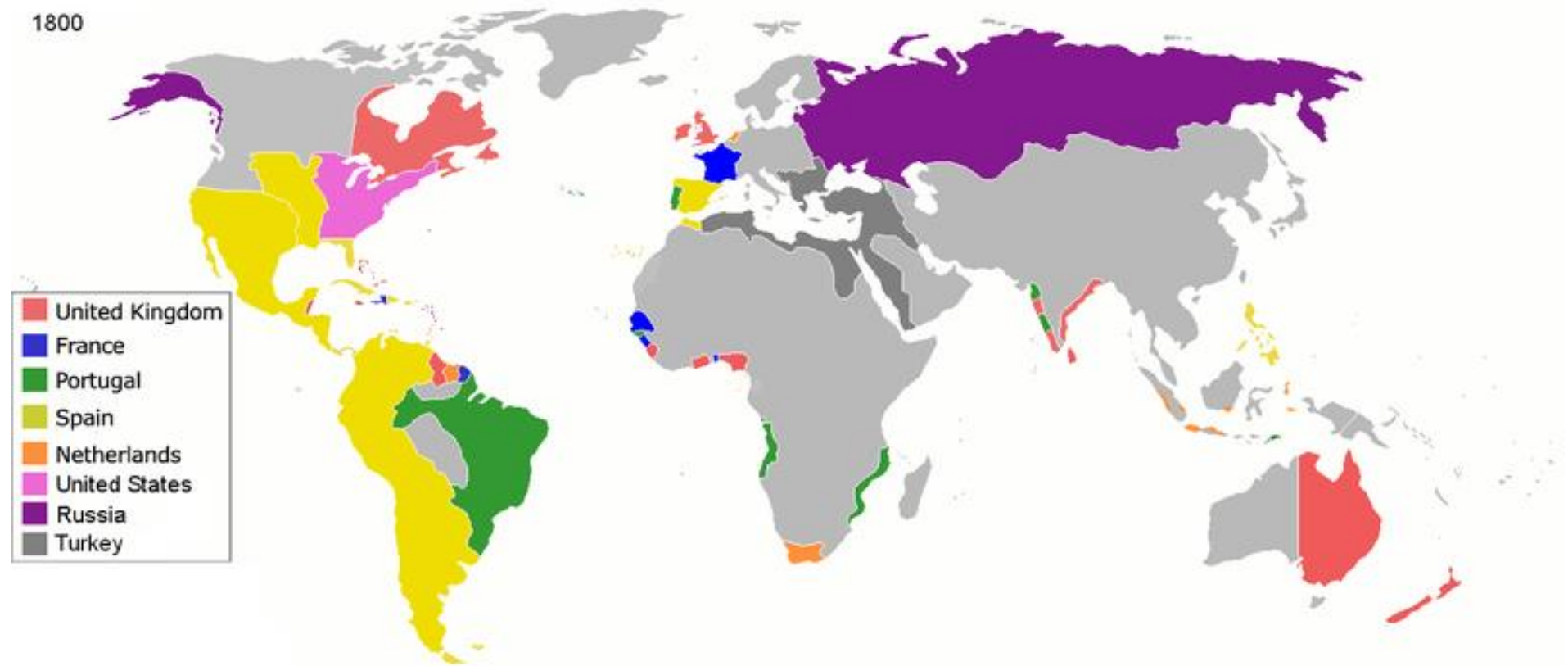
- Celtic (Europe, prehistory – 51 BCE)
- Akkadian (Mesopotamia ca. 2250 – 500 BCE)
- Greek (Balkans, Persia, Eastern Europe 1600 BCE – 1453 ACE)
- Hittite (Turkey 1750 – 1180 BCE)
- Aramaic (Mesopotamia ca. 700 BCE onward)
- Sanskrit (Southern Asia 500 BCE onward)
- Arabic (Middle East, North Africa 622 – 750 ACE)
- Latin (Europe, North Africa, Middle East 753 BCE onward)
- Germanic (Northern Europe (ca. 500 BCE onward)
- Mandarin (221 BCE onward)
- Nahuatl (Central Mexico 600 – 1519 ACE)
- Quechua (South America ca. 1100? ACE – 1572)

The Rise of the Nation-State (1500 – 1900)

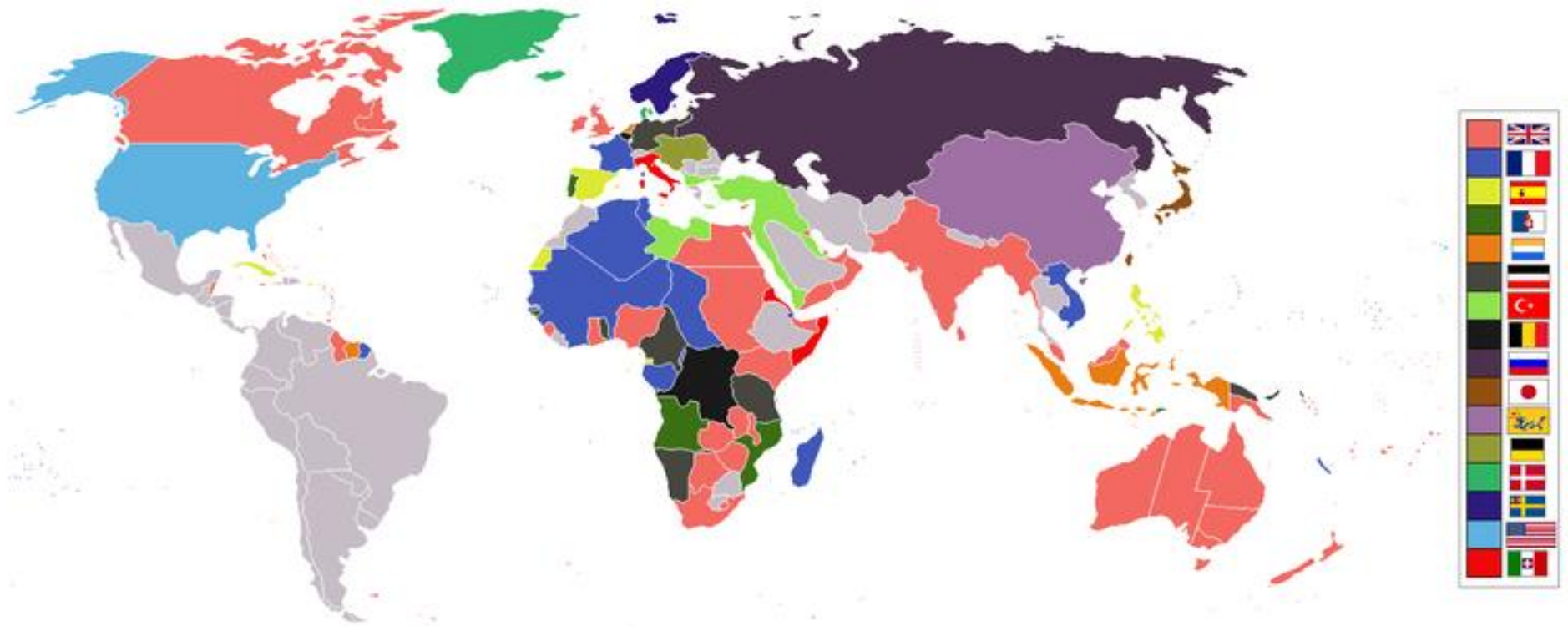
- Portuguese – Brazil, Southern Africa
- Dutch – Indonesia, South Africa, New England
- French – Europe, West Africa, North America, Madagascar
- Russian – Northern Asia
- English – North America, India, Eastern Africa, Australia
- Nationalism old & new
- Irredentism

World Empires - 1800

1800



World Empires - 1898





A THEORY OF LANGUAGE DEATH

The Political Means (1900 – today)



- Public choice theory / praxeology
- No language policy is neutral
 - State monopolies
 - Calculation problems (Misean)
 - Information problems (Hayekian)
- Fallacies of composition
 - Nationalism and national language
 - Imagined communities
- Institutionalization of coercion
 - English-Only legislation
 - Compulsory education



Paved with Good Intentions

- Konmité Pou Etid Kwéyòl (KEK) – Dominica (Patwa)
- Native Title Legislation – Australia
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – United States
- New Yoricans – Puerto Rico > New York City
- BIA Schools – United States

The Three Generations of Language Loss



1. Elders

- Fluent speakers
- First to be affected by societal changes (schooling or urbanization)
- Push their children to focus on the dominant language (can be defensive or economic)

2. Adults

- Conversant but with non-standard grammar
- Possibly limited to receptive language skills only
- Often semi-speakers of *both* languages (leads to creolization)
- Unaware of language shift; defaults to dominant language
- Lack economic resources (broad sense) to devote to language
- Possibly denigrate their heritage language (peer pressures)

3. Children / Young Adults

- Little to no heritage language
- Wish they were taught the language
- Have the economic resources (broad sense) to devote to language



The Economic Means (& Others)

- Killer languages?
- Globalization?
- Technology?
- Trade?
- Urbanization?



RESPONSES & REVITALIZATION

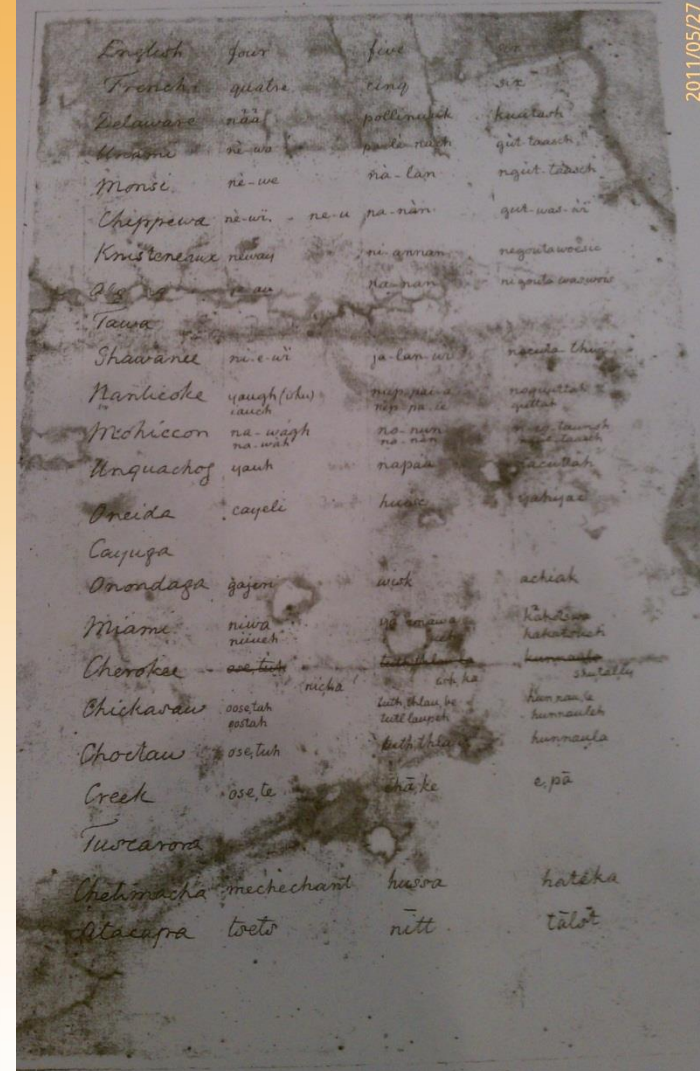
The Spanish Missionaries

1500s – 1700s

- Alonso de Molina – Nahuatl
- Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians each wanted their own Nahuatl grammar
- Tradition continued in S. America (Quechua), N. America (Guale, Timucua; Florida), and Brazil
- Jesuits were excellent field linguists
 - Numerous manuscripts lost when they were expelled from Paraguay
- By 1700, 21 grammars were published
- Missionary work was (and is – SIL) common globally

Colonial Explorations 1700 – 1900

- Jefferson lists
- Bureau of American Ethnology
- Roger Williams – Narragansett (Rhode Island)
- Intense interest in comparative linguistics



English	four	five	six
French	quatre	cinq	six
Delaware	nāā	poll-nūch	kaetach
Urogonia	nā-wo	poll-nūch	gut-taach
Monsi	nā-wo	nā-lan	ngut-tāach
Chippewa	nā-wi	nā-nān	gut-wā-wi
Kristonewa	nūwā	nā-nān	nagūlāwōsā
Algonquin	nā-wo	nā-nān	nā-gūlāwōsā
Tewa			
Shawnee	nā-wi	ja-lan-wi	nā-wā-lā
Narragansett	yaugh (oh)	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Mediccon	nā-wāgh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Anquachog	yaugh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Oneida	cayeli	hūwā	gahyāc
Cayuga			
Onondaga	gajen	wūch	achāc
Miami	nūwā	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Cherokee	ose, tūh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Chickasaw	ose, tūh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Choctaw	ose, tūh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Creek	ose, tūh	nā-nān	nā-wā-lā
Tuocarora			
Chetumacha	mechechant	hūwā	hātēka
Alacappa	tweto	nūtt	tūlōt

The Boasian Linguists

1900s – 1950s



- Franz Boas – describing each language and culture in its own terms
- Sparked a whole cadre of field linguists
 - Mary Haas
 - Morris Swadesh
 - Edward Sapir
 - Benjamin Lee Whorf
 - J. P. Harrington
 - Margaret Mead
 - Ruth Benedict

The Rise of Generativism

1950s – 1980s

- Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (1933)
 - Structuralist linguistics
 - Comprehensive description of N. American languages
 - Meaning is irrelevant to understanding how language operates
- Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (1959)
 - Transformational grammar
 - Universal Grammar (later works)
 - Introspection as a method

Revitalization 1990s – 2010s



- 1992 – *Language* publishes seminal article
 - Ken Hale – On endangered languages and the safeguarding of diversity
 - Ken Hale – Language endangerment and the human value of linguistic diversity
 - Krauss – The world's languages in crisis
- Training indigenous speakers as linguists (Hale)
- Journals (LD&C), Conferences (LD&D, SILS, SSILA), Organizations (FEL, ELF)
- Recognition and support from the field

Should We Care?



- Should no language ever go extinct? What would that look like?
- Are there qualitatively different types of language death?
- Is there a difference in kind between language death in the past and language death today?
- Should we care about all language death or just some?



Contact Information

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