

Instructor:
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Class Hours:
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Barker Center 218 (Fong Room)
TuTh 9:00–10:00 AM
Fr 1:00–2:00

Writing Systems and Language Conservation

Week 4: Conservation, Orthographic Design, and Standardization
Due March 1, 9:00 AM

For Consideration in the Readings

This question is for consideration; there is no need to write it down, these are simply prompts to help with close reading and for discussion on Tuesday.

For the two articles on Inuktitut: These two short articles by Nunatsiaq News discuss Inuktitut Qaliujaaqpait, a unified Inuktitut writing system recently designed and determined by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a non-profit organizing body in Nunavut and surrounding areas which serves the broader Inuit community. Make sure to read not only the articles themselves, but the comments, which are mostly by Inuit readers of Nunatsiaq News. How does the article frame the implementation of Inuktitut Qaliujaaqpait? What about the comments? What are some common opinions commenters have about the Inuktitut Qaliujaaqpait system, especially in comparison to the dual orthography system (which uses both Canadian syllabics and the Latin script)? To what extent do these orthographic systems play a cultural role? How does the origin, or perceived origin, of each script determine its acceptance by members of the community?

For Piller 2010 and Nishiyama 2020: What do you think of this observation that prohibitive signage tends to be more multilingual than other signage? Does it match your experience of seeing signage in Boston, or other places? Do you agree with the claim in Piller 2010 that such signage singles out speakers of said languages as more likely to violate prohibitions mentioned on the signage? Do the case studies in Nishiyama 2020 surprise you? A common justification for a lack of translated official materials is often budgetary; in these cases translations only come about if there is monetary incentive, or by enforcing (the sometimes non-existent) linguistic rights of minorities. How might governments or other governing bodies covertly provide funding for prohibitive signage but not informative signage, and why might they do so, consciously or unconsciously?

Analytical Work

Spanish

Spanish has fairly regular stress, denoted by the following rules:

- (1) a. If a word ends in a vowel, -n, or -s, then stress is on the second-to-last syllable.
- b. If a word ends in a consonant other than -n or -s, then stress is on the last syllable.

However, Spanish does have exceptions to this rule, such as *inglés* 'English', which has stress on the last syllable despite ending in a -s. In Spanish orthography, any exceptions to the above rules are marked by having an accent placed above the stressed syllable's vowel.

According to this spelling rule, which of the following are possible Spanish words? For those which cannot be possible Spanish words, explain why.

- (2) a. camúm
- b. póridi
- c. canaces
- d. cálu
- e. délum

English

The most common plural ending in English is written <s>, but it represents two realized sounds: [s] after voiceless consonants and [z] elsewhere.

- (3) a. <dogs> \equiv [dɔgz] \therefore <s> \equiv [z]
- b. <cats> \equiv [k^hæts] \therefore <s> \equiv [s]
- c. <tins> \equiv [t^hɪnz] \therefore <s> \equiv [z]

English readers naturally read the string of letters <tins> and understand to pronounce the final <s> as a voiced [z]. But [ns] clusters do exist in English; please provide an example of a word which ends in [ns] rather than [nz] like "tins". How does English orthography get around this ambiguity and represent [ns] sequences more or less distinctly from [nz] clusters?