

Assessing ethnolinguistic vitality: how to deal with the effects of language ideologies and trauma?

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Language endangerment

- Recent years have shown an important rise in the significance of this notion.
- Language extinction or language death are present even in popular magazines.
- Many prognostics concerning predicting the moment of language death are being created...
- BUT: these prognostics can also have an influence on the endangered language condition

Scales and databases of language endangerment

- EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) based on Fishman's GIDS scale; UNESCO scale...
- The Ethnologue and the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.
- Over the years, they have become “the” reference resources for language endangerment, and for finding evidence of the risk of extinction for any given language.
- These data are often oversimplified and not taken with the necessary caveats and exceptions.

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is widely used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous oral use, and this is reinforced by sustainable transmission of literacy in the language in formal education.
5	Developing	The language is vigorous and is being used in written form in parts of the community though literacy is not yet sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is still used orally within all generations but there is a significant threat to sustainability because at least one of the conditions for sustainable oral use is lacking.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves but they do not normally transmit it to their children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are elderly and have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	There are no fully proficient speakers, but some symbolic use remains as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community.
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.

UNESCO

1. **Inter-generational transmission:** from no speakers existing any longer (grade 0) to language used by all age groups (grade 5);
2. **Absolute number of speakers:** the total number of speakers of a language;
3. **Proportion of speakers within the total population:** from no speakers (grade 0) to all members of the community are speakers of the language (grade 5);
4. **Trends in existing language domains:** where and with whom is the language used, and for what range of topics. The more consistently and persistently the language is used, the stronger the language is. Ideally, a language is used in all domains (universal use, grade 5).
5. **Response to new domains and media:** the degree of responsiveness of a language to new domains and new media; ideally, a dynamic language is used in all new domains.
6. **Materials for language education and literacy:** the extent to which written material is available and used in formal education. Scores are from 0, if no orthography available to the community, to 5, if there is an established orthography, literacy tradition with grammar, dictionaries, texts, literature, and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
7. **Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use:** official external attitudes, not restricted to institutional protection. Grades range from the prohibition of speaking minority languages (grade 0) to official protection (grade 5).
8. **Community members' attitudes toward their own languages:** this factor addresses the attitudes of community members towards the language. The more positive their attitudes are and more pride they have in language and traditions, the stronger the language is.
9. **Amount and quality of documentation:** the availability of historical and contemporary material, if any.

UNESCO

- **Safe**: language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted
- **Vulnerable**: most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
- **Definitely endangered**: children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
- **Severely endangered**: language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
- **Critically endangered**: the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
- **Extinct**: there are no speakers left

Language vitality scales - Kashubian

- Ethnologue: **moribound** (8a)

The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.

- UNESCO: **severely endangered** (3rd level on 5 grades scale)

Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves.

Ethnolinguistic vitality

- A group's ability to maintain and protect its existence in time as a collective entity with a distinctive identity and language.
- Serves not to show the current condition of a given language/predict its future but most of all to **help to identify those areas in the maintenance and use of a language that need particular attention and support.**

Ethnolinguistic vitality

As such the **ethnolinguistic vitality assessment** can be used as an important tool in the language revitalization process.

- It can serve both **decision-makers, language policy planners** in taking a decision where directing financial and political support in an appropriate way (to help the speech community to maintain their language and not only to make a political gesture) and to **stakeholders** to understand what risk the language is facing. The results can also help **individuals, language users or potential users** to understand their linguistic situation and to decide what language to speak with their children and in different situations.


Ethnolinguistic vitality

- In contrast to some sociolinguistic and sociological statistics, the ethnolinguistic vitality assessment **should not be used for predicting the future of any language!**
- It shows some **tendencies** but whether a language dies out or survives depends on a number of **individual decisions** and **complex circumstances** that may **influence these decisions**.
- That is why predicting language death can be **dangerous** for the language and its revitalization processes as it can **influence negatively people's decisions and language attitudes**.


Ethnolinguistic vitality

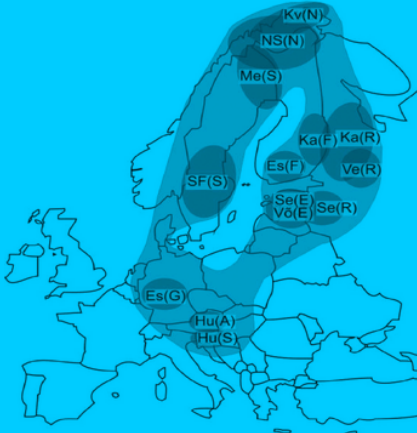
- To provide ethnolinguistic vitality assessment we need to know the sociolinguistic, cultural and historical context of a language.
- The results must be provided with a deep analysis of what circumstances could influence responses of speech community members.
- It is especially important when we try to understand the effects of language trauma and influences of language ideologies on a language condition.

ELDIA (European language diversity for all) <http://www.eldia-project.org/>



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The ELDIA Project and Consortium (ENG)

Category: General Information

A multidisciplinary effort to revitalize minority language, vehicular language and language maintenance studies

The European linguistic landscape is experiencing a profound transformation. Innovations and changes in language policies, education, migration patterns etc. challenge and change the roles and functions of languages within and between states, ethnic groups and nations. **ELDIA (European Language Diversity for All)** is an interdisciplinary research project for reconceptualizing, promoting and re-evaluating individual and societal multilingualism. Experts on applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, law, social studies and statistics, drawn from **eight universities in six European countries**, work together to contribute to a better understanding of how local, "national" and "international" (vehicular) languages interact in contemporary Europe. The empirical research will be conducted with a selected sample of multilingual communities, which is to cover practically the whole spectrum of different political and socioeconomic circumstances of linguistic minorities in Europe (smaller and more numerous, autochthonous or migrant communities, vigorous and endangered, highly or weakly standardized languages etc.). All these minority languages belong to the **Finno-Ugric language family** which is seriously underrepresented in internationally accessible sociolinguistic literature. The results of the research project, however, will be generalizable: they will **contribute to the study of multilingualism and the development of language policies** in other multilingual contexts as well, in and outside Europe.

- Kv(N) = Kven in Norway
- NS(N) = North Sámi in Norway
- Me(S) = Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish) in Sweden
- Ka(F) = Karelian in Finland
- Ka(R) = Karelian in Russia
- Es(F) = Estonian in Finland
- Ve(R) = Vepsian in Russia
- SF(S) = Sweden Finnish
- Se(E) = Seto in Estonia
- Se(R) = Seto in Russia
- Vö(E) = Võro in Estonia
- Es(G) = Estonian in Germany
- Hu(A) = Hungarian in Austria
- Hu(S) = Hungarian in Slovenia

- English (EN)
- Deutsch (DEU)
- Eesti keeles (EST)
- Kainun kielelä (FKV)
- Karjalakse (KRL)
- Magyarul (HUN)
- Meänkielelä (FIT)
- På norsk (NOR)
- По-русски (RUS)
- Sámás (SME)
- Po slovensko (SLO)
- Suomeksi (FIN)
- På svenska (SWE)

ELDIA

The European Language Vitality Barometer is based on the idea of measuring the vitality of a language in terms of the speakers:

- being able and willing to use the language;
- having the chances of using it in a wide variety of public and private contexts;
- being able to develop it further;
- being able and willing to transfer it to the next generations.

COD concept

François Grin and François Vaillancourt's concept that for language to be used three conditions must be met: CAPACITY, OPPORTUNITY, and DESIRE.

COD

- **Capacity:** people must be capable of using a language; the capacity is treated here in subjective terms so it is the speaker's confidence in their competences to use the language that is being assessed.
- **Opportunity:** the knowledge of a language is not sufficient for the language to be used. Speakers have to have also an opportunity to use it. Opportunity depends on one hand, on the existence of a speech community and the level of language transmission; and on the other hand, on the existing institutional arrangements (legislation, regulations at schools or workplaces, etc.) that allow for, support or prohibit the official and/or public use of the language.
- **Desire:** the speakers' wish and readiness to use the language, also reflected in attitudes and in their emotional reactions to the use of the language; It is here that the consequences of linguistic trauma and influences of language ideologies are the most important.

An additional category provided by EuLaViBar is:

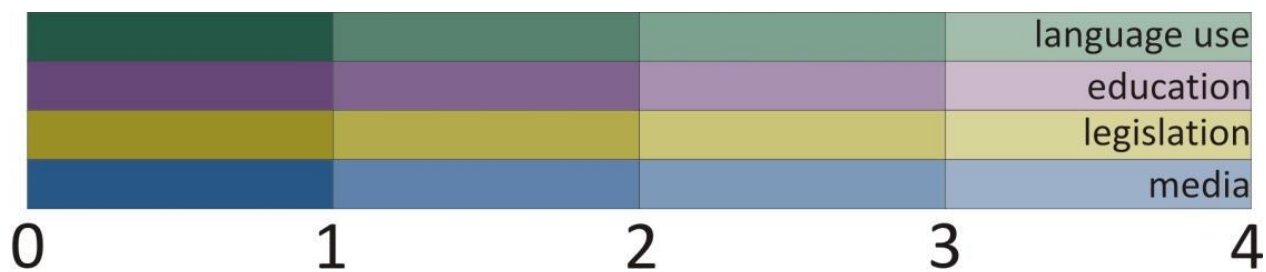
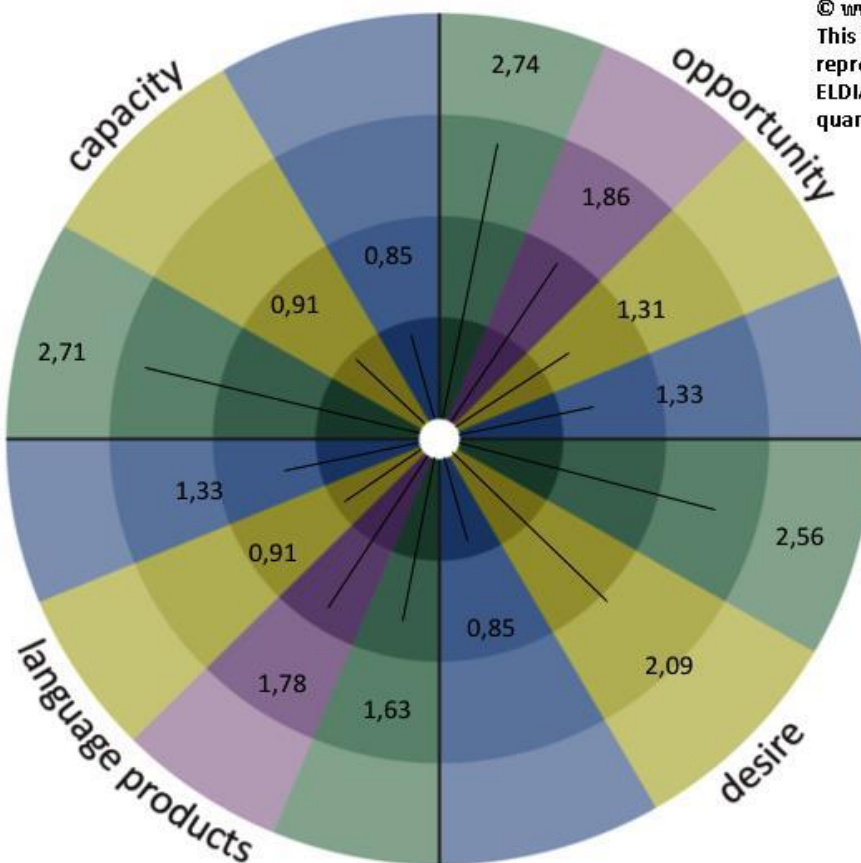
- **Language products or services** that are available in the language (material and immaterial: books, papers, web pages, news broadcasts, concerts, theatre plays etc.) and the demand of such language products.

EuLaViBar

Within each focused area language vitality is evaluated along the following **dimensions**:

- **Legislation**: whether there are laws which support the endangered language or multilingualism in general, whether the speakers know (about) these laws and what they think of them;
- **Education**: all types and levels of education (both language classes/courses and the use of a language in education), people's opinions, attitudes and feelings about education;
- **Media**: all questions relating to all types of media (traditional, electronic, social and interactive media), for instance: media use, language(s) used in media, minority issues in majority media, existence, accessibility, and types of minority media.
- **Language use and interactions**: how the languages are used in communication and social interaction in different situations, with different people etc.

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 This chart must never be used or reproduced without reference to the ELDIA project and the complementary quantitative and qualitative data.



EuLaViBar results

Grade	Description
0	Language maintenance is severely and critically endangered. The language is 'remembered' but not used spontaneously or in active communication. Its use and transmission are not protected or supported institutionally. Children and young people are not encouraged to learn or use the language.
1	Language maintenance is acutely endangered. The language is used in active communication at least in some contexts, but there are serious problems with its use, support and/or transmission, to such an extent that the use of the language can be expected to cease completely in the foreseeable future.
2	Language maintenance is threatened. Language use and transmission are diminishing or seem to be ceasing at least in some contexts or with some speaker groups. If this trend continues, the use of the language may cease completely in the more distant future.
3	Language maintenance is achieved to some extent. The language is supported institutionally and used in various contexts and functions (also beyond its ultimate core area such as the family sphere). It is often transmitted to the next generation, and many of its speakers seem to be able and willing to develop sustainable patterns of multilingualism.
4	The language is maintained at the moment. The language is used and promoted in a wide range of contexts. The language does not appear to be threatened: nothing indicates that (significant amounts of) speakers would give up using the language and transmitting it to the next generation, as long as its social and institutional support remains at the present level.

Variables

- Self-assessment of language competences
- Language transmission
- Language use
- Language attitudes
- Awareness of language situation
- Language stigma (as a consequence of language trauma and language ideologies)

Questionnaire for Wymysiöeryś

1) The sample:

- How to compose the sample of respondents?
- We are talking here about a language as related to the community.
- Who are speakers or 'potential speakers' of Wymysiöeryś?

(potential speakers – those who are somehow related with the speech community and may be targeted with the revitalization activities; who may become language new speakers).

Self-assessment

There are four axes of language use in two dimensions: **active language use** and **passive language use**:

- speaking
- understanding
- reading
- writing

Language transmission

- Language of grandparents?
- Language of parents?
- Communication with grandparents?
- Communication with parents?
- Parents between themselves?
- Parents with children?
- Respondent with his/her partner?
- Respondent with his/her children?
-

Language use: individual and by the community

- How often?
- With whom?
- When? In which circumstances?
- Is the language used in public spheres? In media?
- ...

Language attitudes

Language attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language variety or language varieties of others.

- How to assess language attitudes? By what kind of questions?
- Would you like your child speak the language X?
- What is your opinion about the use of language X in different domains?
- Do you agree with such statements?

(competences in language X facilitates finding a job/ getting higher salary/ are useful/creating bonds with a community...)

Awareness of language situation

- Do you know the status of language X?
- Is (can) language X (be) used in the following domains?
- ...

Language trauma/ consequences of language ideologies

- How can language trauma be defined?
- What provokes language trauma?
 - prohibition of language use
 - punishment for language use
 - exclusion from a group because of language use...

Language trauma/ consequences of language ideologies

- Language ideologies are internalized by a speech community and start to be perceived as an *objective truth* about the language.
- How to ask about it?
- These are difficult memories/experiences often hidden by people, hard to explain etc.
- Also, often these experiences are not direct.

Questions

- When you were a child, did you ever notice that somebody tried to prevent your parents from using with you language X? If yes, who? (family members, school personnel, others?)
- When you were a child, did you feel comfortable while using language X (at school, with your peers, in hospital...)?
- ...

Trauma

Often personal feelings, especially when painful or traumatic are hidden or unconscious.

Possible resolutions:

- Many different questions;
- Oral interviews – open questions and answers through narratives/stories to be analyzed.
- Knowledge of a wide context of the speech community is especially important here.
- It is needed to identify language ideologies that exist in a given community to be able to ask about their possible influences on language attitudes and language ethnolinguistic vitality.