# Endangered Languages, Multilingualism and Linguistics

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As the last century of the present millennium is drawing to a close and the first century of the next one is looming on the horizon, linguistics and the fate of many of the 6000 languages on our planet is poised on a watershed, looking at a changing future.

In this, it must be mentioned that the number of different languages in the world was a decade or so before believed to be about 5000 however, it has since become evident that there are about 6000 languages in the world today. The question of how to separate language from dialect enters into this.[1] It appears that the best test for determining the status of a form of speech as either a separate language or a dialect may be the following: if an unsophisticated person of one speech community is placed into another, and no systematic teaching or learning takes place, and after four weeks or so or less time that person can communicate with members of this other community to a passable extent and will be understood, then the two forms of speech are two dialects. If this is not the case, then the two forms of speech are likely to be different languages.

Questions of new approaches and concepts involving language, language and culture, language and society, the ever increasing menace of language endangerment, disappearance and death, advances in technology which have a marked impact on language work and research, are only a few of the factors which affect language work, study and research, and linguistics in general.

To begin with a factor of fundamental importance which also has a major bearing on the question of the need for the study, and as far as possible, maintenance of languages in danger of disappearing, let me state the following:

For several past decades, a view was dominant in linguistic theory that, with the capacity for having a language being a 'mutation' in *homo sapiens* (*sapiens*), basically all languages were the same in their deep structure, and different societies impressed varieties of a superstructure upon this which simply represented variations of the same pattern. Seeing that all languages were believed to be in principle the same, the many adherents of this theory argued that the knowledge of *one* language (i.e. English, because the theory was developed in the USA) was sufficient for the understanding of everything about human language. Because all languages were thought by them to be basically the same, the speakers of all languages were believed to refer to the very many elements of the material and non-material world around them with the same set of conceptual symbols which they provided with different, but fully intertranslatable, tags in their local languages.

With the increasing re-awakening of the more general thorough study of many languages, especially exotic ones in recent decades, it has become more and more obvious that the above theory is very seriously flawed. It is now realized by many linguists that each

language is in some ways unique and reflects the different ways in which their speakers have come to terms with their world and have organized it in their philosophy and world-view, and have provided the many elements conceived by them of *their individual different* worlds with *unique* tags which are often not directly intertranslatable from language to language. Linguists concerned with European large languages may not notice that so much, because with the very strong trend of most of the cultures of the speakers of large European languages in recent decades towards uniformity, the world-views underlying their different languages have become increasingly very similar. However, as the results of thorough studies of quite different exotic languages (which constitute the vast majority of all languages of the world) demonstrate, the world-views and philosophies underlying them are mostly very different.

Striking examples of this are provided for by the lexicon of indigenous and some other languages which contain a sometimes staggering number of different words for naming different varieties of things culturally important to the speakers. For instance, in Kiwai, a so-called Papuan language of southern Papua New Guinea, there are fifty or so terms for coconut palm according to whether it is a young palm having not yet produced nuts, a palm just sprouting, a mature palm with nuts for drinking, for producing copra, had its nuts harvested, is a low-growing or tall-growing variety, is an old palm producing no more nuts, is mainly grown to provide palm-leaves, etc. etc. There is a generic word for coco-palm, but it is very rarely used, the speakers normally use one of the specific terms when speaking of a coco-palm. There are cases of a large number of terms for specialized varieties of things in English, too, for instance brand and year of production terms for cars such as 'Ford Falcon 1986', Peugeot two-door Sedan 306", etc. instead of the word 'car', which is an abstracted term, because there is nothing which is just a 'car' when one speaks of a motorized four-wheel vehicle for instance. In English, one would use the specialized car-terms only in certain situations, e.g. when inspecting cars at a car-exhibition, otherwise one would use the abstracted term 'car'. In indigenous languages, the reverse would mostly be true. Similarly, in indigenous languages, there would be a range of names for species of trees of cultural interest to the speakers and a generic word for 'useful tree', if there is one at all in a language, would be used only very rarely. English speakers would generally use the word 'tree', sometimes some few specific terms such as 'oak', 'birch', but, unless they are botanists, they would never use any of the very many specialized botanic terms which most English speakers will not even know. In an indigenous speech community, every speaker would know and use, all the many specific names of the trees of cultural interest to them. At the same time, they would usually have only one, or very few terms for all trees which are of no interest to them, i.e. not usable, or not dangerous, etc. This precise naming of things and also actions extends to a large range of concepts in indigenous languages, and far exceeds the possibilities of English and other European languages for items of cultural interest to speakers of indigenous languages. The concept of 'sitting' may be rendered by different verbs for various sitting postures of a human being, for the sitting of a dog, a bird on a branch, an insect on a leaf, etc. So, for instance, the English sentence 'there is a bird sitting on that tree' can have a large number of renderings in an indigenous language according to which species the bird and the tree belong to, and to whether the bird is sitting up, with its legs visible, or squatting with its feathers covering parts of its legs. Also, the indigenous rendering is likely to be more precise than the English sentence, and mention correctly that the bird is sitting on a

57

branch of the tree, not on the tree itself. This is a good example for the very high level of abstraction in an English sentence, as opposed to the very concrete and detailed nature in the rendering of the same concepts in an indigenous language. Also, subdividing the world into individual units named by words in a given language, often follows quite different logic and principles in different languages. In an indigenous language, many bird species may be tagged with different names, but this would be the case only with birds of cultural interest to the speakers. Birds of no interest and concern to the speakers, may be subsumed under one or some very few general terms, perhaps one for small birds and one for big ones. At the same time, flightless large birds like a cassowary (a large ostrich-like jungle bird in New Guinea) is regarded as an animal, not as a bird, which may be reflected by peculiarities of the structure of given languages. To turn to a different language area, the Arabic language, and the Somali language of northeastern Africa, have a great range of different words for 'camel' according to the type and nature of a camel, and to the use to which it is put, and its qualities. Similarly, they have a range of words for different kinds of dates and for different sizes of dates, etc. Also, desert areas have different names according to whether they are sandy, stony, rocky, criss-crossed by dry waterways, etc. This argumentation could be continued on and on, mentioning different ways of looking at the world and splitting it into different concepts as expressed through their languages. The realization that each language is based on a different world view . . . led to the recognition of the scientific, not only social, importance of the study of endangered languages, which from the point of view of the above mentioned first theory, seemed to be scientifically irrelevant. It is now an established fact that with the disappearance of a language, especially an exotic one, an irreplaceable element in the mosaic of the totality of our knowledge of human thought and philosophy has been lost forever.

The increasingly widespread recognition of what has been said in the preceding paragraph not only by linguists, but more and more generally, constitutes an important watershed in approaches to language in general. It also has a very important bearing on attitudes, activities, and processes involving languages in danger of disappearing. Also there is a growing realization that one very important factor in the preservation and maintenance of languages in danger of disappearing, especially in the case of minority languages threatened by large metropolitan languages spoken by very largely only monolingual speakers, is bi- and multilingualism. In view of this, interest in bi- and multilingualism, also by traditionally monolingual speakers of large metropolitan languages such as English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese etc. is now on the increase. It has to be borne in mind in this that until not long ago, in states dominated by usually monolingual speakers of large languages, attitudes and language policies were current which were hostile to the continuation of minority languages and placed their speakers before an either/or choice: either they become also monolingual speakers of the dominant language and carriers of the civilization and culture of its speakers and forget their language, or they keep their language and remain underprivileged fringe members of the state. It hardly occurred to the speakers of a dominant language that stable bilingualism of the minority language speakers would have been an easy solution allowing the minority people entry into the world of the dominant language speakers, while maintaining their ethnic identity and self-respect as minority language speakers. The speakers of the dominant large languages are almost completely ignorant of the fact, that stable continuing bi- and multilingualism, not monolingualism, is the norm in much of the world, e.g.

in India, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, Switzerland, Finland, other parts of Europe, Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, Paraguay etc.

In India, most people of the various states of India are fluent in two or several languages, and the choice of the language(s) of instruction in educational pursuits depends of which of the local languages have the largest numbers of speakers. People will have a working knowledge of that or those languages, and most of them will also be at home in one or several other languages of the state, and of outside it. This situation which for instance has its manifestation in the market places, is stable, not transitory, as is claimed by some linguists on the basis of observation of the languages spoken for instance by immigrants to the USA. In Papua New Guinea, many members of small speech communities also master larger neighbouring local languages and one language of wider intercommunication, as well as mostly the national language Tok Pisin, on a permanent, not transitory, basis. The same is the case of Melanesians in New Caledonia. In Switzerland, most members of the German-speaking population are fully at home in High German and the local Swiss German which is incomprehensible to German speakers from outside Switzerland, know French well, and have a good knowledge of English. The members of the Italian-speaking population of Switzerland often know High German, Swiss German, French and English, and speakers of the Romanch language in Eastern Switzerland mostly know High German and Swiss German, as well as French and Italian, some also English. In southern Finland, everybody is bilingual in Finnish and Swedish, and some know also English. In Africa, most speakers of small local languages also know larger local languages, one language of wider intercommunication such as Swahili, Hausa, Shona, etc. and sometimes also English or French. In Indonesia most people speak at least one, often two or several other languages such as a small and a large local language, etc. in addition to Indonesian which is the national language, but not the first language of many adults, only of some million children now. In the Philippines, 40 million members of a population of about 65 million understand, and largely also speak, Tagalog which has 10 million first language speakers and speak their local language and usually also a large local language of wider communication. In Paraguay, Spanish and Guarani are two major languages of equal standing known to everybody, and speakers of other local languages know them too in addition to their own language. This list could be extended on and on, for instance to the Australian Aborigines who traditionally were multilingual speakers of several Aboriginal languages, with some of them still adhering to this today, or to the language situation in the Bortala region of Western Xinjiang in China, where Oirat Mongolians, Turkic Uyghurs, Manchurian Xibo and Chinese live together, with all the non-Chinese being equally at home in Mongolian, Uyghur and Chinese, and the Xibo also in their own language, and with most Chinese monolingual in Chinese. In a market situation a vendor will try to discern the nationality and first language of an approaching customer and address him in the language which he believes to be the correct choice. If the customer responds in the same language, the conversation will continue in it. If the customer responds in a different language, the vendor will switch to it.

The bi- and especially the multilingual is dealing with a much larger volume of memory than the monolingual and faces a much larger and complex set and web of choices requiring very fast decision concerning the choice of language in a given situation, the choice of the social level, i.e. the register, in the language chosen (the register levels in the two or more languages may not be equivalent), the choice of vocabulary in the language

chosen, which would normally have to follow a different pattern in his other language(s), the correct recall of grammatical features of the language chosen, etc. Natural full bi- and multilinguals, i.e. such from childhood, run very much less risk of interference from their other language(s) than acquired bi- and multilinguals who learned their non-first languages later in life – those have to be very much on the alert for that. All this requires a high-level, very fast, accurate and precise application of intelligence to complex linguistic situations, which continuously exercises the intellect and keeps it instantly ready for use and application. The monolingual has a much less complex and multiform task in using his only language routinely, even if he is exceptional in facing some challenges in his language, like a professional writer would. It is not surprising that bi- and multilinguals tend to be more capable, and faster than monolinguals in finding solutions to unexpected small problems in their daily lives. This is also because bi- and multilinguals are usually to some extent bi- and multicultural and experienced in dealing with contradictory situations. This makes them more tolerant towards new situations and with their generally greater curiosity, enables them to learn, and like to learn, new experiences.

It seems that the possibility of stable bilingualism of speakers of non-dominant and minority languages in their own *and* the dominant language, is a solution allowing the non-dominant languages to continue to exist, and safeguarding their speakers' human right to their own languages. The often heard argument that it is not possible to have a number (often very considerable) of different languages in parallel in the administration and public life, education etc. in a country completely misses the point. The various languages in a country have or could have, different, complementary roles and functions. Depending on their local relative importance, the number of their speakers, the non-dominant languages can be home languages helping their speakers to maintain their feeling of ethnic identity and pride, or they can be local municipal administrative languages, or lingue franche and trade languages over a more extended area, or more widely used and understood contact languages of considerable importance which can function as secondary major languages in parts of the country. In Papua New Guinea in which 740 different languages are spoken, all these types are present, in addition to the national (i.e. dominant) Tok Pisin language, and the two official languages, Hiri Motu and English. In India a similar situation prevails.

A very important watershed development which has had a very considerable bearing on CIPSH and CIPL activities has been the increasing re-awakening of the ethnic self-consciousness of minorities and of other speakers of small or non-dominant languages in several parts of the world which started a few decades ago, and has been steadily gaining momentum since. This brought with it a renewed interest of speakers of such languages, in their own languages which had been steadily receding before large dominant languages until then, with many of them becoming threatened and heading for disappearance, which was in part attributable to their speakers losing interest in their preservation and regarding them of being no use to them any more in the modern world.[2]

This re-awakening of ethnic self-consciousness and the renewed importance by minorities and other small and non-dominant languages in their own languages was followed by a spectacular change in language policies in several parts of the world. The negative attitudes and policies mentioned above have now been changed to positive or at least neutral ones from about 1970 onwards in many countries and areas such as Australia, Canada, some European countries, e.g. in Scandinavia, Japan, Russia with the collapse of

the USSR, etc. which constitutes another important watershed for the fate of minority languages, languages in danger of disappearing, and for bi- and multilingualism.

For instance, in Australia there had been very strong assimilation policies in vogue until the 1970s, which were directed at Australian Aborigines, and also to immigrants. Aborigines were strongly discouraged from using their languages. Members of different tribes and speech communities were put into state-controlled camps (or 'Missions') where they were under pressure of not using their languages, but English. Children were taken from their parents and educated in European ways in boarding-school type establishments where they were forbidden to use their Aboriginal languages. These people, now adults, are today referred to as the 'lost generation'. In the 1970s, government policies switched from assimilation and oppression to multiculturalism and support of Aboriginal culture and languages. Bilingual education in Aboriginal languages and English was introduced in areas where the former were still viable. The camp system was discontinued, the Aboriginals were given full citizenship rights which included their being permitted to consume alcohol which was until then forbidden, a major Institute of Aboriginal Studies was established in Canberra, etc. This coincided with a very strong re-awakening of a feeling of Aboriginal ethnic identity and pride, with their renewed interest in their languages and their maintenance. Several dying and even dead languages were revived, and their use encouraged. A similar situation existed in Canada with regard to Amerindian languages and Eskimo until the 1970s, where a policy switch similar to that in Australia took place, with a simultaneous re-awakening of ethnic self-consciousness and interest in the local languages on the part of Amerindians and Eskimos. In Scandinavia, the local Saami (Lappish) languages had been discouraged, and several driven to near-extinction as a result of adverse government policies, until in the 1970s a switch to positive government attitudes occurred especially strongly in Norway. The use of the languages is now strongly established, a standardized Northern Saami written language established, a Saami Parliament set up in Karasjok in Norway, close to the Finnish border, etc. Here again, there was a very strong re-awakening of Saami ethnic self-consciousness and pride, as well as interest in the Saami languages and their maintenance. In Japan, the Ainu language of Hokkaido was driven to near extinction by adverse and oppressive government policies until a decade or so ago. Similarly, the Ainu language was caused to become extinct on Sakhalin Island, to the north of Hokkaido, by Japanese and Russian hostile government policies, and became extinct on the Kuril Islands further north. About a decade ago, Japanese policies towards the Ainu language suddenly switched to very positive in the wake of political changes in Japan. A most impressive Ainu Museum was established on Hokkaido with facilities for learning the Ainu language, the Ainu were given some regional autonomy, an Ainu delegate was included in the Japanese Parliament, and the learning of Ainu by young people encouraged. There had been a number of Ainu semispeakers (in addition to eight remaining full speakers) who no longer dared to use Ainu for fear of oppression and punitive action by Japanese officials which formerly had been usual. These were strongly encouraged to start using their language again, to which many responded. The USSR, though allegedly committed to protecting and furthering local languages, pursued highly destructive policies directed at small local languages, though it did encourage large local languages, e.g. Uzbek, Kazak, Tatar, etc. which have millions of speakers. Children were taken from their parents and educated in Russian boarding schools where they were forbidden to use their languages. Husbands and wives were

often separated and re-settled in different Russian-speaking communities, to forget the use of their local languages. A number of languages went underground as secret languages with their speakers fearing persecution if they were known to speak those languages. With the collapse of the USSR, these policies against small languages ceased but considerable damage had been done. Several languages believed extinct re-surfaced, and there is re-awakening of ethnic identity feeling in several areas, and renewed interest by speakers of small languages in their maintenance.[3]

A serious threat to the continuation of bi- or multilingualism acquired in early childhood is the narrowminded and uninformed attitude of many schoolteachers in various countries discouraging young pupils from using, or even remembering, languages of their early childhood bi- or multilingualism.

The last remark leads over to the use of language in education. It has been indicated by UNO and UNESCO that ideally it would be desirable for every child to have at least a very basic education in its own language. Unfortunately, this is logistically not possible, if the traditional rigid approach to education is taken into account, with its stress on literacy, primers etc. However, the basic elementary education of children speakers of small minority languages need not be through literacy in their own languages. In this respect, an interesting development is in the offing which brings back to life a method for elementary primary education of children in terms of their preparation for initiation or in general, for later life, which appears to have been in vogue in some indigenous multilingual areas before the advent of European and comparable metropolitan culture contact. Even though there would have been active or passive multilingualism in such communities, large parts of the oral preparation for initiation would have been provided in one, perhaps the largest, language, or in that of the culturally dominant group. However, every day, the various language groups separated for a period, and each of those in which the mother tongue of the initiands or pupils was not the one used generally, were spoken to by a knowledgeable older member of their speech community who told them about matters relating to their initiation, and also about traditions, mythology, skills and activities, and other matters deemed to be important, in the language of their particular language community. There is some anecdotal evidence of this in remarks made to me by very old informants in various parts of the world such as Aboriginal Australia, relating to the early part of the twentieth century when groups speaking several different languages tended to live together, in Papua New Guinea, South America and Siberia, with such situations likely to have existed also elsewhere.

For instance, in the 1960s, a very old informant on an Australian Aboriginal language in southeastern Queensland told the present writer that in the second half of the 19th century, when some tribes in his area who were speaking different languages tended to live together, there was still some instruction of young Aborigines going on in matters deemed useful to them in their later lives, such as knowledge relating to hunting techniques, bushcraft, reading of animal tracks, fire making, and also some mythology and tradition. This instruction was largely given in an Aboriginal lingua franca or contact language which was used for intertribal communication in the area. However, to make sure that all the youngsters understood everything, they were separated for a part of every day into groups according to their languages, and an old member of their respective language group spoke to them about such matters in their own language. Similarly, he was told by old informants in several parts of today's Papua New Guinea in which

small to very small languages were spoken that contacts between neighbouring tribes increased with pacification through the colonial powers in early days. This resulted in instruction to youngsters on matters of importance to them being often given to groups containing youngsters from different language backgrounds. This was given in a local lingua franca or the most widely understood of the local languages. In spite of the fact that with multilingualism being common in such areas, and the language used in this instruction was understood by most of the youngsters, they were split up into groups on the basis of their mother tongues every day for a period, and given the instruction in their mother tongues in addition, by an old member of their speech community. Similar information was given to the present writer by speakers of languages of Siberia, where passive bi- and multilingualism (i.e. each speaker speaks in his own language and understands the others used in a given conversation, without actively speaking them) is present in several areas. Also, similar situations appear to have existed in parts of South America where speakers of small languages were in contact with each other and bi- and multilingualism prevailed.

It is very interesting to note that similar methods of basic oral orientation of children and young persons are beginning to be resorted to again now in places with more than one language in Siberia, South America and probably in some areas in Africa. This method could very well be introduced in Papua New Guinea at the bottom rung of the educational ladder with the added advantage that it would contribute materially to the maintenance of small languages, and to raising the respect for them in the eyes of the children.

There is also an increasing number of scholarly and other organizations in many parts of the world (for instance in Germany, the Netherlands, the USA, Venezuela, Colombia, Papua New Guinea, just to name a very few) which concern themselves with the various aspects of language endangerment globally, in certain parts of the world, or in their own immediate area. For them, publications provide information of great interest to them in their activities. The results of the various projects concerned with the study of individual languages are of interest to linguists and other scholars in subjects relating to the intangible heritage of humanity, and its varied manifestations in language (e.g. anthropologists, sociologists, socio-linguists, human geographers, etc.) but very importantly, to the speakers of languages in danger of disappearing themselves. For them, the published results of such studies are often the first and only systematic presentation of their languages, its structure, its vocabulary, and coherent texts often the first time that they have been reduced to writing. The results of such studies are invaluable to them for the revitalization of their endangered languages and the rekindling of the fading interest of their speech communities, especially of the members of the young generation, in the continued existence of their threatened language. In the case of the studies of moribund languages, the results of a study of such a language constitutes a monument of a vanishing piece of the intangible heritage of humanity, like a relic of a vanishing or vanished material culture in a museum. However, it is a record of the language of a speech community whose descendants may at some time in the future, have the desire to revive their ancestral language, or even do so while a few of the last speakers of it are still alive. This, in fact, is happening with increasing frequency today in several parts of the world, for instance in Australia where several moribund Aboriginal languages, and even languages long extinct, have been revived in the wake of the strong re-awakening of the ethnic identity feeling and pride of the Aboriginal population of Australia, to the point that they

are now used by the descendants of the original speech community in daily communication as a symbol of their ethnic identity.

To turn to another watershed in work involving languages, the spectacular advancements in high technology in recent years must be mentioned. They are likely to continue into the next century with even more stunning developments. Some of these, especially increasingly sophisticated computer techniques, have had important impacts on various types of work and research involving languages. One very important technological advancement concerns cartographic work related to language atlases and linguistic atlases and charts, and other types of graphic presentations of language-connected matters. Language atlas cartography, especially one presenting cartographic information on linguistically highly complex and varied areas, e.g. parts of New Guinea, used to be until a few years ago, a very laborious, lengthy, slow and very costly matter calling for very highly specialized skills and an artistic talent on the part of the cartographers. Now, computer cartography facilities are available which reduce the time and cost required for the production of a complicated multicoloured language map to 10 percent of what would have been required for it a few years ago. Their production calls for different types of skills and qualifications than required for such cartographic work before, but skills much more readily acquired and requiring very much less training time than used to be the case for traditional cartography. Moreover, extensive corrections and changes in the course of the production of a complex multicoloured map which may have required a lengthy and complicated re-doing of parts of, or all of, a map in production, can now be effortlessly and quickly carried out, sometimes in a matter of minutes only. So for instance, the shifting of the location of language symbols on a coloured map presenting endangered languages which a few years ago would have required the re-doing of one or several cartographic print films, can now be achieved in a matter of a few seconds through a simple computer cartographic procedure.

Language atlases have, especially in the last two decades, become an increasingly popular tool in the presentation of the results of linguistic research, especially for areas containing a very large number of different languages, dialects, language families and other language groups such as parts of the Pacific (e.g. the New Guinea area which contains over 1100 different languages), Southeast Asia, Africa, the Americas, etc. With the availability of the present relatively cheap, fast and highly accurate computer cartography which can be expected to become even more sophisticated as time goes on, productions produced by linguistic computer cartography are likely to multiply and to become even more popular. Apart from language maps and atlases, computer cartography is certain to be used more extensively for the graphic representation of linguistic findings. These would be much clearer and easier to understand and be more informative at a glance than written words dealing with the same subject.

Apart from computer cartography, up-to-date and increasingly sophisticated computer techniques are being used (and are likely to be increasingly used as time goes on) for a variety of types of linguistic work, making it less laborious, faster, more reliable and accurate than has been the case before. A good example is dictionary work – the computer permits to maintain a full immediate survey of the entire contents of a growing dictionary, makes possible the finding of the location of any item within seconds, allows corrections and additions to entries to be made effortlessly within a minimum of time. It alphabetizes, reverses, etc. the whole contents of a large dictionary manuscript etc. The

64

same remarks apply to very large linguistic bibliographies, such as the *Linguistic Bibliography/Bibliographie Linguistique* produced for each year by CIPL. Computers can also assist materially in comparative linguistic work involving a large number of languages (e.g. in New Guinea linguistics). They are highly useful in text linguistics, discourse analysis, the rapid searching for given items in large amounts of materials etc.

It is especially the recent availability of personal computers with very large working memory and storage capacities which revolutionized linguistic work as mentioned above.

The increasing role of CD-ROM in linguistic work has also to be mentioned here. For instance, the CIPL Linguistic Bibliography mentioned above is in the process of being put on CD-ROM which will make working with its several tens of thousand annual items much quicker, easier, and increase the usefulness of the Bibliography enormously.

As another watershed, a tendency is noticeable in some types of linguistic work to avoid over-specialization, and to pay increasing attention to cultural phenomena, semantics, the world-view of speakers of a given language in addition to concern with language structure. From such a more global approach to language study and research, new findings and results emerge. Also, there is a tendency followed more and more by linguists, to present their findings in a language and style increasingly intelligible to non-linguists, which is beginning to make the results of linguistic research more accessible to and popular with non-linguists.

Another watershed is the increasing emphasis of linguistic research directed at approaches and subjects not much addressed by it before. Language typology studies are becoming more and more popular; questions of language disappearance and death are increasingly looked at by linguists.

The future of language will be determined by a combination of a range of social attitudes and the influence of high technology and its further developments. It is clear that the study of threatened languages and of bi-multilingualism will benefit from these new tendencies and these developing techniques will enable the linguists concerned to reconsider their approaches to their fields of work, achieving increased efficiency, and being mindful of the emergency of some of them.

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## Notes

1.  There have been several attempts at finding objective criteria for defining dialect versus language, none of them very convincing. One of these regards the figure of 81% of a 200-word basic vocabulary shared between two forms of language as the borderline between language and dialect. This is often misleading: languages showing over 90 percent of their basic vocabulary may be mutually unintelligible because they have quite different grammatical structures (e.g. the Motu language of the Port Moresby used in Papua New Guinea, and Hiri Motu, the lingua franca of much of southern and south eastern Papua New Guinea). Mutual intelligibility of quite similar languages may also be very much impaired by great differences in pronunciation (e.g. German and Dutch). Some linguists regarded mutual intelligibility tests as helpful in determining a form of speach as a separate language, or a dialect of another. They used sound recordings of it played to speakers of another form of speech. This is not likely to give reliable results, because the gestic and mimic, integral to a particular form of speech, were missing. When accompanied by color video recordings, results are more reliable, but the interferences from different pronunciations and grammatical structures are still present.
2.  At the beginning of the 1990s, CIPSH (NGO associated with UNESCO) and CIPL focused their attention and interest on the question of language endangerment of which also many of the speakers in danger of disappearing were becoming aware, and, with UNESCO sharing that interest, played important roles in projects and work relating to such languages and language problems.
3.  For bi-and multilingualism, it is also of considerable importance that UNESCO started a multi-year project named Linguapax whose aim has been to ensure that high-school children who are speakers of dominant metropolitan languages, acquire an advanced knowledge of a second language. The underlying philosophy of this is the recognition of the linguistic, intellectual, attitudinal and social benefits and advantages of bilingualism over monolingualism. Also, the Linguapax project may contribute to the preserving of already existing bilingualism with children of speakers of minority languages. Linguapax may consider extending its bilingualism program to very young children, because of the well-known great ability of children under six years of age to acquire another language easily and quickly.