Endangered Languages

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The language that I am speaking to you now is called Wampanoag.
The language that I am speaking to you now is called Wampanoag. Don’t worry, I’m not planning to talk for a long time in Wampanoag;
The language that I am speaking to you now is called Wampanoag. Don’t worry, I’m not planning to talk for a long time in Wampanoag; I just want you to hear how it sounds.
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Some statistics: (from the Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com)

165 Native American languages still spoken in the US

- 74 “almost extinct” (small number of elderly speakers) (45%)
- 58 with fewer than 1,000 speakers (35%)
- 25 with 1,000-10,000 speakers (15%)
- 8 with 10,000+ speakers: (5%)

  - Navajo 148,530 speakers (in 1990)
  - Ojibwe 35,000 speakers (in 1990)
  - Choctaw 17,890 speakers (in 1998)
  - Dakota 15,355 speakers (in 1990)
  - Western Apache 12,693 speakers (in 1990)
  - Cherokee 11,905 speakers (in 1990)
  - O’odham 11,819 speakers (in 1990)
  - Central Yupik 10,000 speakers (in 1995)
(just for comparison:)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>210,000,000</td>
<td>(in 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>22,400,000</td>
<td>(in 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>447,497</td>
<td>(in 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>377,000</td>
<td>(in 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>194,000</td>
<td>(in 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
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<td>(in 1990)</td>
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<td>10,000</td>
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</table>
more illuminating statistics:

• in 1960, 90% of Navajo children entered kindergarten speaking Navajo...
more illuminating statistics:

• in 1960, 90% of Navajo children entered kindergarten speaking Navajo...
  ...in 1990, it was 30%.
Worldwide: approximately 6,000 languages, 50-90% of which are expected to be extinct by the end of this century.
Lardil Tense

Ngada jarma latha yakin birnkilu
I quickly speared fish-ACC spear-INST
‘I quickly speared the fish with a
2-pronged fishing spear’
Lardil Tense

Ngada jarma latha yakin birnkilu
I quickly speared fish-ACC spear-INST
‘I quickly speared the fish with a
  2-pronged fishing spear’

Ngada jarma r la thur yak ur birnkilur rur
I quickly-F spear-F fish-F spear-INST-F
‘I will quickly spear the fish with a
  2-pronged fishing spear’
Lardil Tense

Nyingki derlde **thur** ngithun **kur** wangalk **ur**
you break-F my-F boomerang-F
‘You’re going to break my boomerang’
Lardil Tense

Nyingki derlde **thur** ngithun **kur** wangalk **ur**
you break-F my-F boomerang-F
‘You’re going to break my boomerang’

Nyingki derlde **thur**
ngithun thabujikan **kur** wangalk **ur**
my o. bro-GEN-F boomerang-F
‘You’re going to break
my older brother’s boomerang’
Lardil Tense

Ngada yanda lathur yakur birnkilurur
I today spear-F fish-F spear-INST-F
‘I’m going to spear fish today
with a 2-pronged spear’
Lardil Tense

Ngada yanda la\textcolor{red}{thur} yak\textcolor{red}{ur} birnkilu\textcolor{red}{rur}
I today spear-F fish-F spear-INST-F
‘I’m going to spear fish today
with a 2-pronged spear’

Birnkilu\textcolor{red}{rur} ngada yak\textcolor{red}{ur} yanda la\textcolor{red}{thur}
So how many people speak this language?
So how many people speak this language?
some success stories:
  • Maori
  • Hawaiian

• now has schools with education entirely in Hawaiian, K>12
• schools opened in 1984: first graduates in 1999.
• 2000 students in Hawaiian-only schools (in 1984, only 50 children could speak)
some success stories:
  • Maori
  • Hawaiian

kālaimanaʻo
carving thought > ‘philosophy’

kālaiʻōlelo
carving language > ‘linguistics’
some success stories:

- Maori
- Hawaiian
- Miami-Illinois
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**kutuma**

unless (+Conj Subj, unchanged)

(John 3:3)

Wunnumuhkut wunnumuhkut kuttunush, Kuttumma wosketomp nompe nekit, matta woh nam8 wuttahs8tum8onk God. Wunômuhkut wunômuhkut kutunush, kutuma washtkeetöp nopee neekut, mata wah nâm8w wuttahs8tumuwôk God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

**kutumôk**

*ketema:ki

alas!

(Revelations 18:10)

Nôkompauwehettit, wutche quihtam8onk wutawakompanaan8onk, n8waog, Kuttummunk, kuttummunk, ne mishe keihtotan Babilon, ne mattanunkquok keihtotan: newutch pasuk hower k8sittum8onk peyaum8. Nôwukôpaweehutut, wuchee quihtamuwôk wutawahköhpunâôk, unuwâak, Kutumôk, kutumôk, nee muhshee kuht8tân Babylon, nee mâtâuneöqahk kuht8tân: neewuchee pâsuq hour k8sutumuwôk puyôm8w. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

**kutumôkee**

*ketema:ki

afflicted; pitiful; poor

(GB 154:35-38)

Wunômuhkut y8 nutunânutamumun nenauun kuttummungk Indiansog pasue matta pish nuttahtoomun uttoh pish appeog weche kuttummungke nunnechanunoonog newutche moochuke nootamhukquannannog yeug Englishmansog ut yeu nuttajyeuonganunonut ut mashpe Barnstable County. Truly we think it is this: We poor Indians soon shall not have any place to reside, together with our poor children, because these Englishmen trouble us very much in this place of ours in Mashpee, Barnstable County.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>Wampanoag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lāapii 'again'</td>
<td>&lt;nompe&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuláakwe 'yesterday'</td>
<td>&lt;wunnonkou&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shkáakwus 'skunk'</td>
<td>&lt;squnck&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moosháandpeew 'he's bald'</td>
<td>&lt;m8sontupau&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wiingáatam 'like (verb)'</td>
<td>&lt;wekontam&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Del. aa : Wamp. ô**
Delaware
nbumaham 'I'm paddling'
nangwah 'my heel'
kawiiw 'he sleeps'

Wampanoag
<nuppumohham>
nupumaham
<nogquhn>
aqan
<koueu, kouweeu>
kaweew

Del. a: Wamp. a
‘excessively, too much’:
<wussaume, wassome, wussome, wussame, wussomme...>
‘excessively, too much’: 
<wussauu-me, wassomme, wussome, wussame, wussoomme...> 

Del. wsaami:
‘excessively, too much’:
<wuss\au_\ume, wass\ome, wuss\ome, wuss\ame, wuss\omme...>

Del. ws\aami: Wamp. wus\omee
peepeenawu-chuchôhq-ôk
look.at reflection device

ahp- uhqâ-hsum -uw
on.top head place cloth

nâh- nay8m -uwâ -t
habitually carry.on.back intrans. 3
peepeenawu-chuchôhq-ôk
look.at reflection device > ‘mirror’

ahp- uhqâ-hsum -uw
on.top head place cloth > ‘pillow’

nâh- nay8m -uwâ -t
habitually carry.on.back intrans. 3 > ‘horse’
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:

language constrains thought.

Edward Sapir (1884-1939),
Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941)
...on the anecdotal level, doesn't look good:

*English*  
beautiful  
handsome  
cute  
pretty  
gorgeous  
lovely  
comely.....

*Italian*  
bello
more anecdotes:

English  Lardil  Tagalog  Finnish
he       niya    siya    hän
she
color:
color:
color:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>color:</th>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
color:
color:
Heider and Olivier (1972): experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

*mola*--'light'

*mili*--'dark'
Heider and Olivier (1972): experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

• shown a single color chip for 5 seconds
Heider and Olivier (1972): experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

- shown a single color chip for 5 seconds
- wait 30 seconds
Heider and Olivier (1972): experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

- shown a single color chip for 5 seconds
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- show a 40-chip array, asked to pick out the chip they'd just seen
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--> same results for English and Dani speakers
“absolute” (north, south...) vs. “non-absolute” (left, right...) spatial reference...
“absolute” (north, south...) vs. “non-absolute” (left, right...) spatial reference...

...and the “animals in a row task” (Levinson et al)
The “animals in a row task”

“Put the animals on table B, just the way they are on table A”
The “animals in a row task”

(table A)  (table B)

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Image of Lobster removed for copyright reasons.

Image of Zebra removed for copyright reasons.

Image of Crab removed for copyright reasons.

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Tenejapan Mayan:  (absolute spatial reference)
The “animals in a row task”

Dutch: (non-absolute spatial reference)
The “animals in a row task”

...on the other hand, the Tenejapan Mayan speakers were tested outside, and the Dutch speakers were tested inside...
The “animals in a row task”

...on the other hand, the Tenejapan Mayan speakers were tested outside, and the Dutch speakers were tested inside...

...and if you test English speakers outside, they behave like Tenejapan Mayans (Li and Gleitman 2002)
The jury's still out...
...this hypothesis is very difficult to test (see Lera Boroditsky's work here at MIT for some recent relevant research).

...but it seems clear that the effects of language on thought, if they're there, are quite subtle.