

Assessing Language Endangerment: A Methodological Review

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Introduction

Of the 7105 languages listed in the 17th edition of *Ethnologue* 33.5% of them are said to be endangered languages. These languages that are under the threat of losing its speakers by choice: as language shift wherein the number of speakers dwindles within the ethnic community. Speakers of these endangered languages cease to speak their heritage language in favor of languages that are socially, politically and economically dominant.

Language shift and language loss are not a new phenomenon, historically many languages have been lost through a process of gradual shift or change, but what worries us is today's language shift occurs when speakers cease to speak their heritage language in favor of the other. What are the reasons for such language shifts or loss? In very rare instances, language loss occurs as a result of the loss of the entire population through natural disasters or war. The most common form of language loss results from language shift and attrition, a more gradual kind of loss, where speakers of a language make a conscious decision to stop using their language or stop speaking it to their children. In such case of language loss, speakers shift or abandon their languages as they see their heritage language as an obstacle to socio-economic mobility, and instead prefers to use the language of a dominant group. In cases like India language shift is motivated as a result of flawed educational policy, which until recently restricted the use of minority language in educational institutes¹. Most scholars (Krauss (1992), Crystal (2000) Fishman (1991), and others) have acknowledged that the language loss is not a new occurrence, but the rate at which it is presently happening is. The reason of language shifts is motivated by a complex set of systemic nurtured factors stemming from local language ecologies to regional, national, and global levels.

Cause of language shift, as Grenoble (2011) notes, often centres around the uneven

1 National Policy on Education 1968, adopted the All India Council for Education 1956 recommendation of the Three Language Formula (TLF) 'which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi-speaking states at the Secondary stage.' The recent National Curriculum framework 2005 on other hand has laid the foundation for Multilingual Education.

concentration of power and prestige between the minority language and culture on the one hand and the languages of wider communication and dominant cultures on the other hand. While the specifics of such power equation may vary by situations, three common overreaching causes are identified in Grenoble (2011) a) Urbanization, b) Globalization, and c) Social and Cultural Dislocation.

In modern times, *Urbanization* emerges as one of the key causes; it brings people from different language and culture into the same working space. They are necessarily required to communicate with each other, and so they turn to an established lingua-franca or a language of wider communication. Secondly, *Globalization*, the modern practice of trade and commerce, demands that all those who are indulged in it communicate with each other as opposed to the traditional set up where only the key figures in the state are expected to be able to communicate in a global language, this puts pressure on the people to communicate in a global language. Skill to communicate in a global language in the developing nations today is seen as a prerequisite for 'success'. Both Urbanization and Globalization have, in a way, achieved a socio-cultural homogenization, leading to *Social and Cultural Dislocation*. Lack of prestige and power is one of the most powerful motivating factors for language shift. This situation often stems from unequal levels of power and often results in the minority community being socially and economically disadvantaged. Disadvantaged in concert terms means that the minority community as compared to the dominant community are politically powerless and are less educated and less wealthy². One common outcome of this is the change in attitudes towards the heritage language of the minority community. Members of the minority community often view the knowledge of their heritage language and culture as an impediment to socio-economic development, further knowledge of the dominant language comes to be perceived as the key to socio-economic development: the result is the renunciation of heritage language and culture; thus this situation has been called *social and cultural dislocation*.

In this context, Language endangerment can be defined as a threat with the extinction of a language, may be conceptualized as a continuum of language vitality. At one end of the continuum, there are dominant languages like Hindi, an official language of the Indian State³, broadly used in the media and education, and the sole lingua-franca in most parts of India. And at the other end, some languages are on the verge of extinction or languages that are extinct languages like Present Greater Andamanese, a language spoken in the Strait Island of Andaman Islands, India. Its speakers have shifted to Andamanese Hindi, a language of the dominant class and a State language of Andaman and Nicobar, showing only a symbolic fluency in their heritage language⁴. In between these, there are languages of varying degree

2 Harbert, Wayne. "Endangered Languages and Economic Development." *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 403-422.

3 Through Article 343 of the Indian Constitution the State has declared Hindi as the official language and English as the co-official language.

4 Anvita Abbi, Bidisha Som and Alok Das "Where Have All The Speakers Gone? A Sociolinguistic Study of

of vitality. As Grenoble (2011) observes, factors assessing Language endangerment are broadly characterized along three important dimensions: 1) the nature and number of persons who identify as the speakers of the language (ethnolinguistic population), 2) domains of use (function) and 3) internal and external pressures/support that exists for a language.

Nature and number of the speaker base are one of the most significant factors in measuring the vitality of the language. A language is endangered when fewer and fewer people identify with it, and hence they neither use it nor pass it on to the next generation. On the dimension of *domains of use*, a language used in fewer and fewer domains of daily activity gradually lose the characteristic of being closely associated with the community and when it finally loses the 'Home' domain it ceases to exist. Finally, one of the most important factors that motivate language shift is *internal and external pressure or support that exist for a language*. By EXTERNAL Pressure or Support here, I refer to the governments' attitudes and policies toward minority languages. Like, in a state where all languages are given equal status minority languages have external support, on the contrary, if a States treats few or one language as official and the rest as subordinate, then the speakers of the minority languages are under constant pressure to adapt to the language of the dominant class. On the other hand, INTERNAL pressure or support refers to the communities' attitude towards their heritage language: a positive attitude towards their heritage language will be a support, while a negative attitude will act as pressure.

The main concern in assessing language endangerment lies in quantifying these factors. While authors vary in several factors, they all agree that no one common factor can be pointed as the reason for language loss. These factors are not solely restricted with the demography of the speakers, and the language use, they are multifaceted in nature. Further, they also agree that these factors are not universal; rather they are dependent on the 'language ecology'⁵ in which the said language is spoken.

The greatest challenge that one immediately faces in assessing language endangerment in India and South Asia at large is the 'societal multilingualism'. Any tool that seeks to assess endangerment must shed its traditional 'Europeanized' notion of 'language' and 'language use' before it can take the work in Hand. In the sections below, will provide a methodological overview and the assessment of two tools that have been broadly used in Indian settings, Ethnologue's EGIDS- Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale and UNESCO's LVE-Language vitality and Endangerment Index.

Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

In the seventeenth edition, Ethnologue introduced a new category of information: Language Status, providing a summary of the status of the language use in a country. As per Ethnologue's website, the status element of a language entry includes two types of information: The first is an estimate of the overall development versus endangerment of the

the Great Andamanese”, Indian Linguistics; 68.3-4: 325-343

5 As conceptualised by Haugen in his seminal paper The Ecology of Language (1971)

language using the EGIDS scale (Lewis and Simons 2010), and the second is a categorization of the Official Recognition given to a language within the country.⁶ In the treatment below, a summary of the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale is provided.

Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, according to Ethnologue “provides both an estimate of the level of endangerment of languages which are losing ground and an estimate of the state of development of those languages which are gaining functions in the communities where they are used.”⁷ EGIDS was developed by Lewis and Simons (2010) based on 'Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale' first developed by Joshua Fishman. The disruption of intergenerational transmission was the only factor used to create a typology of language endangerment⁸, whereas EGIDS, according to its developers, is an attempt to expand the scope of these categorisations.

An Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale according to Lewis 2009 is an attempt to measure and organise languages vitality on a 13 grade scale (level), starting from zero (safe) to ten (extinct), based on data that are indicators of two major dimension of language use: *absolute number of speakers and the use of language in certain domains or functions*. Each of this level (graded scale) is given a distinct one or two-word label that identifies with the major functional category of the level. A summary of these levels is given in the table below.

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 used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet

6 <http://www.ethnologue.com/statistics/status>

7 <http://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status>

8 Fishman in his seminal Paper (1991) notes that intergenerational transmission - whether parents passed on the language to their children - was critical in determining the continuity of a language. He developed a scale with eight levels, in which the first six levels (1–6) the language is being maintained. In the last two levels (7 & 8) parents stopped transmitting their native language and shifted to other languages.

Level	Label	Description
		widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations, and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used, and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Table-1 Levels in Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 11

Assessment in EGIDS

According to Lewis and Simons (2010), the current status of a language can be assessed by answering a set of five key questions about community and language use. These questions are based on a set of seven parameters of language endangerment (Lewis 2008): 1) Age; 2) Demography; 3) Language use; 4) Language Cultivation/Development, Literacy, and Education; 5) Status and Recognition; 6) Language Attitudes; 7) Amount and quality of documentation. These five questions are listed below. Answers to the five key questions identify some of the major factors that need to be addressed in any language maintenance, revitalization, or development project. These factors are identity, vehicularity, the status of intergenerational transmission, literacy acquisition status, and a societal profile of generational language use.

Key Question #1: What is the current identity function of the language? There are four possible answers to this question: Historical, Heritage, Home, and Vehicular.

Answer	Description	EGIDS Level
Historical	The language has no remaining speakers and no community which associates itself with the language as a language of identity.	EGIDS Level 10 (Extinct).
Heritage	There are no remaining L1 speakers, but there may be some emerging L2 speakers or the language may be used for symbolic and	EGIDS Level 9 (Dormant).

	ceremonial purposes only.	
Home	The language is used for daily oral communication in the home domain by at least some. Here the trajectory of language shift or retention becomes an important factor in order to determine the EGIDS level; answering Key Question #3 is necessary.	Answering Key Question #3 is necessary to determine the EGIDS Level
Vehicular	The term vehicular refers to the extent to which a language is used to facilitate communication among those who speak different first languages. If a language is characterized here as being Vehicular, it is used by others as an L2 in addition to being used by the community of L1 speakers. The language has an identity function that goes beyond the local community most closely associated with it.	When this response is selected, Key Question #2 must be answered in order to determine the EGIDS level.

Table 2 EGIDS -Key Question #1: "What is the current identity function of the language?"
(Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 16)

Key Question #2: What is the level of official use? This question helps to distinguish between the possible EGIDS levels when a language is serving the Vehicular identity function. There are four possible answers which correspond to EGIDS levels 0 through 3.

Answer	Description	EGIDS Level
International	The language is used internationally as a language of business, education, and other activities of wider communication.	EGIDS Level 0 (International).
National	The language has official or de facto recognition at the level of the nation-state and is used for government, educational, business, and other communicative needs.	EGIDS Level (National).
Regional	The language is officially recognized at the sub-national level for government, education, business, and other functions.	EGIDS Level 2 (Regional).
Not Official	The language is not officially recognized but is used beyond the local community for intergroup interactions. These may include business (trade), social or other communicative functions.	EGIDS Level 3 (Trade).

Table 3 EGIDS-Key Question #2: "What is the level of official use?"

(Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 17)

Key Question #3: Are all parents transmitting the language to their children? This question must be asked when the answer to Key Question #1 is Home. There are two possible answers.

Table 4: Key Question #3: Are all parents transmitting the language to their children?

Answer	Description	EGIDS Level
Yes	Intergenerational transmission of the language is intact, widespread and ongoing.	One more question (Key Question #4) must be answered in order to determine if the community is at EGIDS Level 4, 5, or 6a.
No	Intergenerational transmission of L1 is being disrupted. This response would characterize incipient or more advanced language shift.	One additional question must be answered (Key Question #5) in order to determine if the community is at EGIDS Level 6b, 7, 8a, or 8b

Table 4 EGIDS-Key Question #3: "Are all parents transmitting the language to their children?" (Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 18)

Key Question #4: What is literacy status? If the response to Key Question #3 is "Yes", then the status of literacy education in the community needs to be identified. There are three possible answers to this question.

Answer	Description	EGIDS Level
Institutional	Literacy is acquired through a system of education supported by a sustainable institution. This is typically the government education system, though other community-based institutions (such as the church or cultural organization) may provide literacy education.	EGIDS Level 4 (Educational).
Incipient	Literacy in the language has been introduced into the community but has not been acquired by most community members through well-established publicly-accessible institutions.	EGIDS Level 5 (Written).
None	There is no significant literate population, no organized means of acquiring literacy skills, or those who are literate read and write only in a second language. There are no institutions supporting local-language literacy, or if such institutions exist, they have not yet had a significant impact on the community.	EGIDS Level 6a, Vigorous.

Table 4 EGIDS Key Question #4: "What is the literacy status?" (Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 18)

Key Question #5: What is the youngest generation of proficient speakers? When the response to Key Question #3 (Intergenerational Transmission) is “No”, it is necessary to know how far along language shift has progressed in order to assess the current EGIDS level. The youngest generation of proficient speakers in an unbroken chain of intergenerational transmission provides an index to the progress of language shift. By “proficient speaker” we mean a person who uses the language for full social interaction in a variety of settings. Specifically excluded is the partial and passive ability that typically characterizes the first generation that embraced the second language.

Answer	Description	EGIDS Level
Great Grandparents	The youngest proficient speakers of the language are of the great grandparent generation. Language shift is very far along.	EGIDS Level 8b (Nearly Extinct).
Grandparents	The youngest proficient speakers of the language are of the grandparent generation. Language shift is advanced.	EGIDS Level 8a (Moribund).
Parents	The youngest proficient speakers of the language are the adults of the child-bearing age. Language shift has begun and is clearly in progress.	EGIDS Level 7 (Shifting).
Children	The youngest proficient speakers of the language are children. However, language shift may be in its beginning stages since full intergenerational transmission is not in place (Key Question #3).	This corresponds to EGIDS Level 6b (Threatened).

Table 4 EGIDS Key Question #5: "What is the youngest generation of proficient speakers?"
(Note: Adapted from Lewis and Simons 2010 p. 19)

According to it, developers EGIDS is proposed as harmonization of the existing three evaluative methods: GIDS, UNESCO, and Ethnologue vitality categories (old). These methods are used to assess the language vitality and evaluate a language status by answering the above five key questions regarding the languages' identity function, vehicularity, state of intergenerational language transmission, literacy acquisition status, and a societal profile of generational language use. This status, according to Ethnologue, provides the baseline information for language planners and policymakers in their projects to revitalize endangered languages.

UNESCO'S Language Vitality and Endangerment

At the 31st Session of the UNESCO General Conference (October 2001), all the state

members unanimously-adopted 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity' and recognized a relationship between biodiversity, cultural diversity and linguistic diversity. UNESCO's action plan recommends that the Member States, in conjunction with speaker communities, undertake steps towards:

1. sustaining the linguistic diversity of humanity and giving support to expression, creation and dissemination of the greatest possible number of languages;
2. encouraging linguistic diversity at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the youngest age;
3. incorporating, where appropriate, traditional pedagogies into the educational process with a view to preserving and making full use of culturally-appropriate methods of communication and transmission of knowledge, and, where permitted by speaker communities, encouraging universal access to information in the public domain through the global network, including the promotion of linguistic diversity in cyberspace.

To attain these goals, an ad hoc expert group on Endangered languages was constituted, to assess language endangerment and urgency of the need for documentation. The ad hoc group identified six factors to evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment, two factors to assess language attitudes and one factor to evaluate the urgency of the need for documentation. Taken together, these nine factors are considered useful for characterizing a language's overall sociolinguistic situation. Except for one factor, the rest of the eight factors are graded on six-point scale 5 (safe) to 0 (extinct).

Six Factors of Language Vitality Assessment

Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission

The most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next (Fishman 1991). Endangerment can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction.

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Description
Safe	5	The language is spoken by all generations. There is no sign of linguistic threat from any other language, and the intergenerational transmission of the language seems uninterrupted.
Unsafe	4	Most but not all children or families of a particular community speak the language as their first language, but it may be restricted to specific social domains (such as at home, where children interact with their parents and grandparents).
Definitively endangered	3	The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage, parents may still speak

		the language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language.
Severely endangered	2	The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children.
Critically endangered	1	The youngest speakers are in the great-grandparental generation, and the language is not used for everyday interactions. These older people often remember only part of the language but do not use it, since there may not be anyone to speak with.
Extinct	0	There is no one who can speak or remember the language.

Table 8 UNESCO's "Factor 1- Intergenerational Language Transmission"
(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger, et al. 2003, p. 8)

Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers

This is the only factor, which is not in an interpretable scale, as the expert group believes 'it is impossible to establish a hard and fast rule for interpreting absolute numbers, but a small speech community is always at risk. '

Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

The number of speakers in relation to the total population of a group is a significant indicator of language vitality, where 'group' may refer to the ethnic, religious, regional or national group with which the speaker community identifies.

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Description: Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population
Safe	5	All speak the language.
Unsafe	4	Nearly all speak the language.
Definitively endangered	3	A majority speak the language.
Severely endangered	2	A minority speak the language.
Critically endangered	1	Very few speak the language.
Extinct	0	None speak the language.

Table 8 UNESCO's "Factor 3-Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population."
(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger, et al. 2003, p. 9)

Factor 4: Shifts in Domains of Language Use

Where, with whom, and the range of topics for which a language is used (domains of language use) directly affects whether or not it will be transmitted to the next generation.

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Description: Domains and Functions
Universal use	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions
Multilingual parity	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
Dwindling domains	3	The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
Limited or formal domains	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions
Highly limited domains	1	The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.
Extinct	0	The language is not used in any domain for any function.

Table 9 UNESCO's "Factor 4-Shifts in Domains of Language Use."

(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger, et al. 2003, p. 10)

Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media

New areas for language use may emerge as community living conditions change. While some language communities do succeed in expanding their own language into new domains, most do not. Schools, new work environments and new media, including broadcast media and the Internet, usually serve only to expand the scope and power of a dominant language at the expense of endangered languages. If the communities do not meet the challenges of modernity with their language, it becomes increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized.

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Description: Domains and Functions
Dynamic	5	The language is used in all new domains.
Robust/active	4	The language is used in most new domains.
Receptive	3	The language is used in many new domains.
Coping	2	The language is used in some new domains.
Minimal	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.

Inactive	0	The language is not used in any new domains.
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Table 10 UNESCO's "Factor 5-Response to New Domains and Media."

(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger et al. 2003, p 11)

Factor 6: Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Education in the language is essential for language vitality. There are language communities that maintain strong oral traditions, and some do not wish their language to be written. In other communities, literacy in their language is a source of pride. In general, however, literacy is directly linked with social and economic development. Books and materials on all topics for various ages and language abilities are needed.

Grade	Accessibility of Written Materials
5	There are an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist, and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community, and some material is being written.
0	No orthography is available to the community.

Table 11 UNESCO's "Factor 6-Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy" (Note: Adopted from Brenzinger et al. 2003, p 12)

Language Attitudes and Policies

The maintenance and abandonment of languages are not just dependent on the Language use and Users, Language attitudes and policies by the dominant and the state play a crucial role in influencing the choice of the community. Linguistic attitudes can be a powerful force either for promotion or for loss of a language. Similarly, a community member's attitude towards their own language also plays a crucial role in accessing the vitality of a language. Factor 7 and 8 seeks to incorporate these two in accessing the Language Endangerment.

Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use

A country's government may have an explicit language use policy for its multiple languages. At one extreme, one language may be designated as the sole official language of the country while all others are condemned. At the other extreme, all languages of a nation

may receive equal official status. Governments and institutions have explicit policies and/or implicit attitudes towards the dominant and subordinate languages. These can be graded as follows:

Degree of Support	Grade	Official Attitudes towards Language
equal support	5	All languages are protected.
Differentiated support	4	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.
Passive assimilation	3	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.
Active assimilation	2	The government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.
Forced assimilation	1	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.
Prohibition	0	Minority languages are prohibited.

Table 12 UNESCO's "Factor 7-Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use."

(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger, et al. 2003, p. 14)

Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language

Members of a speech community are not usually neutral towards their own language. They may see it as essential to their community and identity and promote it; they may use it without promoting it; they may be ashamed of it and, therefore, not promote it; or they may see it as a nuisance and actively avoid using it. When members' attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity. However, if members view their language as a hindrance to economic mobility and integration into mainstream society, they may develop negative attitudes towards their language. To access this, the following grades are provided as per the category:

Grade	Community Members' Attitudes towards Language
5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Most members support language maintenance
3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.

0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.
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Table 13 UNESCO's "Factor 8-Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language" (Note: Adopted from Brenzinger et al. 2003, p. 15)

The urgency of the Need for Documentation

Factor 9: Type and Quality of Documentation

As a guide for assessing the urgency of the need for documenting a language, the type and quality of existing language materials must be identified. Of central importance are written texts, including transcribed, translated and annotated audiovisual recordings of natural speech. Such information is important in helping members of the language community, formulate specific tasks and enables linguists to design research projects together with members of the language community.

Nature of Documentation	Grade	Language Documentation
Superlative	5	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts, and a constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated high- quality audio and video recordings exist.
Good	4	There is one good grammar, and several adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and occasionally updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist.
Fair	3	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient numbers of grammars, dictionaries and texts but no everyday media; audio and video recordings of varying quality or degree of annotation may exist.
Fragmentary	2	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings of varying quality, with or without any annotation, may exist.
Inadequate	1	There are only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality or are completely un-annotated.
Undocumented	0	No material exists.

Table 14 UNESCO's "Factor 9-Type and Quality of Documentation"
(Note: Adopted from Brenzinger, et al. 2003, pp. 16-17)

Assessment Case Studies

To assess the strength and weakness of these two tools, in Table 15, I apply UNESCO's LVE and EGIDS to three languages. Angika: An eastern Indo-Aryan language spoken in Northern Bihar and some parts of Nepal, Gondi: A Central Dravidian language spoken in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, and Kachchi: A western Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Rann of Kutch area of Gujarat.

Factors	Angika Iso 639 Code anp	Gondi Iso 639 Code gno	Kachchi Iso 639 Code kfr
Intergenerational Language Transmission	5	4	4
Absolute Number of Speakers	725,000	2,050,000	823,000
The proportion of Speakers within Total Population	3	3	3
Trends in Existing Language Domains	3	3	3
Response to New Domains and Media	2	2	1
Materials for Language Education and Literacy	2	1	0
Official Status and Use: Governmental & Institutional Language Attitudes, Policies	2 The government encourages passive assimilation to the dominant language. By classifying Angika under Hindi. ⁹	2	2
Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language	1	-	-

9 "Languages in the Eighth Schedule". Ministry of Home Affairs. Retrieved on 18-11-2013

Amount and Quality of Documentation	1 ¹⁰	3 ¹¹	0 ¹²
EGIDS ¹³	Status 5 (Developing)	Status5 (Developing)	Status 6a (Vigorous)

Table 15: LVE score sheet & EGIDS

Interpretation

Angika is safe when we only consider 'intergenerational Language Transmission' (factor 1), a look at the other crucial factors (3&4) does not give such a hopeful picture. Overall Angika, is Vulnerable even though intergenerational transmission of the language remains strong. If the language is to thrive, new language domains are needed, and additional documentation would be advantageous. Gondi and Kachchi are clearly endangered, vulnerable from the perspective of Factor 1 and coupled with the loss of speaker base (factor 3), dwindling domains (factor 4) and lack of educational material (factor 6) put both these languages in Definitely Endangered categories.

On the hand using EGIDS, Since Angika and Gondi are categorised as Status 5 as the Intergenerational Language Transmission is ongoing. Kachichi is placed in Status 6(a) Vigorous even after the child-bearing generation is no longer transmitting the language.

Critical Assessment

In the **Unesco's LVE framework** there are several crucial caveats,

- None of the factors should be used alone; they should be used in together to assess language vitality.
- All factors cannot be treated equally; they have to weigh as per their relevance. Factor 1, 3, & 4 are of crucial importance to all languages.
- The grades from the assessment of factors not meant for quantitative analysis, rather they are indicators for qualitative interpretations.

Apart from these, there are certain shortcomings in the framework:

1. Lack of clarity in the definition of notions like 'speaker' and 'reference community' is not clear. At one hand, it is very difficult to identify the total number of speakers; data from a reliable source are mostly scarce in nature while working with minority groups. On the other hand, it is also equally difficult to decide on whom to include in the reference question is left unanswered, in a country like India attitudes such as pride and shame are associated with language situations.
2. It would be more insightful in assessing whether the community than assessing their availability actively uses materials for language educations and literacy. In the case

10 <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/angi1238> Retrieved on 18-11-2013

11 <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/gond1265> Retrieved on 18-11-2013

12 <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kach1277> Retrieved on 18-11-2013

13 As per information provided in <http://www.ethnologue.com>

study above, Angika and Kachchi, orthography is available, yet the total number of publications and other activities associated with literacy does not show active community participation¹⁴.

3. Reminiscence of the western dominance of One Language, One Nation and/or community was found throughout the tool. It fails to take in to account the societal multilingualism while assessing language vitality. In the Indian context, multilingualism has been the norm, languages here coexist in the additive¹⁵ framework.
4. The tool relies heavily on secondary data, from sources like census and other governmental agency, the accuracy of the data is not guaranteed in such cases. Further, the available data is also not adequate and relying on data from a single informant does not yield consistent response across the community. Thus, detailed field work is necessary

In **Lewis & Simons (2006) EGIDS** proposal heavily focuses on Intergenerational transmission, it provides a more detailed description of the levels and between the levels. Overall EGIDS proposal simplifies the assessment, in a sense, it does not take in to account the difference between the absolute and relative speakers' strength, community's language attitude, government's policies, and existing documentation. Further, the notion of language and language use is 'Pre-Andreson', and their strict adherence to the monolingual model¹⁶ highly constrains its reliability.

In conclusion it can be stated that UNESCO's LVE is novel in considering, (1) not only existing but also new language domains (Factor 5); (2) both absolute and relative population numbers (Factors 2 & 3); (3) internal and external prestige (language attitudes and policies, Factors 7 & 8), and (4) the amount and quality of documentation (Factor 9). The UNESCO tool is broad and gradient enough to have a language show comparative strength in some areas (such as the intergenerational transmission of Kuchchi), while overall showing a more problematic picture (as kuchchi scores zero in several other key domains). The strength of the UNESCO model is that it does not look at languages that are disappearing; rather, it looks for changes in the language's ecology that render the sustainability of language impossible. Thus, it allows the language policymakers to pinpoint and acts on the most problematic area. If only a rough estimate is desired, then EGIDS is an easier and faster alternative, but they may be misleading.

14 Only four Magazines are published in Angika http://rni.nic.in/rni_display_language.asp Retrieved on 18/11/13, and in Kachchi none are to be found http://rni.nic.in/display_state.asp Retrieved on 18/11/13.

15 Additive multilingualism produces not just a numerical increase in languages, but the added languages add new nodes to the existing network of languages. Annamalai (2003)

16 "... through the description of some direct measures of language vitality such as changes in the number of speakers or in the use of the language in certain domains or functions. Less directly, an increase in bilingualism, both in the number of bilinguals and in their proficiency levels,..."
<http://www.ethnologue.com/endangered-languages> Retrieved on 18/11/13.

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