

AVG

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Situation of the language

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0 PRELIMINARIES

This paper constitutes an attempt to systematize the field of the situation of the language by means of a hierarchical structure. It tries to consider all the relevant information to describe a language in its social and historical setting.

During work it turned out that the organization of chapters and subdivisions is sometimes arbitrary or may differ according to the specific situation of a language. For example, for a language with a relatively short known history the chapter *History* (here: § 4) may only be relevant to a small extent (e.g. contact history). In the same case it would be appropriate to describe *Contact phenomena* (here: § 2.2.1.) together with *Contact history* (here: § 4.1.2). For a language with a long history, on the other hand, it would be necessary to provide a whole chapter like § 4 with subdivisions as shown there. At the same time one can equally well imagine using the *history* as a structuring parameter for each of the other chapters.

In a linear hierarchical structure there is no possibility of taking into account every possible combination. Therefore we tried to present one possible but nevertheless exhaustive organization of the situation of a language.

Within LDS, there is no need to put the relevant information in a hierarchical structure. The possibility of linking pieces of information provides a network that links the related topics within the situation of the language as well as with the other system components. In the following hierarchy the potential links are mentioned. Occasionally, reference is made to an unpublished paper by Lehmann entitled "Structure of a language description".

1 Ethnographic situation

Information in this section is the subject matter of ethnology, not of linguistics. It will be fully accounted for in an ethnographic description of the community or society speaking the language. It will be mentioned in a description of the language only to the extent that it is useful for the understanding of texts and examples.

1.1 Geographic distribution

Geographic areas where the language is used as the first language.

One areal and one regional map, if appropriate.

1.1.1 Political units

Countries, provinces, communities etc.

1.1.2 Geographic features

Mountains, deserts, lakes, rivers, shores etc. They may be reference points for locating and motivating contacts or missing contacts between neighboring communities.

1.1.3 Coordinates

1.1.3.1 Altitude

1.1.3.2 Latitude

1.2 Ethnic affiliation of speech community

1.2.1 Native speakers

What race do the people belong to? As who/what do they regard themselves?

1.2.2 Other ethnic groups in the area

1.3 Organization of society

As many of the speech communities are in a process of rapid transition from traditional life to "western civilization", the account in §§1.3 and 1.4 needs to consistently distinguish between these two life-styles.

1.3.1 Basic needs

1.3.1.1 Alimentation

1.3.1.2 Clothing

1.3.1.3 Illness and cure

1.3.1.4 Housing

1.3.2 Life cycle

1.3.2.1 Pregnancy

1.3.2.2 Birth

1.3.2.3 Infancy, childhood, education

1.3.2.4 Puberty and youth

Initiation.

1.3.2.5 Marriage and family life

1.3.2.6 Old age

1.3.2.7 Death and burial

1.3.3 Social structure

1.3.3.1 Classes and ranks

Castes, nobility etc.

1.3.3.2 Kinship system

What social role is played by biological relationships and by relationships established by marriage? Are there clans? What functions do different relatives have in them? This may be especially relevant for the corresponding lexical field.

1.3.3.3 Village structure

What is the arrangement of the houses?

1.3.4 Economic structure

1.3.4.1 Property

What is individual, family, community property? How does this correlate with the possession system of the language?

1.3.4.2 Work

Sources of income for men and women.

1.3.4.2.1 Agriculture

1.3.4.2.2 Hunting, fishing, gathering

1.3.4.2.3 Craft

Spare artistic craft for 1.4.3.1.

1.3.4.2.4 Traffic and commerce

Which places are frequented? By which people?

1.3.5 Political structures

1.3.5.1 Institutions

What kinds of individuals or institutions have which kind of political power? How do they get into office?

1.3.5.2 Law

Is there a traditional native juridical codex and jurisdiction? What are the functions (judge, lawyer etc.)? What is the process in a law suit?

1.3.5.3 War

Give general political and sociological information here; spare historical information for §4.1.2.

1.4 Culture

1.4.1 Spirituality

1.4.1.1 Religion

1.4.1.1.1 Traditional religion or belief

1.4.1.1.1.1 Gods

1.4.1.1.1.2 Order of cosmos

1.4.1.1.2 Imported religion

Confessions, sects, mission.

1.4.1.2 Magic and rituals

1.4.1.2.1 Shamans and sorcerers

1.4.1.2.2 Ceremonies

Any rituals of traditional religion not mentioned in §1.3.1, e.g. rain ceremony, lustration.

1.4.1.3 Mythology

Deeds and fates of supernatural beings in prehistory, esp. world creation.

1.4.1.4 Superstition and taboo

1.4.1.4.1 In relationships

1.4.1.4.2 In hunting

1.4.1.4.3 In alimentation

1.4.1.4.4 Other

1.4.2 Folklore

1.4.2.1 Feasts

Any feasts and festivals not yet mentioned in §1.3.1, esp. regular feasts bound up with the calendar, with the religion.

1.4.2.2 Dance

Refer to §1.4.3.4

1.4.2.3 Games

1.4.2.4 Other customs

E.g. visits.

1.4.3 Art

1.4.3.1 Craft

Which among the products mentioned in §1.3.2.1.3 do men and women fabricate with especial care?

1.4.3.2 Architecture

1.4.3.2.1 Common house

1.4.3.2.2 Other buildings

1.4.3.3 Visual art

Sculpture, pottery, painting, broidery etc.

1.4.3.4 Music

Traditional vocal and instrumental music; instruments.

1.4.3.5 Literature

The subdivision of §1.2.3.2 may be repeated here to the extent there are traditional genres of artistic literature.

2 Social situation

2.1 Internal

2.1.1 Speakers

2.1.1.1 Native speakers

2.1.1.1.1 Number

Give source and date of figure. Does the figure refer to ethnic affiliation (like most census figures) or to linguistic proficiency proper?

2.1.1.1.2 Age (youngest speaker)

This is relevant for languages threatened by extinction.

2.1.1.1.3 Proficiency

This is relevant for languages threatened by extinction. Which social groups are the full speakers, the semi-speakers? What is the current trend? Is there a remarkable language loss?

2.1.1.1.4 Multilingualism

Which of the languages mentioned in §2.2.1 are spoken? By which groups? To which extent and on which occasions?

2.1.1.2 Non-native speakers

Number, social groups, proficiency of non-native speakers.

2.1.2 Stratification

2.1.2.1 Sociolects

Which significant differences in structure and style are there, according to any of the following factors?

2.1.2.1.1 Age

2.1.2.1.2 Sex

2.1.2.1.3 Social status

2.1.2.1.4 Profession

2.1.2.1.5 Ethnic group

2.1.2.2 Special languages

Ritual language, avoidance language, secret language etc.

2.1.2.3 Register (speech style)

There may be registers for baby talk, foreigner talk, public speeches, sermons, story telling etc.

2.1.2.3.1 Determinants of register choice

2.1.2.3.2 Structural properties

2.1.3 Communicative conventions

2.1.3.1 Speech acts and maxims

Details on linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of speech acts such as those enumerated below should be given here (in the onomasiological grammar, §10, only grammaticalized speech acts are treated). To the extent that a fully systematic account cannot be given: Which of the speech acts known in "western civilization" are not used? Which ones not conventionalized here are conventionalized there? Any unusual maxims?

2.1.3.1.1 Greeting

2.1.3.1.2 Request

2.1.3.1.3 Thank

2.1.3.1.4 Apology

2.1.3.2 Courtesy

How do differences in status between speech act participants affect linguistic structure? What are the linguistic means for politeness and honorification?

2.1.3.3 Discourse genres

(the same as in 'Structure of a language description', §2)

2.1.3.4 Paralinguistics

Vocal signals (e.g. coughing), gestures, kinesics, proxemics.

2.2 External

2.2.1 Competing languages

Cross-classify §§3.1.1 and 3.1.2. Spare the historical account for §4.1.2.

2.2.1.1 Kinds of competing language

2.2.1.1.1 Substrate

Is there evidence of another language spoken earlier on in the same territory?

2.2.1.1.2 Neighboring

Mention those adjacent languages with which there is important contact.

2.2.1.1.3 Superstrate

Is there a non-superregional language (cf. §2.2.1.1.4) which is being superimposed to the language under description?

2.2.1.1.4 Superregional languages

This includes the languages of "western civilization" as well as *linguas francas*, pidgins and creoles.

2.2.1.2 For each language:

2.2.1.2.1 Name

2.2.1.2.2 Geographic location

2.2.1.2.3 Genetic affiliation

2.2.1.2.4 Ways of contact

Consider esp. §1.3.2.2.4.

2.2.1.2.5 Loan and borrowing

Areas of convergence, Sprachbund phenomena.

2.2.2 Status of the language

The following points are relevant chiefly for a multilingual community.

2.2.2.1 Relative use in discourse genres

Examine the genres as in 1.2.3.2. Use of the language may be limited to some of them.

2.2.2.2 Use for public purposes

Different languages may be used in traffic, commerce, administration, mass media, school etc.

2.2.2.3 Standardization and modernization

Is there a public effort towards standardizing the language? How does it relate to the sociolects of §2.1.2.1?

2.2.2.4 Language attitudes

2.2.2.4.1 Among native speakers

What prestige does the language have among its own speakers?

2.2.2.4.2 Among others

Is there public or subliminal repression or stigmatization of the language?

2.2.2.5 Language policy and planning

What is the legal/constitutional situation of the language? What is governmental policy regarding its maintenance or suppression? What other (non-governmental) efforts can be noticed?

3 Genetic situation

3.1 Internal: dialects

3.1.1 For each dialect

esp. for the one under study:

3.1.1.1 Name

Native name, its pronunciation, etymology and meaning; names used by others; evaluation of names appearing in the linguistic literature.

3.1.1.2 Geographic location

Refer to §1.1.

3.1.1.3 Linguistic features

3.1.1.3.1 Phonology

3.1.1.3.2 Grammar

3.1.1.3.3 Lexicon

3.1.1.3.4 Diachronic position

Position on a continuum from conservatism (relative archaicity) to progressivity (relative modernism).

3.1.1.3.5 Mutual intelligibility

Is the dialect mutually intelligible with the one of §3.1.2?

3.1.1.4 Prestige

Answer questions as for §2.2.2.4.

3.1.2 Focus of present description

Which dialect is the object of description ('Structure of a language description', §1.2.1)? To what extent do elements of other dialects show up in the description?

3.2 External: genetic affiliation

3.2.1 Mother language

Protolanguage or genetic group to which (the earliest historical stage of) the present language is immediately subordinate. Spare the historical account for §4.2.1.

3.2.2 Sister languages

3.2.2.1 Name

3.2.2.2 Geographic location

3.2.2.3 Linguistic features

3.2.3 Ancestral line

Hierarchy of protolanguages or genetic groups back to phylum.

4 Historical situation

4.1 External

4.1.1 Migrations of speech community

What is known from history (incl. oral tradition) about earlier dwelling sites, migrations, expansions and shrinking of the space occupied by the speech community? Geographic location?

4.1.2 Contacts

Peaceful or bellicious encounters (refer to §2.2.1)

4.1.2.1 with neighboring communities

4.1.2.2 with "western civilization"

4.1.3 Writing

4.1.3.1 Introduction of script

4.1.3.2 First/oldest document

4.1.3.3 Development of writing and literature

4.2 Internal: History of the language system

Specify internal factors influencing the history of the language, and internal structural features as in §3.1.1.3, for each of the following stages.

4.2.1 Immediate protolanguage

Same as in §3.2.1

4.2.2 Subsequent phases

4.2.3 Current developments

Which are the fossilized, and which are the productive patterns in the synchronic phase under study?