



Research paper

Preparation - Factors Affecting Indigenous Languages: Colonization and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

In our research, we conducted a comprehensive literature review to analyze the factors influencing indigenous languages, primarily focusing on the repercussions of colonization on aboriginal languages. Colonization, as evidenced by Sayedayn [1], operates by discouraging linguistic diversity and weakening indigenous languages in an attempt to assert supremacy. Furthermore, our investigation delved into the socio-psychological factor of language attitudes. We explored the impact of negative attitudes on language maintenance, underscoring the critical role of positive attitudes in preserving indigenous languages.

I. Introduction

Throughout the world, languages are disappearing quickly. Thousands of languages are spoken worldwide now, and hundreds of them are known to have vanished. Of the 7102 surviving languages that are known, 22% have been labeled as 'in trouble', 13% are on the verge of extinction, and there is an average loss of 6 languages per year. Furthermore, only 20% of the world's 7102 languages are spoken by approximately 80% of people. The majority of languages are therefore spoken by minorities.

All throughout the world, languages are disappearing quickly. There are thousands of languages spoken around the world now, and hundreds of them are known to have vanished [2]. Of the 7,102 surviving languages that are known, 22% have been labeled as "in trouble," 13% are on the verge of extinction, and there is an average loss of 6 languages per year [3]. Furthermore, only 20% of the world's 7,102 languages are spoken by approximately 80% of people. The majority of languages are therefore spoken by minorities [4].

Obtaining global estimates of the rate of indigenous language loss is very challenging and goes beyond the purview of linguistics [5]. Any estimate must take into account statistical principles and considerations in order to be more useful. Many speakers of smaller, less widely used languages switch from their native tongue to another for several reasons [6- 3]. Declining rates of language skill transfer from parents to children are one sign of this transition. A language may become dormant or extinct if this transition persists, possibly remaining only in recordings, written accounts, and transcriptions [6]. Under such dire conditions, all languages that had not been sufficiently documented vanished totally.

Many factors contribute to language endangerment. According to Batibo [7], some possible factors of language endangerment include the level of pressure from the dominant language (political control, socioeconomic attraction, or social gains); the degree of resistance by the weaker language (strong traditional or religious attachment, strong sense of self-assertion and determination); and the benefits associated with assimilating into the community of the speakers of the stronger language (language abandonment to improve integration). Indigenous language decline has been attributed to several factors, including interethnic marriages, population shifts, attitudes, lack of literacy, lack of pride and status, and the numerical decline of potential speakers. In this paper, we will shed light on the impact of colonization and language attitudes.

II. Colonization

The role of colonialism in the endangerment of languages is very crucial. Indigenous languages have been greatly impacted by colonization. It frequently leads to a decline in the number of people who speak their native tongue, and in rare circumstances, it even causes a language to disappear. Conquering other countries was the main goal of colonialism in order to exercise power, influence, and resource control. Sayedayn [1] states that a set of cultural ideals, such as the supremacy of the white race, were at the core of the imperial conquest. It was believed that European cultures and languages were more developed and contained universal knowledge. This idea of superior culture allowed for the suppression of indigenous languages.

We perceive who we are and where we integrate into the world through language, culture, and identity. The main reason conquerors frequently force their languages on conquered populations is because language and identity are so closely related. Colonizers attack indigenous/non-Western identities by affecting indigenous languages in an effort to infiltrate their target population's minds, thoughts, and values. Values and opinions are effectively but covertly communicated through language. This language policy gives colonizers the ability to carry on with colonization and deepen their roots in colonized lands. Indigenous people have become under the control of colonizers. As a result, indigenous people increasingly accept the conquerors' sovereignty and value system as superior to their own [1].

- ***Language as a colonial weapon***

Language and colonialism have been linked for an extremely long time. While the bullet was used by colonial powers to physically subjugate people, language was used for "spiritual subjugation". The loss or undervaluation of a people's culture and "the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer" led to spiritual slavery [8]. Ngũgĩ asserts: "The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized." [8]

According to Ravishankar [9]. Linguistic violence is a form of aggression against a culture that may never fully recover, and it endures long after the colonizers have left. Language as a tool of colonial dominance has too often been regarded as "one of many symptoms of a larger colonial pathology" [10], as an outcome that doesn't need to be addressed as promptly or seriously as with more pervasive and widespread ideas of colonial brutality.

Since language shapes identity and cultural sovereignty is crucial, colonists typically try to communicate their culture in many ways. In the past, colonists forced their cultures and languages on non-Western people by making them learn to speak a foreign tongue. This process is best shown by the disappearance of indigenous languages in Africa and America. By enforcing assimilation and integration efforts, colonial rulers discouraged and stifled thousands of years of language variation and expertise [1].

Sayedayn [1] states that the Canadian government has allowed numerous indigenous languages to go extinct or endangered through linguistic policies like enfranchisement and the residential school system. original languages were lost as a result of the harsh punishments given to indigenous children who spoke in their original tongues in the residential school system. Native American parents shielded their kids by keeping their languages to themselves because they did not want them to suffer the same repercussions as they had. A priceless history of information, values, beliefs, and culture was lost as a result.

When Ngũgĩ was a child, he endured this process in Kenya. He used to speak Gikuyu as a child but was forced to give up his native dialect throughout school. Gikuyu-speaking kids faced punishment and humiliation, whereas success in spoken or written English was rewarded: "One of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment — three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks — or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY." [8].

By implementing a covert curriculum in ELT textbooks, colonialism aims to demonstrate the superiority of its culture and values. The presentation of the idea that the British/American accent is the only high-level norm of English pronunciation serves as an excellent illustration of this trend. This viewpoint emphasizes an elevated viewpoint that implicitly categorizes speakers of various English dialects as having accents or being less skilled speakers in terms of the power structure. Additionally, ELT materials have a good view of the West; they rarely discuss things like prejudice, health problems, financial difficulties, or unemployment there [1].

III. Attitudes Towards Indigenous Languages

Ryan et al define language attitudes as "any effective, cognitive or behavioral index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or speakers" [11]. Language attitudes is a socio-psychological factor which plays a critical role in preserving indigenous languages in multilingual contexts. What individuals believe about their language, its worth, its utility, and its significance to their culture can have a significant impact on how that language develops. A language's speakers' perceptions of it could hasten, impede, or even stop its decline if it is close to extinction or endangerment [12].

People who speak two or more languages tend to have particular attitudes toward the languages they use. When they speak the languages, they also convey either favorable or unfavorable opinions toward their first, second, or native languages. Certain effects of language use and attitude on the preservation of their native or community languages [13].

Lawson [14]. states that social psychological factors affect language behavior. The choice of which language to use when participating in a discussion must be carefully considered by bilingual or multilingual people. In making this choice, consideration is given to both social and psychological variables, including the interlocutors and conversational subjects they bring up as well as their attitude toward the language and perceived identity. Decisions are also influenced by other elements, such as the decision-maker's level of language proficiency and interaction with speakers of the target language [13]. Suek also argues that the way the general public views community languages influences how those language' speakers think and behave. Community language speakers feel welcomed in society and are therefore free to use their native tongues if there is a good attitude toward community languages. Conversely, negative attitudes toward indigenous languages contribute to language loss.

- ***The effect of pride and prejudice on language endangerment in colonized countries***

Mufwene [15] investigates the effect of pride and prejudice on indigenous languages. He states that the ecological impact of European colonization contributed to the global decline of languages. Additionally, they can overlook the fact that the process's gravity and speed have not been constant throughout. However, knowing the reason is important. With the notable exception of the contributions in Brenzinger [16], which primarily discuss the expansion of some African languages at the expense of other indigenous languages, the majority of these publications criticize the conquered populations' asserted helplessness and lack of choice but to lose pride in and abandon their ancestral languages as a result of colonization.

Mufwene [15] adds that even in a well-documented book as Nettle & Romaine [17] which, for instance, clearly highlights the fact that the extinction of indigenous, studies of the process tend to be homogeneous, demonstrating little difference from one region of the world to another. Brenzinger [16] is unique, as one could expect given that this coexistence constitutes practically all of the book. Australia has experienced language problems more severely than Papua New Guinea. Although the United Kingdom colonized both nations, one was an exploitation colony and the other was a settlement colony. This variance is typically linked to diverse colonization methods, which encouraged various relationships between colonizers and colonized communities and had a considerably smaller impact on indigenous lifestyles than colonial settlements did [18].

In addition, Mufwene [15] and Grenoble and Whaley [19] emphasize the importance of the changes in socio-economic ecologies that indigenous people have obtained. Thus, speakers give up their native tongue in order to adapt to a situation where speaking is no longer useful for them.

IV. Conclusion

No language holds intrinsic superiority in linguistic terms; each reflects individuals' identities and ancestry, fostering a sense of individuality and community. A sense of individuality and community can coexist in different languages. Some of them eventually disappear as they evolve over time. Beliefs, values, and identity can all be influenced by language, which is a strong instrument. As a result of their awareness of the value of language, colonists search for linguistic dominance in order to plunder indigenous lands and their resources.

Investigating the factors affecting the maintenance of indigenous languages with a focus on the historical effect of colonialism and societal attitudes remains the main challenge facing the preservation of aboriginal languages. Colonists used the language as a weapon to maintain their supremacy for a long time even after independence as the colonizer's language is 'omnipresent'. Furthermore, negative attitudes and stigmatization impose obstacles to the revitalization of indigenous languages.

As a result of indigenous language marginalization and exclusion from important linguistic domains during the colonial era, such as schooling, there was a long-term shift and loss of indigenous languages. Here are some recommendations to protect indigenous languages:

- It is crucial to ensure the language transmission from one generation to the next.
- Documentation is crucial to save and revitalize indigenous languages in order to conserve linguistic diversity.
- To implement indigenous language inclusion in schools and community programs.
- To utilize technology to create language learning applications, websites, and social media content.
- Governmental support is salient for language preservation efforts.
- To support and assist indigenous communities to preserve and safeguard their languages
- To encourage festivals and events that celebrate indigenous languages.

In this research, a comprehensive literature review was conducted so as to analyze the factors influencing indigenous languages with a primary focus on the deep effects of imperialism and attitudes on indigenous languages. We investigated the complicated interplay between colonization and social attitudes revealing the layers in order to disclose the impact's depth of both imperialism and attitudes on aboriginal languages. We tried to shed light on how historical factors contribute to the endangerment of indigenous languages. Besides, our research dug into attitudes as a factor compelling contemporary threats to the maintenance and preservation of indigenous languages.

What resonates deeply with us is that this research is an appeal for involvement in saving endangered languages. It urges us to resist the realities faced by indigenous communities and recommends cultural sensitivity to protect linguistic diversity. This paper is a testament to the resistance of these communities and an urgent call for concerted efforts to safeguard languages in danger. We look forward that this research providing a broader understanding of the difficulties and obstacles surrounding Indigenous languages so as to pave the way for effective and meaningful interventions.

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