

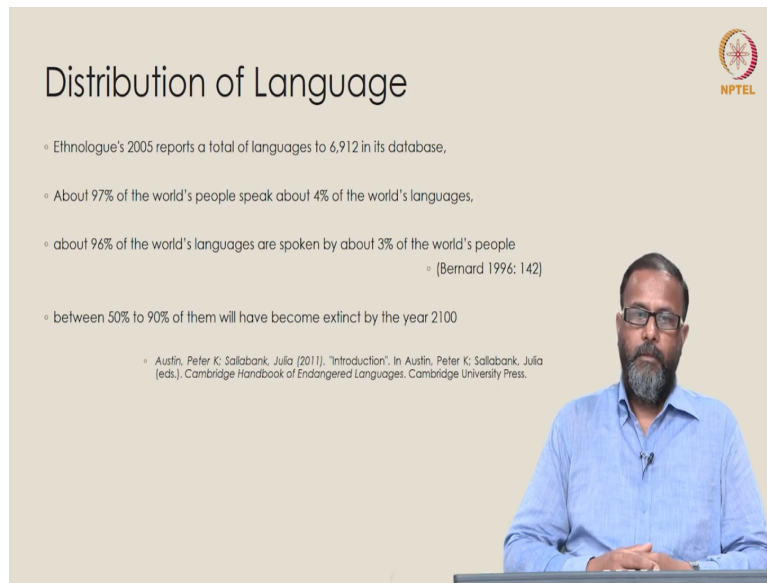
Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
Professor Dr. Om Prakash
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Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida
Language Endangerment

Welcome to class. Today we are going to talk about language endangerment. So how language gets endangered? How language becomes extinct? What are the factors? What happens when language becomes extinct? So far we have been talking about language as a beautiful social phenomena. And we have been talking about the importance and centrality of language in organizing societies and communities.

But imagine, what if some of the languages that we speak today, may no longer exist in the coming years. What will happen if we lose a few of them? This is a very grim situation. This is a very very sad idea to see that some of the languages are in the process of being extinct and very soon hundreds of them will no longer exist. We know nobody speaks Latin as their mother tongue. Almost the similar situation is about classical Sanskrit, in which we have our texts and holy books, though the census of India 2011 registers some of the speakers and respondents approximately 45000 and so who have claimed Sanskrit to be their mother tongue. But still some of the classical languages are only restricted to holy textbooks, be it classical Arabic, Latin Greek, Sanskrit and so on. But what will happen when the languages that people speak till date, most of them vanish. And what do we lose, once a language vanishes. So this is a little sad situation that we are going to discuss today.

How language becomes extinct? So how language gets endangered and what can we do to vitalize them? What can we do to preserve them? What can we do to document them? And that is why there is a need to document them, preserve them, or in certain cases vitalize them. So this is the theme of today's class. We are going to talk about endangered languages and language endangerment as a process.

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The slide is titled "Distribution of Language" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains the following bullet points:


- Ethnologue's 2005 reports a total of languages to 6,912 in its database.
- About 97% of the world's people speak about 4% of the world's languages.
- about 96% of the world's languages are spoken by about 3% of the world's people
 - (Bernard 1996: 142)
- between 50% to 90% of them will have become extinct by the year 2100

At the bottom of the slide, there is a citation: "◦ Austin, Peter K; Sallabank, Julia (2011), 'Introduction'. In Austin, Peter K; Sallabank, Julia (eds.), Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages. Cambridge University Press." A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be the speaker.


If you look at distribution of languages, 'Ethnologue' which is a linguistic database, in its report in 2005 gives us a total number of 6912 languages, which are alive and spoken around the world. Huge number. But interestingly and also you know surprisingly only 97 percent, total 97 percent of the world's population, speaks about only 4 percent of these languages. So only 4 percent of these languages. So out of 6912 languages that Ethnologue reports in its database, 4 percent of it is spoken by 97 percent of the population of the world and about 96 of the total 6912 languages only 3 percent of the world population speaks it. So people who speak 96 percent of the total world languages, are almost 3 percent. And 97 percent speak only 4 percent. So you can understand the distribution. So 4 percent of the total languages are spoken by 97 percent of the population of the world and 96 of world languages are spoken by only 3 percent of the world population. That is the distribution of language. And the prediction says Austin, Peter K. and Sallabank, they predict that by the end of the 21st century, almost a hundred years, in a hundred years between 50 percent and 90 percent of the languages of the world will be extinct. So we would not have these languages anymore in the coming hundred years. That is the situation today. Situation is given as a linguist and also as a user of language.

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STATEMENT-02: CENSUS 2011 INDIA
Distribution of Population by Scheduled and Other Languages
India, States and Union Territories - 2011




| India/State/Union Territory | Scheduled Languages | Other Languages | Total Population 2011 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | Population | Percentage | Population |
| India | 1,17,11,03,853 | 96.71 | 1,21,08,54,977 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 1,21,99,484 | 97.27 | 1,25,41,300 |
| Assam | 67,21,050 | 97.91 | 68,64,652 |
| Bihar | 2,77,03,349 | 99.86 | 2,77,43,338 |
| Chhattisgarh | 10,53,474 | 99.81 | 10,55,430 |
| Goa | 1,03,29,461 | 99.44 | 1,03,66,292 |
| Haryana | 2,53,06,294 | 99.94 | 2,53,51,462 |
| Himachal Pradesh | 1,67,57,013 | 99.83 | 1,67,87,941 |
| Jharkhand | 6,48,73,819 | 94.64 | 6,85,40,431 |
| Karnataka | 19,97,70,172 | 99.95 | 19,98,12,341 |
| Kerala | 10,38,44,271 | 99.75 | 10,40,99,452 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 4,49,632 | 73.44 | 6,10,577 |
| Madagascar | 3,85,707 | 27.87 | 1,38,727 |
| Madagascar | 2,34,781 | 11.87 | 19,78,502 |
| Manipur | 1,64,2,302 | 38.20 | 4,28,55,794 |
| Mizoram | 1,32,500 | 12.38 | 10,77,300 |
| Nagaland | 2,63,151 | 87.91 | 2,99,151 |
| Nagaland | 4,34,757 | 14.80 | 29,32,151 |
| Nagaland | 2,89,52,961 | 92.78 | 3,12,05,574 |
| Nagaland | 9,07,93,299 | 99.47 | 9,12,76,110 |
| Nagaland | 2,97,34,312 | 90.51 | 32,53,822 |
| Nagaland | 3,87,41,904 | 91.85 | 42,32,314 |
| Nagaland | 2,31,42,552 | 90.68 | 25,46,446 |
| Nagaland | 6,72,80,520 | 92.65 | 72,46,289 |
| Nagaland | 5,93,80,062 | 98.25 | 6,03,99,492 |
| Nagaland | 2,40,716 | 88.95 | 2,70,102 |
| Nagaland | 2,14,203 | 62.32 | 3,43,709 |
| Nagaland | 10,72,92,455 | 95.49 | 11,23,74,000 |
| Nagaland | 8,38,15,597 | 99.10 | 8,43,82,777 |
| Nagaland | 5,89,40,444 | 94.47 | 6,24,58,533 |
| Nagaland | 14,41,498 | 98.83 | 14,58,543 |
| Nagaland | 55,151 | 85.54 | 64,473 |
| Nagaland | 3,32,63,039 | 99.57 | 3,34,06,061 |
| Nagaland | 7,20,98,315 | 99.93 | 7,21,47,000 |
| Nagaland | 12,46,854 | 99.91 | 12,47,853 |
| Nagaland | 1,34,400 | 85.23 | 1,56,181 |



Distribution of Language



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- between 50% to 90% of them will have become extinct by the year 2100
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But if you look at the Indian scenario, again, it is not a different case. Look at the language distribution in the Indian population and I will take the census of India language report statement 2, and it says that in India you know, 96.71 percent, I repeat 96.71 of total Indian population, according to census 2011, speak scheduled languages. And by now you are familiar with scheduled languages. Scheduled languages are those languages, which are included in schedule 8 of the Constitution of India and have been given official languages status. So 96.71 percent, almost 97 percent, if you look at the Ethnologue reports and distribution, it is almost like a mirror image. So only 22 languages, which are listed in a schedule and 97 point almost 97, 96.71 percent of the Indian population of Indian, you know, people, speak scheduled languages. That means all other varieties, which are not listed in

schedule 8, are spoken by only 3.29 percent. You can imagine. So non-scheduled languages and other languages and majority of those languages are not even counted in the census data, because the rule and the framework census has for registering languages, that it must have more than ten thousand speakers. So there are languages, where we have less than ten thousand speakers and they are not even registered. So we have not been counting them. And here 96.71 percent of the total Indian population speaks only scheduled languages which are in schedule 8 of constitution of India.

And if you look at state wise data, you know, for example in Jammu Kashmir, it is 97.27, Himachal 97.91, almost 98, in Punjab almost hundred percent, 99.86 percent, in Chandigarh 99.81. Let us say Uttarakhand 99.44, Haryana 99.94, and you can count you know, like Uttar Pradesh for example 99.98, Rajasthan 94.64, in Bihar 99.75, Sikkim 73.64, Arunachal Pradesh only 27.87. You remember this figure, we will talk about it. Nagaland 11.87, Manipur 58.20, Mizoram only 12.35, Meghalaya only 14.65. Otherwise you know states like Assam, Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Daman and Dui, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Lakshadweep, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Puducherry, we have more than 90 percent speakers of scheduled languages. So now the remarkable states are like, you know, Arunachal Pradesh, for that matter Nagaland, for that matter Mizoram, Meghalaya. So these are the states, which have less than 20 percent, 30 percent, less than 30 percent speakers of scheduled languages.

That means the majority of the speakers in these states do not speak scheduled languages. So they speak non-scheduled languages. Otherwise, you know, so you get more varieties in these states and distribution of speakers. So if you look at the world distribution of languages, we saw that 97 percent of the total population speaks only 4 percent of the world languages. And 3 percent of the world's languages are spoken by, you know, 3 percent of the world population speaks 96 percent of these languages. And the similar case we find in Indian distribution, also in census report 2011, where scheduled languages are spoken by almost 96.71 almost you know 97 percent, almost mirroring the world number.

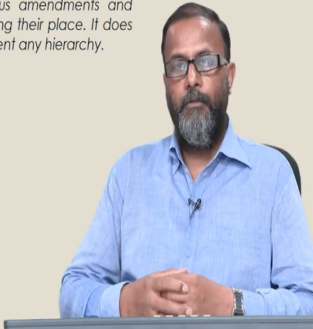
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In accordance with the Articles 344(1) and 351 there are twenty two languages included and listed in this Schedule till date. The languages included in the Eighth Schedule as on date are:

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Assamese | 12. Manipuri |
| 2. Bengali | 13. Marathi |
| 3. Bodo | 14. Nepali |
| 4. Dogri | 15. Odia |
| 5. Gujarati | 16. Punjabi |
| 6. Hindi | 17. Sanskrit |
| 7. Kannada | 18. Santali |
| 8. Kashmiri | 19. Sindhi |
| 9. Konkani | 20. Tamil |
| 10. Maithili | 21. Telugu |
| 11. Malayalam | 22. Urdu |

Note: These languages have appeared in alphabetical order with various amendments and renumbering their place. It does not represent any hierarchy.




Now, why I emphasize scheduled languages? Because the scheduled languages get institutional support and these scheduled languages include 22 languages till date. So we have 22 languages like you know Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu, these 22 languages are scheduled, in the eighth schedule of Indian constitution and these 22 languages constitute almost 97 percent of the population's first language. So they speak these languages. So if you look at the returns in the census of India, these 22 languages cover 97 percent of the population. If I may ask, if you recall, we had talked about scheduled and non-scheduled languages, we had talked about census of India data and we saw that 1369 mother tongues, 121 languages, however the return was very high 19,569. If you look at the percentage of the number of languages in which are scheduled, it is not even 10, less than 10. You know and if you go by the mother tongue, rationalized mother tongue in the 2011 census, 1369 out of 1369, what is the percentage of 22 languages and these languages are spoken by 97 percent of the total population. And you can imagine, why there is a linguistic movement for expanding the list and why more languages are demanding for inclusion in this eighth schedule to get institutional support and promotion.

So now the question is, what is going to happen in the coming future to those languages, which have less than ten thousand speakers in India to those languages which are spoken by only 3 percent of the total population of India and the variety and the number of such


languages is in hundreds. So a handful of languages are spoken by 96.71 percent and hundreds of languages are spoken by merely 3.29 percent. That is a very grim situation.

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This is the reason that has fuelled demands for inclusion of more languages to the Eighth Schedule and 'at present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution'. These languages include:



| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Angika, | (11) Garhwali (Pahari), | (21) Kumaoni (Pahari), | (31) Pahari (Himachali), |
| (2) Banjara, | (12) Gondi, | (22) Kurak, | (32) Pali, |
| (3) Bazika, | (13) Gujjar/Gujari, | (23) Kurmali, | (33) Rajasthani, |
| (4) Bhojpuri, | (14) Ho, | (24) Lepcha, | (34) Sambalpur/Kosali, |
| (5) Bhoti, | (15) Kachachhi, | (25) Limbu, | (35) Shauraseni (Prakrit), |
| (6) Bhotia, | (16) Kamtapuri, | (26) Mizo (Lushai), | (36) Saraiki, |
| (7) Bundelkhandi, | (17) Karbi, | (27) Magahi, | (37) Tenyidi, and |
| (8) Chhattisgarhi, | (18) Khasi, | (28) Mundari, | (38) Tulu. |
| (9) Dhatki, | (19) Kodava (Coorg), | (29) Nagpuri, | |
| (10) English, | (20) Kok Barak, | (30) Nicobarese, | |

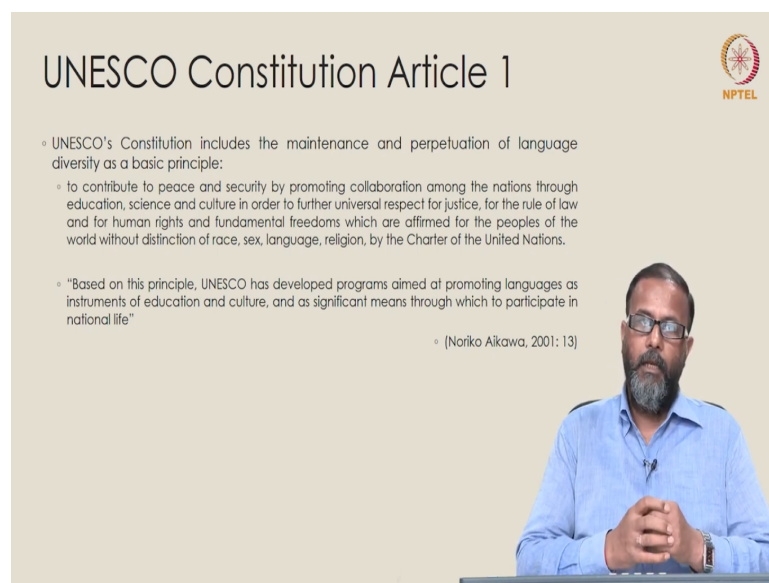


And what are these, which are these languages, which are fighting for inclusion in the eighth schedule. So far there are 38 applications, in representations, which are lying with the government of India, for inclusion in the eighth schedule. But many more languages are seeking inclusion and demanding their position. And these 38 languages, we have been talking about them, timely and again I will quickly go through them. These 38 languages like Angika, Banjara, Bazika, Bhojpuri, Bhoti, Bhotia, Bundelkhandi, Chhattisgarhi, Dhatki, English, Garhwali, Gondi, Gujjari, Ho, Kachachhi, Kamtapuri, Karbi, Khasi, Kodava or Coorg, Kok Barak, Kumaoni or Pahari, Kurak, Kurmali, Nepali, Lepcha, Limbu, Mizo, Magahi, Mundari, Nagpuri, Nicobarese, Himachali, Pali, Rajasthani, Sambalpur or Kosali, Shauraseni or Prakrit, Saraiki, Tenyidi and Tulu. So these languages are demanding for inclusion and representations are pending for consideration. But again I told you that to recall the percentage of scheduled languages spoken in states like Arunachal, states like Nagaland, states like Mizoram, and North Eastern states. So there we see a huge variety of languages. We are excluding Assam and Sikkim, because scheduled languages spoken there Indo-Aryan Assamese are spoken in majority of cases, Bodo of course is the one, which is another scheduled language.

So if you look at the linguistic profile of India and if you look at the number of languages spoken by the majority of the population, it is very complicated. Only 22 scheduled

languages 97 of the population speaks that and rest of the languages, I mean if you look at the categorization in the senses, again there are lots of debate on that, we can talk about it for hours and hours, because the way other languages have been included under one major language like for example Hindi includes more than 40 languages under it, as its dialect. Interestingly we have been talking about the language and dialect and now interestingly languages like Awadhi, Braj, Bhojpuri, Bundeli, you know, Maithili, now is a scheduled language. But other languages in eastern in UP, Bihar, part of Andhra Pradesh. So they are included in Hindi. And if you look at the history of these languages, Hindi is relatively a new language. A recent phenomena compared to the long history of let us say Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, or Braj. But interestingly the census includes them under Hindi. So there is a tacit linguistic tension and demand for recognition, inclusion and acceptance of these languages in schedule 8.

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The slide features the title "UNESCO Constitution Article 1" at the top left. In the top right corner is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a book and a lamp, with the text "NPTEL" below it. The main content of the slide is a bulleted list of text. At the bottom right of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light blue shirt, sitting at a desk with his hands clasped.

UNESCO Constitution Article 1

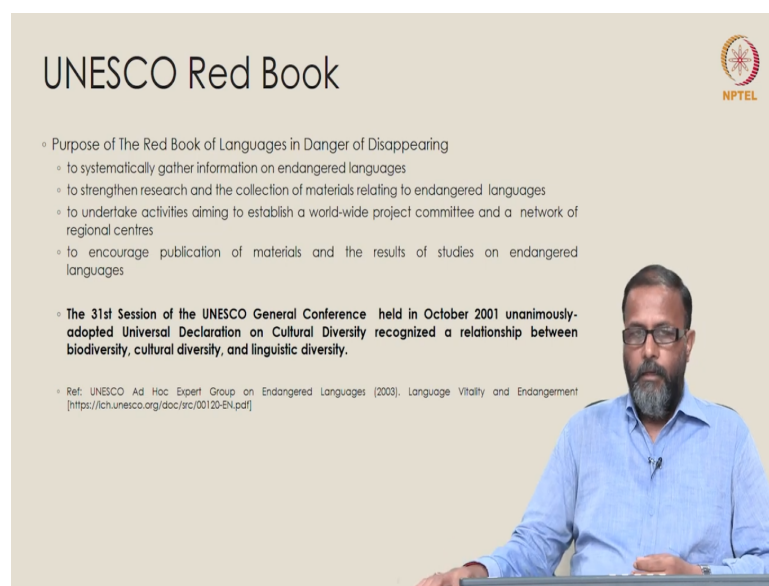
- UNESCO's Constitution includes the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity as a basic principle:
 - to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language, religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.
- "Based on this principle, UNESCO has developed programs aimed at promoting languages as instruments of education and culture, and as significant means through which to participate in national life"

[Noriko Aikawa, 2001: 13]

Now coming back to how we started, why we started this discussion, we started this discussion to see the pattern of endangerment, when a language, you know, moves on the path of being extinct slowly. Slow death of a language. And groups of languages. When we say the death of a language, that means speakers stop speaking it anymore and the number of speakers diminish and slowly language also dies. If you look at UNESCO, Constitution Article 1 guarantees linguistic rights and human rights. I will quote from article 1 UNESCO constitution, and it says UNESCO constitution includes the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity as a basic principle, to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations, through education, science and culture in order to further

universal respect for justice for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedom, which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language, religion by the charter of the United Nations. This is article 1 UNESCO constitution. It gives equal status and writes to all speakers, all languages of the world. And based on this principle UNESCO has developed programs aimed at promoting languages as instruments of education and culture and a significant means through which to participate in national life.

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The slide features the title "UNESCO Red Book" at the top left. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL (National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning) which consists of a circular emblem with a book and a lamp, with the text "NPTEL" below it. The main content of the slide is a bulleted list of points regarding the purpose and history of the Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing. A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be presenting.

UNESCO Red Book

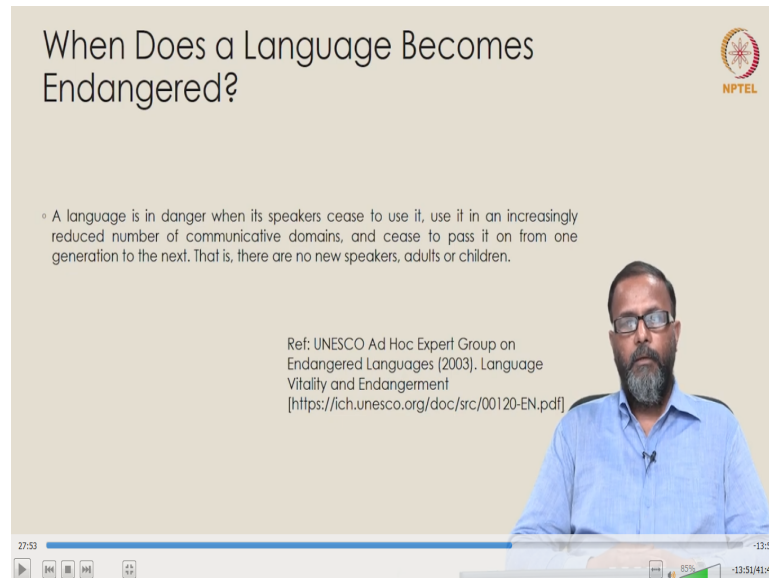
- Purpose of The Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing
 - to systematically gather information on endangered languages
 - to strengthen research and the collection of materials relating to endangered languages
 - to undertake activities aiming to establish a world-wide project committee and a network of regional centres
 - to encourage publication of materials and the results of studies on endangered languages
- **The 31st Session of the UNESCO General Conference held in October 2001 unanimously adopted Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity recognized a relationship between biodiversity, cultural diversity, and linguistic diversity.**
- Ref: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). Language Vitality and Endangerment [<https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00120-BV.pdf>]

Now for that matter, if you look at national policy of education 2020, this also emphasizes on mother tongue education at primary level. The challenges are bigger. We may not have resource books, textbooks, trained teachers and learning material in many of the languages. But still initiatives are there to promote mother tongue education at primary level even in national education policy 2020 and which is a welcome step.

UNESCO created a red book, that is called a red book, the report is called red book and what is that? That was, there was a committee and a report was filed. The purpose of the red book of languages in danger of disappearing is to investigate systematically, gather information on endangered languages, to strengthen research and collection of material, relating to endangered languages, to undertake activities aiming to establish a worldwide project and sustained commitment, and create a network of regional centers, to promote these languages, to encourage publication of materials and the results of studies, on endangered languages. And the 31st session of the UNESCO, general conference held in October 2001 anonymously

adopted a universal declaration on cultural diversity recognizing a relationship between biodiversity, cultural diversity and linguistic diversity.

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When Does a Language Becomes Endangered?

NPTEL

◦ A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children.

Ref: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). Language Vitality and Endangerment [https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf]

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85%

13:51/41:44

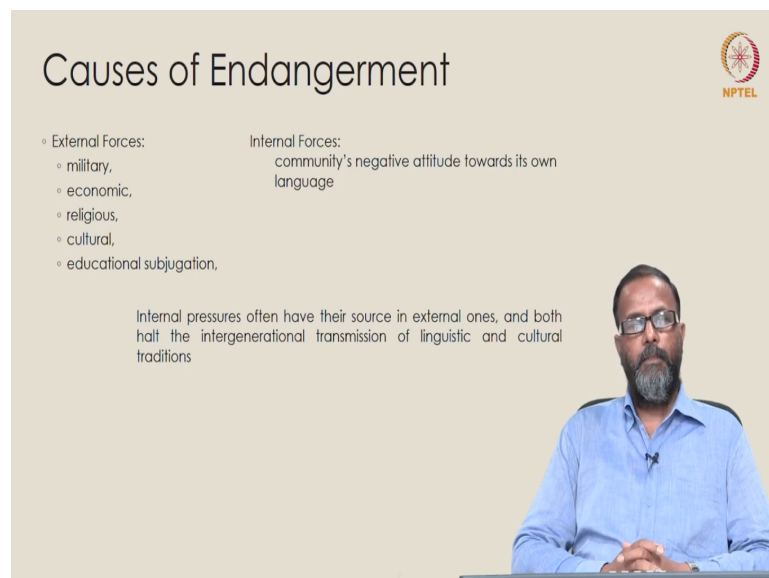
Efforts are on to maintain the multilingual diverse fabric of the world, at United Nations level and concerned governments are also making efforts to maintain the multilingual fabric. India has also done so, we will come to that shortly. Now the question is when does the language become endangered? We will go by the definition of an ad hoc expert group report filed in 2003 by UNESCO and it defines endangered language as a language that is in danger, when its speakers cease to use it. Number one.

Number two. Use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains. And number three. Cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is there are no new speakers, adults or children. It underlines 3 factors. 3 factors, you know, identify a language as endangered, number one, when the number of speakers diminish or the speakers or the community stops using this language. Why is this so? We will come in a while. This is number one.

Number two. When the domain of use shrinks. And finally, when the young children stop acquiring it or when the adult population stops transferring it to the new generation. So basically internal forces the community itself is responsible, but we cannot rule out the influence of external forces, which force our community to abandon the language. So it is a complex phenomenon. It is not a linear cause and effect thing because why one community

stops using its mother tongue, its language and shift to another tongue? What are the conditions, circumstances under which it goes? There are multiple external forces and also internal forces, which force language to be in danger and finally be extinct. So language becomes endangered only when the speakers of the language stop using it anymore or the number gets decreased very fast. When the domain of influence and the domain of huge shrinks and finally when the elders of the community stop transferring it and the young children stop acquiring it as their mother tongue. The language becomes endangered. And there are hundreds of such languages in India. UNESCO lists 191 languages. However, the government of India's figure is little lower, but more than 100.

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The slide is titled "Causes of Endangerment" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It lists two categories of forces: External Forces and Internal Forces. The External Forces include military, economic, religious, cultural, and educational subjugation. The Internal Forces include the community's negative attitude towards its own language. A note at the bottom states that internal pressures often have their source in external ones and both can halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, is seated at a desk in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Causes of Endangerment

External Forces:

- military,
- economic,
- religious,
- cultural,
- educational subjugation,

Internal Forces:

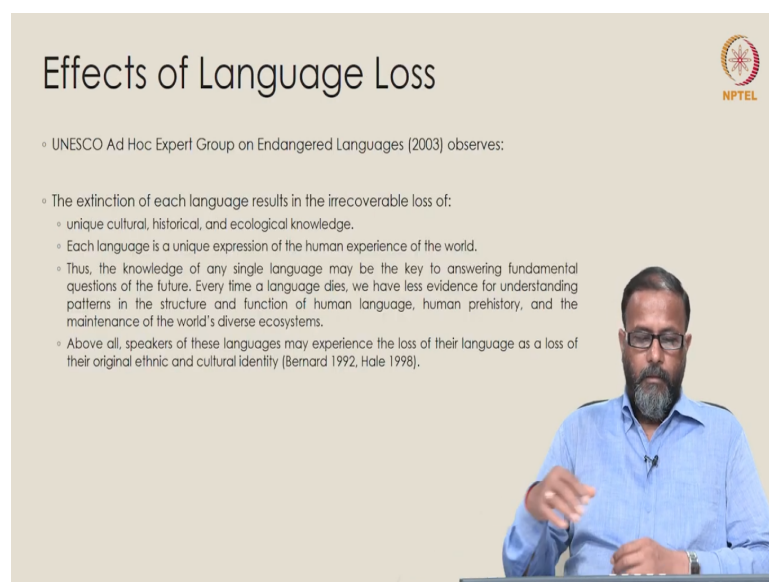
- community's negative attitude towards its own language

Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions

Moving on, what are the causes? Why it happens? So there are multiple reasons like external forces like military suppression, attack, war and we have seen displacement of population, immigration, movement, shifting. And it takes a toll on their language, their practiced culture and their entire social network. Economic reasons, people have to move out of their domain to go and search for jobs and then they need to get assimilated in the new place with the new society and slowly, they shift to the majority language dominant language for their survival. Mass convergence also for religious reasons, cultural reasons and educational subjugation, where the child does not find the mother tongue relevant in education. So it develops apathy towards it, indifference towards it. So these are the external forces. But the role of a community to maintain its language and culture is crucial and the community becomes an internal force to sustain, survive and maintain its language and culture. So when communities develop negative attitudes out of multiple factors, out of multiple external factors, for

example, they may not see their language to be relevant in their social upward mobility. They may see the language as not relevant in getting jobs and opportunities. They may feel their language is isolating them and they are not able to mix and mingle with the majority. So there are multiple reasons why the community develops a negative attitude towards the language and it slowly stops using it, the domain shrinks, the domain of use shrinks and young children stop acquiring it as their mother tongue. And this marks a language as endangered. Because, very soon this language will have no speakers and it will be extinct. However internal pressures often have their source in external ones and both stop the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. And you can see it in metro cities. We have a metrosexual culture. In metro culture, you know in pockets, we have distinct languages and culture practices. But slowly the young generation, next generation and generation after generation, these languages vanish. Language maintenance and language shift is another phenomena, we should understand. So few communities are able to sustain and maintain their language and culture, to some extent. But the majority of these migrant populated, you know, people migrants and who have settled away from their own motherland or maintain that native place, are losing out on these languages and their age-old practiced culture.

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The slide is titled "Effects of Language Loss" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a list of bullet points discussing the consequences of language extinction, such as the loss of cultural and ecological knowledge and the impact on human identity. A video inset in the bottom right shows a man with a beard and glasses speaking at a podium.

Effects of Language Loss

- UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) observes:
- The extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of:
 - unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge.
 - Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world.
- Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory, and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems.
- Above all, speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard 1992, Hale 1998).


Now, why are we talking about preserving a language? Why is there a need to preserve a language? Why do we want to, you know, maintain a language? Why we are lamenting the loss of language? We have been talking about instrumentality of language in organizing communities. Instrumentality of language in encoding their cultural history. Instrumentality of language in encoding their age-old deduced wisdom, cultural practices, common

narratives, collective history. So our language is the trajectory of their socio-cultural sustenance. And how they have sustained years and centuries, what are the deduced knowledge they have acquired, this language encodes all that. Language becomes carrier and when it is lost we lose a culture, we lose a social, entire social network, we lose our identity as a speaker, I lose my identity. So it is almost like getting uprooted from your own history, from your own culture, from your own society. So if you look at the statement given by the UNESCO ad-hoc expert group, on endangered languages, I will quote from there, it observes I will quote, the extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique culture, historical and ecological knowledge. Each language is unique expression of the human experience of the world. Does the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future.


Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystem. Above all speakers of these languages may experience loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity. That is the side affair, a state of affair. Nature is diverse. The nature has diversity. That is, diversity is a natural process. Heterogeneity is common and natural, unmarked. So when we look at the world's population, when we look at world history, can you imagine, let us say, all the texts of a particular language, let us say, Greek are lost, what will happen to us? That all the textbooks and you know knowledge, we have gained through our textbooks, holy textbooks and all important cultural documents, they are lost. What will happen? We lose our identity. So it does not matter how many speakers a language has. It does not matter, how big is the speech community of a language? Each language has its own root. Language is an organic system. Each language has its own ecological system. So once language is lost, everything is lost. The world is lost for these people, who speak these languages.

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Way Forward



- Peter Ladefoged argues that language death is a natural part of the process of human cultural development, and that languages die because communities stop speaking them for their own reasons.
- Ladefoged argued that linguists should simply document and describe languages scientifically, but not seek to interfere with the processes of language loss.
 - Ladefoged, Peter (1992). "Another view of endangered languages". *Language*. **68** (4): 809-811.



So what is the way forward? What do we do? Peter Ladefoged, argues that language death is a natural part of the process of human cultural development. And that language dies because communities stop speaking them for their own reasons. Let us take it as a natural normal process, we are born, we grow and we get old and we die. But the concern is that the rate at which we are losing these languages. So thousands of years these languages have survived and now we are losing them in hardly a hundred years. So speed is concerned. And as a speaker of these languages or as a linguist or as an individual, who has concern towards such loss, we need to document them, we need to preserve them.

We may not have fluent speakers of these languages, let us say, in 100 years, but if we have a systematic documentation of these languages in terms of grammar, in terms of encyclopedia, in terms of thesaurus, in terms of you know folk tales, folklores, oral literature, may be recorded and in coming for coming generations, they will be aware that there was a time, when such a rich trajectory of language existed. So we need to document them, preserve them and in certain cases, some rays of hopes are also there. Where some of the African countries have been able to maintain and revitalize their native language.

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SPPEL: India Initiatives

Galvanized by the grim situation of lesser known languages in the country, the Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL) was instituted by Ministry of Education (Government of India) in 2013. The sole objective of the Scheme is to document and archive the country's languages that have become endangered or likely to be endangered in the near future.

<https://www.sppel.org/>

The SPPEL has listed 117 languages to be documented in its current phase. The following languages are some of lesser known Indian languages which are spoken by less than 10,000 speakers.

ENDANGERED LANGUAGES IN INDIA



And India and the Indian government is also doing a bit for it. So the government of India has taken note of this grim situation and we say lesser known languages, that means languages which have very few speakers, and majority of us even do not know about them. The government of India has listed 117 languages, which are on the verge of extinction, because of the low number of speakers. And you know in 2013 the ministry of education instituted a project to record and preserve these languages, to document these languages that is known as ‘Scheme for Protection and Preserving Endangered Languages’(SPPEL). This initiative by the government of India has listed 117 languages to be documented and preserved and we will see whether many of them can be revitalized.

For more detail on this, you can log into www.sppel.org. It is a government of India initiative, which has listed 117 languages and the distribution of these languages are given in the map, you can see on the right. So every capital in the world, all governments of the world, on the initiatives by UNESCO, are looking into the matter, in documenting, recording and preserving and in certain cases revitalizing, these languages. But the fact is that the majority of them we are going to lose in 100 years. No idea what will happen after 100 years, when we are left with very few languages and the majority of the population will be speaking that. But the natural order is diversity and as an individual, we all must make efforts to preserve our mother tongue.

UNESCO has also declared 21st February, as International Mother Language Day, to celebrate, derive, pride and promote our mother tongue. Because language is a vigorous marker of our identity and it constitutes us, defines us, who we are. So with these notes, we

end up our discussion here. We will continue with more important topics in our next class.
Thank you for now. Thank you very much.