

A global profile of language development versus language endangerment

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Overview of presentation

- Review Fishman's GIDS as a means for assessing the relative safety versus danger of languages
- Describe EGIDS (or Expanded GIDS) as a scale we have developed for use in *Ethnologue* to report the status of language development versus endangerment for every known language
- Present results from our global survey of language status that have just been released in the 17th edition of *Ethnologue*

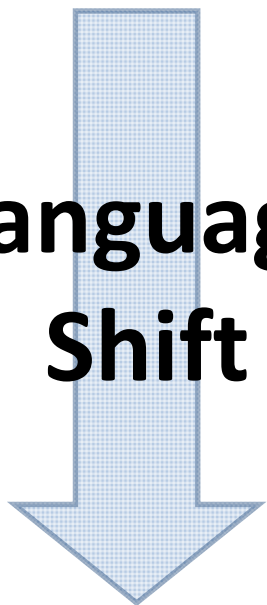
A scale for language status

- We began with GIDS — the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale from Joshua Fishman's (1991) seminal book on *Reversing Language Shift*
- He developed GIDS as a measuring rod for language shift:
 - Level 1 is highest: an official national language
 - Level 8 is lowest: a dying language
 - Going up the 6 levels between represent successively more functions for language in society
 - The scale measures disruption so higher numbers represent greater levels of disruption

The basic premise of GIDS

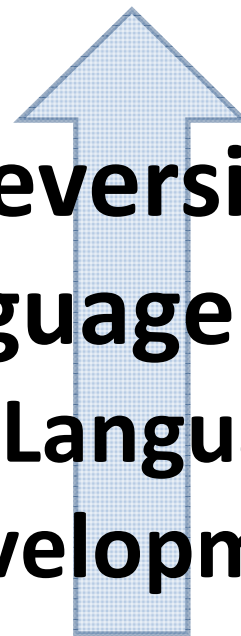
- Language shift (ending in extinction) happens as a language loses functions in society
- To reverse language shift, the community must engage in development to bring those functions back

**Language
Shift**



| |
|---|
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |
| 6 |
| 7 |
| 8 |

**Reversing
Language Shift
(= Language
Development)**



EGIDS: an Expanded GIDS

- We wanted to use GIDS in *Ethnologue* for every known language, but ran into problems:
 - Needed to add extinct languages at bottom of scale, while keeping the *Ethnologue* distinction between dormant and extinct
 - Wanted to add international languages at the top
 - GIDS gives only two levels of endangerment, but we wanted to harmonize with the 4 levels from UNESCO's [Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger](#)
- This resulted in EGIDS as a 13 level scale

The 13 levels of EGIDS

- We also added a descriptive label for each level
- Lewis, M. Paul and Gary F. Simons. 2010. "Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS," *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 55:103-120.
http://www.lingv.ro/resources/scm_images/RRL-02-2010-Lewis.pdf

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 0 | International |
| 1 | National |
| 2 | Provincial |
| 3 | Wider communication |
| 4 | Educational |
| 5 | Developing |
| 6a | Vigorous |
| 6b | Threatened |
| 7 | Shifting |
| 8a | Moribund |
| 8b | Nearly Extinct |
| 9 | Dormant |
| 10 | Extinct |

Alignment of endangerment levels

| EGDIS | Label | UNESCO Atlas |
|-------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 6b | Threatened | Vulnerable |
| 7 | Shifting | Definitely endangered |
| 8a | Moribund | Severely endangered |
| 8b | Nearly extinct | Critically endangered |
| 9 | Dormant | Extinct |
| 10 | Extinct | Extinct |

- Dormant = No longer anyone's L1, but remains as a symbol of identity for an ethnic community

The basic logic of EGIDS

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|--|
| 0, 1, 2, 3 | Vehicular languages | Language is widely used, not only within its native community but by other language communities as well |
| 4, 5, 6a, 6b | Local home languages | Language is used by people of all generations within its native community in the home domain |
| 7, 8a, 8b, 9 | Heritage languages | Language retains an identificational function for its native community but is not used fluently by all generations |
| 10 | Extinct languages | No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language |



For vehicular languages the diagnostic question is:

What is the level of official use?

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| 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. |



For local home languages the diagnostic question is:

What is the sustainability status?

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 4. Educational | The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through 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 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. |

For heritage languages the diagnostic question is:

What is the youngest generation of proficient speakers?

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 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. |
| 8b. Nearly extinct | The only remaining users are elderly and they 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. |

An EGIDS estimate for every language

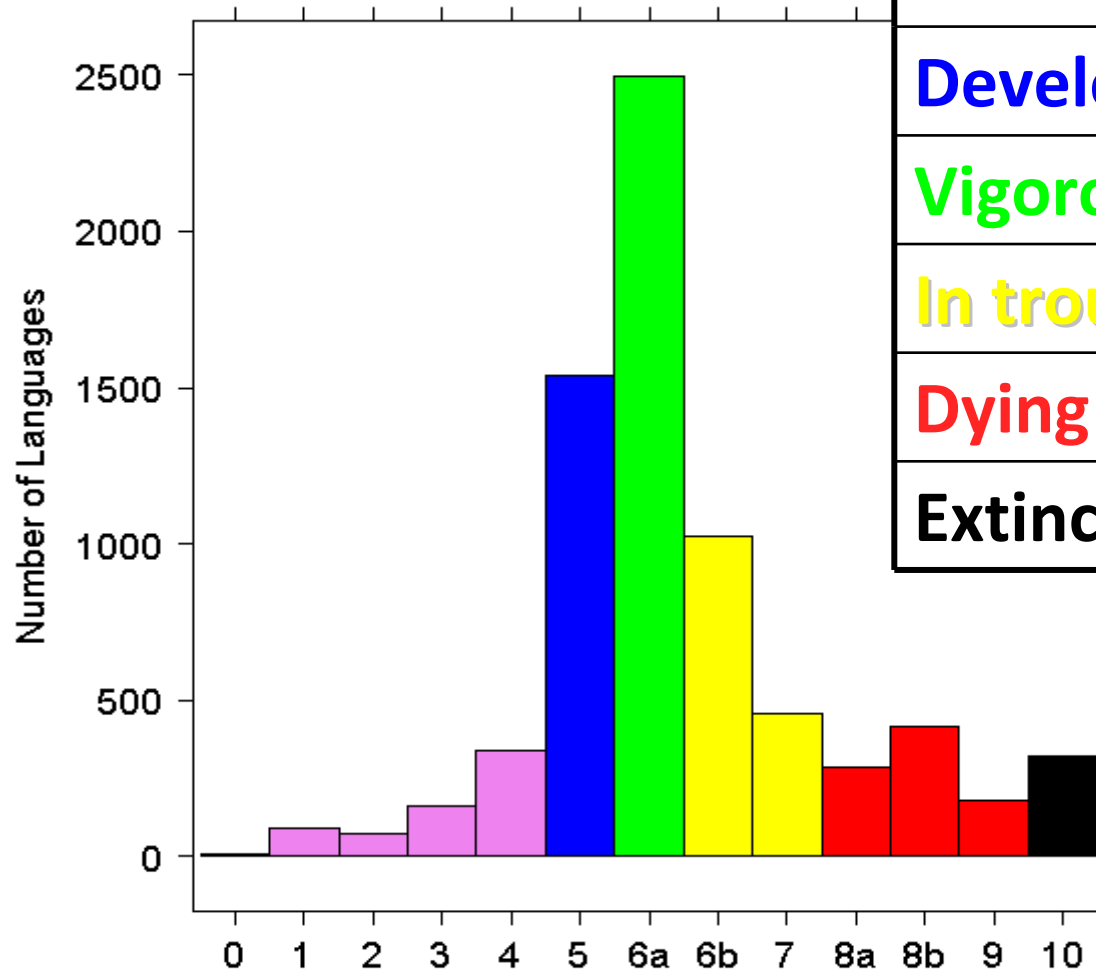
- We followed these steps to generate an initial estimate for every language:
 1. Used an automated script on the *Ethnologue* database to assign a level based on information in the description of a language
 2. If *Ethnologue* gave no clues, consulted the UNESCO *Atlas* to follow their assessment if it is endangered
 3. If still no specific clues, assigned Level 6a (vigorous oral language) as the unmarked case following
 - The “lion’s share” of the world’s languages are at GIDS 6 (Fishman 1991:92)

The review process

- We followed two strategies to review the estimates:
 1. Sent the estimates to our worldwide network of field reviewers and entered their corrections; we had 90% returns.
 2. Implemented 37 database queries to look for potential inconsistencies between EGIDS value and other data; this led to deeper editorial review of about 1,500 language descriptions.
- As a result of the review process:
 - 8% went up, 47% went down, 45% unchanged

A global profile of language status

From *Ethnologue*, 17th edition, 2013



| | | |
|---------------|-------|-----|
| Institutional | 682 | 9% |
| Developing | 1,534 | 21% |
| Vigorous | 2,502 | 33% |
| In trouble | 1,481 | 20% |
| Dying | 904 | 12% |
| Extinct | 377 | 5% |

Total is 7,480: all languages in ISO 639-3 that were living in 1950

The color coding

- Violet (*“Institutional”*) — The language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.
- Blue (*“Developing”*) — The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
- Green (*“Vigorous”*) — The language is unstandardized and in vigorous use among all generations.

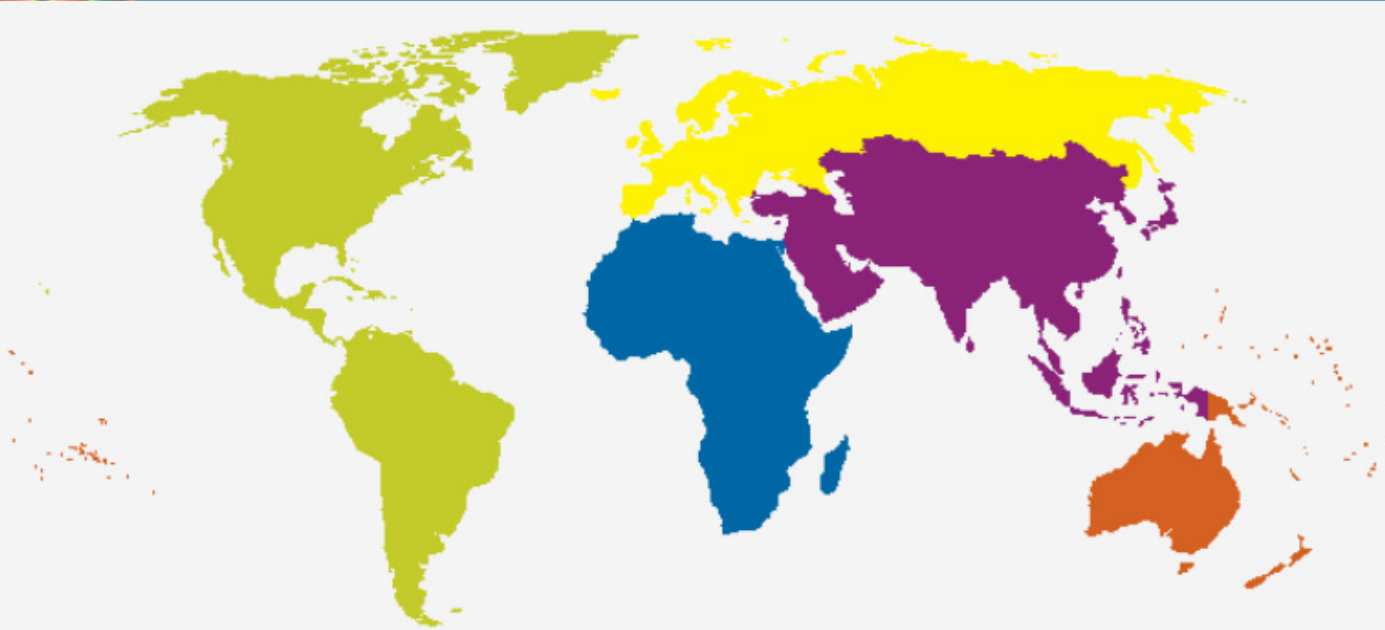
The color coding (2)

- Yellow (*"In trouble"*) — Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language so it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home.
- Red (*"Dying"*) — It is too late to restore natural intergenerational transmission through the home.
- Black (*"Extinct"*) — The language has fallen completely out of use.

Approaches to summarizing status

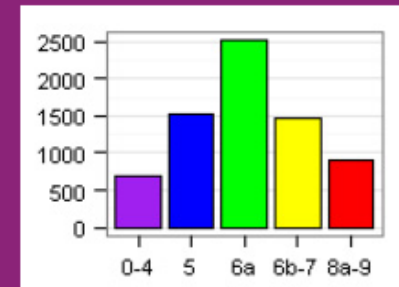
| EGDIS | Ethnologue | UNESCO Atlas |
|-------|------------|--------------|
| 6b | In trouble | Vulnerable |
| 7 | In trouble | Endangered |
| 8a | Dying | Endangered |
| 8b | Dying | Endangered |
| 9 | Dying | Extinct |
| 10 | Extinct | Extinct |

- The most crucial divide is between 7 and 8a
 - Above that divide it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission in the home



World

Population 6,716,664,407
Living Languages 7,105

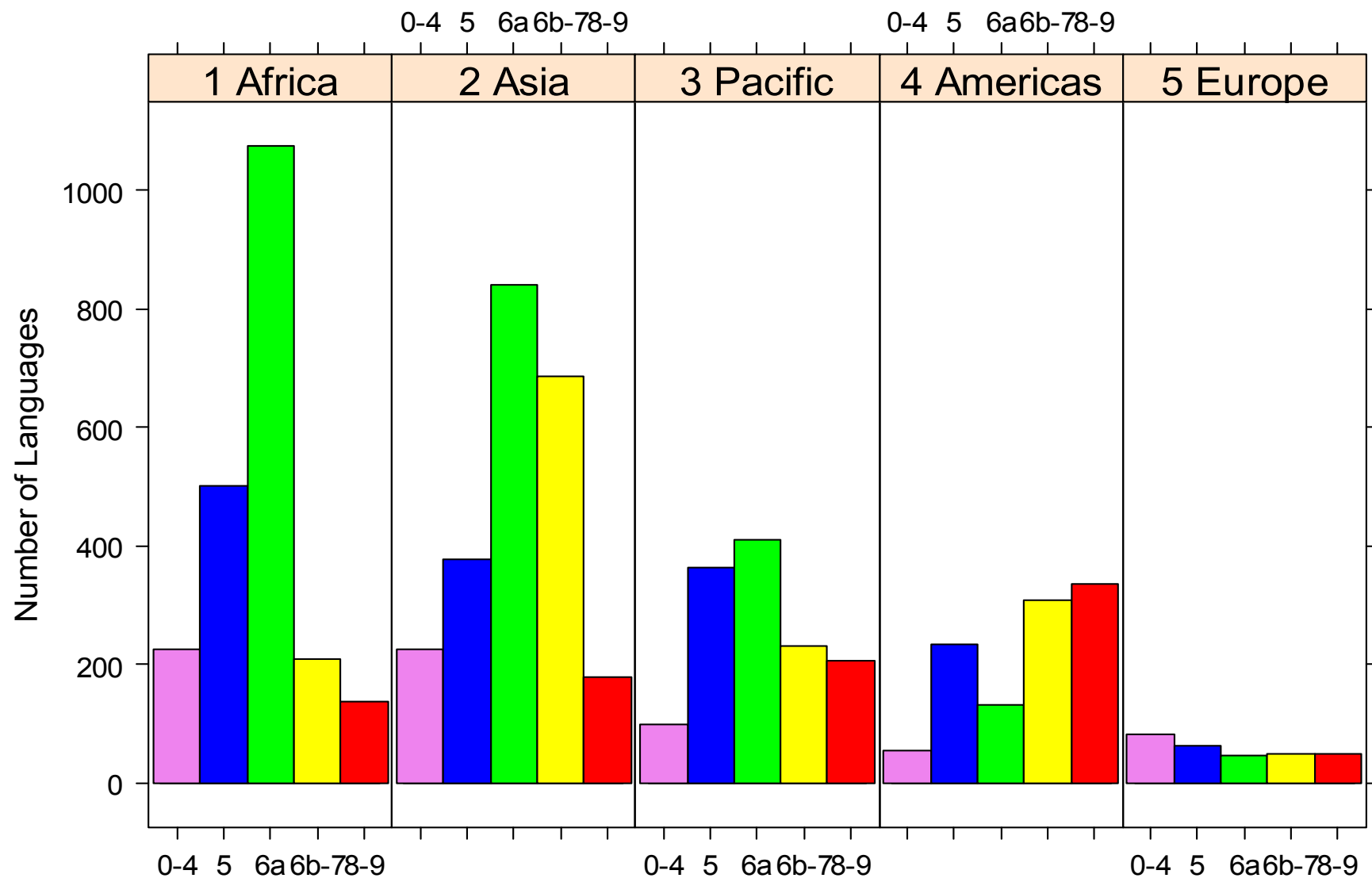


Institutional: 682, Developing: 1,534,
Vigorous: 2,502, In Trouble: 1,481,
Dying: 906

- World summary at www.ethnologue.com
- Click a map region to go down a level and see its summary
- Areas divided into 22 UN regions, and regions into countries
- Hover over a region to pop-up its summary

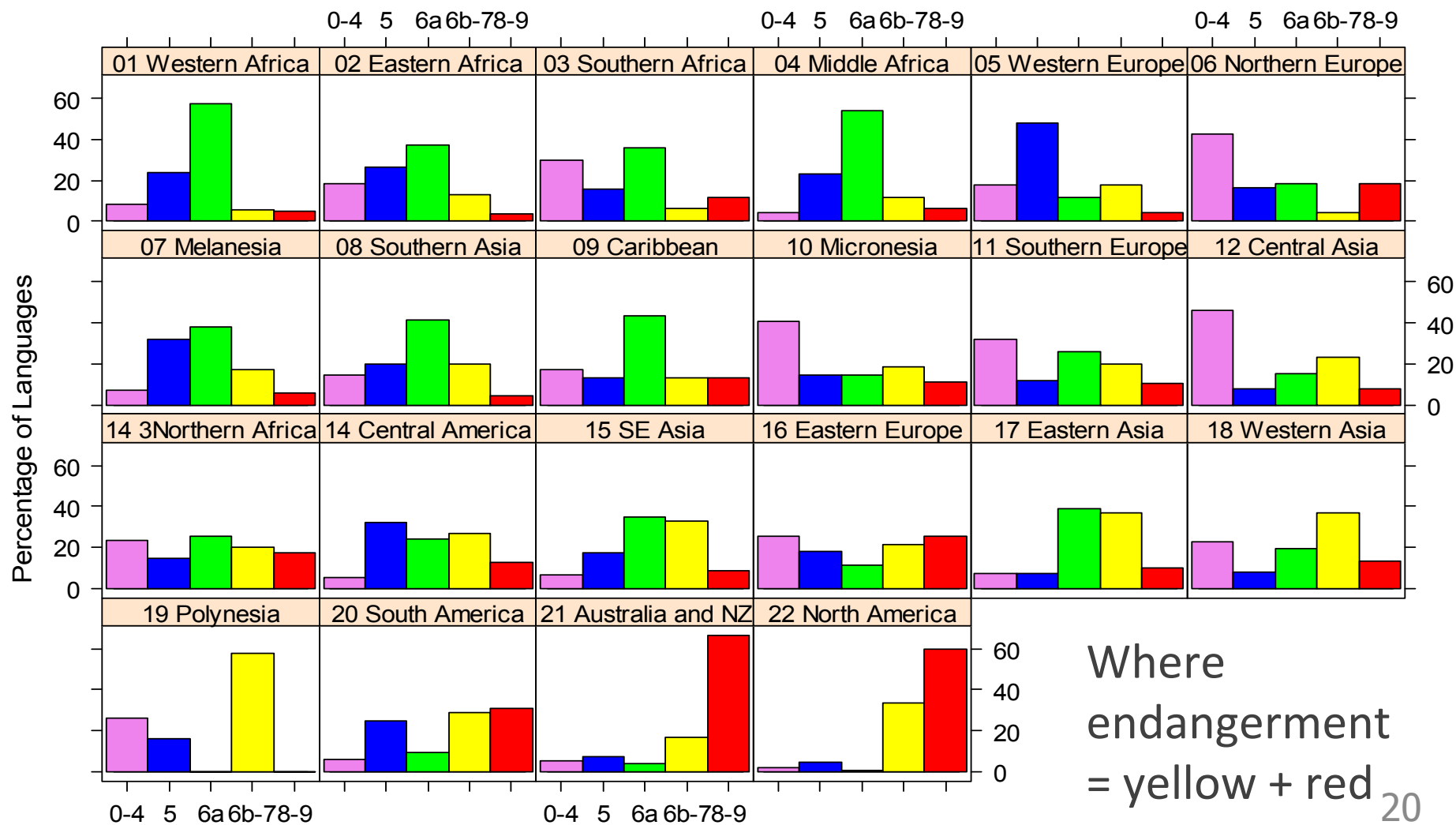


Status of living languages by world area



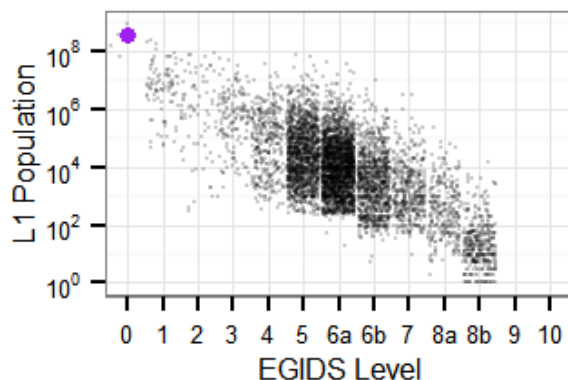


World regions by proportion of endangerment — lowest to highest

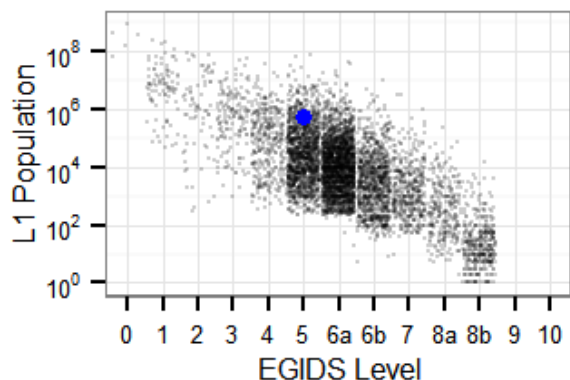


Position in the “language cloud”

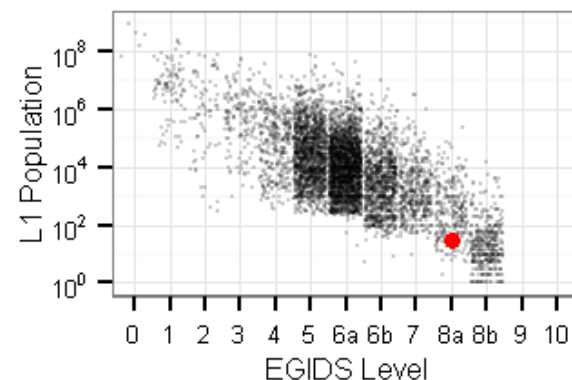
English



Hawaii Pidgin



Dyirbal



- Another visualization of language status at ethnologue.com
 - The cloud is created by plotting a gray dot for every language
 - The vertical axis is L1 population ($10^0 = 1$, $10^8 = 100,000,000$)
 - The horizontal axis is EGIDS level (“jittered” to fill the space)
 - The language in focus is a color-coded large dot

Conclusions

- EGIDS is shedding light on the global language situation
- We find that of 7,480 known living languages since 1950:
 - 9% have reached the safety of institutional transmission
 - At the other extreme, 5% are now extinct and 12% are dying
 - In the middle, 21% are developing, 20% are in trouble, and 33% remain vigorous and undeveloped
- The level of endangerment crisis varies by region:
 - In 4 of 22 UN regions (in Americas and Pacific), more than 55% of languages are in trouble or dying
 - While in 4 of the regions (all in Africa), fewer than 20% are in trouble or dying