

## Society and Social Inequality

### A. Society and Social Inequality

- a. Last time:
  - i. Questioning and refining the category of culture
  - ii. Cultural continuities/cultural transformations
  - iii. *First Contact* discussed
  - iv. Colonialism and culture
  - v. Film clip: *The Linguists*
  
- b. Today:
  - i. Endangered languages
  - ii. Language and culture
  - iii. Society and social organization
  - iv. Intersectionality
  - v. Power

### B. The Linguists

- a. Gregory Anderson & David Harrison
- b. Endangered languages Chulym, Siberia & Soara, India

### C. Linguistic Diversity

- a. 6000-7000 known languages spoken today; many in danger
- b. Multilingualism has been historically more typical than monolingualism

### D. Why are these languages lost?

- a. Through population loss
- b. Through voluntary language shift
- c. Through language shift due to coercion
- d. Language is always caught up in power

### E. Linguistic Domination

- a. Social, political, and economic conditions, and especially the state, confer legitimacy to forms of language
- b. The global linguistic marketplace is outpacing the state in conferring legitimacy (form of exchange in Chungking Mansions is primarily in Cantonese and English)

### F. Global linguistic economy

- a. Languages around the world are increasingly brought into practical and political relationships with each other
- b. Shifting and unequal distribution of linguistic resources means people have shifting and unequal access to political and economic reasons

### G. Language and Globalization

- a. Globalization happens *to* language
  - b. Globalization happens *through* language
  - c. Linguistic resources – political and economic resources
  - d. English-spread and pluralized into “Englishes”
- H. UNESCO’s SCALE FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES
- a. **Vulnerable**, when children are still learning the language as a mother tongue, but it’s restricted in certain areas (like the home)
  - b. **Endangered**, with only older generations still speaking
  - c. **Extinct** when there are no speakers left. (recorded, there is a chance that they will be brought back; “a sleeping language”)
- Is recording endangered languages “salvage” ethnography? An example from fieldwork in Kangra, songs in local dialect Kangdi**
- I. Hotspots of Endangered Languages (New Guinea)
- J. Is this “salvage” ethnography?
- a. Recording traditions (tape recorders)
  - b. Recording older, passed stuff that’s no longer in circulation
  - c. **Franz Boas (1848-1942)**
    - i. Jewish man born in Germany
    - ii. Responsible for introducing cultural anthropology in America
    - iii. Battled racist assumptions (everybody could think the same)
    - iv. Championed cultural relativism
    - v. Interest in cultural diffusion
    - vi. Stressed the value of collecting and documenting texts and material culture of Native American groups on NW coast “salvage ethnography”
    - vii. Often worked with native collaborators (get help from someone within the culture)
    - viii. Collaborating with George Hunt documenting Kwakiutl or Kwakwaka’wakw culture (Native American cultures on Northwest coast)
- K. **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis:**
- a. Edward Sapir & Benjamin Lee Whorf
    - i. Worked with Boas
  - b. Language influences how we perceive the world
  - c. Provides categories for cognition and perception
    - i. Color – some languages that distinguish only between light, dark, and red
- L. Steven Field
- a. Wrote “Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song...”

- b. Papua New Guinea
- c. Traditional Environmental Knowledge
- d. Kaluli: "to you they are birds, to me they are voices in the forest"
- e. Found 125 names for birds
- f. Time is measured by the call of certain bird calls
- g. Each birdcall tells the native what to do (wake up, go gathering, etc.)
- h. Music influenced by birdcalls as well (weeping sounds, etc.)

**Example of Traditional Environmental Knowledge in work of Steven Feld among the Kaluli, New Guinea and their knowledge and symbolic system formed around birds**

M. Language loss

- a. Loss of indigenous knowledge of all kinds
- b. Traditional environmental knowledge disappears
- c. Loss of ways of perceiving the world

N. From Culture to SOCIETY

- a. Society
- b. Social Organization or Social Structure
- c. Status
- d. Role
- e. Egalitarian Societies/Stratified Societies

O. What do we mean by Society?

- a. A group
- b. A community that is connected linguistically, politically, and economically
- c. Spatially contiguous
- d. Share basic economic and political institutions
- e. Interactions are culturally patterned

P. Egalitarian and Stratified Societies

- a. **Egalitarian**: all share roughly the same degree of wealth, power, prestige
- b. **Stratified**: some groups have more access and control of wealth, power

Q. Social Organization or Social Structure

- a. Patterned ways that people interact
- b. Ordered arrangement of the parts
- c. Social relationships informed by norms and rules

**R. Status**

- a. Position within a social structures
- b. Sum of rights and duties associated with the position
- c. We each have multiple overlapping statuses
- d. **Ascribed**: the status you are born in to
- e. **Achieved**: the status you achieve in your life, by meeting certain criteria through your own or others' effort