

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