

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology  
of Egypt / Egyptology

**The Destiny of Human Languages: Will they all Die?  
Sociolinguistic Investigation in Language Death and Revitalization**

*Amir Ibrahim Khudair*

Al-Omraniyah Sc. School, Directorate General of Education in Diyala

[amir.ibrahim94@yahoo.com](mailto:amir.ibrahim94@yahoo.com)

**Amir Ibrahim Khudair. The Destiny of Human Languages: Will they all Die? Sociolinguistic Investigation in Language Death and Revitalization-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 17(5), 1354-1370. ISSN 1567-214x**

**Keywords: Language death, endangered language, language suicide language resurrection.**

**Abstract:**

In this essay the researcher focuses on language death, its internal and external causes in addition to its consequences on the speakers, cultures and knowledge as well. Then, he displays examples of American and European indigenous languages accompanied with the economic and political conditions within which these languages began retreating, declining and then dying out. The sorrowful point in this essay culminates when it deals with language suicide. This linguistic tragedy occurs when the speakers wittingly decide to leave their language under an illusory impression that their own native language is but an inferior one and they have to adopt another superior language due to economic and political interests. Finally, the mechanisms of revitalization of the dying and endangered languages are also investigated to create hope for the next generations to preserve our identity and our universal language and culture diversity.

**Introduction:**

Since the dawn of the industrial epoch the tropical rainforests have begun the process of erosion and the rate of their atrophy was very slow and unnoticeable. Roughly, one in a million animals and plants were moving towards the brink of extinction each year. Later on, after the amazing leap of technology which opened the door to the dominant powers to impose their ways of natural destruction the rate became between one in a thousand to one in a hundred a year. This horrible threat can be generalized to encompass languages as well. This is because the Western pressure on the American and African native people obliged them to assimilate into European values, cultures and languages respectively.

These dominant powers are still threatening the world cultural and linguistic diversity (Crawford, 1995: 22).

Needless to say that indigenous languages have increasingly been in danger of extinction because languages, like biological species, have lives, bodies and souls and they are eventually subjected to ecological changes as well. They are born and they die in the same way living creatures do. Though specialists scientifically observe any mild change languages undergo no one can determine exactly when a language is born and when it dies. It is a matter of a slow, degradable and successive birth and death. James Crawford realizes this analogy when he suggests that languages' fate seems strikingly similar to that of the living species. Both of them may "have fallen victim to predators, changing environments, or more successful competitors" (Crawford, 1995: 21).

On the one hand, the beginning of languages fetal formulation occurs in its phonological aspects and then turn into their semantic and structural domains. When its recognized separate existence comes into being its communicative function would serve as a strong factor in its development and continuity. On the other hand, language death also come to be as a reflection of the decomposition in which all aspects of a language gradually dwindle till it wanes and then perishes forever. At this point the announcement of language death will have been a refutable fact.

### **Language Death: Multi-Faceted Definition:**

Tsunoda in his *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization* suggests that the phenomenon of language death is a natural event that occurs in the human history. To him, language is considered dead when it's afflicted with stagnation and rejection of any development in all its levels as if it were out of the laws of evolution (Tsunoda, 2006: 1). Language is also considered dead if there is no linguistic transmission from elder generations to the next. Hence, children deliberately do not use their native language to communicate with each other in schools, markets, parks and even when they play their favourite video games. If a foreign language occupies all these situations, then, the indigenous language is viewed as dead (Tsunoda, 2006:37). Another definition of language death is formulated by Hans Sasse who considers that language is eventually dead when most community members do not use it in education, governmental offices and mass media . Instead, they use it only in limited occasions such as religious prayers, holy ceremonies, and some kinds of magic incantations (Sasse, 1992:18). Moreover, Language is declared dead when the last speakers die taking it with them to language graveyard (Tsunoda 2006, p. 38). David Crystal in his turn adopts the same attitude suggesting that language dies when there is no justification to learn it or to pass it on to the younger generations (Crystal,2000:1). Additionally, language dies due to the weakness in its ability to assimilate with the new conditions till the new language gradually swallows it till it vanishes forever. Hence, the aboriginal speakers begin gradually avoiding using their ethnic language till they use it only at home or in the worship places (Sasse, 1992:19). Then, little by little, the dying language loses its structural complexity

and its vocabulary enrichment. This “Structural impoverishment and so-called ‘bastardization’ may help accelerate the process of language death in the final stage ... but it will always be the consequence rather than the reason for linguistic obsolescence” (Sasse, 1992:11). As a result, language death is an unnoticeable event for common people but it is a sad and desperate end for linguists, anthropologists or nationalists alike (Crystal,2000:1). Undoubtedly, Death is a cosmological inevitable law encompassing all living creatures including language itself and its symptoms of manifests in decreasing of the number of language speakers accompanied with the same degree of declination in the contexts in which it is used. So, statistics have lately shown that 11% of the living languages have less than 150 speakers and by the advent of the next century a significant number of languages will be no longer spoken anymore (Hoffmann, 2009: 6). But what makes language die? What are the symptoms of its death? Is it possible to revitalize dying languages?

### **Causes and Consequences:**

The emergence and expansion of the nation-state in Europe led to the domination of what is so-called the official language concerning it as a symbol of nationality and patriotic dignity. That political dramatic development put minority languages under unbearable pressure and, at the same time, threatened their cultural existence as well. So the steepening curve of dying and endangered languages began continually increasing (Crystal, 2000:69).

The second cause of language death is the demise of all its users due to widespread pandemics or natural disasters. Needless to say that small tribal communities living in isolated mountains or valleys can be swept out by sudden strong earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or flaming wars. These kinds cataclysms will eventually reduce the number of language users which, in turn, leads to language death (Dorian, 1981:70). For example, in 1998 a sudden earthquake in Papua New Guinea killed 2,200 and forced nearly 10,000 villagers to leave their lands. Consequently, the villages of Arop, Warupu and Malol were altogether decimated leaving nothing but ruins. In addition, more than 30% of the people in these stricken villages were killed. According Ethnologue(1996), the linguistic and anthropologic surveys had shown that Sissano, the Guinean village, had only 4,776 speakers in 1990 whereas Malo population was 3,330. As for Arop, the figure was exactly 1700 villagers. Then, after the mentioned disaster, the number of the villages population hardly reached 500 survivors. The question arisen here is that will their languages and cultures survive too? (Edward, 1985: 53).

Undoubtedly, the answer is not a decisive “yes” because those villagers may live in a homogeneous community where they can interact with each other using their indigenous language. Nonetheless, in most cases the survivors would eventually disperse in different multi-cultured communities where they are forced to alter their native language and learn a dominant one to coincide with the new circumstances they live under. Then, their aboriginal language begins retreating before the new one.

Another factor underlying language death is resulted from famine and drought. In his work *Language, Society and Identity* John Edward talks about the Irish potato famine which occurred in 1845 and resulted in a million deaths within about six years. The blight was the main cause which made most of the population emigrate from Ireland and scattered in different heterogeneous communities. As a result, the Irish language was also affected and the climatic change played a crucial role in accelerating its degradation in favour of English (Edward, 1985: 55).

In Africa, in 1991, the same blight killed a quarter of the children in Somalia according to the estimation of UN agencies which declared that more than 22 million were on the brink of death over 20 countries. Civil war can also threaten languages and causes death. In 1998, according to the UN World Food Programme, starvation caused by ongoing civil war threatened 10% of Sudanese population and made them at risk of starvation. So Ethnologue (1996) estimated that there were 132 languages spoken in Sudan, most of them are in a fragile situation because 17% of them spoken by less than 1000 speakers and 54 of them have less than 10,000 users (Kincade,1991: 157). “The rise of tuberculosis ... notably in Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe – the disease has damaged a quarter of the population aged between 15 and 50” (Crystal, 2000: 73).

When one says that language dies with the death of its users, this stunning fact maybe until today unrecognized grasped by common people.

Those are always wondering how all people altogether die with their language. This question arises because common people do not imagine to what extent man’s brutality and cruelty descend when he wants to subjugate others. They do not know that when the first European arrived in America, the New World was estimated a 100 million and within two centuries of wars and pandemics the figure dropped to less than 1 million. A lot of languages and cultures also disappeared with their speakers during this period of time (Ibid).

Moreover, political discrimination where the dominant ethnic class imposes their language and prohibit speaking any other language in their territories. For example, In Kenya the aboriginal language Gikuyu was forbidden in schools and in all other kinds of educational institutes in addition to governmental offices. If any student speaks the prohibited language with his collogues he will be obliged to carry a slate saying: “I am a donkey” as if it were a donkeys language (Singh and Jones 2005: 82). This ethnic humiliation involve not only their language but also their accompanied culture and their national identity. The same is said in Welsh schools where any child caught speaking Welsh has to carry the same slate

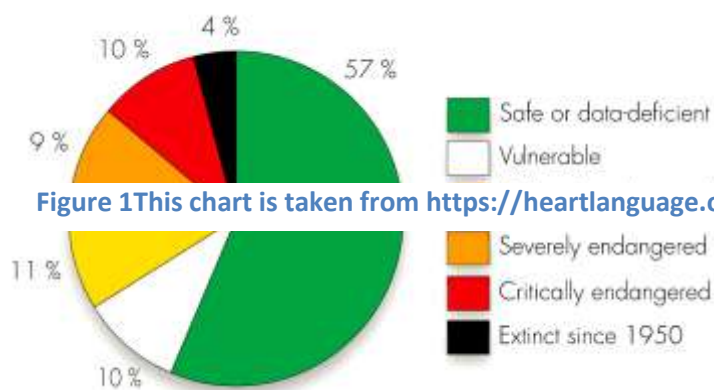


Figure 1 This chart is taken from <https://heartlanguage.org>

with the expression “Welsh Not”. The subjugation culminated to the extent that the speakers’ mouths should be washed with soap and water to clean them from the impurity of their indigenous language! This is what actually happened in Brittany where Breton was viewed as a kind of dirt. Consequently, some native speakers may feel ashamed if they speak their own language because they consider it as an old-fashioned one. So they would willingly refuse to pass it on to the next generations (Singh and Jones 2005: 83).

The cultural shallowness is an additional cause of language death when a language speakers falsely believe that their language and culture do not coincide with modernity and lack the ability to compete with the dominant language. This cultural emptiness was exemplified in what happened to the population of Wales and Ireland who quitted using their languages and adopted English (Singh and Jones, 2005: 84). The other reason is diseases and various kinds of epidemics in addition to ongoing wars which lead to the demise of younger generations. As a result, the population ultimately decreases in number and their language declines and eventually dies as the case of Australian, American and European indigenous languages in the West and Sumerian, Babylonian, and Akkadian in Mesopotamia in the east .

According to this natural declination, individual speakers use their language only in specific setting such as prayers, reciting certain incantations, and some other kinds of religious chants and deliberately avoid using it in other situations. Though religion considered as one of the important factors to save languages from dying out, they political and economic factors play a significant role to deviate the target religion and its related language too. So, the fading languages would be restricted to narrow ritual contexts and then lose most of their lexemes and a great deal of its structural complexity and remain viable only in a very limited scope such as Ancient Greek, Coptic and Latin (Wurm, 1991:1). These languages cannot be viewed as completely dead because their written documents are still available and its resurrection once again is a matter of a political willingness.

#### **Ayapaneco Language: Death after Death:**

Ayapaneco belongs to a series of communities linguistically connected to each other and located along the coast of Veracruz (Mexico). The problem Ayapaneco faced was that it became isolated from its relatives due to political and economic pressures and little by little it coincided with Spanish lexical material and structural patterns and began eroding to the extent that in 1950s it was used only by 80 speakers (Suslak, 2011:573).

In 2011, Sinmaz Emine declared in an article published in *The Guardian* that this language is on the brink of extinction because there have been just two aged people left who can speak it fluently; Manuel Segovia, 75, and Isidro Velazquez, 69. Though these two individuals live in the same village called Ayapa they refuse to talk to each other due to unknown reasons (Emine, 2011: Theguardian.com). Daniel Suslak, a linguistic anthropologist from Indiana

University attributes their unwillingness to socially interaction to the lack of shared interests. This language endangerment urged Suslak to start a project to produce a dictionary of Ayapaneco as a last attempt to revitalize the dying language (Holmes, 2013: 58). Segovia told The Guardian that his language gradually disappeared and it would die with him. He still uses it with his son and wife who cannot speak like him but they understand him though they cannot produce but few words. On the other hand, Velazquez does not converse with others by using his indigenous language any more. Then, if he wants to communicate with the neighbors he just uses Spanish (Ibid).

The announcement of Ayapaneco death has been introduced by the political imposition of Spanish in education In Mexico and prohibiting any other indigenous languages at schools, offices, markets and all aspects of life (Suslak, 2011: 271). Moreover, urbanization of the population which excludes any kind of native cultures in addition to migration which dissipated the homogeneous speakers all over the country, all are considered as significant factors leading to the language demise (Holmes,2013: 59).

#### **Ubykh Language: The speakers who forgot themselves.**

Bruce Connell reported in newsletter of the UK Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) that he went to Cameroon Adamawa province 1994. There, he took notes about Kasaba language and found that only one speaker named Bogon was still alive. His sister could understand Kasaba but cannot speak it fluently. As for his several children and grandchildren, no one of them knows the language. In 1996, Connell returned back to the same region to collect additional data about this dying language, but he did not find Bogon. He died taking his language with him forever (Holmes, 2013: 59). Another obituary appeared in the second (FEL) conference in Edinburgh 1998 declaring the death of another language; Ubykh, the Caucasian language when the last speaker, Tevfik Esenc died in October 1992 (Crystal, 2000:2).

It is important to say that Kasaba and Ubykh had already died before Bogon and Esenc died out because language is, in actual fact, a means of communication. Then, with whom the last speaker made conversations if he was the only one left alive? language is considered alive as long as it is used in conversations between two individuals or more. if there is only one survived alone, he turns into merely a linguistic archive. As for the oral cultures which left no written or recorded documentation, they disappear at the same moment of the archivist death (Ibid). moreover, in the case of Ubykh, there are rumors saying that in addition to Tevfik Esenc there were two or other three individuals who also speak Ubykh fluently. These news are not utilized with evidences. Nevertheless, having these news are true, the whole matter is that its obituary will be delayed a year or two (Wurm, 1998: 193).

Ubykh, the Caucasian language, died in 1992 when the last speaker, Tevfic Esenc died. Statistics show that a century ago there were 50000 Ubykh speakers who little by little decreased in number till they all passed away with their language

and culture. The causes of this tragedy end was always political. In 1864, Everything in the east coast of the black sea was linguistically and culturally normal and naturally developed (Wurm, 1998: 194). Later, everything changed when Russia subjugated the Muslim population and forced them to leave their homeland and flee to Turkey and lived in Marmara region. They, in reality, left their culture, language and even their identity. The cultural reason directed another arrow to the heart of Ubykh language. Esenc said that Ubykh people began speaking Turkish leaving their mother tongue because they thought it would be inappropriate to communicate with Turks in a foreign language (Arik,2015: aa.com.tr).

### Criteria of Language Endangerment

There are various criteria according to which one can check the validity of a certain language. The first one is the number of language speakers. Then, languages spoken only by one or two hundred speakers can be seen as highly endangered because the possibility of dying them all is very high. The second criterion is homogeneity of the speech community: if a language spoken by people who have the same culture and language assuredly hold a solid position and can resist any kind of linguistic eradication or erosion alike. On the other hand, if the speakers are scattered amongst a large number of people who have a different and dominant language. Those speakers will gradually leave their language till it finally dies even though the indigenous people still alive. This is because they change their language which reflects their identity and cultural existence. As for the third criterion, it is very necessary to shed light on national independence. If a nation is taken over by a foreign entrants who impose their language on education, politics and economy in the occupied territories the aboriginal language will be on the brink of extinction (Crystal, 2000: 13).

Fisherman in his prominent work *Reversing Language Shift* uses another scale to assess language continuity. It is called Graded Intergenerational Distribution Scale (GIDS) according to which there are four factors that give rise to language death; economic pressure, social identifiers, mass media and demographic factors. If a language is used in the official mass media like TV channels, cinema, newspapers, magazines and if it is used in education it is on a hard position and far away from being threatened by another killer language (Almurashi, 2017:65).

### UNESCO Scales for Language Vitality:

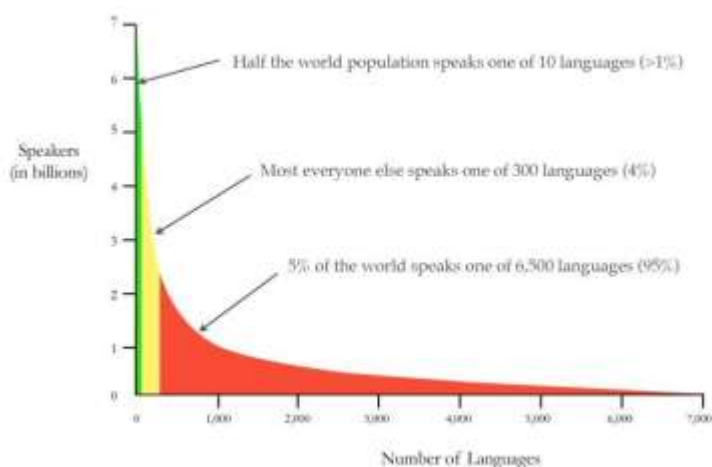
The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) uses nine scales to assess language vitality involving the number of language speakers. Secondly, the percentage of a language speaker in the total population. Third passing language from a generation to another. Fourth scale is the homeland where it is spoken. Mass media can be viewed as the sixth factor, political and communal attitude toward the target language, and the amount of documentation written by the language. These scales are utilized to order languages according to distinctive classes as safe, vulnerable, severely endangered, or extinct. For more detail, if language speakers are of children and

adult it is used in specific setting, it is called vulnerable, whereas the language spoken only by older generation can be classified under what is so called severely endangered language. Then if all language speakers passed away, it would be called as extinct language. Finally, if the speakers of a language rarely use it in their daily life, it come to be called as critically endangered language (UNESCO 2009).

Almurashi (2017) suggest that language vitality can be assessed by using a language endangerment continuum which classified languages that are no longer spoken at the right column whereas language which are widely used at the opposite side. This kind of language are considered as less threatened. While the left-side languages are more endangered. This classification does not involve the languages which have no written or recorded documentations and no speakers left alive to use it because such languages are considered as instinct or dead (Almurashi, 2017: 67).

How many languages are there in the world? For sure there is no reliable figure about the number of languages alive today but some linguists estimate a figure between 6000 to 7000. In the beginning of the twentieth century the estimates were based on guesses so number were very low. One of those who investigated in the number of languages was William Dwight Whitney who thought that the number was just 1000 (Silverstein, 1971:113). whereas Frederick Bodmer said it was only 1500 (Bodmer, 1944: 405). Joshua Whatmough, deepen probability when he suggested that the total figure was 3000 languages still used on the world of today (Whatmough, 1956: 51). As a result, most linguists used to avoid saying anything related to the estimated number. Then, a lot of reliable surveys came into being. One of them was Ethnologue which is considered as the largest systematic approach adopted by most linguists and anthropologists to give validity to its figure. In 1974, Ethnologue announced the number was 5687.

1977, there appeared another significant survey called Voegelins including 4500 language around the world (Silverstein, 1971:115). Though these surveys were based on scientific objectivity but their results were not decisive due to the shortage of the linguistic data. Then, in 1996, with the development of data-gathering approaches, Ethnologue itself in the thirteenth edition said that the number was 6703. This variety in the number, firstly, may be attributed to the vague line





drawn between languages (Ibid). It is not so easy to distinguish whether a specific form is independent separate language or it is just a vernacular of what is so-called a standard language. This intermingled area between languages is responsible for the distinctive difference in the number of the today-used languages (Crystal, 2000:4). The second reason of uncertainty in these estimations is that the linguistic and social data are not sufficient for linguists to decisively depend on. So they waver between over and underestimations. The third reason lies in the nature of the phenomenon itself because the issue of language death is sometimes unnoticeable on time. It takes successive generations to come into being as a tangible fact. People may know exactly that their language has been declining by the passage of time but they do not know at what rate the degradation occurs (Dixon, 1997: 143) . The fourth reason undermining the wavy figures is the methodology the linguists adopt in their researches. In addition, new languages may be discovered and new others may die out during the long-term investigations, all of these facts significantly affect the estimated number of languages on the planet (Silverstein,1971: 118). For example, from time to time, reports come from the islands of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and the South America referring to discovering additional communities and languages which have not previously known. In 1998 two cultures and related languages were found in the high mountains near Mamberamo River in the eastern part of Jakarta those nomadic communities are called Vahudate and Aukedate (Crystal, 2000, 5).

### **Why should we Worry about Languages Destiny?**

Humans are worried about language because it is the mirror that reflects their identity, cultural, ethical and spiritual heritage. When a people declares their language death, they, in fact, announce their separation from themselves because language is the physical embodiment of their souls. In other words, language dies when their speakers die too and vice versa. This tragic scenario has been creatively pictured by James Henare when he talks about the Maori language saying that “Language is the life force of our Maori culture and mana. If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us. Then, I ask our own people who are we?” (Qtd in Nettle and Romaine 2000: 23).

The second reason that makes us assimilate with language is that it is the most precious tool with which one can express their emotions, ideas and their infinite culmination. It is the source of everlasting power summoned from ancestors’ mother tongue. Ronald Barthes realizes this amazing fact when he suggests that language is like a skin that covers the human’s essence (Cristal, 2000: 40).

The third reason for the human’s fear of language loss is the thirst for knowledge. The thirst that has never been quenched. Since language is the main instrument with which the mind is unlocked and explored and since it is the record of human heritage, then, language death will eventually give rise to the loss of human intellectual history as well. The stark example of this is what happened to Hawaiians population who once lost their language and identity alike. The lost

language was a victim of its speakers' carelessness and the lack of their cultural profundity. "Many Hawaiians have now forgotten more of that local knowledge accumulated and handed down orally over the past 2,000 years than western scientists will ever learn" (Nettle and Romaine, 2000: 56).

Hence, language death causes cutting off the ties between the present generations and the past ones. So, the lack of one's language means the loss of religion, traditions customs, poetry, songs and superstitions, with which society members can express solidarity and strengthen their social ties (Tsunoda 2006:141). Language death is undoubtedly another meaning of cultural death (Alshehri, 2016: 54). Then, Language reflects our national existence on the planet. For example, if someone speaks French, this conspicuously indicates that the speaker belongs to French culture. The same can also be said to those who speak Chinese, Russian or English. Individuals can be easily identified depending on their languages or dialects. In Arabic countries, it is easy for everyone to recognize whether the speaker is Iraqi, Lebanese or Egyptian according to the Arabic variety he uses (Alshehri, 2016: 56). Moreover, language plays a vital role to improve the speakers' sense of nationality and sustains their willingness to defend their lands against enemies. It also benefits from economic perspective where it encourages tourism because tourists like seeing aboriginal civilizations and knowing about their roots and cultural grounds (Alshehri, 2016:57). Grasping the native language will make the native individuals bilingual speakers especially when they are compelled to learn another language for the sake of education or getting well-paid jobs in foreign companies. "Multilingualism can provide a number of advantages, namely, it can reduce money spent on health care, improve quality of life, and slow dementia" (Almurashi, 2017: 70). In addition, Cognitive studies have proved that bilingual individuals have cognitive abilities enabling them to solve problems better than monolingual individuals. Besides, they have an amazing control of their attention when they listen to others or when they drive a car in the street and other nonverbal tasks (Adesope et al, 2010:207). For more illustration, speaking native language provides a good opportunity to improve the speakers' psychological and mental life because speaking a foreign language for a long time makes the speaker feel alienated and depressed. For instance, statistics have shown that in British Columbia and English parts of Canada the lack of conversations in their indigenous language was one of the main reasons underlying suicide among youth (Alshehri, 2016: 58). To illustrate, if an individual speaks with others in their native language, this would lessen the psychological tension and widen the horizons of their shared interests and encourages them to cooperate to decompose complexities they face together. Finally, Nelson Mandela, the outstanding president of South Africa said "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart" (Laka, 2014, mappingignorance.org).

### **Language Suicide: Victim-blaming Strategy:**

The first linguist who used the term language suicide was Norman Denison in his work *Language Death and Language Suicide*. According to this disputable model

a language community wittingly decide to quit their own language and adopt another one because they wrongly believe that their own is inferior if compared with the dominant superior language. One of the clear example of this is the Irish language when its speakers left it at will and began using English due to economic and political interests. Denison believes that language suicide is committed when bilingual parents think there is no benefit to inherit a low-prestige language to their children and when children themselves view their indigenous language as an obstacle hindering them from modernity, policy, economy and education. Their language according to this deviate scale has no longer assimilated with the futuristic development. So it should be displaced by a new prestigious language; English (Denison, 1977: 21).

In scientific objectivity there should be no emotional blame directed to Irish People because any choice whatever it is comes to be as a result of intermingled forces giving birth to it. One of the potential causes undermining the parental decision is the reduction of the contexts in which their language is used and the unwillingness of children to learn their aboriginal language preferring using another language in their daily conversations. In the final analysis, the speakers themselves deliberately make their own decision to alter their native language due to unresisted conditions. Needless to say “whether deliberate or not, the notion of language suicide fosters a victim-blaming strategy” (Crawford, 1995:24).

Sasse in his *Theory of Language Death* suggests that language loss is a result of a complex interplay of internal and external factors involving political, economic and cultural. These factors play a negative role in formulating deviate orientations towards the native language which disfavor using it in different domains and creating oppressing conditions to adopt the dominant language. However, the most conspicuous phase of language loss is the interruption of language transmission to the next generations when parents cease doing so at will. Consequently, the younger generation will lack their native language and it ultimately dies out forever (Sasse, 1992, 15).

Mary Jones in her study of Breton notices that the native speakers in Brittany do not consider their language to be prestigious and lack its practicality to deal with new life changes. So they see no benefit for their children to use it anymore. They have to learn French or English to gain their merits. Jones shows that 80% of Breton parents use their indigenous language with their family members especially with those who are older than themselves but only 20% of them speak Breton with their children and 10% normally use it with their grandchildren. It is worth mentioning that standard Breton is still used in school. Hence, Mary Jones thinks that “it is the school, rather than the home, which is ensuring the intergenerational maintenance of Breton” (Jones,1969: 60). To be objective, learning a language in school does not make learners fluent unless there is an ongoing practice with their parents and other family members. There, the students find themselves involving in real meaningful situations in which they naturally develop their language. So parents play a crucial role in the survival of their

native language. If they choose the opposite attitude and cease their language transmission, at this point, they commit what is so called a language suicide.

In her turn, Susan Garzon In her case study of the Mayan community think that the internal factors were more influential than the external one because talking to indigenous people has shown that parents believe that teaching children their own native language will assuredly hinder them from learning Spanish and they ultimately won't be succeed at schools (Garzon, 1992: 51).

### **Language Revitalization: Theory and Reality:**

Language revitalization has lately received a great deal of attention to maintain endangered languages and revive the dead ones (Amery, 2001:141). But what is language revitalization and what can be done to revitalize a dead language? Then, is there a practical example to affirm the theoretical findings?

Language revitalization can be defined “as attempts to preserve threatened languages or revive extinct ones and restore them to be reasonably fluently used in the community as a whole”(Alshehri, 2016: 56). It can also be defined as reusing a language that is no longer spoken to be a means of communication within a certain speech community (Hinton,2001:5). So there should be a careful planning to achieve this desirable goal. Then, one of the most important types of language planning is corpus planning in which the efforts are centralized on making changes in structural and phonetic aspect of the target language. The second kind of language planning focuses on what is so-called status planning. This planning tackles with the political attitude toward the endangered language trying to make it official language used in education and mass media. The third type is called acquisition planning according which teaching learning process should be directed to the language needed to be maintained (Baldauf, 1997:3).

Furthermore, the inseparable relationship between language and culture makes it impossible to revive one and ignore the other. Therefore, any revitalization programs should focus, first and foremost, on reviving traditional cultural activities like songs, dancing, ways of cooking , hunting as well as handcrafts which leadingly evoke the knowledge of the indigenous languages (Wurm,1998, 199). For example, dancing technique was used to refresh Nahautl, the indigenous language of Mexico by members of dance groups in Los Angeles. It was not merely dancing, it was a show of traditional customs, way of living and thinking accompanied with poetry , proverbs as well as religious and historical texts spoken in Nahautl language. It is a technique of an automatic, effortless and spontaneous language learning (Tsunoda, 2006:173). On the other hand, Graham Mckay in his *The Land Still Speaks* suggests that there are so many factors taken into account that play a decisive role in planning language revitalization:

First factor: The capability of the language to be used as a flexible tool for individual and societal communication.

Second factor: the number of the speakers where as long as the number of language speaker is big then language is in a safe position and vice versa.

The third factor: the political position of the language and the speakers alike. If the political class looks inferior to the native language and, at the same time, considers the dominant language as a high prestigious one, then, the endangered language will be subject to declination and atrophy.

The fourth factor is the speakers' view of their own language and the dominant one. Sometimes, the native speakers become victims of a huge campaign of a misleading propaganda showing the aboriginal language as just a barbarian language losing the ability to coincide with modern and scientific reality. So they willingly quit using it in education systems and mass media to avoid staining them as ignorant and foggy persons (Mckay, 1996: 226).

### **Methods for Reviving Languages :**

Reviving a language is not an easy task. It requires a cooperative efforts among the whole society to make its members use it in their daily interaction. To achieve this there should be ongoing practice. This, in turn, can be achieved through many practical steps. The first one is tying education with the endangered language. So, students would be obliged to study most school subjects, like physics, chemistry, mathematics and so on in the indigenous language. This approach faces practical difficulties because it requires a great effort to deal with scientific terminologies and translate them profoundly to avoid using common words which have ambiguous references. The second approach is to teach the threatened language itself and consider it a main school subject students have to pass to move from one stage to another (Amery, 1994:141).

For more details, Hinton in his *Language Revitalization* thinks that there are various methods are used to revive threatened and extinct languages respectively. The choice of one of them coincides with the degree of endangerment. These are, namely, total-immersion method, bilingual method and language reclamation method. In regard to the first method, it considers that creating natural contexts in which learners can only use the threatened language is an effective and successful approach. This would assuredly provide the learners with a good opportunity to practice and gain fluency (Hinton, 2001:9). In New Zealand, the campaign to revive Maori language was the best example of using total-immersion method since it started in 1980s. This method is applied from the preschool stage to the highest one. There, all subject were studied in Maori language. The task has been viewed as one of the most remarkable example of revitalization success.

Concerning a bilingual method, it is permitted to use both; the threatened language and the dominant one. Accordingly, this method is better in language maintenance than in language revitalization. though this approach also create natural and meaningful situations for language learners, the goal is to use it only in their daily life and then gradually both languages are simultaneously used in the same level (Hong, 2010: 1). The conspicuous model of this method is the

maintenance of Tapirape, Brazilian aboriginal language which is now widely used in all aspects of life. This success owed to the fact that all teachers are native speakers and the curriculum is designed to contain the indigenous culture too. Besides, the government allowed to teach Portuguese as a second language to let the door open for language and culture diversity (Alshehri, 2016: 62).

The last method is used only with the extinct languages making benefit of its recorded materials or its left native speakers who still preserve their indigenous language. Kurna language of Adelaide, Hebrew, and Warrungu language of North Queensland, Australia are the best embodiment for language resurrection (Tsunoda, 2006:212).

### **Conclusion:**

It has been shown that languages are analogous to living creatures and it is subject to the same cosmic law; death. This sorrowful end does not happen suddenly without warning alarms. It is a matter of weakness, declination and eventually death. Some languages are still robust and struggle its survival like Chinese, English, French, Russian and Arabic. The causes underlying language death are, namely, ongoing wars, pandemics, migration which all together result in the death of the language speakers and stopping language transmission from elder generations to the youngest ones. The political conflicts and economic deterioration force people to flee their mother countries and seek refuge and safety in different parts of the world. There, they will face heterogeneous societies with various languages and cultures.

Parents living in the foreign language are normally described as monolingual whereas their children would assuredly be bilingual to assimilate with the new language and culture. They have to study in the foreign language and they have to do shopping and communicate with others in sport clubs, on metro stations and on the bus through the same language. Their indigenous language gradually shrinks till its scope be restricted only to intimate conversation at home to confirm their coordination and to deepen their solidarity. It can also be used in worship places to say prayers or to recite some religious hymns. The most tragic end in this phenomenon is what David Crystal called “language suicide” where a certain nation deliberately decides to leave their own language under a misleading impression that their language is but an inferior low-prestigious one in oppose to the high-valued dominant language. This tragedy can be attributed to the cultural alienation in which the community members lose their ethical and spiritual ties which connect them with their heritage, religion and roots. One of the painful example of language suicide is Irish language which has been casted away by its speakers who adopt English language to occupy all aspects of life in Ireland.

Keeping language from the loss is not a matter of preserving a means of communication, nay, it is a real embodiment of the whole history. It is a container of the human intellectual, ethical and spiritual heritage. Though it is similar to living species, death is not an evitable end in regard to languages. The difference between them is that even dead languages can be revitalized again especially if

there are recorded documentations still left keeping their phonetic, structural and semantic aspects. As a result, with the increasing of the national enthusiasm, great efforts have lately been dedicated to resurrect the dying and endangered languages especially in the Central and South America. Then, a lot of saving linguistic programs have been chosen in accordance with the degree of the endangerment the language subjected to. They are total-immersion method, bilingual method and language reclamation method. The first is designed to create natural settings in which the learners have the opportunity to socially interact with each other and to maintain practice. As for the bilingual method, it deals with the fact that the outsider's language is unescapable reality and it has become a second language. So, the efforts should be directed to refresh the native language and reuse it in education systems and in mass media so as to save it from extinction. The last method can be used with dead language trying to resurrect it and to evoke its spirit once again. Brazilian and Korean native languages are the conspicuous examples of the linguistic campaign.

### **Bibliography:**

- Adesope, OO, Lavin, T, Thompson, T & Ungerleider, C 2010, 'A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism', *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 80, no. 2, pp. 207-245.
- Almurashi, Wael Abdulrahman, (2017). *Why we should care about language Death?*  
International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research, Vol.5, No 5: 62-7.
- Arik, Burcu, (2015). *Ubykh: The Language that Die with a Man*. [www.aa.com.tr](http://www.aa.com.tr)
- Bodmer, Frederick. 1944. *The loom of language*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Crawford, James, (1995). *Endangered Native American Languages: What is to be Done and why?* *The Bilingual Research Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 17-38.
- Crystal, David (2000). *Language Death*. 1st Edit. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Denison, Norman, (1977). Language death or language suicide? *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 12, 13 – 22.
- Dixon, R. M. W (1997). *The Rise and Fall of Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dixon, RM 1991, 'The endangered languages of Australia, Indonesia and Oceania',  
*Endangered languages*, pp. 229-255.
- Dorian, Nancy C. 1981. *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Edwards, John. 1985. *Language, Society and Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- England, Nora C. 1998. Mayan Efforts toward Language Preservation. In Grenoble and Whaley (eds.), 99–116.
- Emine, Sinmaz, (2011). Language at risk of dying out – the last two speakers aren't talking <https://www.theguardian.com>
- Fishman, J 1991. *Reversing Language Shift*. 1st ed. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Garzon, Susan 1992. The process of language death in a Mayan community in southern Mexico. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 93, 53 – 66.
- Jones, M. and Singh, I 2005. *Exploring Language Change*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Kolbert, E 2005. Last Words: A language dies. *The New Yorker*.
- Hinton, Leanne, (2001). *Language Revitalization: An Overview*. University of California, Berkeley. < <https://www.researchgate.net>>
- Hoffmann, M 2009. Endangered Languages, Linguistics, and Culture: Researching and Reviving the Unami Language of the Lenape.
- Holmes, Janet, ( 2013). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 4th Edition, London and New York , Routledge, Taylor and Francis group.
- Jones, Mari C. (1996). *The Role of the Speaker in Language Obsolescence: The Case of Breton in Plougastel-Daoulas, Brittany*. *French Language Studies* 6, 45 – 73.
- Kincade, M. Dale. (1991). The decline of native languages in Canada. In Robins and Uhlenbeck (eds.), 157–76.
- Laka, Itziar, (2014). Mandela was right: the Foreign Language Effect. <https://mappingignorance.org/>
- Leonard, W (2008). When is an " Extinct Language" Not Extinct. *Sustaining Linguistic Diversity: Endangered and Minority Languages and Language varieties*, 23-33.
- McKay, GR (1996). *The Land Still Speaks: Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance and Development Needs and Activities*, Australian Government Pub. Service.
- Nettle, D and Romaine, S 2000. *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ridgeway, A (2009). Language is Power; Let us Have ours. *The Sydney Morning Herald* <http://www.smh.com.au>.
- Sasse, Hans-Jurgen. 1992. Theory of language Death. In Mattias Brenzinger (Ed.), *Language Death: Factual and Theoretical Explorations with Special Reference to East Africa*, 7 – 30. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.



- Silverstein, M., (1971). *Whitney on Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Suslak, Daniel F (2011) . *Ayapan Echoes: Linguistic Persistence and Loss in abasco, Mexico*. *American Anthropologist* . Vol. 113.No 4. <  
[www.academia.edu/](http://www.academia.edu/)>
- Tsunoda, T 2006, *Language endangerment and language revitalization: An introduction*, vol. 148, Walter de Gruyter.
- UNESCO, 2009. *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*  
<[www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas](http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas)>
- Whatmough, Joshua. (1956). *Language: a Modern Synthesis*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Wichmann, Soren. 1995. *The Relationship among the Mixe-Zoquean Languages of Mexico*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Wurm, S 1991. *Language death and disappearance: causes and circumstances*. *Diogenes*, 39(153), pp.1-18.