

Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation

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Lecture-39

Lecture 39 : Conclusion

Hello everyone, welcome to the SWAYAM NPTEL course, Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation. This is Dripta and today, you are listening to Lecture number 39 of Module 8. So, the title of today's lecture is Conclusion. So, today we will basically try to look back. We will try to talk about different concepts that we have learnt through this course. So, we will recall the major learnings from the lectures and some of them were useful theoretical concepts, we will talk about them briefly so that you can revise for yourself.

For example, the idea of language shift that we discussed in detail. I will also talk about language vitality and the layers that you have already learnt by now. So, I will briefly mention them. In this course we also shared some strategies for collecting data.

So, I will share the strategies at least some of them. So, that you also remember them again. We will try to highlight some areas, some problem areas that we figured out when we collect data on the field. Remember we tried to talk about your role. So, if you are a community member or if you are an outside researchers, your role will change.

So, what kind of role you have while collecting data. So, we will again look back. And, I will also mention that we explored some of the existing works on endangered languages and lesser known languages of India. So, how we can use them for our work. By telling you the idea of language maintenance and shift that I discussed in detail.

So, you have to remember these notions because these are extremely important specially for background knowledge when you have to study the language use of the community. I hope you remember that I told you choice of language is very important. For example, if you are collecting data from a speaker who is not choosing from the home language rather choosing from a different language. So, you have to be aware of it right. So, you

have to remember that choice of language is important and also the idea of language shift needs to be revisited by you as a researcher.

So, what do we mean by language shift? If you remember it is the gradual replacement of one language by another. And when we talked about shift, on the other hand we also mentioned language maintenance. So, if language shift is not happening for a speech community, it means that they try to maintain their language. We have seen that there is a shift to more dominant languages, more dominant languages of the language hierarchy of any region and it results in endangerment. I hope you remember different levels of endangerment that you have learnt from different lectures.

We talked about language shift in migrant communities and non migrant communities and we also talked about you know migrant majority. So, there is a difference between the migrant minorities and migrant majorities. So, we discussed about it if you remember and we also explored different reasons for language shift like socio economic and political factors, demographic factors and language attitude. We explored the idea of language loyalty, which is a variable function of language use for group maintenance. We discussed the idea of ethnolinguistic vitality which is you know an aggregate of socio cultural factors that will determine a groups ability to function as a distinct collective entity.

So, I hope you remember we discussed you know how to collect ethnolinguistic data and also how to assess ethnolinguistic vitality based on the UNESCO's factors. So, if you are planning to learn more about ethnolinguistic vitality, you can go to the reference and read the entire UNESCO document and of course, use it for your own work. If you are a community member, you can explore how language maintenance is taking place in your community and why and how different community members try to protect their language through different measures. We discussed the idea of reversal of language shift which is an idea given by Fishman So, all these will help you to understand both language maintenance and shift. We found that one person can have different kind of language used based on domains.

I hope you remember the idea of domain. So, we understood that there are different kind of languages used in different domains. And it is very very important for us to remember that there is this eight point scale called graded intergenerational disruption scale. We explored it in detail and if you are planning to look at the vitality of a particular language, you can always put the language in the scale and figure out its position. When we talked about assessment of ethnolinguistic vitality, we talked about different factors of UNESCO for example, intergenerational language transmission, absolute number of speakers also the ratio if you remember.

So, all these will be useful for you I suppose. And along with discussing the different factors for assessing language vitality, I also shared the field experience that we had with vitality data and also the community perspective. Language attitude is something which was highlighted in this course as well. So, we talked about language attitude and how it affects the users and the use of language. We said that there can be overt and covert prestige for different speech communities.

We found that attitudes of the dominant speech community may promote the language of non-dominant speech communities or abandon them. So, it is very important for you to understand what kind of attitude does a dominant speech community around you try to spread. We talked about the governmental and institutional language attitude, we talked about different policies that can reflect the language attitude in a society, we talked about equal support, differentiated support or passive assimilation if you remember. So, if you are trying to include some kind of language attitude studies in your work, then I hope these will be useful for you and you can always go back to the lectures and you know revise them again. We found that the community members attitudes towards their own language may vary, they can be ashamed of their language or they can be proud of their language.

And we found that there are different approaches for measuring language attitude. And we also discussed that you need to have an interdisciplinary technique, there can be direct approach like survey and interviews, you can also have reference or use reference of different language attitude surveys. I also give some example of such surveys. But in Indian context if you are trying to use attitude and if you are not getting any survey, you can use the direct approach. At times attitude studies also include surveys for opinion on policy.

So, these data on opinion can help you to understand the language attitude of different speech communities. I introduced the idea of speech rating scale if you remember. For example, if you ask a person to narrate a story or talk about his or her experience in the home language, record it and then give the recording to a dominant language user and talk about or rather ask the dominant language community member to comment on the narration, you get some idea of the attitude. We talked about the analysis of discourses which can help us to explore the social discourses and ideologies associated with different languages and we also discussed some questions of an attitude survey. So, if you remember there were questions like do you want your children to learn your language, Do you think one language can be used for all purposes? If yes, is it your language? So, these you know questions will be helpful for you in Indian context to understand language attitudes of different communities.

We talked about collecting ethno linguistic data and specifically what actually do we collect when we say that we are collecting ethno linguistic data. So, we discussed data like kinship terms, color terms, house related system, attire and adornment, food culture, traditional occupation. life cycle, worship and rituals, ethno medicine, measurement, games, traditional transport, arts and artifacts, entertainments etcetera. So, I am sure you will collect this data as a part of your vocabulary based on different semantic domain, but these data is also important for you to understand the ethnolinguistic aspects. Again you can focus on some traditional performance, learn about them.

Do audio or video recording of the performance and also analyze your recordings and get some idea of associated concepts like the idea of song man for different communities. As a part of a ethnolinguistic data, I talked about or rather highlighted data on songs, I told you that you know whether the traditional songs or new songs of a community are differing in tunes, beats and languages can also give you some clue of language endangerment. I discussed this idea of music vitality and endangerment framework which is discussed by Grant 2014 to understand music endangerment through language endangerment. This is a very important framework in ethnolinguistic vitality and we also talked about certain problems of collecting ethnomusicological data. For example, if song of a community is having influence of the dominant culture as opposed to traditional songs.

We devoted one class to discuss certain challenges in Indian field. For example, the problems of linguistic heterogeneity in terms of multilingualism in Indian context, this is not very easy to figure out how you will elicit or record or find a particular area to collect your data on a particular language if the area is highly multilingual. There are issues of fuzzy boundaries and also pressure of different languages specifically more prestigious or dominant languages in the hierarchy. Again we talked about language choice in Indian context which is important in terms of multilinguality. We talked about the idea that languages have different status and you have to learn about the status before you start collecting data and linguistic homogeneity can be a problem related to the idea of standardization.

So, we discussed the idea of standardization and try to relate it with the problems of language documentation. If you are familiar with this idea of language standardization in a very Haugenian concept, we talked about these traditional divisions of different stages of language standardization and also talked about the newer critics. If you think about the definition of a standard language or language, you can say that one language is often conceived as an assemblage of dialects and one of them is clearly defined as a standard. when we talk about standard it always has some written norms. I told you that there are

some misconception that non-standard varieties cannot be documented as they are not written.

This is an important concept for you, so you can revisit them if needed. We discussed the stages of standardization and also if a language started a standardization drive in recent past, how do you identify that and also if it is marginalizing the other varieties of the same language. So, when I talk about different stages of standardization, I talked about you know selection, codification, elaboration of function and acceptance. Again we came back to this concept of attitudes in relation to non-standards. We discussed whether the speakers of the so called standards are having some negative attitudes towards the users of non-standards.

We discussed the idea of bias towards a homogeneous language, which is a part of the standard language ideology or SLI, which can affect the speakers to select or choose a language one particular variety of the target language. We discussed that these all these issues are associated with community members and outside researchers. So, if you are a community member you know the standardization story from inside and if you are an outside researcher you have to explore it from different perspectives. We discussed different types of language planning and we said that it can be reviewed from a historical point of view. There were different planning initiatives at different points of time in the history and we can classify them according to chronology.

We talked about if you remember the idea of unconscious and more conscious standardization following Lepage and Tabure-Keller and we said that these are different. Unconscious standardization is different from a conscious standardization. We found that multiple identities is a common context in India and we have to understand the complexities that we find along with the exploration of multiple identities in Indian context. I also talked about the idea of Koineisation, which is different from pidginization and when you talk about Koineisation, you can say that it is a reduction of dialect differences by some kind of simplification and in technical term, we also refer to it as levelling. We know that certain stigmatized forms are often avoided and at times the speakers will also shift varieties.

So, this is very important for you to understand because these are quite common in Indian scenario. We discussed the idea of purism, specifically in association with language standardization, language contact and language variation. So, at times considered that non standards are not pure, contact languages are not pure and any kind of variation you know we cannot consider them as pure. So, we need to check the validity of existing models for western multilingual countries and we should see that whether these are useful for non-western multilingual countries.

So, this question was raised. And we also discussed whether Hogan's model which was based on Norwegian language whether the standardization model is useful everywhere including India. Because there are some cases where you will find double-edged standardization which is often found in Indian context. So, if you follow only the Haugenian model it may not be useful for you. We talked about the minoritized language standardization efforts, which are very different from national language standardizations. We also discussed the chronologies, I hope you remember how we talked about it while discussed it.

We found that the contemporary efforts of standardization are documented, unlike the older initiatives of standardization. So, these contemporary standardizations are not only documented, but these are also accessible to both community members and outsiders. You can actually see how the standardization took place. because now the local actors or you know the policy makers are often coming from bottom. It is a change in the or the role of you know the community members as agents, it is very new to the entire situation.

So, we need to accept the change. We found that certain social actors can support, alter, resist and reject the process of standardization. It is not only the perspective of the outsiders view, but even if you are a community member you can figure out that how different social actors are doing or practicing all these different layers. We talked about certain problems of transcription. So, you learnt about IPA transcription from Professor Lahiri's classes and I talked about some examples in Indian context what kind of transcription related problems that we often face while transcribing or validating or even collecting data. So, I told you that we need to get familiar with the language family specific speech sounds.

So, we train our ears before we start the field work, we do some research on the phonemic inventory of the target language and at times if there is no data available on the target language, we try to do some reference work from similar languages or languages from the same family, which will give you some clue regarding the phonemic inventory which we are going to create after collecting our data. At times we find that adjacent languages even if they are from different language families they affect the speech sounds of a community. So, we need to understand the language of you know the nearby villages or the adjacent areas. So, we need to do some research on their speech sounds as well. And while collecting data, we focus that we need data from different age group, so that we can try to understand or map the variation or changes that are taking place.

When in data from different gender, if there are mobility related factors, so we will the changes will be reflected in the data and also data from different socio economic class.

We talked about confusion in transcription. For example, I discussed examples of glottal stop in some Austroasiatic languages, even some Dravidian languages have them, vowel length in some languages, palatal nasal again from Austroasiatic languages and central vowels from some Indovarian and Dravidian languages. So, if you remember I gave example from different language data and discussed how these were confusing for me initially and how we can check them while validating the data with the help of the community members. I also gave a suggestion if you can note or mark the data with difficulties for further clarification.

So, we can mark the problem areas whether we are having problems of perceiving the sound or we are not making the correct transcription of it, we can mark them while collecting the data or while we are validating it. I have spent some time in discussing creation of pedagogical material. So, this is important for two reasons. One is that pedagogical materials will definitely help the community members in future, but it is also important because the materials will act as a tool of language revitalization. So, I mentioned that it is possible to revitalize a language with pedagogical tools.

So, you create it with the data that you collect from the field and if you are a community member of course, you have some advantage, but you can again take help of some linguists and develop some material and if you are not a community member, you are an outside researcher, you can collaborate with the community members to develop the pedagogical tools. I discussed certain models of developing pedagogical material. If you remember them I discussed MTBE or mother tongue based education, talked about bilingual education models. In mother tongue based education you have primarily the target language or home language of the children for developing the materials. In case of bilingual education, you use language which is already known by the children and then put the target home language together.

The children learn the lesser known language through the known language together, they are used for developing the materials. Also immersion myth method, which is very useful where all the instructions in a class will be using the target language. So, I also gave some examples if you remember. And, discuss some more models like the master-apprentice language learning program where you have a group of community members where one community member knows the language, the others will learn from him or her. I said that there are some strategies for creating literacy material, if you remember and what do I mean by literacy material, I hope you understand by now.

So, there can be different materials like you know word cards, short texts, audio video, TLMs etcetera. And I told you that you know when you develop literacy material for your community or if you are developing material as an outsider you need the data. So,

you need data from the field and how you can use the data for developing the material I shared our experience of working with data and create the pedagogical material in detail. We also talked about different case studies of language documentation from India.

I hope you remember them. We talked about the government initiatives where you know research and documentation initiatives are taking place for protecting the endangered or lesser known languages and also preserve them for the future generations. I discussed some examples where there are documentation initiatives by different academic institutions and shared some relevant research work which have been done by individual researchers from India and discussed some works which have been done on Indian languages, but done by researchers or institutes outside India. So, I hope you can use these repositories as reference and it can help you in your work. I also shared some of the works that we have done on various indigenous or lesser known languages.

So, you can again take help of these works. Now, coming to the conclusion for today's lecture, I will again tell you that what kind of discussions we had done related to language documentation and field work. So, we learnt about some theoretical concepts for some of you these concepts will be newer and I am sure some of you already knew about them maybe it is helping you to brush up your ideas of these theories. You can consider the strategies that we discussed for data collection of course, you learnt about different methods of data collection. But, along with that you learnt about some strategies and I hope both you know methods and strategies will be useful for you in future. We also suggested that you can explore some probable readings before starting your field trip and you need to have understanding of the theoretical aspects as well as the language background, the users background etcetera before you start your actual field trip.

you have to know your field better before you start working. So, it is not the case that you are going to the field and then you start learning about them, you need to learn about them beforehand. At times we do conduct pilotings as I told you. So, these pilotings will help you to know your field better and then when you start working collecting the data you can relate it to the prior knowledge. We talked about revitalization techniques. revitalization techniques include development of pedagogical materials and you also learnt about some technological interventions.

So, all these help to revitalize different languages. And we also discussed different kinds of challenges, I hope you remembered them and not only remember them, but implement them while collecting your own data. So, I hope that this course was useful for you so. Thank you.