Description

The indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality (IEV) are a collection of factors that have been documented in sociolinguistic literature and found pertinent in the PNG context. These factors indicate the probable direction a speech community will go relative to the maintenance of, or shift from, its traditional language. In essence, these indicators are evidences suggestive of relative vitality. Because language maintenance and shift are long-term consequences of consistent patterns of language choice throughout the speaking community (Fasold 1992: 213), within this context, whether a language appears to be maintained or dying is based on the cumulative impact of generally positive and/or negative indicators that place it on a continuum of viability that ranges from vital to change in process, radical shift in process, and on to death.

However, it should be noted that the absence of indicators of ethnolinguistic strength and by implication the presence of characteristics associated with language shift are not fool-proof in the prediction of language shift or death, but cumulatively are suggestive of a trend. Further, no speech community will evidence every distinctive social and/or linguistic characteristic indicative of vitality (or decline) among its entire population. It may be that precursors to language maintenance or shift are in fact dynamic. At a given point, the relative health of a language is not completely associated with the quantity of these indicators present or a specific number of individuals displaying them, but perhaps in the quality of interrelationships between relatively positive and relatively negative forces, compounded by factors that are unique to the community. These together will tip the scale toward viability or toward demise. With this note of caution, a discussion of the organization and implementation of the eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality are as follows.

IEV Organization and Application

There are eight sociolinguistic indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality that form the basis of the IEV. Organizationally, a brief discussion of each indicator is followed by at least one question that informs the subsequent hierarchical scale. The hierarchical scale is then followed by the underlying sociolinguistic principle being assessed.

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1 The early presentations of the PAAD (1991) and then IEV (in 1998) were followed by iterations in two later conferences as: Landweer, 1999. SIL Experience in Documenting PNG Languages: Useful Tidbits for Others - Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Paper presented to the UNESCO conference on Dying Languages in Melanesia, Port Moresby, PNG. 7-10 December 1999 and as Landweer, 2001. Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Paper presented to the Conference on Endangered Languages, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, 29 August 2001. The IEV has changed structurally since its nascent introduction in 1991, and even since its latest public presentation in 2006. Thus, interested parties are urged to use the latest iteration found in the current work, or to contact the author for a version designed for field implementation.

2 Landweer, 1991: 49-67 suggested sociolinguistic indicators for the PNG context. At that time seven indicators were proposed. The eighth indicator was added subsequently.
The relative strength of the targeted language/ethnolinguistic community is established by deciding which of the hierarchical statements fits the situation and then assigning the number (or points) associated with that hierarchical statement. The points range from 3 for the greatest potential for viability to 0 indicating the least potential for viability given that indicator. Once there is an assigned point score for each indicator, the points for the 8 indicators are added together to result in a cumulative vitality score. The greater the points accrued, the higher the expected vitality. There are a total of 24 points possible. A score of 18 or more, assuming no marked change of circumstances (war, natural disaster, epidemic, socioeconomic upheaval), suggests probable continued language viability. A score of 15-17 suggests possible viability. A score of 12-14 suggests a language on the cusp of shifting. A score of less than 12 suggests that the language is endangered.

It should be noted that some users of the IEV have found the assignment of half-points better represents their assessment of individual indicators within the ethnolinguistic context they are evaluating. Such a practice is not outside of the subjective nature of assessment that is found within sociolinguistic evaluation. However, it would be wise for those choosing to do so to report the features they have observed within the society that cumulatively result in the half, but not a full point distinction, within the indicator so assessed.

In terms of application, IEV is not only descriptive, illuminating sociolinguistic characteristics/trends of the language communities profiled, but also diagnostic in that it was designed to help language development agents determine what can or should be done. As such cumulative IEV scores accrued at the highest levels, i.e., 18-24 points, suggest that projects for language description and development can be initiated with a degree of confidence, i.e., the language is likely to be spoken throughout the time that such development programs are undertaken. As cumulative scores decrease, then the implications for language development agents changes from tasks of development to those of documentation with a greater degree of urgency.

Scoring Cautions

Any assessment device, regardless of the soundness of its theoretical base, is only as good as the data that is collected to inform decisions made through it. The IEV is no exception. As a summarization tool, the IEV depends on thorough data collection, using data collection techniques designed to address each of the sociolinguistic questions and principles its indicators cover. The format of the data collection techniques is not as important as the validity and representativeness of the questions that are asked and the actual data collected. Further, the data gathered must come from an appropriate sample of the population of speakers of the target language. Thus, not only should the questions address sociolinguistic issues relevant to the speech community, it is also crucial that data be collected from a representative sample of locations, and within those locations, a representative sample of genders and age groups of the speech community.

Further, there is the necessity that the researchers collecting the data recognize the social factors that are pertinent expressions of the sociolinguistic phenomenon being examined. For example, in IEV 2, the underlying question is: “Is there sufficient use of the language?” A useful

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3 For example, in works such as devised by Edwards, 1994:144 and more recently Karan, 2011:137-149
mechanism to quantify language use is through domain analysis as suggested by the indicator. Thus, it is vital that the researchers have knowledge of specific domains of communication that are typical for the speech community being evaluated. Although there is overlap between speech communities in terms of domains where languages choices are made, e.g., the domains of home, education, and business or trade; there are, in addition, some communities where there are specialized domains where members of the ethnolinguistic community also choose which language or variety to use, e.g., the ritual songs of Vera among the Rongga of Indonesia (Arka. 2010: 91-109). For the Rongga, then, documenting language use in Vera, as well as those domains that are more universal, leads to a better documentation of language use within that ethnolinguistic community, and thus a better ultimate score for IEV 2.

The greater representativeness of the data collected, i.e., the greater the number of individuals, locations, and sub-components of each indicator considered, the better each IEV summarization score will be, and hence, the better the IEV cumulative score and confidence in the validity of the standing in terms of relative language viability. The greater the confidence in the accrued score, the greater is the confidence in resultant recommendations in terms of language development, revitalization, and/or documentation.

To understand the context within which the IEV was developed, please see the full discussion found in Landweer (2006).

IEV Design

Indicator 1: Potential for Contact

In this indicator the evaluator is looking at factors such as distance and accessibility to places where individuals from the targeted community will be exposed to, and potentially be required to use language(s) other than their own vernacular.

Originally the concept was set in terms of where the speech community was located on an urban-rural continuum as proposed by Buchheit (1988: 5-18) and Fishman (1972a: 126-132). However, field experience in PNG has demonstrated that the issue is more than physical location of the ethnolinguistic community relative to an urban setting, such as a city, but to any population center, as the latter had the same social impact as a city. Population centers, such as government stations, regional schools, plantations, mines, factories, even large mission stations exert the same cosmopolitan draw as urban settings including the necessity for a language other than the local vernacular. Finally, there is the radius of the urban or population center to be considered. In PNG I found people would regularly travel 2 hours to and from their village homes to maintain employment at a population center. Thus, perception of remoteness to a population center is culturally defined.

In addition to location relative to an urban or population center, accessibility to those centers must be factored in. One needs to consider the availability of expendable income for transportation to and from the center. Even with regular transportation opportunities to access a population center, would-be travelers need to have sufficient income to take advantage of those opportunities.

The underlying questions: Is the speech community located near a population center where its members would have contact with speakers of other languages? Do they have access to such a population center?
With these questions in mind, the following hierarchy of scores is proposed. The speech community is: (tick one as appropriate).

_____ (3) Remote – no easy access to or from nearest urban (or population) center
_____ (2) Marginal access to and from nearest urban (or population) center
_____ (1) Fairly easy access to and from nearest urban (or population) center
_____ (0) Located within an urban or population center.

The sociolinguistic principle: The less frequent the contact with other languages, the better.

**Indicator 2: Domains in which the target language is used.**

The second indicator of vitality examines the use of the target language within the traditional speech community. One way to look at language use is through domain analysis. Domains are distinct social environments (Fishman 1972b:441) found within every speech community where the choice of language is typically conventionalized (Myers-Scotton 1987:61-65). Generally, in terms of language viability, the greater the number of domains where the target language is the language of choice, the greater reinforcement and maintenance of its use. Domains are culturally defined (Saville-Troike 1989: 51). A macro-designation of societal domains includes the home, cultural events and social events. Within the home, language use encompasses members of the nuclear and extended family units. Cultural events, i.e., those events understood as “traditional” and found within the culture prior to Western contact, include but are not limited to: marriage celebrations; funerals; feasts; birthing and naming customs; purification rites; initiation practices; preparation for and implementation of war; traditional religious practices; tattooing; provision of food with sub-domains of fishing, hunting, gathering, and gardening; and the building of shelters. Social events include introduced societal activities such as formal classroom education, Western forms of sport, non-traditional religious practices, marketing, and non-traditional adjudication.

The underlying question: Is there sufficient use of the language?

To gain a sense for the extent of language use, this indicator then polls specific domains of local language use with and without the interference of a lingua franca, trade language or other languages. The vernacular vitality score is: (tick the appropriate category below)

_____ (3) if the targeted language is the language of choice in the home, and during all cultural and social events.
_____ (2) if the targeted language is the language of choice in the home and within cultural events, but where communication within social events mixes it with a lingua franca or other languages.
_____ (1) if the targeted language is the language of choice in the home, but where both cultural events and social events mix it with a lingua franca or other languages.
_____ (0) if the targeted language is mixed with a lingua franca or other languages in all domains across society including the home environment.

The sociolinguistic principle: The more domains where the vernacular is the sole media for expression, the better.
Indicator 3: Frequency and Type of Code Switching

Code switching is as common as speech. At the broadest level code switching within a multilingual context occurs when a speaker embeds elements from one language in an utterance that is primarily composed of another language.

Code switches may occur inter-sententially, where the change of language takes place between thoughts (graphically represented as sentences); or intra-sententially, where the change of language occurs within a thought group (graphically a sentence). Inter-sentential code switching often occurs at major communication boundaries, and thus may be referred to as “bounded.” Bounded code switches, motivated by a change of participant, topic, or location, may be an evidence of either diglossia or stable bilingualism.

Intra-sentential code switches (or code mixes) are language shifts that occur within a single thought group, and occur typically without redefinition of the communication situation. They may therefore be referred to as “unbounded”.

It has been noted by Chambers (1995: 34-101) and Myers-Scotton (1995:106, 107) that code switching can be used as a momentary marker of group identification for the purpose of re-negotiating role relations within a communication context. This being so, code switching may be considered a marker of ethnolinguistic ambivalence. For as language choice is an indicator of momentary group identification for an individual communicator and as language contact and use are mitigating factors toward language change for that person, so the frequency and type of code switching within the communication patterns of a community of speakers impact the strength of the vernacular code in that community. Thus, the frequency and type of code switching is the third indicator of relative ethnolinguistic vitality.

The underlying question: Is there linguistic ambivalence?

The scale ranking the effects of the frequency and type of code switching is: (tick as appropriate)

_____ (3) if there is monolingual allegiance to the vernacular among the majority of speakers

_____ (2) if there is evidence of a diglossic or a stable bilingual situation in the society

_____ (1) if there is infrequent individual unbounded code switching (code mixing)

_____ (0) if there is frequent individual unbounded code switching (code mixing)

The sociolinguistic principle: The less code switching there is, the better.

Indicator 4: Population and Group Dynamics

One of the most commonly cited factors in the determination of potential viability is the presence of a critical mass of speakers. But the number of speakers defined as “critical” varies. Joshua Fishman, speaking on the requirements for reversal of language shift (1991: 82-95), and Nancy Dorian, speaking on the mechanisms of language death (1986: 72-83), both speak of the need of a core of fluent speakers for language viability. One way that the core of fluent speakers is either supported or undermined is through the language use characteristics of those who immigrate into a speech community (via employment, trade alliances, or marriage).
The underlying question: Is there a critical mass of speakers?

The following hierarchy relatively ranks the targeted language: (tick as appropriate)

_____ (3) Immigrants are actively bilingual – they speak the vernacular of their adopted home
_____ (2) Immigrants are passively bilingual – they understand the vernacular of their adopted home but respond using a lingua franca or trade language
_____ (1) Immigrants require two-way communication entirely via a lingua franca or trade language.
_____ (0) Immigrants maintain their own language and insist others in their adopted home learn to speak it for the purposes of communication with them.

The sociolinguistic principle: the more speakers of the targeted language, the better.

Indicator 5: Social Networks

Milroy (1982: 207-216) and Dow (1988: 19-31) attest to the value of dense, multiplex networks for the maintenance of a vernacular within a wider societal context. A social network is said to be dense when each person to which ego is linked in some kind of relationship, is also linked in relationship with one another (Milroy 1987:50). A social network is said to be multiplex when ego relates to other individuals in a number of capacities simultaneously. (Milroy 1987:51). In most village contexts in PNG the social fabric is both very dense and multiplex because residence patterns, limited mobility, and of the actual and attributed “wantok”4 relations. In the case of a single language, such networks can serve to insulate speakers, isolating and protecting them from language contact pressures toward change.

The underlying question: Is there a network of social relations supportive of the targeted vernacular?

The following is a suggested hierarchy of relative strength: (tick the appropriate status)

_____ (3) Cross cultural independence, intra-community interdependence with dense, multiplex networks utilizing the local language to meet communication needs.
_____ (2) Cross cultural interdependence – divided network systems, internally dense and with a degree of multiplexity modified by the necessity to communicate with outsiders who do not know the local language for some goods and services.
_____ (1) Cross cultural dependence – divided network systems, internally dense, however, there is the necessity to communicate with outsiders who do not know the language for all goods and services.
_____ (0) Individual independence - sparse network - few to nil repetitive social connections supportive of the vernacular.

4 A “wantok” is a person who is genetically related, or has been designated as such. Culturally a person has significant interpersonal rights and obligations to his/her “wantoks”.

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The contents of this document are copyrighted © 2016 M. Lynn Landweer, PhD and/or the respective author(s) noted. All rights are reserved and protected under U.S. and international copyright laws and treaties. Please respect intellectual property rights.
The sociolinguistic principle: The tighter the social structure (dense and multiplex) where the vernacular is the language of choice, the better.

Indicator 6: Social Outlook

In his article, Nash (1987: 7-22) demonstrated that the strength of distinct identity a group has works to maintain their language choice. Further, Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977: 310) have noted the degree of esteem an ethnic group affords itself and is attributed by out-groups serves to reinforce ethnolinguistic vitality. Thus, the perception a group has of itself can impact the value associated with their language and ultimately their choice of language.

The underlying questions: Is there internal and/or external recognition of the language community as separate and unique within the broader society? Is there material or non-material evidence (markers) of such a distinction or of such distinctions?

The ranking of ethnic groups on this sixth indicator is as follows: (tick as appropriate).

_____ (3) Strong internal identity, high status or notoriety conferred by outsiders, with cultural markers present.
_____ (2) Strong internal identity, neutral status conferred by outsiders, with cultural markers present.
_____ (1) Weak internal identity, neutral status conferred by outsiders, with some cultural markers present.
_____ (0) Weak internal identity, negative status conferred by outsiders, with few if any cultural markers present.

The sociolinguistic principle: The greater the group’s internal identity, its external recognition, and its cultural distinctiveness, the better.

Indicator 7: Language Prestige

In spite of Fishman’s caution, indicating that relative prestige is a notion that needs contextual qualification (1972a:132-136), as recently as Batibo (2005: 21, 63-65, and 93-95) following contributions of Sasse (1992), Legère (1992), and Sommer (1992) in Brenzinger (1992: 21, 101, 368) the concept of inter-language prestige is summoned as a motivating force for language maintenance and shift. Of the many diverse language and cultural groups in PNG, population figures, cultural characteristics (e.g. aggressiveness versus passivity; culturally outward looking and assimilative versus cultural contentment and protectionism; trading versus self-sufficient isolation; physical accessibility versus physical isolation; and opportunity - such as commercial development, missionization, and education by expatriate groups) all impact the relative prestige of the language spoken. Language prestige is manifested in many ways: by the deference given by speakers of one language to speakers of a perceived prestige language when they meet; by expectations of local language acquisition by immigrants into the community; by orthographic choices made; by which language(s) are taught/learned and when; and by the choice of which vernacular language will be the media of education in a multilingual region.
**The underlying questions:** Does the target language have prestige nationally? Does the target language have prestige relative to regional languages? How recognized is the target language when compared to other local (neighboring) languages? What is the relative prestige of the target language within the linguistic repertoire of the speech community itself?

The vitality hierarchy for indicator 7 is as follows: (tick as appropriate)

- (3) The language in question is a prestigious, nationally recognized lingua franca
- (2) The language in question is a regionally recognized lingua franca, church, education, and/or trade language
- (1) The language in question is a locally recognized variety with neutral status.
- (0) The language in question is a locally disparaged variety

**The sociolinguistic principle:** The higher the prestige of the language, the better.

**Indicator 8: Access to a Stable and Acceptable Economic Base**

One of the most common motivations for individuals in a community to shift from one language to another is for perceived economic benefit (Holmes 1997: 65-66). Scott Palmer suggests that this shift in language allegiance is a “consequence which hinges on the parents’ perception that adequate work environments using their mother tongue do not exist for their children” (1997: 5). For some, such as those who live in urban settings, facility in the lingua franca is not as much a matter of ‘prospering’ but of existing (Romaine 1992: 92). However, for others, living beyond the radius of urban impact, subsistence gardening, hunting and/or fishing requires adequate access to undisputed land, and hunting and/or fishing grounds. Having adequate resources for traditional subsistence makes it possible to live with a repertoire of traditional language(s). The crux of the matter then rests in the parents’ perception of ‘prospering’ and what language(s) is/are necessary for access to the ‘prosperous’ lifestyle.

**The underlying question:** Is there an acceptable economic base supportive of continuing use of the target language?

A scale of descending support for the vernacular follows: (tick as appropriate)

- (3) Stable and acceptable subsistence base where the vernacular is the code of choice.
- (2) Adequate dual economies where the language used is dictated by choice of subsistence/economic base
- (1) Marginal subsistence economy requiring augmentation of the traditional means of subsistence with cash-based economic schemes that require the use of a language other than the vernacular language.
- (0) Dependence on an economic system requiring use of a language other than the vernacular.

**The sociolinguistic principle:** The more stable and acceptable the income base, where the vernacular language is the language of choice, the better.
The IEV was developed through field work undertaken from 1986-2000 in the Papua New Guinea context. As such, the sociolinguistic milieu was that of small languages (not more than 4,000 speakers and frequently less). In such environments it is possible for sociolinguistic data to be collected in locations across the entire speech community and from a representative population at each collection site, resulting in a comprehensive view of the speech community. In PNG there are still hundreds of languages waiting for assessment and confident application of the IEV. But the applicability of the IEV extends further than the PNG context. There are also hundreds of languages spread across the island nations of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia, whose sociolinguistic environments (“egalitarian mutual multilingualism” (Makihara 2010: 42) are similar to that of PNG. In these contexts the IEV is immediately applicable.

However, outside of the Pacific and across the world there are people groups with population figures that far exceed those of the island nations of the Pacific, but where language vitality is also a concern. Would the IEV be useful in such populous contexts? Yes, but with two caveats.

First, while it is true that the sociolinguistic principles upon which the IEV is built can be applied generally and universally in ethnolinguistic contexts where there is a dominant and dominating language and culture, the impact of such domination on minority languages and cultures cannot be ignored. Fishman (1991: 102), Yamamoto (1998: 114) and Crystal (2000: 130, 133) all acknowledge the necessity of recognition if not outright support by the dominating society of the minority language if that language is to survive. Thus, in such contexts additional considerations must be factored in that account for the pressures of domination. In situations where a minority language is competing with a culturally dominant language, IEV principles may be used for initial language viability assessment. Then IEV results can be supplemented by assessment of the impact the majority language and culture utilizing the assessment criteria of community support and control developed by the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Construct (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal 1981: 146, 149) or the issues outlined by the Bendor-Samuels on national political, education, literacy and literature characteristics that will impact a local level program (1996: 53-54, 57-68), or “diglossia” as outlined by Lewis in the FAMED conditions of the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development (2010: 12-16).

The second caveat has to do with sampling. Where there are more than 3,000-5,000 speakers, regardless of national context (egalitarian multilingualism to minority language in a majority context) care must be taken in selecting a representative sample of the ethnolinguistic community for assessment using the IEV. Having acquired the data, further care must be taken in the interpretation of results. For in large ethnolinguistic communities (at least 5,000 speakers and more so as population figures rise above the 5,000 speaker mark) the responses to the hierarchical states of the IEV may vary considerably due to changes of demographic and social conditions experienced by the various sub-populations of the ethnolinguistic community. For example, pockets of the target community located back in the hills will vary considerably when compared to those who are located on a major thoroughfare. In 1993, while assessing language viability among the Miani speaking population living on the north coast of Madang Province, Papua New Guinea, Noni (Geleit) Voth and I found that those speakers living in villages situated on the coast bordering the North Coast Highway were rapidly switching to Tok Pisin, the regional lingua franca, whereas, those located in the hinterland were maintaining the vernacular (Geleit and Landweer 1993: 53-54). Other factors that can alter language use within sub-sections
of an ethnolinguistic community are: relative levels of education of the speaker population (when education is mediated by a non-vernacular language); attitudes toward the vernacular as compared to the language(s) of wider communication; and opportunity for contact with and use of alternate languages. Such distinguishing factors will result in differing vernacular language viability scores between subsections of the ethnolinguistic community.

In a context where there is a large speaker population the entire ethnolinguistic community could possibly earn a score so low as to suggest a need for immediate language documentation. However, before the final decision is made, one must look at the data set from which the score has been extrapolated. One possibility is that the low score is due to the fact that assessment interviews were primarily undertaken in cosmopolitan concentrations where none of the sociolinguistic factors supportive of language maintenance are present. In this case, assessment of rural populations is indicated before final decisions are made. However, when there is a representative sampling of the entire speech community, resulting in a low cumulative score, it is possible that a sub-section of that ethnolinguistic community could still be targeted for language development. This would be the case where, in analysis of the data set, the scores of the rural populations separated out would result in a viability ranking of 18 or better thus suggesting a confident recommendation for language development. In this situation, the decision whether to prioritize the ethnolinguistic community for language development focusing on the rural population would be a matter of local interest and policy of the language development agency. Underlying, the most basic question is: Just how many “x” speakers are minimal for the initiation of a language development program? Given a total ethnic population of say 30,000 speakers, if 10,000 could be demonstrated as a stable core of vernacular-language speakers, then could one ignore the low cumulative score for the sake of the rural subset of 10,000 who scored well within a positive vitality range? Those using the IEV may not be authorized to make the decision whether a development program should/could/would be initiated, but at least they could give the input of relative viability of both groups (urban and rural) to present to those who do make the final decision.

Recommendations and Scoring

Knowledge of relative language viability is only one factor in the decision whether or not to initiate work within the speech communities of the world. Organizations and the entities or working groups within them, will have administrative policies in terms of assignment of personnel and where those personnel might serve within the host country(ies). The interest of speakers within the ethnolinguistic community; the contracted obligations of the development organization with the host government; the political scene; the skill and availability of personnel; and strategies for their maximal contribution are only some of the factors the contribute to the decision whether or not work will be begun in any given ethnolinguistic group. However, if all of the factors regarding assignment of personnel are positive, and the choice between two or more speech communities is based on relative viability, then the cumulative score of the IEV is suggested as a scale of eligibility for involvement and the type of program that might best be implemented.
Score Summary and Interpretation

Record and tally the scores suggested by each indicator.

The maximum possible score is 24 points.

_____ Indicator 1 Access to a Population Centre
_____ Indicator 2 Domains in which the target language is used
_____ Indicator 3 Frequency and type of code switching
_____ Indicator 4 Population and group dynamics
_____ Indicator 5 Distribution of speakers within their own social network
_____ Indicator 6 Social outlook regarding and within the speech community
_____ Indicator 7 Language prestige
_____ Indicator 8 Access to a stable and acceptable economic base

_____ Total Indicator Score

To interpret the scores, a range of cumulative points suggests potential viability and suggests subsequent actions as follows:

A score of 18-24 (Viable with probable continued viability for the foreseeable future) suggests a language situation that is strong, and is therefore suitable for immediate language development activities.

A score of 15-17 (Possible continued viability in the foreseeable future) suggests language awareness and revitalization activities may be implemented along with development tasks.

A score of 12-14 (Probable shift in process) language awareness and revitalization activities are highly recommended. Provisional language development activities may be instituted with re-evaluation suggested.

A score of < 12 (Language endangerment) suggests language awareness, revitalization, and documentation is imperative.

Given administrative policies at the national, regional, organizational, and entity levels, along with the accrued IEV score, recommendations can be made in terms of language development, language awareness, and/or language documentation of the targeted language community.
Summary

The Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality has been presented as a summarization tool of sociolinguistic indicators of relative language vitality. The instrument was developed specifically within the Melanesian context of Papua New Guinea, but is applicable where small languages exist, including those out of practical implementation of official assimilative language policies. The IEV was designed to be mechanism that not only described the sociolinguistics (the social use) of the language situation presented by the targeted language community, but also to project diagnostically the potential direction of that language use.

The IEV utilizes eight sociolinguistically principled indicators documented in sociolinguistic literature and found pertinent to the Melanesian context specific to Papua New Guinean. Presentation of each indicator is organized as follows: A discussion of each indicator’s sociolinguistic background; (an) underlying question or questions that inform(s) the subsequent hierarchical scale for relative ranking; and the sociolinguistic principle being assessed. Each indicator is subdivided into a four-level hierarchy scale that earns the language community a score of 3, 2, 1 or 0 points.

Given a researcher’s assessment and assignment of the relevant points (associated with the language community’s placement on each hierarchical scale), a total score is calculated to provide a status ranking of viability for that targeted language community. This total score then can be used as a rationale for subsequent language development, awareness, or documentation activities according to organizational policies and entity implementational goals.

Bibliography


