

The conceptualization of linguistic diversity

and its implications
for policy responses

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Contents of the talk

1. Introduction
2. Linguistic Human Rights (LHR): not a paradigm, but a springboard
3. The partnership between LHR and LPP
4. Counting diversity: why it matters
5. Basic measures of linguistic diversity
6. Multi-level linguistic diversity
7. Concluding remarks – and the need for the GLAD project

About linguicism

- Let us start with linguicism – an attitude that challenges diversity management policies
- Linguicism is normally outside of the scope of LPP (“language policy and planning”), because linguicism doesn’t align with democratic standards
 - (whereas LPP, approached here as a form of public policy, is supposed to meet democratic standards)
- But it’s interesting to reason in terms of “pros” and “cons” in LPP, and to see what reasons societies can have *not* to engage in (active or passive) linguicism

Reasoning with LPP

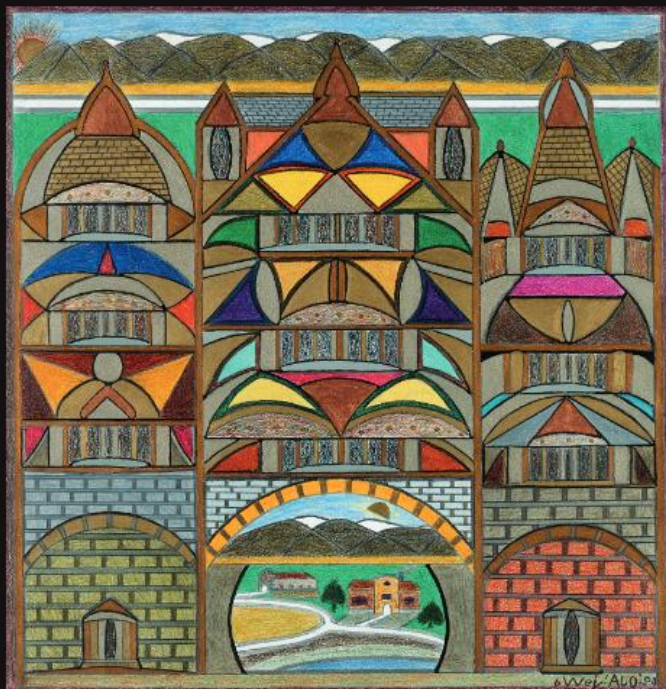
- LPP raises the question of the **advantages and drawbacks of alternative language policy scenarios, which are more or less favorable to linguistic diversity**
- → how can we identify and measure the advantages and drawbacks of having "more" or "less" linguistic diversity?
- → → how do we define and measure linguistic diversity for the purposes of language policy?

LHR: not quite a paradigm

- “Paradigm” (in the SSH): *a set of principles, theories and methods that define a specific approach that can be used to understand and explain a certain group of phenomena*
 - *Note: some authors also add "values" alongside principles, theories and methods*
- LHR:
 - A vantage point astride canonical disciplines
 - A tool for advocacy and activism
- It is the dual nature of LHR that makes it relevant as a companion for LPP

LPP: distinct orientations

- “Classical” LPP (Fishman, etc.)
- → Contemporary LPP *in the language disciplines*:
 - Continuation of classical approach
 - Applied linguistic approaches
 - Interactionnist
 - Ethnographic
 - Critical sociolinguistics
- → LPP *as public policy* (mostly “anchored” in social sciences like political science, economics, etc.)



The Routledge Handbook of Language Policy and Planning

Edited by Michele Gazzola, François Grin,
Linda Cardinal and Kathleen Heugh

- *Quick note in passing:* many of these developments are covered in the *ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING* (e-book, 2023; print: 2024)

Strengths and weaknesses of the LHR approach

- Emphasis on normativity (offers a sense of orientation)
- ... but people have different values
- Even if they share general values, specific goals are often different
- And even if these specific goals are the same, the selection and design of policies for achieving them often differs
- LHR isn't designed to *select and design language policy measures*
- For this purpose, we need LPP

We need
both a
compass and
a map

- LHR offers a compass
- LPP provides a map

Why counting diversity matters

- "Bi- / multilingualization" of an education system
 - ... whose cost, with n languages instead of just one, can be estimated as: $\Delta E = 0.025 \times E \times (n-1)$
- Integration programmes in multicultural cities
 - ... where for integration measures typically depends on the subsidies degree of ethnolinguistic diversity
- Halting language shift and possibly detecting "soft" linguisticide
 - ... which requires a reliable way to monitor linguistic diversity over time

'Richness':

"how many
elements are there?"

1. A local **majority** language;
2. One or more **local (traditional/longstanding) minority** languages spoken by communities typically made up of citizens:
 1. Languages of linguistic minorities
 2. Languages of national minorities
 3. Languages of diasporic minorities
 4. "Autochthonous" languages
3. **Sign** languages (typically a special case, but increasingly handled as a local minority language);
4. Languages maintained **by long-term immigrant communities**, which depending on legislation, may quickly or only slowly acquire citizenship, as part of a process that may or may not stress linguistic and cultural assimilation;
5. Languages used by members **specific non-traditional communities**, such as long-term retirees from abroad;
6. Languages used by people who are **only present temporarily** (tourists, travelers, etc.) and/or by locals who interact with them in their language;
7. Languages that have a degree of **presence as a result of specific causes**:
 1. frequent use in *specific trades and occupations* occurring domestically (e.g. English in business or university teaching and research in non-anglophone countries);
 2. frequent use in *international trade* (brand names, packaging of goods, product composition, safety instructions, etc.)
 3. *reciprocal* international agreements (e.g., in EU member states, the languages of other EU member states)
8. **Other** languages (e.g. **elective clubs** of learners and users of Esperanto, Japanese, Elvish, etc.; languages linked to **religion**);

Different indices

Comparing indices:

- Richness: N
- Greenberg index $G = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^R (p_i^2)$
- Shannon entropy $S = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^R p_i \times \ln(p_i)$
- "Numbers equivalents" of the above

Each index has advantages and drawbacks:

- R is simple to the point of being simplistic, and overstates diversity; G overplays it; S falls in between and is often preferred but is less intuitive; the numbers equivalents are more algebraically challenging

Multi-level diversity

- Space isn't uniform. Diversity stems both from:
 - α : the diversity of elements (alpha diversity)
 - β : the diversity of contexts or 'habitats' in which these elements live (beta diversity)
- Total (gamma) diversity is the product of alpha and beta:

$$\gamma = \alpha \times \beta$$

Illustrating alpha
and beta diversity
with multilingual
cities in a
multilingual
country

- each location (e.g., each city) is diverse and has high α diversity
- but diversity *also* stems from the fact that each city is *differently* diverse; this is what creates β diversity
- if all cities were diverse in the same way, they would ultimately be *identical* in their diversity

Implications and illustration

- Protecting and promoting diversity as a whole (γ) doesn't necessarily mean maximizing α (diversity *in* all habitats/cities)
- It can require maximizing β (differences *between* locations) rather than α
- Illustration:
 - territoriality and language of instruction in Switzerland
- Additional policy implication:
 - promoting diversity through β rather than α can alleviate inter-ethnic tensions and xenophobia

Summary and conclusion (1)

1. LHR is a useful compass, but we also need a map, which LPP can provide
2. Counting diversity is essential
3. It enables comparisons in space and time
4. There's a variety of indices generally more relevant than simple "richness"
5. It's important to reason with two levels, α (or "intra"-element) and β (or "inter"-element) diversity)
6. Total diversity (γ) is the product of the two, and supporting diversity requires paying attention not only to α , but also to β diversity

Summary and conclusion (2): the need for the GLAD project

- Developing tools for the effective, efficient and fair governance of linguistic diversity is an essential task for contemporary research in the governance of linguistic (and, relatedly, cultural) diversity
- An effective, efficient and fair governance of linguistic diversity is an essential principle of truly democratic societies – interestingly, this dovetails with the OSCE's (erstwhile CSCE) *Copenhagen Criteria*.
- Exploring some of the theoretical and empirical questions thrown up by the development of these tools is the core mission of GLAD project (2025-2027), where "GLAD" is the acronym of "Governance of Language Diversity" (see <https://www.unige.ch/fti/elf/autres-recherches-et-activites/projets/glad>).

Further reading

On linguistic human rights:

- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Phillipson, R. (eds.), 2022. *The Handbook of Linguistic Human Rights*. Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Grin, F., 2005: “Linguistic human rights as a source of policy guidelines: A critical assessment”, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 9 (3), 448-460.

On language policy and planning:

- Gazzola, M., Grin, F., Cardinal, L. & Heugh, K. (eds.), 2024: *The Routledge Handbook of Language Policy and Planning*. London/New York: Routledge.

On diversity measurement:

- Grin, F. & Fürst, G. 2022: “Measuring Linguistic Diversity: A Multi-level Metric”, *Social Indicators Research* 164, 601–621. DOI: 10.1007/s11205-022-02934-5