the place of language

from the Trivium and Quadrivium of European Liberal Arts to Haugen's Ecology of Language and beyond



Linguistic Ecology 言語生態学

- Linguistic Ecology is linguistic; i.e., it is about language.
- German zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the word ökologie to refer to the relation of an animal to its environment. The Greek word οίκος (oikos) means "home", but Haeckel intended a more general meaning of home as "habitat" or "environment". Ecology studies the relation of something to its environment.



Linguistic Ecology is about the environments of languages.



language in the context of other knowledge

- were learned via education. For the ancient Greeks, the environment of language was our other cultural skills.
- other cultural knowledge?
- study the foundation of university education: the Trivium.

Language is a cultural skill, and it was conceived by the ancient Greeks to be one skill among other important cultural skills which

The Greeks asked: Where does language fit in the context of our

In the Middle Ages, Europeans made three aspects of language



the Trivium and the Quadrivium

The European "Trivium" included the three studies of grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

the Trivium and the Quadrivium.

- The European "Quadrivium" included the four studies of
- The original goal of a liberal arts education was mastery of



language in European philosophy

- European philosophers conceived the use of linguistic symbols for thinking and communicating to be the most basic educational skills of the Trivium.
- Grammar was about inventing symbols and combining them to express thought.
- Logic (or dialectic) was about the art of thinking and valid reasoning. language to affect or influence others.
- * Rhetoric was about the communication of ideas and the use of



the Quadrivium and numbers

- After the Trivium in importance were the skills of the Quadrivium, which featured numbers.
- Arithmetic was about numbers; counting and basic operations.
- Geometry was about numbers in space; as spacial measures.
- Music was about numbers in time; e.g., about rhythm or pitch.
- Astronomy was about numbers in time and space; the movement of celestial bodies.



Today's SAT scores: Verbal and Math

 The modern SAT exam, which many US universities use to select applicants, has two parts: (1) a test of language skills; and (2) a test of mathematics skills.

 These two parts of the SAT exam are direct descendants of the Trivium and Quadrivium of the medieval European university curriculum.



a very different Chinese model

 Shu 書 was skill in Chinese calligraphy. Hua 畫 was skill in Chinese painting.

- The historical Chinese model of education was very different from the European model. China emphasized the "four arts" 四藝 which a Chinese gentleman must master: qin, qi, shu, and hua.
- * Qin 琴 was the ability to play the guqin 古琴, a type of zither.
- Qi 棋 was the ability to play a game like chess on a board like go.



the "place" of language in learning

- Thus, historically, the academic environment of language was very different for the Europeans and the Chinese.
- Although the Chinese recognized the value of writing and game strategy, they did not place abstract components of language (e.g., symbols) at the foundation of learning.
- Especially since the time of Augustine of Hippo, this European bias in favor of language over painting and music and even mathematics significantly influenced the development of linguistics.



the evolution of linguistic environments

- Medieval European scholars thought about language in the context of other types of knowledge or academic skills.
- * Later, as Latin language use declined, Europeans thought about language as an individual dialect in the context of other dialects or languages.
- * Eventually, Haugen defined "language ecology" as the study of language in its sociolinguistic environment of dialects and contact languages.
- More recently, Halliday defined "ecolinguistics" as the entirety of interactions between a language and its linguistic, anthropological, biological, and physical environments.





Haeckel, Darwin, and Schleicher

- Although he visited Darwin's home and he popularized Darwinism in Germany (cf. Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte, 1868), Haeckel was not a strict Darwinian. Haeckel believed that the characteristics of an organism were acquired through interactions with the environment.
- Haeckel was also influenced by August Schleicher, who was the first linguist to describe language trees. Schleicher also described languages as living organisms.

Prof. August Schleicher. Dle fotografie kreslil F. Kriehuber.



F. M. Voegelin & C. F. Voegelin

- The German ideas of ecology and of language as an organism became popular in the USA in the latter 20th Century (cf. Hoenigswald & Weiner, 1987: passim).
- The phrase "linguistic ecology" was first published in Voegelin & Voegelin (1964; cited by Haugen, 1972: 328): "in linguistic ecology, one begins not with a particular language but with a particular area", which emphasized the importance of **place** or **environment** in the study of language.
- The term "linguistic ecology" was also used in an article on the language situation in Arizona (Voegelin, Voegelin and Schutz, 1967).



Einar Haugen: The Ecology of Language



 Subsequently, Einar Haugen pioneered a form of linguistics which used the idea of an ecosystem to describe the relationships among the diverse forms of language found in the world, and the groups of people who speak them. Haugen's "The Ecology of Language" (1972) was extremely influential.

 Haugen often illustrated his approach with descriptions of the language situation in Norway.
 He was a native bilingual who wrote *The Norwegian language in America: A Study in Bilingual Behavior* (1969).



Haugen's ecological questions

Einar Haugen defined language ecology as "the study of interactions between any given language and its environment" (The Ecology of Language. Stanford University Press, Language science and national development, 1972). How did Haugen elaborate on this ecology metaphor? First, Haugen wanted researchers to become more interested in "ecological questions" about a language, such as these: (1) What is the historical linguistic description of the language? How is it diachronically related to other languages? (cf. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), about the distinction between diachronic and synchronic linguistics) (2) Who uses the language? What is its linguistic demography? What are the human geographic dimensions of this usage? In which places, among which groups, with which religious practices, by which socioeconomic classes, in which professions, etc. is this language used? (cf. Language in Society) (3) What are the sociolinguistic domains of usage which limit or restrict its usage in certain ways? (4) What other languages are concurrently used by its users? What is the **multilingual** nature of its users? (5) What internal variation does the language show? What is the range of dialectal and sociolectal variation? (6) Is the language written? and what is the nature of its written tradition? (cf. Serbo-Croatian before the Yugoslavian civil war) (7) To what degree has the language, especially its writing, been standardized? unified? codified? (8) What sort of language **policy support** does the language have from governments, schools, or other public or private institutions?

(9) In terms of intimacy or status, what are the **attitudes** of its users which characterize **personal identification**? (10) How does a comprehensive ecological classification of the language **compare** with that of other languages?



The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics

- In 1994, Pergamon published *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*,
 R. E. Asher (ed.), a 10-volume set [ELL].
- Because of the increasing importance of language ecology, Asher insisted that ELL include a "Language Situation" article for each of the world's nations. ELL thus considered languages from the various perspectives of stammbaums, sprachbunds, sprachräume, and political areas.
- In the coming weeks, we will consider language situations of areas which illustrate some interesting relationships of linguistic ecology.





