Does ethnolinguistic vitality theory account for the actual vitality of ethnic groups? A critical evaluation

Abstract: Ethnolinguistic vitality theory asserts that Status, Demographic, Institutional Support and Control factors make up the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups. An assessment of a group’s strengths and weaknesses in each of these dimensions provides a rough classification of ethnolinguistic groups into those having low, medium, or high vitality. (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). Low vitality groups are most likely to go through linguistic assimilation and may not be considered a distinctive collective group (Bourhis, Giles, & Rosenthal, 1981). On the other hand, high vitality groups are likely to maintain their language and distinctive cultural traits in multilingual settings. Compared to other models, EVT and its accompanying instruments provide a broader and more inclusive framework for the investigation of language maintenance and shift. However, the empirical evidence obtained in a number of contexts point to an underestimation of the actual vitality of some minority groups. In this talk, based on the findings on ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions of Turkish immigrants in Australia, France, Germany and the Netherlands, a critical evaluation of EVT will be presented.

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