

# Endangered Languages

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The language that I am speaking to you now is called Wampanoag.

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Some statistics: (from the Ethnologue: [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com))

165 Native American languages still spoken in the US

74 “almost extinct” (small number of elderly speakers) (45%)

58 with fewer than 1,000 speakers (35%)

25 with 1,000-10,000 speakers (15%)

8 with 10,000+ speakers: (5%)

Navajo	148,530 speakers	(in 1990)
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Ojibwe	35,000 speakers	(in 1990)
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Choctaw	17,890 speakers	(in 1998)
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Dakota	15,355 speakers	(in 1990)
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Western Apache	12,693 speakers	(in 1990)
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Cherokee	11,905 speakers	(in 1990)
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O’odham	11,819 speakers	(in 1990)
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Central Yupik	10,000 speakers	(in 1995)
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(just for comparison:)

English	210,000,000 speakers	(in 1984)
Spanish	22,400,000 speakers	(in 1990)
Hungarian	447,497 speakers	(in 1990)
Tagalog	377,000 speakers	(in 1990)
Danish	194,000 speakers	(in 1990)
Navajo	148,530 speakers	(in 1990)
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more illuminating statistics:

- in 1960, 90% of Navajo children entered kindergarten speaking Navajo...



more illuminating statistics:

- in 1960, 90% of Navajo children entered kindergarten speaking Navajo...  
...in 1990, it was 30%.

Worldwide: approximately 6,000 languages,  
50-90% of which are expected to be extinct  
by the end of this century.

# Lardil Tense

Ngada jarma latha yakin birnkilu  
I quickly speared fish-ACC spear-INST  
'I quickly speared the fish with a  
2-pronged fishing spear'

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2-pronged fishing spear'

Ngada jarmar<sub>r</sub> lathur<sub>r</sub> yakur<sub>r</sub> birnkilur<sub>r</sub>  
I quickly-F spear-F fish-F spear-INST-F  
'I will quickly spear the fish with a  
2-pronged fishing spear'

# Lardil Tense

Nyingki derlde **thur** ngithun **kur** wangalk **ur**  
you break-F my-F boomerang-F  
'You're going to break my boomerang'

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Nyingki derlde **thur** ngithun **kur** wangalk **ur**  
you break-F my-F boomerang-F  
'You're going to break my boomerang'

Nyingki derlde **thur**  
ngithun thabujikan **kur** wangalk **ur**  
my o. bro-GEN-F boomerang-F  
'You're going to break  
my older brother's boomerang'

# Lardil Tense

Ngada yanda lathur yakur birnkilurur  
I        today    spear-F fish-F    spear-INST-F  
'I'm going to spear fish today  
with a 2-pronged spear'

# Lardil Tense

Ngada yanda lathur yakur birnkilurur

I today spear-F fish-F spear-INST-F

‘I’m going to spear fish today  
with a 2-pronged spear’

Birnkilurur ngada yakur yanda lathur



So how many people speak this language?

# So how many people speak this language?

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some success stories:

- Maori
  - Hawaiian
- 
- now has schools with education entirely in Hawaiian, K>12
  - schools opened in 1984:  
first graduates in 1999.
  - 2000 students in Hawaiian-only schools  
(in 1984, only 50 children could speak)

some success stories:

- Maori
- Hawaiian

kālainana‘o

carving thought > ‘philosophy’

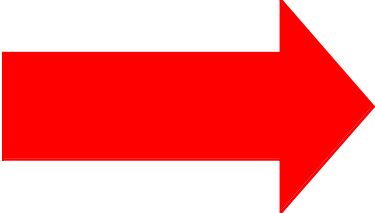
kālai‘ōlelo

carving language > ‘linguistics’

some success stories:

- Maori
- Hawaiian
- Miami-Illinois

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## **kutuma**

unless (+Conj Subj, unchanged)

(John 3:3)

Wunnumuhkut wunnumuhkut kuttunush, Kuttumma wosketomp nompe nekit, matta woh nam8 wuttahs8tum8onk God.

Wunômuhkut wunômuhkut kutunush, kutuma washkeetôp nôpee neekut, mata wah nâm8w wutahs8tumuwôk God.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

## **kutumôk**

\*ketema:ki

alas!

(Revelations 18:10)

Nókompauwehettit, wutche quihtam8onk wutawakompanaonk, n8waog, Kuttummunk, kuttummunk, ne mishe keihtotan Babilon, ne mattanukquok keihtotan: newutch pasuk hower k8sittum8ónk peyaum8.

Nôwukôpawehutut, wuchee quhtamuwôk wutawahkôhpunâôk, unuwâak, Kutumôk, kutumôk, nee muhshee kuht8tân Babylon, nee mâtâuneôqahk kuht8tân: neewuchee pâsuq hour k8sutumuwôk puyôm8w.

Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

## **kutumôkee**

\*ketema:ki

afflicted; pitiful; poor

(GB 154:35-38)

wunnumohkut yeu nuttinnantammun nenauun kuttummungk Indiansog pasue matta pish nuttahtoomun uttoh pish appeog weche kuttummungke nunnechanunoonog newutche moochuke nootamhukqunnannog yeug Englishmansog ut yeu nuttajyeuonganunot ut mashpe Barnstable County

Wunômuhkut y8 nutunânutamumun neenawun kutumôkee Indiansak pâhsuwee mata peesh nutahtaw8mun utah peesh apeeak weechee kutumôkee nunechônunônak neewuchee m8cheekee n8tameehuqunônak y8k Englishmansak ut y8 nutayuwôkanunônut ut Mashpee, Barnstable County.

Truly we think it is this: We poor Indians soon shall not have any place to reside, together with our poor children, because these Englishmen trouble us very much in this place of ours in Mashpee, Barnstable County.

## Delaware

láaapii 'again'

wuláaakwe 'yesterday'

shkáaakwus 'skunk'

moosháaandpeew 'he's bald'

wiingáaatam 'like (verb)'

<nompe>

<wunnonkou>

<squnck>

<m8sontupau>

<wekontam>

## Wampanoag

nôpee

wunôqee

sukôq

m8sôtupâw

weekôtam

Del. aa : Wamp. ô



## Delaware

nbumaham 'I'm paddling'

nangwan 'my heel'

kawiiw 'he sleeps'

<nuppumohham>

<nogquan>

<koueu, kouweu>

## Wampanoag

nupumaham

naqan

kaweew

Del. a: Wamp. a

‘excessively, too much’:

<wussaume, wassome, wussome, wussame,  
wussomme...>

‘excessively, too much’:

<wussaume, wassome, wussome, wussame,  
wussomme...>

Del. wsaami:

‘excessively, too much’:

<wussaume, wassome, wussome, wussame,  
wussommе...>

Del. wsaami: Wamp. wusomee

peepeenawu-chuchôhq-ôk  
look.at reflection device

ahp- uhqâ-hsum -uw  
on.top head place cloth

nâh- nay8m -uwâ -t  
habitually carry.on.back intrans. 3

peepeenawu-chuchôhq-ôk

look.at reflection device > ‘mirror’

ahp- uhqâ-hsum -uw

on.top head place cloth > ‘pillow’

nâh- nay8m -uwâ -t

habitually carry.on.back intrans. 3

> ‘horse’

# **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:**

language constrains thought.

Edward Sapir (1884-1939),  
Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941)

...on the anecdotal level, doesn't look good:

English

Italian

beautiful

bello

handsome

cute

pretty

gorgeous

lovely

comely.....



more anecdotes:

English

Lardil

Tagalog

Finnish

he

niya

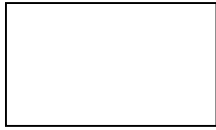
siya

hän

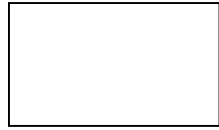
she

color:

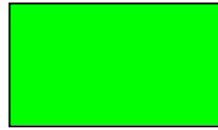
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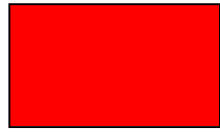
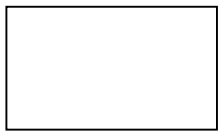
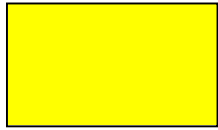
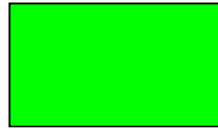
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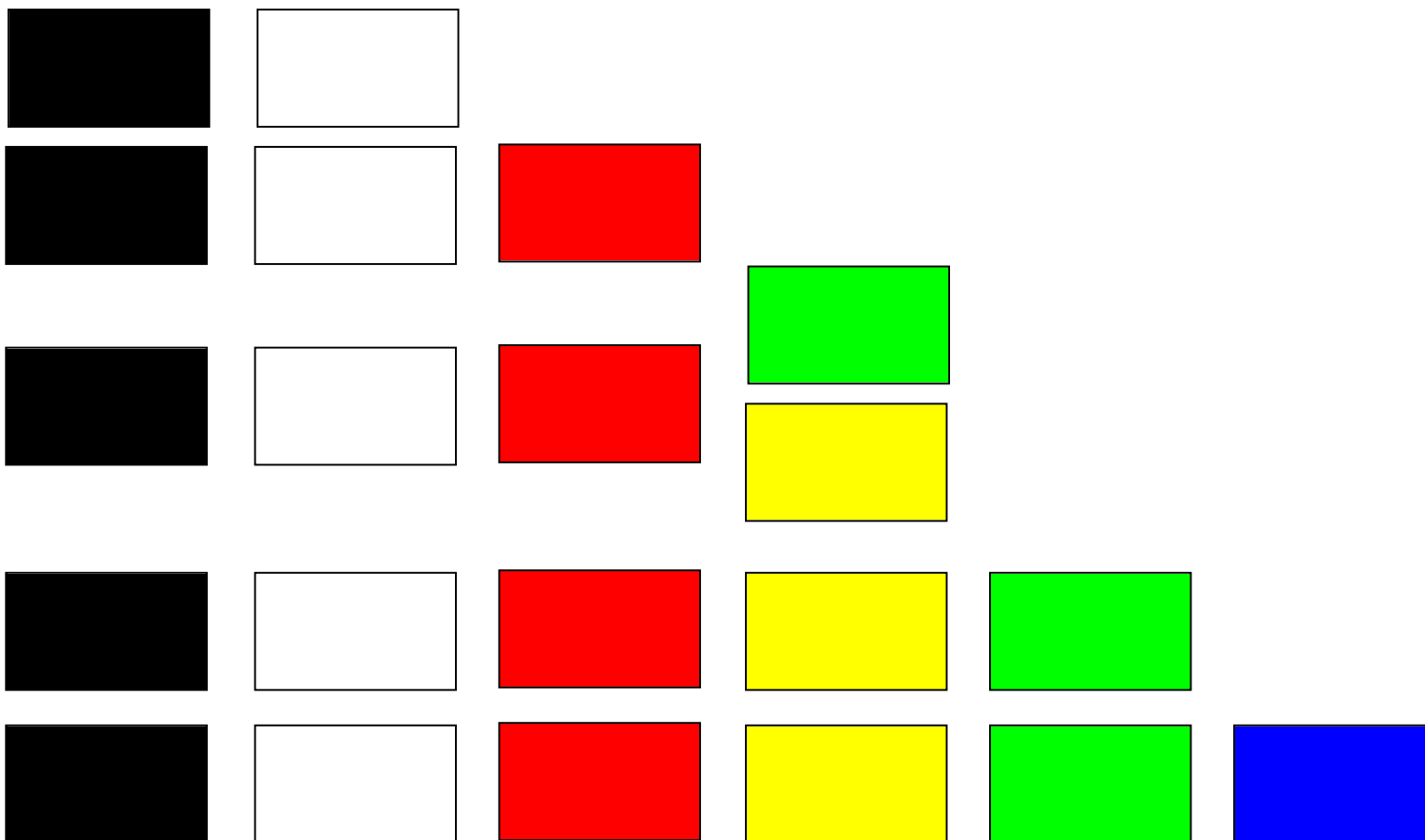
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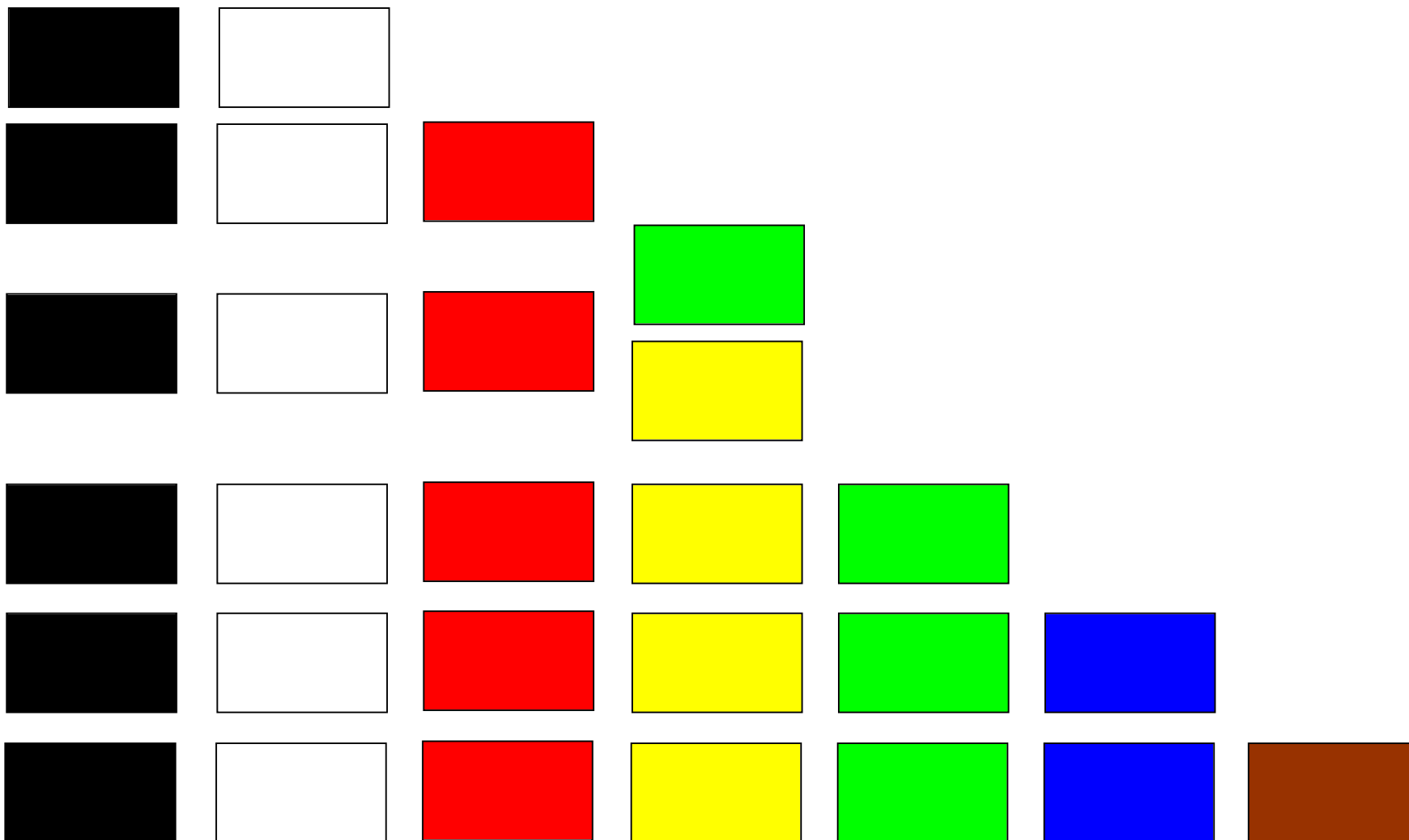
color:



color:



color:





Heider and Olivier (1972):  
experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

*mola*--'light'

*mili*--'dark'

# Heider and Olivier (1972): experiment on Dani (New Guinea)

- shown a single color chip for 5 seconds

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- show a 40-chip array, asked to pick out the chip they'd just seen

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-->same results for English and Dani speakers

“absolute” (north, south...) vs.  
“non-absolute” (left, right...)  
spatial reference...

“absolute” (north, south...) vs.  
“non-absolute” (left, right...)  
spatial reference...

...and the “animals in a row task”  
(Levinson et al)

# The “animals in a row task”

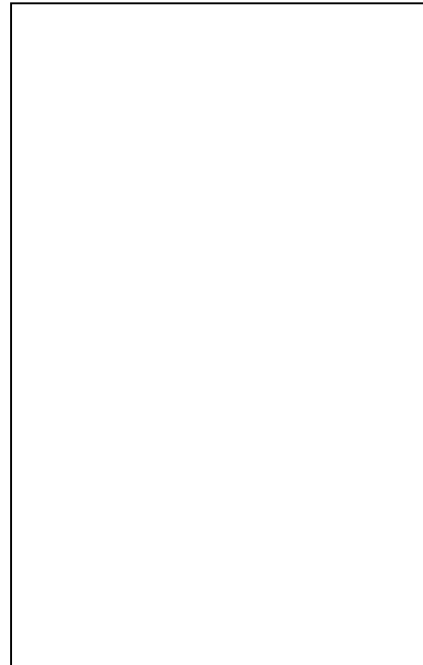
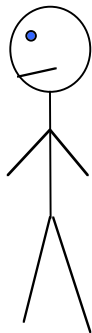
(table A)

(table B)

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“Put the animals on table B, just the way they are on table A”



# The “animals in a row task”

(table A)

(table B)

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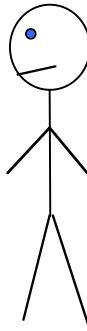
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**Tenejapan Mayan:** (absolute spatial reference)

# The “animals in a row task”

(table A)

(table B)

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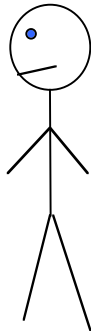
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**Dutch:** (non-absolute spatial reference)

## **The “animals in a row task”**

...on the other hand, the Tenejapan  
Mayan speakers were tested outside,  
and the Dutch speakers were tested  
inside...

## The “animals in a row task”

...on the other hand, the Tenejapan Mayan speakers were tested outside, and the Dutch speakers were tested inside...

...and if you test English speakers outside, they behave like Tenejapan Mayans (Li and Gleitman 2002)

The jury's still out...

...this hypothesis is very difficult to test (see Lera Boroditsky's work here at MIT for some recent relevant research).

...but it seems clear that the effects of language on thought, if they're there, are quite subtle.