

elaborated rank-scale model to simple and elegant hypotheses about linear prospective and retrospective text structure.

And the book claims to provide "advances" in spoken discourse analysis. But with the exception of Sinclair's very programmatic paper, it is not sufficiently forward-looking. The more recent Birmingham work based on corpora of over a hundred million words (largely, but not exclusively, on written discourse) is entirely missing: for real advances here, see two Festschriften for Sinclair (Hoey 1993; Baker et al. 1993).

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Matthias Brenzinger, editor: *Language Death. Factual and Theoretical Explorations with Special Reference to East Africa*. Contributions to the Sociology of Language 64, edited by Joshua A. Fishman. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992. viii + 445 pp. Cloth, DM 208.00.

The topic of language death seems to have finally — and, one hopes, not too late — attracted the general interest of (a broader group of) linguists. In 1991 Robert Robins and Eugenius Uhlenbeck edited a series of articles in a volume on *Endangered Languages* in the Diogenes Library. This publication was also meant as a kind of preparation for the 1992 CIPL conference in Canada, which centered on this issue. In the same year, Ken Hale edited and published in volume 68 of *Language* a set of six essays, all of which deal explicitly with this topic — and were, by the way, also first presented at the CIPL congress (Hale 1992a, 1992b). Thus, in many countries linguists are now gradually becoming aware of the fact that they "must do some serious rethinking of [their] priorities, lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90% of the very field to which it is dedicated" (Krauss 1992: 10).

Even in Germany the national society for linguistics (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft*) started supporting a project group initiated by a few linguists who try to interest more and more students and colleagues in field research and to enable them to at least document some of the endangered languages of the world (see Bechert et al. 1993). Moreover, Dietmar Zaefferer of the University of Munich is installing a Language Documentation Urgency List with which he wants to create a database for information on the current situation in language documentation (e-mail: [ldul@hp11.lrz-muenchen.de](mailto:ldul@hp11.lrz-muenchen.de)).

One of the few places in Germany where the topic of endangered languages has always — and almost inevitably — been in the focus of attention is the Institute for African Languages (*Institut für Afrikanistik*) at the University of Cologne. In the above-mentioned volume edited by Robins and Uhlenbeck, three members of this institute tried to outline the situation with respect to “Language death in Africa” (Brenzinger et al. 1991). A year before the publication of this article members of the Cologne Institute for African Languages organized an international symposium on “Language death in East Africa,” which was held at the Werner-Reimers Foundation in Bad Homburg, and two years later, in 1992, Matthias Brenzinger edited and published in the volume under review here 16 contributions, 14 of which were initially prepared for this symposium.

The aim of the anthology — according to the publisher’s advertisement of this book — “is both to provide case studies on language death and shift, and to contribute to the theoretical discussion of this important topic.” To achieve this aim, the editor of this volume has subdivided the anthology into three parts.

The first part of the book pertains to the theory of language death in general and thus does not only deal with (East) African languages. It consists of a kind of brief introduction, in which the editor, together with Gerrit Dimmendaal, points out that “all instances of language death are the result of language shift” (p. 3); this introductory note is followed by two contributions by Hans-Jürgen Sasse and a paper by Carol Myers-Scotton.

In his paper “Theory of language death” Sasse focuses on the structural linguistic consequences of language death. Despite the title of his paper, Sasse emphasizes that so far there is no such theory. However, he mentions some pioneers of this vein of research and elaborates his contribution explicitly on the basis of Nancy Dorian’s work. He points out that a linguist studying obsolescence first of all has to take extralinguistic factors — which he summarizes under the label “external setting (ES)” — into account. These factors have a strong impact on the “speech behavior

(SB),” and it is here that “structural consequences (SC)” become observable. Sasse demonstrates the interaction of these three levels of research in a model of language death he calls the “Gaelic-Arvanitika model”, because it draws almost exclusively on the evidence of language death that comes from East Sutherland Gaelic and Arvanitika. He investigates the nature of the reduction that leads to language death and discusses the interplay between external and language-internal causes of these reduction processes. After having elaborated on this model, Sasse rightly points out that at present “the entire field of linguistic obsolescence is ... too poorly understood to allow for broad generalizations” (p. 24).

In her paper “Codeswitching as a mechanism of deep borrowing, language shift, and language death,” Myers-Scotton emphasises the role of code-switching (CS) situations for the field. She nicely demonstrates (mainly with examples from Swahili/English) the actual mechanisms involved in the transmission of linguistic material from one language to another and presents five CS-based scenarios of contact-induced change, the last of which may indeed result in language death.

The first part of this book ends with Sasse’s second paper, in which he discusses similarities and differences between “Language decay and contact-induced change.” Sasse demonstrates and exemplifies that it is absolutely necessary to distinguish between “borrowing and interference on the one hand, and irreversible loss and reduction in the system of an obsolescent language on the other” (p. 60). He convincingly shows that this differentiation “is essential for the evaluation of data elicited from last generation speakers in a language death situation” (p. 76), especially with respect to answering the questions of how reliable the speech of the last speaker of a given language is and how much it actually reveals of the original structure of this language.

It goes without saying that this first part of the book does not — and cannot — present a representative overview of all the various theories of language death that have been discussed so far. But this is not the main aim of this book, anyhow, and Sasse’s as well as Myers-Scotton’s arguments are presented with great care, attempting to incorporate — or at least to refer to — as much of the important literature in the field as possible. Thus, this part of the book can well serve the function of ushering the interested reader into this rather broad (though in the main stream quite neglected) field of linguistic discussion.

Part II of the book presents a collection of case studies on language death from East Africa that highlight and illustrate many of the theoretical points made in the first part of the anthology. This part of the book also presents clearly drawn and easily readable maps that

indicate where the various languages are to be found. Part II of the anthology can be subdivided into four sections.

Hermann Batibo's paper on "The fate of ethnic languages in Tanzania" and Karsten Legère's article on "Language shift in Tanzania" describe and analyze the situation and fate of minority languages in Tanzania and discuss the causes for, and the phases of, the observed processes of language shift. Both authors emphasize that Swahili as the national language constitutes a major threat to about 120 languages that are spoken in the country.

The papers by Gerrit J. Dimmendaal ("Reduction in Kore reconsidered"), Mauro Tosco ("Dahalo: An endangered language"), Wilhelm J. G. Möhlig ("Language death and the origin of strata: two case studies of Swahili dialects" — i.e. Chwaka and Chirazi [Chifundi]; G.S.), and Derek Nurse and Martin Walsh ("Chifundi and Vumba: partial shift, no death") center primarily on the structural consequences of language shift and language death.

The next three specific case studies, Matthias Brenzinger's paper on "Lexical retention in language shift: Yaaku/Mukogodo-Maasai and Elmolo/Elmolo-Samburu," Bernd Heine's article on "Dialect death: the case of Terik," and Franz Rottland and Duncan Okoth Okombo's joint contribution about "Language shift among the Suba of Kenya," put their emphasis on the sociolinguistic perspective and point of view in researching language shift and language death.

The second part of this book is completed by Christoph Winter's article, "175 years of language shift in Gweno," which attempts to describe processes of language shift from a historical perspective.

All these case studies provide the interested reader — and I am sure even many experts in East African languages — with an incredible amount of detailed information. Moreover, these case studies strongly support the point Brenzinger finishes his contribution with, namely "that language shift is always case-specific, and that we therefore have to investigate a wider range of cases in East Africa in order to understand the underlying processes and backgrounds of the linguistic outcome of language shift situations" (p. 250). This kind of resume may also be used to justify the, at first sight rather imbalanced, relation of three theoretical papers (plus a brief introduction) to 11 heavily data-oriented and descriptive case studies. At the moment, it seems, we just have to have these case studies and the information they convey before we can start with generalizations that may finally lead to an actual theory of language death.

The last part of the anthology, Gabriele Sommer's "Survey on language death in Africa," provides an overview of African languages relevant to

the topic of language shift and language death. It is explicitly presented as "a very general and ... preliminary survey on those languages ... that are either extinct, or in the process of extinction or threatened by extinction" (p. 301). Nevertheless, this compilation of data on endangered and dying languages in Africa not only is extremely "useful as a first kind of data-base for future research" (p. 301) but also illustrates quite impressively — and shockingly — that "languages are dying out in Africa in an alarming speed" (Brenzinger et al. 1991: 20).

The book ends with a person and a subject index and an index of languages (and variants).

The anthology is — in general — well edited. I could only detect a few typos (e.g. p. 50, line 18: read "CS" for "SC"; p. 83, line 6: read "Vumba" for "Chivumba"; p. 110, line 24: read "severe" for "sever"; p. 198, line 26: read "That is hard..." for "That it hard..."). However, it is somewhat annoying for nonexperts that in the example on p. 111 given by Legère they find both the Bondei and the Swahili expressions in italics — which just makes the examples of code switching difficult to understand. Moreover, in Dimmendaal's article the reader is in search of nine footnotes: they are presented at the end of the paper, but their numbers are not given in the text. Finally, to end this somewhat carping list, it is a bit puzzling to find Rilling (1986) listed after Rottland, Vossen (1986) and Sasse (1981) on p. 155 in Tosco's list of references.

To sum up, this collection of papers on language death in (East) Africa provides the reader with excellent case studies on processes of language shift and thus certainly contributes to the theoretical discussion of the important topic of endangered and dying languages — not only in Africa, but all over the world. It deserves a broad readership — readers who can afford to have this book on their desk or in their bookshelves; however, I am afraid that the price of the book dooms it to await its readers in libraries only. The reviewer can only hope at the moment that not only more and more linguists but also publishers and editors realize the truth of Ken Hale's reminder: "The loss of local languages, and of the cultural systems that they express, has meant irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth, the priceless products of human mental industry" (Hale 1992b:36).

If we do not realize that documenting — especially endangered — languages is a very important task for us, if we continue to somehow disregard good empirical descriptive research in favor of — often too philosophical and effete, but often also extremely fascinating — sandtable exercises in linguistic theories, we all may finally end up in a situation where the famous phrase "Let's take any language, say English..." comes closer and closer to having only the reading that (I

hope) was and is not intended by the producers of this famous utterance. To prevent this, we need many more books like the one under review here, and it is hoped not only that these books will be priced so that they are available for the interested public, but also that they will come up to the standards set by this anthology.

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Robert C. Williamson: *Minority Languages and Bilingualism: Case Studies in Language Maintenance and Shift*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1991.

This comparative study is based on interviews with 857 speakers of seven minority languages in Western Europe and the United States: Scottish Gaelic, Breton, Welsh, Romansh, Friulan, Galician, and Pennsylvania Dutch. Williamson, who is a sociologist rather than a linguist, gives no particular reason for selecting these seven. He notes simply that his choice was arbitrary (p. iii). In fact, none of the seven areas represents a center of economic activity within their respective nation-states. All of the languages are to a great extent marginal to industry and the power elite. However, within them, other differences are apparent, such as the degree of distance and autonomy vis-à-vis the official language. The Celtic languages, which make up nearly half the sample, are the most distinct