

Indigenous Language Overview

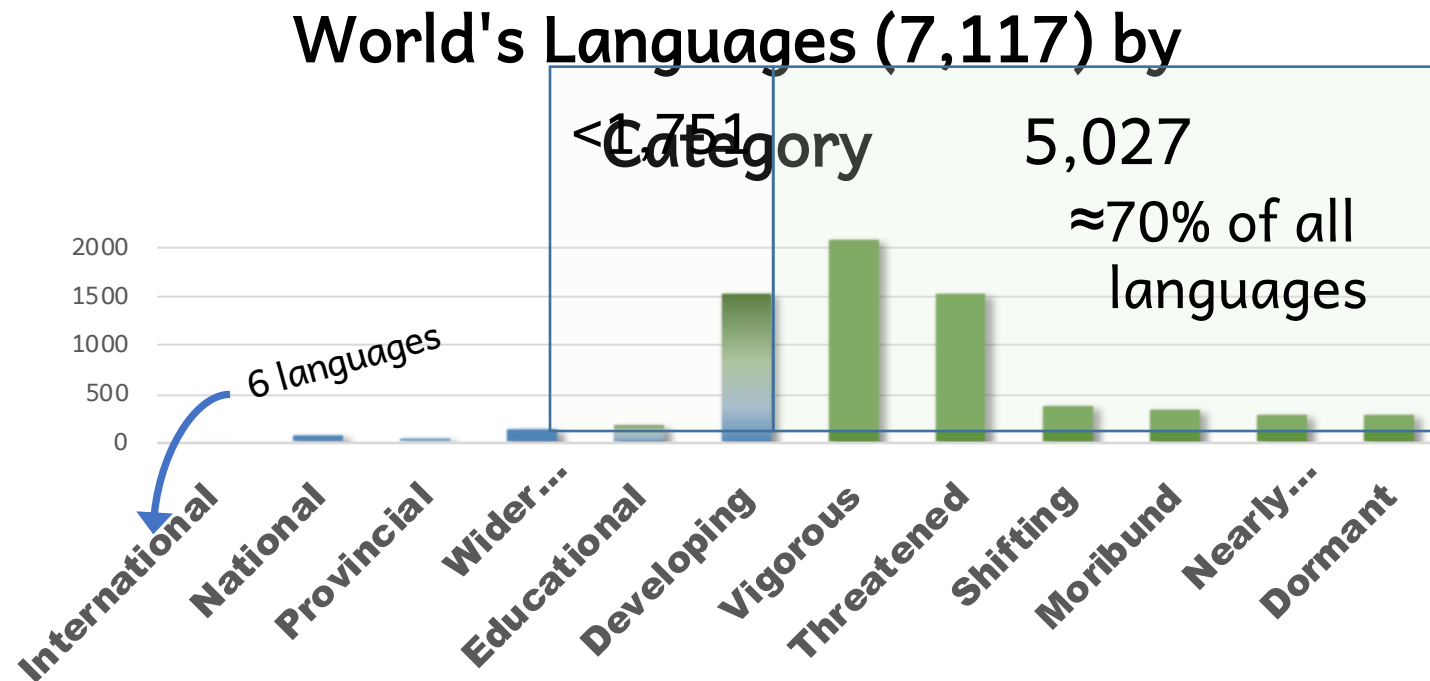
Paul Frank, PhD
Executive Director, SIL LEAD, Inc.
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What are indigenous languages?

- Languages spoken by peoples who are **non-dominant communities** having **historical continuity** with pre-invasion/colonial times and who have their own **ethnic identity**
- Indigenous people **self-identify**
- There is no **definitive list** of indigenous languages



How many indigenous languages are there?



≈400 million people/≈5% of the world's population



Language loss and sustainability

- Loss of strong identity → language shift
- 2,926 languages threatened, ≈40% of all languages
- Vigorous oral L1 + written L2 = Diglossia (stable)
- Written L1 loses out to written L2 (unstable) *unless*:
 - Standardized
 - Institutionalized



Language standardization

- Stable orthography
- Consistently spelled
- Language resources—dictionary, grammar
- Literature



Education in indigenous languages

- A right!—UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Standardization important
- Need L1 teaching and learning materials across the curriculum
- But also other L1 reading materials



Literature in indigenous languages

- Documentation and preservation
- Builds pride in and status of the language
- Strengthen identity
- A must for L1 education
- Needed for standardization
- Needed for institutionalization



ICT and indigenous languages

- All languages, scripts, characters supported (Unicode)
- Increasing # of tools for creating L1 literature
- Tools with indigenous language interface!
- Ease of use fosters broad participation in writing
- They can leapfrog several generations of technology
- Indigenous people can create and are creating their own literature using ICT

