Digital Language Diversity on New Media

The DLDP Survey about European Minority Languages

Irene Russo - Claudia Soria
ILC CNR Pisa

Minority Languages in New Media: Towards language revitalisation in Africa and Europe
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A sad story...

- Every two weeks a language dies

- “next door” minority languages
  - often neglected by local institutions
  - speakers not aware of their bilingualism
  - activists lacking tools to preserve their languages

- Digital media represent a challenge and an opportunity
Digital Language Diversity

Digital language diversity is the extent to which a language is present and used in digital media through digital devices.

“As an endangered language will progress if its speakers can make use of language technology” (Crystal 2000: 141)

Digital Language Death and Digital Extinction: a language disappears from the Web because of lack of use and usability.
Low Digital Language Diversity means...

- Unequal access to information
- Unequal access to services
- Unequal digital dignity
- Unequal access to technological development
- Unequal opportunities for language survival
Minority language and Internet in 2007

Cunliffe (2007):

- With Internet minority language speakers can become producers of media content but it's not clear which technologies are more effective in revitalising minority cultures
- Internet use changes the perception of the language and has an impact on its social status
- Active communities online produce content but also interact
The Digital Language Diversity Project - Background

- Europe's digital language diversity is limited
- Use of MLs in wider contexts, including the digital one, will contribute indirectly to their preservation and revitalization
- Usability of MLs over digital media and devices is blocked:
  - Lack of digital literacy
  - Lack of technological support for using those languages
  - Lack of assertiveness
The Digital Language Diversity Project

- Enables digital language equality
- Addresses EU regional/minority languages
- Aims at removing barriers blocking digital usability of regional and minority languages
- Fosters bottom-up initiatives
- Four European minority languages: Basque, Breton, Karelian, Sardinian
In general terms...

digital readiness → digital usability → digital presence
META-NET’s focus was on the role of the availability of digital content for promotion of digital usage of these languages and development of language-based digital applications.
DLDP Long-term objective

- to advance the sustainability of Europe’s regional and minority languages in the digital world by empowering their speakers with the knowledge and abilities to create and share content on digital devices using their minority languages
DLDP building blocks

- Digital Language Vitality Tool
- A Survey
- Digital language Survival Kits
- A Training Programme
- Roadmap to Digital Language Diversity
Consortium

- Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale (CNR-ILC), Coordinator, Italy
- ELEN, Brittany, France
- Elhuyar Fundazioa, Basque Country, Spain
- Johannes Gutenberg Universitat Mainz, Germany
- Karaljan Kjelen Seura, Finland
DLDP Survey

- A survey detailing the digital fitness (use and usability) of four languages
- The first survey about actual needs of European minority languages speakers regarding digital opportunities
- 48 questions, 1295 respondents
- During Spring 2016 people were contacted through social media and mailing lists
- Caveat: the sample is not representative of the whole population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basque</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karelian</td>
<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sardinian</td>
<td>514</td>
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</tbody>
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Do you ever use your language on the Internet?

Digital use makes minority languages alive

DLDP for the International Mother Language Day 2017

DLDP launched the first survey about the actual needs of minority languages speakers regarding digital opportunities. The complete analysis is coming soon on www.dldp.eu
I use my mother language for electronic communication (reading and writing)

Digital use makes minority languages alive

DLDP launched the first survey about the actual needs of minority languages speakers regarding digital opportunities. The complete analysis is coming soon on www.dldp.eu
Do you ever use your mother language on Facebook and Twitter?

Digital use makes minority languages alive

DLDP launched the first survey about the actual needs of minority languages speakers regarding digital opportunities. The complete analysis is coming soon on www.dldp.eu
New media and social media

- New media as communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity in addition to interactivity between users and information
- Social media use is not the traditional informational media use
- The audience connect, communicate and interact with each other
Users can be classified according to the frequency of use, the variety of use and the content preferences (Brandtzaeg et al. 2011).

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**Different users**

**Entertainment users:** they use Internet radio or TV, listen to music, chat, and play online games. They are willing to provide content and produce materials for minority language but in a playful way (e.g. game-with-a-purpose). They are good at promoting minority languages uses among groups of peers on social media;

**Instrumental users:** interested in goal-oriented activities such as searching for information about goods or net-banking, e-commerce. When speakers of a minority language they can act as beta testers of translated interfaces;

**Advanced users:** they display a very varied and broad Internet behaviour but mainly instrumental activities. They can be representatives of speakers communities promoting local activities, sharing their skills and thus becoming drivers of a digital expansion of their language.
Some basic data from the survey: Age
Some basic data from the survey: Gender

- **Basque**: 52.7% Male, 46.1% Female

- **Breton**: 69.5% Male, 30% Female

- **Karelian**: 51.9% Male, 46.2% Female

- **Sardinian**: 64% Male, 36.4% Female
Some basic data from the survey: belief sets

From social psychology **language attitudes** have three components (O'Rourke 2012):

- cognitive (entailing belief about the world)
- affective (involving feelings toward an object)
- behavioural (encouraging or promoting certain actions)

**Possible answers:** Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree not disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, I prefer not to say
Some basic data from the survey: belief set 1

1. It embodies the history and culture of the region/country — Cultural Value
2. It is the language of my childhood /my parents / my grandparents — Affective Value
3. It gives me a sense of who I am and where I belong — Identity Value
4. It is a tool for communicating with the people of the community I belong to — Social Value
5. It provides access to opportunities (work, study, etc.) — Status Value
Some basic data from the survey: belief set 1

Betek peseurt poent e savit a-du gant an disklériaduriou-mañ?

Mitä ajattelet şeuruavista väitteistä?

Su sardu est importante ca..
Some basic data from the survey: belief set 2

1. I'd like to use my MinLang in any aspect of my life and Internet is one of them

2. Using my MinLang on the Internet shows that it is modern / relevant in the contemporary world

3. I think it would make my MinLang more appealing to young generations

4. I don't think it's worth using my MinLang on the Internet

5. It's easier to use MagLang instead

6. My MinLang is a spoken language mainly, and it cannot be used on the Internet
Correlation: Age & belief set 2

- For Basque, Breton and Sardinian not interesting correlations
- For Karelian there is a weak negative correlation between the first and the second statements and age ($r = -0.32$, $r = -0.33$)
Correlation: beliefs about Internet & use of the MinLang on Internet

There is in general a positive correlation if we consider users that said they strongly agree with statement 1 and 2

1 I'd like to use my MinLang in any aspect of my life and Internet is one of them

2 Using my MinLang on the Internet shows that it is modern / relevant in the contemporary world

and how they use their minority language on the Internet (for reading and for writing VS just for reading) but for Karelian and Sardinian is stronger (r = 0.41, r = 0.35 with statement 1)
Who will digitally revitalise minority languages?
Who will digitally revitalise minority languages?

- A professional involved with the language?
- The one that defines him/herself as an activist?
- The one that strongly agrees with the idea that using minority language on the Internet is vital for its survival?
- The one that uses the language on the Internet as a content consumer and a content producer?
Who is going to digitally revitalise minority languages?

S/he uses MinLang in electronic communication, s/he uses Internet for reading and writing content, s/he wants to use MinLang on the Internet even because it makes the language modern

Identikit:  s/he is not that young (30-39, 40-49)

s/he describes her/himself as bilingual or MagLang mother language

s/he not a professional involved with the language

s/he is involved in revitalisation activities
Conclusions

- New media can help in the revitalisation of European minority languages
- They are a rich source of content for (computational) linguists
- The presence of minority languages on social media changes the way they're perceived
- Young people are essential, the digital divide is not a big problem (but what about the gender divide?) but...
- ...entertainment users will not save the language
- Users that produce content can be the target for digital revitalisation campaigns
- Big dream: with interactive modalities people can collaboratively create a standard if the MinLang is not standardised
We need your help!

- Are you a speaker of a minority language, esp. of Basque, Sardinian, Karelian and Breton?
- Do you have an interest in teaching others how to create online content? Are you a digital enthusiast?
- Are you willing to help the project by informing others about its existence, goals and results?
- Are you a professional in media, ICT, education, language technology, language policy?
- Would you like to keep us informed about what’s going on elsewhere?

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