

Trabajo Fin de Grado

“Disappearing tongues: the endangered language crisis”: The translation process of a journalistic text

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Introduction:

The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the student has learnt and has acquired all the theory, analysis, skills, abilities and capacities that the degree provides. In particular it focuses on all the skills and abilities that are related to the area of linguistics, more specifically to translation studies. Therefore the main aim is to translate and analyze the whole process of translating a text.

The text I will be analyzing is journalistic, and I have chosen this field in particular since it is in constant change and I believe it is very important because it allows exchange of information across language barriers.

As I have mentioned above, this dissertation falls within the linguistic field and more specifically is a hypothetical translation brief where an article from a British newspaper, *The Guardian* is going to be published on *El Diario.es*, a prominent Spanish news outlet. *The Guardian* and *El Diario.es* made a collaboration since January 13, 2016, where they agreed to publish the most relevant contents of *The Guardian* in Spanish on *El Diario.es* through its International section.¹

This article from *The Guardian* would hypothetically be published in *The Guardian* en español in *El Diario.es* for a Spanish audience.²

The specific article named *Disappearing Tongues: The Endangered Language Crisis* looks into the alarming issue of language extinction, a crisis which has significant cultural as well as scientific implications. This source text is an edited extract of a book which I will mention below. The structure of this text consists of an introduction to the crisis where it does an overview of the current state of the endangered languages, providing statistics and examples, the causes of language extinction and its consequences, and it also includes a call to action where the author encourages the readers to support language preservation efforts and policies.

This popularization article is part of the book *Language City: The Fight to Preserve Endangered Mother Languages*, written by Ross Perlin, is a portrait of contemporary New York City, the most linguistically diverse place ever to have existed on the planet. In *Language City*, Perlin recounts the history of immigration that shaped the city, and follows six

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<https://www.apmadrid.es/alianza-eldiario-es-the-guardian-la-colaboracion-entre-proyectos-periodistico-s-con-elementos-en-comun-puede-ser-mas-productiva-que-la-competencia/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/series/the-guardian-in-spanish>

speakers of endangered languages deep into their communities to learn how they are maintaining and reviving their languages against odds.

It is important to imply that the source text, which will be portrayed in the appendix section (Appendix A) is an article that can be considered as an opinion piece although its origin is in fact a summary of the book I mentioned above. In The Guardian online, this article is published in The Long Read, and more specifically in the section of Culture where language articles are published. Therefore the hypothetical translation brief would be published as well in the section named “Cultura” where articles about “Lenguaje” or “Idiomas” in *El Diario.es* are included.

Taking this into account, the length of the articles of that section in *El Diario.es* are usually of 2000 words approximately and as the original article has 3292 words, one of the first tasks to be carried out is to select the specific information that is of importance as well as attractive for the Spanish audience.

This process has been achieved through the help of a translating strategy known as *transediting*, a term which was coined by Stetting (1989) to define journalistic practice which copes with the grey area between editing and translating. It basically consists of a complex journalistic work that requires reorienting the text in addition to fulfilling its informative function, responding to the expectations of the local audience and the ideological lines set by the newspaper.

Therefore, by taking into account that traditional newspapers usually follow a style guide which is a set of standards for the writing, formatting and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, in the case of *El Diario.es*, a digital newspaper does not comply with one. For that reason I am going to follow the conventions that I have observed that this digital newspaper follows.

The translation process follows Nord’s (2005, pg.6) theoretical principles, where he states that “a translation process is usually initiated by a customer or “initiator”, approaching a translator because they need a certain target text for a particular addressee”.

Nord (2005) also adds something very significant related to my translation brief which says that as a general rule, texts are not produced just in order to be translated but to fulfil certain communicative purposes for a specific SL audience (Nord, 2005, pg.6).

Moreover, written texts can exist outside their original situation and can therefore be applied to new situations - a procedure which may change their function(s) altogether. In order to find out whether the text is suitable for the new situation in the target language, the translator has to take into consideration the factors and constituents of the original situation. (Nord, 2005, pg.8)

This is a key step for the translator's job since s/he therefore has to be able to analyze and comprehend the stylistic features as well as of structure of the target texts in order to make the right choices and decisions, so that the target audience (El Diario.es) understands it all correctly and it is attractive enough for readers to read different articles.

Lastly, as Nord (2005) puts it "their command of the source culture must enable them to reconstruct the possible reactions of an ST receiver, whereas their command of the target culture allows them to anticipate the possible reactions of a TT receiver and thereby verify the functional adequacy of the translation they produce (pg.12-13).

1. Textual Analysis

According to Nord (1998), the analysis of extratextual and intratextual factors falls within a field that Christiane Nord calls 'pre-translational analysis' in her Source text- Target text: a functional model of pre-translational analysis, translated and adapted from the German by the author herself in 2012. This concept refers to the need for an adequate analysis of the source text, before starting to translate or in the first step of the translating process. In the foreword to this work, Nord stresses the need for a specific model of analysis for translation that fulfills the following functions: seek a broad and deep understanding of the source text and the interpretation of its message, explain the linguistic and textual structures, relating them to the system and norm of the source language, determine the function of each textual element in the context of the communicative situation and provide the translator with a reliable basis for any decisions that need to be made during the translation process.

Therefore the main function of the translator is to achieve the same intention with the same point of view, without changing anything. Consequently, an extensive analysis has to be made in order to identify the different characteristics as well as the inadequacies in order to carry out the best possible translation. Thus, the factors of the communicative situation in which the source text is used are of decisive importance for text analysis because they determine its communicative function (Nord, 1998:41).

The analysis of this text follows Nord's (1998) stages, including both the extratextual and intratextual factors. The extratextual factors are those which are analysed before reading the text, simply by observing the situation in which the text is used. In this way, the receivers build up a certain expectation as to the intratextual factors of the text (Nord, 1998: 42). They deal with the information that surrounds the text but is not presented explicitly in it, such as the information about the authors and addressee, the time when it is produced and the place where it was written.

On the other hand the intratextual factors include the summary of the text, all the linguistic devices and the register used in order to write the text and convey its meaning. Therefore all these aspects are on which this textual analysis is based.

1.1. Extratextual Factors:

- **Author of the text:** Ross Perlin, who is a linguist, writer and translator. As a linguist, he has served as co-director of the non-profit Endangered Language Alliance, where since 2013 he has overseen research projects focused on language documentation, mapping, policy, and public programming. He is the author of the article in question, which is an extract of a book named: *Language City: The Fight to Preserve Endangered Mother Tongues*.
- **Intention of the author:** To raise awareness of disappearing tongues, educate and inform of the causes and consequences of language extinction, motivate readers to take action by engaging in cultural preservation and inspire them to recognize the importance of linguistic diversity as well as being able to contribute to preserve endangered languages.
- **Sender:** *The Guardian*, a British daily newspaper. In *The Guardian* online, this article is published in The Long Read, and more specifically in the section of Culture where language articles are published.
- **Addressee:** Globally individuals interested in cultural, social and language topics.
- **Time and Place:** The date of the publication in The Guardian was on Thursday 22 February, 2024 06.00 CET.

1.2. Intratextual Factors:

- **Theme / Subject matter:** it deals with the crisis of disappearing languages around the world. The article explores the decline in the number of languages spoken worldwide, emphasizing the cultural implications of this loss. In addition it also delves into the reasons behind this crisis as well as the dominance of major languages. This article also highlights the efforts that linguists and indigenous communities have to do in order to preserve these endangered languages and the importance of maintaining linguistic diversity for cultural identity and knowledge preservation.
- **Content:** The structure of this article consists of an introduction to the crisis of those endangered languages which outlines the significance of the issue. It is then followed several paragraphs that delve into the specific aspects of the crisis, providing statistics as well as examples, and it includes subsections or headings that guide the reader through the causes and impacts, the consequences of language extinction, including arguments for and against this claim and a final message to the citizenship.
- **Genre and register of the text:** The register is hybrid since it presents academic terminology yet is written in a neutral way. Therefore it is accessible for readers from

all backgrounds so they are capable of understanding the article and make their own assumptions.

- **Syntax of the text:** the article is written in a style that aims to inform readers while also engaging their interest, therefore it uses both complex and simple yet accessible language to explain complex issues related to language extinction. The article also incorporates quotes and testimonies from experts, linguists and members of indigenous communities. These quotes are seamlessly integrated into the text to provide an authoritative perspective as well as giving personal insights. In addition, the tone of the article is analytical since it reflects all the implications of language loss, and as I have mentioned above, this tone helps to encourage readers to consider the major importance of this issue.

Therefore, following the ideas that I have mentioned above, the text to be translated has 2,121 words without modifying the original text but having selected fragments from it that are important for its understanding. The parts that I have selected from the original text of The Guardian, therefore the parts that will be translated, will be shown in Appendix A, highlighted in yellow.

2. Difficulties related to the translation of the text

It is important to understand that in order for the text to be published in a Spanish digital newspaper, the features, vocabulary, expressions and register have to be adapted according to the conventions of not only the language but also of the register of the newspaper where it is going to be published.

Although this is a hypothetical translation brief, *ElDiario.es* explains a set of guidelines that the newspaper operates by which is available in this website³.

Therefore in this part of the dissertation I am going to be explaining the problems that I have had to deal with throughout the whole process of translation from the extracts that I have selected from the article of *The Guardian* to be published in *ElDiario.es*.

2.1. Classification of translation problems.

Firstly I would like to begin by giving a definition of what problem is for Hurtado Albir (2001, p. 282): “it is not a collection of recipes to be applied automatically, but fundamental principles by means of which the paths can be traced and that make it possible to transfer all the elements of a text into another language”. On the other hand Nord (1998, p. 286). proposes another definition for these problems in the translation process: “translation problems can be defined as the difficulties that can be encountered in translation (linguistic, extralinguistic, etc.), that are of an objective nature and which the translator may encounter when carrying out a translation task”.

Hurtado Albir (2001, p. 288) therefore proposes a classification that arranges these problems that I have mentioned above into four different categories of translation problems: pragmatic, extra-linguistic, linguistic and instrumental problems. From the four categories, the first three categories are the most important ones for the analysis of the article of *The Guardian*, since more examples of them can be found. Moreover, Hurtado Albir (2001) also states that on the categorization and identification of these issues, “we can start from the verification that there is an immense variety of translation problems and that these may affect micro-units of the original text but also macro-units: how to resolve the macro-structure on the translation of a certain textual genre, etc.” (p.287).

³ https://www.eldiario.es/estatuto/estatuto-eldiario_132_9607115.html

After having established a definition of the problems that Albir proposes, in this part of the dissertation I will give examples of each type of problems that I have encountered when translating the text for the hypothetical translation brief.

Therefore to find a solution to each of these problems it is fundamental to first detect them, classify them and correct them:

2.1.1. Pragmatic problems:

According to Hurtado Albir (2001, p. 288), “they are problems related to the speech acts in the source text, the author’s intention, presuppositions and implicatures, as well as those that arise from the translation assignment, the characteristics of the addressee and the context in which the the translation takes place”.

- a) Intention: The intention that the author may want to transmit should be the same as in the ST (source text). As I have mentioned above in the extratextual factors, the aim of the author is to raise awareness and a clear way to achieve this is by using short and clear sentences.

Examples of this type of sentences are: “*Language is a universal and democratic fact*”, “*But it’s also what the languages carry inside them: the poetry, literature, jokes, proverbs...*”, “*Now the shift is happening inside homes as well.*”

- Solutions: In order to maintain the author’s purpose regarding the style and his way of writing, the best way to keep this and also satisfy Spanish’s readers of the digital newspaper, these sentences will be translated literally: “El idioma es un hecho universal y democrático”, “Pero también es lo que los idiomas llevan dentro de ellos: la poesía, literatura, los chistes, proverbios...”, “Ahora el cambio también está sucediendo dentro de las casas”.
- Result: Therefore this is how these examples look like:

1st example:

- ST: “*Language is a universal and democratic fact*”.
- TT: ““El idioma es un hecho universal y democrático”

2nd example:

- ST: “*But it’s also what the languages carry inside them: the poetry, literature, jokes, proverbs...*”.
- TT: “Pero también es lo que los idiomas llevan dentro de ellos: la poesía, literatura, los chistes, proverbios...”

3rd example:

- ST: “*Now the shift is happening inside homes as well.*”
- TT: “Ahora el cambio también está sucediendo dentro de las casas”.

b) References to original titles and content: Although the source text (*The Guardian*) writes the title of a book in Spanish and makes reference to one of the quotations in English, the process of translation involves a search for the original text.

- Solution: Therefore the process of the translator in this case requires documenting and looking for the original title of the work in Spanish as well as the original quotation, instead of translating the English version of the source text.

As *The Guardian* uses “*Gramática Castellana*” in its text, looking for the original title is the first step, in order to ensure it has not been invented. The solution therefore, as I have mentioned above, is to do a process of documentation in order to ensure this title is like it says in the source text. As I have been able to find here in this website ⁴ the title of Antonio de Nebrija’s work is exactly like the author of the source text mentions it.

In the case of the quotation “*Language has always been the companion of empire*”, like I already indicated above, this cannot be translated, the same procedure applies to Nebrija’s quotation, which consists in looking into what Nebrija literally said in his work and sticking by it. As a result, a research has been done to find out the original version in Spanish ⁵.

- Result:

1st example:

- ST: “Gramática castellana”
- TT: “Gramática Castellana”

2nd example:

- ST: “*Language has always been the companion of empire*”
- TT: “*Siempre la lengua fue compañera del Imperio*”

⁴ <https://www.bne.es/es/Micrositios/Guias/12Octubre/Lenguas/Castellano/>

⁵

<https://www.palaciorealtestamentario.es/2022/07/29/siempre-la-lengua-fue-companera-del-imperio/#:~:text=Elio%20Antonio%20de%20Nebrija.>

- c) Cultural references: In the source text there are references that even if there was an exact equivalent of them in the target text, readers from a Spanish speaking culture, may not know as much as the readers of the English speaking contexts.
- Examples of this are: "*Endangered Language Alliance*", which is a non-profit organization that relies on collaborations between linguists and communities and whose mission is to forge a future for languages.
- Solutions: In order to find the equivalent for this so it maintains the author's intention of mentioning it in the source text, it is key to search if the literal translation of it in Spanish does actually exist. In the Spanish language this organization would be "La Alianza de Lenguas en Peligro de Extinción". Therefore this example shows that this problem is of extreme importance since although the translation in Spanish portrays the same idea the author (Ross Perlin) wants, it can happen that the Spanish readers of the digital newspaper feel lost and may need to search it up. This can lead to pragmatic problems in international communication and speakers from other languages might struggle to participate or be misunderstood, marginalized or undervalued in a global discourse.
 - Result:
- d) Idiomatic expressions: These expressions are worth mentioning since when translating them into another language, they cannot be translated literally since they may lose their figurative meaning. The translator's task is to convey the same meaning in the target language using expressions that are adapted into a more standard and more understandable way so that readers of the target audience know what you mean and make sense of the expression in the text and that therefore, the meaning is kept.
- Examples of this type of expressions are: "*crumbling fast*", "*bristle with syntactic invention*", "*at the heart of*", "*the crux of it*",
- Solutions: As I have just mentioned above, these expressions should be given a translation that the target reader understands and therefore, the role of the translator is also key in finding what suits best.
- Therefore the equivalent meanings of these expressions in Spanish would be: "desmoronándose rápidamente", "otras se erigen con la invención sintáctica", "en el centro de", "el quid de la cuestión".
- Result: Consequently, this is how these examples would appear:

1st example:

- ST: "*crumbling fast*"
- TT: "desmoronándose rápidamente"

2nd example:

- ST: "*bristle with syntactic invention*"
- TT: "otras se erigen con la invención sintáctica"

3rd example:

- ST: "*at the heart of*"
- TT: "en el centro de"

4th example:

- ST: "*the crux of it*"
- TT: "el quid de la cuestión"

2.1.2. Extra-linguistic problems:

"They are problems that refer to the thematic, cultural or encyclopedic issues" (Hurtado Albir, 2001, p. 288).

- a) Historical references: The source text makes reference to Antonio de Nebrija's "*Gramática Castellana*", which "*aimed to raise vernacular Castilian Spanish to the level of Latin and other imperial languages, just in time for European conquests across the globe*".

- Solutions: This example is not really related to a translation problem, however since it is a cultural and historical reference and has enormous implications in the TL, it has to be handled with care and importance since it may have significant historical implications and significance in Spanish-speaking contexts.

Therefore my solution to this linguistic problem consisted in that I had to make sure that the title in Spanish of this original work by Nebrija that appears in the TO, is the original one that the author of the work published at the time. For this reason no cultural adjustments of any type were required for this problem.

- Result: Therefore this is how this example looks like:
- ST: "*aimed to raise vernacular Castilian Spanish to the level of Latin and other imperial languages, just in time for European conquests across the globe*".
 - TT: Gramática Castellana "que tenía como objetivo elevar el español castellano vernáculo al nivel del latín y otras lenguas imperiales, justo a tiempo para las conquistas europeas en todo el mundo".

2.1.3. Linguistic problems:

According to Hurtado Albir (2001, p. 288), “these are problems of a normative nature, which mainly involve discrepancies between the two languages at different levels: lexical, morphosyntactic, stylistic and textual (cohesion, coherence, thematic progression, textual typologies and intertextuality)”.

- a) Specific lexicon: This aspect is of great importance because if the translator does not know the exact meaning of a word, there could be misunderstandings.

This could be the case of “*killer languages*” and “*puff of aspiration*”.

- Solutions: A research has to be made so Spanish readers of the digital newspaper will understand fully what it is meant by the translated version of these lexical expressions. Moreover it is also important to maintain the intended meaning of the word of the source text, which requires careful adaptation.

Therefore “*killer languages*” which refers to a dominant and prestigious language that gradually causes the extinction of other minor languages, has to be translated as “*lenguas asesinas*”, which keeps the same meaning of the words in Spanish. In addition, the original text includes that these “*killer languages*” are “*English, Spanish and Chinese, but so are Nepali and Brazilian Portuguese*”.

- Result:

- ST: “*killer languages*”
- TT: “*lenguas muertas*”

- b) Grammatical conventions: English and Spanish have different syntactic structures such as the placement of adjectives, use of passive voice, sentence length, etc., they differ between the 2 languages and require rephrasing them to maintain coherence as well as readability. To solve these problems it is necessary to look for information that supports the solutions to translate these problems into Spanish:

1. Whereas it is common in the source text (English) to see passive voice forms, in Spanish it is more usual to see active voice structures, particularly in registers and genres as well as specific types of texts.

- Solution: An example of this in the text is “*Perceptions of linguistic superiority or inferiority are not based on anything about the languages themselves, but on the power, class or status of the speakers*” in English, would be “*Las percepciones de superioridad o inferioridad lingüística no se basan en nada sobre los idiomas en sí, sino en el poder, la clase o el estatus de los hablantes*” in Spanish.

Therefore by doing it this way, the structure remains somewhat similar, however the verb “se basan” is reflexive in Spanish.

- Result: Therefore this is how the example would look like:
 - ST: *"Perceptions of linguistic superiority or inferiority are not based on anything about the languages themselves, but on the power, class or status of the speakers".*
 - TT: “Las percepciones de superioridad o inferioridad lingüística no se basan en nada sobre los idiomas en sí, sino en el poder, la clase o el estatus de los hablantes”
 - Result: Therefore this is how the example would look like:
 - ST: *"Perceptions of linguistic superiority or inferiority are not based on anything about the languages themselves, but on the power, class or status of the speakers".*
 - TT: “Las percepciones de superioridad o inferioridad lingüística no se basan en nada sobre los idiomas en sí, sino en el poder, la clase o el estatus de los hablantes”
2. Whereas in English the -ing form phrases are more common, the Spanish language often translates these clauses using an infinitive form or a noun, or as it is the case of this example, of a relative clause in Spanish.
- Solution: *"Language is a universal and democratic fact cutting across all human societies: no human group is without it, and no language is superior to any other"* would result in “El lenguaje es un hecho universal y democrático que atraviesa todas las sociedades humanas: ningún grupo humano está sin él, y ninguna lengua es superior a otra”.
- This solution translated the relative clause “cutting across” into a more explicit form.
- Result:
 - ST: *"Language is a universal and democratic fact cutting across all human societies: no human group is without it, and no language is superior to any other"*
 - TT: “El lenguaje es un hecho universal y democrático que atraviesa todas las sociedades humanas: ningún grupo humano está sin él, y ninguna lengua es superior a otra”.

- a) Orthographic conventions: Punctuation for numbers is different in both languages. According to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, in Spanish a blank space should be used to separate groups of three digits in numbers ⁶.
- Solution: Therefore the number “7,000” that appears in the source text ⁷should be written “7 000” in the translation. This requires careful attention in order to ensure that all types of terms are correctly translated and so the text maintains its orthographic conventions.
- Result:
 - ST: “7,000”
 - TT: “7 000”

2.1.4. Instrumental problems:

“They are the problems that derive from the difficulty of documentation because it requires much research or the use of computer tools” (Hurtado Albir, 2001, p. 288).

- a) Research: Both information to be able to know about some specific information I had previously not known needs further research to be able to make sure how to translate them correctly into the target language and adjust it to the Spanish digital newspaper.
- In the case of some of the problems I had mentioned above, such as the references to original titles and its content, I had to do the appropriate research in order to make the perfect translation and stick to the original information of the target text, as well as being faithful to the target language (Spanish).

With regard to these issues, as Hurtado Albir (2001, p. 288) proposes, “there is a need for an empirical research on the different types and modalities of translation that will help us better identify and classify the diversity of translation problems faced by the translator”. She remarks this is an important task because by identifying these problems and the strategies s/he uses to solve them, the translator will be able to do a better job in the translation as well as being able to make the right decisions. The author implies that “only these studies will help us to better identify the variety of translation problems, establish the differences between difficulties and problems and also consider their progression in the acquisition of the translating competence ” (2001, p. 288-289).

⁶ <https://www.rae.es/ortograf%C3%ADa/los-n%C3%BAmeros-enteros-y-el-separador-de-millares>

⁷ <https://www.fundeu.es/consulta/miles-6498/>

3. Translation procedures and strategies

In this section of the dissertation I will be dealing with the strategies that I have used during the translation process. Moreover I will be portraying the process by giving examples of each strategy as well as citing authors to support the use that I have made of them.

Firstly I would like to point out that although there are many classifications of the different strategies, such as the ones by Hernández Guerrero (2006), Hurtado Albir (2001), as Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) argue, we should distinguish between techniques and strategies. For these authors (2002, p. 507) “techniques describe the result obtained and can be used to classify different types of translation solutions whereas strategies are related to the mechanisms used by translators throughout the whole translation process to find a solution to the problems they find”. Following their argumentation, they refer to them as “translation techniques”.

In relation to these translation techniques, Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002, p. 509) consider that the use that translators make of these strategies to find solutions throughout the process of translation “affects the whole text and depends on the aim of the translation”.

Another crucial thing to comprehend is that the translator's primary responsibility when translating is that it “involves negotiation, conscious selection and it involves re-creation in the target language” (Bielsa, E. & Bassnett, S. 2009, p. 7).

As I mentioned In this dissertation's introduction, I already made use of a strategy in order to be able to select the information that was important for the analysis of the opinion article, which is transediting (Stetting, K.,1989). This strategy has been of great importance in order to meet the requirements of *EIDiario.es*, which involve adjusting to the length of their articles, adapting to the register, etc.

Moreover taking into account that this is an journalistic article that is being translated, Bielsa & Bassnet (2009) state that “research into the strategies of news translation is still relatively under-developed, but already there is interest worldwide in examining the processes of exchange and transfer in the media” (p.10). Translators therefore have come to the conclusion that translating information directly in news translation is the least common, since what is far more interesting is to select and restructure the material in a way so target readers feel that the article is engaging (Bielsa, E. & Bassnett, S. 2009, p. 11). For that

reason translation is a crucial aspect of journalism and must adhere to the same genre and style standards that apply to journalism in general (p.57).

Although different scholars have written about the strategies and have made their own classification, the description of the strategies used in this section is based on the classification established by Zaro & Truman (1998).

In addition, although there are many strategies, only the most frequently applied are mentioned in this dissertation and despite the fact that there are many examples of each strategy, only some of them will be mentioned with the purpose of illustration. I have chosen to insert tables with 3 columns where i represent in the 1st column the example in the source language, in the 2nd column I portray the translation in the target language and in the 3rd column I add some notes that are of importance to understand the process that has been carried out:

1. Literal translation: Zaro and Truman define it as “precise correspondences of structure and significance” (1998):

Source Text	Target Text / Translation	Notes
<i>"Linguistic diversity on Earth is far more profound and fundamental than previously imagined".</i>	"La diversidad lingüística en la Tierra es mucho más profunda y fundamental de lo que se había imaginado anteriormente."	The sentence structure in Spanish mirrors the English sentence structure and there is no added information or explanation.
<i>"Language is a universal and democratic fact cutting across all human societies."</i>	"El lenguaje es un hecho universal y democrático que atraviesa todas las sociedades humanas."	As the previous example, the sentence structure remains consistent in the translation and no additional information is included.

2. Equivalence: it is an extreme case of modulation where it expresses the same situation in different modalities, especially idiomatic (Zaro & Truman, 1998):

Source Text	Target Text / Translation	Notes
<i>"reserve currency of communication".</i>	"moneda de reserva de la comunicación".	The idiom "reserve currency" refers to something that is held in significant quantities by central banks as a part of their foreign exchange reserves. Translating it into "moneda de reserva" in Spanish retains the same metaphorical meaning.
<i>"light the spark".</i>	"encender la chispa"	The idiom in English means to initiate something or trigger an idea or an action, therefore when doing the translation by using the strategy of equivalence, the result ends up conveying the same meaning that it does in the English version.

3. Amplification: Zaro and Truman explain that this strategy is used when more words are used to express the same idea in the target language (1998). These are some examples that represent this strategy which I had to use in my process of translation:

Source Text	Target Text / Translation	Notes
<i>"Every language signed or spoken <u>natively</u>"</i>	"Cada idioma, firmado o hablado <u>de forma nativa</u> "	The reason why in Spanish more words are used to translate one word of the target language is to compensate for a syntactic deficiency. When translating into Spanish, the most frequently added elements are prepositions or conjunctions.

"24/7"	"A todas horas todos los días de la semana"	In this case the target language uses a procedure by which more linguistic elements are used than in the source language to express the same idea.
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4. Cultural adaptation: consists in looking for a term in the target text that designates a similar meaning to that of the original text, in order to achieve pragmatic equivalence (Zaro & Truman, 1998):

Source Text	Target Text / Translation	Notes
<i>"joined-up juggernaut"</i>	"Monstruo despiadadamente ensamblado"	This example represents that in certain moments, the translator has to be able to replace the meaning of the source language since it has communicative difficulties and is hardly used in the culture of the target language.

As a conclusion, it is important to highlight that the use of these strategies are crucial not only to adapt the message of the original text to the target language but also to attract readers of the digital newspaper. Bassnett (2005) affirms that "the task of the translator is to bring home a text that has originated elsewhere, and to render it in terms that will be acceptable to target readers. In this respect, translation is a form of communication" (2005, p. 122). The role of the translator therefore is taken to the next level since what his/her most important task is to "reproduce the source in as close an approximation as possible for readers who have no knowledge of the source language" (Bassnett, 2005, p. 124).

4. Revision:

According to Mossop (2007), the revision part is of great importance for the publication of any kind of translation and he gives a number of reasons why. He states that “first, it is extraordinarily easy to write sentences that are structured in such a way that readers will misunderstand them or have difficulty understanding them. Second, it is easy to forget about the future readers and write something which is not suited to them” (p. 18). To address these issues, editors must make necessary text corrections to ensure that it complies with societal norms about language and textual standards and meets the publisher’s goals (Mossop, 2007, p. 18).

Another crucial point to take into account is that as Parra (2005, p. 17) states, this process of revision does not consist in verifying and correcting a text in two languages, but in “correcting and improving the target text by comparing it with the source text”. Throughout this process of revision, the translator encounters different kinds of revision such as the revision of content, linguistic, functional and the revision of the target text presentation (Parra, 2007, p.208). However, depending on the type of translation that is being reviewed, one or more types of proofreading will be chosen, depending on the general aspects to be checked in the translation, as well as on the instructions of the translation brief (Parra, 2007, p.208).

In terms of the revision parameters, Mossop (2007, p. 134) makes a classification of the types of errors since there is “an exhaustive listing of things that can go wrong when translating”. He divides them into four groups, which are the problems of transfer, which are related to the accuracy and the completeness of the translation, that arise when the translator needs to be able to adapt the same meaning of the words of the source text to the target text. The problems of content make reference to whether the ideas of the text make sense and there are also problems related to language and style, which refer to whether the connections between sentences are clear (rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) and if the terminology used suits the genre. Lastly the problems related to the presentation of the text deal with the layout, typography and organisation.

Nevertheless, Hurtado Albir (2001) proposes that a distinction between errors and inadequacies should be made. Even though the majority of authors use the term error, others employ inadequacy or fault. Spilka (1984, p. 72) defines errors as “systematic and recurrent which are due to the complexities of the target language, whereas faults are due to

conceivable factors, such as fatigue or momentary distraction". This distinction is related to one of the essential phases of the translator's work.

Regarding these problems I have just mentioned above, in my process of translation I have had to deal with all but mostly with the problems of transfer since I had to be able to make sure the Spanish audience would understand the information as well as being faithful to the source text. For example in the case of "*ordinary people*", my first translation had been "gente común", but after doing some revision, the final translation and best suit for it is "gente corriente", since I decided it is more adequate.

Another example would be "*inside homes*", which had been firstly translated as "dentro de las casas", however "dentro de los hogares" is way more appropriate in the target language.

On the other hand, problems of language and style have also been common throughout my process of translation. In these cases I had to ensure the translation that I was doing was being faithful to the grammatical, orthographic and punctuation norms of the target language. Examples of these types of problems have been: "*nation states*" which I translated as "estados nación" at first, however after a process of documentation and research my final version is "Estados nación", as in Spanish, whenever the word "Estado" corresponds to a political entity, its governing bodies or territory, it is written with capital letter.

In the case of punctuation problems, the same process of documentation has been done. As I explained above in the classification of translation problems, orthographic conventions such as translating "7,000" into Spanish also requires this kind of research. Therefore the final translation would be "7 000", without a period.

As I will portray below in the appendix section (Appendix B), a process of revision before doing the final version (Appendix C) of a translation has been crucial to be able to make the necessary changes and modifications to a text in order to satisfy the target digital newspaper's requirements as well as to improve the quality of the translation.

As a final point, editing and revising the first version before doing the final version of a translation of the source text has been one of the most important tasks I have had to deal with throughout this whole process. Nevertheless I have been able to understand that it is crucial so the final version is adequate and errors are nowhere found.

Conclusions:

The aim of this dissertation has been to be able to not only put the translation process into practice, but also to resolve the problems that arise from it as well as using the translation strategies to find solutions to these problems.

Furthermore, what I have been able to grasp from doing this whole process is that doing a translation requires not only adapting to the target language but also being able to have the ability to do the adequate research so everything is clear and logical in the final version of the translation. In addition I have also learnt new expressions from the source language as well as grammatical conventions of the target language that I had previously not known before.

Regarding the difficulties that have come up throughout the process of translating a text from a journalistic field, I had to be able to adapt the target text to the requirements of the target digital newspaper, particularly in relation to length. This required also maintaining both the cohesion and coherence of the source text, while at the same time omitting details that did not provide important information for the Spanish audience.

Moreover, another important difficulty whilst doing the translation has been that the source text had some inconsistencies, since the text from *The Guardian* was already a summary of a book. Therefore, I realised that at times the original text's explanation of the theme lacked cohesion. Nevertheless I was able to carry out the process and grasp the information that the author was implying in order to portray the same meaning in the target language.

This dissertation has been a remarkable experience since it has allowed me to analyse a source text written in English, and it has enriched my knowledge. Through this process I have developed a deeper understanding of both the source and the target languages and has broadened my linguistic competence and cultural awareness.

Lastly, it has also shown me that in order to carry out a translation it is of great importance to be very meticulous and well-organised. Every word, phrase, and sentence structure matters since it impacts the final outcome of the translation.

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Appendices:

APPENDIX A: Source Text.

The parts that I have selected for the translation have been highlighted in yellow.

Disappearing tongues: the endangered language crisis

Linguistic diversity on Earth is far more profound and fundamental than previously imagined. But it's also crumbling fast

By Ross Perlin

At the heart of linguistics is a radical premise: all languages are equal. This underlies everything we do at the Endangered Language Alliance, an eccentric extended family of linguists, language activists, polyglots and ordinary people, whose mission is to document endangered languages and support linguistic diversity, especially in the world's hyperdiverse cities.

Language is a universal and democratic fact cutting across all human societies: no human group is without it, and no language is superior to any other. More than race or religion, language is a window on to the deepest levels of human diversity. The familiar map of the world's 200 or so nation-states is superficial compared with the little-known map of its 7,000 languages. Some languages may specialise in talking about melancholy, seaweed or atomic structure; some grammars may glory in conjugating verbs while others bristle with syntactic invention. Languages represent thousands of natural experiments: ways of seeing, understanding and living that should form part of any meaningful account of what it is to be human.

Users of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Mandarin, English and the like have continually proclaimed their languages holier, more perfect or more adaptive than the unwritten, unstandardised "dialects" they look down on. But from a linguistic point of view, no language as used by a native speaker is in any way inferior, let alone broken. The vast majority have always been oral, with written language a derivative of comparatively recent vintage, confined to tiny elites in a small number of highly centralised societies. Writing is palpably a trained technology of conscious coding, in comparison with the natural and universal human behaviours of speaking and signing.

Perceptions of linguistic superiority or inferiority are not based on anything about the languages themselves, but on the power, class or status of the speakers. Every language signed or spoken natively is a fully equipped system for handling the core communicative demands of daily life, able to coin or borrow words as needed. "Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey," said the linguist and polyglot Roman Jakobson. In other words: it's possible to say anything in any language, but each language's grammar requires speakers to mark out certain parts of reality and not others,

however unconsciously. This is the essence of what makes linguistics fascinating and revealing.

All languages may be equal in the abstract, but much harder to bridge are the social and historical disparities among their speakers. At present, about half of all languages are spoken by communities of 10,000 or fewer, and hundreds have just 10 speakers or fewer. On every continent, the median number of speakers for a language is below 1,000, and in Australia this figure goes as low as 87.

Today, these numbers reflect serious endangerment, and even languages with hundreds of thousands or a few million speakers can be considered vulnerable. In the past, however, small language communities could be quite stable, especially hunter-gatherer groups, which typically comprised fewer than 1,000 people. Likewise, most older sign languages, now critically endangered, evolved in so-called deaf villages, where the incidence of hereditary deafness in the population was significantly higher than elsewhere, though still rarely more than about 2%. Many hearing people in these villages could also sign, but the core group of signers was typically several hundred at most.

In general, sheer speaker or signer numbers have always mattered less than intergenerational transmission. A small language can apparently remain strong for centuries as long as parents, grandparents and other caregivers are using it with children. Take Gurr-Goni, an Aboriginal language from north-central Arnhem Land in Australia, which has had just several dozen speakers as far back as anyone can remember. Far from being an isolated group, Gurr-Goni speakers maintained their language in a context of multilingual equilibrium, where each “father tongue” was integrally connected with certain ancestral lands and natural resources. It’s this kind of equilibrium that has been vanishing fast as colonial and national languages take over.

But why does linguistic diversity matter in the first place? For a linguist, the answer is clear enough: little-documented, primarily oral languages are often the ones with the most to teach us about the nature and possibilities of human communication more generally. Without the Khoisan languages of southern Africa, we wouldn’t know how extensively and expressively clicks could be used. Without Warao, spoken in Guyana, Venezuela and Suriname, we wouldn’t know that object-subject-verb could be the routine way of ordering a sentence. Without the Hmong-Mien languages of south-east Asia, we wouldn’t know that a language could have a dozen tones.

But it’s also what the languages carry inside them: the poetry, literature, jokes, ...proverbs and turns of phrase. The oral histories, the local and environmental knowledge, the wisdom, and the lifeways. Only a fraction of this ever can or will be translated into other languages.

If this still sounds theoretical, consider even more immediate, practical consequences. A growing body of research shows that there is no substitute for mother-tongue education, and that language maintenance is an integral component of physical and mental well-being – perhaps especially so for long-marginalised Indigenous and minority peoples.

For this is the crux of it: languages are not “dying natural deaths”, but being hounded out of existence.

Like biodiversity, linguistic diversity remains strongest today in remote and rugged regions traditionally beyond the reach of empires and nation states: mountain ranges like the Himalayas and the Caucasus; archipelagoes like Indonesia and the Solomons; and what were once zones of refuge like the Amazon, southern Mexico, Papua New Guinea and parts of west and central Africa. But these too are now under tremendous pressure.

“Language has always been the companion of empire,” wrote Antonio de Nebrija in his 1492 *Gramática Castellana*, which aimed to raise vernacular Castilian Spanish to the level of Latin and other imperial languages, just in time for European conquests across the globe. Though languages have always changed and come and gone, the scope for linguistic imperialism has widened exponentially since Nebrija’s day. A comparatively small number of empires and nation states, now bristling with 24/7 communication and education systems, cover every inch of the Earth. Worldwide, centuries of imperialism, capitalism, urbanisation, environmental destruction and nation building are now coming to a head linguistically. With power behind them, a few hundred languages keep growing and getting all the resources, while the other 95% struggle.

Particularly dominant are just a few dozen languages of wider communication, less politely called “killer languages”. English, Spanish and Chinese are on the march, but so are Nepali and Brazilian Portuguese. These languages are spreading through political, economic and cultural conquest, and the consequences are seeping into everything. At the same time, only under extraordinary circumstances are a few new languages emerging, such as Light Warlpiri, which developed out of mixing English and the Aboriginal language Warlpiri in Australia’s Northern Territory.

In anglophone settler societies such as the US and Canada, genocide, expulsion, disease and every form of prejudice and pressure exerted on Native peoples have profoundly altered the linguistic landscape. About half of the 300 distinct languages once spoken north of the Rio Grande have already been silenced, and most of those remaining are no longer actively used, with under 10 native speakers. Only a few of the largest, including ᏪᏯᏰᏍᏔᏰ (Cherokee), Diné Bizaad (Navajo) and Yup’ik can in any way be considered “safe”, though profoundly embattled, for the coming decades. Likewise, most of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages once spoken in Australia are either no longer spoken or else down to small clusters of elderly speakers, with just a few still heroically being transmitted.

Dominant-language speakers opine that everything would be easier and better (and peace on Earth!) if everyone would just speak their particular dominant language. But common languages don’t unify in and of themselves – look at many of the world’s civil wars, or the deep divisions in anglophone American society today. The imaginative challenge of big differences is quickly replaced with the narcissism of small ones: scrutinising other people’s accents, sociolects, word choice, tone of voice.

The spheres of use for smaller languages and nonstandard varieties are continually shrinking: they often emerge only in private, yielding as soon as a speaker steps outside. Now the shift is happening inside homes as well. Families around the world are hitching

their fate to English and other dominant languages – abandoning not just words, but vast traditions of gesture, intonation, facial expression, conversational style and perhaps even the culture and character behind all these. Only in the face of intense political, economic, religious or social pressures do people stop passing on their mother tongues to children, but today these pressures are everywhere. The disruption of this basic natural process has come to feel almost normal.

Of course English in particular, supercharged by business, pop culture and the internet after centuries of colonial expansion, is the real empire of our time – far more fluid and influential than any political entity. Many English speakers go their entire lives without encountering anything significant they can't do or get in their language. Whatever the power dynamics of any given conversation, English is pure linguistic privilege, the reserve currency of communication. The push to learn it is an event of planetary significance, swelling a linguistic community of going on half a billion native English speakers worldwide, plus another 1 or 2 billion who know it as a second language. These numbers are growing every day.

Many people think the world, or at least their corner of it, is growing ever more diverse, but monolinguals are increasingly in charge. The monolingual mindset, bone-deep in almost every anglophone American, blocks any real urgency about other languages. A multilingual childhood, only now widely recognised as an inestimable cognitive advantage, can add a whole dimension to someone's understanding of the world, with a sense of linguistic and cultural perspective. But to do it right, especially for monolingual parents, can require serious effort and resources.

What should a monolingual person do? Every time someone speaks, they embody an inherited chain of choices. It can be profoundly useful to be a native speaker of the dominant dialect of a dominant language. Representing the associated "mainstream" culture with every sound means being able to talk to many and sound good to most. Rarely does a dominant-language monolingual need to speak anyone else's language, and it counts as a charming attempt if they do, a mark of open-mindedness and sophistication or an advanced party trick. Since reading and writing usually hew close to the dominant dialect, book learning is that much easier. A person "without an accent" is by default considered to be smarter or better educated as soon as they open their mouth.

Yet people intensely aware of privilege based on gender, race, class or sexuality seldom consider their linguistic privilege. English or Spanish or Mandarin or Urdu may just seem like the air you breathe. The only cure for monolingualism is to learn other human languages, but it's at least a start to learn *about* them, from those who speak them. Maybe there should be a special kind of therapy for monolinguals, where you have to sit listening to a language you can't understand, without translation but with total patience.

For an academic linguist, this is an occupational hazard. On first meeting, a speaker knows you don't know their language, but there is a useful ambiguity. If not learning languages, what exactly does a linguist do? Sound systems are entire ecosystems for the ear, but even on an initial listen you can try to make out the shapes of syllables, the qualities of vowels, the puff of aspiration, the bent tongue of a retroflex. There may be clues in the intonation patterns: variations in pitch, rhythm, loudness, voice quality or the length of sounds, which convey not only vibes, but essential information, like how rising pitch in English can signal a

yes-no question. Under the rush of unfamiliar sound, flowing at hundreds of syllables a minute, you try to hold back from the scramble for meaning and suss out the structure.

From the glottis to the lips, the whole tract where spoken language happens is just five or six inches long. Across evolutionary eons, a space for eating and breathing gradually took on linguistic uses, not just anywhere but at certain places of articulation: the lips, the teeth, the alveolar ridge, the hard palate and the soft one behind it, the uvula that hangs like a little grape above the throat, the pharynx and the larynx. The tongue – that near-universal symbol of language – darts and bends to make contact wherever it can. For signers, it happens in the hands. (In what follows, I use terms such as speech and oral for the sake of simplicity, but virtually everything here also applies to sign languages.) There are also whistled languages, drum languages and many other ways of emulating speech across space.

To document and describe languages while there is still time ought to be the first task for a linguist. Yet a linguist's moment of discovery is also almost always the moment of grasping a disappearance. For any outsider claiming to “discover” any human society or culture or language – that is, announcing the existence of some smaller group to the ruthlessly joined-up juggernaut sometimes known as “us” – is also arriving at, and bound up in, the moment of its destruction. The same forces that bring an outside linguist in are bringing everything else as well.

The organised movement to preserve the world's languages is recent. In 1992, the linguist Michael Krauss warned that linguistics would “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”. This helped light the spark. Inspired by the new push for biodiversity and the growing movement for Indigenous rights, a cohort of linguists and language activists vowed to use new technologies to record and preserve as much as possible of the world's vanishing linguistic heritage. Ideally, speakers record and document their own languages, and this is now increasingly common.

Language documentation may sound like an obvious priority for linguistics, but it flies in the face of what most linguists have been focusing on for the past 70 years: *language*, not *languages*. Following Noam Chomsky, most have been chasing theoretical and computational questions, seeing themselves as Martians trying to document an essentially uniform language called Earthling. Their evidence has come mostly from the largest languages, which happen to be the dominant ones they're familiar with. Few meaningful universals have emerged from all the armchair theorising and laboratory testing. Theory has its place, of course, but it's essential that languages be documented on their own terms. The real view from Mars, it turns out, is that linguistic diversity on Earth is far more profound and fundamental than previously imagined.

At the same time, there is an essential toolkit that every language should have: a substantial dictionary, a detailed grammatical description, and a representative corpus of recorded stories, oral histories and other texts showing the language in action, and at least partially transcribed, translated, analysed and archived. To the extent that speakers are willing, these materials should be maximally accessible and archived for posterity. Speakers of larger languages take for granted effectively limitless resources in and about their languages. Forget Siri, speech recognition, automatic translation, spellcheck and

other nifty tools: imagine not having a dictionary, any established way of writing or any authority on the language at all, aside from an elder you have to find and ask in person.

It's one thing to help build arks, or at least archives, but linguists don't and can't "save" languages. By definition, every language is limitless as long as speakers are still speaking it or signers are signing it. No language ends on the last page of a dictionary. From a finite number of sounds, words, rules and techniques, speakers form an infinite number of utterances. There is no single way that a community "really speaks", nor any one authoritative type of data to preserve for all time. Language is too fluid.

Unfortunately, many linguists also dwell on damaging, defeatist abstractions about language "death" and "extinction" while Indigenous scholars state clearly that oppression is the threat, and that reclaiming Indigenous languages is about liberation and recovery from historical trauma. Linguistics, like anthropology, has skeletons in its disciplinary closet. **Fighting for endangered languages can only mean fighting on the side of their speakers and signers, and ultimately it's always up to communities whether and how to keep using their languages. Some have been struggling to do so for centuries; others are less concerned. Of course, there are not only pressures, but also always enticements to learn a dominant language, which may grant access, however limited, to the dominant culture's resources.**

For some members, the breakdown of a traditional community may feel like emancipation; for others, a disaster. Whether it's a matter of survival or a question of common sense, the logic of abandoning a smaller mother tongue for work, education, migration, marriage or any number of other reasons can seem unassailable. Once-valued or ingrained connections to ancestors, traditions, territories and knowledge systems can easily seem irrelevant, obscure or simply impossible to access under contemporary conditions.

It's a powerful-sounding truism, but not quite true, that language and culture are inextricably linked, since group identities in some cases persist after the loss of a language. Nor should anyone feel forced to stay within any particular culture. What matters is that individuals and communities have meaningful options for how they relate to their linguistic pasts and construct their linguistic futures. Given the normal and natural human capacity for multilingualism, maintaining a less widely spoken language need not preclude learning a more widely spoken one.

There are now hundreds of language revitalisation movements around the world, most launched in just the past few decades, creating a wealth of experience for others to draw on. It can feel like nearly impossible work, where even a single new speaker of a highly endangered language counts as a serious triumph, requiring years of dedication. At the same time, scattered speakers are now finding one another in virtual spaces, where language learning options are multiplying and reality-augmenting and artificial intelligence possibilities are on the horizon.

If one critical ingredient has been missing from language revitalisation movements, it is real financial, political, and technical support from majority populations. Speakers of endangered languages almost never encounter outside interest in or knowledge about their languages, while persecution, mockery, and stigma are still common. To the extent that language policy or discussion is on the agenda at all, it relates to specific points of conflict in a few dominant languages, not the collapse of linguistic diversity itself.

For the revivers of endangered languages, a sense of radical futility may be waiting round the bend of every utterance. Where will I speak this? Who will understand me? Who can even tell me if I'm speaking correctly? Will I ever start thinking in the language? When almost no one else is doing it, matching a string of sounds to a meaning can seem downright arbitrary. And yet it is only after ingesting masses of often arbitrary-seeming words that people can process or produce them at speed, and only then that they can start feeling the indescribable sense of what it is to live in a particular language – just as an actor needs to get her lines down cold before even starting to get into character. To try to communicate with what is no longer a tool of communication – to resurrect a whole worldview that is almost over the horizon – is a wonderful madness.

APPENDIX B: ST and 1st version of the translation

Disappearing tongues: the endangered language crisis Linguistic diversity on Earth is far more profound and fundamental than previously imagined. But it's also crumbling fast By Ross Perlin At the heart of linguistics is a radical premise: all languages are equal. This underlies everything we do at the Endangered Language Alliance, an eccentric extended family of linguists, language activists, polyglots and ordinary people, whose mission is to document endangered languages and support linguistic diversity, especially in the world's hyperdiverse cities. Language is a universal and democratic fact cutting across all human societies: no human group is without it, and no language is superior to any other. More than race or religion, language is a window on to the deepest levels of human diversity. The familiar map of the world's 200 or so nation-states is superficial compared with the little-known map of its 7,000 languages.	Lenguas en desaparición: la crisis de las lenguas en peligro de extinción. La diversidad lingüística en la Tierra es mucho más profunda y esencial de lo que se imaginaba anteriormente. De todas formas, también se está desmoronando rápidamente. Por Ross Perlin En el centro de la lingüística hay una premisa radical: todos los idiomas son iguales. Esto subyace a todo lo que hacemos en La Alianza de Lenguas en Peligro de Extinción, una peculiar y amplia familia de lingüistas, activistas lingüísticos, políglotas y gente común, cuya misión es documentar estas lenguas en peligro de extinción y apoyar la diversidad lingüística, particularmente en las ciudades más heterogéneas del mundo. El lenguaje es un hecho universal y democrático que atraviesa todas las sociedades humanas: ningún grupo humano está sin él, y ninguna lengua es superior a otra". El lenguaje, más que la raza o la religión, es una ventana a los niveles más profundos de la diversidad humana. El mapa familiar de los aproximadamente 200 estados nación del mundo es superficial en comparación con el mapa poco conocido de sus 7 000 idiomas.
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Some languages may specialise in talking about melancholy, seaweed or atomic structure; some grammars may glory in conjugating verbs while others bristle with syntactic invention.

Languages represent thousands of natural experiments: ways of seeing, understanding and living that should form part of any meaningful account of what it is to be human. [...]

Perceptions of linguistic superiority or inferiority are not based on anything about the languages themselves, but on the power, class or status of the speakers. **Every language signed** or spoken natively is a fully equipped system for handling the core communicative demands of daily life, able to coin or borrow words as needed.

“Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey,” said the linguist and polyglot Roman Jakobson. In other words: it’s possible to say anything in any language, but each language’s grammar requires speakers to **mark out** certain parts of reality and not others, **however unconsciously**. This is the essence of what makes linguistics fascinating and revealing.

All languages may be equal in the abstract, but much harder to bridge are the social and historical disparities among their speakers.

Algunas lenguas puede que se especialicen en hablar de melancolía, algas marinas o **de** estructuras atómicas; algunas gramáticas pueden llegar a regodearse en la conjugación de verbos, mientras que otras se **erigen con** la invención sintáctica.

Los idiomas representan miles de experimentos naturales: formas de ver, comprender y vivir que deben formar parte de cualquier relato significativo de lo que supone ser humano. [...]

Las percepciones de superioridad o inferioridad lingüística no se basan en nada sobre los idiomas en sí, sino en el poder, la **clase** o el estatus de los hablantes. Cada idioma, **firmado** o hablado de forma nativa es un sistema totalmente equipado para el manejo de las demandas comunicativas de la vida diaria, capaz de acuñar o pedir prestadas palabras **como** sea necesario.

“Los idiomas difieren esencialmente en lo que deben transmitir y no en lo que pueden transmitir”, dijo el lingüista y políglota Roman Jakobson. En otras palabras: es posible decir cualquier cosa en cualquier idioma, pero la gramática de cada idioma requiere que los hablantes **marquen** ciertas partes de la realidad y no otras **XXX**. Esta es la esencia que hace que la lingüística sea fascinante y reveladora.

En teoría, todos los idiomas pueden llegar a ser iguales, pero las disparidades sociales e históricas entre sus hablantes son mucho más difíciles de superar.

At present, about half of all languages are spoken by communities of 10,000 or fewer, and hundreds have just 10 speakers or fewer.

On every continent, the median number of speakers for a language is below 1,000. [...] Today, these numbers reflect serious endangerment, and even languages with hundreds of thousands or a few million speakers can be considered vulnerable.

In the past, however, small language communities could be quite stable, [...]

But why does linguistic diversity matter in the first place? For a linguist, the answer is clear enough: little-documented, primarily oral languages are often the ones with the most to teach us about the nature and possibilities of human communication more generally. [...]

But it's also what the languages carry inside them: the poetry, literature, jokes, proverbs and turns of phrase.

The oral histories, the local and environmental knowledge, the wisdom, and the lifeways. Only a fraction of this ever can or will be translated into other languages.

If this still sounds theoretical, consider even more immediate, practical consequences. A

Hoy en día, alrededor de la mitad de todos los idiomas son hablados por comunidades de 10 000 personas o menos, y cientos de otras tienen solo 10 hablantes o menos.

El número medio de hablantes de un idioma en cada conteniente es inferior a 1 000. [...]

En la actualidad, estas cifras reflejan un grave peligro, e incluso los idiomas con miles o unos pocos millones de hablantes pueden ser considerados vulnerables. Sin embargo, en el pasado, las comunidades lingüísticas pequeñas podían ser bastante estables, [...]

Pero ¿por qué es importante la diversidad lingüística? Para un lingüista la respuesta es obvia: los idiomas poco documentados, principalmente orales, son a menudo aquellos los que, en general, nos enseñan más sobre la naturaleza y las posibilidades de comunicación humana. [...]

Pero también es lo que los idiomas llevan dentro de ellos: la poesía, la literatura, chistes, proverbios y formas de expresarse.

Las historias orales, el conocimiento local y ambiental, la sabiduría y estilos de vida. Solo una parte de esto puede llegar a ser o ser traducida a otro idioma.

Si esto todavía te suena teórico, ten en cuenta las consecuencias aún más próximas y prácticas. Cada vez hay más estudios que demuestran que la enseñanza

growing body of research shows that there is no substitute for mother-tongue education, and that language maintenance is an integral component of physical and mental well-being – perhaps especially so for long-marginalised Indigenous and minority peoples. For this is the crux of it: languages are not “dying natural deaths” but being hounded out of existence. Like biodiversity, linguistic diversity remains strongest today in remote and rugged regions traditionally beyond the reach of empires and nation states. [...] “Language has always been the companion of empire,” wrote Antonio de Nebrija in his 1492 <u>Gramática Castellana</u>, which aimed to raise vernacular Castilian Spanish to the level of Latin and other imperial languages, just in time for European conquests across the globe. Though languages have always changed and come and gone, the scope for linguistic imperialism has widened exponentially since Nebrija’s day. A comparatively small number of empires and nation states, now bristling with 24/7 communication and education systems, cover every inch of the Earth.	de la lengua materna es insustituible, y que el mantenimiento del idioma es un componente esencial para el bienestar tanto físico como mental, especialmente para los pueblos indígenas y las minorías marginadas. Este es el quid de la cuestión: los idiomas no están “muriendo por causas naturales”, sino que están siendo expulsadas a la fuerza. Al igual que la biodiversidad, la diversidad lingüística hoy en día sigue siendo hoy más fuerte en regiones remotas e inaccesibles, tradicionalmente fuera del alcance de los imperios y los estados nación [...] “El idioma siempre ha sido el compañero del imperio”, escribió Antonio de Nebrija en su libro Gramática Castellana de 1492, cuyo objetivo era elevar el castellano vernáculo al nivel del latín y otras lenguas imperiales, justo a tiempo para las conquistas europeas en todo el mundo. Aunque las lenguas siempre han cambiado, han ido y venido, el alcance del imperialismo lingüístico se ha ampliado potencialmente desde los tiempos de Nebrija. Un número relativamente pequeño de imperios y estados nación, los cuales están repletos de sistemas de comunicación y educación todos los días de la semana, abarcan cada centímetro de la Tierra.
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Worldwide, centuries of imperialism, capitalism, urbanisation, environmental destruction and **nation building** are now coming to a head linguistically.

With power behind them, a few hundred languages keep growing and getting all the resources, while the other 95% struggle. Particularly dominant are just a few dozen languages of wider communication, less politely called "killer languages". English, Spanish and Chinese are on the march, but so are Nepali and Brazilian Portuguese.

These languages are spreading through political, economic and cultural conquest, and the consequences are **seeping into** everything. [...]



A road sign with the English names crossed out and replaced with Aboriginal names near Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia. Photograph: Tessa Pietersma/Alamy

In anglophone settler societies such as the US and Canada, genocide, expulsion, disease and every form of prejudice and pressure exerted on Native peoples have profoundly altered the linguistic landscape.

En todo el mundo, siglos de imperialismo, capitalismo, urbanización, destrucción del medio ambiente y construcción **nacional** están llegando a su punto álgido desde el punto de vista lingüístico.

Con el poder detrás de ellos, unos pocos cientos de idiomas siguen creciendo y acaparando todos los recursos, mientras que el otro 95 % **lucha**.

Solo unas pocas docenas de idiomas son particularmente dominantes en comunicación más amplia, menos cortésmente llamadas "lenguas asesinas".

El inglés, español y el chino están en marcha, pero también lo están el nepalí y el portugués brasileño.

Estos idiomas se están extendiendo a través de la conquista política, económica y cultural, y las consecuencias se filtran **a** todo. [...]



Una señal de tráfico con los nombres ingleses tachados y sustituidos por nombres aborígenes cerca de Alice Springs en Territorio del Norte, Australia. Fotografía: Tessa Pietersma/Alamy

En las sociedades de colonos anglófonas como Estados Unidos y Canadá, el genocidio, el exilio, las enfermedades y cualquier tipo de prejuicio o presión ejercidas sobre los pueblos nativos han alterado profundamente el panorama lingüístico.

About half of the 300 distinct languages once spoken north of the Rio Grande have already been silenced, and most of those remaining are no longer actively used, with under 10 native speakers. [...]

Dominant-language speakers opine that everything would be easier and better (and peace on Earth!) if everyone would just speak their particular dominant language. But common languages don't unify in and of themselves [---]

The imaginative challenge of big differences is quickly replaced with the narcissism of small ones: **scrutinising other people's accents**, sociolects, word choice, tone of voice.

The spheres of use for smaller languages and nonstandard varieties are continually shrinking: they often emerge only in private, yielding as soon as a speaker steps outside.

Now the shift is happening inside homes as well. Families around the world are hitching their fate to English and other dominant languages – abandoning not just words, but vast traditions of gesture, intonation, facial expression, conversational style and perhaps even the culture and character behind all these.

Only in the face of intense political, economic, religious or social pressures do people stop passing on their **mother**

Alrededor de la mitad de los 300 idiomas diferentes que se hablaban al norte de Rio Grande ya han sido **eliminados**, y la mayoría de los que quedan, los cuales **cuentas** con menos de 10 hablantes nativos, ya no se utilizan de forma activa. [...]

Los hablantes de lenguas **predominantes** opinan que todo sería más fácil y mejor (¡y habría paz en la Tierra!) si todo el mundo hablase su idioma dominante. Pero las lenguas comunes no se unifican por sí mismas. [...]

El desafío imaginativo de las grandes diferencias se sustituirá rápidamente por el narcisismo de las pequeñas, **así como analizar los acentos, sociolectos, elección de palabras y el tono de voz de otras personas.**

Los ámbitos de uso de las lenguas más pequeñas y las variedades no convencionales se están reduciendo continuamente: a menudo surgen solo en privado, cediendo el paso tan pronto **cuando el hablante sale.**

Ahora el cambio también está sucediendo dentro de **las casas**. Familias de todo el mundo están apostando por el inglés y otros idiomas dominantes – abandonando no solo el **vocablo**, sino también una amplia tradición de gestos, entonación, expresiones faciales, **estilos de conversación** y tal vez incluso la cultura y el **carácter** que hay detrás de todo esto.

Solo ante **las** intensas presiones políticas, económicas, religiosas y sociales, la gente deja de **pasar** el **idioma natal** a sus hijos,

tongues to children, but today these pressures are everywhere. The disruption of this basic natural process has come to feel almost normal.

Of course, English in particular, supercharged by business, pop culture and the internet after centuries of colonial expansion, is the real empire of our time – far more fluid and influential than any political entity.

Many English speakers go their entire lives without encountering anything significant they can't do or get in their language.

Whatever the power dynamics of any given conversation, English is pure linguistic privilege, the reserve currency of communication.

The push to learn it is an event of planetary significance, swelling a linguistic community of going on half a billion native English speakers worldwide, plus another 1 or 2 billion who know it as a second language. These numbers are growing every day.

Many people think the world, or at least their corner of it, is growing ever more diverse, but monolinguals are increasingly in charge. The monolingual mindset, bone-deep in almost every anglophone

pero hoy en día estas tensiones están en todas partes. La interrupción de este proceso natural básico se ha convertido en algo casi normal.

Por supuesto, tras siglos de expansión colonial, el inglés en particular, sobrealimentado por los negocios, la cultura popular e internet, se ha convertido en el verdadero imperio de nuestro tiempo –mucho más efectivo e influyente que cualquier entidad política.

Muchos angloparlantes pasan toda su vida sin toparse con nada importante que no puedan hacer o conseguir en su idioma.

Sea cual sea la dinámica de poder en una conversación, el inglés es un privilegio lingüístico puro, la moneda de reserva de la comunicación.

El impulso para aprenderlo es un acontecimiento de importancia planetaria, que engrosa una comunidad lingüística de casi 500 millones de angloparlantes nativos en todo el mundo, además de otros 1 o 2 mil millones que lo practican como segundo idioma.

Estas cifras crecen diariamente.

Mucha gente piensa que el mundo, o al menos su rincón, se está volviendo cada vez más diverso, pero los monolingües están cada vez más al cargo. La mentalidad monolingüe, la cual profundiza en casi todos los estadounidenses

American, blocks any real urgency about other languages. A multilingual childhood, only now widely recognised as an inestimable cognitive advantage, can add a whole dimension to someone's understanding of the world, with a sense of linguistic and cultural perspective. But to do it right, especially for monolingual parents, can require serious effort and resources. What should a monolingual person do? Every time someone speaks, they embody an inherited chain of choices. It can be profoundly useful to be a native speaker of the dominant dialect of a dominant language. Representing the associated "mainstream" culture with every sound means being able to talk to many and sound good to most. [...] Since reading and writing usually hew close to the dominant dialect, book learning is that much easier. A person "without an accent" is by default considered to be smarter or better educated as soon as they open their mouth.	anglófonos, cierra el paso a cualquier urgencia verdadera sobre otras lenguas. Una infancia multilingüe, que solo ahora se reconoce ampliamente como una ventaja cognitiva incalculable, puede sumar toda una dimensión a la comprensión del mundo de una persona, con un sentido de la perspectiva lingüística y cultural. Pero para hacerlo de la manera correcta, sobre todo para los padres monolingües, puede llegar a requerir mucho esfuerzo y recursos. ¿Qué debería hacer una persona monolingüe? Cada vez que alguien habla, son ejemplo de una cadena de opciones heredada. Puede ser profundamente útil ser un hablante nativo del dialecto dominante de una lengua dominante. Representar la cultura "dominante" asociada con cada sonido significa poder hablar con muchos y sonar bien para la mayoría. [...] Dado que la lectura y la escritura suelen ajustarse a los dialectos dominantes, aprender a base de libros es mucho más fácil. Por defecto, una persona "sin acento" es considerada más inteligente o mejor educada en cuanto empieza a hablar.
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Yet people intensely aware of privilege based on gender, race, class or sexuality seldom consider their linguistic privilege.

English or Spanish or Mandarin or Urdu may just seem like the air you breathe. The only cure for monolingualism is to learn other human languages, but it's at least a start to learn *about* them, from those who speak them. Maybe there should be a special kind of therapy for monolinguals, where you have to sit listening to a language you can't understand, without translation but with total patience.



One of the last remaining speakers of the Khoisan language N|uu teaching it to school children in South Africa in 2015. Photograph: Mujahid Safodien/AFP/Getty

For an academic linguist, this is an occupational hazard. On first meeting, a speaker knows you don't know their language, but there is a useful ambiguity.

Sin embargo, las personas que son **intensamente** conscientes de los privilegios basados en **el** género, raza, **clase** o sexualidad, casi nunca tienen en cuenta su privilegio lingüístico.

El inglés, español, mandarín o el urdu pueden parecer **una bocanada de aire fresco**. La única cura para el monolingüismo es aprender otros idiomas, pero un buen comienzo sería al menos aprender **sobre ellas**, de aquellos **quienes lo** hablan. Quizá debería haber un tipo especial de terapia para monolingües, **donde tendrían que sentarse a escuchar un idioma que no entienden**, sin traducción, pero con **completa paciencia**.



Uno de los últimos hablantes de la lengua Khoisan N|uu enseña a alumnos de Sudáfrica en 2015. Fotografía: Mujahid Safodien/AFP/Getty

Para un lingüista académico, esto son gajes del oficio. En la primera reunión, un hablante sabe que no conoces su lengua, pero hay una ambigüedad útil.

If not learning languages, what exactly does a linguist do? Sound systems are entire ecosystems for the ear, but even on an initial listen you can try to make out the shapes of syllables, the qualities of vowels, the puff of aspiration, the bent tongue of a retroflex.

There may be clues in the intonation patterns: variations in pitch, rhythm, loudness, voice quality or the length of sounds, which convey not only vibes, but essential information, like how rising pitch in English can signal a yes-no question.

Under the rush of unfamiliar **sound**, flowing at hundreds of syllables a minute, you try to hold back from the scramble for meaning and suss out the structure. [...]

To document and describe languages while there is still time ought to be the first task for a linguist. Yet a linguist's **moment of discovery** is also almost always the moment of grasping a disappearance.

For any outsider claiming to “discover” any human society or culture or language – that is, announcing the existence of some smaller group to the ruthlessly **joined-up**

¿Qué hace exactamente un lingüista si no aprende idiomas? Los equipos de sonidos son ecosistemas completos para el oído, pero incluso en una escucha inicial, se puede intentar distinguir las formas de las sílabas, las cualidades de las vocales, sople de aspiración, la lengua doblada de un retroflejo.

Puede llegar a haber pistas en los patrones de entonación: variaciones en el tono, ritmo, el volumen, la calidad de la voz o la duración de los sonidos, los cuales no solo transmiten vibraciones, sino que también información esencial, como por ejemplo la forma en que el aumento de un tono alto/ascendente en inglés puede significar ser indicar que es una pregunta de sí o no.

Bajo el tráfago Ante la avalancha de sonidos desconocidos, que fluyen a cientos de sílabas por minuto, intentas contener te en la búsqueda del significado e intentas identificar la estructura. [...]

Mientras aún hay tiempo, documentarse y describir idiomas debería ser la primera tarea de un lingüista. Sin embargo, la oportunidad de descubrir de un lingüista es también casi siempre el momento de entender una desaparición.

Cualquier forastero que asegure “descubrir” una sociedad, cultura o lengua humana – es decir, anunciar que anuncie la existencia de un grupo más pequeño al monstruo despiadadamente ensamblado – a veces también conocido como “nosotros” –, está

juggernaut sometimes known as “us” – is also arriving at, and bound up in, the moment of its destruction. The same forces that bring an outside linguist in are bringing everything else as well.

The organised movement to preserve the world’s languages is recent. In 1992, the linguist Michael Krauss warned that linguistics would “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”.

This helped light the spark. Inspired by the new push for biodiversity and the growing movement for Indigenous rights, a cohort of linguists and language activists vowed to use new technologies to record and preserve as much as possible of the world’s vanishing linguistic heritage.

Ideally, speakers record and document their own languages, and this is now increasingly common.

Language documentation may sound like an obvious priority for linguistics, but it flies in the face of what most linguists have been focusing on for the past 70 years: *language*, not languages. [...]

Their evidence has come mostly from the largest languages, which happen to be the dominant ones they’re familiar with.

llegando y esta siendo arrastrado al momento de su destrucción. Las mismas fuerzas que traen a un lingüista externo están trayendo también todo lo demás.

El movimiento organizado para preservar los idiomas del mundo es reciente. En 1992, el lingüista Michael Krauss advertía de que la lingüística “pasaría a la historia como la única ciencia capaz de presidir de forma inconsciente la desaparición del 90 % de la que se dedica”.

Esto ayudó a encender la chispa. Inspirados por el nuevo impulso a la biodiversidad y el creciente movimiento por los derechos de los indígenas, un séquito de lingüistas y activistas del lenguaje se comprometieron a utilizar las nuevas tecnologías para registrar y preservar tanto como fuera posible el patrimonio lingüístico mundial en extinción.

Idealmente, los hablantes registran y documentan sus propios idiomas, y esto es ahora cada vez más común.

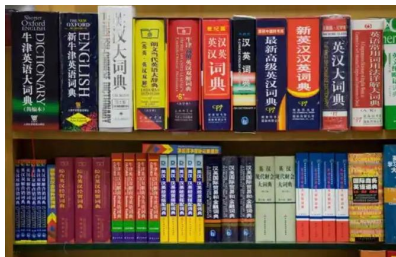
La documentación lingüística puede parecer una prioridad obvia para los lingüistas, pero va en contra de aquello en lo que se han centrado la mayoría de los lingüistas en los últimos 70 años: el lenguaje, no los lenguajes. [...]

Sus pruebas provienen sobre todo de los idiomas más grandes, los cuales resultan ser los dominantes y con los que están familiarizados.

Few meaningful universals have emerged from all the armchair theorising and laboratory testing. Theory has its place, of course, but it's essential that languages be documented on their own terms. [...]

At the same time, there is an **essential** toolkit that every language should have: a substantial dictionary, a detailed grammatical description, and a representative corpus of **recorded stories, oral histories and other texts** showing the language in action, and at least partially transcribed, translated, analysed and archived.

To the extent that speakers are willing, these materials should be **maximally accessible** and archived for posterity. [...]



English dictionaries in a Beijing bookshop.
Photograph: Tim Graham/Alamy

Fighting for endangered languages can only mean fighting on the side of their speakers and **signers**, and ultimately it's always up to communities whether and how to keep using their languages.

Some have been struggling to do so for centuries; others are less concerned. Of course, there are not only pressures, but

Algunos universales significativos han surgido de la teorización de sillón y **de las** pruebas de laboratorio. La teoría tiene su lugar, por supuesto, pero es esencial que las lenguas se documenten en sus propios términos. [...]

Al mismo tiempo, todas las lenguas deberían disponer de un **juego** de herramientas **imprescindible**: un diccionario básico, una descripción gramática **detallada** y un corpus **característico** **representativo** de relatos registrados, historias orales y otros textos que muestren el idioma en marcha, y al menos que estén parcialmente transcritos, traducidos, analizados y archivados.

Estos materiales deberían estar lo más **accesibles** y **archivados** posible para la **posteridad**, en la medida en que los **hablantes** estén dispuestos. [...]



Diccionarios de inglés en una librería de Pekín.
Fotografía: Tim Graham/Alamy

Luchar por las lenguas en peligro de extinción solo puede significar pelear del lado de sus hablantes y **firmantes**, y a fin de cuentas siempre dependerá de **si** las comunidades quieren y saben seguir usando sus lenguas.

Algunas llevan siglos luchando por hacerlo; a otras les preocupa menos. Por supuesto, para aprender un idioma dominante no solo

also always enticements to learn a dominant language, which may grant access, however limited, to the dominant culture's resources. [...]

There are now hundreds of **language** revitalisation movements around the world, most launched in just the past few decades, creating a wealth of experience for others to draw on.

It can feel like nearly impossible work, where even a single new speaker of a highly endangered language counts as a serious triumph, requiring years of dedication. [...]

If one critical ingredient has been missing from language revitalisation movements, it is **real** financial, political, and technical support from majority populations.

Speakers of endangered languages almost never encounter **outside interest in or knowledge about their languages**, while persecution, mockery, and stigma are still common. [...]

For the revivers of endangered languages, a sense of radical futility may be waiting round the bend of every utterance. Where will I speak this? Who will understand me? Who can even tell me if I'm speaking correctly? Will I ever start thinking in the language?

When almost no one else is doing it, matching a string of sounds to a meaning can seem downright arbitrary. [...]

hay presiones, sino **que** también incentivos, lo que puede **conceder** el acceso a los recursos de la cultura dominante, aunque sea limitado. [...]

En la actualidad hay cientos de movimientos de modernización **del lenguaje** por todo el mundo, la mayoría de los cuales han sido puestos en marcha en las últimas décadas, creando **una gran cantidad de experiencia** **de la** que otros **se** pueden **aprovechar** **beneficiar**.

Puede parecer un trabajo casi imposible, en el que incluso un solo nuevo hablante de una lengua en peligro de extinción supone un gran triunfo que requiere años de dedicación. [...]

Si hay un ingrediente fundamental que ha faltado en los movimientos de modernización del idioma, es el apoyo financiero, político y técnico de las poblaciones mayoritarias.

Los hablantes de los **idiomas** en peligro de extinción casi nunca encuentran interés externo o las conocen, mientras que la persecución, la burla y el estigma siguen siendo **comunes**.

Para los **defensores** de las lenguas en peligro **de** extinción, una sensación de inutilidad radical puede estar esperando a la vuelta de cada expresión. ¿Dónde voy a **hablar** **decir** esto? ¿Quién me entenderá? ¿Quién **se dará cuenta** de si estoy hablando correctamente? ¿Alguna vez empezaré a pensar en ese idioma? Cuando casi nadie lo hace, asociar una cadena de sonidos a un significado puede llegar a parecer sumamente arbitrario. [...]

To try to communicate with what is no longer a tool of communication – to resurrect a whole worldview that is almost over the horizon – is a wonderfulmadness.

Tratar de comunicarse con lo que ya no es una herramienta de comunicación – para resucitar toda una cosmovisión que **está casi a un futuro inmediato** – es una locura maravillosa.

APPENDIX C – Final version of the translation

In this section of the dissertation I present the final version of the translation, and here I have tried to show that I have adapted it to the conventions of both the type and font size of this digital newspaper.

This simulates as much as possible, how a Spanish reader would find this text if s/he were to read it.

HOY HABLAMOS DE... Atentado Trump Salario mínimo Pareja de Ayuso España Inglaterra Celeb

elDiario.es

Hazte
socio/a



Lenguas en desaparición: la crisis de las lenguas en peligro de extinción

La diversidad lingüística en la Tierra es mucho más profunda y esencial de lo que se imaginaba anteriormente. Aunque también se está desmoronando rápidamente



Ross Perlin

En el centro de la lingüística hay una premisa radical: todos los idiomas son iguales. Esto subyace a todo lo que hacemos en La Alianza de Lenguas en Peligro de Extinción, una peculiar y amplia familia de lingüistas, activistas lingüísticos, políglotas y gente corriente, cuya misión es documentar estas lenguas en peligro de extinción y apoyar la diversidad lingüística, particularmente en las ciudades más heterogéneas del mundo.

El lenguaje es un hecho universal y democrático que atraviesa todas las sociedades humanas: ningún grupo humano carece de él, y ninguna lengua es superior a otra. El lenguaje, más que la raza o la religión, es una ventana a los niveles más profundos de la diversidad humana. El mapa familiar de los aproximadamente 200 Estados nación del mundo es superficial en comparación con el mapa poco conocido de sus 7 000 idiomas. Algunas lenguas pueden especializarse en hablar de melancolía, algas marinas o estructuras atómicas; algunas gramáticas pueden llegar a regodearse en la conjugación de verbos, mientras que otras son muy ricas en la invención sintáctica. Los idiomas representan miles de experimentos naturales: formas de ver, comprender y vivir que deben formar parte de cualquier relato significativo de lo que supone ser humano. [...]

Las percepciones de superioridad o inferioridad lingüística no se basan en nada sobre los idiomas en sí, sino en el poder, la clase social o el estatus de los hablantes. Cada idioma, de signos o hablado de forma nativa es un sistema totalmente equipado para el manejo de las demandas comunicativas de la vida diaria, capaz de acuñar o pedir prestadas palabras cuando sea necesario. "Los idiomas difieren esencialmente en lo que deben transmitir y no en lo que pueden transmitir", dijo el lingüista y políglota Roman Jakobson. En otras palabras: es posible decir cualquier cosa en cualquier idioma, pero la gramática de cada idioma requiere que los hablantes elijan ciertas partes de la realidad y no otras, aunque sea de manera inconsciente. Esta es la esencia que hace que la lingüística sea fascinante y reveladora.

En teoría, todos los idiomas pueden llegar a ser iguales, pero las disparidades sociales e históricas entre sus hablantes son mucho más difíciles de superar. Hoy en día, alrededor de la mitad de todas las lenguas son habladas por comunidades de 10 000 personas o

menos, y cientos de otras tienes solo 10 hablantes o menos. El número medio de hablantes de un idioma en cada continente es inferior a 1 000 [...]

En la actualidad, estas cifras reflejan un grave peligro, e incluso los idiomas con miles o unos pocos millones de hablantes pueden ser considerados vulnerables. Sin embargo, en el pasado, las comunidades lingüísticas pequeñas podían ser bastante estables, [...]

Pero, ¿por qué es importante la diversidad lingüística? Para un lingüista la respuesta es obvia: los idiomas poco documentados, principalmente orales, son a menudo aquellos que, en general, nos enseñan más sobre la naturaleza y las posibilidades de comunicación humana. [...]

Pero también es lo que los idiomas conllevan dentro de ellos: la poesía, literatura, chistes, proverbios y formas de expresarse. Las historias orales, el conocimiento local y ambiental, la sabiduría y estilos de vida. Solo una parte de esto puede llegar a ser traducido a otras lenguas.

Si esto todavía suena teórico, tenga en cuenta las consecuencias aún más próximas y prácticas. Cada vez hay más estudios que demuestran que la enseñanza de la lengua materna es insustituible, y que el mantenimiento del idioma es un componente esencial para el bienestar tanto físico como mental, especialmente para los pueblos indígenas y minorías largo tiempo marginadas.

Este es el quid de la cuestión: las lenguas no están “muriendo por causas naturales”, sino que están siendo expulsadas a la fuerza.

Al igual que la biodiversidad, la diversidad lingüística hoy en día sigue siendo hoy más fuerte en regiones remotas e inaccesibles,

tradicionalmente fuera del alcance de los imperios y los Estados nación: [...]

“Siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio”, escribió Antonio de Nebrija en su libro *Gramática Castellana* de 1492, cuyo objetivo era elevar el castellano vernáculo al nivel del latín y otras lenguas imperiales, justo a tiempo para las conquistas europeas por todo el mundo. Aunque las lenguas siempre han cambiado, nacido y muerto, el alcance del imperialismo lingüístico se ha ampliado exponencialmente desde los tiempos de Nebrija. Un número comparativamente pequeño de imperios y Estados nación, los cuales están repletos de sistemas de comunicación y educación a todas horas todos los días de la semana, abarcan cada centímetro de la Tierra. En todo el mundo, siglos de imperialismo, capitalismo, urbanización, destrucción del medio ambiente y construcción de naciones están llegando a su punto álgido desde el punto de vista lingüístico. Con el poder de ciertos países detrás de ellos, unos pocos cientos de idiomas siguen creciendo y acaparando todos los recursos, mientras que el otro 95 % resiste.

Solo unas pocas docenas de lenguas son particularmente dominantes en comunicación más amplia, menos cortésmente llamadas “lenguas asesinas”. El inglés, español y chino siguen avanzando, pero también lo están el nepalí y el portugués brasileño. Estos idiomas se están extendiendo a través de la conquista política, económica y cultural, y las consecuencias se filtran en todo. [...]



Una señal de tráfico con los nombres ingleses tachados y sustituidos por nombres aborígenes cerca de Alice Springs en Territorio del Norte, Australia. Fotografía: Tessa Pietersma/Alamy

En las sociedades de colonos anglófonas como Estados Unidos y Canadá, el genocidio, el exilio, las enfermedades y cualquier tipo de prejuicio o presión ejercidas sobre los pueblos nativos han alterado profundamente el panorama lingüístico. Alrededor de la mitad de los 300 idiomas diferentes que se hablaban al norte de Rio Grande ya han sido silenciados, y la mayoría de los que quedan, los cuales cuentan con menos de 10 hablantes nativos, ya no se utilizan de forma activa. [...]

Los hablantes de lenguas dominantes opinan que todo sería más fácil y mejor (¡y habría paz en la Tierra!) si todo el mundo hablase su idioma dominante. Pero las lenguas comunes no se unifican por sí mismas [...]

El desafío imaginativo de las grandes diferencias se sustituye rápidamente por el narcisismo de las pequeñas, así como son los acentos, sociolectos, elección de palabras y tono de voz de otras personas.

Los ámbitos de uso de las lenguas más pequeñas y las variedades no convencionales se están reduciendo continuamente: a menudo surgen solo en privado, cediendo el paso tan pronto como el hablante sale al exterior. Ahora el cambio también está sucediendo dentro de los hogares. Familias de todo el mundo están apostando por el inglés y otros idiomas dominantes - abandonando no solo el vocablo, sino que también una amplia tradición de gestos, entonación, expresiones faciales, estilos de conversación y tal vez incluso la cultura y personalidad que hay detrás de todo esto. Solo ante intensas presiones políticas, económicas, religiosas y sociales, la gente deja de transmitir la lengua materna a sus hijos, pero hoy en día estas presiones están en todas partes. La interrupción de este proceso natural básico ha pasado a considerarse como algo casi normal.

Por supuesto, tras siglos de expansión colonial, el inglés en particular, sobrealimentado por los negocios, la cultura pop e internet, se ha convertido en el verdadero imperio de nuestro tiempo - mucho más efectivo e influyente que cualquier entidad política. Muchos angloparlantes pasan toda su vida sin toparse con nada importante que no puedan hacer o conseguir en su idioma. Sea cual sea la dinámica de poder en una conversación, el inglés es un privilegio lingüístico puro, la moneda de reserva de la comunicación. La presión para aprenderlo es un hecho de importancia planetaria, que engrosa una comunidad lingüística de casi 500 millones de angloparlantes nativos en todo el mundo, además de otros 1 o 2 mil millones que lo practican como segundo idioma. Estas cifras crecen diariamente.

Mucha gente piensa que el mundo, o al menos su rincón, se está volviendo cada vez más diverso, pero los monolingües están cada vez más al mando. La mentalidad monolingüe, la cual se arraiga en casi todos los estadounidenses anglófonos, cierra el paso a cualquier urgencia verdadera sobre otras lenguas. Una infancia multilingüe, que solo ahora se reconoce ampliamente como una ventaja cognitiva incalculable, puede sumar toda una dimensión a la comprensión del mundo de una persona, con un sentido de la perspectiva lingüística y cultural. Pero para hacerlo de la manera correcta, sobre todo para los padres monolingües, puede llegar a requerir mucho esfuerzo y recursos.

¿Qué debería hacer una persona monolingüe? Cada vez que alguien habla, plasma una cadena de opciones heredada. Puede ser profundamente útil ser un hablante nativo del dialecto dominante de una lengua dominante. Representar la cultura "dominante" asociada con cada sonido significa poder hablar con muchos y sonar bien para la mayoría. [...]

Dado que la lectura y la escritura suelen ajustarse a los dialectos dominantes, aprender a base de libros es mucho más fácil. Por defecto, una persona "sin acento" es considerada más inteligente o mejor educada en cuanto empieza a hablar.

Sin embargo, las personas que son plenamente conscientes de los privilegios basados en el género, la raza, clase social o sexualidad, casi nunca tienen en cuenta su privilegio lingüístico. El inglés, español, mandarín o el urdu pueden parecer el aire que respiras. La única cura para el monolingüismo es aprender otros idiomas, pero un buen comienzo sería al menos aprender sobre ellos, de aquellos que lo hablan. Quizá debería haber un tipo especial de terapia para monolingües, en la que uno tendría que sentarse a escuchar un idioma que no entiende, sin traducción, pero con paciencia absoluta.



Uno de los últimos hablantes de la lengua Khoisan Njuu enseña a alumnos de Sudáfrica en 2015.
Fotografía: Mujahid Safodien/AFP/Getty

Para un lingüista académico, esto son gajes del oficio. En la primera reunión, un hablante sabe que no conoces su lengua, pero hay una ambigüedad útil. ¿Qué hace exactamente un lingüista si no aprende idiomas? Los sistemas auditivos son ecosistemas completos para el oído, pero incluso en una escucha inicial, se puede intentar distinguir las formas de las sílabas, cualidades de las vocales, aspiración, el movimiento de la lengua en retroflejo. Puede haber pistas en los patrones de entonación: variaciones en el tono, ritmo, el volumen, la calidad de la voz o la duración de los sonidos, los cuales no solo transmiten vibraciones, sino también información esencial, como por ejemplo la forma en que un tono ascendente en

inglés puede indicar que es una pregunta de sí o no. Ante la avalancha de sonidos desconocidos, que fluyen a cientos de sílabas por minuto, intente contenerse en la búsqueda del significado e intente identificar la estructura. [...]

Mientras aún hay tiempo, documentarse y describir lenguas debería ser la primera tarea de un lingüista. Sin embargo, en el momento en el que el lingüista descubre algo es también casi siempre el momento en que se da cuenta de una desaparición. Cualquier forastero que asegure “descubrir” una sociedad, cultura o lengua humana - es decir, que anuncie la existencia de un grupo más pequeño al monstruo despiadadamente ensamblado - a veces también conocido como “nosotros” -, está llegando y está siendo arrastrado al momento de su destrucción. Las mismas fuerzas que traen a un lingüista externo están trayendo también todo lo demás.

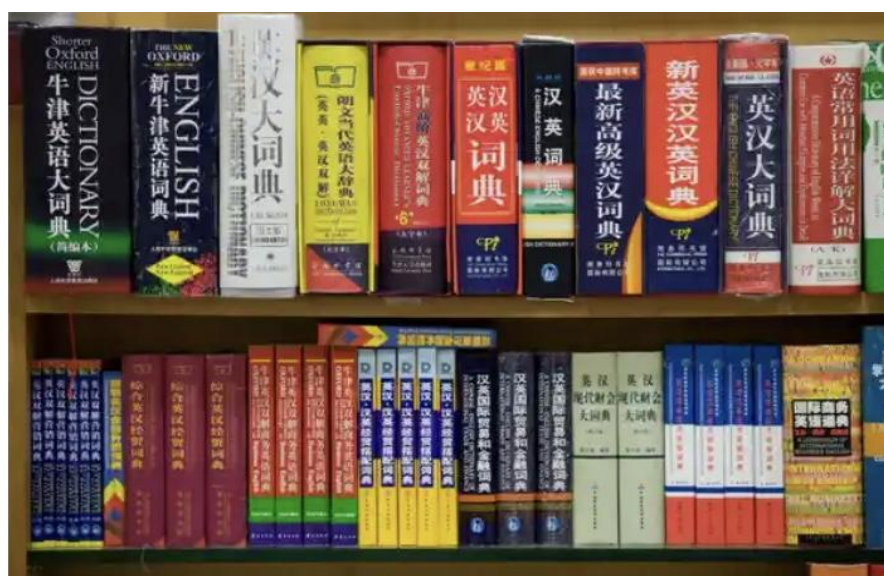
El movimiento organizado para preservar los idiomas del mundo es reciente. En 1992, el lingüista Michael Krauss advertía de que la lingüística “pasaría a la historia como la única ciencia capaz de presidir de forma inconsciente la desaparición del 90 % de la disciplina a la que se dedica”. Esto ayudó a encender la chispa. Inspirados por el nuevo impulso a la biodiversidad y el creciente movimiento por los derechos de los indígenas, un séquito de lingüistas y activistas del lenguaje se comprometieron a utilizar las nuevas tecnologías para registrar y preservar tanto como fuera posible el patrimonio lingüístico mundial en extinción. Idealmente, los hablantes registran y documentan sus propias lenguas, y esto es ahora cada vez más frecuente.

La documentación lingüística puede parecer una prioridad obvia para los lingüistas, pero va en contra de aquello en lo que se han centrado la mayoría de los lingüistas en los últimos 70 años: el *lenguaje*, no los lenguajes. [...]

Su constancia documental proviene sobre todo de los idiomas más grandes, los cuales resultan ser los dominantes y con los que están familiarizados. Algunos universales significativos han surgido de la teorización de sillón y pruebas de laboratorio. La teoría tiene su

lugar, por supuesto, pero es esencial que las lenguas se documenten en sus propios términos. [...]

Al mismo tiempo, todas las lenguas deberían disponer de un juego de herramientas esencial: un diccionario básico, una descripción gramatical detallada y un corpus representativo de relatos, historias orales y otros textos registrados que muestren el idioma en marcha, y al menos que estén parcialmente transcritos, traducidos, analizados y archivados. Estos materiales deberían estar lo más accesibles y archivados posible para la posteridad, en la medida en que los hablantes estén dispuestos. [...]



Diccionarios de inglés en una librería de Pekín. Fotografía: Tim Graham/Alamy

Luchar por las lenguas en peligro de extinción solo puede significar luchar del lado de sus hablantes y de las personas que usan el lenguaje de signos, y a fin de cuentas siempre dependerá de si las comunidades quieren y saben seguir usando sus lenguas. Algunas llevan siglos luchando por hacerlo; a otras les preocupa menos. Por supuesto, para aprender un idioma dominante no solo hay presiones, sino también incentivos, lo que puede garantizar el acceso, aunque sea limitado, a los recursos de la cultura dominante. [...]

En la actualidad hay cientos de movimientos de modernización lingüística por todo el mundo, la mayoría de las cuales han sido puestos en marcha en las últimas décadas, creando una amplia experiencia de la que otros se pueden beneficiar. Puede parecer un trabajo casi imposible, en el que incluso un solo nuevo hablante de una lengua en peligro de extinción supone un gran triunfo que requiere años de dedicación. [...]

Si hay un ingrediente auténtico que falta en los movimientos de modernización del idioma, es el apoyo financiero, político y técnico de las poblaciones mayoritarias. Los hablantes de las lenguas en peligro de extinción casi nunca encuentran interés o razón ajenas, mientras que la persecución, la burla y el estigma siguen siendo frecuentes. [...]

Para los revitalizadores de las lenguas en peligro de extinción, una sensación de inutilidad radical puede estar esperando a la vuelta de cada expresión. ¿Dónde voy a decir esto? ¿Quién me entenderá? ¿Quién puede incluso decirme si estoy hablando correctamente? ¿Alguna vez empezaré a pensar en ese idioma? Cuando casi nadie lo hace, asociar una cadena de sonidos a un significado puede llegar a parecer sumamente arbitrario. [...]

Tratar de comunicarse con lo que ya no es una herramienta de comunicación – para resucitar toda una cosmovisión que está a punto de desaparecer – es una locura maravillosa.