Multilingualism and social media

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- Ostensive definition: Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, Foursquare, Youtube, ...
- Substantive definition: user-generated content, opportunity to discuss, ...
- Functional definition: social media is the new proximity
- Traditional proximity: by shared location, work, social fabric, ...
- What makes the new proximity different is that it is voluntary, not imposed by birth or tradition!
- We choose our FB friends, those we follow on Twitter, etc.
- Impact of traditional proximities remains very strong: we choose our high school buddies in FB, our colleagues on LinkedIn

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- 'Still' languages (all but a few hundred of the worls's languages) are digitally dead
- 'Vital' languages (almost all languages spoken at this meeting) have good uptake in social media
- 'Thriving' languages (the world's top 16-24) have excellent uptake
- The real frontier: bottom of 'vital' category
- Languages getting there: Basque, Welsh, Frisian, ...

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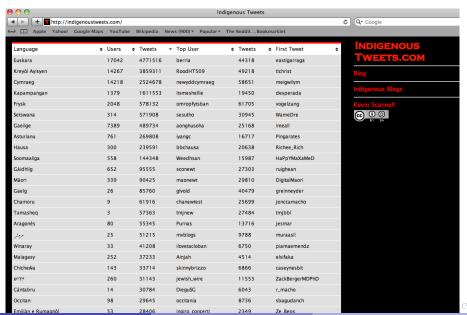
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TWEETS (AND BLOGS) IN VITAL LANGUAGES



John Wyles asked for "practical suggestions for policymakers on how to define their priorities in using social media to maximise the impact of their communications and information policies".

- Work the chain of literacy
- Think outside the social media box
- Make a big push for transparency

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- Word-level tools: spellchecker, stemmer, morphological analysis
- Phrase-level tools: part-of-speech tagging, named entity recognition
- Sentence-level tools: light parsing, machine translation
- Input: speech and character recognition
- Output: generation, synthesis, fonts

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- Must support higher education of native speakers
- Look outside EU: India, much of Africa and Asia struggle with the same problems
- Look outside social media proper: email, hangouts, voice calls (not just Skype), text/sms all thrive when the tools are there

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- National projects need to make their corpora not just searchable but also downloadable by ROAMing (randomize, omit, anonymize, mix). Make sure open access to materials collected is a precondition of EU funding
- A wikipedia is a necessary but insufficient condition for digital ascent, digital communities (not just read-only material) are also needed. Give micro-grants to small communities (literary, theatrical, whatever brings people together) to document in their native language what they are doing.

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Conclusions

- It is not just your social media content that large-scale aggregators have visibility into, the NSA, your ISP, and your software vendors are already analyzing your phonecalls/text (and perhaps your hard drive as well). Make sure their information monopoly is broken
- Change starts with you. If you are a public servant, especially a
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