

**From *The Ecology of Language Evolution* to  
*Language Evolution: Contact,  
competition and change***

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**Language Endangerment:  
From *The Ecology of  
Language Evolution* to date**

**... still an embarrassing subject  
matter for linguistics**

## Why an embarrassment?

- ❑ We still appear to be more concerned with languages than with humans
- ❑ We are still too focused on languages as representational systems than as tools or technology for communication
  - ✓ **Too static a conception of “culture”!**
- ❑ We talk more about language rights than about human rights
- ❑ There is still too much discourse about linguistic diversity for the good of linguistics

## ... socially,

- ❑ Too much focus on language loss among Native Americans and other “indigenous” people as the abnormal case
- ❑ ... not enough interest in understanding why many people of European descent in the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand do not speak their heritage languages any more... and why they are projected as more normal citizens of the Americas, Australia and NZ than the “indigenous” people
- ❑ And we should revisit the suggestion that Europe had/has no “indigenous” languages

## ... and intellectually:

- ❑ Too little has been said about the place of language endangerment in language evolution and how it proceeds
- ❑ The history on the subject matter is still shallow; too much focus on the European colonial period alone and on “globalization” too narrowly understood
- ❑ There is still confusion between language documentation and language maintenance or revitalization

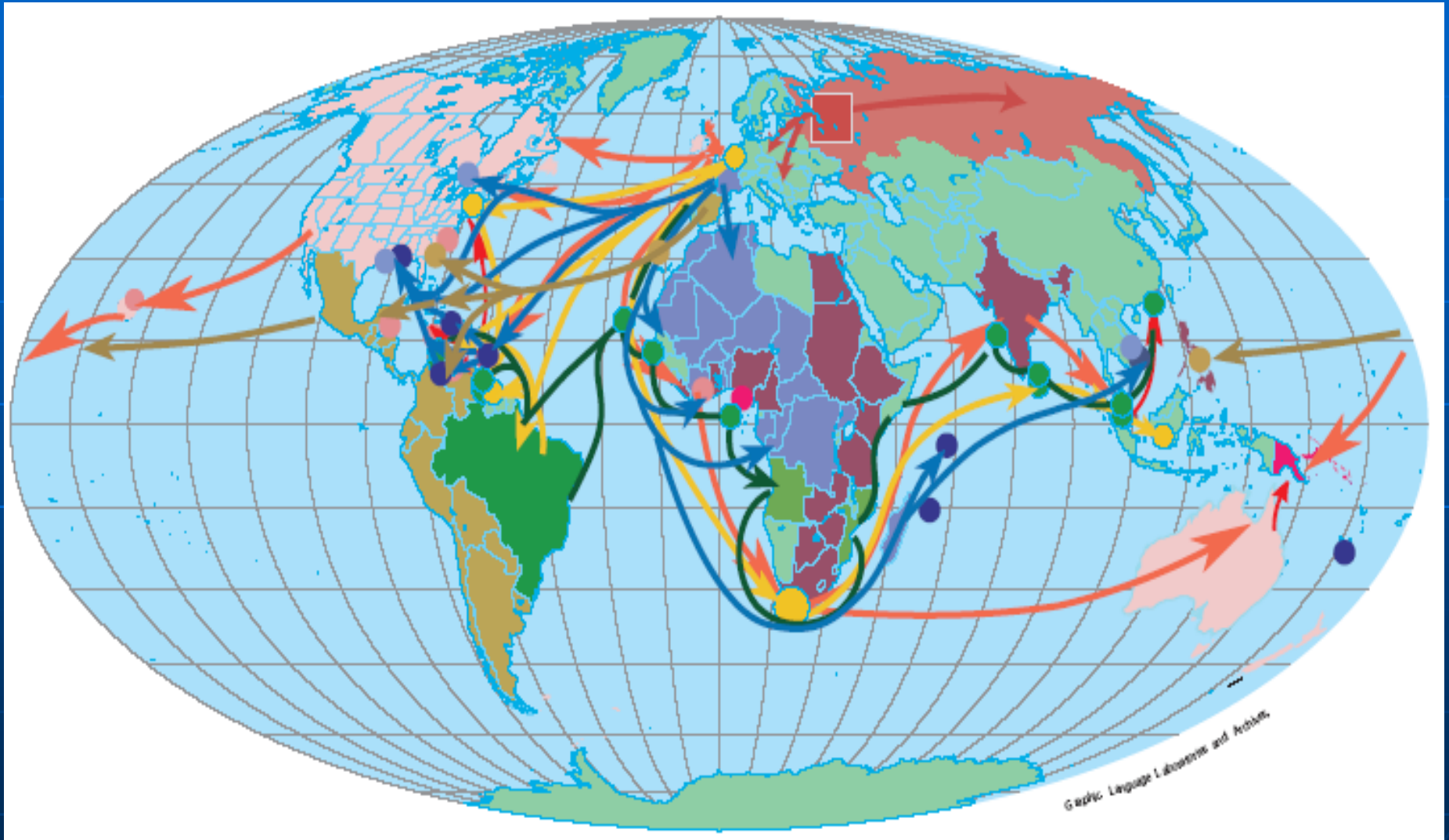
# Politicians and economists are seeking our expert advice

- ❑ What can linguists tell economists who need their expert opinions on socio-economic development
- ❑ What can linguists tell politicians about managing linguistic diversity or societal multilingualism and their (perceived) role in political conflicts?
- ❑ What kind of political and economic ecologies can sustain linguistic diversity and to what advantage(s)?

# Can linguists handle the subject matter alone?

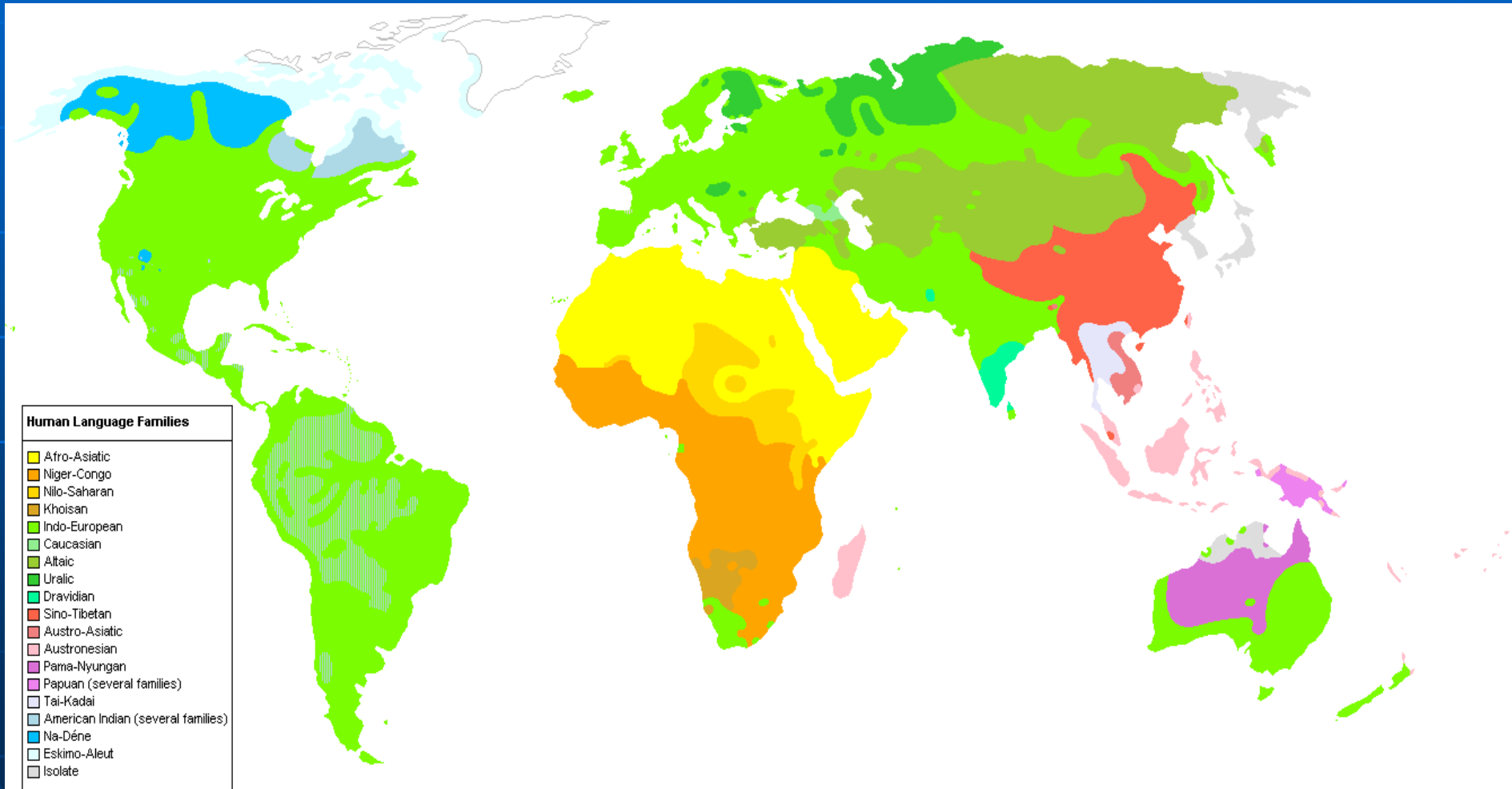
- ❑ How can we collaborate with economists in ways that are cross-fertilizing?
- ❑ Languages as technology, as assets, as liabilities
- ❑ Nations and population structure: the cost of being “minorated” and/or marginalized
- ❑ The significance of urbanization and its role in sustaining or eroding the vitality of some languages.

# The current discourse on language endangerment and loss: Let's blame it on colonization

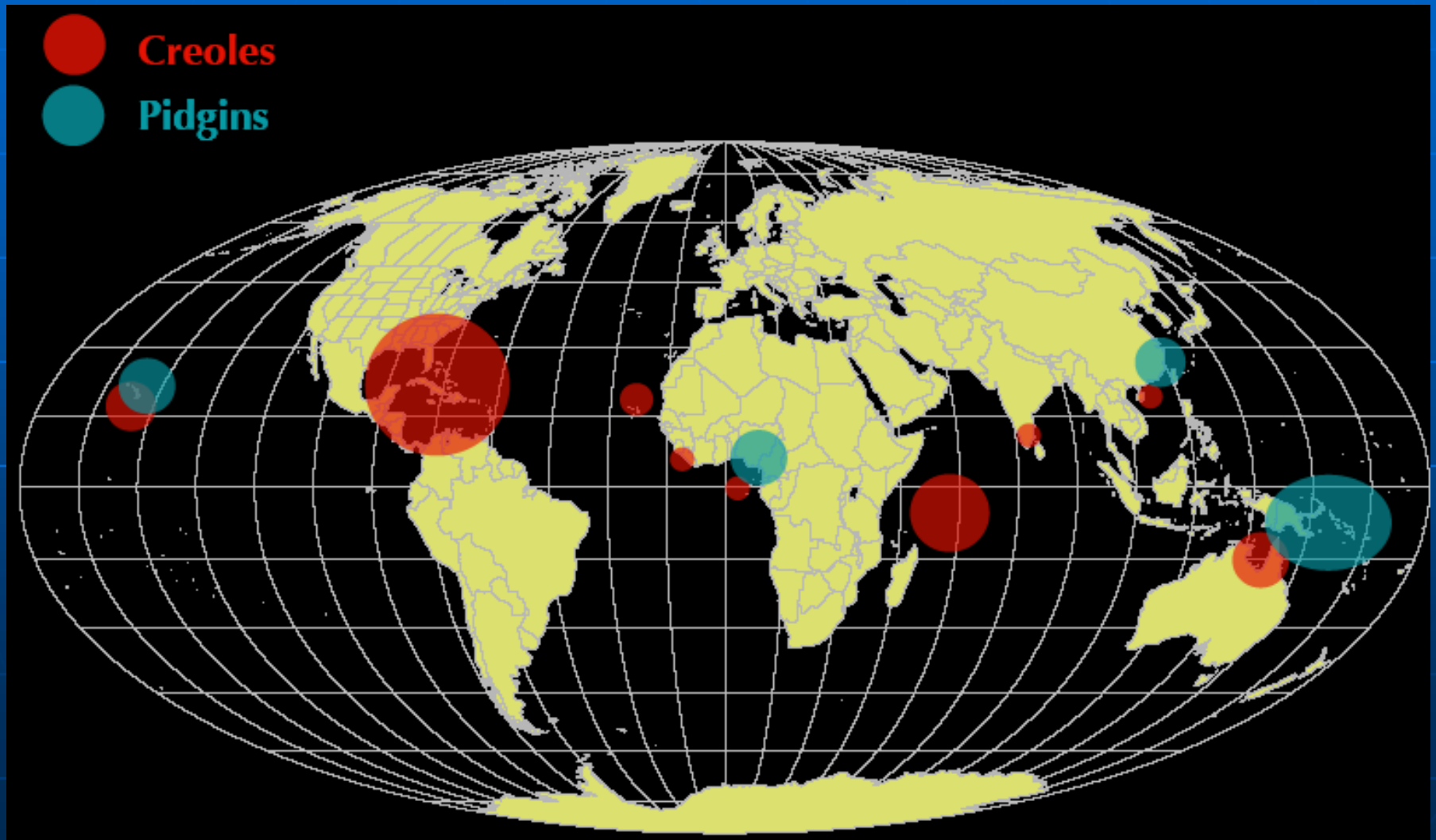




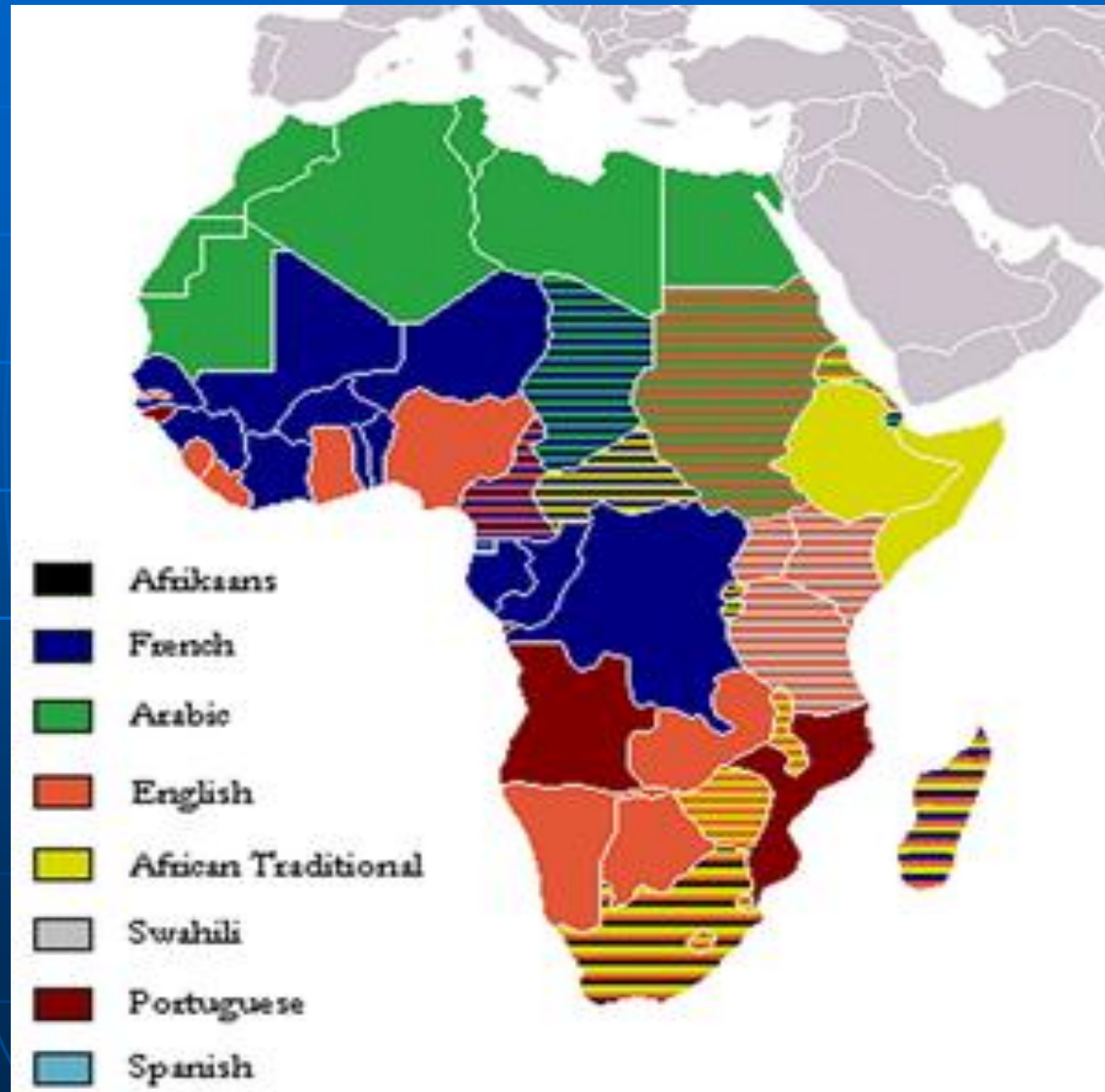
# The linguistic/cultural Indo-Europeanization of the world since the 15<sup>th</sup> century... with some hybridization or innovations



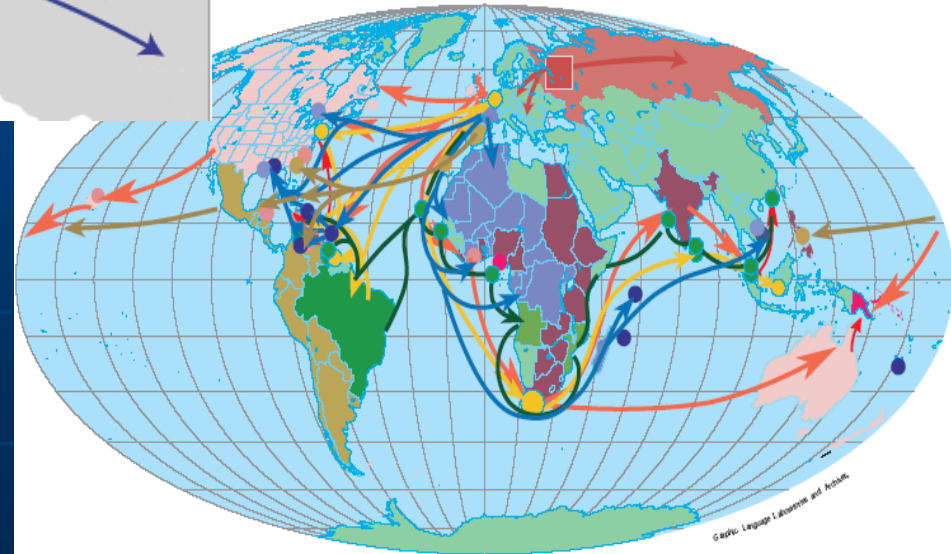
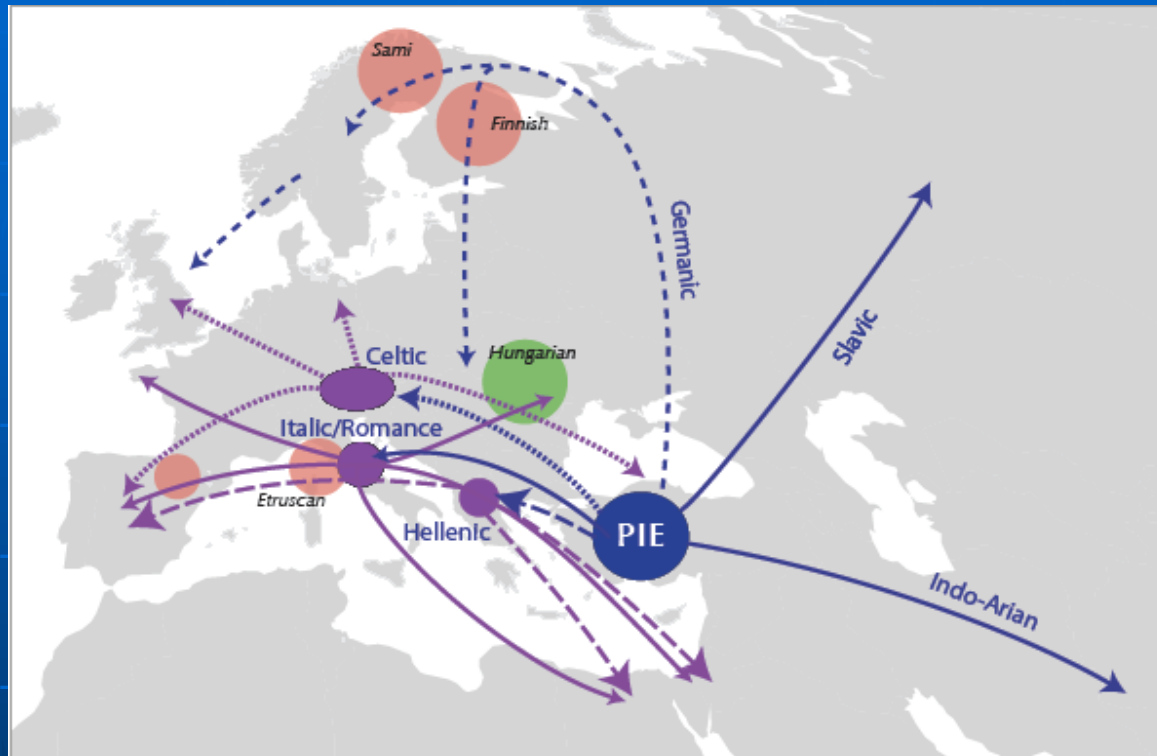
There have been not only losses but also some linguistic gains.



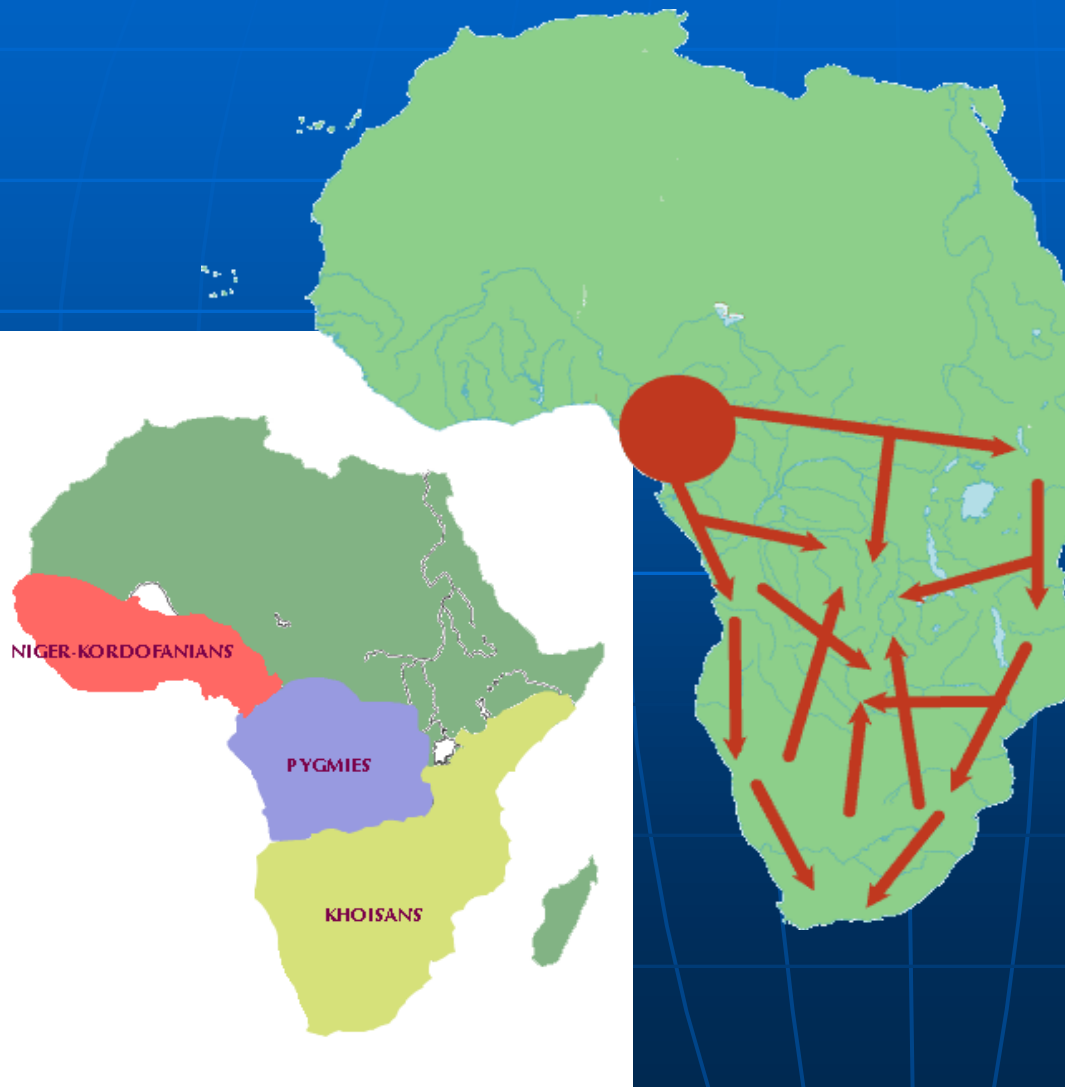
# A partial post-colonial linguascape of Africa: Why hasn't Africa Indo-Europeanized to the same extent as the Americas and Australia?



# Language birth and death during the Indo-European expansion since about 6kya



# Bantu dispersal/migrations: A history of language births and deaths



# The Roman Empire and the emergence of the Romance languages



# We can actually learn more about language vitality and/in the Roman Empire

- ❑ A hybrid colonization style (according to my typology)
- ❑ Varying language policies and practices
- ❑ The significance of urban centers as spread points for Latin
- ❑ Greater number of neo-Latin varieties
- ❑ Locality of competition dynamics in lg evolution



# Why has language vitality proceeded differentially? How variably has the Indo-European expansion proceeded?

- Different colonization styles
  - Trade colonization
  - Settlement colonization
    - ✓ “Creolization” as linguistic/cultural indigenization
  - Exploitation colonization
- The role of invaders’ ills in reducing indigenous populations
- The role of indigenous migrations triggered by European settlements



# Migrations within Africa caused by the European colonization: Their impact on language evolution



## *Labor migrations*

Adapted from Caroline Wright. 1997, "Labor migration." In *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*.

# Who said globalization had to be worldwide and uniform?

## □ Globalization as:

- Network of interconnectedness and interdependences

- Integration

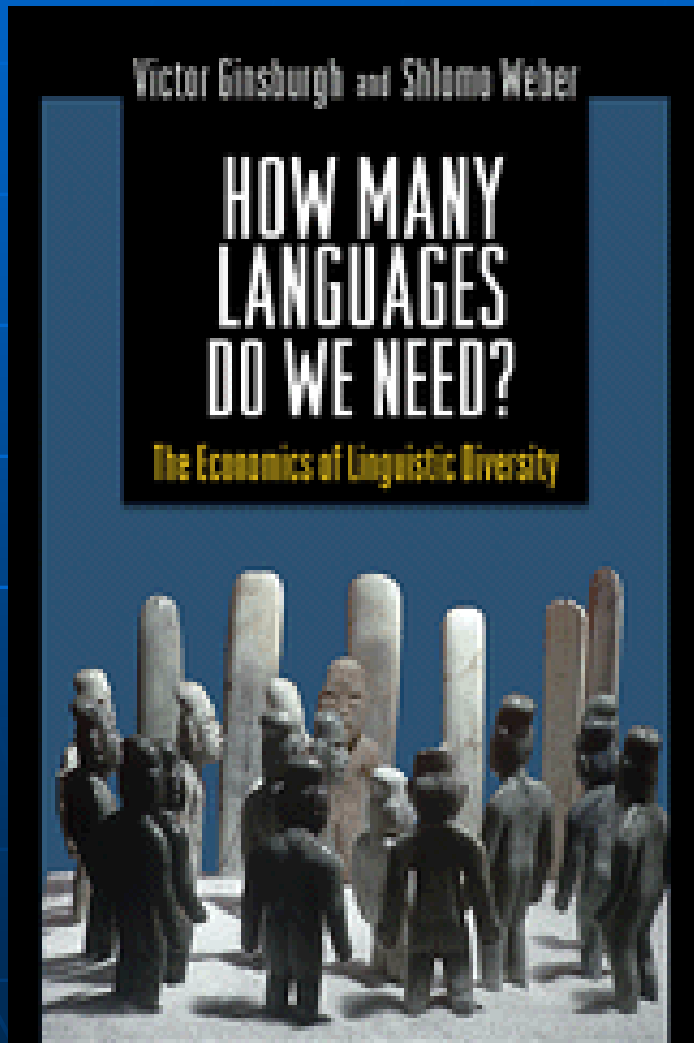
- Population movements/migrations  $\Leftrightarrow$   
Mobility with and without economic power

- Glocalization and globalization index

- Globalization and economic marginalization

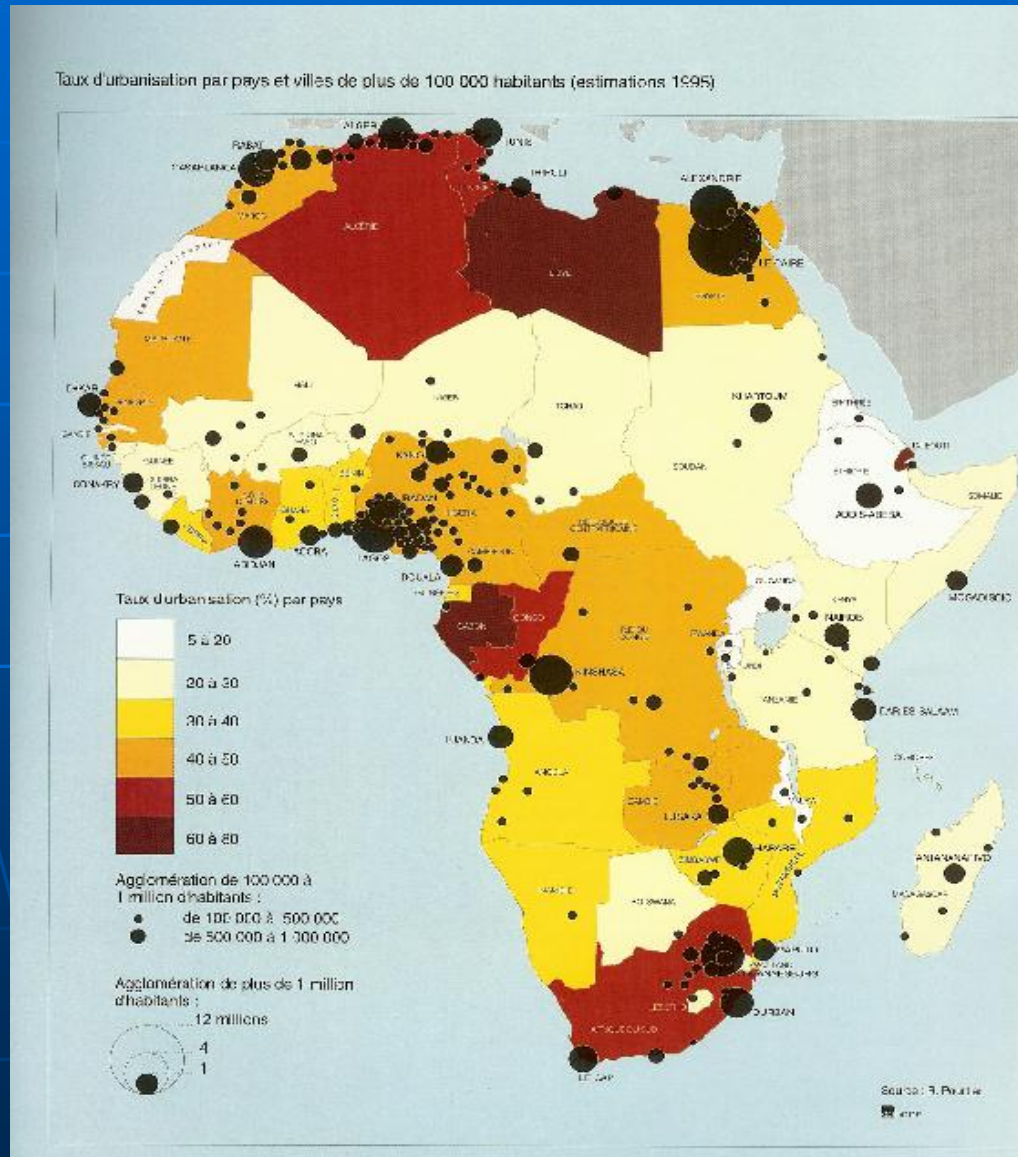
- Language and globalization

# The role of language in the economic development of citizens and nations, and in international trade

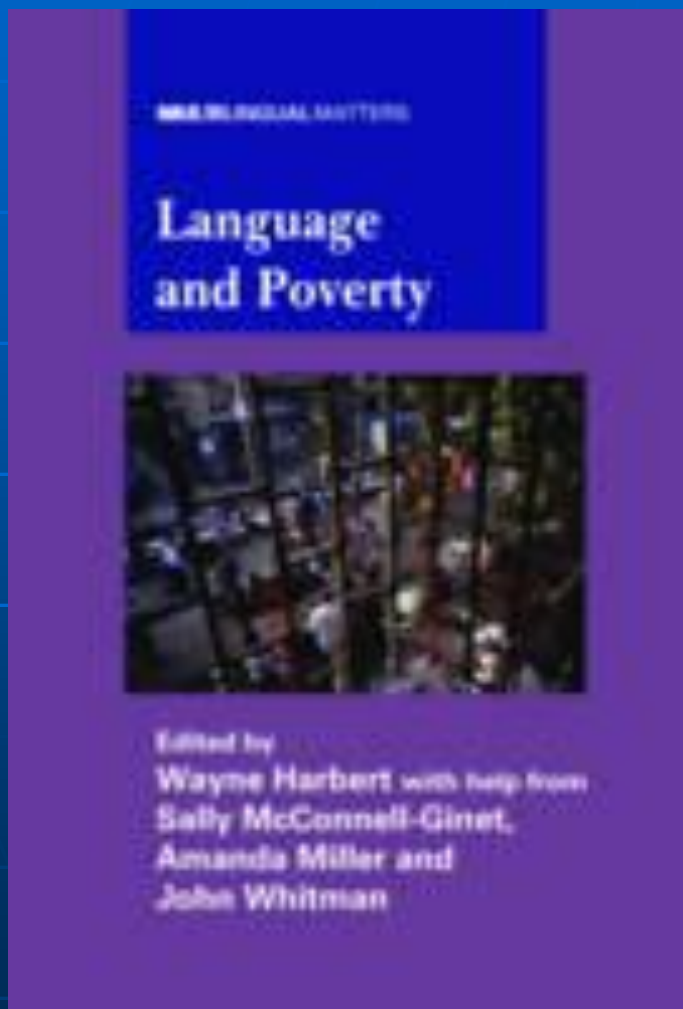


- ❑ Language and the reality of multiculturalism
- ❑ Language and ethnic divisiveness
- ❑ Language and economic integration or marginalization
- ❑ Language and education

# African cities: Interesting observatories for language contact and its consequences



# Do linguists understand poverty and how to eradicate it in multilingual societies?



- ❑ "La langue doit nourrir son homme"
- ❑ Language as an asset or a liability
- ❑ When "language wealth" and "language rights" mean nothing; and languages must be subordinated to people
- ❑ Factoring the local economic resources in the global picture.

# Empowering speakers economically in order to maintain/revitalize their languages



- Can the State always afford to empower everyone of its languages?
- Can the State exercise any control over the languages that individual citizens prefer to speak?
- What kind of socioeconomic infrastructure should the State provide to help maintain (ethno)linguistic diversity and equality?

# How much control can a State exercise on individual decisions of its citizens regarding language practice?

- Can the State control informal economy and how far?
- Can the State control its citizens' socialization patterns?
- Or can the State focus on developing the economic infrastructure ignoring patterns of language practice and probably disadvantaging some people?
- Or should the State leave it all to self-organization?

# Who and/or what “kills” languages and how?

- ❑ Do speakers really decide (consciously) to give up their languages?
- ❑ What particular population structures favor evolution toward monolingualism?
- ❑ Are the ecological conditions leading to language loss the same for all ethnolinguistic groups?
- ❑ What particular kinds of ecological pressures determine individual speakers' language choices during their interactions?
- ❑ Why don't speakers fight them if the pressures are disadvantageous? Or how can they (be advised to) fight them?



## More concretely...

- ❑ Why is English the dominant language of this conference and of the Summer School, while the French are our hosts?
- ❑ Why am I talking to you in English when I am a fluent French speaker (or so I rate myself)?
- ❑ Why didn't I consider it an option to address you in Kikongo, or Lingala, or, least of all, Kiyansi and be a proud Muntu (\*Bantu)?

**So, from 2001 to date, regarding language endangerment and loss, linguists should realize that...**

- ❖ There is little that they can do themselves regarding language maintenance or revitalization (□ language documentation).
- ❖ They should expect (more) requests for advice from economists and politicians.
- ❖ There are a lot of questions that we should be prepared to answer, based on sound empirical scholarship.
- ❖ Language advocacy alone may yield more embarrassment than praise.

감사합니다 Natick

Grazie

Danke Ευχαριστίες Dalu

Thank You Köszönöm

Tack

Спасибо Dank Gracias

谢谢

Merci

Seé

ありがとう

Obrigado