

Language endangerment critical thinking sample

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Introduction

Language endangerment refers to the level of risk involved in making a language become suppressed and eventually fall out of use. It may not be possible for regional language speakers to forecast the extinction of their languages. This persuasive essay aims to convince the low variety language speakers in China that they can overcome the dominance of popular languages like the Mandarin and English.

Mandarin is widely used in the Chinese education system which makes it the official language. On the other hand, English is commonly used all over the world hence posing a threat to regional languages in China. These dominant languages are among the reasons why low variety language speakers in China think that they cannot retain their original languages.

As speakers of low variety language in China, the best way to overcome language endangerment is by having a positive attitude about language endangerment. After understanding the causes of endangerment, the regional language speakers can take measures to mitigate the risks of endangerment and salvage the dying languages.

On the contrary, regional language speakers are not willing to take action to salvage their dying languages. They are afraid of that the rest of the population may seclude them even more. This is because their languages are unpopular and they are spoken by fewer people. Fear of seclusion is a barrier to their willingness to fight regional language endangerment.

However, with consistent use of measures like language documentation and regionalization the barrier may be overcome.

Social institutions like marriage make low variety language speakers to be

endangered and eventually become extinct (Brenzinger 2). Matthias Brenzinger is an endangered languages analyst who has examined factors that endanger language diversity among various societies. Such institutions compel the regional language speakers to become members of other communities. This may make the individuals to shift from their native languages to enable them to communicate with members of their new society hence causing language endangerment.

Physical danger to speakers also makes languages prone to death and extinction. The occurrence of natural disasters like diseases, earthquakes and famine are beyond the control of human beings. When these disasters happen on a large scale, they threaten the lives of those people who live in particular countries. There is a risk of regional language extinction if such disasters happen in China.

Minority communities are social in nature hence sidelining them in terms of culture and resource allocation could make them prefer to be identified with certain groups or tribes. As a result, most of these minority communities may decide to change their language to suit what favours their existence. This explains why there are some regional language speakers in China who have accepted to be assimilated into other communities as a result of dominance by the other communities.

In economic terms, marginalization leads to abject poverty which may compel the low variety language speakers to migrate to urban centres. Consequently, minority speakers within this society may lose their identity hence endangering their language (Hale et al. 2). These language researchers focus on endangered languages in the American society and

their ideas can be borrowed to apply on this Chinese case.

The rise of globalization all over the world has also led to language endangerment. It implies that the jurisdiction of languages is no longer guarded by national borders. In China today, there are certain languages that dominate commerce and communication. Many languages are at a risk in this modern world as people use languages recognized internationally at the expense of their native languages (Brown 3). Brown is a language professor with vast knowledge on sustaining the diversity of languages in the society.

There is no need to feel secluded as low variety language speakers since there is a significant population of such speakers all over China. There is a rich variety of language in China due to the large population. Given this large population, it is easy for regional language speakers to become overshadowed by the majority ethnic groups in China.

Some regional language speakers believe that it is right to be dominated by the popular groups. They have fallen to the bottom of the social order as a result of being the unpopular groups. Low variety language speakers do not pride themselves on the fact that their native languages can be passed on to the forthcoming generations. Their population figure is quite insignificant compared to the whole Chinese population. Some groups like the Dungan and the Min Dong have grown overly submissive. They have allowed themselves to be absorbed and assimilated into the linguistic traits of other dominant groups.

Regional language speakers have little voice in the political and administrative ruling class in China. The fact that Mandarin is used as the

official language points to how much minority languages have been sidelined. In spite of their native languages, the education system compels them to be taught in Mandarin.

For many generations, low variety language speakers have failed to assert their place in society. They have shown little hope about a change of events. However, there are certain measures and practices they can adopt to change the dominating language imbalance.

Preservation of cultural heritage is one of the ways in which language endangerment can be prevented. Being a minority community does not imply that this particular society is not proud of their culture. Language is part and parcel of their culture. By preserving their cultural heritage as low variety language speakers, they can ensure that their languages are safely preserved within their heritage. The level of endangerment will subsequently reduce. Low variety language speakers can incorporate the native languages within the local school curriculums. This will help learners in school to pride themselves on the existence of these languages consequently nurturing their growth (Wei and Yuming 4). Wei and Yuming are editors of the Asian Journal of Sociological Sciences who wrote on the language situation in China as a result of Chinese influence in the Asian continent.

Language documentation is the first measure that low variety language speakers can take to prevent endangerment. Documentation means that languages are put down in form of writing. Written work is a permanent record that can be easily passed down to younger generations. In the presence of documented language material, the future generations of low variety speakers will be in a position to understand the language better even

if the popular languages may have corrupted the original form of the that language. It is also important to note that the future generation can easily identify with a cultural trait that regional language speakers have if there is hard evidence of the existence of that trait in writing.

As minority language speakers, language maintenance can be achieved through preservation of documented materials. Languages cannot die or become extinct if documented records are kept. Maintenance helps to deal with all levels of language endangerment (D. Bradley and M. Bradley 5).

David Bradley and Maya Bradley are language researchers who examine examine how endangered languages can be maintained.

Secondly, increasing the population as regional language speakers will help reduce language endangerment. Given that they are a minority population, they stand the risk of losing their native languages because of low population. With more language speakers, it makes it more difficult for the language to become extinct (Tsunoda and Tasaku 5). Tsunoda and Tasaku reveal the methods of language revitalization in their publication on endangered minority languages in China.

Regionalization also reduces language endangerment. Language endangerment and the risk of extinction are high amongst regional language speakers as a result of widespread migration from their native areas.

Regionalization is a practice that encourages such communities to stay in their areas of origin (Zhang and Ma 5). The authors are researchers interested in how endangered languages can be protected in China.

According to Zhang and Ma, low variety language speakers should be discouraged from migrating to metropolitan cities in search of jobs. Instead,

they should be condoned to stay within their native areas and develop those regions politically, economically and socially.

Regionalization helps to concentrate their common language needs together as a community. With such linguistic unity, it is easy to preserve their language. For example, the regional language can be regularly used to publish local newspapers and articles. The use of that language will grow hence preventing its extinction.

Most of these languages that are susceptible to extinction in China are not spoken or used regularly. This is because the native speakers are spread far and wide across the large country making it difficult for the speakers to conceptualize any meaningful and consistent use.

Regional language speakers can change their beliefs of becoming extinct through efforts of documenting the endangered languages, regionalization, population increase and preserving their cultural heritage. Those who criticize the efforts made by low variety language speakers may argue that the efforts are not enough to guarantee the recovery of their fading languages. However, the truth is that all hope is not lost. As long as the native speakers still live among the regional language, the dominance of their languages can still be effectively set up once again.

In conclusion, minority language speakers in China can salvage their vulnerable languages by changing the attitude that their languages will eventually become extinct. Effectively understanding the causes of language endangerment can also be used to cut down the risks of language extinction.

In China today, popular languages especially Mandarin and English have

greatly influenced the language heritage of other regional languages. This persuasive essay has pointed out the use of Mandarin by the Chinese government. This is an indication that the regional language speakers have to give up their native languages to accommodate the frequent use of Mandarin. In addition English is an international language which has forced most Chinese regional languages to succumb to its erosive effects.

Low variety language speakers in china need to respect their language heritage. It is important for them to preserve their identity by resisting the influence brought about by popular languages.

Works Cited

Bradley, David, and Maya Bradley. Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002. Print.

Brenzinger, Matthias. Language Diversity Endangered. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007. Print

Brown, K. D. Sustaining linguistic diversity: Endangered and minority languages and language varieties. Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 40(2), 210-212, 2009. Print. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/848432593?accountid=14749>

Hale, Ken, et al. Endangered Languages. New York: Linguistic Society of America, 1992. Print.

Tsunoda, Tasaku. Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization: An Introduction. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006. Print.

Wei, Li, and Li Yuming. The Language Situation in China, Volume 1. Boston: De Gruyter, 2013. Print.

Zhang, C., & Ma, Q. The protection of endangered languages in mainland

<https://assignbuster.com/language-endangerment-critical-thinking-sample/>

china. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 713-718,
April 2012. Print.