

Beja dialects: dynamic perspectives
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This paper starts from a static sketch of linguistic properties, and employs dynamic descriptions of changes in language use, to highlight perceptions of language endangerment.

A static description of dialect differences serves as background:

This includes (1) different suprasegmental systems, with and without contrastive pitch accent, (2) coexisting phonologies with and without new phonemes, (3) divergent morphologies with loss or maintainance of contrasts, and (4) various lexical inventories with and without loans from national languages.

A dynamic description needs to take into account demographic and cultural forces:

Demographic changes like re-settlement, migration, urbanisation and school allocations are driven by a continuous decrease of rainfall.

Different strengths of oral traditions are also assessed under a dynamic perspective: (1) The change in the performance of oral traditions, (2) the use of oral traditions in school books, (3) internet experiments with various forms of the language, and (4) the conscious maintenance of cultural traditions by different clubs and associations.

Perceptions of "endangerment" have their own dynamics:

Given different contexts, "endangerment" is perceived differently. Where language development is addressed, as in Eritrea, perceptions are changing. Acuteness of this perception also differs across the generations, as they employ different channels of tribal, national and international communication.