



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean

# **Mediating multilingualism in a local community context – a sharing of innovation and expertise between Scotland, Ireland, and India**

Conchúr Ó Giollagáin

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Director of UHI Language Sciences Institute

University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland

18 March 2019  
GCRF Project



# Collaborative philosophy for our GCRF Project

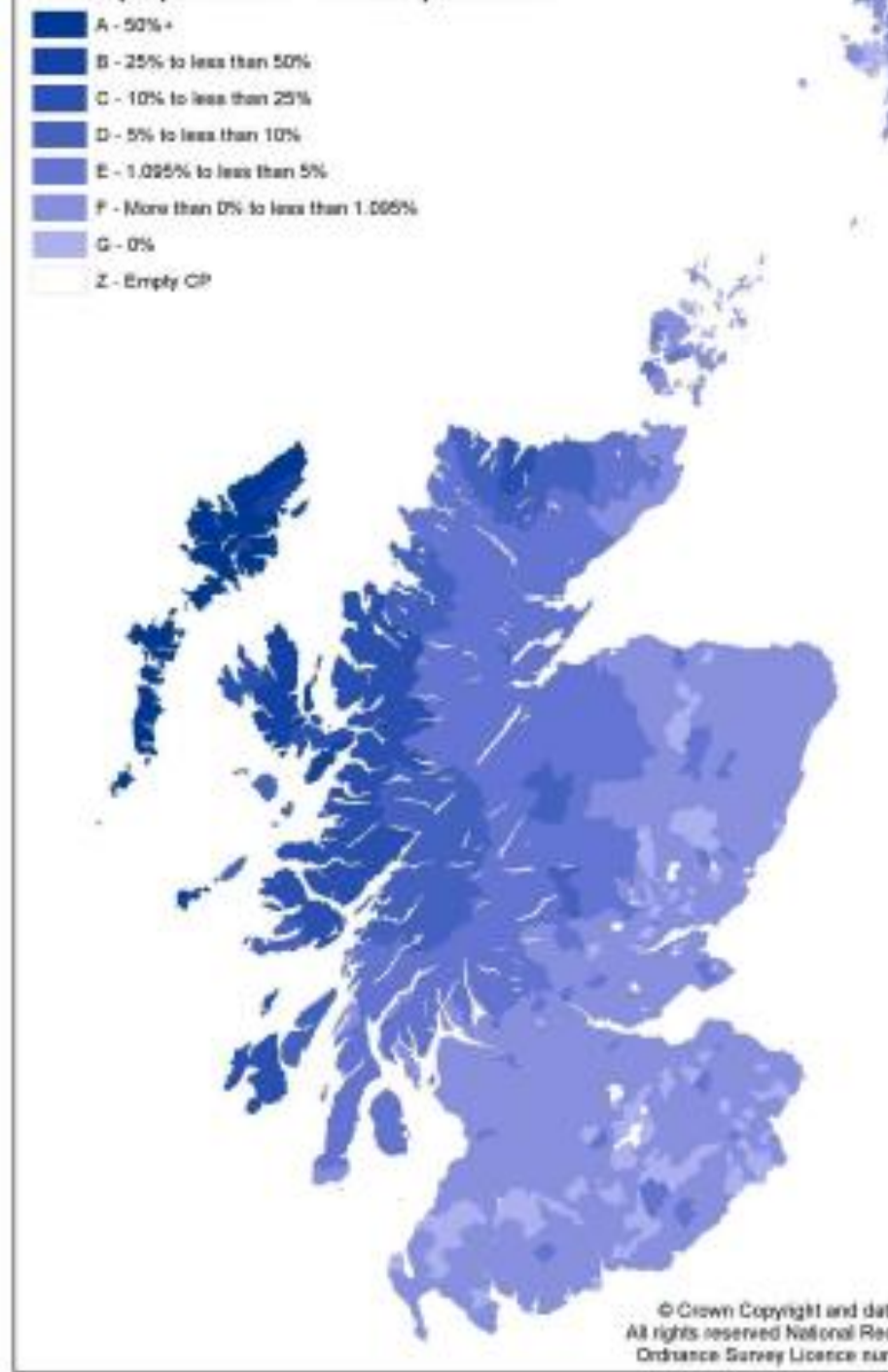
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- **Demolinguistic context of Language Protection and Promotion**
  - Rich diversity in an overwhelming sense of threat
- **Empathetic ethnography**
  - LPP – advice and assistance
  - Ethnographic retrieval – recording for posterity, addressing risk
- **Video ethnography as community engagement**
  - Methodologies and practice of capturing the ethnolinguistic wealth
- **Multilingual turn – but words can be cheap!**
  - Putting the respect for linguistic diversity into practice
  - Easier to talk about aspirations rather than action

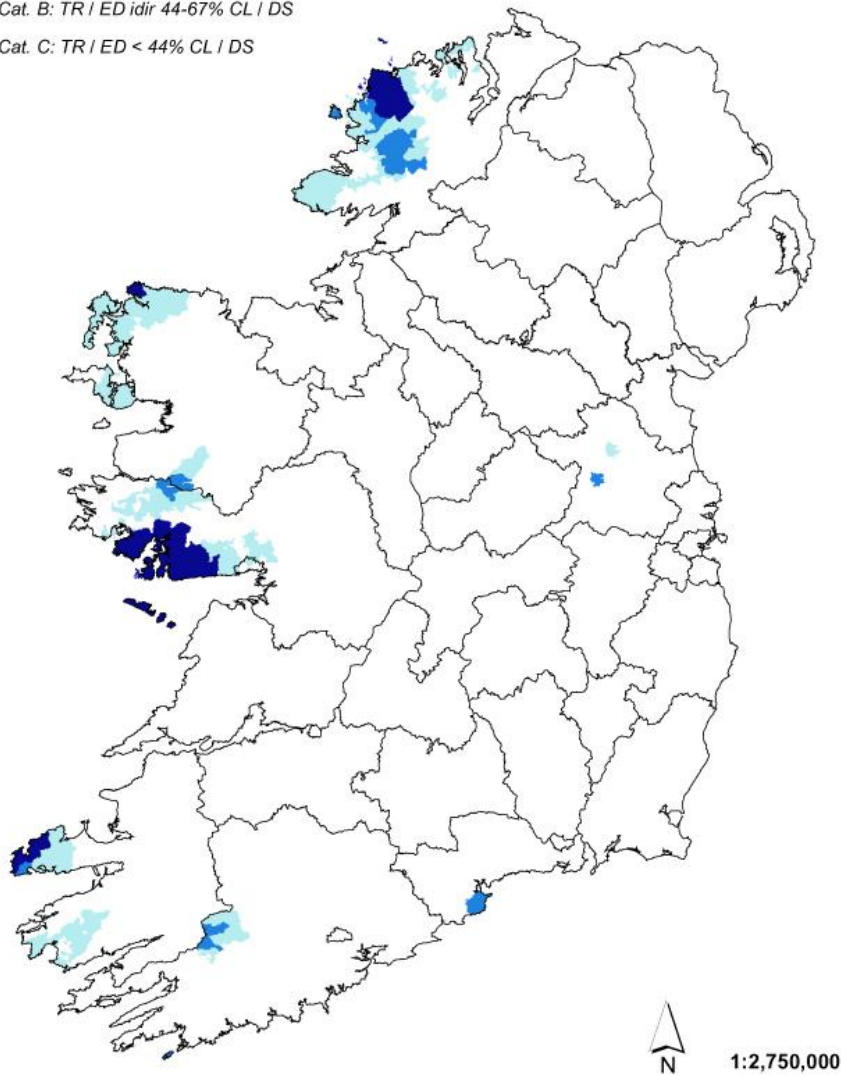
Map Satellite



- A - 50%+
- B - 25% to less than 50%
- C - 10% to less than 25%
- D - 5% to less than 10%
- E - 1.005% to less than 5%
- F - More than 0% to less than 1.005%
- G - 0%
- Z - Empty GP



- Cat. A: TR / ED le 67% + CL / DS
- Cat. B: TR / ED idir 44-67% CL / DS
- Cat. C: TR / ED < 44% CL / DS



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh  
National University of Ireland, Galway

## COMPREHENSIVE LINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE USE OF IRISH IN THE GAELTACHT

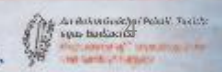


## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2007

Conchúr Ó Giollaigáin Seosamh Mac Donnacha  
Fiona Ní Chualáin  
Aoife Ní Shéaghda  
Mary O'Brien

**A, B, C Gaeltacht Categories** in Ó Giollaigáin, Mac Donnacha et al. 2007. *Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht*. Prepared by NIRSA. Copyright # MP 8252 , © OSI / Government of Ireland.



# Project Outline

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## Initial GCRF aims

- *Building capacity and capability*, through establishing partnership;
- *Interdisciplinary and collaborative research activity*, through involving both sociolinguistic and information technology expertise;
- *Pump-priming and relationship-building*, through network development and pilot project work.

# Healthy critiques and comparisons

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## GCRF contexts

- Exposing our ideas to scrutiny from vastly different ethnolinguistic contexts;
- Disparities in discursive attention;
- Europe = 3.5% of world's ethnolinguistic diversity.

## Partners for ongoing collaboration

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- Amity University Haryana, Gurgaon
- Centres for Language Endangerment in India
- [Central Institute of Indian Languages](#) (Mysore)
- University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland
- Soillse partnership universities
- Irish universities

# Global Demography of Language: Ethnologue 2019

Pop. Range	Living languages			Number of speakers		
	Count	Percent	Cumulative	Total	Percent	Cumulative
100,000,000+	8	0.1	0.1%	2,829,205,530	40.5	40.5%
10,000,000 ->	86	1.2	1.3%	2,797,265,640	40.0	80.5%
1,000,000 ->	313	4.4	5.7%	985,460,876	14.1	94.6%
100,000 ->	977	13.7	19.5%	310,434,917	4.4	99.0%
10,000 ->	1,812	25.5	44.9%	62,071,471	0.9	99.9%
1,000 ->	1,966	27.6	72.6%	7,510,447	0.1	100.0%
100 ->	1,042	14.7	87.2%	463,752	0.0	100.0%
10 ->	305	4.3	91.5%	11,923	0.0	100.0%
1 ->	114	1.6	93.1%	465	0.0	100.0%
0	314	4.4	97.6%	0	0.0	100.0%
Unknown	174	2.4	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	7,111	100.0		6,992,425,021	100.0	

Source: Eberhard et al. 2019

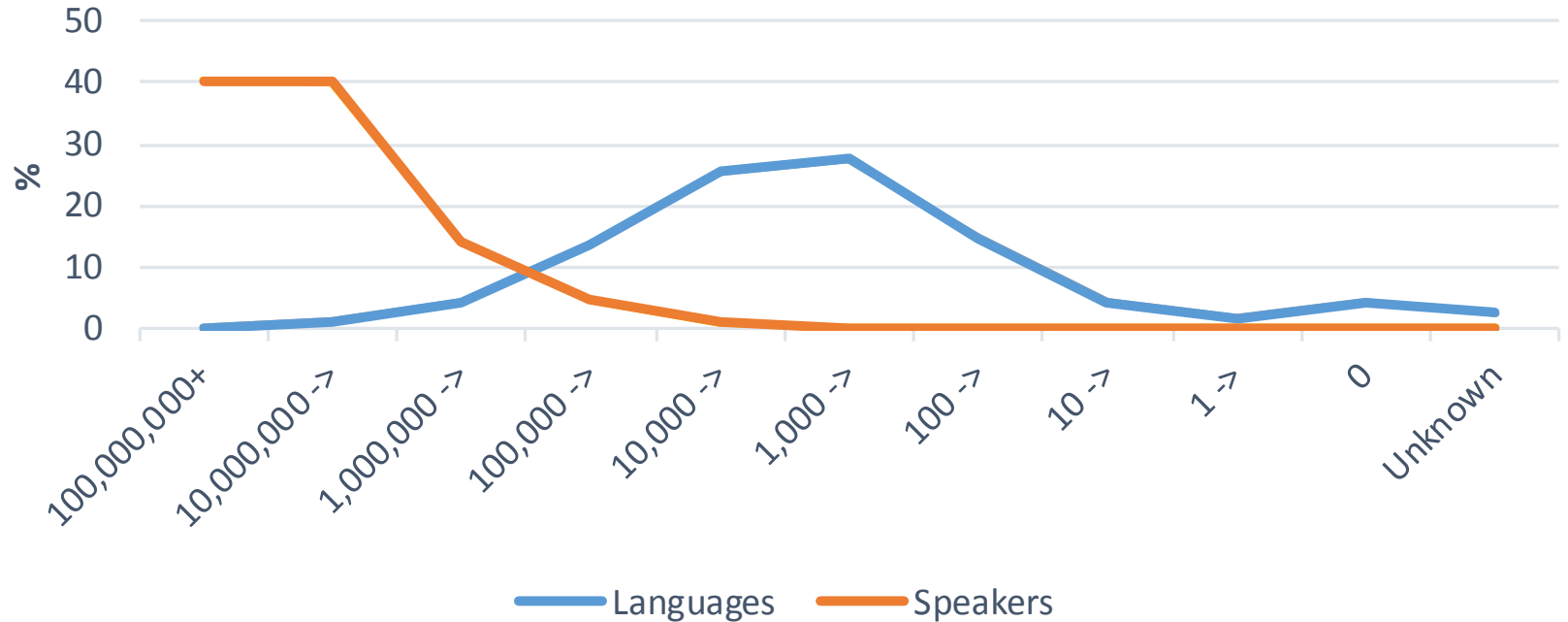


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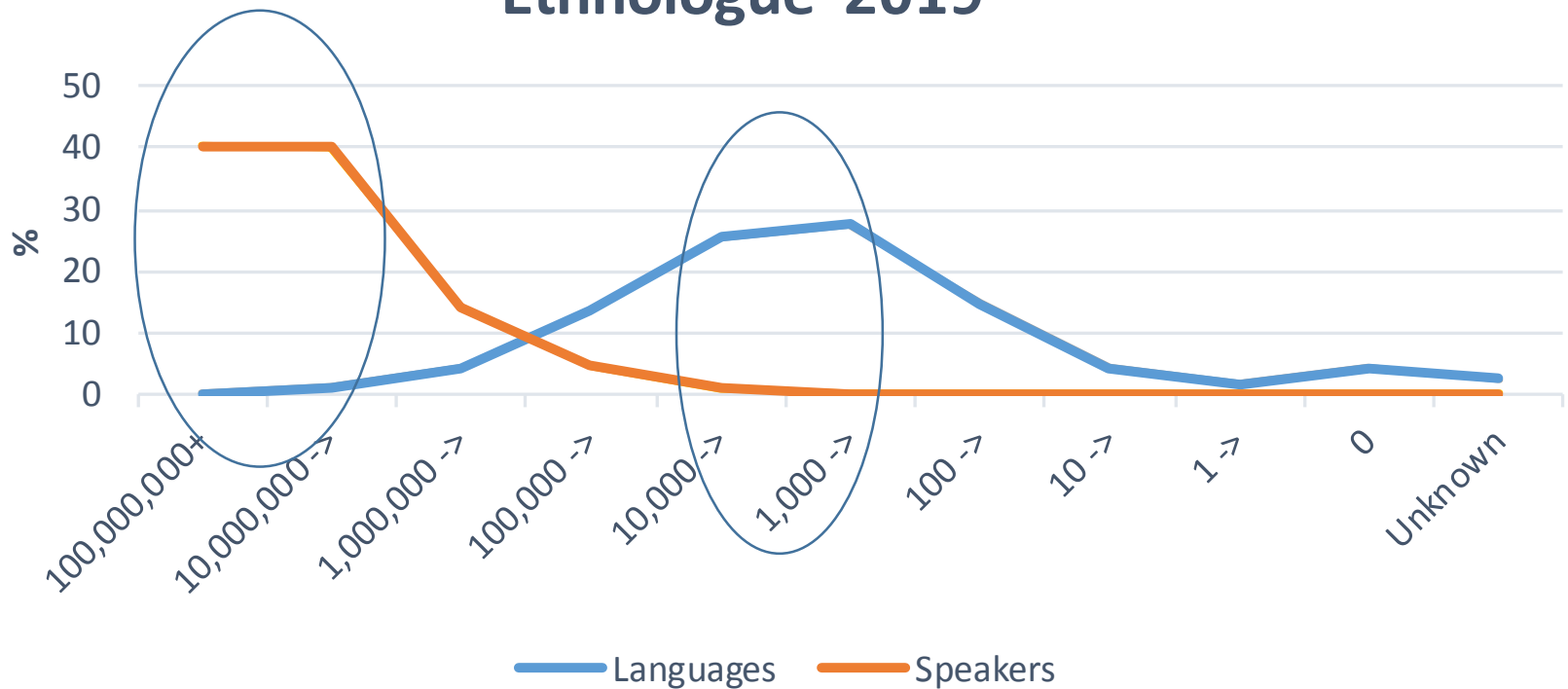
Source: Eberhard et al. 2019

## Demographic and Language Relations: Ethnologue 2019



Data: Ethnologue 2019  
Eberhard et al. 2019

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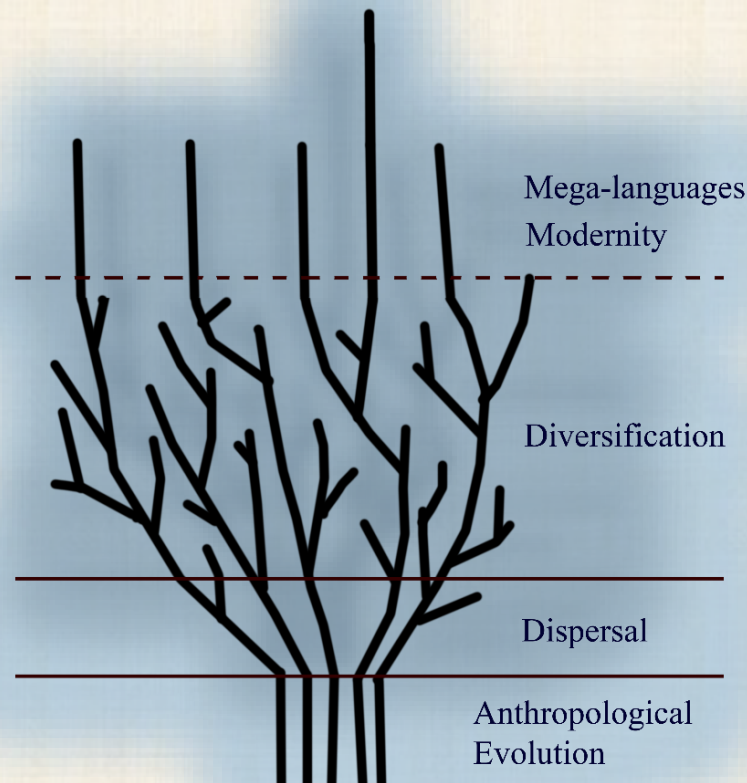


Data: Ethnologue 2019  
Eberhard et al. 2019

# Local Challenges in Global Trends: Post-spatial Anthropocene

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- Threshold of post-diversity, centrifugal English and mega-languages
- Horizontal Diversity in Cosmopolitan centres
- Discontinuity in minority cultures, eroded spatial diversity



# Metropolitan diversity without diachronic (history) and spatial (geographic) diversity

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- **Contradictions of Cosmopolitan Anthropocene** (cities more diverse but subordinate regions less diverse):
  - **Geographic dimension:** Erosion of the regional diversity
  - **Historical dimension:** Groups dispossessed of their cultural roots, era of socio-cultural amputation

# Hierarchical Language System (de Swaan 2010)

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**de Swaan** (2010: 56–58; 2007; cf. Deutsch 1966) identifies four levels in this hierarchical system:

- The **hypercentral** language English, gaining speakers globally, and occupying the ascendant position at the centre of the galaxy.
- 13 **supercentral** languages functioning transnationally, in widespread language groups (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Turkish)
- 150 **central** languages (3% of languages), occupying ‘planetary’ positions in the system. Mainly official or ‘national’ languages of a state and used in administration, education, media, parliament,
- 6000+ **peripheral** languages which function in a marginal relationship to the system and are generally also incidental to the national context. They occupy satellite positions around the bigger ‘planetary’ languages.

# ‘Peripheral subnational languages (Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin, forthcoming)

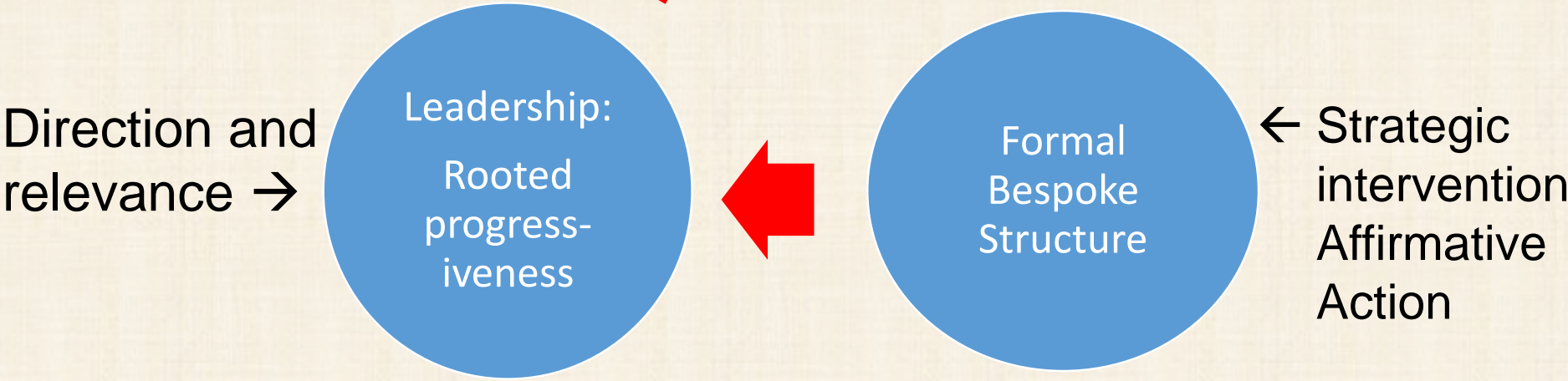
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## 4 categories of subnational or peripheral minority languages:

- **Small-scale isolation with vibrancy:** There are small MinLs that maintain some degree of social prevalence and functional orality because of their relative isolation from modernising majoritarian LPP. For example, indigenous groups of northern Australia (Singer and Harris 2016)
- **Demolinguistic density with (planning and) vibrancy:** Many non-dominant MinLs maintain viable orality, literacy and sustainable levels of language transmission due to high speaker densities and access to (primary) educational supports, e.g. over 1 million speakers of Ngbaka in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo (cf. Lewis and Simons 2016: 85).
- **Planned and non-vital or threatened:** Endangered MinLs with LPrPr such as Frisian, the Celtic languages and many of the first languages of Canada.
- **Non-planned and non-vital:** Endangered MinLs without LPrPr such as many defunct North American, Australian and Siberian languages in the former-Soviet Union.

# Resilience in Commons of Minority Condition

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Tapaidh leibh!  
Thank you!

Go raibh maith agaibh!

Post-d: [cog.smo@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:cog.smo@uhi.ac.uk)