

Re: Natural Language Praised

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-12/msg00440.html>

- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 05 Dec 2005 15:19:52 GMT
-

leuwarden@xxxxxxxx wrote:

>
> Peter T. Daniels wrote:
>> leuwarden@xxxxxxxx wrote:
>>>
>>> Peter T. Daniels wrote:
>
>>>>
>>>> (a) Latin never died; it survives in all the Romance languages.
>>>
>>> in this sense, nobody ever dies. that is some sort of metaphysics,
>>> isn't it
>>
>> How absurd. You are not your father; but Spanish (for instance) is one
>> of the many varieties of Modern Latin (aka the Romance languages).
>
> No, please, it is not absurd, though of course it is not my opinion. I
> am more like my father than French is like Latin. And a biologist would
> probably confirm that with some ADN statistics.

DNA? No. You are a distinct entity from your father. But there is no point in the entire history of, say, Spanish at which you could say "This is no longer Latin; this is Spanish" or "This is no longer Indo-European; this is Italic." We all still speak Indo-European! (But it's changed a whole lot because our communities got real big and separated.)

>>> yes. I believe that even the papal encyclicals are still published in
>>> Latin, and in case of discrepancies, it is the Latin version that
>>> counts. but I am not sure about that.
>>
>> I think this was changed very recently. (But look for a reversion under
>> Pope Ratzinger.)
>
> I know.
>
>>
>>>> (c) Latin can still be used as a spoken lingua franca at international
>>>> congresses of Roman Catholics.

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>>>

>>> yes, but the language no longer lives = changes + grows. it is

>>> fossilized.

>>

>> Those enthusiasts in Rome and Helsinki continue to invent vocabulary for

>> modern notions.

>

> I do not understand the reference to Rome and Helsinki

>From time to time there are magazine stories about some gentlemen in Rome who teach spoken Latin; and Finnish radio has regular broadcasts in Latin.

>>> I have a little edition of Morgenstern's poetry with Latin translations

>>> that were made for fun and could be quoted to show that Latin *can*

>>> (your word) also be used for avantgarde poetic production

>>

>> Translated from what, Yiddish?

>

> from German. I'd think he and Heine are Germany's most widely read

> poets, I mean people who are really read, not just analyzed in some

> university publication.

Not Goethe? Schiller? Rilke? Brecht? What are his name and dates?

>> That's not exactly "poetic production,"

>

> no, it is not.

>

>> but there's no reason poets couldn't write in Latin today. Just as

>> generations of English schoolboys had to compose Greek and Latin verse.

>

> ???

> you know, poetry that is not spontaneous in its origin is nothing.

> Rhyme and white space around it are really not what matters.

There's still no reason why poets couldn't write in Latin today.

>>>> (d) The situations of Hebrew and Latin were almost identical until late

>>>> in the 19th century.

>>>

>>> ????

>>> you wouldn't forget that the two languages did not have the same

>>> official standing?

>>

>> What does that have to do with anything?

>

> The fact that one had for ages been paraded by scholars and the other

> survived by the skin of its teeth would show in many ways; I was

> questioning your meaning of "identical".

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Sorry, but I'm not able to tell which language you are assigning which characteristic, since both have been "paraded by scholars" and neither "survived by the skin of its teeth."

>> Antisemitism is indeed one of the reasons for the thriving of Hebrew
>> literacy for some 1500 years when it was no one's native language.
>
> Of course.
>
>>
>>>> Virtually every Jewish male studied Hebrew to at
>>>> least some extent, although their native languages were always something
>>>> else.
>>>
>>> but that would have been more or less voluntary, whereas Latin was
>>> obligatory only for the very few who could afford a university degree.
>>
>> Your contrast is inapt. Hebrew was all but compulsory for every boy of
>> whatever station (have you seen *Fiddler on the Roof*?)
>
> No. My ideas are from what I read in Golda Meir's autobiography, where
> this problem is sometimes mentioned

Golda Meir grew to adulthood in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I don't know what she could have told you in her autobiography.

>> and even
>> available for some girls (have you seen *Yentl*?).
>
> No. (I had better admit that I do not like film)

Then read stories by I. B. Singer. (They've just (all?) been collected in three Library of America volumes, some newly translated.)

>>> in language mastery the motivation is of basic importance, because a
>>> language is not a rational (phenomenon? thing? set? affair?) and
>>> cannot be learnt in a purely rational way.
>>
>> Absolutely correct. One of the reasons for learning a language is what
>> sociologists call solidarity or cohesion.
>>
> .
>>>
>>> I asked a girl here on the net who lived in Israel, and I once asked a
>>> tourist in the Madrid subway, and both told me that Hebrew had become
>>> an everyday language in Israel. when asked, the tourist in the Madrid
>>> metro told me that kids playing football in the street in some Israeli
>>> town would speak Hebrew to each other
>>
>> Of course Hebrew is the everyday language in Israel! Where could you
>> have gotten any other idea?

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- >
- > !!!
- > I thought it was impossible to revive. I thought people would learn it
- > to pass some exam, but that each would privately continue speaking in
- > his own language.

"Way back" in the late 19th century, children were brought up speaking nothing else; by 1925, the language had prevailed throughout the immigrant Jewish community. European and American immigrants went to school to learn Hebrew to replace their native Yiddish (and other languages).

- > The Russians tried to impose Russian all over, but had to give up.

The Russians weren't exactly welcome in most of the Empire/Soviet Union, but they were remarkably successful in many places. Most of the 'stans use Russian rather than their native Turkic languages for most of their business.

- > Franco tried to impose Spanish and succeeded more or less, so that now
- > there is a reaction trying to revive the languages that he had more or
- > less forbidden. I thought people could not be obliged to learn a
- > language. In addition, Israel was very poor, had to cope with
- > immigration plus war.

Neither Basque nor Catalan suffered major declines under Franco. (Unlike Breton in France, which succumbed in just a few decades to "benign neglect.")

- >> However, the influence of Biblical Hebrew is
- >> minimal, because Israel is aggressively secular; the only people who
- >> study Scripture seriously are the various stripes of Ultra-Orthodox, who
- >> don't speak Hebrew
- >
- > !!?? then what do they speak?

Yiddish. Pay attention!

—

Peter T. Daniels grammatim@xxxxxxx

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• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***
 ◇ *From:* leuwarden
- ◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***
 ◇ *From:* leuwarden
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◇ *From:* leuwarden

◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***

◇ *From:* J. W. Love

◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***

◇ *From:* Ruud Harmsen

• **References:**

◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***

◇ *From:* leuwarden

◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***

◇ *From:* Joachim Pense

◆ ***Re: Natural Language Praised***

◇ *From:* leuwarden

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• Prev by Date: ***Re: Be and Have in Hebrew, and ACC case***

• Next by Date: ***Re: Kremlin***

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