

Typology I: Homework for Lecture 1, 2015/04/22

(The questions marked with (*) are research questions you can use to deepen your understanding, the others could be exam questions.)

1. How many languages are there? What is the problem with this question?
2. Do you expect the number of languages to increase or decrease in the future? Justify your answer!
3. *Name three languages that are extinct (in the sense that nobody speaks them as native languages any more). Find out and briefly explain for each language why/how it died out.
4. Why is it difficult to determine the number of languages in a given region at a given time? Name two problematic cases.
5. *Two important internet resources about the languages of the world are the World Atlas of Language Structures and Ethnologue. Find out and briefly explain what kind of information can be found at these sites.
6. *For a language of your choice (e.g. your native language), find out how it is classified genealogically. What are the closest relatives? Which languages are more distantly related? Is the classification disputed? Are there any fringe theories about your language? What do these theories try to show?