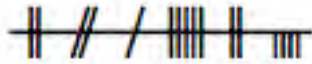


OGMIOS



Don't cut off our tongues!

The message on a postcard advocating for the protection of language rights in Australia's Northern Territory (Page 3)

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Front cover: The image (© Yambirra School Council, NT, Aus.) is of the postcard now being distributed by groups in Australia supporting bilingual education. The back of the postcard is below, addressed to Australia's Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

Reinstate bilingual education!

Dear Minister,

1. Bilingual education is good educational practice. It is the coordinated use of two languages for instructional purposes. There is no evidence to support claims that English-only programs will serve these children well.

2. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14.1 states: Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

3. Bilingual education supports the maintenance of Indigenous languages. In the past 220 years about 200 Australian Indigenous languages have disappeared. Bilingual education is important in supporting the maintenance of some of the last strong Indigenous languages in the country.

Indigenous bilingual education in Australia represents much more than a range of education programs. It is a measure of non-Indigenous commitment to self-determination for Indigenous communities.

Where do you stand?

1. Editorial

The Foundation can look back with satisfaction on FEL XIII as another successful annual international conference. As I said in the previous issue, this was to be one of the most logistically challenging conferences we have held to date, being held in Khorog (locally known as Khorugh), the cultural centre of the Pamir Mountain region of Tajikistan, situated in the far southeast of the country on the Panj river bordering Afghanistan. Foreign participants in this conference are unlikely ever to forget the magnificent sights along the 560-km. overland journey from Dushanbe to Khorog. And the conference itself, held in the State Hall in the centre of Khorog, lived up to the expectation of a packed and interesting programme. For the first time in our history, this was a trilingual conference – English, Russian and Tajik were the equal working languages of the conference, and for reasons of time it was not possible to provide simultaneous interpretation from one into the other two – although our redoubtable conference chairman Hakim Elnazarov, apparently equally at home in all three (as well as the local Shughnani) kept us all abreast of what was being said. The Proceedings volume, which appeared during the conference, was actually quadrilingual (adding Dari in Persian script), with English abstracts throughout. One of the greatest benefits of our annual conferences is the making of new friends, even across language barriers, and FEL can now count many Tajik linguists among its members. The excursion, on the Sunday after the conference, took us to the Kushana fort of Qahqaha (early first millennium AD), and one of the two villages, deeper in the Pamirs on the southern border of Tajikistan, where the Ishkashimi language is still spoken: we were given a warm welcome and festive meal by our local hosts.

As usual, FEL held its Annual General Meeting during the conference, and in the elections the present committee was elected (mostly re-elected) unopposed, with addition of some new co-opted members.

Your Editor has been travelling again, to international conferences on subjects of interest to FEL members, in India and the USA, which appear here under separate headings.

Chris Moseley

Cover Story: Northern Territory's small languages sidelined from schools

Greg Dickson, Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics,

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

It's been over a year since the government of the Northern Territory (NT), Australia developed a policy mandating English-only teaching for the first four hours of every school day in all schools. Previously, some schools were 'bilingual', where traditional languages such as Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri and Djambarrpuyŋu were used systematically alongside English to teach the school curriculum to young students. These Indigenous languages are in precarious positions of having no more than 3000 speakers, some with less.

The "Four hours of English" policy continues to cause upset and controversy among many Indigenous educators and language speakers as well as non-Indigenous educators, linguists and rights advocates.

At a Bilingual Education Symposium in June 2009 (see *Ogmios* #38, p.20) in the Australian capital, Canberra, Warlpiri educator Connie Walit was among the voices lobbying for greater recognition of minority Aboriginal languages:

"The one thing we have left from our parents and grandparents which is really our own is our language, Warlpiri. This is the last thing we have left to pass on to our children and grandchildren," (in Simpson 2009).

Another symposium attendee and Rembarrnga speaker, Miliwanga Sandy, was quoted on a national news website blog:

"What we want is both-way teaching in the school – not only for two hours a week but everyday there should be both-way teaching... That policy of speaking English only at the school is the wrong thing – it is not good for our children ... they will forget their language" (in Gosford, 2009)

The NT Government has continued to refuse to heed the calls of Indigenous constituents, expert advice and research, all espousing the benefits of bilingual education. A national current affairs television program, *Four Corners*, highlighted the issue in a special edition, broadcast in September 2009. Despite the fact that there are thousands of children speaking Indigenous languages as their mother tongue in the NT, the head of the Department of Education claimed that English is "the language of learning, the language of living" (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2009). At least one school has chosen to ignore the "4 Hours" policy, with Yirrkala CEC chairperson Djuwalpi Marika stating:

"They want to try to westernise Yolŋu people, they want to leave us in the mainstream culture like a white man... We'll ignore him. We'll ignore him." (ibid 2009).

Others persist with the struggle to overturn the government policy limiting Indigenous language education. Lobbying has come from church leaders, Indigenous leaders, educators, linguists and more. Petitions, postcard campaigns (as featured on this edition's front cover) and internet lobbying on popular sites such as Facebook and Google have all helped to raise awareness, but are yet to affect government policy.

The concerns of the effect of the "4 Hours of English" policy on the remaining Indigenous languages in the Northern Territory are ongoing and deep seated, exemplified by Warlpiri elder Jerry Patrick Jangala's comment on national television:

"Look like we going to lose our culture yes, and our law too... Yeah, really bad thing for us because we if we lose that we got no anything to say, no. We have to close our mouth all the time." (ibid 2009).

Further information

Going Back To Lajamanu - Four Corners program (videos, transcripts, print media):
<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2009/s2683288.htm>

Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory: Principles, policy and practice AIATSIS Research Symposium. Audio and video files available at: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/symposiaAV.html>

Supporters of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory Facebook group:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=35768410977>

Websites viewed 15th December 2009.

References

Australian Broadcasting Commission. (2009) *Four Corners* – Going Back to Lajamanu program transcript, viewed 4 November 2009, <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2009/s2685585.htm>.

Gosford, B. (2009). Miliwanga Sandy – language is our culture, our life, our identity, viewed 4th November 2009,

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/northern/2009/06/25/miliwanga-sandy-language-is-our-culture-our-life-our-identity/>.

Simpson, J. (2009). Doing the best by Indigenous children in remote communities, *Transient Languages and Cultures*, viewed 2nd July 2009,

http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/elac/2009/07/doing_the_best_by_indigenous_c.html.

Editor's Note: See also Aden Ridgeway's article below - *Language is Power; Let Us have Ours*.

2. Development of the Foundation

Resolution of the FEL XIII Conference, Khorog, Tajikistan, 26, September, 2009

The Foundation for Endangered Languages held its 13th International Conference in Khorog, Tajikistan from 24-26th September, 2009. The conference was organised jointly with the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Institute of Humanities, Khorog, Tajikistan and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK. This year the conference looked into the complex interrelation of endangered languages and history, especially how history can benefit from and serve the preservation and revitalisation of endangered languages.

The conference gathered more than 50 participants from 8 countries, including Tajikistan, Russia, USA, UK, Netherlands, Denmark, Pakistan and Australia. All the participants who have registered for the conference have become members of the FEL for the duration of a year.

The significant number of participants from Tajikistan attested to a great linguistic potential of the country, especially, those specialised in Pamiri and Yaghnobi languages. They have been documenting and studying these endangered languages at the Institute of Humanities in Khorog and the Institute of Languages and Literature in Dushanbe for many years. According to the Tajik Law on Language 'The Pamiri and Yaghnobi languages should be preserved and promoted'.

The Constitution of Tajikistan provides a legal umbrella for the preservation of these languages. Inspired by the state support, the scholars of the above-mentioned institutions have developed school textbooks for some of these endangered languages for the primary level students. However, all the participants of the conference felt that the implementation of the language preservation initiatives is not fully supported by the state officials and relevant institutions.

All the participants declared that the Pamiri and Yaghnobi languages are part of national heritage of Tajikistan, part of the heritage from the Arian nations, which inhabited the vast area of Central Asia before the spread of Persian and Turkish languages in this territory. In spite of large number of Pamiri speakers, the languages do not yet have their own script and are not taught in educational institutions. The conference participants unanimously agreed on an appeal to the Tajik government to implement the state laws on languages and take decisive steps towards the preservation and promotion of the Yaghnobi and Pamiri languages. Among the number of suggestions made by the conference delegates, the following have been found as priority for the improvement of minority languages situation in Tajikistan:

- Creation of script for the Yaghnobi and Pamiri languages
- Writing textbooks on these languages for the primary level classes
- Training for instructors in the Yaghnobi and Pamiri languages
- Teach the Yaghnobi and Pamiri languages in primary schools (1-4).

FEL and UNESCO Atlas partnership

The Foundation for Endangered Languages has entered into a contract to deal with the feedback from users of the on-line 3rd edition of

the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, which appeared in February 2009. As it is an interactive work, which welcomes comments from users, it has attracted numerous comments, suggestions and proposed amendments to the data, and it requires constant monitoring so that the most pertinent suggestions can be acted upon.

Since several members of the FEL Committee were involved in editing the Atlas, it seemed appropriate that FEL should be the body appointed to deal with the comments and suggestions. Work began on this project in October, and initially the comments are referred back to the regional Section Editors of the atlas for comment, and then passed on for further action if it necessary.

Meanwhile the printed version of the Atlas, with accompanying text, is expected out in January 2010, with simultaneous translations into French and Spanish.

Chris Moseley

2009 FEL grants announced

This year 10 grants were awarded for a total of approximately \$8,900 (US). Following is a list of the successful applicants, with brief details of their projects:

1. Ana Paula Barros Brandao - Paresi; Document the language. State of Mato Grosso, Brazil

The Paresi people, who number approximately 2000, live in the State of Mato Grosso, Brazil. The goal of this project is to document the Paresi language, contributing to its preservation and revitalization, and to advance the linguistic research about the language.

These Indians are divided in at least three subgroups: Kashíñiti, Waimaré, and Korázini (Kozarene). More recent information indicates that the majority of the population is bilingual in Paresi and Portuguese, with Paresi as their first language.

Paresi has a low number of speakers and it can be considered as having a high degree of endangerment. Approximately half a dozen or fewer speak the Waimaré variety, and the Kaxiniti variety is almost extinct with only two or three speakers. To date, the Paresi language has had limited documentation.

2. Robert Borges, Margot van den Berg - Kumanti and Papagadu; Publish a booklet.

Tapanahoni River, Eastern Surinam

With only approximately 50 Kumanti and 100 Papagadu speakers left, speakers of these ritual languages fear their extinction within the next 1-2 decades. Thus, documentation efforts will have to be made as soon as possible and assistance should be given to the speakers in the revitalization process. Ndyuka spirit culture has been studied from an anthropological perspective, but not the languages of the Kumanti and Papagadu spirit cults. Now Kumanti and Papagadu specialist as well as anthropologist and linguists want to work together to document and preserve these languages.

This project proposes research in Ndyuka territory in eastern Surinam in order to collect linguistic data on Kumanti and Papagadu in close collaboration with two renowned anthropologists as well as Ndyuka experts on Kumanti and Papagadu. It further aims at collecting and archiving linguistic data to facilitate a description of the basic linguistic structures. The output of the research will be returned to the community in the following year as materials in an accessible format (mostly likely booklets), such that the community will have a record of these languages should they become extinct. Findings will further be detailed in scientific papers and a chapter in the applicant's PhD thesis.

3. Martine Bruil - Ecuadorian Siona; Create reading materials. Cuyabeno, Ecuador

Ecuadorian Siona is an endangered language with less than 200 speakers left. More and more people within the Siona community are starting to speak only Spanish. In order to prevent the language from becoming extinct, it is necessary to set up a revitalization program. However, in order to revitalize a language, documentation is needed. In the case of Ecuadorian Siona, there is no documentation. This project is to lay a basis for the documentation of Ecuadorian Siona.

First, to record different types of stories and conversations in order to create a small corpus in the language. Secondly, to transcribe the different types of texts together with Siona speakers. These texts will be made available to the Siona community, so that they can use them as reading materials in schools. Finally to describe some specific aspects of the grammar using the transcribed texts and asking the Siona speakers for their views on the language.

The resulting description can be used by schoolteachers to get an idea of how to teach these difficult aspects of the grammar to children who no longer learn Siona as a first language.

4. Shuping Huang - *Isbukun Bunun; Build a language corpus.* Central Taiwan

Isbukun Bunun is an Austronesian language spoken in the central-southern mountainous areas of Taiwan. In addition to sinicization with Chinese immigrants, a biased language policy has suppressed the use of Isbukun Bunun in all public contexts and has seriously damaged its vitality. Today, the estimated speech population is less than 5,000, and around 90% of the fluent speakers are over 55 years old. Although elders are still actively using their native language, the younger generation mostly speaks Mandarin Chinese as their first language, and Isbukun is likely to go extinction if no remedy is postulated.

The present project is to document speech data in digital forms (audio, visual, and transcribed data) for the potential of its revitalization. Indigenous Isbukuns will be trained to collect, analyze, and document their native language.

By training native assistants, we will build a corpus of transcribed and translated texts accessible to educators, cultural organizations and language learners. This corpus will include natural narrations, conversation, and the interlinearized Bunun Bible. Native teachers of Isbukun Bunun who are looking for resources to improve their language proficiency and to generate teaching materials will be benefited by an easily-accessible on-line corpus.

5. Susan Kalt - *Quechua; Document language in rural Andes*

Cuzco, Peru; Cochabamba and Chuquisaca, Bolivia

To support children's acquisition and maintenance of Quechua (quz) in rural highland Bolivia and Peru. According to the most recent Peruvian Census (2007:2.4.1.) declaration of Quechua as the language learned in childhood declined 3.3 percent between 1993-2007. Most children are immersed in Spanish upon entering school, and Quechua language, culture and ways of teaching are poorly integrated into the school curriculum.

Our independent research team has studied children's Quechua and Spanish grammar in rural Andean schools and has promised to report results to community leaders, education authorities and those responsible for teacher education in Cuzco, Sucre and Cochabamba.

The project combines our report-back sessions with workshops in which we present parents, teachers and teacher educators with a prototype of a vehicle for incorporating indigenous input in the formal curriculum.

Our model is the "curriculum kit" offered by museums to elementary educators in Massachusetts. These kits are thematic, multimedia bundles that include books, songs, games, projects and lesson plans. Our team includes indigenous educators experienced in curriculum design who will train parents and teachers to develop, store and exchange

their own kits (Yachaywasipaq q'ipikuna) to promote Quechua language, culture and ways of teaching in the rural classroom.

6. John Kerby - *Toda Sedeq; Publish CD recordings of stories*

Nantou County, Taiwan

The present project aims to provide texts in Toda Sedeq by a native speaker in a format that can be used by children and other people aspiring to learn the language.

It will contain an audio version of the texts (CD) and Chinese and Japanese translations of the texts presented in a manner easily usable by learners with knowledge of one of the two languages of translation. Chinese is obviously the major vehicle of communication in Taiwan; however, older people generally have a good working knowledge of Japanese and younger people often study it as a second language.

The original texts were told by a renowned native speaker who is highly respected in the community and has a vast array of knowledge about traditional Sedeq culture. The texts are of extreme historical value and publishing them, even in limited edition, would spur interest both in language revival and traditional culture.

The current proposal is hoped to be one in a series of texts published for Chinese and/or Japanese readers.

7. Lila San Roque - *Duna; Publish a booklet*

Koroba-Kopiago, Papua New Guinea

The Duna people live in a remote area of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. They have a unique language and culture that has suffered intense upheaval and fracture over the past decades as people have come into contact with larger national and global communities, including missionising and mining organisations.

Today, Duna people are coping with severe disadvantage in areas of health, education, income and land productivity. People continue to take strength from their sense of Duna identity and community but a key feature of this identity – the Duna language – has a doubtful future. A big problem for the continuing use of Duna is the fact that it is not used for basic literacy and numeracy education in elementary schools, and that there are hardly any Duna print media available.

In April 2009 teachers in the Duna-speaking area got together to develop some school and health education materials written in Duna. The immediate aim of this project is to print these booklets and transport them to Duna schools and aid posts, which do not themselves have power or road access. Distributing the materials is a step towards Duna people being able to access basic education and life-saving information in their own language. It is a small beginning to a project that has the potential to grow and to change people's lives. Supporting Duna, as for any endangered language, is a way of treasuring diversity and enriching us all.

8. Ricard Vinas de Puig - *Tzotzil, Mixtec and other indigenous languages; Publish a dictionary*

North and Central America

This project aims at the promotion of the indigenous languages spoken by the members of the (im)migrant community in Eastern North Carolina. The main objective is the creation of a multilingual dictionary representing the languages of the community and with the active participation of the speakers.

Following a Participatory Action Research approach, the project will focus on the active participation of the community, both in the initial (linguistic survey and data elicitation) and in the final stages (design and publication). Such an approach allows for a return of the decision power to the community as its members are agentive participants in the whole process.

The end product will be a visual multilingual dictionary portraying the different language varieties of the community (including, but not limited to, Tzotzil, Mixtec, and other indigenous languages of North and Central America). The product will be returned to the community for its use and distribution.

The benefits of this project are two-fold: a self-empowering of the (im)migrant community; and an awareness raising of the linguistic diversity present within the 'Latino' population in the area. Additionally, this project might serve as a starting point for other projects, either from a linguistic or from an anthropological perspective.

9. Linda Westberg, Matthew Tasker - Sapara; Publish teaching materials

Pastaza province, Ecuador

To address the near extinction of the Sapara language which is presently only spoken by five elders who are all over 75 years of age, Project Yanawka has spent eight months using participative methods to work actively with the Sapara people to create innovative educational material in order to help teach their language in their schools.

This project is proactively addressing the fact that the Sapara have not received any concrete governmental support to create educational material which is vitally important in the attempt to revitalise their language. The project has a strong focus on using the process of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon to empower community members to think innovatively about present problems in order to produce creative solutions.

Through community-based workshops we are proud to have provided the first opportunity for the Sapara to collectively write a textbook and to help produce audiovisual material to document and teach their language to their children. It is our present aim to publish the textbook and produce the audiovisual material on CDs so that the Sapara are able to start using the material in their schools and homes to begin the process of revitalising their language.

10. Christina Willis - Darma, Byangsi and Chaudangsi; Document the Rang languages

Uttarakhand, India

To continue work on an endangered Tibeto-Burman language, called Darma, which is spoken in the Indian Himalayas: specifically, in conjunction with the ongoing Darma project, to begin to expand the scope of my project to include two other endangered Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the same area of India.

Both of these varieties are believed to be closely related to Darma, but without further investigation, the relationship of these three languages cannot be confirmed.

Moreover as world globalization continues and people abandon their traditional languages in favour of dominant varieties such as Hindi and English, the threat of permanent loss looms large. Combined these three varieties have no more than 6,000 speakers. With no writing system and marginal status, these languages must be documented before they are lost forever.

Here is a piece of non-linguistic news, which arrived just as we were going to press. It will certainly distress any of us who were present at our FEL conference in Gorno-Badakhshan, and experienced the scenic grandeur and the marvellous human hospitality of the place. Thanks to Vickie Abel for bringing this news item to your editor's attention:

Tajikistan: Quake leaves hundreds homeless

Deirdre Tynan, Eurasianet news web-site 4 January 2010

Hundreds of people are homeless in sub-zero weather conditions following an earthquake in Tajikistan.

The quake, registering 5.3 on the Richter scale, struck the Vanj District of Gorno-Badakhshan during the early morning of January 2. There were no reported fatalities.

Estimates of property damage vary widely. Authorities are downplaying initial reports that some 20,000 residents were left homeless by the quake. "According to the information we have 1,019 apartments are partly damaged, 98 houses are destroyed. That's about 70 percent of all the housing in the district center of Vanj. Preliminary information indicates that approximately 583 people are left without homes," Lt. Col. Fozil Kasimov, head of the Committee for Emergency Situations, told EurasiaNet on January 4.

Khusrav Sharipov, the head of the United Nation's Disaster Management project in Tajikistan, asserted that the damage was more extensive than officials were admitting. "According to the preliminary information we have, 98 houses are fully destroyed and 622 people lived in them. Also, 921 houses are partly damaged and 6,315 people were living in these homes," he said.

A spokesperson for the US Embassy in Dushanbe said that between 500 and 2,300 people were forced to evacuate either fully or partially destroyed homes.

The quake's epicenter was about 250-kilometers southeast of Dushanbe and 80-kilometers north of Khorog, the region's administrative capital, according to the US Geological Survey.

The villages of Rogh and Gishkhon were most severely affected by the quake, the Asia-Plus news agency quoted the deputy chairman of Vanj District, Azimjon Shamsiddinov, as saying. Displaced persons are staying with relatives, or are being housed in schools and hospitals, he added. A medical clinic, the prosecutor's office and two schools were also reportedly flattened. Early estimates put the cost of the damage at around \$1.5 million. Telephone and power lines remain down and the main road between Vanj and Khorog is blocked by rock falls and mudslides.

"The Tajik Government is mobilizing an assessment team consisting of specialists from the Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology, GlavGeology and Committee on Emergency Services from Dushanbe," a US Embassy spokesperson in Dushanbe said. The Tajik government has not requested international assistance, she added.

Editor's Note: Deirdre Tynan is a Bishkek-based reporter specializing in Central Asian affairs.

3. Endangered Languages in the News

In China, the Forgotten Manchu Seek to Rekindle Their Glory

By Ian Johnson

QAPQAL, China - Hasutai gingerly turns on the tape recorder and places it on a table. Out of it emanates something he thought he'd never hear: his native tongue, Manchu, spoken by a living person.

Hasutai is a Manchu, descendant of a nomadic warrior tribe that conquered China in the 17th century and ruled it for more than 250

years. Generations of persecution have all but eliminated the Manchus' language.

So Hasutai, who in the Manchu tradition goes by the one name, has come to this remote corner of China on a quest. His goal is to connect with members of the Xibe tribe - a reclusive group who speak a forgotten dialect similar to his people's. Along with a band of like-minded young people in half a dozen Chinese cities, Hasutai has started schools, Web sites, written textbooks and recorded the few remaining Manchu speakers for posterity.

"At some point you realize that the first language you're speaking isn't your mother tongue," says Hasutai. "You feel like an orphan. You want to find your mother."

Hasutai is at the vanguard of an explosion of ethnic awareness and pride across China. The nation's 1.3 billion people are overwhelmingly Han Chinese, but roughly 9% of the population are ethnic minorities: Manchus and Mongolians, Uighurs and Tibetans as well as dozens of others. Although their numbers are small, minorities live on nearly half of China's territory, including most of its borderlands. Over the past two years they have been at the center of bloody riots that claimed hundreds of lives.

As China's Communist Party marks its 60th year this week with a series of festivities to symbolize national unity, Chinese society is struggling to overcome growing ethnic rifts.

For decades, China's authoritarian policies kept a lid on ethnic expression. Now, as the party loosens control over society, individuals are defining themselves by their culture -- embracing who they are, what language they speak and what their ancestors accomplished. "This is not a hobby or an interest," says Hukshen, a 22-year-old Manchu language student. "This is a burning emotion I feel, a need to find out who I am."

On some levels, this search can be a positive force, helping to give meaning to people's lives. "Having these outlets helps stability," says Sara Davis, director of Asia Catalyst, a non-governmental organization that promotes grassroots organizing. "If [people] feel proud of their culture, they're invested in their society."

But because many of China's 55 minority groups still feel marginalized, expressions of anger and violence are on the rise. Over the past two years, China has suffered serious ethnic rioting, something rare in China's recent history. Earlier this year, riots in China's vast region of Xinjiang left nearly 200 dead and 2,000 wounded.

A heightened sense of ethnic identity also poses challenges because China has few national symbols or myths to hold the groups together. Most Manchus, for example, are unimpressed with the Great Wall, a defensive fortification built by Chinese to keep them out. Ma Rong, a prominent writer and thinker at Peking University, says society is fragmenting.

"We should rethink a new framework of nation building," Mr. Ma wrote in a recent essay. He called upon people to "endeavor to make the country consider the 'nation' as the most essential and the most fundamental identification group."

Much of the identification can be traced to the Communists' policies. Soon after the party took power in 1949, it adopted minority programs imported from the Soviets. The population was divided into ethnic groups. Today there are 56. For those who didn't fit neat categories, social scientists created classifications. Even the Chinese majority got their own label, "Han." The basic idea was to keep an eye on minority groups -- especially those in strategically important regions of the country like Tibet and Xinjiang -- in order to prevent uprisings.

The policies have been a double-edged sword. By emblazoning people's ethnicity on their identity cards and passports, few can forget their past. Yet newer policies push assimilation. Officially, Beijing

encourages minorities to learn languages and offers schooling, broadcasts and publications in minority languages. In practice, these offerings are minimal.

Minority education often takes place for a few grades in elementary school, while broadcasts are often just for an hour or two a day, or even a week. Coupled with economic forces that push them to learn Chinese, this neglect means that many young minorities have only a rudimentary understanding of their mother tongues.

For Manchus, the sense of loss was particularly acute. Manchu originated from China's northeast, which under the country's last dynasty, the Qing, was off-limits to Han Chinese immigration. As the dynasty collapsed toward the end of the 19th century, Chinese migrants flooded in. When Japan occupied Manchuria in the 1930s, Manchu language education was replaced by Japanese. Once China retook the region at the war's end, Japanese classes were replaced by Chinese. The Manchu language was never again taught on a wide scale.

As a result, virtually no Manchus today have heard Manchu spoken by their parents. For many, it was taboo. Gebu Algika, a 30-year-old sports promoter who helps run one of the Manchu classes in Beijing, said his grandfather, a prominent Manchu, was executed by the Communists shortly after the 1949 takeover for being a "reactionary."

His family fearfully changed its ethnic registration from Manchu to Han. "People born after 1950 don't speak it," he says. "It was politically dangerous."

As rulers of China's last dynasty, Manchus suffered especially under communist rule. Members of the court underwent ideological indoctrination: Most famously the last emperor, Puyi, whose life story was filmed by Bernardo Bertolucci, became a gardener. His relatives were forbidden to speak Manchu, and Manchu schools in Beijing closed down.

Today, only one elementary school in the country teaches Manchu, and that only as an elective. In universities and a handful of private schools, written Manchu is still taught but purely as a means to reading the Qing dynasty's archives.

From two million registered Manchus in China's 1980 census, the country now has nine million - a reflection of people's willingness to ignore stigmas and embrace their true heritage. For Hasutai, the desire to reconnect to his roots flared up when he was 11 and realized that his people's language was all but dead. He decided to teach himself written Manchu, using textbooks and old ethnographic recordings of Manchus.

Over time, he came into contact with other Manchus who shared the same goals. The group launched two Web sites, reprinted old textbooks, made up flashcards and collected recordings of Manchu speakers. Hasutai began holding classes in downtown Beijing. "We want it to be part of our life, a language we speak with our spouses and children," says Ridaikin, who also uses the Chinese name Hu Aibo. The 24-year-old graduate student in mathematics teaches one of the Manchu classes in Beijing.

The young men decided they needed more help and began by turning to academia to help promote their cause. That led to disappointment, with some scholars giving the impression that they weren't much interested in the language's revival.

Scholars familiar with the new language schools say the effort is inconsequential. "That may be regrettable but I'm afraid that's how it is," says Xu Danliang, a researcher of Manchu history at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. "People don't know how it's really spoken in daily life."

Indeed, with virtually no native speakers left, it isn't always clear how to speak the words. In the Qing dynasty, a textbook had been developed for Chinese wanting to learn their rulers' languages, with

Chinese characters to suggest how to pronounce Manchu letters. That helped, as did a system of transcribing Manchu script into Roman letters devised by European missionaries and academics. But even today, Manchus can't agree on how to pronounce one of the vowels, let alone how to make the language flow naturally.

Hasutai decided the answer lay in a remote corner of China: Qapqal, a county on the Kazakh border. In the 18th century, one of China's most famous emperors, Qianlong, sent members of the Xibe tribe to the newly conquered steppes of Central Asia.

Close Manchu allies, the Xibe spoke what essentially was a dialect of Manchu. Isolated from the currents that wiped out Manchu speakers in their heartland, the Xibe kept the language in this remote region.

In July he decided to head west. The 28-year-old quit his job writing software for the Chinese computer maker Founder Group and traveled with a friend, a 22-year-old broadcasting student. They took a 40-hour train ride from Beijing to Urumqi, then a 10-hour bus ride.

The two live in a dormitory of a Xibe middle school and take six hours of Manchu lessons a day from an elderly teacher. Most of the time they wander the streets, reveling in the fact that people here are speaking a language from a bygone era.

One afternoon, they amble down a dusty, poplar-lined street to a market and watch old women haggle over seeds. Then they stop into a restaurant, where a group of Xibe men invite them over for beers and chicken. Dressed in polo shirts, shorts and sandals, the young men hardly blend in with the sun-hardened locals, mostly farmers. But the Xibe are impressed at their resolve and flattered that they have come to learn from them. Still, they find it curious that the young men are only now learning their native tongue as adults. "You Manchus, you lost your character. What happened to you?" one asks in Chinese. The young men look sheepish.

"Their language isn't bad but it's bookish," another adds. "Some of the words they say, I don't understand. We speak colloquial." Hasutai interjects enthusiastically: "That's a great advantage. It's what we want to learn."

The men immediately stand up and drink to that, downing plastic cups of warm beer, the first of many toasts. Hasutai sees the time he will spend here -- he might stay for months -- as part of an effort to make him a better teacher. "Not everyone can come out here," he says. "We're taking it back to them."

In Beijing a few days later, a group of teachers excitedly discuss the two young men's adventure. It is clear that most won't go -- obligations hold them back in Beijing -- but they are awaiting the two's return.

Soon the students crowd into the classroom, the conference room of a company sympathetic to the Manchu revival. Dekjin, a 28-year-old teacher, turns to the whiteboard and in a blue marker writes in Manchu script a word. Next to it she writes in Roman letters the way the word is spoken: m-a-n-j-u; Manchu.

Then she turns to the class and says, "This is who we are."

From the Wall Street Journal, 4 October 2009 – the on-line article contains links to interactive sampling of the Manchu language. The author, Ian Johnson, can be contacted at: ian.johnson@wsj.com.

Strange sounds at minority languages song contest

By Simon Hooper, CNN

Leeuwarden, Netherlands (CNN) -- "This is the outfit our parents wore when they used to go out to dance. It's a traditional outfit," jokes Riemelmeester Malde.

Malde is addressing a theater audience in Friesland in the northern Netherlands where he and his bandmates are about to perform in their native Low German dialect at Liet International, a song contest for European minority languages.

But Malde's band is a rap trio rather than a folk troupe and their outfits are anything but traditional: boiler suits adorned with yellow and black hazard tape and garish hip hop baseball caps. Their instruments are laptops, microphones and loudhailers and, as their name suggests, De fofftig Penns owe more to 50 Cent than their Lower Saxony origins.

"We try not to have anything too middle of the road. Our contest is about new songs. The variety and originality are important," Liet coordinator Onno Falkena told CNN ahead of Saturday night's final in Leeuwarden, the Frisian capital.

Since being established in Friesland in 2002, Liet International has become a hub of the minority language music scene. If that sounds niche, it's worth noting that there are estimated to be almost 50 million minority or regional language speakers in Europe. Liet International casts its net for contestants across the entire continent.

In purely musical terms, the event also offers a kaleidoscopic antidote to the Eurovision Song Contest, in which the lingua franca is cheesy English-language pop. This year, other finalists represented genres as diverse as Sami metal, Occitan electronica, Celtic power pop and cultures from Karelian in the Arctic north to Sardinian in the Mediterranean south.

"You would think it would be a bit worthy with people singing in Latgalian or Scottish Gaelic," says Davyth Hicks, a Cornish-speaking musician and lobbyist for the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL) in Brussels. "But actually the musical standard is as good as anything you would get anywhere in the world in a competitive music market."

Remon De Jong, a local Frisian rapper and co-host for the evening, says the fact that the artists have consciously chosen to swim against the mainstream also allows their music to shine.

"If you want to be a big success you don't perform in a small language," he told CNN. "These acts are playing for the music's sake and for their own people. It's a very different mindset."

Yet the main purpose of Liet International is to promote linguistic diversity. In Friesland, regional officials say the local language is thriving: around 90 percent of the province's 640,000 population understands Frisian and the language is taught in schools alongside Dutch and English.

"In Friesland we are aware of our own richness," Culture Minister Jannewietske De Vries told CNN. "We have a language of the heart, Frisian. We have a language of the nation which is Dutch. And we have a world language which is English."

For the acts, many performing in languages whose speaking populations would struggle to fill a medium-sized football stadium, the contest is a chance to express solidarity and draw encouragement from other minority cultures.

"The situation of our language is very delicate," says Ruben Bada, who performs with Alfredo Gonzalez, a finalist from Spain's northern Asturias region. "At the moment it's at serious risk of dying. So the fact we can come here to sing in our language and be recognized outside our borders is very important."

At a parallel academic conference taking place in Leeuwarden, there is a sense of growing confidence that lesser-used languages are finally being taken seriously.

A European charter promoting and stimulating regional and minority languages came into force in 1998 and has now been ratified by 24 European countries.

Despite concerns voiced by many campaigners about a new language law in Slovakia which they say threatens the rights of the country's Hungarian-speaking minority, EBLUL President Neasa Ni Chinneide says that progress in bilingual regions such as Friesland is being made.

"We are gradually arriving at a position where minority rights and linguistic rights are being respected in a way they never were before," she told CNN.

Ni Chinneide also rejected notions of endangered languages as dying traditions, preserved for heritage's sake but essentially out of step with an increasingly homogeneous globalized culture.

She argues that communicating in minority languages equips people for the modern world by encouraging an openness to diversity and an aptitude for multilingualism.

"What we are talking about is an engagement with real life," she says. "I don't think anyone who speaks a so-called regional or minority language thinks of themselves as being preserved. They are just being who they are."

Back at Liet International, the 11 finalists have all performed and the international jury has returned from its deliberations with the final verdict. In turn, each member of the panel steps forward to deliver their scores, the bands gathered on stage nervously glancing up at the big screen leaderboard as the tallies are updated.

Until the final round of points it's a three-way fight, with Friulian guitarist Lino Straulino and Sardinian outfit Dr Drer & CRC Posse in contention. But in the end it's Sami rockers SomBy -- performing in genuinely traditional gakti costume -- who emerge victorious.

It's an impressive achievement for the precociously young, mostly female metal band from Northern Finland, who already have a record deal and an album under their belts -- despite performing in a language spoken and understood by no more than 30,000 people, according to UNESCO estimates.

Guitarist Oula Guttorm admits there isn't much of a metal scene back home where the better known form of Sami musical expression is an a capella chanting style known as yoik.

"We came here to bring things forward," Guttorm says. "We choose to sing in Sami because we want to make Sami culture more modern. Yoik is good music but we wanted to show that our music can be something else as well."

From CNN web-site (www.cnn.com), 3rd November 2009

The World Affairs Journal recently published this diatribe by John McWhorter against the value of endangered languages (in its Fall 2009 issue):

The Cosmopolitan Tongue: The Universality of English

John McWhorter

In depicting the emergence of the world's languages as a curse of gibberish, the biblical tale of the Tower of Babel makes us moderns smile. Yet, considering the headache that 6,000 languages can induce in real life, the story makes a certain sense.

Not long ago, 33 of the FBI's 12,000 employees spoke Arabic, as did 6 of the 1,000 employees at the American Embassy in Iraq. How can we significantly improve that situation is a good question. It's hard to learn Arabic, and not only because it's hard to pick up any new language. Iraqi Arabic is actually one of several "dialects" of Arabic that is as different from the others as one Romance language is from another. Using Iraqi Arabic even in a country as close as Egypt would

be like sitting down at a trattoria in Milan and ordering lunch in Portuguese.

Bookstore shelves groan under the weight of countless foreign-language self-teaching sets that are about as useful as the tonics and elixirs that passed as medicine a century ago and leave their students with anaemic vocabularies and paltry grammar that are of little use in real conversation.

Even with good instruction, it is fiendishly difficult to learn any new language well, at least after about the age of 15. While vilified in certain quarters as threatening the future of the English language in America, most immigrants who actually try to improve their English skills here in the United States find that they have trouble communicating effectively even with doctors or their children's schoolteachers.

Yet the going idea among linguists and anthropologists is that we must keep as many languages alive as possible, and that the death of each one is another step on a treadmill toward humankind's cultural oblivion. This accounted for the melancholy tone, for example, of the obituaries for the Eyak language of southern Alaska last year when its last speaker died.

That death did mean, to be sure, that no one will again use the word *demexch*, which refers to a soft spot in the ice where it is good to fish. Never again will we hear the word *'at* for an evergreen branch, a word whose final sound is a whistling past the sides of the tongue that sounds like wind passing through just such a branch. And behind this small death is a larger context.

Linguistic death is proceeding more rapidly even than species attrition. According to one estimate, a hundred years from now the 6,000 languages in use today will likely dwindle to 600. The question, though, is whether this is a problem.

As someone who has taught himself languages as a hobby since childhood and is an academic linguist, I hardly rejoice when a language dies. Other languages can put concepts together in ways that make them more fascinatingly different from English than most of us are aware they can be. In the Berik language in New Guinea, for example, verbs have to mark the sex of the person you are affecting, the size of the object you are wielding, and whether it is light outside. (*Kitobana* means "gives three large objects to a male in the sunlight.") Berik is doing fine for now, but is probably one of the languages we won't see around in 2109.

Assuming that we can keep 6,000 languages alive is the rough equivalent of supposing that we can stop, say, ice from developing soft spots. Here's why. As people speaking indigenous languages migrate to cities, inevitably they learn globally dominant languages like English and use them in their interactions with one another. The immigrants' children may use their parents' indigenous languages at home. But they never know those languages as part of their public life, and will therefore be more comfortable with the official language of the world they grow up in. For the most part, they will speak this language to their own children. These children will not know the indigenous languages of their grandparents, and thus pretty soon they will not be spoken. This is language death.

Many scholars hope that we can turn back the tide with programs to revive indigenous languages, but the sad fact is that this will almost never be very effective. Learning small indigenous languages tends to be a tough business for people raised in European languages: they tend to be more like Berik than like French.

I saw what this meant when I was assigned to teach some Native Americans their ancestral language. Filled with sounds it's hard to make unless you were born to them, it seemed almost *designed* to frustrate someone who grew up with English.

In the Central Pomo language of California, if one person sits, the word is—get ready—'c^háw. The mark at the beginning signifies a

catch in the throat, and what the raised little *h* requires shall not detain us here, but rest assured that it's a distinct challenge to render if you grew up speaking English. But if more than one person sits, it's a different word, *naphów*. If it's liquid that is sitting, as in a container, then the word is *c'óm*. The whole language is like this.

Yes, there is the success story of Hebrew, but that unlikely revival came about because of a happenstantial confluence of religion, the birth of a nation, and the obsession of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who settled in Palestine and insisted on speaking only Hebrew to all Jews. This extended to reducing his wife to tears when he caught her singing a lullaby to their child in her native Russian.

Few people not involved with nation building would be inclined to such a violent dedication to learning a new language, as is proven by the merely genuflective level of Hebrew that American Jews today typically master in Hebrew school. It also helped Hebrew's successful comeback that it had a long tradition of written materials. Only about 200 languages are truly written: most are only spoken.

What makes the potential death of a language all the more emotionally charged is the belief that if a language dies, a cultural worldview will die with it. But this idea is fragile. Certainly language is a key aspect of what distinguishes one group from another. However, a language itself does not correspond to the particulars of a culture but to a faceless process that creates new languages as the result of geographical separation. For example, most Americans pronounce disgusting as "diss-kussting" with a *k* sound. (Try it—you probably do too.) However, some people say "dizz-gusting"—it's easier to pronounce the *g* after a softer sound like *z*. Imagine a language with the word pronounced as it is spelled (and as it was in Latin): "diss-gusting."

The group speaking the language splits into two groups that go their separate ways. Come back five hundred years later, and one group is pronouncing the word "diss-kussting," while the other is pronouncing it "dizz-gusting." After even more time, the word would start shortening, just as we pronounce "let us" as "let's." After a thousand years, in one place it would be something like "skussting," while in the other it might be "zgustin." After another thousand, perhaps "skusty" and "zguss." By this time, these are no longer even the same language.

This is exactly why there are different languages—what began in Latin as *augustus* became *agosto* in Spanish and, in French, *août*, pronounced as just the single vowel sound. Estonian is what happened when speakers of an earlier language migrated away from other ones; in one place, Estonian happened, in the other, Finnish did. And so while Finnish for *horse* is *hevonen*, in Estonian it's *hobune*.

Notice that this is not about culture, any more than saying "diss-kussting" rather than "diz-gusting" reflects anything about one's soul. In fact, all human groups could, somehow, exhibit the exact same culture—and yet their languages would be as different as they are now, because the differences are the result of geographical separation, leading to chance linguistic driftings of the kind that turn *augustus* into *agosto* and *août*. In this we would be like whales, whose species behave similarly everywhere, but have distinct "songs" as the result of happenstance. Who argues that we must preserve each pod of whales because of the particular songs they happen to have developed? The diversity of human languages is subject to the same evaluation: each one is the result of a roll of the dice.

One school of thought proposes that there is more than mere chance in how a language's words emerge, and that if we look closely we see culture peeping through. For example, in its obituary for Eyak, the *Economist* proposed that the fact that *kultahl* meant both leaf and feather signified a cultural appreciation of the unique spiritual relationship of trees and birds. But in English we use *hover* to refer both to the act of waiting, suspended, in the air and the act of staying close to a mate at a cocktail party to ward off potential rivals. Notice how much less interesting that is to us than the bit about the Eyak and leaves and feathers.

For the better part of a century, all attempts to conjure any meaningful indication of thought patterns or cultural outlook from the vocabularies and grammars of languages has fallen apart in that sort of way, with researchers picking up only a few isolated shards of evidence. For example, because "table" has feminine gender in Spanish (*la mesa*), a Spanish speaker is more likely—if pressed—to imagine a cartoon table having a high voice. But this isn't exactly what most of us would think of as meaningfully "cultural," nor as having to do with "thought." And in fact, Spanish speakers do not go about routinely imagining tables as cooing in feminine tones.

Thus the oft-heard claim that the death of a language means the death of a culture puts the cart before the horse. When the culture dies, naturally the language dies along with it. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true. Groups do not find themselves in the bizarre circumstance of having all of their traditional cultural accoutrements in hand only to find themselves incapable of indigenous expression because they no longer speak the corresponding language. Native American groups would bristle at the idea that they are no longer meaningfully "Indian" simply because they no longer speak their ancestral tongue. Note also the obvious and vibrant black American culture in the United States, among people who speak not Yoruba but English.

The main loss when a language dies is not cultural but aesthetic. The click sounds in certain African languages are magnificent to hear. In many Amazonian languages, when you say something you have to specify, with a suffix, where you got the information. The Ket language of Siberia is so awesomely irregular as to seem a work of art.

But let's remember that this aesthetic delight is mainly savored by the outside observer, often a professional savorer like myself.

Professional linguists or anthropologists are part of a distinct human minority. Most people, in the West or anywhere else, find the fact that there are so many languages in the world no more interesting than I would find a list of all the makes of Toyota. So our case for preserving the world's languages cannot be based on how fascinating their variegation appears to a few people in the world. The question is whether there is some urgent benefit to humanity from the fact that some people speak click languages, while others speak Ket or thousands of others, instead of everyone speaking in a universal tongue. As 5,500 languages slowly disappear, the aesthetic loss is not to be dismissed. And in fact dying languages become museum pieces. For this reason it is fortunate and crucial that modern technology is recording and analyzing them more thoroughly than ever before. Perhaps a future lies before us in which English will be a sort of global tongue while people continue to speak about 600 other languages among themselves. English already is a de facto universal language—yet those who would consider it a blessing if everyone over 15 spoke an artificial language like Esperanto are often somewhat *diss-kussted* that this is the status English is moving closer toward decade by decade.

Obviously, the discomfort with English "taking over" is due to associations with imperialism, first on the part of the English and then, of course, the American behemoth. We cannot erase from our minds the unsavory aspects of history. Nor should we erase from our minds the fact that countless languages—such as most of the indigenous languages of North America and Australia—have become extinct not because of something as abstract and gradual as globalization, but because of violence, annexation, and cultural extermination. But we cannot change that history, nor is it currently conceivable how we could arrange for some other language to replace the growing universality of English. Like the QWERTY keyboard, this particular horse is out of the barn.

Even if the world's currencies are someday tied to the *renmimbi*, English's head start as the lingua franca of popular culture, scholarship, and international discourse would ensure its linguistic dominance. To change this situation would require a great many centuries, certainly too long a span to figure meaningfully in our assessment of

the place of English in world communications in our present moment.

And notice how daunting the prospect of Chinese as a world language is, with a writing system that demands mastery of 2,000 characters in order to be able to read even a tabloid newspaper. For all of its association with Pepsi and the CIA, English is very user-friendly as the world's 6,000 languages go. English verb conjugation is spare compared to, say, that of Italian—just the third-person singular *s* in the present, for example. There are no pesky genders to memorize (and no feminine-gendered tables that talk like Penelope Cruz).

There are no sounds under whose dispensation you almost have to be born as a prerequisite for rendering them anywhere near properly, like the notorious trilly *r̃* sound in Czech.

Each language is hard in its own way. Try explaining to a foreigner why, if you get a busy signal, you might say, "I'll try her tomorrow," but you can also say, "Tomorrow I turn 25," without using the *will* to indicate the future. But as a language all people are required to learn, would it really be better to have one like Russian, with three genders, fiercely subtle and irregular verb marking, and numbers so hard to express properly that Russians themselves have trouble with them?

There are those who worry not only that English will become *primus inter pares*, but that it will finally eat up even the last remaining 600 languages as well. But this stretches the imagination, to be sure. As long as there are Japanese people meeting and raising children in Japan, amidst a culture in which Japanese is enshrined as the language of not only speech but education, literature, and journalism, it is hard to conceive even of the first step toward the day when a child raised in Osaka would speak English and think of Japanese as a language his parents spoke when they "didn't want me to understand." Eyak is one thing, but the languages spoken by substantial populations and well entrenched in writing are another.

However, as is increasingly clear today, under the terms of the present order we must prepare for unforeseen circumstances and treat the surprising as normal. Suppose global warming patterns forced population relocations of unprecedented volume and speed: perhaps this could lead to the use of English as a *lingua franca* among displaced hordes of assorted extractions, such that children raised in these new settings would speak English instead of Finnish or Japanese or Croatian.

Or just maybe the process could happen as the result of some less dramatic and more gradual process. We might conceive of humanity continuing to benefit from the extinct 600 languages as taught ones. People could savor Tolstoy in the original Russian as we today read Virgil in Latin.

Viscerally, as a great fan of Russian for many years, I am as uncomfortable as anyone else with the prospect of Russian no longer being passed on to children. However, I am also aware that mine is not necessarily a logical discomfort. Coming back to the Tower of Babel, can we say that the benefits of linguistic diversity are more important, in a way that a representative number of humans could agree upon, than the impediment to communication that they entail? Especially when their differentiation from one another is, ultimately, a product of the same kind of accretionary accidents that distinguish a woodchuck from a groundhog?

At the end of the day, language death is, ironically, a symptom of people coming together. Globalization means hitherto isolated peoples migrating and sharing space. For them to do so and still maintain distinct languages across generations happens only amidst unusually tenacious self-isolation—such as that of the Amish—or brutal segregation. (Jews did not speak Yiddish in order to revel in their diversity but because they lived in an apartheid society.) Crucially, it is black Americans, the Americans whose English is most distinct from that of the mainstream, who are the ones most likely to live separately from whites geographically and spiritually.

The alternative, it would seem, is indigenous groups left to live in isolation—complete with the maltreatment of women and lack of access to modern medicine and technology typical of such societies. Few could countenance this as morally justified, and attempts to find some happy medium in such cases are frustrated by the simple fact that such peoples, upon exposure to the West, tend to seek membership in it.

As we assess our linguistic future as a species, a basic question remains. Would it be inherently evil if there were not 6,000 spoken languages but one? We must consider the question in its pure, logical essence, apart from particular associations with English and its history. Notice, for example, how the discomfort with the prospect in itself eases when you imagine the world's language being, say, Eyak.

John McWhorter is a linguist, political commentator, and lecturer in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University.

Advertisers find a new voice in historic campaign

From the Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November 2009

Australian advertising history will be made tonight with the screening of a television commercial featuring an indigenous language voiceover with English subtitles.

The 30-second ad promoting greater literacy levels among indigenous children features the voice of an elder from Tennant Creek, a remote community in the Central Desert, speaking in Warumungu language.

Judy Nakkamarra Nixon speaks for most of the ad, revealing that only one in five children in remote indigenous communities is able to read to a minimum standard by year 9. The ad's screening marks the start of an appeal mounted by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, of which the Herald is a media partner. to change that.

It also represents a milestone in advertising for an industry that until recently has largely ignored indigenous Australians.

The recent reworking of the Qantas I Still Call Australia Home ad, featuring members of the Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir singing in a Torres Strait Islands dialect, Kala Lagaw Ya, has gone some way to rectifying that.

Tonight's ad goes a step further in featuring an indigenous language spoken for most of it.

Jonathan McCauley, the director of Eleven Communications, the ad agency that made the clip, said he hoped the ad and the language used would grab the attention of viewers. "This isn't an issue that is top of mind for most people so we needed to jolt people into thinking about it," he said.

Mr McCauley said the director was forced to revert to English for the last 10 seconds of the ad because the word "donate" does not exist in Warumungu. The polysyllabic language, which uses at least two words for every word of English, presented challenges.

The chairwoman of the foundation, Mary-Ruth Mendel, said Mrs Nixon, a former nurse and teacher, recognised the importance of maintaining her native language because she saw it as "a bridge between the old and the modern worlds".

Survey says 70% of Colombia's ethnic groups still speak native languages

From Colombia News in Colombiareports.com web-site, 27 November 2009

A Colombian ethno-linguist has been charged with designing a program to ensure the preservation of the 68 different native languages that exist in Colombia.

"Every time a language dies it is as if the world had many faces and one of them was to vanish forever," stated the ethno-linguist Jon Landaburu, who is in charge of devising the protection program for the diverse languages spoken by Colombia's indigenous tribes as well as its Caribbean islanders and people of African descent.

The world recently awoke to a new concern; the extinction of minor languages.

Despite having survived centuries with their traditions and culture, an increasing number of communities are succumbing to the overwhelming power of bigger cultural groups and their languages. The likes of English, Spanish and Mandarin are gradually crushing smaller languages into non-existence.

"The situation is difficult because when there is a culture with overpowering superiority over others ... parents often do not transmit their mother-tongue to their children and the children learn the language of the conqueror because it will give them advantages," explained Landaburu in a report by the newspaper *El Espectador*.

According to the ethnolinguist, Colombia has a staggering diversity of dialects which derive from 13 source languages, and authorities have decided to implement a law to protect both the languages and their cultures.

The law is currently being discussed in the Senate by the Ministry of Culture, and Landaburu's organization expects it to be passed before the end of the year. President Alvaro Uribe is then due to sanction the bill.

Developing a defence mechanism for these languages required working closely with each community. A large survey was therefore conducted of the various communities which enabled researchers to determine that 70% of these ethnic groups - comprising around 1.4 million people - still spoke their own languages.

Some communities, such as the Cuna from the dept of Uraba (where almost 95% of the population still speak the language of their ancestors) told researchers that they had no problems maintaining their dialect and that in fact it was an essential part of their society. However, other groups have all but lost their heritage and ancient dialects are spoken by very few, and mainly elders.

"A language is protected by the people who speak it and the fundamental point is transmission through the family, but the survival of the language also depends on external conditions," concluded Landaburu, stating that he believes that by nurturing a more positive atmosphere and encouraging use, young people will be more enthusiastic about speaking their native tongue and thus more inclined to continue its transmission.

Aboriginal identity threatened through loss of language

From the Lethbridge Herald, Lethbridge, Alberta, 13 November 2009

By Caroline Zentner

Finding a person under the age of 20 who speaks Blackfoot is so rare that elders are concerned the loss of the language will lead to loss of identity. Members of the Blackfoot Confederacy gathered at Red Crow Community College Friday to brainstorm ways of renewing the language for upcoming generations.

"We don't have a generation to carry on the language, for the most part," said Betty Bastien, a University of Calgary social work professor.

Bastien studied intergenerational trauma of First Nations in a four-year research project funded by Health Canada. Epidemics, loss of

the buffalo, residential schools and the reservation system created trauma for First Nations people historically and the consequences are evident in today's social, economic and political problems. "After working with the elders for four years, we've come to understand that the way any society governs itself is through their language," Bastien said during a break in the day-long meeting. "Their language is what creates distinctions in the world in which we live." Language gives people a way to relate to the world and make sense of things. Blackfoot and other indigenous languages carry traditional knowledge about the world which is needed to survive. In ancient times, Blackfoot people were spiritually connected to the world around them. That relationship has been severed and, with it, the connection to human survival needs. "The language — it informs us and governs how we relate to that world in which we live. It's premised on balance," Bastien said. "In the olden days, all the kids spoke the native language," said Bruce Wolf Child, an elder advisor at Red Crow Community College. "When I was at the residential school, we were told to forget about our language and punished if we spoke it. Today we're trying to bring it back because our kids are getting lost." Elders on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, Mont., are also worried and they hope to increase the opportunities for young people to listen to Blackfoot language speakers. Having a gathering place where young people can hear the language being spoken by elders as they tell their stories creates a link between the generations much more than attending an Indian-language class, said Robert Many Guns, a Blackfeet elder. "We're trying to find an alley to get to our younger generation to make them interested in understanding the language," he said.

Herman Yellow Old Woman, a leader and tribal councillor with the Siksika First Nation, agreed that efforts must go beyond language classes in school.

"We're teaching them in the schools but the current curriculum isn't working," Yellow Old Woman said. "They emphasize too much on the spelling instead of speaking and understanding the language."

Blackfoot classes are offered in Siksika schools as an option but Yellow Old Woman would like to see it made a priority. In addition, all school employees should be able to speak the language and parents and grandparents who speak Blackfoot should make a point of speaking the language to younger generations.

"In Siksika, my generation is between 35 and 45 and we're still at 80 to 85 per cent fluency," he said. "But it's the generation after that that we're worried about. Twenty per cent at the most are Blackfoot speakers. Below 20, I can honestly say there's no speakers any more."

Language of power is focus in legal action over sackings

From the Times Higher Education Supplement, 3 September 2009

By Melanie Newman

Three academics who were sacked by a Japanese university on charges of "academic harassment" have claimed that they were ousted for attempting to teach an indigenous language.

The professors of educational linguistics, who have asked not to be named, are bringing legal action against Hokkaido University of Education after being fired by the institution in February.

Academic harassment - a relatively new concept in Japan - is defined as the abuse of power of one's academic position.

The university has accused the academics of "violating the human rights of the students under their supervision" by forcing them to

work on an "extraordinary volume of assignments" for their own research purposes.

As a result, nine students suffered physical or psychological problems including hallucinations, the institution claimed.

Reports in the Japanese media have highlighted the fact that the three staff had chosen the indigenous language of Ainu as a theme for collaborative research for students majoring in English-language education.

The Ainu people are indigenous to northern Japan, where Hokkaido University is situated.

Historically marginalised, their language is now on the verge of extinction.

Recommendations made recently by a government committee to tackle discrimination of the Ainu people have been opposed by some conservative groups in Japan, which fear that the measures proposed could open the door to land claims and affirmative action.

At the time of their sacking, the three Hokkaido professors were teaching Ainu courses, with the approval of the university, and developing Japanese-Ainu dictionaries.

In 2007, two of the professors started constructing a database of books written in Ainu held by Japanese libraries, enlisting the help of student volunteers.

The professors said that while it was true that some students made complaints, the university "exploited these complaints and fabricated a story about harassment".

In a statement to Times Higher Education, they say the university accused them of "creating a cult group and engaging in mind control of the students".

The professors allege that their department head was told by a senior manager to stop them from teaching Ainu, a claim denied by the university.

After they were removed from their jobs, the Ainu language and culture classes they taught were scrapped, the professors say, adding that Japanese-Ainu dual-language signposts within the university have been taken down.

Yoshiya Goto, the university's executive director, denied that the teaching of the Ainu language had played any part in their dismissal and reiterated the allegation that the professors had "abused students' human rights".

He said: "Our resolution was not arbitrary but was based on a thorough investigation and followed the appropriate procedures. Their complaint is therefore entirely false."

He added that the professors had applied for an injunction against their dismissal at the Sapporo District Court, but their attempt had failed.

Ancient tongue sits on the brink of extinction

From the Phnom Penh Post, 13 November 2009

By Sebastian Strangio and Sam Rith

One of Cambodia's oldest known languages is teetering on the brink of extinction, according to language experts who say its loss will erase the last vestiges of a culture stretching back far into Southeast Asia's prehistory.

The S'aoch tongue, a distant relation to modern Khmer, is now spoken by just a handful of villagers in Kampot province, and linguists say it is unlikely to survive for another generation.

Jean-Michel Filippi, a professor of linguistics at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, said the S'aoch, confined to the small hamlet of Samrong Loeu, now number just 110 people, of whom only about a tenth speak the language.

"There are no more than 10 fluent speakers," said Filippi, who has transcribed around 3,500 S'aoch words in the course of his study of the language.

Even these could only be considered "virtual" speakers, he said, in the sense that day-to-day life no longer gives them any opportunities to use their mother tongue.

Based on interviews with the S'aoch, Filippi said the banning of the language by the Khmer Rouge and the group's increasing contact with the Khmer majority had sped the "rejection" of their native norms and practices.

He cited one S'aoch villager who said the mother tongue had died out because it no longer had much practical relevance for the community. "The people who have money use the Khmer language.

Sometimes we may use it, but strictly between ourselves. And when there are Khmer people, we only use Khmer," the villager said.

S'aoch belongs to the Austroasiatic family of languages, an indigenous language group that also includes Khmer and Vietnamese, as well as minority languages in India, Myanmar and Malaysia. Gerard Diffloth, a historical linguist and retired professor of Austroasiatic languages, said the word s'aoch – a modern Khmer term meaning "skin infection" – hinted at the group's historically unequal relationship with the Cambodian majority, but belied the tongue's scientific and cultural importance.

"It's very ancient, much more ancient than Angkor and pre-Angkor. It's so ancient that even researchers don't really know how far back it goes," he said, adding that its inevitable loss will destroy one of the few remaining links with the ancient history of mainland Southeast Asia.

"When they disappear, a whole chapter of history will just vanish," he said.

Despite the decline in the language's use, S'aoch, on the rare occasions it is used, has remained relatively immune to the linguistic influence of Khmer and remains a time capsule from the depths of prehistory.

"The knowledge the elder members of the community have of their language remains intact, a kind of virtual or frozen knowledge," Filippi said.

Linguistically, S'aoch has "almost unique phonetic peculiarities", he added, including a "breathy" voice – which adds a "sepulchral" effect to the speaker's tone – and a "creaky" voice, resulting from the insertion of a glottal stop in the middle of a syllable. Ros Chantrabot, deputy director of the Royal Academy of Cambodia, said studies of S'aoch and the Kingdom's other "micro-languages" were thin on the ground and voiced concerns they would eventually be lost.

"I am concerned about [losing] the Poa, So'ong and S'aoch languages," he said. "We have to research them in depth in order to preserve and understand our history more clearly." But experts said the fate of the S'aoch is hardly an isolated case, and that efforts to revive such languages around the world rarely manage to stem the tide of cultural absorption.

Revitalisation, usually pursued through the creation of a written script and teaching materials in native languages, is also unlikely for Cambodia's smallest language groups.

"It is obvious that a revitalisation would not be possible in the case of the S'aoch," Filippi said. "In many cases, the speakers of endangered languages consider that speaking their language and teaching it to

their children is a handicap, and they prefer to switch to the majority language.”

Filippi said that two languages disappear each month, and that 94 percent of those spoken worldwide are confined to less than 2 percent of the world's population. Half of the world's 6,700 languages, he added, will likely disappear in the next century. Diffloth said the process of modern nation-building and economic development had gradually eroded the cultural isolation enjoyed by micro-languages such as the S'aoch, exposing them to the use of standardised national languages.

“[The problem] is the idea that a country should speak one language,” he said. “Unfortunately, it's impossible to avoid.”

Cambodia's imperilled languages

- **S'aoch:** Population of 110, in Kampot province
- **Somray:** circa 300 (Pursat)
- **Poa:** c 300 (Preah Vihear)
- **Samre:** c 400 (Koh Kong)
- **So'ong:** c 500 (Kampong Speu)
- **Samre:** c 400 (Koh Kong)
- **Kacho:** c 4,000 (Ratanakiri)
- **Stieng:** c 4,000 (Kratie, Monduliri, Vietnam)
- **Jarai:** c 20,000 (Ratanakiri, Vietnam)
- **Phnong:** c 20,000 (Monduliri)

Source: Jean-Michel Filippi, 2008

Language is power; let us have ours

Extract from the Sydney Morning Herald/National Times, 26th November 2009

By Aden Ridgeway

Once, while travelling through many remote communities on the Tanami Track, an old man said to me, "Come speak my language and I'll speak yours".

It was only then that I completely understood what my own grandmother, who spoke the Gumbaynggirr language of the NSW north coast, had taught me about the importance of language in our lives - it goes to the heart and soul of one's identity and gives connection to family, country and community. It instils a sense of enormous pride and provides the strength from which to see the world beyond the fences of your own community - then everything seems possible.

I look forward to the day when Canberra makes a decision that one verse of our national anthem should be sung in an Aboriginal language.

The way we deal with indigenous language goes to the heart of how we see Aboriginal communities, how we see ourselves and how we deal with the range of problems that exist in these communities as being "in" or "outside" of the national story and, therefore, deserving of proper treatment.

Yet the Northern Territory and Federal governments have mandated a requirement that all Aboriginal children in all Territory schools

must learn in English for the first four hours of learning from next year, sidelining education in indigenous languages.

This decision is especially short-sighted, demonstrating a mindset plaguing Aboriginal affairs that devalues and demonises the strength and value of culture and identity within our indigenous communities.

In the ongoing debate about bilingual education, addressing "disadvantage" is used as the mask to hide opposition to our claims for language and identity. Our treatment at the hands of the broader society is presented as lying outside the national story - a story told, for the most part, in English.

If we are ever to hope that things will get better in many of these communities, then change must start with each Australian appreciating the cries for recognising indigenous identity.

How many of us can claim to speak a language other than English? How many of us can speak an Aboriginal language?

Very few, I would imagine. My own language, Gumbaynggirr, is now only spoken by a handful of people but we are determined to reverse that trend.

As such, we need to cast our minds ahead one generation to understand fully the detrimental impact of the Territory decision. If Aboriginal children are not taught in their own language first, then what will become of the identity and culture of the people of the future?

This is not to say that English should not be taught. Of course it should. But the reality in northern Australia is not whether maintaining language hinders a child's future but whether the best of life's opportunities are available to all.

Much of the evidence the world over suggests that bilingual and multilingual language processes accelerate one's capacity to acquire English. So why are Aboriginal children being treated as if this were not so? Why is the role that parents and grandparents play in teaching their children being diminished?

Aboriginal languages, for the most part, are not officially recognised and, therefore, sit outside the nation's formal structures.

If English education is to be seen as a tool for improving access to life's opportunities, then not only does the future depend upon quality education but a capacity to find space for Aboriginal languages within our curriculum.

The school's role, like that of broader society, should be about embracing and validating the first language of children, not assuming without evidence that the first language holds Aboriginal children back.

Surely knowing more is better than knowing less.

Knowing more has certainly not held the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, back in his dealings with China, and knowing more has certainly not held back Noel Pearson, who speaks his own language, and several others including English.

I ask myself, "Why must it be so that the predominant player in the lives of Aboriginal communities must always be government?"

This Federal Government needs to be careful that its current actions do not lead to greater dependency as a direct result of its interventionist policies, particularly in the north and the remote parts of central Australia.

While much needs to be done in these places, the reality is it can't be achieved without the involvement of the people most affected and certainly not through ill-thought out interventions.

Senator Aden Ridgeway is a Gumbaynggirr man from Northern New South Wales, Australia.

4. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

We are not going to surrender'

Trying to re-launch the only Italian-language journal devoted to minorities, indigenous peoples and stateless nations

This message is directed to several peoples engaged in the defence of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and stateless nations.

Many of these may remember "La causa dei popoli" [The cause of peoples], the only Italian-language journal dealing with such topics. Launched in 2001, this journal had a troubled life and released four issues:

1. Various themes including Brazil's Indians and indigenous/minority TV networks;
2. Indigenous peoples of the South Pacific (incl. articles by Darlene Keju-Johnson, Garth Nettheim, Mililani Trask and Oscar Temaru);
3. Indigenous peoples of Asia (incl. articles by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Joan Carling, Mutang Urud and Parshuram Tamang);
4. Native Americans in the twenty-first century (incl. articles by Tim Giago, Duane Chpaman, Jon Reyhner and Renate Domnick).

Issues 1 and 2 were released in 2001, then, after a long pause, two further issues appeared in 2005. Then followed a new pause.

The four issues are only available on the Internet:
http://www.popoliminacciati.org/la_causa_dei_popoli.page

Now we are going to relaunch the journal. According to what we've learned, this will only be feasible if we succeed in gathering many people - activists, scholars, journalists - working in this field. In Italy there are many people interested in such topics, but there is no specialising journal in Italian. Hence the place for our venture.

We want to avoid the mistakes of the past: the journal must be open to a wide range of ideas, proposals, including associations, scholars, and all concerned people. Many of them already gave our contribution. We hope more will follow. It is not easy to talk about such topics in Italy, but we are not going to surrender.

So we hope you will help us - not only by writing articles and reviews, as some of you already did, but even by making proposals. "La causa dei popoli" will thus be a journal conceived by an international community of concerned people, instead of being conceived by an association only.

Well, let's come to the core. A new issue is nearly ready, dealing with minorities of Turkey. We think it should be completed, given the relevance of the subject. Among others, it will include the unpublished Italian version of the famous interview where Nobel Prize laureate Orhan Pamuk clearly condemns the Armenian genocide.

If this issue is nearly ready, you can still contribute by sending book and film reviews. They should not exceed 400 words and reach us by the end of March. Besides that, we solicit suggestions concerning the topic of the issue to appear after the abovementioned one. Please remember that our journal deals with any region of the world, from Western Europe to the South Pacific. The journal should appear twice in a year, so it cannot deal with yesterday's events.

Well, we think that's all for now. We thank you very much for your attention and take the chance to send you our warmest wishes for the New Year.

Alessandro Michelucci
Documentation Centre on Threatened Peoples
PO Box 6282
I-50127 Florence
Italy
www.popoliminacciati.org

Trace Foundation

Trace conferences, Tibetan classes and grants

On Oct. 23-24 2009, Trace Foundation hosted the third event in its lecture series *Minority Language in Today's Global Society*, entitled *Vitality and Viability of Minority Languages*. Since 1993 Trace Foundation in New York is doing a remarkable job in keeping an eye on Tibet and its multiple challenges. The conference gathered several specialists, such as Joshua Fishman, Elliot Sperling, Joseph Lo Bianco, Trowo Gyaltzen, Arienne Dwyer, Thupten Phuntsok and Jaye Trabu among others. Prof. Fishman elaborated on the need of the three essential virtues of patience, prudence and functional specificity.

According to him, most weakened languages of the world survive in the homes and communities and therefore, the reversal of language shift should start from there.

Grants for IATS 2010

Grants are offered by Trace Foundation to Tibetan scholars from the People's Republic of China participating to the 12th International Association of Tibetan Studies (IATS) B-C. University, Vancouver, Aug.2010, whose abstracts have been accepted (*deadline Jan.31, 2010*)

5. Allied Societies and Activities

AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples

Call for papers

AlterNative seeks papers in indigenous languages. The world is currently facing a crisis in the revitalisation of indigenous languages. On average, every fortnight an indigenous language becomes extinct as sole surviving speakers pass away or indigenous languages are overwhelmed by those of a dominant culture. In line with this ethos, AlterNative aims to publish one article in its original language per issue.

AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal which aims to present indigenous views from native indigenous perspectives. We are dedicated to the analysis and dissemination of indigenous knowledge that belongs to cultural, traditional, tribal and aboriginal peoples, as well as first nations, from around the world.

Papers should respond to one or more themes of the journal:
Origins; Place; Peoples; Community; Culture; Traditional and oral history; Heritage; Colonialism; Power; Intervention; Development; Self-determination.

Submission and deadlines:

Articles should be in an indigenous language and address the themes of the journal. AlterNative primarily publishes substantive articles that

address a particular indigenous issue or theme. Each article should be accompanied by a 100-150 word abstract in English.

Submissions received before 31 December 2009 will be considered for our first general issue of 2010. However, we accept submissions throughout the year via our online portal.

For more details, please visit our website:
<http://www.alternative.ac.nz/>

Consortium on Training in Language Documentation and Conservation

From Margaret Florey

We are pleased to announce the formation of the *Consortium on Training in Language Documentation and Conservation* (CTLDC). The CTLDC has been established as an international response to the crisis confronting the world's languages by co-Directors Carol Genetti (University of California at Santa Barbara and InField founder) and Margaret Florey (co-founder and co-Director of the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity).

The central aim of the CTLDC is to build a global resource for all those who are actively working to maintain linguistic diversity through fostering collaboration among people who are engaged in training in language documentation and conservation. The CTLDC will provide a critical network to foster communication and collaboration, and enhance the sharing of skills and resources.

An international Planning Group has been established to guide the development of the Consortium. The Planning Group (listed below) comprises representatives of organizations which are at the forefront of supporting linguistic diversity through planning and administering training programs, creating funding strategies to support linguistic diversity, designing tools to provide more accurate data on trends in linguistic diversity, establishing resource networks, and developing and influencing language policy. UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Section has agreed to host the first meeting of the Planning Group in Paris in late 2010. That meeting will allow us to prioritize activities and establish the structure and goals of the Consortium.

Following the 2010 meeting, the CTLDC will open for international membership and will begin to work towards its longer-term goals, to

- construct a clearinghouse of materials accessible to LDC trainers and community members from across the globe,
- provide a forum for the sharing of curricula, teaching and assessment strategies, and methods,
- facilitate the explicit discussion of the goals and models currently being developed and implemented for training in language documentation and conservation (LDC),
- encourage partnerships between trainers of varied backgrounds and experiences,
- take into account a wide variety of perspectives and approaches by bringing together instructors from universities, communities, intensive institutes, school-based programs, language centers, and other initiatives,
- promote new collaborations, exchange ideas, and support training efforts worldwide,
- identify successful practices for LDC education,
- establish ethical and other principles to guide practitioners in documentation, conservation, and capacity-building activities,
- develop strategies to increase the range of funding opportunities to support LDC training at all levels,

- publicize LDC activities and events to raise greater awareness about the importance of linguistic diversity.

We will continue to provide updated information as the Consortium develops, and we look forward to many of you joining us as members and sharing your expertise to further support linguistic diversity.

Advisors and Planning Group for the CTLDC

American Indian Language Development Institute, USA (Ofelia Zepeda)

Asia/Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO, Japan (Misako Ohnuki)

Asociación Oxlajuuj Keej Maya Ajtziib and Center for the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (Nora England)

Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education, Australia (Jeanie Bell)

Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Institute, Canada (Sally Rice)

Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Mexico (B'alam Mateo Toledo)

Comhairle Nan Sgoiltean Araich, Scotland (Finlay Macleoid)

Documentation of Endangered Languages, Volkswagen Stiftung, Germany (Jost Gippert)

Endangered Language Fund, USA (Doug Whalen)

First Nations Languages Program, University of British Columbia, Canada (Patricia Shaw)

Foundation for Endangered Languages (Nicholas Ostler)

Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, and 3L Summer School London representative, England (Peter Austin)

Index of Linguistic Diversity, USA (David Harmon)

Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee, South Africa (Nigel Crawhall)

Indonesia Training Workshops (Margaret Florey)

Institute on Field Linguistics and Language Documentation (InField), USA (Carol Genetti)

Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Bhutan (Lungtaen Gyatso)

Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas and Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Mexico (José Antonio Flores Farfán)

LinguistList, Digital Endangered Languages and Musics Archive Network, and Electronic Metastructure for Endangered Languages Data, USA (Helen Aristar-Dry)

Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and National Geographic Society, USA (David Harrison)

Mahidol University, Thailand (Suwilai Premsrirat)

Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre, Australia (Daryn McKenny)

National Science Foundation, Documenting Endangered Languages Program, USA (advisor, Susan Penfield)

Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures, Australia (Nicholas Thieberger)

Program of Professional Development in Intercultural Bilingual Education for the Andean Countries, Universidad Mayor de San Simón, Cochabamba, Bolivia (Luis Enrique Lopez)

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan (Toshihide Nakayama)

Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity, Australia (Margaret Florey and Nicholas Thieberger)

School of International Studies, University of South Australia (Kathleen Heugh)

SIL International, USA (J. Stephen Quakenbush)

Sorosoro (Rozenn Milin)

Summer School on Documentary Linguistics in West Africa (Felix Ameka)

Te Puna Wānanga, University of Auckland, New Zealand (Peter Keegan)

6. Letters to the Editor

Linguistic diversity and official languages

Dear Dr. Moseley,

I hope you're well. I am looking for information on linguistic diversity, and have found some excellent information in the Atlas of Endangered Languages, Ethnologue and other tools. But I have searched in vain for an answer to the question "what proportion of the world lives in a country where the official language is not their own?" I'm not sure if such a statistic exists, but thought that if it did, you may be the person to point me in the right direction.

Thank you so much in advance and all the best, Sara Abbas

Readers' responses to this thought-provoking question will be gladly printed here and forwarded to Sara. – Editor

FEL grant leads to successful publication

Dear Nicholas:

It is a pleasure to contact you after such a long time. I heard about the work and projects of the Foundation for Endangered Languages that you head even after the project A First Pilagá Pedagogical Grammar and Texts had concluded, which you financed and extended between 2003 and 2004. Once the work had finished we began to focus on the book, which is called *Gramatica Pedagógica de la Lengua Pilagá. This proposal, which had begun as a small endeavor, has grown in the following two years with the participation of teachers, teenagers and elderly members of the Pilagá communities of Formosa. As a result, our pedagogical grammar now includes a design of about 300 pages divided into three parts.

The first is the grammar explained from the Pilagá perspective and contrasts with the systems of other languages in the area (for example, Spanish). The second is a series of activities to be used with each chapter in Part one. The third part contains the answers to the activities and further activities for the teachers. This is written both in Pilagá and Spanish.* It took a year to finish the design and we could carry it out thanks to additional funds but it was not easy given the kind of technical support that was available in the province of Formosa.

Finally in 2007 we could print up 100 copies in a very "simple", lower-quality version. We distributed three to four copies per school for consulting and study by the teachers for use with their students. The book was a success and today is still the only source of material for the 15 Pilagá schools serving 2,843 children. The text provides ideas for the teachers' lesson plans. However, they only have two hours weekly to teach language and indigenous culture because the provincial school curriculum promotes more Spanish teaching than the Chaco Indigenous languages.

Experience and implementation have given rise to some adjustments. They have further enriched the material with the contribution of others from the Pilagá community. We have added new activities and corrected some words and paradigms based on comments by the users themselves, even by those that have not used it directly but at least have seen the material. These people (the most elderly) have contributed some observations. Consequently, we have redesigned the text taking into consideration these changes and are seeking financial support to reprint the text.

I have been at La Trobe at the Research Center for Linguistic Typology for the past two months. Some days ago, the publications of Ogmios from the past few years were incorporated into the Centre's library. It was a pleasure to read them and see that you are still working. I accessed the Foundation's Website and saw that one of the proposed aims is to offer facilities for the publication of results. Hence, I thought of contacting you. I have a copy of the grammar with me in Melbourne that I can send to you. Please let me know if this is of interest, where I should mail it. It is the early version but I would like you to read it and would appreciate your comments. It would be of great importance if you could help us to publish the final version to be distributed in the schools. We welcome any suggestions you might have and are grateful to the Foundation for Endangered Languages for any financial support for this initiative. We know that few pedagogical grammars exist on indigenous languages, none in Argentina and none on a Chaco area language.

This would also serve as an incentive for other people and/or linguists that have not yet been able to prepare material of this kind.

With kind regards,

Alejandra Vidal

7. Publications, Book Reviews

L'ethnologue nouveau est arrivé!

Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 16th edition, edited by M. Paul Lewis, released July 2009, 1248 pp., ISBN 978-1-55671-216-6, US \$100.

This publication needs no introduction to endangered-language folk. Over its sixteen editions since 1951, it has become the standard catalogue of the world's languages, with very little to compete or compare with it.

Having said that, I should say what the other runners in its race are (at least in English), since they are often overlooked.

There is the *Linguasphere Register* (in two volumes) ed. David Dalby, last issued to my knowledge in 2000 (reviewed by Anthony Grant at <http://tinyurl.com/ya2bq6z>) which begins with an alphabetical listing of 70,000 language names, whose referents are then in the second volume placed with speaker populations, in their family and geographical position. (By comparison, the volume under review here has 41,185 entries in its index.)

There is the *Encyclopaedia of the World's Endangered Languages*, (Routledge, 2007) edited by FEL's own Treasurer (and Ogmios editor) Christopher Moseley, which indexes about 3400 language names, but gives – in a single volume – brief sociolinguistic descriptions of each of these, as well as overviews of the family relationships in each traditional area of the world. Moseley has also recently been producing an *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* (UNESCO, 3rd ed. 2008), which will be published in book form in 2010, but which is already accessible on the Internet at www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00206.

The above catalogue-style works are all useful, and have the advantage of apparent scientific neutrality, where Ethnologue is very much associated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and hence the

Christian evangelical movement the Wycliffe Bible translators founded in 1942 by William Cameron Townsend. As against this, *Ethnologue* does not read like any sort of Christian tract. (Of course, much of the scientific tradition itself has been argued to derive historically from a Christian mindset which clearly distinguishes the secular from the divine in describing the world.)

It is produced systematically to a regular schedule (renewed like the Olympics every four years), it covers all the world's languages (not just those deemed endangered, or spoken by minorities): entries are organized by continent and by country (splitting Russia into two), which means that the heading for each country can include certain amount of detail on inter-linguistic relations: as a result, besides copious coverage of indigenous groups, it also serves as a guide to immigrant language communities (though the editor is careful to say that this is not complete).

Its coverage of the "availability of scripture" (viz the Christian Bible) is also useful as a proxy for the degree of literacy in a language since – certainly for the world's minority languages – the Bible, or sections of the New Testament, are likely to be among the first books published in it.

The identification of languages, using a set of three-letter codes, is up to the world standard ISO 639-3: not surprising, since this new standard, which was officially approved in 2007, and defined nearly 7,500 separate identities, was devised and developed by SIL itself.

The entries for languages are often rich, but not consistently so.

Still, besides the near-universal list of alternative names, population and geographical location, one often finds details of dialects, a thumbnail description of "Lg Use", i.e. sociolinguistic patterns, and "Lg Dev" i.e. spread of literacy, and sometimes even (under "Other") indicative details about the grammar.

The statements of language use by different generations, where present, give some presentation of how effectively the language is being transmitted to future generations.

This edition differs from its predecessors in recognizing (with ISO 639-3 codes) macro-languages, defined as "multiple, closely related individual languages that are deemed in some usage contexts to be a single language". SIL had traditionally been an organization which would err on the side of 'splitting' rather than 'lumping' in the endlessly fractious question of when two varieties of speech are the same language or different; but the introduction of 55 macro-languages (including such favourites as Chinese, Arabic, Malay, Persian, Uzbek, Serbo-Croat, Quechua, Albanian, Guarani, Kongo and Mongolian, but not Hindi or Norwegian) means that more justice can be done to common understandings of 'same language'.

Besides the individual language entries, *Ethnologue* also offers a statistical preface which brings together many of the figures in pre-assembled charts (the raw numbers ceased to be downloadable from the www.sil.org website with the 14th edition). Among other things, this is interesting for the Diversity Index which is provided for each country (using Fishman's concept, the probability that two random people in the country will speak the same language). There is also a very useful set of coloured maps, showing the linguistic geography of the indigenous populations of most countries in the world – though with some surprising gaps: e.g. there is no map of India.

It is usual to decry, or at least to express scepticism about, the population figures in *Ethnologue*. True, they do come from a variety of sources, and often from different periods. But at least they are there, for every language, and provide a first basis for the discussion of the plight of any language.

It has also been something of an embarrassment to those of us publicly concerned about the status of languages, and rampant pace of extinction, that the number of languages listed in *Ethnologue*, explicitly "a comprehensive listing of the known living languages of the world", has regularly gone up, edition by edition, from 6170 (in

1988) to 6528 (in 1992) to 6703 (in 1996) to 6809 (in 2000) to 6912 (in 2004). During the first decade of the existence of FEL, then (from 1996) the number of known living languages was actually increasing at just the rate that was popularly said (and journalistically believed) to measure the rate of world language extinction, namely one every two weeks.

From that point of view, it must be considered a relief that this increase has finally levelled off, and the number of languages in this edition is given as 6909.

Nevertheless the editor informs us this actually reflects 163 languages new to this edition (half – 80 – of them the result of splitting), less 166 which have had to be discontinued (again, about half – 75 – through merging of previously separate entries). This means that 91 languages have actually been recognized as having lost their last speaker in this last olympiad, translating to 1.9 languages per calendar month: not too far from (though better than) the popular claim.

Where did this popular claim come from? It is difficult to be certain, since there has never been any clear, let alone reliable, source of longitudinal statistics on language vitality. But it is perhaps telling that the median population for the world's languages is just over 7,500. (This *Ethnologue* gives it as 7,560.) This is the size of a small village, and decidedly on the unhealthy side for language survival. Let us suppose, then, that the world's languages with that population or fewer are likely to go extinct in the foreseeable future, say within the present century. At the rate of a language lost every two weeks, 26 a year, or a 104 per olympiad, we should lose 2600 of them, or close to half the world's languages, before the 21st century is out.

Current population is not the only index of a language's vitality, but it can certainly be suggestive. This *Ethnologue* shows that the median population of languages in different continents is markedly different: Pacific 980, Americas 2,300, Asia 11,100, Africa 25,200 and Europe 201,500. This reflects quite closely one's presumptions about the prospects of their respective languages – although the Pacific figures may be dragged down by the predominance of small island languages with tiny populations (as well as the remarkable language score of Papua New Guinea, with 830 living languages shared among a mere 3.8 million indigenous people).

Speculations of this kind naturally arise in working with this book, and I personally find it invaluable. But more generally, every library that aspires to serious coverage of linguistics, sociology, anthropology or ethnography should have an up-to-date copy of this work, to give a current appraisal of the language situation in every country in the world. Individuals may aspire to own it too, but the price-tag of \$100 may cool the ardour of many.

Nicholas Ostler

Kalenjin-English Dictionary

Samburtaab Ng'aleekaab Kaleenchin, by Kibn'yaanko Seroney ISBN 9789966769732, 608 pages, African Books Collective, Nairobi 2009.

The Kalenjin/Kaleenchin language is spoken by close to 6 million people in Kenya with substantial numbers also in Uganda and Tanzania. The Kalenjin linguistic family in Kenya includes the Marakwet, Nandi, Sabaot, Kibikiis, Terik, Keyyo, Tuken, Seng'wer, Ogiek and Pokot. These groups are mutually intelligible despite their variants of the Kalenjin language. This dictionary, the product of 15 years research activity is the first Kalenjin/English dictionary. It includes 13703 entries and is the hope of the author that the dictionary get improved and expanded. As words die or fall out of use, new words are created and given new meaning. The first edition is a system of that process.

The above is taken from the publisher's announcement. The author, a one-time FEL member, comments that this is a general dictionary, and that specific terminology requires a separate volume.

Kibn'yaanko is well advanced in compiling a separate Kalenjin terminology volume, but requires funding to carry on with compilation and get it published. Anyone who is able to help with this venture is welcome to contact your Editor to be put in touch with him.

The Austronesian Languages

From the An-Lang web-site - www.pacling.com/catalogue/602.html

The Austronesian languages - Robert Blust PL 602 2009 ISBN 9780858836020 852 pp Prices: Australia AUD \$198.00 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$180.00

This is the first single-authored book that attempts to describe the Austronesian language family in its entirety. It includes chapters or chapter sections on: the physical and cultural background in which these languages are embedded, official and national languages, largest and smallest languages in all major geographical regions, speech levels and respect language, male/female speech differences, vituperation and profanity, secret languages, ritual languages, language contact, a survey of the sound systems of both typical and atypical languages in all major geographical regions, numerals and numeration, colour terminology, demonstratives, locatives and directions, pronouns, metaphor, language names and greetings, semantic change, lexical change, linguistics paleontology, morphology, syntax, the history of scholarship on Austronesian languages, a critical assessment of the reconstruction of Proto Austronesian phonology, a survey of types of sound change, a critical assessment of claims regarding the external relations of the Austronesian languages, subgrouping, size of the scholarly community and major centres of Austronesian scholarship, periodic meetings and periodic publications, landmarks of scholarship with regard to other language families, a survey of bibliographies of Austronesian linguistics, and an extensive list of references to the published literature.

Austronesian historical linguistics and culture history: a festschrift for Robert Blust.

Alexander Adelaar and Andrew Pawley, editors. PL 601 2009 ISBN 9780858836013 554 pp. Prices: Australia AUD \$143.00 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$130.00

This book brings together new work on Austronesian historical linguistics and culture history to honour Robert Blust. The memoirs in Part 1 reflect on Blust's groundbreaking contributions to these fields over the last 40 years. The remaining 26 chapters contain contributions by leading Austronesianists on a wide range of topics that broadly match Blust's own research interests. The chapters in Part 2 ('sound change') examine issues in the historical phonology of Austronesian languages. Those in Part 3 ('grammatical change and typology') deal with morphological and syntactic reconstruction at various levels, from Proto Austronesian down. Methodological and substantive issues in the genetic classification of Austronesian languages are treated in Part 4 ('subgrouping') and in several chapters in other sections. Chapters in Part 5 ('culture history and lexical reconstruction') investigate ways in which the close analysis of lexicon, in conjunction with different kinds of non-linguistic evidence, can throw light on the history of Austronesian-speaking peoples.

Several chapters in the volume propose significant revisions to currently accepted reconstructions of PAn phonology and/or morphology. Others focus on the historical development of languages of particular regions, including Taiwan, the Philippines, Borneo, Java, the Strait of Malacca, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, New Guinea, the Solomon Is., Vanuatu, Polynesia and Micronesia.

Immersion – a film on endangered languages

By Reina Yaidoo

Immersion is a short film which raises awareness about endangered languages.

The film is written as if an endangered language had come alive. How would it see its fate? How would it react to the forces and attractions of more dominant languages?

Languages at their most compelling delve into people, their perspective on life, motivations and thoughts. When we think about English we think about books from Shakespeare to the latest Steven King novel, films from *Raging Bull* by Martin Scorsese to *Indiana Jones*, songs and celebrities etc.

If the wish is to encourage others to find out about an endangered language all these variances for interactivity on education, entertainment, knowledge, history must be encouraged and accommodated by the language.

Immersion, it is hoped, asserts a more entertainment-motivated perspective in order to raise awareness of the subject. In the coming months the film will be submitted to a variety of Festivals and social networking sites such as Facebook to spread the word.



As an ongoing process Podcasts translations from a variety of endangered languages will also be added to the film site. There will be discussions about the film and interviews with speakers of endangered languages.

These translations can then be used for educational purposes for new learners of a language. The translations will also allow non-speakers to hear the languages being spoken, a feat which is tragically unfamiliar. The site has currently had communications from Yuchi, Gaelic and Yiddish speakers.

We would be grateful for any other speakers who wish to become involved by providing translations or interviews. It is hoped the film is used ultimately as a celebration of language.

Here is an excerpt from a scene in the film:

Lema is the endangered language. How would you add/improve or change the conversation between the dominant language and the passenger?

SCENE 3. EXT. DAY. ROAD. 2 CARS ARE PARKED ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE ROAD TO EACH OTHER.

Lema exits her house and enters one of the cars. She turns on the radio and flicks between the stations – white noise is heard and a variety of languages. The radio is on long wave.

LEMA (V/O): I've tried to jog my memory

We are drawn to Lema's eyes, reflected in the rear view mirror. There is a sense of foreboding; she feels she's being watched. The characters in the other car have Lema under surveillance. They observe her actions, hardly looking at each other, as they converse.

DOMINANT LANGUAGE:

... the next time I see her there's going to be a misunderstanding.

PASSENGER:

If you hadn't interrupted me, you would have heard by now how far she fell, when she fell, and for who she fell.

Imagine a whole world vision, concepts in oblivion...

DOMINANT LANGUAGE:

They say a cemetery is a place filled with irreplaceable people

PASSENGER:

True...

Can you believe they have 63 words for shopping?

The film in its entirety can be found on the sites below. The ongoing blog provides updates on all our activities. Please subscribe and feel free to add comments and feedback.

Main site and ongoing blog:

<http://immersionfilm.tumblr.com/>

<http://www.indiegogo.com/Immersion>

Facebook page: <http://apps.facebook.com/indiegogo/Immersion>

Contact Details: reina.yaidoo@googlemail.com

8. Places to go on the Web

Irish upside down

Elke Watson

At first glance there is nothing unusual about this website that caters for Irish language learners, offering an abundance of activities that claim to 'take Irish out of the classroom'. Furthermore, this site is the sales vehicle for a calendar in Irish that has just been released in its second year.

Elke Watson, founder of IoraRua.com, sits in her garden as a make-shift office, enjoying a balmy day in late September, surrounded by green hills, a distant crow of a rooster, with a plethora of colourful native birds dropping in for a visit. Still nothing unusual, but the season is spring, the feathered wildlife is neither linnets nor thrushes but carrying names such as kookaburra and lorikeet. Elke does not live in a Gaeltacht (an area in Ireland where *Gaeilge* is the working language), or elsewhere in Ireland for that matter. She is at home in a tiny village called Hartley Vale, located 3 hours away from Sydney, NSW, Australia.

The location is an old, disused school house, set in a garden nestled at the foot of the Blue Mountains. A former place of learning and education seems a fitting location for a Think Tank, a production site, warehouse and distribution centre alike for this unique tool that is on sale on iorarua.com, litrioht.com as well as Northern Irish Cultúr-lann bookshops.

This desk calendar for learners is named "Tuigim Anois!" (*Now I get it!*), and would stand out as rather quirky if placed amidst comparable products such as dictionaries, grammars and work-books, as well as other "oldies but goodies" time-tested resources. "Tuigim

Anois!" sees itself filling a niche where people don't necessarily find the time to complete a chapter in a self-guided workbook. These sets of collectible cards undertake to explain concepts of grammar that frequently cause problems amongst learners. "Tuigim Anois!" quite cheekily gives us all a gentle nudge to sneak five minutes of time even at the workplace or in the kitchen, and run through some fun concepts of *Gaeilge*.

Iorarua.com has recently generated a lot of interest in Ireland. The commonly asked question is "Why Irish?". German-born Elke has a keen interest in Ireland, its culture and history, so it was a logical leap to take up the language. Initially driven by a curiosity how to pronounce words like *comhghairdeas* (that's Congratulations! in English), she joined the Community College at the University of Sydney about four years ago just to do the basic level of Irish. The rest, as they say, is history. The class, a tight-knit bunch of people from all walks of life (probation officers, lawyers, engineers, clerks) became almost a surrogate *clan* away from home.

While the regular classes have finished, Elke still attends the week-long Summer School (held in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria) and Winter School (held on the October long weekend in Sydney) each year. The average attendance for these events is around 70-120 people, the majority of them Irish-born or of direct Irish ancestry. In recent years, quite a few younger people have joined from around Australia, a very encouraging trend and necessary if the learning and teaching of this language is to continue here. Even more remarkably, two Australian teenagers who have no genealogical roots to Ireland took up the language as well. Isn't it nothing short of a triumph that Irish could now rank amongst Italian, Spanish, German or Cantonese as a language that a teenager can take up because it's there, because it's cool, because she can make interesting conversation? Perhaps it's the uninhibited approach that a teenager living in Australia can take – the lack of association that a language is political, burdened with history, or restricted to use in the classroom, in song or poetry?

In Elke's opinion, Australia is a most interesting place and historical setting to learn Irish if one insists on taking up Ireland's national language outside Ireland itself. Irish ancestry accounts for the second largest group (2001 Census). The first Irish people came to Australian shores as convicts and were the lowest-ranking social group in the penal colony, after the Aboriginals. Among them, those who were brought out from Irish-speaking corners and had little or no English, were even worse off.

Dymphna Lonergan describes in her book, *Sounds Irish*, how many Australian slang terms could well originate from the *Gaeilge* of Irish-speaking convicts. The quintessential Australian Didgeridoo, for example: could it stem from the word for *dúdaire* (piper, trumpeter) and *dubh* (pronounced 'doooh' meaning black)? The linguistic origins of this word, amongst others, could certainly be passionately debated, and have been.

Elke's website also provides an area called *World Irish*, where people can discuss words that shape their environment that cannot be found in an Irish dictionary: Weatherboard home, Female Factory – how would one translate these, where literal translations clearly would not apply. The initiative is the brainchild of Colin Ryan, editor of the regular newsletter *An Luibín*, and Val Noone, historian and writer. The discussion forum is the logical medium to spread the word beyond the setting of a Melbourne circle and take it to an international discussion table.

The look and feel of the site is intended to appeal to a wide audience and is a departure from traditional imagery such as Celtic knotwork or leprechauns. It focuses on the language as a modern, living language per se, rather than on the history, mythology and politics. The Companion Website (a free E-learning component that supports the Tuigim Anois! Calendar) even more so uses colourful modern icons and type to draw in a younger audience. This philosophy is embodied in so many aspects of the site, from using the language in cooking or finding funny captions, to guessing song lines.

The choice of the iconic Red Squirrel (*an tIora Rua*) manifests the modern approach even further whilst also embracing the history of a language that originated sometime in the 5th century BC. Red Squirrels are under threat to become extinct at the 'paws' of the introduced Grey Squirrel (*an tIora Glas*), a species introduced from England over a hundred years ago, that is not only more aggressive but also more suited to the de-forested areas of Ireland than its red-haired, arboreal cousin. Furthermore, the Squirrel pox disease affects the red type only. There have been some positive developments in recent times to stop their decline, but the work is far from over. It is a most interesting parallel that can be drawn between the history and fate of the squirrel and the native tongue of Ireland, and it is widely agreed that both must be preserved.

The Red Squirrel logo has a modern feel to it. It bears a lot of significance to Elke who was schooled in Nürnberg, where she would often spend more time gazing at the antics of the squirrels running up and down chestnut and oak trees outside her classroom windows than paying attention to the teacher. Its Norse cousin, *Ratatosk*, appealed to her, the messenger running up and down the giant "world tree" *Yggdrasil*, carrying messages between the eagle perched at the top, and the dragon *Nidhogg*, who dwells beneath and eats the tree's roots. *Ratatosk* was said to tell slanderous gossip as well, thus provoking trouble between the two immobile parties. Elke revels in the impish nature that her character can take, and is about to announce a competition that will be held in this cheeky spirit. "Real Estate Irish" will invite learners and speakers alike to submit descriptions for literally unsellable house. It promises to be a lot of fun and Elke is hoping for a strong participation.

It's no surprise that Elke is a keen admirer of author Flann O'Brien (or Myles na gCopaleen, or even Brian O'Nolan as was his real name), who wrote *The Poor Mouth* in 1941. Initially written in Irish under the original title "An Beal Bocht" and not translated until the nineteen-seventies, it is a story that laments the Gaelic fate that the hero Bonaparte O'Coonassa, a *child of the ashes*, along with his family and other villagers, has to endure in his hometown of Corkadoragha. It is a novel that, despite hilarious dialogues and comical situations, leaves the reader often with an uneasy feeling that the lines were typed in an almost frantic, angry frame of mind by O'Brien. Certain key scenes in this book appear to scream out in frustration at the characters' resignation to their poverty and squalor, this being the "Gaelic way".

Gaels! It delights my Gaelic heart to be here today speaking Gaelic with you at this Gaelic feis in the centre of the Gaeltacht. May I state that I am a Gael. I'm Gaelic from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. . . . If we're truly Gaelic, we must constantly discuss the question of the Gaelic revival and the question of Gaelicism. There is no use in having Gaelic, if we converse in it on non-Gaelic topics. He who speaks Gaelic but fails to discuss the language question is not truly Gaelic in his heart; such conduct is of no benefit to Gaelicism because he only jeers at Gaelic and reviles the Gaels. There is nothing in this life so nice and so Gaelic as truly true Gaelic Gaels who speak in true Gaelic Gaelic about the truly Gaelic language.

The people behind IoraRua.com are perhaps not *truly true Gaelic Gaels*, but perhaps this explains a few 'aberrations'? As O'Brien repeatedly sighs: *The likes of them will never be here again.*

But change is in the air and plenty of Web blogs, magazines, radio stations, discos, theatrical productions – to mention but a few - have adopted this modern approach.

Their likes are multiplying, and Irish is on a steady path to become a modern-day, hip language.

9. Forthcoming events

HRELP Workshop: Endangered Languages, endangered knowledge & sustainability

Call for papers

Saturday 27 February 2010, 9.30am - 6.00pm, College Buildings, School of Oriental and African Studies, London WC1H 0XG, UK. Keynote speaker: Lenore Grenoble (University of Chicago)

The goal of the workshop is to investigate sustainable approaches to endangered languages themselves, and our research (at both theoretical and practical levels). Issues might include:

- Enabling communities to sustain languages and linguistic ecologies
- Linking language maintenance with sustainable human development
- Preserving traditional knowledge and indigenous paradigms of teaching, learning, and research
- Keeping the products of our research sustainable
- Are "sustaining languages" and "sustaining traditional knowledge" something that researchers can do, or are they down to speakers alone?

Proposals are invited for papers which present cutting-edge research on the themes and topics outlined above. Each speaker will have 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for discussion, followed by further plenary discussion. Abstracts should be a maximum of 300 words long (not including any references) and should be sent to: elap@soas.ac.uk.

Deadline: Friday 15th January 2010. Notification of acceptance will be sent by 30th January.

Registration details will be available shortly. The workshop is part of Endangered Languages week 2010. More details will be posted on www.hrelp.org.

It is planned to publish the proceedings of the workshop via the Endangered Languages Project's journal, Language Documentation and Description.

Multilingualism and Education conference

Multilingualism and education: global practices, challenges and the way forward.

Co-hosted by Kenyatta University and the University of Pennsylvania. 22 – 23 July 2010 at Kenyatta University Conference Centre (KUCC), Nairobi, Kenya.

The conference is intended to bring together researchers, professionals, classroom practitioners, policy makers and language specialists interested in issues that relate to multilingualism, education and linguistic diversity as global phenomena. Papers at the conference are expected to range from presentation of research findings to analysis of practice.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15th December 2009

Notification of acceptance of abstracts: 30th January 2010

Deadline for submission of full paper: 30th March 2010

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

- Language policies and language choice in a multilingual education context.
- Linguistic challenges in a multilingual set-up.

- Benefits of mother-tongue education in early childhood.
- Teaching methodologies in multilingual education.
- Multilingualism in education in Africa: Reality on the ground.
- Multilingual education and IT/computing.
- Models for multi-literacy, multilingual, multimodal practices.
- Benefits of multilingualism in education
- Socio-cultural issues, multilingualism and special language needs/ disorders.

Principal Speakers:

- Prof. Nancy H. Hornberger, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania
- Prof. Okoth Okombo, Department of Linguistics, University of Nairobi
- Prof. Susan Malone, SIL International, Bangkok, Thailand

Registration Fees: Participants from Africa: Kshs. 4,000. Rest of the World 150 USD

Contact person at Kenyatta University:

Martin C. Njoroge, PhD, Department of English & Linguistics,
Kenyatta University, P.O. Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

Symposium on Stabilizing Indigenous Languages – and other conferences

From Northwest Indian Language Institute web-site

From June 21 through July 30, 2010, Northwest Indian Language Institute and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Oregon will host linguists and community members from around the world for conferences, Symposia, workshops, and courses on language preservation, maintenance, and revitalization, and the linguistic description and documentation that can support these efforts.

First, from June 25-27, 2010, we will host the 17th Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium (SILS), the 45th International Conference on Salish and Neighboring Languages, the Athabaskan/Dene Languages Conference, and the Hokan-Penutian Languages Conference.

The co-occurrence of these conferences will allow community members/language activists and linguists to come together to share ideas, learn from each other, and facilitate contacts between academic linguists and communities that speak endangered languages.

Beginning June 21, 2010, the next two weeks will see a series of intensive courses and workshops offered by both local experts and specialists from around the globe. The annual NILI Summer Institute will be combined with the second Institute for Field Linguistics and Language Documentation (InField 2010). This two weeks will be filled with two weeks of classes and workshops for community members, language activists and linguists, offering training on a wide range of issues related to language preservation, maintenance and revitalization, linguistic fieldwork and documentation.

Through InField 2010, we will offer one week of supported work in the computer labs (July 5-9), and also one or more 4-week field methods courses (July 5-30).

Until we have more concrete information about our offerings for InField 2010, we suggest that people who are interested or curious check out the website for InField 2008, in Santa Barbara. As good as InField 2008 was, thanks to the experience we gained working together on that one, we hope to do even better in 2010.

International Summer School on Language Documentation and Description

Preliminary announcement

The Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL) is proud to host the third 3L International Summer School on Language Documentation and Description, from Monday 5th July to Saturday 17th July 2010.

The 3L Summer School offers 1- and 2-week courses treating various aspects of language documentation and description for future and novice field linguists.

Courses cover both practical and typological issues, including but not limited to the following:

- Practical training in fieldwork methods
- Recording techniques, software for documentation, description and archiving
- Grammar writing, the analysis of tone
- Endangered Sign Languages
- Languages of South America, New Guinea, Indonesia and Africa

There will be a student conference on Saturday July 11, 2010. The 3L Summer School draws upon the extensive expertise of the three organizing universities in the 3L Consortium: University of Lyon, Leiden University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. It builds upon the successes of the first 3L Summer School held in Lyon in 2008 (http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/AALLED/Univ_ete/Summer_school.html) and the second 3L Summer School held in London in 2009 (<http://www.hrelp.org/events/3L/index.html>)

More information on the program, fees, registration, accommodation, etc. of the third 3L International Summer School in Leiden will be available soon on www.hrelp.org/3L/leiden2010/

Please note that the 3L Summer School in 2010 will be followed directly by the Leiden Summer School in Languages and Linguistics (for more information on this school, see <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/summerschool/>).

Organising committee: Marian Klamer, Maarten Kossmann, Victoria Nyst, Rebecca Voll, Martine Bruil, Matthew Doyle, Chenxi Spades
Leiden University Centre for Linguistics,
<http://www.hum.leiden.edu/lucl/>

Conference on Endangered Languages and Cultures of Native America

Call for papers

9 – 11 April 2010, Salt Lake City, UT, USA

Contact Person: Jennifer Mitchell

Linguistic Field(s): Anthropological Linguistics; Applied Linguistics

Call Deadline: 20-Jan-2010

Meeting Description: Conference on Endangered Languages and Cultures of Native America (6th annual CELCNA), April 9-11, 2010, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
Call for Papers

Abstracts deadline: Jan. 20, 2010

Papers or posters or discussion sessions are invited on any aspect of American Indian languages, in particular on language documentation or language revitalization. American Indian participants are especially invited and encouraged to come. Papers are 20 minutes each in length, with an additional 10 minutes for discussion. Proposals for discussion sessions should specify which person or persons will lead the discussion, and what the proposed topic/question for discussion is.

Deadline: for abstracts: Jan. 20, 2010. The Program Committee will announce results about Feb. 5.

Papers and posters can be presented in English or Spanish; Abstracts can be submitted in English or Spanish. There will some be Spanish language sessions, and those working with indigenous languages of Latin America are encouraged to co and the University of Pennsylvania and participate.

From the Linguist List, via Francis Hult

Workshop on the Languages of Papua Melanesian languages on the edge of Asia: past, present and future

First call for abstracts

8-12 February 2010, Manokwari, Indonesia

This workshop will focus on the most linguistically diverse part of the world – Melanesia – which straddles countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Melanesia contains around a fifth of the world's 6,000 languages in under 3% of its land area and less than 0.2% of its population.

These languages are astonishingly diverse, barely known to science, and face the threat of extinction without trace in the coming century unless concerted international efforts are made to meet the huge challenge of documenting them. This conference addresses the scientific issues raised by these languages. The scientific part of the program will cover the whole gamut of linguistic questions from phonology to syntax to typology to historical linguistics, as well as topics bordering musicology, anthropology and prehistory, plus papers on digital archiving, documentary linguistics, scientific infrastructure and the training of linguists from minority language groups.

Besides the scientific questions, the theoretical recognition of cultural and linguistic rights of minority groups in Indonesia, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea faces enormous practical difficulties if it is to be realised, as national governments have indicated they wish, as education programs that allow children to receive part of their schooling in their mother-tongue. The conference will run from Monday the 8th to Friday the 12th of February 2010, and will include a free day for an excursion and informal discussions on Wednesday the 10th. The conference will be followed by a one-day master class on Field Methods and Language Resources on Saturday the 13th of February.

Invited speakers include Linda Barwick, Steven Bird, Mark Donohue, Michael Dunn, Nikolaus Himmelmann, Steve Levinson, and Ger Reesink. David Gil, Department of Linguistics, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

10. Obituaries

Braam Le Roux

Robert K. Hitchcock, Kalahari Peoples Fund

From the Kalahari Peoples Network (www.kalaharipeoples.net) 22 November 2009

Le Roux was one of the founders of Kuru, a San support organization, the first of its kind in Botswana. He was also, along with Axel Thoma, one of the founders of WIMSA, the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa.

Kuru Development Trust was founded as a multipurpose development institution and registered officially with the Botswana Government as a charitable organization in 1986 after lengthy discussions with people in western Botswana and other parts of southern Africa. Kuru, now known as the Kuru Family of Organizations (KFO), is a broad-based San support organization that engages in a wide variety of development activities. Its work ranges from doing capacity-building among community-based organizations to assisting local people in income generation and agricultural projects. Starting first in D'Kar in western Botswana, Kuru expanded to other communities in Ghanzi District and in North West District (Ngamiland).

Kuru was the first non-government organization to work directly with San in Botswana besides faith-based institutions. In the 1990s Kuru staff initiated an Early Childhood Care and Education Program (ECCE), part of which was devoted to establishing and running preschools. The Bokamoso Preschool Program, as it is known, does in-service pre-school teacher training. It also assists in the development of curricula and materials for use in the schools. The preschool program works in communities without schools and establishes play groups for children.

The approach of Bokamoso teachers and their trainers can be characterized as holistic, covering a variety of skills and building on the knowledge of the teachers and the children with whom they interact. The program emphasizes creative play, story-telling, arts and crafts work, and exchanging of information about the natural and social environment. Classes are given in mother tongue San languages, including Nharo, the language spoken by many western Botswana San. The parents of the local children are also involved extensively in the preschool program, which has helped to institutionalize the program and has contributed to its sustainability over the long term.

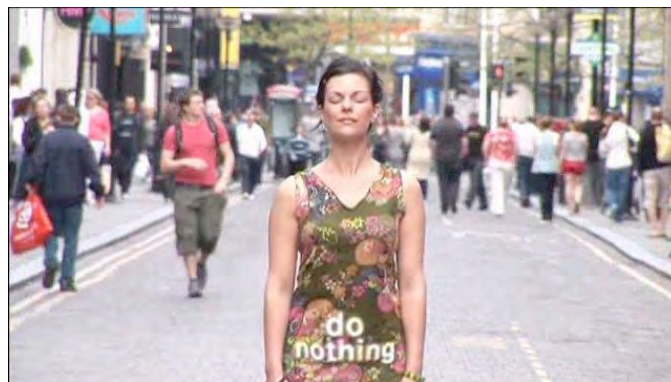
Kuru, like other innovative NGOs, has attempted to build on the strengths of local communities (see Le Roux 1996; Van Tripp and Oussoren 1999). It uses a consultative approach in which lengthy discussions are held with local people. KFO works with the various segments of communities, paying careful attention to dimensions of gender, age, kinship, and social identity. Kuru, along with other NGOs, has been involved in promoting self-help efforts in rural communities. It has also been a leader in promoting health and well-being among San and other people in western Botswana. Kuru also sought to promote development and human rights among all of the peoples of Botswana.

In August 1999 I was in the Tsodilo Hills in northwestern Botswana with a group of consultants evaluating Kuru for a funding agency, Hivos. We camped near the Female Hill, not far from the National Museum housing area. It was a very cold night, and the wind picked up. I will always remember waking up and seeing Braam going around and covering various people with blankets to protect them from the cold. He was an incredibly caring and giving individual who devoted his life to helping others. He will be missed greatly.

Stills from *Immersion* –
featured in this edition of Ogmios.



Lema – the endangered language



The Dominant Language

