

FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

# OGMIOS



*Members of the Bong'om speaking community of Bungoma District, Kenya  
(Picture: Edward Chepkotit Murunga)*

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## 1. Editorial

Because Ogmios appears only three times a year, there are often news items of a time-sensitive nature that have to be omitted from its pages – notices of conferences, urgent actions and so forth. The FEL web-site, [www.ogmios.org](http://www.ogmios.org), is the obvious place for these news items, so let me remind you to make use of that resource as well as *Ogmios*.

Also on that site you will see the latest developments in the plans for the annual FEL conference, now our fifteenth, to be held in Quito, Ecuador, in September. You'll also find details of the conference below. This conference will be at least bilingual (English/Spanish) if not trilingual, with some participation by speakers of indigenous languages such as Shuar. There will be opportunities outside of Conference time to explore some aspects of Ecuador's rich and diverse ethnic and linguistic heritage. Details of how to book for the conference are provided below.

On another front, FEL's collaboration with UNESCO on the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* is continuing. On 21 February this year, International Mother Tongue day, there was a 're-launch' of the on-line version of the Atlas, which continues to allow users to provide comments and feedback on the data on endangered languages in the Atlas, which is being processed by our team of consultants. You'll find an interview conducted in Botswana for UN Radio by one of our consultant editors, Matthias Brenzinger, in 'Endangered Languages in the News' in this issue.

The Atlas was also presented at another UNESCO conference in Venice earlier in February, in the context of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Veneto region. In this year of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unification of Italy, the regional languages of the Italian state, and what they mean to their speakers as badges of identity, are being critically re-examined. There is a vibrant and heated debate about the rights and settings of regional languages in Italy – one of the oldest continuous cultures in Europe, yet one of the youngest states. In this issue of *Ogmios*, we present some specially contributed articles on the Veneto region and the language of the thousand-year republic of Venice – which did not join united Italy in 1861 like the other states and city-states, but was only 'conquered' in 1866. In Venice, just as much as in the less metropolitan regions of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Italy, the debate rages on – how to preserve the linguistic uniqueness of an old-established speech community? See some of the letters and articles in this issue.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, FEL has announced its latest round of Grants for 2011. We congratulate the nine successful applicants and wish them success with their projects. You'll find the details below.

*Chris Moseley*

## 2. Development of the Foundation

### Voces e imágenes de las Lenguas en Peligro / Endangered Languages - the Voices they Project, and the Images they Present

*Quito, Ecuador, 7-10 September 2011*

Language endangerment is now accepted as an important issue of our times, but it is sometimes misrepresented as a problem just for the speaker communities, and not for the wider societies which surround and often penetrate them. In this conference, we want to focus on the impacts that minority languages make on those outside, whether deliberately – through raising their voices – or implicitly, through the images that they give out to outsiders. What messages do endangered languages send to the wider world? These voices and images may play vital roles in the formation of language attitudes.

We are therefore asking questions of these kinds:

- How have endangered language communities presented themselves, their languages and their cultures? The audience could be outsiders, but it could also be young, or returning, members of their own families.
- What policies have outsiders used to characterize these communities, across a whole spectrum of possibilities? These will include attempts to vilify, stigmatize or even annihilate them, to seek to assimilate or recruit them, to accept them passively, or even to see some special value in them?
- What uses have endangered language communities made of others' methods to protect themselves, or to enhance their standing?
- How have endangered language speakers maintained or transformed, or been alienated from, their traditions or identity?
- What alliances have endangered language communities forged for mutual protection?
- How have attitudes to majority languages been affected by greater interest in minority languages?
- How have the techniques derived from majority-language culture, e.g. for teaching, or for documentation, been used for endangered languages?
- How have mass media (as radio, television), and modern networked media (as mobile phones, the internet) affected the image of endangered languages, or given them new voices?

These are just some of the questions to be discussed in this conference, which aims to learn lessons about the place of minority languages within larger communities. We aim to create awareness about the current situation of endangered languages among the speakers and non-speakers of such languages. Our goal is to promote linguistic maintenance within a wide variety of social contexts. There will be a place to discuss relevant experience of the documentation of endangered languages as well as of language revitalization.

Ecuador is well known for its geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity. Besides Spanish, it hosts thirteen indigenous languages, all endangered. Quichua has around 1 million speakers in Ecuador, of 8 million along the Andes. The indigenous languages are found on the coast, in the highlands (Sierra) and on the Amazon - representing many of South America's linguistic families.

#### *Important dates*

- 1 August, 2011: In case of acceptance, the full paper will be due. *Note:* It is a condition of speaking at the conference that authors submit a hard copy of their paper by this deadline, in MS Word and as a PDF; further details on the format of text will be specified to the authors. In the course of the following month, PowerPoint presentations (if any) should be submitted, together with a scanned photograph of author
- September 7-9, 2011: Conference
- September 10, 2011: Excursion to Otavalo (see below)

#### *Excursion to Otavalo*

([www.otavalo.gov.ec](http://www.otavalo.gov.ec); [www.otavalo.virtual.com](http://www.otavalo.virtual.com))

This trip will include a visit to the indigenous market, lakes, a sacred waterfall, a condor park, and perhaps a visit to local musicians. Later excursions may also be planned: Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas (at least one more day), and if there is interest, Galápagos Islands or the Selva (jungle).

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## 2011 FEL Grants Announced

This year 9 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, and provisional sums awarded shown in US dollars:

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Language supported</i>	<i>Grant in US\$ (approx)</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Femmy Admiraal	Germany	Baure (Beni province, Bolivia)	\$958	Producing learning materials
Martine Bruil	Ecuador	Ecuadorian Awapit	\$1000	Develop audio recordings
Eliane Casmargo	France	Cashinahua (Panoan Language), Peru, Amazonia	\$950	Study traditions and produce book
Gabriela Garcia	USA	Southeastern Tepehuan (O'dham), Mexico	\$1182	Documentation and learning materials
Cornelius Gulere	Uganda	Lusoga	\$1000	Print learning materials
Musombwa Igunzi Michel	Rwanda	Kinyindu in Congo	\$980	Producing DVDs
Emily McEwan-Fujita	Canada	Scottish Gaelic	\$930	Teaching, workshop
Antoinette Schapper	Netherlands	Kamang, located in Indonesia	\$963	Learning materials
Rachel Watson	UK	Mlomp (Jóola), Mlomp village and surrounding area, Southern Senegal	\$800	Documentation and orthography development



## FEL books available from HRELP for on-line purchase

As a result of on-going collaboration between the Foundation for Endangered Languages and the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, all thirteen FEL books (proceedings of their unique annual conferences) can now be purchased securely by credit card through the SOAS online bookstore

<http://www.bitly.com/LDDstore>. (Scroll down past the LDD volumes for the FEL books.)

To celebrate, we are offering all the FEL books for £15 each, a **saving of 25% off** the regular retail price. This offer is strictly limited and must end on 1st June 2011. To take advantage of the offer, you can find it on-line at [www.hrelp.org](http://www.hrelp.org) or the 'Endangered Languages and Cultures' blog at [www.paradisec.org.au](http://www.paradisec.org.au).

## 3. Endangered Languages in the News

### Bong'om of Kenya –the forgotten people?

*Edward Chepkotit arap Mungu (arapmungu@yahoo.com)*

#### Introduction

The Bong'om community has been classified as Nilo-Saharan; Eastern Sudan Nilotic, Southern Kalenjin-Elgon. Authentically, they were nomadic pastoralists who settled in Kenya in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in Bungoma district, Kenya. They are an indigenous minority of what is now Bungoma district. They were occupying the southwest and the northwest of Bungoma town, mainly around the hills of Kapchai, Webuye, South Malakisi, Sang'alo, and North Kabras. They are also scattered in Luhya speaking areas.

In the nineteen-seventies the population was 2,500, which went up to 30,000 in 1994 (UNESCO, 2001). During the 1992 tribal clashes some of the Bong'om were forced to migrate to areas especially among their cousins in Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts where they have lost their identity and recognition. However, a significant number of them remained in Bungoma.

#### Key challenges

##### 1. *Language and Culture Extinction*

According to UNESCO'S Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Bong'om is among 16 Kenyan languages that are either extinct, moribund or endangered. Although, the Bong'om are Nilotic, they now speak Kibukusu (a Bantu tongue). In fact, 7 out of 10 people of the Bong'om tribe speak Kibukusu as a result of intermarriage and influence by the widely-spoken Kibukusu (UNESCO, 2001).

Also, the Bong'om indigenous place names have been corrupted by the dominant Bukusu tribe.

##### 2. *Forced Eviction from Ancestral Territory*

Due to the tribal clashes of 1992, Bong'om people have been scattered and now live as Internally Displaced Persons in Mt. Elgon and Trans Nzoia districts in Kenya. Appeals for help from the government have never borne any fruit. They currently suffer from isolation and live in abject poverty.

##### 3. *Representation*

Bong'om people, like other minorities in Kenya, face discrimination and tribalism in social, economic and political spheres of life. Because of their numbers, they cannot elect one of their own to civic and parliamentary seats. This has led to despair and disillusionment.

#### Current efforts

Through lobbying and presentations made to the National Constitution Review Commission and other government agencies, the rights of minorities have been entrenched in the new constitution. The community has formed a community based organization – Bong'om Language Project - to revive the language and culture.

*(See cover photographs of Bong'om families at Sang'alo hills in Bungoma, Kenya)*

## International Mother Tongue Day 2011

*Matthias Brenzinger, an FEL member and one of the consultant editors on the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, based at the University of Cologne but currently in Botswana, was interviewed on the occasion of International Mother Tongue Day (21 February) for UN Radio by Derrick Mbatha.*

February 21 is observed as International Mother Language Day, proclaimed by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1999 to promote all the languages of the world. UNESCO also publishes the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger to raise awareness about the need to safeguard the world's linguistic diversity. Derrick Mbatha

asked Dr. Matthias Brenzinger, a linguist based in Gaborone, Botswana about the importance of mother tongue.

*BRENZINGER: Mother tongue is important to all people and with the general trend of globalization, it becomes more and more important for people to identify themselves as communities in order to have their own identity saved and promoted.*

*MBATHA: Talking about various communities, how would you respond to the argument that in fact it's good for humanity in the world to speak one language because it makes communication easier among various communities?*

*BRENZINGER: I think this argument is valid and I think we should all speak one language and we should all be able to communicate, but there is no need to give up your own language if you are acquiring other second languages. It's a benefit also intellectually to have those second languages. And the global languages like Spanish and English are spreading as second languages not as mother tongues.*

*MBATHA: Now, as you know, UNESCO publishes the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. What does the newest edition of the Atlas say about these languages?*

*BRENZINGER: We talk about the worldwide number of languages. We linguists believe that there are about 6 to 7,000 languages and about 2,500 of them are now considered being endangered. That means they are included in this new edition of the Atlas which is also accessible online.*

*MBATHA: What is endangering these 2,500 languages?*

*BRENZINGER: Most of those languages are now endangered because people live today in national states with national dominant languages like German in Germany, like French in France and Japanese in Japan. So all these small languages spoken in those countries are endangered because community members shift to those dominant languages and give up their own.*

*MBATHA: What are some of the challenges in efforts to preserve linguistic diversity?*

*BRENZINGER: Languages are threatened in various different ways in very different contexts. Most of the 364 languages which I actually added to the Atlas on Endangered Languages by the UNESCO, most of them still have speakers and one just has to convince them that this is a valuable cultural asset which should be transmitted to their children. You have other cases like for example in Hawaii where there is a movement to reintroduce Hawaiian. So there are new mother tongue speakers of Hawaiian. In Africa it's more*

*changing attitudes towards the languages. The languages are still there and spoken and one needs to raise awareness among the communities that it's a cultural treasure.*

## 2011 – Year of Livonian language and Culture

*Press release from the Society of Friends of Livonia (translated by the editor)*

The International Society of Friends of Livonia and the Livonian Cultural Centre (*Līvõd Kultūr sidām*) in Riga, Latvia, has declared 2011 to be the international year of Livonian language and culture. The marking of this year as the year of Livonian language and culture is due to several cultural, historical and anticipated events.

In 2011 it will be 150 years since the appearance of the first Livonian grammar and dictionary in St.Petersburg. This great work, a collaboration by A.J.Sjögren and F.J.Wiedemann, also included the first examples of Livonian folklore, poetry and religious texts. It is 90 years since the appearance of the first secular Livonian-language book – *Līvõd ežmi lugdõbrõtõz* (First Livonian Reader). This was the first of the series published by the Academic Mother Tongue Society.

It is 80 years since Livonian-language periodical *Livoli* (The Livonian) began to appear, with the support of the Finnish Academic Tribal Club (*Akateeminen Heimoklubi*). It is 75 years since the Livonian Kõrli Stalte compiled the first Livonian primer, commissioned by the Academic Mother Tongue Society.

It is 20 years since the Latvian state promulgated the special protected area, *Līvõd Rānda*, the Livonian cultural-historical territory. In the law of the Republic of Latvia "On the free development and right to cultural autonomy of national and ethnic groups of Latvia" the Livonians were recognised as an indigenous people of Latvia. Likewise, in 2011, the Livonian cultural and linguistic portal *livones.lv* celebrates five years of existence. This is a contemporary media environment which distributes information in the Livonian, Latvian, English and partially also Estonian and Finnish languages. The Livonian language and culture are not only of historical value, covered over by the dust of centuries. They are significant for today's Latvian, and hopefully also Estonian, cultural life and that of other countries, offering discoveries that are not only of scientific but also of day-to-day importance. In 2011 they will be supported through several new publications and events. The most comprehensive Livonian-Estonian-Latvian dictionary so far will appear, the author of which is the foremost scholar of Livonian today, Em. Prof. Tiit-Rein Viitso. The

new dictionary, which also includes a Livonian grammar, will be a suitable learning tool for Livonian along with authentic language samples.

At the end of last year, Valts Ernštreits defended his doctorate in philology at the University of Tartu with his thesis "The development of the Livonian literary language". In 2011 a book on sources of the Livonian literary language, based on this doctoral dissertation, will appear. In Estonia a comprehensive compilation on Livonian history, culture and language is being published, gathering together the most important studies by Estonian, Latvian and Finnish scholars; there will also be an anthology of Livonian poetry, and other studies of Livonian culture. International scientific conferences, seminars, exhibitions and other events are being held in Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

The main partners in co-operation with the international Society of Friends of Livonia and *Līvõ Kultūr Sidām* during the year of Livonian language and culture are the Finno-Ugric Institute in Estonia, the University of Tartu, the Estonian Language Institute and the Mother Tongue Society, in Latvian the Latvian Academy of Sciences, the Latvian Language Agency, the Latvian National Historical Museum and other institutions. The co-ordinators of the events are Valts Ernštreits in Latvia, Tapio Mäkeläinen in Finland, and Tuuli Tuisk in Estonia.

## How to say goodbye around the world

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Under this title, the Education supplement of *The Guardian* here in the UK on 22 February published an interview by Lucy Tobin with FEL member Mark Turin, who runs the World Oral Literature Project at the University of Cambridge. Mark describes the many and varied sources of recordings of oral literature in endangered languages which have come to be stored in this on-line collection. The article gives a link to the database: [www.oralliterature.org/database](http://www.oralliterature.org/database).

## Radionovelas – preserving Mayan linguistic heritage through broadcasting

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*From the MACHI web-site (Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative, [www.machiproject.org](http://www.machiproject.org)) accessed by Serena D'Agostino 30 December 2010*

Since 2003, Fundación ProPetén has produced a radionovela program entitled *Entre Dos Caminos* (At the Crossroads) combining the drama of a soap opera with messages about the environment, health, and social issues.

In 2007 and 2008 Fundación ProPetén and MACHI worked together to produce a series of 40 episodes on Maya cultural heritage and conservation for *Entre Dos Caminos*. All forty episodes were recorded and broadcast in both Spanish and Q'eqchi' Maya and played twice a day, in the morning and the evening.

In 2009 the broadcast area was increased to include Alta Verapaz and Izabal and the series was replayed. During broadcasts, listeners were invited to interact with the stories by calling in to offer opinions, answer questions, and win prizes.

In 2010, MACHI and ProPetén are adapting the cultural heritage episodes of the radionovela *Entre Dos Caminos* for the classroom.

The program will illustrate the primary themes and content of the public school curricula – such as Social Science, Mathematics and Citizenship – through the topics of the ancient Maya, archaeological conservation, and cultural identity.

Twenty public schools, located in nine of the Petén's twelve municipalities, were identified to participate in a 2010 pilot program. Each school is located near a known archaeological site, or is in a community with strong cultural traditions.

Teachers of the third and fourth grades of the primary schools in Ixlú and La Caoba are taking a major role in refining and improving the materials.

The pilot program is expected to take place in all twenty schools by the end of the year (2010).

## Mayan-language puppetry on film

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*From the same source as above*

Along with collaborators Kaxil Kiuc, MACHI developed and produced a puppet movie filmed on location at the archaeological sites of Chichen Itzá and Kiuc in the state of Yucatán.

The completed DVD, *En el Camino de Nuestros Antepasados (On the Road of Our Ancestors)*, was received by its first audiences in a pilot program beginning February 2009. Approximately 90 DVDs and teacher's guides were distributed to governmental and non-governmental institutions, schools and universities, and museums and archaeological sites around the state.

Teachers and facilitators were encouraged to use the materials between February and June and to assist in the collection of data about the effectiveness of the program by administering three surveys to their students and audiences. In June, MACHI returned to Yucatán to collect the surveys and conduct more in depth evaluations with the participating institutions.

The film continues to be used in schools and libraries throughout the Yucatán. It will also serve to inspire other projects developed by indigenous organizations throughout the Peninsula in 2011.

DVDs with English or Spanish subtitles are available for a fifty dollar donation to MACHI.

## Radio and Native American languages

From web-site [www.nativenetworks.si.edu](http://www.nativenetworks.si.edu), accessed on 30 December 2010 by Serena d'Agostino

One concern in many communities is the survival of the Native language. With indigenous languages becoming obsolete as their fluent speakers age, tribal radio can be an important partner in preserving traditional language and culture. Of the 300 indigenous languages spoken in the United States at the time of European contact, only 148 survive today. Of these, one-third have fewer than 100 speakers. Currently Koahnic Broadcast Corporation produces the popular national program *Native Word of the Day*, heard in community and urban areas alike.

The first Native radio stations started with the promotion of language and culture within their own communities as their main interest. Stations like KTBD in New Mexico translate National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* into Navajo. KYUK at Bethel, Alaska, presents its daily news programs in English and in Yup'ik. KILI on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where about 15,000 Lakota speakers live, offers its four-hour morning program and other cultural programs in Lakota. The KILI crew often travels across the 5,000-square-mile reservation to do live coverage.

Similarly, in Canada, CKRZ-FM on the Six Nations Reserve in southwestern Ontario serves a community with members from each of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. CKRZ has gradually introduced multilingual radio, with broadcasts in Cayuga, Mohawk, and other languages. These broadcasts reflect the communities' continuing efforts to maintain fluency in their languages, which once faced destruction through the imposition of the non-Indian education system.

For a map and listing of Native stations affiliated with the Center for Native American Radio, a centralized service bureau for nearly 30 public radio stations serving Native American listeners, download

[http://www.nativenetworks.si.edu/eng/yellow/radio\\_stations\\_table.htm](http://www.nativenetworks.si.edu/eng/yellow/radio_stations_table.htm)

## Indigenous Language TV Series: Finding Our Talk

The third season of *Finding Our Talk: A Journey into Indigenous Languages* is now available on DVD. The 13-part series celebrates the success and challenges of language preservation and revitalization around the world. Directed by aboriginal directors and produced by Mushkeg Media Inc., this season takes an international perspective looking at endangered languages in Australia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Norway, Guatemala, Bolivia and North America.

The award winning series has been broadcast in Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Some episodes represent the first professional recordings of elders speaking rarely heard languages. Other episodes showcase the role technology and innovation play in modern language revitalization programs. Three seasons were filmed in Canada and seven other countries.

Thirty-nine, half hour episodes each look at endangered languages from a modern aboriginal perspective. There is no other series like it.

"Finding Our Talk" is a valuable resource for language speakers, learners and teachers. Visit [www.mushkeg.ca](http://www.mushkeg.ca) to learn more, download an informational PDF, and view excerpts from all three seasons of the series. You can also view excerpts at our YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/MushkegMedia>

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## Rosetta Stone produces Inupiaq language software

*From the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Alaska, 21 January 2011*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - And now an Inupiaq language lesson. Qaqasuraq. Noun. The modern Inupiaq term for a computer. Loosely translated, it means "little brain." Ready to learn more? Fire up the qaqasuraq for the latest of three new computer programs designed to teach variations of the fading Alaska Native language. The North Slope Borough and Rosetta Stone software company plan to unveil a program this spring specially designed to teach the North Slope Inupiaq dialect, using the photos and voices of Inupiaq people recorded in Barrow.

There are as few as 1,500 fluent speakers of Inupiaq in Alaska, estimates Fairbanks linguist Michael Krauss. Once, it was the primary language of the northern and northwest regions of the state. Barrow-born Edna MacLean, a former Inupiaq professor for the University of Alaska Fairbanks, spent two years working on the Inupiaq program. She translated thousands of words and phrases from English to the North Slope Inupiaq dialect of the Inuit language.

### Inupiaq for "computer"

Linguist Edna MacLean, originally of Barrow, teaches the Inupiaq word for "computer."

The job is nearly done. Soon the program will be available to schools and households. Just in time for Inupiaq language experts like MacLean, 66

"A lot of us speakers are getting older, but we sure would like our children and grandchildren to have access to something like this," she said.

Like many Alaska Natives who came of age in earlier generations, MacLean was punished in school for speaking her language, she said. "I yelled something in Inupiaq at the girl in front of me, and (my third-grade teacher) came over and pulled my ear."

Today the ability to speak indigenous languages is a prized skill. MacLean's son, Andrew, wrote and directed an Inupiaq-language movie in Barrow that he later adapted into a feature film that will screen at the Sundance Film Festival later this month. In Kotzebue, where the NANA Regional Corp. has completed regional Inupiaq dialect teaching programs in partnership with Rosetta Stone, a private Inupiaq immersion school offers

classes to students as young as 3 years old.

Overall, Inupiaq is healthier than most traditional Alaska Native tongues. Of the 20 Alaska Native languages, one -- Eyak -- is extinct. Only Inupiaq and Central Yup'ik -- the native language of much of Southwestern Alaska -- are still spoken fluently by more than 1,000 people, Krauss estimates.

But the only way to keep languages alive is to teach them to children. And in many cases, Inupiaq is disappearing from homes as new parents raise kids in English-only households, MacLean said.

"The language is in danger of becoming extinct after maybe one or two generations," she said.

### Targeting endangered languages

Arlington, Va., based Rosetta Stone sells computer software that teaches more than 30 languages, from Arabic to Vietnamese, by showing people pictures, giving examples of proper speech and rating users on their pronunciation. Like an immersion school, you see and hear only the language you're learning.

American Indian groups looking to revive their languages began approaching the company for help in 1999. By 2004, Rosetta Stone had set up an endangered-language program to partner with Native groups around the world, said Marion Bittinger, manager of the program.

There's now software for learning Navajo, Mohawk and Inuititut, an Inuit tongue spoken in Canada.

Among the two most recent are a pair of Alaska Inupiaq dialects: one for the coastal Kotzebue region, completed in 2007, and another inland dialect spoken in villages such as Kobuk and Selawik that was finished in 2010.

The company doesn't sell the endangered language programs itself. Typically, the software is instead distributed by its partners.

In Alaska that means the Aqqaluk Trust, a nonprofit foundation NANA created, and the North Slope Borough.

"Most typically, the highest priority is to get the software into the schools for use by teachers," Bittinger said.

Between the two Northwest Alaska dialects, NANA has ordered thousands of copies of the Inupiaq Rosetta Stone programs and began sending free copies to the households of shareholders last year.

The company has already shipped more than 800 free copies to shareholder families, some by mail, some simply flown as freight on bush planes to Inupiaq villages, said Hans Schaeffer of the Aqqaluk Trust in Kotzebue.

People and organizations bought more than 150 at \$195 each, he said.

A 30-year-old Inupiaq whose family is from Kobuk and Kotzebue, Schaeffer said he's tried the software himself. As with the software for the North Slope dialect, the Northwest Alaska Inupiaq programs use photos of modern Inupiat and nearby places to teach the language.

"There are a lot of faces that I did recognize," Schaeffer said. "So when they come out with a word for like 'daughter,' there's a picture of a gal that I went to high school with."

NANA hopes the software raises Inupiaq comprehension rates in the region, where a 2005 survey found that only 14 percent of residents were fluent. According to the Aqqaluk Trust, the survey found that those who did speak the language were mostly 65 or older.

### The voice of Inupiaq

When the software for the North Slope Inupiaq dialect ships, one of the voices users will hear is the rich, slow timbre of former Barrow whaling captain and Inupiaq language professor James Nageak.

### Inupiaq phrases

Linguist James Nageak, originally of Kaktovik, provides examples of phrases he recorded for a new teaching program for learning the North Slope dialect of Inupiaq.

Nageak, 70, now lives in Anaktuvuk Pass, where he auditioned for the job over the phone. Soon he was on his way to Barrow for a week of hours-long recording sessions.

Although there are three separate teaching programs for Inupiaq, speakers of one dialect shouldn't have much trouble understanding another.

To Nageak, who grew up in Kaktovik, for example, someone speaking the Kobuk flavor of Inupiaq has a slight "Southern drawl."

"It's just like if you're from Boston and you meet somebody from, let's say, New Orleans," he said.

Rosetta Stone expects the North Slope dialect software to be finished in a month or two. Certainly by spring, Bit-

tinger said.

Exactly how it will be distributed -- including options for buying the software -- remain to be decided, said K.C. Miller, a project manager at the borough's Inupiat History Language and Culture division.

As of 2008, the project was expected to cost more than \$500,000, with about \$370,000 paid through a donation from Shell Oil, she said.

MacLean expects the program to be distributed throughout the North Slope Borough.

### Adults can learn language

Krauss, the former director of the Alaska Native Language Center, said the Rosetta Stone software is the best program of its kind that he knows of. But it's not magic, he said.

You still need to have conversations with other people to learn to fluently and easily speak a language.

"Nothing can replace another human being," Krauss said.

But can an adult who did not grow up speaking or hearing Inupiaq expect to ever become fluent in the Eskimo language?

Krauss believes so.

"Everybody can learn a first language, and that goes likewise for a second language, depending on the personality and the situation," he said.

One of the first people to buy a CD teaching the Inupiaq coastal dialect in Kotzebue was a woman from out of town, working at the local college campus, said Leland Barger a department director for the Aqqaluk Trust.

A week after buying the software, the woman stopped by his office, he said.

"How is your day going?" she asked in Inupiaq.

"I told her in Eskimo, 'It's 8:15 in the morning, and the day's just starting. So far so good,'" he said.

## Mexican Indian Language Appears Headed for Extinction

*By Helena Lozano. Edited from Latin American Herald Tribune website, e,16th March 2011*

MEXICO CITY – Ayapaneco, one of the 364 Indian languages spoken in Mexico, appears headed for extinction because its last two speakers refuse to communicate with each other due to a long-running feud.

Manuel Segovia and Isidro Velazquez are the last surviving speakers of the language, which has its roots in Jalpa de Mendez, a town in the southern state of Tabasco.

The two elderly men live in the small community of Ayapan, but they have not spoken to each other in years even though their houses are only about 500 meters (some 1,600 feet) apart.

The source of the feud between the 75-year-old Segovia and the 69-year-old Velazquez is not known.

About 8,000 Ayapaneco-speaking families were still around in the mid-20th century, but the construction of the Villahermosa-Comacalco highway prompted many residents to leave the area, putting the language on the path to extinction, Segovia said.

"Time and progress transformed the town, the people went to work in bigger towns and there they started to see and bring back other customs," Segovia said.

"When the two of us die, it's over, the language will die," Segovia said.

A written record of this rich language, however, will survive, thanks to two Stanford University linguists who spent two years recording Segovia pronouncing the thousands of words he knows.

The recordings were used to produce a dictionary that sells in the United States for thousands of dollars, Segovia said.

At least 36 other Indian languages are in danger of disappearing unless efforts are made to save them in Mexico, where 141 native languages have died off since colonial days, experts say.

Potlapigu, Guazapar, Mocerito, Cocoa, Ure, Zacateca, Zuaque, Sabaibo and Ahome are among the Indian languages that have disappeared.

Languages mainly disappear because of the discrimination that members of Indian communities suffer, National Indigenous Languages Institute, or INALI, archaeologist Arnulfo Embriz told Efe.

"After being turned down for jobs, schools ... the Indians have decided to stop speaking them," Embriz said.

"If you don't speak Spanish, forget about getting ahead," the archaeologist said.

The 2010 census completed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, or INEGI, found nearly 7 million speakers of Indian languages in Mexico, or approximately 1 million more than in 2007.

The increase was the result of efforts by both INALI specialists and Indian communities to teach languages, document them and make people aware of their right to preserve their language.

Schools are now using books translated into Indian languages, the Mexican Constitution has been translated into at least 13 indigenous languages and communities are "raising their voices" to exercise their rights, Embriz said.

"However, the disappearance of some languages is irreversible," the archaeologist said.

Efforts are being made in Mexico to recognize the nation's cultural heritage and change the attitude of people about their origins, languages and sociocultural practices.

Some have also called for an academic cataloging of linguistic diversity and campaigns to make people aware of the need to preserve Indian languages. EFE

## Paraguay: Government adopts Guarani as an official language

*Edited from the [indigenouspeopleissues.com](http://indigenouspeopleissues.com) web-site, 10 February 2011*

Paraguay's government has adopted the Guarani indigenous language as an official language alongside Castilian, after the enactment of the Languages Act, intended to reclaim the national culture.

This introduction coincides with the celebrations of the bicentenary of the Independence of the South American country and is the conclusion of an application built in 1992 by several personalities from the cultural and political life of Paraguay.

This year there is an article in the Constitution which specifies that Paraguay is a bilingual and multicultural country "with Guarani and Castilian, so it was necessary to establish this standard.

This decree is very important for Latin America in general, shared with the legacy of Paraguay Guarani is spoken today by 10 million people.

The project, approved by the National Parliament and the executive branch, was preceded by two bills-prepared by the National Commission on Bilingualism and Civil Society Workshop, which were compared and consolidated three years ago, local media said.

This new standard will establish the procedures for using both Guaraní and the Castilian, while determining that indigenous languages, in the same way as other minorities, are part of national heritage.

To be established after this law is the National Language Policy, in order to plan, research and promote the native languages in Paraguay.

Also to be founded is the Academia de la Lengua Guaraní to have rules for this language and specifying a common alphabet and grammar.

Given this, the National Secretariat of Culture (SNC) held the proclamation of the law that will spread the ancient culture of the nation.

"Culminating a long and laborious process of several decades for the dignity of their languages, the nation has access to an essential tool for the defense and promotion of their languages, central to the cultural wealth that it has," said CNS a statement.

Guaraní is an indigenous language spoken and routinely used by about 80 percent of Paraguayans, who number about six million citizens.

## David Crystal addresses British Academy

Professor David Crystal urged increased public awareness of endangered languages in address to the British

Academy on 23 February, the British journal *Research Fortnight* reported. He compared the publicity given to loss of language diversity to the much more successful publicity given by academics to habitat loss in the natural world. Little funding is given to the topic, he pointed out, because it is not in the public eye.

Tim Connell, vice-chairman of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, told *Research Fortnight* that language loss and habitat loss are co-occurring in such places as the Amazon rainforest.

Crystal proposed three measures to draw attention to the loss of language diversity: the commissioning of a piece of art that will draw attention to the problem; an award similar to the Nobel Prize; and the establishment of a research base in Britain for language diversity.

## Indigenous Tweets

*Linguist Kevin Scannell of St.Louis, Missouri runs the 'Indigenous Tweets' blogspot, which encourages the use of small languages on Twitter. On 8 April 2011 the blogspot recorded some new milestones:*

We've reached some milestones in the last week. First, I've added 17 new languages to the site since the last update, so there are now 71 supported languages in all, more than twice the number we started with three weeks ago. Again Michael Bauer helped with several of these, and I also had a number of people write to me after the BBC interview asking if I would support their language. Here's the full list of new languages:

- Ainu
- Bemba
- Dholuo/Luo
- Diidxazá/Zapotec
- Gamilaraay
- Kaqchikel
- Lak ótiyapi/Lakota
- Luganda
- Mapudungun
- Nawat/Pipil
- Occitan
- Palauan
- P'urhépecha
- Romani
- Qatzijob'al/K'iche'
- Shona
- Tigrigna

Among these are our first indigenous Australian language (Gamlaraay, with 3 speakers according to Ethnologue) and two other critically endangered languages: Ainu (~15 speakers in Japan), and Nawat (~20 speakers, all older). Thanks to Alan R. King who provided training data for Nawat and who is responsible for the first couple of tweets in that language.

We also have a number of new translations. The first round of translations came mostly from friends working on the Firefox localization teams. Many of these new translations are directly from members of supported language communities on Twitter: Rumantsch (Gion-Andri Cantieni,, Setswana (Sternly Simon,, Kɪlaangi (Oliver Stegen,, Occitan (Maxime Caillon,, Kernewek/Cornish (John Gillingham,, Brezhoneg/Breton (Ahmed Razoui, and Nawat/Pipil (Alan R. King). We also have a translation into Marshallese from Marco Mora, but no tweets in that language yet!

One additional milestone. The site is generated by using a program that "crawls" Twitter users, grabbing the tweets on their timeline and performing statistical language recognition on those tweets (details to come). Then, if a given user has more than a certain fraction of their tweets in the target language, that user's followers are added to a queue to be checked in the same way. In the last couple of days, the initial crawls for Basque and Welsh were completed, meaning all languages, with the exception of Haitian Creole, are now complete. Therefore the number of users currently listed for each language should represent a good initial estimate of the total user base on Twitter. Of course the program will continue to add new users as they are discovered by the crawler (through random search queries for words in each language) and as they are suggested via the form on each language page on IndigenousTweets.com.

Haitian Creole is a special case and will remain so. As noted in an earlier post, we expect there are at least 100,000 people tweeting in Creole and it is unlikely I can keep up with all of them given the limits imposed by Twitter, but I will do my best.

## Venetian in peril

*By Alessandro Mocellin, 7th April 2011*

When we discuss whether Venetian is a language or not, we should – and most of the time we are used to – preliminarily define what a language is. The mostly known and referred definition of "language" compared to "dialect" is the famous statement "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy". That is to say that the difference between a so called "dialect" and a "proper language" is just a political one. For our part, we cannot overlook that if this definition is seriously considered to every extent, no one should doubt the Venetian language to be a proper language. Venetian was the language used by everyone in each situation during the long splendour of the Most Serene Republic of Venice, till 1797 (just a couple of centuries ago). We also learn from the historical chronicles of the following period that the Venetian language was widely used in the Austrian naval fleet (which was called "Austro-Venezianische Marine" till the 1848 revolution in Venice and the Veneto). In fact, the Venetian language was spoken at every level of the naval hierarchy from the humblest mariner to the admiral in person, as is attested for Admiral Tegetthoff, whose guidance and ability brought the proud Venetian marine force to its last glorious victory in 1866. Please note that the enemy fleet brilliantly defeated by this Austro-Venetian naval fleet – whose mariners came from the Venetian lagoon and coasts – was the Italian fleet, on its first naval battle as a unified State (since 1861).

But the Venetian language keeps its role even today, as in nearly every local administration (Commons, Provinces and the Region itself) the Venetian language is widely used by citizens, administra-

tive staff and politicians themselves. That's why one could find oneself astonished when coming to know that political pressures by Italian party directions put our regional politicians in check, as they do informally use Venetian language in administration, but they don't think to ask strongly for the formalization of this de facto linguistic situation because of the veto expressed by the national directions of the parties, because in Italy they hold a very strong power of political "life or death" sentence on local candidates. This practice is widely known, used and even accepted.

One could think talking of these facts to be off topic in a linguistic argument as this aims to be, but we must bring them to the global public opinion in order to let the general public realize the political stalemate we are in, while our language is suffering. In other words, we'd like foreign observers to consider deeply how it could be difficult to request and obtain any substantial and continuing help from local politics in this schizophrenic political environment, which sometimes leads to contradictory decisions and statements given by politicians and also by some academicians who seem to be somehow influenced by the general situation all around.

### Why do we think it is a language?

As one could easily imagine, we Veneti think that our language is a proper language because it is and has always been our mother tongue. This means that we feel emotionally it to be a language, but the majority of Veneti are not given the chance to come to know effectively and widely the very reasons why it really is a language, not just a dialect of Italian as many keep saying, and even more keep not disputing.

The Venetian language is the mother tongue of the majority of the population of Veneto Region, as it is the one which is learnt in the first place and through the familiar "traditio linguae", and it is thus the very first language perceived by the foetus in their last intra-uterine months. In fact, as statistics report (Istat, 2007) in Veneto Region only the 24% of people declares itself as speaking only Italian in every situation.

But it is a mother tongue also for our People collectively, meaning by this that it has always been the language of Veneti – made, used and passed on to us – since the 'vulgar' linguistic era began in Europe. The Venetian language plays a very important role in the whole cultural identity of Veneti, who are one of the most ancient peoples in Europe, being called with the same name and inhabiting the same territory consecutively for three millennia now. Our language is a written testament of a cultural heritage that we have the burden and honour to preserve and continue.

Switching to more rational reasons, first of all, on a linguistic category basis, we should observe that the Venetian language is far older than Italian. And also, subsequently, we can rationalize that Italian language is an artificial one. When the great Dante talked about the Italic 'vulgars' in his "De vulgari eloquentia", he recognized the need to have a common language for all the speakers of a "volgare del si". When he defined it as a language to be "illustre, cardinale, aulico, curiale" with these four adjectives, he did so in a prescriptive – not descriptive – way. Dante is widely considered as the father of the Italian language, and he in person gives us the evidence both that the Italian language is artificial and that it is younger than historical Italic languages (such as Venetian, Sicilian, Neapolitan, etc...).

This last temporal consideration turns a different light on the concept of "dialect": if the Venetian language (and then also Neapolitan, Sicilian, Tuscan, Piedmontese, Friulian, etc...) existed before Italian was spoken, how on earth can it be a local derivation of the "national" Italian?

One could say that Dante wrote at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, and that it was an early time also in the life and development of Italic 'vulgars'. But we cannot forget that the first dictionary of the Italian language of 1612 (printed in Venice, by the way) was itself not a descriptive one, but rather prescriptive: it was a



collection of terms and expression of how the Tuscan Accademia della Crusca intended the Italian language should have been written and spoken: that was not how the Italian language was used.

It is important, then, to have a thought about the number of Italian-speaking people in the past. The only solid statistic we have is that at the first stages of the Italian political unification (1861-1870), Italian speaking people were 2.5% of the total population (De Mauro): that is no more than 650 thousands in 26 million people. By the way, as all Veneti (2.5 million people) spoke Venetian in that period, we should notice that this means there were roughly four Venetian speakers to every one Italian speaker in the middle of the 19th century.

The Venetian mentality is mainly practical, rather than theoretical, and many of us like to stress the fact that Venetian migrants in past times kept their original language (our language) till nowadays. In Southern Brazil, for instance, there are large communities who speak Venetian, some millions of speakers, as some statistics report (it is the so called "Taliàn", which would mean "Italian", but shows evident phonetic phenomena which are typical of Venetian: unstressed vowel apheresis and apocope). This overseas vitality is confirmed by the fact that immigrants in our Veneto (returned rich, as it has always been, with the last economic boom of 40 years ago) still need and want to learn Venetian even before Italian.

#### Why do they say it is a dialect?

Maybe the only point where both positions agree on is that the Venetian language is not the same as Italian. Those who express their contrast to the idea of Venetian being a language usually ground their thesis on the fact that Venetian is not so different from Italian. They usually consider Venetian to be a dialect of the Italian language because of the large part of the lexicon they have in common.

Others indicate reasons for Venetian being a dialect in its quite high frequency of dyatopic linguistic variation. This would lead, in their consideration, Venetian not to be a language, but to be "many languages" or "many dialects".

Some others, finally, express their reasons in terms of lack of prestige, literature or even structure, mainly referring to an alleged absence of literature, solid grammar or proper linguistic tradition.

#### Why do we say it is a language?

The first typical thesis against Venetian (i.e. "it has too much in common with Italian in terms of lexicon") should be labelled as scientifically inconsistent, or even not scientific at all.

First of all, the bare comparison of lexicon operates a dangerous reduction of the linguistic phenomenon to words (or, better, to stem-words). A language is certainly made up by stem-words, but it also needs proper phonetics, morphology and syntax to be considered a complete linguistic code, being able to express complex meanings and communicate thoughts.

But even accepting this canon as a valid criterion, in the case of Venetian we find it in contrast with the widely known linguistic relationship between vulgar Greek and vulgar Venetian. Some Venetian words do come from Greek, rather than from Latin (while Italian refers to Latin a lot more than Venetian does): words like "carèga", "pirón", "sùsta", "catàr", "baùco", find a correspondence in Greek, but not in Italian or Latin (Italian: "sèdia", "forchéttà", "mòlla", "trovàre", "stùpido"; English: "seat/chair", "fork", "(metal) spring", "find", "stupid").

Finally, the lexicon should be separated from the linguistic heritage of Europe as a whole (so called "Europisms", i.e. those words which have been created on the basis of Latin and Greek stem-words since Humanism in every field of scientific research: for example: tachycardia, accelerate, constitution, restoration, nostalgia, atom, &c.). But the main reason why this exposed theory proves to be not scientific is that it leads to adverse results. If you want to reduce Venetian to a simple dialect of the Italian language with this "lexicon theory", you'll come to the absurd result that even Spanish (Castilian) is a

dialect of Italian, or that Venetian could be a dialect of Catalan, or even that Portuguese and Occitan are dialects of Venetian.

The second argument against language status for Venetian shows a little more consistency in terms of scientific value.

They say that the Venetian language is too varied, as you can find different words to express the same meaning. In their reasoning, this would lead to confusion and even to the degradation of the Venetian language to a dialect, because of its alleged lack of a solid basis of common terms among the population of speakers. This is true to the extent of direct comprehensibility of the single term, as sometimes there could be completely different terms to name the same thing (e.g. for "snail", "escargot" in French, you could find Venetian "sciòso" or "bogón"). First of all, one should consider this as a proper difference in lexicon only when it involves a complete change in the stemword, while classifying other differences to be just phonetic (respectively "sciós" and "bovón"). It is amusing to think that these are exactly the terms that many Veneti use to name the snail-like "@" (commercial at) symbol, which was created –as you maybe know – by Venetian merchants as a commercial symbol meaning "this/these (number) amphora/ae at (money value)".

Now that the fact that this second argument is partly true as an empirical observation has been explained, we must ask ourselves whether its alleged consequence is correct. Being more explicit, we find the presence of various terms for the same (or very similar) thing, but does this imply that Venetian is not a language, but a dialect? First of all we must frankly declare that this doesn't mean that Venetian becomes thus a dialect of the Italian language at all (e.g. why not of Spanish?). Secondly, we should ask ourselves if this lexical variability is as dangerous as it is said to be. When we study Italian and are asked to write a piece, all teachers remind us not to be repetitive while using the lexicon: the Italian language is very rich in vocabulary and manners of expression. Every classroom is given a vocabulary of synonyms and antonyms. The question you maybe have in mind is this: "Why does lexical variability represent richness for Italian while allegedly implying confusion and incomprehensibility for Venetian?"

For example, the Italian dictionary compiled by the Accademia della Crusca and printed in 1612 –which was a prescriptive one, as we have said – listed four terms for the word "rifle": archibugio, fucile, schioppo, stioppo. These four terms are made up from three different stem-words, as "schioppo" and "stioppo" are just phonetic variations of the same term (please notice that "stioppo" was used only in some parts of Tuscany, but its prescribed use must be framed in the Academic will to keep Italian as "Tuscan" as possible).

So, which is the real criterion in perceiving lexical variation in Italian differently from Venetian or Sicilian or Neapolitan? We may observe that it's just a matter of schooling. We are naturally Venetian speakers and scholarly Italian speakers, because we have invested (willingly or not) tens of thousands of hours sitting on a chair and listening or reading at school or for school (thus learning new words) in the Italian language. For example, a Venetian speaker would say in Venetian "strucàr" for "press", but the same person would use "prèmere" while speaking Italian. It will take a series of readings and listenings for the Venetian speaker to come to use the Italian (Tuscan) synonym "pigiàre", and the competence in its use would probably be just passive (i.e. understood when reading and listening), without entering in the daily use of the Veneto who speaks Italian, who feels that term as lexically alien to its linguistic domain in Italian.

Also in this case, though indirectly, a reductive vision of the nature of language is present.

Those who refer to this second argument keep considering language as just a series of words. If this was true, linguistic competence could rely on the memorization of a dictionary, rather than on direct speech of mother tongue speakers.

But even accepting this argument, one should remember that opponents previously said Venetian is easily understood by Italians in general, but this is not empirically justified in terms of lexicon, as the Italian noun for "sciòso" is "chiocciola", so it is completely different and etymologically not comparable: Italian speakers won't understand it easily. In reality, when we extend our view to the linguistic experience necessarily as a whole, we can find some characteristics of Venetian that strongly differ from Italian in phonetics and syntax particularly, but also in morphology.

If the Italian schooling system is widely known as scarcely professional in terms of teaching languages (particularly foreign ones) it could be because of this general vision which considers ancient Latin and Greek as "perfect languages". This leads the whole system in the direction of theoretically considering and practically teaching languages as if they were like Latin and Greek, i.e. as if they were dead languages.

A deeper and more open-minded observation of Venetian makes us aware that while finding those differences we noted from the Italian language, we have actually found those characteristics which are in common among all localized variants Venetian language (what is correctly called "dialect", e.g. "Padoàn" is the dialect of Venetian language spoken in Padua and its neighbourhood). In fact, once we have understood that what is different between Venetian and Italian is what nearly all variants of Venetian have in common, we have thus proven, beyond any reasonable doubt, both that Venetian is different from Italian and that Venetian is one language, though naturally and inevitably varied.

At this final stage, anyway, we must consider that those two arguments against the Venetian language did not actually need to be contrasted individually, as they are contradictory to each other. In fact, while it is firstly said that Venetian is not so different from Italian (this is based on the alleged comprehensibility of Venetian by every Italian speaker), on the other side many use the second argument in order to degrade Venetian to a dialect because of its diatopical variation, which, they say, makes a Veronese speaker incomprehensible to a Belunàt (speaker from Belluno), a 'Venicean' to a Paduan, and so on (we can use the term "Venicean" to tell the difference between Venetian as spoken in Venice and Venetian as spoken in the Veneto collectively).

You have probably felt the incompatibility of those arguments: their combined acceptance would lead to the nonsense of a Venetian speaker being easily understood by Italian speakers but not by other Venetian speakers. How can it be that a Milanese can easily understand the Venetian language (as the first theory states) while Paduan speakers of Venetian won't understand Veronese speakers of Venetian (as the second theory says)?

This inconceivable contradiction seems to be in the range of the attempt of finding any possible allegation, with no rationalized idea of the resulting messy argumentation. "This is what I need to say: please find me out some reasons why I'm right if I think so". Please note that it happened that the same person in different situations used both these two contradictory arguments in order to attack the language status of Venetian!

Finally, the third argument is that of an alleged lack of prestige and literature. This is plainly false as you just think about Venice and the Most Serene Republic, which is remembered and evoked as the longest republic ever (exactly 1100 continuous years): there are several publications collecting and describing the use of Venetian in thousands of pieces of law, politics, trials and diplomacy. Regarding literature you could only think about Ruzante, Goldoni, Baffo, Casanova, Boaretti, Fontana, Noventa, Zanzotto, Meneghello, and many many others... Then, we should think that the prestige of a language also comes from important persons who were Venetian speakers: it'll be enough just to name Marco Polo, Caboto, Pigafetta, Bellini, Tizian, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Veronese, Canaletto, Bassano, Tiepolo, Guardi, Canova, Palladio, and many many others. Well, we have to

say that if ever they existed, Romeo and Juliet would also have spoken Venetian.

Given that this alleged absence of prestige and literature is false, we should think about why these additional factors are required for Venetian but they were not when in 1999 the Italian Parliament recognized as proper languages some "former dialects" of Italic origin: Friulian, Sardinian and Ladin. Ladin language, for example, didn't and doesn't have any prestigious literature, nor the representation of a State or any important person speaking it: in reality, it used to be only used orally, and the written tradition was near to zero; it is spoken by some tens of thousands of people and varied as much as Venetian varies diatopically (even more if we consider the very small number of Ladin speakers). How on earth can it be that if Ladin is a formally recognized language, then Venetian is not?

There is also another important factor to be analyzed in order to form a complete vision. Language is somehow the written testament of a cultural heritage, as we said before.

This means that an autonomous culture would be mirrored by a correspondently autonomous language. As we are interested in the autonomy of language in this piece, we should point out some interesting peculiarities of Venetian that reflect an autonomous development of Venetian society.

For example, while nearly every European language names the days of the week adding an enclitic "-day" in English, "-tag" in German, "-di" in Italian (and so on), Venetian does not. Actually, we just find the name of the astrological planets from Monday to Friday, the Hebrew "Sabbath" for Saturday and the Christian day of the Lord ("dominus" in Latin) for Sunday. So we do say: "lùni, màrti, mèrcore, zòba, vènare, sàbo, doménega" (moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Sabbath, Somonica; please note the Venetian -eg- form in "doménega" instead of -ic- form of Latin "dominica" and Italian "doménica").

Another interesting cultural phenomenon is the feminine surname, as in Russian. In fact, Venetian language and culture use the surname as an adjective: for example the surname "Sartór" (meaning "Taylor", a typical job surname like "Munàro" for Miller and "Fàvaro" for Smith) can be declined as an adjective to define one woman as "la Maria Sartora", one man as "Marco Sartor", two sisters as "le sorele Sartore" and the family as a whole in masculine plural form "i Sartori".

Finally, an orthographic note: the Venetian language has some typical characteristics that make the use of the Italian graphic system impractical and confusing: for at least seven centuries Venetian writers have been on a process to synthesize a way to write Venetian correctly and as phonemically as possible. That's why in Venetian you could find a written "X" which is not to be read as /ks/, but as a /z/, and in fact sometimes it is also written as a "Z". The verb "xe" (= he/she/it "is") must be read /ze/ (and in fact some prefer writing it as "ze"). This "rule" is valid for every other word with that X or Z: ga-Zette; Zaleti (typical biscuits); Zustinian, Zonta, Xausa (surnames); doXe (Doge).

Some detractors could then say: "as you see, there are different costumes also in the way to write it". We should ask them to remember this suggestion of theirs when they say the Venetian language is not vital or that it is perceived as useless: a language which is a matter of strong contrast is by this only reason a vital language, just as well as only living people can have fever.

[Editor's note: See more on Veneto on pp. 21-22 below.]

## Australia: indigenous language revival in NSW schools

The 'Living Black' programme on the national SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) television network in Australia reported on 21 March 2011 on the indigenous Gamilaraay language teaching programme at St. Joseph's School, Walgett, NSW, including interviews with teacher John Brown and linguist John Giacon on the keen interest shown by pupils in reviving the dormant language.

## Afûk and EduFrysk: measures to promote Frisian

*Tseard DeGraaf, Fryske Akademy*

The Algemene Fryske ûnderrjocht Kommissje Afûk (a foundation to promote the knowledge and use of the Frisian language) is a cultural institution in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden with special tasks in the field of education (see [www.afuk.nl](http://www.afuk.nl)). Firstly, it exploits a bookshop in the centre of town where books related to the Frisian language and culture are sold. It also is an editing house producing numerous books and other publications, in particular educational material and the Frisian monthly journal *De Moanne* ([www.demoanne.nl](http://www.demoanne.nl)).

The Afûk organises courses on Friesland and its language and culture, which for instance take place on the island of Terschelling. Also, it houses a special translation service *stipepunt Frysk*, where texts are translated from and into Frisian. Special educational methods are developed for language classes and in particular for children who grow up and go to school in a bilingual Frisian-Dutch situation or even in trilingual schools, where Frisian, Dutch and English are used. Very successful programs are provided by the so-called *Tomke*-books for small children and the online learning facility *EduFrysk*.

*Anyone with questions about Frisian grammar and the use of the language can receive aid from the Language Desk. The Desk answers questions about spelling, phrasing or terminology and can give advice concerning the composition of Frisian texts. The Language Desk is specialized in translating texts containing technical terms into Frisian (e.g. notarial acts, official and technical documents). Information can be obtained about place names in Friesland, foreign geographic names, computer terminology, terminology in special areas, such as for inland shipping, creation of new words, etc.*

*The Afûk is (mainly) funded by the regional government. It has several commercial counterparts, for instance the language agencies *Taalburo Popkema*, specialized in translation and linguistic research ([www.taalburopopkema.nl](http://www.taalburopopkema.nl)) and *DAT Tekstbureau*, specialized in literary translation, editing and the production of Frisian audiobooks ([www.dattekstbureau.nl](http://www.dattekstbureau.nl)).*

*EduFrysk* ([www.edufrysk.com/](http://www.edufrysk.com/)) presents an innovative multimedia online learning facility, which allows people to learn the Frisian language in their own time and at their own speed. It contains a multitude of texts, poetry, musical performances, videos, dictations and several kinds of exercises. The program keeps record of the student's progress and by using the mouse one can discover the meaning of Frisian words, consult a dictionary and listen to the pronunciation.

This is one of the most complete language learning facilities on the internet, which is financially supported by the Frisian provincial government and has modules on several levels of ability. Target groups are students, teachers and interested learners, who not only live in Friesland, but in principle anywhere in the world with access to the internet. The language of instruction is Dutch but an English version is in preparation. For this one can for instance think of 'root seekers' in America where many descendants of Frisian emigrants are living.

New features in the program are the possibility for users to create their own profile, work in virtual communities and with expert groups, use podcasts and language games. The program is permanently extended with new issues and it also has large educational potential for application for other minority languages in the world. In this way the internet can play a very important role in the education and safeguarding of the minority languages in the world and stimulate the revitalization of endangered languages.

## 4. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

### An appeal from Tim Brookes

*Readers will already be familiar with Tim Brookes from his 'Endangered Alphabets' book and associated articles. We have received the following appeal from him:*

Dear fellow linguists, anthropologists and scholars in general all across the planet:

Having finished my original Endangered Alphabets Project (see <http://www.endangeredalphabets.com>), I'm now starting a similar carving project whose aim once again is to draw attention to the world's vanishing scripts-and I need your help.

The project will have many different outcomes. If all goes well, it will result in endangered scripts being combined with an endangered languages poetry project, being carved and displayed throughout the U.S. and in other countries, and even being projected onto the sides of major U.S. buildings.

For this to happen, though, I need to be in touch with people who can read and write these disappearing scripts well enough to be able to translate a short text for me.

Here are the scripts in which I am especially interested, and as yet have nobody who can act as a translator:

Redjang	Nushu	TaiDam
Bamum	Ranjana/ Lantsa	Javanese
Balinese	N'Ko	Maldivian/ Thaana
Manchu	Buhid	

If you happen to be able to read and write in one or more of these scripts and are interested in joining me in this project by translating a four-line poem, please contact me at [brookes@champlain.edu](mailto:brookes@champlain.edu). Needless to say, I'll credit you in all written materials.

If you think you may know of someone else who may be able to help, please forward this appeal to him or her.

Thanks so much, and best wishes,

*Tim Brookes*

## 5. Allied Societies and Activities

### New Manx Gaelic blog-spot

Adrian Cain, the indefatigable champion of Manx on the Isle of Man, has alerted us to the new Manx Gaelic blog-spot: [www.cowag.org](http://www.cowag.org). It covers all issues relating to the Manx language, and some of it is in Manx, geared to learners of the language.

## 6. Letters to the Editor

### Endangered language coverage in the Italian, French and German media

I have been interested in the fate of endangered languages since 2002, when I came across the book *Language Death* by David Crystal (CUP, 2000). Since then, I have joined the Swiss Society for Endangered Languages and the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL). I am eager to do something for a cause about which I am utterly worried and about which I feel powerless. I feel powerless in particular because I do not know exactly where to start when it comes to taking action. So far, my research has revolved around the contemporary Italian language, and at the moment it is not easy for me to expand my field of expertise, especially as an already busy researcher in my own field and mother of two small children. That is why I decided to try to begin by informing the general public about endangered languages, which is an important goal of both Academic Societies.

Shortly after joining FEL, I contacted the editor of *Ogmios*, Christopher Moseley, to offer my help in whatever capacity for the newsletter of the Foundation. He suggested that I translate into English an article on endangered languages written in Italian, French or German, to write something new and/or to monitor the news on endangered languages written in other languages than English. On the 17.8.2010, I started several Google Alerts, based on the number of total hits in Google, with the following phrases: *endangered languages* (English), *bedrohte Sprachen* (German), *linguale in pericolo* (Italian), *linguale in via di estinzione, morte delle lingue* (Italian), *langues en danger / en voie de disparition* (French). Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results based on a query or topic. It is (or so I thought) a great way of being informed about the latest news published on the net on a certain topic and keeping track of it. Each Alert is subdivided into three sections: News, Blogs and Web.

Today, after six months, the results are the following: I receive a Google Alert in English on endangered languages every day (very often including articles listed in the News section). Thanks to Google Alert, I have collected dozens of interesting articles on endangered languages in English (which appeared in online newspapers from all over the globe), for instance on the discovery of Koro, a language from Arunachal Pradesh (northern India) not yet documented or known to the western world; on Breton and Manx (the last being, according to some people, not really endangered); on Saulteaux, Nakota,

Lakota and Dakota, four aboriginal languages spoken in the Province of Saskatchewan (Canada); on Rovignese (also called Istriot), a Romance language mainly spoken on the Adriatic coast in Croatia (Istria); on Jeju, spoken on the island of Jeju (South Korea); on Suba, a language confined to a few pockets on the two Islands of Lake Victoria Mfangano and Rusinga (Kenya).

In contrast, I do not regularly receive a Google Alert written in the other languages. In fact, I very rarely have the pleasure of getting a real Alert related to endangered languages in websites written in Italian, German and French. The occasional Alerts that I receive are generally on endangered animals or plants, because Google alerts me also about news, blogs and websites in which my query words are not adjacent. However, there are also important differences among the three languages of my query. Most surprisingly, I did not – in six months of time – receive one single Alert related to endangered languages or language death in Italian! I very occasionally received an Alert related to the German phrase *bedrohte Sprachen*. And when it happened to be related to the subject, it was always the same short video from ‘You Tube’, showing one minute of Plattdeutsch or, more interestingly, an event organized by the *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen*. The Alerts related to the French *langues en danger / en voie de disparition* – also very rare – were also of interest, but did not contain links to news articles. In sum, through Google Alerts, I have not been able to collect a single article from a newspaper written in Italian, French or German.

The Alerts in French, however, lead to an important discovery. They contained links to videos that could be watched on the website of *Sorosoro*. *Pour que vivent les langues du monde* (the word *sorosoro*, which means ‘the breath’, ‘the word’, comes from Araki, a language spoken in Vanuatu, which has only 8 speakers left on a small island state located in the Pacific Ocean). This is probably one of the most interesting websites dedicated to endangered languages written in French (and the webpages are translated in English and Spanish). It provides descriptions of the current funded programs in language documentation and revitalization and in the promotion of multilingualism. This website also lists articles published on these issues in the French press (but not only). Once found, I could not stop reading (at last!). One of the last articles listed is “Profession: d nicheur de langues rares”, published in *Lib ration* on November 26, 2010, which is accompanied by a video, containing a beautiful surprise: at the end of the short 5 min. movie we can hear the late Tevfik Esen , the last speaker of Ubykh/Ubuh, a unique language known for having approximately 80 consonants and only a few (maybe only two) distinctive vow-

els! To read this and other fascinating articles in French (as well as in English), to view weekly uploaded films on and in endangered languages, subscribe to the newsletter etc. visit the *Sorosoro* website (at <http://www.sorosoro.org>).

What can be concluded from this brief Google Alert experiment? Do I have problems with my search terms? To answer this question, I searched my query words in Google again (on the 7.2.2011) and got the following number of hits per search (for the exact phrases): English *endangered languages* (213,000); French *langues en danger* (169,000), *langues en voie de disparition* (phrase used as Wikipedia entry, 8,570); German *bedrohte Sprachen* (44,700) and, in the singular form, *bedrohte Sprache* (phrase used as Wikipedia entry, 4,790); Italian *lingue in pericolo* (8,100) and, in the singular form, *lingua in pericolo* (phrase used as Wikipedia entry, 2,320), *lingue in via di estinzione* (6,430), *morte delle lingue* (12,200). My query words seem fine and thus the problem appears to be Google Alerts, at least in French (the phrase «*langues en danger*» is used in the article from *Lib ration*). To increase the chances of receiving a real Alert, I could add the following query words: English *language death* (61,200); French *mort des langues* (38,600); German *Sprachtot* (131,000). As for Italian, which gets the lowest number of hits for the English equivalent of *endangered languages*, there is not much I could add. I already monitored the web for the phrase *morte delle lingue*. Adding the phrase *estinzione linguistica* (the Wikipedia equivalent of *language death*) would probably not be of significant help, since the total number of hits in Google amounts to 344...

As for the conclusions, I would say that we probably need to have more information on endangered languages in major languages other than English in general and in the written media (newspapers) in particular. This seems especially true for Italian. And surely, as it turns out that we cannot rely on search-engines like Google Alerts, that we need good websites on endangered languages, which lists the items published in the press. For French, there is for instance *Sorosoro*. For Italian and German, I do not know. Any suggestions anyone?

*Anna-Maria De Cesare*

([anna-maria.decesare@unibas.ch](mailto:anna-maria.decesare@unibas.ch))

## In defence of Veneto

Dear Professor Moseley,

My name is Davide Guiotto, president of the cultural association “Veneto Nostro” and member of the regional Veneto board of “Lingua e grafia veneta”. I’m writing to





you just regarding the matter of the Veneto language, its tutelage and valorization, after what has been discussed during the works of the international meeting recently held in Venice [*by UNESCO on 10-11 February –ed.*]. The association I represent has been working for many years on the territory of our region, Veneto, and is actively engaged in the protection and defence not only of our linguistic patrimony, but also on traditions, culture and history of our people. Thanks to many of our activities, meetings and debates arranged about the subject and thanks to the contacts with Veneto politicians of the widest ideological positions from right to left, in 2007 the Regione Veneto recognized Veneto as a language with a special law (L.R.08/2007). But unfortunately now the situation is the following: as Veneti we don't yet have the right of teaching our language at school, not to see it worthily represented though mass media (radio, newspaper or TV) where it is absent altogether. We are constantly told in more or less explicit ways that Veneto is not a language but a dialect, that it is badly spoken Italian or an inferior language; this attitude, since the nineteen-seventies on, has led the majority of the parents to feel ashamed of speaking Veneto and therefore to pass our mother tongue to their children. We are convinced that a quick turnabout is necessary as soon as possible to get to concrete efforts for the real protection and promotion of the Veneto language; otherwise, as the same UNESCO has pointed out, Veneto will be one of the minority languages that will disappear by the end of this century. Furthermore, due to matters frequently linked to political disputes, the Italian parliament has not recognized Veneto as a language. This fact is extremely detrimental, for, as we were personally informed by Dr.

Leonard Orban, European Commissioner for Multilingualism, if a minority language is not recognized as a language by the state where it is spoken, it cannot be recognized as a language by Europe either. We are then in a blocked situation and, if I may add, in a situation of real danger. As you can imagine, if our language is not transmitted with the proper support to the new generations, if it is excluded from the mass media, if the politics of the central state give no value to it, nor official acknowledgment, if in school programs its teaching is not provided, so Veneto is not only vulnerable as pointed by you in the Atlas, but at risk of extinction.

All this to tell you that we would be pleased to be able to co-operate with you to find any solution to the situation I just tried to describe. It would be very helpful if you, as UNESCO, could be ambassadors to the appropriate institutional seats for this our very emergency, because this is what the matter is about. I'd be honoured if we could eventually meet in order to better discuss together these problems and about consequent actions to be taken in synergy with your prestigious organization. I remain at personal complete disposal for any further communications, and thanking you so much for your attention, I send my very best regards.

Davide Guiotto

## 7. Publications, Book Reviews

### A linguistic history of Venice

By *Ronnie Ferguson*

Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanum, Serie II, vol. 57

Published by Casa Editrice Leo S.Olschi, Firenze. Italy

ISBN 978 88 222 5645 4

*From the publisher's press release:*

This is the first comprehensive study of the history, status and structures, past and present, of Venetian. It provides a contextualised account, using detailed linguistic and historical data, of the emergence of Venetian in the medieval period, of its evolving status as a written medium within the Republic of Venice, and of its enduring prestige as a spoken 'dialect' in an Italy rapidly moving towards monolingualism.

The book consists of nine chapters followed by a complete bibliography. Chapter One looks at Venetian today, mapping out a schema of its functional distribution since Italian unification. Chapter Two establishes the overall periodisation employed in the book, and locates Venetian within its Italo-Romance environment. Chapters Three, Four and five are dedicated to an extensive structural analysis of the language/dialect using Modern Venetian as its reference point. Chapters Six and Seven are more linear and historical. The former locates the origins of Venetian in the complex koineisation processes generated by the settlement and early urbanisation patterns of the lagoon city, and considers its textual emergence. The latter examines the transition of Venetian from language to dialect between 1500 and 1800. Both are followed by a representative selection of commented texts with translations. Chapter Eight surveys the Venetian lexicon, while Chapter Nine assesses the contact impact of Italian on Venetian from the Middle Ages to the present.

Ronnie Ferguson is Full Professor of Italian at the University of St. Andrews, where he is also Head of the School of Modern Languages.

### Endangered Languages: Critical Concepts in Linguistics

Edited and with a new introduction by Peter K. Austin and Stuart McGill, both at SOAS, University of London, UK. London: Routledge 2011

*From the publisher's press release:*

At least half of the seven thousand or so languages spoken today are in danger of disappearing during the 21st century. Although languages have always come and gone, the current rate of language extinction is unprecedented, a loss which not only affects individual communities but also diminishes the world's linguistic heritage. This crisis has stimulated a variety of responses from linguists: sociolinguists have been concerned with the study of language revitalisation – how the tendency to shift away from minority languages can be reversed – while general linguists have paid more attention to the structural aspects of language endangerment – how languages change as they fall into disuse. In recent years linguists have been particularly concerned with language documentation – the activity of recording, annotating, translating and archiving audiovisual materials of languages before they are lost. In addition, all linguists working on endangered languages face the ethical questions of how much effort they should devote to non-academic activities in support of the communities with whom they work.

The study of language endangerment has only really become a concern of mainstream linguistics in the past twenty years, and this four-volume collection is the first of its kind, bringing together research on language endangerment from leading scholars. Theoretical and practical responses by linguists have led to the emergence of the linguistic sub-fields of language documentation and language revitalisation, and most of the publications within them date from just the last ten years. There has however been a veritable flood of book and articles during this time, and an enormous flowering of interest both within academia and in the wider community as well. Twenty years ago an extensive collection on this topic could not have been put together.

A general introduction by the editors gives an overview of the history of research on endangered languages and the main issues faced by scholars of language endangerment today, while specific volume instructions detail the research context of the individual articles. *Endangered Languages* is an essential one-stop work of reference and will be appreciated by researchers and students of language endangerment and related disciplines.

### Portuguese in the East

By Dr. Shihan De Silva Jayasuriya, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London

Publisher: I.B. Tauris, March 2011. ISBN 9781845115852

*From the publisher's press release:*

Vasco da Gama's voyage to India in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century opened up new economic and cultural and linguistic horizons for the Portuguese. At the height of Portugal's maritime influence, it had created an oceanic state ranging from the Cape of Good Hope to China. While Portugal's direct political influence in Asia was comparatively short-lived, its linguistic influence remains. Here Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya charts the influence of the Portuguese in more than fifty Asian tongues, illustrating the extent of Lusitanian links. Luso-Asian influences became ingrained in Eastern cultures in more subtle ways than other European cultures which followed, such as the Portuguese oral traditions in folk literature, now embedded in post-colonial Asian music and song. These Portuguese cultural legacies are a lasting reminder of an unexpected outcome of seaborne commerce.

## Meyah: a language of West Papua, Indonesia

*By Gilles Gravelle (Pacific Linguistics series)*

This book is the first detailed linguistic description of the Meyah language. The Meyah people live in the eastern Bird's Head region of Papua, Indonesia. Although the Meyah had early contact with Western people, specifically the British in the early 18th century and the Dutch in the early 19th century, very little has been written on the language or the people. Indeed, until recently the entire Bird's Head region was the most understudied area of New Guinea in relation to language, ethnography, and the natural sciences. The region is of particular linguistic interest because of its location which forms a convergence zone between Austronesian and Papuan languages. Long term contact between the two linguistic families shows an interesting hybridization between Austronesian and Papuan language features. This description of the Meyah language provides a synchronic snapshot of such diachronic changes taking place in what is presumably a Papuan language. The book begins with a brief comparison between two closely related dialects, Meyah and Moskona. Meyah became a north-coast oriented society, whereas Moskona remained isolated between the southern flank of the Arfak Mountains and the coastal lowlands. Additionally, there are many comparisons made with other eastern Bird's Head languages, such as the amazing array of phonological systems, with at least four different supra-segmental systems briefly mentioned.

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338 pp.

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Prices: Australia AUD \$104.50 (incl. GST), Overseas AUD \$95.00

## Somersaults

*(a play by Iain Finlay Macleod)*

*At the Citz theatre, Glasgow until 26 March 2011*

*From the Guardian, 22 March 2011*

*Review by Mark Fisher*

What do you have left when you strip away your home, your personal possessions and your loved ones? For some, it might be a sense of selfhood, spirituality or oneness with the universe. For playwright Iain Finlay Macleod, all that remains is language. And the dilemma for his central character, James, in this poignant and playful drama for the National Theatre of Scotland, is that even the words are disappearing.

One word is particularly bothering him. James is a successful entrepreneur who has made a fast buck from the games industry and is now living the metropolitan life in Hampstead. He feels little pull home to the Isle of Lewis and has no use for his native Gaelic apart from as a debased, spot-the-swear-word party game. Yet it is with a sense of alarm that he realises he no longer recalls the Gaelic word for "somersault". This is a man who grew up being known not as James but as Seumas. His formative experience was through a language he now uses only when he speaks to his terminally ill father. Losing vocabulary is like losing a family member; a fundamental part of him that can never be replaced. When bankruptcy strikes, his material world is torn down – literally in the case of Kai Fischer's sandpit set, which is surrounded by transparent gauze that falls away with each blow to his sense of identity.

Losing everything, James finds the only thing he truly values is his mother tongue. Played by Tony Kearney with charm and physicality (he can do somersaults even if he can't pronounce them), he embodies the internal conflict of the minority-language speaker trying to square the practical advantages of communicating in English with the deep self-definition that comes with speaking in his own tongue.

In this way, the play's discussion is not simply about nostalgia versus modernity, but about how we value those things that inform our cultural, social and personal identity even if they are of no monetary worth. Eventually, like his language, James disappears from view, leaving us to look at a desolate and empty stage. From the audience, the actors continue the debate, but it is as if the argument has already been lost.

In a world of dying languages, this is not the first time this predicament has been aired but, in Vicky Featherstone's fluid, carefully timed production, Somersaults gives it a wistful, human face.

## 8. Places to go on the Web

### A South Australian linguist on the Isle of Man

*From Adrian Cain, Manx Language Officer, 26 November 2010*

One of the highlights of this year's Cooish was the Ned Maddrell lecture with Rob Amery who discussed his work with Aboriginal languages.

You can now view some short videos from this lecture on my blog at:

<http://cowag.wordpress.com/2010/11/26/ned-maddrell-lecture-with-rob-amery/>

### Emerging Languages, Emergent Knowledge

*David Harrison continues to post articles on the theme of the impoverishment of human knowledge through the loss of languages. One such recent posting was under the above title in the Huffpost on-line journal, accessible at <http://j.mp/gwi611>. (dateline: 18.2.2011)*

## 9. Forthcoming events

### International Symposium on the Languages of Java

State Islamic University of Malang, East Java, Indonesia  
23-24 June 2011.

Conference website:

<http://lingweb.eva.mpg.de/jakarta/isloj3.php>

**The island of Java** is home to several major languages. Javanese—spoken mainly in Central and East Java—is the world's 10th or 11th largest language in number of native speakers. It has one of the oldest and fullest recorded histories of any Austronesian language. It also has been of considerable interest to scholars because of the system of speech levels or speech styles found in a number of varieties of Javanese. Sundanese—spoken in West Java—has over 27 million speakers, and Madurese—spoken on the neighboring island of Madura and throughout parts of East Java—has over 13 million speakers. Varieties of both of these languages

have speech level systems and such systems can also be found in the geographically, historically, and linguistically related languages on the neighboring islands of Bali and Lombok. Each of these languages displays a range of dialects, isolects, continua, and contact varieties and yet they have received relatively little attention from linguists. With this symposium, we offer an opportunity for scholars working on any aspect of Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese and Sasak to come together and share their findings. We aim to encourage and promote continued research on these important and unique languages.

**Abstracts** are invited for papers to be presented on any linguistic topics dealing with the languages of Java and its environs—Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Sasak. Given the location of the conference, papers on Sasak are especially encouraged. Papers on other languages will be judged according to their relevance to the symposium topic.

Papers are welcome from any subfield of linguistics and using any approach or theoretical background. Studies of non-standard(ized) versions, dialects, and isolects, including contact varieties, are particularly welcome. All papers are to be presented in English.

### Symposium on Teaching and Learning Indigenous Languages of Latin America

30 October – 2 November 2011, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

The Association for Teaching and Learning Indigenous Languages of Latin America (ATLILLA) and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame invited proposals by 14 February for panels, individual papers, round table discussions, interactive workshops, poster sessions and technological tools showcases to be presented at the second **Symposium of Teaching and Learning Indigenous Languages of Latin America (STLILLA 2011)**. Proceedings of the symposium will be published.

### University of Westminster Conference on Language Contact- Change-Maintenance and Loss

22-23 July, 2011 Hosted by the Department of English Language, Linguistics and Cultural Studies, University of Westminster London, United Kingdom. Most present-day societies are multilingual, though

multilingualism is not always recognised by public institutions. Nation states often include regional minorities that have their own language; quite often, populations in border areas speak the language of the neighbouring country. In ex-colonial states, a former colonial language often continues to serve as the official state language while most people use tribal or ethnic languages for everyday informal communication.

Most urban centres around the world have attracted large-scale immigration from across the country or from overseas, giving rise to urban linguistic minorities. Some countries have two or more national languages, while others recognise regional or minority languages and grant them limited official status. In most multilingual communities, the languages tend to have distinct specialised functions. Quite often, one language is used for informal communication within the group, another for inter-ethnic communication, and sometimes yet another language is used in the public domain - for education and media and in correspondence and institutions. Multilingual societies face the problem of maintaining an effective medium of communication while safeguarding the linguistic and cultural heritage of the various population sectors.

This conference will provide a forum for researchers and students concerned with aspects of multilingualism to compare findings on and exchange analyses of different settings, and in so doing contribute to theory-building in the field.

Organisers Dr Kelechukwu Ihemere, University of Westminster, UK; Sharon Sinclair, University of Westminster, UK

## Developing orthographies for unwritten languages

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*From the SIL web-site, 26 January 2011*

Orthographies have long been of interest to linguists, relating to both linguistic theory and social issues. This interest has increased lately because of the connection with endangered language research. Researchers in such languages have become sensitive to a moral imperative to not just study languages for the sake of scientific investigation, but to assist minority language groups in ways that the communities themselves value. In many circumstances, literacy is one of these. Literacy in an endangered language can strengthen a language's vitality, raise the perceived status of the language, make it possi-

ble to communicate in ways not known before (e.g. personal letters), preserve cultural material, and make it easier to disseminate certain types of information such as health materials.

However, introducing literacy in a language community that has never known it, or has known literacy only in a national language, is a more complex undertaking than many researchers realize or are trained for. Endangered languages concerns and language documentation methodology have indeed motivated improvements in how graduate students are taught today. However, practical applications of linguistics, such as pedagogical grammars, monolingual dictionaries for community use, and literacy primers and reading materials production, are not in focus outside of summer schools such as InField.

In this Symposium, we cannot cover all the elements involved in literacy, but we focus on one major aspect, that of developing an orthography for a previously unwritten language, and issues to consider when undertaking such a project. These will include issues in developing the actual orthography, but also issues related to how such an orthography is used and embedded in a larger social and cultural context.

The first presentation addresses the non-linguistics issues involved in orthographies. These will include governmental policies, educational factors, and especially crucial sociolinguistic factors. Also, brief mention will be made of other factors for successful literacy, such as development of materials and training of readers and of teachers.

The second presentation treats what level of phonological depth is the most fruitful in application to orthographies. It will be proposed that something corresponding to the output of the lexical level in a lexical phonology-type approach most corresponds to psychological awareness for speakers.

The third presentation discusses options of marking tone in an orthography, likely needed for a majority of the world's languages. It also will present different options that have been used for marking lexical and grammatical tone, in Africa and other areas.

The fourth set of presentations includes three brief case studies from disparate areas of the world, illustrating concrete cases of the above topics, from California, Mexico, and Southeast Asia.



## Language Documentation Meets Corpus Linguistics

'Language Documentation Meets Corpus Linguistics: How to Exploit DOBES Corpora for Descriptive Linguistics and Language Typology?'

The University of Regensburg (Germany)

September 27-28, 2011

There will be an international workshop 'Language Documentation Meets Corpus Linguistics: How to Exploit DOBES Corpora for Descriptive Linguistics and Language Typology?' at the University of Regensburg, September 19-28, 2011. This workshop follows the Summer School on language documentation but addresses itself to a wider audience. The major goal of this workshop is to bring together documentary linguists and corpus linguists in order to explore and discover ways how DOBES corpora - and there are more than 50 digital corpora in the archive of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen by now - can be automatically or semi-automatically exploited for descriptive linguistics and language typology.

The workshop topic is a hot topic in the linguistic community - in particular among the documentary linguists who are also interested in descriptive linguistics and typology. During the last 10 years the Volkswagen Foundation has funded more than 50 documentation projects all over the world and other comparable funding initiatives e.g. in Great Britain and the US have funded large and smaller sized documentation projects as well.

The results of these projects are large and digitally available data repositories containing audio and video recordings, transcribed and glossed text collections of all kinds of text genres and text types, and lexical databases. Most of the linguists who were involved in the collection of these data are not only interested in the data collection itself, but also in language description or comparative linguistics (typology and historical linguistics). The question then arises how these corpora can be used in linguistic research.

The conference explores the possibilities to exploit DOBES corpora of endangered languages that were compiled by over 50 documentation projects all over the world for descriptive linguistics and language typology. Call for Papers:

The workshop will explore methodological questions which have to do with the technical aspects as well as with theoretical questions of the exploitation of DOBES corpora. In addition, the workshop will elicit presentations that show the successful application of corpus

linguistic methods to DOBES corpora and its results on all levels of the language system as well as cross-linguistically. The answers and approaches found with DOBES corpora can naturally be extended to other corpora of the same kind.

More specifically, the workshop seeks answers to the following questions, but is not restricted to them:

1. How to apply corpus linguistic methods to DOBES corpora?
2. How should a (DOBES) corpus look like? Principles and problems of the creation of a representative text corpus
3. What kinds of information should be included in the corpus: the question of annotations and other kinds of additional information?
4. What kinds of searches does a descriptive linguist need? and what kind of search procedures are possible in DOBES corpora?
5. Do DOBES corpora have advantages over 'traditional' monolingual text corpora? and how can these advantages be exploited?
6. How reliable and significant are concordances of DOBES corpora - the unpleasant question of statistics in linguistics
7. The linking of the descriptive grammar with the text corpus and the presentation of corpus data in descriptive and typological studies

Submission:

Authors are invited to submit a one page abstract for a 30 min talk including discussion. Abstracts should be anonymous and should be sent as attachments in PDF format to: Johannes Helmbrecht

([johannes.helmbrechtsprachlit.uni-regensburg.de](mailto:johannes.helmbrechtsprachlit.uni-regensburg.de)).

## 10. Obituaries

### Digital Dharma – the life of E. Gene Smith

E. Gene Smith, the American scholar of Tibetan literature who was probably the single greatest Western benefactor for the rescue of ancient Tibetan manuscripts, died on 16 December 2010, aged 74. His single-handed mission to rescue Tibetan culture from destruction has now been immortalized on film.

The film *Digital Dharma* tells the moving story of one man's mission to save a culture from oblivion. You can read about it, and about his life, in several sources on the Internet, such as

<http://www.digitaldharma.com/the-film/>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/29/world/asia/29smith.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/29/world/asia/29smith.html?_r=1)

<http://www.languagehat.com/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/books-obituaries/8246945/Gene-Smith.html>

as well as a Wikipedia entry.



**E. Gene Smith at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center**

## Foundation for Endangered Languages

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a. current (and future) exchange organisations (i.e. charities that send their publication to the Foundation).  
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<sup>3</sup> "Voluntary body" includes university departments and charity organisations, "Official body" includes government departments.

# FEL Manifesto

## 1. Preamble 1.1. The Present Situation

At this point in human history, most human languages are spoken by exceedingly few people. And that majority, the majority of languages, is about to vanish.

The most authoritative source on the languages of the world (Ethnologue, Gordon 2005) lists just over 6,900 living languages. Population figures are available for just over 6,600 of them (or 94.5%). Of these 6,600, it may be noted that:

56% are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people; 28% by fewer than 1,000; and 83% are restricted to single countries, and so are particularly exposed to the policies of a single government. At the other end of the scale, 10 major languages, each spoken by over 100 million people, are the mother tongues of almost half (49%) of the world's population.

More important than this snapshot of proportions and populations is the outlook for survival of the languages we have. Hard comparable data here are scarce or absent, often because of the sheer variety of the human condition: a small community, isolated or bilingual, may continue for centuries to speak a unique language, while in another place a populous language may for social or political reasons die out in little more than a generation. Another reason is that the period in which records have been kept is too short to document a trend: e.g. the Ethnologue has been issued only since 1951. However, it is difficult to imagine many communities sustaining serious daily use of a language for even a generation with fewer than 100 speakers: yet at least 10% of the world's living languages are now in this position.

Some of the forces which make for language loss are clear: the impacts of urbanization, Westernization and global communications grow daily, all serving to diminish the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of small and traditional communities. Discriminatory policies, and population movements also take their toll of languages.

In our era, the preponderance of tiny language communities means that the majority of the world's languages are vulnerable not just to decline but to extinction.

## 1.2. The Likely Prospect

There is agreement among linguists who have considered the situation that over half of the world's languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation. We and our children, then, are living at the point in human history where, within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out.

This mass extinction of languages may not appear immediately life-threatening. Some will feel that a reduction in numbers of languages will ease communication, and perhaps help build nations, even global solidarity. But it has been well pointed out that the success of humanity in colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop cultures suited for survival in a variety of environments. These cultures have everywhere been transmitted by languages, in oral traditions and latterly in written literatures. So when language transmission itself breaks down, especially before the advent of literacy in a culture, there is always a large loss of inherited knowledge.

Valued or not, that knowledge is lost, and humanity is the poorer. Along with it may go a large part of the pride and self-identity of the community of former speakers. And there is another kind of loss, of a different type of knowledge. As each language dies, science, in linguistics, anthropology, prehistory and psychology, loses one more precious source of data, one more of the diverse and unique ways that the human mind can express itself through a language's structure and vocabulary.

We cannot now assess the full effect of the massive simplification of the world's linguistic diversity now occurring. But language loss, when it occurs, is sheer loss, irreversible and not in itself creative. Speakers of an endangered language may well resist the extinction of their traditions, and of their linguistic identity. They have every right to do so. And we, as scientists, or con-

cerned human beings, will applaud them in trying to preserve part of the diversity which is one of our greatest strengths and treasures.

## 1.3. The Need for an Organization

We cannot stem the global forces which are at the root of language decline and loss.

But we can work to lessen the ignorance which sees language loss as inevitable when it is not, and does not properly value all that will go when a language itself vanishes.

We can work to see technological developments, such as computing and telecommunications, used to support small communities and their traditions rather than to supplant them. And we can work to lessen the damage:

- by recording as much as possible of the languages of communities which seem to be in terminal decline;
- by emphasizing particular benefits of the diversity still remaining; and
- by promoting literacy and language maintenance programmes, to increase the strength and morale of the users of languages in danger.

In order to further these aims, there is a need for an autonomous international organization which is not constrained or influenced by matters of race, politics, gender or religion. This organization will recognise in language issues the principles of self-determination, and group and individual rights. It will pay due regard to economic, social, cultural, community and humanitarian considerations. Although it may work with any international, regional or local Authority, it will retain its independence throughout. Membership will be open to those in all walks of life.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

The Foundation for Endangered Languages exists to support, enable and assist the documentation, protection and promotion of endangered languages. In order to do this, it aims:

To raise awareness of endangered languages, both inside and outside the communities where they are spoken, through all media;

To support the use of endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life;

To monitor linguistic policies and practices, and to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary;

To support the documentation of endangered languages, by offering financial assistance, training, or facilities for the publication of results;

To collect together and make available information of use in the preservation of endangered languages;

To disseminate information on all of the above activities as widely as possible.





*Members of the Bong'om community of Bungoma District, Kenya*