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Photo of a blue tongue lizard, taken in remote Western Australia, but common to many parts of the state.
1. Editorial

So Ogmios has now reached its fiftieth issue. To mark the occasion we have an especially interesting assortment of articles. And our cover gives of montages of some of the topics we have covered in these past fifty issues.

Again I must apologise that you are receiving your copy of Ogmios after the cover date. But I make no apology for the fact that one of our most energetic members, now an FEL Committee member, features in more than one article: Professor Ghil’ad Zuckermann of the University of Adelaide, South Australia, who has been giving the topic of endangered languages a high profile in the Australian media. In this issue is just a small sample of the coverage the topic has been getting through him: Australia’s national multicultural broadcaster SBS has also featured items created by him.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

2013 FEL grants announced

This year 20 grants were awarded for a total of just over $19,000 (US). Following is a list of the successful applicants, with the language name, brief details of their projects, and provisional sums awarded shown in US dollars:

- Mary Paster (USA): Rumsen (Costanoan), California, USA: $864 (Developing materials).
- Mark Post (Switzerland): Tangam, Tibet, India: $1000 (Developing dictionary).
- Amos Teo (Australia): Sumi, spoken mainly in Zunheboto district, Nagaland, NE India: $984 (Development of mother tongue literacy).
- Emmanuel Ngue Um (Cameroon): Leti language, spoken in Cameroon: $868 (Developing learning centre).
- Ismail Avci (Turkey): Laz, Northeast Black Sea region of Turkey: £1000 (Developing reading and course book).
- Bethany Ojalehto (USA): Ngobere, Panama: $1000 (Developing curriculum).
- Tingsheng Zhou (China): Tulihua dialect: $915 (Survey).
- Vera Ferreira (Portugal): Minderico (ISO code [drc]), spoken in Minde (Portugal): $991 (Developing teaching software).
- Jeanette Wiens (Canada): Dene Suline (Athabaskan), Dillon, Saskatchewan, Canada: $904 (Transcription).
- Anna Vladimiriva (Finland): Khakas language: $976 (Early Childhood project).
- Elena Mihas (Australia): Asheninka Perene: $1000 (Production of dictionary).
- Musombwa Ignunzi Michel (DR Congo): Kinyindu: $996 (Data collection and publication).
- Firuz Sabzaliev (Tajikistan): $1000 (Translation of film into Shughni).
- Sarbajit Singh (India): Kharam language of Manipur, India: $1000 (Developing materials).

FEL 2013: Endangered Languages Beyond Boundaries

The 2013 FEL Conference, FEL XVII, will be held at Carleton University, in Ottawa, the capital of Canada and headquarters of the country’s national Aboriginal organizations. The many endangered Indigenous languages across Canada make it an excellent setting for a conference that will explore collaboration, community involvement, and cross-disciplinary research on endangered languages. The conference will highlight community connections, collaborative approaches, intergenerational cooperation, technological and social media related innovations, and community-researcher alliances. We seek to bring together speakers, activists, and researchers, from a range of disciplines, organizations, and governments, all striving to understand and improve the situation of endangered languages, and to broaden awareness of the importance and implications of language maintenance and revitalization for individual and community well-being overall.
Efforts world-wide to preserve, maintain, and revitalize endangered languages often encounter limited resources and funding. This points to the need for collaborative approaches and for the pooling of resources, whether on a local, national, or international scale. Such cooperative ventures extend beyond the constraints of boundaries, whether these involve linguistic or ethnic identities; geography; jurisdictions; community size, type and location (urban, rural, isolated); political or social considerations; language status (official or unofficial, dominant or minority); familial and generational ties; academic disciplines; or institutional or group affiliations.

Such barriers, and the challenges they may pose, can raise significant issues for collaborative and community-centred approaches aimed at strengthening endangered languages. For example:

Where there are multiple dialects, should language support efforts be prioritized or focused on the more viable varieties of a particular endangered language or language group? Do endangered languages and their variants need a critical mass? Should efforts to support them lead to their coalescence despite these boundaries? On what basis should these decisions be made?

What challenges (and compromises) are involved in decision-making related to language standardization? Should there be an effort to standardize across the dialects to establish one definitive version of a writing system?

What collaborative approaches, such as the sharing of existing language resources, curriculum development, knowledge transfer, training and best practices, can best aid communities with critically endangered languages or dialects (e.g. providing opportunities to individuals to learn a dialect even if it is not their own)?

What types and models of collaborative research and communication can help communities to ensure that their language perspectives and goals are integrated? For example, strictly linguistic classifications of a community’s language may differ from those based on social considerations and political boundaries.

To what extent can existing standardized frameworks of language assessment, such as UNESCO’s Language Vitality Endangerment (LVE) Framework and Fishman’s Graded Inter-generational Disruption Scale (GIDS), help to yield comparable data? How can community-defined factors and aspects of a given community unique to it be integrated into these frameworks?

How can surveys and data be used to develop measures and indicators in the assessment of language vitality?

In contrast to isolated communities, the situation can be exacerbated in urban environments by the prevalence of the dominant language. How can urban language revitalization efforts be enhanced? How can people play a major role in the mainstream culture without sacrificing their endangered language and culture?

How can people in the dominant culture and their governments be made aware of and sensitive to the issues of endangered languages?

How can endangered language practitioners take advantage of technology to increase awareness among the mainstream about endangered languages? How can technology be used to teach and increase the use of endangered languages?

How can generations support each other in strengthening their endangered languages? How can Elders, adults, and youth work together to develop terminology in new domains, such as technology and social media, that existing vocabulary may not cover?

What is the importance of language learning and revitalization for individual and community well-being, health and educational outcomes?

### 3. Endangered Languages in the News

**Scholar tracks origins of Hawai‘i’s ancestors**

*By Colin M. Stewart, from the Hawaii Tribune-Herald, 11 January 2013*

A professor of Hawaiian language believes he has traced the ancestors of Hawai‘i’s first inhabitants to the remote, Polynesian Outlier atolls to the southwest.

Dr. William H. “Pila” Wilson, with the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo’s Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikolani College of Hawaiian Language, has been studying the unique linguistic changes between East Polynesian languages — found in the huge geographic area containing Hawaii, Rapanui, and New Zealand — and the languages found in the Outlier atolls. In all, he focused on 73 differences in his article “Whence The East Polynesians?” which was published in the December 2012 issue of Oceanic Linguistics.

Wilson’s findings differ from the commonly held notion among linguists and anthropologists that East Polynesia, including Hawaii, was first settled from Central Western Polynesia, most likely from Samoa, according to his paper.

“Presented here is a very different history, one involving a northern settlement pathway from atolls of the east coast of the Solomon Islands, some 2,000 miles northwest of Samoa,” he wrote.

The findings could have a very tangible effect on the study of Hawaiian culture and language, historians’ understanding of where
the Hawaiians came from, and how their ancestry affected the development of their society, he said.

“This could have a big bearing on our understanding of East Polynesia and Hawaii. People have heard me talking about it for a while, but it’s still a pretty novel idea,” Wilson said. “I think for a lot of people, it’s a surprise. It was always assumed they came from Samoa.”

Wilson explained Thursday that the idea first occurred to him in the 1980s, when he was working on his dissertation.

“When I first came to UH-Hilo, I was looking at all Polynesian languages, and pronominal systems. I noticed a strange connection between the Outliers and Eastern Polynesia. There were interesting similarities and differences between words,” he said.

For example, the word for a type of bird with a curved beak known as the “kia” became “kiei” in the Outliers and early East Polynesia, which later developed into the Hawaiian bird name “‘iwi.”

“The latest archaeological research indicates the initial settlement took place as recently as 1,000 years ago,” he said, “which left many wondering why the East Polynesian and Samoan languages were so different.”

Other evidence besides language appears to bear out his theory, Wilson added.

“What archaeologists seem to find is that the East Polynesians had very strong technology for deep-water fishing. But the people in Tonga and Samoa were more agriculturally oriented. They weren’t as dependent on fishing. My connection with these findings is that these tiny little islands (the Outliers) have hardly any land area to grow anything on. They had to develop fishing and navigation to survive,” he said.

The difference between the cultures has long puzzled researchers, he said, but could be explained by his theory, that the East Polynesian ancestors were separated far to the northwest of Samoa on the atolls for a considerable period before they entered East Polynesia.

Wilson was quick to say that while it is never a good idea for a person to say that they are “absolutely right” about something, he added that he would be “very surprised” if his theory is not correct.

That’s not to say, however, that his theory is not without its critics.

“There have been a couple of criticisms of the work,” he said.

One critique is that the languages of people living on an island like Hawaii share similar words for plants with other Polynesians, despite the fact that such plants are not found on the Outlier atolls, which are on average smaller in size than the UH-Hilo campus, Wilson said.

Why would those people have words for plants they may have never seen?

Wilson argues, however, that just as modern-day Hawaii residents know what an oak or maple tree is, despite not having them here, so too were the Outlier ancestors aware of other islands’ ecosystems.

“I mean, these were people who were traveling thousands of miles by canoe. They would have known the plant life on a larger island,” he said. “The closest places with mountainous land were only 300 miles. That would have been nothing to people who had traveled 2,000 miles.”

Census data misleading, languages still at risk in Australia

By Aidan Wilson, from the Crikey blog (Australia), 21 January 2013

A report in The Australian claims that the 2011 census showed that the Aboriginal language “crisis” has been overstated, that indigenous languages are not in danger of dying out. Aidan Wilson looks into the data to find out what’s going on.

Just before Christmas, The Australian published an article about indigenous language use in Australia that drew on research conducted by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the ANU. The article began with this:

Aboriginal crisis exaggerated, says census

New census analysis reveals that the “crisis” in Aboriginal languages is overstated, debunking the notion that mother tongues are dying out.

In the Northern Territory the proportion of Aborigines speaking an indigenous language at home rose from 59.1 per cent in 2006 to 64.7 per cent in 2011. For years now we’ve been hearing statistics like ‘a language dies every two weeks’ and ‘by the end of the century, half of the world’s 7000 languages will no longer be spoken’, and the top-end of Australia has been indicated as a hot-spot for language endangerment. Also, having worked on endangered languages over the last 7 years, I can say from my own experiences, and those of my colleagues, that the situation is critical and is not being overstated.

So how could the census possibly reveal that there isn’t a problem?

To attempt to answer this, I downloaded the original report and got reading. I quickly found that its findings don’t bear much resemblance to those of The Australian:
The main finding was that there has been a steady decline in the percentage of indigenous Australians who speak an Indigenous language between 2001 and 2011. Given the potential individual and community benefit of Indigenous language retention, this is clearly a negative finding.

How then, did The Australian come up with the overall impression that ‘mother tongues’ are no longer threatened?

The numbers that The Australian cites are correct, inasmuch as that is what the census data says. The number of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory that self-reported as speaking an Aboriginal language rose from 28,974 in 2006 to 34,086 in 2011, which equates to 59.1% and 64.7% respectively (as reported above) of the overall indigenous population that reported speaking an Aboriginal language.

But if we look closer at the numbers and the breakdown of individual languages, it quickly becomes clear where the misunderstanding lies.

Alongside the report, CAEPR has published a spreadsheet of data showing indigenous languages and their speaker populations in both 2006 and 2011. One thing that’s strikingly obvious is the extraordinary increase in the number of speakers for some of the languages on the list. Some languages that had very few or no speakers in 2006 (reportedly) apparently experienced miraculous rejuvenation over the subsequent five years. Dalabon for example, exhibited a phenomenal rate of uptake, with only 7 people reporting as speaking the language in 2006 shooting up to a whopping 73 in 2011, a ten-fold increase. This, to be brutally honest, is impossible, and many of the languages in the list exhibit a similarly inexplicable increase in the number of speakers. Respondents are clearly answering the language question based on their linguistic affiliation – the language they claim in virtue of being born into a particular linguistic group – rather than their actual linguistic ability. There’s nothing wrong with this, especially given that the census doesn’t otherwise ask for anything such as one’s ancestral language. Nor is this specific to Aboriginal people. This is something that many migrant communities and families have to grapple with when filling out the census. A 3rd generation Italian family might only speak Italian sparingly, with their grandparents for instance, but they’ll still put down ‘Italian’ as the language they speak at home, just as my father – a staunch atheist – always answered ‘Methodist’ under religion. It simply highlights the limitations of a simplistic, self-reporting survey such as the census for enumerating more complex questions such as language (and religion, for that matter).

Another methodological problem for the purposes described here, is the inclusion of non-traditional Aboriginal languages, such as Kriol (the most populous language in the list) and Yumplatok (or Torres Strait Islander creole; incidentally the second-most populous language on the list). Since the census is being interpreted to assess the linguistic health of Aboriginal languages overall, including these languages only serves to cloud the data. For instance, if a community switches from their traditional language to Kriol (as has happened many times in Australian history), but the size of that community grows over time, then the overall numbers would show an increase in the number of people speaking ‘an Aboriginal language’ rather than, more accurately, that the traditional language is no longer being spoken.

The census is simply not the best way to assess the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages for the issues mentioned above. Fortunately then, there is the National Indigenous Languages Survey. The first such survey, completed in 2005, was a huge national undertaking that attempted to get accurate figures for the state of indigenous languages. It found (emphasis mine):

The situation of Australia’s languages is very grave and requires urgent action. Of an original number of over 250 known Australian Indigenous languages, only about 145 Indigenous languages are still spoken and the vast majority of these, about 110, are in the severely and critically endangered categories.

The second National Indigenous Languages Survey is currently being conducted and when finished, will probably show that the situation hasn’t improved in the last 7 years, contrary to the claims of The Australian. The census is an extremely useful enumeration of the population for a whole range of different reasons, but gathering accurate and useful information with respect to the health of Aboriginal languages is evidently not one of them.

Partnerships in Planning for Language Communities – Challenges and Opportunities

Éamonn Ó Néachtain

Introduction

In describing the continual erosion of the Irish-language minority community in the Gaeltacht, Fennell (1981) summons the metaphor of the crumbling archipelago.
The image evokes the collision of unrelenting and colossal forces undermining, sod by turf, the linguistic land mass, damaging its form and cohesiveness from below and within. Such figurative descriptions are redolent of the conflict inherent in the meeting of unequal forces and call to mind the emotive, partisan and uniquely personal consequences of such language attrition for people, families and communities. There are deeply intimate, emotive and atavistic dimensions to the minority-majority language dynamic. As minority languages disintegrate below us, the tendency is sometimes to look for in figurative and rhetorical descriptions what might more likely be found in the more objective practice of scrupulous analysis and forward planning. Such endeavours might more likely surface remedial and developmental initiatives which could contribute to the perpetuation of minority languages through positive language planning. This article describes aspects of such proposed planning initiatives in the contemporary Irish Gaeltacht.

Historical Context for Language Shift in Ireland

The historical context within which the dislocation and decline of the Irish language as a community vernacular in Ireland has occurred has been ably documented in historical, sociological and linguistic commentaries. Suffice to say here that the Irish language (Celtic in origin) was the dominant vernacular on the island at the beginning of the 17th century outside of Dublin and some other smaller settlements (de Fréine, 1978, Commins, 1988). The rate of shift from the autochthons language to the mainstream English-language medium accelerated and intensified from the 16th century onwards. Between 1600 and 1900, two-thirds of the population changed its language over a period of eight generations (Ó Laoire, 2005). It is estimated that 45% of the island’s population was Irish-speaking in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and had reduced to just under thirty per cent by the mid-nineteenth century (Fitzgerald, 1984).

The process of the minoritisation of the language and its increasing assimilation into the English-speaking world arose mainly from socioeconomic processes in Irish society assisted by antagonistic measures on the part of the British government during the colonial period which began in earnest in the 17th century (Ó Riagáin, 1997). Political independence from the United Kingdom for 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland was achieved in 1922. The new Free State government introduced a range of policy and development initiatives to reverse the historical patterns of language shift and support the restoration of the historical and distinctive language as the national language. The new government also committed itself to the development of the Gaeltacht as the linguistic heartland.

The Gaeltacht in Ireland

The Gaeltacht in Ireland refers to those spatial districts, situated mainly along the West coast, where Irish is still used as a community and familial language. Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht form part of a minority language group but do not form part of an identifiable ethnic minority or Volksgruppe. The Free State government founded the first Gaeltacht Commission in 1925. It set out to establish the extent of and to provide for an ‘official’ definition of the Irish-language speaking areas and to estimate the number and distribution of Irish-speakers (Mac Donnacha, S and Ó Giollágáin, C., 2007). Its introduction as a special measure also recognised that those areas where Irish remained the ‘home language’ coincided with areas which suffered from serious economic hardship and underdevelopment (Ó Riagáin, 2007). Since the late nineteen-fifties, the creation of dedicated development institutions and funding programmes for these districts have seen a significant increase in socio-economic welfare, employment opportunities and enhanced infrastructure provision. It has also curtailed the extent of long-standing patterns involuntary out-migration from these areas. However, in the 75 years between the establishment of the first (1925) and second (2000) Gaeltacht Commissions, the demo-linguistic vitality of the Irish language within the Gaeltacht has continued to decline.

A Decade of Research and Policy Development

The ongoing evidence of shift from Irish to English within the Gaeltacht saw the creation of the second Gaeltacht Commission in 2000. Amongst its recommendations were the creation of a national strategy for the development of Irish, the provision of legislative measures to enhance and protect the status of Irish and a range of initiatives to support the language communities within the Gaeltacht.

The extent of the shift at a community level from Irish to the dominant English-language-medium is documented in the Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht (2007). Principal amongst the study’s key findings was that without comprehensive and integrated planning interventions to arrest the decline, Irish would cease to function as the predominant community and family language within a twenty-year time horizon.

The Gaeltacht Act (2012)

The new Gaeltacht Act (2012) forms part of the Irish Government’s response to these challenges.
It sets out the statutory basis for a range of measures which attempt to stabilise and develop the Irish language community within the Gaeltacht. This represents a policy challenge of the first importance which needs to be addressed in a comprehensive, innovative and integrated manner. Within this overall challenge it is possible to isolate two different but interrelated complex considerations: the resolution of which will be fundamental to the prospects of securing the status and viability of Irish as the minority community-language within the Gaeltacht. The first relates to the state’s capacity to introduce a new policy and practice of language planning at national level and at local level within the Gaeltacht. The second relates to the development of an integrated model for development, a model which will ensure that the socio-economic development strategy to be implemented in the Gaeltacht will be erected within a conceptual framework and a practice of development which will provide optimum protection to the language heartland and that a generative and catalytic model for the language’s development is identified and implemented.

**Opportunities and Challenges for Community Language Planning**

The Gaeltacht Act of 2012 has the potential and the capacity to engage with these development challenges in a systematic and progressive manner. The prospects for success will be determined by the capacity within the state sector to plan and manage the available resources towards this end. Success will depend on the level of funding and the allocation of such resources in support of the explicit strategic objectives enshrined in the Act. It will also depend on the commitment and co-operation of local communities and their willingness to mobilise local social capital in support of their own linguistic survival as an autonomous language community.

A key new policy departure relates to the formalisation and legitimisation of language planning at community level and based on a partnership model between the state and community actors. Moreover, the industrial development model of rural regeneration which formed the primary statutory response to Gaeltacht development has the potential to be transformed into a more comprehensive and integrated regional development model which considers the totality of local development in a coherent and systemic manner. Such a model needs to be underpinned and driven by language planning as a core element of community and local regeneration. The language horse is now no longer behind the industrial cart. The challenge of language planning advocates the need for localised and integrated structures which facilitate partnership between the state and non-state actors.

It commits to long-term planning and the development and the implementation of incremental initiatives which seek to secure the position of the minority language in the key domains of the family, education, the labour market and the discharge of other key public services.

This policy initiative represents a step-change in the recognition of the critical need to plan for the language’s future development at a local, intimate community level as well as its incorporation into statutory, policy and legal provisions within Irish law. It forms a deliberate attempt to plan and manage socio-linguistic change in a manner and at a scale never before contemplated in the Irish context. It assumes and will be dependent on the commitment and resolve of support of local communities. It explicitly recognises a significant role for these communities and underlies their shared responsibility for planning for their own future. It countenances a formal engagement with the full state apparatus as it delivers policies, programmes and services to the minority language community. Through this process, the status and potential of local community-based structures will be further legitimised by the official recognition and authority of the state. A further central feature of the language planning effort should include the development of a model of economic regeneration and development which will be socio-linguistically informed.

The reach of the state’s influence or ameliorative capacity to undertake the complexity of managing socio-linguistic change as an instrument within an integrated regional development approach has had little traction as a policy concern to date. Even to the extent that such a policy was historically considered desirable or worthwhile, there has been little sense to date that all of the necessary technical aptitudes and skills were available to government to initiate such a new order of development planning. In such a complex and challenging model, planning initiatives would be required to judge the efficacy of their outputs in linguistic as well as in economic terms. The contemporary debate (see Walsh, 2006; McLeod, 2002; Bourgeois, 2009; , McEwan-Fujita, 2006) has argued the importance of this institutional parallelism of economic and linguistic objectives. It advocates an approach that discounts development policies which do not explicitly engage with their linguistic impacts. Some of the findings from their research are ambivalent, contradictory and anomalous. What they have in common, however, is that they consider reliance on orthodox development policies as marginal to the search for optimal solutions to minority-language community development. At worst, such policies are seen as directly contributing to the ongoing erosion of language communities and the inter-generational transmission of the minority language.
which is the final arbitrator and index of language vitality (Fishman, 1990).

It is hoped that the implementation of the new Gaeltacht Act will assist in some worthwhile manner in the development of appropriate concepts and development plans which will support the sustainable development of the Gaeltacht and to development policy generally.

It is further hoped that such work might have relevance and applicability in other minority-language contexts.

References:
Fitzgerald, G. ‘Irish-speaking in the pre-famine period: a study based on the 1911 census data for people born before 1851 and still alive in 1911’ Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy 103C: 5 (Baile Átha Cliath: Royal Irish Academy, 2003)

Stop, revive and survive
By Ghil’ad Zuckermann, from The Australian (on-line edition), 26 June 2012

LINGUICIDE (language killing) and glottophagy (language eating) have made Australia the unlucky country. With globalisation, homogenisation and Coca-colonisation there will be more and more groups added to the forlorn club of the lost-heritage peoples.

Language reclamation will become increasingly relevant as people seek to recover their cultural autonomy, empower their spiritual and intellectual sovereignty, and improve wellbeing.

There are various ethical, aesthetic and utilitarian benefits of language revival - for example, historical justice, diversity and employability, respectively. There is an urgent need to offer perspicacious insights relevant to language reclamation.

Revival linguistics is a new discipline, being established at Adelaide, studying comparatively and systematically the universal constraints, global mechanisms and local peculiarities and idiosyncrasies apparent in revival attempts across various sociological backgrounds, all over the world. Revival linguistics combines scientific studies of native language acquisition and foreign language learning. After all, language reclamation is the most extreme case of second-language learning.

Revival linguistics complements the established area of documentary linguistics, which records endangered languages before they fall asleep.

There is a need to revise the fields of grammaticography (writing grammars) and lexicography (writing dictionaries): grammars and dictionaries ought to be written for language reclamation in a user-friendly way, for communities, not only for linguists. For example, we should avoid highfalutin, often Latin-based grammatical terminology.

We should also offer communities a user-friendly spelling. Juxtapose Lutheran missionary Clamor Wilhelms Schurmann’s 1844 user-unfriendly spelling “nunyara” for the Barngarla (Parnkalla) word for “recovery”. Ignoring the English environment, this spelling resulted in the pronunciation nanYara rather than NOOYara. While nunyara suits documentary linguistics, NOONYara would be preferred from a revival linguistic perspective.
For linguists, the first stage of any language revival must involve a long period of observation and careful listening while learning, mapping and characterising the specific needs, desires and potentials of an indigenous or minority or culturally endangered community. Only then can one inspire and assist.

That said, there are linguistic constraints applicable to all revival attempts. Mastering them would help revivalists and first nations’ leaders to work more efficiently. For example, it is easier to resurrect basic vocabulary and verbal conjugations than sounds and word order. Revivalists should be realistic and abandon discouraging, counter-productive slogans such as “Give us authenticity or give us death!”

Closely related to contact linguistics, revival linguistics changes the field of historical linguistics by, for instance, weakening the family tree-model, which implies that a language has only one parent.

One day we may invent devices to “inject” a language into our brains. But until then, any attempt to reclaim a hibernating language will result in a hybrid that combines components from the revivalists’ and documents’ mother tongues and, of course, the target sleeping language. In the immortal words of Jerry Seinfeld, “Not that there’s anything wrong with that!”

Native tongue title and language rights should be promoted. The government ought to define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vernaculars as official languages of Australia. We must change the linguistic landscape of Whyalla and elsewhere. Signs should be in both English and the local indigenous language. We ought to acknowledge intellectual property of indigenous knowledge including language, music and dance. Furthermore, in the future the very insights offered by revival linguistics will become part of Aboriginal intellectual property, when Slovenes or Estonians come to Australia to ask indigenous Australians to assist them in their own European language resurrection.

The punchline? One, if your language is endangered, do not allow it to fall asleep. Two, if your language falls asleep: stop, revive, survive! Three, if you revive a language, embrace the hybridity of the emerging tongue. Four, if your language is healthy, assist others in linguistic need.

Ghil’ad Zuckermann is Chair of Linguistics and Endangered languages at the University of Adelaide.

‘Sleeping’ languages may be lost forever

From the Otago Daily Times (on-line edition) 18 September 2012

Prof Ghil’ad Zuckermann argues that the loss of language is more severe than the loss of land.

Of the 7000 languages in the world today, it is predicted that up to 90% will become extinct within 100 years. In Australia, where I live, out of 250 Indigenous languages, only 15 - just 6% - are alive and kicking, by which I mean their children are native speakers. The rest are what I like to call “sleeping beauties” - and if we do not take action they could be lost forever. With globalisation, homogenisation and Coca-colonisation there will be more and more groups all over the world added to the forlorn club of the lost-heritage peoples.

Does it matter?

I think it does.

Most people understand the importance of saving the Tasmanian devil or Sumatran tiger, so surely it is equally important to reclaim the languages of the indigenous people of these same areas. The benefits include social justice, diversity, wellbeing and employability among others.

There are precedents for reviving languages. The Hebrew revival movement turned a historical sacred language into the national language of Israel with millions of native speakers, including myself. Language reclamation will become increasingly relevant as people seek to recover their cultural autonomy, empower their spiritual and intellectual sovereignty, and improve their mental health. In fact, I would argue that the loss of language is more severe than the loss of land. While the land remains, when a language is lost so too is cultural autonomy. Governments are likely to come under increasing pressure to compensate indigenous peoples for this loss.

Take Australia, for example. Linguistically, Australia has been turned into the “unlucky country” through the historical processes of linguicide (language killing) and glottophagy (language eating), starting from the early colonial period.

In 1843, South Australian colonist Anthony Forster said: “The natives would be sooner civilised if their language was extinct.”
South Australian governor George Grey noted in 1841: "The ruder languages disappear successively, and the tongue of England alone is heard around."

Australia can learn a lot from Aotearoa New Zealand when it comes to what I call "Native Tongue Title", and linguistic human rights. Te reo Maori has the advantage that it never died, despite linguicide efforts of the colonial government. Today, te reo, a repository of endangered outlooks, is a relative success story. It is one of the country’s two official languages alongside the New Zealand Sign Language (English is only a de facto language). Te reo is supported by the Maori Language Commission and the Wai 262 claim, which lays out explicit steps to protect the language.

But we cannot be complacent. The percentage of native Maori speakers is extremely low, particularly among children, and Maori remains a seriously endangered language. For these reasons, it would be rectifying historical justice to turn Oceania into the world’s centre for language revitalisation and for the new field that I am at present establishing at the University of Adelaide: Revival Linguistics. There is an urgent need to produce linguistic and socio-linguistic insights relevant to language reclamation. An awareness of the universal linguistic constraints applicable to all revival attempts, regardless of social circumstances, would help revivalists and indigenous community leaders to work more efficiently; for example, to focus more on basic vocabulary and verbal conjugations than on sounds and word order.

Revival linguistics would assist language revivalists in understanding that the process is as important as the end goal from the point of view of indigenous empowerment and wellbeing.

All languages evolve, and it is a myth to assume there is a pure and authentic tongue.

Experience shows that any successful attempt to reclaim a hibernating language will result in a hybrid that combines components from the revivalists' and documenters' mother tongues as well as the target language. Some communities might want only to change the "linguistic landscape" of their town (for example, erecting bilingual signs); others may want to conduct cultural rituals in their language; yet others may want to aim for an all-encompassing native-speaking community that converses in the revived language in all semantic domains. In all cases it is for the indigenous people, not for the linguist, to decide.

These are among the basic principles that the revival linguist encourages in indigenous communities:
1. If your language is endangered: do not allow it to fall asleep.
2. If your language falls asleep: stop, revive, survive.
3. If you revive a language, embrace the hybridity of the emerging tongue;
4. If your language is healthy, assist others in linguistic need.

Better a dirty, injured butterfly that is alive than a perfectly beautiful butterfly stuck on the wall!

Sleeping Beauty: Why indigenous languages need to be saved from the brink

By Georgina Flaherty, from the Australian Higher Education Supplement (on-line version), 21 March 2013

ONCE upon a time in a land not so far away, there were 250 indigenous languages. This was before British colonisation. An alarming 93 per cent of indigenous languages are dying or have already died. As indigenous language expert Professor Ghil’ad Zuckermann, from the University of Adelaide says, these languages are ‘sleeping beauties.’

Ethically, we have a duty to reclaim indigenous languages after the British invasion and the Stolen Generation resulted in mass linguicide. By revitalising indigenous languages not only will we help mend faults of the past but we will be facilitating social progress by creating a greater collective understanding between non-indigenous and indigenous Australians. The revitalisation of indigenous languages will contribute to Australia’s diversity by exhibiting their unique beauty.

Some of these languages are critically endangered and some have already undergone extinction. Every Australian deserves to express themselves through their culture and language, to be empowered and proud. Therefore, we must prioritise this issue, for the happily ever after Australia deserves.

Georgina Flaherty, 12, is a Year 12 student in Adelaide. She recently did a research project about critically endangered indigenous languages and bilingual education. She was also visited the Tiwi Islands with my school last year. She would like to give special thanks to Professor Ghil’ad Zuckermann.
Description of Minority Languages in Russia on the Basis of Historical Data, Sound Archives and Field Work

Contribution to the International Mother Language Day of UNESCO, Budapest, 21 February 2013

Tjeerd de Graaf, Foundation for Siberian Cultures, Groningen Centre for Russian Studies and Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning; Frisian Academy, The Netherlands

During a stay in the Sakha Republic (Siberia) in 1994, local linguists in Yakutsk told us about the history of the Yakut language. They mentioned the fact that the first written information on this language could be found in a book by the Dutch author Nicolaas Witsen, but that they were not yet able to read this. Witsen was an important Dutchman who had personal contacts with Peter the Great during his visit to Amsterdam in 1697 and who provided information about Western Europe to the Russians. On the other hand, from Witsen’s publications the Western world learned much about the Russian empire. Witsen’s main work is contained in two large volumes of the book Noord en Oost Tartarye which first appeared in 1692 with a description of North-eastern Asia. In this book Witsen gives many details on the peoples of Siberia, their languages and cultures, and he provides the first maps of this part of the world. For many of the Siberian languages, for example for Yakut, word lists are provided. The books are written in seventeenth century Dutch and it was difficult for colleagues in Russia to get access to the interesting material it contains. With a group of Russian and Dutch scholars we have prepared a Russian edition of this work, which has been published in 2010.

The historical data of about 30 of the minority languages and cultures mentioned in the book are now available, such as for the Uralic languages Hanty (Ostiak), Mansi (Vogul), Mari (Cheremis), Mordvin, Komi (Zyryen), Nenet and Enets (Samoyed). We are preparing a special publication on this topic.

Archives do not only contain written material, but also other data like sound recordings. Prior to 1890, linguistic and ethnological fieldwork was based on direct contacts with representatives of various cultures, in which the investigator took notes by hand after many repetitions of tales and songs during recording sessions. At the end of the 19th century, the great invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison changed all this. For the first time in human history, people were able to store and hear acoustic data, in particular speech, songs and music.

As recordings were made, it became obvious that a central facility was needed for the preservation of the valuable material which had been collected. At the turn of the century this led to the establishment of sound archives, the earliest of which in Europe were located in Vienna and Berlin. Soon after, the first Russian collections were made, which later found their way to the sound archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg in the Pushkinsky Dom. These sound archives contain more than 6,000 wax cylinders of the Edison phonograph and in addition, an extensive fund of gramophone records exists and one of the largest collections of tape-recordings of Russian folklore. These represent the history of Russian ethnography and contain a wide range of materials.

In the past, expeditions were sent to various parts of the world to gather data which were then returned to the archives for preservation and study. In 1897, for instance, on the initiative of the famous anthropologist and linguist Franz Boas, the Jesup Expedition set out to examine evidence of similarities among the peoples of Siberia and the North-west Coast of America. Recordings of this expedition were made in Siberia and many of these recordings form one of the basic collections used in our collaboration projects with Saint-Petersburg. The first of these projects on the Use of Acoustic Data Bases and the Study of Language Change (1995-1998) has been financially supported by the organisation INTAS of the EU in Brussels.

We were able to reconstruct part of the many recordings in the Pushkinsky Dom and to make them available for further research, which is not only important for historical and cultural reasons, but also for language description and for studying direct possible evidence of language change.

In a second INTAS project, Saint-Petersburg Sound Archives on the World Wide Web (1998 - 2001) part of the sound recordings have been put on a web site and are now available for further study.

In our INTAS projects we first completed the reconstruction of sound archive material of the Zhirmunsky collection. Zhirmunsky was a famous linguist who worked in Saint Petersburg /Leningrad earlier in the 20th century. One of his main interests was the study of German dialects spoken on the territory of Russia. In the period between 1927 and 1930 he recorded many utterances, in particular songs of German settlers on gramophone discs. In the framework of our INTAS project, most of these discs have been digitized.
Over the last twenty years, it has again become possible to study the German dia-leets in Russia with the aid of existing linguistic databases and new fieldwork. One of these dialects is the Plautdietsch language of the Siberian Mennonites, which has been the topic of a PhD thesis at Groningen University.

Important activities related to linguistic databases in Saint Petersburg concern the many recordings of Russian dialects and minority languages in the Russian Federation, such as Han'ty. Mansi, Nenets, Nivkh, Tungus, Yakut, Yukaghir and others. One of our aims has been the construction of a phonetic database of the languages of Russia which has many scientific, cultural and technical applications. In the framework of the NWO project Voices of Tundra and Taiga (2002 - 2005) we combined the data from old sound recordings with the results of modern fieldwork, in order to describe the languages and cultures of ethnic groups in Russia. It will be possible to use this information for the preparation of text books on certain languages, collections of folklore, data on ethnomusicology and for the study of language contact, language change and migration movements.

From 2006 until 2008 and from 2010 until 2012 we received grants from the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library, which made it possible to re-record material from mainly private collections on historic sound carriers according to up to date technology and to store them in safe places together with the related metadata. The storage facilities provided by the project can modernise the possible archiving activities in the Russian Federation. In our presentation we consider some examples of data in these archives, such as the historical sound recordings, which in 1935 Wolfgang Steinitz made of the Han'ty language and folklore. At present we continue this work with the reconstruction of Udmurt material in collaboration with scholars in Saint-Petersburg and Udmurtia, one of the Federal Republics of the Russian Federation with a Finno-ugric minority.

The extinction of languages is a process, which takes place nearly everywhere in the world. The rich variety of languages which must have existed in the past is diminishing rapidly. As estimated by various linguists, in the next 50 years many of the 6000 languages which are at present spoken in the world will disappear. At the moment 20 to 50% of these languages are no longer used by children, which makes their survival very uncertain. In our reports it has been stated that quite a few languages on the terri-tory of the Russian Federation are under threat of total extinction and that measures should be taken to put an end to this process of degradation and dying out of languages. Linguists and ethnolo-gists should work together with representatives of endangered languages in order to find solutions to these problems.

With a study group of UNESCO we have prepared several publications on this matter and a special Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, which is also available on the internet.

In the Foundation for Siberian Cultures, which was founded in 2010, we have the aim to preserve the indigenous languages of the Russian Federation and the ecological knowledge expressed in them. During our fieldwork expeditions to Sakhalin, Kamchatka, Northern Yakutia and Central Siberia we have studied processes of language shift and language death for some minority peoples of Russia, in particular for the Nivkh of Sakhalin, the Itelmen and Koryak of Kamchatka, the Yukaghir of Sakha and the Siberian Mennonites. It is a very important task for the linguistic community to make a registration of the last speakers of these languages in interviews with good sound and video recording equipment. The results of modern field work and the reconstructed data from sound archives will provide important information for the preparation of language descriptions, grammars, dictionaries and edited collections of oral and written literature. These can also be used to develop teaching methods, in particular for the younger members of certain ethnic groups who do not have sufficient knowledge of their native language. In this way we can make them aware of their heritage and the Russian Federation can create a basis for multi-ethnic co-existence of Russians with many other ethnic groups in this country.

Short biography:
Since 1990, Tjeerd de Graaf, Associate Professor of Phonetics at Groningen University until 2003, has specialized in the phonetic aspects of Ethnolinguistics. In 1990, he made his first fieldwork trip with a Japanese expedition to the minority peoples of Sakhalin. Since then, he has contributed to various research projects on endangered languages and the use of sound archives related to ethnic minorities in Russia. This takes place in co-operation with colleagues in the Russian Federation and Japan. Most of these projects were financially supported by special grants from the European Union and the Netherlands Organization of Scientific Research NWO. In 1998, Tjeerd de Graaf received a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the University of St.Petersburg for his work in the field of ethnolinguistics. Since 2002, he has been a board member of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (Great Britain) and a research fellow at the Mercator Centre of the Frisian Academy, which co-ordinates research on European minorities - in particular the language, his-
tory and culture of Frisian, one of the lesser used languages of Europe. In the first half of 2003, he spent a semester as visiting professor at the University of St.Petersburg. In 2004 and 2005, Tjerd de Graaf worked as guest researcher at the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University (Japan). Since 2006 some of his projects have been financially supported by the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library.

ECJ condemns “restrictive” language law in Flanders

*By Martin Banks, from the Human Rights Without Frontiers web-site/European Parliament Magazine. 30 April 2013*

The Flemish community in Belgium has been condemned for allegedly infringing EU freedom of movement by only drafting workers’ contracts in Dutch. Under Flemish law on the use of languages, employees must complete their employment contract in Dutch. Failure to comply with the law can result in a cancellation of the contract, even if the worker comes from abroad.

However, in a new ruling, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) says the Flemish law infringes the freedom of movement of workers within the EU.

The judgement by the ECJ – the EU’s highest court, said, “The court notes that only the Dutch text is authentic in the drafting of cross-border employment contracts concluded by employers whose established place of business is in the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium.

“Consequently, such legislation, which is liable to have a dissuasive effect on non-Dutch-speaking employees and employers from other member states, constitutes a restriction on freedom of movement for workers.”

The ECJ, which is based in Luxembourg, found that the Flemish community had infringed the rights of a Dutch national named Anton Las who was working for a multinational group whose registered office is in Singapore. Soon after Las was hired as chief financial officer for PSA Antwerp, his employers terminated his contract, which was drafted in English.

The Flemish government said the language law was justified as part of a strategy to “protect and promote the Dutch language”. But the ruling by the ECJ said, “The court states that such a restriction is justified only if it pursues an objective in the public interest,” is appropriate to ensuring the attainment of that objective, and is strictly proportionate.”

“Yet parties to a cross-border employment contract do not necessarily have knowledge of Dutch.”

“In such a situation, the establishment of free and informed consent between the parties requires those parties to draft a contract in a language other than the official language of that member state.”

Meanwhile, UK Conservative MEP Kay Swinburne says that making Welsh an official EU language would waste millions of euros a year. Instead, she argues, the steps taken over the last 20 years to ensure Welsh survives should be used as a model to protect other languages across Europe. She said that making Welsh an official language “would not advance its cause in the slightest”. Her comments come after Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans last week declared that Welsh should become and official language of the EU. Evans said: “We won semi-official status for the Welsh language in Europe in 2008. That was a welcome step and has done a great deal to raise the profile of Wales and our language and culture. “But I see it as a step towards achieving real equality, which means full official status.”

Ice Age language may share words with modern tongues

*AFP/Yahoo web-site 7 May 2013*

Our Ice Age ancestors in Europe, 15,000 years ago, may have used words we would recognize today, according to a new study out this week in a US journal.

Words that sound alike in related languages are generally assumed to have come from a common route, like “father” in English and “pater” in Latin. Lead author Mark Pagel, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Reading in Britain, and his team were able to take the analysis a step further by showing that certain very commonly used words, like pronouns, are more likely to stay the same over the millennia.

“We discovered numerals, pronouns and special adverbs are replaced far more slowly, with linguistic half-lives of once every 10,000 or even more years.” Pagel explained. In other words, everyday words like “I, you, we, man and bark,” have, in certain languages, the same meaning and nearly the same sound as they did thousands of years ago.
Their analysis suggests that at least seven major language families in Eurasia all descended from a common ancestor language.

"As a rule of thumb, words used more than about once per thousand in everyday speech were seven to ten times more likely to show deep ancestry in the Eurasian superfamily," Pagel said.

Focusing on these common lexical items helped the British researchers avoid a common pitfall of historical linguistics -- that it is difficult to distinguish between words that sound alike because of common ancestry and words that sound alike because of simple coincidence. For instance, "team" and "cream" in English are unrelated, but sound quite similar.

But the everyday words were statistically likely to be related, and so when the researchers found ones that sounded alike, they were able to conclude with fair confidence that it was not simply by chance.

The latest study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Pagel's previous research had looked into the evolution of more than 7,000 Indo-European languages, looking for shared patterns in how language is used and why some words stay in use while others disappear over time.

Texas German dialect may be one of a kind, and is dying out

From the BBC News website, 15 May 2013

The first German settlers arrived in Texas over 150 years ago and successfully passed on their native language throughout the generations - until now.

German was the main language used in schools, churches and businesses around the hill country between Austin and San Antonio. But two world wars and the resulting drop in the standing of German meant that the fifth and sixth generation of immigrants did not pass it on to their children.

Still the biggest ancestry group in the US, according to Census data, a large majority of German-Americans never learned the language of their ancestors.

Hans Boas, a linguistic and German professor at the University of Texas, has made it his mission to record as many speakers of German in the Lone Star State as he can before the last generation of Texas Germans passes away.

Mr Boas has recorded 800 hours of interviews with over 400 German descendants in Texas and archived them at the Texas German Dialect Project. He says the dialect, created from various regional German origins and a mix of English, is one of a kind.

"We have found no two speakers that speak roughly alike," Mr Boas told the BBC at his office in Austin. The BBC's Franz Strasser went to Weimar, New Braunfels and Austin to find the last speakers of this dialect.

4. Appeals, News and Views from Endangered Communities

Kangaroo blood and salt tears

By Andy Park, from the website of SBS television (Australia), 17 April 2013

There's blood on my shoes and all around me the skins of roos are being wrenched off their thick tails. We have just popped out to buy lunch.

I'm standing in a Kangaroo abattoir on the outskirts of Port Augusta, South Australia, with Bangala elders Steve and Harry, who have promised me a barbecue lunch. We are taking a break from filming as they participate in a language reclamation workshop run by renowned Israeli linguist Gil'ad Zuckermann. A specialist in endangered language, the Oxford and Cambridge-trained professor himself speaks the reclaimed language of Hebrew.

Bangala was once spoken right across the Eyre Peninsula, and being a seaside people, the Bangala had numerous words for shark, just like the Inuit people of North America have many words for snow.

But colonisation and forced adoption has seen the decline of Bangala as members of the Stolen Generation were taken to missions where speaking in language was sometimes harshly discouraged.

Nowadays, only the elders remember a few words, snippets of a time before time. Which brings us to the Umee-warra mission just down the road.

The asbestos-filled mission has now fallen into ruin, with smashed windows and boarded-up doors. A whole group of elders lead me through the condemned dormitories, pointing out places where their memories coalesce into little pools of sadness.

We stop and Steve tells me how his mother was beaten in
5. New Technology

Amazon backs down over Cornish

With more than 40% of the world’s estimated 7,000 languages "endangered and at risk of extinction", an army of tiny publishers is fighting an unsung battle to save them. UK press Diglot Books is one of them, and this week took on the might of Amazon to get its Cornish children’s story out to readers.

Told by the internet giant that Matthew and the Wellington Boots (Matthew ha’n Eskisyow Glaw in Cornish, or Kernwek) would not be made available through Kindle Direct Publishing because it was in a language that is "not currently supported" by the platform, Diglot petitioned the retailer. Director Alison O’Dorman said it did so "on the basis that our title was actually bilingual and that the Cornish translation had been checked by an examiner for the Cornish Language Board, and also that the alphabet was the same as English so there were no extra characters needed". When this had no effect, she turned to social media for support.

"The great news is that Amazon have indeed backed down after the support that we have generated, and have now agreed to publish the Cornish title," said O’Dorman, who hailed it as a testament to the power of social media in "allowing a minnow such as ourselves to change the minds of a big company".

O’Dorman added that KDP’s official statement about the decision was: "The book is in a language that is not currently supported by Kindle Direct Publishing. At this time, you can upload and sell books in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Galician, and Basque to customers worldwide in the Kindle Store. We’re working to add more languages to this list in the future."

"It is a surprisingly short list of languages and doesn’t even include Welsh,” said O’Dorman.

Amazon did not respond to a request for comment, but Matthew and the Wellington Boots is now for sale as an e-book via Amazon and Apple – where it has already received two five-star reviews, one in Cornish.

‘When Matthew bounces down the stairs in a rush to play in the garden with his best friend Diglot, he discovers it is raining outside. Oh no! How can he play with his digger, ride his bicycle, or swing on his swing if everything is all wet?’ runs the English text. In its Cornish translation from translator Stephen Gadd, this becomes:

“Pan aslamm Matthew an grisowyow war-nans yn uskis rag gwari y’n lowarth gans y goweth gwella, Diglot, ev a dhiskudh hy bos ow kül glaw. Ogh na! Fatel yl ev gwari gans y jynn-palas, diwrosa po le ska war y lesk mars yw puptra gylb?"

Around 500 people cited Cornish as their main language in the 2011 census, which places the language as "endangered" on the Catalogue of Endangered Languages, a global collaborative project to preserve languages. Diglot believes it is vital to protect it.

"From a cultural perspective the existence of its own language adds considerable weight to the feeling of a cultural identity to Cornish people, and according to Cornwall councillor Bert Biscoe, a member of the Cornish Language Partnership, ‘If you’re looking at Cornwall’s distinctiveness, its brand in the future world of trade and so forth, having something that distinguishes and defines our brand like a living language is very important’,” said O’Dorman.

She feels the best way to breathe life into Cornish is through children. "The key to truly reviving the language is clearly with the younger generation and bilingual books are a fantastic way to achieve this as they are easily accessible to both parents and children alike," she said. The importance of stepping in to preserve minority languages has been recognised by UNESCO, which argues that that their disappearance is neither inevitable nor irreversible.

Its Endangered Languages Programme aims to demonstrate its belief that "well-planned and implemented language policies can bolster the ongoing efforts of speaker communities to maintain or revitalise their mother tongues and pass them on to younger generations".

The Alaskan language Tlingit is listed as being "critically endangered", with an ethnic population of only 400 people. But that didn’t deter the small Alaskan publisher Hazy Island Books from publishing the first ever children’s book in the language. “Clearly, if the language is to continue to live and breathe, it must find a way to take its nourishment from the here and now,” said publisher Liz Dodd, releasing The Story of the Town Bear and the Forest Bear, or Aanka Xóodzi ka Aasgutu Xóodzi Shkalnegi, in 2011.

Dodd said this week that the book had been distributed to 700 students in South East Alaska, Yukon and British Columbia, and another 200 have been sold in bookstores.
and online. Hazy Island was hoping to extend its reach by making an iPad app of it. "A few years ago things looked very bad for Tlingit. All the elders were dying off, but I went to a clan conference about a year ago and there were all these young Tlingit speakers, who speak a half-and-half language," she said.

Back in the UK, independent press Francis Boutle is on a mission to protect the lesser used languages of Europe, releasing titles in everything from Manx to Occitan – and Cornish.

Publisher Clive Boutle said: "Although there is a surprising amount of interest in minority and regional languages – for some, like the Norman languages of the Channel Islands, the interest may be too little, too late. Even Welsh, which is widely spoken, may have reached a tipping point in its heartlands.

"In France the situation is perhaps worse than in the UK, with regional languages not recognised by the French government, the only one not to have signed the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Occitan, the language of the troubadours, is greatly endangered as it slips from everyday use in Provence, Gascony and the Languedoc.

My aim is not just to record these languages as they pass, but to provide a platform for their revival." He added: "While so much good work is being done by small publishers in the area of minority languages, it is disturbing that so much power over the distribution of books is concentrated in the hands of Amazon, who also own Abebooks, Kindle, and now, GoodReads."It is not surprising that they don’t recognise or value languages like Cornish, which don’t represent significant market opportunities – that’s money! A small victory may have taken place with Amazon’s change of heart over Matthew and the Wellington Boots, but in the long run Amazon are the mortal enemies of diversity. Publishers use them at your peril."

5. Obituaries

Darrell T. Tryon

By Malcolm Ross, from the An-Lang website 16 May 2013

Emeritus Professor Darrell Tryon, longtime researcher into the languages of Vanuatu, the Solomons and the Loyalty Islands, died in Canberra on Wednesday 15th May at the age of 70. Darrell had been battling melanoma for some months, but the suddenness of his passing comes as a considerable shock to his colleagues at the Australian National University and elsewhere.

Darrell was born and grew up in New Zealand, where he completed his Bachelor’s degree at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch. He studied French, became a fluent speaker, and an abiding interest in French South Pacific affairs was one of the continuing threads of his career.

Darrell is known among Oceanic linguists particularly for his association with the nation of Vanuatu and for his research into its languages. In fieldwork started in 1969 he collected extensive wordlists from communities throughout Vanuatu and worked out the first set of hypotheses about relationships among the country’s languages, presenting these first at the First International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics in Honolulu in 1974, then publishing both the wordlists and his findings in a compendious Pacific Linguistics volume (C-50). The 292-item wordlists from 179 communities, the vast majority collected by Darrell himself, remain a major source of Vanuatu lexical data.

In 1983 Darrell published a similar volume for the languages of the Solomon Islands, based on wordlists collected by himself and Brian Hackman. Most of his ongoing linguistic research, however, concerned Vanuatu, and he published numerous papers on Vanuatu-related linguistic topics.

Darrell’s magnum opus, the result of several years of work, was the "Comparative Austronesian Dictionary", an edited five-volume work published by Mouton de Gruyter in 1995, that contained annotated wordlists for 1310 meanings organized by semantic domains in 80 Austronesian languages, 40 of them Oceanic. Each list was compiled by a specialist in the language, who also provided a short introduction to the language, and the work as a whole was introduced by articles written by Darrell.

For more than 20 years, from the early nineteen-eighties, Darrell was also heavily involved in the Vanuatu Fieldworker Programme, which once a year brought together at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre men who were interested in recording the traditions of their communities. Eventually these fieldworkers, most of whom had limited formal education and worked together using Bislama, the lingua franca of Vanuatu, numbered fifty or so. All were resident in their home villages, and each annual meeting focussed on a single cultural topic. The materials collected in this way were archived at the Cultural Centre in Port Vila. Until around 2009 these annual meetings were conducted under Darrell’s leader-
Alongside his linguistic activities Darrell had an abiding interest in history, and the book "Pacific Pidgins and Creoles", co-authored with Jean-Michel Charpentier (2004), combined these two interests in an insightful way, turning some of his colleagues’ assumptions about the history of Pacific pidgins upside down.

In the decade or so before his retirement in 2007 Darrell was heavily involved in university administration and for part of this time was the Deputy Director of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University. His involvement in the wider work of the school strengthened his interests in the governance and sociology of the countries of the South Pacific, and many of his more recent publications have been in this area. He was variably a Constitutional Adviser to Vanuatu Government and a member of the Council of the University of New Caledonia. In 2004 he was awarded the Legion of Honour by the French Government, in recognition of his contributions to French language and culture, especially in the Pacific, and for his work in fostering bilateral relations between Australia and France.

Darrell will be greatly missed by colleagues and students at the ANU and by his many friends in Vanuatu, France and elsewhere.

\textit{Malcolm Ross}

\section*{6. Publications, Book Review}

\subsection*{New volume on languages of Latin America}

\textit{LIAMES (Lingüas Indígenas Americanas), vol. 12, edited Angel H. Corbera Mori and others. Spring 2012. Published by Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas SP, Brazil. 211 p.. ISSN 1678-0531.}

This trilingual volume, in Portuguese, Spanish and English, is a welcome addition to the canon of works on the lesser studied indigenous languages of Latin America, and it is heartening to see such a wide range of languages covered in one volume. The articles range over Ashéninka Perené (Arawak), Yaqui, Nivaele, Apuriná, Katukina-Kanamari, Xerente, Juruna and Maxakali, and the aspects covered include semantics, pragmatics, syntax, phonology and sociolinguistics. There are also reviews of other recent books on indigenous languages of Latin America. This continent is perhaps the least well known in relation to its linguistic richness, so volumes like this are to be welcomed and encouraged.

\textit{Chris Moseley}

\section*{7. Places to go on the Web}

\subsection*{European Parliament publishes Note on Endangered Languages}


\subsection*{Aboriginal language app launched in Queensland}

By Terri Begley, from the 612 ABC web-site, Queensland, Australia, 19 April 2013

"Jingi" Know what that is? It's "g'day" in Yugambeh language.

It was once spoken by Aboriginal tribes all around the South East (of Australia). In a Queensland first, Yugambeh went digital this morning. Listen online at: http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/2013/04/aboriginal-language-app-launched-.html

\section*{8. Letter to the Editor}

From Eisel Mazarid (eisel.mazarid@gmail.com)

This is a survey of audio-recordings from a self-made ethnographer of mainland Southeast Asia (inclusive of Yunnan, Laos and Cambodia --i.e., areas I'm familiar with myself to whatever extent).

Although some of the recordings are instrumental, most have lyrics, and because these are "traditional songs" (i.e., perceived as old-fashioned within each of the respective cultures) they really do demonstrate how profoundly alien each of these languages is from the others -- something that is much misunderstood because of the emphasis placed on overly-theoretical linkages between the languages (that tend to fascinate academic linguists who study these things, but that scarcely touch the "parole" of the living languages concerned).

https://soundcloud.com/kinkgong

I actually proposed doing a Ph.D. thesis on the ethnic group here named as "Bulang", BTW; absolutely nothing has ever been published in English about their language (or religion, culture, history, etc.) --but here you get to hear both their secular and sacred music (separate recordings, in starkly different style), at the touch of a button.

All of this stuff breaks my heart.

E.M.
Foundation for Endangered Languages

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3 “Voluntary body” includes university departments and charity organisations. “Official body” includes government departments.

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**MEMBERSHIP REVIEW**

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FEL Manifesto

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;
- 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 concerned 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:

1. To raise awareness of endangered languages, both inside and outside the communities where they are spoken, through all media;
2. To support the use of endangered languages in all contexts: at home, in education, in the media, and in social, cultural and economic life;
3. To monitor linguistic policies and practices, and to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary;
4. To support the documentation of endangered languages, by offering financial assistance, training, or facilities for the publication of results;
5. To collect together and make available information of use in the preservation of endangered languages;
6. To disseminate information on all of the above activities as widely as possible.