Tupinamba women of northern Espírito Santo state, Brazil, face the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: Centro de Documentação Eloy Ferreira da Silva

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1. Editorial

Since the last issue of Ogmios, one huge issue has dominated the world: the pandemic spread of the COVID-19 virus. The media have talked about little else, but since it is a question of human survival, indigenous populations and endangered speech communities have tended to be ignored. We try to rectify this situation in this issue – and not only in this issue, but also in the blog postings that have appeared on the www.ogmios.org website.

Another major feature of this issue is the conclusion of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and the declaration of a whole United Nations Decade of Indigenous Languages, from 2022 to 2032. During the year that Ogmios has been in abeyance, FEL made the IYIL a major feature of its activities; in this issue we look back on the past year and forward to the future decade.

I make no apology for harping on the perilous situation for Brazil’s indigenes: a danger that has redoubled in force since the COVID-19 pandemic spread to that country. In this issue we present the Brazilian government’s response to our appeal, launched in December 2018. Bolsonaro’s government may not be learning any lessons, but we as an organization can learn some lessons about how to run a campaign. This was FEL’s first attempt at an ‘organised’ campaign, and clearly we have a lot to learn about campaigning. We didn’t run a sustained programme of letters and messages to the Brazilian authorities, and thus allowed them the luxury of a long and lazy delay. We didn’t attempt to go public and publicise the issue in our own name in the British press. There are many things we could have done, including a social media campaign, and I hope that we learn a lesson from this, if we’re to stand up for indigenous languages at all. Meanwhile people are dying, some of them from a different cause than the one we first feared when I expressed our righteous indignation.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation


University College London (UCL), UK

The theme of this year’s FEL conference is teaching and learning materials (including primers, grammars, dictionaries, textbooks, websites, language documentation and other audiovisual material, apps, etc.) for, in, and about endangered languages. We would like to invite presentations that focus on the types of pedagogical resources that are appropriate for endangered language situations (including the teaching and learning of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as relevant), and the roles they can play in the support for and revitalization of endangered languages. Presentations could also explore how such resources can contribute to the status and profile of a language, and what practical and pedagogical solutions and resources work best for first, heritage, and second language speakers and learners.

Abstract submission closed 11 May 2020. For more details, see the EasyChair website (https://easychair.org/cfp/FEL24).

For further information please contact fel.london2020@gmail.com.

This will be an online conference, carried on Zoom.

The International Year of Indigenous Languages: first anniversary

By Salem Mezhoud

“It’s my language, it’s my life”. This was the title of the conference-exhibition held on 19 June 2019 IN THE Brunei Gallery of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, to mark the UN’s International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL). The event was co-organised by the Foundation for Endangered Languages, Westminster United Nations Association, and Survival International.

The IYIL was the outcome of combined efforts by diverse organisations and institutions which led to a recommendation by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) which endorsed the principle by a resolution in 2016. The Permanent Forum’s initiative and the ensuing UNGA resolution critically recognised the central role of language in indigenous cultures. At the origin of this recognition is also the realisation that most endangered languages (40% according to the Permanent Forum) are also indigenous languages, those spoken by indigenous peoples and communities.

Throughout nearly three decades of debate and work on drafting an international legal instrument for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples, it was always clear that language constituted a central dimension of the cultural rights of indigenous peoples. In these deliberations, language was considered mostly under the general umbrella of culture. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), passed through several drafts from 1989 to 2007, always stressing the importance of every aspect of indigenous culture, from ritual to religion, customs and history, to education and the mother tongue.

The final draft of the UNDRIP, adopted in 2007, addressed linguistic issues through a multi-layered protection of indigenous rights. This includes provisions in

- article 5 ("the right to maintain (...) their distinct (...) cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully (...) in the (...) cultural life of the State"),
- article 8 ("the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture"),
- article 13 ("the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures")
- article 14 (the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages").
• Article 16 of UNDRIP also provides indigenous peoples with the right to “establish their own media in their own languages” and other articles protect them against discrimination and exploitation of different forms and in a wider scope.

In recent years, the close relationship between language, and cultural and natural diversity has been made more apparent and prominent in the quest for global solutions to global problems, including climate change. However, the effects of natural and human-induced disasters, and those of political activities, on the survival of languages are often easier to understand and to visualise than the reverse phenomenon, the impact of the disappearance of languages on cultural diversity and, ultimately, on biodiversity. This is more complex and tougher to comprehend, especially as language is not always understood as a vehicle for precious knowledge and ancient wisdom.

Indigenous knowledge, most notably in the pharmaceutical field, is now widely recognised. The ecological, planet-friendly practices of indigenous peoples, in their everyday life, are beginning to be understood and, still to a limited extent, respected. The relationship between all these practices and indigenous languages is still barely acknowledged at the global scale and the consequence of the loss of languages from our cultural diversity on the biodiversity is far from understood. It is time, however, for this simple warning, “endanger language and you endanger the biodiversity, and hence endanger the planet” to be taken seriously.

The United Nations, in proclaiming the IYIL, stressed some basic facts:

“The ongoing loss of indigenous languages is particularly devastating, as the complex knowledges and cultures they foster are increasingly recognized as strategic resources for good governance, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and sustainable development”.

The IYIL was to be a platform for raising awareness and mobilising “different players” to ensure a global coordinated action to protect indigenous languages “not only to benefit the peoples who speak these languages, but also for others to appreciate the important contribution they make to our world’s rich cultural diversity”. Indigenous languages, according to the UN, need to be protected because they are a path to five domains and sources of global harmony: knowledge, peace, rights, inclusion, diversity. Each of these leads to unique ways and systems of averting problems and solving issues. This is also a novel way of achieving the UN’s own Sustainable Development Goals and the original mission of the organisation, peacebuilding.

In marking the IYIL, FEL sought the collaboration of one of the world’s most prominent indigenous rights organisations, Survival International, and the principal UK support group for the organisation’s mapping of indigenous languages. Saleh Mezhoud, by virtue a member of both FEL and UNA Westminster, and a former UN official and drafter of the UNDRIP, outlined the work of the UN regarding indigenous peoples’ issues and explaining the different stages in the long road to the IYIL.

Westminster UNA produced posters on thirty languages spoken by indigenous communities, each with a mini-biography of the language and a sample of its sounds. As audio recordings were played throughout in a loop, some coincidentally illustrated languages listed in the FEL catalogue of grant recipients prepared by Hakim Elnazarov. Prior to the conference, short UN-produced films depicting the “challenges facing indigenous peoples in several countries” were screened and throughout the event an exhibition of documents and materials provided by the partner organisations was held.

Among the films
• **Joenia: Indigenous rights defender** in Brazil, about the first woman indigenous lawyer in Brazil who defends the human rights of indigenous peoples;
• **Mapuche: Saving indigenous language**, which describes the efforts of the Mapuche of Chile to preserve their very existence through the preservation of their language;
• **Ainu: Indigenous peoples in Japan**, showing the efforts to reverse the Japanese government’s assimilation policies, which all but produced the extinction of the ethnic group, by preserving the Ainu’s language and rich culture.
Most countries in the world, including the Member States of the Council of Europe, are facing an unprecedented pandemic, the so-called coronavirus, or COVID-19. For a few weeks now, governments have been introducing, gradually and at different paces, a wide range of measures, ranging from basic hygiene recommendations to partial or total confinement of their populations.

Relevant authorities at national, regional or local level and medical experts are all reiterating that only by a strict compliance with the measures proposed, will the further spread of the COVID-19 be controlled.

While welcoming the steps taken, it has to be noted that countries have not systematically shared the information, instructions, guidelines or recommendations in languages other than the official language of the country. This also concerns the traditional regional or minority languages spoken in the respective countries. The communication of relevant recommendations in these languages is of utmost importance for the well-being of the speakers of regional or minority languages.

It is important, and authorities should not forget, that national minorities are an integral part of their societies and in order for the measures adopted to have full effect, they should be made available and easily accessible to the whole population.

While the above should be considered as a requirement for the Council of Europe Member States that have ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - ECRML - (notably the provisions concerning health care and public administration), other Council of Europe Member States should strongly consider addressing their nationals in all the languages traditionally spoken in their countries.

In addition, some states have resorted to online teaching or teaching through the medium of TV. In most cases, however, teaching is limited to the official language(s), not considering the needs of the pupils who usually receive education in regional or minority languages. This approach can be considered not only contrary to the Charter’s undertakings but also discriminatory.

Through this message, the Committee of Experts of the ECRML would like to invite states to take language-related issues into account when developing further policies and instructions to address this exceptional medical crisis.

Public health information campaigns are, at least initially, organized at national government level, and therefore they’re issued in the national language of a country, to reach the widest possible audience. Very few countries, however, have only one language, and in the current pandemic (at the time of writing, April 2020) it has seemed that small languages have been trampled in the rush to get an urgent message out. The Council of Europe’s statement above applies to a continent with strong and widely understood national languages; how does multilingualism fare on other continents? Even in Europe the message is unevenly spread.

In Italy, one of the countries worst affected by the virus, public information for non-speakers of standard Italian was of course directed at immigrant minorities, not at Italy’s own domestic minorities, who can be assumed to have command of Italian.

3. Endangered Languages in the News

COVID-19 and health warnings in minority languages

Chris Moseley
On 30th March 2020, the Council of Europe posted the following message on its web-site:
On 18 March 2020, the European Commission reported on this web-site https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news:

The website of the Valle d’Aosta Region features a guide on what people should do and where they can go at the moment. The guide is published in Italian, Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish. The website also includes translations of the self-declaration form of the Ministry of Interior, currently required to be completed and carried by those who go outside.

The Emilia Romagna Region has published a webpage with links to numerous municipalities, associations and international organisations providing information in different languages.

The Municipality of Ravenna created videos with information in Arabic, Wolof, Bambara, Pashto, French and English. The videos were produced by the association Camera a Sud di Lecco and the FARI project cultural mediators. The municipality also translated guidance on protecting against the virus into 14 languages. Associations such as Il Grande Colibri and Naga have translated guidelines of the Ministry of Health and collect and update translations and information. Another association, Cambalache, has created an easy-access information page, #nonesseiolo [#youarenotalone], providing practical information on workers’ safety, shop that are still open and the emergency number to call for those without a family doctor. Médecines du Monde Italie is offering this the emergency telephone service in Italian, English and French.

CIR (Italian Council for Refugees) and the association Associazion Diritti per tutti translated the most important points of the 8 March 2020 decree on CODIV-19 of the President of the Council of Ministers into Arab, Urdu, Bengali, Spanish, French and English.

Naturally, immigrant populations are an important target of public information about a pandemic in any country (especially considering that in both the UK and the USA a disproportionate number of victims appear to be from ethnic minorities), but in terms of indigenous languages, let’s limit our focus here to multilingual nations. The following report about multi-ethnic societies in Africa appeared on the Radio France International web-site on 4th March:

Journalists, filmmakers, graphic designers, and those who can speak or write effectively in one of the estimated 3,000 local languages on the African continent have mobilized to get the message out on how to prevent the deadly virus that is spread by breath droplets as they are coughed or sneezed. Coronavirus can also be transmitted when a person touches their face after touching a contaminated surface. The virus can be absorbed through mucous membranes.

While some governments and health ministries have launched local language information, journalists like Elia Ntal and Kudzai Gerede, who both work for the Harare-based Zimbabwe newswire 263Chat, translated information on Covid-19 in Shona and Ndebele, respectively.

For Gerede, a business journalist originally from Bulawayo, it was second nature to get the information out in Ndebele, a local language spoken by many who feel marginalized in the south of the country.

“So few people think about translating information into Ndebele,” Gerede tells RFI. He put forward the idea to write stories in Shona and Ndebele during an editorial meeting where journalists were discussing how to make the Covid-19 information as clear as possible for their audience.

“I suggested to do a write up in Ndebele and asked my other colleague if he could do the same in Shona. The editor liked it and then we just took a government statement written in English and paraphrased it in local languages since we realised there wasn’t any literature in these languages,” he says.

The eastern Democratic Republic of Congo discharged its last Ebola patient nearly one month ago, and now local health educators are trying to bring communities up to speed on how to protect themselves from coronavirus. Confusion about the similarities and differences between Ebola and Covid-19 is rife, says Laure Venier, a community engagement program coordinator for the DRC with Translators Without Borders (TWB).

“A lot of people are expressing that they feel safer because they know how to take care of themselves because of the hygiene measures put in place for Ebola,” she tells RFI.

The Congolese authorities have created a helpline in nine different local languages that is open from 8h00 to 20h00, which Venier says is useful, acknowledging that creating a helpline in all 400 local languages would be a near-impossible task.

While Nigeria is trying to deal with how to maintain social distancing and put food on the table, a number of people as well as UN agencies have come together in order to get the word out in some of the local languages in Africa’s most populous country.

Nigerian filmmaker Niyi Akinmolayan, famous in his own right for directing The Wedding Party 2, the highest-grossing Nollywood movie of all time, used his skills to create a short video that he then dubbed into a number of Nigerian languages, including Igbo, Pidgin and Hausa. Akinmolayan has been promoting them on social media to ensure everyone knows about how easily Covid-19 is spread.

The United Nations, which usually operates in six official languages, has expanded their public information campaigns to include posters in Hausa, Kanuri, Yoruba, and Igbo, and have included a misinformation feature as well.

One woman produced a video in Fulfulde, a language spoken by the Fulani people mainly in Adamawa state in Nigeria, in addition to two northern provinces of Cameroon. The video was shared on the US Embassy in Yaoundé’s Facebook page. South Africa is tackling misinformation regarding Covid-19 by running a WhatsApp helpline in five of the country’s 11 official languages—English, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans. South Africa’s News24 reported that although the helpline initially only took questions in English, the Health Department added four more to accommodate more South Africans.

In Morocco, it was the initiative of yet another journalist, Hammou Hasnoui, and graphic designer Aissam El Nehi who created a video with subtitles in Tachelhit and Tarifit, two Moroccan Tamazight (also known as Berber) dialects. They have posted their videos on YouTube and Facebook in order to get the word out to the Berber minority in the country.
Many on the continent have answered the call to get information out, but groups who work with refugees and asylum seekers in Europe are also working to ensure the most vulnerable understand how the disease is spread.

The Linguistic and Intercultural Mediations in a context of International Migrations group (LIMINAL), has already asked online for help in translating coronavirus information into a number of languages, including 15 African local languages. A member of the group told RFI that they have already had translations into Sudanese Arabic and Tigrinya, a language spoken in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The British site for medical charity Doctors of the World has information translated into a number of languages, including Somali and Tigrinya.

French residents have had to print out and carry an authorization to leave their homes. For refugees who do not speak French, the Anti-Authoritarian Group for Toulouse and its Surroundings (IAATA) has translated the French guidelines and has provided the authorization letter in a number of languages, including Amharic, Bambara, Diakhanke, Igbo, Malagasy, Peul, Soninke, Sussu, and Tigrinya.

Ireland’s national health service has also translated Covid-19 guidelines into a number of languages, including Yoruba. (Source: Radio France International http://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20200403)

Our sister organization the Minority Rights Group has spoken out in favour of informing indigenous peoples about the dangers of the pandemic virus. Clare Thomas, their director, wrote this in an opinion piece for Thomson Reuters News on 24th March:

COVID-19 emergency relief must reach everyone, including minorities and indigenous peoples

Time and time again, when emergencies occur, minorities and indigenous peoples are at risk of being excluded from lifesaving humanitarian interventions. The current COVID-19 pandemic is no different and it is our moral obligation to ensure national responses leave no one behind.

Aid is supposed to be neutral, but we know this is not always the case. In a local situation where some are powerful and count, while others are powerless and don’t count, not everyone will receive aid according to their need.

For more than 50 years, we have documented the exclusion of minorities and indigenous peoples from responses to conflict and post-conflict situations (Roma in the Balkans, minority clan members in Somalia, and Muhamasheen in the current conflict in Yemen), to natural disasters (Dalits after the 2004 Tsunami). With today’s global emergency, we have a duty to address the issue of exclusion head-on, and ensure all responses to COVID-19 are inclusive of the world’s most vulnerable people.

We therefore urge governments and healthcare providers to consider the following four points in their COVID-19 responses:

1. Lack of documentation should in no case be a barrier to the highest quality care.

Minorities and indigenous people are less likely to carry an ID document (for example, Roma in Ukraine) and their citizenship may be contested or challenged (for example the Maragoli community in Uganda). If an ID card is needed to access healthcare, this can put minority and indigenous communities at a major disadvantage.

2. All COVID-19 care should be provided free of charge to those who cannot afford to pay.

Many minorities and indigenous communities are poorer than majority communities in the same country. We know that indigenous women access maternal health care less than other women and some of these women have told us that cost is a factor in this. This applies, for example to some women from the Chin community in Myanmar.

3. Information about prevention and ways to seek help in case of symptoms should be made available in as many languages as possible.

Translators without Borders has documented many instances of aid being provided in languages that the intended recipients do not speak well. Radio broadcasts in various languages, including minority languages, may be the best option.

4. Nutrition and access to food should be a priority and should not depend on economic status.

Minority communities and indigenous peoples are generally poorer, and their nutritional status may be worse. They are likely to have fewer resources to buy or store food, or to pay for medicines or treatment. They are unlikely to have reserves of either cash or food to sustain themselves whilst they may be unable to work. Batwa community members in Rwanda, for example, have told us they’re facing the prospect of living without an income since their traditional means of work (involving travel to other’s land) is no longer viable or available. Many minorities and indigenous people are more likely to migrate regularly, meaning they have no regular clinic and that government warnings to stay at home are not meaningful to them […]

The communities mentioned in the Minority Rights Group piece cited above are generally indigenous to the countries mentioned. As mentioned earlier, immigrant communities in their host countries are often at a disadvantage in receiving information health advice – not only in the current global pandemic, but also in terms of general health care. In New Zealand, for example, the large immigrant population from other Pacific nations needs to be told about the kind of health care available to them. See the back page for an example of a multilingual set of instructions for performing self-checking for bowel cancer.

This topic has featured in several blog postings on the FEL web-site: www.ogmios.org
The Uyghurs: a nation imprisoned, a language expunged

It’s very difficult to get objective information about the current plight of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang province, in the west of the People’s Republic of China. The most prominent voices that are heard are those of the Chinese government, which claims that all is well and under control, the Uyghur nation is being re-educated in camps for their benefit, to extinguish the traces of terrorism that taint them; and of foreign ‘experts’ who have their own agenda against the Chinese authorities. Ogmios has sought out the opinion of a native speaker who has lived in England for 19 years but is still in regular touch with his homeland.

Your Editor interviewed him in London in early March 2020. As he has not given me permission to use his name, I am just calling him M.

M. is known to his Uyghur readers as ‘Oqya’ (Bow and Arrow in Uyghur). He has published four books so far, the latest being a ‘Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Uyghur Social Customs and Traditions’, published in the UK in 2019.

M is not representing the Uyghurs in Britain in any formal organisation, but rather calls himself an independent scholar. He studied English in China, then went to Turkey for four years to perfect his knowledge of the Turkic languages (the family to which Uyghur belongs), and then came to England.

I asked him if he feels like a refugee or an exile in Britain. No, he says; being already a scholar of English, he felt integrated within a month of arriving in the UK.

How has the current Chinese policy toward the Uyghurs affected his own family back home? His brother was restricted and put in a detention camp for years until six months ago. Relatives of prisoners are forced to denounce them in the media. Currently Amnesty International is running a campaign to appeal to the Chinese authorities to abandon their repressive policies against the Uyghurs. I asked M. if the allegations by Amnesty are true: the detention in camps for ‘re-education’, the Chinese blanket accusations of extremism, the separation of Uyghurs from their families. They are true, he assured me, and much more than that. What is more, strong censorship is being exercised. Our conversation took place in a week when it was becoming clear that facts about the ‘Wuhan’ Corona virus that originated in China had been, at first, rigorously suppressed.

I asked if there is a protest movement among Uyghurs in Xinjiang. No, there isn’t; any protest is ruthlessly suppressed. And news from Xinjiang is hard to come by. It is known, for instance, that the Corona virus has affected Xinjiang province, but there is no news of it in the detention camps.

What are the official media in China reporting about events in Xinjiang, I wondered. They report how the Uyghur people are being re-educated. Anyone in China who publicly disagrees with this claim is in danger of imprisonment or death. And the current situation with the virus at the time of the interview is a good yardstick of the effective suppression of news.

How are Uyghurs in general portrayed to the Chinese public, I asked him, and he was ready with his answer: Hospitable, dancing, open and presentable.

Turning to the subject of language endangerment, I asked M. in what specific ways the Uyghur language is in danger. He replied that it is not a language of education. Where there is any bilingual education, it will not qualify anyone for a job. One and a half million people in the detention camps are learning Chinese as a first language. As far as he knows, no book has been published in Uyghur in China since 2017. The campaign against Uyghur-language publication is actually retroactive: the authorities confiscate Uyghur books from private homes, and books in the language are expunged from the libraries.

So what about the use of the language in everyday life, I asked. Uyghur continues to be used in private communication, but not in contacts with the authorities.

This means that there is no legal redress in Uyghur. Court proceedings are all in Chinese.

As for the media and the press, there is Uyghur news on television and probably also radio. Loudspeakers in villages make announcements (by Uyghurs) in Chinese.

What about the language in economic life? Any independent economy for the Uyghurs has collapsed. Instead there is a strong pull into exile; Uyghurs have a strong motivation to leave their country as best they can, as there is little economic future for them at home. Further contributing to the decline of the economy and demographic weakening is intermarriage. Forced marriages, for both men and women, to Han Chinese are commonplace. This is likely to result in emigration from Xinjiang for the Uyghur partner. With demographic dilution like this, the position of the Uyghur language is further weakened. In 1949, according to the census, there were only 250,000 Han Chinese living in Xinjiang province; the rest were Uyghur and other minorities. Now the Han make up the overwhelming majority.

One of Amnesty International’s claims in its current campaign for the Uyghurs is that ‘China is trying to erase an entire culture’. M. told me that his own efforts as a scholar, such as his latest ‘Concise Encyclopedia’, are in reaction to this Chinese campaign. His previous work in Uyghur, the ‘Chronicles of Uyghur’, also attempted to preserve and record the nation’s long cultural traditions.

M. believes that it is this non-Han culture, rather than the Islamic religion, that the Chinese are trying to stamp out. In April 1991 there was a serious uprising in Xinjiang, and when it was suppressed it was not Islam that was blamed, but ‘separatism’. All the same, among Amnesty’s claims is that the inmates of the re-education camps ‘face political indoctrination and are forced to renounce their faith’.

And incidentally, the term ‘re-education centre’ is a name that was applied to the detention camps after the fact. Previously they were not referred to by a general name, but under foreign pressure, when their existence was irrefutably revealed, the term was applied to them.

Information about the plight of the Uyghurs may be hard to find from official sources, but M. referred me to a Facebook page: among several sites devoted to the Uyghur cause is www.facebook.com/Uyghurlar. There has also been a BBC documentary on them, and a list of the camps is given in www.uyghurleaks.org.

Chris Moseley
Giuseppina D. Schirò and other women poets of endangered languages

Eda Derhemi

In my mind, endangered communities are feminine. I will go further: in my mind, they are also feminist—or at least they are more feminist than other communities, in the sense that the women in them have a strong inclination to fight for their individual and community causes, to improve their life and that of the community, and to be emancipated. These associations are neither impulsive nor arbitrary. Subordination to dominant outside groups is a common phenomenon among such communities, and struggling for resilience and a recognition of uniqueness is destined to increase sooner or later; it is understandable that in these communities women come to an early recognition of their subordinate status in society, and more importantly to a critical and confrontational perspective to all kinds of domination. It makes sense that the position of women is stronger in communities that fight to maintain their identity and to have its social value recognized, or communities where the concept of the resilience of being different has a longer tradition. These women often show profiles of more conspicuous self-determination, creativity, and leadership than women in other communities of the same size and social importance, communities of mainstream language and identity. One situation does not simply cause the other: they work like a continuous spiral that enforces resistance and affects the individuals communities of a “different” type.

In December of 2019 Giuseppina Demetra Schirò, an Arbëresh woman from Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily, published a poetic volume with 25 selected poems that she has written in Arbëresh starting from her youth. The volume gives two versions of each poem, the first in Italian and the second in Arbëresh. Arbëresh is an old variety of Albanian that was carried from the Balkans to Piana degli Albanesi and many other Italian villages between the 13th and 14th centuries. For most speakers of today’s Albanian and of today’s Arbëresh, the two languages are no longer mutually intelligible, although there is a large basic vocabulary that they have in common. However, it is common practice among Arbëresh community leaders, especially academic, literary, and religious elites, to study standard Albanian at some point in their lives, and to reach varying levels of proficiency in it. This has established a useful working tradition for those who have cultivated written Arbëresh (the written form is not used by the community at large), which has significant need for a larger lexicon than the present one, which has been damaged through the long process of attrition and stylistic or domain limitations, as well as from the lack of an orthographic norm. In my studies regarding Arbëresh, I have often underlined the importance of Piana’s elite that for centuries has kept alive the constant efforts toward the maintenance of Arbëresh language and ritual in Piana. It is not common for a town of 6,000 inhabitants (today) in Sicily or anywhere else to produce so many high profile intellectuals and activists of many talents. It was also unusual for a small town to open (in 1730) a village school for educating young women, like “Collegio di Maria di Piana”, where the study of Arbëresh language was obligatory for students, and all teachers were expected to be proficient in Arbëresh. ¹

Pietro Manali, the writer of one of two excellent introductions to the poetic volume of Giuseppina D. Schirò, focuses on three very different feminine literary voices in Piana degli Albanesi: Cristina Gentile Mandalà, who

¹ In the UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, Arbëresh is classified as definitely endangered. Although Arbëresh is losing speakers, functions, and domains in many small towns around Southern Italy, Piana degli Albanesi has consistently demonstrated more positive attitudes than other endangered language communities. Also, since its early beginnings Piana has had a strong and concerned elite that has understood that care for the language is the path to survival of their identity. Giuseppina speaking Arbëresh

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_WS0_9PZgw
Giuseppina Demetra Schirò, who carries the family name of some of the most prestigious literary Arbëresë in centuries, is one of those women whose interests in the Byzantine religious rite of her community, the language in general and the old texts written in Arbërësh in particular, and the cultural difference in every form are traits that have accompanied her since childhood. Giuseppina says she owes her Arbërësh dedication to great community leaders of the past, like Papas Gjergj Schirò, of the present, like Giuseppe Schirò di Maggio, and to many dedicated teachers and families such as her own that love and care for the difference in Piana degli Albanesi. The two introductory presentations of her volume provide an insightful analysis of Giuseppina’s poetry, thematic lines and style. Her poems are not mere first steps of an excited user of a dying language; they are mature expressions of poetic sentiments related to the ritual and to her town, and to the elusive old country from which the Arbërësh brought their names and their souls. Giuseppina’s metaphorical associations originate in a Mediterranean sea where Homeric characters meet modern ideologies and new destinies that Giuseppina assigns to them, connect with melancholic symbols of language, of the Byzantine rite and formulas in Greek or Arbërësh. In her symbolic poems often knitted by complex abstract visions, there is an ever-present theme of permanent unhappy and unfulfilled love, some sort of academic eroticism of a very personal love blurred with nostalgia for the old country of origin.

But there are two questions in my mind as I read her poetry, which I will just mention here, and try to answer in another article. The Arbërësh versions of the poems are preceded by their Italian versions. But the question “in what language does Giuseppina create her poems”, is not at all easy to answer. This is especially due to the fact that in the Arbërësh versions of her poems, she often uses lexical items borrowed from Albanian that are not part of her active vocabulary, but that she has encountered through reading and are indispensable to all Arbërësh writers. One thing I am sure about is that the poems are not exact translations from Arbërësh to Italian, and even less a translation from Italian to Arbërësh. To answer my question, a thorough analysis of her poems is needed, which is of interest not only from a literary perspective, but even more from a linguistic perspective, including linguistic investigation of the creative ability and strategies used by speakers of endangered languages.

The other question is, to whom is this book directed? For whom does Giuseppina write? The simple answer, knowing her, is that she writes for herself, to liberate and solve her anxieties, “l’ansia d’occhi” (The title of one of GDS poems which means “eyes’ anxiety”), which she can only accomplish through “the language of her heart” as she often says referring to Arbërësh. It is interesting to note that the Arbërësh version is accompanied by a large number of explanatory translations of the Arbërësh words into Albanian, some of which so close that would be immediately understood by an Albanian reading the Arbërësh version. But these translations demonstrate Giuseppina’s expectation or wish that her poems be read and understood by an Albanian audience as well. For the Arbërësh speakers who are all bilingual and read or understand Italian much better than Arbërësh, translating the words of Standard Albanian is not necessary, since, to understand them, they can refer to the Italian version of the poems. The question, however, remains: if speakers of Italian, Arbërësh, and Albanian...
Serious creative works in poetry are hard. They are harder among women and very hard using endangered languages. But I do not know villages of Piana’s size with a great tradition of women activism and poetry, although Arbëresh has been endangered for a long while. One unresolved problem considering female writers of endangered languages is getting published; and reaching an audience is even harder. Given the importance of women in linguistic maintenance and the critical role of publication and literacy for the vitality of a language, especially an endangered one, looking into such aspects of creative works in endangered languages and their use would yield insights for better planning and more useful assistance that could be given to women writers and to writers of endangered languages in general, and to their communities.

Two Scripts for languages in Northeast India

By Stephen Morey

While many communities are grappling with the challenges of reducing their languages to writing using already developed scripts such as the Roman script, some people are finding that already existing scripts are unable to fully express their language properly, and so are creating new scripts.

Mr. Lakhum Yogka Mossang and Mr Banwang Losu are two such creators, using their deep native speaker intuitions to create scripts that express all the contrastive sounds of their languages, consonants, vowels and tones.

Lakhum Yogka Mossang, of Namphai Nong, Miao, Arunachal Pradesh, has created a script for writing the Tangsa languages (those included under ISO639.3 nst) spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, India and across the border in the north of Sagaing Region, Myanmar. It is an alphabetic script, genetically unrelated to existing scripts. Although revised several times, the 2020 January version consists of 89 characters: 79 letters (48 listed as vowels and 31 listed as consonants) and 10 digits.

A key design feature of the script is that for each vowel there are four symbols, corresponding to four different tones in Tangsa languages. Lakhum Mossang’s native variety is Mossang, spelled Muixshaung in a Roman orthography developed by Rev. Gam Win, and /m² auŋ²/ in an phonemic transcription, where both the -x and the superscript number 2 indicate a mid-high falling tone. We usually spell the language name as Muishaung in English, without the -x tone marks.

Muishaung has four tone categories: a low falling tone (tone 1), a mid-high falling tone (tone 2), a high possible rising tone (tone 3) and a short or stopped tone.

In Lakhum Mossang’s script, these are written differently in combination with vowels, as shown in the example below (with the script in the first line, a phonemic rendition in the second, and the Roman based orthography devised by Rev. Gam Win in the third).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>o₁</th>
<th>o³</th>
<th>oʔ</th>
<th>o²</th>
<th>a¹</th>
<th>a³</th>
<th>aʔ</th>
<th>a²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oz</td>
<td>oc</td>
<td>oq</td>
<td>ox</td>
<td>az</td>
<td>ac</td>
<td>aq</td>
<td>ax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Together with Mr. Wanglung Mossang, a native speaker of Muishaung working to preserve his unique language, we’ve recently started making videos to teach the script. The first of these can be viewed on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObTkTFcr051. This video, produced during COVID-19 lockdown, was first made as a powerpoint presentation by me in Australia, and then sent to Wanglung as a video for him to record the pronunciations. These he sent back (via Facebook) and I aligned the sound with the movie! We are also currently working together on an application to include the Wancho script in Unicode.

Here is small sample of the script, (with the Romanization) telling the traditional story of the loss of writing – God handed out writing to every community, but the Tangsa were among the last and it was given to them on animal skin. They got hungry and ate it, and writing was lost. Now it is found again:

Giuseppina Demetra Schiro

Te dejì i zêmìres

Poesie
Peru: Can indigenous languages survive Covid-19?

By Juanjo Dioses, Vatican News correspondent, translated by Chris Moseley (May 2020)

On 27th May, Peru commemorates the Day of Indigenous Languages, which reminds us of the importance of preserving cultural identity; however, with the expansion of Covid-19 into the most remote parts of the Peruvian Amazon, the most pressing necessity now is to survive the threat of cultural extinction.

Loreto: the region with the greatest number of infections

Of the 47 indigenous languages in Peru, 25 are located in Loreto, one of the regions most affected by Covid-19. So far more than two thousand cases of infection have been reported there, which is almost 50% of the cases in the Peruvian Amazon. Arabela and Ikitu, languages with about 40 and about 25 speakers respectively, are in grave danger of extinction in the region, and others with less than two native speakers (Andoa Shimigae, Carhuara, Munich) may definitely disappear.

In this region, the battle against Coronavirus has led to more than 180 doctors being infected, of whom 11 have died, while the city of Iquitos contains high rates of infection. For example, according to official government figures, a test carried out on a group of traders in the largest market in the largest market in the Peruvian forested area (Mercado Belén), a figure of 100% infection was recorded.

Coronavirus among the Awajún and Wampis peoples

But the virus has also penetrated the security controls that the Awajún and Wampis peoples established weeks ago at the frontiers of their territories to block access to tourists and outsiders. As a result, the first ten cases of infection have been reported, three of them in the heart of the Awajún community and seven in other parts of the province of Condorcanqui. How can this penetration be explained? Everything had been working well until a group of young indigenous people, students and workers, returned from the big cities without any checks, carrying the invisible enemy within them.

This phenomenon has been repeated in nearby towns: the Interethnic Development Association of the Peruvian Forest announced that its president, Lizardo Cauper, of the Shipibo-Konibo people, and the leader of the same organisation in the Ucayali region, Berlin Diques, of the Asháninka people, were infected with Covid-19 in Pucallpa after participating in activities to help indigenous communities.

Scanty health centres with few supplies

With the spread of the infection in remote areas of the Peruvian Amazon region, the major problem among several to be resolved is the distance which the residents have to cover, especially in the district of Nieva (Condorcanqui), where Awajún, Wampis and Quechua are spoken. To get to the nearest health centre takes about five hours on foot.

Apart from this obstacle there is a second problem: according to the Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the North Amazon (ORPIAN), the health centres are not equipped with medicines, food and resources to treat Covid-19 patients.

References to the COVID-19 message in these languages:  
Muishaung Gam Win
https://translationcommons.org/covid19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nst-000
Wancho - Romanized
https://translationcommons.org/covid-19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nnp-000
Wancho - Script
https://translationcommons.org/covid-19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nnp-001

Banwang Losu’s language, Wancho, is related to the Tangsa – both being members of the Tibeto-Burman language family, and both belonging to the group called Northern Naga. Like Tangsa, Wancho has three tones and stop final words. Banwang’s script was created around 2010. I first met him in 2013 when he came down from the remote mountain area of his home village – Kamhua Nakru – to meet me at the market at Moran, in Assam, and join me on a car journey to Digboi, so that we could discuss his script. We’ve been lucky to meet up several times since then and in December 2019 it was a particular highlight that Banwang could attend the FEL conference in Sydney. Banwang’s script has been accepted in Unicode, which means you can type it right now on Facebook, mobile phone &c. I first came to know Banwang because of a wonderful animated movie that he had created of his script, which was last year reported on the news in India – and you can see it at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=498952827571211.

The script marks the tones by no mark – low tone, a single ‘feather’ – mid tone or a double feather – high tone., as we see here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>̈ ̈</td>
<td>‘tired’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>̈</td>
<td>‘to become mad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>̈ ̈ ̈</td>
<td>‘mithun (buffalo)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full animated video of Banwang teaching his script can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zj_AwJaOYCM. Here is a small sample of a script with a children’s song, sung by the late Soipho Pansa; here we see the script, a ‘simplified’ Romanization with tone marking, and an English translation:

| Apa Aapi xo norq matkok saq sPa kAi | Aapiyo naang matkok saa sophaa kai | Oh grandmother, please give me your small sickle. |
| Gaaqsa qam dAk KH dIqGaQ | Nga saa kham dak khu(ng) ding-naga | For making the kham (og drum) and the khung. |

References to the COVID-19 message in these languages:
Muishaung Gam Win
https://translationcommons.org/covid19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nst-000
Wancho - Romanized
https://translationcommons.org/covid-19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nnp-000
Wancho - Script
https://translationcommons.org/covid-19multilingual/?edit=&official=&uid=nnp-001
When the next 27 May comes around, the major acknowledgement of the cultural identity of Peru and its plurality of people, will be in preserving its principal figures, those who, in the words of Pope Francis during his visit to Puerto Maldonado in 2018, represent a “sincere option for the protection of life, the protection of the land, and the protection of cultures.”

**UNESCO declares International Decade of Indigenous Languages**

In late February UNESCO held a High-Level Meeting at Los Pinos, the former Mexican presidential palace, in Mexico City, to conclude the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and to announce the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, to run from 2022 to 2032. Representatives of indigenous organisations around the world, diplomats, United Nations officials and many indigenous Mexicans attended the three-day event, which culminated in a grand concert, with music specially composed for the occasion, and the promulgation of the Los Pinos Declaration, which envisages concerted efforts all over the world to preserve indigenous languages. In June 2020 the final version of the Declaration was published. Here are some excerpts from it.

1. **KEY PRINCIPLES**

**KEY PRINCIPLES.** The following key principles, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms and the collective and individual rights and values of indigenous peoples, will inspire the future Global Plan of Action of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages:

- **Centrality of Indigenous Peoples** - “Nothing for us without us”, according to the principle of self-determination; the right to use, develop, revitalize, and transmit to future generations the languages which reflect the insights and values of indigenous peoples, their traditional knowledge systems and cultures; the equal treatment of indigenous languages with respect to other languages; and the effective and inclusive participation and consultation based on the free, prior-informed consent of Indigenous peoples from the beginning of any development initiative.

- **Compliance with international law and standards**, in particular, taking into consideration the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other relevant international treaties which constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, rights and well-being of indigenous peoples, as well as for the promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism based on mutual respect, coexistence, living together and benefit.

- **Joint action “Delivering as One”** in the spirit of enhancing efficient and coherent delivery across the UN

**system (UN System-wide action plan (SWAP))** in partnership with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Special Rapporteur, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; as well as the integration of UN normative and operational mandates on the rights of indigenous peoples working in collaboration with UN Country Teams (UNCT).

- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels** in order to foster synergies, adequate responses and leadership, including participation of indigenous peoples.

- **A holistic approach in programming** based upon human rights, the embracement of cultural and linguistic sensitivity, gender equality, persons with disabilities-inclusiveness, global and multicultural citizenship and a paradigm which encourages capacity-building and empowerment of indigenous peoples as well as environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

- **Synergy among different international frameworks on indigenous rights** and sustainable development, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

2. **MAJOR OBJECTIVES**

**MAJOR OBJECTIVES:** The International Decade of Indigenous Languages aligned with the decision A/74/396 of 2019 of the United Nations General Assembly will have among its major objectives to:

- draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages;
- take urgent steps at the national and international levels; and
- invite UNESCO to serve as the lead agency for the International Decade, in collaboration with UNDESA and other relevant agencies, within existing resources.

Integrate indigenous languages into global sustainable development frameworks and mechanisms

Provide access to justice and public services in indigenous languages, support existing and build new effective, accountable and inclusive institutions,

Mainstream indigenous languages across public policies, including but not limited to education, culture, science, research and technology, environment, good governance, health care and well-being, employment, economic and political, and other domains.

Ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education, including mother-tongue-based, bilingual and multilingual education, and promote life-long learning opportunities for indigenous language learners and users of all ages and abilities

Ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all indigenous peoples at all ages by further promoting access to health
care in indigenous languages, including health related information and services.

- Design and provide access to sustainable, accessible and affordable language technologies and media.
- Support the safeguarding and protection of indigenous language heritage, including intangible cultural heritage and oral tradition.
- Support and encourage public and private funding and direct investments in the revitalization, support, access and promotion of indigenous languages.
- Ensure equal and inclusive participation and involvement of indigenous youth, young girls and women, and persons with disabilities.
- Ensure a proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism of indigenous languages.
- Provide instruments with appropriate evidence for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages in order to systematically measure the progress made, which would be supported with appropriate evidence-based data collection instruments.

**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR THE DECADE**

**GUIDING FRAMEWORK.** The International Decade of Indigenous Languages will provide a guiding framework for a global, regional, and national action, based on the following:

- **Reinforcing one of the principles above mentioned, multi-stakeholder partnership** involving all relevant stakeholders:
  - Member States;
  - Indigenous peoples’ representatives, including designated representatives from the seven socio-cultural regions, and other indigenous peoples’ organizations;
  - UN-system entities, including representatives of the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues (IAGS);
  - UN three-party mechanisms, namely the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP);
  - UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, as appropriate;
  - Academia;
  - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs);
  - Civil society;
  - Public institutions and private sector;
  - Other professional organizations and communities of practice.

- **The World Atlas of Languages**, as one of the global tools, will provide a detailed record of languages as communicative tools and knowledge resources in their respective sociopolitical context. This work would help to emphasize the importance of including statistical information on the current situation of indigenous peoples, particularly their languages.

The major objectives of the World Atlas of Languages are:

- Create a reliable source of information on linguistic diversity and multilingualism for mainstreaming within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strategies and ongoing initiatives;
- Assess language vitality, endangerment and status, as well as sustainability;
- Promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism;
- Provide data on linguistic diversity from monolingualism to multilingualism;
- Provide advice for informed policy formulation and decision making.

The World Atlas of Languages will target the following audiences to provide with evidence-based data for informed policy and decision making:

- Policy makers / information on languages present in the country;
- Civil society, users / country-specific information on languages used;
- Experts, academics, teachers / information of their area of expertise;
- Private sector / information on languages for innovative solutions.

- **Regional mechanisms to strengthen indigenous communities through their languages** will be established to support international, national and local activities.

- Provide support for the interaction with existing multilateral indigenous peoples regional and national mechanisms, networks and organizations of indigenous peoples’ cooperation such as Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact, Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), Ibero-American Institute of Indigenous Languages (IIALI), Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), Pacific Indigenous Network, as well as the national bodies such as the National Congress of American Indians (USA), the Assembly of First Nations (Canada) and others.

- UN three party mechanisms of indigenous issues such as UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should interact with indigenous peoples’ regional caucuses and make use of regional dialogues facilitated by the UN experts, involving Member States, UN-system entities and indigenous peoples’ representatives.

- Interact with indigenous peoples through the Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) such as the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Arctic Council and intergovernmental programmes such as UNESCO Intergovernmental Programme Information for All (IFAP) and Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and other intergovernmental mechanisms.

- **An International Governance Mechanism** will be established to ensure an equitable participation of all stakeholders and to provide guidance on the
implementation of the future Global Plan of Action for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, based on the following principles:

- The international governance mechanism will facilitate the preparation of the Global Plan of Action for the organization of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, taking into consideration the lessons learned from the IYIL2019.
- For the selection of members of the international mechanism, regional consultations should be carried out with the participation of indigenous peoples.
- Since it is a Decade, a rotation system of the members of the international mechanism should be established and working modalities agreed.
- The international mechanism should make use of and build on coordinate activities with other existing mechanisms at the regional, national, or local level in relation to indigenous peoples.
- The international mechanism must should generate the appropriate means to receive inputs from civil society organizations and other relevant public, academic and private actors.
- A full and effective indigenous participation from all socio-cultural regions should be ensured in the work of the Steering Committee for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and other relevant international events, based on the principle of respect for regional processes of decision-making of indigenous peoples.
- An international mechanism should be established to ensure a smooth transition-preparatory period (2020-2021) by expanding the Steering Committee for organization of the IYIL2019 to the international mechanism in order to provide guidance on the organization of the future International Decade of Indigenous Languages for a period of 2020-2021.

**Financing mechanisms** to provide resources for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the organization of the International Decade and the execution of concrete projects to conserve, support and promote indigenous languages. These mechanisms should:

- Guarantee the participation of indigenous peoples in actions to use, preserve, revitalize and promote their languages;
- Articulate the voices of indigenous peoples globally by encouraging participation and collaboration among indigenous peoples, academia, government;
- Engage private sector that works on indigenous territory to allocate funds to strengthen linguistic revitalization processes;
- Ensure that funds are flexible and reach indigenous people and other legal associative figures;
- Contemplate principles of transparency and accountability;
- Ensure technical advice and capacity building;
- Generate tax incentives;
- Promote public policies for the creation of financing funds.

**TIMEFRAME**

**KEY MILESTONES:** The International Decade of Indigenous Languages will consist of the following five milestones:

- **2020 – 2021 / TRANSITION**
  This period is focus on the preparatory actions: launch of the Decade, including evaluation of the IYIL2019, wider consultations, planning and launch of indigenous languages relevant actions, and mobilization of necessary consolidate resources. Coordination mechanism for the use, preservation, revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages and empowerment of their users at global, regional, national and local levels, in the public and private spaces.

- **2022 – 2025 / SCALE UP**
  During this period, all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of the Global Action Plan through an established multidonor financial mechanism, flagship activities and partnerships to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages.

- **2025 – 2027 / MID REVIEW**
  Based on the midterm review results, new opportunities will be identified and tackle existing challenges for the strategic integration of indigenous languages into a new global development framework (Post 2030 Agenda), and national, regional and global strategies and development frameworks in order to preserve, revitalize and promote them.

- **2027 – 2030 / STRATEGIC POSITIONING**
  Make strategic choices to position indigenous languages within a new global strategic development framework and related discussions to identify next steps for the future plans to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages.

- **2031– 2032 / INTEGRATION**
  Integrate indigenous languages into a new global strategic development framework (Post 2030 Sustainable Development Framework) in order to ensure a long-term sustainability and vitality of languages, as well as empowerment of indigenous language users.
4. Review

Language Endangerment


Reviewed by Christopher Moseley and Nicholas Ostler

Launched at FEL’s annual conference in Sydney in December 2019, this book, by two of FEL’s long-standing members, is a welcome addition to the growing number of books on the subject that is central to our Foundation’s concerns. It is published in CUP’s ‘Key Topics in Linguistic Anthropology’ series.

The book takes account of the accumulation of writings on the topic of language endangerment over the past twenty years and more, in our young branch of science. The Introduction surveys the state of threatened languages in the world today and why it matters; chapter 2 examines the measurement of the stages of language endangerment. Chapter 3, ‘Working in a Community’, considers the implications of linguistic fieldwork among endangered speech communities. Since the speakers’ own attitudes to their languages have to be paramount for their survival, chapter 4 considers ‘Identity and Attitudes’. Following on from this, speakers’ opportunities to use their languages are examined in chapter 5, ‘Language Knowledge and Use’. Geopolitical and related factors are the subject of chapter 6, ‘The Sociolinguistic Setting’. The changes that a language undergoes – phonological, morphological, lexical and other – are examined in chapter 7, ‘Linguistic processes’. ‘Policy and Planning’ are discussed in chapter 8, and ‘Language Reclamation’ in chapter 9. ‘Methodology’ in chapter 10 refers to the goals and processes of data collection. The last chapter draws all the strands together in a brief Conclusion. A comprehensive glossary and bibliography are provided, so the newcomer to this field need not feel bewildered by the terminology.

This is a comprehensive but manageable account of a vast field, written by experts with long and active experience in working with endangered languages. A distinct advantage of this book is that each chapter closes with a description of a particular language which focuses and illustrates the aspect in question. These example languages are very diverse, in time and space: together they create a global sense of the field, which is usually difficult to grasp.

5. Places to go on the Internet

How the pandemic threatens Native Americans – and their languages

Subtitled ‘Spokane spoken here’, this was the title of an article in the Economist (www.economist.com) which appeared in the 19 May 2020 issue, examining the risks posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to Native American communities in the USA.

Hidden Compass

Hidden Compass is an on-line magazine for the curious traveler, edited by Sabine Bergmann. Recently (May 2020) she wrote a special issue of the magazine devoted to the subject of endangered languages, including interviews with several people who are familiar to FEL. Here is the full URL:

https://hiddencompass.net/2020/07/endangered-languages-awakening-canopy/

6. ...and Finally

Co-existence of Arbëresh with Italian