Osage has a tiny user community, but a strong education programme and the support of the tribal council. See the Article on ‘Criteria for Script Vitality’ by Tim Brookes in this issue.
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1. Editorial

As we go to press, again behind schedule, we are planning for the Foundation’s 27th conference, and this year we are revisiting a country we’ve visited before, namely Morocco. The venue for the conference this year will be the Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, and the dates have been provisionally set for the third week of November. The theme of the conference will be Endangered Languages and Cultural Diversity, and we hope for a lively debate among our Moroccan and international audience. The Call for Papers is about to go out.

Chris Moseley

2. Development of the Foundation

FEL XXVI Albuquerque 2022: recordings available

For those of you who missed, or wish to relive, our 2022 conference in Albuquerque, recordings of the sessions are available on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvesvfaavuP-0RAUZ2a4vSDc0leVR_4zx

FEL XXVII Rabat 2023: call for abstracts

In collaboration with the Moroccan Institute for Advanced Studies (IMEA), and the Faculty of Science of Education (FSE), FEL announces a call for abstracts for its 27th Annual Conference in Rabat, Morocco on 23-25 November 2023. The topic will be Endangered Languages and Cultural Diversity, and the text of the call, together with key deadlines, can be found later in this issue of Ogmios.

3. Criteria for Script Vitality – Analysis Piece by Tim Brookes

The Endangered Alphabets Project is in the middle of a three-year undertaking to do something that, as far as I know, nobody else has done or even attempted: to identify every script in use in the world and assess the vitality of each one.

We’re calling it the Red List, and we’re on schedule to finish in late 2024, but we face a major challenge: how do you assess whether a script is in good health, or in decline? How do you calculate whether it will survive, rebound, or fall farther from use? On a scale of 1-9, how do we tell a 4 from a 5?

The entire field of script loss is so poorly studied it presents a snowstorm of unanswered questions, not just about the state of individual scripts but about the natural history of script loss in general:

Unanswered Questions

- What is the trajectory of decline? How rapidly is a marginalized script lost? (Indonesian scripts were staggering two generations after the new country switched to the Latin alphabet.)
- What is the critical mass of users that is needed for a script to survive? (Samaritan survived despite being used by only four families.)
- How much protection does a religion offer? (In several cases a script survives only in liturgical use, but even that survival depends on the vitality of the religion.)
- How important is a generational divide? Especially nowadays, when a generational script divide may be amplified by a technology divide?
- Does a genocide (or for that matter even active repression) have a paradoxical rebound effect? (The actions of the Myanmar government against the Karen and Rohingya may have meant the Kayak Li and Hanifi Rohingya scripts took on additional importance to the Karen and Rohingya, especially those in refugee camps, but you’d have to be pretty callous to see that as a silver lining.)
- Is a script more likely to be revitalized in the homeland or through the diaspora? (Depends on the living conditions under which the scattered population is living and working.)
- To what extent is script endangerment linked with language endangerment? Does the gradual loss of the language wear away at the script, or the other way round? (In some cases, the two are not connected at all. The Vietnamese language didn’t suffer when the country changed from the Chữ Nôm script to the Latin alphabet, though literature in Chữ Nôm rapidly became inaccessible.)
- Conversely, does language revitalization lead to script revitalization, or vice versa? (Depends on policy. The Cherokee have specifically decided to try to revive both together.)
- What about the potent paradox: the more besieged the culture, the stronger their potential sense of connection to their script as an emblem of their identity?

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How to start assessing vitality, then? Well, we don’t know whether vitality criteria for spoken languages can be applied as vitality criteria for scripts—it seems to be a lot harder to resurrect an unspoken language than an unused script, for example—but we can look at, say, the UNESCO criteria for language vitality, and make some observations.
Observations on UNESCO Criteria

1) Intergenerational Language Transmission;
2) Absolute Number of Speakers;
3) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population;
4) Trends in Existing Language Domains;
5) Response to New Domains and Media; and
6) Materials for Language Education and Literacy.

The first three categories present a major problem for anyone researching script vitality: we don’t know how many people use a given script, or their demographics, because no census, as far as I know, includes a question or questions about which script people use.

The other criteria would seem to translate to script vitality, but are they enough?

I don’t want to disparage this list or the people who created it, or the vital work being done in many communities using these criteria, but I do want to suggest some additional considerations, without which the vitality discussion is in danger of being academic in both senses.

Some Additional Considerations

1) Is the script visible?

In some respects this is a straightforward conversion of the above criteria (if the community has a Wikipedia page in its language, does it also use its own script? If it has a Facebook page, does that page support the script or reduce it to a series of tofu squares?), but we can also assess a script’s vitality in other ways, sometimes referred to as the linguistic landscape.

For a script to be viable, I suggest, it must be visible. Some current scholarly digitization efforts are based on the desire to archive or study specific scripts, and quote the original text in research papers. This is an entirely laudable initiative—but does improving the accessibility of a script and its past improve its vitality?

If a minority script exists only in historical documents, engravings, and inscriptions, it is all too easy to assume it is no longer in use, and the culture that created it has also been lost. But if that script can still be seen, and what’s more, if it can be seen in new, interesting and creative forms, it’s a sign of life, energy, passion, commitment. It not only shows an unfamiliar script to its neighbors and to the world in striking and memorable ways, and it shows the user community that their traditional writing is still alive, and they have not been pushed into the shadows or forgotten.

When I offered to do a series of carvings for the Abenaki tribal centers around Vermont and asked what text they would like me to carve (in Abenaki, one of the world’s most threatened languages), they said, unhesitatingly, they wanted me to carve “We are still here.”

Aspects of “Visibility:

For me, that is the single most important goal of language or script revitalization. Linguistic rights are human rights, and an endangered alphabet is a symptom of an endangered culture. Asking “How viable is this script?” is only valuable when it leads to the next question: “How can I help?”

Signage

Signage, I suggest, can be more backward-looking or forward-looking. There are plaques in Manchu language/script in the Forbidden City in Beijing, but they hardly represent an effort on the part of the PRC to revive Manchu—any more than writing in Tibetan script in Lhasa implies an invitation to Tibetans to speak and write Tibetan.

By contrast, the large, illuminated signage in Tifinagh on King Mohammed V Airport in Casablanca not only acknowledges (at last) the presence in Morocco of the Amazigh population, it does so in a context that implies travel, investment, tourism—literally the country’s relationship with the rest of the world.

Other signage (street names in Lampung, Balinese and Bugis scripts in Indonesia, for example) is more neutral—but it still represents not only an acknowledgement but an expenditure on behalf of the islands’ traditional cultures.

Another category of signage is what might be called “socially responsible”: is essential information displayed on signage and in published form in scripts used by minority communities and refugees? During an Ebola outbreak, for example, this can literally make the difference between life and mass death.

Iconic usage

Some signage goes beyond the purely administrative, being used in contexts that imply cultural/religious/historical status: stamps and monuments (various), flags (Tifinagh, Amazigh flag), national seal (Soyombo, Mongolian), banknotes (Baybayin, Philippines), sacred display (temple signage, Tai Tham, Thailand). These contexts also imply a degree of acceptance by authority—a significant factor to peoples who are used to having no authority, or to having authority work against them.

Artwork

Calligraphy and type design not only convey life, energy, passion, and commitment, they can convey beauty—a complex and inadequate word that tries to capture a deep and moving connection far beyond the mere representation of phenomena. Script-based art includes sculptures (Glagolitic, Croatia;
Ogham, Ireland), calligraphy (Mongolian, Chu-Nom in northern Vietnam), type design (Aksara Di Nusantara, traditional scripts of Indonesia). A number of artists have created works that integrate individual characters of the Cherokee syllabary in visual artworks in various media, elevating the script itself to the status of art.

Publishing

Internet publishing in minority and Indigenous scripts is advancing at extraordinary speed, but traditional publishing, I suggest, is at least as important. The cost of casting type—and of physical publishing in general—has meant that commercial publishers have tended to marginalize minority scripts even farther, regarding them as not worth the investment. This in turn means that writers from a minority language community tend to switch to a regional or national script in order to attract a wider readership—an issue common in South Asia.

So it’s surely a sign of vitality that the Nunavut publisher Inhabit Media produces a steady output of books for Inuit readers, some incorporating traditional tales or knowledge, some using the Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics. And a shout-out to the government of the Indian state of Sikkim, whose commitment to polygraphy is so remarkable that the government-funded online newspaper, the Sikkim Herald, is published in thirteen languages and eight scripts: Nepali/Newar, Limbu, English/Latin, Bhutia, Sunuwar/Mukhia, Rai, Lepcha and Gurung/Khema.

2) Is it a traditional script, or a recently-created one?

This may seem to be a question about community acceptance, but the fact is, communities are often as divided about the value of supporting a declining script as they are about having to learn a new one. No, this criterion is about an ingrained prejudice, in many quarters, against scripts that have been deliberately designed, usually with great commitment to polygraphy. That the government-funded online newspaper, the Sikkim Herald, is published in thirteen languages and eight scripts is significant.

I’ve heard the authors of such scripts dismissed by governmental figures, NGO workers and scholars as amateurs, troublemakers, distractions, publicity-seekers or, most damning of all, enthusiasts. Their scripts are likewise dismissed as being doomed to failure because new scripts so rarely take root—a self-fulfilling prophecy if ever I heard one. A new script is like a baby bird: it faces so many natural obstacles and dangers it does well to survive until it can take wing—so formidable a set of challenges, in fact, that I routinely include new and emerging scripts in my category of “endangered,” until proven otherwise.

The Red List is trying to assess vitality from what may seem a radical position—that Indigenous and minority communities should be supported if they have the desire to revitalize or create their own scripts. It’s not my place to judge what is in their best interests; it’s my job to respect them and their autonomy.

3) What funding is available for script revitalization?

In North America, a certain amount of government, foundation and academic funding is now, belatedly, available for language revitalization, which in the case of Cherokee is taken to include support for the syllabary. Elsewhere this is not the case. I can’t claim to know funding specifics for every country, but here’s one indicator: in a dozen years of working on the Alphabets, I have come across only one person with a full-time higher education salary whose job is to study the scripts of his region—Sikkim—and support revitalization efforts. This consideration leads straight into...

4) What is the attitude of local, regional or national government?

I don’t wish to be conspiracy-theorist, but it’s worth noting that as befits a body that is beholden to all its member nations, the UNESCO criteria studiously avoid anything politically contentious. For example: as UNESCO works with national governments rather than smaller or less powerful communities within those member nations, there’s no direct mention of the fact that the biggest threat to a script and its community may be the policies of the national government.

Script vitality is, in fact, almost always political rather than linguistic. For example: we know of very, very few successful and completed acts of script revitalization. The most remarkable of those, Meitei Mayek, went from being outright banned to being restored to official status—but that revitalization involved acts of civil disobedience in the Indian state of Manipur that can be characterized as fairly extreme. From the late 1970s onward, Meitei scholars began campaigning to bring back the Meitei script, which had been all but eradicated in a frenzy of religious zeal and book-burning in the eighteenth century. Partisan support became steadily more active and insistent. Notices in Bengali, the rival script, were defaced with tar. The government library in Imphal, which housed a considerable number of books in Bengali, was burned down.

Language revitalization, even in peaceable nations, is far from being simply an intellectual and administrative challenge. The Welsh Language Society, Cymdeithas yr Iaith, made its case for the revival of Welsh by a campaign of direct action including sit-ins, painting slogans on buildings and bridges, and other forms of civic disruption, to such an extent that to date over a thousand people have appeared before the courts, many receiving prison sentences, making it Britain’s largest protest group since the Suffragette movement. During the Sixties, Cymdeithas yr Iaith was part of a broader Welsh nationalist movement that took direct action considerably farther, bombing a water pipeline, a tax office, and other targets.
But these are exceptions: the use of force is almost always on the side of the dominant culture. The eradication of the Mayan script by the Spanish was accompanied by systematic torture of Mayan nobility. We know of at least four people who created scripts for their own language communities who were executed for their efforts, and others who have been arrested, harassed, or essentially hounded to death.

When we ask, “Can a script be revitalized?” then, we’re asking whether benign intervention by outsiders can defuse a highly emotional and volatile situation, and effect change that people in authority have ignored or even resisted for years, even centuries. This vital element may and almost inevitably will vary from time to time, place to place, administration to administration. One constant, however, is that the government is unlikely to take kindly to script-revival outsiders giving them advice on how to do their job.

5) Is there an X factor, a spectacular and irresistible act of individual commitment?

This criterion is impossible to quantify or predict, but it is certainly not hard to recognize. For example: in 2019 Elizabeth Bryant, barely out of high school, decided to learn the Takelma language, the ancestral speech of the Cow Creek band of the Umpqua Nation in Oregon. The language had never been written down, and the last speaker had died in the 1930’s, but the Smithsonian Institution had a collection of recordings on wax cylinders of conversations between Francis Johnson, the last Takelma speaker, and linguist Edward Sapir. Through these recordings and Sapir’s notes, Bryant taught herself Takelma.

Such an act of reconstruction and revival is widely considered impossible. Bryant’s dedication has given enormous energy and inspiration to the Cow Creek education program, which is now as vital and active as any such program within a small tribe with a hitherto-considered-extinct language can be.

Similar acts of dedication are taking place in the field of scripts, especially in South Asia, often by individuals. The skill-combination of font designer/linguist/coder, once highly unusual, is now becoming increasingly common. On their own, such individuals may face frustration rather than guaranteed success, but the importance of their example can’t be exaggerated.

A Basic Question

So are we applying these vitality criteria to our Red List research? Well, no.

The Red List is an attempt to break a vicious cycle. Nobody knows how many scripts are in use in the world, and which of them are under threat, because nobody is doing that research. Nobody is doing that research because there are no faculty positions or PhD programs focusing on script loss. There are no such programs because there is no funding. There is no funding because there is no perceived crisis or need. And there is no perception of need because...

...yes, you can see what is coming...

...there is no documentation. So whereas the original Red List of Threatened Species could draw on the work of nonprofits and government agencies worldwide, the only way I can see to break that vicious cycle is to do whatever research we can on a close-to-zero budget funded (so far) entirely on individual donations from people who understand the need.

This means that, frankly, we can’t do as thorough a job as needs to be done. But this, plus the fact that a short survey yields the best response rate, has the advantage of forcing us to consider where to start: if we have the time and the personnel to ask just one question, what would that be?

So I’ve asked my researchers to begin with what I believe to be the single most determinant question: “Is the script being taught?”

If no, already it is in dire trouble: on a scale of 1-9 it is at best an 8, and falling. If yes, a handful of follow-up questions help to reveal exactly what the script’s constituency is, and what support that constituency offers.

Is it being used as a medium of instruction in government-funded schools? That’s a gold-standard question, playing into UNESCO criteria 1, 4, 5 and 6, and it embraces the related issues of local/regional/national government endorsement and sources of funding. And if the answer is yes, then the script is probably also being used in other official contexts, and is as stable as a minority script is likely to be.

One step down is if it is taught in government-funded schools, but not as a medium of instruction. Here the value varies wildly, especially in the quality of teaching and support materials. Huge credit to IRCAM in Morocco for producing clean, professional but kid-friendly classroom primers that are even color-coded to reflect variants in the Amazigh family of languages. Even so, studying, say, traditional Balinese script for a term or a year may well strike some of the students as a tedious and pointless chore unless other factors beyond the classroom (family support, signage, use in the workplace, cool online activities) give it point and value.

A more common answer (as with Cherokee, for example, in regional universities in the U.S.) is that it is taught as an optional subject. This implies a qualified support, and a temporary engagement: better than nothing, and important to pay respect to the cultural heritage, but necessarily limited in the number of actual users it creates.

Even more common answers regarding minority scripts are that they are taught by a community group, in a religious setting, or online.
It’s very hard to judge the comparative survival value of each. The support of a religious tradition can be very strong if the religion itself is strong in numbers and culturally respected, but that isn’t always the case. Some religions (Coptic, for example) have become targets, as have their languages and scripts.

Community groups and ethnic schools, which seem to be becoming more popular, have a strong sense of purpose but unstated funding. And online teaching tends to be the province of the young and the eager, which is great, but the numbers tend to be very small. Perhaps the latter’s greatest potential impact is with the diaspora: many cultures are finding that YouTube and WhatsApp channels have great drawing power for those who have gone overseas in search of work or education, and the combination of young, educated, potentially isolated, highly-motivated exiles has led to the creation of at least one script in the past 24 months (Goulssouf) and has also generated a support-base for Siloti Nagri among the numerous Silhetis living in the UK.

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I’m not sure I’ll ever be able to develop a metric that will allow every script to be placed on a Vitality Scale of 1-6, or whatever. But is that, in fact, the goal?

The longer purpose of the Red List, in fact, is to go beyond a clinical assessment on purely linguistic grounds, and to get people to change their thinking about the value of minority cultures in all their manifestations, including, but not limited to, their script.

I think of this as the David Attenborough Transformation. Over the course of his very long and distinguished career, Attenborough has realized that a naturalist cannot study or talk about the natural world in the abstract, and that a number of ways in which he has presented his subject have needed to change, to shift from detachment to engagement.

He has gone from saying, essentially, “Isn’t this an interesting animal? This is how it behaves...” to “This interesting animal is dying out through habitat loss. We are to blame, and unless we change our thinking and our policies, this animal is a goner.”

The Thaana script of the Maldives would allow every script to be placed on a Vitality Scale of 1-6, or whatever. But is that, in fact, the goal?

The Thaana script of the Maldives would be threatened by global warming. Water rising levels, will mean the Thaana is threatened by global warming.

A vital script does you little good if your entire community is waiting to be evacuated, or scattering to join friends and relatives in other countries where they speak other languages, use other scripts.

4. Endangered Languages in the News

Corsican language ban stirs protest on French island

From Agence-France Presse in Ajaccio, from the Guardian (UK), 10 March 2023

Court cites France’s constitution in ruling that only French is allowed in exercise of public office on Corsica

A court in Corsica has prompted outrage by banning the use of the Corsican language in the island’s local parliament.

The court in the city of Bastia cited France’s constitution it its ruling on Thursday that French was the only language allowed in the exercise of public office.

Corsican, which is close to standard Italian and has about 150,000 native speakers, is considered by the UN’s cultural organisation Unesco to be in danger of becoming extinct.

Thursday’s verdict ruled the Corsican assembly’s custom of allowing Corsican language for debates was unconstitutional and therefore banned.

Beyond the language question, the court said local rules effectively establishing “the existence of a Corsican people” were also a violation of the constitution.

The ruling follows a lawsuit brought by the prefect of Corsica – the central government’s highest representative on the island – and comes as Emmanuel Macron’s administration is talking with local politicians about granting Corsica greater autonomy.

Leading pro-autonomy politicians immediately lashed out at the verdict.

“This decision amounts to stripping Corsican parliament members of the right to speak their language during debates,” said the island’s executive council president, Gilles Simeoni, and Corsican assembly president, Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis.

“Accepting this state of affairs is unthinkable for us,” they said in a joint statement, announcing an appeal against the verdict. The Corsican language needed to be given official status alongside French to it to survive and develop, they said.

Pro-independence party Core in Fronte tweeted, in Corsican, that it considered the verdict “shameful”.

The boss of the Party of the Corsican Nation, Jean-Christophe Angelini, tweeted that the decision “sounds to us like an insult”, also calling it “an injustice and a disgrace”.

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Corsica has a fraught relationship with France’s central government, with nationalist movements having demanded more autonomy or even outright independence for several decades.

Macron said last month that he had “no taboos” about reforming the status of Corsica, which is a sunny Mediterranean island beloved by holidaymakers. But he insisted that Corsica had to remain part of France.

New negotiations between Paris and Corsican leaders appear to have been unblocked by the conditional release of two men convicted of participating in the 1998 murder of the island’s prefect Claude Érignac, the highest-ranking French official to have ever been assassinated.

Summit of young speakers of minoritized languages

Press release from HIGA Gasteiz

Registration is open to participate in HIGA, the Summit of Young Speakers of Minoritized Languages

Vitoria-Gasteiz will host the 4th edition of HIGA, the Summit of Young Speakers of Minoritized Languages, which will take place from July 17 to 21, 2023. The project, promoted by Basque and Youth services of Vitoria-Gasteiz’s City Council, will bring together 75 young people from all over the world in a five-day program that will include training activities, spaces for exchange and collaboration, and cultural activities with the aim of weaving a network between linguistic communities. The registration is open until 16 April. Organizations and associations from all over the world have joined the event and UNESCO has chosen HIGA! as one of the official events of the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Languages.

In the presentation ceremony of the current edition, the Councillor for the Basque language area of the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council, Iñaki Gurtubai, explained that HIGA! was born in 2011 and, a dozen years later, they aim to “turn Vitoria-Gasteiz into a world capital in the work of revitalizing minoritized languages. We want HIGA! to be a space for meeting, reflection, activism, work and the exchange of information and proposals to promote the use and revitalization of all these languages”.

Diverse topics will be addressed at the conference, such as the challenges and tips for activism in favour of minority languages, the intersectionality between linguistic revitalisation and other social transformations, and the possibilities that new technologies offer minority languages. This year, HIGA! will also include two innovations. On the one hand, the development of collaborative projects between the different participating language communities will be encouraged, and on the other hand, a digital platform will be created to promote interaction between the people taking part in HIGA!2023 and to offer the general public materials to get to know each participant’s background and the situation of the languages represented in this year’s edition.

People interested in participating in HIGA! must complete the registration form available on the website www.labur.eus/higa. There are only two requirements to participate: being a speaker of a minoritized language in the world and being between 18 and 35 years old. Among all the applications received, 75 will be selected and those people chosen to attend HIGA! will not have to pay a registration fee, nor for accommodation or food. In addition, in order to guarantee that young people with fewer resources and/or coming from geographically farther places have the same opportunity to participate, financing (total or partial) may be received for the trip.

Keelepästäjä / To Save a Language

The Estonian linguist Indrek Park has collaborated with film director Liivo Niglas to make a film, To Save a Language (Keelepästäjä in Estonian) about Park’s efforts to learn the Mandan language of North Dakota from the last fluent native speaker, Edwin Benson. The film was completed in 2020. To learn more about it on-line, you can view https://www.imdb.com > to save a language, and to view a trailer, https://www.youtube.com > watch to save a language.

“We’re losing our identity’: the young Egyptians fighting to save the ancient Nubian tongue

From Edmund Bower in Cairo, from the Guardian (UK) 12 April 2023

Born and raised in Nubia, southern Egypt, the 29-year-old Jejad Ashraf is the first in her family to grow up not understanding the Nubian language. “I lived in Aswan my whole life”, she says, “but none of my family spoke Nubian to me at home.”

In just two generations the language, once spoken everywhere in the region, has almost vanished. In her village, a date-farming community on the banks of the Nile, “the youngest who speak Nubian are 61 or 62. It is becoming extinct,” says Ashraf.

It is the same throughout Egypt, and that’s something she wants to change. Last year, she helped launch the online service Nobig Koro (Learn Nubian) to encourage young people to learn the language. It is one of a number of initiatives in recent years to reach young Nubians at home and abroad and keep the language and culture from dying out.

Ashraf started taking Nubian classes in Cairo where she went to study legal translation. “Since I was young, I was attracted to the language,” she says. She made two friends on the course, the 31-year-old Wessam Fathy and Mostafa Fares, also
31. Both were born to Nubian parents but unable to speak the language.

The three of them started a weekly study group to go over what they learned in class and practise singing the songs their teacher wrote out for them in Nubian and Arabic. “Nubian songs have everything you find in the language”, says Ashraf, “so we would memorise them, practise singing them and discuss the words we didn’t know.”

Posting their sessions online was a way to “share the things we learned, the things we love, with other young Nubians”, says Ashraf. They soon realised there were many others who felt disconnected from their heritage. “The new generation are more educated,” says Fares. “They can feel that they are losing their identity.”

There are no statistics on how many Nubians live in Egypt. Estimates range from 300,000 to 5 million, spread throughout the country. In the 1960s, much of Old Nubia was destroyed by the construction of the Aswan High Dam, which flooded the region upstream from Aswan. Between 50,000 and 130,000 people were forced to move from ancient villages, mostly to Cairo, Alexandria or purpose-built accommodation in the desert – all areas where Arabic was spoken.

“Nubians started to dissolve”, says the 73-year-old teacher Mohamed Sobhy, “like when you put sugar in water.”

Born 10 miles downstream from the dam, Sobhy’s family was spared displacement, but throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as more children began attending school, he witnessed the language fading away. No Egyptian school or university teaches Nubian, and parents were keen for their children to speak fluent Arabic.

“We are in a country that is poor,” says Sobhy. “To make people learn Nubian, you have to tell them it will give them jobs. If not, it is in vain.”

Sobhy translates songs and collates folk stories and phrases. “I keep doing it because maybe, someday, someone will continue,” he says. “At the least, I want to leave a record of Nubian literature.”

In 2017, he established a YouTube channel, which has racked up over 70,000 views, uploading videos of himself reciting Nubian poetry, explaining expressions and breaking down songs. “I am one of the people who want to teach Nubian through songs,” he says. “People know the songs but they don’t know the meaning.”

Although the language has gone from everyday conversation, it has survived through Nubian music. Both classical and contemporary Nubian artists remain popular in southern Egypt, performing in a style distinct from Arabic pop songs because of its traditional instruments and rhythms.

“The songs are a kind of glue, holding us to the language,” says Fares, who often finds people singing along to the songs without knowing the meaning.

Another initiative to teach the language to children is Nubi App, founded by the 33-year-old computer programmer Mostafa Talosh. Talosh’s parents had forgotten the language after moving to Alexandria as children. As an adult, Talosh took lessons at a Nubian social club. “The language is the most important thing that we’re trying to hold on to,” he says. “Whether you’re concerned with Nubian identity or Nubian traditions, without the language, there’s nothing.”

He launched the app in 2017, offering basic phrases in one of four Nubian dialects, with translation in Arabic and English. Neither Talosh nor his team of five volunteers take a salary, and the app has been downloaded more than 10,000 times.

Talosh has travelled to countries with Nubian-speaking populations including Tunisia, Sudan and Kenya to promote it. “Our generation has the tools to help people learn the language,” he says. “We wanted to do this for people everywhere, even people outside Egypt.”

But teacher Khairiya Musa, 65, says that, despite such initiatives, there may not be another generation speaking Nubian. Forced out of her village by the dam, Musa grew up in a displacement settlement that “was just desert and rocks”. She now lives and teaches Nubian in a densely populated neighbourhood in Giza. She also has a YouTube channel to which she uploads short Nubian lessons and cooking tutorials.

“We need to teach children Nubian,” she says. “We want to teach them in schools and we want the government to support us.”

For the government, Nubian is a sensitive subject. In the wake of the 2010-2011 Arab spring, activists successfully campaigned to have Nubians’ “right to return” to the shores of the dam’s reservoir written into the 2014 constitution. But since then, there has been little progress on the issue.

Under President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, political activism has been outlawed in Egypt. In 2016, a protest march to the lands surrounding the lake was broken up by police and its leaders arrested. The following year, 24 activists were detained after police violently broke up a peaceful protest in Aswan.

“Right to return is no longer discussed because people know that they won’t get it,” says human rights researcher Fatma Emam Sakory, once involved in lobbying for Nubian issues. “Even the people I used to work with on the constitution committee are not active,” she says. But as politics have become less accessible, Eman adds, young people are “talking more about culture and language”.

Rising interest among young Nubians has made advocates of the language “very optimistic”, says Musa. “Before, there was no hope.” When she began teaching Nubian seven years ago, she was resigned to the fact that the language would soon disappear. “But now, most young people want to learn,” she says. “So there is hope.”
‘You can’t speak what you can’t hear’: how Māori and Pacific sports stars are helping revitalise vulnerable languages

By Dion Enari and Sierra Keung, from The Conversation (Australia), 18 May 2023

We’re becoming more used to hearing and seeing te reo Māori in everyday use these days. And Pacific languages are becoming increasingly familiar too – especially during the Pacific language weeks now under way.

But if there’s one forum that has seen a genuine surge in the use of Indigenous languages it’s the world of elite sport. It’s a reflection of the increased cultural pride felt by Māori and Pacific athletes – and it’s one more way these vulnerable languages are being kept alive in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Take women’s rugby star Ruby Tui, for example, who broke into her native Samoan during an impromptu interview with a BBC reporter during the Olympic Games in 2021.

After her Black Ferns team won the 2022 women’s Rugby World Cup, Tui led the crowd in a spontaneous rendition of the classic Māori waiata (song) “Tutira Mai Ngā Iwi” – making international headlines in the process.

Tui joins other high-profile Māori and Pacific players such as All Blacks Ardie Savea, TJ Perenara and Patrick Tuipulotu, and Black Ferns star Stacy Fluhler, who have all used their mother tongues during interviews.

This is more than a feel-good phenomenon. Public figures using their native languages on the big stage support the revitalisation efforts being made by Indigenous people in general.

Despite te reo Māori being an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, and Samoan being the country’s third-most-spoken language (and second-most-spoken language in Auckland), there are still real concerns for their long-term survival.

Te reo Māori is listed as “vulnerable” on the UNESCO endangered languages list, and the number of Samoan speakers among the diaspora populations is decreasing.

New Zealand census data show only 3% of the population can speak te reo Māori, and only 2% Samoan. In fact, these numbers may be an overestimation of language capability, with the true percentages even lower. It is thought that, without deliberate effort, language loss can occur within three generations.

On a positive note, it wasn’t very long ago that Indigenous athletes would only speak English during interviews. So the fact they will now use their star status to raise awareness of their culture and language is a sign of progress.

In the process, these athletes are making inroads into what has largely been a eurocentric sporting arena. In fact, it might be better to think of them not as athletes of Indigenous heritage, but rather as Indigenous people who happen to be athletes.

This is something our research supports. Many of these athletes feel a sense of responsibility to their families, villages, tribes and nations – not only to play well, but to use their profile to benefit their people.

This runs counter in some ways to the often individualistic values and financial priorities of commercial sports. Even in the hyper-competitive world of American football (NFL), Pacific players have managed to bring their cultures and languages to the fore.

Since its inception in 2017, the Polynesian Bowl has celebrated the legacy of Polynesian NFL players, with a Polynesian Hall of Fame, as well as through an ambassador programme and high school all-star game – with a primetime live broadcast spot on the NFL network.

All these initiatives suggest there is another place where bilingual proficiency could make a difference – the commentary box.

There have already been examples of this – notably various initiatives by Whakaata Māori (Māori Television), including te reo Māori commentary during the 2011 Rugby World Cup and 2022 Men’s Softball World Cup.

In 2019, Sky Sport also offered a te reo Māori option for matches broadcast during te wiki o te reo Māori (Māori Language Week). The same year, Sky piloted a Pacific language commentary team for the Pasifika Challenge rugby event. Samoan, Tongan and Fijian commentaries were made available for all matches.

Television New Zealand and Spark Sport also offered te reo Māori commentary at this year’s T20 cricket series. Former Black Cap Peter McGlashan (Ngāti Porou) explained his involvement this way:

My grandma grew up in a time when Māori were prohibited from speaking their language – it was beaten out of us. So this is something very special to me.

Te reo Māori is about so much more than just words. It’s the story of a culture that you can’t articulate accurately in any other language. It’s important we keep using it.

Part of the purpose of the commentary initiative, of course, was to attract more Māori to cricket. With that will come more role models and more opportunities to put the culture on the field. As McGlashan also said:

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It’s just like the language. You can’t speak what you can’t hear. And you can’t be what you can’t see.

Manx Language Risen from the Dead

From the Guardian (UK)

In 2009 the Manx language was declared extinct. Today Isle of Man residents are using Twitter, music, and schooling to help revive their ancestors’ mother tongue. The Manx language traditionally spoken on the Isle of Man declined rapidly in the 19th century.

“I often go to my local pub The Albert to speak Manx to friends, which is strange to think, given that years ago this could have ended up with me being asked to leave a pub,” said Adrian Cain.

The Albert is a local watering hole in Port St Mary on the south coast of the Isle of Man where, according to Cain, drinkers can now be heard conversing over their pint glasses in a language declared extinct by Unesco in 2009.

Cain, Manx Gaelic development officer at the Manx Heritage Foundation, is one of the thousands of speakers of Manx, a Goidelic language, closely related to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. After centuries of lying dormant the language is now experiencing an unexpected revival.

“The Manx language is a wonderful comeback story,” says David Harrison, a lecturer who has spent the past 20 years studying endangered languages around the world. “It impressed me so much because it was a language that defied the odds against survival,” he says.

As with many endangered languages, the Manx people have been made to think their language is worthless. During the 19th century the native language of Manx became increasingly overshadowed by English. Islanders began raising their children in English with the view that Manx would soon become useless. Evidence of this can be seen as far back as 1872 in a letter published in the Manx newspaper Mona’s Herald, where Reverend J T Clarke lamented the decline of his mother tongue: “In order to be able to deal in the English markets, it is English, and only English, Manx people must learn to speak.”

By 1901 only 9.1% of the population claimed to speak Manx and over the next two decades this figure quickly dropped to 1.1%, according to official census figures. Poverty on the island during a recession in the mid-19th century cemented an association between the language and economic decline. “As with many endangered languages, the Manx people have been made to think their language is worthless,” said Harrison. “These negative attitudes get internalised by communities, which causes them to let go of their language. They had to reverse this mentality.”

Yet throughout the decline there have been many people fighting to preserve the language. Evidence of support can be found as early as 1897 in a notice in the local paper in Peel. It invited people with an interest in the Manx language to attend a meeting, marking the beginnings of the Manx Language Society, which was officially founded two years later.

One of the biggest pioneers in the revival is Brian Stowell, who decided to learn the Manx language in 1953 after reading an article about a man called Douglas Faragher, who was lamenting the rapid decline of his mother tongue.

Stowell joined Faragher, and along with several other people, they spent the following weekends driving around the island in a van listening to old Manx tape recordings. “Initially I was seen to be a bit of a nut job,” said Stowell. “But it became clear that beneath the surface there was huge support for the language from many people.”

Stowell believes one of the biggest obstacles has been the old Manx speakers themselves. “Manx to a large extent dumped their own language. There was a strong fear of the language and many people thought it to be backward and associated it with poverty,” said Stowell. A common saying among the old Manx speakers was Cha jean oo cosney ping lesh y Ghalick, meaning: “You will not earn a penny with Manx.”

Ned Maddrell was the last native speaker of Manx who, unlike others, did not want to see his language disappear. A decade before Ned’s death in 1964, Stowell made some tape recordings of him talking, which can now be heard on YouTube.

According to Cain, more than 1,800 people claim to speak, read and write Manx today, although this may not necessarily illustrate actual fluency.

Last December, Harrison visited the Isle of Man to film a documentary about Manx and see for himself how a language recently declared dead was brought back to life.

“It is extraordinary to think that they have produced a generation of ‘new native speakers’,” said Harrison, commenting on how far the revival movement has come.

Bunscoill Ghaelgagh, a primary school that teaches almost entirely in the Manx language, has been key to the revival. Established 14 years ago and located in St Johns in the centre of the island, there are 70 pupils attending the school. Apart from a weekly English class, every lesson is taught in Manx. “Our pupils have helped bring Manx back from the brink,” said headteacher Julie Matthews. Pupils have also started writing to penpals from schools in Glasgow that can read and write in Scottish Gaelic, a language closely related to Manx.

This is not the first time the pupils have used letters to reach out in their language. In response to the 2009 edition of Unesco’s Atlas of World Languages in Danger, where Manx was listed as effectively dead, several children from Bunscoill Ghaelgagh school wrote letters asking the organisation: “If our language is extinct then what language are we writing in?”
The classification has since been changed to “critically endangered”.

There is evidence that the language is skipping back a generation. “More and more parents of pupils are learning Manx because their children can speak it. It’s a good idea to know what your children are talking about,” Matthews said.

According to Harrison, embracing the support of technology has been key to the success of today’s Manx revival. Adrian Cain has pioneered the use of Manx in YouTube videos and podcasts and is a keen Manx tweeter. Cain has also recently produced a Manx app for smartphones, which has been downloaded by thousands of learners.

“My role is outside the education system, and we are encouraging more adults to learn the language,” says Cain, who added that using new technologies make learning Manx much more accessible.

The language has become present in many aspects of everyday life and culture. “I was really struck by how absolutely devoted and passionate people were about the language,” said Harrison. “I saw and heard it used in all kinds of settings – texting, video subtitling, social media – I even saw a Christmas church service in the language.”

The Manx revival has also been echoed through music. Reflecting on his time on the island exploring the language, Harrison said: “The X factor for reviving languages is really pride and love for the language. The revival on the Isle of Man is a clear example of this.”

While methods of communication have changed in ways that original Manx speakers might never have imagined, this pride has been constant through each step of the revival: from letters, Church meetings, old tape recordings to apps and tweets or, to use a recently coined Manx word: tweetal.

The first large dictionary of the Warlpiri language began in 1959 in Alice Springs, when Yuendumu man Kenny Wayne Jungarrayi and others started teaching their language to a young American linguist, Ken Hale.

Sixty years in the making, the Warlpiri Dictionary has been shortlisted for the 2023 Australian Book Industry Awards – a rarity for a dictionary.

Spoken in and around the Tanami Desert, Warlpiri is an Australian Aboriginal language used by around 3,000 adults and children as their everyday language.

Warlpiri artist Otto Sims Jungarrayi says:

In the old days when kardiya [non-Indigenous] people came, when they reached this continent, we had jukurrpa “law” here, not written on paper but true jukurrpa “law”, that the ancestors gave us. Now we put our language and our jukurrpa law on paper.

The dictionary and these materials represent the authority of elders, even if those elders are no longer present.

From the start of this project, Hale tape-recorded and transcribed many hours of Warlpiri people talking about language, country, kin and diverse aspects of traditional life.

The Warlpiri people he recorded came from different parts of Warlpiri country, speaking their own distinctive varieties of the language. From this material, Hale hand-wrote the words and meanings on small slips of paper that could be sorted in different ways.

Bilingual education was introduced in Northern Territory schools in the 1970s. It meant the Warlpiri communities needed a common spelling system.

In the early 1970s, at Lajamanu community, Warlpiri men Maurice Luther Jupurrurla and Marlurku Paddy Patrick Jangala worked with linguist Lothar Jagst to develop that spelling system. It was adopted in the new bilingual schools.

Dictionary work became a focus for the new linguist position at Yuendumu School, first filled in 1975 by the dictionary’s chief compiler, Mary Laughrin. She worked closely in the school with dictionary co-compiler Jeannie Egan Nungarrayi.

Over the next four decades, in a type of early crowd-sourcing, more than 210 Warlpiri speakers from different Warlpiri communities worked on and off with Laughrin and others. They found words (ultimately 11,000 plus), decided how to spell them, translated them into English, showed how they can be used in Warlpiri sentences, and provided the social, cultural and biological information that makes this a truly encyclopedic dictionary.

5. New publications

Six decades, 210 speakers and 11,000 words: How a groundbreaking First Nations dictionary was made

By Carmel O’Shanessy, Jane Simpson and Otto Sims Jungarrayi
From The Conversation (Australia)
Co-compiler †Marlurrku Paddy Patrick Jangala took on a mission to preserve the meanings of conceptually difficult and older words by writing definitions directly in Warlpiri. The 4,000 complex definitions in Warlpiri provide Warlpiri perspectives on the most important characteristics of each concept.

For example, in these two entries, both defined by †Marlurrku Paddy Patrick Jangala:

Kakuju-mardarni is like when a person is happy or is sitting on their own feeling satisfied, or is nodding off to sleep, or is smiling – a man or a woman feeling happy about something like a lover or about their spouse whom they desire or because their lover has sent them a message.

Kakuju-mardarni, ngulaj, yanga-kajakula yapu warlingi manu yangka niginami kurritakurra-karra manu yukukiru wantinga-karrara munu yinakarra kunna manu wati yanga warlingi nyija-run-guku marda waminja-warnuku manu marda kali-nyaniku kujaka yangka wardu-pinji manu marda yangka kujakalara jaru yilyamirri waminja-warnuru.

And:

Jalangu is a day which is not tomorrow or not yesterday. It is today. It is the time of daylight that is now.


Then, there was the laborious task of checking the draft dictionary entries.

Computer scientists assisted with data management and experimented with an electronic display, called Kirrkirr. Kirrkirr users can type in a word and see a visual display of meanings connected to that word (for example, words with a similar meaning, or the opposite meaning). They can also hear it pronounced, and see examples of how the word is used in Warlpiri.

Experts (among them anthropologists, Bible translators, botanists and zoologists) helped to identify plants, animals and more.

And artists, including Jenny Taylor and Jenny Green, provided images they had created for the Institute for Aboriginal Development Press Picture Dictionary series and other publications.

Warlpiri people have been working to pass on their language, to ensure their children and grandchildren can speak it. Tess Ross Napaljarri began working as a teaching assistant 50 years ago, setting up the Yuendumu bilingual education program. She has described how she learned to read and write Warlpiri. “We became partners with the teachers in how to teach the Warlpiri children,” she says.

The children were learning their first language, Warlpiri, and second language, English, “and they were really smart on both languages”. The commitment of Warlpiri people to bilingual education has been – and continues to be – enormous. Since 2005, they have dedicated royalty money through the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust into supporting this work.

Warlpiri want Warlpiri children to be able to speak for themselves in a meaningful way – in both English and Warlpiri. Today, many Warlpiri now live away from Warlpiri country.

Tess’s niece, Bess Price Nungarrayi, is now assistant principal at Yipirinya School, on Arrernte country in Alice Springs. With more limited opportunities for hearing Warlpiri, Bess says the dictionary will be very useful in strengthening children’s Warlpiri.

This bilingual dictionary has many audiences. Warlpiri people enriching their knowledge of their language, Warlpiri and non-Warlpiri teachers preparing learning materials, Ranger groups studying eco-systems on Warlpiri country. And anyone wanting to learn about Warlpiri language, history, natural history knowledge and culture.

It can help Warlpiri speakers translate complex Warlpiri words into English, and it’s also an important tool for outsiders to learn Warlpiri – something Warlpiri people have long encouraged.

Ormay Gallagher Nangala, a Warlpiri educator at the Bilingual Resources Development Unit, says:


The dictionary makers brought together information and intentions from the elders who have now passed away, the people who have been working in education for many years, and the future generations who will continue to learn Warlpiri.

New video materials for learners of Livonian

“Op livõ kieldõ” (Learn Livonian) is the name of a new series of video lessons for beginners in Livonian prepared by the Livonian Institute at the University of Latvia. As a first stage, ten lessons have been prepared, in which diligent students are asked to talk about themselves, ask others to tell about themselves and give basic information about other people.

The teaching materials have been prepared on the basis of the communicative approach, the basis of which is acquiring the language in everyday situations, use of the language, with every new element interplaying with what is already known, thus consciously appreciating and observing the rules of the language. Particularly in the situation of Livonian, whose speakers are numbered in the tens, so it is not possible to hear or use it every day, and thus test and improve one’s language skills, the first ten lessons offer the beginner the chance to learn Livonian unhurriedly, repeating and reinforcing the rules of the
language, using all the language skills – speaking, reading, listening and writing – and communicate in real situations of language use.

“Especially in the initial stages of language learning it’s important to do it consistently and gradually, linking each new unit of the language to what is already known and reinforce it in language use, listening to the sound of the language and using it oneself. This teaching material, guided by young Livonians, will let you approach what is most important for all new language learners, the spirit and nature of the language”, explains Gunta Klava, the chief researcher at the Livonian Institute, University of Latvia, and creator of the teaching material.

Gija dictionary launch records living language of East Kimberley region

From AIATSIS Identity magazine (Australia)

On 3 May, the Warmun community came together to celebrate the launch of the Gija dictionary. It was a celebration of the Gija language, and the community connected through speeches, ceremony, culture, and most importantly, honouring the survival and continuation of language and culture.

6. Forthcoming events

FEL Canada AGM

Our sister organisation FEL Canada is holding its Annual General Meeting on 15th June. Reminders are being sent out to present and past (lapsed) members, along with a flyer involving a recruiting drive for volunteers. The announcement, ‘Get involved’, says:

In keeping with the 2013 FEL conference themes, our approach is one of collaboration, building on community connections and a variety of research, skills and disciplines. We welcome the involvement of people from all kinds of backgrounds, and with all kinds of skills: First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, communities and organizations; people in research and education at all levels; people with experience in working with minority language communities; people with skills in organizational management, accounting, fund-raising, law and communications - in short, every person can make a difference in the future of Canada’s indigenous languages!

www.felcanada.org

The Mende Kikakui script has been declared a ‘failed script’, but it is the subject of vigorous revitalisation efforts in Sierra Leone.

The traditional Mongolian script is undertaking the tough work of revitalisation in the Republic of Mongolia, but is being officially undermined in China.

See Tim Brookes’ article on endangered alphabets in this issue.

Back to Africa – with a bang!

In 2001 The Foundation for Endangered Languages held its first conference on African soil. FEL V (FEL’s fifth conference) took place in Agadir, the well known resort town of Southern Morocco, with pristine beaches and emerald sea – actually the Atlantic Ocean which, though few locals bathe in it in the autumn, remained warm and welcoming for the handful of international scholars who attended the conference in September. Only a few, because, unlike the ocean water, the international context was practically sizzling hot, still in shock from an event which had taken place only nine days before, 9/11.

In those days before Zoom, when hybrid meant a vegetable or a fruit obtained by botanic manipulation, one consequence of 9/11 was a drastic reduction of international travel which deprived the conference of a large number of scholars from North America and even Europe who had cancelled their bookings and their trip to Morocco. The conference was nevertheless successful, and many participants still remember the exquisite excursions to the High Atlas where they were given the full treatment of Berber hospitality, and to the untold treasures of Marrakech, including UNESCO World Heritage Jemma el Fna.

A 20th anniversary conference was to take place in Agadir in 2021, but, as the dates coincided, FEL instead, held its 25th anniversary conference in Tirana, Albania. Now, twenty-two years after FEL V, FEL is going back to Morocco with FEL XXVII which will be held in the capital, Rabat.

It is hoped that this second conference on the African continent will encourage scholars and institutions from other parts of Africa to take a closer interest in Endangered Languages.
Language loss seriously affects cultural diversity and therefore threatens the future and viability of Mankind. Recent research and study of endangered languages have increased global awareness of the extent and rate of the problem, drawing attention to the growing number of disappearing languages and the speed at which they disappear, but they have also uncovered the serious consequences that extinction of languages may have on the future of humankind.

The loss of cultural practices and traditions, as well as ancestral or indigenous knowledge, experience and worldview, impacts not only specific linguistic communities but also affects all the human community. Just like the disappearance of one animal species (such as the bee) can threaten the entire balance, or even all life, on the planet, the extinction of one single language diminishes our planet’s cultural diversity and therefore reduces the survival chances of mankind. The threat to one language can signify danger to many others, and language extinction may entail the disappearance of significant amounts of cultural knowledge of vital importance for the human species.

Socio-economic pressures, and political disorder can, and often do, provoke dramatic changes with often terrible consequences for linguistic and cultural diversity. Communities everywhere are faced with the challenge of embracing progress and development while fighting to preserve their traditions, cultural practices and languages. As human culture is created and nurtured by particular communities before it spreads to and is adopted by others when a community disappears, its culture and knowledge die with it, and it does not benefit other communities.

This conference aims to bring a multidisciplinary light on endangered languages and the impact of language extinction on linguistic and cultural diversity. It will encourage study of indigenous and minority languages and cultures and their role in enhancing our general knowledge of the animal, vegetal and mineral world, as well as the links and harmony between the cultural and the natural world.

Topics to be examined and questions that may be asked include, but are not limited to:

- Endangered languages as vehicles of ancestral knowledge and repositories of the common human cultural heritage (examples include current biological, cosmological, agricultural, animal behaviour, cultural histories, and medical knowledge including traditional pharmacopoeias from specific communities; how these have been passed on to the outside world and how the risk of extinction of some languages threatens cultural diversity and potentially deprives mankind of ancestral knowledge).

- The contribution of endangered languages to world knowledge (examples include knowledge which historically or currently, has proved beneficial, helped save lives, offered new wisdom, presented alternative behaviour)

- New threats to cultural diversity (includes deliberate political measures targeting specific languages, the spread of more dominant languages through political alignment, identity (re)definition, technological factors)

- The effect(s) of the increasing loss of linguistic and cultural diversity in the world (new threats to cultural diversity increase the threat to language or languages - including political and ideological measures)

FEL XXVII Rabat 2023, Endangered Languages and Cultural Diversity

- The Foundation for Endangered Languages (UK Registered Charity No 1070616). The Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) and the Moroccan Institute for Advanced Studies (IMEA) are to organise in collaboration with The Faculty of Science of Education (FSE): The 27th Annual Conference (FEL XXVII) in Rabat, Morocco, 23 – 25 November 2023

- La Fondation pour les Langues en Danger et l’Institut Marocain d’Etudes Avancées organisent en collaboration avec La Faculté des Sciences de l’Education La 27e Conférence annuelle (FEL XXVII) à Rabat, Marocdu 23 – 25 novembre 2023

- تنظم مؤسسة اللغات المهددة بالانقراض والمعهد المغربي للدراسات المتقدمةتعاون مع كلية علوم التربية المؤتمر السنوي (FEL XXVII)Ô à الرباط، المغرب من 23 نوفمبر 2023

Text of Call for Abstracts – FEL XXVII

Endangered Languages and Cultural Diversity

Language loss, it is now understood, is a loss for all humankind.

As language is both a vehicle of culture and an integral part of culture, the extinction of a language very often means the extinction of a culture, and the extinction of one culture severely impacts all other cultures.
- Defending cultural diversity (communities’ initiatives, language revitalisation with wider impact, increased awareness). The focus of the conference will be on the relationship between language endangerment/extinction and the threat to cultural diversity. While it has a universal scope, it aims to also encourage scholarship and accounts of community initiatives from the African continent as well as those relating to African situations.

The conference will take place from 23 to 25 November 2023 at Faculté des Sciences de l’Éducation, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. (Details concerning the date and venue will be specified later) Registration will be open for hybrid participation (with videoconferencing).

Excursions to relevant places of interest in Morocco will be available to those who attend physically.

Extended abstracts of about 1000 words in the English language should be sent to https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=felxxvii2023 before 12 July 2023.

The extended abstract should provide a brief account of the context, the issue(s) studied, the methodology used, and relevant references, together with a mention of any major results, conclusions and implications.

Those whose abstracts are accepted will be notified by 22 August 2023.

Important Dates

- 12 July 2023: Deadline for submission of abstract
- 22 August 2023: Selected applicants informed
- 20 September 2023: Deadline for Reception of Final Version of Accepted Abstracts
- 23-24 November 2023 Conference dates
- 25 November: Excursion to a local community