Twenty Years of the Endangered Language Fund: Language Challenges and Language Opportunities

Lone Star Foyer

5:30-7:00 PM

Organizers: Claire Bowern (Yale University)
                  Monica Macaulay (University of Wisconsin, Madison)
                  Julie Tetel Andresen (Duke University)

Participants: Natalia Bermúdez (The University of Texas at Austin)
                  Geraldine Coriz (Nanbé Pueblo)
                  Tammy Decoteau (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Dakotah Language Institute)
                  Doudou Diop (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar)
                  Shelece Easterday (University of New Mexico/Nanbé Tewa Language Revitalization)
                  Emily Elfner (University of British Columbia)
                  Dmitri Funk (Moscow State University)
                  Evelyn O. Anaya Hatch (Nanbé Pueblo)
                  Martin Kohlberger (Leiden University/James Cook University)
                  Monica Macaulay (University of Wisconsin, Madison)
                  Brenda G. McKenna (Nanbé Pueblo)
                  Cora O. McKenna (Nanbé Pueblo)
                  Modesta Monthorn (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation)
                  Saudah Namyalo (Makerere University)
                  Yolanda Pushetonequa (University of Minnesota)
                  Kate Riestenberg (Georgetown University)
                  Konrad Rybka (University of Amsterdam)
                  Adjaratou Oumar Sall (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar)
                  Patricia A. Shaw (University of British Columbia)
                  Logan Sutton (Indiana University/Nanbé Tewa Language Revitalization)
                  Zvjezdana Vrzić (University of Rijeka/New York University)
                  George Winzenburg, S.J. (Red Cloud Indian School)

The Endangered Language Fund (ELF) was founded in 1996 with the goal of supporting endangered language preservation and documentation projects. Our main mechanism for supporting work on endangered languages has been funding small grants (of approximately US$2500) to individuals, tribes, and museums. ELF's grants have promoted work in over 30 countries and have seen a wide range of projects, from the development Indigenous radio programs in South Dakota, to recording of the last living oral historian of the Shor language of western Siberia, to the establishment of orthographies and literacy materials to be used by endangered language teaching programs all over the world.

This poster session illustrates this work. As can be seen, the contributions cover themes relating to academic work on endangered languages, pedagogical materials, archival work on endangered languages (or languages no longer spoken), work aimed at supporting and encouraging language use, and the fruitful partners that can develop between linguists and communities. We showcase the important niche that small grants play in the world of endangered language work, particularly for groups and individuals who may not have access to other sources of funding.

We see four ways in which this poster session is important to linguists in the US. First, it is an illustration of the State of the Art in language documentation. The poster presenters show creative solutions to the problem of how to do important documentation of some of the world's most endangered languages with very little funding. For example, one of the presenters (Funk) was able to compile a corpus of epic texts in Shor (Siberia) by corresponding with a speaker by letter. The poster session is an important illustration for students and linguists of the range of work that can be done with endangered languages, and its best practice. Secondly, it shows the importance of 'thinking small' – that is, how endangered language grants that are one hundred times smaller than a typical National Science Foundation grant can nonetheless make a big difference, whether to a community working on maintaining their language, or a graduate student looking for a way into the professional world. Thirdly, it shows the range of

applied work that Native communities do with linguists, from orthography development to ethnobiology. This is important modeling, particularly for graduate students and professional linguists who are looking for ways to deepen the broader impacts of their own work. Finally, it shows difference that linguistics can make on the ground to native communities, the importance of supporting native speaker linguists working on their own endangered languages, and how we as a field can do our best to make sure that the object of our study doesn't disappear from under us.

The poster presenters are from schools, colleges, and universities. They represent languages from Europe, North and South America, Africa. The presenters are native speakers, students, faculty, and community members. This eclectic panel provides an important illustration of the breadth of community and scholarly commitment to preventing language loss.

Abstracts

Monica Macaulay (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Claire Bowern (Yale University)
Language endangerment and small grants: the ELF model

Almost half the world's languages are endangered. In the 20 years since the Endangered Language Fund was founded, the idea of endangered languages has become institutionalized. Now is a good time to take stock: how many more languages have documentation now than 25 years ago, for example? How far have our practices come? Who are we documenting languages for? What initiatives have worked, and where are the problems? We survey answers to these questions and provide an overview of the Endangered Language Fund's (ELF's) role in contributing to documenting and supporting the world's endangered languages. Finally, we argue that major funding initiatives have focused on only one aspect of language documentation: that is, the preservation of aspects of the linguistic record. It is much more difficult to find funding for projects which support *speakers* of endangered languages.

Cora O. McKenna (Nanbé Ówîngeh**)**
Brenda G. McKenna (Nanbé Ówîngeh**)**
Evelyn O. Anaya Hatch (Nanbé Ówîngeh**)**
Geraldine Coriz, (Nanbé Ówîngeh**)**
A model collaboration among a North American Indigenous community and Academia: Nanbé Tewa Language Program, the University of New Mexico, and the Endangered Language Fund

The Nanbé Tewa language is *critically endangered*. The Nanbé Tewa Language Program (Program) secured an Endangered Language Fund (ELF) several years ago. It was one of the small grants the Program applied for after its then-governor re-established its language program, hired an instructor, and provided limited instruction funding. Small grants, such as the ones from ELF, not only allow a language community to acquire resources necessary for its mission, but serves as a motivator to seek further financial and in-kind sources.

Indigenous language programs should consider every grant opportunity thoroughly, temper post-award selection by careful evaluation of the acceptance terms, and fully document the negotiation process. Potential recipients need to be willing to walk away if terms proposed are non negotiable, exploitative, or offensive.

Natalia Bermúdez (University of Texas at Austin)
The value of small grants for young documentary field linguists

The value of small grants before embarking on a dissertation project in documentary linguistics is undeniable, especially when the young linguist is not native to the language they work with. During the ELF grant period (2011-2012) I learned the basics of the Naso language (Panama), but more importantly, I formed social ties and developed a compass for the complex and delicate politics of the area I work in. I spent ten months in the field training younger Naso speakers to transcribe and translate recordings of their grandparents in family projects. These two crucial methods, speaker-driven documentation and collaboration within family units, are fundamental for the project I have now in the Naso territory where five extended family teams are working on different chapters on a Naso cultural book project funded by the ELDP and NSF.

Modesta Monthorn (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation)
The Umatilla Dictionary Project

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) is a small community located in eastern Oregon with a tribal enrollment of 3,000. Currently, there are 4 fluent speakers of the Umatilla language. The Umatilla Dictionary Project has been a project of the CTUIR and Noel Rude and is the culmination of 17 years of work. The end result is a usable dictionary for all ages that want to learn and have knowledge of the Umatilla language. The Umatilla dictionary plays a big role in our current language endeavors as tribe. The dictionary has tremendous personal significance for many of us here on our reservation. The people that dedicated their time to the compilation of this work are all gone. This book has preserved their words and knowledge for all of us and for those of us yet to come. The value of a book like this goes beyond monetary compensation and places it truly in the heart of the people.

Tammy Decoteau (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Dakotah Language Institute)
Everyday Dakotah, a 3 CD set of language learning CDs

In 2010 the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Dakotah Language Institute compiled a list of 340 common phrases in our language which we have collected over the years. We wrote each phrase onto a post-it note and created a display of all the phrases in the hallway of our building. A notice was printed in the tribal newspaper requesting members of the tribe to come and vote on the phrases they wanted included on the CDs. A form was developed for people to select twenty-five phrases. Two elders of the tribe were retained to provide the voices. A book of the phrases was developed. CD covers were designed and production of the CDs continues years later and the CDs continue to be purchased and used. After completion of the project our tribal radio station would take a phrase and play it all week as the "Dakotah Phrase of the Week." This poster describes the creation of the CDs.

George Winzenburg, S.J. (Red Cloud Indian School*)*
Maȟpíya Lúta Lakȟól'iyapi Waúŋspewičhakhiyapi: teaching Lakota to Red Cloud Students

Red Cloud Indian School, a private school on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, developed the first comprehensive K-12 Lakota textbook curriculum in conjunction with the American Indian Studies Research Institute (AISRI) at Indiana University. This poster demonstrates how the curriculum is designed to teach students to speak, read, and write Lakota and to gain basic fluency in the Lakota language; the project strives to create language proficiency in all students by the time they graduate and cultivate a deep appreciation and understanding of Lakota history and traditions. This project is a contribution to the Lakota language community, and it is our way of adding to the many efforts of language revitalization and sustainability. RCIS is ensuring that our students, our parents, and our community are engaging with the language on a regular basis.

Kate Riestenberg (*Georgetown University)*
Task-based language teaching in support of Zapotec revitalization

This poster presents the design, execution, and results of implementing task-based language teaching in an after-school Zapotec language revitalization program in the community of San Pablo Macuiltianguis (Oaxaca, Mexico). The poster will cover the following themes: (1) the procedure undertaken to design and realize a needs analysis in the community, (2) the content of a three-day TBLT workshop with instructors, (3) the repository of teaching resources created through the workshop, (4) reactions from students, teachers, and community members collected through pre- and post-implementation interviews, and (5) challenges and lessons learned. This project has implications for linguists interested in the teaching and learning of indigenous languages as well as for indigenous language communities interested in task-based language teaching. It also lays the groundwork for future research on classroom-supported teaching and learning of Zapotec.

Yolanda Pushetonequa (University of Minnesota)
Meskwaki phonological change and orthography

In this poster I report on my study of Meskwaki phonology and orthography. In particular, I focus on the status of preaspiration, the status of semivowel deletion and word final vowel deletion. These processes are pervasive throughout the language; I examine nominal morphology in order to isolate these processes and I analyze data from current natural spoken discourse to look at acoustic properties of this phenomena. Previous research has described the predictable deletion of these phonemes in certain environments and suggested that a change is underway in the language (Goddard, 1988, 1991). I analyze the most recent changes and compare to Goddard's existing work, adding phonetic evidence to the picture. I conclude that while the sounds that undergo

deletion are still present in the grammar of many modern day speakers, evidence from younger speakers indicates semivowel deletion and word final devoicing are progressing to the point of complete loss for some speakers. The phonological evidence I provide supports existing claims that active phonological change patterns affect Meskwaki standard orthography. I argue that the recent changes cause this to be even more critical than ever with the potential for lasting implications. Additionally, I analyze preconsonantal glottal activity to provide measurable evidence supporting its phonemic status. I touch upon orthographic issues caused by the exclusion of certain phonemic segments such as those typically described as *hC* clusters. I use my findings to initiate a dialogue within the Meskwaki community about orthography, literacy, and sociolinguistic attitudes and preferences.

Konrad Rybka (University of Amsterdam)
Small grants, big steps: the development of the Lokono orthographic standard across the three Guianas

This poster visualizes the process of the development of the Lokono orthography in French Guiana, Suriname, and Guyana. Lokono is a critically endangered Arawakan language spoken in the three Guianas (Rybka 2015). The on-going orthography project, supported until now by small grants from the Society for Endangered Languages and the Endangered Languages Fund, is an attempt at the standardization and popularization of Lokono orthography in the three countries in order to pave way for subsequent revitalization activities. The goal of the poster is twofold. First, the poster traces through time and space the complex chain of activities aimed at developing an international orthographic standard for Lokono. Second, the poster speaks volumes for the importance and utility of small grants for language documentation and revitalization. The poster illustrates how small grants can be enmeshed into a project, ultimately bringing a snowball effect to language revitalization endeavors.

Logan Sutton (Indiana University Bloomington/ Nanbé Tewa Language Revitalization)
Shelece Easterday (University of New Mexico/Nanbé Tewa Language Revitalization)
Suprasegmentals and revising orthography in Nanbé Tewa

Nanbé Tewa is one of five distinctive dialects of Rio Grande Tewa, a Kiowa-Tanoan language spoken in New Mexico. Though the variety has fewer than 30 fluent speakers, it is characterized by particular phonological features that may enrich our understanding of suprasegmentals in Rio Grande Tewa and Kiowa-Tanoan. In this poster we present some of our observations and discuss the complications these entail for practical matters of community-oriented language documentation. One salient phonological feature is the distribution of the glottal stop. The syllable structure of the language allows only /ŋ/ and /ʔ/ to occur in word-final codas. /ʔ/ also occurs word internally, but is conspicuously restricted to preceding sonorants and voiced stops. The tendency for /ʔ/ to disappear in certain environments suggests an association with larger prosodic domains and status as a suprasegmental feature rather than a consonant. While a better understanding of suprasegmentals in Tewa can only improve the accuracy of pedagogical materials, it also raises questions of orthographic representation.

Emily Elfner (University of British Columbia*)*
Patricia A. Shaw (University of British Columbia)
Game‑based methodology for the study of intonational contours in Kwak'wala

Kwak'wala is a critically endangered First Nations language spoken in British Columbia, Canada. Our ELF-funded project seeks to document intonational patterns through recordings of conversational interactions between pairs of fluent Elders. As part of our goal to document intonational patterns in the language, we developed an interactional picture-guessing game in which two players are provided with identical sets of six pictures. The goal is to ask questions that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no' (optionally expanding the response into a full sentence) until the guesser has deduced which is the correct picture. In addition to generating a corpus of naturalistic speech that can be used for the study of intonational patterns, the game methodology has generated a significant body of data to enhance the paucity of documentation within a spontaneous conversational genre, and will be used in the development of pedagogical materials.

Zvjezdana Vrzić (University of Rijeka/New York University)
The effort of documenting and preserving Vlashki/Zheyanski language

This poster lays out the accomplishments and results of the long running community-oriented documentation and preservation project that was jumpstarted with an ELF grant obtained in 2014. With ELF funds, the presenter was able to carry out a pilot oral history and language documentation project in the Vlashki-speaking community in New York City. Vlashki is a name used by speakers for the language known as Istro-Romanian (ʀᴜᴏ) in linguistics, spoken in two locations on the peninsula of Istria in Croatia. The poster will present the accomplishments and products of the community-oriented project, such as language

workshops for children run by the speakers, language learning materials, yearly event dedicated to the language and culture, photography exhibition prepared using the photographs collected during interviewing, and the like.

Dmitri Funk (Moscow State University)
The ELF Small Grant and corpora of Shor epic texts

In December 2003 thanks to the ELF financial support of my project "The Last Epic Singer: recording of the last examples of the dying poetic language of Shors (Western Siberia, Russia)" there were recorded some examples of Shors heroic epics from an outstanding epic singer – kaichi Vladimir Egorovich Tannagashev (1932-2007). As a result, there exists a unique archive that consists of some 60 epic texts at full lengths or in short episodes as told/recorded by Tannagashev. Much later, in 2011-2014 a significant part of this treasure was placed into a database and published online which gave literally a new life to studying the Shor language and folklore. Eight epic tales originally recorded in 2003 remain unpublished, waiting in the wings, but the project sponsored by ELF still gave lots of materials and ideas that have been realized later on.

Martin Kohlberger (Leiden University/James Cook University)
Documenting endangered knowledge amongst the Shiwiar

Although the vast majority of ELF funding has been awarded to work with languages which are in imminent danger of disappearing, two ELF-funded projects centred on the Shiwiar language showcase the urgency of documentation even in cases where the language itself continues to be used vigorously by a community, but where cultural and ethnolinguistic knowledge is not being transmitted to younger generations.

Shiwiar is a Chicham language spoken by 1,200 people in Ecuador and Peru. Despite the vitality of the language, the last three decades have brought on a rapid change of lifestyle which has virtually halted the transmission of many aspects of traditional knowledge to younger generations. In two ELF-funded projects, endangered cultural knowledge (ethnobiology and toponymy) and endangered linguistic genres (incantations and avoidance registers) were documented. This case study highlights the importance of including knowledge and genre endangerment as critical areas within the scope of language endangerment.

Saudah Namyalo (Makerere University)
Small is never small for the poorest of the poor: lessons learnt from the documentation of Lunyara folktales

Lunyara is the native language of the Banyara. It is a Bantu language of the Niger-Congo language family. Lunyara is spoken in the central region of Uganda. The Banyara as an ethnic group are estimated to be 21,000 speakers (Lewis et al. 2016)). Lunyara is one of the most endangered of Uganda's indigenous languages. Though the language is still used for face-to-face communication within all generations, it is quickly losing users. The documentation of Lunyara folktales with a small grant such as that I received from ELF is a living testimony that *'SMALL IS NEVER SMALL FOR THE POOREST OF THE POOR'*. A successful completion of this project served as a catalyst towards the community's initiatives to revitalise and develop Lunyara. Drawing from the experiences gained during the project, some Lunyara speakers took on small self funded projects to save their language from extinction.

Adjaratou Oumar Sall (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar)
Doudou Diop (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar)
The Bedik and socialized flora: plants and funeral rites

Bedik are an ethnic group living in the hills of eastern Senegal, around Kedougou, in the District of Bandafassi. They are one of the smallest minority (about 3,380 in 2002) in Senegal. Bedik is one of the most endangered languages of the region. This work was done with ELF support for an ethnobotanical documentation of Bedik. Thanks to this support, we were able, as part of the documentation of Bedik culture, to set up an ethnobotanical database in Mënik-French-English. The ethnobotanical Bedik database highlights the relationship between the plant into the Bedik's environment and the cultural connotations regarding the name, use, and cultural beliefs. These data are an important contribution to the documentation and description of endangered and minority languages in Senegal and constitute a repository of language data of great value to future generation of researchers from the disciplines of natural science, botany, linguistics, and to community members alike.