

Colin Chappell

How do you say, “I love you” in !Xóõ?

Endangered language resources on the web

Federico Fellini once said that “Language is not only a different vocabulary. A different language is a different vision of life.”¹ How lucky we are to live on a planet that is currently home to nearly 7,000 different visions of life, each with a rich history and an irreplaceable capacity to express the collective wisdom and culture of a people. Our luck, however, may be quickly running out. According to UNESCO, over half of the world’s 7,000 languages will be extinct by the year 2100 if no action is taken to ensure their preservation.² The extinction of one language, one vision of life, is a tragedy. The impending extinction of so many languages is nothing short of a global cultural crisis.

Thus, there is an urgent need to document the world’s dying languages in lasting, durable ways. As the quote from Fellini makes clear, this does not simply mean creating a dictionary listing the words of a language. Languages don’t exist in a vacuum, and they certainly don’t exist (at least in a living sense) in a dictionary. Language is indistinct from the culture of which it is a part and from people who use it, and any effort to document a language must be as political as it is linguistic, as sociological as it is archival. In most cases, there is not a single reason why a language becomes endangered or extinct; it is more often a mix of several interrelated factors (language policy, lack of preservation resources, and language education, among others) that ultimately leads to the spread of

more dominant imperial languages and the death of smaller, more marginalized ones. The effort to preserve and revitalize the world’s endangered languages, spearheaded by intrepid linguists, archivists, ethnographers, politicians, professors, and countless others of all stripes around the world, is a monumental one.

The resources presented here, while only a tiny sample of those available on the topic, are intended to give some insight into how the incomparably complex and interdisciplinary issues of language endangerment and language revitalization are being confronted on local and global scales.

Language policy

• **Endangered Languages and Linguistic Diversity in the European Union (EU).** This 2013 EU Parliament report outlines policy initiatives adopted by the union to ensure the survival of its many endangered languages. Best practices for language resource sharing and examples of successful language revitalization programs from around the EU are highlighted. The report, however, concludes by noting that the “issues surrounding the promotion of minority and endangered languages will not be a priority area” in the EU over the next five years. *Access:* <http://www.europarl.europa>.

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eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/495851/IPOL-CULT_NT(2013)495851_EN.pdf.

- **Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (UDLR).** Drafted and adopted in 1996 by the writers' association PEN International, UDLR lays out the rights of all communities to preserve, maintain, and celebrate their native language(s). The Declaration argues that using one's native language and being a part of a language community are basic human rights. Though not a formal policy document, its intent was and still is to influence language policy by putting pressure on governments to recognize the rights of minority language groups. *Access:* <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/linguistic.pdf>.

- **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.** Though not limited to coverage of endangered languages, the resources on this website examine many issues that intersect with endangered language preservation and revitalization. The reports section of the site provides a good overview of just how many factors can play a role in the extinction of minority languages and cultures. *Access:* <http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>.

Language information

- **The Endangered Languages Project.**

The Endangered Languages Project was developed by Google and is now operated jointly by the First Peoples' Cultural Council and The Institute for Language Information and Technology at Eastern Michigan University. At the heart of the project's website is an interactive language map that allows users to see the geographic location of thousands of endangered languages and to access information, language samples, and additional resources. Much of the content (especially language samples and learning materials) is uploaded by users so content and coverage varies greatly between languages. *Access:* <http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/>.

- **The Enduring Voices Project.** A joint effort between *National Geographic* and the Living Tongues Institute, the Enduring Languages Project seeks to raise awareness

about *language hotspots*. A *hotspot* is defined as a region "having the greatest linguistic diversity, the greatest language endangerment, and the least-studied languages." In addition to audio recordings and general information about language endangerment, the site also has an evocative collection of portraits featuring the last speakers of some of the world's most endangered languages, bringing the urgency of language extinction home in a way only *National Geographic* can. *Access:* <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/enduring-voices/>.

- **Ethnologue.** Whether you're looking for information on Mandarin Chinese or Sentinelese, this website is an excellent resource. Though not specific to endangered languages, this ambitious effort (also available in print) is an attempt to catalog every known language in the world. The 18th edition contains information on 7,102 living languages as well as 367 languages that have been declared extinct since the catalog's first edition was printed in 1951. The site also has helpful introductions to language endangerment and language redevelopment issues. *Access:* <https://www.ethnologue.com/>.

- **UNESCO Endangered Languages Program.** The website of UNESCO's language revitalization efforts covers several aspects of language endangerment, including methodology for assessing language vitality and dozens of videos documenting native speakers. A big part of UNESCO's advocacy and revitalization efforts is its Interactive Map of Languages in Danger, which allows users to search for and locate languages by name, geographic location, number of speakers, and level of vitality. This is also an excellent resource for staying up-to-date on current UNESCO projects relating to language revitalization. *Access:* <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/>.

Research, advocacy, and training

- **Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project (HRELP).** Established by the SOAS, University of London in 2002 through funding provided by the cultural nonprofit

Arcadia, the primary mission of the HRELP is both “to document as many endangered languages as possible” and to train language documenters to do the same. The website of the project provides a wealth of information about language documentation grants, international events, and print and digital publications. *Access:* <http://www.hrelp.org/>.

- **Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages.** The Living Tongues Institute is a nonprofit research organization working to document, preserve, and revitalize endangered languages. The Institute’s website includes talking dictionaries of a handful of endangered languages as well as information and content related to major projects funded by the institute, like a project aimed at documenting Kallawayaya, a secret language spoken among itinerant healers in Bolivia. One of the organization’s principal efforts is the Enduring Voices Project developed jointly with National Geographic Mission Programs. *Access:* <http://livingtongues.org/>.



- **Our Mother Tongues.** The website accompanying filmmaker Anne Makepeace’s 2010 documentary *We Still Live Here*, about the revitalization of the Wampanoag language in southern Massachusetts. Dedicated to raising awareness of Native American language revitalization efforts, the site features videos of native speakers and e-postcards in 14 indigenous Native American languages. *Access:* <http://ourmothertongues.org/home.aspx>.

- **The Rosetta Project.** A self-described “exploration into very long-term archiving,” the Rosetta Project is an effort by San Francisco’s The Long Now Foundation to ensure the survival of the world’s languages in the face of digital obsolescence. In 2008, the organization unveiled its Rosetta Disk, a three-inch nickel object inscribed with 13,000 pages of data from 1,500 languages. An ever-expanding online companion to the disk is maintained at the Internet Archive. The site

is notable less as an academic resource and more as an example of innovative thinking in language documentation. *Access:* <http://rosettaproject.org/>.

Digital repositories

- **The Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America.** Grammars, dictionaries, field notes, and recordings of native speakers can be found for hundreds of indigenous Latin American languages on this site maintained by the University of Texas. Also notable is the excellent overview of indigenous languages in Latin America. Registration (free) is required to access all content. *Access:* <http://www.ailla.utexas.org/site/welcome.html>.

- **Documentation of Endangered Languages Archive (DOBES).** The number of languages covered in the DOBES Archive is significantly fewer than some of the other data archives and digital repositories discussed here, but the depth of coverage for each language is much greater. Detailed historical and cultural information, as well as images, videos, and language samples, are provided for roughly 60 languages. The DOBES Archive is part of the larger The Language Archive, an organization focused on issues in the description and digital preservation of language data. Registration (free) is required for access to some content. *Access:* <http://dobes.mpi.nl/>.

- **Endangered Languages Archive.** This digital archive was formerly a branch of the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project but is now operated by the SOAS Library at the University of London. The staff behind the archive has developed an excellent collection featuring audio, video, and text samples from dozens of endangered languages as well as maps, language information, and information about depositors. Content is uploaded by field researchers and information about the most recently updated collections can be found on the site’s homepage. Registration (free) is required to access most of the content, and, in some cases, individual rights must be obtained from depositors. *Access:* <http://elar.soas.ac.uk/>.

- **Open Language Archives Community Language Resource Catalog.** Federated digital archive allowing users to search for materials across 57 of the Internet's most prominent language repositories, both digital and traditional. *Access:* <http://www.language-archives.org/>.

- **Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC).** PARADISEC is a digital repository, funded largely by the Australian government, focused on conserving Australian and South Pacific indigenous language materials. Like many endangered language repositories, the language materials are deposited and the metadata is generated by independent field researchers. For those particularly interested in digital preservation, the website is notable for the information it provides on applying Open Archives Initiative metadata standards to digital language collections. *Access:* <http://www.paradisec.org.au/home.html>.

- **World Oral Literature Project (WOLP).** Though this collaboration between Cambridge University and Yale University stopped offering grants and accepting new language materials in March 2013, its website is still a goldmine of endangered language oral literature collections recorded over the last 80 years. In addition to more recent collections gathered during fieldwork funded by the project, the WOLP website contains dozens of heritage recordings, some dating back to the 1940s and 1950s. *Access:* <http://www.oralliterature.org/>.

Lectures, videos, and MOOCs

- **Enduring Voices YouTube Channel.** The YouTube channel of the Enduring Voices Project brings together the project's field recordings documenting native speakers and musicians of some of the world's most endangered languages, including a rap duo who blends Spanish with a dialect of Chile's endangered Huilliche language. *Access:* <https://www.youtube.com/user/EnduringVoices/featured>.

- **Language Revival: Securing the Future of Endangered Languages.** This

thought-provoking MOOC from the University of Adelaide provides an excellent and interactive introduction to the preservation and revitalization of endangered languages. All course content, including video lectures, transcripts, and assignments, can be accessed on the course website. Registration (free) is required with edX in order to take the course. *Access:* <https://www.edx.org/course/language-revival-securing-future-adelaide-x-lang101x#!>.

- **Wade Davis: Dreams from Endangered Cultures.** In this TED talk, National Geographic Explorer Wade Davis presents an invigorating argument for defending indigenous cultures and languages. Davis compares the loss of cultures and languages to the loss of biodiversity in the natural world and presents humorous and insightful stories from his own studies of endangered cultures. *Access:* http://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_on_endangered_cultures?language=en.

- **World Oral Literature Project Occasional Lecture Series.** Lectures from the World Oral Literature Project covering topics related to endangered languages and cultures. The collection contains nine audio files and one video file. *Access:* <http://www.sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1094157>.

Scholarly journals

- **Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.** Language policy and rights, minority group dynamics, multilingual accommodations, and language education are among the many themes covered by this peer-reviewed journal. *Access:* <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmmm20/current#.VdoA-q363Mt>.

- **Language Documentation and Conservation.** This open access journal published by the University of Hawai'i Press covers all aspects of language documentation, including data management, ethical issues, language archiving, and lexicography. *Access:* <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/>.

Blogs, electronic lists, and forums

- **Anggarrgoon.** Maintained by Yale

professor and linguist Claire Bowern (who also serves as vice president of the Endangered Language Fund), this blog provides a look at the fieldwork and research being done to preserve Australia's indigenous languages. Updates on publications, grants, and endangered language news items are often featured. *Access:* <https://anggaroon.wordpress.com/>.

• **Endangered Languages and Cultures.**

Fascinating and insightful blog covering all aspects of endangered languages and cultures, including issues in documentation, technology, language policy, and education. As the blog was started by faculty at the University of Sydney and remains connected to the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures, a majority of the posts are focused on endangered languages in Australia and the South Pacific. *Access:* <http://www.paradisec.org.au/blog/>.

• **Indigenous Languages and Technology (ILAT).** Electronic list that focuses on issues relating to the intersection(s) of technology and language revitalization. *Access:* <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cashcash/ILAT.html>.

• **The Linguist List.** The Linguist List is a major online forum, started in 1990, that focuses on the worldwide linguistics community. Information about conferences, publications, jobs, and other resources from around the world is posted frequently. Use the site's search function to find content related to endangered languages. *Access:* <http://linguistlist.org/>.

Notes

1. <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/05/movies/fellini-on-men-women-love-life-art-and-his-new-movie.html>.
2. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/>. ❧

"Making all the right moves . . ." (continues from page 551)

Liaison Program in an Academic Library," *College & Research Libraries* 61 no. 5 (2000): 439. See <http://crl.acrl.org/content/61/5/432.full.pdf+html>. "In summation, an effective liaison program should be comprehensive, yet detailed. It should be structured, yet provide room for flexibility. It should be well grounded in theory, yet based on proven experience."

7. Sturtevant, *The Artful Journey*, 55. I have slightly modified this list.

8. M. R. Tennant, L. C. Butson, M. E. Rezeau, P. J. Tucker, M. E. Boyle, and G. Clayton, "Customizing for Clients: Developing a Library Liaison Program from Need to Plan," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 89 no. 1 (2001): 8–20, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC31699/?tool=pmcentrez. Accessed December 1, 2014. A good reminder to tailor the plan, but does not include a useful methodology for faculty relationships.

9. Kenney proposes "focusing on outputs," ". . . but ultimately we need to shift from measuring how many departmental meetings one attends to how well integrated the liaison is in the life of the department." "Leveraging the Liaison Model." *Ithaka S+R*, 2014, 9.

10. *Ibid.*, 3. ❧

The advertisement for ALAJobLIST is presented in a grey rectangular box. At the top left is the ALA logo, and to its right is the word "JobLIST" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of "JobLIST" is a graphic of a bookshelf with several books. Below the title is the text "The #1 source for jobs in Library and Information Science and Technology". The main body of the ad is divided into two sections. The first section is titled "JOB SEEKERS" in bold. Below it, the text reads "Refine your search—easier advanced search options. Filter and sort hundreds of job ads." followed by "Create customized job alerts on the fly." The second section is titled "EMPLOYERS" in bold. Below it, the text reads "Strengthen your candidate pool—ALA reaches the most engaged professionals and students" followed by "Simplify recruitment—flat-rate pricing, multi-ad packages, optional enhanced postings for increased visibility." At the bottom of the ad, there are logos for ALA, HRDR, and ACRL. Below these is the text "american libraries" and "College & Research Libraries" with a stylized "news" logo. At the very bottom, the website address "joblist.ala.org" is displayed in a large, bold font.