THE LANGUAGE SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT

Authors

Anna Luisa Daigneault
Program Director
Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages

Daniel Bögre Udell
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Wikitongues

Kristen Tcherneshoff
Program Director
Wikitongues

Gregory D. S. Anderson
Co-Founder and President
Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages

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GETTING STARTED

Introduction

This Language Sustainability Toolkit was created by Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and Wikitongues. Living Tongues is one of the world's leading endangered language research organizations, providing online language learning and preservation tools such as electronic online multimedia dictionaries. Wikitongues is a global movement for language survival, helping people document, archive, and promote their languages online.

Wikitongues and Living Tongues believe that every person deserves the resources to keep their language alive, so we developed a process for you to measure the health of your language and build a strategy for people to keep speaking the language. In this toolkit, you'll learn about techniques that you can use to document your language, promote your language, and organize your community

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to speak your language. You'll also learn about success stories from around the world. The process of recording and storing your language can be called language documentation, and the process of keeping your language alive can be called language revival or language revitalization. All of those activities are key parts of language sustainability.

What is 'language sustainability'?

Language sustainability is a way to think about the lifelong goal of keeping your language alive. How do you teach your language to the next generation and make your community proud to speak it? Every community is unique and the path to language sustainability will be different for everyone. You may need to inspire people in your community to speak your language by creating books, films, music, and other media in your language. You may need to push your government to officially recognize your language, so that it becomes more widely respected. You may need to build immersive environments for your language, either in person or online, so that people in your community can easily use your language on a daily basis. Regardless of the strategy that you choose, remember: keeping your language alive is a long-

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term process that requires patience, perseverance, and hope. Let's get started.

Language Story: Tehuelche

Dora Manchado, the last fluent speaker of Tehuelche (aonekko 'a'ien), worked with linguistic anthropologist Javier Domingo (University of Montreal) in the final years of her life to record her knowledge of her language and culture. Upon her passing, Domingo wrote, "Dora knew perfectly well that language not only means interaction, but also trust, complicity, intimacy. She proved to me that language means sharing, and company. Thanks to the recordings she made, the rest of the community members now have, if they want, the possibility of affirming their past and reconstructing their identity."

Find your team

You can follow the steps in this toolkit by yourself, but we have found that language revival projects grow faster when people work together as a team. Working with other people can help expand your network, motivate you, give you more ideas, and increase your long-term productivity. Teamwork also builds up a community around your language, which is essential to keeping it alive. Locate other

like-minded people who can join you, either in person or online (or both). If possible, include people of different ages, genders, and professions. In the beginning, it is not necessarily important for you to be fluent in your language, but it is important that you and your team are excited about keeping your language alive. In the long run, it may be helpful to connect with at least one advanced or fluent speaker, if your language has any.

How to find your team

- Search for other speakers on Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, and other platforms.
- Search hashtags related to your language or culture on Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms.
- Reach out to local school teachers who teach your language.
- Find cultural organizations dedicated to promoting your language.
- Search on Global Voices and Rising Voices to read posts about your region; you may find like-minded language activists, writers, educators, and artists.
- Contact local universities with programs in history, anthropology, or linguistics. There may be professors or students there who study your language.

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Contact Living Tongues Institute and Wikitongues (hello@wikitongues.org)! We work with people all over the world and may be able to connect you with someone who works on your language.

After you find your team

Determine the best way to communicate and collaborate. What platform works best for you? Teams can use Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, Slack, or other platforms for getting in touch, and online workspaces like Google Docs, One Drive, or Dropbox to organize and share their content.

Plan regular meetings to share your progress and ideas. Having weekly or monthly meetings scheduled on your calendar builds momentum. Depending on your situation, these meetings may be online or in person, but they all help build the strength of your community and relationships with each other.

Decide what your language needs to thrive, and plan to make it happen over time.

In the following sections, we show you how to evaluate how healthy your language is, how to document your language, and how to promote it through activism and community organizing.

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Identify Challenges and Solutions

Every community faces different challenges to keeping their language alive. As you evaluate what your language needs, think about why your community is struggling to teach, speak, or use your language. This may be a difficult process. Here is a list of common challenges and potential solutions:

The number of speakers is declining
If there are few fluent speakers of your language or the majority of speakers are older, try recording interviews with elders and other fluent speakers and share that content online. This will be the beginning of language-learning materials. It may also inspire and encourage others, especially young people, to join you in learning and promoting your language.

For example
Language activists often submit their language videos to the Wikitongues Youtube channel.

Your community struggles with internalized shame
It is common for people to feel embarrassed or ashamed about speaking their language because

their culture has experienced severe forms of discrimination, oppression, or racism. Those feelings might run very deep. Changing those feelings over time means understanding the history of the language and the people who speak it, and the issues that speakers have faced over generations. Also, people may feel a sense of guilt when they try to learn the language, and are told that they are “not speaking correctly.” If people in your community are shy about speaking for some of these reasons, have private conversations with like-minded individuals to determine safe spaces where you can use your language and begin to restore a sense of pride in using it for yourself and for others.

For example
West Frisian activists in Leeuwarden, Netherlands led community language flash mobs, social media campaigns with local celebrities, and encouraged stores to give discounts for people who came in speaking West Frisian to build community pride in using the language.

Speakers are far apart
If you are not physically close to other speakers of your language or members of your culture, try using the internet to find language allies. See Find

Your Team for more ideas.

For example
Users of Black American Sign Language (BASL), who often live far apart, use a private Facebook group for discussing their language, speaking with each other, and creating new signs.

There is little or no financial support for your language
If there is little local support for your language or you can't find funding to document, archive, or teach your language, see the funding sources section for a list of foundations that may be able to help you financially. If you have never written a grant proposal, reach out to someone who has experience writing for advice. You can also think creatively about ways to generate money for keeping your language alive, such as monetizing a Youtube channel, creating a fundraiser event to help support the creation of new materials, or partnering with another group or company to raise funds.

For example
Bintou Camara, a language activist in Guinea, is raising money to revitalize her language, Nalu, by partnering with foreign embassies and companies

that are present in her community.

Your language's writing system is not standardized

For some languages, there might not be a standard writing system yet. There might also be technical issues involving certain special characters that aren't easy to use on computers or mobile devices yet (see step 4's "Digital Technology" section for a longer discussion on that topic). For some languages, there may even be multiple competing writing systems. Be aware that choosing a script can be an action that has political impacts in your community. Linguists can help guide the process of choosing a script, but ultimately it should be up to community members to make decisions about scripts. Example. In the Sora language (India), there are five competing writing systems. They are associated with different religious or political factions in the region. Resolving the issue of standardizing the writing system should come from within the Sora community and may take patience, negotiation, and time. It may turn out that the writing systems need to co-exist and be used in all the language resources, to be fair to people's preferences.

Your language has many unique dialects

If your language has several dialects, it is important to look at all dialects in the beginning of your revitalization project. Which dialect do you want to focus on? How do speakers of each dialect like to be represented? You may be able to include some (or all) of the dialects in your project, but in some cases, you'll want to develop separate resources for each individual dialect.
At Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, we are often asked about dialects and how they are presented in our electronic multimedia dictionaries. Some communities want their dictionary to contain several dialects, and we accommodate that. Other communities request to have a separate dictionary for each dialect, and we help facilitate that as well.

For example
Catalan has several distinct varieties, each with unique vocabulary and grammar. Catalan from Catalonia and Catalan from Valencia—also called Valencian—are promoted by separate organizations: the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and the Academica de la Llengua Valenciana.

The Yanesha' language (spoken in the southcentral Peruvian Amazon) has two dialects: upriver

and downriver. Yanesha' speakers, leaders, and educators have decided that the two dialects are similar enough that they can all share the same educational resources such as dictionaries and schoolbooks. Dialectical differences are identified in the materials.

Your language lacks educational materials

If it is difficult to find any educational resources in your language, try working with local educators, artists, and community organizers to create learning materials like children's books, dictionaries, and grammars. You can also start by translating existing educational resources into your language.

For example

Artists and storytellers in Haiti and Rwanda work closely with Nabu, a children's literacy non-profit, to publish children's books in Haitian Creole and Kinyarwanda.

Your language isn't politically recognized

Many governments prioritize dominant languages. They might not support smaller minority languages, or they might actively try to erase them. If your government doesn't recognize or support your language, and political activism is

allowed in your country, try contacting a local lawyer who can show you how to petition for language recognition. Sometimes, legal work is available pro bono (for free). You may also decide that political recognition is unnecessary and other forms of support and revitalization take priority.

For example
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kihunde language activist Hangi Bulebe successfully rallied his community to introduce Kihunde in primary schools, despite the absence of government recognition for the language.

Depending on your situation and your country's history, some (or all) of the above challenges may threaten the future of your language. It's impossible for one person to solve all of these problems alone, but that's where your team comes in. By working together, you can divide the work, focus on your individual skills, rely on each other's strengths, and ensure a strong, resilient, and long-term effort to keep your language alive. Talking with your team or community about what your language needs might be the first step to making a difference. Is your language being spoken in the streets, or used in online spaces? Remember that you and your team might be the first ones to

bring the language back into the public. Future generations will be grateful for the work that your team does to keep your language alive.

Worksheet Questions

How do you engage with your language?
Who do you speak it with? Where do you speak it?
Who would you like to speak it with in the future?
Is there a sense of “internalized shame” in your community about the language? Do you know why that feeling exists (or does not exist)?
Do you feel proud of your language? If so, what are things about your language that you love? If not, what are things about your language that you struggle with?
Who in your community, or online, would be on your dream team for language revival?
What other roadblocks (or challenges) does your language face?
What are some solutions that can help you?

Assess your language’s health

When you start a revitalization project, take time to reflect on the health of your language. If your language has few speakers and little

documentation, prioritize the creation and preservation of audio and video recordings so that future speakers may use those materials. For example, today's speakers of nearly dormant languages such as Tutelo-Saponi, Cornish, Tunica-Biloxi, and Wendat relied on decades-old dictionaries, publications, and recordings to revive their languages in their communities.

Linguists tend to describe language health according to the scale below. Remember that these categories are here to help us understand what is happening to a language over time. Languages can shift from one category to another. You and your community have the power to keep your language alive.

Language Status

Healthy / Thriving

There is a stable or growing community with speakers of all generations. Your community's youngest members still learn and use your language.

Threatened

There is a small but semi-stable community of speakers. There are still younger people learning the language. Note: a language can be threatened

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even if it has a large speaker community.

Endangered
No children speak the language at all. That means that they are learning a different language when they begin to speak.

Highly Endangered
The youngest speakers are over the age of 40.

Moribund
The youngest speakers are over the age of 60.

Dormant / Awakening
There are no more fluent living speakers left, but some social uses of the language still remain, or there is a heritage identity associated with the use of the language.

Extinct
There are no more fluent living speakers left, no parts of the language are being used at all, and there is no sense of heritage identity associated with the language. For example: Sumerian is an extinct language.

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Worksheet Questions

Are young children and teenagers learning your language? Where?

Are adults learning it as well? Where are they learning it?

If few people are speaking the language, what caused this?

What dominant language(s) might be replacing the language?

How many speakers of your language are there?

If you don’t know, where can you find that information?

What health category do you think your language is in?

If the language is becoming more threatened over time, how could you help increase the interest in reviving it?

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DOCUMENT YOUR LANGUAGE

Gather Available Language Materials

Every community working to keep their language alive has one thing in common: documentation, so their language can be shared and taught. Before you create new documentation, find out what materials already exist in your language and try to collect them. You can make physical photocopies or download digital copies that you can store online using a cloud service, like Dropbox or Google Drive, for everyone on your team to access. Through this process, you will see what has been done already, and what still needs to be done. If you don't know where to start, contact local educators and professors to see who can help you find materials. Local libraries and universities may have resources in your language.

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You may also find materials online at any of the following websites:

ELCat (Endangered Languages Catalog)
Glottolog
OLAC
Wikitongues
YouTube
PARADISEC
ELAR
DELAMAN
DoBeS
First Languages Australia
AILLA
Living Tongues Educational Resource Page

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Language Materials Checklist

- Print dictionary
- Online multimedia dictionary
- Educational grammar used to make curriculums
- Audio recordings of words, phrases, natural conversation, and interviews
- Video recordings of oral histories, daily activities, and interviews with speakers
- Musical recordings with lyrics
- Educational materials for students
- Stories (recorded and written in text, when available)
- An ISO code (for digitization and browser recognition)
- Glottocode (for academic/archival recognition)
- UNICODE recognition (for digitization)
- Fonts for your language's script, if your language uses a script
- Access to a keyboard in your language
- Advanced Digital Tools such as spellchecker and predictive text
- Comprehensive grammar (optional)

Recording Oral History Videos

Recording an oral history is a core component of what we call 'early stage' language documentation: it shows the language as it is naturally spoken.

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Those looking to both researchers and learners access to a language's features, its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Perhaps most importantly, oral histories can offer a look into the life of a speaker or a community.

Technical Guidelines

Whether you're using a professional camera and audio recorder, or just a smartphone, remember:

Clean audio is essential

It's important to record your interview with minimal background noise and audio interference. Avoid crowded hallways, busy streets, or background music.

Stick to landscape dimensions

Though it is common for people to use portrait ratios when recording with smartphones, it is better to film with landscape dimensions, with your phone horizontal rather than vertical. This is better for online media players. The video should be framed to the upper body of the speaker(s) or wider.

Smartphones make great audio recorders

If you have access to a professional camera, but lack professional audio equipment, your phone

can be used to record external audio. For iOS devices, we recommend iTalk. For Android, we recommend Audio Recorder.

How to safeguard your oral history

If you are recording content in a language that has very little existing documentation, you may want to consider officially archiving it for future generations as well. You can archive any oral history content at wikitongues.org/submit-a-video. You can also have a look at Archiving for the Future. According to their website, it is a training course that is "designed to teach language documenters, activists, and researchers how to organize, arrange, and archive language documentation, revitalization, and maintenance materials and metadata in a digital repository or language archive. The entire course can be completed in approximately 3-5 hours."

How to Caption and Translate Oral Histories

Transcription versus Translation

Transcript refers to the text of your interview in the language(s) spoken rendered into some means of writing it, that is, the actual words used in the language(s), while a translation is a rendering of the meaning of the content of the video transcript into another language. If you can, create a

transcript of your language(s) as spoken in the recording and a translation into an international language. You can do this in person or afterwards by email or phone.

Ideal file type for subtitles

The best way to create transcripts and translations is with .SRT files. These types of files sync automatically with most video and media players to create subtitles.

How to format .SRT files

Each subtitle is formatted with three line breaks:

The numerical sequence counter: 1 , 2 , 3 , and so on.

The opening and closing time markers, which are formatted as Hours:Minutes:Seconds: Milliseconds and joined by --> .

The raw text of the subtitle.

Subtitles should contain fewer than 40 characters per line of text. You can use websites such as https://wordcounter.net to double check your lines.

Example

```
“Hello, my name is Joana. I am from
Tarragona and Catalan is my mother
tongue. I also speak Spanish and
```

English.” is formatted like this:

```
1
00:00:01,00 --> 00:00:03,00
Hello, my name is Joana.

2
00:00:03,03 --> 00:00:11,00
I am from Tarragona
And Catalan is my mother tongue.

3
00:00:11,06 --> 00:00:14,00
I also speak Spanish and English.
```

How to create subtitles

To create an .SRT file, open up your preferred text editor on your computer (for example: Word or Pages) and divide your transcript or translation by the lines they would appear as subtitles. When you’re done creating your .SRT file, save it with the file extension .srt. Most default text editors will generate .srt files seamlessly, but you may have problems using Microsoft Word. We recommend using Sublime Text, which is free for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers.

Non-Latin Characters

.SRT files support any character set supported by Unicode, so whether your transcript or translation uses the Cyrillic alphabet, Arabic script, or any other writing system, it will work with .srt formatting.

Oral History Elicitation Protocol

Goals

Many threatened languages around the world have very little video documentation of fluent speakers speaking the language. Recording an oral history is therefore a time capsule of useful information and fascinating content that can serve future generations in their language and cultural revitalization efforts. To serve the process of language documentation, the main goals of recording an oral history are to capture natural, connected speech in a specific language, and also to document a person's cultural knowledge about traditions and ways of life that are at risk of disappearing. An oral history may also capture many other interesting facets of life, including a person's relationships with their kin, their contemporary perspective on their language and culture and changes in their community. Please keep these goals in mind as you interview yourself or a person in your family or community.

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Oral History Questions

Please answer the questions below in the language you are documenting. These answers should be filmed on video and multiple copies should be stored on digital hard drives for safekeeping. If you are interviewing yourself, please speak in the native tongue that you are documenting (and not another language that you might know). If you are interviewing someone else and they switch to the regional contact language or dominant language, respectfully steer them back to speaking their native language for the sake of the language documentation process.

Full Version of this Questionnaire

Completing the full questionnaire will take various interview sessions with a speaker, and may take anywhere from 8-12 hours to complete (maybe much more, depending on the speaker). Only attempt to do the full questionnaire if you know that a speaker has a lot of time and energy to invest into doing the full questionnaire over the course of an agreed upon period of time. For example, you could agree to meet the speaker once a week for one or two hours, and then make progress over time. Do not rush through the questionnaire, but allow a person to take the time they need to respond to a given question.

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Lean Version of this Questionnaire

If you only have 1-2 hours with a speaker of a language, you have limited time and you will not be able to ask them all of the questions in this document. Please read through the questionnaire and select in advance only one or two questions from each section. Or, you may choose to only cover one section of the document.

Section 1: Early Life & Identity

Birth and culture

When and where were you born? (Keep in mind in some places in the world, such as Papua New Guinea, it is not socially acceptable to ask a person's name and age when you first meet them.)

What is your family's cultural background? (Do your mother and father come from the same ethnicity or from different ethnicities?) Please describe in detail.

What is your family's religious background? Was religion observed in your home? If religion was observed in your home, how was it observed?

Language(s)

Which languages did your parents speak during your childhood? Which languages did your grandparents speak?

What are the native languages that you learned

to speak fluently while growing up? What other languages did you understand but did not necessarily speak fluently?
Describe your current relationship with your language(s). Do you feel a strong cultural connection to any of the languages that you speak?

Community, Origins and Migration

Describe the community (or communities) you grew up in. Was it urban or rural?
Other than your own cultural group, what other cultural groups lived in your community? Other groups can include people from different religions, ethnicities, castes, etc.
Does your family originate from the place you grew up, or from a different place? What do you know about that place? Have you ever visited it?

Family Memories & History

What do you remember about your grandparents?
Did you grow up hearing about any of your early ancestors whom you never met?
Have you lived through any major historical events? Describe how you and your family were affected by these events.

Economics

What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember any times when your family faced economic difficulties? Please describe.

What skills and activities did you learn while you were growing up? Who taught you these skills? Skills and activities can include fishing, hunting, farming, cooking, carpentry, crafts, weaving, specific sports, and many other important things.

Education & Pastimes

What were your favorite subjects in school?

Describe your sibling(s) and your interactions with them when you were young. Were you very close in age? Did you attend school together?

What did you do in your spare time during your adolescence?

Food

What are some of the foods you ate when you were growing up?

Who prepared these foods for your family?

Section 2: Adult Life & Changes Over Time

Occupation

What occupation(s) did you want to pursue

when you were a child? Why?
Describe your current occupation. Where do you work?
Describe how you chose your occupation. Do you wish to stay in this occupation?
What are some of the difficulties related to your job/employment?

Local Celebrations

What festivals does your family celebrate in a normal year?
Can you describe some of your local friends?
What kinds of activities do you do together?

Family Life & Health

If you are in a relationship, how did you meet your current partner (husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, significant other)? What brought you together?
Are you married? If so, can you describe your wedding celebration?
Did you have children? If so, how many children do you have, and how old are they?
What types of sports, games and pastimes have you been involved with in your life?
How do you maintain your level of health?
What are your favorite foods that are unique to your culture or region?

Qualities

Describe your personality. What are some of your strengths?
What things in your life are the most important to you right now?
What qualities do you look for in your friendships and relationships?
Are there any cultural or humanitarian causes that are important to you? Please describe.

Future Goals

What are your immediate goals for the future?
What are your long-term goals for yourself and your family?

Reflections on Change

How have you changed since your childhood?
How has your community changed since your childhood?

Changes to Language and Culture

What aspects of your language do you find unique?
How do different generations of your community interact with their language?
What changes do you think might happen to your culture and language in the near future?
Do you have any advice for future generations?

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Section 3: Cultural Topics

Storytelling

Are stories in your language written in books, or are they mostly told orally?

In which places and during which events do you hear stories told in your language?

Can you tell me a folktale that you remember hearing as a child or adolescent?

Are there any particular authors or storytellers in your language who are important to you? Please describe.

Music

Please describe the traditional music of your culture. What instruments are used?

How does the music make you feel? Are there any particular musicians who are important to you?

Are you a musician, or do you know any musicians personally?

What other musical styles did you grow up listening to?

When do you listen to music in your daily life, and how do you access it? Do you listen to musicians in person, or do you listen to recorded music?

Food

Are food and cooking important in your life?
What are some foods from your culture that you highly recommend?
Who taught you how to cook?

Fashion, Clothing, and Textiles

Describe the traditional clothing of your culture.
What clothing and clothing styles did you grow up with?
Do you currently wear any traditional clothes? Please describe if you wear them everyday or for specific occasions. If on specific occasions, which occasions?
Describe any pieces of clothing that hold a particular significance to you.

Gender Identity and Expression

What genders are recognized in your community?
How are the genders of your community expected to conduct themselves?
Are genders in your community today the same as when you were a child?

Section 4: Daily Life & Environment

Describe a typical day in your life (this year).
Describe your appearance and choice in

clothing for daily activities.
What are your preferred methods of transport?
Do you enjoy traveling ? How do you get to work?
Describe the architecture of your area, as well as the traditional architecture of your culture.
Describe the physical geography of your area.
Describe the kinds of animals that live in your area.
Describe the kinds of plants that live in your area.
What big technological advancements have you experienced? Which have been the most meaningful to you and why?
What are your preferred modes of communication? How have methods of communication changed during your life?
Is there any other information that you would like to share about your daily life?

Creating a Lexicon

Introduction

Many languages are under-documented, so there is an urgent need to create a reference resource like a dictionary, which contains the lexicon of the language: the words and their meanings. You, or a member of your core team, can begin this

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process by creating a list of written vocabulary and phrases. These can later be used to create dictionaries and other learning materials—even a curriculum. Keep reading for suggestions about where to publish your lexicon materials, as well as a vocabulary elicitation protocol (or foundational word list) to help you get started.

Where to Publish

To keep a local copy of your lexicon, you can download the Living Tongues Master Elicitation list to print or edit offline on your device. You can also create a free, multimedia lexicon by using Living Dictionaries, an online dictionary-builder created by Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages. Living Dictionaries are collaborative multimedia tools that can help languages survive for generations to come. Ideal for safeguarding Indigenous as well as diasporic languages, Living Dictionaries are never out-of-print, infinitely expandable resources. They go beyond the limits of a static print dictionary by combining language data with digital audio recordings of native speakers, accompanied by digital photos and videos. Living Dictionaries address the urgent need to provide comprehensive, free online tech tools that can assist language communities simultaneously in conservation

efforts and revitalization programs. This platform can accommodate everyone from seasoned field linguists to emerging language activists. The intended target audience of this web app is inclusive, diverse, and multilingual. The interface is available for use in a growing number of dominant languages, and allows for several hundred glossing languages. Go to https://livingdictionaries.app to find out more.

Vocabulary Elicitation Protocol

This list is for language activists who are seeking a clear starting point for documenting a language anywhere in the world. The words in this list are called targets—meaning that you are aiming to target and record the corresponding term in the language you are documenting. The resulting words and phrases you will gather are called forms. The process of documenting forms in this way is called elicitation. We suggest recording this process using an audio recorder and a video camera, and taking notes as you go along. Please record each form twice so you can get a clear pronunciation of the form. We estimate that it could take an activist anywhere from 4-8 hours to record this full list with a speaker, depending on their available time and level of fluency. We encourage you to plan several sessions with a

speaker ahead of time. If you see a term that is not useful or relevant to your language, community or region, please feel free to skip it, or swap it for something else that is more relevant. There may also be many additional words that you want to add to this list.

You do not have to be a trained linguist to elicit and record this list. We advise that you check your recordings and notes for quality and accuracy. If the speaker misses a target and provides you with a word that has a different meaning from what was requested, take note of that and make adjustments as needed. Confirming the authenticity of forms independently with more than one speaker is a necessary part of language documentation. Ideally, you can conduct this process in reverse as well: asking what the target means in the contact language. If there is a writing system (alphabet) for this language that you are not familiar with, you may also need to ask for expert local advice to correctly represent these words correctly in their written form. If you are seeking to represent the sounds of these targets using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and you do not have a background in phonetics, you will need to request the assistance of a linguist trained in phonetic transcription. Elicitation takes time, patience, and

diligence, so don’t be discouraged!

In Parts 1 to 11, we provide a range of lexical lists that are organized by core groups of meanings (in semantic domains such as body parts, kinship terms, etc) and other sets of targets. In Part 12, we provide a brief list of verbal paradigms to elicit, so that you can approach the study of the language’s grammar. Some people like to assign an ID number to each target, especially if they are collecting the same data in multiple languages, so they can compare the data systematically. While we did not include ID numbers in this short list, you can assign ID numbers for your targets if you want to. This document is by no means a complete or comprehensive list for documenting an entire language. This is a shorter version of our Master Elicitation list that we suggest using for in-depth documentation projects (feel free to bookmark that link). Specific regional sublists are under development and will be tailored to relevant regions contexts and posted on the Master Elicitation page. Our goal with this shortened “Global List” is to provide a vocabulary and grammar list that serves communities world-wide. This list was initially conceived to document South Asian languages and then was adapted to serve a global audience.

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You can also download this multilingual spreadsheet version of the same list below. This spreadsheet contains the prompts in English, French, and Spanish. It can also be used to import a batch of content to a Living Dictionary.

Master Elicitation List begins on the next page.

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Part 1: Body Parts

head	bosom/breast	diarrhea
hair	rib	heel
chin	shoulder	hip
ear	shoulder blade	knee
eye	buttocks	leg
eyebrow	waist	thigh
nose	bone	foot
mouth	blood	toe
cheek	intestines	toenail
beard	lung	mucus
brain	stomach	cough
neck	skin	finger
skull	anus	fingernail
tongue	penis	fist
tooth	scrotum	forearm
heart	hand	little finger
chest	armpit	thumb
arm	elbow	ankle
back	urine	testicles
backbone	vomit	vagina
belly	excrement	milk
semen	saliva	sweat

Part 2: Universe and the Natural World

air	dawn	fire
cave	day	full moon
cloud	east	gold

ground
hail
hive
hole
snow
south
star
stone
summer
sun
valley
water
year
honey
lightning
malaria
meat
moon
mountain
mud
nest
night
north
ocean, sea
pond
puddle
rain
rainbow
river
rock
salt
sand
shell
forest
fruit
grass
leaf
lime
root
thorn
tree
(fire)wood
Trail
waterfall
west
wind
winter
sky
smoke
bark
branch
flower

Part 3: Animals

ant
bat
bear
bee
bird
boar
butterfly
chicken
chicken egg
cockroach
crab
crocodile
lice, body
louse, head
lizard
louse
meat
monkey
crow
dog
duck
eagle
egg
fat

feather
female
fish
flea
fly (noun)
frog
goose
hawk
insect
intestinal
parasite
leech
worm
mosquito
mosquito larva
mouse
pig
rat
red ant
snake
sow
spider
tiger
toad
turtle
tusk
ant
ant hill
wild boar
wing

Part 4. Kinship and Relationships

daughter
son
father
mother
brother
younger brother
elder brother
sister
younger sister
elder sister
wife
husband
hunter
dead body
chief
maternal
grandfather
maternal
grandmother
paternal
grandfather
paternal
grandmother
maternal aunt
maternal uncle
paternal aunt
paternal uncle
man
woman
girl
boy
people
tribe
twin
brother-in-law
sister-in-law
daughter-in-law
son-in-law
father-in-law
mother-in-law
child
baby
old person
gray-haired
person
enemy
friend
ghost

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shaman
thief

Part 5. Numerals

one
two
three
four
five
six
seven
eight
nine
ten
eleven
twelve
fourteen
fifteen
nineteen
twenty
thirty
forty
fifty
sixty
seventy
eighty
ninety
hundred
five hundred
seven hundred
thousand
first
second
third
fourth

Part 6. Daily Life

arrow
ash(es)
axe
bag
basket
bow
bowstring
bridge
broom
cage
comb (n)
drum
death
dream
name
fence
fishnet
flute
garden
grave
hammock
hat
hearth, cooking
pit / fire
embers
house
hut
knife
smell
word
pain
magic
money

net	song	fan
pipe	spear	language
roof	village	story
sharpening tool	ladder	itch

Part 7. Colors

black	green	yellow
blue	red	
brown	white	

Part 8. Pronouns

that	how	where
this	how many	which
then	how much	who
there	what	why
here	when	

Part 9. Adverbials

today	tomorrow	every day
tomorrow	day before	never
yesterday	yesterday	no
now	at night	yes
day after	in morning	

Part 10. Adjectives

all	awake	beautiful
alone	bad	better
another	bald	blind

boiled
impossible
kind
fat
flat
free

Part 11. Verbs

answer
arrive
ask
bark (dog)
be blind
begin
bite
bleed
blow
born, be
break (vi)
break (vt)
breathe
gather
Give
give birth
give greetings
go
go to sleep
grind
have
have breakfast
have children
have cold
have diarrhea
have fever
perspire
play
poor, be
pregnant, be
prepare
prepared, be
press
pull
sell
send
separated, be
set on fire
sharpen
sing
sit down
smell (v)
sneeze
sniff
snore
speak
spit (v)
stop
thirsty, be
throw
tie
push
put
quiet, be
raise
receive
recognize
remain
return
run
salivate
save
say
see
burn (vi)
burn (vt)
bury
buy
catch
chew
choose
close

comb (v)
come
cook
copulate (have sex with)
heat (v)
help
hidden, be
hide
hold
hot, be
hungry, be
hunt
ill, become
kick
kill
killed, be
kiss
know
know each other
laugh
leave
lie (down)
lie (tell untruth)
make
need (v)
nurse (v)
obey
open
tear
think
cough
cry
cut
defecate (shit)
die
dig
do
dream
drink
drunk, be
drunk, get
dry
eat
enter
escape
fall
fear
feed
fight
find
finish
fly (v)
freed, be
frighten
fry
have hiccups
have itch
Hear
trap (v)
try
understand
undress
urinate (piss)
vomit
walk
want
wash clothes
wash hair
wash hands
wash self
wash someone
watch (v)
wet, become
Yawn
pass the night
pay
swim
take
talk

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Part 12: Elicitation of Grammar (Verbal Paradigms)

The list of verbs below represents a starting point for understanding a language's grammar. It is by no means a comprehensive list to study verbs in a particular language. We use the first person singular pronoun "I" and the third person plural "the women" to show agreement in the verbs. We are asking for the following types of verbs: a transitive verb (phrase) with a subject that controls the action (cut the fish), a transitive verb with an undergoer subject (be scared of), an intransitive verb with an active or controlling subject (run) and one intransitive verb with a subject that experiences the action (to be hungry). We include negative forms of each verb as well, and we use adverbs such as now, yesterday, and tomorrow to trigger verb tenses, if such tenses exist in the language (note: many languages lack tenses).

CUT

I am cutting the fish (now)

the women are cutting the fish (now)

Yesterday I cut the fish

Yesterday the women cut the fish

Tomorrow I will cut the fish

Tomorrow the women will cut the fish

I am not cutting the fish (now)

The women are not cutting the fish (now)
Yesterday I did not cut the fish
Yesterday the women did not cut the fish
Tomorrow I will not cut the fish
Tomorrow the women will not cut the fish

BE SCARED OF

I am scared of the dog (now)
The women are scared of the dog (now)
Yesterday I was scared of the dog
Yesterday the women were scared of the dog
Tomorrow I will be scared of the dog
Tomorrow the women will be scared of the dog
I am not scared of the dog (now)
The women are not scared of the dog (now)
Yesterday I was not scared of the dog
Yesterday the women were not scared of the dog
Tomorrow I will not be scared of the dog
Tomorrow the women will not be scared of the dog

RUN

I run (now)
The women run (now)
Yesterday I ran
Yesterday the women ran
Tomorrow I will run
Tomorrow the women will run
I do not run (now)

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The women do not run (now)
Yesterday I did not run
Yesterday the women did not run
Tomorrow I will not run
Tomorrow the women will not run

BE HUNGRY

I am hungry (now)
The women are hungry (now)
Yesterday I was hungry
Yesterday the women were hungry
Tomorrow I will be hungry
Tomorrow the women will be hungry
I am not hungry (now)
The women are not hungry (now)
Yesterday I was not hungry
Yesterday the women were not hungry
Tomorrow I will not be hungry
Tomorrow the women will not be hungry

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PROMOTE YOUR LANGUAGE

Determine Your Language Goals

What Do You Want For Your Language?

Take a moment to answer the following questions regarding your language revitalization project. This can be done individually, or with your core team.

What kinds of events could be good settings for the language to be used?

Do you want more people to speak your language? If so, how many?

How can you use the Internet to locate other speakers of your language?

Can you make a public call-out on a radio station? How else can you use the radio to share your language?

Can you and your team use social media and community forums to organize events? What types of immersion events can you create, either physically or online?

Cultural and Linguistic Media

Media are a great tool for promoting your language, teaching your language, and sharing your language. If your language lacks media, decide which channels and platforms are best for your community. Observe what media people in your community like, and imagine what you could create in your language that would be similar. Examples of media include:

Recorded music

The Peruvian rapper Liberato Kani produces music in his ancestral language, Quechua, rather than Spanish.

Radio shows and podcasts

Indigenous Media Foundation in Nepal broadcasts in 20+ Indigenous languages of Nepal. Nick Wapachee launched a Cree-only podcast for his community.

Online language-learning platforms

Indigenous languages such as Maori, Scots Gaelic, Hawaiian, Quechua, Navajo, and Lakota are featured on educational platforms, with online courses, flashcards, and games available. Read more here: A Guide To Learning Indigenous and Under-Resourced Minority Languages by Living

Tongues.

Television, animation and movies
Members of the Haida language movement produced a feature film entirely in their language: SG̲ aawaay K̲’uuna, or “Edge of the Knife”.
Also, check out the Amazonimations series: a collaborative research project that brings together anthropologists, animators, artists, and Indigenous people.

Online videos
In addition to editing Wikipedia in Basque, Aiora Probatxoa manages a Basque-language YouTube channel to engage younger speakers of their language.

Only text feeds
Telegram and Twitter feeds are easy ways to publish in your language on a daily basis. For example, L’Office du Jèrriais uses Twitter to promote the Jèrriais language online by posting memes, language facts, and other engaging content. With about 1500 followers, almost a third of the entire Jerriàis-speaking world is online.

Wikipedia
In 2001, Catalan activists became the first to

publish on Wikipedia into a language other than English. In 2020, the Nyoongar language activist Ingrid Cumming is translating Wikipedia so that young people in the community can read entries and learn in their own language, rather than English.

Interactive websites

This website teaches vocabulary in Marra, an Australian Aboriginal language. Kanienkeha.net is an open-source site that teaches Kanien'keha (Mohawk), a First Nations language spoken in Canada.

Video games

Mushroom 11 allows people to play in Algonquin, Inuktitut, and Anishinaabemowin. Singuistics is a singing game that released a Gwich'in edition. Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace is an Aboriginally determined research-creation network in Canada whose goal is to ensure Indigenous presence in the web pages, online environments, video games, and virtual worlds that comprise cyberspace.

Books and poetry

WriteOurWorld encourages kids to publish e-books in their language. Nabu works with storytellers

and illustrators from around the world to publish children's books in their languages.

Comic books and graphic novels
Far Lombard is translating and publishing graphic novels in Lombard. Kiyindou Yamakasi created a comic book in Nigerian Pidgin, exploring Yoruba mythology.

Performance art and dance
The Khakas language theater performances in Khakassia, Russia are some of the only sanctioned ways that local people can engage with their native language. Another great example is the popularity of the Haka dance: it is a type of Māori war dance traditionally used to showcase pride, strength and unity. Learn Native American dance traditions online with Pow Wow Sweat.

Traditional Sports
Many Indigenous sports are making a resurgence in the public eye. Learning terminology related to the sport, or traditional game, may be a great way to access the languages. An example of this is the World Indigenous Games.

Awareness Campaigns & Signage
You can use social media to promote knowledge

of traditional names for places, animals, and plants in your language. In Winnipeg, Canada, Michael Redhead Champagne is promoting Cree-language signs at the local zoo. Some university campuses in North America feature signs in Indigenous languages.

Digital Technology

This section is about the necessary first steps for expanding digital technology to support your language for use on computers and mobile devices. Are you able to easily use your language online or on your devices? Here is an initial set of questions to help you identify steps to advance your language's digital self-determination.

Does your language have an ISO 639-3 code?
The UN-affiliated International Standards Organization maintains three-letter codes for over 7,000 languages. Web and software developers use these codes to teach computers and other devices to recognize different languages. Search the ISO 639-3 code set for your language. If your language doesn't have an ISO 639-3 code, apply for recognition here.

Why does this matter?

If your community is digitally active, it is important to have the ability to use your language on your devices. Without an ISO code, it is impossible to translate operating systems and software interfaces, or even get support for tools like Google Translate. An ISO code creates access to these opportunities.

Is a Unicode-supported font available in your language?

Even if your computer doesn't have your language's writing system pre-installed, it is possible that there are fonts for your language. Start by searching for your language on Google Noto or Brill two multilingual fonts that each support more than 500 writing systems. If Unicode fonts are not available, you can work with font designers and people within the technical industry to create font(s) to support text using the script(s). Desktops and laptops allow installation of downloadable fonts. Note that many mobile devices may not directly support font installation.

Why does this matter?

A supported font is required to display characters on screens. Using Unicode fonts further ensures that you have support for languages that have

extended character sets.

Is it easy to type in your language?

Google Virtual Keyboard has over 100 keyboards for 70 different languages to use on your computer with the Chrome browser. If your language does not have a standardized font, consider contacting Debbie Anderson at the Script Encoding Initiative for help getting started.

Why does this matter?

When people are unable to type in their language, it is common for them to slowly shift to another language. For example, in Ethiopia, most devices don’t come with the Ge’ez script pre-installed. As a result, there has been a slow shift toward using the Roman alphabet online, which has caused a language shift towards English among young people. The ability to type and text in your language is central to keeping it alive in the digital age.

Are keyboards with autocorrect available on your phone?

Many smartphones have a certain amount of languages which you can install to your keyboard within the settings. For keyboards not already included with your phone, vist Gboard, the

Google Keyboard for mobile. It has support for many languages on both iOS and Android. If there is not a phone keyboard available for your language, consider working with people in the technical industry to develop a keyboard or input method. Here are good resources to help you begin: Keyman, Microsoft Keyboard Builder, and SIL Ukelele. Note that installing a keyboard or another input method from the internet may introduce security risks. If your language already has an ISO code, fonts, and a keyboard available, advanced language technologies are available to further digitize your language: speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and machine translation. For further information, visit the Language Digitization Initiative.

Why does this matter?
The ability to text and use social media in your language is important for digital longevity. Autocorrect is helpful for daily use and a useful tool for those learning the language.

Further Reading
https://openlt.org/ is a manifesto for open language technology; it's a great place to learn about advocating for your language's inclusion in digital technology.

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Immersion Techniques

Immersive environments are an excellent way for speakers of all levels to connect to each other and to the language. You don’t need to be 100% fluent to start an immersion group!

Individual or Small Group Immersion

One way to engage with your language is to listen to legacy recordings. Where possible, we also highly recommend connecting with a fluent or semi-fluent speaker, if there are such people, so you can ask them questions and have basic conversations one-on-one. You may want to consider locating or even creating a master-apprentice program. It is an immersive process where a new speaker learns directly from an experienced speaker by spending extended periods of time with them.

If you are a tutor who already has experience teaching your language, consider signing up as an online teacher. There are online teaching opportunities on apps and websites such as HelloTalk, iTalki, and Verbling and others. Read Learning Languages Online: A Guide to Studying Endangered, Under-resourced and Minority Languages to see if your language has any online

learning courses available. You can also promote yourself as a language tutor in Facebook groups devoted to language revitalization.

Find ways to increase your literacy skills in your language. As the Kanien'keha website powerfully states, "Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development." If you're with a group, you can create book clubs or writing clubs, and you can send text messages and emails in your language. Follow lingotips on Instagram for other creative language immersion ideas.

Community Immersion

In-person community programming such as language nests for toddlers are very effective ways to teach the language to little ones. Furthermore, family language programs where speakers of all ages can connect are a good way to promote intergenerational transmission. We also recommend looking into Dr. Greymorning's Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) as an interesting way of approaching language learning by only using monolingual spoken language, and not using any other translation language as an "intermediary" to teach it. Events

and gatherings such as poetry contests, language arts festivals, musical performances, and language camps are excellent ways for speakers of all ages and levels to connect. These can be held online or in person. One excellent example of a language camp is Nêhiyawak, a Cree language learning camp held in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Other activities that can be shared are watching films in the language (or brainstorming about ideas to create films!) and listening to recorded or live music in the language in a community setting. We also highly recommend curating fun experiences such as culinary activities, where people can discuss and make food together while speaking in the language. Nature walks where speakers explore plant knowledge are also a fascinating and authentic way to learn about local plants and their traditional uses in the language. Going on bird-watching trips and discussing bird species in your language is also a good way to learn about local species, ecology and language.

Signage, Media, and Promotion of the Language

Radio shows can help share your language regionally, and podcasts can promote stories and discussions in your language with people who live beyond your local area. Street signs can share

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the original linguistic landscape of a place, while also ensuring your language is visible in the public eye. Maps in local languages can reinforce the relationship between language, history, place, and people.

In terms of online language activism, memes can promote humor and cultural-specific jokes, while increasing social media usage. You can use YouTube to share your language through videos, and you can create private Facebook groups to help connect speakers near and far. You can start using Twitter in your language, and add a hashtag with the name of your language to see if other people start using the hashtag as well. You can create Wikipedia pages in your language. Wikipedia advances learning in your language and sets the stage for its use in academic and non-fiction literature.

Economic opportunities associated with heritage language proficiency

Promoting tourism and diverse cultural experiences may generate income. Participating in digital development of the language (apps, games, websites, etc) can also generate revenue in the long-term. Becoming an official translator or interpreter (in the health, legal, and educational

fields) can also yield job opportunities. Writing and releasing original music, and publishing books and e-books can generate income through royalties and licensing opportunities. Learning transferable technical skills for audio-visual and multimedia production can also lead to generating income from Youtube and possibly lead to work in the music, film, and TV industries.

Funding Techniques

Many language communities need resources to get their programs off the ground and stay sustainable. We put together a handy list of organizations and foundations that offer grants for language documentation and revitalization: we will continually update this page.

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