The Endangered Language Fund will be the topic of a symposium at the upcoming annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America. It is entitled “Findings from Targeted Work on Endangered Languages: 13 Years of the Endangered Language Fund’s Projects,” and it will take place Sunday morning, 10 January 2010. Please see the LSA website for more information: http://www.lsadc.org/info/meet-annual.cfm

As the Endangered Language Fund (ELF) enters its 13th year of operation, we find it appropriate to step back and see what kinds of contributions to linguistic science have been achieved through the small level grants that ELF has been able to provide. This session brings together the research of seven grantees who have been funded over the last dozen years to work on endangered languages that vary widely typologically, historically, and geographically.

Language documentation has increased dramatically in the past decade. One of the most pressing concerns for linguists and community members engaged in language documentation and revitalization is the issue of limited resources. One of the main challenges is to make efficient use of financial resources to support the efforts of individuals and groups who work on a large number of endangered languages and whose goals are often disparate. The symposium’s participants will address this challenge, explicitly and implicitly, as it pertains to their own research projects. Their papers will center around three key questions: What is the value of relatively small grants in the field of language documentation? How can such grants be used most efficiently? And how can documentation projects help achieve the goals of external linguists and communities in which endangered languages are spoken?

The first four papers in the symposium are devoted to the value of the work to linguistic science: (1) Beier et al. reveal a previously unknown pattern in Iquito, where the distinction between realis and irrealis is marked not morphologically or lexically but through word order; (2) Murray focuses on illocutionary mood markers and evidentials in Cheyenne, concluding that they are a semantic natural class; (3) Boyle and Gwin highlight three aspects of contact-induced change in Hidatsa, showing how loss of the switch reference system has been reinterpreted on the model of English coordination; and (4) Silva demonstrates how Desano data contradict some existing typological claims for evidentiality.

The next three papers center around language workers’ interactions with and delimitations of the language communities: (5) Nonaka finds unusual structures in the Ban Khor Sign Language of Thailand and proposes a metric for identifying and delineating speech/sign communities; (6) Twins and Haag discuss a revitalization project for Cheyenne, which provided the impetus for a lengthier than expected development phase but has been of continuing use; and (7) Bowern, reporting on her work with the Bardi community, focuses on the role of small grants in funding pilot projects and argues that linguistic research projects can be fruitfully combined with community revitalization and pedagogical projects.

We argue that small grants are very effective in such projects and that they can be used to support human resources which are critical in language documentation and revitalization projects alike. The permanent record these projects generate will continue to provide linguistic insights for future generations of scholars and language learners. Some insights are already available, as the present papers...
demonstrate. Even small scale projects are capable of providing new evidence of the diversity of linguistic function. We can expect continuing progress in understanding language based on directed work on endangered languages.

**Paper Abstracts:**

Leveraging small grants for maximum linguistic discovery: The Endangered Language Fund experience

D. H. Whalen and Lenore Grenoble (Haskins Laboratories/ELF; University of Chicago/ELF)

The Endangered Language Fund (ELF) was created in 1996 to provide grants for the scientific study and revitalization of endangered languages. Since then, the main program has awarded 138 grants, with budgets averaging around $2,000. Given the worldwide nature of language endangerment, it is fitting that awards funded studies on every inhabited continent. Can small amounts produce useful results? We asked this of the ELF awardees, and seven of their reports were selected for this symposium. The wide range of insights gained and the continuing usefulness of the material collected during the grant years is impressive and, to our mind, beyond what one might expect from such small investments. Both the results and the continuing interest of the material collected during the grant years suggest that the grants have a useful role to play.

Reality status in Iquito (Zaparoan): An unattested mechanism for marking an inflectional category

Christine Beier, Cynthia Hansen, I-wen Lai and Lev Michael (University of Texas at Austin; University of California, Berkeley)

With fewer than 30 speakers, Iquito, a Zaparoan language of northern Peruvian Amazonia, is highly endangered. Prior to the Iquito Language Documentation Project (ILDP), documentation was limited, as was our understanding of its tense-aspect-mood (TAM) system. A grant from the Endangered Language Fund in 2002 was crucial to launching the ILDP and obtaining a major grant from the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Documentation Programme. In analyzing Iquito’s TAM system, we discovered a previously unattested mechanism for marking an inflectional category: word order. Cross-linguistically, inflectional categories are expressed by a variety of morphological mechanisms. In this paper, we present evidence that in Iquito, reality status (i.e., a binary distinction between reals and irreals) is marked solely by word order.

Cheyenne evidentials as not-at-issue assertion

Sarah Murray (Rutgers University)

In Cheyenne (Algonquian: Montana), evidentials are part of the illocutionary mood paradigm, in morphological alternation with, e.g., imperative and interrogative mood markers. Results from my fieldwork on Cheyenne suggest that current views on the nature of assertion need to be revised. Based on semantic diagnostics, I argue Cheyenne sentences with evidentials grammaticize a distinction in assertion between what is at-issue and what is not. Evidentials contribute to the not-at-issue component of assertion. Their contribution is new and truth-conditional but is not part of the at-issue content, the ‘main point’ of the sentence. The at-issue component of assertion is treated as a proposal to update the common ground while the not-at-issue component is added directly to the common ground. This analysis generalizes to other types of speech acts, which can be modeled as different kinds of proposals. On this view, Cheyenne evidentials and illocutionary mood markers form a natural semantic class.

Sign language typologies and speech/sign communities: Findings from Ban Khor, Thailand

Angela M. Nonaka (University of Texas at Austin)

Manual-visual languages that spontaneously emerge in small, rural communities with high incidences of hereditary deafness constitute one of three major types of extant sign languages. Known as ‘indigenous’ or ‘village’ sign languages, they...
are among the world’s least documented but most endangered languages. This presentation reports key findings from one such language variety in Thailand, Ban Khor Sign Language. Several aspects are notable: a rare phonological form, a non-manual sign, color terminology, the WH-question system, and baby talk/motherese. Finally, a replicable anthropological metric is proffered for developing first-pass estimates of the size, scope, and membership of other undocumented village sign languages.

Hidatsa inquiry: Some recent answers and progress
John P. Boyle and Alex Gwin (Northeastern Illinois University; Mandaree Language Program)

Hidatsa is one of the least documented languages of the Siouan family. Although sporadic work has contributed greatly to our understanding of the language, an ELF grant received in 2005 has allowed a sustained and ongoing relationship with the Hidatsa community. This grant has provided funding for two different veins of research. The first, and most tangible area of research to the Hidatsa community, is the development of pedagogical materials. The second is one of linguistic documentation and discovery: a switch-reference system, a large number of illocutionary force markers, and internally headed relative clauses. We will conclude with some brief remarks about how these discoveries fit into the larger area of Siouan Studies.

The unusual traits of Desano, an endangered Eastern Tukanoan language of Northwest Amazonia
Wilson Silva (University of Utah)

In this study, I investigate a number of the typologically most interesting traits of Desano (DES), which have not been accounted for well in the available literature. DES has unusual nasal harmony in which voiceless stops are affected by nasal spreading. I also present evidence of a tonal system. Another important trait is the evidentials, which mark the information in a sentence as visual, non-visual, or hearsay, each further distinguished by a direct/indirect distinction for a total of six markers. The last trait I explore is the noun class and classifier systems. ‘Animate’ nouns are further classified as singular or plural, and when singular, as masculine or feminine. In DES, some animate nouns can also take the shape classifier. These new findings raise questions about previous descriptions of DES and have much to contribute to the linguistic typology.

Long-term use from short-term funding: The Cheyenne Language CD Project
Joyce Twins and Marcia Haag (Cheyenne-Arapago Tribes of Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma)

With a $4000 grant from the Endangered Language Fund, the research team was able to directly underwrite some basic costs, such as travel and speakers’ fees. But more importantly, they were able to multiply the monies from the grant by using undergraduate assistants to write elicitation scripts and do recordings, by taking advantage of professional volunteers, and by leveraging the activities of the original grant to gain more grant monies to pay for editing of the CD. Nevertheless, there were some drawbacks to this piecemeal fashion of gaining resources: reliance on undergraduate skills and timelines and borrowed acoustic equipment made the final product of a lesser quality than could have been attained with more control over the resources, and it took three years for the CD to be distributed. However, this CD remains one of the primary tools used in Cheyenne language classes.

Archival language documentation and the role of small grants
Claire Bowern (Yale University)

In 2003, I received an ELF grant to work on material relevant to my PhD thesis on the Bardi language of north-west Australia. This was combined with a second small grant. With these funds, I was able to complete a final field trip for my dissertation. I worked with four speakers in analyzing texts recorded in 1929-30. We investigated syntactic structures which had not surfaced through translation-based elicitation and other narratives.

There is a role for a small grants for pilot projects which produce results far out of proportion to their cost. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize the theoretical linguistic work which can be done in the context of community projects. Finally, the use of existing textual materials as stimuli for further work is undervalued, and fieldworkers should be encouraged to make use of archival materials in their work on underdescribed languages.

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ENDANGERED LANGUAGE FUND ADDS TWO MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Endangered Language Fund is pleased to announce that we have added two new members to our Board of Directors, who will also serve as officers.

**Lenore Grenoble** (University of Chicago) is our new Vice President. She will assist in developing our resources and running our grant program. Lenore is one of the leaders in the field of endangered languages, particularly in coauthoring two of the most useful books in the field (“Endangered Languages: Current Issues and Future Prospects” and “Saving Languages. An Introduction to Language Revitalization”). She is interested in Slavic, Tungusic and languages of the North, discourse and conversation analysis, deixis, contact linguistics and language endangerment, attrition, and revitalization. After many years at Dartmouth College, she is now a professor at the University of Chicago.

More information can be found at: http://slavic.uchicago.edu/faculty-staff/grenoble.shtml

**Cynthia Henderson Magner** (Beyond Bookkeeping, Inc.) is our new Treasurer and will be responsible for keeping us on track with our bookkeeping and financial planning. Cindy holds a BA from Columbia University and an MBA from San Francisco State University. She founded Beyond Bookkeeping in 2005. With the help of six bookkeepers and administrative assistants, her group now manages the accounting for over 40 businesses and non-profit organizations. She replaces Richard Shanahan, who had to step down due to increased commitments at work. We thank him for his years of service to ELF as Treasurer.

**Bobby Winston**, a Board member since 2007, has recently become the Secretary for the Endangered Language Fund. He takes over from Becky Bending, who has served ably in that post for the past three years. We thank Becky for her service and look forward to having Bobby expand his role with the Fund.