



## **ELF Awards 12 Grants in 2005**

The Endangered Language Fund is pleased to announce that we have awarded twelve grants this year. From a very competitive field of 70 applications, the twelve best were selected for funding. As in previous years, there was a broad range of topics and language families. The awards were made on the basis of merit, but, as has happened consistently in recent years, the geographical spread closely matched the proportion of proposals from different areas. The selection process gets more difficult every year, and only the support of our members keeps the process going.

### **Laureano Segovia: Documenting Wichi Language and Traditional Culture**

Laureano Segovia is a native speaker of Wichi, a Matacoan language spoken in the southern Chaco region of Argentina and southeastern Bolivia. The Wichi were formerly hunter-gatherers who were forced to settle in communities and lead sedentary lives after European contact. The communities in eastern Salta were able to lead traditional lifestyles until the middle of the 20th century. Most of the young members of the communities have no knowledge of that era. The main goal of the project is to document the speakers of Wichi in the Eastern Salta area, focusing on those who still remember the traditional lifestyle and narratives. Based on the recorded interviews, a printed collection of their accounts will be produced primarily for the native Wichi communities in the area. Several texts, transcribed and morphologically analyzed in Spanish and English, will be available online. The researchers will establish a website for Wichi, with information about the speakers, the language, the communities, and the current efforts in language maintenance.

### **Gratien Gualbert Atindogbe (University of Buea): A Reference Grammar of Barombi**

The Barombi is a language spoken by about 3,000 people living in southwestern Meme and Ndian regions of Cameroon. Barombi belongs to the Benue-Congo branch of the Bantu language family, and there has not yet been a thorough documentation of the language. This project aims at

providing the Barombi speakers and any other interested researchers with an exhaustive grammatical book on the Barombi language. The book will be thorough enough to provide an adequate description of the language, but it will also be accessible as a resource to the community as an educational reference. In addition to his work on behalf of the Barombi-speaking community, Atindogbe's efforts will clarify the relationship between the Barombi and Bankon languages, and between the other Bantu languages of Cameroon.

### **Joel Nasveira Simo (Vanuatu National Language Committee): Reviving Vanuatu's Dying Languages**

The Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu is home to 115 languages spoken among its 120,000 residents, giving it far and away the highest linguistic diversity per capita of any country in the world. Mores is one of 32 languages spoken on the island of Santo. It has never been studied, and there has never been an attempt to develop an orthography for the language. Many of speakers have recently committed to work together under the leadership of two of the community elders, to preserve and strengthen the language. Joel Simo plans to make recordings of the language to be used for analysis of the grammar and phonology, as well as an archive of the oral history. He will also compile a wordlist and a sketch of the grammar, which will form the basis for developing literacy materials to be used in Mores language classes. These advances will be facilitated by an orthographic system agreed upon by the community.

### **Mark Turin (U. Cambridge): Thangmi Shamanic Chants: Preserving an Endangered Ritual Language and Tradition from Nepal**

The Thangmi (Thami in Nepali) are a little-known and disadvantaged ethnic community of 23,000 indigenous to Nepal, but with significant populations in Darjeeling, West Bengal, India, and in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. They speak an endangered Tibeto-Burman language of the same name, which is the closest relative of Newar, the language of the Kathmandu valley. In the course of Mark Turin's seven years of research on the language, he has col-

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lected over 100 oral narratives from the shamans, the exclusive ritual practitioners of the Thangmi community. The content of these texts is as linguistically unique as it is culturally salient. The narratives document the origin of the Thangmi people, explain the meaning of their clan names, contain the ritual structure of life-cycle rites (birth, marriage and death), and provide invaluable local knowledge of the medicinal uses of wild plants. In short, Thangmi shamans and their texts are the repository of the oral history of the people. In this project, Turin will transcribe and analyze these texts using the Nepali Unicode font and prepare a glossary of the ritual lexicon and terminology used by Thangmi shamans for publication. The Nepali Thami Society has requested that the texts be made available locally and also hosted online.

### **Pastor Dawari Braide: Documentation and Preservation of the Kalabari Language for Posterity**

Kalabari is a Niger-Congo language spoken by the people of the same name, in the Niger River delta of southern Nigeria. Since the 1950's, the residents of this area have migrated abroad and to other parts of Nigeria following the development of the oil industry and its negative impact on their ecosystems, and the fragmented community of speakers has had to rely on English to fill the gaps in its communication. The community is interested in maintaining what is left of the speaker population. Through the assistance of this grant, Pastor Braide is developing a web based bilingual lexicography of the Kalabari language to be used by the speakers, especially those in the Diaspora. Back at home, he intends to set up study centers in the urban centers to teach the language during school days and holidays. In the local schools, he will organize essay-writing competitions to promote literacy in Kalabari.

### **Tyler Peterson (University of British Columbia): Video Documentation of Gitksan Narratives: Legends, Life Stories, and My Day**

Gitksan people live in a number of communities situated in or near the valley of the Skeena River in northwestern British Columbia, Canada. There are approximately 50 fluent speakers remaining, and they represent the last opportunity to capture the finer-grained details and subtleties of the Gitksan language as it is spoken in relating forms of narrative. Tyler Peterson will document three specific manifestations of narrative form, none of which have been previously documented: traditional narratives and legends which have been passed through the generations, a story of the significant events of some of the speakers' lives, and the use of narratives related to daily living, which will reveal how the language has been adapted to express modern-day realities. Peterson has chosen to use video documentation to capture extra-linguistic data that often accompany narration, such as hand and body gestures, facial expressions, and other ex-

pressions that complement speech and are integral to the narration. The language data will be analyzed as part of the researcher's work at the University of British Columbia, and the recordings will be available for the use of the Gitksan community.

**Elena V. Perekhval'skaya (St. Petersburg State University): Online Documentation of Udihe**

The Udihe language belongs to the Southern group of the Tungus-Manchu language family, a branch of Altaic. The modern Udihe live in several multi-ethnic settlements scattered over an extensive territory in the Ussuri taiga in the southern part of the Russian Far East. Udihe is spoken by no more than 100 people, but there has been a recent effort to revitalize the language, and many members of the community are working together to maintain what is left of the speaker population. The current project proposes to create a multimedia collection of linguistic and cultural information on Udihe available for public use on the internet. The documentation will include original texts, both as audio recordings, and in transcribed, translated and analyzed form, as well as dictionaries and pictures. A thorough compilation of morpheme-by-morpheme glosses and entries will be available electronically. The goal of the project is to make all of the information obtained on the present grant accessible to Udihe speakers by transferring the user's version of the documentation to CDs which can be distributed in the Udihe communities, in which computer knowledge is becoming more and more widespread, and circumstances permitting, by creating smaller versions of the dictionary in printed form for distribution in local schools.

**Andrew Garrett (University of California, Berkeley), Melodie George (Hoopa Valley High School), Victor Golla (Humboldt State University/ University of California, Davis): A Returning Fluent Hupa Speaker: Documentation and Digital Language Materials**

Hupa, an Athabaskan language spoken in and near Hoopa Valley in northwestern California, has eight fluent speakers, all of whom are elderly. There is an active Hupa language program, offering classes in the Hoopa Valley High School as well as evening community classes for people of all ages. The program is successful, but now that the language is used only rarely and in restricted functional domains, it is natural that today's Hupa speakers do not show the same stylistic range and do not exploit the language's considerable morphosyntactic complexity to the same degree as speakers of their parents' generation. This year, though, a fluent Hupa speaker who has not been part of the speech community for many decades has returned to Hoopa Valley and has taken an active interest in the tribal language program. Surprisingly, her level of proficiency and control

of the complex grammar and style are reminiscent of the oldest speakers of twenty or thirty years ago, and she is making important contributions to local language teaching. The current project will involve a systematic documentation of the returning speaker's language, the development of the recordings as educational resources, and an exploration into the long-term linguistic effects of isolation from a speech community on an individual's use of language.

**Jorge Gomez Rendon (University of Amsterdam): Documented Survey of Sia Pedee and Development of Basic Teaching Materials**

Sia Pedee (also known as Epera) is a Chococoan language of the Embera family spoken in the northern province of Esmeraldas, Ecuador. There are around 250 speakers of Epera, mostly among the older generations. Unlike some of their neighbors, they do not have their own bilingual education program, in part because Epera has not been examined thoroughly. Jorge Gomez Rendon plans to conduct a linguistic and sociolinguistic survey and documentation of the language, which will include the development of an orthography for the language. He will also make an accurate assessment of the number of speakers, the degree and form of transmission to new generations, the spheres in which the language is used, and other aspects of the use and viability of the language. Audio and video recordings, with accompanying transcriptions, will be the principal medium of documentation, and the community will be trained in audio recording and text processing so that they can record and process material on their own. Selected recordings will be elaborated and incorporated as teaching materials to support a pilot bilingual education program.

**Zealelem Leyew (University of Addis Ababa): Recording the Last Fluent Speakers of Kemantney**

The Kemant people, a group of mostly Orthodox Christian farmers, inhabit an area about 800 kilometers northwest of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. According to the 1994 census, there are around 1,625 speakers of Kemantney, but following the death of many of the older members of the community, the speaker population has been reduced to only a few hundred. Most of the fluent speakers of Kemantney are in their 60s or above, and the well-known storytellers are older. The opportunity to find speakers who still enjoy excellent lexical and grammatical control of Kemantney makes the documentation of the language quite indispensable and urgent. The main focus of the research is to document the language by gathering, processing and archiving the data and producing a dictionary and transcribed texts, which will be made available as a resource to the members of the community who are interested in maintaining the use of the language.

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**Rosa Vallejos (University of Oregon):  
Documenting the Language of the Kokama-  
Kokamilla People**

The purpose of this project is to conduct field-work in two Kokama-Kokamilla communities in Peru and to collect text data from native speakers. Products of the project will contribute to ongoing language revitalization efforts and will be available to members of the community. The text collection will be valuable material for producing school materials and for training bilingual teachers in Kokama-Kokamilla and Spanish. The Kokama-Kokamilla people live in the Amazon, along the Huallaga, Marañon, Ucayali, Nanay, Samiria, and Amazon rivers. The ethnic population is approximately 20,000, but the language is spoken by no more than 1,500 people, all of whom are over 50. Small groups of Kokama speakers have also been reported in Brazil and Colombia; however, at present, this language is extinct in Colombia and very close to extinct in Brazil.

**John P. Boyle (University of Chicago):  
Hidatsa Language Documentation and  
Revitalization**

Hidatsa is a Siouan language spoken almost exclusively on the Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. There are approximately 75 speakers, most of whom are over the age of 50, and very little work has been done to document the language. John Boyle will develop a package of educational materials to be used by the middle and high school programs in Mandaree and New Town, North Dakota. He will start by making a student dictionary, using a new community-supported writing system, and then he will produce a student guide to Hidatsa verbs based on the "501...verbs" series. This list of regular and irregular verb forms will be of use to the community and to linguists who will be able to study the verb system. Finally, Boyle will produce a basic sketch of Hidatsa to give the learners an overview of the grammar and verb morphology. All of the materials will be of use to both the Hidatsa community and to the linguistics community.