



As línguas têm importância... Languages Matter
Los idiomas que cuentan... Languages Matter
ภาษา... Languages Matter
Языки важны... Languages Matter
语言，至关重要... Languages Matter



"I am overwhelmed that my language is now in written form. I was honored to be chosen to read the first traditional story ever written down in my language, using our own Simbiti alphabet!" Julius K. Mwitwa expressed this at the conclusion of an orthography development workshop for Bantu languages. Approximately 14 million people speak a Bantu language with no writing system.

International Year of Languages: Languages Matter!

In July, I attended a conference in Bangkok that focused on language development, language revitalization and multilingual education in ethnolinguistic communities. I was particularly impressed by the wide, multi-ethnic diversity of the attendees, and was reminded again that language concern is an internationally shared focus. And with good reason!

Updated statistics in the 16th edition of the *Ethnologue* reveal the alarming rate at which endangered languages are dying. This plight is one issue addressed by the United Nations proclaiming 2008 as the International Year of Languages. Minority languages have been the heart of SIL's focus since our founding in 1934. Today SIL consultants continue to meet with international multilateral organizations and national agencies to address language-based development in the contexts of globalization, geolinguistics, literacy, heritage languages and multilingualism in cyberspace. As I participated in these discussions this year, I saw afresh that many people worldwide look to SIL for leadership in language-based development, documentation, literacy and registry of the world's languages. SIL experts work diligently to train local communities to carry out these important responsibilities.

This *Update* highlights a few of the opportunities we had in 2008 to work alongside language communities in their efforts to carry out sustainable language-based development and multilingual education while making use of cutting-edge technology and software. Ranging from orthography design workshops in Tanzania to the development of a picture dictionary for an Australian Aboriginal language—from a bilingual malaria eradication project in Burkina Faso to the *Dai Banna SIL* font used by a newspaper in China—communities around the world are daily discovering new ways their languages matter.

We continue to celebrate the significance of each of the world's languages and we anticipate increased partnerships within the wider international community to address the issues faced by local communities.

Fredrick A. Boswell

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Executive Director





The Bantu Literacy Tool simplifies primer design for Bantu languages by helping determine a teaching order for consonants and vowels.

Language-Based Development Assists Bantu Languages

About 200 million Africans south of the equator speak one of 500 languages belonging to the Bantu language family. Approximately 14 million people speak one of the 250 Bantu languages that have no writing system. SIL's involvement with Bantu languages reflects its service in supporting sustainable language-based development in ethnolinguistic minority communities.

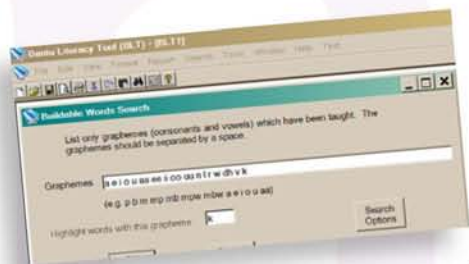
Bantu-Specific Software Development

To facilitate language work and the development of writing systems and reading materials, SIL has designed innovative software tools that take advantage of Bantu language similarities. These newly developed computer programs were demonstrated during a symposium at the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée conference in Germany this year.

- The *Bantu Orthography Manual* offers principles for designing a writing system, including two sample strategies.
- The *Bantu Literacy Tool* helps determine the most effective order to teach consonants and vowels while providing a list of suitable words for each lesson.
- The *Phonology Template Editor and Search Tool* assists with the phonological analysis of a Bantu language.

Participants from two Bantu languages in Tanzania produced literacy primers in two weeks using the *Bantu Literacy Tool* software. As a result, the Vwanji people now have a 40-lesson primer, and the Malila people have a 45-lesson primer.

Sena, a Bantu language, serves as the tutorial for *SIL FieldWorks*, a software suite used to manage language and cultural field notes and compile small dictionaries.



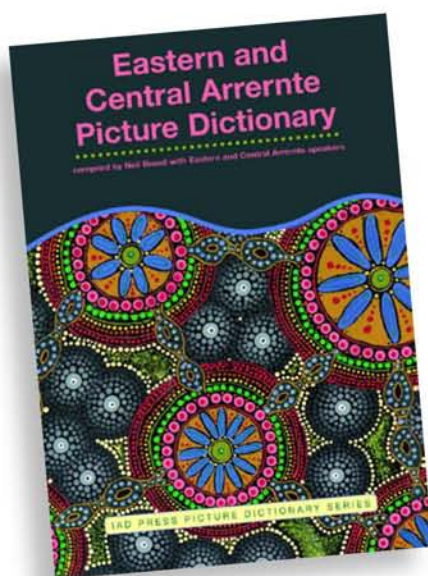
Translation and Materials Development

In cooperation with local communities, SIL linguists published dozens of articles and books about Bantu languages, including the 303-page *Grammar of Akoose*. In the past two years, SIL has published over 50 books in local Bantu languages in eight countries. Many were translations of literature not understood locally when read in the national language, such as an AIDS information booklet in Ngoni, a Mozambican Bantu language. Other books documenting traditional cultural knowledge were translated into national languages.

Partnerships in Language-Based Development

Language-based development is a series of ongoing planned actions that a community takes to ensure that its language continues to serve its changing social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual needs and goals. Across Africa, various Bantu communities have requested the expertise of SIL in development efforts. In addition, SIL participates in The Bantu Initiative, a cooperative effort by a number of language research agencies.





The Arrernte picture dictionary contains over 600 key words with more than 400 black-and-white illustrations.

The background font on this page is the Dai Banna SIL. Text in this brochure and the 16th edition of the Ethnologue are typeset in Gentium. All of the new fonts are Unicode-compliant and freely available under the SIL Open Font License.

Communities Produce Dictionaries

A mother-tongue dictionary provides an authoritative spelling reference while preserving a rich description of ethnobiology, social structure and everyday life. A dictionary also increases the prestige of a language and a speaker's self-esteem. During a dictionary development workshop in Peru, six participants from three languages completed 700-entry preliminary dictionaries for their languages.

The *Eastern and Central Arrernte Picture Dictionary*, ninth in a series of dictionaries in Australian Aboriginal languages, is a valuable literacy tool that illustrates aspects of Arrernte culture, both past and present.

In Papua New Guinea, the 742-page *Mbula-English Dictionary* is suitable for use in local schools as well as by academic audiences of Oceanic languages.

In Sichuan, China, a trilingual 6,000-entry dictionary was a cooperative project with Southwest University for Nationalities. The *Nuosu Yi-Chinese-English Glossary* was compiled using *SIL FieldWorks Language Explorer* software.



Giamsa Apei consults SIL linguist Salme Bugenhagen on the 3,800-entry bilingual *Mbula* dictionary.

Developers Create Four New Fonts

Two of the fonts released by SIL in 2008 address challenges presented when ethnolinguistic communities want to apply new computer technology to the non-roman writing systems they have used for centuries. The *Dai Banna SIL* font is now used by a newspaper in Yunnan, China, for people who speak the Xishuangbanna Dai language. The *Sophia Nubian* font was developed for African languages using the Coptic alphabet.

The other two fonts are based on the roman alphabet, and address special book-publishing needs. The *Andika* literacy font provides the simple sans serif characters best suited to new readers, including diacritics and special characters literacy workers need. *Gentium* is specially designed for printing long books; it uses space economically, while maintaining easily read letter shapes.





Literacy Supports Project to Reduce Malaria

A community literacy program among the Kaan people contributed to the success of a year-long public health project to create a malaria-free zone in Burkina Faso. Of the Kaan people receiving mosquito nets, 99% used them appropriately, resulting in an impressive decrease in malaria cases. The mosquito net distributors used bilingual educational materials about malaria prevention developed by the Kaan community in consultation with SIL. This cooperation between the local Kaansa literacy association, the Somerled Foundation, SIL and others is part of a global campaign to significantly reduce the incidence of malaria in tropical regions.



Posters printed in Kaansa are read aloud to teach people how malaria is transmitted and prevented.



*Executive Director
Freddy Boswell
extends greetings
to conference
participants on
behalf of SIL.*

Languages Matter to Educators and Policymakers

SIL consultants gave plenary addresses, presented papers and led panel discussions at two major conferences in Thailand. Along with six other national and international organizations, SIL co-sponsored the *Second International Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Ethnolinguistic Communities*. In addition to interaction on these topics, participants developed networks for continued discussion.

At the conference on *National Language Policy: Language Diversity and National Unity*, participants recognized and discussed the place of ethnic minority languages in a national language policy and the importance of translation standards. They acknowledged the unique linguistic challenges of teaching international languages. SIL consultants provided examples of how ethnic multilingual education can benefit society.



Language Impacts Millennium Development Goal Progress

SIL promotes language-based development as vital for achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Language-based development is a significant tool for advocates, aid workers, governments and nongovernmental organizations in partnering with local communities.

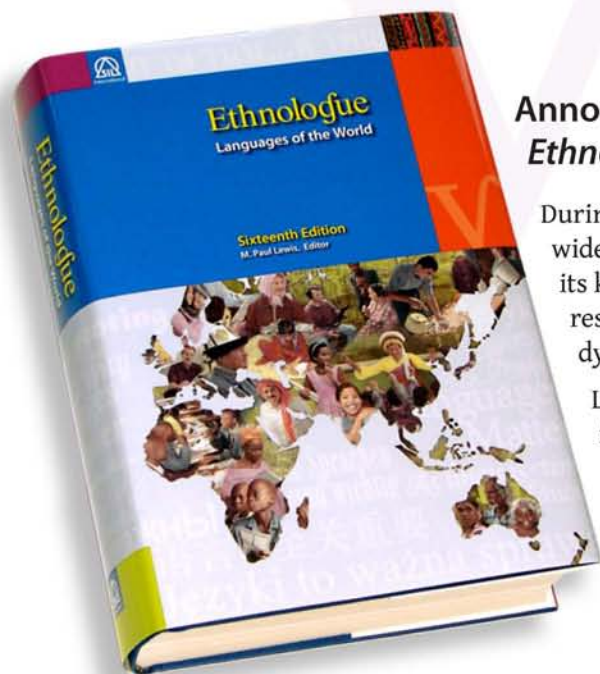
Because many underprivileged peoples do not speak national languages, they lack access to primary education and experience poverty, inequality and disease. A writing system for the mother tongue becomes a tool for people to build a better present and a better future. Communities are realizing that by receiving new information in their first language, they can begin discovering solutions to the challenges expressed by the MDGs. The long-term results are worth the investment of money and time.

As part of SIL's advocacy efforts during the International Year of Languages, stories illustrating how languages matter in achieving each MDG were printed in an SIL brochure, *Why Languages Matter: Meeting Millennium Development Goals through local languages*.

www.sil.org/sil/global/mdg.htm



Through language-based development, SIL partners with others to address goals for ethnolinguistic communities worldwide.



Announcing a New Edition of the *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*

During 2008, work was completed on the 16th edition of the *Ethnologue*, widely regarded to be the most comprehensive reference volume of its kind. For more than fifty years, thousands of language-related researchers worldwide have relied on, and contributed to, this dynamic compilation.

Linguistic research and survey data reported over the past four years reveal 163 previously unregistered languages and approximately 90 languages that are no longer spoken. This new edition of the *Ethnologue*—available in spring 2009—catalogs 6,909 known living languages.

www.ethnologue.com



7500 W. Camp Wisdom Road
 Dallas, Texas 75236-5629 USA
 Phone: 972 708-7400
 Fax: 972 708-7350
 E-mail: info-sil@sil.org
 Web: www.sil.org

About SIL International

SIL International is a nonprofit faith-based organization that has served as an advocate for sustainable language-based development since 1934. SIL facilitates research, translation, training and materials development for ethnolinguistic minority communities.

As a nongovernmental organization, SIL has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and formal consultative relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

SIL offers training in applied linguistics at many institutions around the world. Course topics include phonetics, phonology, grammar, linguistic research, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, literacy, translation and program planning.

SIL operates on contributions from individuals and organizations interested in various aspects of language-based development. Major contributors include affiliated member organizations of Wycliffe International.

SIL makes its services available to all without regard to religious belief, political ideology, gender, race or ethnic background.

More reports and audited financial statements:

www.sil.org

Related news items:

www.sil.org/sil/news/archives.html

Language-related resources:

www.ethnologue.com

SIL Statistics

6,909	Languages spoken in the world (<i>Ethnologue</i> , 16th Edition)
2,550	Total languages researched (over 1.7 billion speakers)
1,998	Active language projects (1.2 billion speakers)
Over 1,000	Active literacy programs
Over 2 million	Number of readers trained
35,000	Published works
Over 6,000	Active personnel
Over 60	Nationalities of SIL staff

These statistics offer the most current estimates available.

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Affiliated Organizations

Canada Institute of Linguistics

Langley, British Columbia, Canada

www.canil.ca

Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics

Dallas, Texas, USA

www.gial.edu

International Museum of Cultures, Inc.

Dallas, Texas, USA

www.internationalmuseum

ofcultures.org

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www.jaars.org

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