



Summary

New technologies can be and should be used to protect and promote so-called “minority” languages. In this workshop, we saw various examples of the use of modern technologies in non-major language contexts. For example, we saw an implementation of a multi-lingual dictionary for Quechua, Spanish, English and German. In the Basque country, they are using these new technologies for the dissemination of the Basque language. The Basque model is an example of a non-commercial use of the Internet that could also be applied to other non-major languages. It is important to use open-source software and the it is suggested that the Basque government should work on open-source software to promote the Basque language.

We also saw an example of a multi-media sound dictionary for an Endangered Language (in this case, the Selkup language of North-Western Siberia). This is an example of combining the needs of linguists and the Endangered Language speakers. Another example came from Latvia and efforts in the Riga Technical University Distance Education Study Centre where they are developing interactive, online learning resources in Latvian. A further example was the use of a template to develop CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) materials for Endangered Languages. This template enables the production of CALL materials and takes into account the special constraints that prevail in the Endangered Language context.

In some environments it is considered important to develop software in the local (minority) language. For example, in Canada, the state government in Quebec ensures the implementation of the French Language Charter. This means that all software in use in Quebec should be in French and the government work with the software manufactures in the production of a French interface for their software. They also insist that French language software is available at the same time as its English counterpart and at the same cost.

The Atlantis project is a database of resources available on and in the minority languages of the European Union. It includes information on language learning resources and digital sources of information on these languages amongst other things. It was also pointed out

that the concept of linguistic identity was very important in the electronic era. The issue of translating new words mainly from the field of science and technology was also raised. It was pointed out that it is not just a matter of simply “converting” the word into another language as semantic information is often inherently coded in the original word.

Recommendations

1. It is important to consolidate currently existing resources and future projects should work collaboratively
2. The different organisations working in the area of languages and technology (e.g. UNESCO, the Atlantis project etc.) should work together in close cooperation and make resources available to others that could potentially avail of them.
3. We believe that LinguaPAX should be involved in coordinating the currently fragmented efforts at worldwide language database initiatives.
4. Linguapax should encourage re-use of existing resources and foster an environment in which there is a multiplier effect (i.e. the same software can be used to produce materials in many different languages).
5. We also recommend that open source software be used in order to make the resources accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Below follows a very brief summary of each presentation in the order in which they were presented:

Prof. Diana Rumpite

There are many international projects underway in Latvia (especially at the Riga Technical University Distance Education Study Centre) to develop online resources in Latvian. These courses aim to address the new challenges faced by the Baltic states (especially since 1991 e.g. social, economic and cultural changes) and also avail of the opportunities available with new technologies.

These projects involve many geographically dispersed, international researchers working together in an online development environment to produce state-of-the-art learning resources in Latvian and other Baltic languages. The centre is using these projects as prototypes for future courseware for the virtual university (projected for 2004) in Latvia.

Bernard Salvail

“La prédominance de l’anglais dans les nouvelles technologies de l’information”.

1. Le Québec s’est doté d’une stratégie d’intervention pour favoriser l’usage du français dans les technologies de l’information au travail et dans l’enseignement technique et professionnel.
2. Il s’agit d’une action que vise à produire des effets durables sur la présence et la disponibilité de produits informatiques en français sur le marché québécois. Ce qui signifie une intervention dirigée et massive auprès des fabricants, des distributeurs et des détaillants de ces produits pour aménager l’offre, et auprès de tous les intervenants des milieux du travail et de l’enseignement pour aménager la demande de produits en français.

3. Depuis 1993, les efforts investis pour accroître l'utilisation du français dans les technologies de l'information ont donné des résultats fort satisfaisants quant à l'offre de produits en français. Pour ce qui est de la demande exprimée par les utilisateurs, quoique l'on constate un certain progrès, on ne peut pas parler encore d'un attrait naturel et spontané des produits en français, et encore moins, un réflexe à privilégier et à mettre en valeur l'utilisation de l'informatique en français dans les activités commerciales et de travail.
4. C'est donc au niveau de la demande que l'on doit agir avec encore plus d'empressement et de vigueur, car les gains sont ardues et les acquis difficiles à maintenir. Il faut accentuer l'effort d'animation sur le terrain auprès des travailleurs, des consommateurs et des formateurs, pour renforcer l'attraction des produits en français et susciter l'adhésion des décideurs et des utilisateurs de ces produits.

Gotzon Egia

"Las ventajas de ser pequeño: notas sobre la presencia de la lengua vasca en Internet".

Las comunidades lingüísticas pequeñas, como la vasca, deben afrontar su presencia en Internet y las nuevas tecnologías no desde el punto de vista del mercado, sino desde el punto de vista de las oportunidades que Internet ofrece para promover el uso de lenguas de difusión y demografía reducidas.

La atención debe orientarse a crear instrumentos (programas y aplicaciones informáticas) que faciliten la incorporación de contenidos en lenguas minorizadas a Internet.

La vía está en la utilización y popularización de los programas de código abierto, que permiten crear tales instrumentos con un costo reducido y al margen de los condicionamientos que impone el mercado informático.

En el caso vasco, las instituciones públicas están llamadas a jugar un papel activo en la extensión de los programas de código abierto, y en la elaboración de herramientas que faciliten la presencia de la lengua vasca en las nuevas tecnologías.

Pamela Núñez

"¿Cómo ayudan las nuevas tecnologías a proteger las lenguas minoritarias?".

Determinadas herramientas basadas en las nuevas tecnologías pueden y deben ser utilizadas para proteger y promover el uso de las lenguas minoritarias.

En concreto, aplicaciones informáticas destinadas a gestionar terminología multilingüe, o de traducción asistida por ordenador, resultan extremadamente útiles para crear bases de datos, que pueden ser compartidas y utilizadas mediante Internet.

El uso de tales tecnologías para comunidades lingüísticas minoritarias pueden permitir una reducción significativa de gastos, y obtener para dichas lenguas ventajas competitivas y estratégicas.

Eda Heloisa Pilla

There are many words from external languages (principally technical words from English) that are entering the lexicon of the world's other languages. Brazilian Portuguese is an example of such a language and it is difficult to know how to translate these words into Brazilian Portuguese. The translation is not simply a matter of converting the word into Brazilian Portuguese because often there is semantic information encoded in the new words.

It seems that there is a reluctance in Brazil to use local creativity and talent to form new words in Brazilian Portuguese. Perhaps this is due to a lack of self-confidence. Nevertheless, this is an issue that needs to be addressed and involves more than just linguistic issues.

Joan Martí i Castell

“La diversitat lingüística en la societat de la informació”.

La identidad de una comunidad, en la era de la información y el conocimiento, no puede entenderse sin la identidad lingüística, de la misma forma que una lengua no existe sin la vinculación con una comunidad.

Cualquier lengua del mundo es, para su comunidad, lengua de cultura y de civilización. La importancia o el peso mayor o menor de una lengua depende del poder que su comunidad sea capaz de reunir.

Desde el punto de vista de las lenguas minorizadas, la globalización y el mestizaje deben entenderse no como una uniformización igualizadora, sino como un mosaico de contrastes, en el que cada lengua conserve de manera nítida sus rasgos identitarios.

Olga Kazakevitch

Researchers from the University of Moscow have worked on a sounding dictionary of an Endangered Language of Siberia (Northern Selkups). It is not only a project for linguistic research, but also a linguistic resource which can be used as teaching material in mother tongue classes. The few remaining speakers of Selkup (< 600) live in different villages and there are several dialects (which has caused problem in the development of acceptable language material).

This project has recorded several native speakers and carefully documented their ethnographic information. The results of the project have proved interesting for linguists and have provided the Selkup speakers with an initial presence on the Internet.

Marta Torres i Vilatarsana Miquel Strubell i Trueta

“El Projecte Atlantis:recursos vinculats a les noves technologies per a les llengües minoritzades de la UE”.

El web de l'Observatori Atlantis ofereix els múltiples enllaços als recursos existents en les sis categories que conformen el projecte, consultables a través d'una base de dades. Aquestes categories són:

1. Plataformes d'aprenentatge en llengües minoritzades.
2. Eines i recursos en les technologies del llenguatge.
3. Technologies de la informació i de la comunicació:plans regionals, aplicacions informàtiques i eines d'Internet.
4. Recursos digitals culturals i diversitat lingüística.
5. Convergència i emissions en llengües minoritzades.
6. Edició electrònica i llengües minoritzades.

A més, el web també posa a la disposició dels usuaris els informes finals d'aquestes sis categories que destaquen les àrees, els projectes i la tecnologia que, en l'opinió dels membres del projecte, ofereixen el potencial més gran per a obtenir efectes multiplicadors d'un grup lingüístic a un altre.

Monica Ward

New technologies can be used to develop CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) materials for Endangered Languages. A template has been developed for the development of CALL materials for Endangered Languages. It is not perfect but can produce useful materials for Endangered Language communities. It is simple, incorporates up-to-date CALL and techniques and is free.

It will not solve all the problems of Endangered Languages, but can be used as a starting point for language teaching efforts. It has been used to develop CALL materials for Nawat (an Endangered Language of El Salvador) and is available to anyone who wishes to use it.