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Handbook on Language Preservation and Documentation, languages of Nepal

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► **To cite this version:**

Aimée Lahaussais. Handbook on Language Preservation and Documentation, languages of Nepal. UNESCO, pp.155, 2006. hal-00447503

HAL Id: hal-00447503

<https://hal.science/hal-00447503>

Submitted on 15 Jan 2010

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**Handbook
for the
documentation of
endangered languages**

Version:

Languages of Nepal

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1 INTRODUCTION

A great many minority languages are disappearing around the world, and those which disappear without a trace represent a great loss in cultural heritage. One critical reason for the high level of endangerment of many minority languages is that they are not being passed on to the younger generations. Some of the causes include pressure on children to use the national (or another important) language (either because of perceived improved socioeconomic opportunities, or because of feelings of inferiority about speaking a minority language); the availability of education only in a language other than the minority language; migration away from the homeland into environments where the minority language is not spoken. Whatever the reasons, this interruption in the transmission of the language means that eventually only older speakers are left. When these older speakers disappear, so will the minority language. In the case of languages with no written form which have not been documented, this means that there are no remaining records of what was once a vibrant and unique language.

Many languages are being or have been described by linguists. Unfortunately, for practical reasons, linguists are unable to document all endangered languages. Oftentimes, members of language communities whose language is not being worked on may wish to take on the project of documenting their language, but they sometimes lack the methodology to do this.

The present handbook is intended as an answer to that problem. It will guide the reader through the process of collecting linguistic data on his or her endangered language in the absence of a linguist. By working through the material in this handbook, the reader will compile a viable record of the words and grammar that make up the language, as well as of the stories and different types of spoken interactions which are part of the heritage of the language community. It is hoped that the result will not only provide a record of the language, as spoken by native speakers, but will also stimulate renewed community-wide interest in the language, which may in turn reduce the rate at which the language is being lost.

1.1 Goals of language documentation

Language documentation is a long, sometimes challenging process. It is made more difficult when the language is already partially lost. While this can be discouraging for the person taking on documentation, it is important to realize that in the case of a dying language, some data is better than none. In other words, it is important to do as much as possible, but to realize that this might not be as much as had originally been intended. If the documenter him or herself cannot provide all the linguistic data discussed in the handbook, then there might be other members of the community who can. The crucial thing is to gather what data is available, to record types of language use which cover as wide a range as possible, and to trust that the very act of carrying out a documentation project will stimulate awareness and interest in the language among the community members.

A good way to think about the material you record is to imagine yourself trying to relearn a language after there are no more speakers left: what types of things would you want to know how to say? It is possible that your documentation of your language will produce the only available information at some future date. The handbook will assist you in collecting the material, but you are ultimately the only ones able to decide what is relevant and what is not about your culture and language. If greetings and ceremonial spoken exchanges are an important part of the culture, make sure to record many different ways these greetings are performed. If there is a traditional form of storytelling, be sure to get many examples of stories recorded in the traditional style, before it is lost.

In working through the handbook, remember that it is intended as a guide, and not a definitive methodology that must be followed word by word. If there are sections which are not relevant to your language, these should be skipped. If there are certain things which are not covered in the handbook but which are an important part of your language, they should be added. The handbook is a guide, but cannot cover all possibilities, precisely because each language has unique features. The handbook should be taken as a point of departure for collecting material.

1.2 Audience

This handbook is written for native speakers of an endangered language who are interested in preserving their language. The person who heads the documentation project will be bilingual and literate in yet another language. Typically, this other language will be the national language of the country of residence, and will be the language in which the material in the handbook is presented. The main documenter will need to involve other speakers from the community, not necessarily literate, who will provide words, expressions and stories in the endangered language being documented.

Throughout the handbook, there is an opposition set up between the target language and the dominant language. These terms refer, respectively, to the language being documented (called “target language” because that language is the target of our

investigation) and to the language which is gradually replacing it (called “dominant language” because it is geographically dominant and taking over in contexts where the target language used to be spoken.) Often the dominant language is the national language, or one of the national languages, of the country of residence, but it could also be a regional language which is beginning to invade on the territory of the target language. There could also be several dominant languages which are endangering the target language. Whether there is one or more dominant languages, what is important is that these languages, through use in various contexts, such as education, administration, commerce, social life, religious life, are beginning to replace the target language. When the number of contexts in which the target language is spoken decreases, the motivation for passing on the target language is also reduced, and the number of young speakers begins to dwindle.

In the handbook, then, by “dominant language” is in fact meant whatever language is taking over or threatening to take over the target language, even if there are several such dominant languages. Reference is made throughout the handbook to “your” language: by this, we mean the “target language”, the minority language which you are working to document before it becomes extinct. The term “your language” is used in opposition to “dominant language”, even though it is assumed that you are bilingual in both, because it is the language of the community to which you belong.

1.3 Ethical considerations

The material record you will be creating of your language and culture is partly for future use. As a result, you will want to think how to preserve it for future generations. A good place to have materials preserved is an archive. Archives are places where materials of different types, often sound, visual and paper, are preserved in proper conditions for future use, also allowing access at the current time. Typically, the archive would keep the original materials, and the community would receive copies for daily use. If your language materials are archived, you will need to think about certain issues of ownership: who will be allowed to access and use the materials? Is it restricted to people from your ethnic group, or is it open to anyone interested in your language and culture? Do the people who contributed materials to your documentation project (people who you record speaking, for example) agree with your ideas on who the archived material belongs to? Is there some material which should be accessible to all, but some material which should not? (a sensitive political discussion might be restricted, for example) How do you feel about a researcher using the materials in 30 years to publish articles about the language or culture? How do you feel about him using the material in 100 years? These are important issues to consider, as the material is being produced partly for future generations, but involves currently living individuals. You should discuss these issues with the people who participate in your documentation project, and if possible, record what their decisions are about how the material they produce is to be used. In this way, if and when the material is archived, it will be kept according to the wishes of the people who generated it. The questions raised above about access to material should not prevent you from archiving: archives label materials so that their use respects the wishes of the community.

1.4 General organization of the handbook

This handbook breaks the documentation of the language down into various components. It begins with a chapter dealing with making sound recordings, and how to ensure good quality and proper preservation of the materials created. The next chapter contains a questionnaire covering background information about the language community, information which is very important to identifying the language and community. This chapter is followed by one containing word lists, which are given as starting points to the process of collecting words (along with their translations) towards making a dictionary. There is then a chapter on what has been called “useful language” such as greetings, questions, commands, all considered essential parts of basic communication in everyday use. The next chapter provides advice on stimulating and recording conversations, followed by a chapter on how to record stories and other narratives. We then look at how to develop a writing system. The transcriptional system of the language will be useful for the following chapter, which deals with collecting material on various aspects of the grammar of the language, through a combination of questionnaires and translation exercises.

As an appendix to the handbook there is a workbook, which duplicates all the material in the handbook to which an answer is sought: it replicates the questions to be answered, the sentences to be translated, the vocabulary lists to be filled in, and leaves space for verb tables as well as for spontaneous material the documenter wishes to add. The workbook guides the documenter by organizing the material, but it will also be essential to complete this information with other written materials generated by the process of documentation.

2 MAKING SOUND RECORDINGS

Your main means of documenting your language is going to be by creating a tangible, physical record. This will principally be through sound recordings, made with sound recording equipment, and it might possibly also include a visual component, either photograph or video.

The sound recordings will probably be the most important part of your documentation project. Your aim is to document, as broadly as possible, your language in everyday use as well as in more formal situations (such as during ritual ceremonies). If you work through the handbook with the help of other speakers (if for example you do not consider yourself a fluent speaker of your language), then record all the work sessions. This will help the interpretation of the material you generate, and it will also become part of the sound record of the language.

2.1 Quality of recordings

Because the sound recordings are so important, you want to make them as good as possible. Practise using your recording equipment before actually recording a session

or a story: test the machine, to see if and how it works. You will also want to experiment with your external microphone, holding it at different distances from speakers to practise getting the best recording. Also be aware of outside surrounding sounds: if possible, do the recording in as quiet a place as possible. You usually have some control over the location of a recording if you are the one organizing the session, like when you ask someone to tell you a story, Try to record indoors if possible, away from loud sounds made by animals, children, running water, or whatever else may affect the quality of your recording. You might also consider recording some material late in the evenings, when the village is quieter than during the day.

It is also important to make sure that the recording is actually taking place when you think it is. You should test the machine before your speakers begin telling you long stories, by taping a few words and playing them back to yourself. This way you can be confident that the recording is actually occurring.

2.2 Identification of recordings

Bear in mind that the tapes need to be easily identifiable for future use. The recordings will not be very useful if noone is able to identify what the material they contain is. You will need to label each cassette with the name of the language and what the contents of the cassette are (for example, the contents label could say something like: “part 4.2 of the handbook: words for animals”, or it could be “conversation with John Bard, 54 years old, about his life in the village as a boy”. Make sure these labels are in the national language, so that the cassettes are easy to organize and identify, even if there are no longer any speakers.

A supplementary and very important way of identifying the material on a cassette is to orally record onto the cassette itself what material it contains. This information should follow each story, conversation, etc you record, and should give as much detail as possible about the contents of the cassette are (and, as with written labels, this detail should be in some other wider-spread language, such as the national language, for identification by non-speakers of the target language). This information can be much more detailed than what is written on the label, and will be most useful if it identifies the following:

- the speakers (by name, age, place of birth, level of competency in the language)
- the contents: what they are talking about, why they are talking about it, whether it was a naturally occurring event or whether it was staged and planned

Again, in deciding what additional information to record onto the tapes after each recording, it may be helpful to imagine yourself as a descendant in the future rediscovering a lost language: what sorts of things would you want to know about the recording on the cassette? What would help you understand and make sense of what you are hearing?

2.3 Storage of recordings

This has partly been discussed under ethical considerations in the introduction. You will want to store the materials you produce in a safe place where it will be protected from

the elements which may eventually age the recordings beyond use. Until your materials can be deposited in an archive, keep them from getting too hot or too cold or wet (by packing them in a box which is wrapped in material and then kept out of sunlight and away from fires or other heat sources.) You will want to send your materials to an archive, library or university for proper storage. For this you may want to make copies of the originals, and use these to work with, for example for transcription, where you will be doing lots of rewinding of the tapes. The copies could be made by playing a cassette on one tape recorder and recording it onto another blank cassette on another tape recorder, or you could get assistance from an archive or university in producing copies. Do remember though that the quality of the original recording will be the best one available, and that the original cassettes are the ones which should be preserved with the greatest care.

2.4 Visual records

Another very useful record is visual. This could be created with a camera, which you use to document the culture and people associated with the language (for example, photos of religious ceremonies, if this is allowed, could be very valuable for your future descendants), or, even better, with a video camera. Creating videos of people using the language in everyday life and in ritual or festive events will provide insight about how gesture accompanies speech, could possibly give indications about what the mouth looks like in producing a sound (which people may some day no longer know how to produce), and will be a visual record of the language and accompanying culture. The same ideas apply as with sound recordings about identifying the materials as clearly as possible.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE LANGUAGE

As a member of the language community, you are uniquely placed to collect the most accurate information about the people and place associated with the language you are documenting. This information is useful in correctly identifying the language being documented, in order to get a good idea of its social and geographical status. The information also helps determine the state of vitality or endangerment of the language at the time of your documentation,

- 1 What is the name of the language, as given by speakers of the language?
- 2 What is the name of the language, as given by outsiders?
- 3 Where is the area where the language is spoken? Please give as detailed a description as possible (country, district, near a particular river or mountain, nearby towns, etc. If possible, provide a map.)
- 4 How does one reach this area? (what means of transportation from the nearest major city, how long is the journey, etc.)

- 5 What are the names of villages/towns where the language is spoken?
- 6 What is considered to be the homeland of the community?
- 7 Are other languages spoken in same area? If so, what are they?
- 8 How many people live in the area (whether or not they are speakers, whether or not they are members of the same tribe)?
- 9 How many of these, if any, speak only the target language?
- 10 How many people are bilingual in the target language and something else?
For bilinguals, are the two languages always the same two (eg. national language and target language), or are there different patterns? What are these languages?
- 11 What is the level of competence of various age groups?

For each of the following groups, say whether they can speak and understand, only understand, not understand or speak:

old people:

adults:

young people:

children:

12 Is there a written form of the language?

13 What are the patterns of use? If the target language is not used for these different contexts, what language is used?

Administration?

Education?

Religion?

Social contexts? If the target language is not exclusively used in social contexts (in casual conversations between friends or relatives, for example), what else is used, and what are the patterns you recognize (in age, gender, or other)?

14 Do you consider there to be different dialects of the target language? If so, can you give some of the differences (these may include pronunciation, different words for some things, different grammar).

- 15 If there are different dialects, which one are you documenting?
- 16 Is anyone aware of any kind of previous documentation of the language?
- 17 Are there stories about where the people came from originally? What sorts of beliefs are held about the history of the tribe?
- 18 Is there anything else you think is relevant to the situation of the language?

4 WORD LISTS

Your goal will be to start compiling word lists, to create a record of some common words. This stage is the initial one in creating a dictionary: you collect words and their definitions. In this case, the definition might be limited to the translation in the dominant language—the words in the lists below—but you could also expand and give more details about the word in the target language. You might include visual material, such as drawings or photos, but if you do, remember to make it clear which word in the target language these correspond to.

The lists given below are by no means supposed to be exhaustive. They are provided because they fit into some general categories that relate to life and the world around us. The general categories of these basic words are as follows:

- 1 body parts
- 2 animals
- 3 natural objects and events
- 4 plants and food
- 5 people and family relationships

You should use these lists as a starting point. They concern basic vocabulary, but you will want to add terms which refer to cultural items, events, and activities. Feel free to create new categories as well. Collect as many words as you can from the lists provided, and in cases where you want to supplement the lists, please do so.

If you are working with people from different villages, it is useful if you record which village you got the word from, as the pronunciation might be different from place to place.

You may also notice a difference between the words given by women and men. If you do, make note of which word is that used by men and that used by women, as this is an interesting situation and should be recorded.

One other situation you will probably encounter is words borrowed from the dominant language. If this is the case and you find no one in the village who remembers the original word in your language, then record the borrowed word. Pay attention to its

pronunciation, though, which may be slightly different than in the dominant language.

4.1 Methodology for collecting word lists

The general methodology will be to take this list to different speakers, and ask them for the words, and record them as you go. At this point, we do not yet expect you to be writing words down, although you can if you feel comfortable doing this, as you will learn some things about how to develop and refine a writing system as you do (also see chapter 8 for additional advice). It will be important, in your recording, to keep together the word you are seeking and the word you are collecting, which you can do by saying it first in the dominant language, followed immediately by the word in the target language (or the other way around, but make it clear what order you use.)

The methodology will be different depending on how endangered your language is and how well you, the documenter, knows the language. If you are a perfectly fluent speaker, then you might proceed as follows: read through the list, to become familiar with the words asked for. Then record yourself reading the word in the dominant language, and then translating it into the target language. This way, the pairs will be neatly lined up and it will be clear which word goes with which meaning in the dominant language.

If instead you are not quite as familiar with the language you are documenting, you will want the help of other speakers. In that case, seek out speakers who have a reputation for knowing the language well. Go through the list of words suggested below, to make sure you are familiar with them. You could then record your session with the good speakers, during which you say the word to them in the dominant language, following which they give you the corresponding word in the target language. This system will ensure that the words are properly paired up. If the speakers have discussions about the words you are asking for, keep recording. This could be very valuable material: it might be a discussion between speakers who disagree about how to translate a word, or they may have several translations for the one word you propose, and give you details which define each word better.

It is possible that some words will be difficult for speakers to come up with. These words may come back to them later, or appear in a story, which is why collecting words must be an ongoing part of documentation.

There may be words which cannot be given as they appear on the list, because they cannot be listed alone. In such cases, tell the speakers to give the word as if it had 'his' or 'her' in front.

When you finish going through a list, or a part of a list, see if there are any other words speakers want to add: these might be cultural words or events, or words omitted for some other reason.

4.2 Body Parts

body
head
face
forehead
temple

eye
eyelid
eyebrow
eyelash
tear

nose
nostril

ear

mouth
palate
gums
tongue
lip
tooth
incisor
molar
eye-tooth / canine tooth
wisdom tooth
baby tooth

cheek
cheekbone
chin
jaw
neck
throat

torso
chest
rib
collar bone / clavicle
shoulder
shoulder blade
breast
nipple

back
spine / backbone
waist
belly
belly-button
hips
buttocks
tailbone / coccyx

arm
armpit
upper arm
elbow
forearm / lower arm
wrist
hand

leg
thigh
knee
calf
ankle
foot
heel

finger
index finger
middle finger
ring finger
little finger
thumb
toe
knuckle
nail

hair (general)
hair of head
skin
fat
bone
blood
muscle
lung
heart
stomach

to live/to be alive

to breathe
to sleep/to be asleep
to wake/to be awake
to dream

to go
to come
to walk
to run
to jump
to fly
to fall
to stand
to sit
to lie
to swim
to dance

to touch
to hear
to listen
to see
to look
to taste
to smell

to blink
to cry
to open eyes
to close eyes

to eat
to drink
to be hungry
to be thirsty
to lick
to suck
to swallow
to bite
to chew

to speak
to smile
to sing
to shout

to blow (with mouth)

to laugh
to cough
to hiccup
to sneeze
to snore
to whistle
to burp

to be sick
to limp
to bleed

4.3 Animals

animal (general)
cow
buffalo
yak
horse
donkey
mule
pig
goat
sheep
chicken
duck
goose
dog
wolf
fox
cat
tiger
leopard
lion
deer
bear
monkey
mouse
rabbit
elephant
rhinoceros
bat
frog
turtle
lizard
crocodile

snake
bird (general)
owl
hawk
crow/raven
fish (general)
snail
slug
insect
ant
bee
dragonfly
butterfly
moth
grasshopper
cricket
fly
mosquito
beetle
louse
nit
flea
cockroach
spider
scorpion
leech (land)
leech (water)
earthworm
caterpillar

4.4 Natural Objects

sky
sun
day
moon
star
rainbow
wind
air
cloud
fog
rain
snow
thunder
lightning

monsoon

fire

smoke

ember/hot coal

ash/cinder

water

puddle

sea/ocean/large body of salt water

island

lake

river

waterfall

whirlpool

spring

well

ice

flood

drought

soil/dirt

sand

clay

dust

silt

mud

highlands/the hills

mountain

hill

lowlands/the plains

plateau

(river) valley

gorge (between mountains)

stone

hole

cave/hole (in rock)

metal (general)

iron

rust

gold

silver

copper

tin

brass

bronze

lead

to blow (of wind)

to rain

to snow

to freeze

to melt

to flow

to burn/to be on fire

to set fire to

to put out fire

to be hot (of weather)

to be cold (of weather)

4.5 Plants and Food

barley

buckwheat

corn

millet

rice

cooked rice

husked rice

unhusked rice

wheat

amaranth

lentil

soybean

pea

peanut

nut

fruit

banana

orange

apple

pear

lemon

lime

pineapple

fig

mango

papaya

watermelon

strawberry

vegetable
spinach
cabbage
cauliflower
stringbean
cucumber
eggplant
tomato
radish
onion
scallion
potato
sweet-potato
squash
pumpkin

ginger
chili
garlic
pepper
pickle
sugar
salt

tea
water
beer
wine

tree
flower
grass
plant
leaf
root
bark
trunk
branch
bush
vine
weed
wood
hay
field
paddy field (wet)
swidden (dry)

to mill/grind
to boil water
to boil something
to cook
to peel
to mash (in mortar and pestle)
to mix
to stir
to sort through (eg grains, lentils)
to pick (fruit, vegetable)
to sow seed
to harvest
to till field
to plant
to winnow
to ripen
to rot
to cut wood/grass
to gather wood
to kill an animal for food

4.6 People and Family

father
mother
husband
wife
son
daughter
brother
elder brother
younger brother
sister
elder sister
younger sister
father-in-law
mother-in-law
daughter-in-law
son-in-law
grandfather
grandmother
grandson
granddaughter
uncle
paternal uncle (brother of father)
maternal uncle (brother of mother)

aunt
paternal aunt (sister of father)
maternal aunt (sister of mother)
nephew
niece
man
woman
parent
child
baby

family
name
house
marriage
divorce
childhood
old age
widow
widower
orphan
relative
friend
enemy
host
guest

carpenter
weaver
potter
leather-worker
tailor
herder
official
soldier
worker
farmer
doctor
teacher
student
magician
priest
god
ghost, demon

to give birth
to be born

to marry
to divorce
to die
to like/to love
to hate
to work
to buy
to sell
to make
to build
to carry
to teach
to learn
to read
to write
to sew

Appendix B contains extra vocabulary items, organized into similar categories. If you or other speakers know the words, record them, and again, take them as a departure point for collecting further vocabulary. With an endangered language, vocabulary is often borrowed from the national language, more and more with every generation, so the more you are able to collect now, the better record you will create of the words that make up your language.

5 BASIC INFORMATION EXCHANGE

In this chapter, we deal with recording what has been called “useful language”, in the sense that it contains some basic elements of language as they are used on a daily, informal basis. These include things such as how people greet each other and begin conversations, how they address each other, how they ask each other questions and how they order each other to do things. This is of course just a limited view of what parts of language are useful, but these are things that might not come up in working through the grammar of the language (as is you will do in chapter 9), yet they are essential to normal conversation and interaction. The material you collect at this stage will be quite different from material you collect in chapter 9, which will be staged in that you are trying to collect specific grammatical material. The main goal of chapters 5, 6 and 7 is to create a record of natural language, as people chose to speak it.

You will be recording speakers in the community (if they agree, of course!) as they engage in different specific types of communication. These recordings will be onto a cassette, and will not (yet) be annotated, although you may do so if you wish. When you finish recording each bit, make sure you identify it (a recorded identification might be something like: “two older ladies who are neighbours greeting each other in the morning”)

Speakers may be shy about having their voice recorded onto a cassette. In this case, you can do a trial run, to show them how the tape recorder works and what they sound like when the tape is played back. (This will also allow you to test your equipment and technique.)

The speakers may also be shy about making mistakes while they are talking. You can reassure them that it does not matter, and that it is natural for people to make mistakes when they speak, as we all do, particularly in non-rehearsed informal speech. Do, however, make it clear to them that the decision about whether to keep or erase a recording belongs to them.

For all the information you collect, please be very careful to record yourself describing the scene and the different people participating and sum up what was said and what happened. This is particularly important if the material is not transcribed, because otherwise it will be difficult to make use of your data to analyze how this type of useful language is actually used.

5.1 Greetings

How people greet each other is an important part of how to use a language in the context of a community, as it is often the first thing people say to each other upon meeting.

How do people greet each other on a normal basis? Is this any different in specific situations, such as more formal situations?

One way to record different types of greetings would be to walk around the village with your recording equipment turned on, and record yourself and others as they greet each other during a chance meeting along a path while walking. You could then go, either alone, or with someone, to someone's house, again recording the interaction as people come together. Another scenario that might elicit a different type of greeting and ensuing questions is if the visit is planned and the people know you are going to visit.

Your goal is to try to record how people greet each other in as many situations as you encounter: the three scenarios mentioned reflect different degrees of planning, and might affect the greetings. Other scenarios might include people greeting each other (if they do) when they come together at religious ceremonies, at weddings, at funerals, at remembrance ceremonies, for example. As a native speaker, you probably have an intuitive idea what situations are going to reveal differences in greetings. Use this knowledge to make sure you record as wide a range as possible.

Also significant might be the different social levels/statuses of people greeting each other: children vs adults vs elders, men vs women, people from within the community and those from outside (if for example the language is spoken in several communities). The above represent different ways you could get recordings of people greeting each other.

5.2 Terms of address

Also interesting is the terms people use when they talk to each other, and how these terms correlate to age, gender, status, insider vs outsider association. This type of information might well come up in the same pieces of conversations as the greetings you will record for section 5.1.

This type of information is also interesting to understand how society is structured and what the relationships are between people. You could record people within families talking to each other, as well as people talking to others not related to them.

5.3 Questions

How do people ask each other questions? Questions are often an important part of any conversational exchange, and will probably come up in any of the pieces of conversation you have recorded above. Greetings will often be followed by questions about where people have come from, where they are going, whether they are healthy, and any other possibility.

It is also possible that the beginnings of conversations when people meet in the different types of situations seen above under the section on greetings will include questions which are almost part of the greeting. So if you keep your tape recorder on for a few minutes after people first meet, you will probably have recorded several questions.

In addition to what you record naturally, could you provide or ask for translations of the the following questions into the target language?

“What is your name?”

“What is that over there?”

“Who are you?”

“Who lives in this village?”

“Whom did you see at his house?”

“To whom did you give the money?”

“When did you arrive here?”

“When will you leave?”

“Why did you come here?”

“Why do you plant rice in a wet field?”

“Where is the closest village from here?”

“Where are all the children?”

“Where are you going?”

“Where are you coming from?”

“How do you get to the mountains?”

“How do you cook meat?”

“How old are you?”

“How many people live here?”

In addition to the type of question above, which requires a full answer, some questions have a simple answer, which can be either yes or no. How are the following types of questions formed? And how would a positive or negative answer be made?

--Are you hot?
--Yes/No."

--Is this water good?
--Yes/No."

--Do you like this food?
--Yes/No."

--Can you see the mountains in your country?
--Yes/No."

5.4 Commands

Commands, where people are ordered to perform a certain action, are very common in daily communication between people.

Our goal is to record how people utter commands to get each other to do things.

One way you might elicit commands in a natural way is to ask someone to teach you how to do some activity and record the teaching session, as in the following:

1 Recipes: descriptions of how to make a traditional dish or drink. In addition to often including command forms, this type of speech preserves important cultural information.

2 Descriptions of how to make an important cultural object, such as a basket.

3 Descriptions of how to do typical activities: these activities may cover any range of topics, from agricultural to house-building.

You are more likely to be recording command forms if you ask for the descriptions and recipes by asking "tell me how to...", because the speakers will then give you instructions.

In addition to the natural way to express commands, we are also interested in whether these command forms are affected by certain grammatical features. Read the following situations, described in parentheses, and give the command form which corresponds.

(Two boys are playing. One stands still and tells the other:) "Run!"

(A boy is playing in a dangerous place. His father tells him:) "Don't run!"

If the context for the two commands changes, such as there being more than one boy, does the form of the verb stay the same? If not, please give the different forms (if they exist), for two boys and many boys being given the same command. Can anything else affect the command form, such as the gender of either person (the person giving or

receiving the order), or their age?

(A boy is running in the direction of a dangerous snake. You tell him:) “Stop!”

(You are walking with your child and the child wants to stop, because he is tired. You tell him:) “Don’t stop!”

As above, is the form of the verb different depending on how many people are involved? Or on their gender or age?

(A dog is making too much noise. You tell your friend, who is with you:) “Hit him!”

(Your brother is angry at his friend, and wants to fight. You tell him:) “Don’t hit him!”

As above, does the command form change according to the number of people involved? For example, in the case of hitting the dog, is the verb form different if the context involves two friends who are both told to hit the dog? How about if there are two or more dogs involved?

(A child is playing with a stick. You tell him:) “Give it to me!”

(A woman is holding a small boy, who is crying. You tell her:) “Give him to me.”

In these two situations, there are several factors which might affect the command form: the number of things being given (stick/child), the number of people giving (the person receiving the command), and the number of people receiving it. Does changing these variables make any difference to the form of the command verb?

6 CONVERSATIONS

Recording conversations is very useful for documentation in the sense that it captures the way people actually speak to each other. We’ve seen above certain types of useful speech which future learners will probably want to know first, such as how to greet people and ask them questions, but it would also be useful to have recordings of natural conversations between people.

Your goal will be to stimulate conversations and record them. One way you might stimulate a conversation is by using the word lists provided above in chapter 4. Around the basic categories the words are separated into, you could start discussions about activities pertaining to different areas of life in the community. For example, the section on plants and food might stimulate discussions about which kinds of plants are used for food in the area where the language is spoken, how these plants are cultivated or collected, how they are prepared. The category of body parts might lead to interesting information about what type of clothing is worn on which parts of the body, or perhaps what illnesses or emotions are associated with specific body parts. As for animals, a discussion might arise from the hierarchy into which animals are classified in your culture, or where these animals are believed to come from, or perhaps related to food: which ones are eaten and which are not. The word lists are thus proposed as a point of departure to stimulate conversations and discussions between speakers, which you might need to moderate initially to get them started.

It might also be awkward for speakers to have recorded conversations at first, but they will probably eventually get involved in the conversation and forget about the recorder.

In order to launch a conversation between two or more people, you could be the moderator, and start out the conversation with a topic you know people have strong opinions about.

7 STORIES AND OTHER NARRATIVES

In this section, we will look at the process of collecting recordings of the type of speech which is often performed by one person. This is unlike conversation in many ways: there is only one speaker, which means that generally there will not be interruptions and questions. Another difference is that this type of narrative is often more rehearsed, as it might have been told on several occasions.

The following are ideas for various types of narratives to record.

- 1 Folktales: traditional stories, which tend to contain a great deal of cultural information, such as important cultural characters and traditions.
- 2 Origin myths: stories which describe how the tribe came to be, where it came from and why it settled in a particular area. This type of story might also contain information about why the tribe has the name it does.
- 3 Historical narratives: events in the history of the area or interaction of different groups which might be of interest, and which may have been passed down over several generations.
- 4 Descriptions of life in the village. These might be descriptions of the different events of the year, the agricultural cycle, the various festivals which are celebrated, the important events in a person's life (such as birth, marriage, death).
- 5 Prepared scenes. These scenes, acted out by several speakers (either rehearsed in advance or not) might recount imagined encounters between people, or recreate historical or religious stories. They will be different from free conversations by virtue of the different participants having roles.
- 6 Ceremonies. Religious ceremonies and songs often use quite different language. If it is not forbidden to record this language, this would make very interesting material, in terms of both its linguistic and cultural value.

Eventually, you will want to transcribe, that is to put into written form, the recordings you have made in the previous four chapters. The word lists are reproduced in the workbook and the material can be transcribed there. As for conversations and stories, the transcription process is more laborious. It will involve listening to the recordings many times, stopping at each sentence or piece of sentence, and writing the material down, until you eventually have the entire set of material. For conversations and stories, you will also need to do what is called glossing, that is providing under each transcribed word, its meaning in the dominant language, followed by a more fluent translation underneath. For more information, see 9.1.

8 DEVELOPING A WRITING SYSTEM

Many endangered languages are used in an exclusively oral setting: information is transmitted orally, and there is no traditional system for writing the language down. For a documentation project, it is important to have a transcription system, as it allows us to record information beyond what we can accomplish with just audio recordings. We have not yet dealt with transcription, as the previous sections did not require transcribing. However, once you have assimilated the material in this chapter, you may wish to go back and transcribe certain of the materials you have already collected.

Is there any system in place for writing down the target language?

If so, is it one which people are able to use easily, or does the community feel it needs to be changed?

If there is no writing system, or if there is one and the community wants to change it, you will have to develop a means of transcribing your language. The easiest solution will be to use a writing system you already know: generally, this might be the writing system used for the national language, which will need to be adapted somewhat. Alternatively, it might be a writing system used for another language you know, again often with some adaptation needed.

8.1 Principle of a writing system

The general principle of a writing system is to have one distinct symbol for every sound or combination of sounds in the language. This principle applies to alphabets, where each symbol represents a sound, and to syllabaries, where each symbol represents a syllable.

Either system, alphabet or syllabary, can be successfully adapted to transcribe any language, as long as the principle of one symbol to one sound or combination of sounds is respected. In other words, as you devise a transcription system for your language, based on another writing system which you have selected, you must have one particular symbol correspond to a single sound or syllable: that way, when someone else is reading words or sentences you have transcribed, they will consistently be able to connect what you transcribe to the sounds of the language.

The basic methodology you will follow is this:

- 1 Chose a writing system which you are going to use to write your unwritten language. It should be one which are very comfortable with, and which you can write easily. Generally, this will be the writing system used for the dominant language.
- 2 Think about the sounds in your language, and determine which ones do not have an equivalent in the writing system you have chosen. It could be, for example, that your language has the sound “l”, whereas the dominant language has no such “l” sound (and therefore the writing system you are borrowing has no “l” symbol.)
- 3 You will need to create/adapt a way to write the sounds which are not covered by the writing system. There are two ways to do this:

a) Borrow a symbol which has no other use in your language. If, for example, as in the case above, your language has an “l” sound but the dominant language does not, you will need to use something else to write “l”. The dominant language may have a sound which your language does not: maybe the dominant language has an “r” sound and symbol, but your language does not have an “r” sound. You could then use the “r” symbol, which is otherwise unused, to write your language’s “l” sound.

b) Create a new symbol. You may not be able to identify an unused symbol, and need to create a new one to cover the sounds of your language. In such a case, possibilities range from inventing a completely new symbol to adapting existing symbols by adding extra marks to them. The main thing to keep in mind is that you want a writing system which is simple to use, so the symbols should not be too complicated.

4 Start using the writing system to transcribe words in your language, and see whether the system can express all the different sounds and is easy to use.

The main thing to remember as you go about putting together your writing system is that the symbols need to be used consistently within your system: a reader who has learned your system should not have to wonder whether a certain symbol means one thing in one word and another in another word.

8.2 Possible difficulties

8.2.1 Vowel sounds

Generally, the vowel sounds in a language are the most difficult to transcribe with a borrowed writing system. This is because there is so much variation between languages in the sets of vowels they use.

Think about how many vowel sounds your language has. Is there, in the writing system you have chosen to borrow, a distinct symbol you can use for each vowel? Or, if you are using a syllabary, a distinct symbol for each syllable where there is a vowel?

If the writing system you plan to use does not have enough vowel sounds, there are different ways you can create more symbols, some of which are discussed above in 8.1.3. Another possibility, if using letters, you can combine two letters to create a new symbol for a distinct sound, such as writing “ea” in contrast to “e” and “a”.

The most important thing will be that you have the same number of vowel symbols as you have vowel sounds : if five vowel sounds exist for your language, then you should have five vowel letters or symbols.

8.2.2 Long and short vowels

In some languages, vowels might exist in two versions: long and short. You will need to decide whether you want to distinguish these in writing, and if so, how to distinguish them.

One criterion for deciding whether to distinguish the vowels by length is this: if you have two words which are identical except for the vowel being long in one and short in another, and the two words have different meanings. It might be important, then, to have a difference in the writing to show that the words are not the same.

One technique for differentiating long and short vowels is to write the long vowel as a double vowel, such as “aa”, in opposition to the single, short vowel, written “a”. One other possibility is to put a sign above the vowel, such as “ā” in opposition to “a”. As before, what is important is consistency and ease of use.

8.2.3 Nasal vowels

Another thing you might want to mark on the vowels is if they have a nasal quality (pronounced through the nose). As before, the decision whether or not to indicate the nasality of the vowel is up to you, but one good reason for showing the difference between nasal and non-nasal vowels is if there is a difference in meaning between two words which are the same except for the nasal vowel in one and not the other.

There may be something in the writing system you are borrowing which indicates that a vowel is nasal. For alphabets, it is sometimes noted with a mark above the letter, as in “ā”.

8.2.4 Tones

Some languages have tones, and in those languages, often an otherwise identical word with a different tone has a completely different meaning. If your language has tone, you must decide whether you want your writing system to indicate this.

If you decide to write tone, there are several possibilities for showing the tone. You will first need to figure out how many different tones appear in the language. Generally the same tones will appear on the different vowels of the language: you probably want to choose a symbol to mark the tone, and add this mark on top of each vowel where it appears (instead of having a separate mark for each vowel+tone combination.) You will need to choose distinct symbols for each tone: this could be an accent mark above the vowel, or a number next to or above the vowel. Once more, the symbol you chose is not important, but what is important is the consistency and ease with which it can be used. If you used a particular symbol above a letter to show nasality or the short-long vowel distinction, then be sure you are not using the same symbol to mark tones.

8.2.5 Consonants

Consonants will generally be easier to write with borrowed symbols than vowels, but the symbols may still need some adapting. You might, for example, have consonant sounds

in your language which do not exist in the writing system you borrow.

The principles for writing sounds which do not exist in the dominant language are discussed above (8.1.3). These include using an otherwise unused symbol, or adapting a symbol by adding marks to it, as has been done to T in the following: Ʀ, Ƨ, Ƨ̇. If using the alphabet, another possibility is to decide that capital and small letters have different sounds associated.

You can also combine two consonant symbols to create a new symbol. If your language has a retroflex sounds (made with the tongue curled up and backwards), you might write this with a combination of “t” or “d” with “r” because the retroflex sometimes sounds like it is partway between these sounds. Again, consistency is crucial, and the writing system you create should be able to show the important sound differences which exist in your language.

A good way to think about the transcription system is to think what someone else who is trying to relearn the language might be able to figure out relatively quickly and simply. Will they be able to use what you have written to recreate the sounds of the language? Do not worry if it takes a while to figure out how to transcribe the system: you may start and realize after a while that you have forgotten a sound, and have to start again.

8.3 Transcription exercise

As a starting exercise, take a few words:

house
tree
river
stone

First, identify what the words are in your language.

Next, identify the different sounds that compose the words:

In the writing system of the national language, or in another system if you prefer, is there a symbol that corresponds to all the sounds in these words?

If there is no way to write the sounds, is there another symbol which contains a sound which does not exist in your language which you could borrow for this specific sound? If not, can you invent a way to write the sound which is convenient to write and to remember?

We'll add a few more words, and see whether these bring up new sounds you had not written before:

mother
father

family
village

How are these words pronounced in your language?

Are there new sounds which were not in the previous four words, and if so, can you find a symbol to use to write them?

By thinking about the words above and their pronunciation, you have begun the process of working out a transcription system.

The next chapter concerns vocabulary. It includes five lists of basic words (some of which may not, or no longer, exist, in your language).

Your job is to go through the lists, think about what the words are in your language, and what sounds make them up. Then think about how you are going to develop a writing system to show the distinct sounds which make up these words.

Take your time going over the lists, until you are comfortable with the system, until you feel you are able to write all the sounds which exist in your language.

When you feel ready, begin working through the vocabulary lists below, which are organized according to different themes, writing down the words which you know.

Once you have worked through the word lists you should be comfortable with your writing system. You will have a good sense of what the different sounds of the language are. At that point, draw up a list of the different symbols you use, so that we have a sense of the range of the whole system. Also, if any of these have been adapted from their original sound, try to give a description of what the sound is and how it is produced.

9 GRAMMAR

This chapter deals with specific grammatical patterns which may occur in your language. It guides you through the process of recording information on the language's grammar through a combination of questions, questionnaires, charts, and translation exercises. For this part of the data collection, it will still be very important to record any material which is produced, but it will also be good to transcribe the results of your work, so that they can later be analyzed by a linguist who can produce a grammar for the community from your materials.

9.1 Methodology for transcribing sentences

The methodology given here applies to all situations where you are asked to translate and transcribe sentences. The goal is to record how the meaning is expressed your

language and to tell us what the individual words mean (in the order in which they appear in your language).

1 Look at the sentences given below in the dominant language and translate the concept into your language.

2 Write down the version of the sentence as it would be said in your language.

3 Beneath each word you have written in your language, write a translation into the dominant language of each individual word, in the order in which the words appear in the sentence in your language.

The following scenario exemplifies how this process works: in this case, the dominant language will be English, and the target language will be Japanese.

A sentence is given in the dominant language, to be translated into the target language. Imagine that the following is the given sentence.

“I eat rice.”

The documenter will translate the sentence into the target language (Japanese, in this example), making a good sentence which sounds natural and which expresses the concept of the original:

“gohan wo tabemasu”

A word-for-word translation of the Japanese sentence into the dominant language is given. The point of this is so that we have a record of what each word in the target language sentence corresponds to. Below, you see the Japanese sentence as well as the word-for-word translation into English.

gohan wo	tabemasu
rice object-marker	eat

The word-for-word translation raises several issues: there is not always a corresponding word from one language to another. For example, the Japanese word “wo” is translated as “object-marker”, because it follows the object in a Japanese sentence. If a word appears which you cannot give a translation for, try to give (perhaps in the margin, or lower in the page) an explanation of what the word means or indicates. If you cannot find an explanation, leave a space under the unexplained word. It is possible that later, after writing many examples, you will understand what the pattern is.

The way this sequence of sentences will look in a workbook is this:

“I eat rice”	
gohan wo	tabemasu

rice object-marker eat

The sequence of original sentence, translation and word-for-word translation will therefore take up three lines in your workbook, for each sentence. The spacing of the target language translation and the word-for-word translation is such that the words in the target language are lined up with the corresponding translation.

The format given above, aligning the target language sentence and the dominant language word-for-word translation, is the one you will use for all the translation exercises in this handbook. The handbook is made up of a number of sentences for you to translate, but these are just guides, and you are encouraged to add your own sentences. In these cases, you will have to add a “fluent” translation into the dominant language (a translation into the dominant language, which sounds natural in the dominant language, unlike the word-for-word translation), so that there is a record of the equivalent fluent sentence in both the target language and the dominant.

The format suggested above shows us several things: it gives us the sentence in the target language, and the word-for-word translation back into the dominant language allows us to understand the order of the words in the sentence in the target language. This is important so that we can records the patterns used in the target language.

For some languages, and in some cases, the original sentences and their translations will look very similar, only with different words. Please translate them even in this case, as they contain useful information about how to make a good sentence in your language.

As a practice exercise, you will translate and transcribe the following sentence.

“This is my house.”

How do you express this concept in your language?

Write down the sentence as it is said in your language.

Under each word you have written in your language, write its translation in the dominant language.

You should now have a sentence as it is expressed in your language, as well as its word-for-word translation back into the dominant language. The word-for-word translation in the dominant language will not usually have any meaning, because the words are in the order in which they appear in your language. This will record the order in which words are connected to make a good sentence in your language.

You will now translate the sentences in the sections below, following the methodology we have seen above. If some things are impossible to say in your language, note this next to the sentence and move on to the next.

9.2 To be / to have

This chapter gathers information on basic sentences, which show how the concepts of being and having are expressed. The goal is to see how the concepts of being, such as something being in a place, something existing, something or someone have a certain characteristic, and having, such as owning or being associated with something or someone, are expressed in simple sentences.

9.2.1 Description

The sentences below give a description of person, in terms of their job or relationship to someone.

“That woman is her mother.”

“My father is a farmer.”

“Your sister is a teacher.”

“That man is my father’s friend.”

“They were brothers.”

“I am not a doctor.”

9.2.2 Location

The sentences below explain the location of something or someone.

“The corn is in the field.”

“The millet is in the house.”

“The chickens are in the mud.”

“She is at home.”

“He is not at home.”

“They are behind the house.”

9.2.3 Personal characteristics

The sentences below tell us one of the characteristics of the subject.

“The dog is small.”

“My brother is strong.”

“The school is far.”

“The weather is not hot this year.”

9.2.4 Existence

The sentences below tell us about the existence of something or someone, generally at a certain location.

“There is a market in the big town.”

“There is no store here.”
“There is a window in the wall.”
“There is a river in the village.”
“There is a hospital in the capital.”
“There are many tribes in our village.”

9.2.5 Ownership

The sentences below express the possession of an object or person by the subject.

“I have a goat.”
“He has two wives.”
“You have a book.”
“We have a toy.”
“I have a big family.”
“You do not have money.”
“I do not have food.”

This section has allowed us to document how to make simple sentences in your language, and to understand the order in which the words are placed in these sentences.

9.3 Nouns

Nouns are the words that refer to people and things. They can represent the subjects and objects of sentences. Most of the words that you collected in the word lists were nouns. This chapter concerns the words and affixes that are added to nouns to make them more expressive.

In your language, consider whether you can add any of the following to a noun:

- an indication that it is singular or plural
- a number
- a word which indicates which exact noun is meant
- an adjective
- a word or set of words expressing belonging
- a pronoun, to replace the noun
- a mark that shows its role in a sentence

9.3.1 Singular/plural

Do nouns change to show that they are singular or plural?

They might change by adding an affix, or perhaps the noun might change shapes. It is also possible that there is no difference between singular and plural.

Consider the words in the following pairs. Can you express the difference for all or any of the pairs? Write down both words in the pair, with the singular word first, and the plural word next. Remember that in some cases, there may be no difference at all. In that case, write the word that works for both singular and plural.

“Father; fathers”

“Son; sons”

“Child; children”

“Dog; dogs”

“Tiger; tigers”

“Chicken; chickens”

“Ant; ants”

“River; rivers”

“Mountain; mountains”

“Road; roads”

“Pot; pots”

You may find that only nouns that refer to living beings (humans and/or animals) are different in the plural and singular, or there might be a difference for all words.

If there is a way to make a plural noun in your language, when is it used?

Do you need to use the plural form every time there is more than one, or is it optional? If it is optional, which words is it optional for?

If there is a plural form for words, what is the meaning: does it indicate many of the same object, or possibly the object and others like it?

Is there a way of referring specifically to two of the noun, or three of the noun, as opposed to many of the noun?

How do you express the concepts of the following sets? Please translate the word sets. Remember that your language might not express the difference, in which case just write the concept down once for each set.

“two pigs; many pigs”

“two houses; many houses”

“two people ; many people”

“two mothers ; many mothers”

“two dogs ; three dogs ; many dogs”

“two pens ; three pens ; many pens”

9.3.2 Numbers

This section concerns how objects are counted in your language.

Please list the numbers, as you would say them if counting. Your language may no longer have these numbers, or it may have even more than this. If there are more, give a few more examples of how to make numbers.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

When you are talking about a number of specific objects, do you need a counting word or a numerical classifier alongside the number and noun?

Please translate the following:

“one leaf ; two leaves”
“one apple; three apples”
“one tree; four trees”
“one stick; five sticks”
“one child; six children”
“one cow; seven cows”
“one house; eight houses”
“one bread; nine breads”

If you do need a counting word in addition to the number and the noun, please list the types of objects which use the various counting words. This might have to do with their shape (round vs. flat vs. long), or there might some other factor in deciding which word to use when enumerating objects. Please give as much detail as you can about how counting words are used with specific types of objects.

One thing you might notice is that there was a system like this, but that it has become much more simple, using only one or a few counting words. Ask older speakers if they remember any counting words, which may otherwise be disappearing.

9.3.3 *Demonstratives*

Languages often have ways of specifying the position of a noun in reference to the speaker or listener. This is accomplished by adding words like ‘this’ and ‘that’, which are called ‘demonstratives’, as they verbally demonstrate or show which noun is concerned. Generally these words will make distinctions based on the distance of the object, like

'this' which shows that it is near the speaker, as opposed to 'that' which shows that the object is not near the speaker.

Does your language have words which are added to a noun to point out which one it is? If this type of word exists, what are the different words which can be used? What do they refer to? Some options are 'near the speaker', 'near the listener', 'far from both the listener and the speaker'. Does your language have other possibilities, such as whether the object is visible or not?

Please give examples of the different possibilities for specifying a noun, as described above, by choosing one object ('the house', for example) and listing it in the different possible forms ('this house', 'that house', 'that house over there'), along with definitions of what the combinations mean and what the relevant factors are.

9.3.4 *Adjectives*

Adjectives provide additional information about various qualities of the noun they go with. An example in which there are some adjectives is given below:
"The little red hen"

Some of the possible categories which adjectives cover are the following.

Age: young, old

Size: big, small, huge

Value: good, bad

Color: black, white, red, green, etc.

Physical property: smooth, hard, high

Shape: flat, round

Human tendency: mean, friendly, intelligent

Speed: fast, slow

Not all languages have all these categories, and some have even more than this. We shall be looking at different types of adjectives in your language, and how they are combined.

9.3.4.1 Simple adjectives

Does your language have many adjectives, which express many different types of qualities (such as those seen above), or are there just a few? If there are few, try to list them. If there are many, please give some basic ones, such as those listed above.

Please write down some pairs of adjectives and nouns, as suggested below. Imagine a child pointing to something in front of him and asking 'What is that?' You will write different possible answers to the question:

"It's a big tree."

"It's a dry field."

“It’s a black cloud.”

“It’s a powerful tiger.”

Sometimes, it is possible to use several adjectives with the same noun. Is that possible in your language? Write different combinations which you think of, including, if possible some combinations of one noun with several different adjectives.

If more than one adjective can appear with a single noun, how do you decide what kind of adjective comes first? Can you give a pattern for the order of different types of adjectives, by giving examples with several adjectives for one noun, like the following?

“It’s a big, red house.”

“He’s a big, mean man.”

Do you need a verb when you make a sentence with an adjective? In some languages, adjective-like words act like verbs in sentences. Are there some types of adjectives that need a verb to make a sentence, and others that do not?

Does the adjective change depending on what the noun is? For example, if the adjective goes with a word like ‘woman’, does it sound different from when it is with a word like ‘man’? If so, please give some examples, like the following.

“She’s a tall woman.”

“He’s a tall man.”

9.3.4.2 Comparative adjectives

Adjectives are also used to compare two or more objects, expressing that one of the objects has more or less of a certain quality than the others.

How are the following sentences translated?

“My house is bigger than your house.”

“The school is farther than the clinic.”

“You are taller than your father.”

“This pig is fatter than that one.”

“That woman is more beautiful than this one.”

9.3.4.3 Superlative adjectives

There is another step beyond comparison, and this is when an object is compared with all other similar objects, expressing that it has the most or the least of a certain quality.

How do you also express that an object or person is an extreme example of the quality in the adjective, as in the following sentences translated?

“This mountain is the highest in the whole country.”

“Our market is the biggest in the district.”

“The biggest city is the capital.”
“This bridge is the longest one in the area.”
“This boy is the best student”.

9.3.5 Possession

Nouns can occur with words which express who they belong to, such as the difference between ‘father’ and ‘my father’.

In some languages, some nouns must always occur with a word saying who owns them, and cannot appear alone. If your language does this, you probably came across the problem as you were filling out the word lists, and are aware what types of words can and cannot occur alone. These types of nouns might include family relationships, names of body parts, or perhaps important objects within the culture (such as means of transportation, animals, tools).

Does your language necessarily need to express the owner for certain types of words, and if so, what types of words must be accompanied by a word saying whose they are?

9.3.5.1 Possession by pronouns

One way to express possession of an object is using a pronoun. In some languages, there are special forms of the pronouns, which express possession, while in other languages, this might be accomplished by using the normal form of the pronoun, either alone next to the word, or in combination with a word like “of”. Sometimes, languages have both possibilities.

Below is a list of words appearing with the possessive pronoun that goes with ‘I’. How are these expressed in your language? Is there just one way to express the concept, or perhaps several alternative ways?

“my hand”
“my house”
“my houses”
“my father”
“my mother”
“my land”
“my pen”
“my pens”
“my hat”
“my hats”

After translating the words above, do the same, substituting in turn all the other pronouns in your language (e.g., you singular, you plural, he, she, we, etc.)

Sometimes it is possible to express possession of an object, but the noun representing the object can be omitted.

The following dialogue gives an example:

“Whose hat is that on the floor?”

“It is mine.”

In some cases, the word might be the same as the possessive pronouns we saw above, or, it may be a different word.

How would you translate various possible answers to the dialogue above? In other words, imagine answering the question above, for a variety of owners (I, you, he, she, we, etc) of the hat:

“It is _____”

9.3.5.2 Possession by nouns

It is also possible to express that a noun possesses an object, as in “the boy’s hat” or “Maya’s father”.

In cases like this, where the possessor of a noun is another noun (or name), how is the relationship of possession expressed?

Is there a word which appears between the two nouns?

Is something added to one of the two nouns?

Is something added to both nouns?

Or are they placed next to each other, with no extra words?

By translating the following, you will see how this type of possession is expressed. If there are alternative ways of expressing the following concepts, please give examples.

“Maya’s father”

“the boy’s friend”

“the dog’s master”

“the dog’s bone”

“the country’s government”

“the school’s teacher”

“the water of the river”

“the village chief”

If there are different ways of showing possession for the above groups of words, does it depend on what type of noun is possessed (family relationships, body parts, special tools, animals, clothes, etc)?

9.3.6 Pronouns

What pronouns are used in your language?

The following list includes some possibilities for different pronouns. Please make a list of the ones which are used your language (there may be fewer than in the list below, or

you may have further distinctions not listed below) and define what they refer to. List them as if they were in a simple sentence, such as the underlined pronoun in:

'I am sleeping'

I (male)

I (female)

we two (including the person being spoken to)

we two (excluding the person being spoken to)

we three/more (including the person being spoken to)

we three/more (excluding the person being spoken to)

you (singular, informal, male)

you (singular, informal, female)

you (singular, formal, male)

you (singular, formal, female)

you two (informal, male)

you two (informal, female)

you two (formal, male)

you two (formal, female)

you three/more (informal, male)

you three/more (informal, female)

you three/more (formal, male)

you three/more (formal, female)

he (informal)

he (formal)

she (informal)

she (formal)

they two (informal, male)

they two (formal, male)

they two (informal, female)

they two (formal, female)

they three/more (informal, male)

they three/more (formal, male)

they three/more (informal, female)

they three/more (formal, female)

As we see in the list above, some languages have a number of factors which can affect which pronoun is used: it can be a male/female distinction, a formal/informal distinction, a distinction for the plural between two or more, and a distinction, for "we", between

whether the person spoken to is included or not.

If your language makes distinctions such as these, what are the contexts when they are used? For formality, what determines whether or not someone is referred to with a formal or informal pronoun? For male/female, is the distinction always made, or only sometimes?

9.6 Case

Case is a term we use to talk about the roles of nouns and pronouns in sentences, such as the subject and the object.

In some languages, nouns and pronouns show this by their position in the sentence; in other languages, the nouns and pronouns change in some way to show their role.

The following two sentences are quite different: in the first, the dog is the subject and the cat the object, in the second sentence, these roles are reversed.

'The dog is biting the cat.'

'The cat is biting the dog.'

How does your language show the difference between the two sentences? Please provide translations of the above sentences, as well as explanations, if possible.

When the same two sentences describe an event that happened in the past, is there a difference in the way the roles are expressed?

'The dog bit the cat yesterday.'

'The cat bit the dog yesterday.'

The following sentences contain nouns and pronouns with different roles in the sentence. By translating them, you are recording how nouns behave in different roles.

"The dog is sleeping."

"The dog slept all day."

"The dog plays with the cat."

"The dog played with the cat all day."

"The dog pushes the ball to the cat."

"The dog pushed the ball to the cat."

"I am sitting on the floor."

"I was sitting on the floor all day."

"The woman is sitting on the floor."

"The woman was sitting on the floor."

"I see a man."

“I saw a man yesterday.”
“She sees a man.”
“She saw a man yesterday.”

“I eat rice.”
“I ate rice this morning.”
“The woman eats rice.”
“The woman ate rice this morning.”
“The woman eats rice in the house.”
“The woman eats rice with a spoon.”

“I feed rice to the child.”
“I fed rice to the child this morning.”
“The woman feeds rice to the child.”
“The woman fed rice to the child.”
“The woman feeds rice to the child with a spoon.”
“The woman feeds the dog.”
“The woman fed the dog this morning.”

“The woman cooks rice for the men.”
“The woman cooked rice for the men this morning.”

“The woman gives a ball to the dog.”
“The woman gives a ball to the child.”
“The woman is giving the child to her mother.”

“The woman is walking to the market now.”
“The woman walked to the market yesterday.”
“The woman is walking from the market to the village now.”

The sentences above contained nouns in different roles, whereas those below contain a pronoun (underlined) in a variety of roles.
Please translate the following sentences.

“I am hitting the boy right now.”
“I hit the boy yesterday.”

“The boy is hitting me right now.”
“The boy hit me yesterday.”

“The boy gives me a ball.”
“The boy gave me a ball yesterday.”

“The boy is walking with me to school right now.”
“The boy is making a basket for me right now.”

“The child is running to me.”

“The child is running away from me.”

The above sentences show the underlined pronoun “I” in several different roles. Please substitute each of the pronouns in your language for the underlined pronoun, and write down the translations. This may seem like a repetitive exercise, but it records very interesting information about whether or not pronouns change in different roles, and if they do, what they are changing into.

Sometimes, there are certain verbs, often related to emotions, which make the subject appear differently than if it were an ordinary subject. Please translate the following sentences, which may possibly have this effect on the subject.

“I am scared of rats.”

“I am afraid of the dark.”

“I don’t feel well.”

“I don’t like rice.”

“I feel shy.”

“I am angry.”

9.4 Verbs

9.4.1 Agreement

Verbs can be divided into two broad classes: those which have only subjects, and those which have objects as well as subjects. Some examples of subject-only verbs would be actions which only involve the subject, such as “to walk”, “to sit”, “to sleep”. As for verbs that have both subjects and objects, the action is carried out by the subject onto an object. Some straightforward examples are “to hit” (there is always someone hitting and something being hit), “to read” (there is always a reader and something being read), “to buy” (there is always a buyer and something that is bought).

In some languages, the verb changes depending on who the subject and object are. We call this agreement, because the verb is said to “agree” with the nouns involved in the action. In other languages, there is no agreement: the verb stays the same, no matter who is the subject or object.

9.4.1.1 Subject-only verbs

We saw above some examples of verbs with only subjects and no objects. For verbs which do have agreement with the subject, the changes in the verb for different subjects can be shown in a table like that below.

Does your language have verbs which change according to the subject?

As a test, consider the following two sentences (as they are expressed in your language), and see whether there is anything different about the verb:

“I walk.”

“The cat walks.”

If the verb does have a different shape (as it does above, as there is an extra –s on the end in the second sentence), then your language has verb agreement, which this section will help you document.

The table below shows how the verb “to sit” (in the present tense) changes with different subject pronouns. The way to read the table is to look in the left-most column, which indicates what the subject is. Follow the row over to the next column, which shows the shape of the verb for that particular subject (in English, the only subject that changes the verb is ‘he/she/it’, where an “s” is added to the end. In other languages with agreement, there may be much more significant differences between the verb forms for distinct subject.)

Subject ‘I’	I sit
Subject ‘you’	You sit
Subject ‘he/she/it’	He sits
Subject ‘we’	We sit
Subject ‘you (plural)’	You sit
Subject ‘they’	They sit

Your task is to provide this type of verb table for several simple subject-only verbs, thus recording how the verb changes with the different pronouns.

Methodology for making subject-only verb tables

- 1 Draw a chart like that for the verb ‘to sit’ seen above.

It should have two columns, one for the pronouns, and one for the verb forms.

It should have as many rows as there are separate pronouns in your language, with one pronoun on each line, in the left-most column. The pronouns can be in any order you like, but the conventional way of ordering pronouns is as in section 7.6 above.

- 2 Chose a subject-only verb and make a short sentence. The verb should be in the present tense (an action taking place now). An example sentence is given below.

“He is walking to school.”

- 3 Substitute each of the pronouns in your language into the subject slot (which is underlined in the above example). Remember that you may have more pronouns than in the example chart above.

eg. “I am walking to school”, “You are walking to school”, “He is walking to school”,

etc.

4 Go through the chart you have made, filling in, in the slot next to each pronoun, the verb form which corresponds to it.

Once you have made and filled in charts for several subject-only verbs in the present tense (actions happening now), then repeat the exercise, making charts for the same verbs showing how they change with each pronoun in the past tense (actions which are finished, like something which happened last year and is completely done).

9.4.1.2 Subject-Object verbs

We saw above examples of verbs which have both a subject and an object.

For this type of verb, we need to record the behavior of the verb: the basic possibilities are that the verb does not change at all, that it changes depending on the subject alone, and that it changes depending on both the subject and the object.

As an initial test of whether there is agreement for Subject-Object verbs, consider the following sentences.

“I am hitting you”

“He is hitting you”

“I am hitting him”

“He is hitting him”

If the form of the verb is same in all four cases, then the language probably does not have agreement. You do not need to fill out the verb charts.

If the first and third sentences have the same verb form, and the second and fourth have the same verb form, then the language probably has agreement with only the subject. Try filling out a verb chart, as described below, and if you see that the form of the verb does not change at all, regardless of the changing objects, then fill out a Subject-only verb chart for some Subject-Object verbs, such as “to hit”, “to read”, “to buy”.

If the verb is different in all four sentences, then the language probably has agreement with the subject and object. You will need to fill out a verb chart, as described below.

Making a subject-object verb chart is quite similar to making a subject-only verb chart, but more complex. It involves making a chart which shows how the verb changes depending on both the subject and the object.

The example below is a chart for the verb ‘to hit’ in the present tense. The different possibilities for subject pronouns are given in the left-hand column. The different possibilities for the object pronouns are given in the top-most row. In this way, we have a record of all the possible combinations of subject and object pronouns, and how the verb changes accordingly. For example, if we want to see what a verb looks like when it has a ‘we’ subject and a ‘you (plural)’ object, we find ‘we’ in the subject column. We

then follow the row until we are in the column which says ‘Object ‘you (plural)’” at the top. The verb in the space where the row and the column overlap is the form we are looking for.

	Object ‘I’	Object ‘you’	Object ‘he/she/it’	Object ‘we’	Object ‘you’ (plural)	Object ‘they’
Subject ‘I’		hit	hit		hit	hit
Subject ‘you’	hit		hit	hit		hit
Subject ‘he/she/it’	hits	hits	hits	hits	hits	hits
Subject ‘we’		hit	hit		hit	hit
Subject ‘you’(plural)	hit		hit	hit		hit
Subject ‘they’	hit	hit	hit	hit	hit	hit

You will notice some blank spaces in the table. These are the spaces which cannot be filled, because that combination does not exist: for example, the crossing of ‘Subject ‘I’ and ‘Object ‘I’” is left blank, because it is difficult to imagine saying ‘I hit me’ (although it is possible to say ‘I hit myself’, something we will look at below).

You will now make a similar chart for subject-object verbs in your language.

Methodology for making subject-object verb charts

- 1 Make a chart like the one we saw above for ‘to hit’.

The number of rows and columns is determined by the number of distinct pronouns in your language. If the language has twelve pronouns, then the chart will have twelve blank rows (plus one above to write the pronouns in) and twelve blank columns (plus one to the left to write the pronouns in).

In the left-most column, you will write the pronouns, one in each row. Again, the order is up to you, but the conventional order is that in 7.6 above. In the top-most row, you will write all the pronouns, with one pronoun per column. Remember that, depending on your language, you may have more pronouns than in the example chart above.

- 2 Chose a subject-object verb and make a short sentence, in the present tense.

e.g. “He is hitting me.”

- 3 Substitute each of the pronouns in your language into the subject and

object slots (underlined in the above example) of your short sentence.

e.g. “I am hitting you”, “I am hitting him”, “I am hitting you (plural)”, “I am hitting them”, “You are hitting me”, “You are hitting us”, etc.

4 Work through the chart, filling in the verb form for each of the possible (remember that some are not possible, such as subject and object “I” together) combinations of subject pronouns (listed in the left-hand column) and object pronouns (listed in the top row of the table).

You can then repeat the exercise with several subject-object verbs. It should then be repeated, giving the same verbs in the past tense (referring to completed actions, such as those finished a year ago, for example).

9.4.1.3 Reflexive verbs

The term “reflexive verb” refers to verbs which have the same subject and object, in the sense that the subject is performing the action on him- or herself. Generally, there are types of actions which are frequently expressed as reflexive, often having to do with personal grooming (dressing, washing).

How is this type of scenario expressed in your language? Translate the following concept:

“I see myself.”

Substitute for the underlined pronoun all the other possible pronouns, in order to record how this type of reflexive action is expressed with different subjects.

Is there a special set of verbs used to express reflexive actions, which is different from what you would use if the subject and object were distinct? This question will be partially answered by translating the following sentence pairs.

“He is looking at myself in the mirror.”

“He is looking at the child.”

“I washed myself.”

“I washed the child.”

“I burned myself in the fire.”

“I burned the rice.”

“I got myself dressed.”

“I got the child dressed.”

9.4.2 *Timing and duration of actions*

Verbs, in addition to telling us who is participating in an action, also tell us the timing of the action. Is it something that has already happened, that is happening now, or that will happen later? Is it an action that happens regularly, or just a single time, or is it in the middle of happening currently?

There are many more possibilities, and the context for the action or actions must be given in order to correctly document how these timing issues are marked. The following

sentences cover a range of different timing and duration possibilities for various actions. By translating and transcribing them, you will convey how such information is transmitted in your language. In some cases, several of the sentences might be expressed the same way in your language.

Translate the following sentences.

“He is laughing.” (because I am telling a funny story right now)

“He will laugh.” (soon, when I tell him my funny story)

“He laughed.” (when I told him a funny story)

“He laughed for a long time.” (after he heard my story)

“When he was a child, he laughed all the time.”

“He usually laughs.” (when he hears funny stories)

“He will start to laugh.” (If you tell him a funny story)

“He will stop laughing.” (When he hears the end of the story)

“His stomach hurts because he laughed so much.”

“He is building a house.” (can you see him over there?)

“He is building a house.” (can you hear him?)

“He is building a house.” (my mother told me about it)

“He is building a house.” (I am quite sure he is, as I can see the wood and tools, even though I do not see him doing the work)

“He is building a house.” (I am very surprised, because he is usually very lazy)

“He builds houses.” (that’s his job)

“He is building a house for the neighbours.” (the project isn’t finished yet, but he is taking a break)

“He has been building a house since last week.”

“He built a house yesterday.”

“He built a house last month.”

“He built a house last year.”

“He will build a house tomorrow.”

“He will build a house next week.”

“He will build a house next year.”

“He finished building a house this morning.”

“He started building a house this morning.” (and he is still working)

“He started building a house this morning.” (and he is resting now)

“He built a house.” (and that’s it right there)

“He built a house.” (he told me)

“He built a house.” (it must be true, even though I have not seen it, because his family will live there soon)

“He built a house.” (I had no idea he knew how to)

“He will build a house.” (he told me so)

“He coughs often.” (I hear him at night)

“He coughs often.” (Can you see how tired he looks?)

“He coughs often.” (and I give him water every time he does)

“He usually coughs in the evening.”

“When he drank the cold water, he coughed once.”
“When he drank the cold water he coughed twice.”
“When he drank the cold water he coughed four times.”
“When he drank the cold water he coughed many times.”
“When he drank the cold water, he started coughing.”
“When he went inside, he stopped coughing.”
“He was coughing the whole time while I told the story.”
“He started to cough last night, but stopped coughing during the night.”
“He started to cough last night.” (and he is still coughing today)
“I heard him coughing all night.”
“I heard him cough once last night.”
“I hear him coughing right now.”
“I always hear him coughing.”

9.4.3 *Negation*

This section concerns making a sentence into the negative. Consider the following pair, as they are expressed in your language.

“He speaks English.”
“He does not speak English.”

Different languages have different strategies for making negatives: in some, negation may be expressed by adding a negative affix to the verb; in others, the verb may change (sometimes the negative verb might have agreement with the subject also, so that every subject has a different negative verb form); or, it may be a negative word placed elsewhere in the sentence.

First, we will perform a test of whether your language has negative verb agreement. If the language does not have agreement with affirmative verbs (as seen in 9.4.1), then you can ignore this set of sentences and move on to translating those further down. If your language does have verb agreement, then translate the following pairs of sentences.

(Think of the context as a mother looking for her small child and asking people.)

“I see her.”
“I do not see her.”
“You (singular) see her.”
“You (singular) do not see her.”
“He sees her.”
“He does not see her.”

Looking at the sentences as you have translated them in your language, pay attention to the verbs in particular. Is the negative version of each pair distinguished by the same affix being added to the verb? If so, then negation is indicated by adding a particular affix to the verb, and this affix is not affected by the subject. There is no negative agreement, and you can proceed to translating the sentences below. If instead the negative verb in each pair of sentences is not the same negative affix added to the verb,

then your verbs have special negative agreement, which must be recorded. If this is the case for your language, you will need to fill out verb charts (as in 9.4.1.1) for a negative verb, so show how the negative marker is distinct for each subject. In order to do this, you can take the same verbs as you had in the positive, and make a new chart, following the same methodology, with the negative forms of verbs.)

If you do not have negative agreement, you can record the contrast by translating a number of pairs affirmative and negative sentences. Please translate the following:

“He has a brother.”
“He does not have a brother.”
“He has some money.”
“He has no money.”
“The tree is big.”
“The tree is not big.”
“I see the child.”
“I do not see the child.”

Is the negative indicated differently based on the timing of the verb?

“The tree was big (before it was cut down).”
“The tree was not big.”
“He spoke English when he was a boy.”
“He did not speak English when he was a boy.”
“I saw the child yesterday.”
“I did not see the child yesterday.”
“I will go to the capital tomorrow.”
“I will not go to the capital tomorrow.”

It is also interesting to see how questions are answered in the affirmative and negative, as the way of saying “no” in response to a question can vary depending on the nature of the verb in the question. The following are mini-dialogues, which you should translate and then give both an affirmative answer and a negative answer.

--Does he speak English?
--Yes/No.”
--Did he speak English when he was a boy?
--Yes/No.”
--Does he have a brother?
--Yes/No.”

9.4.4 Adverbs

Adverbs are words which add more detail to the description of how the action is carried out. In different languages, they can cover different ranges of topics, such as time, manner, direction. In some languages, the types of adverbs described below are separate words which are added to the sentence, whereas in other languages, it is the

verb which changes to express the concept described.

9.4.4.1 Manner

Manner adverbs describe how the action is carried out, as in the following example.

“The boy cut the grass **quickly**, because the buffalos were hungry.”

Translate the following sentences, which contain some possible manner adverbs. Sometimes, you will not be able to translate them, in which case you should explain how the concept might be conveyed.

“She runs very fast.”

“The old man walks slowly.”

“He eats rice with his hands.”

“She kicks the ball with her feet.”

“The old man tells the story in Hindi.”

Some languages have large numbers of possibilities, whereas others have very few. Are there other possibilities for common adverbs in your language? Could you exemplify them in some sentences?

9.4.4.2 Time

Time adverbs describe when an event takes place, as in the following.

“He left **this morning**.”

Again, there are a number of possibilities for these time adverbs, some of which are given below. Give the equivalents for those which you have specific words for.

this morning, this afternoon, this evening, tonight

now, soon, later, earlier

during the night, during the day, at dawn, at noon, at sunset, these days, in the past, in the future, soon, someday, earlier, later, in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening

today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, the day after that...

yesterday, the day before yesterday, the day before that...

this week, next week, the week after next, the week after that...

last week, the week before last, the week before that...

three months ago, two months ago, last month, this month, next month, the month after that, the month after that

this year, next year, the year after next, the year after that...

last year, the year before last, the year before that...

How do you put these adverbs into a sentence?

“He left at dawn.”

“He left in the morning.”

“He left yesterday.”

9.4.4.3 Direction/location

Adverbs of direction or location show where or in which direction the action is carried out, as in the example.

“When you arrive at the river, turn **left** and walk **up** the hill.”

Can you give an individual word for the following directional adverbs:

left

right

uphill

downhill

north

south

east

west

towards the capital

away from the capital

This class of adverbs is interesting in that some languages incorporate information about direction into the verb. If your language does this, you will find that some of the sentences below use different verbs, even if they are given in the dominant language as the same verb with a different adverb. If this is the case, please complete the list of sentences by adding other verbs which incorporate direction, and explain what they mean.

“Turn left at the river.”

“Turn right at the river.”

“To go to the capital, walk north.”

“To go to the capital, walk south.”

“To go to the capital, walk west.”

“To go to the capital, walk east.”

“At the river, go up the hill.”

“At the river, go down the hill.”

“They came down to my house.”

“They came up to my house.”

“They went up to my house.”

“They went down to my house.”

“I live across the river.”

“The animals walked over the pass.”

9.5 Clause combinations

The various grammar chapters so far discussed simple sentences (with notions of having and being), nouns, and verbs. Through translations of sentences, you have recorded other aspects of your language's grammar as well. This chapter deals specifically with more complex sentences: those in which there are two or more clauses (short sentences or pieces of sentences containing actions or events) are combined to express a more complex action or event.

9.5.1 *Verb combinations*

Are there any events which can only be expressed by using two (or more) verbs combined together?

This type of situation might be an action such as bringing something somewhere (like "to pick up and go"), or it might be a specific cultural event (combining dancing and singing, perhaps). It might also be the way you express beginning or ending an action. What you are looking for are actions which are expressed through two or more other verbs (or pieces of verbs).

If you can identify that the language does have closely connected verbs, in the sense described above, can you give some examples of such verb pairs? Ideally, you would put such verbs into sentences, and explain what the two single verbs mean and what the composite verb means.

9.5.2 *Reported events*

When we report something done by something else, the sentence can sometimes involve several verbs. Consider the following example:

"She told my mother that I hit her."

In this example, there are several events: one event is "She told my mother" and the other is "I hit her", which is what the woman tells the mother. We are interested in how this type of situation is expressed, where someone reports an event that took place. The first verb will often be one like the following: "to hear", "to tell", "to say". Other verbs that often participate in the same construction, even though they are not reporting events, are "to know", "to think", "to feel", "to notice", "to realize", "to understand", "to hear", because they relate a feeling about something.

Please translate the following concepts. If there are several possible ways to do so, please give them all, explaining whether there is any difference in meaning.

"It is cold here in winter."

"She said it is cold here in winter."

"She told me that it is cold here in winter."

“I heard that it is cold here in winter.”
“She knows it is cold here in winter.”

“Your sister had a child last night.”
“Your mother said that your sister had a child last night.”
“Your mother told me that your sister had a child last night.”
“I heard that your sister had a child last night.”

9.5.3 *Expression of desire, need, ability*

Sentences expressing the desire for, need for, ability to, and obligation to other actions also contain complex structures. They contain a verb which expresses the subject’s feeling of desire/need/ability/obligation about another action, as well as telling us what that other action is.

“She wants to learn the alphabet.”

In the example, the subject has a desire, which is expressed as an action “learning the alphabet”. By translating various examples of this type of sentence, we can record how this type of complex concept is expressed in your language. The following sets contrast a simple sentence with a more complex one where the simple concept becomes the object of desire/need/obligation/etc. Do not translate the material in parentheses, which gives more context to help you with your translation.

“He is leaving.”
“He wants to leave.”
“I want him to leave.”
“He cannot leave (It is raining outside).”
“He must leave (I say so).”
“He must leave (He has something else to do).”

“I am making a basket.”
“I want to make a basket.”
“I want him to make a basket.”
“He wants to make a basket.”
“He wants me to make a basket.”
“I like to make baskets.”
“I can make a basket.” (I have all the materials)
“I know how to make a basket.”
“I must make a basket.” (the old one is broken)
“He must make a basket.” (the old one is broken)

9.5.4 *Adverbial phrases*

The following six sections concern the expression of time, location, manner, purpose,

reason and simultaneity for the main action in the sentence, through a separate phrase which contains its own verb. These act like adverbs, except that the concept is expressed through a whole phrase which includes a verb.

For each section, please translate the sentences given. In some cases, there may be several ways the sentence can be put together to express the same thing. Please write down the various possibilities, explaining how they differ.

9.5.4.1 Time

The timing of the main action is described in a separate phrase which contains an action.

“We will collect wood before we cook.”

“He will come to my house after his parents leave.”

“There was a storm when he was born.”

“He has had bad luck since his wife left him.”

9.5.4.2 Location

The location of the main action is described in a separate phrase which contains an action.

“We will meet him where he works.”

“She came to where we were hiding.”

“I put the hammer back where I found it.”

“Go to where the river forks.”

9.5.4.3 Manner

The way in which the action is carried out is described in a separate phrase which contains an action.

“He killed the animal like his father always did.”

“The children did as their teacher told them.”

“I am cooking the rice like my mother showed me.”

“You are walking like a tiger walks!”

9.5.4.4 Purpose

One of the actions in the sentence expresses that something is done in order to achieve a specific result.

“I went to the river in order to get some water.”

“I go to town to buy rice when there is a famine.”

“We pray so that we have a good harvest.”

“They practiced every day so that they would win the game.”

9.5.4.5 Reason

This scenario is that where one of the sentences is the explanation for the situation described in the other. In some languages, this may be expressed in the same way as purpose, in the previous section. Even if so, please translate the following.

“I do not want to go because it is raining.”

“My feet hurt so I cannot walk.”

“Because he broke the chair we must sit on the floor.”

“He was given that name so he would be lucky.”

9.5.4.6 Simultaneous action

This is when both actions described in the sentence happen at the same time.

“I told a story while I was cooking.”

“She hurt her hand while milling flour.”

“The knife broke while he was cutting wood.”

“You saw a deer while you were walking.”

“The thieves came while we were sleeping.”

9.5.5 Conditionals

Conditionals are sentences which express a condition which is necessary for something else to happen.

For the following sentences, please provide translations. You may be able to express the same concept in various ways (for example, you might be able to use a different way to say “if” and shift the position of the two phrases in the sentence). If so, please give the alternative structures as well, and explain how they differ. One other possible variation concerns the tenses of the verbs in conditional sentences: if you can form the same sentence with different tenses, please show this and explain what is different when the tense changes (it might be the degree of certainty of the event).

9.5.5.1 “if”

“If it rains tomorrow, the roads will be full of mud.”

“If the sun shines, the crops will grow quickly.”

“If you do not come next week, I will be angry.”

“If you are hungry, eat some of this food.”

“If there is a flood, people will die.”

9.5.5.2 “if only”

This type of conditional expresses that the condition for something to happen was not

fulfilled.

“If it had rained last year, we wouldn’t have the famine now.”

“If you had studied harder, you would have a good job in the city now.”

9.5.5.3 “only if”

This type of conditional expresses that the only way in which something will happen is if the other condition is fulfilled.

“You will find an office job only if you go to the capital.”

“Only if you work hard will you have a better life.”

“The crops will survive only if it rains tomorrow.”

9.5.5.4 “even if”

This type of conditional expresses the idea that even if a certain condition is fulfilled, the situation will be the same as expressed.

“Even if you study, you will still have to work in the fields.”

“Even if she marries him, she will have to work.”

“Whatever you do, there will always be sadness in the world.”

9.5.6 *Relative clauses*

Relative clauses are phrases, containing a verb, which act like adjectives, in that they give more information about one of the nouns in the sentence.

Compare

“I see a pig.”

and

“I see a pig that is eating corn.”

The second sentence tells you more about the pig than the first one does, and in that sense, helps to define the noun.

Translate the pair of sentences above.

For the second of the pair (“I see a pig that is eating corn.”), are there different ways to express this? For example, is it possible to have the words arranged in a different order to express the same thing?

Translate the following sentences, which contain examples of relative clauses. Some may not be possible in your language. Is there another way to express the same concept? (Perhaps the idea gets divided into more than one sentence?)

“The man who is walking on the road right now is tall.”

“The man who is eating a banana is tall.”

“The man he killed was tall.”
“The man I gave food to left quickly.”
“The tool I milled flour with is broken.”
“The man whose arms are so strong is a porter.”
“The woman who is walking on the road right now is tall.”
“The pig which is walking on the road right now is fat.”
“The stone which is rolling on the road right now is big.”
“The man who was walking on the road yesterday is tall.”

9.5.7 Coordination

Sentences can be joined in a way which expresses that several different actions took place. In some languages, a word is added between the two sentences, to link them. In others, something might be done to one of the verbs, to show that the actions are linked. There are other possibilities as well, as we need to record how this is done in your language.

Please translate the following.

“She went to the market and he stayed home.”
“She went to the market and she stayed there for a long time.”
“When there is a festival, I dance and I sing.”
“When there is a festival, I dance and my sister sings.”
“I like to dance and to sing.”
“I like to dance and my sister likes to sing.”
“I told her to dance and to sing.”
“I told her to dance and him to sing.”
“I know how to dance and to sing.”
“I know how to dance but I do not know how to sing.”
“I know how to dance but she does not know how to dance.”
“When we were young, I danced and my sister sang.”
“When our brother gets married, I will dance and my sister will sing.”

This is the end of the section on collecting specific grammatical constructions. The handbook has guided you through the process of collecting different types of information about your language. As was suggested before, the process of documenting a language is ongoing, and the more data is collected (and labelled and transcribed) the better the material record is created for future language learners. We hope that you will continue to work on your documentation project, by continuing to collect as many types of speech and language as possible, from as wide a variety of speakers as possible. If the documentation process is very long-term, then carefully note the date at which you record different materials, as the language is likely to change over the course of several years.

Congratulations on having gotten this far. You have played a significant part in ensuring that your language will not disappear without a trace.

Appendix A

WORKBOOK

This workbook is to be used in conjunction with the Handbook, and is where you will transcribe the answers to the questions asked. The numbers and chapter headings correspond to those in the Handbook.

Any information which you want to add should go into a separate notebook. It is very important that the material in the separate notebook have clear labels indicating what the material is, otherwise it will not be usable. This will be the case for any transcriptions you make of conversations or stories, and extra vocabulary words (and more detailed definitions, including drawings) will probably also need to be entered into the separate notebook. You should not feel constrained by this workbook. Its purpose is to give you direction, and to ensure that material you transcribe is paired up with its equivalent in the dominant language, for easy identification.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE LANGUAGE

Please answer the following questions about your language. Make sure the information is in the dominant language, so it can be interpreted by non-speakers of your language.

- What is the name of the language, as given by speakers of the language?
- What is the name of the language, as given by outsiders?
- Where is the area where the language is spoken? Please give as detailed a description as possible (country, district, near a particular river or mountain, nearby towns, etc. If possible, provide a map.)
- How does one reach this area? (what means of transportation from the nearest major city, how long is the journey, etc.)
- What are the names of villages/towns where the language is spoken?
- What is considered to be the homeland of the community?

- Are other languages spoken in same area? If so, what are they?
- How many people live in the area (whether or not they are speakers, whether or not they are members of the same tribe)?
- How many of these, if any, speak only the target language?
- How many people are bilingual in the target language and something else?
For bilinguals, are the two languages always the same two (eg. national language and target language), or are there different patterns? What are these languages?
- What is the level of competence of various age groups?
For each of the following groups, say whether they can speak and understand, only understand, not understand or speak:
old people:

adults:

young people:

children:

- Is there a written form of the language?
- What are the patterns of use? If the target language is not used for these different contexts, what language is used?

Administration?

Education?

Religion?

Social contexts?

If the target language is not exclusively used in social contexts (in casual conversations between friends or relatives, for example), what else is used, and what are the patterns (of age, gender, or other)?

- Do you consider there to be different dialects of the target language? If so, can you give some of the differences (these may include pronunciation, different words for some things, different grammar).
- If there are different dialects, which one are you documenting?
- Is anyone aware of any kind of previous documentation of the language?
- Are there stories about where the people came from originally? What sorts of beliefs are held about the history of the tribe? (If this type of story exists, please make sure to record it when you are collecting stories.)
- Is there anything else you think is relevant to the situation of the language?

4 WORD LISTS

These word lists are to be compiled by you for your language, using the transcription system you have devised. While it may take a few tries before you are comfortable enough with your transcription system to be able to capture these words in written form, work through the list until you feel satisfied with the written form you have assigned these words.

There may be words for which your language no longer has an equivalent. There will also be words which make you think of others which are not on this list, in which case you should add those at the bottom of each section.

If there is a distinction in the word used by a man and by a woman, note this somehow.

4.2 Body Parts

body

head

face

forehead

temple

eye

eyelid

eyebrow

eyelash

tear

nose

nostril

ear

mouth

palate

gums

tongue

lip

tooth

incisor

molar

eye-tooth / canine tooth

wisdom tooth

baby tooth

cheek

cheekbone

chin

jaw

neck

throat

torso

chest

rib

collar bone / clavicle

shoulder

shoulder blade

breast

nipple

back

spine / backbone

waist

belly

belly-button

hips

buttocks

tailbone / coccyx

arm

armpit

upper arm

elbow

forearm / lower arm

wrist

hand

leg

thigh

knee

calf

ankle

foot

heel

finger

index finger

middle finger

ring finger

little finger

thumb

toe

knuckle

nail

hair (general)

hair of head

skin

fat

bone

blood

muscle

lung

heart

stomach

Other body part words?

(These should go in a separate notebook, with the translations in the dominant language so the words are identifiable.)

Body-related verbs:

to live/to be alive

to breathe

to sleep/to be asleep

to wake/to be awake

to dream

to go

to come

to walk

to run

to jump

to fly

to fall

to stand

to sit

to lie

to swim

to dance

to touch

to hear

to listen

to see

to look

to taste

to smell

to blink

to cry

to open eyes

to close eyes

to eat

to drink

to be hungry

to be thirsty

to lick

to suck

to swallow

to bite

to chew

to speak

to smile

to sing

to shout

to blow (with mouth)

to laugh

to cough

to hiccup

to sneeze

to snore

to whistle

to burp

to be sick

to limp

to bleed

Other verbs related to body parts?

4.3 Animals

animal (general)

cow

buffalo

yak

horse

donkey

mule

pig

goat

sheep

chicken

duck

goose

dog

wolf

fox

cat

tiger

leopard

lion

deer

bear

monkey

mouse

rabbit

elephant

rhinoceros

bat

frog

turtle

lizard

crocodile
snake
bird (general)
owl
hawk
crow/raven
fish (general)
snail
slug
insect
ant
bee
dragonfly
butterfly
moth
grasshopper
cricket
fly
mosquito
beetle
louse
nit
flea

cockroach

spider

scorpion

leech (land)

leech (water)

earthworm

caterpillar

Other animal names?

4.4 Natural Objects

sky

sun

day

moon

star

rainbow

wind

air

cloud

fog

rain

snow

thunder

lightning

monsoon

fire

smoke

ember/hot coal

ash/cinder

water

puddle

sea/ocean/large body of salt water

island

lake

river

waterfall

whirlpool

spring

well

ice

flood

drought

soil/dirt

sand

clay

dust

silt

mud

highlands/the hills

mountain

hill

lowlands/the plains

plateau

(river) valley

gorge (between mountains)

stone

hole

cave/hole (in rock)

metal (general)

iron

rust

gold

silver

copper

tin

brass

bronze

lead

Other terms for natural objects?

Verbs related to natural objects and events:

to blow (of wind)

to rain

to snow

to freeze

to melt

to flow

to burn/to be on fire

to set fire to

to put out fire

to be hot (of weather)

to be cold (of weather)

Others?

4.5 Plants and Food

barley

buckwheat

corn

millet

rice

cooked rice

husked rice

unhusked rice

wheat

amaranth

lentil

soybean

pea

peanut

nut

fruit

banana

orange

apple

pear

lemon

lime

pineapple

fig

mango

papaya

watermelon

strawberry

vegetable

spinach

cabbage

cauliflower

stringbean

cucumber

eggplant

tomato

radish

onion

scallion

potato

sweet-potato

squash

pumpkin

ginger

chili

garlic

pepper

pickle

sugar

salt

tea

water

beer

wine

tree

flower

grass

plant
leaf

root

bark

trunk

branch

bush

vine

weed

wood

hay

field

paddy field (wet)

swidden (dry)

Other plant/food/agriculture terms?

Verbs related to food and plants:

to mill/grind

to boil water

to boil something

to cook

to peel

to mash (in mortar and pestle)

to mix

to stir

to sort through (eg grains, lentils)

to pick (fruit, vegetable)

to sow seed

to harvest

to till field

to plant

to winnow

to ripen

to rot

to cut wood/grass

to gather wood

to kill an animal for food

Others?

4.6 People and Family

father

mother

husband

wife

son

daughter

brother

elder brother

younger brother

sister

elder sister

younger sister

father-in-law

mother-in-law

daughter-in-law

son-in-law

grandfather

grandmother

grandson

granddaughter

uncle

paternal uncle (brother of father)

maternal uncle (brother of mother)

aunt

paternal aunt (sister of father)

maternal aunt (sister of mother)

nephew

niece

man

woman

parent

child

baby

family

name

house

marriage

divorce

childhood

old age

widow

widower

orphan

relative

friend

enemy

host

guest

carpenter

weaver

potter

leather-worker

tailor

herder

official

soldier

worker

farmer

doctor

teacher

student

magician

priest

god

ghost, demon

Other terms for people, jobs, or relationships?

Verbs related to people and jobs:

to give birth

to be born

to marry

to divorce

to die

to like/to love

to hate

to work

to buy

to sell

to make

to build

to carry

to teach

to learn

to read

to write

to sew

Others?

Appendix B has extra vocabulary items, which can be written into a separate notebook.

5 BASIC INFORMATION EXCHANGE

5.3 Questions

How do you ask the following questions?

“What is your name?”

“What is that over there?”

“Who are you?”

“Who lives in this village?”

“Whom did you see at his house?”

“To whom did you give the money?”

“When did you arrive here?”

“When will you leave?”

“Why did you come here?”

“Why do you plant rice in a wet field?”

“Where is the closest village from here?”

“Where are all the children?”

“Where are you going?”

“Where are you coming from?”

“How do you get to the mountains?”

“How do you cook meat?”

“How old are you?”

“How many people live here?”

In addition to the type of question above, which requires a full answer, some questions have a simple answer, which can be either yes or no. How are the following types of questions formed? And how would a positive or negative answer be made?

“--Are you hot?
--Yes/No.”

“--Is this water good?
--Yes/No.”

“--Do you like this food?
--Yes/No.”

“--Can you see the mountains in your country?
--Yes/No.”

Is there yet another way to ask questions? If so, please describe it, and give some examples.

5.4 Commands

Taking into account the scenarios which are expressed in parentheses, how would you translate the following commands?

(Two boys are playing. One stands still and tells the other:) “Run!”

(A boy is playing in a dangerous place. His father tells him:) “Don’t run!”

If the context for the two commands changes, such as there being more than one boy, does the form of the verb stay the same? If not, please give the different forms (if they exist), for two boys and many boys being given the same command. Can anything else affect the command form, such as the gender of either person (the person giving or receiving the order), or their age?

(A boy is running in the direction of a dangerous snake. You tell him:) “Stop!”

(You are walking with your child and the child wants to stop, because he is tired. You tell him:) “Don’t stop!”

As above, is the form of the verb different depending on how many people are involved? Or on their gender or age?

(A dog is making too much noise. You tell your friend, who is with you:) “Hit him!”

(Your brother is angry at his friend, and wants to fight. You tell him:) “Don’t hit him!”

As above, does the command form change according to the number of people involved? For example, in the case of hitting the dog, is the verb form different if the context

involves two friends who are both told to hit the dog? How about if there are two or more dogs involved?

(A child is playing with a stick. You tell him:) "Give it to me!"

(A woman is holding a small boy, who is crying. You tell her:) "Give him to me."

In these two situations, there are several factors which might affect the command form: the number of things being given (stick/child), the number of people giving (the person receiving the command), and the number of people receiving it. Does changing these variables make any difference to the form of the command verb?

8 TRANSCRIPTION

- Is there any system in place for writing down the target language? If so, is it one which people are able to use easily, or does the community feel it needs to be changed?

Write down the list of all the symbols which make up the transcription system for your language. (If any symbols are adapted, please give a description of the sound they represent as best you can.)

9.2 TO BE/TO HAVE

In this section, you begin collecting, transcribing and translating simple sentences. Remember the format for lining up the translation into your language with the corresponding words in the dominant language, as in 9.1 in the handbook.

9.2.1 Description

“That woman is her mother.”

“My father is a farmer.”

“Your sister is a teacher.”

“That man is my father’s friend.”

“They were brothers.”

“I am not a doctor.”

9.2.2 Location

“The corn is in the field.”

“The millet is in the house.”

“The chickens are in the mud.”

“She is at home.”

“He is not at home.”

“They are behind the house.”

9.2.3 Personal characteristics

“The dog is small.”

“My brother is strong.”

“The school is far.”

“The weather is not hot this year.”

9.2.4 Existence

“There is a market in the big town.”

“There is no store here.”

“There is a window in the wall.”

“There is a river in the village.”

“There is a hospital in the capital.”

“There are many tribes in our village.”

9.2.5 Ownership

“I have a goat.”

“He has two wives.”

“You have a book.”

“We have a toy.”

“I have a big family.”

“You do not have money.”

“I do not have food.”

9.3 NOUNS

9.3.1 Singular/plural

Do nouns in your language change to show that they are singular or plural?

Consider the following pairs in your language, and write them down as they are said in your language (in some cases, both words in the pairs may be expressed in exactly the same way).

“Father; fathers”

“Son; sons”

“Child; children”

“Dog; dogs”

“Tiger; tigers”

“Chicken; chickens”

“Ant; ants”

“River; rivers”

“Mountain; mountains”

“Road; roads”

“Pot; pots”

If there is a way to make a plural noun in your language, when is it used?

Do you need to use the plural form every time there is more than one, or is it optional? If it is optional, which words or kinds of words is it optional for?

If there is a plural form for words, what is the meaning: does it indicate many of the same object, or possibly the object and others like it?

Is there a way of referring specifically to two of the noun, or three of the noun, as opposed to many of the noun?

How do you express the concepts of the following sets?

“two pigs; many pigs”

“two houses; many houses”

“two people ; many people”

“two mothers ; many mothers”

“two dogs ; three dogs ; many dogs”

“two pens ; three pens ; many pens”

9.3.2 Numbers

Please list the numbers, as you would say them if counting.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

When you are talking about a number of specific objects, do you need a counting word alongside the number and noun?

Please translate the following:

“one leaf ; two leaves”

“one apple; three apples”

“one tree; four trees”

“one stick; five sticks”

“one child; six children”

“one cow; seven cows”

“one house; eight houses”

“one bread; nine breads”

If you do need a counting word in addition to the number and the noun, please list the types of objects which use the various counting words.

9.3.3 Demonstratives

Does your language have words which are added to a noun to point out which one it is? If this type of word exists, what are the different words which can be used?

What do they refer to?

Some options are ‘near the speaker’, ‘near the listener’, ‘far from both the listener and the speaker’.

Does your language have other possibilities, such as whether the object is visible or not?

Please give examples of the different possibilities for specifying a noun, as described above, by choosing one object (‘the house’, for example) and listing it in the different possible forms (‘this house’, ‘that house’, ‘that house over there’), along with definitions of what the combinations mean and what the relevant factors are.

9.3.4 Adjectives

9.3.4.1 *Simple adjectives*

Does your language have many adjectives, or are there just a few? If there are few, try to list them.

Imagine a child pointing to something in front of him and asking 'What is that?'. Write down the following possible answers, as if you were answering the child's question.

"It's a big tree."

"It's a dry field."

"It's a black cloud."

"It's a powerful tiger."

If more than one adjective can appear with a single noun, how do you decide what kind of adjective comes first?

Can you give a pattern for the order of different types of adjectives, by giving examples of phrases with several adjectives for one noun, like the following?

"It's a big, red house."

"He's a big, mean man."

Do you need a verb when you make a sentence with an adjective?

Are there some types of adjectives that need a verb to make a sentence, and others that do not?

Does the adjective change depending on what the noun is, as in the following?

“She’s a tall woman.”

“He’s a tall man.”

9.3.4.2 *Comparative adjectives*

How are the following sentences translated?

“My house is bigger than your house.”

“The school is farther than the clinic.”

“You are taller than your father.”

“This pig is fatter than that one.”

“That woman is more beautiful than this one.”

9.3.4.3 *Superlative adjectives*

How do you also express that an object or person is an extreme example of the quality in the adjective, as in the following sentences translated?

“This mountain is the highest in the whole country.”

“Our market is the biggest in the district.”

“The biggest city is the capital.”

“This bridge is the longest one in the area.”

“This boy is the best student”.

9.3.5 Possession

Does your language necessarily need to express the owner for certain types of words, and if so, what types of words must be accompanied by a word saying whose they are? For example, is it possible to say “father” or must you say “his father”?

9.3.5.1 Possession by pronouns

Give the equivalent of these in your language:

“my hand”

“my house”

“my houses”

“my father”

“my mother”

“my land”

“my pen”

“my pens”

“my hat”

“my hats”

Next, substitute the other pronouns in your language (e.g., you singular, you plural, he, she, we, etc.) with the same words.

“Whose hat is that on the floor?”

“It is mine.”

How would you translate various possible answers to the dialogue above with different pronouns (yours, his, hers, etc) substituted for the underlined?

“It is _____”

9.3.5.2 *Possession by nouns*

In cases like this, where the possessor of a noun is another noun (or name), how is the relationship of possession expressed in the following examples? If there are several ways to express the same thing, please give examples.

“Maya’s father”

“the boy’s friend”

“the dog’s master”

“the dog’s bone”

“the country’s government”

“the school’s teacher”

“the water of the river”

“the village chief”

If there is are different ways of showing possession for the above phrases, does it depend on what type of noun is possessed (family relationships, body parts, special tools, animals, clothes, etc)?

9.3.6 Pronouns

What pronouns are used in your language?

The following list includes some possibilities for different pronouns, not all of which necessarily exist in your language. List them as if they were in a simple sentence, such as the underlined pronoun in:

'I am sleeping'

I (male)

I (female)

we two (including the person being spoken to)

we two (excluding the person being spoken to)

we three/more (including the person being spoken to)

we three/more (excluding the person being spoken to)

you (singular, informal, male)

you (singular, informal, female)

you (singular, formal, male)

you (singular, formal, female)

you two (informal, male)

you two (informal, female)

you two (formal, male)

you two (formal, female)

you three/more (informal, male)

you three/more (informal, female)

you three/more (formal, male)

you three/more (formal, female)

he (informal)

he (formal)

she (informal)

she (formal)

they two (informal, male)

they two (formal, male)

they two (informal, female)

they two (formal, female)

they three/more (informal, male)

they three/more (formal, male)

they three/more (informal, female)

they three/more (formal, female)

If your language makes formality distinctions, what determines whether or not someone is referred to with a formal or informal pronoun? For male/female, is the distinction always made, or only sometimes?

9.3.7 Case

How does your language show the difference between the following two sentences?

'The dog is biting the cat.'

'The cat is biting the dog.'

When the same two sentences describe an event that happened in the past, is there a difference in the way the roles are expressed?

'The dog bit the cat yesterday.'

'The cat bit the dog yesterday.'

The following sentences contain nouns and pronouns with different roles in the sentence. Please translate the concept as closely as possible.

"The dog is sleeping."

“The dog slept all day.”

“The dog plays with the cat.”

“The dog played with the cat all day.”

“The dog pushes the ball to the cat.”

“The dog pushed the ball to the cat.”

“I am sitting.”

“I was sitting all day.”

“The woman is sitting.”

“The woman was sitting.”

“I see a man.”

“I saw a man yesterday.”

“She sees a man.”

“She saw a man yesterday.”

“I eat rice.”

“I ate rice this morning.”

“The woman eats rice.”

“The woman ate rice this morning.”

“The woman eats rice in the house.”

“The woman eats rice with a spoon.”

“I feed rice to the child.”

“I fed rice to the child this morning.”

“The woman feeds rice to the child.”

“The woman fed rice to the child.”

“The woman feeds rice to the child with a spoon.”

“The woman feeds the dog.”

“The woman fed the dog this morning.”

“The woman cooks rice for the men.”

“The woman cooked rice for the men this morning.”

“The woman gives a ball to the dog.”

“The woman gives a ball to the child.”

“The woman is giving the child to her mother.”

“The woman is walking to the market now.”

“The woman walked to the market yesterday.”

“The woman is walking from the market to the village now.”

Please translate the following sentences, and then give them again, substituting in all the existing pronouns in your language.

“I am hitting the boy right now.”

“I hit the boy yesterday.”

“The boy is hitting me right now.”

“The boy hit me yesterday.”

“The boy gives me a ball.”

“The boy gave me a ball yesterday.”

“The boy is walking with me to school right now.”

“The boy is making a basket for me right now.”

“The child is running to me.”

“The child is running away from me.”

‘I am scared of rats’

“I am afraid of the dark.”

‘I don’t feel well’

‘I don’t like rice’ (=rice disgusts me)

‘I feel shy’

‘I am angry’

9.4 VERBS

9.4.1 Agreement

9.4.1.1 *Subject-only verbs*

Does your language have verbs which change according to the subject?
Follow the instructions in 9.4.1.1 in the handbook. The following table is just an example. You may have fewer or more pronouns than the number of lines below.

9.4.1.2 *Subject-Object verbs*

You will now make a similar chart for subject-object verbs in your language.

object → pronouns															
subject ↓ pronouns															

9.4.1.3 *Reflexive verbs*

Translate the following concept:

“I see myself.”

Substitute for the underlined pronoun all the other possible pronouns, in order to record how this type of reflexive action is expressed with different subjects.

Is there a special set of verbs used to express reflexive actions, which is different from what you would use if the subject and object were distinct? This question will be partially answered by translating the following sentence pairs.

“He is looking at myself in a mirror.”

“He is looking at the child.”

“I washed myself.”

“I washed the child.”

“I burned myself in the fire.”

“I burned the rice.”

“I got myself dressed.”

“I got the child dressed.”

9.4.2 Timing and duration of actions

Translate the following sentences. The material in brackets () is not to be translated, but rather provides the context, which you will need to take into account when you are translating the concepts expressed in the sentences.

“He is laughing.” (because I am telling a funny story right now)

“He will laugh.” (soon, when I tell him my funny story)

“He laughed.” (when I told him a funny story)

“He laughed for a long time.” (after he heard my story)

“When he was a child, he laughed all the time.”

“He usually laughs.” (when he hears funny stories)

“He will start to laugh.” (If you tell him a funny story)

“He will stop laughing.” (When he hears the end of the story)

“His stomach hurts because he laughed so much.”

“He is building a house.” (can you see him over there?)

“He is building a house.” (can you hear him?)

“He is building a house.” (my mother told me about it)

“He is building a house.” (I am quite sure he is, as I can see the wood and tools, even though I do not see him doing the work)

“He is building a house.” (I am very surprised, because he is usually very lazy)

“He builds houses.” (that’s his job)

“He is building a house for the neighbours.” (the project isn’t finished yet, but he is taking a break)

“He has been building a house since last week.”

“He built a house yesterday.”

“He built a house last month.”

“He built a house last year.”

“He will build a house tomorrow.”

“He will build a house next week.”

“He will build a house next year.”

“He finished building a house this morning.”

“He started building a house this morning.” (and he is still working)

“He started building a house this morning.” (and he is resting now)

“He built a house.” (and that’s it right there)

“He built a house.” (he told me)

“He built a house.” (it must be true, even though I have not seen it, because his family will live there soon)

“He built a house.” (I had no idea he knew how to)

“He will build a house.” (he told me so)

“He coughs often.” (I hear him at night)

“He coughs often.” (Can you see how tired he looks?)

“He coughs often.” (and I give him water every time he does)

“He usually coughs in the evening.”

“When he drank the cold water, he coughed once.”

“When he drank the cold water he coughed twice.”

“When he drank the cold water he coughed four times.”

“When he drank the cold water he coughed many times.”

“When he drank the cold water, he started coughing.”

“When he went inside, he stopped coughing.”

“He was coughing the whole time while I told the story.”

“He started to cough last night, but stopped coughing during the night.”

“He started to cough last night.” (and he is still coughing today)

“I heard him coughing all night.”

“I heard him cough once last night.”

“I hear him coughing right now.”

“I always hear him coughing.”

9.4.3 Negation

Translate the following pairs of sentences.

“I see her.”

“I do not see her.”

“You (singular) see her.”

“You (singular) do not see her.”

“He sees her.”

“He does not see her.”

Looking at the sentences as you have translated them in your language, pay attention to the verbs in particular.

Is the negative version of each pair distinguished by the same affix being added to the verb?

If so, then negation is indicated by adding a particular affix to the verb, and this affix is not affected by the subject. There is no negative agreement, and you can proceed to translating the sentences below.

If instead the negative verb in each pair of sentences is not the same negative affix added to the verb, then your verbs have special negative agreement, which must be recorded. If this is the case for your language, you will need to fill out verb charts (as in 8.1.1) for a negative verb, so show how the negative marker is distinct for each subject. In order to do this, you can take the same verbs as you had in the positive, and make a new chart, following the same methodology, with the negative forms of verbs.)

Negative verb chart (only if the negative verb form changes with different subjects)?

If you do not have negative agreement, you can record the contrast by translating a number of pairs affirmative and negative sentences. Please translate the following:

“He has a brother.”

“He does not have a brother.”

“He has some money.”

“He has no money.”

“The tree is big.”

“The tree is not big.”

“I see the child.”

“I do not see the child.”

Is the negative indicated differently based on the timing of the verb?

“The tree was big (before it was cut down).”

“The tree was not big.”

“He spoke English when he was a boy.”

“He did not speak English when he was a boy.”

“I saw the child yesterday.”

“I did not see the child yesterday.”

“I will go to the capital tomorrow.”

“I will not go to the capital tomorrow.”

The following are mini-dialogues, which you should translate and then give both an

affirmative answer and a negative answer.

--Does he speak English?

--Yes/No."

--Did he speak English when he was a boy?

--Yes/No."

--Does he have a brother?

--Yes/No."

9.4.4 Adverbs

9.4.4.1 Manner

Translate the following sentences. Sometimes, you will not be able to translate them, in which case you should explain how the concept might be conveyed.

"She runs very fast."

"The old man walks slowly."

"He eats rice with his hands."

"She kicks the ball with her feet."

“The old man tells the story in Hindi.”

Some languages have large numbers of possibilities, whereas others have very few. Are there other possibilities for common adverbs in your language? Could you exemplify them in some sentences?

9.4.4.2 *Time*

Give the equivalents for those which you have specific words for.

this morning, this afternoon, this evening, tonight

now, soon, later, earlier

during the night, during the day, at dawn, at noon, at sunset, these days, in the past, in the future, soon, someday, earlier, later, in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening

today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, the day after that...
yesterday, the day before yesterday, the day before that...

this week, next week, the week after next, the week after that...
last week, the week before last, the week before that...

three months ago, two months ago, last month, this month, next month, the month after that, the month after that

this year, next year, the year after next, the year after that...
last year, the year before last, the year before that...

Others?

How do you put these adverbs into a sentence?

“He left at dawn.”

“He left in the morning.”

“He left yesterday.”

9.4.4.3 Direction/location

Can you give an individual word for the following directional adverbs? (If not, leave blank.)

left

right

uphill

downhill

north

south

east

west

towards the capital

away from the capital

If your language incorporates direction adverbs directly into some verbs, please translate the following, and complete the list of sentences by adding examples of other verbs which incorporate direction, explaining what they mean.

“Turn left at the river.”

“Turn right at the river.”

“To go to the capital, walk north.”

“To go to the capital, walk south.”

“To go to the capital, walk west.”

“To go to the capital, walk east.”

“At the river, go up the hill.”

“At the river, go down the hill.”

“They came down to my house.”

“They came up to my house.”

“They went up to my house.”

“They went down to my house.”

“I live across the river.”

“The animals walked over the pass.”

9.5 CLAUSE COMBINATIONS

9.5.1 Verb combinations

Are there any events which can only be expressed by using two (or more) verbs combined together?

This type of situation might be an action such as bringing something somewhere (like “to pick up and go”), or it might be a specific cultural event (combining dancing and singing, perhaps). It might also be the way you express beginning or ending an action. What you are looking for are actions which are expressed through two or more other verbs (or pieces of verbs).

If you can identify that the language does have closely connected verbs, in the sense described above, can you give some examples of such verb pairs? Ideally, you would put such verbs into sentences, and explain what the two single verbs mean and what the composite verb means.

9.5.2 Reported events

Please translate the following concepts. If there are several possible ways to do so, please give them all, explaining whether there is any difference in meaning.

“It is cold here in winter.”

“She said it is cold here in winter.”

“She told me that it is cold here in winter.”

“I heard that it is cold here in winter.”

“She knows it is cold here in winter.”

“Your sister had a child last night.”

“Your mother said that your sister had a child last night.”

“Your mother told me that your sister had a child last night.”

“I heard that your sister had a child last night.”

9.5.3 Expression of desire, need, ability

Please translate the following concepts. The material in parentheses is there to provide the context. You should take it into account when formulating the concept in your language, but not translate it.

“He is leaving.”

“He wants to leave.”

“I want him to leave.”

“He cannot leave.” (It is raining outside)

“He must leave.” (I say so)

“He must leave.” (He has something else to do)

“I am making a basket.”

“I want to make a basket.”

“I want him to make a basket.”

“He wants to make a basket.”

“He wants me to make a basket.”

“I like to make baskets.”

“I can make a basket.” (I have all the materials)

“I can make a basket.” (I know how to)

“I must make a basket.” (the old one is broken)

“He must make a basket.” (the old one is broken)

9.5.4 Adverbial phrases

For each section, please translate the sentences given. In some cases, there may be several ways the sentence can be put together to express the same thing. Please write down the various possibilities, explaining how they differ.

9.5.4.1 Time

“We will collect wood before we cook.”

“He will come to my house after his parents leave.”

“There was a storm when he was born.”

“He has had bad luck since his wife left him.”

Others?

9.5.4.2 *Location*

“We will meet him where he works.”

“She came to where we were hiding.”

“I put the hammer back where I found it.”

“Go to where the river forks.”

Others?

9.5.4.3 *Manner*

“He killed the animal like his father always did.”

“The children did as their teacher told them.”

“I am cooking the rice like my mother showed me.”

“You are walking like a tiger walks!”

Others?

9.5.4.4 *Purpose*

“I went to the river in order to get some water.”

“I go to town to buy rice when there is a famine.”

“We pray so that we have a good harvest.”

“They practiced every day so that they would win the game.”

Others?

9.5.4.5 *Reason*

“I do not want to go because it is raining.”

“My feet hurt so I cannot walk.”

“Because he broke the chair we must sit on the floor.”

“He was given that name so he would be lucky.”

Others?

9.5.4.6 *Simultaneous action*

“I told a story while I was cooking.”

“She hurt her hand while milling flour.”

“The knife broke while he was cutting wood.”

“You saw a deer while you were walking.”

“The thieves came while we were sleeping.”

Others?

9.5.5 Conditionals

For the following sentences, please provide translations. You may be able to express the same concept in various ways (for example, you might be able to use a different way to say “if” and shift the position of the two phrases in the sentence). If so, please give the alternative structures as well, and explain how they differ. One other possible variation concerns the tenses of the verbs in conditional sentences: if you can form the same sentence with different tenses, please show this and explain what is different when the tense changes (it might be the degree of certainty of the event).

9.5.5.1 “if”

“If it rains tomorrow, the roads will be full of mud.”

“If the sun shines, the crops will grow quickly.”

“If you do not come next week, I will be angry.”

“If you are hungry, eat some of this food.”

“If there is a flood, people will die.”

Others?

9.5.5.2 *“if only”*

“If it had rained last year, we wouldn’t have the famine now.”

“If you had studied harder, you would have a good job in the city now.”

Others?

9.5.5.3 *“only if”*

“You will find an office job only if you go to the capital.”

“Only if you work hard will you have a better life.”

“The crops will survive only if it rains tomorrow.”

Others?

9.5.5.4 *“even if”*

“Even if you study, you will still have to work in the fields.”

“Even if she marries him, she will have to work.”

“Whatever you do, there will always be sadness in the world.”

Others?

9.5.6 Relative clauses

Translate the following pair of sentences:

“I see a pig.”

“I see a pig that is eating corn.”

For the second of the pair (“I see a pig that is eating corn.”), are there different ways to express this? For example, is it possible to have the words arranged in a different order to express the same thing?

Translate the following sentences, which contain examples of relative clauses. Some may not be possible in your language. Is there another way to express the same concept? (Perhaps the idea gets divided into more than one sentence?)

“The man who is walking on the road right now is tall.”

“The man who is eating a banana is tall.”

“The man he killed was tall.”

“The man I gave food to left quickly.”

“The tool I milled flour with is broken.”

“The man whose arms are so strong is a porter.”

“The woman who is walking on the road right now is tall.”

“The pig which is walking on the road right now is fat.”

“The stone which is rolling on the road right now is big.”

“The man who was walking on the road yesterday is tall.”

9.5.7 Coordination

Please translate the following.

“She went to the market and he stayed home.”

“She went to the market and she stayed there for a long time.”

“When there is a festival, I dance and I sing.”

“When there is a festival, I dance and my sister sings.”

“I like to dance and to sing.”

“I like to dance and my sister likes to sing.”

“I told her to dance and to sing.”

“I told her to dance and him to sing.”

“I know how to dance and to sing.”

“I know how to dance but I do not know how to sing.”

“I know how to dance but she does not know how to dance.”

“When we were young, I danced and my sister sang.”

“When our brother gets married, I will dance and my sister will sing.”

Appendix B

EXTRA VOCABULARY

You can use the following lists, organized into similar categories as in the main text, to collect more words. As before, some of these words may not apply to your language, in which case you should skip them.

Body Parts (Humans and Animals)

side (right)
side (left)
back
front
torso / trunk
limbs / arms and legs
lap
bosom
groin / loins (i.e. hips to thighs)
flesh / meat
corpse / dead body
carcass / dead animal
top of head
fontanel (soft spots in baby skull)
skull
brain
scalp
comb (of rooster)
horn (of animal)
antler (of deer)
eyeball
iris
pupil
white of eye
eye sand
blind
nose bridge
nose flaps
nose hair
snout (of pig, etc.)
liquid mucus
solid mucus
to blow one's nose
earlobe
outer ear
inner ear

ear canal
eardrum
earwax
deaf
soft palate
uvula
saliva
to be full / to be satiated
to spit
vomit
to vomit
to hold in mouth
to open mouth
to yawn
to stutter
mute / dumb
upper lip
lower lip
beak / bill (of bird)
tusk (of elephant, boar)
lower jaw
upper jaw
goiter
nape of neck
adam's apple
windpipe
rib cage
breastbone
to shrug shoulders
udder (of cow, goat)
milk
colostrum (baby's first milk)
to nurse / suckle
to wean
upper back
lower back
small of back
spinal cord
hunchback
pelvis
hipbone
haunches (of animal)
crotch / fork of legs
tail (of animal)

limbs
to tickle

arm muscles / biceps
elbow bone
inner elbow
palm
back of hand
right hand
left hand
fin (of fish)
wing (of bird)
paw (of mammal)
thigh bone
hamstring
knee cap
knee hollow
shin
shin bone
ankle bone
achilles tendon
arch
ball of the foot
sole
instep
footprint
hoof (of animal)
paw (of animal)
crippled / lame
fingerprint
big toe
second toe
middle toe
fourth toe
little toe
fingernail
toenail
claw (of animal)
talon (of bird)
pincers (eg. of crab)

facial hair
beard
goatee
moustache
body hair
underarm hair
chest hair
leg hair

fur (of animal)
feather (of bird)
mane (of horse, lion)
whiskers (of animal)
sweat / perspiration
pore
blemish on skin
freckle
pimple
mole
wart
cyst
age spot / liver spot
scar
wrinkle
rash
to itch/ to be itchy
scab
scales (of fish)
hide / leather (dried animal skin)
skeleton
vertebrae (of spine)
marrow
cartilage
tendon (muscle to bone)
ligament (bone to bone)
blood vessel / vein / artery
joint
nerve

internal organs:

brain
spinal cord
marrow
gill (of fish)
phlegm
heartbeat
pulse
viscera / guts / entrails (in general)
liver
bile
gall bladder
kidney
urinary bladder
urine
to urinate
spleen

pancreas
intestines
large intestine
small intestine
appendix
anus / rectum
feces / shit
meconium / baby shit
to defecate

injury and infection:
to tremble / shiver / shudder
be numb / be paralyzed
to swell / be swollen
pus
abscess / ulcer / open wound

body part measurements:
phalanx (knuckle length)
hand span
cubit (elbow to fingers)
cord / fathom (outstretched arms)
nose to fingertip
left fingertip to right fingertip

mind / locus of thought
heart / locus of emotions
heart / locus of personality

Other boys parts for humans or animals?

Other body-related verbs, for either humans or animals?

Natural Objects

world
nature
light
shadow
shade
dark

sunlight
sunrise
dawn
sunset

dusk/twilight
darkness
solar eclipse
moonlight
new moon
full moon
lunar eclipse
comet
evening star
morning star
other stars and constellations
to twinkle

mist/haze
to be cloudy/be overcast
raindrop
dew
frost
hail/sleet
storm
flame
spark
to sparkle
bonfire
to smoulder/glow
to burn off fields/slash and burn

rainwater
spring water
salt water
pond
current
rapids
stream
icicle

earth/ground/dry land
earthquake
swamp/marsh/wetland
mountain range
mountainside/slope
ridge
cliff
large rock/boulder
flintstone
pebble
hole/perforation

coal
sulfur

Plants

tuber/bulb
fiber
stalk/stem
sap/resin
thorn
burr
seed
pod
flower bud
petal
pollen
nectar
fragrant
to bloom

Other plant parts?

Wood

timber
log
stick
splinter
firewood

Grasses

reed
cane-rope
hemp
rattan
thatch
fodder (food for animals)
straw
bale (bundle of hay)

mushroom
moss
mildew
mold
cactus
tobacco

fern
rhododendron
thistle

Other plants?

Appendix C

GLOSSARY

- affix:* piece of word which attaches to the front (in which case it is called “prefix”) or back (in which case it is called “suffix”) of the word
- borrowing:* a word or combination of words which has been copied from another language. Sometimes borrowings are adapted: words might not sound exactly as they do in the original language from which they have been borrowed.
- clause:* a short sentence or piece of sentences containing a verb
- dialect :* a variety of a language. It is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between dialect and language. It is generally said that dialects of the same language are understandable to each other, whether different languages are not.
- dominant language :* the language replacing the minority language in certain contexts
- formal :* (said of pronouns) showing respect. Also called honorific.
- fluent translation:* a translation which sounds natural (in opposition to a word-for-word translation, which sounds unnatural because the order of the words is that of the original language)
- informal:* (said of pronouns) opposite of formal
- language community:* a group of people who form a community because they speak the same ancestral language
- language preservation:* work done to ensure that a language does not die
- narrative:* some oral event, whether it is a story, a conversation, a recipe, a song
- national language:* the official language of the country. In some countries, there is more than one.
- native speaker:* someone who speaks the language in question as their main language; someone who is at ease expressing any kind of concept in the language,

and considers it their primary language

natural

speech: language as it emerges naturally in the course of daily use, as opposed to a formal or rehearsed version used in a more contrived situation

phrase: group of words

plural : more than one. The plural of a noun is the form of the noun when it designates more than one of the object

pronoun : the word which replaces the noun when the designation of the person is clear (like "I", "you", "he", which replace names or nouns designating that person)

reflexive : a verb where the action is done to oneself

role in the action :

whether the person or thing concerned is the one performing the action, having the action performed on them, being what is used to perform the action, being the one receiving an object being transferred, etc.

singular: a single exemplar of whatever the noun designates; opposite of plural

speaker: person who speaks a given language. There are different levels of speakers, depending on how well they master the language, with native speaker being the person completely comfortable expressing him or herself in the given language

target

language: the language being documented

text: in the context of an oral language, this actually means oral narrative. It refers to any stream of language, as opposed to a single sentence.

transcription: the process of writing down the language with consistent symbols

vocabulary: words which make up the language. In the case of endangered languages, the vocabulary can have large parts of it replaced by borrowings from the dominant language

word-for-word

translation: the act of translating each word in the order in which it appears in the original language. A word-for-word translation often sounds very strange, because the words are in the order in which they should be for the original language, not the language into which the translation is made.

Appendix D

BIBLIOGRAPHY and RESOURCES

Bibliography

The references used in developing this handbook are excellent resources for information about how to do fieldwork and what the issues are surrounding endangered languages.

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Resources

UNESCO www.unesco.org

Foundation for Endangered Languages www.ogmios.org

Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation

Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project www.hrelp.org

DOBES (Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen) www.mpi.nl/DOBES/

Endangered Languages Fund www.ling.yale.edu/~elf/

LinguistList, www.linguistlist.org

This is a site for linguists, with message boards and newsletters, and is a good place to post a question about who has worked on which languages in your region, or request assistance from someone who may be coming to the field. Also, information about conferences, which could be taking place in your country.

Himalayan Languages Project, housed at University of Leiden
www.ias.nl/host/himalaya