



spark

Every language reflects a unique world-view with its own value systems, philosophy and particular cultural features. The extinction of a language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural knowledge, including historical, spiritual and ecological knowledge that may be essential for the survival of its speakers. Language is not only a strong vector for cultural identity, but an outlet for creativity, innovation and abstract communication.

What can I do to cultivate a language? What do current language documentation methods lack? Perspective? Context? Rich Media. Interactivity. Cultural pride. Accessibility. Sharability.

According to linguist David Crystal, about three thousand languages will die within the next hundred years. That's about one language every two weeks. (A language is considered dead when the last speaker dies.) Why are efforts made to preserve languages? Because every language is a unique representation of the human experience, and every extinguished language makes humanity that much poorer.

	k	s	t	n	h	m	y	r	w		
a	あ	か	さ	た	な	は	ま	や	ら	わ	ん
i	い	き	し	ち	に	ひ	み	り	ゐ	*	ⁿ nasal
u	う	く	す	っ	ぬ	ふ	む	ゆ	る		
e	え	け	せ	て	ね	へ	め	れ	ゑ	*	
o	お	こ	そ	と	の	ほ	も	よ	ろ	を	

* no longer in use



audience

My audience will be people who benefit from enhanced language documentation methods, and can include, but is not limited to, Language Associations / Preservation Initiatives that currently document and preserve endangered languages and mobile users who are native speakers of endangered (minority) languages.



solution

To create an app (or prototype) that enables people from all over the world (especially field linguists and native speakers) to crowdsource documentation of their languages and through audio, imagery, video, and text - all in the palm of their hands.



puzzling thoughts

What happens to "untranslatable" words, phrases, and ideas?
 How will language preservationists keep up with evolving languages?
 Should language be seen only as a communication tool? Should it be made universal for efficiency's sake? (i.e. Esperanto)? Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Chomsky's universal grammar theory)
 "War is what happens when language fails" (-Margaret Atwood)
 How do we create supportive environments for minority language speakers?



feedback

Name, Contact Info

If you had to document your own language, what kind of things would you want to preserve?

How important is language to you? What if your language died next week?

What is the most compelling aspect about this project?

Other comments, concerns, or feedback? :)