Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 26B Linguistics		
Title of case study: Preserving and Revitalising Endangered Languages in Europe and Asia		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):**	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:**
Professor Mary Dalrymple	Professor of Linguistics	October 2004-Present
Dr Charlotte Hemmings	Leverhulme Early Career Researcher/Postdoctoral Researcher	November 2016-Present
Dr Holly Kennard	Departmental Lecturer in Phonology (previously British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow)	December 2014-Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2017-31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)
Collaborating with communities in Europe and Asia, Dalrymple, Hemmings, and Kennard have worked to mitigate the effects of speakers of endangered languages shifting to languages of wider communication: serious loss of linguistic knowledge and cultural and linguistic diversity not only for speakers but also the international community. The research has:
- counteracted language extinction by giving native speakers audio-visual documentation of their language, songs, stories, and culture;
- given younger and future generations sustainable access to their native language by training educators and community leaders;
- created awareness of the importance of language diversity and the crisis of language endangerment worldwide.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
Since 2010, the Faculty of Linguistics at the University of Oxford has worked increasingly on the revitalisation and documentation of endangered languages of Europe and Asia. The preservation of these languages is essential to the survival of language diversity and culture.

Language documentation & description in Northern Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo
The hitherto poorly documented languages of Northern Sarawak – Kelabit, Lun Bawang, and Sa'ban – are classified as 'endangered' because younger generations are shifting to English and Malay. Hemmings' 2016 Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship combined documentation and description of these languages with innovative research into the influence in them of information structure on syntactic choices **[R1-3]**. This work identified how little was known about the languages, the threat from declining use, and the need to support communities in revitalising their languages for the future.

Working within the community, Hemmings collected over 65 hours of audio and video recordings to document the languages and analyse structures in context. Interviews relating to the grammar, as well as descriptions of cultural practices, folk stories, songs, oral history, were collected in each language. The recordings were transcribed using working orthographies and translated into English to make them maximally accessible **[R4]**. The research, through ongoing dialogue with the community, revealed significant differences in structure among the languages,

produced the first descriptions of particular grammatical features, and collected important resources for their preservation, documentation, and revitalisation.

Interspeaker Variation & Language Revitalisation of Breton, France
Breton, a language of north-western France classified by UNESCO as 'severely endangered', is in grave decline: since 1950, the number of speakers has fallen from one million to about 200,000. The process of revitalising the language has faced many challenges. Kennard's British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship established that the lack of interaction between traditional Breton speakers and teachers/learners had prevented the creation of effective teaching resources.

   Kennard investigated key morphophonological features (stress, gender, mutation), comparing older traditional Breton speakers and younger new speakers **[R5]**. Fieldwork in south-west Brittany saw Kennard interview younger and older adults, along with students at a Breton-medium secondary school. The research provided concrete examples of the difference between traditional Breton speakers and younger Neo-Breton speakers. It established that younger speakers struggle to acquire some morphophonological aspects of Breton and are therefore perceived to sound 'different' or even 'wrong'. This perception presents a major challenge for Breton-language education, and for the maintenance and revitalisation of the language.

Documentation, Description and Revitalisation of the Enggano Language
There are few resources for the Enggano language, except texts published by Hans Kähler from the 1930s, without accompanying recordings. Today only the older generations are fluent and many children speak only Indonesian.

   Dalrymple leads an AHRC-funded project (in collaboration with scholars at the Australian National University and the Goethe University in Frankfurt) to collect audio and video recordings of traditional stories, conversations, cultural events, and descriptions of everyday tasks to preserve Enggano for future generations. The project builds on a pilot study conducted in 2018-2019, and involves documentation and description of the language, spoken on Enggano Island, Indonesia. The project coordinates, and collaborates with, native speakers to transcribe and analyse the recordings and translate them into Indonesian and English. This effort, alongside the research, is making the collection widely accessible to community members, language learners, and linguists. A key outcome will be preserving recordings for future research and for the Enggano community and descendants. To date, 45 hours of recordings across a range of genres have been collected. These will be made open access on the project's website **[R6]**, and the dataset will be deposited at the end of the project in a reputable archive, e.g. Paradisec (https://www.paradisec.org.au/) The material being gathered also supports the longer term goal of producing a descriptive grammar of Enggano that compares it with related languages to explore its position within the Austronesian language family.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)
 R1. [COVID-delayed output] [Book Chapter] Hemmings, Charlotte. 'When an antipassive isn't an antipassive anymore: the actor voice construction in Kelabit'. To appear in K. Janic and A. Witzlack-Makarevich (eds.) *The Multifaceted Aspects of Antipassive*. Typological Studies in Language. John Benjamins, 1-85.
 R2. [Journal Article] Hemmings, Charlotte. 2020. 'Methods in Language Documentation and Description: A Guide to the Kelabit Documentation Project'. In Peter Austin & Stefanie Pillai (eds.) 'Language Description, Documentation and Revitalisation of Languages in Malaysia', a special issue of the *Journal of Modern Languages*. DOI: 10.22452/jml.vol30no1.1
 R3. [Research Data Set] Hemmings, Charlotte. 2017. *Documentation of the Kelabit Language, Sarawak, Malaysia.* London: SOAS, Endangered Languages Archive. https://web.archive.org/web/20210201145257/https://www.elararchive.org/uncategorized/SO_7fc0f4ed-ffa1-4174-88d3-097c4cb3cd08/. Deposit of audio/video recordings and their annotated transcripts. Also available on request.
 R4. [Research Data Set] Hemmings, Charlotte. 2020. *Documentation of the Sa'ban Language, Sarawak, Malaysia*. London: SOAS, Endangered Languages Archive. https://web.archive.org/web/20210201144223/https://www.elararchive.org/dk0635/;

Documentation of the Lun Bawang Language, Sarawak, Malaysia. London: SOAS, Endangered Languages Archive. https://web.archive.org/web/20210201144934/https://www.elararchive.org/dk0636/. Also available on request.

R5. [Journal Article] Kennard, Holly J. 2019. 'Morphosyntactic and morphophonological variation in Breton: a cross-generational perspective' *Journal of French Language Studies* 29(2): 235-263. DOI: 10.1017/S0959269519000115

R6. [Website Content] Dalrymple, Mary et al. Enggano archive website: https://enggano.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk/

Research Grants

Mary Dalrymple (PI), AHRC Research Grant of GBP378,907 awarded for 'Enggano in the Austronesian family: Historical and typological perspectives' (Grant Number AH/S011064/1) 2019-2022.

Holly Kennard, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship award of GBP247,777 for the project 'Metrical structure, gender and mutation: two generations of Breton speakers under influence from French' (Grant Number pf150116) 2016-2018.

Charlotte Hemmings, Early Career Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust of GBP90,000 for the Project: 'Information Structure in the Languages of Northern Sarawak' (Grant Number ECF-2016-425) 2016-2019.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Prevention of language extinction by providing communities of native speakers with archived audio-visual documentation of their language, songs, stories and culture

For endangered languages, the creation, preservation, and use of audio-video materials are vital to ensure that knowledge of language and culture is not irreversibly lost. This is particularly true for communities whose languages are passed down via oral tradition and largely unwritten, like Kelabit, Sa'ban and Lun Bawang, documented as part of Hemmings' research. The recordings have been made open access to ensure long-term preservation and prevent against loss. They have been widely shared with the communities (including via public presentations in Bario, Ba Kelalan and Long Banga to audiences of 50-100 community members each time). The communities felt that the collection of recordings was important in order to teach the younger generations their languages. A speaker of Kelabit commented that the recordings helped the survival of his/her language because "the recordings collected can be preserved and can be used in teaching our young people". [**E1**]

This is also true for the Enggano language, which has approximately 1,500 speakers and is classified by Ethnologue as 'threatened'. The dataset of Enggano audio and video recordings constitutes an important record of traditional stories and other oral performances by what may be the last generation of fluent speakers. Various community leaders, speaking on behalf of the community as a whole, have expressed enthusiastic support for the project; they are aware of the precarious state of their language and are anxious for it to be recorded while the opportunity remains. In the words of Enggano community members, "we can only say thank you and we are ready to support your activities so that Enggano does not become an extinct language" [**E2.4: p. 6**]

Trained educators and community leaders to preserve and promote endangered languages for future generations

The Faculty's focus on community collaboration and resource creation has created capacity amongst native-speaker linguists and language teachers to document and educate on the languages within their communities.

In addition to individual training with project consultants in the use of annotation software or video recording, Hemmings hosted a workshop in October 2017 for native speaker linguists in Ba Kelalan. Involving communities directly in the process of documenting their languages, approximately 50 participants gave their time to plan and record their sessions. The results uploaded to the Language Landscape website [**E3**] demonstrated the successful transfer of knowledge and skills to workshop participants. Participant feedback sheets revealed the trainees' intentions in choosing to make their recordings; reasons given include: (1) "so our younger generations will continue to know the songs and the story"; (2) "to preserve for future

generations"; (3) "to teach others basic greetings"; (4) "to promote and preserve our language". [**E4**]

Building on research findings in relation to Breton, Kennard organised a workshop in January 2020 in Quimper (Kemper), south-west Brittany, in collaboration with the Breton teacher-training college *Kelenn. Kelenn* is the only teacher training college for Breton immersion teaching, and its students become primary school teachers in Breton-medium immersion schools. Students from both years of the Masters course (a total of 21 students), teacher-trainers, and other interested members of staff participated. They were presented with an evidence-based picture of Breton usage among teenaged speakers, the particular features of their morphophonology, and the challenges facing Breton transmission. One participant commented that she would "explain to the children why we mutate [words] and not just the rules in class, and try to correct them more often". Another said "I would like to give greater importance to the acquisition of the mutations without at the same time putting the pupils off" [**E5**]. In particular, there was surprise at the variability in usage of traditional Breton features among teenage pupils. One participant commented "I found it surprising to see such a variety of responses (in mutation) among the young high school pupils". Attendees recognised that explicit teaching of these features may need to begin earlier in pupils' school-life than the student teachers had thought: pupils "still haven't mastered the mutations" after years of schooling and the workshop led teachers to think "that it will…be necessary to push the importance of learning mutation from primary school level" [**E5**].

The Enggano community is similarly aware of the precarious position of their language. By involving community stakeholders and native speaker linguists in the documentation, several have been trained in the use of language documentation software (such as ELAN and SayMore), data processing and planning and executing language documentation recording sessions. This has empowered them to become leaders in Enggano language and cultural maintenance and revitalisation activities ("everyone in the Enggano community is again excited to learn Enggano, which we have almost forgotten"), and they have communicated their desire to remain involved in this way. [**E2.1: p. 2**]

Local educators [**E2.5**] and community leaders are working in partnership to develop educational materials for local schools, targeting ages 13-15. [**E2.3: p. 5**]. In the words of a local educator, the project has been beneficial "specifically for me as a member of the teaching staff in the school in designing Enggano language teaching materials and Enggano language dictionaries which until now have not been available" [**E2.5: p. 7**].

Increased understanding of the value of language diversity

Within endangered language speaker communities, the value of language diversity has been imparted through ongoing research collaborations. This has also been achieved through targeted workshops and events, as described above, and through the creation of teaching resources, which have helped to awaken interest in language among the younger generations. As the case of an Enggano student shows, younger people not only are "again in communication with elders whom [they] consider to have indigenous knowledge about Enggano", but they will also go "back to learning about [their] own traditional culture" [**E2.1: p. 3**].

The Enggano project, for example, has involved ongoing engagement and discussion with the community (e.g., through townhall and workshop meetings) about the enrichment and reclamation of cultural heritage in an increasingly multilingual world. This involves knowledge transfer on the challenges of maintaining indigenous heritage, whilst maintaining identity as citizens of a stable, modern Indonesia. The project, which "aims to document and analyse the Enggano language", has actively connected local project consultants with relevant NGOs and government institutions, such as the Badan Bahasa (National Language Board), and thereby advocated for the importance of maintaining the Enggano language. [**E2.6: p. 10**]

It is not only important to promote and preserve endangered languages within the communities of speakers, learners and teachers, but also to raise awareness among speakers of more widely-spoken languages. Hemmings and Kennard have been actively involved in public engagement events that share their knowledge of endangered languages in order to promote positive attitudes towards language diversity and increase understanding of the threat of language endangerment.

Hemmings co-organized two public engagement events together with Language Landscape and Oxford's AHRC-funded Creative Multilingualism project. These were open to the

public as part of Museum ('Linguamania') and Library Late events in Oxford, held in January 2017 and March 2019 respectively. Hemmings discussed language endangerment and documentation and promoted linguistic diversity by encouraging participants to make recordings in different languages and to add them to the Language Landscape map. The first event resulted in 72 recordings in over 40 different languages, and the second resulted in 16 recordings in 12 different languages [**E6** & **E7**]. Participants commented on how "engaging" and "inspiring" the activities were. One participant commented that it was "a very timely event in a period of apparently declining interest in languages and therefore in the richness and diversity of the world". The audio-visual content was one of the highlights of the Bodleian Library's *Babel: Adventures in Translation* exhibition (34% of feedback responses singled it out as a favourite feature; **E8: p. 12**), which attracted 35,528 visitors between 15 February and 2 June 2019, a figure which exceeded internal expectations [**E8: p. 3**].

The Faculty's activities have also involved reaching out particularly to young people. Thus, 17 pupils from years 7-10 at the Oxford Academy attended a four-session workshop co-organized by Hemmings and Kennard with Dr Jieun Kiaer (Faculty of Oriental Studies), which ran between April and June 2019. The workshops informed students about endangered languages and guided them in creating their own group projects to record the language diversity of their class. Subsequent questionnaires demonstrated a deeper understanding of endangered languages and 80% of participants strongly agreed that it is important to map and document languages. Their reasons were: (1) "so that endangered languages don't go extinct"; (2) "because you don't want peoples' languages to be lost"; (3) to provide "more awareness for languages"; and (4) "because they are someone's culture and we do not want them to fade" [**E10**]. Indeed, one participant commented that the best part of the workshop was learning about endangered languages and one group's recording project was themed around endangered languages, documenting variation in Kelabit, Breton, and Irish – the three endangered languages spoken by the project leaders. Hemmings also led a highly ranked [**E9**] interactive session on language endangerment and diversity and the languages of Borneo, in a workshop organized in Oxford for about 20 A-level students considering studying anthropology.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

E1. Example of anonymised feedback on the Kelabit Documentation Project [16/02/19].

E2. Communications with Enggano community leaders and members [in Enggano and Indonesian; English translations provided] [March 2019-March 2020]:

    E2.1. Letter from Enggano community member and project assistant [19/03/19]

    E2.2. Social media message from the Camat (District Head) of Enggano

    E2.3. First passage transcribed from an audio recording of part of a speech at a gathering of Enggano clan leaders

    E2.4. Second passage transcribed from an audio recording of part of a speech at a gathering of Enggano clan leaders

    E2.5. Letter from Enggano school teacher [13/03/20]

    E2.6. Letter from the Indonesian National Research and Innovation Agency [20/01/20]

E3. Language Landscape website – recordings from eBorneo Knowledge Fair 2017 workshop, Ba Kelalan, Malaysia. http://languagelandscape.org/project/eBorneo [accessed on 01/12/20].

E4. Feedback forms from endangered-language speakers in Ba Kelalan, Malaysia [27/10/17].

E5. Report and feedback from Kennard's training workshop in Quimper [in English and French; feedback in French has been translated into English when cited in the report] [April 2020].

E6. Language Landscape website – recordings from Ashmolean Museum's LinguaMania event, Oxford. http://languagelandscape.org/project/linguamania [accessed on 01/12/20].

E7. Language Landscape website – recordings from Weston Library's Library Lates event, Oxford. http://languagelandscape.org/project/Babel [accessed on 01/12/20].

E8. *Babel: Adventures in Translation* Evaluation Report containing exhibition kiosk data [2019].

E9. Selected feedback from the Anthropology Open Day at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford [01/06/19].

E10. Before & After Questionnaires and Report from the Language Landscape Outreach Project at the Oxford Academy, accompanied by details of group recording projects [24/04/19].