

<p><b>Institution: SOAS</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics</b></p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Research in the Department of Linguistics at SOAS concentrates on theoretical, descriptive, and applied linguistics, with a particular focus on language documentation, language variation and change, and multilingualism. The Department's impact strategy is aimed at different audiences and beneficiaries including speech communities, language learners and educationalists, government offices, NGOs and activists, and, in a more general sense, civil society and the broader public. The main type of impact results from the provision of knowledge about languages we work on either in terms of their structural properties, feeding into teaching materials or cultural exhibitions; or in terms of the ecologies in which they are used, feeding into projects addressing perceptions and attitudes. Due to our regional focus on the languages of Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Australia, the unit's impact is relevant both in the UK and abroad. Some of it may be difficult to quantify or to trace to specific sources, but it forms part of the cumulative impact of arts and humanities research, which is often transformative for the lives of millions of people and communities.</p> <p>Since 2008, we have engaged in a variety of activities and collaborations aimed at maximising impact. Most significant is our work on endangered languages and the promotion of language documentation and revitalisation efforts in the face of the rapid diminishing of the world's linguistic diversity. Together with the work of peers and partners, this work has contributed to a change in thinking about language and its role for communities and their identities: public discourse related to language endangerment and responses to it, including communities themselves, governments, the media, and the general public, has significantly increased and become more informed over the last two decades or so. Our work on theoretical linguistics is less directly orientated towards external impact, though it does both inform and contribute towards external collaboration with non-academic bodies, including schools, civil society organisations, government, museums and the private sector.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Language documentation and description of endangered and little studied languages lies at the centre of research work of almost all members of staff (in particular, <b>Austin, Lüpke, Marten, Nikolaeva, Sallabank, Simard, Watkins</b>). The unit applies the insights of knowledge created in research to enhance public understanding and raise awareness about the world's linguistic diversity and language endangerment. We have worked extensively in the area of documenting and publicizing linguistic diversity around the globe through activities such as the annual Endangered Languages Week, which draws on our research and includes visiting lectures, workshops, films, demonstrations, recording sessions, and other outreach activities. The student-run London Language Landscape Project (initiated by <b>Simard</b> in collaboration with ELAR in 2011) draws on research on language boundaries and features an interactive map, as well as audio and video materials celebrating linguistic diversity in London for public online use. <b>Simard</b> also organised the 'Every Language Matters' event at the ESRC Festival of Social Science, including panel discussions and information stalls on language and the impact of linguistic research. Based on her field materials, <b>Nikolaeva</b> created a digital resource on endangered Siberian languages and cultures, which is freely available for public online use and targets both academics and non-academics.</p> <p>The unit's research on multilingualism and language pedagogy, especially in the situation of language contacts, provides better understanding of the factors that threaten and sustain languages and assists the measurement, assessment and maintenance of bicultural diversity in its human context. For instance, <b>Lüpke's</b> on-going work on multilingualism in West Africa has great potential impact for a wide range of extra-academic stakeholders because it touches on language ideologies, attitudes and practices such as teaching models and provides a better understanding of the ecology of languages and linguistic diversity. It can also inform language management and pedagogy, in Africa and elsewhere, by providing inspiring models and reversing global tendencies <u>of-in</u> knowledge <u>transferflows</u>.</p> <p>An important area of on-going research which has a direct relevance outside academia is research into language and identity, language attitudes, policy, planning and revitalisation. This</p>

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research focuses on 'language in the real world', involves contact with language planners and activists, and informs and influences public policies related to languages and cultures. For example, **Simard** is working closely with rangers at the Jutpurra National Park (Australia), where her knowledge of tribal languages contributes to discussion of environmental monitoring, the protection of sacred sites, invasive species control, fire management, and mineral exploration applications. **Watkins'** engagement with minority languages in Burma made him one of very few non-missionary experts in the field of linguistic diversity and language policy in that country. In 2013, he was invited to address two key audiences in Burma: the politically influential monastery in Mandalay and a group of Burmese MPs, mostly from ethnic minorities. **Sachdev's** work on vitality of ethnolinguistic minorities and community languages has impact on the maintenance and learning of these languages by members of the communities themselves. The high profile of this research has helped to raise the status of minority languages amongst members of both minority groups and the general public.

This research also informs government organizations. **Sachdev** has provided advice to the Department of Children, Schools & Families through their *Our Languages*, *Capital L* and *Routes into Language* initiatives. He has served as Director for Languages to help deliver the National Languages Strategy, and as the member of the Board of a 'Canada-UK' colloquium on bilateral policy initiatives funded jointly by the FCO and Government of Canada. **Hill** provides information for Immigration Advisory Service. Another example of work with government is **Hewitt's** work on conflict-resolution in Transcaucasia and disseminating the Abkhazian position vis-à-vis Georgia through publications. This work benefited diplomats and INGOs, and was recognised by a medal "for Services" from the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Abkhazia. Through the SOAS Enterprise Office, **Marten** has conducted language and culture briefings on southern African countries for diplomats (on South Africa in 2008 and 2010; Namibia in 2009; Zambia in 2009 and 2011).

### c. Strategy and plans

Moving forward, it is our intention to develop impact work that is already on-going, as well as to target new audiences and forms of external impact. For example, the Sylheti Language Project (**Simard**) has already been significant for immigrant communities in London, and involves collaboration with the Surma Community Centre (the Bengali Workers' Association in Camden). It aims to create a DVD containing recordings of folk tales and traditional songs with an accompanying book written in Sylheti and English, a set of DVDs and a book containing traditional recipes and stories inspired by food; and a survey of young people's attitude towards the Sylheti language. Another aim is the creation of a new user-friendly Sylheti alphabet. The current alphabet is a modified version of Bengali, with its own script, and is inadequate for many community-language purposes. As all younger speakers of the community are English speakers, a new alphabet using Latin-based characters would provide an easier transition to writing Sylheti and ease communication by taking into account the needs of young Londoners (e.g. email, SMS etc.)

We will seek to extend our impact on the content and form of non-higher education. **Watkins** has taught yearly summer schools in Burmese in Yangon since 2008, making available language tuition in Burmese to the foreigners living in Yangon. **Sallabank** was invited to address a Language Conference at the City of London School for Girls in October 2013. Members of the Sylheti Language Project will continue training young Sylheti speakers in audio and video recording techniques, as well as language transcription and video editing, which will help their future employability. The new 'Language Landscape in London Schools' project targets schoolchildren. It has received funding from the SOAS social entrepreneurship initiative to organise workshops and show children that speaking many languages is a valuable skill. The pilot project was run for eight weeks in 2013 in the Bow School of Maths and Computing in Tower Hamlets, the second most linguistically diverse borough of London, and is planned to continue in the future. These activities are aimed at increasing the uptake of language learning and valorisation of community languages, and through this to strengthen the UK's participation in an increasingly globalised world and provide learners with the skills and intellectual capital they need in a competitive job market and complex modern realities.

Further examples of specific audiences that will be targeted include:

(a) *linguistic communities* such as the communities of Agnack and Djibonker (Senegal) for which the DoBeS project 'Pots, plants and people: a documentation of Bainunk knowledge systems' (**Lüpke**) prepared two exhibitions featuring plant and pottery knowledge; **Lüpke** further

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organized exhibitions in Baïnouk villages in West Africa, and a documentary film on multilingualism in the village of Agnack is now being finalised and will be submitted to a number of festivals, including Film Africa next year.

(b) *civil society organizations*: Since 2010 **Austin** has been working for the Dieri Aboriginal Corporation (Australia) developing language learning materials. Development of a bilingual dictionary and an online multimedia resource database is under way. **Lüpke's** research has benefitted the Baïnouk lobby organisation BOREPAB (*Bureau d'Organisation, de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Patrimoine Baïnouk*), in particular, by providing the recordings of cultural heritage, the dictionaries and text collections. In addition, we will continue working with the charity Waste Watch within the AHRC Skills Development Scheme 'Language research and teaching in a multilingual world' on waste management on multilingual housing estates in London (**Lüpke**); and with the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Cultural Emergency Response Programme (**Hill**). **Hill's** ongoing work will link with the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (Cambridge MA, USA), which will provide digital texts that Hill is annotating to enhance their utility for wider users.

(c) *media, publishers, museums*: **Marten** has provided advice and information on African languages for BBC Radio 4 and CNN Online, and has been Oxford English Dictionary consultant for Bantu languages since 2007; **Hill** has been consulted by the Department of Asia of the Victoria and Albert Museum. This work will be extended, building on recent consultancies for Merrell Publishers, CNN Online, Linguacubun Bath, Central Translations Belfast, National Geographic (**Marten**); and work with Lexicom as part of the AHRC funded 'Tibetan in Digital Communication' (**Hill**). **Hill** has also advised the legal profession, through consultancy for Duncan Moghal Solicitors & Advocates and Trott and Gentry Solicitors. It is expected this work will continue.

(e) *schools*: Since 2009 **Lüpke** has conducted yearly outreach activities as part of Black History Month at a primary school in London that presents her research in an accessible format to school children. **Marten** was director of the regional London consortium of the *Routes into Languages* programme and works closely with SOAS Widening Participation staff and frequently takes part in school visits and outreach events.

Moving forward, our goal is to ensure a clear process for the development of impact plans for individual research projects, including internal peer review of research proposals and development and maintenance of a system to identify and track evidence of impact.

#### d. Relationship to case studies

Two case studies included in our submission relate to documentation of endangered languages, the area in which there is the strongest link between research and impact. The first of these concerns the **Endangered Languages Archive**, a major initiative funded by Arcadia fund as part of Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project hosted by SOAS since 2002. It aims to document and support endangered languages, train language documenters, preserve and disseminate documentation materials among academics and the general public, and raise public awareness of linguistic diversity. ~~As a second case study, we have included the specific~~ This broader perspective is complemented by a particular specific example which is the work of **Sallabank** in relation to the minority language of Guernesiate. This work has involved study of the needs of learners of this language, as well as language policy and planning, and aims to develop learning materials based on both the outcomes of this research and on language documentation. The research has been conducted in close collaboration with the Guernsey Language Commission, as well as with local NGOs such as the Comité d'la Culture Guernesiate (an umbrella body for language support groups) and La Société Guernesiate, a local scientific society which advises government officials on language-related issues.