

Foreword

Mário Pinharanda-Nunes

University of Macau

Hugo C. Cardoso

Universidade de Lisboa

In the time spanning from Himmelmann's (1998) seminal article, the practice of language documentation has understandably developed a discernible focus on endangered, minority and lesser described languages. While the primary concern of documentary linguistics lies specifically in 'data collection, representation and diffusion (...) with grammars, dictionaries, and text collections as secondary, dependant products' (Austin, 2006:87), a natural entanglement with linguistic description has become evident, but also with language conservation and revitalization.

As a result of the realization of the global pervasiveness of language endangerment, these associated endeavours have significantly expanded their vitality and visibility in recent years. However, as Garrett (2006) notes, contact languages have been to some extent absent from discourses on language endangerment, but also from institutional initiatives to counter the situation, a fact he attributes to factors related to many of these languages' relative recentness and a perceived lack of autonomy (with respect to their lexifiers). However, the reality is that, in practice, contact languages have also been and continue to be the object of language documentation, description, and revitalization efforts, as demonstrated in this special volume with concrete reference to the regions of South, Southeast and East Asia.

This particular geographic focus – which is highly pertinent, since contact languages of Asia are in general less prominent than their Atlantic counterparts in the literature – derives from the fact that the genesis of this volume relates to the 2nd *Conference of Language Contact in Asia and the Pacific*, hosted by the University of

Macau in September 2016. The conference covered a diverse scope of subfields related to language contact, involving language description of morpho-syntactic and phonological phenomena, language acquisition studies, and language documentation and revitalization of minority languages. From this rather eclectic list of topics, a selection of those conference papers, with two other additions, focusing on documentation and revitalization, came to constitute this special publication of *Language Documentation & Conservation*.

Throughout the centuries, the regions of South, Southeast, and East Asia have been fertile in instances of linguistic contact, and they have therefore witnessed the formation of several contact languages, understood here, with e.g. Ansaldo (2007: 4), as languages formed in “high-contact environments”, which may range from pidgins to creoles and mixed languages. This volume includes studies related to a small subset of these, namely Sri Lanka Portuguese, Papia Kristang, Baba Malay, and Zamboanga Chabacano. The fact that three out of these four languages are Iberian-lexified creoles does not – despite the expertise of the editors – reflect an intentional narrowing of the scope of the volume; it is the result of the submissions received and of the subsequent peer-review process.

The opening article, entitled ‘Documenting modern Sri Lanka Portuguese’, is co-authored by Hugo C. Cardoso, Mahesh Radhakrishnan, Patrícia Costa and Rui Pereira and reports on a documentation project funded by the *Endangered Languages Documentation Programme*. The authors begin by providing a historical overview of the sociohistorical context behind the formation of Sri Lanka Portuguese (SLP), a creole language of that South Asian island, as well as of the extent of its documentation since the 19th century. The article then goes on to describe the actions undertaken within the ‘Documentation of Sri Lanka Portuguese’ (DSLPP) project to engage with its various facets: i) the survey of the sociolinguistic status of modern SLP, including geographic distribution, number of speakers, speaker perceptions of fluency, language transmission and vitality; ii) the methodology of language documentation, including the definition of an orthography transcription and annotation strategies; iii) the coordination between language documentation and ethnomusicological research, built into the project; iv) the location and transcription of rare and archival sources relating to SLP. This article provides a descriptive account of the challenges, methods and choices involved in a specific documentation project focusing on an endangered creole, which may serve to inform similar endeavours elsewhere.

Kevin Martens Wong’s ‘Kodrah Kristang: The initiative to revitalize the Kristang language in Singapore’ is a detailed description and self-assessment of a revitalization project set up by the himself, aimed at reviving the use of Papia Kristang (PK), the Portuguese-lexified creole originally developed in Malacca, among the Eurasian community of Singapore. The article begins with a description of the genesis of PK and its heritage community, its spread to Singapore, current issues on the naming of the language, and number of speakers. The remainder of this extensive article introduces

the reader to the successive phases of this revitalization initiative, specifying, for each of them, the intended outcomes and methods to achieve them. The initiative entails five phases and foresees an ideal expansion of the use of PK in Singapore until 2045, when the language should obtain a critical mass of fluent speakers in the country. This article very didactically spells out the principles and actions involved in the revitalization of a severely endangered Asian creole (cut-off from its European lexifier), which makes it as valuable to fellow linguists as to language activists interested in setting up similar projects elsewhere.

Still with reference to Singapore, Nala Lee's article 'Peranakans in Singapore: Responses to language endangerment and documentation' addresses speakers' attitudes to the endangerment and documentation of Baba Malay, a creole of the Chinese community in and around the Strait of Malacca. Lee guides us through the origin and expansion of the community from Malacca to Penang and Singapore, before focusing on the last of these three nuclei. She surveys the perspective of the Peranakan community towards the issues of language endangerment and documentation over time, as well as current attitudes, as expressed in a questionnaire. The study highlights the impact of self-perception, as well as awareness-raising, on the long-term preservation of endangered contact languages, so often neglected in this respect.

The closing article, Eduardo Tobar Delgado's 'Documenting online writing practices: The case of nominal plural marking in Zamboanga Chabacano', analyses variation in the expression of plurality in the Spanish-lexified creole of Zamboanga (the Philippines), which resorts to a number of different strategies: plural marker, inflection, lexicalizations, multiple marking, zero marking, numerals, reduplication, and the associative plural. To address this issue, Tobar Delgado resorts to online data collected in social media, a type of data which, as the author notes, is frequently disregarded in the practice of language documentation. However, he argues in favour of the relevance of online written data – specifically, data sourced from written online discussions on social networks –, demonstrating how such corpora may be invaluable instruments in the documentation of minority (whether endangered or not) and under-described languages.

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