

Linguistic identity in and out of Africa

KARSTEN LEGÈRE

Professor Emeritus, University of Gothenburg

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses at least two approaches to determine linguistic identity. In so doing, particular attention is paid to the preparation and implementation of UNESCO's IYIL (International Year of Indigenous Languages) 2019 initiative. As known, given UNESCO's international prestige, institutions and speech communities felt stimulated by this IYIL2019 initiative. As a consequence, their focus was on dealing with those national languages of their countries which in a linguistic hierarchy are not in a top position (like e.g. English, French, Spanish and more), but are rated somehow less important by their speakers or officials. It turned out in the data analysis process for this paper that UNESCO's conceptualization deficits have hampered a productive grassroots response such as evidenced in Namibia. With regard to the development and dissemination of a unified identity concept worldwide a prominent African colleague points out that in Europe, North America, China, in many African countries south of the Equator, etc. own umbrella terms are well established. This implies that UNESCO's identity related activities have not so far much contributed to feasible changes.

KEYWORDS

Identity; grass roots self-identification; top-down identification; African and Scandinavian examples; variety of results; terminological diversity versus UNESCO's global umbrella term.

1. INTRODUCTION - SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND BASICS

On 22 November 2016 the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, Cultural) of the UN General Assembly proclaimed IYIL 2019. In this regard, the press release of 8 December 2016¹ announced that the resolution on the “Rights of indigenous peoples” stated the following: “The resolution stresses the urgent need to preserve, promote and revitalize endangered languages [...]”, inviting UNESCO to “serve as the lead agency for the Year”. [Emphasis added]

Shortly thereafter, the same text draws “[...] attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages at the national and international levels”. [Emphasis added]

The above extract shows a terminological contradiction in that endangered languages are equated with *indigenous languages* (henceforth IL) and vice versa. This cannot be explained as a simple oversight, because the UN/UNESCO/ILO, etc. approach to (non-) defining *indigenous peoples* includes also the language of each people. Thus, for assessing language endangerment there are criteria in UNESCO (2003) or *Ethnologue*. This discrepancy is glaring if, for example, one compares the glossonyms in the endangered languages collection at the Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, The Netherlands,² or of the Endangered Languages Archive at the University of London, with the ethnonyms that are listed e.g. in the IWGIA Yearbook, by Wikipedia, etc.³

It is completely incomprehensible why for the terminological inconsistencies outlined above, in preparation of IYIL2019, UNESCO as a global player was not willing to get down to basics regarding the definition dilemma. Here the definition approach of the Council of Europe traced in the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” is an example that is worthy of being imitated:

“Article 1 – Definitions,

For the purposes of this Charter: a) “regional or minority languages” means languages that are: i traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State

¹ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-liaison-office-in-new-york/about-this-office/single-view/news/united_nations_general_assembly_proclaims_2019_as_the_intern/; accessed 27 January 2019, recent search was unsuccessful, but available (accessed 21 August 2021) is another relevant link, i.e. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Seventeenth session, New York, 16–27 April 2018, Item 3 of the provisional agenda, Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum, Action plan for organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages that is a useful overview of the IYIL 2019 focus and content. Link <https://undocs.org/E/C.19/2018/8>

² The results of the Documentation of Endangered Languages (DoBeS) initiative of the Volkswagen Foundation, the DoBeS Archive were accepted by UNESCO as “Memory of the World”.

³ See The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), 2020. https://iwgia.org/images/yearbook/2020/IWGIA_The_Indigenous_World_2020.pdf as well as https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_indigenous_peoples accessed 17 August 2021.

*who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population, ii different from the official language(s) of that State [...]"*⁴

As an alternative for the English description of 'indigenous' the Merriam-Webster dictionary may be helpful, as pointing out that this lexical item means either:

- 1 a) *produced, growing, living, or occurring natively or naturally in a particular region or environment, or*
- 1 b) *Indigenous or less commonly indigenous, of or relating to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group.*⁵ [Emphasis added]

This Webster entry lists synonyms such as aboriginal, autochthonous, born, domestic, endemic, and native; antonyms are non-indigenous, non-native etc.

A check of UN/UNESCO websites to obtain an up-to-date list of ILs which are conforming to the UN/UNESCO conceptualization has been unsuccessful. There were info bites, such as the following data overview on the IYIL 2019 website:

Indigenous Languages

At present, 96 per cent of the world's approximately 6,700 languages are spoken by only 3 per cent of the world's population. Although indigenous peoples make up less than 6% of the global population, they speak more than 4,000 of the world's languages.

*Conservative estimates suggest that more than half of the world's languages will become extinct by 2100. Other calculations predict that up to 95 per cent of the world's languages may become extinct or seriously endangered by the end of this century. The majority of the languages that are under threat are indigenous languages. It is estimated that one indigenous language dies every two weeks.*⁶

Although having been responsible for the implementation of IYIL2019, UNESCO has been reluctant to submit a list of those ILs the endangerment of which is advanced.

As reported above, the groundwork for the IYIL2019 proclamation was done by Bolivia and Ecuador that also co-authored the associated text. The

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680695175> accessed 17 August 2021.

⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous>, accessed 17 August 2021. An enquiry about "indigenous languages" is rejected as "The word you've entered isn't in the dictionary".

⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/04/Indigenous-Languages.pdf>. [emphasis added]. This means that when annually 26 languages die until 2100, 80 years ahead approximately 2150 ILs (and not 4000) will be lost.

background against which these two countries propagated for a global initiative an umbrella term which is deeply rooted in their colonial past, as well as a critical review of terminological problems and inadequacies not only in the South American neighbourhood will be focused on in the following sections. In this respect, it should be borne in mind that the proclamation text offers various interpretations for its ambiguity and lack of adequate definition, as already pointed out above.

2. REGIONAL LINGUISTIC PROFILES IN THE LIGHT OF IYIL2019

2.1. BOLIVIA AND ECUADOR

Both countries support efforts to protect, empower and promote ILs back home and worldwide. However, in their constitutions, for example, the linguistic terminology involves catchphrases that have nothing to do with IL, because the term indigenous is only traced in the context of the word ‘people’, i.e. *pueblos indígenas* ‘indigenous peoples’, which does not refer to any Bolivian or Ecuadorian language. This is illustrated below.

Quoted from Bolivia’s 2009 Constitution: “Son idiomas oficiales ... el castellano y todos los idiomas de las naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos ...” [emphasis added].

An exhaustive list of all languages other than Spanish follows. Here, *idiomas*, i.e. ‘languages’ applies to Spanish as well as to all other co-official languages.⁷

From Ecuador’s 2008 Constitution, Article 2: “... el castellano, el kichwa y el shuar son idiomas oficiales ... 1. Los demás idiomas ancestrales son de uso oficial para los pueblos indígenas ...”.

Notable is the catchphrase *idiomas ancestrales* (“ancestral languages”). Furthermore, Article 28 of Ecuador’s *Ley de Educación* (Education Law) speaks of “lenguas aborígenes” (“aboriginal languages”).

It is strange to observe above that, although both Bolivia and Ecuador have been IYIL 2019 protagonists, these countries use modified linguistic umbrella terms for the languages spoken by their populations back home. In view of this discrepancy, for comprehensive country profiles one has to consult *Ethnologue* (Simons & Fennig 2018). *Ethnologue* publishes statistical data on what it defines as IL (i.e. belonging to a specified country) vs. non-indigenous languages (Spanish plus immigrants’ languages). In addition, *Ethnologue*

⁷ A quotation from a Spanish digital dictionary - “We usually say *idioma* when we talk about languages (human tongue) while we use *lenguaje* as language like a programming “language” it would sound awkward to say *el lenguaje Inglés* instead of *el idioma Inglés*...”

(as a reliable reference source for determining the status of a language according to the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale/EGIDS) lists 13 languages in Bolivia that are in trouble and 18 as dying, while eight are in trouble in Ecuador, and three are dying.

Further, it may be interesting to note here how, for example, Bolivian languages and peoples suffered from discrimination under Spanish colonial rule as well as under post-colonial governments after independence from Spain in 1820 (source: Leclerc 2020, Bolivia):

a) *Les langues indigènes furent interdites dans toutes les manifestations officielles de l'État espagnol, mais malgré tout les autochtones résistèrent à la tentative d'assimilation (castillanisation).*

b) *Quant aux populations autochtones, elles furent considérées comme «inférieures» et plus ou moins dépouillées de tous leurs droits civils, politiques, sociaux et linguistiques.*

Moving away from South America, the next region is sub-Saharan Africa with its strong focus on ethnic and linguistic self-identification⁸ away from the colonial legacy.

2.2 SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

During a review of official language use in Africa the constitutions or other relevant official documents in 23 African countries mostly South of the Equator were reviewed. Below is a summary of the results.

As enshrined in the Constitutions of Benin, Cameroon, DRC, and Gabon among other African countries, all languages of African origin are identified as *national languages* since they belong to a defined nation-state. In the Congo Republic and in Mozambique, the terms *langues nationales véhiculaires* and *línguas veiculares* (in French and Portuguese respectively, the equivalent of *lingua francas*) are stipulated. More umbrella terms are published in Legère (2017), for an update see Legère (2021: 181-182).

Out of the 23 countries reviewed only Kenya and RSA use the term *indigenous* as follows:

In Kenya, referring to all languages other than the official ones (English and Swahili, the latter being also identified as Kenya's national language) the country's 2010 Constitution (Republic of Kenya 2010:14) states in its Article 7(3): "*The State shall (a) promote and protect the diversity of language of the peo-*

⁸ Remember the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - A/RES/61/295, p. 24, Art. 33; 2.: "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions." Source: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf last accessed 21 August 2021

ple of Kenya; and (b) promote the development and use of indigenous (i.e. Kenyan, K.L.) languages [...]” [emphasis added].⁹

In the South African constitution (= Act 108 of 1996, Founding Provisions, Languages) the text reads as follows: “6. (1) *The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.* (2) *Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people [...]*

Here “indigenous” clearly means the official African languages of the RSA i.e., belonging to a particular place/country, as described in Webster 1) a).

Further, (5) (a) (ii) refers to South African heritage languages such as Khoi, Nama, and those of the San communities, which are **not** classified as ILs in the RSA constitution, although being related to Webster 1, b).¹⁰

In the 23 African countries studied, the language of the former foreign colonisers/administrators has everywhere been stipulated as the official language, even when it is co-official, i.e. sharing this status with another language, like e.g. Swahili in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda.

It is strange that in designing and organizing IYIL 2019, UNESCO was not prepared to study or to care about the official terminology that was coined by African governments or other official institutions¹¹ and the resulting linguistic implications at the national level.

Instead, IYIL protagonists made it easy for themselves by putting aside the principle of self-identification (see above), identifying all languages spoken by formerly colonially oppressed peoples worldwide with the umbrella term “indigenous languages”. This kind of strange conceptualization was the focal point that was discussed with senior colleagues and African language experts in 2019/20 against the African background.

The lack of a solid, globally acceptable UNESCO position on the implementation of IYIL 2019 became apparent at the annual meeting of the Namibian UNESCO Commission in Windhoek April 5, 2019 (not recorded by UNESCO Paris in its IYIL2019 event list). At this meeting, the Namibian organizers

⁹ For a comprehensive overview that covers the constitutional dispensations in all African countries, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_linguistic_rights_in_African_constitutions; accessed 21 August 2021.

¹⁰ Further, in Act No. 6 of 2019: Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act, 2019, Chapter 1, page 8 see definitions of “indigenous community”, “indigenous cultural expression”, “indigenous knowledge” and “indigenous knowledge practitioner” Mind the terminological contradictions which are also evidenced in the SABC recording “Elevating indigenous languages remains a challenge” - <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=3C9bYYzYdx8>. compared to https://iwgia.org/images/yearbook/2020/IWGIA_The_Indigenous_World_2020.pdf p. 161-PART 1 – Region and country reports – South Africa (web pages last accessed on 21 August 2021).

¹¹ Remember that earlier African governments rejected the term „indigenous peoples“ for its negative connotations in Africa, as it was used in derogatory ways during European colonialism (web sources Legère 2019 4).

came forward with their own interpretation of how to deal with this complex issue. In no way did languages of Namibia's First Peoples, such as those spoken by San communities, play a role. Instead, the invited speakers (divided into grassroots and academic) dealt with problems of African languages in Namibia in general (i.e. the Webster 1a interpretation) in terms of social prestige, language maintenance, promotion and development.

By the way, among the Namibian marginalised San, Ovatie and Ovatjimba the latter speak Otjiherero. Thus, if these communities are identified as "indigenous peoples" by UNESCO and others, the language that Ovatjimba speak is not endangered.¹²

Next, what follows here are some observations regarding the position of the Sámi communities in Sweden and Norway.

2.3 SAMI - AN EUROPEAN MINORITY LANGUAGE GROUP (DIALECT CONTINUUM)

The Sami call themselves *Urfolk* (First People). Being *Urfolk*, the Sámi communities are frequently cited, when the current situation among and the future of First Peoples and minorities in Europe and the Arctic Region are dealt with.

In Norway the legal status of Sámi is defined in "The Sámi Act" (Act of 12 June 1987 No. 56) "§ 1-5. *Sami languages. Sami and Norwegian are languages of equal worth* (emphasis added). *They shall be accorded equal status pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 3*".¹³

During a visit to Karasjok (Norwegian Sámi administrative centre) and its Sámi Park some years ago i.e. the multitude of publications in the Sámi languages was noted with great attention and interest. By comparison, even prominent African languages do not come up by far with such a large number and wide range of publications as those of the Sámi. Another important achievement is the existence of the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (website <https://samas.no/en>) in Kautokeino in Norway which even offers language courses in various Sámi languages. The following Norwegian Sami languages are recognised by the EU authorities which at the right hand side of the table also determine the extent of this recognition.

¹² Even in e.g. Cameroon First peoples have given up their heritage language in favour of that of their neighbours thus speaking a noun class language, the endangerment of which is not known.

¹³ <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/the-sami-act-/id449701/> further Chapter 3. The Sami language. § 3-1. Definitions. etc.; last accessed 21 August 2021.

Lule Sami	Part II (Article 7) and Part III (Articles 8-14)
North Sami	Part II (Article 7) and Part III (Articles 8-14)
South Sami	Part II (Article 7) and Part III (Articles 8-14)

article 7 - recognition and support, article 8 - education and 9 rights, media, etc.¹⁴

As for the Sami languages in Sweden, a Swedish website¹⁵ summarises that

“In 2000, Sami was recognised as an official minority language¹⁶ in Sweden, and the central government has since given the Sami Parliament greater influence and financial resources to preserve the Sami languages, which are rich in variation. Just imagine more than 300 different ways of saying snow – from powder to slush.”

Another Sámi website states that *“Alla samiska språk är klassade som hotade språk [...]”*¹⁷ in so doing accepting UNESCO’s endangered language version as portrayed in the “Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger of Disappearing“ (1996 > 2001, 3rd edition Mosley 2010). Further, the Sámi website records IYIL 2019 in Swedish as *urfolksprakaret*.

Similar to Norway, Sámi studies and research are important and well established e.g. at the Umeå universitet, Várdduo - Centrum för samisk forskning.¹⁸

The list of Swedish Sami languages and their status as European minority languages is identical with the Norwegian list above.

As a matter of fact, the endangerment process among the Sámi languages is advanced. The estimate of Sámi numbers (i.e. 80.000 persons spread over 4 countries, 20,000 speakers of the most widespread North Sámi) worries the Sami communities.¹⁹ What is highly interesting to note is the community commitment as reflected e. g. in the *Förslag till handlingsprogram för bevarande av de samiska språken*²⁰ which is a comprehensive action plan for language maintenance and empowerment. Its implementation is certainly not easy, in particular at the national level, where Swedish, Norwegian or Finnish

¹⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/languages-covered-en-rev2804/16809e4301> which is a 10 page listing up all recognised minority languages updated on: 28 April 2020, entry Norway, pp. 2-3; accessed 17 august 2021.

¹⁵ <https://sweden.se/society/sami-in-sweden/>.

¹⁶ See also *Lag om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk* (SFS 2009:724): *Samiska är ett officiellt minoritetsspråk i Sverige*. source: <http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/sfs/20090724.PDF>, further <https://www.sametinget.se/1079> - web pages last accessed 21 August 2021. Similarly, for Finland see “Sámi Language Act” (1086/2003) Link. Saamen kielilaki.PDF (finlex.fi).

¹⁷ <http://www.samer.se/2739>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

¹⁸ <https://www.umu.se/vardduo-centrum-for-samisk-forskning>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

¹⁹ <https://sweden.se/society/sami-in-sweden>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

²⁰ <https://www.sametinget.se/151550>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

dominate as the national languages with the highest communicative prestige country-wide. It is evident that even if the minority languages are *de jure* equal to other national languages, the distribution and domains where the first-mentioned languages are used contribute to their privileged status. Outside the autonomous Sapmi area in the north of Scandinavia the use of the Saami language is rather restricted. Of course, people can speak Sámi in Helsinki, Oslo or Stockholm, but the number of those who understand this language there is small. The problems the Sámi communities are exposed to were well summarised and assessed in the context of IYIL2019 by Aili Keskitalo, Sametingspresident in Norway (see below), and Lars Miguel Utsi, Deputy Chairman of the Swedish Sametinget.

The Sámi language has been dealt with here quite extensively, because, from a global point of view the linguistic situation in Sápmi and the Sami endangerment process are very typical.

In this respect, judging from the Tanzanian experience,²¹ special attention should be paid to the question - why should someone speak or preserve a language that is compared with other national languages for him/her less prominent in official, formal and even informal domains, as well as less widespread at the country level? As a consequence, the focus of any initiative should be to win the hearts of the young generation who should be prepared to take over the lead in language policy and implementation in due time. Obviously, neither the Sámi, First Peoples of both Americas and in other regions, nor ethnic communities and minorities such as in Africa, Australia or Asia are satisfied to see how their languages are getting lost, because they are no longer used.

At the end of IYIL 2019 the President of the Sami Parliament, Ms. Aili Keskitalo was contacted per email.²² The message drew attention to the fact that IL is a stigma term in larger parts of Africa where it is associated with primitive, second-class or underdeveloped languages. Here is her response:

From: Keskitalo, Aili <aili.keskitalo@samediggi.no >

Sent: Saturday, November 23, 2019 1:33:55 PM

To: Karsten Legère <karsten.legere@african.gu.se >

Re: IYIL 2019

“[...] Sami refer to ourselves as Indigenous,²³ and we do not consider this a derogatory term.²⁴ We are well aware of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and have engaged substantially in the celebration [...]”

²¹ In Tanzania and elsewhere the older generation esp. in rural areas is deeply concerned about this situation.

²² She was a member of the IYIL2019 Organizing Committee.

²³ Who is non-indigenous in Scandinavia, according to the Sámi understanding?

²⁴ Which it is, even if this is not recognised by Sámi authorities, while people not only in Africa, but also elsewhere avoid it.

As a comment to this message - the question is why do the Sami call themselves *Urfolk*, but reject any self-identification which is similar to that in Canada and the USA as First People or First Nation? Instead, the Sami identify themselves with an English umbrella term that, as shown above in the example of Namibia, may be understood as negating the First People's concept.

As for Sámi and IYIL2019, mainly the Norwegian Sámi communities organised the Arctic Conference, where e.g. the following statement was made regarding priorities:

“Our fundamental tenet is that the Norwegian and Sámi languages shall be considered to be of equal stature and value”.²⁵ This calls for a robust language campaign throughout society, where all players can contribute to promoting the Sámi languages.²⁶

This means, the Sámi authorities both in Norway and in Sweden keep the ball of language maintenance and promotion rolling. However, even the achievements so far are worth to be reported (maybe as a Sami language profile on the UNESCO website).

Identity problems have come up at the end of IYIL 2019, when UNESCO presented an overview of the events during this year 2019. This overview has been analysed with regard to linguistic umbrella terms which were traced in the events list. The results are summarised in the following section.

3. IDENTITY CONCEPTUALIZATION AND ITS TERMINOLOGY

The lexical items below are arranged according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary approach, as outlined in 1. above

a) * national languages, *línguas nacionais*, *nationale Sprachen* (other than the national language, e.g. *Kiswahili*, *Kirundi* or *ikiNyarwanda*) belonging to a particular nation, * minority language, *langue minoritaire*,²⁷ * *lugha za jamii* in Tanzania, Kenya and more;

b) relating to the earliest known inhabitants and their language

* ancestral languages;

* heritage languages,²⁸ treasure language;

²⁵ KL: Has this not been made clear in the Sami Act quoted above?

²⁶ <https://en.iyil2019.org/events/sami-language-conference-iyil2019-launching-in-arctic-region/>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

²⁷ E.g. <https://en.iyil2019.org/events/langues-changements-et-adaptations-ethnographies-et-ecolinguistiques-des-communautés-cotières-nord-européennes-a-laune-du-xxième-siècle/>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

²⁸ LINGUIST List: Vol-32-1080. Wed Mar 24 2021. ISSN: 1069 - 4875 announcing publications in Southern Unami which is “the heritage language of the Delaware Tribe of

- * *urfolkssprak* in Scandinavia;
- * languages of *Orang Asli* ‘First People’ in Malaysia;
- * *lenguas originarias* (e.g. Mexico);²⁹
- * First Nations/First Peoples languages (USA, Canada),
- * First languages (Australia);³⁰
- * *языки коренного первородного населения*, in Russia.

Suffice it to note here again that for UNESCO indigenous languages are also supposed to mean endangered languages, *langues en danger*, ~ languages in danger (of disappearing), since the whole IYIL2019 initiative has strongly argued for the maintenance, promotion and empowerment of small and not so small languages (like the Sami cluster)³¹ that are in the process of being given up.

4. IDENTITY FROM THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE - ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

The following are initially comments from a senior African colleague (a participant of the Regional Addis Ababa IYIL2019 conference organized by UNESCO end July 2019) who is concerned about UNESCO’s global imposition of a terminology that e.g. in Africa (but also elsewhere) is controversial and unpopular in particular in former Portuguese colonies:

a) Is the term “indigenous” pejorative? Yes, it certainly is, not only in terms of its origins but in its virtually exclusive use for non-European languages. Even in its practical application as proposed for the IYIL 2019, it is muddled up in its restriction to museum piece endangered languages to the exclusion of many languages which are in need of promotion and empowerment.

b) Can the term “indigenous” be redefined to make it less offensive? For example, can it be made to refer to autochthonous languages found in a given area? If this can be done, all languages including English, French and German will be called indigenous languages in countries where they are natively spoken. I doubt if those who have the messianic mission of rescuing dying languages will agree to relegate their languages to an inferior status.

c) Can the term “indigenous” be abolished? I doubt if this is possible. This is a term that has become part of the international discussion, especially in UNESCO circles.

Indians (Bartlesville, Okla.) and the Delaware Nation of Western Oklahoma (Anadarko)” (emphasis KL).

²⁹ <https://en.iyil2019.org/events/exhibicion-y-venta-de-libros-relacionados-con-las-lenguas-originarias/>, last accessed 21 August 2021.

³⁰ The name of the First Languages Australia organization, see: <https://www.firstlanguages.org.au>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

³¹ Dialects should be added as suggested already in the 2018 Yuelu Proclamation.

d) What can be done in the circumstances? Rejecting the use of “indigenous languages” in the sense of limiting its scope to just endangered languages. In the African context, the lesson to be drawn from this is that initiatives to adjust and reinterpret the term “indigenous” according to situation and reality may well be the way out.

This is a perfect summary that, together with the fundamental Robillard/Bahuchet (2012) discussion of the terminological escapades that the authors have traced among Central African forest dwellers should be highly relevant for UNESCO and other institutions which believe that there is no alternative to the global umbrella term “indigenous languages”.

Based mainly on the review of UNESCO documents and other sources that deemed to be important for the discussion of terminological issues related to IYIL 2019 and beyond the following is suggested here:

- It is time to stop the supremacist interference of organizations, institutions, NGO’s, ‘expats’ and persons from outside who feel being authorized to tell others - communities, ethnic groups, individuals - who they are.
- African States which have been studied in the context of identity matters should be encouraged to pursue their will and way of deciding by themselves what is appropriate (or not) in the process of linguistic self-identification.

It should be borne in mind that in view of the colonial past or racist connotations, quite recently terminological changes that are supportive to a constructive identity approach were made at the national/regional level as follows:

- E-word being replaced by “Inuit”;
- P-word in Central Africa being banned by officials;³²
- partial self-identification as “First Peoples/Nations” instead of “Indian”;
- in Germany/Austria and Switzerland dropping words like *Mohr*, *Eingeborene* (already many years before *Eingeborenensprachen*), but Duden and some media still maintain stigma terms like “indigene Sprachen” und “indigene Menschen/Indigene”³³ for denoting languages and peoples in Africa, Latin America, USA, Canada, Asia, Australia (on top of Aborigines).

³² Robillard&Bahuchet (2012).

³³ A typical example is the way how in German media D. Jur. Deb Haaland’s ethnic origin was described, such as *Indigene wird Minister*, ‘Indigenous becomes Minister’, also Wikipedia’s https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deb_Haaland_-_erste_indigene_US-Ministerin ‘First indigenous Minister’, whereas the English Wikipedia version writes that the Secretary of the Interior is “[...] an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo [...]” <https://www.doi.gov/secretary-deb-haaland>: “[...] a member of the Pueblo of Laguna [...]” - links last accessed 21 August 2021.

The rejection of the stigma terms above is a solid argument against UNESCO's reluctance of dropping its favorite *indigenous languages*. Similarly, after World War 2 the French colonial stigma term *peuples indigènes, langues indigènes* was replaced by *peuples/langues autochthones*.³⁴ Also the N-word had been replaced a long time ago by *Afroamerican*.³⁵ Another terminological re-orientations happened in Mozambique, Angola, Cap Verde and Guinea Bissau, where the stigma term *línguas indígenas* was rejected being replaced with *línguas nacionais*. In addition, as earlier summarised - out of 23 African countries, only two have included the expression *indigenous languages* in official documents, all others have stipulated other umbrella terms.

Above the question was asked whether it is acceptable to call (the national languages) English, French, German (also Spanish, Italian, Russian, Hungarian, Polish, etc.) *indigenous languages*, subsequently being answered - of course, not...

5. RÉSUMÉ AND OUTLOOK

This paper deals with issues related to linguistic identity. The starting point is the ambiguous use of the keyword *indigenous language* stimulated by UNESCO and its IYIL2019 profile. In this context, reference is made to two aspects, namely, on the one hand the self-identification by the language community on the grassroots level or likewise by qualified institutions on the national level. On the other hand, a linguistic identification is made from outside, the result of which is in contradiction to the national, regional or grassroots identification. Both cases produce a conflicting linguistic identity, since the second approach doesn't care for an identity which goes back to the linguistic self-identification process.

A number of examples from different countries (with a focus on South America, 23 African countries, Scandinavia) demonstrate how differently this global IYIL2019 initiative has been implemented in view of UNESCO's reluctance to define the exact profile of IYIL2019. Given UNESCO's international prestige, little opposition to the former authoritarian way, that has imposed a strange identity on a large group of languages worldwide, has been observed.

This is problematic, because UNESCO is now planning a Decade of Indigenous Languages, which, as a consequence, gives rise to a renewed divi-

³⁴ See also Bouchareb, Rachid. 2006.

³⁵ But mind the use of its diminutive in the Philippines which is as pejorative as the N-word. BBC reports that the N-word has also been used by white actors in the Australian TV serie Neighbours, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-56652191>; last accessed 21 August 2021.

sion of the world into regions with languages the identity of which is on the one hand, determined from outside.

Accordingly, in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia/Oceania, as in the times of colonialism, there are indigenous languages. In contrast, Europe and North America are excluded from a global initiative to promote small languages and dialects, because there are hardly any languages whose speakers accept an identity imposed by UNESCO.

REFERENCES

- ACHPR/African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. 2006. *Indigenous Peoples in Africa: The Forgotten Peoples? The African Commission's work on indigenous peoples in Africa*. Banjul and Copenhagen: ACHPR and IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs).
- Calvet, Louis-Jean. 1978. *Die Sprachenfresser: Ein Versuch über Linguistik und Kolonialismus*. Berlin: Arsenal (German translation of Calvet's 1974 book in French linguistique et colonialism, petit traité de glottophagie. Paris: Edition Payot).
- CHAGS 12. 2018. Programme. Penang: School of Social Sciences.
- Economist (The). 2018, 7 July. "Aboriginal rights: 230 years later", pp. 45-46.
- Legère, Karsten. 2017. "Empowering national languages: The Bantu language area" in: Rajja Kramer & Roland Kießling (eds.) *Mechthildian Approaches to Afrikanistik*, pp. 243-260. Köln: Köppe Publ.
- Legère, Karsten. 2021. "Official and co-official languages in sub-Saharan Africa: What about other languages?" in: Anderson Chebanne & Amani Lusekelo (eds.) 2021. *African Languages. Linguistic, Literary and Social Issues. A Festschrift in honour of Prof. Herman Batibo (CASAS BOOK SERIES*. No. 131), pp. 177-193 (Chapter 11). Cape Town: UWC/CASAS.
- Legère, Karsten, Richard Trewby & Mariana van Graan. 2001. *The implementation of the Namibian language policy in education: Lower primary grades and pre-service teacher education. An ERNESA [Educational Research Network of Eastern and Southern Africa] Report*. Windhoek: Namibia Educational Research Association.
- Newitt, Malyn. 1995. *A history of Mozambique*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Robillard, Marine & Bahuchet, Serge (2012). "Les Pygmées et les autres: terminologie, catégorisation et politique" in: *Journal des africanistes*. 82 (1/2): 15-51.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. & Robert Phillipson (editors). 1995. *Linguistic Human Rights. Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 2000. *Linguistic genocide in education or world-wide diversity and human rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum associate

Web resources

- Bouchareb, Rachid (Director). 2006. Days of Glory (Indigènes). accessed <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0444182/>; last accessed 17 August 2021.
- CIA/Central Intelligence Agency. 2019. World Factbook. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>; last accessed 21 August 2021.
- Duden internet version, entry *Eingeborene*. <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/> accessed 21 August 2021.
- Council of Europe. 1992. *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Strasbourg: CoE. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680695175>, accessed 21 August 2021.
- ILO & ACHPR/International Labour Organization and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. 2009. Overview Report of the Research Project by the International Labour Organization and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the constitutional and legislative protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in 24 African countries. Geneva: ILO. Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/publications/WCMS_115929/lang-en/index.htm; last accessed 21 August 2021.
- IWGIA (= International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs). 2018. 370 million indigenous people. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/indigenous-world> last accessed 21 August 2021.¹
- Leclerc, Jacques. 2020. *L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde*. Ottawa: Laval University <http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/afra.htm> last accessed 21 August 2021).
- Legère, Karsten 2002. "The Languages of Tanzania project: Background, sources and problems" in: *Africa & Asia*, 2: 163-186. https://www.ipd.gu.se/digitalAssets/1324/1324043_the-languages-of-tanzania-project.pdf (for this paper) accessed 17 August 2021;
- Legère, Karsten 2019. OL > "Open letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, 1 February 2019", available at <https://osf.io/a6n7p/quickfiles>.
- Legère, Karsten. 2020. "Deutsch als „indigene Sprache“?" in: Sprachnachrichten. Das weltweite Netz der deutschen Sprache 87 (III), 15. https://www.dialog-mb.com/files/2020_Sprachnachrichten_2020-03_Sprache_der_Gewalt.pdf.
- Legère, Karsten 2021. "IYIL and a forthcoming decade", unpublished document, <https://osf.io/h83fc/>.
- Marks, Don. 2014. "What's in a name: Indian, Native, Aboriginal or Indigenous?" *CBC News*, 2 October 2014. Available at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/what-s-in-a-name-indian-native-aboriginal-or-indigenous-1.2784518>; last accessed 21 August 2021.
- Merriam-Webster's Dictionary online. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous#synonyms>, last accessed 17 August 2021.
- Republic of Kenya. 2010. *Constitution of Kenya, 2010*. Nairobi: The National Council for Law Reporting. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ken127322.pdf>; last accessed 21 August 2021.
- Simons, Gary F & Charles D Fennig (eds.). 2018. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Twenty-first edition. Dallas, TX: SIL International. Available at <http://www>.

¹ Biased reports such as the Tanzanian one in: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/tanzania> (last accessed 21 August 2021), which claims "Tanzania does not recognize the existence of indigenous peoples", not aware at all that there is "Sera ya utamaduni" 'Cultural policy' which focuses on the existence of many national languages other than Swahili spoken by ethnic communities.

- ethnologue.com; last accessed 21 August 2021.
- United Nations, General Assembly. Human Rights Council. 2012. *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples* <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Expert-mechanism-language.pdf>, last accessed 21 August 2021.
- UN Human Rights. 2012. *The Role of Languages and Culture in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ipeoples/emrip/pages/studylanguages.aspx> last accessed 21 August 2021.
- UNESCO. 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment. Document submitted to the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages* Paris, 10–12 March 2003 http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf, last accessed 21 August 2021.
- UNESCO. 2019. *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. Paris: UNESCO. <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/> accessed 21 August 2021.

Wikipedia. 2021. *List of linguistic rights in African constitutions*; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_linguistic_rights_in_African_constitutions; accessed 21 August 2021.