maaya

réseau mondial pour la diversité linguistique

Biennium Report 2009-2011

The present document aims to provide a brief insight into the activities launched by Maaya from 2009 to 2011.

Introduction

Languages, with their strong connections to identity, communication, social integration, education and development, hold a strategic importance for the peoples of our planet. However, we estimate that in an increasingly globalized world, some of them are more and more jeopardized. This risk appeared in the 20th century and it is still valid, as we are regularly reminded by the UNESCO. Thus, it is more than ever opportune to keep looking for ways and means to promote and protect threatened languages. This is all the more true since 96% out of the 6 000 languages in the world are only spoken by 4% of the population; less than a quarter of the languages are used at school and in the cyberspace, and in a very sporadic way for most of them; just a few more than three hundred languages are represented in the IT field. The main challenge regarding the presence of languages in cyberspace is not only related to multilingualism in itself; it is rather connected to questions about Internet governance, domain names, scripts and encoding, but also to education, creation of cultural and educational contents, to name but a few. It stands to reason that the development of digital television, the multifaceted roles played by the Internet, and mobile communication are also relevant issues at the start of the century. When languages fade, the rich fabric of cultural diversity in the world also declines.

Languages in everyday life – in other words cyberspace, education, culture, economy, hold a dramatic importance for multiple reasons. The interaction between public authorities and citizens depends more and more on computers and other electronic devices (television, mobile phones, etc.); so does the communication between students in the world. Besides, trade relations are also strongly based on computerized systems, more and more contained in computers, certainly, but also in other electronic tools, thanks to the convergence of digital technologies. The use of several languages in the digital world may be associated with the exercise of citizenship and with the reinforcement of participatory democracy.

In this context, the World Network for Linguistic Diversity – Maaya developed its activities during the period that goes from July, 2009 to February, 2011, which corresponds to the reorganization of the Executive Committee within the Network (the decision was taken on July 20 and 22, 2009 in Paris, confirmed by the General Meeting of Barcelona of September 28, 2009).

Meetings and Conferences

The President, the members of the Executive Committee and the members of the Network took an active part in several events and international conferences, namely:

- ***Internet Governance Forum*** (Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, November 15-18, 2009)
Coordination of the activities in the context of the "Dynamic Coalition for Linguistic Diversity". Presentation of a report by Viola Krebs about the "Dynamic Coalition for Linguistic Diversity", available at http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/dynamic-coalitions/73-linguistic-diversity (IGF website). Moderation of the "Coalition" session of November 17, 2009. Daniel Pimienta also participated in the IGF and in the activities of the "Dynamic Coalition".

- ***International Mother Language Day*** (UNESCO, February 21, 2010)
Participation of Daniel Prado, Treasurer of MAAYA, in the opening session of the Day (see: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/40278/12662453791International_Mother_Language_Day_Programme_and_CVs_of_Participants.pdf/International%2BMother%2BLanguage%2BDay %2BProgramme%2Band%2BCVs%2Bof%2BParticipants.pdf).

- ***Follow-up Forum to the World Summit on the Information Society of the ITU*** (May 18-22, 2010)
Participation of Adama Samassékou in the Opening Plenary Session of the Forum with a speech concerning the report on indicators. Participation of several members of Maaya in the meeting regarding the action line C8 on linguistic diversity in cyberspace. Setting up of an information stand by ICVolunteers and distribution of Maaya brochures. Participation in a high level panel discussion organized by UNDESA about e-governance.
See: http://groups.itu.int/stocktaking/EventCalendar/WSISFORUM2010.aspx.

- ***Internet Governance Forum*** (Vilnius, Lithuania, September 14-17, 2010)
Coordination of the activities in the context of the "Dynamic Coalition for Linguistic Diversity". Presentation of a report by Viola Krebs about the "Dynamic Coalition for Linguistic Diversity", available at http://www.icvnews.org/wiki/index.php/2010_Meeting_in_Vilnius%2C_Lithuania (for the French version, please see: http://www.icvnews.org/wiki/index.php/2010_R%C3%A9union_%C3%A0_Vilnius %2C_Lituanie).

- ***International Mother Language Day*** (UNESCO, February 21, 2011)
Participation of Daniel Prado, Daniel Pimienta and Cláudio Menezes in the programme of the Day organized by the UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/imld_programme_fr_10022011.pdf).

- Meeting with the authors who wrote the articles for the "Guide on multilingualism and cyberspace" in Paris.

Projects in progress or accomplished

- ***Bamako International Forum on Multilingualism (BIFM)***
The Bamako International Forum on Multilingualism (BIFM) was initiated by the ACALAN and MAAYA. It was held in Bamako (Mali), from February 19, to February 21, 2009, in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the International Organization of La Francophonie, the UNESCO, the Latin Union and the Spanish and Mali governments.

The BIFM was organized as the major celebration for the International Year of Languages (IYL) in the African continent. Its organizers considered it to be a first step towards a World Summit on Multilingualism. The BIFM adopted two essential texts: "the Bamako Commitment for a Universal Multilingualism" and its "Action Plan", with a "Master Plan for the Partnership between National Languages and Languages of the North in Educational Systems".

In addition, during the Forum, the represented countries – Austria, Burkina Faso, Spain, Gabon, Gambia, Mali and Senegal – were urged to rally, in cooperation with the UNESCO (first strategic partner), the IOF, the Latin Union, the ACALAN, MAAYA and the other partners, and ask the UN to call forth a World Summit on the importance of multilingualism in relation to the Global Agenda.

It was also recommended that a Global Observatory for Multilingualism should be set up.

The Acts of the BIFM are being currently edited for publication. They will efficiently increase public awareness as regards the setting up of a Ministerial Conference on Multilingualism in 2013 – a second step towards the World Summit.

- ***Guide on multilingualism and cyberspace***

This book targets the knowledgeable public, including policy-makers on language and Internet development. It contains references and reflections to make the best use of the internet for the development of linguistic diversity.

UNESCO financed the first part of this project. But the delays for the articles were not respected by the authors. At the end of 2010, it was decided that the French publisher C&F éditions should be put in charge of the management and publication of the book, thanks to the funding of the Latin Union. The Anloc financed the translation of the book as well. The guide book was published in French and in English first, and later on in various forms:

  - o in printed version for libraries and for direct sales on the internet or in bookstores;
  - o in several portable digital versions (CD, PDF file or ePub). These versions will be available on portable digital media (possibly CD-Rom, flash drives) and on the internet, or via ebook sales systems.

The book should be launched for the 2011 Forum for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which will be held from May 16 to May 20, 2011.

- ***Project DILINET***

FUNREDES initiated a project which consists in designing indicators of linguistic diversity in the digital world. It aims to overcome the difficulties that come with current methods (which are the fruit of the MAAYA members' work: LOP, Latin Union and FUNREDES). The difficulties stem from the important size of the web and the excesses of search engines. The result is a very ambitious project that strongly relies on research. It could find partners and funding with the help of the European Union Framework Programme, and it could have a significant impact on public policies for languages and the digital divide, on the development of content industries and more generally, on Internet applications for the management of huge volumes of data.

This initiative was introduced during the meeting organized by the UNESCO for the Internet Governance Forum, which was held in Vilnius, in September, 2010. It obtained the financial support of the UNESCO, the Latin Union and the IOF as regards its defining a project and looking for partners. This stage is in progress and will end in Mars, 2011 with a well-defined project and a precise strategy for funding. It is worth noticing that the ITU and the group working on indicators in the information society were integrated into MAAYA and are now following this file.

- ***Cooperation with the IOF***

Cooperation agreement with the International Organization of La Francophonie – IOF (terminated on December 31, 2009)