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AN ELECTRONIC LEXICOGRAPHY TOOL FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

Nematova Surayyo

Kashkadarya, Karshi, 29th school teacher

Annotation: Living Dictionaries are comprehensive, free online technological tools integrating audio, images and other multimedia that can assist endangered and other language communities, providing a simple way to create high-quality multilingual documentation records. The platform is a progressive web application functioning within any Internet browser on any computer or mobile device, Android or iOS. If needed, Living Dictionaries can be created, managed and edited using only smartphones or tablets, which can function as complete workstations for recording and entering linguistic data and other multimedia. Living Dictionaries may be public or private and may include written entries with translations and example sentences in multiple languages and scripts, audiovisual files, parts of speech and semantic domains, morphosyntactic linguistic analysis and be tagged with other metadata. The platform is free because for almost all minority language communities the costs related to producing high-quality linguistic materials can be insurmountable. Online dictionaries should reflect the user communities, tailored to suit their needs as well as curated by citizen-linguists. Community resources have greater uptake and engagement by communities if they take a primary role in developing them.

Key words: dictionary; language technology; endangered languages; lexicography; web application

ELEKTRON LEKSIKOGRAFIYA VOSITASI JAMIYAT FAOLLARI UCHUN.

Nematova Surayyo

Qashqadaryo, Qarshi, 29-maktab o'qituvchisi

Annotatsiya: Tirik lug'atlar audio va tasvirlarni birlashtirgan keng qamrovli, bepul onlayn texnologik vositalardir va xavf ostida qolgan va boshqa til jamoalariga yordam beradigan boshqa multimedia, ta'minlash yuqori sifatli ko'p tilli hujjat yozuvlarini yaratishning oddiy usuli. Platforma har qanday kompyuter yoki mobil qurilmada har qanday Internet-brauzerda ishlaydigan progressiv veb-ilova qurilma, Android yoki iOS. Agar kerak bo'lsa, "Tirik lug'atlar" yaratilishi, boshqarilishi va tahrirlanishi mumkin yozish uchun to'liq ish stantsiyalari sifatida ishlashi mumkin bo'lgan faqat smartfon yoki planshetlardan foydalanish va lingvistik ma'lumotlar va boshqa multimediyalarni kiritish. Jonli lug'atlar ommaviy yoki shaxsiy bo'lishi mumkin va bir nechta tillardagi tarjimalar va misol jumalari bilan yozilgan yozuvlarni o'z ichiga olishi mumkin va skriptlar, audiovizual fayllar, nutq qismlari va semantik sohalar, morfosintaktik lingvistik tahlil qilish va boshqa metama'lumotlar bilan belgilanishi. Platforma bepul, chunki deyarli hamma uchun ozchiliklar tillari jamoalari yuqori sifatli lingvistik materiallarni ishlab chiqarish bilan



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bog'liq xarajatlar yengib bo'lmaydigan bo'lishi mumkin. Onlayn lug'atlar foydalanuvchi jamoalarini aks ettirishi kerak, ularning ehtiyojlariga moslashtirilgan, shuningdek, fuqarolar-lingvistlar tomonidan tuzilgan. Jamiyat resurslari mavjud jamiyatlar ularni rivojlantirishda asosiy rol o'ynasa, ularni yanada ko'proq qabul qilish va jalb qilish.

Kalit so'zlar: lug'at; til texnologiyasi; xavf ostida qolgan tillar; leksikografiya; veb Ilova.



Technology can be “disruptive” because it can forever change the way people operate in their daily lives. But what if technology could also “disrupt” language bias and privilege? What if access to certain language technologies could help challenge language hierarchies and give endangered languages a fighting chance of survival? With over 3,000 languages in danger of being lost before the end of the century, we know there is a need to act quickly. Living Dictionaries¹ address the urgent need to provide comprehensive, free online technological tools that can assist endangered language communities simultaneously in conservation efforts and revitalisation programs by providing a simple way to create high-quality language documentation records. The Living Dictionaries platform can accommodate everyone from seasoned field linguists to emerging language activists in developing countries. The platform is free to use, and the intended target audience of this web app is inclusive, diverse and multilingual. The advantages of online dictionaries have been well-known for some time. Dmitrova discussed such features as their wide accessibility, the possibility for them to be continuously updated as well as corrected and edited, or the creation of an online community of real-time users in multiple different locations, which can lead to real-time editing and updating of the dictionary. Lew and de Schryver concur that “[o]nline dictionaries as well as dictionary apps can be updated as often as needed, and all users can instantly benefit from the improved content or features right from the moment these become available.” Dmitrova also commented on a key feature of online digital dictionaries: no restrictions on the size. Indeed, the old dictionary-making paradigm was dependent on printing restrictions, content limits, page layouts, alphabetisation and other ‘corporate’ concerns, where when updating dictionaries “the editors usually had to grapple with the dilemma of what to sacrifice in order to make space for the new items.” Today, these types of bottom-line concerns are largely irrelevant, and powerful search functionality and the relatively low cost of database storage has obviated the challenges of the past. As Lew and de Schryver (ibid.) put it: “[t]he digital revolution has changed that, and now items are in fact very rarely removed when digital dictionaries are updated.” Other innovative advantages of electronic dictionaries include: “the option to hear new words being pronounced, being able to copy over foreign scripts one would be hard pressed to type in, the interconnectivity with other resources (such as corpora), and the fact that one stays within the same (digital) medium, rather than having to move back and forth between the screen and a book on one’s desk” Furthermore, we now benefit from the possibility of integrating large numbers of photos and other audiovisual multimedia, the ability to accommodate sign as well as oral languages, and perhaps most importantly, the capacity to address the vast gap in digital resource availability that disproportionately

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impacts minority communities worldwide. A multimedia online dictionary platform such as Living Dictionaries accommodates the needs of twenty-first century users of such tools by using the latest technologies to produce tools that in the long run can become encyclopaedic in nature. Online dictionaries can now reflect the user communities in a meaningful way, they can be tailored to suit their needs as well as curated by citizen-linguists who wish to build resources for their languages. No longer the exclusive domain of academic expert authorities and state-sanctioned language academies, digital dictionaries of the electronic era indeed belong to the realm of the collective intellectual property of language communities themselves. We strongly feel that for endangered and threatened. Proceedings of eLex 2021 minority languages, the future of lexicography is crowd-sourced citizen science. Community resources developed by community members are almost certain to have greater uptake and engagement by communities if they take a primary role in developing these resources themselves. Speaking about (South) Africa, Prinsloo reminds us that “[w]hat is emphasised and encouraged today is the urge to compile dictionaries for African languages in Africa, by Africans, for Africans”, see also Prinsloo et al. This includes taking into consideration, among other things, that the complex grammatical structures of many African languages differ rather significantly from those of other major European and Asian languages (Van Wyk, 1995). During our online and in-person training workshops at the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, language activists who are facing rapid language loss have enthusiastically voiced their desire to create and maintain their own digital resources. We have created the Living Dictionaries platform with them in mind, optimising it for global remote collaboration, ease of use and accessibility on mobile devices, and we integrate community user feedback into the design and programming of the tool. This project can help mitigate the global language extinction crisis by opening the door to linguistic documentation for all, expanding access to cultural equity and self-determination. As an online platform that presently houses dictionaries for over 200 languages, it utilises the safety and flexibility of remote collaboration between dictionary managers. We are committed to maintaining this platform for decades to come so that the work of language activists may live on and benefit our descendants, community stakeholders, educators and scholars.

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