

National Science Foundation
Workshop for
**Documenting Endangered
Languages**



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ELPR and other initiatives in Japan

Toshihide NAKAYAMA

*Research Institute for Languages and Cultures
of Asia and Africa (ILCAA)
Tokyo U of Foreign Studies*



ELPR

(Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim Project)

- ❁ Funded by Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)
- ❁ Funded under the 'Scientific Research on Priority Areas' program Grant period: 1999-2003
- ❁ Grant amount: approx. 670 million yen (US\$ 5.8 million)
- ❁ Involved over 200 researchers (including about 40 graduate students)

ELPR: Activities

❁ Main goal:

- fieldwork-based documentation of endangered languages of the Pacific Rim area
- particular emphasis on severely endangered languages

❁ Types of work supported:

- Fieldwork
- Publication of research results
- Development of supporting tools

ELPR: Results

— in the form of traditional (paper) publication

- Collection of texts
- Grammatical descriptions
- Dictionaries and word lists
- Collection of research papers

— about half are in Japanese; the other half in English; some in Russian and other languages

ELPR Experience: Issues

❁ *Academic system:*

- Short-sighted, product-oriented evaluation

❁ *Public relations:*

- limited impact on public awareness and sympathy

❁ *Project administration:*

- Administrative burden was not well distributed
- Productivity of the sub-units varied dramatically

❁ *Strategic planning:*

- The grant activities were not followed up
- The publications are becoming endangered

ELPR Experience: Wishes

- ❁ Better research strategies
 - ◆ Better data processing and utilization strategy
 - ◆ Better archiving and publication strategy
- ❁ Long-term strategy and infrastructure-building
 - ◆ More coordination in research activities
- ❁ Community building
 - ◆ Better sharing of information and wisdom
 - ◆ Stronger sense of community among researchers
 - ◆ Recruiting and support for younger researchers
- ❁ Better public relations

Beyond ELPR: What now?

- ❁ Better infrastructure for supporting and promoting EL work
 - ◆ Build more solid methodological base
 - ◆ Build stronger collaborative research culture and community

Global COE (Center of Excellence)

- ❁ Government-funded program to strengthen graduate training and research
- ❁ 5 years from 2007
- ❁ Annual budget: approx. 100 million yen (US\$ 0.7 million)
- ❁ Supports field research and descriptive work by TUFs graduate students and post-doctoral fellows

ILCAA Project

- ❁ Expected to start in 2008; first phase for 5 years
- ❁ Aims to build international collaboration in research on linguistic diversity (documentary linguistics and typology)
- ❁ Hopes to help EL-related work in Japan better coordinated with work in other initiatives