

Akie in Tanzania - updating the documentation of a critically endangered language (continuation)

Initiative: Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen (beendet)

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The Akie are a small traditional hunter-gatherer group of Tanzania whose language is critically endangered for the extremely low number of 234 mother tongue speakers. The massive impact of the Maasai and their prestigious Maa language, culture, and life style plus the permanent influence of Bantu languages contribute to a steady erosion of the linguistic and ethnic identity of the Akie. This has been studied in a documentation project 2012 - 2015. Starting from scratch (i.e. a completely undescribed language) a solid linguistic foundation was laid culminating in a discourse grammar of Akie. The objective of the follow up project aims basically again at documenting the Akie language, but starting from a better position as the result of our data collection and analysis. On the one hand, the analysis of existing documents has to go ahead paying attention to specific aspects of the Akie language, such as the erosion of the Akie language documented in code-switching, the adaptation of the language to a changing world, the special way discourse markers are used including the role of imitating the dialogue with "asííwe" (ancestors) in rituals and blessings and more. On the other hand, the project addresses hunter/gatherer community's rich heritage and traditions such as the widespread knowledge about nature and the animal kingdom or peculiar linguistic features that illustrate the nature - language interface. The Akie community belongs to those few minorities where the traditional knowledge is part and parcel of most adult persons, in particular male members who were or are hunters. Next to hunting comes honey collection and its vocabulary as well as cultural practices followed by the bird - human being interaction that is peculiar to the Akie, but rarely observed outside this community. Furthermore, Akie music and songs shall be studied that are part and parcel of social as well as cultural events, and even popular outside the Akie community.

Projektbeteiligte

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