Writing your language

- Orthography - a writing system specific to a language
- Why is it important to have an orthography?
  - As we said in week one, a language that has not been documented is at risk of being lost forever
  - Writing systems can create community cohesion
  - Good or bad, a language with a writing system tends to be viewed with more respect

Sound Systems

- A sound system is a list of the contrastive sounds in a language
- Activity: how many sounds are in the following words?
  - Sea
  - Stick
  - Mix
  - Choose

The sounds of the world

- The IPA – International Phonetic Alphabet
- a consistent way of representing the sounds of language
- one-to-one correspondence between sounds and symbols
- like music, it should be accessible to anyone who has learned it
The IPA Consonants

The IPA Vowels

Sound Systems
- No one language has all of these sounds
- It is important to find out every sound that contrasts in your language
  - The IPA chart is a tool to help linguists do just that
  - Minimal Pairs are another tool

Minimal Pairs
- Two words that differ by one sound, and have different meanings
  - Examples: hat/at, bat/pat, fat/vat, cat/gat
  - This shows us that each one of those sounds is very important in a language, they are **phonemes**
  - Different languages will contrast different sounds
    - In English, the 'l' in 'leaf', and the 'l' in 'feel' do NOT contrast, but they sound very different
      - But they might contrast in other languages!
    - In English, the 'f' in 'leaf' and the 'v' in 'leave DO contrast
      - But they might not in other languages
Types of Orthographies

**Logographic System**
- Basic principle: each morpheme has its own symbol
- Unless you grow up with this tradition, it can be very hard to learn
- To read a typical Chinese newspaper, you need to know around 6,000 symbols!
- Example
  - 玉 – ‘jade’
  - 爱 – ‘love’
  - 下跌 – ‘fall’
  - 叶 – ‘leaf’
  - 落叶 – ‘falling leaves’

**Syllabary**
- Basic Principle: one symbol per syllable
- Depends on the syllable constraints of the language
- A syllable is made up of three basic parts
  - onset (the consonants in the beginning)
  - nucleus (the vowel in the center, the glue of a syllable)
  - coda (the consonants in the end)
- Example
  - Japanese katakana, hirigana
    - a e i o u
    - ア エ イ オ ウ
    - ba be bi bo bu
    - パ ペ ピ ボ ブ
    - da de di do du
    - ダ デ ヂ ド デュ

**Alphabets** – Basic Principle: one symbol per meaningful sound, or phoneme.
- Roman alphabet (ex: English, Italian)
- Cyrillic alphabet (ex: Russian, Bulgarian)
- What if you don’t have an orthography?
  - You can develop your own working orthography!
  - Things to keep in mind when developing a working orthography:
    - 1 sound to 1 symbol is best
    - Don’t use letters you don’t need
    - Think about making your writing system computer-compatible. Remember, non-standard symbols take longer to type, and all people who want to read and write about your language in the future may not have your same non-standard symbols installed on their computers.
Today’s activity

- Develop, or document, your language’s orthography
  - Use the minimal pairs exercise on your handout with your mentor
- In your web template “Orthography”
  - Write out each sound symbol with your mentor
  - Try to find the IPA used for that sound
  - Come up with an example word
    - Every word should use the sound word-initially, unless that sound does not occur word initial
    - Should be followed by the same vowel (ex, /a/)
    - Should be the same number of syllables

Wrap-up

- Any interesting sounds, symbols used?
- Any problems encountered?
- Questions?
- Next week: Morphology and glossing
- Thank you!