TEXTING CAN SAVE LANGUAGES

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There is a fascinating article in the Wall Street Journal about the way in which using text messages could help to preserve language diversity around the world. The author suggests that there are about 200 languages around the world which have large enough populations to justify developing text message technology for them. Interestingly, he says that the real key (no pun intended) will be to have predictive text available in those languages. Given the way in which predictive text messes up every message I ever try and send, I'm not completely convinced, but he makes a strong case:

> *Putting text on cellphones involves more than just printing letters on the number keys. Texting is cumbersome on a 12-key handset, requiring multiple taps on keys to select some letters. It is even harder in languages with more than the 26 letters of English. In Hindi, a language with 11 vowels and 34 consonants that is spoken by 40% of the Indian population, texting "Namaste," which means "hello," can take 21 key presses.*
>
> *The solution for most users is predictive text. A phone with predictive text guesses what word a person is trying to type on the 12-key cellphone keypad, requiring far fewer keystrokes.*
>
> *Typing "Namaste" with predictive text takes just six key presses. Nuance Corp. of Burlington, Mass., which dominates the predictive-text market, says that in 2006 cellphone users in India with predictive text in their handsets averaged 70 messages a week; those without it averaged 18. (read more)*

Welcome though this initiative is, it is only looking at 200 languages. Bible translation, which also helps to preserve minority languages has a much wider spread. We hope to see the Scriptures translated into most of the worlds 6,000 languages in the next seventeen years.

HT Many Pies.