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Newsletter focusing on multilingual regions dealing with regional or minority languages, but also immigrant languages and smaller state languages, with emphasis on language needs arising from migration and globalisation. Submit your subscription request, comments or suggestions to: **Richard de Boer** (Fryske Akademy).

## NEWS

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## NEWS

### Mercator language report: Seven perspectives on Bildts

Bildts is a minority language spoken in the Northwestern part of the province of Fryslân in the Netherlands. It has some 6,000 native speakers. Currently, Bildts does not have official recognition as a minority language in the Netherlands, although it receives support from both the province and the local municipality.

This municipality is planned to be merged into a larger municipality in 2018. At the same time, the municipal council of Het Bildt has set elevation of Bildts as one of its policy goals. The Mercator report, which was presented at the town hall of Het Bildt on 2 July 2015, provides a vision for a Bildts language policy to be set out in the preparatory process towards this merger of municipalities. More specifically, it explores chances for and expected consequences of inclusion of Bildts in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

This exploration is done through a literature review of the language status of Bildts and through comparison with other minority languages in Europe. Some of these other languages studied are presently protected by this Charter, while others are not. In this manner, the expected effect of the Charter may be weighed against the alternatives.

Download the report "[Seven perspectives on Bildts](#)" [PDF], authored by linguistic researcher Paulus van Sluis.



## 7-8 October 2015: Seminar Open Learning in Minority Languages



In the fast developing digital area, new opportunities address themselves for regional and minority languages to engage with other language communities or to engage others with their language. Open Education and Open Educational Practices (OEP) and Open Educational Resources (OER) in that respect, are in ideal way to empower a small languages.

How can different language communities and cross-border collaboration advance the development of OER? How can OEP be transferred to language communities with less financial resources and political support and how? What are the challenges and opportunities from a policy perspective on OER uptake? What is the added value of OER from a (small) language teaching perspective?

These and other topics will be addressed in a seminar taking place on 7-8 October 2015 in Leeuwarden (the Netherlands). Both researchers, educators and policymakers in the field of regional and minority languages are welcome to participate in the seminar. The seminar is organized by the European Commission funded Life Long Learning project LangOER and hosted by the Mercator Research Centre (part of the Fryske Akademy).

Registration will open on the 1st of August 2015. For registration, send an e-mail to: [mercator@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:mercator@fryske-akademy.nl). See for more information: [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu).

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## France to Ratify European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages?

French President François Hollande is trying to get the French Parliament to authorize the ratification of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (RMLs). The Charter was signed by France in 1999, but was then considered unconstitutional by the Constitutional Council and consequently never ratified. During the 2012 presidential election, Mr Hollande promised that in case of victory he would submit this issue to the Parliament.



The French newspaper "Le Télégramme" recently revealed a letter sent on 1 June 2015 by French President François Hollande to the President of France's Commission on Constitutional laws, legislation and general administration of the Republic, Mr Jean-Jacques Urvoas, in which the President stated that he would submit the question of the ratification of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (RMLs) to the French Parliament. This was one of the 60 promises made by Mr Hollande during his 2012 presidential campaign.

Source: [UNPO](#), 15 June 2015.

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## Google Chrome multilingual spellcheck feature in the works



It's common for most of us in India to use multiple languages. And that just created a whole new language – Hinglish. Similarly, millions use multiple languages simultaneously as they type. However, spell check technologies have been limited, enabling just one language at a time. You could either switch to one language, or add words from the other language to your dictionary. Mobile devices, on the other hand, have been more adaptive in their learning of user response. Google Chrome might just change all of it.

According to a report in [9to5google](#), "in Chrome dev version 45.0.2453.0 released yesterday, a 'developer channel' build of the browser with changes and features that are still in their early development stages and as such not yet ready to be downloaded by the masses, the ability to enable spellchecking in Chrome against multiple languages caught our eye in the official changelog for the release, particularly as its a feature the community has been begging for in frustrated Chromium issue tracker threads dating back to 2008 when the Google-centric browser was released."

Since these are still developer builds, it will take some time for this feature to become a default feature in the Chrome browser. Also, the multilingual spellcheck function will be restricted to Windows and Linux.

Source: [New Day Post](#), 12 July 2015.

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## China-Turkey relationship strained over Uighurs

Burnt Chinese flags, attacks on Chinese restaurants, alleged attacks on tourists who were mistaken for being Chinese and protests across the country. In recent weeks anti-Chinese sentiment has been on the rise in Turkey.



Turkish Muslims and Uighurs from the far western region of China share ethnicity and have close cultural and religious ties. The protests started following reports that Uighurs in China had been banned from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

Muslims worldwide observe Ramadan, when the faithful abstain from eating and drinking during daylight hours. "Our people have been saddened over the news that Uighur Turks have been banned from fasting or carrying out other religious duties in the Xinjiang region," Turkey's foreign ministry said in a statement last week.

Source: BBC News, 9 July 2015.

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## Batsbi: A Silent Death of a Minority Language



The Batsbi language, a minority language related to Chechen, has been driven to the brink of extinction. Traditionally spoken in Zemo Alvani, Akhmeta Region, Kakheti, it has already lost its role as a community language and without institutional support it continues to decline at a rapid pace. Revaz Orbetishvili is the forefront fighter for the preservation of the Batsbi language and one of community leaders in Zemo Alvani. Many foreign linguists studying the language have chosen to stay at his place to receive instruction. 'All of us here are Tsova Tush', Revaz tells me at a funeral we're attending, 'yet we're all speaking Georgian. Not a single word in our own language.'

The Tush were resettled to the plains from their historical homeland in Tusheti in the 19th century. The majority of the Tush speaks a dialect of Georgian, while one subgrouping — the Tsova Tush — speak a separate language. Their language, known as Batsbi or Bats, is spoken in approximately half of the village of Zemo Alvani. It is distantly related to Chechen and Ingush and is considered by linguists to have preserved many old forms absent from its sister languages.

Different linguistic studies put the number of speakers at approximately 3,000, yet Revaz estimates that active speakers may be as few as 800. There is also a generational gap. 'Some youth in their late twenties speaks Batsbi, but teenagers can't speak it at all. The language is headed towards a disaster.'

Source: [Democracy & Freedom Watch](#), 18 June 2015.

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## Expert in the Spotlight for July 2015: Dr. Stephan Breidbach

Dr. Stephan Breidbach is Professor of English Language Education at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, Germany. His research interests are in addition to the bilingual subject: teaching foreign language in teacher training, Critical Language Awareness, language policy and learning identities.

"Foreign language teaching is traditionally monocultural in content and often monolingual in practice. I think a change in the mind-set of language teachers is necessary regarding their linguistic and professional identities. Another challenge in foreign language teaching is to cater for plurilingual learners. Particularly in urban schools, their numbers are significant, and traditional foreign language teaching still conceptualises learners as monolingual speakers of the dominant language within a society."



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## INTERESTING LINKS

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Cong Wang and Bodo Steiner, "[Can Ethno-Linguistic Diversity Explain Cross-Country Differences in Social Capital?: A Global Perspective](#)", *Economic Record*, 2015. Also available as a [working paper](#).

[A crowdsourced Scots dictionary means we can ensure our linguistic legacy](#), Katie Gallogly-Swan proposes in newspaper *The Herald*.

[Publishing in Catalan: It's About Making a 'Minority Language' Work](#). Catalan publishers must target consumers who read and buy books indifferently in two languages.

[The digital language barrier: how does language shape your experience of the internet?](#) From the *Guardian* article series *The case for language learning*.

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## EVENTS

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[26–31 July 2015, Antwerp \(BE\): Complex Linguistic Repertoires and Minority Languages in Immigrant Communities](#), Antwerp, Belgium.

[31 July 2015, Cambridge \(UK\): 5th Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment](#), University of Cambridge.

[15-22 August 2015, Dačice \(CZ\): Summer School of Linguistics 2015](#), Dačice, Czech Republic.

[14-17 September 2015, Barcelona \(ES\): 4th Barcelona Summer School on Bilingualism and Multilingualism Workshop](#), Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain.

[17-19 September 2015, Budapest \(HU\): Mercator-LEARNMe Conference on Minority Language Research, Educational Practice and Policy](#), Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest, Hungary.

[7-8 October 2015, Leeuwarden \(NL\): Open Learning in Minority Languages: Chances and Perspectives](#), LANGoer seminar hosted by Fryske Akademy/Mercator Research Centre, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

[29-30 October 2015, London \(UK\): Interpreting Communities: Minority Writing in European Literary Fields](#), conference at the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR), London.

[12-13 November 2015, London \(UK\): 2nd UCL Graduate Conference in Linguistics](#), London, United Kingdom.

[18-20 November 2015, Trento \(IT\): Theory of Language and the Debate on Language Origins](#), Trento, Italy. Call deadline: 5 August 2015.

[23-26 November 2015, Auckland \(NZ\): 4th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity \(LED 2015\)](#), University of Auckland, New Zealand.

[17-18 December 2015, Leuven \(BE\): Morphology Days 2015](#), KU Leuven, Belgium. Call deadline: 1 July 2015.

[24-26 January 2016, Valencia \(ES\): 3rd International Conference on Linguistic & Psycholinguistic Approaches to Text Structure](#), KU Leuven, Belgium. Call deadline: 20 July 2015.

[18-20 February 2016, Tbilisi \(GE\): The Impact of Socio-Political Transformations on Language and Identity](#), Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Call deadline: 31 July 2015.

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**30 March-1 April 2016, Strasbourg (FR): The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: Lessons from Research.** Symposium organised by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe. Call deadline: 15 September 2015.

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