I am an Arts Specialist

My name is _____ and I am an Arts Specialist. Because my job is relatively new, you may appreciate the introductory information below.

Who are you?
I am someone with interest in helping the kingdom of God grow, artistic skills and sensibilities, and training in ethnographic methods.

What will you actually… y'know…do?
When I first arrive on the field, I want to join a language community for at least two or three years. While I'm focusing on these relationships, I will learn the language, perform ethnographic research, and start a list of the community's artistic genres.

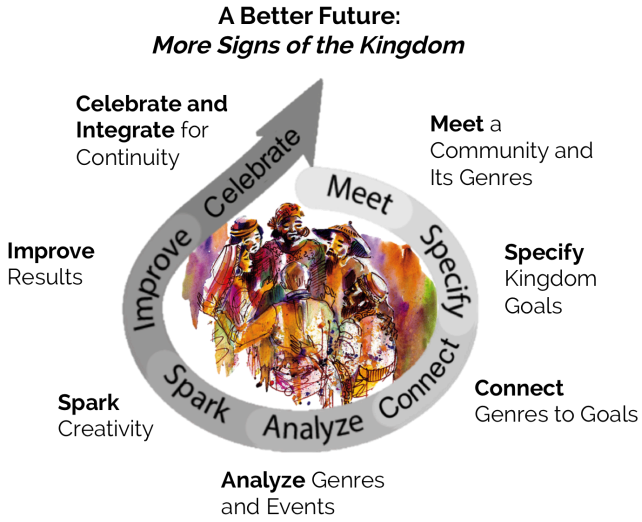
Beginning in this anchoring time, I can help you translate the Bible better, make more effective literacy materials, draw communities to enage Scripture with more vigor, and provide data that governments can use to enter UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage process. Wherever my and a community's goals overlap, I can help a community draw on their arts to reach their goals more completely.

Okay, but what will you actually* do *when you start, like every day?
My first goals will be to get to know the language community, its artists, and arts. I'll do this by making relationships, learning the language, employing ethnographic research methods like interviewing, audio and video recording, and participant observation.

I will put information that I gather into a Community Arts Profile (CAP). As I continue to learn, I will keep adding to this, which will take the form of a document or database. The CAP will serve as my foundation for planning research and other activities.

Okay, again, but I still don't understand the overall picture of your involvement in a language program.

I envision my work as guided by a flexible method with elements that the community and I can implement and that other stakeholders can measure. Creating Local Arts Together (CLAT)—outlined in *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals* (Schrag, William Carey Library, 2013)—consists of seven localizable steps that community members can use to encourage vibrancy in their longer traditions:



1. **Meet a Community and Its Genres**. Explore artistic and social resources that exist in the community. Performing Step 1 allows you to build relationships, involve and understand the people, and to discover the hidden treasures of the community.
2. **Specify Kingdom Goals**. Discover the goals that the community wants to work toward. Performing Step 2 ensures that you are helping the community work toward aims that they have agreed on together.
3. **Connect Genres to Goals.** Choose an artistic genre that can help the community meet its goals, and identify activities that can result in purposeful creativity in this genre. Performing Step 3 reveals the mechanisms that relate certain kinds of artistic activity to its effects, so that the activities you perform have a high chance of succeeding.
4. **Analyze Genres and Events.** Describe the event and its genre(s) as a whole, and its artistic forms as arts as well as in relationship to their broader cultural context. Performing Step 4 results in detailed knowledge of the art forms, information that is crucial to sparking creativity, improving what is produced, and integrating it into the community.
5. **Spark Creativity**. Implement activities the community has chosen to spark creativity within the chosen genre. Performing Step 5 actually produces new artistic works for events.
6. **Improve Results**. Evaluate results of the sparking activities and make them better. Performing Step 6 makes sure that the new artistry exhibits the aesthetic qualities, produces the impacts, and communicates the intended messages at a level of quality appropriate to its purposes.
7. **Celebrate and Integrate for Continuity**. Plan and implement ways that this new kind of creativity can continue into the future. Identify more contexts where the new and old arts can be displayed and performed. Performing Step 7 makes it more likely that a community will keep making its arts in ways that produce good effects long into the future.

Who will you interact with?
I am prepared to work at a basic level with community artists of all kinds, program planners, Scripture Engagement personnel, Bible translators, literacy folks, community development experts, linguists, language and culture learners, community gatekeepers, and others. I have developed further competencies in genres exhibiting a particular kind of artistry (e.g., drama, song, visual, storytelling, oratory, dance) and in working toward a few program goals (e.g., translation, Scripture Engagement, literacy, CD, trauma healing, language and culture documentation); ask me what I do best. I am also trained to never stop learning, so am eager to acquire new skills and knowledge.

What does your job description say you can do?
The Arts Specialist works alongside local singers, actors, dancers, storytellers, and artisans, researching a community's performing and visual arts and then sparking artistic creation to reach mutual spiritual and social goals. He or she focuses on the integration of the arts into language development programs in coordination with related efforts in Scripture Use, Literacy, Community Development, Translation, Language Assessment, Sociolinguistics, Language and Culture Learning, Anthropology, Linguistics, and Sign Languages.

What other things can you do, and not do?
- I am not necessarily a worship leader, a playwright, graphic designer, or a socially awkward creative type (though I might be any of these).
- I *am* trained to work with communities in participatory ways, and understand language program planning.

How can your supervisors and colleagues best support you?
- Include me in strategic planning processes for regions, branches, and individual language programs.
- Take some risks with me. Together we can figure out what works and what doesn't work, and that will include some failures.
- Treat me as though my work is essential to the success of language programs (it often is, though you may not have seen it yet). Though I'm happy to help out where needed, please don't fill my schedule and job description with non-arts work.
- Support me in my ongoing professional growth plan, providing time and finances to contribute to academic and CoP ethnoarts meetings. I may also be interested in getting a master's or doctorate.

How do you relate to SIL's Area and International Ethnomusicology and Arts Groups?
I'll needs some finances to attend CoP meetings organized by regional or international administration. I also look to them for ethnoarts Best Practices, training materials, and courses.

How do you understand culture and language development?

I look at an ethnolinguistic community as interacting through multiple local communication genres, from dialogue between peers to artistically marked poetry. I focus on helping communities identify local communication genres and evaluate them for including in language program goals. So I focus on learning, learning, learning.

More formally, I see artistic forms of communication in LD as follows:

1. Status development planning increases the number of domains of use (a community's agreed-on times and places) for using God's Word or community development messages in their local language and their local arts, with the approval of gatekeepers.
2. Corpus development planning places life-crucial knowledge, God's Word or community development messages in multiple forms, at multiple difficulty levels, and multiple interest levels to reach a variety of intended audiences.
3. Acquisition development planning sends the corpus of materials out, seeks to interest people in accessing the works and teaches people how to use them. Acquisition development includes increasing opportunity and incentive to access and learn from local language Scripture or community development through local arts or recordings of local arts. (expanded from from Cooper, Robert. 1989. Language Planning and Social Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

Do you only value traditional arts and artists?

I believe God can use all forms of communication to expand His kingdom. But the histories of missions and globalization have led to an unequal playing field: Arts of Wider Communication (AWCs)—like Praise and Worship songs—spread everywhere, but local artists stay in the shadows. So I choose to invest more energy and time in the excellent communicators *outside* globalized social structures. Just like SIL and Wycliffe invest more energy, time, and resources into speakers of minority languages, Arts Specialists focus on gifted minority communicators outside Western and other majority genres. In addition, artistic forms of communication require as much attention and analysis to rightly integrate them into language programs as do didactic or explanatory texts (often, more). And the pay off is huge.

How do you understand God, the world, and heaven?

Two fundamental principles guide my work. First, I approach every individual as somebody God created in His image. This means that I know I will find traces of God in each person and their communities. It also means that I always start as a learner, following Jesus' example of appreciative inquiry (Phil 2).

Second, I look at the world as an incomplete representation of heaven. My job as a Christian is to pray for, seek, and work toward extending the kingdom of Heaven on earth and into heaven. This means that I don't always begin with the Church when I connect with a community. In fact, I look for ways for communities to increase signs of the kingdom that may not be in the church yet, trying to help churches infect their communities with the kingdom.

Creation, General Revelation, the Depravity of Man, and the Kingdom of Heaven play especially important roles in informing how I think and why I act. I believe the most enduring and penetrating activities are ones that communities perform in consultation with other partners, and that draw on their local resources, especially their artistic forms of communication.

Where can I learn more?

- tinyurl.com/WorkWithSILEthnoarts
- Brian Schrag, with Robin Harris. *In press.*"Ethnodoxology's Time is Here: How Learning to Know Local Artists Can Lead to More of God's Kingdom on Earth and in Heaven" *Lausanne Global Analysis.*