Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures

Fall 2019

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SSA 4930 Section 3579/ LIN 4930 Section 4D25/ LIN 6932 Section 4D40

Language Endangerment

Time: 4th period (10:40 - 11:40)

Location: Documentation Lab

Description

The United Nations has declared 2019 to be the Year of Indigenous Languages (IY2019) in order to draw attention to the important role these languages play in the lives of people. According to UNESCO, of the world’s 6000-7000 languages, 97% of the world’s population speak 4% of the languages while only 3% of the people speak 96% of the languages. A great number of these languages are disappearing at an alarming rate, and it is estimated that up to 50% of the languages will become extinct by the end of the century. The course explores the phenomenon of language endangerment across the world, noting the differences in Africa, as opposed to the Americas and Australia. It examines the causes of language endangerment and its ramifications for the societies that lose their languages, on the one hand, and the scientific community, on the other.

Course objectives

At the conclusion of the course the participants should be able to:
• describe the highly endangered situation of indigenous languages in all parts of the world
• distinguish between the different processes of language loss
• identify the consequences for a community to lose its language and culture
• define measures taken to reverse language loss

In addition, chapters will be taken from the following books:


These and a few other articles will be placed in the course site on Canvas

**Requirements**

Final grading is based on an assignment, a test, a project work, and critical report on other projects. While the 4000-level students will do the project work in pairs, 6000-level students will do it alone. The breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>4930 Level</th>
<th>6932 Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading a presentation</td>
<td>30 pts</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Test</td>
<td>30 pts</td>
<td>30 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final (take home) exam</td>
<td>40 pts</td>
<td>30 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project presentations (for 6000-level)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Week 1 (Wednesday August 21 – Friday August 23). Review of syllabus and introduction to language endangerment**

Endangered languages: why it matters <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7HZOsQYx_U>

Introduction (Course Textbook pp 1-12)

**Week 2 (Monday August 26 – Friday, August 30). The endangerment situation on the globe**

Why Save a language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7BLBUS1IXc>
Toward a typology of language endangerment, by Leonore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley (1998) 
Pp 22-54

Can a language endanger itself? Reshaping repertoires in urban Senegal, by Fiona McLaughlin (2015) 
In James Essegbey, Brent Henderson & Fiona Mc Laughlin, (eds.), *Language documentation and 
endangerment in Africa.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Pp 131-151

**Week 3 (Wednesday, September 4 – Friday, September 6). Factors that contribute to language 
endangerment**

Why and how languages become endangered? (Course Textbook pp 18-37)

At the margin – African endangered languages in the context of global endangerment discourses, by 

Monday, September 2, is a holiday

**Week 4 (Wednesday, September 9 – Friday, September 13). Factors that contribute to language 
endangerment**

Language ideologies in the discourse of education that promote language shift in Kenya. By Heidi A. 
Orcutt-Gachiri. In Tania Granadillo and Heidi A. Orcutt-Gachiri (eds.), *Ethnographic contributions to the 

Education and its role in language endangerment in Siberia and the Far East. By Olga Kazakevich. In 
Tania Granadillo and Heidi A. Orcutt-Gachiri (eds.), *Ethnographic contributions to the study of 
endangered languages.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. Pp 30-41

NB. I am away on Wednesday, September 11

**Week 5 (Monday, September 16 – Friday, September 20). Factors that contribute to language 
endangerment 2**

Is English education always detrimental to vernacular languages? Education and language 
endangerment from Papua New Guinea, by M. Lynn Landweer. In Tania Granadillo and Heidi A. Orcutt-
Gachiri (eds.), *Ethnographic contributions to the study of endangered languages.* Tucson: The University 
of Arizona Press. Pp 42-56
Week 6 (Monday, September 23 – Friday, September 28). Factors that contribute to language endangerment 2

Sliding into dormancy: social processes and linguistic effects (Course Textbook pp 42-68)


Midterm Exam on Friday, September 28

Week 7 (Monday, September 30 – Wednesday, October 2). What is lost: linguistic diversity


Friday, October 4 is Homecoming

Week 8 (Monday, October 7 – Friday, October 11). What is lost 2

What a community loses: language loss as cultural loss (Course Textbook pp 79-93)

The library of babel in Dying words: endangered languages and what they have to tell us. Nicholas Evans, Wily-Blackwell pp5-44

Week 9 (Monday, October 14 – Friday, October 18). What is lost 3

What science loses: language loss as a threat to our understanding of human history, human cognition, and the natural world (Course Textbook pp 94-107)

Movie: First language: the race to save Cherokee <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9y8fDOLsO4>
**Week 10 (Monday, October 21 – Friday, October 25). What is lost 4**


**Week 11 (Monday, October 28 – Friday, November 1). What is lost 5**

K. David Harrison *When languages die: the extinction of the world’s languages and the erosion of human knowledge.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

An extinction of (ideas about) species (pp 23-56)

CASE STUDY: Vanishing herds and reindeer words (57-60)

Many moons ago: traditional calendars (pp 61-94)

CASE STUDY: Normads of Western Mongolia

**Week 12 (Monday, November 4 – Friday, November 8). What is lost 4**

Back from the (nearly) dead: reviving indigenous languages across North America


**Week 13 (Monday, November 11 – Friday, November 15). Revitalization**

Revitalizing endangered language (pp153-174)

Monday, November 11 is Veteran’s Day
Week 14 (Monday, November 18 – Friday, November 22). Revitalization


Week 15 (Monday, November 25). Presentation

November 27-30 are Thanksgiving holidays

Week 16 (Monday, December 2 – Wednesday, December 4) Presentation and revitalization

Presentation and Take home exam

Leading a presentation (30% for 4000-level students and 20% for 6000-level students)

Each student is required to read one of the chapters/papers and give a presentation in class.

Midterm test (30 points)

Students will write a midterm test that deals with the topics covered over the period.

Take home exam (40% for 4000-level students and 30% for 6000-level students)

Students will receive a number of essay topics to write at home as a take home exam

Presentation (20%)

6000-level students will do a detailed presentation on an endangered language of their own choosing. T

Grading Scale

93-100 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 63-66 (D); 60-62 (D-); 59 or below (E)

A grade of Incomplete (I) will not be issued under any circumstance.
Grading Policy

Information on current UF grading policy can be found at:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Students with disabilities

The University of Florida provides high-quality services to students with disabilities, and you are encouraged to take advantage of them. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should 1) Register with and provide documentation to Disability Resources (352-392-8565), and 2) Bring a letter to the instructor from Disability Resources indicating that you need academic accommodations. Please do this as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of class.

Honor/Conduct Code

An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. As a University of Florida student, one is expected to neither commit nor assist another in committing an academic honesty violation. Additionally, it is the student's duty to report observed academic honesty violations. Violations of the Honor Code and academic dishonesty will be sanctioned.