Sociolinguistics of endangered languages
University of Chicago, Spring Quarter 2005
MWF 11:30-12:20, Wieboldt 230

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Office hours: Mon 2-4 and by appointment

Course requirements and grading:

Essays: 35%
Discussion/participation: 15%
Final paper/presentation: 50%

Discussion – Enrolled students must present an overview and lead the discussion for any one of the assigned readings. Let me know as soon as possible which reading you would like to discuss.

Essays – There are five short (2-3 page) essays on specific topics. (We will discuss the issues in class, so please do them on time.)

1. Dictionary/grammar review: Write a review of any grammar or dictionary (preferably a recent one). Questions to consider – What are the goals of the dictionary/grammar? How does the grammar/dictionary represent speakers? Does the dictionary/grammar stand with regard to the goals of linguistics as a field and local community goals? Due April 8.

2. Status report: Outline the status of a particular language or language family. Questions to consider: How does the language fit into typologies of endangerment? What are the domains of usage? Have there been efforts at revitalization? Due April 20.

3. Orthography/Standardization: Discuss the writing system or prescriptive grammar of a language. Questions to consider: How were orthographic/prescriptive decisions made? In what contexts is the written language used? What are the political and ideological issues surrounding the standard variety or the writing system? Due May 4.

4. Strategies/educational methods: Discuss a program for language revitalization. Questions to consider: How were the methods of the program chosen? Who is involved in the program? Has the program been successful? Due May 16.

5. Technology/multimedia review: Briefly review a multimedia resource or web-page designed for revitalization purposes. Questions to consider: What are the goals of the resource and who is it designed for? How does the resource deal with issues of
standardization, orthography and contexts of usage? How is the resource used by the community? Due May 27.

Final research paper and presentation: You have to write a paper and present your research to the class. The paper may be on any topic related to the course (and you may use the essays as background for the final paper). Presentations will occur during the scheduled final exam period.

DEADLINES: NOTHING WILL BE ACCEPTED LATE except by prior agreement or with a documented medical excuse. If you feel you will have trouble getting an assignment in on time contact me as soon as possible BEFORE the assignment is due.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS such as any disabilities (including learning disabilities) should let me know as soon as possible so that proper accommodations may be made. In addition, if there are any RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS for which you need to miss class please let me know the dates within the first two weeks of the semester so that we can arrange for make-up work.

I. Endangered Language Discourse

Wed March 30 – Linguists’ views


Fri April 1 – Addressing the general public

Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine, 2000 “Where have all the languages gone?” from Vanishing Voices. 1-25


Mon April 4 - Indigenous viewpoints


Wed April 6: - Critiques of endangered language discourse


**Fri April 8** – The biological metaphor

UNESCO/Terralingua. *Sharing a world of difference*


**First essay due**

**II. Typologies of endangerment**

**Mon April 11** – The GIDS model


**Wed April 13** – Applying the GIDS model


**Fri April 15** – Other typologies


UNESCO Ad Hoc Committee on Endangered Languages, Language vitality and endangerment: By way of introduction. UNESCO document.
Mon April 18 – Is there an endangerment canon?


III. Sociolinguistic variation and endangerment/revitalization

Wed April 20 – Language change and endangered languages


Second Essay Due

Fri April 22 – The sociolinguistics of revitalization


Mon April 25 – Reconciling the goals of linguists and communities I


Wed April 27 - Reconciling the goals of linguists and communities II

IV. Standardization and orthography

Fri April 29 – Politics of standardization


Mon May 2 - Authenticity


Wed May 4 - Orthography

Bender, Margaret. 2002. From “easy phonetics” to the syllabary: An orthographic division of labor in Cherokee Language Education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 33(1) 90-117.


Third Essay due

V. Revitalization programs

Fri May 6 – Overview of revitalization


Mon May 9 – Nest programs

**Wed May 11** – The Master-Apprentice program


**Fri May 13** – Immersion programs


**Mon May 16** – Indigenous educators


**Fourth Essay Due**

**Wed May 18** – The role of schools


**Fri May 20** – Comparing revitalization programs


VI. Technology and revitalization

**Mon May 23** – New technologies


**Wed May 25** – Technology and dictionary-making


**Fri May 27** – The internet and multimedia


**Fifth Essay Due**

**Mon May 30** – Memorial Day, no class

VII. Institutional responses

**Wed June 1** – The E-MELD project


**Fri June 3** – University responses
