

Technology for Language Revitalization

Class time: Wednesdays, 10:10-11

Room: Library Tower 1667

Office hours: Tuesdays, 10:15-11:15

Course website: canders1.github.io/FYS/index.html

Instructor: Carolyn Anderson (she/her)

Email: carolynander@umass.edu

Office location: ILC N421C

Course overview

This course will focus on the role of technology in language revitalization, exploring both its benefits and downsides. We will discuss the importance of linguistic diversity and the socio-political factors that lead to language loss. We will also learn how communities are working to revitalize their languages through a variety of means. In particular, we will focus on the role of technology in language revitalization. We will contribute in a small way to an ongoing language revitalization project in Oaxaca, Mexico through a Twitter annotation project. As part of the first-year seminar, we will learn about resources on campus and practice skills that will help you succeed in your transition to life at UMass.

Learning outcomes

Students will...

1. gain awareness of the benefits of linguistic diversity
2. be able to recognize factors that lead to language loss
3. be able to assess primary and secondary sources critically
4. be able to think critically about the role of technology in society
5. gain experience in documentary linguistics / digital humanities

Course requirements

Work for this class is expected to take at most 2-3 hours outside of class per week, and will include:

Readings

There will be weekly readings, which will be posted on the course website. Please do the assigned reading *before* the class for which it is assigned, and think about 1-2 questions or discussion points to share in class.

Reflection papers

You will be assigned two written reflections. The first reflection will be due at the end of Week 5; the second will be due at the end of the semester. The reflections will be 3-5 pages long; they are a chance for you to reflect on the themes of the class.

In-class activities

Class participation is extremely important. Most of our class time will be spent in discussion. We also have various short research activities, such as surveying students or evaluating online resources. For each activity, you will be asked either to present your findings to the class or to write a short summary of your results.

Annotation project

The last five weeks of this class will involve an annotation project. We will work together in class to annotate and archive tweets from the Voces del Valle project, which is an ongoing digital literacy project for speakers of indigenous languages of Oaxaca, Mexico. During this portion of the class, our class time will be spent doing annotation work.

You may also be assigned some small annotation assignments to complete outside of class.

Course Policies

Course materials

Course materials will be posted on the course website. **There is no textbook.**

Grading

This is a pass/fail course. To receive a passing grade you must complete all in-class activities and assignments. Each in-class activity will have something for you to submit. At the end of the semester, your lowest in-class grade will be dropped. There will also be an opportunity to replace an in-class grade with an extra credit activity.

Attendance

Coming to class is crucial. **Please email me if you are going to miss class.** In the case of a serious, unexpected event that will impact your attendance, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

If you are participating in a university activity that will require you to miss more than 3 classes, let me know now. If the activity requires that you miss more than 20% of our class meetings, university regulations require that you drop either the course or the activity.

Academic honesty statement

We are committed to acting with academic integrity and being ethical in what we say and write. I trust that students are fundamentally honest and I will help you learn the appropriate conventions for academic integrity, such as citing sources and acknowledging collaborators. We will discuss standards for ethical scholarly behavior explicitly in this class.

Taking notes during class is an important activity to help you learn the material. Your class notes in any format are for your personal use only; distributing or selling them without faculty permission is in violation of both Academic Honesty and the University's copyright.

Here is the UMass Academic Honesty Policy: <http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty.php>

Disability statement

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus.

If you are in need of accommodation for a documented disability, register with Disability Services to have an accommodation letter sent to me. It is your responsibility to initiate these services and to communicate with faculty ahead of time to manage accommodations in a timely manner. For more information consult the Disability Services website: <http://www.umass.edu/disability>

If you think you need an accommodation for something that is not covered by Disability Services, I am happy to discuss that with you.

Classroom decorum

We all work together to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Please treat your fellow classmates with respect at all times. In particular, please refrain from activities that may distract other class participants, such as checking text messages or social media.

Contacting me

Feel free to contact me with questions or concerns about the course. If you need in-depth help on assignments, my office hours are the best venue for that (if my posted office hours don't work for you, please email me to find a different time).

For quick questions about assignments, or for logistics questions, emailing me is the fastest way to reach me. Whenever possible, I will respond within the same day.

Schedule

Week 1: What is language endangerment?

Overview of course; introduction to language endangerment.
Exercise: language background

Week 2: Language endangerment continued

Discussion: Consequences of language loss.
Reading: McCulloch (2019), Chapter 8; Rosenbaum (2017)

Week 3: What is language revitalization?

Discussion: Methods for language revitalization.
Reading: Harrison (2007)

Week 4: Language revitalization strategies

Explore different strategies for language revitalization.
Reading: Kipp (2009) or Hinton (2011)

Week 5: Technology for language documentation versus revitalization

Discussion: technology for documentation versus technology for revitalization.

Exercise: Understanding different audiences

Reading: Keegan (2018)

Week 6: Social media for minority languages

First reflection paper due.

Discussion: reading academic papers

Exercise: Exploring social media in indigenous languages

Reading: None

Week 7: Sustainability and technology

Exercise: Evaluating primary sources

Reading: Wagner (2017)

Week 8: Descriptive linguistics and the role of linguists

No class: watch *The Linguists* documentary instead

Week 9: Voces del Valle annotation project

Introduction to the annotation project.

Discussion: What is metadata, and why is it important?

Reading: Lillehaugen (2016)

Week 10: Annotating tweets

Exercise: Linguistic analysis using Lopez & Lillehaugen (2017)

Reading: Lopez & Lillehaugen (2017)

Week 11: Annotating tweets

Exercise: Annotating tweets (topic and translation)

Reading: Selections from Munro et al. (2008)

Week 12: Archiving tweets

Exercise: Continued work on annotation project.

Reading: Pérez Báez (2014)

Week 13: Wrap-up

No reading; watch *Dizhsa Nabani* instead.

Second reflection paper due by end of exam period.