Ida Chow | 15-112 Term Project | “Language Journal”

**Project Proposal**

The final product of this term project is intended to work as a “Language Journal” with its goal of being implemented into a usable tool for those learning a language of a country other than their own. This expands the usability of the project to travelers and students, but also potentially refugees who have been recently relocated to foreign countries.

The inspiration for this project comes from the work I have done as an active member of CMU FORGE – a club that deals with aiding refugees that have been recently relocated to the Pittsburgh area. In my case, the Nepali-Bhutanese family I personally help is one that has moved here mere months ago, and experiencing difficulties adapting to cultural and lingual differences. The mother of the family knows a sparse amount of English that makes not only communication between myself and her hard, but also the adjustment to her new South Side community quite strained. While she has a job, I’ve come to understand that work is tedious and lonely without being able to communicate with those around her. In order to help directly with this issue – one faced by many of the refugee population here – a more adaptive, customizable, and simple language learning app could be of help.

The app itself would have a focus on being a “journal” or “phrasebook”, without a set curriculum, since the importance of settling in a new community is the need to adapt to a new colloquial lingo. More important than actual formal grammatical structures are phrases, conversational openers and closers, questions, and specific tidbits that may be important to the user – it is much more essential to get a grasp of general phrasing when in a foreign environment than it is to simply practice conjunctions and prepositions. I want to emphasize the ability to integrate customizable audio (pronunciation of phrases and vocabulary by native speakers, or also just notes from the user in the language of their choice), and perhaps as part of scaling the project, customizable visuals (to be able to draw an image, or import an image).

In terms of code, I’m saving vocabulary, definitions, and time stamps into text files. Audio (and potentially images) will be saved in a folder. Since there is no curriculum, and everything is customizable, this means that all wording/audio/visuals will be personally set by the user. In terms of user interface, I want the actual interface to have near no text, with as much of it relying on the more universal language of imagery. Symbols to denote audio, written definitions, and so on, will be created by myself in Illustrator or another graphics software. I want it overall to be cohesively full of enough features to be able to successfully facilitate learning and reviewing of a language.

