The Topic: this seminar treats the topic of language endangerment by identifying a worldwide problem and examining the possible responses which might partially rectify the situation. By some estimates, less than 10% of the world's languages will survive beyond the present century. Global economic forces and other political economic factors are clearly responsible for a pattern of language shift which threatens most of the world's indigenous and subnational languages which are not identified with particular nation-states or have international currency. But what is the human cost of such language death both to the speakers of these languages and to us as thoughtful world citizens? In this seminar we discuss what are the consequences of language death and what can be done to provide alternatives for those communities who seek to preserve their distinctive linguistic resources. By examining case studies of language death and language renewal we obtain a ground level view of the processes which lead to language death and those that are involved with language revitalization. The seminar will examine several different responses to the need for revitalization including the use of so-called master-apprentice programs and the application of media technology.

Meetings:

#1 January 8 Introductions

Introduction of Topics, of Class Personnel

#2 January 15 Language Death


#3 January 22 What is at risk?

Read: Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. 2000. Lost Words, Lost Worlds (Chapter 3 of) Vanishing Voices, the extinction of the world’s Languages., pp. 50-77. Oxford University Press.

#4 January 29 What should we do (or not)?


#5 February 5 New Technologies and Language Revitalization

Presentation of Taitaduhaan: Western Mono Ways of Speaking by Paul V. Kroskrity, Rosalie Bethel (Western Mono), and Jennifer F. Reynolds. (CD-ROM), U Oklahoma Press. 2002.

#6 February 12 Language Revitalization I


#7 February 19 Language revitalization II


#8 February 26 Our Unconscious(?) Compliance


#9 March 4 Language revitalization III: case studies


#10 March 11 Rethinking the Language of Language Endangerment and Revitalization


#11 March 18 Language Rights and Linguistic Revitalization


Grading: Grading is obligatorily S/U. There are no written assignments. Students earn passing grades by 1) attending seminar meetings (and missing no more than 2 meetings) and 2) by engaging in full and informed participation in the discussion of readings. For students who do not participate in seminar discussion on a regular basis, written reviews of the assigned articles will be required to earn a passing grade.