

**LIN 4930**  
**Syllabus for Language Documentation**  
University of Florida, Gainesville

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**Course Description**

This is an interdisciplinary course designed to expose students to new technologies used in language documentation. It is open to students who have either taken LIN 3010 (Introduction to Linguistics) or ANT 3620 (Language and Culture) or based on interview with instructor.

**Introduction**

The languages of the world are disappearing at an alarming rate. It has been suggested that about half of the world's languages have disappeared in the past 500 years (Nettle and Romaine 2000), and some linguists estimate that between 60 to 90% of the world's languages may be at risk of extinction within the next hundred years (see Romaine 2007). This situation leads to loss of diversity and important cultural knowledge. Since the 1990s efforts have been made by several bodies including UNESCO to address this problem. Linguists and anthropologists have been at the forefront in the effort to at least document the languages before they disappear. In some cases, efforts are made to revitalize the languages as well.

Language documentation is facilitated by modern technological advances that enable the digitization and integration of video, audio and textual material.

**Class objectives**

The aim of this course is to teach students to use new technologies to document languages as a way to deal with language endangerment. It will appraise students with the present linguistic state of affairs and its consequences for global linguistic ecology. Students will learn about language documentation as an interdisciplinary field of linguistic inquiry and practice, which deals primarily with endangered languages. This includes various aspects of fieldwork, such as the expectations of the documentalist and those of potential communities whose languages are documented, and the ethics and practicalities involved. An important aspect of this course is the integration of the study of language structure, language use and the culture of language. This means that in addition to issues involving the documentation of lexical knowledge and grammatical structure, students will learn about cultural and ethnographic understanding of language. State of the art tools for recording, processing and archiving digital data will also be learned. These include using Toolbox to create lexical and textual databases, Isle Metadata Initiative (IMDI) for creating metadata for digital data that is prepared for archiving, and ELAN for integrating textual, audio and visual data in a time-aligned format. Finally, students will learn how to write grant proposals to document endangered languages.

**Requirements:**

The evaluation requirements for this course are two cumulative tests which will be taken during the first half of the course, a documentation project, and a project proposal, both of which will be the focus of the second half. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Tests (2)

40

2. Documentation project	40
3. Project proposal	20

### Topic 1 Language endangerment

Discusses the different levels of language endangerment and the consequences on linguistic and cultural diversity.

- What is Language death? By David Crystal, pp1-27
- Warramurrungunji's Children- The library of Babel. By Nicholas Evans
- <http://southasia.oneworld.net/ictsfordevelopment/online-atlas-for-endangered-languages> (online atlas for endangered languages)

### Topic 2 Language documentation as a field of anthropological linguistic inquiry and practice

Discusses documentary linguistics.

- Current trends in language documentation. By Peter Austin and Lenore Grenoble
- Reproduction and preservation of linguistic knowledge: linguistics' response to language endangerment, by Nikolaus Himmelmann Annual Review of Anthropology, vol 37

### Topic 3 Ethics

Discusses the ethical issues involved in working with human subjects most often with economically disadvantaged groups.

- Ethics and practicalities of cooperative fieldwork and analysis. By Arienne M. Dwyer (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 2)
- IRB ([http://www.research.ufl.edu/research/pdf/irb\\_1.pdf](http://www.research.ufl.edu/research/pdf/irb_1.pdf))

Test 1

### Topic 4 Tools for recording

Discusses the hardware needed for a documentation project

- an introduction to fieldwork and instrumental phonetics by Peter Ladefoged.

### Topic 5 Ethnography

Discusses the position of ethnographical information in language documentation and how to incorporate a cultural and ethnographic understanding of language into research.

- Ethnography in language documentation, by Bruna Franchetto (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 8)
- The ethnography of language and language documentation, by Jane H. Hill (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 5)

### Topic 6 Documenting lexical knowledge

Documenting lexical knowledge, by John B. Haviland (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 6)

- Comrie, B. and N. Smith, Questionnaire, *Lingua Descriptive Series*, *Lingua* 42: 1-72. P9 .L55.
- Bouquiaux and Thomas

Test 2

### Topic 7 Using elicitation tools

Discusses different kinds of tools for and techniques of elicitation: Director matcher tasks, Triads; the design and use of diagrams, drawings and wordless pictures, as well as video stimuli

- Frog story
- Field Manual for the Language and Cognition Group at the Max-Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen

#### Topic 8 Transcription

Discusses different forms of transcription

- Linguistic annotation by Eva Schultze-Berndt (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 9)

#### Topic 9 Establishing a lexical and textual database

- Toolbox

#### Topic 10 Creating metadata

- ISLE Metadata Initiative (IMDI) (<http://www.mpi.nl/publications/escidoc-60630/?searchterm=imdi>)

#### Topic 11 Integrating video and audio

- ELAN (<http://www.mpi.nl/publications/escidoc-60436/?searchterm=ELAN>)

#### Topic 12 Sketch grammar

Takes a look at the typology and role of sketch grammar in language documentation

- Sketch grammar by Ulrike Mosel (*Essentials of Language Documentation*, Chapter 12)

#### Topic 13 Writing grant proposals to document and endangered language

Looks at the bodies that fund language documentation programs, noting their criteria and tailors proposal to suit the requirements

- NSF-Documenting Endangered Languages (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2006/nsf06577/nsf06577.htm>)
- Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Program (<http://www.hrelp.org/>)
- We discuss some successful proposals on the NSF-DEL website

#### **Required textbook**

Gippert Jost, Himmelmann Nikolaus P., and Mosel Ulrike (2006): *Essentials of language documentation*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter

#### **Required readings** (papers will be made available on ARES)

Evans, Nick (2009): *Dying Words*. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp 5-23

Crystal, David (2000): *Language death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp1-27

Nikolaus P. Himmelmann (2008): Reproduction and preservation of linguistic knowledge: linguistics' response to language endangerment. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol 37, October 2008

Ladefoged, Peter (2003): *Phonetic data analysis: an introduction to fieldwork and instrumental phonetics*. Oxford: Blackwell pp

Online atlas for endangered languages (<http://southasia.oneworld.net/ictsfordevelopment/online-atlas-for-endangered-languages>)

## **Class Guidelines**

### **Documentation Project (40 points)**

Students will record a session on a language of their choice using one of the elicitation tools. The recording should be audio and video. Students will then transcribe 5 minutes of the work for 10 points. The transcript will be used to create a textual database for 10 points. Students will also set up a lexical database comprising 20 words from a semantic domain and words from the transcribed portion of their text (10 points). The text and video will then be integrated (10 points).

Students need to choose their project language (which can be any language but English) and inform the professor by the end of week 6. This should be submitted the date that is scheduled at ISIS for final exams (NB there are no final exams).

### **Proposal (20 points)**

As part of the grades students are required to write a project proposal for the documentation of an endangered language. The said proposal will be 8 pages in length double-spaced, including bibliography. It must have Times New Roman with font size 12. This should be also submitted on the date that is scheduled at ISIS for final exams.

## **Academic Honesty Guidelines**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action.

Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines include but are not limited to:

*Cheating.* The improper taking or tendering of any information or material which shall be used to determine academic credit. Taking of information includes copying graded homework assignments from another student; working with another individual(s) on graded assignments or homework; looking or attempting to look at notes, a text, or another student's paper during an exam.

*Plagiarism.* The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one's own thought, whether the other's work is oral or written (including electronic), published or unpublished. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on written materials or in oral presentations; submitting work produced by an on-line translation service or the translation feature of an on-line dictionary as your own.

*Misrepresentation.* Any act or omission with intent to deceive a teacher for academic advantage. Misrepresentation includes lying to a teacher to increase your grade; lying or misrepresenting facts when confronted with an allegation of academic honesty.

## **Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities must register with the Dean of Students office. Contact the Assistant Dean of Students/Director of the Disability Resources Program at:

P202 Peabody Hall

Gainesville, FL 32611-5055

Phone (352) 392-1261 (V), 392-3008 (TDD)

For stress, emotional and psychological support, please contact the Counseling Center at:

301 Peabody Hall

Phone (352) 392-1575

Or: [www.counsel.ufl.edu](http://www.counsel.ufl.edu)

Grading Scale

A 93-100	A- 90-92	
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
E less than 60%		

Please note that minus grades are calculated into your GPA according to the Registrar's formula:

A 4.0	A- 3.67	
B+ 3.33	B 3	B- 2.67
C+ 2.33	C 2.0	C- 1.67
D+ 1.33	D 1.0	D- .67
E 0		
WF 0		
I 0		
NG 0		
S-U 0		