Endangered Languages in the Undergraduate Curriculum
Brazos
9:00 – 10:30 AM

Organizers:
Michal Temkin Martínez (Boise State University)
Shobhana Chelliah (University of North Texas)

Participants:
Kevin Baetscher (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
Brenda Clark (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
Ted Fernald (Swarthmore College)
Kristine Hildebrandt (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)
Kavon Hooshyar (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
Joana Jansen (University of Oregon)
Michal Temkin Martínez (Boise State University)
Gabriela Pérez Báez (Smithsonian Institution)
Tim Thornes (Boise State University)
Janne Underriner (University of Oregon)
Sejung Yang (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)

Sponsors:
Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation (CELP)
Linguistics in Higher Education Committee (LiHEC)

Curriculum built around language endangerment is an effective way for linguists to engage students and the community in discussions about issues of central concern to linguists, i.e., the documentation and preservation of languages that are fast becoming dormant. Such curricula could also satisfy common university requirements that allow undergraduate students to gain foundational knowledge of the diversity of human cultures, and the varied physical and natural world in which we live. In addition to fulfilling university “core” requirements and counting as electives for related fields, modules on language endangerment and endangered languages could also be incorporated into many courses including geography, political science, anthropology, and music.

In this proposed symposium, presenters will share lessons learned and strategies for successfully proposing and implementing opportunities for undergraduate students to engage with topics related to endangered languages and their preservation throughout the university curriculum. These case studies are intended to encourage LSA members to advocate for the incorporation of endangered language education into the curriculum at their respective universities.

Courses about endangered languages, their preservation and documentation have traditionally been relegated to graduate courses. It is important to bring information on language endangerment to undergraduate students in linguistics who do not always continue to graduate studies in the field. By doing so, we can increase the number of people in the general population (future voters, policy makers, fellow citizens) who care about issues related to language endangerment. This is a goal that is directly tied to the CELP and LiHEC charges in that it will:

- Call attention to the rapid loss of language diversity worldwide and encourages the documentation and study of endangered languages.
- Serve as a resource for those concerned about the incorporation of linguistic content into broader, interdisciplinary enterprises by showcasing diverse ways in which programs and departments are offering courses about endangered languages.
- Help promote the development and sustenance of linguistics programs and departments by demonstrating ways in which some linguistics programs provide service to other programs at their home universities.
- Assist programs and departments with recruiting and retaining talented students, undergraduate majors and degree candidates, especially students who are interested in endangered languages.

Following the 90-minute panel, a poster session will allow audience members to individually interact with presenters and gain a more detailed understanding of the topics covered during the symposium. This session will serve as an idea-generator for faculty from varied programs seeking to expand course offerings across the University curriculum, as well as to graduate students.
interested in gathering ideas for future course development. The presentations will begin with ideas for general education and core curricula and will narrow to courses specific to linguistics students. The last two presentations will discuss out-of-class research opportunities for undergraduates in linguistics.

Abstracts (Presentations)

Ted Fernald (Swarthmore College)

*Community-based language research and revitalization work with undergraduates*

Engaging undergraduates in research and maintenance work on endangered languages can benefit students, communities, and linguists, but attention must be paid to the differing needs of these groups. What is beneficial and effective to a community depends on many factors including the history of interactions between the cultures involved. One approach does not fit all. We draw on examples from liberal arts and tribal colleges, a community-based research group (the Navajo Language Academy/Diné Bizaad Naalkaah), and work in NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates. Students who are from an endangered speech community will have different experiences engaging in linguistic work in that community than outsider students will. If they don’t speak the language well they may have a difficult time doing research. Outsider students may need to find ways to earn answers their questions. Finding ways for research and educational projects to benefit the community is of critical importance.

Joana Jansen (University of Oregon)

*Ichishkíin and Chinuk Wawa: teaching local endangered languages at the University of Oregon and Lane Community College*

Since 2008, Ichishkíin and Chinuk Wawa language courses have been offered at the University of Oregon (UO) and Lane Community College (LCC). These languages, indigenous to peoples of Oregon and Washington, support academic as well as tribal communities. Both courses resulted through partnerships developed at the Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI) at UO with Ichishkíin-speaking communities and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Additionally, they respect the government-to-government relationship between Oregon’s Nine Federally Recognized Tribes and UO and LCC. The contributions of this paper (i) describe the initial and ongoing development of the courses; (ii) discuss how the courses have been changed and strengthened via collaborative partnerships; and (iii) argue that teaching local endangered languages in a university setting enriches academic experiences of Native and non-Native students; supports broader language revitalization efforts; addresses issues of human and linguistic rights; and strengthens academic institutions by incorporating and valuing indigenous viewpoints.

Kristine Hildebrandt (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

*Introducing undergraduate students to language endangerment*

Anderson (2011) notes that language endangerment remains a somewhat esoteric field of study. If so, what are the roles of educators in language documentation, preservation, and revitalization? This presentation shares experiences from an undergraduate course on "Language Endangerment and Death," where students come from many backgrounds, and are locally originating. Their demographic profile is white, monolingual English speakers. Generating engagement is a challenge: students are comfortable with their monolingualism in a globally dominant language, and are suspicious about what this course offers their professional development agenda. This course integrates central themes (language diversity, causes and consequences of death, models of preservation, etc.) with case studies they themselves build. This presentation illustrates online resource investigations, student-authored blogs, and simulations of online archives using open-source CMS’s like Omeka. This presentation will also consider ongoing challenges, for example, the persistent prescriptivism that views language codification or standardization as a guarantee of viability.

Tim Thornes (Boise State University)

*Regional language endangerment: bridging disciplines and communities in the classroom*

The focus of a new topics course entitled “Perspectives on Native North American Languages” is to address language endangerment issues faced by a range of stakeholders—teachers, students, caregivers, leaders, and grassroots activists, as well as linguists. The growth in language revitalization programs across North America provides an excellent opportunity to explore such efforts in the context of local concerns and activism beyond the domain of language.
Concurrent issues in economic opportunity, educational inclusion, land and water rights, health and wellness, tribal sovereignty, identity, and environmental protection are beyond what is possible to address within a typical unit of instruction dedicated to language endangerment in a course. Final group project assignments will center on proposals that connect language to issues like these by exploring informed solutions. Students will be evaluated, in large part, upon how well they are able to match these proposals to existing institutions and contexts.

**Michal Temkin Martínez** (Boise State University)
**Tim Thornes** (Boise State University)

*Documenting languages of displaced people – an undergraduate capstone experience*

A linguistic field methods course makes for an ideal senior capstone experience for undergraduate students. Traditionally, such courses allow students to synthesize material and analytical tools acquired in their previous linguistics courses and apply them to a language with which they have no previous experience. When the languages studied in such a course are those spoken by members of the larger community who have been resettled, students learn about issues of displacement and its effect on minority and minoritized languages. In this part of the symposium, we describe a senior capstone experience in which students develop language documentation projects for languages spoken by displaced refugees in the US. Some develop into long-term projects that involve members of the local speech community in collaboration with both students and faculty, providing new opportunities for capacity-building and professional development.

**Kavon Hooshiar** (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
**Brenda Clark** (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
**Sejung Yang** (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
**Kevin Baetscher** (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)

*The Language Documentation Training Center’s contribution to undergraduate education*

The Language Documentation Training Center (LDTC) is a student run program that provides a platform for members of the University of Hawai‘i community to document their native languages through a series of workshops. Undergraduates can participate in this program as speakers, mentors with linguistic knowledge, or trainees interested in the field. The success of LDTC is due to its speaker-centric model. Students explore the uniqueness of their speech variety regardless of how it is defined by outsiders. Our program creates language advocates and encourages collaboration. Graduates of our workshops consistently describe a renewed sense of appreciation for their language and learn to value language maintenance. In trying to recruit new speakers, we have learned to deal with university bureaucracy, build long-term relationships with other campus organizations, and foster institutional memory within our leadership. We believe our model is generalizable in any community where speakers from diverse communities can be reached.

**Michal Temkin Martínez** (Boise State University)
**Shobhana Chelliah** (University of North Texas)

*Discussion/Q&A*

The organizers will lead a discussion summarizing successful strategies and approaches for proposing and implementing a variety of opportunities for undergraduates to engage with endangered languages.
Abstracts (Posters)

Kristine Hildebrandt (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

‘Community’ and ‘collaboration’ in undergraduate language documentation research: a case study from Nepal and a U.S. university

A traditional image of endangered language documentation is that of the lone-wolf scholar, devoting years to singlehandedly describing and preserving a language. This model is changing now, with the rise of team projects with community-oriented outputs. This poster illustrates a next step in the evolution of collaborative documentation, where faculty and students in a U.S. university work together to describe and preserve endangered languages of Nepal. An NSF-funded documentation project investigates the structure and the prospects of four Tibeto-Burman languages. At this scale this necessitates multiple participants with methods that are co-constructed and evaluated across all levels. We survey here some initiatives orchestrated by students recruited through an Undergraduate Creative Activities program, through project funds, or through volunteer interest. They include a digital archive of transcribed videos; analysis of sociolinguistic interviews towards a co-authored academic publication; and, construction of a trilingual community dictionary, published in 2016.

Gabriela Pérez Báez (Smithsonian Institution)

Demystifying multilingualism: evidence-based knowledge on multilingual acquisition in the context of endangered languages

Factors that affect the language transmission practices of a community are heavily social in nature and influenced by the attitudes towards language use as held by social groups. Approaches to the problem of the interruption of the transmission of languages can benefit from dissemination of evidence-based information about multilingualism. A 2-hour workshop curriculum has been designed to break down popular myths about multilingual acquisition and to foster transmission of a heritage language. The curriculum is designed with two audiences in mind: parents or would-be parents and college-age students in areas of high linguistic diversity. The curriculum provides evidence-based data on multilingualism in human history, basic child language acquisition principles, acquisition processes in monolingual and bi/multilingual children, linguistic rights, and practical advice to foster multilingualism and the transmission of endangered languages. Demographic data on the linguistic diversity of the United States will be included.