Biography of Language/Dialect. This assignment is to study a language that has become either very powerful, or not powerful at all. Many languages around the world have increased in power and dominance or decreased based on a variety of things such as growth or loss of empire, increase in technology or culture, greater or fewer speakers and users, literacy rates, and others. Many of you in your linguistic autobiography have expressed interest in other languages and we’ve read about several—you are all knowledgeable and able to discover something interesting about language policy or some of the history of a language. Since you will have to do some research on this, you need to use the library resources to find credible articles and books. Check with me before you submit something, but good places to find information is Encyclopedia Britannica, the online site Omniglot.com, the endangered languages site at Queens College—CUNY, the Language Log site, David Crystal’s Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, the CityTech librarians, the Oxford English Dictionary (NOT the Online Etymology Dictionary), and ME! So you don’t accidentally commit plagiarism, you MUST consult with me and show me your source(s) before you turn in your paper. Here are possible topics: In a 2-3 page essay (700-1000 words), discuss and elaborate on your observations about where the language has come from, how it developed, who speaks it, how it might be changing, what its future might be. All topics must be approved by me because I want to help you write the best paper you can. Short topics with specific details of 4-5 sentences are due Thursday, November 11. The essay is due Thursday, November 30 and I will be asking for brief updates EVERY DAY in class. Remember that the sooner you get drafts and revisions of work to me the sooner we can move on. Please don’t wait until the end of the semester! Here are possible topics: The concept of Standard English has given rise to misunderstanding and debate. For many Americans, “standard” implies that one variety of English is more correct than others. Use one or more chapter in our book as a starting point or ask me for articles and write on the history of Standard English. How did the concept develop? How do linguists and also non-linguists (“regular” people) define it? Why do discussions of Standard English often include the notions of power and social class? You can do topic #1 with another Standard language such as Arabic, French, Spanish, Hind. Writing of the codification of Standard English an author says, that by “analyzing ‘correct’ usage shows that only a tiny minority of educated people use that variety, which means that the people who decided what is “correct” or “standard” made sure that only the elite would fully know and use the language. That also means that the majority of people speaks or uses “incorrect” language. There are apparently advantages and disadvantages to having a standard. What are they and can a study of them be objective? Sometimes users of French or German object to borrowings from English (while English accepts many words from other languages). What words and types of words have been objected to and why? What have language policy makers in those countries done to prevent the inclusion of English? Why do they object? Choose a pidgin or creole language (see me for help). Keep in mind that some languages that have “Pidgin” or “Creole” as part of their name are often languages now. Where and how did the language originate? What kinds of people started speaking it? What other languages does it influence? What might the future of the language be? Many authors who grew up in bilingual households say that knowing and using two languages affects their identity and that of the world around them. Some of these authors are from countries that had been colonized and they now feel that their own language will not be read, they cannot find an audience, they do not “fit in” with their original language, they might write in both languages, etc. Find an article and an author who writes about this experience. Some authors you might like are Richard Rodriquez, Gloria Anzaldua, Asia Djabar, Junot Diaz, Chinua Achebe, and others. See me or a librarian for help. Consider who speaks/uses English around the world. What variety is it? For what purpose? Where do they speak it? Is it a first language, second language, or foreign language learned in their country? You can also write this paper on the uses historical and current on the uses of Latin, Swahili, French, Haitian Creole, and even Esperanto. Choose a topic that you are interested in but with help from me. You must create a paper topic from this question and develop it into something you can research and write about. You must formulate a proposal that is about 4-5 sentences and specifically related to something we have done in class. You must have this ok’d by me.