What are the causes of language death?

Takeover of global languages like English

Younger population does not want to learn since not useful

Elders’ fear of language corruption and desire to retain linguistic purity—so elders do not want to pass it on

Failure to use language in institutional settings like schools, religion, government

Oppression and force; imperialism

Immigration and emigration

Failure to evolve and make up new words

Death of the people

Spread of agriculture

Influence of the Media: radio, television, Internet

Elite fashion, status, and prestige associated with non-indigenous languages

Environmental destruction displaces indigenous groups, who then lose their language

Why should we care about it? (what are the implications?)

1. We lose knowledge of biological diversity (plants and animals). Indigenous languages have, built into them, intricate knowledge of natural processes and the healing and practical applications of plants, insects, and animals.
2. We lose distinct and unique world-views (as hypothesized by Sapir and Whorf) and ways of understanding and categorizing the world.
3. We lost knowledge of language structure and forsake our chance to answer key linguistic questions (like the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis!)
4. We lose an opportunity to reconstruct our understanding of human pre-history. Historical linguistics can yield and understanding of human settlement patterns, migration, conquest, and interaction.
5. Language is a key marker of ethnic identity, which is increasingly valued in a globalizing world that threatens to homogenize and squelch ethnic minorities.
6. Minority languages can be used to the advantage of political institutions and individuals by provide secret or restricted codes of communication.