

LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2022)

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Class meets: T/Th 1:30-2:45pm in MBH 219

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Office Hours (tentative): Mon 11am-12pm ([Zoom](#)); Tues 3-4pm (Carr Hall 201); or by appt.

Class Description

In this course, we will explore the ways that language creates and reflects social identities. We will look at the contextual factors—social, cultural, geographical, political, etc.—that impact language use and variation. In essence, we will learn how language shapes our world, and how we shape language itself. Some of the core questions we will engage include:

1. What are the key features of a linguistic community, and how do communities evolve over time?
2. What distinguishes a language from a dialect, register, or style?
3. How are culture, identity, and power connected to the people's linguistic behaviors?
4. What sorts of methods and questions have been central to sociolinguistics research over time?
5. What role has language played in public debates about politics, education, social justice, etc.?
6. What issues are emerging in current research in sociolinguistics?

Students will develop skills in the following:

- Applying theoretical concepts to linguistic artifacts (speech, text, multi-media, etc.)
- Explaining the relevance of sociolinguistics to the world around us
- Evaluating and responding to various perspectives on complex issues about language
- Designing projects that investigate linguistic communities and practices
- Gathering and analyzing sociolinguistic data
- Writing about sociolinguistics concepts from both personal and analytical perspectives

Readings

All readings and other media/materials are available on Canvas (go/hub).

If you engage better with a book than with individual pdfs, I highly recommend purchasing Holmes's (2013) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, published via Routledge.

Expectations

Your presence and engagement are an important part of your learning, of your peers' learning as well! I expect you to attend classes on time, complete all assigned readings, and turn in your work on

time. **Communication is key!** There may be penalties for late papers, multiple absences, or lack of preparation for class, unless we have made arrangements in advance. If you do need to miss class, please notify me via email or text before class, if possible. Extended absences may require approval from a Dean. I often send reminders and notes via email, so please check your email at least once every 24 hours.

What does it mean to “participate” in this course? Course participation includes discussion (both speaking and active listening), as well as engagement in individual, pair, and small group activities. This means that **doing the readings for course is crucial to your ability to participate** (see more info in Grading Breakdown, below).

Being an **active participant** in class also requires you to be organized. This includes:

- Making time to do the readings before class, using the Reading Guides (in-class and Canvas)
- Having a folder/notebook in which to keep course handouts and other materials
- Keeping track of your schedule, so that you meet deadlines
- Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work (Note: Expect and prepare for a computer crash at some point this semester!)

While I do not have a specific policy about use of technology in the classroom, I expect you to be **mindful** about using devices in a way that promotes learning rather than distraction. A few films or other media are assigned as part of course preparation, and I encourage you to watch those with one or more of your classmates!

Formatting for Written Work

Unless specified otherwise, written assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. [APA citation style](#) is preferred, but other formats may be accepted upon student request (NOTE: No cover page or abstract is necessary). All work should include an honor code statement: *I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.*

Communication and Support

Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours (on weekdays), and I expect the same of my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to reflect on the course, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you encounter difficulties with any course material or assignments, please contact me early and often, so that I can help support you. I may be able to match you with a tutor, if you are struggling with written work, or with oral presentations for this class.

If you have a disability or learning issue **of any kind** that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal accommodations, please be sure to contact the Disability Resource Center (formerly “ADA Office”): <https://www.middlebury.edu/office/disability-resource-center>

Although I will be available to support your learning, I hope you will also make use of support from:

- **The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (go/CTLR)** offers peer tutoring for nearly every academic subject, including drop-in writing tutors, prescheduled study groups, and professional staff.
- The **Writing Center (go/WC)** offers both peer and professional writing tutoring, online and in-person. They also offer conversation partners for students for whom English is an Additional Language, as well as other events and resources.
- **Oratory Now (go/oratorynow)** is a group of peer coaches for oral presentations and other forms of public speaking.
- The **Office of Digital Learning and Inquiry—go/DLINQ** offers support with all sorts of technologies and digital tools.
- **Counseling Services (go/counseling)**: Can help with emotional and social challenges, including stress, anxiety, and adjustment to Middlebury. There are often same-day in-person appointments available, in addition to 24/7 support via MiddTelehealth.
- **Anderson Freeman Center (go/afc)**: Intercultural Center in Carr Hall, designed to provide a 'home' for students who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in higher education. Great place to relax, make new friends, cook, etc. My office is there as well ☺

Grading Breakdown

Due dates for all items below are on the course calendar. Shorter homework assignments may be given from time to time, to help you engage more fully with readings or other media.

- I. **Class Preparation and Participation** [in-class and occasionally online] = 20%
- II. **Quiz 1, on essential terms and concepts from class** = 10%
We will have a review session in class prior to the quiz, and students will also be given a study guide. But the best way to prepare for this quiz is to take time to do course readings
- III. **Quiz 2, take-home** = 10%
For this quiz, you will choose 3 of 4 questions to respond to in writing. Your response should be 1-2 pages (double-spaced) for each question.
- IV. **Projects (3 total)** = 60%
 1. Profile of a Linguistic Community = 15% (5% group presentation and abstract/bibliography; 10% Response Paper)
 2. Sociolinguistics Scrapbook = 15%

3. Independent Research Project = 30% (20% final paper, 5% mini-presentation, 5% scaffolding assignments- e.g., proposal, check-ins, etc.)

Overview of Major Projects

(NOTE: More details and samples of student work for each will be provided in class and on Canvas)

Profile of a Linguistic Community (Project 1)

For this project, you and your group members will research the characteristics of a specific linguistic community, focusing on the ways language is used to create/define identity and to build group solidarity. You may draw on a combination of sources for this project, including scholarly publications, general audience resources, popular media, and possibly interviews/surveys with members of this community.

The three components for this assignment will be a short (6-8 min) group presentation, an abstract and bibliography (1 per group), and a 2-3 page Response Paper (one from each group member) answering these three questions:

1. What made you interested in studying this community?
2. What are some of the most interesting or noteworthy features of this linguistic community? (Discuss general trends as well as specific examples).
3. How has studying this community enriched (and even complicated!) your understanding of Sociolinguistics? (You're encouraged to reference particular course theories/concepts)

Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (Project 2)

This is a project that you will work on throughout the semester, in which you collect and reflect on **8-10 electronic "artifacts"** that are connected to our class. An artifact could be a news article (print or online), media clip, literary text, live event, or even an account of a conversation. Artifacts can be drawn from your other classes as well. For each artifact, you will write a paragraph (less than one page) reflection that explains why you chose this artifact and how it relates to sociolinguistics. **At least one of your items should be from an out-of-class lecture or co-curricular event**, such as those offered at the [Clifford Symposium](#), Fall Faculty Forum (Fri Oct 7th), or the [Linguistics Program](#) (or other programs/departments). We'll talk more in class about how to create an artifact from a lecture/presentation. Ideally, you will not have to look too hard to find relevant artifacts—they will begin to "pop out" at you, as you engage with course material and connect it to your daily life. You'll also be asked to share one of your favorite artifacts during class.

Independent Research Project (Project 3)

The purpose of this project is to give you the opportunity to engage firsthand in sociolinguistics research. You will develop a narrow and relevant research question that ties in to our course material. To answer your question, you may **analyze existing linguistic data**, such as texts or

transcripts. Or, you may design a survey or interview protocol, to **examine attitudes** about language variation and/or use. Whichever option you choose, you need to have a systematic method for analysis, so you're not "cherry-picking" from the data.

Your final paper (10-15 pp. total) will include an Introduction and Rationale for the project (2-3 pp, citing course readings and/or outside sources), a description of Hypothesis and Methods (1-2 pp.), and a section containing Findings, Discussion, (5-8 pp.) Limitations, and Possibilities for future research (1-2pp.) You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from me, and possibly from your classmates along the way. With the final draft of the paper, you will submit a separate Researcher's Memo that describes what you learned from the process and how it contributed to your learning of Sociolinguistics.

A few sample research questions from past students:

1. What are the attitudes of Japanese students and professors toward Ryukyuan (endangered) languages in Southern Japan? (interviews)
2. What identities does the use of three slang terms ("ODE", "fam", and "grind") index among Middlebury College students? (survey)
3. What are the beliefs and practices of Vermont parents about correcting grammar/pronunciation errors in their children's speech? (interviews)
4. How do female students at Middlebury feel about being addressed as "man," "dude" and/or "guys"? (survey)
5. How do Arabic professors at Middlebury address language variation (e.g., diglossia, colloquial variation) within their curricula and instruction?
6. What are the patterns of code-switching between Korean and English TV commercials, and what do those patterns indicate about South Korean society? (discourse analysis)

(see next page for schedule of topics, readings, and assignments).

Course Schedule for LNGT 102- Fall 2022

NOTE: *All assigned readings are available on Canvas, unless otherwise noted*

Sept 13 (T)- Course introduction and overview. Watch “[PBS Crash Course: Sociolinguistics](#).” Introduction to linguistic relativity (i.e., Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) and other key terms.

Sept 15 (Th)- Mesthrie et al. pp. 1-20 (Sections 1.1-1.3). Review key terms (see handout from class, also on Canvas). Discuss Project 1. Preview readings for Tues.

Due by **Sun Sept 18** on Canvas: **Post ideas for Project 1** and/or respond to ideas from others.

Sept 20 (T)- Boroditsky (2011)- “How Language Shapes Thought” (alternative: [Hidden Brain podcast](#)) AND Casasanto (2008)- “Big Bad Whorf.” Focus on key questions and evidence for/against the theory of linguistic relativity.

Sept 22 (Th)- Pae (2020) “Linguistic Relativity.” In-class role-play/debate. Also discuss groups for Project 1. Preview topics for Tues.

Due by **Fri 9/23** (midnight): Group lists for Project 1 (1 member post names and topic on Canvas).

*Sept 22-24: [Clifford Symposium](#) -theme is Conflict Transformation (Scrapbook opportunity!).

Due by **Sun 9/25** (midnight): Group Proposal for Project 1 (post on Canvas):

1. Which linguistic community do you intend to study?
2. What aspects of this community will you examine most closely? *
3. What are some reputable you will draw on?
4. Which concepts from class (thus far) do you expect to be most relevant?

Over weekend: Watch *American Tongues* via [Kanopy streaming](#).

Due: by **Mon 9/26:** Contribute to Canvas online discussion about the film.

Sept 27 (T)- Kendall et al (2018): “African American Language” (pdf on Canvas or use [direct link](#)).
[Alternative media- [talk by Dr. Lisa Green](#)]. Cont’d discussing *American Tongues*.

Sept 29 (Th)- Read Sandel (2015)- “Dialects” and **skim** Starks & McRobbie “Collecting Sociolinguistics Data.”

[Over the weekend: Start preparing for group presentations.]

Oct 4 (T)- Eckert (2012): “3 Waves of Variation Study” (topic: language variation and social class).

Oct 6 (Th)- Jigsaw Reading: **Choose:** Igoudin (2011- Asian American girls’ use of AAE)
OR Melgarejo & Bucholtz (2020- Latinx linguistic representations in *Jane the Virgin*)
(topic: Complicating racial/ethnic language variation). Begin Project 1 presentations.

***Fri Oct 7th:** Fall Faculty Forum (Scrapbook opportunity!)

Due by **Sun Oct 9:** Group abstract and bibliography for Project 1 (post to Canvas).

Oct 11 (T)- Before class watch– and [“Register variation in ASL”](#) (5 min) and [“Signing Black in America”](#) (27 min). Continue presentations for Project 1.

Oct 13 (Th): Holmes Ch 10: “Style, Context, and Register” (focus pp. 1-25). Finish presentations.

Due Sun Oct 16: Response paper (individual) from Project 1.

*Mon Oct 17th 4:30pm- *Scrapbook opp*- talk by [María Luz García](#) on Mayan translation in U.S.

Oct 18 (T): Review for quiz. Also preview readings/media on language, prestige, and power.

Oct 20 (Th): **Quiz 1**. After, join online discussion about language choice and code-switching (also preparing to read Holmes Ch 2 and 4).

Oct 25 (T): Holmes Ch 2- “Language Choice in Multilingual Communities.”

Oct 27 (Th): Holmes Ch 4- “Linguistic Varieties and Multilingual Nations.”

Due Sun Oct 30: First 2 entries for Sociolinguistics Scrapbook.

Nov 1 (T)- Damico et al (2008) “Language and Power” and Tannen (1995) “Power of Talk” (topics: Language and power, intro to gendered language interactions)

Nov 3 (Th)- Holmes Ch 12: “Gender, Politeness, etc.” Also McBee (2018, NYTimes).

Due Nov 6 (Sun) on Canvas: Proposal(s) for final project (Qs below) **OR** Schedule mtg w/ Prof S.

1. What question would you like to answer, and why is this a relevant question?
2. What data will you analyze? (and How will you collect the data, if necessary?)
3. What do you expect to find (i.e., your hypothesis)?
4. What do you need (from Prof S. or other sources) to be successful in this project?

Nov 8 (T)- Luu (2016) “Linguistics of Mass Persuasion” ([I here](#) and [II here](#), or pdf on Canvas). Come with examples from current politics (U.S. and globally).

Optional reading: [Duseja & Jhamtani \(2019\)](#) on the “Sociolinguistics of echo chambers”

Nov 10 (Th)- Holmes Ch 5: “National Languages and Language Planning.” Possible guest speaker(?). Prepare for take-home quiz.

Due Nov 13 (Sun) on Canvas: **Take-home quiz** (answer 3 of 4 ques, 1-2 pp. each, double spaced.)

Nov 15 (T). Baird et al (2018) study with highlights. Also watch Baugh TEDx talk or read Baugh (2005). (topic: Linguistic profiling and discrimination).

Nov 17 (Th) (topic: Linguistic Justice). Reading: Explore assigned website for your group (see notes from 10/15). Also prepare to share a favorite scrapbook entry in class.

Due Fri Nov 18th (or earlier): Brief update and next steps for Final Project **OR** sign up for mtg. Also **recommended**: submit Outline or draft of Intro/Rationale for feedback now or

soon after break.

****Nov 18-27 THANKSGIVING BREAK****

Due by Mon Nov 28th (post to Canvas discussion): Sociolinguistics Scrapbook

Nov 29 (T)- Shapiro (2014). Possible alternative reading. (topic: Sociolinguistics & Education)

Dec 1 (Th)- (Tentative topic: Sociolinguistics in Digital Interactions—e.g., texting, social media, etc.). Reading: [Vox interview](#) with Gretchen McCullough. Possible additional.

Due Dec 4 (Sun)- Optional, but **highly recommended**: Submit outline or full draft of research paper for feedback (on Canvas). (There will be short meeting times available as well).

Dec 6 (T)- Research mini-presentations I. Course response forms.

Dec 8 (Th)- Research mini-presentations II. Course wrap-up and possible work time.

Due Dec 13th (T), extensions by request: Final Paper for Research Project, plus Researcher's Memo (both on Canvas).
