LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2023)

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Class meets: T/Th 2:15-3:30pm in WNS 101

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 Office Hours (tentative): Mon 11am-12pm (Zoom); Tues 3:40-4:40pm (**Munroe 119**); 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 **Holmes's (2013) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, published via Routledge,** which can be requested via the Middlebury Library.

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 course readings is crucial to your ability to participate during class** (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!

Final note: I am open to your using AI text-generation tools like ChatGPT to aid your learning, similar to how you might use an internet search engine to find information. But please be advised that these tools have many weaknesses, including inserting inaccurate information and made-up sources. If you would like to use one of these tools for a class assignment, please **notify me in advance** so we can make sure you use the tools to *enrich rather than inhibit* your learning.

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, depression, 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.

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** = 7%
For this quiz, you will choose 1 of 2 essay questions to respond to, demonstrating your learning since the first quiz. Your response should be 1-2 pages (double-spaced). You may also choose to answer both questions, and I will keep the higher of the two grades.

IV. **Projects (3 total)** = 63%

1. Profile of a Linguistic Community = 20% (10% group presentation and abstract/bibliography; 10% Response Paper)

2. Sociolinguistics Scrapbook = 18%

3. Independent Research Project = 25% (20% final paper, 5% mini-presentation and other scaffolding - 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 <u>one</u> of your items should be from an <u>out-of-class lecture or co-curricular event,</u>** such as those offered at the Clifford Symposium, Fall Faculty Forum (**Fri Sept 29th**), or the Linguistics Program (e.g., the talk **on Wed Oct 25th at 4:30pm** in RAJ). 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 some of your favorite artifacts in online discussion and 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. There may be an opportunity to work with a partner on this project.

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 endangered Ryukyuan 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)

Calendar of Readings and Assignments for LNGT 102- Fall 2023
NOTE: All assigned readings are available on Canvas, unless otherwise noted

Sept 12 (T)- Course introduction and overview. Watch "PBS Crash Course: Sociolinguistics." Introduction to linguistic relativity (i.e., Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) and other key terms.
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Sept 14 (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 17 on Canvas: **Post ideas for Project 1** and/or respond to ideas from others.

Sept 19 (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 21 (Th)- Pae (2020) "Linguistic Relativity." In-class role-play/debate. Also discuss groups for Project 1. Preview next week's topics.

*Sept 21-23: Scrapbook opportunity- Clifford Symposium (focus on Race and Education)

Due by Fri 9/22 (midnight): Group lists for Project 1 (1 member post names and topic on Canvas).

Due by Sun 9/24 (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 9/25: Contribute to Canvas online discussion about the film.

Sept 26 (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 28 (Th)- Read Sandel (2015)- "Dialects" and **skim** Starks & McRobbie "Collecting
        Sociolinguistics Data."

 ***Fri Sept 29:** (Scrapbook opportunity- Fall Faculty Forum

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

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

Oct 5 (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.

Due by **Sun Oct 8**: Group abstract and bibliography for Project 1 (post to Canvas).

Oct 10 (T)- Before class watch– **and** "Register variation in ASL" (5 min) and *Signing Black in America* (27 min). Continue presentations for Project 1.

Oct 12 (Th): Holmes Ch 10: "Style, Context, and Register" -focus pp. 1-25. Finish presentations.

Due Sun Oct 15: Response paper (individual) from Project 1 (post to Canvas).

Oct 17 (T): Review for quiz. Also preview readings/media on language, prestige, and power.

Oct 19 (Th): Quiz 1. After, join online discussion about language choice and code-switching (also preparing to read Holmes Ch 2 and 4).

Oct 24 (T): Holmes Ch 2- "Language Choice in Multilingual Communities."

 *Wed Oct 25th- Scrapbook opportunity- talk by Dr. Brendan Regan on "The Acquisition of Dialect Features during Study Abroad" (4:30pm, RAJ Conference room)

Oct 26 (Th): ONLINE ASYNCRHONOUS CLASS: Contribute to online discussion focused on Holmes Ch 4- "Linguistic Varieties and Multilingual Nations."

Due Sun Oct 29: First 2 entries for Sociolinguistics Scrapbook.

Oct 31 (T)- Damico et al (2008) "Language and Power" and Tannen (1995) "Power of Talk" (topics: Language and power, intro to gendered language interactions)

Nov 2 (Th)- Holmes Ch 12: "Gender, Politeness, etc." Also Grant (2023, NYTimes) **OR** McBee (2018, NYTimes). (topic: continued from Tues)

Due Nov 5 (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 7 (T)- Luu (2016) "Linguistics of Mass Persuasion" (Part 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 9 (Th)- Holmes Ch 5: "National Languages and Language Planning." Possible guest speaker. Prepare for take-home quiz.

Due Nov 12 (Sun): Take-home quiz (answer 1 of 2 --or both-- 1-2 pp. each). Submit on Canvas.

Nov 14 (T) Baird et al (2018) study (pdf with highlights). Also watch Baugh TEDx talk or read Baugh (2005). (topic: Linguistic profiling and discrimination).

Nov 16 (Th) (topic: Linguistic Justice). Reading: Explore assigned website for your group (see notes from Tuesday). Also prepare to share a favorite scrapbook entry in class.

Due **Fri Nov 17th (or earlier):** Brief update and next steps for Final Project **OR** sign up for mtg after break. Also **recommended**: submit Outline or draft of Intro/Rationale for feedback soon after break.

****Nov 17-26 THANKSGIVING BREAK****

Due **by Mon Nov 27th** (post to Canvas discussion): Sociolinguistics Scrapbook

Nov 28 (T)- Shapiro (2014). Possible alternative reading. (topic: Sociolinguistics & Education)

Nov 30 (Th)- (Tentative topic: Sociolinguistics in Digital Interactions—e.g., texting, social media, etc.). Reading: Vox interview with Gretchen McCullough.

Due **Dec 3 (Sun)-** Optional, but **highly recommended**: Submit outline or partial/full draft of research paper for feedback (on Canvas). (There will be short meeting times available as well).

Dec 5 (T)- Research mini-presentations I. Course response forms.

Dec 7 (Th)- Research mini-presentations II. Course wrap-up and possible work time.

Due **Dec 12th (T), extensions available by request:** Final Paper for Research Project, plus Researcher's Memo (both on Canvas).

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