LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2024)

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Class meets: T/Th 9:45-11:00am (MAC 221)

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Office Hours (tentative): T/Th 11:10am-12pm and 3:40-4:20pm (in **Munroe 119 or Zoom by request).** Also by appt on M/W/F afternoons.

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 by the deadline. **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 (and other media)** is crucial to your ability to participate actively in class. I strongly encourage you to find reading/listening/watching buddies 😊

Some of the topics we will discuss in class can be sensitive ones (e.g., related to identity, power, politics, etc.). Having a classroom where students are willing to engage these topics is very important to me. Some agreements that can help us to have productive dialogue together include:
- Share airtime- step 'up' or 'back' as needed.
- Avoid interrupting—allow others to finish their speaking.
- Maintain confidentiality with other people's stories.

The default policy in this class regarding technology is that most of the time, you **should not need phones in class—and you will only sometimes need laptops**. That said, there are times when these technologies can be helpful. So I ask you to put away technologies during class as the default policy, but we can discuss individual and group exceptions to this policy. And if you are using devices in a way that is distracting to your peers, that may affect your participation grade.

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 or a peer tutor to talk through ideas for writing. 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 me, and to your success in this 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, <u>please contact me **early** and **often**</u>, 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 learning issue **<u>of any kind</u>** that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal disability 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 **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.

- **The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (<u>go/CTLR</u>)** offers peer tutoring for nearly every academic subject, including drop-in writing tutors, prescheduled study groups, and professional staff.

- **Library Services (<u>go/LIB</u>)** has professional staff available to meet in person or virtually, and to chat about finding and using secondary sources for your coursework. They also have excellent guides for citing sources, upholding the honor code (and avoiding plagiarism), and other important aspects of academics at Midd.

- **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—<u>go/DLINQ</u>**) 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** (**<u>go/afc</u>**): 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** = 25%
   This includes being on time, prepared, and active during class, as well as participating in online discussion and reading annotations. Clear and timely communication about missed classes and assignment submission also affects this portion of your grade.

II. **Quiz on essential terms and concepts from class** = 13%

   We will have a review session in class prior to the quiz, and you will also be given a study guide. But the best way to prepare for this quiz is to keep up with course readings/annotations and to be an active participant in class.

III. **Projects (3 total)** = 62% - see details below

   1. Profile of a Linguistic Community = 16% (8% group presentation and abstract/bibliography; 8% Response Paper)

   2. Sociolinguistics Scrapbook = 21% (7% for each of 3 deadlines)

   3. Independent Research Project = 25% (17% final paper, 8% mini-presentation and scaffolding assignments - e.g., proposal, researcher journal, peer review, 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 features of this linguistic community did YOU find most interesting or surprising?

3. How has studying this community enriched your understanding of Sociolinguistics? What are some lingering questions you have after completing this project? (You're encouraged to reference particular course theories/concepts)

4. How did you feel about communication and division of labor within your group?

Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (Project 2)

This is a project that you will work on throughout the semester, in which you collect and reflect on **10 "artifacts"** (electronically or by hand) 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 or so (less than one page) annotation that explains WHY you chose this artifact and HOW it relates to sociolinguistics. **You can find samples of this assignment on Canvas** 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.

At least <u>one</u> of your Scrapbook entries should be related to your academics at Middlebury. This could be from one or your other classes or from a co-curricular event (lecture, panel, etc.). Some such events are noted in the Calendar (separate document). These include the Clifford Symposium, Fall Faculty Forum, and Linguistics programming (more info TBD)

You will develop this project in 3 phases, adding to a Google doc each time that you post to Canvas. Here are the **deadlines** for this project (also noted in course Calendar). Note that there is a particular set of terms/concepts you can choose from for each deadline:

- Due **Sun Oct 27th**: First set (4 entries), focused on linguistic communities, Sapir-Whorf (linguistic relativity), language variation (historical, geographic, racial/ethnic, gender), register/style, and/or code-switching/style-shifting

- **Due Sun Nov 10th**: Second set (4 entries), focused on and power, discourse, politeness, gender, and/or sexuality

- **Due Sun Nov 17th** : Third set (2 entries), focused on linguistic profiling and discrimination, linguistic privilege, linguistic justice.

  There will be an opportunity for you to earn a bit of extra credit toward your participation grade by responding to some of your peers' Scrapbook entries. 😊

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:

✓ Introduction and Rationale for the project (2-3 pp)
  What question(s) are you investigating, and why is it relevant to Sociolinguistics? (You should cite at least 1 course reading and/or outside sources)

✓ Description of Hypothesis and Methods (1-2 pp.)
  Why did you expect to find and why? How did you design the survey/interview protocol? How did you recruit participants? How did you analyze data?

✓ Findings, Discussion (5-8 pp.)
  What were some trends in the findings, with examples? What were some exceptions to those trends? To what extent did these findings match your hypothesis? What is surprising and/or noteworthy in your findings?

✓ Limitations, and Possibilities for future research (1-2pp.)
  What do we need to be cautious about in interpreting your findings? What might you have done if you had more time/resources? What are some related projects that you (or someone else) could pursue in the future, building on this one?

You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from me and from your classmates along the way. You will keep a Researcher Journal where you share updates along the way, including a final reflection that discusses what you learned from the process and how it contributed to your learning of Sociolinguistics.

Some sample research questions from past students:

1. How do female students at Midd feel about being addressed as "man," "dude" and/or "guys"? (survey)

2. Does the word "queer" have different meanings for college students who identify as such versus for those who do not? (survey)

3. What are the attitudes of Japanese students and professors toward endangered Ryukyuan languages in Southern Japan? (interviews)

4. How do Arabic professors at Middlebury address language variation (e.g., diglossia, colloquial variation) within their curricula and instruction? (interviews)

5. What are the beliefs and practices of preschool teachers in Middlebury about correcting grammar/pronunciation errors in their children's speech? (interviews)

6. How do code-switching practices differ in Korean vs. English TV commercials, and what do those patterns indicate about South Korean society? (discourse analysis)

Please see separate Calendar document for the schedule of topics, readings, & deadlines