LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2019)

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

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  Office Hours (Carr Hall 201): Mon 11am-12pm and 2-3pm; Tues/Thurs 3:30-4:15pm (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.

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, creole, 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 questions about language
- Designing projects that investigate linguistic communities and practices
- Gathering and analyzing linguistic data
- Writing about sociolinguistics concepts from both personal and analytical perspectives

Required Reading List
These two books are available via the Middlebury bookstore and at other online retailers.
Please purchase or borrow them as soon as possible.

1. Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, and Leap (2009). *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (2nd Ed) John Benjamins. (Print or online version is fine. Paper and e-book versions are on reserve at Davis library).

2. Orwell, G. *1984* (novel).

3. Other readings, films, and supplementary materials will be available via Canvas (go/coursehub), or via Davis Library Reserves (via Circulation Desk)

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course; cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation (which includes both speaking and listening!) of each member. You are expected to attend all classes on time, prepared to engage actively in course discussion and activities. Late papers, unexcused absences, and missed assignments will be penalized. In the event of illness, please notify me (via email or phone) *before* the class that you will be missing. Multiple absences could have an adverse effect on your final course grade.

I also expect that you will organize yourself so that you are prepared for class and can submit assignments on time. This includes
- Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology (see separate handout)
- Having a folder/notebook in which to keep course handouts and other materials
- Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work
  Note: A computer crash is NOT an excuse for late work!

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 allows you and your peers to remain present and engaged. Several films are assigned as part of course preparation. It is your responsibility to arrange to watch those films—ideally with some 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 (weekdays), and 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 **learning issue of any kind** that might impact your studies, please be in touch, so I can make sure you have all of the support you need. Students who have Letters of Accommodation should contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through the Disability Resource Center (formerly called Student Accessibility Services- visit **go/ADA** for more info). Please contact Jodi Litchfield or Michelle Audette, the ADA Coordinators, for more information: Michelle Audette can be reached

at maudette@middlebury.edu or 802-443-2169 and Jodi Litchfield can be reached at litchfie@middlebury.edu or 802-443-5936. All discussions will remain confidential.

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 film)

I. **Class Preparation and Participation/Discussion** [in-class and occasional 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. There will be one question on each of the following themes: *language and gender, Orwell's views on language (e.g. euphemism/jargon), language and politics (e.g., propaganda, obfuscation), and inclusive/PC language.*

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% presentation, 5% scaffolding assignments- e.g., proposal, check-ins, etc.)

Overview of Major Projects (NOTE: More details for each will be provided in class)

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 (5-8 min) group presentation, an abstract and bibliography (1 per group), and a 2-3 page Response Paper (one from each group member) answering these two questions:
1. What are some of the most interesting features of this linguistic community?
(discuss general trends as well as specific examples).

2. How has studying this community enriched (and even complicated!) your understanding of Sociolinguistics? (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 "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, such as those offered at the Faculty Forum on Fri, Sept 27th**. (We'll talk more in class about how to create an artifact from lectures and presentations). 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 (3-4 pp, citing course readings and/or outside sources), a description of Hypothesis and Methods (1-2 pp.), and a section containing Findings, Discussion, Limitations, and Possibilities for future research (6-8 pp.). You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from your professor (and possibly classmates) along the way. With the final draft of the paper, you will submit a separate Researcher's Memo (1-2 pp.) 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 greeted as "man," "dude" and/or "guys"? (survey)

5. How does the Simpsons character Cletus both reinforce and resist stereotypes about Appalachian English? (corpus analysis of media transcripts)

Course Schedule for LNGT 102- Fall 2019

Sept 10 (T)- Course introduction and overview. Introduction to Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
Sept 12 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 1. Review key terms (see handout, also on Canvas). Continue discussing Whorfian Hypothesis and other key concepts. Discuss Project 1. Preview Boroditsky and Whorf.

[Over weekend, on Canvas: **Post ideas for Project 1** and/or respond to ideas from others].

Sept 17 (T)- Whorf "The Relation of Habitual Thought" and Boroditsky "How Language Shapes Thought" (both on Canvas).
Sept 19 (Th)- Pinker "Mentalese" and Casasanto "Big Bad Whorf" (both on Canvas).
            In-class role-play/debate.   Also discuss groups for Project 1.

Due by Fri 9/20 (midnight): Group lists for Project 1 (1 member post names and topic on Canvas).
Due by Sun 9/22 (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 of the sources you will draw on?
      4. Which concepts from class (thus far) do you expect to be most relevant?

[Over weekend: Watch *American Tongues* (film available for Kanopy streaming via Davis library).
Post to Canvas online discussion by Mon 9/23]

Sept 24 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 2 (Regional Dialectology). Continue discussing *American Tongues*.
Sept 26 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 3. (Social Dialectology).   Other reading/podcast TBD.

*Fri Sept 27th afternoon: Fall Faculty Forum (Scrapbook opportunity!)
 [Over the weekend: Start preparing for group presentations.]

 Oct 1 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 5 (Language Choice and Code-switching). Also watch *Slumdog Millionaire*.
            (on reserve at Davis Library).
 Oct 3 (Th)-Mesthrie Ch 6 (Language in interaction). Begin mini-presentations for Project 1.
            Due by Sun Oct 6: Group abstract and bibliography for Project (post to Canvas).

Oct 8 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 4 (Language Variation and Change). Continue mini-presentations.
Oct 10 (Th)- Finish mini-presentations. Review for quiz.

Due by Sun 10/13: Response paper from project 1 (Canvas)

Oct 15 (T)- **Quiz.** Begin discussing Mesthrie Ch 7 (Gender and Language Use).
Oct 17 (Th)- Read Tannen "Power of Talk," and McBee, 2018- NYTimes E.C. opp: online discussion. Also discuss Sociolinguistics Scrapbook. Possible visit from Leah Metzger '20.

[Over weekend, **post 1 scrapbook entry** to Canvas. Also start reading *1984,* for Thurs 10/24]

Oct 22 (T)- Orwell "Politics and the English Language" (on Canvas). Possible addl reading or film.
    Share from Sociolinguistics Scrapbooks (oral, in-class)
Oct 24 (Th)- "Newspeak" (Appendix) of *1984,* plus other excerpts from the novel.

Oct 29 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 10 (Language and Power). Continue discussion of *1984.*
    Discuss Quiz 2 (take-home).
Oct 31 (Th)- **NO CLASS –Post** another Scrapbook entry **by Fri** (E.C. opp: Respond to 1-2
    others!). Also work on quiz, **due Sun**.

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

Nov 5 (T)- Combined class visit with Vanessa Ruiz (**location TBD**)
    Readings (on Canvas): Santos & Hauser (2015, *NYTimes*), plus excerpts from Baird &
    Rohena Madrazo (2018).
Nov 7 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 8 (Language Maintenance, Shift, and Death) **OR** Mesthrie Ch 9 (Pidgins,
    Creoles, and "New Englishes"). Discuss final projects.

Due Nov 10 (Sun) on Canvas: Post proposal(s) for final project:
    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 12 (T)- Readings/media TBD.- Guest lecture from Per Urlaub (Language Schools/Linguistics)
    on language and identity (or related topic).
Nov 14 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 12 (Language Planning and Policy).
    Guest lecture with MIIS Prof. Thor Sawin (on language in Eastern Europe).

[Over weekend- work on final project.]

Nov 19 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 11 (Sociolinguistics and Education) and Delpit (on Canvas).
Nov 21 (Th)- **ONLINE CLASS**: topic: Sociolinguistics in Digital Spaces. (readings and discussion
on Canvas).

Due Nov 25 (Mon, midnight)- Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (on Canvas, post to discussion forum)

Nov 26 (T)- Topic TBD- possibly Mesthrie Ch 13 (Sociolinguistics and Sign Language.)
    Possible guest speaker.
Nov 28 (Th)- **THANKSGIVING**- no class.

Due Dec 1 (Sun)- Optional, but **highly recommended**!: Submit draft or outline of research paper
for feedback (on Canvas).

Dec 3 (T)- Research presentations I. Course evaluations.
Dec 5 (Th)- Research presentations II. Course wrap-up.
Due Dec 10 (T)- Final Paper for Research Project, plus Researcher's Memo (both on Canvas).