

## Sociolinguistics

Place & Time: W 3:30-6:10, Linguistics Dept., 10 Washington Place, Rm. 103

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Office Hours:	Tuesday 4-5:30, or by appointment	By appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The unifying theme of sociolinguistics is a concern with LANGUAGE IN USE, and the investigation of the COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE of speakers which enables them to use language actively and appropriately. Hence it departs from the abstract, asocial approach to language that is encountered in some other subfields of linguistics. This course is intended to serve as an introduction to the theory, methods, and central concerns of sociolinguistics, and to some of the fundamental research results in the field. The following major areas will be addressed:

- Methods and argumentation. The empirical focus on language use requires a methodology that is appropriate to studying the speech community. Investigating variation and diversity requires quantitative approaches to analysis and argumentation. We will examine such methods and how they are used to construct arguments and analyses.
- Language and social organization: the reflection and creation of social organization through language. The structure of the speech community: sociolinguistic diversity by ethnicity, class, gender, social networks; situation, context and speech style. Linguistic performance of identity.
- Variation and linguistic theory: how do the facts of linguistic diversity, variability, and communicative competence bear upon theoretical models in linguistics.
- Dynamic aspects of language: language change in progress, language acquisition, code-switching, creolization.
- Macro-sociolinguistics: societal multilingualism, language policy and planning, language maintenance and shift, language endangerment, linguistic human rights.

**READINGS:** Readings will be assigned from a variety of sources; most of these will be available on the website for this course on NYU Classes. Visiting scholars should speak to the instructor about getting access to the site. The readings for each class meeting are indicated on the outline below. Two main sources of readings are:

- Coupland, N., & A. Jaworski, eds. 1997. *Sociolinguistics: A reader and coursebook*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Tagliamonte, Sali. 2006. *Analyzing sociolinguistic variation*. Cambridge U. Press

**RESEARCH ETHICS.** Sociolinguistic research necessarily involves studying people's use of language. Students must be familiar with the legal and ethical norms for such research. All course participants are required to complete the on-line NYU Human Subjects Training course, if you have not already done so. See <https://www.nyu.edu/research/resources-and-support-offices/getting-started-withyourresearch/human-subjects-research/tutorial.html> for directions, and <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/> for the actual tutorial.

**SPECIAL NEEDS:** Students who need accommodation in assignments or deadlines due to disabilities, special circumstances, health, or religious requirements are encouraged to discuss their situation with the instructor.

#### **REQUIREMENTS/ASSESSMENT**

- **Participation [20%].** All participants are expected to do the assigned reading and to participate in class discussions. For each week's reading, there will be a discussion forum on NYU Classes. Enrolled students are required, and auditors are encouraged, to post one question or comment each week regarding one or more of the readings by the end of the day on Tuesday.
  
- **Assignments [80%].** There will be four assignments (each worth 20%) due during the course of the semester, each addressing a different one of the major topic areas mentioned above. In all cases you can either choose your own topic in consultation with the instructor, or do assigned topics.
  - (1) Data collection, ordinarily a sociolinguistic interview, with a write-up describing and critiquing your methods.
  - (2) A short paper (~2400 words) on a topic relating to the linguistic reflection of social organization (e.g., language and gender, class, ethnicity, etc.)
  - (3) A quantitative study of some sociolinguistic variable (written, plus oral presentation).
  - (4) A short paper (~2400 words) on a macro-sociolinguistic topic, such as societal multilingualism, language policy or planning, etc.

**Naming your submissions.** All the assignments you submit, including .doc, .pdf, and sound files, should **include your name as part of the filename!** When faculty receive a dozen files with names like 'Assignment 1' or 'Interview', we can't tell them apart without opening them all.

### Course Outline

Readings marked with \* have been taken from

Coupland, Nikolas, and Adam Jaworski. 1997. *Sociolinguistics: A Reader*. New York, NY: Macmillan Education, and may be abridged from the original published version.

#### Professor MacKenzie

- Sept 2** Introduction: perspectives & approaches to the study of language in society  
**Read:** Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog 1968 §0, §3.4, §3.5; Fruehwald to appear (only pp. 1–5, up to §3); Eckert 2012; Fishman 1972\*; Gumperz 1981\*
- Sept 9** **No class – Legislative Day – classes meet on a Monday schedule**  
 Complete the [CITI Social & Behavioral Research Course](#) if you haven't already.  
 Allow at least two hours for this.
- Sept 16** Sociolinguistic methodology: data collection, research ethics, data analysis  
**Read:** Tagliamonte 2006 ch. 1–4, Wolfram & Fasold 1974\*, Bayley 2013
- Sept 23** Language and social organization: social class, communities of practice, networks  
**Read:** Dodsworth 2010, Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999, Labov 1973
- Sept 30** Language and age; language and ethnicity  
**Read:** Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2009 §1–3, Sankoff 2019; Benor 2010, Blake 2014  
**First assignment due – sociolinguistic interview.**
- Oct 7** Language and gender  
**Read:** Eckert 1989, Gal 1978, Zimman 2017
- Oct 14** Language and style: accommodation, audience design, speaker design, indexicality  
**Read:** Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994, Coupland 1985, Sharma 2018
- Oct 21** Sociolinguistic perception & cognition  
**Read:** Lambert et al. 1960, Labov et al. 2011 (only pp. 431–439, until “Experiment 2”), Guy & Boberg 1997, Tamminga et al. 2016  
**Second assignment due – paper on language and social organization.**  
**GG presents third assignment – variation study.**

#### Professor Guy

- Oct 28** Dialects and speech communities. Social proximity and linguistic similarity. Shared norms. Linguistic coherence. **Read:** Labov, Trudgill (C&J pp 163-184), Chambers & Trudgill 2004, Ch 1-4, Guy 1980, Guy 2013.
- Nov 4** Language change in progress. Variation and change  
**Read:** Guy et al. 1986, Eckert 1997 (in Coulmas, ed.), Tagliamonte 2015  
[http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/16/tagliamonte/#tagliamonte\\_2015](http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/16/tagliamonte/#tagliamonte_2015)
- Nov 11** Social drivers of linguistic change: standardization, education, media. Change and identity.  
**Read:** Edwards & Giles, 1984. ‘Sociolinguistics and education’ (Trudgill, *Applied Sociolinguistics*, 119-149); Seargeant & Tagg 2014. ‘Language of social media’

- Nov 18** Languages in contact: codeswitching; creolization.  
**Read:** Myers-Scotton and Rickford & McWhorter (in Coulmas); Gardner-Chloros (C&J pp 361-375).  
**Third assignment due – study of a sociolinguistic variable**
- Nov 24** Student research reports – oral presentations.  
Societal multilingualism, language maintenance and shift.  
**Read:** Fasold, ‘Sociolinguistics of Society’, Chaps 1 & 8; Haugen (C&J pp 341-351)
- Dec 2** Language policy and planning. Linguistic minorities. Linguistic human rights.  
**Read:** Daoust (Coulmas, pp. 436-452), Carter 2016, ‘Language policy in context’.  
Linguistic Human Rights pdf (readings from Skuttnab-Kangas & Phillipson).  
Linguistic human rights – International declarations handout.
- Dec 9** Last class. Standard and nonstandard. Conclusions: Communicative competence; language in use. Towards an integrated theory of language.
- Dec 16 **Fourth assignment due – paper on macro topic: language policy, planning, education, language shift/maintenance, linguistic human rights....**