

Course: LIN 315 Language in its social setting
Semester: Fall 2016
Instructor: Jürgen Bohnemeyer
Text: Wardhaugh⁶2010

This course in a nutshell: This course offers a first introduction to the study of language in its social and cultural context, with an emphasis on sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (especially the ethnography of speaking).

What this course is about, in much more detail: How does who we are and who those we talk to are affect how we speak? For example, how does it affect what language or dialect we use to talk to them, how formally or informally we speak, how we address the interlocutor, and what we do to “gain the floor” and hold or cede it during the conversation? Conversely, how does our use of language, not merely reflect, but help define who we are, in terms of class, gender, race, age, and so on, at least in the perception of others? There are four fields within linguistics and the neighboring disciplines that study these questions: pragmatics, conversation analysis, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology.

Pragmatics is the study of utterance meaning. It aims to construct theories that account for all those aspects of the meanings of linguistic utterances that depend, not solely on the words and syntactic constructions they involve, but on the context in which they occur. Although pragmatics can be defined as a subfield of linguistics, some of the most important theoretical contributions to this field have been made by philosophers of language. Examples are J. L. Austin’s theory of **speech acts** – actions that are carried out by means of utterances but have consequences outside of the discourse or conversation, such as greetings, commands, requests, apologies, baptisms, or declarations of war – and H. P. Grice’ theory of **conversational implicatures** – inferences speakers and hearers make about each other’s communicative intentions, such as the inference that when I say *It’s cold in here*, I might want you to close the window. A third very important complex of phenomena studied within pragmatics is that of **deixis** or **indexicality** – the dependence of the meaning of many linguistic expressions on some aspect of the context in which they are used (an example is the pronoun *I*, which always refers to the speaker of the utterance, and the adverb *now*, which refers to the time at which the utterance is made).

Conversation analysis is an approach to the study of the structure of linguistic interactions that originally developed out of sociology. But unlike the field of sociolinguistics (see below), the emphasis in conversation analysis is not so much on the speech people use during conversations – such as the words they chose and how they pronounce these – but on how they negotiate the turns during a conversation – chiefly, who get’s to say something about what to whom at what point of the conversation. For example, powerful people are more likely to interrupt people of lesser power, and are likely to hold the floor longer. Conversation analysts ask how this plays out in interactions between men and women, doctors and patients, teachers and students, and so on.

Sociolinguistics is a subfield of linguistics that attempts to determine how sociological variables such as age, race, gender, and class influence language use. One important perspective within sociolinguistics is that of **social variation** – the fact that what words and constructions a speaker chooses to convey a certain idea and the pronunciation of those words and constructions varies, not just from region to region (in terms of dialects in the traditional sense of the term), but also with age, race, gender, class, and so on. In this respect, variationist sociolinguistics shares its domain with the study of language and identity within the field of linguistic anthropology (see below). The two approaches differ in their goals: variationist sociolinguists study variation primarily with the aim of modeling how language use and language change reflect the structure and makeup of society.

Linguistic anthropology (or anthropological linguistics – the two terms are used more or less interchangeably) is an approach to the study of language and culture at the intersection of cultural anthropology and linguistics. Linguistic anthropologists seek to understand language as an integral part of culture - the sum total of the knowledge and practices (socially shared habitual behavior) that an individual partakes in by virtue of being a member of a community. This perspective makes it possible for linguistic anthropologists to use linguistic evidence and methods of linguistics to illuminate the culture of the speech community and to bring cultural evidence and anthropological methods to bear on the study of those aspects of language that are culture-specific. Linguistic anthropology has developed several broad themes, each branching off into numerous different lines of inquiry. **Cognitive anthropology** focuses on the meanings expressed by the lexical items and grammatical constructions of a language, asking to what extent these reflect culture-specific conceptualizations of the speech community. For example, ethnobotanists and ethnozoologists study indigenous terminologies for life forms, seeking to determine what aspects of these vary from community to community, depending on the particular use of and significance attributed to a life form, and what aspects are shared across cultures, reflecting the shared biological and cognitive heritage of humankind. Similar research has targeted terminologies for color, kinship, emotions, tastes and smells, and so on. The most controversial idea in cognitive anthropology is the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis - the hypothesis that the language habitually used by the members of a community may influence the way they memorize and conceptualize reality. The **ethnography of speaking** (or ethnography of communication), the second major sub-field within linguistic anthropology, examines culture-specific aspects of language use, viewing speaking itself as a cultural practice - from simple speech acts such as greetings and leave-takings via more complex “scripted” speech events (e.g., religious ceremonies, political speeches, court room proceedings) to the ethno-poetic study of verbal art and to culture-specific norms of linguistic **politeness**.

More recently, linguistic anthropologists have focused on the problem of **language and identity**. Like that of variationist sociolinguists described above, this project examines the relation between language use and identity categories such as age, gender, class, and race. However, while sociolinguists seek to describe the effects of such categories on language use in objective, quantitative terms, linguistic anthropologists seek to understand how the use of certain linguistic variables (pronunciations, words,

constructions) helps define perceived identity categories by means of linguistic (or language) ideologies. An identity category that we will pay particular attention to is that of gender.

A complex of phenomena studied by sociolinguists and ethnographers of communication alike, along with historical linguists, is **multilingualism**. **Code switching** concerns the question which factors determine the selection of a language in a given situation by people who speak more than that one language. Of course the competence of the addressee or hearer in one language or another matters, as does the topic of conversation; but so do a host of other factors – including language ideologies, the relative power, prestige, and “solidarity” between the interlocutors, and the formality of the situation. **Diglossia** refers to the existence, not of multiple mutually unintelligible languages, but of multiple dialects or varieties of one and the same language, within a single speech community. The factors that determine which variety/dialect is used in any given situation are very similar to those governing code switching. **Contact-induced change** is any change one language undergoes as a result of contact with another, from borrowing of words or morphemes via calquing of constructions or other abstract templates to the formation of linguistic areas (in which genealogically unrelated languages come to resemble each other through contact more than each language resembles genealogically related languages spoken outside the area) and contact varieties (including pidgin and creole languages) and eventually all the way to language shift and language death, where one language is replaced by another in the life of the community.

Goals of the course: Students should develop a “mental map” of the phenomena of language use that places them in the contexts and perspectives of the fields and approaches that study them. They should understand the basic questions each approach asks and the kinds of answers it seeks well enough to be in a position to decide whether they would like or need to immerse themselves further in any of these approaches and fields. When confronted with a phenomenon of language use in their future academic or non-academic practice, they should know the basic questions a linguist, sociologist, or anthropologist might ask about this phenomenon and where to look for existing research that might have addressed the phenomenon.

Classes: M/W/F 12:00 – 12:50 in 101 Baldy
Instructor: Dr. Jürgen Bohnemeyer – Office 642 Baldy Phone 645-0127
E-mail jb77@buffalo.edu Office hours M/W/F 1:00 – 1:50pm
TAs: Dan Fox (GTA) – office hours **T/R 11-12:30 in 447 Baldy.**

Coursework:

- Preparatory reading. Reading assignments in preparation of each class. Mandatory readings from the main text book, typically around 10 pages per class. Optional advanced readings for those who like to follow up and get deeper into particular topics. See the schedule below.

- Twelve short weekly homework assignments, involving mostly analysis of data provided with the assignments. Performance on the best ten accounts for 60% of the overall grade. **No replacements/make-ups.** Students can elect to do a lit review presentation in lieu of three HW assignments (see below).
- Take-home Mid-term and Final exams, implemented as online test administered through UBlerns. Students may elect to write a short (maximally 10 pages) term paper in lieu of the exams. The topic of the paper must be accepted by the instructor at least three weeks in advance of submission. Students may also present one of the advanced readings listed on the course outline (see below).
- Lit review presentations: Students may present a summary of one of the advanced readings listed on the class outline below in class during the lecture for which the reading is listed in lieu of the exams or three of the homework assignments. Presentations should be 10-20 minutes long and must include a handout.
- In-class participation. I grade participation as follows: Regular active participation – A; regular attendance and occasional active participation – B; regular attendance, no active participation – C; irregular attendance, no active participation: D; poor attendance, no active participation: F. **Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every lecture.** Attendance counts as irregular if the student missed more than one lecture unexcused and as poor if more than three lectures were missed unexcused.

Rolling assignment schedule: Assignments are released every Friday except during the first and last week and Fall Recess. They will be discussed in class the following Wednesday and Monday and are due the Friday after that.

Assessment: Best 10 HW assignments – 60%; final exam – 25%; in-class participation – 15%.

Paperless class: Lecture notes will be posted on UBlerns/Course Documents two hours ahead of class. Additional readings will be posted on UBlerns/Course Documents two days ahead of class. Assignments may be partially posted on UBlerns for downloading and partially administered through UBlerns as online tests (t.b.a.).

Learning outcomes: The following table identifies the intended learning goals of the course and maps them to the instruments that will be used for the assessment of the students' success. **Keep in mind, however, that all of these assessment instruments are designed not only to test attainment of the learning goals, but simultaneously also to solidify, enhance, and refine them.** The program goals referenced in the table are stated in an appendix to this syllabus.

| Part | Assign-ment | Outcomes | Program goals covered |
|------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | HW01 | Learn to distinguish between | Core concepts; Grasp of |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| | (and Mid-term) | grammaticality and conformity with standard norms; learn to classify dialects on the basis of their words vs. speech sounds; achieve a deeper understanding of the nature of dialects | cognitive/social aspects of language; Language diversity awareness; Critical thinking; Problem solving |
| | HW02 (and Mid-term) | Develop a grasp of the factors of power and prestige that influence the classification of linguistic varieties as languages vs. dialects outside the academic world of linguistics | Core concepts; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Language diversity awareness; Critical thinking |
| | HW03 (and Mid-term) | Learn to distinguish between pidgin and creole languages; acquire some initial exposure to their grammatical analysis; learn to evaluate hypotheses about their origins | Core concepts; Language diversity awareness; Critical thinking; Problem solving |
| | HW04 (and Mid-term) | Learn to distinguish between different types of code switching, to classify individual switches accordingly, and to understand the different underlying motivations that cause speakers to switch | Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Language diversity awareness; Problem solving |
| Part II: Variationist socio-linguistics (weeks 6-9) (weeks 6-9) | HW05 (and Mid-term) | Familiarize yourself with the analysis of sociolinguistic variables; develop an understanding of the idealizations involved in the view of linguistic varieties – including languages and dialects – as discrete entities | Core concepts; language diversity awareness; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Problem solving; Critical thinking |
| | HW06 (and Mid-term) | Begin to familiarize yourself with the principles of quantitative research designs in sociolinguistics; learn to identify, categorize, and interpret dependencies between linguistic and sociological variables | Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Problem solving |
| | HW07 (and Final) | Extend and consolidate your knowledge of the principles of quantitative research designs in sociolinguistics; learn to analyze data sets involving network variables | Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Problem solving |
| | HW08 (and Final) | Further extend and consolidate your grasp of quantitative research designs in sociolinguistics; learn to identify evidence of ongoing language change in a data set and to isolate effects of transmission (inter-generational change) and diffusion (intra-generational change) | Core concepts; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Critical thinking; Problem solving |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| Part III: Linguistic anthropology and pragmatics (weeks 9-13) | HW09 (and Final) | Develop an awareness for how languages differ from one another in terms of how they represent and frame reality and what they have in common in this respect; develop an understanding of the typology of color terminologies in the world's languages, by learning to classify fictional color terminologies in terms of whether or not they conform to the predictions of Berlin & Kay 1969 and Kay 1975 | Language diversity awareness; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Problem solving |
| | HW10 (and Final) | Learn to identify and classify speech acts; learn to identify and explain mismatches between speech acts and the syntactic sentence types used to perform them | Problem solving; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Life skills |
| | HW11 (and Final) | Learn to classify strategies of expressing politeness and to analyze and explain their use and misuse | Problem solving; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Life skills |
| Part IV: Language and identity (weeks 14-15) | HW12 (and Final) | Learn to analyze and interpret data suggesting gender differentials in the use of politeness strategies; develop a critical understanding of power differences inculcated in cultural gender roles and their reflection in language use | Core concepts; Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language; Critical thinking; Problem solving; Life skills |

Outline: Unless otherwise noted, reading assignments refer to the textbook, Wardhaugh⁶2010. All other readings are optional and will be downloadable from UBlearns.

| Unit | Week | Day | Date | Topic | Readings (page numbers refer to Wardhaugh ⁶ 2010 unless otherwise noted) |
|---|------|-----|------|---|---|
| Intro | 1 | M | 8/29 | This course; the four fields of the study of language use | |
| | | W | 8/31 | Knowledge and use of language | 1-8 |
| | | F | 9/2 | Variation; language and society | 8-19 |
| Part I: Linguistic varieties, language contact, | 2 | M | 9/5 | LABOR DAY | |
| | | W | 9/7 | Varieties; language vs. dialect | 21-31 |
| | | F | 9/9 | Categorical and gradual models of variation; standardization; the Education Fallacy | 31-40 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-------|--|--|
| multi-lingualism | 3 | M | 9/12 | Language contact; contact varieties | 53-57 |
| | | W | 9/14 | Pidgins and creoles: definitions; distribution and characteristics | 57-68 |
| | | F | 9/16 | Origins; from pidgin to creole and beyond | 68-83 |
| | 4 | M | 9/19 | Multilingualism and multilingual communities | 84-98 (Buchholz & Hall 2004) |
| | | W | 9/21 | Codes and code-switching | 98-104 (Blom & Gumperz 1972; Myers-Scotton 1993: Ch2) |
| | | F | 9/23 | Theories of code-switching; accommodation | 104-116 (Myers-Scotton 1993: Ch5) |
| | 5 | M | 9/26 | Types of social structure | Coupland & Jaworski 2009 |
| | | W | 9/28 | Speech communities | 118-125 (Gumperz & Wilson 1971) |
| | | F | 9/30 | Intersecting communities; networks and repertoires | 126-133 |
| Part II: Variationist socio-linguistics | 6 | M | 10/3 | Dimensions of linguistic variation; regional variation | 137-144 |
| | | W | 10/5 | The linguistic variable | 144-148 |
| | | F | 10/7 | Social variation | 148-155 |
| | 7 | M | 10/10 | Data collection and analysis | 155-165 |
| | | W | 10/12 | Findings and issues: an early study; NYC | 165-173 |
| | | F | 10/14 | Norwich and Reading a variety of studies | 173-176 |
| | 8 | M | 10/17 | A variety of studies | 176-184 |
| | | W | 10/19 | Belfast; controversies | 184-194 |
| | | F | 10/21 | Language change | 195-214 (Labov 1994: 177-201) |
| | 9 | M | 10/24 | Transmission and diffusion | Labov 2007 |
| | | W | 10/26 | The process of change | 214-226 (Eckert 1988; Labov 2010: Ch5) |
| | Part III: Linguistic anthropology and pragmatics | | F | 10/28 | Culture; relativity; cognitive anthropology: kinship |
| 10 | | M | 10/31 | Semantic typology: color | 245-252; Bohnemeyer 2011; (Moore et al 2015) |
| | | W | 11/2 | Semantic typology: space | Majid <i>et al.</i> 2004 |
| | | F | 11/4 | The linguistic transmission and diffusion of cognitive practices | Bohnemeyer et al (under review); (Bohnemeyer et al 2015) |

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---|-------------------|---|---|
| | 11 | M | 11/7 | Talk and action: speech acts | 301-308 |
| | | W | 11/9 | Cooperation (conversational implicatures) | 308-314 |
| | | F | 11/11 | Speech events | 253-265 (Duranti 1997: ch.9; Hymes 1972) |
| | 12 | M | 11/14 | Ethnography of communication: case studies | (Sherzer 1989; Keenan 1989) |
| | | W | 11/16 | Social deixis I: terms of address | 274-291 |
| | | F | 11/18 | Social deixis II: honorification | Irvine 1992; (Foley 1997: 313-333) |
| | 13 | M | 11/21 | Politeness I: phenomena | 291-300 |
| | | W | 11/23 | FALL RECESS | |
| | | F | 11/25 | | |
| | 14 | M | 11/28 | Politeness II: Face Theory | Brown 2005; (Brown & Levinson 1987: 101-129) |
| | | W | 11/30 | Politeness III: cross-cultural variation | Foley 1997: 273-275; Matsumoto 1988; (Ishiyama 2009; Keenan 1989) |
| Part IV: Language and identity | | F | 12/2 | Language and identity; language and gender: three research traditions | Buchholz & Hall 2004; (Irvine & Gal 2000) |
| | 15 | M | 12/5 ¹ | Ethnographic and variationist approaches to language and gender | 333-342; (Eckert 1988) |
| | | W | 12/7 | Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis; conversation-analytical approaches to language and gender | 343-355; (265-272) |
| | | F | 12/9 | Language diversity and globalization | 401-407 (Evans 2010: 5-44; Thomason 2001: Ch9-10; Dorian 1981: Ch2-3; Schmidt 1985) |

Reading list

Blom, J.-P. & J. Gumperz. (1972). Social Meaning in Linguistic Structures: Code Switching in Northern Norway. In: J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.), *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. New York Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

¹ I'm scheduled to present at a conference in Melbourne, Australia during the last week of classes and so will likely be absent the entire week. The default instructor for the week is Dan Fox. Guest lecturers are still being solicited.

- Bohnmeyer, J. (2011). Semantic typology as an approach to mapping the nature-nurture divide in cognition. White paper for the initiative SBE 2020: Future Research in the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences. Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.
(http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_2020/2020_pdfs/Bohnmeyer_Juergen_95.pdf; last accessed 6/25/2014).
- Bohnmeyer, J., E. Benedicto, K. T. Donelson, A. Eggleston, C. K. O'Meara, G. Pérez Báez, R. Tucker, A. Capistrán Garza, N. Hernández Green, M. Hernández Gómez, S. Herrera, E. Palancar, G. Polian, & R. Romero Méndez. (Under review). The linguistic transmission of cognitive practices: Reference frames in and around Mesoamerica. *Cognition*.
- Bohnmeyer, J., K. T. Donelson, R. Tucker, E. Benedicto, A. Eggleston, G. Pérez Báez, A. Capistrán Garza, N. Hernández Green, M. Hernández Gómez, S. Herrera, C. K. O'Meara, E. Palancar, G. Polian, H. Rodríguez, and R. Romero Méndez. (2015). In search of areal effects in semantic typology: Reference frames in Mesoamerica. Manuscript. *Language Dynamics and Change* 5(2): 169-201.
- Brown, P. (2005). Linguistic politeness/Sprachliche Höflichkeit. In U. Ammon, N. Dittmar, K. J. Mattheier & P. Trudgill (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*. Berlin: de Gruyter. 1410-1416.
- Brown, P. & S. C. Levinson. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buchholtz, M. & K. Hall. (2004). Language and identity. In A. Duranti (ed.), *A companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 369-394.
- Coupland, N. & A. Jaworski. (2009). Social worlds through language. In N. Coupland & A. Jaworski (eds.), *The new sociolinguistics reader*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 1-21.
- Dorian, N. C. (1981). *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckert, P. (1988). Adolescent social structure and the spread of linguistic change. *Language in society* 17: 183-207.
- Evans, N. 2010. *Dying words: Endangered languages and what they have to tell us*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Foley, W. A. (1997). *Anthropological linguistics: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Gumperz, J. J. & Wilson, R. (1971). Convergence and creolization: A case from the Indo-Aryan/Dravidian border in India. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Pidginization and creolization in language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hymes, D. (1972). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In D. Hymes & J. J. Gumperz (Eds.), *The ethnography of communication*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston. 35-71.
- Hudson, R. A. (1996). *Sociolinguistics*. [2nd Edition!, reprinted 1998, 1999] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Irvine, J. (1992). Ideologies of honorific language. *Pragmatics* 2(3): 251-262.

- Irvine, J. & S. Gal. (2000). Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In P. Kroskrity, ed., *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. 35-84.
- Ishiyama, O. (2009). A note on Matsumoto regarding Japanese verbs of giving and receiving. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 1061–1065.
- Keenan, E. (1989). Norm-makers, norm-breakers: Uses of speech by men and women in a Malagasy community. In Bauman & Sherzer (Eds): 125-143.
- Labov, W. (1982). Objectivity and commitment in linguistic science: The case of the Black English trial in Ann Arbor. *Language in Society* 11: 165-201.
- Labov, W. (1994). *Principles of Linguistic Change. Volume 1: Internal Factors*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Labov, W. (2007). Transmission and diffusion. *Language* 83(2): 344-387.
- Labov, W. (2010). *Principles of linguistic change. Volume 3: Cognitive and cultural factors*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Levinson, S. C. (2003). Language and mind: Let's get the issues straight! *Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought*, ed. by Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow, 25-46. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Majid, A., M. Bowerman, S. Kita, D. B. M. Haun, & S. C. Levinson. 2004. Can language restructure cognition? The case for Space. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8(3): 108-114.
- Mastumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12: 403-426.
- Moore, R., K. T. Donelson, A. Eggleston, & J. Bohnermeyer. (2015) Semantic typology: New approaches to crosslinguistic variation in language and cognition. *Linguistic Vanguard* (DOI 10.1515/lingvan-2015-1004).
- Schmidt, A. (1985). Speech variation and social networks in dying Dyirbal. In Clyne (Ed.) 1985: 123-150.
- Sherzer, J. (1989). Namakke, sunmakke, kormakke: Three types of Cuna speech event. In Bauman & Sherzer (Eds.): 263-282.
- Thomason, S. (2001). *Language contact: An introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Appendix: Undergraduate Program Learning Outcomes

1. Core concepts

Students will comprehend the core concepts of linguistics (including ones those in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, or semantics), as well as the basic literature that assumes such concepts.

2. Grasp of cognitive/social aspects of language

Students will achieve an awareness of language in its broader cognitive and social context.

3. Language diversity awareness

Students will develop an awareness of linguistic diversity and variability.

4. Critical thinking

Students will master the ability to construct arguments for choosing between alternative analyses of linguistic phenomena and to identify relevant data bearing on the analyses.

5. Problem solving

Students will be able to analyze linguistic data from English or other languages and to construct descriptions of particular linguistic phenomena in particular languages.

6. Data collection

Students will be able to develop basic collection and analysis skills.

7. Communication skills

Students will attain the skills necessary to prepare written and oral presentations on linguistic topics.

8. Life skills

Students will comprehend and appreciate cultural differences among speakers of different languages, be capable of applying the analytic skills acquired through the study of linguistics to other areas of life, and ascertain the importance of language in human endeavors.