

Special Topics in Sociolinguistics

Option Module for MSc-Applied Linguistics, Semester 2 2008

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Aims and objectives

This option complements and develops ideas and materials that were introduced in the core courses in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis.

The course focuses on issues of current relevance to the staff and students taking it. In the past it has offered a critical review of sociolinguistic methods for data collection and analysis; language and gender; language and social identity; etc.

In 2008, the focus will again be on language and identity (in a broad sense), building on the introductory work in this area laid down in the foundation course with Dr Erik Schleeff. The content and methods of the course will be complementary to (i.e. not the same as!) those covered in Dr Joseph Gafaranga's options modules on Bilingualism and Discourse Analysis.

The course will address the importance of the following questions in sociolinguistics:

- What constitutes a *(socio)linguistic* approach to identity?
- How does the study of language and identity inform our understanding of other social categories, e.g. modernity, localness?
- What methods do sociolinguists use to identify identity talk?
- How do social and individual identities interact with language variation and change?

Course outline

A detailed course outline/syllabus of classes and topics is given below.

This option module concludes with a Research Fest in the last week of Semester 2. It is absolutely essential that you are able to attend the Research Fest in Week 11, so if there is **any reason** why you might not be available that week, you **must** let the course organiser know by the start of Semester 2.

Week 1: What constitutes a (socio)linguistic approach to the study of identity?

Required readings:

Meyerhoff, Miriam 2006. *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.

Meyerhoff, Miriam (in prep). *Language & Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell. Chapter 1.

Recommended (cf. Week 8):

Meyerhoff, Miriam & Nancy Niedzielski 1994. Resistance to creolization: An interpersonal and intergroup account. *Language & Communication* 14. 313-330.

Week 2: Direct/indirect indexing and acts of identity

Required:

Ochs, Elinor 1992. Indexing gender. In Alessandro Duranti & Charles Goodwin (eds). *Rethinking Context*. Cambridge: CUP. 336-346.

Le Page, R.B. & Andrée Tabouret-Keller 1985. *Acts of Identity*. Cambridge: CUP. 158-186.

Meyerhoff, Miriam (in prep) *Language & Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell. Chapter 2

Week 3: Indexing the local (1): Linguistic practices and language attitudes (anthropological perspectives)

Required:

Besnier, Niko 2003. Crossing genders, mixing languages: The linguistic construction of transgenderism in Tonga. In Janet Holmes & Miriam Meyerhoff (eds) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell. 279-301.

Sidnell, Jack 2003. Constructing and managing male exclusivity in talk-in-interaction. In Janet Holmes & Miriam Meyerhoff (eds) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell. 327-352. **Esp. 333-339.**

Recommended:

Besnier, Niko 2004. Consumption and cosmopolitanism: Practicing modernity at the second-hand marketplace in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 77. 7-45.

Week 4: Indexing the local (2): Linguistic practices and language attitudes (other perspectives)

Meyers, Greg 2006. Where are you from? Identifying place. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 10. 320-343.

Corder, Saskia & Miriam Meyerhoff 2007. Communities of Practice in the analysis of intercultural communication. In Helga Kotthoff & Helen Spencer-Oatey (eds). *Handbook of Applied Linguistics: Volume 7 Intercultural Communication*. Oxford: Elsevier.

Meyerhoff, Miriam 2004. Attitudes to gender and creoles: A case study on *mokes* and *titas*. *Te Reo*. 47. 63-82.

Week 5: (Re)presenting identities in writing

Required:

- Coupland, Justine 1996. Dating advertisements: Discourses of the commodified self. *Discourse and Society* 7. Reprinted in Deborah Cameron & Don Kulick (eds) 2006. *The Language and Sexuality Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge. 101-117.
- Linmark, R. Zamora 1995. Tongue-tied and The Two Filipinos. *Rolling the Rs*. Kaya Press. 48-54; 67-70.
- Yamanaka, Lois-Ann. t.b.a.

Week 6: Identity and language change: Operationalising identity in variationist sociolinguistics

Required:

- Dubois, Sylvie & Barbara Horvath 1999. When the music changes, you change too: Gender and language change in Cajun English. *Language Variation and Change*. 11. 287-313.
- Hazen, Kirk 2002. Identity and language variation in a rural community. *Language*. 78. 240-257.

Week 7: READING WEEK

Individual sign-ups with Miriam to discuss final paper.

Week 8: Resistance and difference

Required:

- Meyerhoff, Miriam & Nancy Niedzielski 1994. Resistance to creolization: An interpersonal and intergroup account. *Language & Communication* 14. 313-330.
- Starks, Donna & Hayley Reffell 2006. Reading 'TH': Vernacular variants in Pasifika Englishes in South Auckland. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 10. 382-392.
- Labov, William 1972. *Sociolinguistics Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 1 (The social motivation of a sound change).

Recommended (cf. Week 10):

- Besnier, Niko 1994. The truth and other irrelevant aspects of Nukulaelae gossip. *Pacific Studies*. 17. 1-39.

Week 9: Reallocation and reindexing

Required:

- Meyerhoff, Miriam & Nancy Niedzielski 2003. The globalisation of vernacular variation. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 7. 534-555.
- Queen, Robin 2004. 'Du hast jar keene Ahnung': African American English dubbed into German. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 8. 515-537.

Week 10: Small talk and gossip

Required:

- Besnier, Niko 1994. The truth and other irrelevant aspects of Nukulaelae gossip. *Pacific Studies*. 17. 1-39.
- Pilkington, Jane 1992. 'Don't try and make out that I'm nice!' The different strategies women and men use when gossiping. *Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics*. 5. 37-60.
- Holmes, Janet 2006. *Gendered Talk at Work*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Chapter 3 'Relational practice—Not just women's work.')

Week 11: COURSE MINI-CONFERENCE

Assessment

Final assessment will be by way of a 5,000 word (maximum) essay: *EITHER* discussing problems or issues in language and identity research, *OR* outlining the results of independent research into the linguistic study of identity.

In week 7 (18-22 February), I will arrange a meeting time with each member of the class to discuss your plans for your final project. You can use this as a brainstorming session with me to narrow down your choice to one from many ideas you might have. Or you can use it as an opportunity for more focused discussion of your research, e.g. specific problems with the data, gaps in your knowledge of the literature.

In evaluating your work, we will be looking for evidence of both creativity and sound judgement. For example, creativity may be demonstrated through your identification of a problem, issue or theoretical perspective on language and identity. It may also be demonstrated through innovative data collection and analysis. Sound judgement may be demonstrated through original observations and critiques of previously published work. It may also be demonstrated through a clearly-focused presentation of complex data.

Readings

The readings are up-to-date primary research from journals and books. The set readings for each class are provided in the outline of classes above.

As this is an "advanced" option in sociolinguistics, there is an expectation that students will be reading extensively throughout the entire semester. *PLEASE SEE THE NOTE ON "WORKLOAD" BELOW.*

If prospective students would like to get a head start on the readings, they should contact me before the end of Semester 1 and I will make copies of materials available to them directly.

Workload

This course is a quarter of a typical MSc student workload for a semester and the workload is determined accordingly.

For example, it is expected that in order to obtain a good pass in this course, students will spend about **10 hours per week** on the course (in class, preparing for class, and undertaking research and/or reading related to course work). Students who hope to get a very good or excellent pass in this course should expect to do more than this.