

LG114: *Language in Society* – Outline (Spring 2019)

Peter Patrick, module director

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This is an outline of LG114 (LG114-4-SP *Language in Society*)

- For online resources see the Moodle page: <https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/>

1 Outline

This module provides an introduction to the role of variation in the language system, and the techniques and concepts required to study the way language varies and changes, including geographically (geographical dialect), according to social context (social dialect), and across time – that is, to the basic principles of sociolinguistics and language variation. We begin by defining language, dialect, and other varieties, and considering myths about language. Topics include language attitudes and ideologies; the fundamentals of measuring language variation; variation across time, regions, and social categories; social patterns and social functions of language variation; speaker variables; models and methods of studying language change; and the relationship of variation to language change. Examples are drawn from the whole history of English dialect usage and change in the British Isles, and varieties of English worldwide.

- the role of variation in the language system, and the techniques and concepts required;
- how language varies & changes geographically, by social context & across time;
- that is, the basic principles of sociolinguistics;
- with a focus on English in the British Isles and worldwide.

2 Aims

- Introduce the basic concepts of language variation and change
- Address some popular myths about language
- Investigate attitudes to language and ideologies about language
- Introduce fundamental techniques for describing and measuring language variation (across time, region, and social category)
- Describe the social patterns and social functions of language variation
- Illustrate the relationship of language variation to language change

3 Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Understand the role variation plays in language systems
- Analyse variation in vernacular data and explain its systematic patterning
- Approach the primary academic literature on how social categories affect language use
- Understand how attitudes to language are intertwined with language use and structure
- Relate synchronic variation to models of language change
- Critically view the social functions and values of dialects and vernacular language usage

4 Staff

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5 Method

There will be a 2 hour lecture, and a 1 hour class, every week.

6 Assessment

- 50 per cent Coursework Mark, 50 per cent Exam Mark
- Exam Duration and Period: 2:00 hours during Summer Examination period.
- Coursework
 - Submit all assessed coursework work via FASER
 - Coursework will consist of:
 - Three exercise assignments (no word limit but 500 words each should be enough)
 - An essay assignment (1500 word limit)

Item	Weighting	Deadline
Exercise 1	16.6%	Monday, week 19, 4 Feb 2019
Exercise 2	16.6%	Monday, week 22, 25 Feb 2019
Exercise 3	16.6%	Monday, week 25, 18 March 2019
Essay	50%	Monday, week 30, 22 April 2019
Total	100%	

Details of the first three coursework exercises will be available online. The questions for the essay are the following (choose ONE):

1. Describe and discuss some attitudes towards language. Give some examples of the ways in which language attitudes can be studied and consider the shortcomings of their methods.
2. Briefly explain what is meant by 'age grading'. Give examples of age-graded linguistic features, explaining how they work. How is age-grading different from change in progress?

3. Define *dialect*, distinguishing it clearly from *accent* and *language*. Give examples of each. What is *linguistic diffusion*? Briefly explain at least two kinds or models.

7 Week by Week Breakdown

1. (Week 16) *Introduction*: Language, dialect, prescriptive/descriptive, referential vs. social meaning, etc.
2. (Week 17) *Language Attitudes 1: Language Myths*: e.g. Should language change? Are some dialects bad, some languages primitive? Do women talk too much? Are double negatives illogical?
3. (Week 18) *Style & Social Meaning*: Style as individual range of expression; style and speech community. Style creates/changes social meaning. Deixis in T/V pronouns: social function overrides grammatical.
4. (Week 19) *Language Attitudes 2: Perception of variation*: matched guise/perceptual dialectology studies. (Standard) language ideology and linguistic stereotypes.
5. (Week 20) *Variation by Speaker*: How class, age, and sex influence language use.
6. (Week 21) *Linguistic Variation & Meaning, I: Morphology*. The linguistic variable (revisited); form and function (e.g. variation in -ing suffix) from Old English to Modern English – language change, regional and social variation, acquisition.
7. (Week 22) *Linguistic Variation & Meaning, II: Morphology*. Zero grammatical variants. English (-s): verbal, possessive, plural (Norfolk, SW, AAVE, Jamaican Creole).
8. (Week 23) *Variation in Space*. Dialect diffusion, divergence and contact.
9. (Week 24) *Linguistic Causes of Variation*. Linguistic context constrains variation. Change spreads through linguistic context. Grammatical variation underlying (e.g. -/ing/ again). Animacy in Jamaican Creole plurals. S-curve of change.
10. (Week 25) *Linguistic Change*. Genetic linguistics. Stable variation vs change in progress. Change from above (social motivation) vs below (linguistic motivation). Apparent/real-time diagnosis of change.

8 Reading

There's a **textbook**:

- Ronald Wardhaugh & Janet M Fuller. 2015, 7th ed. *An introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- The book is available online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b2026807~S5>
- See also the companion site: <http://www.wiley.com/go/wardhaugh/sociolinguistics>

The following **supplementary readings** may be useful (see the TALIS reading list for a full list - <https://rl.talis.com/3/essex/lists/0B3833F1-FF48-B9F3-FDB7-1DOE733BA0BE.html>):

Bauer, Laurie & Peter Trudgill, eds. *Language Myths*. 1998. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Chambers, JK. 2009, rev. ed. *Sociolinguistic theory: Linguistic variation and its social significance*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Chambers, JK, & Peter Trudgill. 1998. *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b1709171~S5>

Chambers, JK & Natalie Schilling-Estes. 2013, 2nd ed. *The handbook of language variation and change*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell. Online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b1981733~S5>

- Coupland, Nikolas, & Adam Jaworski, eds. 1997. *Sociolinguistics: A reader*. London: Macmillan.
- Garrett, Peter. "Language attitudes." Chapter 14 in C Llamas, L Mullany & P Stockwell, eds., *The Routledge companion to sociolinguistics*: 116-121. London: Routledge. Online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b1709254~S5>
- Meyerhoff, Miriam. 2011, 2nd ed. *Introducing sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge. Online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b1813688~S5>
- Milroy, Lesley & Matthew Gordon. 2003. *Sociolinguistics: Method and interpretation*. Malden MA: Blackwell. Online: <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk/record=b1687966~S5>
- Trudgill, Peter. 2000, 4th ed. *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society*. London: Penguin.