

Phiadelphia University
English Department
MA Programme in Language and Literature
English 0120721 : Sociolinguistics
Fall Semester, 2006-07
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I. Course description:

This course provides a socially-based approach to language with emphasis on its function and meaning in real communication situations. It addresses the diversity of language use in respect of pronunciation, grammar and style across different social groups interacting in different contexts and registers. It also underlines the close affinity between language and social factors such as gender and ethnicity.

II. Learning outcomes *

Knowledge and understanding:

To be successful in your study of this course, you are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of :

1. different theoretical and analytical approaches to the study of language with emphasis on sociolinguistics;
2. the relative strengths and limitations of different linguistic and anthropological approaches to the study of language and literacy;
3. the importance of mode (spoken, written and multimodal, i.e. combinations of words and pictures) and context (social, political, and cultural) in language choice;
4. a wide range of terminology for describing language use and linguistic analysis;
5. how your learning in different parts of the course may be integrated according to the central conceptual strands of the course: the relationship between language and context; how meaning is produced through spoken, written and multi-media communication; the relationship between language and identity.

cognitive skills:

To be successful in your study of this course you are expected to:

1. demonstrate how particular approaches to the study of language can be applied to empirical data;
2. evaluate critically the strengths and limitations of particular theoretical and analytical approaches to language, literacy and the collection of linguistic data.
3. demonstrate awareness of the process involved in linguistic research;
4. relate theoretical concepts to concrete experience;

* slightly adapted from **E300: Assignment Book and Project Guide (SUP 801834)**, The open university, pp.21-22,2005.

5. design and carry out a small-scale research project requiring the collection of linguistic data.
6. demonstrate autonomy in selecting appropriate topics / data for investigation, and in carrying out project work;
7. use appropriate terminology to describe and discuss specific linguistic theories, concepts and evidence;
8. synthesise different points of view, and personal research data in order to reach your own conclusions;
9. evaluate and adapt project work in the light of feedback and practical experience;

Communication skills

To be successful in your study of this course you are expected to:

1. select and synthesise the main points of information, or of an argument, from a variety of sources;
2. exercise critical judgement about sources of evidence;
3. develop research skills, including the ability to gather, sift and organize material independently and critically, and to evaluate its relevance and significance;
4. develop good practice in the acknowledgement of source material and in the presentation of bibliographies;
5. construct a continuous logical line of argument which specifically answers the question set;
6. present written work to a high standard using the appropriate register and style.

Practical / professional skills

To be successful in your study of this course you are expected to develop abilities in:

1. abstracting and synthesizing information from a variety of sources;
2. making independent and analytical judgements;
3. using and evaluating a variety of means to analyse linguistic and ethnographic data;
4. evaluating social, political and ethical issues related to language use;
5. communicating effectively in writing, selecting appropriate genre, style and register;
6. working independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time management;
7. planning and undertaking research.

III. Study Calendar

Study week	Course material	Acs	Assignments tests / final examinations
1	General introduction and discussion	Ac 1 : Bands 1-2	
2	<u>An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (ISL) by J.Holmes</u> Ch1: what do sociolinguists study Ch:2 Language choice in multilingual communities.		
3	ISL, Ch4: ‘Linguistic varieties and multilingual nations’. ISL, Ch5: ‘National languages and language planning’.		
4	ISL, Ch6: ‘Regional and social dialects’		
5	ISL, Ch7: ‘Gender and age’		
6	ISL, Ch8: ‘Ethnicity and social networks’ ISL, Ch9: ‘Language change’		
7	ISL, Ch10: ‘Style, context, and register’		Test 1
8	ISL, Ch10: ‘Style, context, and register’.		
9	ISL, Ch11: ‘Speech functions, politeness and cross cultural communication’		
10	ISL, Ch12: ‘Gender, politeness, and stereotypes’		
11	ISL, Ch13: ‘Language , cognition, and culture ‘		
12	ISL, Ch14: ‘Attitude and applications’		
13	<u>Al`Arabiyya</u> , pp. 51-79 ‘Principles for Cod-switching Between Standard and Egyptian Arabic’ by Mushira Eid		TMA / report
14	<u>Lang. Soc.</u> 12,433-457 ‘Patterns of communal Language variation in Bahrain’, by Clive Holes.		
15	<u>Anthopological Linguistics</u> , Vol. 28, No.1 ‘Standard and Prestige Language: A Problem in Arabic Sociolinguistics’ by Muhammad H. Ibrahim.		
16	Final examination		

Referring to the course material and other sources *

Your assignment is meant to provide evidence that you have read and understood the course materials. You may refer briefly to other sources of evidence if you wish, but your assignments will be assessed primarily on your understanding and use of the course materials. Whatever the source of your evidence, remember that it is not sufficient simply to reproduce it – you need to use it to advance your argument.

Citing material from the course

When you are reporting a piece of research or an argument, you should make it clear where this comes from. The course chapters provide examples of the usual academic conventions for doing this (e.g. 'Quirk (1986) claimed that ...'). Since you and your tutor have access to the same course material, you can, if you wish, use a form of reference such as: 'In Chapter 1 Reading A, Randolph Quirk claimed that ...'; or 'On Audiocassette 1 Band 3, Dick Leith suggested ..' The main thing is to make it clear which piece of work you are drawing on. Wherever possible, give precise page references: this not only makes it easier for your tutor to check the evidence you are drawing on; it also helps you trace your sources when you come to revise.

You may wish to include brief quotations from the course materials. In this case, they should be clearly set out as quotations, and the source should be given. Otherwise, if you are discussing ideas from the course, try to read and absorb these, then write what you think about them in your own words. It is particularly important, when setting out your own ideas or arguments, that you do not reproduce long extracts from the course (or from other sources) with little or no change, as this gives the impression that you are trying to pass off someone else's ideas as your own. This could constitute plagiarism, which is treated as a very serious offence by the University. Below is an extract from a chapter on plagiarism, which you may find helpful.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the theft of other people's words and ideas. Plagiarism happens when you claim (or appear to claim) that an idea, or the expression of it, is your own when in fact it is someone else's. Deliberate plagiarism usually takes the form of either getting someone else to write your essay for you and then saying it's yours, or copying chunks of text out of a book with the deliberate intent of deceiving the reader into thinking they are in your own words. Accidental plagiarism, which most institutions are obliged to penalize equally heavily, is achieved by oversight and/or lack of skill in manipulating information. Here are some examples of how it can happen:

- You make notes from a book, copying out lots of relevant passages and then, when you come to write the essay, you copy your notes into it, forgetting that they were copied in the first place.

* This material is taken from U 210 Assignment Book 2002 by Diana Honeybore, PP. 4-11, The open University.

- You use a book which covers exactly the area you are dealing with; you are aware that you mustn't copy it out, so you deftly rephrase little bits, by replacing 'small' with 'little', 'major differences' by 'main differences' and by swapping over the order of two halves of a sentence. You think that this is now legitimate, but your assessors do not.
- You use entirely your own words, but you don't acknowledge the source of your information.
- You draw from notes you made or were given for some previous course of study, without realizing that these were copied or adapted from some other source.

A reader will assume that any idea not referenced is your own, and that any passage not in quote marks is in your own words. This is a contract of trust which you must respect.

How to avoid accidental plagiarism: some strategies

Expect to acknowledge everything you've got from a source other than your own head. The things that don't need referencing are your own ideas and common or uncontroversial knowledge (English is a Germanic Language, for example). If in doubt, err on the side of over—referencing, until you get the knack. Having too many references in a text breaks up the flow of your writing, but that is the lesser of two evils. To avoid too much repetition, you may be able to say at the beginning of a section or paragraph: The following is a summary of information given in Smith (1994). Note, however, that it is not sufficient to give one vague reference to your source somewhere, and then draw directly from it for page after page.

Rather than just summarizing what you are reading for the sake of it, make notes relevant to the task in hand and identify the major points that relate to your purpose. Make the notes under headings; you can then write out your own version based on those points. When making notes, use your own words wherever possible. Never copy anything out without putting it in inverted commas and putting a page reference next to it. Always keep the full reference details for any source you draw on, as you will need them later. These details should be integral to your notes, so that you can easily see where an idea or quote has come from. Where your source text gives examples of a phenomenon under discussion, try to think of some examples of your own (or look them up in a dictionary or another book). This is in any case a good way of ensuring that you understand what you are writing about. However, if you are in doubt about whether your example is valid (e.g. where the examples have been drawn from a particular source that you cannot access), quote the ones you have been given and acknowledge them appropriately. If there is any terminology you don't understand, look it up [or ask your tutor for advice], don't just copy it out.

(Wray et al, 1998)

Listing your sources in a bibliography

At the end of your assignment, you should list the sources to which you have referred. The course books illustrate the conventional layout for different types of reference (see examples in the box below). When referring to course materials, you do not need to give such full sources (you could simply list materials as 'Describing Language, Chapter 1' or 'Audiocassette 2 Band 2 Indian English', etc.). The important thing is that your tutor should be clear about material you have drawn on.

Reference list styles

Note: it is usual to italicize book titles; however, if you are not able to do this, you should underline them instead.

Book

TRUDGILL, P. and HANNAH, J. (1994, 3rd edn) *International English*, London, Edward Arnold.

Chapter/extract from an edited collection

HARRIS, J. (1993) 'The grammar of Irish English' in MILROY, J. and MILROY, L. (eds) *Real English: the grammar of English dialects in the British Isles*, London, Longman.

Paper in a journal or magazine

WALES, L. (1994) 'Royalse: the rise and fall of "the Queen's English" ', *English Today*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 3-10.

Some frequently asked questions

Here we offer some guidance on some of the dilemmas that occur regularly when preparing to answer a TMA.

What should I do if the question is not clear or seems ambiguous?

As mentioned above, we try to ensure this will not be a problem. However, if you feel a question is unclear, you should contact your tutor in the first instance: he or she should be able to help you sort out any confusion. Failing that, you should state in your introduction how you are interpreting the question (together with whatever justification you think is necessary) and then proceed to answer it on those terms.

What should I do if I disagree with the arguments being put in the course material?

You are not expected to agree with everything that is said in the course book or audiovisual material. Indeed, we hope that you will engage in a critical dialogue with the analysis and arguments you encounter.

However, any criticism you offer should be based on sound knowledge and understanding of the ideas and information presented in that part of the course, and your reservations should be supported by relevant argument and information either from the course material or another source that is fully acknowledged and referenced.

Should I include personal experience and material from other sources?

You are often asked, as part of your study, to relate ideas in the course to your own experiences of English. It is also suggested that you collect your own examples of material to put in a 'cuttings file'. Examples might be newspaper articles dealing with any aspect of English, advertisements, letters, business cards, and so on. You may also like to jot down examples of English that you hear around you or which your children use. Some TMAs may refer directly to the cuttings file, with suggestions on how this may be used. Where TMAs do not do this, you may still feel that you have examples which are relevant. In this case, ensure that any examples you include can be related to the question; try to use them to illustrate or address points from the course; and select a small number of examples so that you have enough space to deal with ideas and evidence discussed in the course materials. Please remember to acknowledge your source. Extensive analyses should be accompanied by a photocopy of the original wherever possible.

IV. Marking criteria *

The following criteria will be used in evaluating and grading your assignment, tests, and final examination paper.

- **The relevance of your answer to the question set**

Your tutor will look for evidence that you have clearly understood the question and directed your answer accordingly.

- **Your knowledge and understanding of the course material**

Your tutor will look for evidence that you have understood and can draw effectively on research evidence, ideas, concepts and arguments that are central to the course.

- **Your ability to discuss and evaluate alternative explanations and arguments**

Researchers and other commentators may provide different (and sometimes competing) explanations for linguistic events and processes. Your tutor will look to see whether you are able to discuss these, and evaluate any arguments put forward in support of a particular viewpoint.

- **The ability to present and pursue an argument**

Your tutor will examine the structure of your answer to assess how well you can put together the material you use to sustain and support an argument.

* Slightly amended from U 210 Assignment Book 2002 by Honeybone, PP. 11-12.

- **The ability to express yourself clearly using academic conventions as appropriate**

Your tutor will look for clarity in your work, in the way you make points, present research findings and make critical comments. You are not expected to make extensive use of technical vocabulary, but you should be able to refer to key terms and concepts from the course materials. You should also acknowledge clearly any sources you have drawn on.

For assignments that include practical work with language data, your tutor will take into account:

- **Your ability to make a clear analysis and interpretation of language data as specified in the assignment**

Your tutor will look to see whether your analysis is appropriate, whether it draws on relevant ideas and concepts from the course, and whether any interpretation you give is justified by reference to relevant aspects of the data.

The comments from your tutor should explain why you received the marks given. They will cover the content of your assignment (e.g. your understanding of key issues, the argument you have constructed). Comments may also include teaching points about aspects of your work which could have been strengthened or extended. In addition, they may suggest ways of improving your performance in future assignments.

The allocation of marks for the course will be as follows:

On-going assessment ***60 marks:***

- 1st test 30 marks
- Assignment / report 30 marks

Final examination ***40 marks***

V. REFERENCES

1. Brown, Penelope and Stephen Levinson (1987) Politeness: Some universals in Language usage . Mouton
2. Cameron, Debra (1995) Verbal Hygiene . London, Routledge
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5. Edwards, A.D. (1976) Language in Culture and Class . London, Heinemann
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11. Holmes, Janet. (1988) Paying Compliments: a sex- preferential positive politeness strategy. Journal of Pragmatics . 12, 3: 445-65
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- 14 . Hymes, Dell. (1974) Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach. Philadelphia University and Pennsylvania Press.
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- 17 . Romaine, Suzan (2000) Language in Society : An Introduction to Socio-linguistics. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.
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- 19 . Suleiman, Y. (ed.) (1996) Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa. Surrey: Curzon.
- 20 . Tannen, Deborah. (ed.) (1993) Gender and Conversational Interaction.
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- 22 . Trudgill, Peter, and Cheshire, Jenny. (eds) (1998) The Sociolinguistics Reader: Gender and Discourse. Arnold.
- 23 . Wardhaugh, Ronald. (1997) Introduction to Sociolinguistics. Blackwell.