Course Description

Language has been called a "social mirror," reflecting who we are, where we are from, and who we interact with. However, language has increasingly come to be seen as a tool of social construction as well. It does not simply reflect some amalgamation of our past, but is critically involved in shaping our future. We use language to construct our personas, to ally ourselves with some groups and distance ourselves from others, to project ourselves into some futures and away from others. However, not all these social constructions are evident to casual observers of language. Hence, one goal of our work this term is to bring to conscious awareness just how we use language as we build and interact with the societies around us. A second goal is to consider our attitudes towards language, including many common myths. What linguists know about language is often at odds with prevailing opinion, and we will study, and remedy, that disjunction.

The centerpiece of the course this term, however, is dialects, standards, and standardization: what they are, how they are formed, maintained, and lost; what their linguistic features are, and, most significantly, how they function to group and stratify society.

Students will work, alone or in groups, to conduct original research in one of three ways:
1) collecting data on the present linguistic variations of local residents, as well as attitudes towards these variations;
2) collecting data on local groups and "communities of practice"; or
3) examining language and/or attitudes about language in the media.

Through this research project, we will come to understand how linguists gather and interpret sociolinguistic data, and understand the significance of linguistic variation in our society. By closely examining how it is that people use language, we should come to understand when and why we and others use it differently, and in the process, learn how we may become more adept in our own language use.

NOTE: Common abbreviations for language (lg), linguistics (lx) and sociolinguistics (soclx) may be used throughout the term.

Course Requirements

- Participation 20%
  - Attendance & active engagement in class discussion
  - Weekly reading responses
- Exam #1 (on 2/17/04) 20%
- Exam #2 (on 3/25/04) 20%
- Prospectuses (prelim. due 2/19, revision due 3/16) plus conferences with VB. Weeks 6&7 5%
- Oral presentation (Wks 13-15) 15%
- Final research paper & portfolio (due Friday, 4/30) 20%
Total 100%

NOTE: Keep all material written this semester in a portfolio, to be turned in at the end of the semester.

**Explanation of Course Requirements**

**Attendance & Active Engagement**

Regular attendance and preparation are the only ways to keep up with the pace of ideas and information exchange in this class. We will frequently discuss material in class that is NOT covered in the books or put on reserve or e-mail. It is also YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to read the material before class and to come prepared to discuss it, and to arrange for someone to pick up any handouts or lend you notes if you miss class.

You learn linguistics by doing it; thus, active engagement in class participation is very important. If you miss class, you deprive yourself of important practice and information, as well as depriving the class of your viewpoint and ideas. Each unexcused absence after the first counts -0.5 points. However, missing more than five class periods zeroes out 10% of your participation grade. Be sure to notify me in writing of any legitimately excusable absences—in advance, if possible.

**Weekly Reading Responses**

Come to class having read the assignment listed for that day! It is critical to keep up with the readings assigned so that you are able to intelligently discuss the questions we consider. To prepare for class, you will do weekly reading responses (typed, 1-2 pp.), to help get you thinking about issues for discussion. We will use weekly reading responses as springboards for discussion: they will be based on your readings or on an observation. I may also use brief quizzes to check whether you are keeping up with the readings. You will turn these in on time, and they will be assessed as Excellent (+), Satisfactory (V) or Unsatisfactory (-), or missing (0).

**Examinations**

The two essay examinations during the semester will cover the material up to that point in class and in the texts. It is absolutely critical to read the texts. We cannot cover all material in the class, and I will assume that you will be familiar with the general issues and approaches raised by the authors. All examinations must be your own work. The two exams will be tests of your ability to understand, apply, and extend the vocabulary and basic principles covered in the readings and class lectures and discussions.

**Research Project**

Early in the term, you will choose a topic for your final research panel presentation and paper, which may be done alone or in groups. I will allow some time in class to meet with your group to choose a particular topic, but you will probably need to meet together outside of class. On 2/19, you will turn in a BRIEF preliminary prospectus outlining your topic and methodological approach, to be written up formally, revised and resubmitted, with an annotated bibliography, on 3/16, following the conference with me during week 6 or 7.

**The presentation and final paper** will come out of your in-depth study of sociolinguistic issues. Your research must contain original data collected in an approved manner.

The **oral presentation**, given in class in the last three weeks of the quarter, should take approximately 5-7 minutes per person, plus some minutes for questions. This oral presentation may act as a rough draft for your final paper, but do not read your paper to the class!

The **final paper** should be carefully researched (citing all sources appropriately), exemplified with linguistic data, and well argued. All bibliographic items should be cited according the standards of the APA or MLA. The paper and **portfolio** is due on Friday, 4/30. More details about this final paper will follow.

**Academic Integrity**

True learning demands careful attention to words and ideas, our own and others. We must give others’ ideas thoughtful consideration if we desire it for ourselves. Likewise, we must respect the rights and responsibilities of intellectual property. Taking someone else’s thoughts or words and passing them off as your own is academic theft. Using others’ work without proper attribution will result in your failing the assignment, or the class, depending on the scope. However, it is no contradiction that linguists often do their best work in consultation with others; in fact, we must observe how people use language in order to gather our data. You are encouraged to work with others as you prepare assignments for class, and in the final presentation and paper, but all exams must be your own work. Furthermore, you must contribute your fair share to any group work. Please see me if you have difficulties in understanding where the line lies between consultation and/or quotation vs. plagiarism.

Here are two useful websites to consult:
1) Sharon Wilson’s page defining (and avoiding) plagiarism: http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/we/AvoidingPlagiarism.html
2) The University’s Academic Integrity Policy: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/dos/academicintegrity.html

**ADA NOTE**

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (x7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (x7-3310).
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<td>1/13 Introduction: language identity, difference, standards, correctness, English Only Reading: Wheeler, Pinker: 3-14</td>
<td>1/15 Linguistic facts of life: change, variation, quality, use, standards &amp; standardization Reading: Lippi-Green 1: 3-40</td>
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<td>1/20 Lg. vs. dialect; communicative competence; differ. words, diff. worlds? Reading: Romaine Preface &amp; 1: 1-31</td>
<td>1/22 Sociolinguistic patterns: class, gender, age, style, networks Reading: Romaine 3: 64-100</td>
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<td>1/27 Gender variation and language Reading: Romaine 4: 101-134</td>
<td>1/29 Gendered conversation, Afr-Am women Reading: Wheeler, Tannen 211-16; Troutman 217-32</td>
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<td>2/3 Video: American Tongues Reading: browse ahead to look for topics</td>
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<td>2/10 Myths: non-accent, standards; ideology and subordination Reading: Lippi-Green 2-4: 41-73</td>
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<td>2/17 Lg. problems as social problems REV: RES: PROSPECTUS &amp; BIB. DUE Reading: Romaine 7: 205-39</td>
<td>2/19 Local dialect issues: Laura Walikainen Teaching children about lg. discrn. fig. in the movies. Reading: Lippi-Green 5: 77-103, 10: 202-16 RESEARCH PROSPECTUSES DUE RESEARCH CONFERENCES</td>
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<td>2/24 Escanaba in da Moonlight Reading: Wheeler, Dumas: 67-80</td>
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<td>3/23 Info industry, news media Reading: Lippi-Green 7: 133-51; Wheeler, Cotter 165-80</td>
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<td>4/29 Summary. So what? (evaluations) 4/30 Friday PORTFOLIOS DUE</td>
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