

LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY (1.0 COURSE UNIT)

The study of language lies at the intersection of the humanities and the social and natural sciences. This course examines ways in which society interfaces with culture, nature, and self. Key points of this intersection: how and why languages differ (language typologies); how and why a language can vary in spatial, temporal and especially societal dimensions; how and why languages are the same 'deep-down' (linguistic universals); the role of language media; intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication, the problem of equivalence, and the enigma of translation.

Core Bibliography (selections and examples
discussed in class to be drawn from these and other works)

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y.: *Classifiers: A Typology of Noun Categorization Devices* (Oxford U.P., 2000)
- Aitchison, Jean: *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ²1991)
- Ball, M., and J. Rahilly 1999. *Phonetics: The Science of Speech*, London: Hodder Arnold.
- Bolinger, D., and D. A. Sears *Aspects of Language* (New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, ³1981)
- Bolinger, D. *Language -- the Loaded Weapon* (London: Longman, 1980)
- Bynon, T.: *Historical Linguistics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
- Catford, J. C.: *Fundamental Concepts in Phonetics* (Indiana U.P., 1977)
- Coates, J.: *Women, Men and Language* (London: Longman, ²1993)
- Comrie, B., *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, ²1989).
- Corbett, G.: *Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Croft, W. ²2003. *Language Universals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DeFrancis, J.: *Visible speech : the diverse oneness of writing systems* (University of Hawaii Press, 1989)
- Dixon, R.M.W.: *The Rise and Fall of Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Downes, William (1998) (2nd edition) *Language and Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fasold, R. 1990. *Sociolinguistics of Language*, Oxford and Cambridge (US): Blackwell.
- Foley, William A. 1997. *Anthropological Linguistics: an Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Friedrich, P. 1986. *The Language Parallax*, Austin:University of Texas Press.
- Fry, D. 1977. *Homo loquens: Man as a Talking Animal*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goddard, C. 1998. *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford Textbooks in Linguistics.
- Graddol, D., J. Cheshire, and J. Swann ²1994. *Describing Language...*, London: Taylor and Francis.
- Grenoble, L., and L. J. Whaley 1998. *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M.K. 1978 *Language as Social Semiotic*, London: Arnold.
- Haspelmath, M. 2002. *Understanding Morphology*, London: Arnold.
- Hymes, D. 1996. *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*, London: Taylor and Francis.
- Hock, H. H., and B. D. Joseph 1996. *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship: an Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*, Berlin and New York: Mouton-De Gruyter.
- Jablonski, N. G., and L. C. Aiello 1998. *The Origin and Diversification of Language*, The Edited Proceedings of a Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Foundation Endowment Symposium, July 17-1998, Memoirs of the California Academy of Sciences Number 24, San Francisco: Allen Press.

- Katamba, F. 1989. *An Introduction to Phonology*, London : Longman.
- Keller, R. 1994. *On Language Change: The Invisible Hand in Language*, London: Routledge.
- Lakoff, G. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Lass, R. 1984: *Phonology: an introduction to basic concepts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..
- Laver 1994. *Principles of Phonetics*, Cambridge Cambridge Univeristy Press.
- Lehiste, I. 1988. *Lectures in Language Contact*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Macaulay, Ronald. 1994 *The Social Art: Language and its Uses*, New York and Oxofrd: Oxford Universty Press
- Matthews, P.H. ²1991. *Morphology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Palmer, F.R. ²1981. *Semantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pike, K: *Phonetics: a critical analysis of phonetic theory and a technic for the practical description of sounds* (Oxford U.P. and Michigan U.P., 1943)
- Samuels, M.L.: *Linguistic Evolution. With special reference to English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, vol. 5, 1972)
- Salzmann, Z. *Language, Culture, & Society. An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993)
- Sapir, E. *Language* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921).
- Trask, R.L. ²1999. *Language: The Basics*, London: Routledge.
- Van Valin, Jr., and LaPolla 1997. *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, J.C. 1982. *Accents of English*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waldron, R.A. 1974. *Sense and Sense Development*, London: Deutsch.

Sample syllabus:

AUTUMN TERM

Weeks 1&2

What is a language? What is language? Structure and function; media.

Essential reading: Trask 1995, chapter 1 ('The uniqueness of human language', pages 1-24), Bolinger and Sears ³1981, chapter 1 ('Some traits of language', pages 1-16), Graddol, Cheshire, and Swann ²1994, chapter 1 ('The nature of language', pages 1-27)

Further reading: Chapters 4-9 in Macaulay 1994.

Weeks 2&3

Sources of diversity, 1.: space and time Language families (and isolates) on Earth; the status of Europe; methods, fundamental theoretical questions. Biology, prehistory; typology, divergence and convergence.

Trask 1995, chapter 4 (pages 73-92), and Bolinger and Sears ³1981, chapters 9 ('Variation in Space', pp. 273-199) and 10 ('Variation in Time', pages 231-272); Chapter 2 in Downes ²1998.

Further reading: Chapter 11 in Macaulay 1994; Dixon, R.M.W.: *The Rise and Fall of Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); 'The Origin and Dispersal of Languages: Linguistic Evidence', pages 127-170 in Jablonski, Nina G. and Leslie C. Aiello (eds) *The Origin and Diversification of Language*, Watis Symposium Series in Anthropology, Memoirs of the California Academy of Sciences, Number 24, San Fransisco: California Academy of Sciences.

Weeks 4&5

Sources of diversity, 2: social structures and functions Linguistic variety as a result of variation in adaptive, personal-agentive, institutional, and cultural systems (à la Parsons). In-groups, marginalization, sexism, xenophobia, demagoguery, roles of language in forms of nationalism. Dialect & accent; form v. function/use (Fasold: 'linguistics proper'); linguistic engineering.

Essential reading: De Bernardi, J. 1994 'Social aspects of language use', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, T. Ingold (ed.) London: Routledge, pp. 861-890.

Course-Unit Outline Form

Preliminary on sexism and language: Bolinger 1980, chapter 9 (pages 89-104);

Further reading: Chapters 12 & 13 in Macaulay 1994; for an example of how such diversity can arise, with time, through contact between languages, dialects, and sociolects, see Samuels 1972, chapter 6 ('Diversity and Contact', pages 88-134). For perspectives on language in various forms of nationalism, McCrone, D. 1998. *The Sociology of Nationalism*, London: Routledge, especially Chapters 4 through 6.

[reading week]

Weeks 6&7

Universals, 1: how all human languages are essentially alike.

Essential reading: Chapter 3 ('Mind, Universals, and the Sensible World') in Foley 1997.

Further reading: Chapters 1 and 2 in Comrie 1989; Chapters 1 and 2 in Croft 2003; Whaley 1997; Goddard, C. 2001. 'Lexico-semantic universals: A critical overview', *Linguistic Typology* 5:1-65.

Week 8

Script and its absence; social context and language context. Kinds of orality and kinds of literacy; script shibboleths; (animated) fonts; zed wars; greengrocers' apostrophes. The intersection of script with prestige, law, and the Sacred.

Essential reading: Bolinger and Sears 1981, chapters 11 ('Writing and Reading', pages 273-299) and 12 ('Language and the Public Interest', pages 300-320); also Trask 1995, chapter 8 ('Attitudes to Language', pages 157-181), and Graddol, Cheshire, and Swann 1994, chapter 7 ('Discourse and text', pages 190-234).

Further reading: Lord, A. 1987. 'Characteristics of Orality', pages 54-72 in *Oral Tradition: A Festschrift for Walter J. Ong*, ed. J.M. Foley, *Slavica* 2:1 (January 1987), Columbus, Ohio: Slavica; Chapter 6 ('Narrative Form as a Grammar of Experience: Native Americans and a Glimpse of English') in Hymes 1996; DeFrancis, J.: *Visible speech: the diverse oneness of writing systems* (University of Hawaii Press, 1989)

Week 9

Universals, 2: structuralism; kinship and other social institutions

Essential reading: Chapters 4 & 6 ('Structuralism', 'Kinship') in Foley 1997.

Further reading: Rosman, A. and P. Rubel 2003. 'Are Kinship Terminologies and Kinship Concepts Translatable?', pages 269-283 in Rubel, P.G. and A. Rosman (eds) *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology*, Oxford and New York: Berg.

Week 10

Discourses: language and power

Essential reading: Bolinger 1980; Downes 1998:265-270.

Further reading: Fairclough, N. 1989. *Language and Power*, London: Longman; Tambiah, S.J. 1968. 'The magical power of words'. *Man (n.s.)* 3, 175-208.

SPRING TERM

Weeks 1&2

Gender Verbal behaviour, verbal stereotypes; the presentation of self v. group styles; regional, religious, ethnic and class covariables.

Essential reading: Chapter 4 in Trask 1999; Chapter 15 ('Language and Gender') in Foley 1997; Downes 1998:203-213; Chapter 17 in Macaulay 1994.

Further reading: Coates, Jennifer 1993. *Women, Men and Language*, London: Longman; Lakoff, R. 1975 *Language and Woman's Place*, New York: Harper & Row; Crosby, F. and L. Nyquist 1977. 'The Female Register: An Empirical Study of Lakoff's Hypotheses', *Language in Society* 6: 313-322.

Week 3

Models and metaphors (relativism)

Essential reading: Chapter 19 ('Rhetoric') in Macaulay 1994; Chapter 9 ('Models and Metaphors') in Foley 1997.

Further reading: Lakoff 1987; Chock, P.P. 2001. 'The Constrained Use of Irony in U.S. Congressional Hearings on Immigration', pages 41-62 in *Irony in Action: Anthropology, Practice, and the Moral Imagination*, ed. J.W. Fernandez and M.T. Huber, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Weeks 4&5

Privilege and discourse: communicative competences and voice Restricted and elaborated codes (Bernstein); theories of knowledge and communication in everyday life (Habermas).

Essential reading: Chapter 17 ('Language Socialization') in Foley 1997.

Further reading: Chapters 3 and 10 in Hymes 1996.

[reading week]

Weeks 6&7

Ethnocentrism: semantic and pragmatic bases of intercultural communication

Essential reading: Chapter 4 of Goddard 1998; Chapters 5 and 6 in Fasold 1990.

Further reading: Wierzbicka, A. 1985. 'Different cultures, different languages, different pragmatics', *Journal of Pragmatics* 9:145-178.

Weeks 8&9

Genre: ritual language and verbal art (framing; poetics; play; performance...; untranslatability and cross-cultural communication; diffusion)

Salzman 1993:235-252; Chapter 18 ('Genre: Poetics, Ritual Languages, and Verbal Art') in Foley 1997; Chapter 18 in Macaulay 1994.

Further reading: Chapter 9 ('Bernstein and Poetics') in Hymes 1996; MacGaffey, Wyatt 2003. 'Structural Impediments to Translation in Art', Chapter 10 (pp. 249-267) in Rubel, Paula G., and A. Rosman (eds.) *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology*, Oxford and New York: Berg. Bauman, Richard 2001. 'Verbal art as performance', Chapter 7 in Duranti, A. 2001. *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell; Handelman, D. 1976. 'Play and ritual: Complementary frames of meta-communication', pp. 185-192 in Chapman, A.J., and H. Foot (eds.), *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*, London: Pergamon.

Week 10

Gathering-together, conclusions, outlook

Title: LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Course Code: SEEE1004

Course-unit value: 1.0 cu

Availability: sporadic, depending on demand

Open to: all students with permission of the instructor

Course leader: Daniel Abondolo

Other participants: Research students, as available

Aims:

1. Heightened awareness of societal variables connected with language variation
2. Increased facility with terms enabling clear description of linguistic phenomena
3. Meta-awareness of the role of society in the creation of the individual, and vice versa

Objectives: By the end of the course, you will have acquired:

1. On successful completion, students should be able to distinguish a wide range of sociolinguistic phenomena, and thereby to diagnose and evaluate such phenomena on a more sound basis.

Teaching & Learning Methods:

Discussion in class of a wide range of primary data and secondary (socio-)linguistic literature.

Number of Hours: 40

Assessment:

Coursework: practice exercises and short essays

Examination: three-hour unseen examination

AFFILIATE STUDENTS:

First Semester only:

Second Semester only: