

Linguistics 154

Language and Social Identity

Course information and syllabus – Fall 2009

General Information

Grant McGuire (Instructor)	Office	263 Stevenson (note: I may also be in rm. 221)
	Office Hours	Tu: 2:30 – 3:30 W: 11:00 – 12:00 By appointment
	Email	gmcguir1<at>ucsc.edu or grantlmcguire<at>gmail.com
Webpage	http://people.ucsc.edu/~gmcguir1/Ling154	
Meeting Times	Tu Th 4:00 – 5:45pm	Cowell 134

Course Objectives

In this class, we will talk about the interaction of society and language(s), primarily in the United States. In order to discuss this rationally, it will be necessary to talk about social norms and linguistic norms in an objective manner. This will almost certainly prove challenging, because chances are very good that each and every one of us:

- has been raised with certain speech patterns,
- has acquired other language habits along the way,
- has evaluated others' language use as somehow better or worse than our own.

This course will, in part, be about stepping back from our own preconceptions about language in order to evaluate these experiences in an objective way. In exploring these experiences, a recurrent theme will be the idea of a “standard” variety of American English. We will focus on several questions, among which are the following:

- What is Standard American English (SAE)?
- Is SAE anyone's native language variety?
- Is SAE “better” than other varieties of English?

We will also seek to develop an understanding of linguistic issues as they touch upon political and social issues of our day. Questions will include:

- Should everyone in the United States be forced to learn English?
- What language(s) should be used in the schools (e.g. SAE, “Ebonics”, Spanish...)?
- Is there “linguistic profiling”, i.e. are people discriminated against based on their speech?

In short, this course will present a framework for thinking about the nature and significance of variation in language use, and will be a hands-on investigation of what people do with their language depending on their social identity and the social contexts they participate in.

Required Texts

- Finegan, Edward and John R. Rickford, eds. 2004. *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Several readings will be on the class webpage. See the course schedule for details.

Requirements

- Reading Assignments and Quizzes*: Students should read each article (at least once) before the date listed on the syllabus. Discussion of these readings is the main focus of learning in this course, and so being prepared is extremely important. The class will be much more informative, substantive, and even fun if every person arrives having read and ready to discuss. There will be four (4) quizzes spread throughout the quarter. These will cover basic terminology and concepts from the readings and lecture.
- Class Participation*: In a relatively small class such as this one, each person's insights, questions, thoughts, etc. are extremely valuable. Students are expected to contribute to the discussion on a daily basis.
- Homework*: There will be two (2) homework assignments, which fall in the middle of the quarter. Each homework assignment will be a mini research project in which students collect and/or analyze original linguistic data and write a

short paper presenting and evaluating the results. Homework assignments will require students to synthesize the course material, analyze creatively and think analytically. Each one will be assigned at least one week before its due date.

4. Research Project: This class requires an original research project. This will have several parts spread across the quarter to make the process easier. There will be two “status reports”: one in which you select and describe your topic of research (the “brainstorm”), and a second in which you describe, in detail, how you will collect and analyze data or what readings you will do (the “proposal”). At the end of the quarter you will write up your research as a final paper, first due as an annotated outline and then as a final polished product. This is due at the assigned time of the final. More information will be given soon in class.

Grading

Homework Assignments	30% (2 x 15% each)
Quizzes	20% (4 x 5% each)
Research Project	
Brainstorm	5%
Proposal	10%
Final Paper	30%
Class Participation	5%
Total	100%

Letter grades are assigned according to the following scale:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79		
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-69
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59

Makeup policy: I will accept late written assignments until the last day of class. Better late than never. However, late assignments will be penalized for each day that they are late so it is distinctly to a student’s advantage to turn in all work on time. The final paper cannot be turned in late and no incompletes will be given except in the most dire circumstances!

Classroom Etiquette: It is important to respect not only the instructor, but also fellow classmates. Language can be a sensitive topic. Personal feelings on these issues can be very strong, and can lead to intense emotional responses during discussion. Students are expected to respect their classmates’ rights to their opinions and beliefs. This includes not interrupting people, dominating the floor, raising one’s voice, insulting, threatening, etc.

A Note On Sensitive Topics: This class will cover several sensitive topics, such as race, gender, sexuality, obscenity, etc. If you feel uncomfortable about any of these topics, please contact me, in person or anonymously, to voice your concerns. To contact me anonymously, set up a hotmail/gmail/yahoo account with the username <ling154_*randomnumbers*@yahoo.com> and email me from that.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating is a very serious issue. Although students are encouraged to discuss the readings and homework assignments, each student’s work must be his/her own. An easy way to ensure this is that as soon as you start *writing* an assignment, you should no longer be discussing it with your classmates. If you have any questions, please direct them to the instructor. If I even *suspect* that someone is cheating, I am *obligated* to report him/her. You do not want this to happen. Therefore, if you have any question at all as to what constitutes cheating, please ask.

Students with Special Needs: Please let the instructor know within the first week of class if you are registered with the Disability Resource Center and have any physical impairments or learning needs that I should be aware of in order to assist you in better taking advantage of and/or meeting the requirements of this class. I will work with the them to provide special accommodations to students who require such assistance. Students who feel that they might benefit from services offered by this office but have not yet been assessed should contact them as soon as possible (drc@ucsc.edu, 146 Hahn Student Services).

Course Schedule

F&R = Finegan & Rickford textbook

* = on reserve at the Main Library

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
week 1			
day 1 (8/29)	<i>course basics and intro</i>	none	
day 2 (10/1)	<i>the linguistic facts of life</i>	none	
week 2			
day 3 (10/6)	<i>who has an accent?</i>	Preston (F&R 26)	
day 4 (10/8)	<i>the myth of Standard English</i>	*Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998 (1)	Homework 1 assigned
week 3			
day 5 (10/13)	<i>sources of language variation: historical and geographic factors</i>	Bailey (F&R 1)	Brainstorm due
day 6 (10/15)	“ “	none	Quiz 1
week 4			
day 7 (10/20)	<i>regional dialects</i> <i>sources of language variation: linguistic factors</i>	Kretzschmar (F&R 3)	
day 8 (10/22)	“ “	*Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998 (2) *Clopper and Pisoni 2004	homework 1 due
week 5			
day 9 (10/27)	<i>sources of language variation: social factors</i>	Wolfram (F&R 4)	
day 10 (10/29)	“ “	*Labov 1972	quiz 2
week 6			
day 11 (11/3)	<i>social dialects: adolescent language</i>	Eckert (F&R 19)	status report 2 due
day 12 (11/5)	“ “	*Eckert 1988	
week 7			
day 13 (11/10)	<i>social dialects: AAVE</i>	Green (F&R 5)	homework 2 due
day 14 (11/12)	“ “	*Green 2002	
week 8			
day 15 (11/17)			rough draft
day 16 (11/19)	<i>social dialects: Sexuality</i>	*Munson and Babel 2007	quiz 3
week 9			
day 17 (11/24)	<i>language and policy: “Ebonics” in the schools</i>	Fillmore (F&R 18)	
No Class	<i>codeswitching: Spanish and English</i>	Silva-Corvalán (F&R 11)	
week 10			
day 18 (12/1)	<i>language and policy: English-only movement</i>	Wiley (F&R 17)	
day 19 (12/3)	<i>wrap-up</i>		quiz 4
finals week			
day 21 (12/8)			Final Paper Due

References for Reserve Articles

Clopper, C. G., & Pisoni, D. B. (2004). “Homebodies and army brats: Some effects of early linguistic experience and

- residential history on dialect categorization.” *Language Variation and Change*, 16, 31-48.
- Eckert, Penelope. 1988. “Adolescent social structure and the spread of linguistic change.” *Language in Society* 17(2), 183-207.
- Green, Lisa. 2002. “Speech events and rules of interaction in AAE.” Chapter in *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 134-163.
- Labov, William. 1972. “Social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores.” Chapter in *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 43-69.
- Linnes, Kathleen. 1998. “Middle-class AAVE versus middle-class bilingualism: Contrasting speech communities” *American Speech* 73(4), 339-367.
- Munson, Ben and Molly Babel (2006). “Loose Lips and Silver Tongues, or, Projecting Sexual Orientation Through Speech” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1 (2007): 10.1111/j.1749-818x.2007.00028.x
- (1) Wolfram, Walt and Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1998. “The reality of dialects.” Chapter in *American English*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- (2) Wolfram, Walt and Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1998. “Why do languages have dialects?” Chapter in *American English*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers..