

**Course Title: LCD 144, Language and Social Diversity**

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## **Justification**

The course fulfills the *Analyzing Social Structures* area of knowledge. As the course title implies, the course is a direct examination of social diversity through the lens of language. Specifically, students will analyze compare different identity factors, such as race, age, gender, class, geographic, and national identity, and their effects on language form and use.

The course also fulfills the criteria for the *World Cultures* context of experience. The studies used include a variety of contexts in both the first and third worlds, including many regions that many QC students or their families have immigrated from.

The studies in the syllabus are chosen to combine these two goals, for instance:

- How different dialects prompt different reactions from people (Bayard et al.'s study of the prestige of American English in Australia and New Zealand.)
- To reflect the tension between what in language is universal and what is specific to culture, (i.e. Scollon and Scollon's comparison of Chinese and English accounts of the same new events)
- To what extent a culture changes in contact with other cultures (i.e., Makihara's study of language shift in Rapa Nui)
- How cultures are plural in their linguistic practices (i.e., Zentella's examination of New York Puerto Ricans and Bastardas' essay on the multilingual potential of Europe)
- How language serves as a bridge between cultures (Kang's study of code switching by Korean Americans)
- How small formal properties of language serve to create and support a professional image (Zhang's study of the "Beijing Smooth Operator," an archetype of the new go-getting Chinese businessman)
- To see how new linguistic forms emerge as society changes (Roth-Gordon's study of youth and language in Brazil and Tagliamonti & Denis's study of instant messaging by young Canadians)
- Show how race interacts with language in the US (Zentella's study of New York Puerto Ricans and Purnell, et al.'s study of discrimination based on ethnic varieties of language in California)

Obviously, the studies shown in the syllabus are subject to change according to different instructors' preferences and as new works appear. However, these studies have set standards in the field for understanding diversity and accessibility through the systematic examination of language use.

In addition to being provided information in these readings, students are asked to carry out active inquiry by carefully scaffolded analysis of these readings. Then, they will do original research examining effects of social diversity on language.

It is worth noting that one of the key foci of a number of the studies is language evolution. Also, in the sample syllabus below, for instance, the research investigates a potential language change in progress in English (e.g. the on-going decline in the use of the *n* in *an* before vowels).

In sum, the goals of the course go beyond the material being read. They involve an effort to scaffold a scientific approach to phenomena involving language and social diversity, phenomena are ubiquitous and amenable to undergraduate research, but, for all that, often not obvious.

## Course Materials, Assignments, and Activities

### Readings

- Bastardas-Boada, Albert (2007). ["Linguistic sustainability for a multilingual humanity"](#), *Glossa. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 2, num. 2  
An essay on the advantages and historical reluctance to embrace multilingualism in Europe.
- Dailey-O'Cain (2000) The sociolinguistic distribution of and attitudes toward focuser like and quotative like. *J. of Sociolinguistics*, 4, pp.60-80  
*A quantitative study of the newer uses of the word "like" in the conversations of young people, and the attitudes towards these usages.*
- Kang, A. (2003) Negotiating conflict within the constraints of social hierarchies in Korean American Discourse.  
*A study about how language choice among Korean Americans is constrained by a desire to express or avoid certain hierarchical relations mandatory in Korean and difficult to express in English*
- Kiesling, Scott (2004) Dude. *American Speech* 79, pp. 281-305.  
*A history and current sociolinguistic account of the word "dude"*
- Makiyara, Miki (2004) Linguistic Syncretism and Language Ideologies: Transforming Sociolinguistic Hierarchy on Rapa Nui (Easter Island) *American Anthropologist*, 106(3), pp. 529–540.  
*An examination of how as Easter Islanders shift from their Polynesian language to the state language, Spanish, they maintain their distinctive linguistic identity.*
- Purnell, T., Isardi, W., & Baugh, J. (1999). Perceptual and phonetic experiments on American English dialect identification. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 18(1), 10-30.  
*Studies how listeners can distinguish speakers' ethnicities and the consequences of those categorizations. Gave rise to the term "linguistic profiling," which has been discussed in the media*
- Roth-Gordon, J. (2007) Youth, slang, and pragmatic expressions: Examples from Brazilian Portuguese. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11(3) 322-345.  
*Shows, using a Brazilian example, of how young people create their own distinctive linguistic markers.*
- Tannen, D. (2004) The relativity of linguistic strategies: rethinking dominance and power. *Sociolinguistics: the Essential Readings*. (Christina Bratt Paulson & Richard Tucker, (Eds) Malden, MA Blackwell.  
Examination of how different patterns of women's and men's speech can be misconstrued as signaling male dominance of women.
- Okamoto, S., 1994. "Gendered" speech styles and social identity among young Japanese women. In: Bucholtz, M., Liang, A.C., Sutton, L.A. and Hines, C., Editors, 1994. *Proceedings of the third Berkeley Women and Language Conference, Berkeley Women and Language Group, Berkeley*, pp. 569–581.  
*How Japanese "women's language," is really a way of constructing specific ideas of gender.*
- Scollon, Ron & Scollon, Suzie Wong 1997. Point of view and citation: Fourteen Chinese and English Versions of the 'same' news story. *Text* 17(1):83-125.  
How culture shapes both practices of what should be cited and how information is evaluated.

- Tagliamonte & Denis (2008) *Linguistic Ruin? LOL! Instant messaging and teen language*. MS U. of Toronto. Explores the relationship between linguistic change and instant messaging using quantitative sociolinguistic means.
- Trudgill, P. and Bauer, L. *Language Myths: A series of short essays written by prominent sociolinguists that debunk common misconceptions about language*. They will be used as introductions to specific research areas that are explored in greater detail in the research readings.
- Wolfram Schilling-Estes *American English: Dialects and variation* (Introductory Chapter). Contains an overview of dialectal diversity in the US.
- Zentella, A. (1997) Chapter 1 of *Growing Up Bilingual*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. A description of how this ethnography of communication was carried out and some observations the author noticed in a Puerto Rican community in East Harlem.
- Zhang, Qing (2005), A Chinese yuppie in Beijing: Phonological variation and the construction of a new professional identity. *Language in Society* 34: 431-466. How people use linguistic resources to create a new archetype: the Beijing smooth operator.

### **Assignments**

- Individual analyses of readings following a template graded on a rubric (see syllabus).
- Group revisions of the analyses
- Final Exam
- Original research project on an issue of language variation possibly done by the whole class.
- Blackboard assignments

### **Class Activities**

Class will be divided into two parts. One will be lectures that will provide relevant facts about the topics of the articles, the theories appealed to by the authors, methodologies used, and significance. The other will be group revisions of the analyses students do individually. For this activity, it may be most effective for students to be given a labtop (the department has a labtop cart) and groups will be able to work on their revisions on line. The last days of class will be devoted to working and possibly presenting the research report findings.

### **Assessment**

Student Evaluations

Faculty-peer observations

Success of students on research report responses and on their own research.

### **Administration**

After the first two semesters, students will be asked to evaluate the course, evaluating readings, and suggesting changes to projects. It is anticipated that the course will be taught by full time faculty. To ensure systematicity in implementation as PLAS course, new instructors teaching this course will be oriented to the goals of the PLAS piece of the general education curriculum, and will be given access both to the justification and description of materials in this document and to sample syllabi. (This is something our department is already used to doing with the many courses we offer that fall within the purview of the Education Unit's assessment routines.)