

Course Outline for LING 320 (Sociolinguistics 1)

Content: This course will provide you with an introduction to the study of **LANGUAGE VARIATION AND CHANGE**, a subject that comprises three closely related disciplines: **HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS** (the study of how languages change over time); **DIALECTOLOGY** (the study of regional variation in language); and **SOCIOLINGUISTICS** (the study of the relationships between language and society). While we will explore all of these subjects and the relations among them, our main emphasis will be on Sociolinguistics, including both **CORRELATIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS** (how social factors like age, sex and social class influence linguistic variation) and many topics in the **SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE** (the role of language in human behavior and social organization). Included among the latter are situations of language contact (pidgins & creoles, multilingualism, etc.) and issues related to disciplines like anthropology, education, gender & cultural studies, politics, social psychology and sociology. This course is a prerequisite for all advanced courses in language variation and change: Historical Linguistics (LING 425); Sociolinguistics 2 (LING 520); and Dialectology (LING 521).

Content advisory: Some of the topics we discuss in this class, such as the nature of sex or social class differences, the relation of language to disadvantage or the proper role of language planning, are controversial, giving rise to strong views and emotions. In a spirit of scientific inquiry, while maintaining due respect for all individuals and groups, open debate on these topics will be encouraged. If you do not feel comfortable discussing such issues, and perhaps challenging your own views on them, you might prefer to take a different course.

Instructional method and technology policy: This class involves traditional teaching methods, including lectures (without PowerPoint) and class discussion, as well as a few document projections audio examples; it does *not* include an on-line component. Regular attendance in class and good note-taking are therefore encouraged, as is doing assigned readings before the class in which they will be discussed. Laptops and voice recorders are permitted, but photography is not. Use of laptops and other electronic devices must be appropriate to and respectful of the classroom environment: recreational use of the internet during class is inappropriate and distracting for other students. Cell phones should be turned off and put away during class. If you do not think you can function well in this environment, you are strongly encouraged to choose a different course.

Time/Place: Mon/Weds, 4:05-5:25 p.m., in BURN 1B36.

Instructor: Prof. Charles Boberg. Office: 1085 Dr. Penfield, #223. E-mail (always best): charles.boberg@mcgill.ca. Tel.: (514) 398-4869.

Access to the instructor: You are encouraged to e-mail me if you have questions or concerns about the course or about other advising matters. If required, an in-person meeting can be

<p>NB: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). Also note that, in accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.</p>
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scheduled by e-mail. If you have brief comments or questions, you are also welcome to talk to me after class.

Required textbook: Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (6th ed.). Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. Available at McGill Bookstore, or on reserve at library. Previous editions may be substituted, but avoid the 7th edition, co-authored with Janet Fuller, which is substantially altered from previous editions and no longer suitable for this course.

Prerequisite: LING 201 or permission of instructor. This should not be your first linguistics class. While the emphasis in this class will be on the interaction of language and society rather than on theoretical models of grammar, you will be expected to understand basic concepts of linguistic analysis, such as are taught in an introductory course in general linguistics. If you have concerns about your level of preparation, consult the instructor.

Evaluation:	Midterm exam	20%	Term paper	30%
	Data collection assignment	10%	Final exam (cumulative)	40%

Midterm exam: to be written in class on the day indicated below. Absences on the exam day (anticipated or unanticipated) should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible. At the instructor's discretion, following discussion of the reason for the absence, a grade adjustment may be possible. In the case of absence on medical grounds, proper documentation of a suitably serious and unanticipated condition is required. Where the absence is not deemed excusable, a grade of zero will be awarded.

Data collection assignment: In order to give students some hands-on experience in gathering sociolinguistic data, you are required to collect ten responses (or more, if you like!) to a sociolinguistic **questionnaire** and enter the resulting data on an Excel spreadsheet. The data from the whole class will then be compiled by the instructor and presented in a report, which we will discuss as an example of the kinds of variation we study in the course. Together with your data, you will submit a brief (3 pages) **written report** on how you gathered your data and what kinds of variation you observed. The necessary forms, along with detailed instructions on the questionnaire and format of the report, will be distributed later. The entire assignment is worth 10%: 0.5% for each valid questionnaire response, to a maximum of 5% for 10 responses; and the remaining 5% for the written report. **Group work** is encouraged but not required. If you work with other students, each student in the group is responsible for collecting ten responses, for which credit will be evenly distributed; the report can then be jointly written, based on a larger and more diverse set of data than one student could collect alone.

Term paper: You are required to write a term paper for this class, worth 30% of your grade. This will be a paper of 10-12 pages (12-point font, double-spaced), in which you either:

- a) discuss and take a position on one of the topics from the following list, with a critical review of at least five articles or books on your topic; or
- b) report on your own investigation of linguistic variation and/or change.

It is assumed that most students choosing **option (a)** will work alone, but group work is also acceptable. Option (a) essays must, in addition to presenting and justifying their own view of the topic, provide a **critical review** of at least **five articles or books** on the topic, with an integrative discussion that supports the main argument of the paper. If you find an anthology of research on your topic, with chapters written by different authors, each chapter can count as a separate source. At least five of the reviewed sources must be **traditionally-published** academic articles, books or chapters in books, rather than internet materials available only in electronic form (e.g. websites or Wikipedia, etc.). Libraries like McGill's are full of paper-based information about every conceivable topic, going back a century or more, which has not (yet?) been digitized and made accessible via the Web, including many of the classic or seminal works in each field. You should spend some time in the library and take advantage of this wealth of knowledge in thinking about your topic. You may of course use internet search engines, including the McGill Library's on-line catalog, to identify these materials, and traditionally-published sources accessed via the internet, such as through the Library's electronic journal subscriptions, also count as traditional sources (as long as they are published in printed, paper form somewhere). If you have difficulty finding what you want in the library, by all means ask a librarian for help: that is their job (the specialist for Linguistics is Tatiana Bedjanian). They will not do your research for you, but they are (usually) happy to assist you in doing it yourself. Introductory textbooks, including the text for this class, cannot be counted as one of your five sources, but can serve as a valuable guide to published work on all of the following topics. Once you have satisfied the requirement for five traditional sources, you may supplement these with as many other references as you like, in any media, including websites. Following is the list of suggested topics, with specific issues you might address in each case; other topics may be proposed to the instructor but require approval.

1) Standard vs. non-standard: take a position on the role of the standard variety of English or another language. Is "correct" usage important or not, and why? Should it be taught in schools, or required in certain professional contexts? Is it realistic to expect public evaluations of non-standard varieties to change?

2) The role of the mass media in linguistic variation and change: do the modern mass media serve to encourage or limit regional and/or social variation in language? Do they speed up language change or slow it down? Can you identify specific examples of such influence? In linguistic terms, will the digital age produce one global monolithic culture or a new diversity of specialized communities, each with unique characteristics?

3) English as a global language: how will the role of English as a global language affect the future development of English, particularly as the numerical balance of English-speakers shifts from traditional communities like Britain, the U.S. or Canada to new communities in Europe, Africa, Asia or Latin America? Will one or two global standards persist, or will English break up the way Latin did? Is Global English a productive and liberating tool for people around the world, bringing new opportunities, or a destroyer of local language and culture, or both?

4) Language planning: compare and evaluate efforts to revive or sustain traditional or minority languages in at least two different parts of the world; e.g., the Celtic languages in Britain, French or indigenous languages in Canada, or Hebrew in Israel. Concentrate on factors that predict failure or success in each case, to develop a more general account of this issue.

5) Bilingualism: Argue for or against the maintenance of two official languages in Quebec, Canada, the United States or somewhere else. Should Quebec grant official status to its historic Anglophone minority? Should Canada abandon bilingualism where numbers do not support it, or promote Chinese, or Cree and Inuktitut, to official status, in addition to English and French? Should Spanish gain or be barred from official recognition in the United States?

6) Language and gender: What causes sex or gender differences in language use? Argue for or against the biological/genetic or social/cultural views. Are biological differences between female and male brains and cognitive patterns big enough to explain differences in linguistic behavior? Is the feminist account of these differences, developed in the 1960s and 70s, when gender roles in western society were quite different from those that prevail today, still valid? Are sex differences in language disappearing as gender roles change? Can the speech of LGBT people tell us anything about these questions?

7) Language and disadvantage: Argue for or against the use of language planning to correct what are seen by some as conditions of inequality, disadvantage or social injustice. Are such measures practically effective, or merely symbolic and utopian?

Students choosing **option (b)** must consult with the instructor about the design of their research project, which could potentially serve as the pilot for an expanded investigation of the same topic in Sociolinguistics 2 (LING 520) or Dialectology (LING 521). In such a project, you must present and analyze data on one or more linguistic variables of your choice, from at least two groups of subjects divided by age, region, sex and/or social class, with at least ten participants in each group. Your **written report** should include: a clear statement of the variation you are studying and your research question or experimental hypothesis; a review of previous work (where available) on your dependent (linguistic) and independent (social) variables; a description of your method of data collection and analysis; a presentation and quantitative analysis of your results in tabular and possibly also graphic form; and a discussion and interpretation of these results in light of your research question or hypothesis and in relation to the themes and theories we have discussed in class. Following conventional scientific form, these sections should be clearly identified with headings (*Introduction, Method, Results*, etc.). As with the data collection assignment, group work on option (b) is encouraged but not required. It may involve collaboration on data collection alone, with separate written reports, or on the entire project, in which case all group members are assigned the same grade.

Policies on submission of written work: the following policies should be observed in carrying out and submitting written work for this class. If you have any concerns or questions about these policies, you should raise them as soon as possible.

Format: In writing and formatting your text, you should observe the following guidelines:

- All written assignments should be **neatly** presented, beginning with a **title page** stating the name(s) and McGill ID number(s) of the author(s), the title of the submission, the course (LING 521) and the date.
- All pages should be **stapled** or otherwise securely bound together (do this before you come to class: do not assume someone in class will lend you a stapler).

- **Page numbers** and a header briefly identifying the author(s) should be included on every page of text (following the title page) except, if you prefer, the first page; page numbering should count the first page of text, not the title page, as page 1.
- The main text of the paper should be in **12-point font, double-spaced**. You may print single- or double-sided, as you prefer.
- The text should be free of typographical, stylistic and grammatical errors. If you have difficulties in this respect, or you are not a native-speaker of English, you are encouraged to seek help in checking over your text before you submit it. All students should **edit** their work carefully before submitting it. Care in this regard shows respect both for your own work and for your reader.
- **In-text citation** should follow the normal practice in Linguistics, which is to identify the author's last name and the year and, if possible, page number of the citation in parentheses after the quotation or cited idea, e.g., "quoted text" (Smith 1975:12).
- Students are reminded that all ideas, facts and spoken or written passages taken from other sources or authors must be properly attributed to their original sources and/or authors, and that failure to do so may constitute **plagiarism**, which could result in a failing grade on the paper or, potentially, more serious punitive measures. If you have questions about citation, consult the instructor.
- Papers should conclude with a **list of references** to all works cited in the text, in a consistent format, with items listed alphabetically by author's last name. Beyond that, the particular format you use is up to you (if you need a model, use the reference list in the course textbook as a guide).
- **Tables and figures** (graphs or illustrations), if used, should be sequentially numbered for easy reference and accompanied by brief captions explaining their content.
- **Appendices** of extra material may be included after the list of references but will not be read unless specifically referred to in the body of the paper; appendices do not count towards the page-length of the paper.

Submitting your paper: Papers should be submitted in **hard copy in class** (not electronically) on the dates indicated below. **Extensions** of submission deadlines will not be granted except in cases of legitimate, unanticipated and properly documented medical emergency or other serious incapacity. **Electronic submission** is not acceptable except under the same circumstances and by special permission. **Late submissions** without extension will be penalized at a rate of 10% of the paper grade per day, including weekends; submissions after class on the due date will be penalized 5%. Late submissions may be placed in the assignment drop-off box in the outer (photocopier) room of the Linguistics Department main office, Room 111, 1085 Dr. Penfield, but it is advisable to let me know by e-mail that you have done this. Submissions received by the end of each day (4:30 pm) will be stamped with that day's date by departmental staff and transferred to the instructor's mailbox. It is the **student's responsibility** to ensure timely and effective submission of all written work; any irregularities in this respect, including late submissions, should be promptly and clearly communicated to the instructor. If you have any questions or concerns about written assignments, you are encouraged to consult the instructor as early as possible.

Tentative schedule of lectures, readings, assignments and exams: see next page.

Tentative schedule of lectures, readings, assignments and exams:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Lecture topic/Exam</i>	<i>Readings due, etc.</i>
01.08	M	Introduction (review of course outline, etc.).	
01.10	W	Introduction: variation and linguistic theory.	Ch. 1
01.15	M	Regional & social varieties; style; speech communities; networks.	Ch. 2, 5
01.17	W	Dialectology: regional variation.	Ch. 6
01.22	M	Regional variation, continued.	
01.24	W	Regional variation, continued.	
01.29	M	Linguistic variables; social variation.	
01.31	W	Variation studies: theory & method; statistics.	
02.05	M	Fischer and Labov.	Ch. 7
02.07	W	Trudgill, Cheshire, Milroys, Wolfram, etc.	DATA COLL. ASS'T DUE
02.12	M	Historical linguistics.	Ch. 8
02.14	W	Language change in progress.	
02.19	M	Mechanism of language change.	
02.21	W	MIDTERM EXAM	MIDTERM EXAM
02.26	M	Language contact phenomena.	Ch. 3
02.28	W	Pidgins & creoles.	
03.05- 03.09	M-F	No class: STUDY BREAK	BREAK
03.12	M	Review of midterm exam; Diglossia, bilingualism & code-switching.	Ch. 4
03.14	W	Discussion: language choice in Montreal.	
03.19	M	Language & culture; ethnography of communication.	Ch. 9-10
03.21	W	Solidarity & politeness; speech acts.	Ch. 11-12
03.26	M	Language & gender; language & disadvantage.	Ch. 13-14 TERM PAPERS DUE
03.28	W	Discussion: language, gender & disadvantage.	
04.02	M	Language planning.	Ch. 15
04.04	W	No class: Easter Monday holiday	
04.09	M	Language planning in North America.	
04.11	W	Discussion: language planning in Quebec & Canada.	
04.16	M	Discussion cont'd; pre-final exam review.	
TBA		FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM