

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Brazil: Social Justice & Inequality in São Paulo

Course Code / Title: (SP/LING 370) Language in Identity Construction, Social Dynamics and Meaning-Making

Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Linguistics / Sociology, Anthropology, Urban Studies

Language of Instruction: English.

Prerequisites / Requirements: Prior coursework in the social sciences is recommended, but not required; intermediate/advanced Portuguese allows for greater flexibility in fieldwork, but assignments are adaptable to all levels of proficiency.

Description

Language plays a fundamental role in society and social life, serving as a key medium through which individuals act upon reality to build relationships, transform social meanings, and construct and negotiate their identities. Sociolinguistic inquiry delves into these complex interactions, exploring how language both reflects and shapes social structures and cultural practices. This course examines the intricate relationship between language use, social structures, ideologies, and individual agency. Through lectures, discussions, and data workshops, students develop the analytical tools needed to critically assess the ways in which linguistic choices can reinforce, challenge or subvert existing social hierarchies. Students also explore how individuals and groups use language to express their identities and navigate social structures, considering phenomena such as performance and performativity, conversational style, language attitudes and perception, relational aspects of language use (e.g., difference vs. similarity, authenticity vs. artifice), among others.

Leveraging the Brazilian context, students actively engage in fieldwork and data collection to produce original research on language use across social groups, spaces and contexts in São Paulo. Through a hands-on empirical approach to social analysis, this course provides a nuanced understanding of how power dynamics, inequities and forms of resistance materialize through verbal and semiotic behavior, while fostering critical appreciation for the rich linguistic diversity of social life.

Content warning:

At times, this course intentionally invites students to engage with readings and content that are controversial. These include, but are not limited to, instances of racial discrimination, homophobia and transphobia, distortions of consent during rape trials, and other forms of violence. Students might find this disturbing. The intention is not to endorse perspectives, but rigorously engage with them. If certain material is emotionally challenging, students can discuss with the professor before or after class. Students may also leave the classroom without academic penalty, if the discussion becomes too emotionally challenging. Students are, however, responsible for all missed material, and so should arrange to get notes from another student or see the professor individually.

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Objectives

Overall, students gain an understanding of key methods and theoretical frameworks relevant to work in sociolinguistics and how to apply them to the analysis of linguistic data to answer social questions and address social problems.

Specifically, students:

- Become familiar with methodologies used by sociolinguists and understand how these methodologies intersect with other social sciences and humanities.
- Cultivate an understanding of linguistic diversity and develop strategies for integrating affirmative attitudes to linguistic diversity in their personal and professional lives.
- Understand the connections between linguistics and other academic and professional disciplines of interest.
- Develop critical thinking abilities to understand the role of linguistics in identifying and fighting injustices.
- Reflect on the role of language in promoting positive social change.

Course Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Reading assignments are generally 20-30 pages per class session.

Graded assignments include:

- **Hypothesis:** 10 brief but relevant/insightful comments about readings using the social annotation tool Hypothesis.
- **Short analyses:** 4 guided short analyses based on students' fieldwork, collected data and research.
- **Expand the syllabus:** 1 short (1-2 paragraphs) summary of an outside reading selected by students based on their interests for having potential to be included in a future iteration of the course.
- **Training project:** comprised of a PPT (the training materials) and a short presentation, to be developed in consultation with the faculty member on a topic and for an audience of students' choice.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation	8%
Hypothesis (10 at 2%)	20%
Short analyses (4 at 10%)	40%
Expand the syllabus	7%
Training project:	25%
○ Incremental steps	5%

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- Training pitch 5%
- Final project 15%

Readings

Barrett, Rusty. "Indexing Polyphonous Identity in the Speech of African American Drag Queens." In *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*, edited by Mary Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, and Laurel A. Sutton, 313-331. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Borba, Rodrigo. "How an Individual Becomes a Subject: Discourse, Interaction and Subjectification at a Brazilian Gender Identity Clinic." *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* 163 (2015): 1-23.

Borba, Rodrigo, and Ana Cristina Ostermann. "Do Bodies Matter? Travestis' Embodiment of (Trans) Gender Identity through the Manipulation of the Brazilian Portuguese Grammatical Gender System." *Gender & Language* 1, no. 1 (2007): 131-147.

Bucholtz, Mary, and Kira Hall. "Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach." *Discourse Studies* 7, no. 4-5 (2005): 585-614.

Chun, Elaine W. "Ideologies of Legitimate Mockery: Margaret Cho's Revoicings of Mock Asian." *Pragmatics* 14, no. 2-3 (2004): 263-289.

D'Arcy, Alexandra. "'Like' and Language Ideology: Disentangling Fact from Fiction." *American Speech* 82, no. 4 (2007): 386-419.

de Jesus, Felipe Leandro, and Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard. "Abjection and Condemnation: Media Representations of a Transgender Criminal in Brazil." *Gender & Language* 12, no. 3 (2018): 372-397.

Eckert, Penelope. "Language and Power in the Preadolescent Heterosexual Market." *American Speech* 86, no. 1 (2011): 85-97.

Ehrlich, Susan. "The Discursive Reconstruction of Sexual Consent." *Discourse & Society* 9, no. 2 (1998): 149-171.

Fischer, John L. "Social Influences on the Choice of a Linguistic Variant." *WORD* 14, no. 1 (1958): 47-56.

Irvine, Judith T., and Susan Gal. "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity, 35-84. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000.

Kiesling, Scott F. "Constructing Identity." In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, 2nd ed., edited by J. K. Chambers and Natalie Schilling, 448-467. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

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Kiesling, Scott F. "The 'Gay Voice' and 'Brospeak': Toward a Systematic Model of Stance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality*, edited by Kira Hall and Rusty Barrett, 1-20. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Labov, William. *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Leeman, Jennifer, and Gabriella Modan. "Commodified Language in Chinatown: A Contextualized Approach to Linguistic Landscape." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13, no. 3 (2009): 332-362.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Mendes, Ronald Belini, and Livia Oushiro. "Variable Number Agreement in Brazilian Portuguese: An Overview." *Language & Linguistic Compass* 9, no. 9 (2015): 358-368.

Mendes, Ronald Belini, "Sociolinguistics in Brazil." In *The Routledge Handbook of Sociolinguistics Around the World*, edited by Martin J. Ball, Rajend Mesthrie, and Chiara Meluzzi, 85-94. London: Routledge, 2023.

Mendoza-Denton, Norma. "Pregnant Pauses: Silence and Authority in the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings." In *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, edited by Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, 51-66. London: Routledge, 1995.

Ochs, Elinor. "Indexing Gender." In *Rethinking Context*, edited by Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin, 335-358. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Ochs, Elinor, and Carolyn Taylor. "The 'Father Knows Best' Dynamic in Dinnertime Narratives." In *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, edited by Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, 97-120. London: Routledge, 1995.

Oushiro, Livia, and Maria Parafita-Couto. "Old Variables, New Meanings: Resignification of Rural Speech Variants in São Paulo's Urban Ecology." In *Urban Sociolinguistics: The City as a Linguistic Process and Experience*, edited by Dick Smakman and Patrick Heinrich, 58-76. London: Routledge, 2017.

Preston, Dennis. "Language with an Attitude." In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, edited by J. K. Chambers and Natalie Schilling, 39-66. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Rickford, John R., and Sharese King. "Language and Linguistics on Trial: Hearing Rachel Jeantel (and Other Vernacular Speakers) in the Courtroom and Beyond." *Language* 92, no. 4 (2016): 948-988.

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Speer, Susan A. "Pursuing Views and Testing Commitments: Hypothetical Questions in the Psychiatric Assessment of Transsexual Patients." In *Why Do You Ask? The Function of Questions in Institutional Discourse*, edited by Alice Freed and Susan Ehrlich, 133-158. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Stubbe, Maria, et al. "Multiple Discourse Analyses of a Workplace Interaction." *Discourse Studies* 5 (2003): 351-389.

Tannen, Deborah. *Conversation Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wardhaugh, Ronald, and Janet M. Fuller. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 7th ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Additional Resources

Gillon, Carrie, and Megan Figueroa, hosts. *The Vocal Fries: The Podcast About Linguistic Discrimination*. 2018-present.

Cullinan, Danica, and Neal Hutcheson, directors. *Talking Black in America*. The Language & Life Project, 2020.

Outline of Course Content

PART I: THINKING LIKE A SOCIOLINGUIST

Module 1: Sociolinguistic Inquiry

- Language as a system; (socio)linguistics as a science
- Languages, dialects and other linguistic groupings (e.g., registers, sociolects, familylects, among others)
- Dialect maps and atlases: comparing and contrasting Brazil and the US
- Exploring group associations: speech communities, social networks and communities of practice
- Language contact: multilingualism, linguistic transfer, code-switching, pidgins, creoles.

Module 2: Language, Power and Ideology

- Linguistic differentiation
- Language ideology and discrimination: Linguistic purism and language hygiene
- Overt vs. covert prestige
- Address terms, power and solidarity
- Linguistic landscapes

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PART II: THEORIES AND METHODS IN THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

Module 3: Variationist Sociolinguistics

- Overview of quantitative/variationist/Labovian sociolinguistics
- Linguistic variables, variants and social meaning
- Language change and changes-in-progress: Real- vs. apparent-time studies
- Perception studies and language attitudes
- Paulistano Portuguese in focus: History, migration and change

Module 4: Identity Construction in Interaction

- Language socialization
- Indexicality, stance and framing in discourse
- Tactics of intersubjectivity
- Conversational style

PART III: ON LANGUAGING AND DOING “BEING”

Module 5: Race, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Class and Mobility

- Stigmatized varieties and social meaning
- Overview of AAE and comparisons with Brazil
- Linguistic appropriation and pop culture
- Autochthonous (indigenous) languages and language policies
- (Im)migration and language change

Module 6: Genders and Sexualities

- Overview of the field: From “women’s language” to poststructuralism
- Masculinity and the concept of the “unmarked”
- Normalcy, normativities and the heterosexual matrix
- Coming-out narratives
- Queerlects: Focusing Brazilian Pajubá

Module 7: Performance and Performativity

- Linguistic performance and the creation of personae
- Mock language varieties
- Indexical disjuncture

PART IV: SOCIOLINGUISTICS BEYOND ACADEMIA

Module 8: Applications of Sociolinguistics

- Linguistic profiling and injustice
- Forensic linguistics
- Language revitalization efforts
- Sociolinguistic awareness and education