

Language in Social Interaction I

Spring 2015, Mon 10:30–12:00

Instructor

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Office hours: Mon 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

Goal of the course

The goal of this course is to learn the basics of sociolinguistics, with an emphasis on sociolinguistic issues in Japan and/or the Japanese language. It aims to better understand the linguistic diversity of the world and its relation to society and culture. Some illustrative questions we will address in class are below:

- How do we use different languages, or different styles of the same language (e.g. polite vs. plain) in different situations?
- How do we use words to achieve our goals? How can we guess an intended meaning in conversation?
- Which language should have an official status? Should we save dying languages?
- Culture determines language, language determines culture, both, or neither?

Outline of the course

Our course loosely follows the structure of the textbook, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. You should read the textbook chapters by the date indicated in the schedule.

The first half of the course is more about macro-level phenomena, such as multilingual societies, dialects, and language change. The second half of the course is more about micro-level issues, i.e. how people behave in each communication setting, although these two aspects of language are closely related.

Course website

<http://asaokitan.net/courses/socio2015/>

Textbook

- Holmes (2013) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. (4th edition)

Copies are available at the NU co-op or online stores.

Schedule (tentative)

The schedule is subject to minor changes; check the website to see updates.

Apr 13	Introduction	
Apr 20	Multilingualism and diglossia	Ch 1, 2
Apr 27	Guest talk 1: Masahiro YAMADA (Kyoto U) Documentation and revitalization of endangered languages	
May 11	Birth and death of languages	Ch 3, 4
May 18	Dialects	Quiz 1 Ch 6
May 25	Language variation in age, social class and ethnicity	
Jun 1	Language change	Ch 9
Jun 8	Gender	Ch 7, 12
Jun 15	Speech act and maxims of conversation	Quiz 2
Jun 22	Speech style and politeness	Ch 10, 11
Jun 29	How discourse is organized	Ch 14
Jul 6	Guest talk 2 (details TBA)	
Jul 13	Language and culture	Quiz 3 Ch 13
(Jul 20)	(Holiday - Marine Day)	
Jul 27	(backup day)	
Aug 3	(backup day)	Final project due

Grading

Attendance and participation (40%)

You will be asked to attend every class and actively participate in class discussions. You need to submit a reaction paper at the end of each class. Typically, you will be asked to write a paragraph or two to present your own opinions and/or questions on the class topic.

Quizzes (30%)

You will be asked to show your understanding of the key concepts discussed in class and in the textbook. Quiz dates will be announced in advance.

Final project (30%)

In the final project, you need to collect and analyze your own data on a sociolinguistic variation or discourse function. Detailed instructions will be announced later.

Guest lectures

Two guest lectures are planned, in which active researchers of subfields of sociolinguistics will be invited to give a talk.

Notes

- Turn your cellphone to the silent mode.
- If you are absent from the classroom for more than one third of a class, the instructor reserves the right to reduce your attendance points.