University of Tunis Lecturer : Raoudha Ben Othman

English Department

Introduction to Sociolinguistics

2018-2019

**Syllabus**

**Aims**

1. To examine the relations between language and society, following the progression of Sociolinguistics from the ‘language reflects society’, to the ‘language constitutes society’ perspective.
2. To explore the types of linguistic variation within society, and the causes and effects of linguistic change.

**Syllabus**

This course will explore different aspects of the relationship between language and society focusing on themes that traditionally come under the label ‘Sociolinguistics’. Languages are often related to developments in society. The main basis for any conclusions as to the nature of relationship between language and society and society will be provided by an examination of linguistic variation. Particular attention is given to the study of variation involving e.g. gender, ethnicity, age and class variables - and combinations of these. In particular; the relationship between sociological characteristics (e.g. age, sex, educational level, social class), variation and change will be the main themes underlying the course. This course will attempt to answer questions such as:

1. Why do people in different parts of a country speak differently?
2. How can we tell where a person comes from by listening ot his or her speech?
3. Why do people in different social classes speak differently?
4. Is there a difference between the speech of men and women? If so, what are these differences and why do they exist?
5. Are some dialects more correct than others?
6. Should “standard language” be taught in schools,

**Intended learning outcomes**

On successful completion of this module, students will:

1. Understand and use the basic conceptual terminology of variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. *variable, variant, style, indicator, hypercorrection, age-grading*),
2. Show how language and social factors are inter-related,
3. Be familiar with theories of language change,
4. Be able to understand the significance of sociolinguistic data as presented in charts and graphs,
5. Evaluate critically the social bases for linguistic value judgements.

The intended generic learning outcomes and, as appropriate, their relationship to programme learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Communicate the results of study and work accurately, with well structured and coherent arguments in an effective and fluent manner both in speech and in writing, to a specialist and non-specialist audience,
2. Evaluate and interpret data logically and systematically,
3. Develop their ability to work cooperatively with others, exercising personal responsibility and sensitivity,
4. Demonstrate their ability to undertake independent learning, by taking initiative, being organised and meeting deadlines,
5. Use IT skills to present information effectively; develop and exchange relevant information through the use of shared access to documents.

**Learning / Teaching Methods**

* Teaching of subject knowledge will be through a combination of lectures, seminars and student short presentations
* Students are provided with a course handout and a pre-reading pack of background material.

**Assignments & Assessment**

*Weekly reading requirement*

Students are required to undertake each week’s reading assignment before the lecture and are expected to read every text set for each week critically. Students are requested to bring their questions to class but are reminded to tackle language understanding problems before doing so.

*End of semester exam*

You will be given three questions but you will have to select two and answer them on your exam sheet. You will be asked reflection questions and expected to rely on 1st readings and 2nd class discussions. All of the questions will require you to take a position that have to defend using information and concepts you are expected to learn from the course.

**Support**

Students are encouraged either to email me their queries to [R.benothmen@gmail.com](mailto:R.benothmen@gmail.com) or to post them on the class blog <https://sociolinguisticsatfshst.wordpress.com> which will contain copies of set readings as well.

Posting questions on the blog will enable all students to benefit from ***all*** questions and answers and thus enhance their understanding and learning of the basic concepts of the course.

**Syllabus Plan**

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| Week | Title | Reading |
| W1 | Meeting | No reading |
| W2 | Speech community | Horvath & Sankoff (1987) |
| W3 | Language variety | Milroy & Milroy in Coulmas (ed.) (1997) |
| W4 | Dialects & varieties | Holmes (2001) ch.6 |
| W5 | Codeswitching | Myers-Scotton (1993) |
| W6 | Codeswitching in Tunisia | Lawson & Sachdev (2000) |
| W7 | Diglossia | Ferguson (1959) |
| W8 | Language and gender | Holmes (2001) ch. 7 |
| W9 | Language and media | Leitner in Coulams (ed.) (1997) |
| W10 | Language and education | Holmes (2001) ch. 14 |
| W11 | Review and mock exam |  |

**References**

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| Coulmas, F. (ed.) (1997) The Handbook of Sociolinguistics. Blackwell. |
| Ferguson, C.A. (1959) ‘Diglossia’ Word, 15, pp. 325-401. |
| Holmes, J. (2001) An introduction to Sociolinguistics. 2nd edition. Longman |
| Horvath, B. & Sankoff, D. (1987) ‘Delimiting the Sydney Speech Community’ Language in Society, 16:2, pp. 179-204 |
| Lawson, S. & Sachdev, I. (2000) ‘Codeswitching in Tunisia: Attitudinal and behavioural dimensions’ *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32, pp. 1343:1361. |
| Myers-Scotton, C. (1993) ‘Common and Uncommon Ground: Social and Structural Factors in Codeswitching’ *Language in Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 475-503. |