LING 450: Sociolinguistics I: Basic concepts

Course contents: This course introduces the basic concepts and methodological developments in sociolinguistics as these have progressed since the emergence of studies of language variation at the end of the 19th century to the present day. Following a presentation of early dialectological studies and their modern echoes, we pass on to phenomena of linguistic diversity and standardization. To explain the maintenance of non-standard varieties, we turn to such classics in urban dialectology as Labov 1972 and Trudgill 1974. These bring us to the discussion of the macro-variables of class and gender, as well as their interrelationships. Scrutiny of the methodological limitations of these early studies prompts us to consider alternative methods of data collection and analysis, including research ethics. The notion of social network as such an alternative methodological tool also causes us to shift focus to the behavior of individual speakers, and the notions of style and register, as well as the related notion of diglossia. Through a comparison of style-shifting to code-switching, we come to the topic of language contact and examine it in its various instantiations, including borrowing, code-switching, code-mixing, koineization, language maintenance, shift and death. Explanations for these linguistic outcomes of contact draw heavily on such speaker-based notions as accommodation and acts of identity.

Organization: Guided discussions of set texts including both classics and the latest developments in each field. Set texts are available to download from e-reserves <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/reserves.html>. You are expected to print out, read in advance, and bring with you to class the texts discussed each week.

Assessment: Three components will be evaluated: class participation (20%), 3 research assignments (60%), and presentation of a set text in class (20%).

Prerequisites: LING 250 or consent of instructor.

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