LING 550: Sociolinguistics II:
Bridging the micro- and macro-perspectives

**Scope and content:** This course explores the relationship between the macro- and micro-levels of sociolinguistic analysis and the various ways in which this relationship has been tackled in sociolinguistic research. Broadly speaking, on the ‘macro’ side one finds notions such as ‘society,’ ‘social categories,’ and ‘structure,’ while on the ‘micro’ side we have the ‘individual,’ individual ‘acts’ and ‘choices,’ and ‘agency.’ Clearly, these two are sides of the same coin: they mutually determine each other in various ways, and cannot be studied independently of each other. To introduce the ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ as alternative levels of analysis, we will begin by problematizing classical sociolinguistic categories, such as Labovian ‘class.’ Social network analysis will be introduced as an alternative model, based on Milroy’s Belfast and Trudgill’s Norwich studies. Social network analysis will then be applied to the category of gender, and we will investigate its usefulness in dealing with issues of overt vs. covert prestige, and the ‘different cultures’ vs. ‘power’ explanations of gender differences in language. Recent studies of masculinity will also be discussed in this context, comparing the explanations put forward with the customary focus on women’s language. This will bring us to the notion of identity and its construction through language. Studies of youth language and academic language will be discussed as applications of the notion of ‘acts of identity.’ But as we narrow down our analytical lens to the ‘individual agent,’ his/her unity as a primary source of explanation will also come under scrutiny: ‘agency’ will turn out not to be a unitary notion, and ‘free choice’, ‘rationality’, and even ‘intention’ will turn out to be socially constituted. This will lead us to explore notions which have been proposed as intermediary between structure and agency, such as the Bourdieuan *habitus* and Giddens’s *structuration* theory. We will complete the course with an overview of some recent applications of these notions to the analysis of linguistic phenomena.

**Intended audience:** The primary focus of this course is on the interplay between the individual and society, as this is manifested through language. The course will be of interest to students of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, as well as those interested in language variation from a socio-cultural perspective, and the sociology of language.

**Organization:** Lecture presentations and guided discussions of set texts. Three components will be evaluated: class participation (40%), final research paper (40%), and presentation of a set text in class (20%).

**Prerequisites:** LING 450 or consent of instructor.

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