

ENGL 653 Teaching Composition from a Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Class Room: Edwards 169
Class Time: Monday 6p-8:45p
Office Hours: MWF 9a-10a; T 10a-11a

Language is a property of the speech community, an instrument of social communication that evolves gradually and continuously throughout human history in response to a variety of human needs.

—William Labov (1987) Some observations on the foundation of Linguistics

Course Description

This course will center on the implications of the reality of language variation in the teaching of English specifically in the United States. Linguists know that variation is an inherent fact of language. This will then create multiple dialects of a language, which linguistics see as each being of equal validity. However, sociolinguistics teaches us that dialects are intimately connected to social factors like age, gender, and most importantly power. Therefore, some dialects of a language will be more valued than others based on the power maintained by the speakers of that dialect. Where these facts come to a head is in the educational system. So, the question of what and how to teach so-called *Standardized American English* becomes extremely important. This course then, will look at all the linguistic and socio-political implications of teaching composition at the college level.

Some questions we will seek to answer: How do we teach from an informed sociolinguistic perspective? Should we teach Standardized English or should we teach another variety of English, or some combination of the two? How do we maintain our sociolinguistic views of language diversity while still teaching Standardized English? How do we help speakers of a non-standard dialect value their own language in the classroom?

Required Materials

PDFs of other related articles, distributed through Canvas.

Learning Objectives

- To apply explanations based on sociolinguistic theory to common and mythical assessments of language
- To come to an informed and defensible position on how to teach in light of inherent language variation
- To learn strategies for how to teach English from a sociolinguistic perspective

Course Requirements and Evaluation

In this course you will show your familiarity and synthesis of topics and theories presented in the readings through extensive and thorough class discussion and by through formal reading responses. Your ability to apply course concepts will be assessed through oral presentations and a final course paper.

Course Grade Determination

• Reading Response	25%
• Presentations	25%
• Final Paper	<u>50%</u>
• TOTAL	100%

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

To do well in this class, it is essential that you be in class each meeting. If you are unable to attend a class for any reason, you are responsible for contacting me to receive any materials distributed on that day and to turn in any assignments. You will be held responsible for anything missed during an absence.

Late Work

All work must be turned in on time on the date it is due. Late work will not be accepted. (Extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis)

Academic Integrity

Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. See the university's policy on academic integrity.

Classroom Etiquette

All cell phones must be turned off and put away during class. It is disrespectful to the professor and your fellow students to be giving your attention to anything other than the class discuss taking place.

You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner regarding your interaction with the professor as well as with your fellow classmates. Lively discussion and multiple viewpoints are encouraged in this class; however, you are always expected to respond in a professional manner towards the ideas and opinions of your classmates.

This schedule is tentative and subject to change as necessary.

week	date	description	reading
1	17-Aug	Introductions and Ideas	
2	24-Aug	Sociolinguistic Reality and Teaching	Ch1 and Ch6 Lippi-Green 2012
3	31-Aug	Students' Right to their Own Language	NCTE statement 1974, Smitherman 1995
4	7-Sep	Labor Day	
5	14-Sep	Students' Right to their Own Language	Kinloch 2005, Wible 2006
6	21-Sep	Standard English and Spoken vs Written language	Ch 1, 2, and 3 Milroy and Milroy 1999
7	28-Sep	Dialect Interference	Wolfram and Whiteman 1971, Coleman 1997
8	5-Oct	Dialect Interference	Redd and Webb 2005, Hartwell 1980
9	12-Oct	out	
10	19-Oct	Views on Standard English	Sledd 1969, Smitherman 1987, Charity Hudley and Mallinson 2011
11	26-Oct	Ann Arbor and Oakland	Ball and Lardner 1997, Smitherman and Baugh 2002
12	2-Nov	What should we be doing?	Lobeck 2005, Elbow 1999, Wheeler 2005
13	9-Nov	What should we be doing?	Reaser and Adger 2008, Wolfram, Adger, and Christian 1999, Mayer and New 2010
14	16-Nov	Teaching grammar	Ch1 and Ch2 Noguchi 1991, Jones, Myhill, and Bailey 2012
	23-Nov	Thanksgiving	
15	30-Nov	Teaching grammar	Cheshire 2005, Gilyard and Richardson 2001

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