

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
Second Term, 2025-26

- 1. Course Code: LING5604**
- 2. Course Title: Topics in Sociolinguistics**
- 3. Course Title (Chinese):**
- 4. Course Description:**

This course explores human language in the broader context of culture and society. Does language change and what are the processes involved? To what extent does the same language vary due to gender, power, status, and identity? How do people with higher and lower social status talk differently? How are these relationships reflected in the use of language? Through introducing students to major issues in sociolinguistic studies, students will be able to develop a better understanding of how language functions in societal contexts from a linguistic perspective. Exploring these topics will enhance students' awareness of language as a cultural phenomenon and sharpen their sensitivity to the nuances of language use in the context of a multilingual world.

5. Course Syllabus

Topics	Concepts
Language, Dialects and Varieties	language vs dialect, standard language, regional dialects, social dialects, ethnic dialects, styles, registers and genres
Language Attitudes and Identity	language attitudes: how identity is expressed through language
Multilingual Societies and Language Contact	lingua francas, pidgin and creole formation, linguistic characteristics of pidgins and creoles
Language Variation and Change	regional variation, linguistic variables, social variation, synchronic variation, and diachronic change
Discourse Analysis	interactional sociolinguistics, conversational analysis
Sociolinguistics and Social Justice	sexist language, gender, and sexuality identities; social dialects and education; legitimation of minority languages and dialects, access to English as a global language
Language Policy and Planning	types of language planning; endangered languages

6. Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand that language behaviors are regulated systematically not only by abstract linguistic principles but also by social factors.
- Identify the key issues in sociolinguistics and discuss these issues in sociolinguistic-specific terminologies.
- Identify and appreciate relevant sociolinguistic phenomena in daily communication settings.
- Analyze sociolinguistic phenomena with concepts learned in the course.
- Greater awareness of local and regional sociolinguistic situations.

7. Course Components (Teaching Modes and Learning Activities)

Lecture: 3 hours in-class

Lecture will be offered face-to-face, with no hybrid mode of teaching and learning.

8. Assessment type

Task nature	Description	Weight
Individual essay	Compare two multilingual societies in terms of their respective ‘sociolinguistic’ profiles. Summarize your findings in a 1000-word explanatory essay. Deadline: 9 February	40%
Group Project	Choose a sociolinguistic topic related to daily life in the speech community with which you are most familiar. In addition to a literature review related to the selected topic, the presentation should include an explanation of the project’s aim and approach. Date of presentations: 17 April 2026	30% <i>(10% presentation ppt file + 20% project paper)</i>
- project paper	A mini-research paper on the chosen topic (1800-2000 words, Roman font 12, single space). Deadline: 22 April 2026	
Midterm Quiz		30%

Late submission policy:

Assessment task	Extension allowed (Y/N)	Late submission policy
1. Individual written assignment	Y	<i>Unless an extension is granted, late submissions will result in a deduction of 5% of the marks awarded per day, with no marks to be given for a delay beyond 5 calendar days. Extension requests, supported by appropriate documentation, should be submitted to the course teacher for approval at least one week before the deadline in writing. Only unforeseen or exceptional circumstances beyond a student’s control will be considered.</i>
2. Group project: group oral presentation + project paper		

9. Assessment Rubric

LING5604	Topics in Sociolinguistics
A	Recognize almost all the basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe with great depth a wide range of factors influencing language use in the society; excellent in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations with a lot of critical insights.
A-	Recognize most basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe with great depth a wide range of factors influencing language use in the society; good in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations with some critical insights.

B	Recognize some basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe with some depth some factors influencing language use in the society; <u>satisfactory in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations.</u>
C	Recognize relatively few basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe rather superficially some factors influencing language use in the society; <u>weak in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations.</u>
D	Recognize very few basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe superficially a very limited number of factors influencing language use in the society; very weak in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations.
F	Recognize almost no basic concepts about language and society covered in the course; describe almost no factors influencing language use in the society; extremely weak in analyzing and evaluating linguistic phenomena in real-life situations.

10. Required and recommended reading

Course textbook:

Wardhaugh, Ronald & Janet Fuller. 2015. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Wiley Blackwell. (7th edition)

11. Feedback for evaluation

Students are encouraged to give feedback or comments on course contents and teaching materials throughout the course, in addition to the midterm and final course evaluation. Students can contact the lecturer directly. See contact details below.

12. Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Required reading
Week 1	9 Jan	Languages, dialects and varieties	W & F Chapters 1-2
Week 2	16 Jan	Language attitudes and identity	W & F Chapter 3
Week 3	23 Jan	Multilingual societies and language contact	W & F Chapter 4
Week 4	30 Jan	Contact languages: pidgins and creoles	W & F Chapter 5
Week 5	6 Feb	Language Variation	W & F Chapters 6-7
	9 Feb	Individual essay due	
Week 6	13 Feb	Language Change	W & F Chapter 8
	20 Feb	<i>Public Holiday</i>	
Week 7	27 Feb	Discourse Analysis	

Week 8	6 Mar	Language, Text and Context	W & F Chapters 9-11
Week 9	13 Mar	<i>Midterm Quiz</i>	
Week 10	20 Mar	Language, Gender and Sexuality	W & F Chapter 12
Week 11	27 Mar	Sociolinguistics and Education	W & F Chapter 13
Week 12	10 Apr	Language Policy and Planning	W & F Chapter 14
Week 13	17 Apr	Student presentations	

13. Contact details

Professor Jonathan WEBSTER
 Email: jonathanjameswebster@cuhk.edu.hk

14. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed [declaration](#) that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students' work will be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale

reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions, etc., produced by staff members/ teachers at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Approach 1 - All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks

Use of AI tools for grading and provision of feedback on student work (include this Section where applicable)

Approach 1 - All use of AI tools is prohibited for grading and provision of feedback on student work

Guidelines on sharing lecture recordings

1. The copyright of any lecture recordings shared in the course, whether they are produced by teachers, students, or peer note-takers, belongs to the University.
2. Students should not share these recordings with others without obtaining prior written consent from the teacher.