

LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY

LIN911

Convenor and Tutor: Dr. Andrew Smith

This non-advanced unit is intended to provide a basic introduction to language variety: how language reflects and constructs social contexts and identities. We address the following issues:

- What is a language? A dialect?
- How does the way we speak influence others? Why do we judge people on the way they speak?
- How does the way we speak interact with social factors such as gender and ethnic identity? How is our speech able to constitute these identities? How does the way we speak **to** others partially constitute **their** identities?
- How does language vary according to region? Why do different speakers from the same region still speak differently?
- How and why do languages change? How and why do people try to direct language change? Why are some people resistant to language change?
- How are social and linguistic identity constructed in conversation?

We take examples from English and from a range of other languages, extracting the basic principles that underlie language choice and language change as it is influenced by society. Students are encouraged to examine language use as it occurs around them, learning the conceptual tools and vocabulary to describe a range of different kinds of variation and related social structures.

Assessment: One short assignment, and one practical fieldwork investigation.

Set Texts for the Module:

Janet Holmes (2008) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (3rd Edition). Longman