LING1109

Language, Culture and Communication

Session 2, Special circumstance 2020

Department of Linguistics

Contents

Notice

As part of Phase 3 of our return to campus plan, most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group learning activities on campus for the second half-year, while keeping an online version available for those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face and online activities for your unit, please go to timetable viewer. To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
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Credit points
10	
Prerequisites	
Corequisites	
Co-badged status	

Unit description
This unit investigates language through issues the major linguists have asked over the last century. These questions begin with: what counts as a sign and how sign systems begin in a community, but organise the brain of the individual. We track the emergence of language in the child and variations of language which are a consequence of new pressures to act, talk, and think throughout our social networks. The unit also examines the variation of languages across 'language families', and the extent to which linguistic tools can be applied in diverse areas of cultural analysis - from electronic channels to verbal art. We consider the power of language by looking at the relationship of language to the ideologies of everyday experience, as well as those that are actively produced and maintained by powerful groups with vested interests.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Describe basic principles in the study of language as a meaning making system

ULO2: Recognize and analyse patterns in language

ULO3: Relate these patterns to what language is doing for its speakers in a given social and cultural context

ULO4: Understand key vectors of variation in language: code, register, dialect, typological variation

ULO5: Understand how language grows and develops in human cultures and within the individual

ULO6: Select and apply basic tools and techniques for the study of language data

ULO7: Make judgments about the social and cultural implications of linguistic patterns in natural language data

General Assessment Information

Submission of tasks:

All assessment tasks due by midnight on the due date.

Late Assessment Procedure:

- Late submissions without an extension will receive a penalty of 3% of the total mark available for the assessment task per day including weekend days (i.e. this is 3% of the total marks possible for the task – NOT 3% of the marks the student received. For example, if the assessment task is worth 100 marks and the student is two days late their mark for the task is reduced by 6 marks.)

- Late submission of an assessment task without an extension will not be accepted at all after the date on which marked assessment tasks have been released to the rest of the class. Any student with unsubmitted work at this date will receive a mark of 0 for the assessment task.

- Extensions will only be given in special circumstances, and can be requested by completing the Special Consideration request at ask.mq.edu.au and providing the requisite supporting documentation.

- Extensions that will result in submissions after the assessment task has been returned to the class will require a separate assessment task to be completed at the unit convenor's discretion.
- For more information on Special Consideration, see the university website https://student s.mq.edu.au/study/my-study-program/special-consideration\
- If a student fails the unit due to non-submission of an assignment or non-attendance at an exam, an FA grade will be applied in accordance with the University's Assessment Policy.
- Unit convenors have the discretion to determine whether or not students should fail a unit on the basis of lateness penalties alone if other learning outcomes of the unit have been met.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Tutorial tasks/preparation	30%	No	13/9/20 (first submission) 30/10/20 (second submission)
Module study	40%	No	4/11/20
Take home exam during final exam period	30%	No	Released 13/11/20 Due 16/11/20

Tutorial tasks/preparation

Assessment Type [1]: Field work task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 18 hours
Due: **13/9/20 (first submission) 30/10/20 (second submission)**
Weighting: **30%**

Tutorial preparation, participation and task completion/submission constitutes 30% of the overall mark for this unit. Each week students are required to read an article, and do a task in preparation for the tutorial. Students bring notes on the reading and the task for discussion in the tutorial. These tasks are submitted for marking at two points in the semester: end of week 7, and end of week 12. Students receive a mark out of 15 on each of these submissions. The mark will take account not only of the work submitted, but of student participation and contribution in the tutorials.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Describe basic principles in the study of language as a meaning making system

- Recognize and analyse patterns in language

- Relate these patterns to what language is doing for its speakers in a given social and cultural context

- Understand key vectors of variation in language: code, register, dialect, typological variation

- Understand how language grows and develops in human cultures and within the individual

- Select and apply basic tools and techniques for the study of language data

- Make judgments about the social and cultural implications of linguistic patterns in natural language data

Module study

Assessment Type [1]: Case study/analysis
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 40 hours
Due: **4/11/20**
Weighting: **40%**

Data collection, analysis and interpretation (1500 words), based on a topic that set by the student.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Describe basic principles in the study of language as a meaning making system

- Recognize and analyse patterns in language

- Relate these patterns to what language is doing for its speakers in a given social and cultural context

- Understand key vectors of variation in language: code, register, dialect, typological variation

- Understand how language grows and develops in human cultures and within the individual

- Select and apply basic tools and techniques for the study of language data

- Make judgments about the social and cultural implications of linguistic patterns in natural language data

Take home exam during final exam period

Assessment Type [1]: Quiz/Test
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 18 hours
Due: **Released 13/11/20 Due 16/11/20**
Weighting: **30%**

Exam consisting of two parts: short answer and one long answer.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Describe basic principles in the study of language as a meaning making system
- Recognize and analyse patterns in language
- Relate these patterns to what language is doing for its speakers in a given social and cultural context
- Understand key vectors of variation in language: code, register, dialect, typological variation
- Understand how language grows and develops in human cultures and within the individual
- Select and apply basic tools and techniques for the study of language data
- Make judgments about the social and cultural implications of linguistic patterns in natural language data

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[1] If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the Writing Centre for academic skills support.

[2] Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Weekly on-hour lectures by zoom. Weekly tutorials with on campus or online options: see timetable.

Unit Schedule

UNIT SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Lecture topic
1	MODULE 1: Signs and social networks	**Starting with signs in writing systems** Speech is difficult to study since it comes to us and goes in the moment; but writing systems offer us a static start – we can look at words and examine the basis of writing. Early writing systems, and many contemporary schemes are based on the 'syllable' – a chunk of combined sounds. An alphabet appears to be based on single sounds, and this singularity produces the smaller set of symbols of the Greek, Latin, English system that we use. Japanese has 2 syllabic scripts and an additional use of Chinese characters, which can be called upon for their value as sounds or as meanings. Chinese characters are neither iconic (pictures) or syllabic. How does all this variety work out in a wider world of global communication? How do writing systems affect literacy? What about printing and computers? Why is writing an art form in some cultures? Why is the spelling of many words unlike their actual sound? What, then, is punctuation? These basic beginnings allow us to reflect on what counts as a linguistic sign.
2		**How do you mean? Signs and linguistic sign systems** If you think you know what a sign is, think again. While we are sensitive to meanings, humans generally show a poor sense of how their meanings come about. Even linguists trade in simplifications in order to avoid the paradoxical nature of our first steps in linguistics. But the complexity of sign behaviour – when we confront that complexity– becomes a source of wonder, and a new way of seeing our society and its interaction with our brains. When you make a mistake in 'reading' the world about you, then you are likely to be amidst a sign system that you have misinterpreted. But a linguistic sign is not simply a piece of sound aligned to a human meaning! Signs are social and psychological; psychological and social. How does this 2 way relationship come about? And how can we put our knowledge about sign systems to work as we look around us at society, at literature, at film, and in the propaganda and advertising that sweep around us with their dazzling claim on our attention and our beliefs? This lecture opens up the fields of linguistics and of semiotics (the general study of systems of signs).
3		**Social networks and social networking** The familiar notion of a social network has a history going back to the study of families, businesses, accents and dialects; and social class. All of these were studied before our use of social networks as connections through the internet and phone systems. While we generate networks of connections by living, we ask how can such networks be put to practical use – not for surveillance, but in understanding social conditions and social change; the dynamics of hospitals and urban systems; and in the ways we might better manage complexity of economies and cities.
4	MODULE 2: Linguistics in the era of big data	**Linguistics in the era of big data** We live in an era of 'big data'. More and more scientists and engineers are involved with compiling and analysing big bodies of data, to help communities understand themselves better and to plan for the future. What does 'big data' mean in linguistics? This lecture introduces the idea of 'corpora', bodies of language data used for scholarly research as well as in many fields of practical application. We will look at the google books corpus, the largest ever corpus of English language data, and consider some technology for analysing texts as well as for visualizing patterns in text, including word clouds, word trees, and the distribution of words across a text.
5		**Using technology for corpus studies** In this lecture, we introduce you to some handy technology which automates the study of some kinds of lexical patterns in big data sets. Make sure you bring your laptop or an ipad to the lecture this week. We will step through how to use a concordance programme, and how to use Voyant Tools (http://voyant-tools.org/). We will provide some interesting text data for you to start your own explorations.

6		**What kinds of questions can you ask of a corpus?**
		In this lecture, we introduce key notions for shaping and defining a corpus. The ways in which we form a body of texts shapes the kinds of questions we can ask. We discuss the importance of corpora in creating an empirical foundation for linguistics. We explore some important findings from corpus linguistics, and their cultural significance. We also discuss the limitations of automated text analysis.
7	**MODULE 3:** **A World of Language Variation**	**Language, context and text** Carrying over from the previous modules, we come down to details of the way we can describe our transactions with the world, context by context. We are not all members of the same social networks; we become exponents of different forms of discourse – you need a lawyer in court; an architect must defer to an engineer; sports, dance, music all have specific ways of meaning expressed in ways of saying… We divide up contexts into parameters or variables which help us keep track of what is going on. We build in the direction of things by following the choices that speakers make in that field, with a particular emotional tenor, and we examine the way the channel of communication determines aspects of what people can and cannot do in that mode. The tool is simple and allows us to decide how much we need for our social research questions.
8		**Accent, register, dialect, code** A different style of discourse for a different context is called register variation. In the previous lecture, we looked at how to bring out this kind of variation in our research applying field, tenor, and mode. But how does register relate to the more obvious manifestations of a spoken language: namely, the accent someone exhibits, and the differences of dialect (words and grammar that separate the speakers whom we describe as 'speaking' the same language? We set out the important distinctions in relation to the 3 terms: accent, register; dialect. We then move back to the different semantic expectations we have in the living of life – how authority is expressed; how it might be contested; how it leads us to make assumptions about something which is still 'a work in progress' – namely, what makes sense; how the world is to be ordered and regulated by a silent code.
9		**A world of languages** 100 years before Darwin proposed evolutionary "descent with modification", linguists noted that languages appeared to change according to a system of family relationships. Today, the languages of the world present us with a mesmerising spectrum of practical ways of interrelating aspects of our social and material worlds. Languages sort out things, events, times, forms of evidence, human hierarchies, intimacies, predictions; agency; prominence of information…and so much more, into categories that we call grammar. To discover this breadth of variation between humans is much like finding a new continent with abundance of life forms not previously imagined. This raises many issues for us to ponder – the loss of 'species' of language as languages disappear; translation as an art; the experience of being bi-lingual; cross cultural thinking; and teaching!
10	**MODULE 4: Language, culture and education**	**Language and schooling: how culture shapes learning** What actually happens in a classroom? Is primary school an extension of home knowledge? What differences are there in the talk of teachers as we go up to high school and university? How are we different from peoples who did not learn to write and read? Are we stilling evolving through the cultural and mental tools we devise? Will computers change the way we think, feel, and work. Should language be more of a focus of schooling, or can we become good 'users' without explicit, objective enquiry into language? Given controls over press and other sources of information, do we need to emphasise the tools of reasoning in language in order to increase our critical powers?
11		**Language and culture: language construing reality** How different are cultures – what are the extremes in viewing the world? How might languages give us clear evidence of different patterns of living? Linguists have been at the forefront of these questions about cultural relativism. We need to look at concrete cases of variation in dealing with the world through meaning – what is unacceptable, even heinous, in one culture can seem reasonable in another, or in the same culture in a different historical era (consider slavery, or capital punishment; but also attitudes to animals, forests, and the passing of time). How do such contrasts of custom come about? And how are we to discuss such clashes of interpretation when they ensnare communities or whole countries into conflicts?

12		**The language brain?**
		How language came about and its role in the evolution of the human brain IS the hottest topic in human sciences! Linguists are only a minor group in the choir of academic voices who lay claim to this topic: the language brain. Neuroscientists, biologists, philosophers have competed to interpret the most complex unit of matter in the cosmos. For a start the brain is not the beginning and end of our nervous system: language reminds us of our whole body and the links to those around us – we are part of a collective, and come to our personalities through dealing with other people – all the specific connections that we tried to represent in the lectures on social networks.
		We review the implications of the most recent neuroscience in relation to the role of language: that is, language as an extension of evolution(do other species have languages, or sign systems?); and language in the construction of our inner lives. Ultimately, we look at the way language constructs that most subtle of all organs – the unique self.
13		**Unit review and exam preparation**

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Grade Appeal Policy
- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy *(**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct

Results

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Getting help with your assignment
- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.