

Seminar: The Diversity of English I/II

Instructor: Yutai Watanabe

0. Important Notice

In 2016 Nakiai-sensei instructs this seminar as a 90minute long course (worth 2 credits per semester). The class will become 180 minutes long (4 credits per semester) from 2017 onwards.

1. Theme

The English language, once only spoken in the British Isles, has spread around the world with an estimated 1.5 billion people as native or non-native speakers. At the same time, the language has been developing a wide range of variations, depending on the social and cultural contexts in which it has been transplanted and used. The seminar will be concerned with the phonetic and lexical features of English(es) both in the Inner and Expanding Circles.

During the spring semester, we will deal with southern hemisphere varieties, New Zealand English (NZE) in particular. NZE is not a ‘black sheep’ of English in regard to its distinctive phonology and vocabulary, but could be regarded as a ‘forerunner’ in terms of sound evolution and lexical borrowing from its contact with an indigenous language. As practical work, students will analyse dialogues in locally produced films and on YouTube clips for purposes of identification.



The fall semester will be dedicated to examining L2-accented English in the Expanding Circle: German, Spanish and Japanese accents, among others. A considerable emphasis will be placed on the status of and attitudes towards English as a lingua franca in Japan. In the process of individual and/or collaborative research, we will also discuss why it is necessary to reconceptualise traditional notions of bilingualism and the ‘native speaker’.



2. Course methods

Students will take turns to review a book chapter or journal article assigned by the instructor, noting key terms and concepts, which could be proactively studied by consulting reference books. The other students in the class will contribute to the discussion with their questions and observations. Each student is expected to write a short and an extended essay on their chosen topic towards the end of the 3rd and 4th year, respectively.

3. Selection Process

(1) Email me with an essay attached describing your interest in the seminar by 28th October at 11:30am. You are highly recommended to refer to the relevant linguistics courses you have taken. My email address: [REDACTED]

(2) Interviews will be held in my office between 31st October and 11th November. I will contact you and arrange a date and time. My office is Room 2108 on the 21st floor of Boissonade Tower.

(3) The seminar is limited to five 3rd year students in principle. The 4th year students may not be newly accepted unless they demonstrate an extremely solid background in linguistics.

4. Requirements for application

Successful applicants must be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the seminar themes. It is essential that they should have completed most 200-level linguistics courses with good grades.

5. Open seminar

I am taking a sabbatical leave in the 2016 academic year, thus I have no class open to any students. Feel free to contact me by email if you have any inquiries about the seminar content.

6. Who will benefit from this seminar?

(1) Students interested in (socio)linguistic topics, including English dialects and accents, bilingualism, native vs. non-native speakers, and English as a lingua franca.

(2) Students having wondered how English used in real contexts differ from the ‘model’ English, which they learned in high school classrooms.

(3) Students who find the following videos interesting or amusing. Viewer discretion is advised. The clips contain coarse language.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwhmJaWIU2M>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZLBY3lYtsQ>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dABo_DCIdpM&feature=related