

# Linguistics and the social sciences

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Many students of linguistics find themselves dealing with issues that have concerned social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, geography, politics, and social psychology. And many students in these subjects find themselves wanting a principled, consistent analysis of some form of language: they have a collection of policy documents, new articles, interviews, or transcripts from television, and they want to relate them to some issue about social change. This note is intended for teachers of courses with titles like 'Language in Society' who want to lead their students to further resources for linking linguistics to the social sciences.

## What linguists need from the social sciences

The practical strength of most linguists is their ability to pursue sustained analysis, and often to compare the applicability of two or more different systems of analysis. To do this, they often take some key social aspects of language use for granted, particularly in undergraduate coursework.

## Identities

Social scientists have often warned sociolinguists against essentialising identities, taking them as fixed attributes, categories to be ticked off in the survey. Class was the first of these categories to be called into question; belonging to a class seems to be not so much a socio-economic fact as a cultural process. Gender also becomes complicated, a performance of certain roles that may or may not correspond to biological sex. National identities, so closely tied to languages and especially standard languages, can be treated as 'imagined communities'. While an earlier generation of sociolinguists looked for the authentic user of a language, often the oldest and most isolated speaker in a community, current sociolinguistics celebrates hybridity, the mixing and crossing of identities. Students sometimes imagine, from the skepticism of current social science approaches to class, gender, and ethnicity, that the social inequalities described in these terms have magically disappeared over the last generation.

## Structure

Linguists have traditionally turned to sociology and political science for an account of social structure: stratification, institutions, laws, roles, exchange. But in the stripped-down version of sociology used by linguists, it is hard to tell how these structures ever change: working class people talk working class, some people have authority, and institutions specify the appropriateness of kinds of language to be used within them. Current research emphasizes different kinds of mediation between language and social change, the importance of different discourse practices, so that change or resistance to change are not just read off the kind of language used.

Emphasizes = يؤكد بشدد

Appropriateness = بشكل مناسب

Issues = قضايا او مشاكل

Ability= الإستطاعة أو القدرة

Pursue = اللحاق أو البحث ، التعقب

Undergraduate = المرحلة الجامعية