Carolina Amador-Moreno (Extremadura) Orality and the study of Irish English spoken discourse in historical sources

This course will pay particular attention to the analysis of discourse features from a historical (socio)pragmatic perspective. We will focus on Irish English, which is often cited as a possible source of particular features that were historically transported to other emerging varieties of English across the world. We will explore how written discourse captured the voices of many Irish English speakers in the past, allowing us to trace language use diachronically.

The course will engage with examples of fictional discourse and will focus on private correspondence. By turning to CORIECOR, the *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence*, we will take a closer look at how Irish English was recorded through letter writing. CORIECOR contains a large body of personal letters mainly to and from Irish emigrants, sent for the most part between Ireland and the United States, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, from approximately 1750 to 1940. The course will allow students to reflect on how diachronic corpora can help us identify patterns of consistency across time, as well as trends in usage, and instances of slower types of linguistic change across language varieties.

Corpus-based studies covering nearly 1000 years of English language history show personal correspondence to be more vernacular, and more sensitive to linguistic variation and change, than other types of texts (e.g. Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). Although not always well suited to the study of all linguistic levels, letters are rich sources of data for (morpho)syntactic, lexical and sociopragmatic analysis. Through specific examples, and with a focus on discourse-pragmatics, students will observe how private correspondence represents the writers' vernacular or ordinary everyday language. Letters are considered to be among the most "oral" text types available for linguistic study (Schneider 2002) and they are, therefore, a possible alternative to the spoken language studied by modern sociolinguists (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009:121-122).

Essentially through this course we will look at the past to understand present-day linguistic uses. Broadly, the course will allow students to 1) engage in methodological reflections related to corpus building; 2) go beyond decontextualised and isolated examples of language use and language change, taking into account the discourse context in which the changes and uses take place; and 3) think about how diachronic variational pragmatics can complement synchronic approaches.

REFERENCES

Nevalainen, Terttu and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. 2003. *Historical sociolinguistics: Language change in Tudor and Stuart England.* London: Longman.

Schneider, Edgar W. 2002. Investigating variation and change in written documents. In J. K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill & Natalie Schilling-Estes (eds.), *The handbook of language variation and Change*, 67–96. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Ingrid 2009. *An introduction to Late Modern English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

James Clackson (Cambridge) Sociolinguistic Variation in Ancient Languages

There is an abundance of material from the ancient world that lends itself to sociolinguistic study, including a large corpus of literary texts, as well as documentary evidence preserved on papyri, tablets, stone or other media. This course will pick different corpora to exemplify different themes, theories and methods in the field of ancient sociolinguistics. The topics covered will include: the nature of the evidence and approaches to the 'bad data' problem; the relationship between speech and writing, and

the identification of different speech registers; regional variation; the correlation of linguistic variation with social classes, gender, age and status; bi- and multilingualism, and the interpretation of texts including two or more languages; ideas about linguistic purity and standards; the impact of Christianity on language use and linguistic behaviour. The material for this course will primarily be taken from the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, although other languages spoken in the lands around the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times will also feature. No assumption of any knowledge of any ancient language will be assumed.

Simeon Dekker (Giessen) The development of Middle Ruthenian as a literary language in an Early Modern multilingual environment: integrating philological and sociolinguistic perspectives between East and West

This course is situated at the intersection of three fields of study: it combines philological, sociolinguistic and cultural-historical components. These fields are taken up in a case study into the formation of the Ruthenian language in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th centuries. Middle Ruthenian is not a direct precursor of modern Belarusian and Ukrainian, but a literary language common to the predecessors of both present-day nations. Literary Ruthenian (also known as *prosta mova*) was formed on the basis of an East Slavic chancery language. An extension of this medieval chancery base led to the formation of a fully-fledged literary language. Its use cannot be seen separately from the linguistic, cultural and religious fracture lines between East and West, which converged on the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The development of Ruthenian was affected significantly by its position in a multilingual environment shaped by intense oral and written language contact, especially with Polish, Latin and Church Slavonic. In the absence of oral sources, we have to rely on textual evidence. This course is not about language contact in everyday life ('from below'), but about the traces a multilingual environment left on the formation of a newly established literary language. Thus, language contact is to be analysed in terms of the intertwining of Eastern and Western textual traditions.

Without presupposing competence in Slavic languages, we shall nevertheless try to work with the original texts as much as possible. This will involve the study of linguistic features, such as the distribution of verbal tenses, but also questions like the interrelatedness of language and alphabet, the division of labour between languages throughout different text types, genres and registers. None of these issues can be discussed without a substantial sociolinguistic component. The development of Middle Ruthenian is, therefore, a relevant case study into textual manifestations of sociolinguistic variation in an Early Modern multilingual society.

Chiara Fedriani (Genoa) Diachronic socio-pragmatics: The evolution of requests in the history of Italian

Chiara Fedriani, University of Genoa

Making requests is one of the most fundamental and pervasive activities in social interaction. As Rossi (2015: 1) observes, "[o]ur propensity to appeal to others for things we cannot do alone – or do better together – is constitutive of human sociality, as is the need to monitor, coordinate and direct each other in our daily collaborative activities." Beyond lying at the core of cooperation in social life (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014: 1), requests are particularly intriguing from a pragmatic perspective because of their implications for facework and (im)politeness dynamics. For this reason, in this course we will examine the diachronic evolution of request strategies from a socio-pragmatic perspective, a topic that is still largely unexplored for Italian.

The data we will analyze and discuss in class are drawn from the newly developed DIADIta corpus (De Felice & Strik Lievers 2024). The corpus comprises 24 texts from different literary genres, mostly plays, novels, and short stories where dialogic interaction is particularly frequent. DIADIta spans from the 13th to the 20th century, amounting to 594,317 tokens, and is annotated for a wide range of socio-pragmatically relevant phenomena, including the characters' genders, speech acts, discourse markers, pragmatic functions such as (im)politeness and epistemic stance, and pragmatic aims such as attention-getting, among others.

The main evolutionary trends that emerge concern (i) radical changes in the use of performative verbs and support moves; (ii) a gradual increase of face-saving devices; and (iii) the pragmaticalization of new politeness markers – in some cases cyclically replacing older forms. We will interpret these large-scale pragmatic changes against the broader socio-cultural backdrop of European history: from a post-medieval society governed by the codes of the *Ancien Régime* to the erosion of rigid social hierarchies, leading to the rise of the modern bourgeoisie. This transition entailed new face needs and norms of interaction, increasingly oriented toward respecting the face wants of individual selves (Paternoster & Fitzmaurice 2019: 12-16).

References

De Felice, I., Strik-Lievers, F. (2024), Building a pragmatically annotated diachronic corpus: the DIADIta project. In F. Dell'Orletta, A. Lenci, S. Montemagni, R. Sprugnoli (eds.), *Proceedings of the Tenth Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2024).* Aachen CEUR-WS.

Drew, P., Couper-Kuhlen, E. (2014), Requesting – from speech act to recruitment. In P. Drew, E. Couper-Kuhlen (eds.), *Requesting in Social Interaction*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1–34.

Paternoster, A., Fitzmaurice, S. (2019), Politeness in nineteenth-century Europe. In A. Paternoster, S. Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Politeness in nineteenth-century Europe a research agenda*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1–35.

Rossi, G. (2015), *The request system in Italian interaction.* Ph.D. MPI Nijmegen and Radboud Universiteit.

Matthias Kappler (Venice) The sociolinguistics of an empire: Multilingualism and multigraphism in the Ottoman world

How did people communicate across languages, scripts, and religions in one of the most multilingual empires in history? This course invites students to explore the rich sociolinguistic landscape of the late Ottoman Empire (18th–19th centuries), focusing on multilingualism, language contact, and the use of multiple writing systems across linguistic boundaries.

The course begins with an introduction to key concepts such as multigraphism, elite multilingualism, and language contact from a historical sociolinguistic perspective. The first lecture then examines Ottoman society as a multilingual empire structured by language hierarchies and policies tied to elite education and administration. Through concrete examples—such as the Ottoman Greek community—students will explore how religious and linguistic minorities positioned themselves in relation to the imperial language of the elite, and how everyday multilingual practices like code-switching and diglossia shaped communication and identity.

The second lecture turns to the fascinating world of Ottoman multiscriptural practices as indicators of linguistic diversity. Students will discover how and why languages were written in scripts not

traditionally associated with them—such as Turkish in Greek or Armenian characters, or Greek dialects written in the Arabic script. Far from being marginal or exceptional, these practices—shaped by factors such as religious affiliation, linguistic variation, and cultural negotiation—, were widespread and served both practical purposes and expressions of identity. At the same time, they challenge later national narratives and invite us to rethink how knowledge circulated across religious and linguistic communities.

Overall, the course offers students a new perspective on the role of language and writing in a multicultural imperial society caught between modernisation and conservatism. By examining multilingualism and multigraphism from the imperial centre to its peripheries—and vice versa—, the course provides valuable insights into language attitudes, cultural negotiation, and intercommunal relations—topics that remain highly relevant in today's multilingual world.

Oliver Mayeux (Cambridge) The Historical Sociolinguistics of Creoles and Pidgins

This course introduces students to the historical sociolinguistics of pidgins and creoles, focusing on how social structure, contact, and variation interact as a new language emerges, stabilises, and changes over time. Together, we will move beyond purely structural or typological accounts of pidgins and creoles and come to view them as historically situated linguistic systems shaped by speakers' social practices, ideologies, and power relations.

The course begins with a discursive and critical overview of classic theories of pidginisation and creolisation. These approaches are then re-evaluated through the lens of historical sociolinguistics to emphasise the importance of demographics, mobility, and the social structures and contexts shaping early variation. Particular attention is paid to the problem of evidence: we will examine early textual sources together as socially embedded artefacts and discuss the extent to which they might reflect spoken language. We will then move on to explore variation in societies where pidgins and creoles were and are spoken. Students will explore how competing forms coexist in early pidgins and creoles, how variation becomes structured over time, and how social meaning and indexicality contribute to the emergence of particular ways of speaking.

At regular points throughout the course, we will engage in theoretical and methodological reflection, considering the relevance of quantitative analysis, third-wave sociolinguistics, and ethnographic approaches in interpreting the data under discussion. In light of the often violent and unequal historical conditions under which most pidgins and creoles emerged, we will also address questions of race, racism, power, and enduring colonial legacies in sociolinguistic work.

Ulrike Vogl (Ghent) Differentiating Dutch: Language naming and metalinguistic debates in the Low Countries and beyond

This course explores how Dutch has been linguistically differentiated across time through practices of language naming and metalinguistic commentary. We examine how endonyms and exonyms for Dutch have shifted from the early modern period to the nineteenth century, and how these labels were mobilised to construct social, political, and cultural boundaries within and beyond the Low Countries. Building on recent work in historical sociolinguistics and language-ideological research, we analyse naming practices as sites where questions of language hierarchies and linguistic authority become discursively encoded.

A second strand focuses on early modern foreign language teaching materials (16th-18th centuries), in which authors explicitly debated the status and learnability of Dutch and other languages. These metalinguistic discussions reveal how Dutch was positioned as a foreign language, how linguistic

competence was ideologically framed, and how broader societal concerns shaped arguments for or against learning particular languages.

Bringing these strands together, the course explores how language naming and language pedagogical discourse jointly contributed to the evolving ideological construction of "Dutch." We will engage with examples of textual sources (e.g. early modern monolingual and multilingual textbooks and grammars, as well as newspapers), discuss methodological approaches to analysing metalinguistic discourse, and reflect on how linguistic differentiation processes participate in larger histories of language(s).

References

Irvine, Judith T. & Susan Gal (2000): Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In Paul V. Kroskrity (ed.), Regimes of language ideologies, polities, and identities. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press. 35–84.

Krämer, Philipp, Ulrike Vogl, & Leena Kolehmainen (2022): What is "Language Making"?" International Journal of the Sociology of Language 274: 1–27.