

## 53-512 Language variation and change

### Course description

*'She's wanting a change.'*  
*'We overnighed in Dublin.'*  
*'I'll text you this address.'*

*golden handcuffs, designer stubble, mouse potato, rogue states*

香菇蓝瘦 *'Mushroom and blue skinny (lit.)'* in Chinese meaning *'I want to cry and I suffer'*

It is difficult to find a language that is not subject to variability. While some variations are predictable, others are not. Language Variation and Change is a term used in present-day sociolinguistics to refer to the small variation which occur in language and which are determined by external, social factors. These variations can and do lead in time to language change. They contrast with variations in language which are motivated by internal factors – structural features of a language – which can also lead to change, especially when this internal variation occurs during first language acquisition.

In this course, we will first learn some basic principles and assumptions of language variation and change, including how language and society interact, how social attitudes, social ambition and social bonding affect the way in which people speak as well as how the internal structure of language interacts with external social factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, identity, etc. We will then review some of the state-of-art research methods and the quantitative analysis of Language Variation and Change with a special focus on, but not limited to the English-speaking communities around the world.

### Requirements:

Students are expected to attend class regularly, participate in discussions and give a presentation. Students who require full credit points are required to submit a written report.

### Recommended literature:

Chambers, J.K., Peter Trudgill and Natalie Schilling-Estes (2003). *The handbook of language variation and change*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Schreier, Daniel (2014). *Variation and change in English: an introduction*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

Leech, Geoffrey, Marianne Hundt, Christian Mair, and Nicholas Smith (2009). *Change in contemporary English*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tagliamonte, Sali A. (2012). *Variationist Sociolinguistics: change, observation, interpretation*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Trudgill, Peter (2000). *Sociolinguistics. An Introduction to Language and Society*. London: Penguin.