

Veranstalter:	Prof. Dr. Peter Siemund
Thema:	Pronouns: Language Contact, Social Change, and Refunctionalization (ENG-4, ENG-4a, ENG-10, ENG-11, AA7, AA9, LAA8, LAA11, IAA20, IAA23, IAA24, IAA25, ENGAGE-M01a,ENGAGE-M02)
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Pronouns represent a central grammatically oriented word class comprising several subgroups: personal, reflexive, demonstrative, indefinite, interrogative. They can encode a wide array of grammatical categories, inter alia, person, number, gender, reflexivity, politeness, respect, clusivity, distance. Pronouns are morphologically light in the typical case and count amongst the more frequently used items.

Pronouns form closed paradigms and are also relatively stable in diachronic terms. These paradigms are good examples of the structuralist conception of “un système où tout se tient” (attributed to Ferdinand de Saussure; Koerner 1997) where the interdependence of the items within a paradigm is foregrounded. Accordingly, they prove relatively immune to language contact, but sometimes we do find contact-induced change in this domain, as when Scandinavian influence implanted the 3rd person plural pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their* into the English paradigm.

Moreover, pronouns carry immense symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991). They encode social relations and are salient enough to attract the language users’ attention. This renders them a prominent target for linguistic intervention during periods of social change when the ideological underpinnings of societies are renegotiated. This perspective allows one to understand the promotion of gender-neutral (epicene) *they* as well as the borrowing of Finnish gender-neutral *hän* into Swedish and Norwegian (*hen*). Such processes are not new and can be related to the generalization of *you* to singular contexts in Early Modern English when the expression of social differences was of utmost importance.

The seminar explores an important word class at the crossroads of cognitive and social sciences. It will investigate pronouns from both perspectives, especially pointing to areas where cognition and social structure interact and come into conflict. The seminar will begin with an overview of pronouns as a distinct word class including its subcategories. It will go on to discuss language contact and linguistic intervention as forces of pronominal change. There will further be classes concerning pronominal variation, grammaticalization, and refunctionalization.

Students will be organized in expert groups that will regularly report their results.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press.

- Koerner, E. 1997. Notes on the history of the concept of language as a system 'Où tout se tient'. *Linguistica Atlantica* 19, 1–20. journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/la/article/view/22501 (accessed 30 April 2021).
- Siemund, Peter. 2008, 2013. *Pronominal Gender in English: A Study of English Varieties from a Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Siemund, Peter. 2013. *Varieties of English. A Typological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siemund, Peter. Fc. 2023. On the alleged stability of pronouns: The influence of language contact and social intervention. In Laura Paterson (ed.) *Handbook of Pronouns*. London: Routledge.