

Dialectology & Sociolinguistics: Voices across Space and Society

Course type: MA seminar Year of studies: 2025/2026 Instructor: Adam Biały, PhD

Prerequisites: Rudimentary knowledge and interest in language

Aims and objectives:

What makes Liverpool speech distinct from Newcastle? Why do the Gallagher brothers shy away from using RP? Why might second-person pronouns differ between age groups? Ever wondered about these? This course examines both **regional (geographical)** and **social (sociolectal)** variation in language, blending theories, real-world case studies, and student-led research.

Core themes include:

- **Dialect maps**, isoglosses, and dialect continua (e.g. Romance language chains)
- The logic behind **social dialects**—linked to age, gender, or socioeconomic background
- Contact phenomena: dialect levelling, koineization, and borrowing processes
- Perceptual dialectology: examining how speakers perceive and judge dialect differences
- Exploration of historical and social case studies from Europe, India, and North America

The discussion of the topics covered during the course will enable students to select the area of further study and formulate the topics of their MA theses.

Range of (MA thesis) topics:

The topics of MA theses can range within sociolinguistics (language and society), pragmatics (language and context), ethnolinguistics (language and culture), intercultural communication (translation) or any other (interesting and sufficient) area of linguistics.

Examples of topics:

- The dialect of gender and age.
- English as an international language.
- Slang, its function in a linguistic community.
- Approaches to dealing with sociolinguistic aspects (e.g., dialect, sociolect, jargon, register).
- Attitudes to language variability (accents and dialects).
- Diglossia and linguistic oppression.
- Dialects of English and their development.
- The language of the new media (e.g. memes in social media)
- The functions of codeswitching.
- The language of politeness.
- Analysis of regional dialects of English (e.g. Estuary English (or another selected dialect)), from its beginning to current state.
- Cultural and linguistic aspects in intercultural communication (e.g. translation).

References (selected):

Aronoff, M. and Rees-Miller, J. (eds.) 2003. *The Handbook of Linguistics*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd. Bartmiński, J. 2006. *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata*. Wydawnictwo UMCS.

Bayley, R, Cameron, R., and Lucas, S. (eds) 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Britain, David & Jenny Cheshire (eds) 2003. Social Dialectology. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Burke, Peter & Roy Porter (eds) 1991. *Language, Self, and Society. A Social History of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chambers, J. K. & Natalie Schilling (eds) 2013. *Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Holmes, J. 2013. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. Routledge.

Snell-Hornby, M., Jettmarova, Z., Kaindl, K. 1997. *Translation as Intercultural Communication*. John Benjamins.

Siemund, P. 2013. *Varieties of English: A Typological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tabakowska, E. 2001. *Kognitywne podstawy języka i językoznawstwa*. Universitas, Kraków. Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.