

Principles of Language Change

Type of course: MA.AA.SW07
Time: Monday 10-12 a.m. (10:15 - 11:45)
Venue: Carl-Zeiss-Str. 3, SR 221
Workload: 5 ECTS



Course description

The seminar is concerned with the question of how and why languages change over time. In order to approach these issues, the first part of the course provides an overview of typical patterns of language change in lexical semantics, phonology, morphology and syntax. It will be argued that innovations in these areas are driven primarily by cognitive-functional considerations, while their propagation (and hence their ultimate visibility as a genuine 'change' in the language) is regulated by intricate social and especially social-psychological factors. Accordingly, the second part of the course will be devoted to an examination of these sociolinguistic dimensions of change. Finally, the class will be rounded off by a brief look at the more global outcomes of change (i.e. patterns of geographical diversion into dialects, languages and language families) and the linguistic reconstruction of such large-scale patterns of historical relatedness.

Requirements and marking system

- regular **attendance**, active **participation** and thorough weekly **preparation** (see below)
- a **forum entry** on wordwise on a linguistic change that you've noticed
- a **short presentation** in pairs (except for state-examination candidates)
- **final exam** (90 minutes, 11 July 2016, 10-12h)

Weekly preparation

An essential part (and requirement) of the course is your in-depth preparation of each session at home. This usually comes in the form of **preparatory texts** and accompanying **homework**. The course will be based on the major chapters in:

[McColl Millar, Robert and Larry Trask \(2015\). *Trask's Historical Linguistics*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.](#)

Further references will be provided for each topic of the course.

The course management system

The course management system of our department, called **WORDWISE** (www.wordwise.uni-jena.de), will be the online platform of this class. All class materials (including PPT presentations, in-class worksheets, follow-up handouts, references, etc.) will be made available there. In addition, important organisational information (e.g. announcements etc.) will also be distributed via WORDWISE (to your email address). Therefore, please make sure your email address on WORDWISE is valid and that you check it regularly!

Course programme (syllabus)

DATE	TOPIC AND OBLIGATORY LITERATURE	DETAILS AND REPORTS
1 04.04.16	<i>Introduction to the course: Aims and structure of the course. Organisation. Approaching language change.</i>	Working with historical data. Symptoms and causes of change. Linguistic and non-linguistic attitudes to change.
	Linguistic patterns of change	
2 11.04.16	<i>Lexical change (I): Change in word meaning.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch. 2.5 (pp. 32-43)	Working with the <i>OED</i> and historical corpora (<i>COHA</i>).
3 18.04.16	<i>Lexical change (II): Change in the word stock.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch. 2.1-2.4 (pp. 16-32)	Report: Cross-linguistic databases on borrowing (<i>WOLD</i> , <i>AfBo</i>).
4 25.04.16	<i>Sound change (I): Syntagmatic processes.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch.3 (pp. 48-66)	Report: IE, Germanic and the Germanic consonant shifts (Grimms' Law, Verner's Law).
5 02.05.16	<i>Sound change (II): Paradigmatic processes.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch.4 (pp. 71-83)	Report: Sound change and the consequences for PDE English spelling.
6 09.05.16	<i>Morphological change.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch. 5 (pp.96-111)	Report: Frequency effects in morphological change.
	16.05.16 No class (Pentecost).	
7 23.05.16	<i>Syntactic change (I): Basic processes.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch. 6 (pp. 127-136)	Report: Principles, processes and examples of grammaticalization.
8 30.05.16	<i>Syntactic change (II): Continuation.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch. 6 (pp.137-140) and Bybee 2015: 178-182	Report 1: A case study on English <i>like</i> (Meehan 1991) Report 2: Syntactic reanalysis of English syntactic functions (Hawkins 1986 and further material)
	The spread of innovations	
9 06.06.16	<i>The macrostructure of propagation: Variation and its social significance.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch.10 (250-271)	Overview of the social factors governing propagation.
10 13.06.16	<i>The microstructure of propagation: Networks, ties and the invisible hand in change.</i> Milroy and Milroy 1992: 5-12 and McMahon 1994: 249-252	Report: The invisible hand phenomenon (Keller 1994).
11 20.06.16	<i>Internal (lexical) diffusion processes.</i> Aitchison 2013: 86-99 and 107-113 .	Report 1: The course of actualization (de Smet 2012). Report 2: Corpus-based methods for the study of constructional change (Hilpert 2007).
12 27.06.16	<i>External (geographical) diffusion processes.</i> McColl Millar 2015: Ch.7 (pp. 154-179)	Report: Genetic relationships and the comparative method in historical linguistics (McColl Millar Ch.8).
	Conclusion	
13 04.07.16	<i>A unified evolutionary model of language change: Utterance selection and different orders of variation. Conclusion and course evaluation.</i>	Revise the course materials and bring any remaining questions that you may have.
	11.07.16 Final exam	