

LSA.376: Syllabus

M Th 3:45-5:30 240-108
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[other contact information is available on my website:

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~zwicky>]

Course materials will be available via the homepage for the course:

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~zwicky/unfree.html>

Things will be added to this page as the course goes on, so you'll need to check it periodically.

All materials will be available on-line. I will be relying heavily on Language Log postings (<http://www.language-log.com>) and material already on my webpage.

Topics by meeting (with a main file, on my website, for each topic):

- 1 (7/5): introduction (file: [.../intro.linginst.pdf](#))
- 2 (7/9): *which/that* (file: [.../whichthat.linginst.pdf](#))
- 3 (7/12): *much/a lot* (file: [.../muchalot.linginst.pdf](#)); discussion of student topics
- 4 (7/16): *however/but* (file: [.../howeverbut.linginst.pdf](#))
- 5 (7/19): alternative Count/Mass assignment (file: [.../countmass.linginst.pdf](#))
- 6 (7/23): *P + of* (file: [.../P+of.linginst.pdf](#))
- 7 (7/26): summary, student presentations

Assignments:

1. For credit students (and auditors who want to join in the fun): pick one topic from the first two sections of the file "A list of some variants in English" ([.../unfree.exx.pdf](#)). I'd suggest you avoid the five topics that I'll be talking about, unless you think you have a fresh slant on one of them. You can also suggest an appropriate topic that's not on the list.

Your task is to discover something about how the variants you chose differ – in syntactic distribution, meaning, discourse function, style, whatever. It's fine to pick a topic that's been studied a lot by other people; the point is for you to experience the process of discovery, not (necessarily) to make a contribution to scholarship in a few weeks of summer school. (You might reinvent the wheel. Even so, there's a fair chance that your wheel will be an interesting one.) So I will actively discourage you from rummaging through reference grammars, advice manuals, the technical literatures on grammar and variation, etc.

Start by making some hypotheses about what's going on and then checking these hypotheses against easy-to-use corpora. See what you can find doing Google searches. These are quick, though dirty, but you can often make real headway on a topic that way. We'll talk about some other possibilities in class.

We'll have an initial discussion of the topics in class on 7/12. And then students will present their findings at the last class meeting, on 7/26.

2. Your second assignment is to keep a data log and e-mail it two installments to me (by Friday evening 7/13 and 7/20). This is a record of things you notice in what you hear and read: variants that catch your attention, including those you think might be inadvertent errors, those that are not put the way you would put them, those that sound unfamiliar to you, etc. Try to provide as much information as you can about where you collected your examples and who produced them. Discuss your examples briefly: what do you think is going on? (I can cope easily with .doc, .txt, and .rtf files.)