Stockholm University

Optional Linguistics Module: English in Old and New Media
(7.5 credits)
Spring 2025
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Module description

In this module, we explore historical developments in the use of English across a variety of media practices. It is often assumed that digital communication technology has led to unique sets of linguistic strategies for performing identities and maintaining networks online. However, once we look closely at historical and modern media practices, we find surprising similarities in the use of multimodal resources and associated ideologies. The module compares English texts and writing practices from different periods. We trace developments and continuities in genres, texts and debates around what counts as appropriate writing. We discuss themes such as self-fashioning, standardisation and visual pragmatics as well as implications for English learning and teaching. This transhistorical approach to studying the English language challenges assumptions about the unique strategies of new media users and sheds light on the motivations and social concerns that have always informed human communication.

Intended learning outcomes

Upon completion of the module, the student is expected to be able to:

- account for the contents of the course literature;
- display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field;
- apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material;
- analyse language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field;
- motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field;
- demonstrate a good understanding of written English;
- express themselves in academic English.

Grading

The module adopts the 7-grade SU scale (A–E, Fx, F).
To receive a final grade, students must have completed all the examination assignments (not done all examination assignments=no grade).
To receive a passing grade (A to E), students must complete all the examination assignments, pass them, and thus demonstrate that they achieved all the learning outcomes at least at the minimum level (see "Module grading" below).

Module activities

The module consists of the following activities:

- Seminars (pre-seminar instructions for each seminar will be posted on Athena);
- Before each seminar, students are expected to finish the assigned reading and do any accompanying tasks. Students should be prepared to discuss the reading and tasks at the seminar;
- Students are expected to complete all the tasks assigned by the teacher.

Examination

Students are required to complete the following:

- Written assignment (A-F)
- Oral assignments (Pass/Fail)

Essay: (A-F)
Two options: a) a review paper that discusses the concepts encountered in the module based on published research; or b) a mini-study that applies the concepts discussed in the module to a relevant set of texts. The essay needs to be based on concepts discussed during the course of the module. The essay should be **1700 - 2000 words**.

Article/chapter discussion: (Pass/Fail)
In groups, you will briefly introduce one of the course readings (5 min), and lead a seminar discussion (15 min). Each student in the group presents part of the introduction and is responsible for part of the discussion.

Oral presentation: Presentation of your research paper (Pass/Fail)
In the final seminar you will present your assignment paper in a 5-minute presentation.

Required reading

Coursebook:
Selected chapters from: Tagg, C. & Evans, M. (2020). *Message and medium: English language practices across old and new media*. De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110670837 (available online through Stockholm University Library)

- Ch. 0: Introducing transhistorical approaches to digital language practices (Evans, M. & Tagg, C.) (pp. 1-13)
- Ch. 1: The rise of the Pragmatic Web: Implications for rethinking meaning and interaction (Jones, R.H.) (pp. 17-37)
- Ch. 3: Spelling in context: A transhistorical pragmatic perspective on orthographic practices in English (Tagg, C. & Evans, M.) (pp. 55-79)
- Ch. 6: "New" media and self-fashioning: The construction of a political persona by Elizabeth I and Donald Trump (Seargeant, P.) (pp. 112-127)
- Ch. 8: Digital literacies and the long history of the academic article (Barton, D.) (pp. 149-163)
- Ch. 12: Paratextual presentation of Christopher St German's *Doctor and Student* 1528–1886 (Varila et al.) (pp. 232-252)
- Ch. 15: Disruptive practice: Multimodality, innovation and standardisation from the medieval to the digital text (Thompson, R., & Collins, M.) (pp. 282-305)

Required chapters and articles (all available electronically through SUB)

Bazerman, Charles. (2000[1988]). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science.* The WAC Clearinghouse. (Originally Published in 1988 by University of Wisconsin Press) Ch. 3 pp. 59-79. Available online: https://wac.colostate.edu/books/landmarks/bazerman-shaping/

Birke, D. & Christ, B. (2013). Paratext and digitized narrative: Mapping the field. *Narrative 21*(1), 65-87. https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2013.0003

Dayter, D. (2014). Self-praise in microblogging. *Journal of Pragmatics, 61*, 91-102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.11.021.

Evans, M. (2020). *Royal voices: Language and power in Tudor England*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 0 (Introduction, pp. 1-31) and Chapter 3 (pp. 84-114).

Howard-Hill, T.H. (2006). Early modern printers and the standardization of English spelling. *Modern Language Review, 101*(1), 16-29. https://doi.org/10.1353/mlr.2006.0060.

Jones, R.H. (2021). The text is reading you: Teaching language in the age of the algorithm, *Linguistics and Education, 62*. 100750. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2019.100750.

Waller, R. (2012). Graphic literacies for a digital age: The survival of layout. *The Information Society, 28*(4), 236-252. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2012.689609

Schedule

Seminar	Topics	To do before the seminar
Seminar 1	Module introduction	Ch. 0 Introduction
Seminar 2	Paratextual reader presentation	Ch. 12; Birke & Christ, 2013
Seminar 3	Spelling in context	Ch. 3; Howard-Hill, 2006
Seminar 4	Pragmatics of letters	Evans, 2020 Chs. 0 and 3
Seminar 5	Self-fashioning	Ch. 6; Dayter, 2014
Seminar 6	The long history of academic writing; Show and tell mid-way	Ch. 8; Bazerman, 2000[1988] Ch. 3
Seminar 7	The pragmatic web & teaching Presentations	Ch. 1; Jones, 2021
Seminar 8	Multimodality; Presentations	Ch. 15; Waller, 2012
Deadline for final essay assignment: 23 March , 23:59 Resit deadline: 27 April, 23:59.		

Module grading criteria

Written assignments grading criteria

Grade	Criteria
A: Excellent	The student shows excellent ability to: - account for the contents of the course literature; - display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field; - apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material; - analyze language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field; - motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field; - demonstrate a good understanding of written English; - express themselves in academic English.
B: Very good	The student shows very good ability to: - account for the contents of the course literature; - display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods discussed; - apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material; - analyze language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field; - motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field; - demonstrate a good understanding of written English; - express themselves in academic English.
C: Good	The student shows good ability to: - account for the contents of the course literature;

	- display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods discussed; - apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material; - analyze language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field; - motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field; - demonstrate a good understanding of written English; - express themselves in academic English.
D: Satisfactory	The student shows adequate ability to: - account for the contents of the course literature; - display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods discussed; - apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material; - analyze language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field; - motivate their own analyses writing in a manner relevant to the field; - demonstrate a good understanding of written English; - express themselves in academic English.
E: Adequate	The student shows minimally adequate ability to: - account for the contents of the course literature; - display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods discussed; - apply these concepts to authentic texts or other language material; - analyze language material from a theoretical perspective applicable to the field; - motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field; - demonstrate a good understanding of written English; - express themselves in academic English.
Fx: Fail (Inadequate)	The student's work demonstrates some but not all of the required skills specified in the learning outcomes at an adequate level. Some more work is required to achieve a passing grade.
F: Fail (Totally inadequate)	The student's work does not demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module. Much more work is required to achieve a passing grade.

Oral presentations grading criteria

Criteria	Pass	Fail
Content	The presentation introduces the topic of the presentation in a clear and concise manner demonstrating the student's understanding of the linguistic research issues discussed. Research aims, methods and results of the study under discussion are presented and discussed in a lucid manner.	In the presentation the student does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the linguistic issues under discussion. Research aims, methods and results of the study under discussion are not presented in an adequate manner.
Organisation and language	The presentation is well structured and easy to follow. The language used is academic and does not contain any severe mistakes.	The organisation of the presentation is poor, and the language used contains several mistakes.