



@Inmfl

24 April 2023
ALL session for ITEC providers
- via Zoom

Linguistics for language teachers

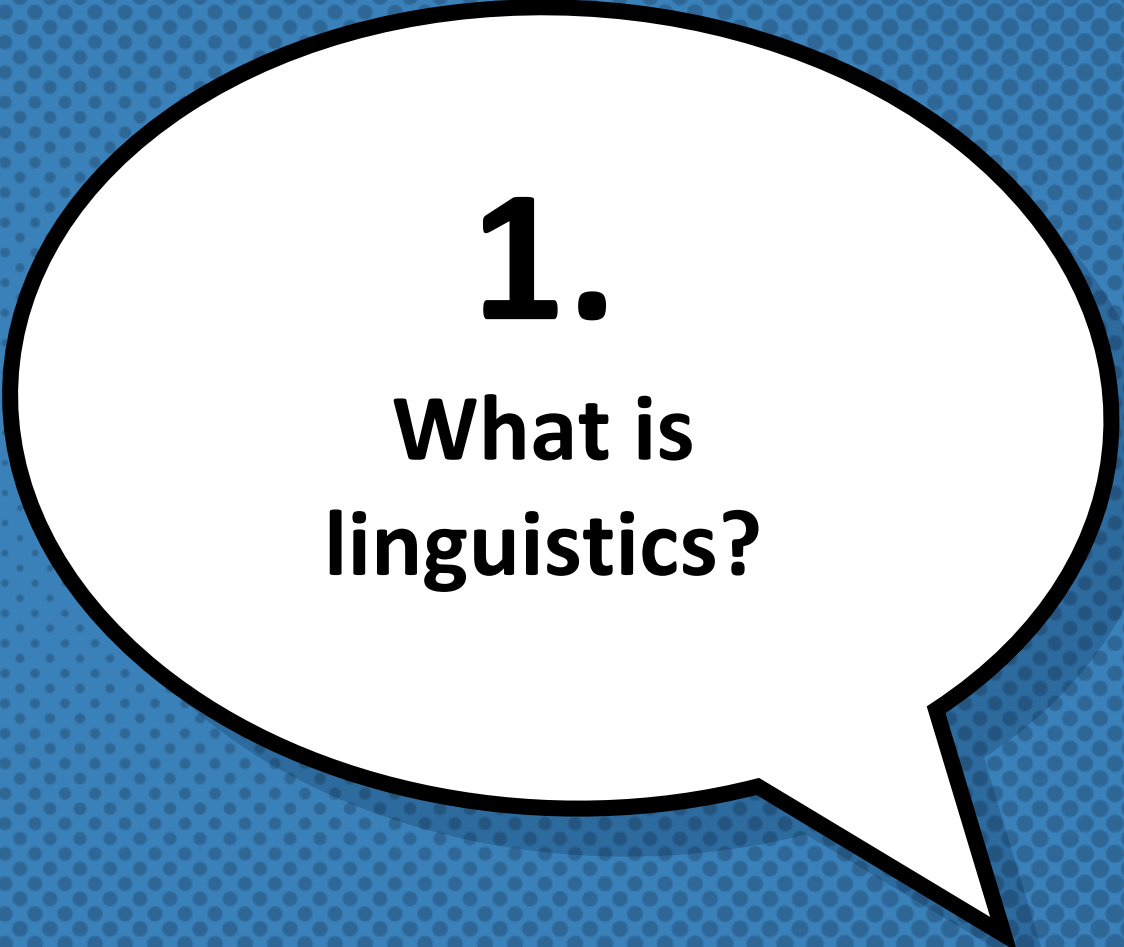
Michelle Sheehan
Alice Corr
Anna Havinga
Jonathan Kasstan
Sascha Stollhans

THE
LINGUISTICS
@INMFL
PROJECT

The 'Linguistics in Modern Foreign Languages' (or MFL) Project is making the case for the place of linguistics in school-based language teaching.

As seen in:





1.

**What is
linguistics?**

So what is linguistics?

- ✗ Linguistics is the **objective (scientific) study of language(s)**
- ✗ It is the study of **how language(s) work(s)**
- ✗ It looks at the sounds and structures of linguistic varieties as well as how and why they are used



Picture source:

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Linguistics.jpg>

Or, as one of you put it:

Linguistics is learning ABOUT language rather than learning the language itself. It allows you to understand both the common and disparate elements of languages across the world and brings with it the options to appreciate the scientific basis of language as well as the huge social, cultural, cognitive and environmental elements of language. The opportunity to understand how and why we say the things we do - in any language - and how important it is to appreciate this to avoid misunderstandings and improve cultural capital - is something all language teachers should have.



2.

**What can linguistics
do for MFL?**

Linguistics: the potential benefits

1. New ways of thinking about language(s)

- × **Objective**, (scientific) approach
- × **Descriptive** rather than prescriptive
- × Deeper **understanding** of what language is and how it works

2. Recruitment

- × **different/new kinds of students** attracted to languages
- × languages **more accessible** to less able/less confident students

Linguistics: the potential benefits

3. Empowerment of students

- × Skills for **autonomous language study**
- × Reduced **linguistic misconceptions** and prejudices
- × **Ownership** of their unique way of speaking (“idiolect”), especially for community language/heritage speakers
- × ‘appreciation of the **universality** of human cognition and also of **human diversity**’ (Tortora 2017:4)

Linguistics: the potential benefits

4. Cross-curricular connections

- × Empirical investigation and theory formation/testing ('STEM' skills)
- × Intersection with English, sciences, maths, history, geography...

5. Language proficiency!

- × increased **metalinguistic** and **sociolinguistic awareness**
- × better **communicative competence** (through understanding of how language use varies)



3.

Our project

Who are we?

- × Academic linguists working on Romance/Germanic languages, based in UK universities

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Alice Corr



Norma Schifano



Michelle Sheehan



Jonathan Kasstan



Anna Havinga



Sascha Stollhans

Who are we?

- × Experienced MFL teachers

- × Peter Gillman (project RA)
- × Janette Swainston
- × Claire Robinson
- × Susana Lopes
- × Débora Minguito
- × Christina Westwood

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What has our project done?

- × **Introductory mini-courses for French, German and Spanish linguistics (available to download for free from our website)**
- × **Heritage Portuguese Linguistics Taster**
- × **Heritage French Linguistics Taster**
- × **Aimed at A-level/advanced GCSE students**
- × **Training for primary and secondary languages teachers**

www.linguisticsinmfl.co.uk



What's our project doing now?

- × Testing materials for French/German/Spanish A-levels (co-created with our team of experienced MFL teachers)
- × designed to fit into the existing A-level curriculum
- × introduce **basic notions** (e.g. descriptivism vs. prescriptivism, sociolinguistic variation and language change)
- × **comparisons** with English to raise linguistic awareness

Project aims

- × Show that linguistics is **attractive** to MFL students.
- × Show that linguistics is **feasible** for teachers to teach.
- × Investigate how a knowledge of linguistics affects students' **attitudes towards learning a language**.
- × Investigate how it affects **confidence** in the target language.
- × Investigate the possibilities of linguistics in the teaching of **community languages** (so far: Portuguese, French).



4.

**Ideas for the
classroom**



**Using linguistics to
develop
pronunciation**

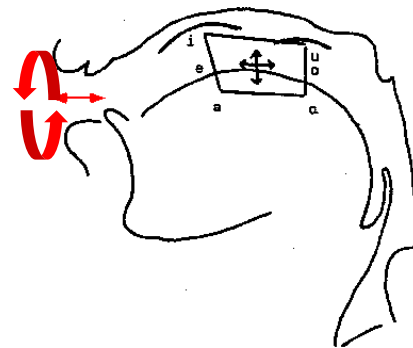
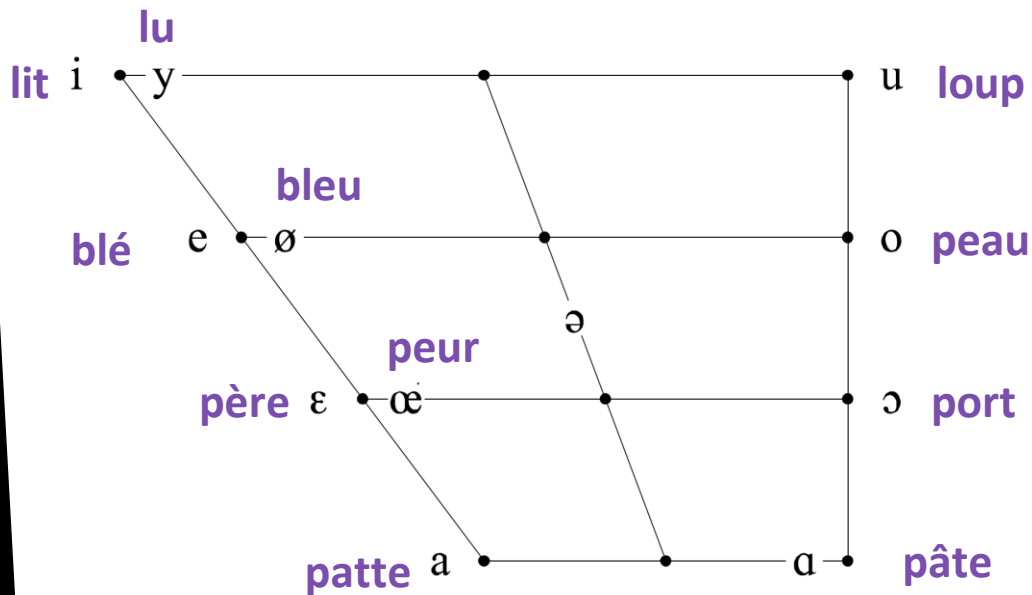
Which parts of the mouth are used to pronounce these sounds?

Intuitions about articulation (Fabb 1985)

	b	p	t	d	th(is)	th(rough)	g	c
lips	✓	✓						
teeth						✓		
tongue						✓		
voice box	✓			✓	✓	✗		
tonsils								
nose								
gums								

If you speak any other languages, are there any differences?

French ROUNDED vowels



Alien words

WHICH of these alien words look like Spanish words?

Nrisata

Cho

Sabocón

Boterma

Collíguay

Sploco

Source for nonsense words: Parrondo Rodríguez (1999)

Alien words

WHICH of these alien words look like Spanish words?

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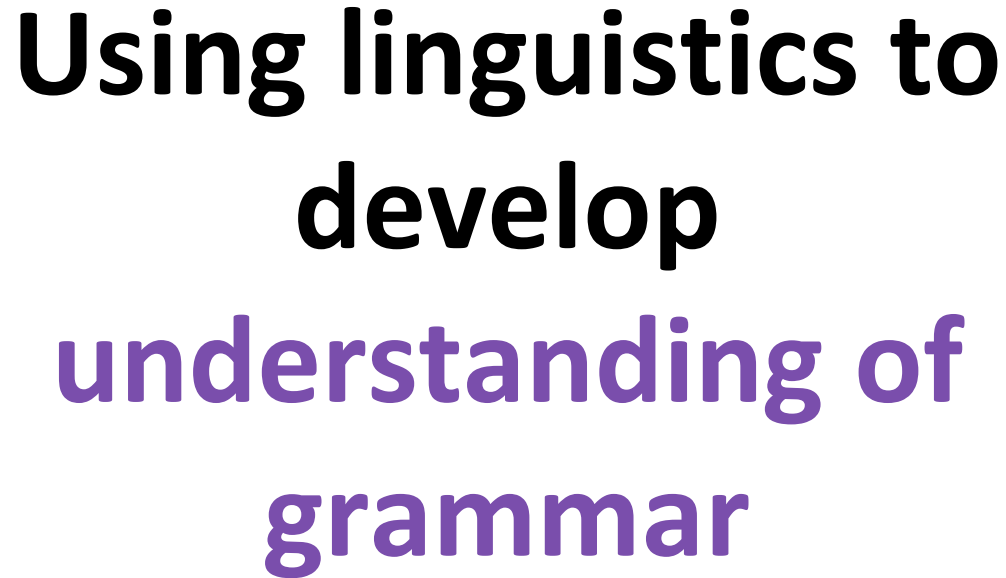
Collíguay

Sploco

Source for nonsense words: Parrondo Rodríguez (1999)

Spanish phonology

- × Spanish phonology is much more restrictive than English
- × Consonant clusters are highly constrained, and extra (epenthetic) 'e's are required to pronounce loan words:
 - × Spain España
 - × spouse esposo/a
 - × snob esnob
 - × spray espray
- × Some consonant clusters are also not possible in English (*nrista*, *mbwana*) but are possible in other languages



**Using linguistics to
develop
understanding of
grammar**

Linguistics puzzles

- × The UK Linguistics Olympiad offers free linguistic puzzles for use in schools.
- × <https://www.uklo.org>
- × There are PPTs offering guidance of how to tackle these puzzles.

Foundation level: Abma

Mwamni sileng.

He drinks water.

Nutsu mwatbo mwamni sileng.

The child keeps drinking water.

Nutsu mwegau.

The child grows.

Based on a slide by Prof. Dick Hudson, available via UKLO

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A neutral starting point for comparison

Mwamni sileng.

He drinks water.

- Can your language(s) leave out subject pronouns like Abma?
- Why?
- Are there any contexts where subjects tend to be used/left out?

Based on a slide by Prof. Dick Hudson, available via UKLO

Foundation level: Abma

Nutsu mwatbo mwamni sileng.

The child keeps
drinking water.

Nutsu mwegau.

The child grows.

- Where is the agreement on Abma verbs?
- What about in the language(s) you speak?
- What else is not used in Amba?

Based on a slide by Prof. Dick Hudson, available via UKLO

Spanish 'diminutives'

What kinds of words can you add –ito/a to? What meaning does the suffix have in these examples?

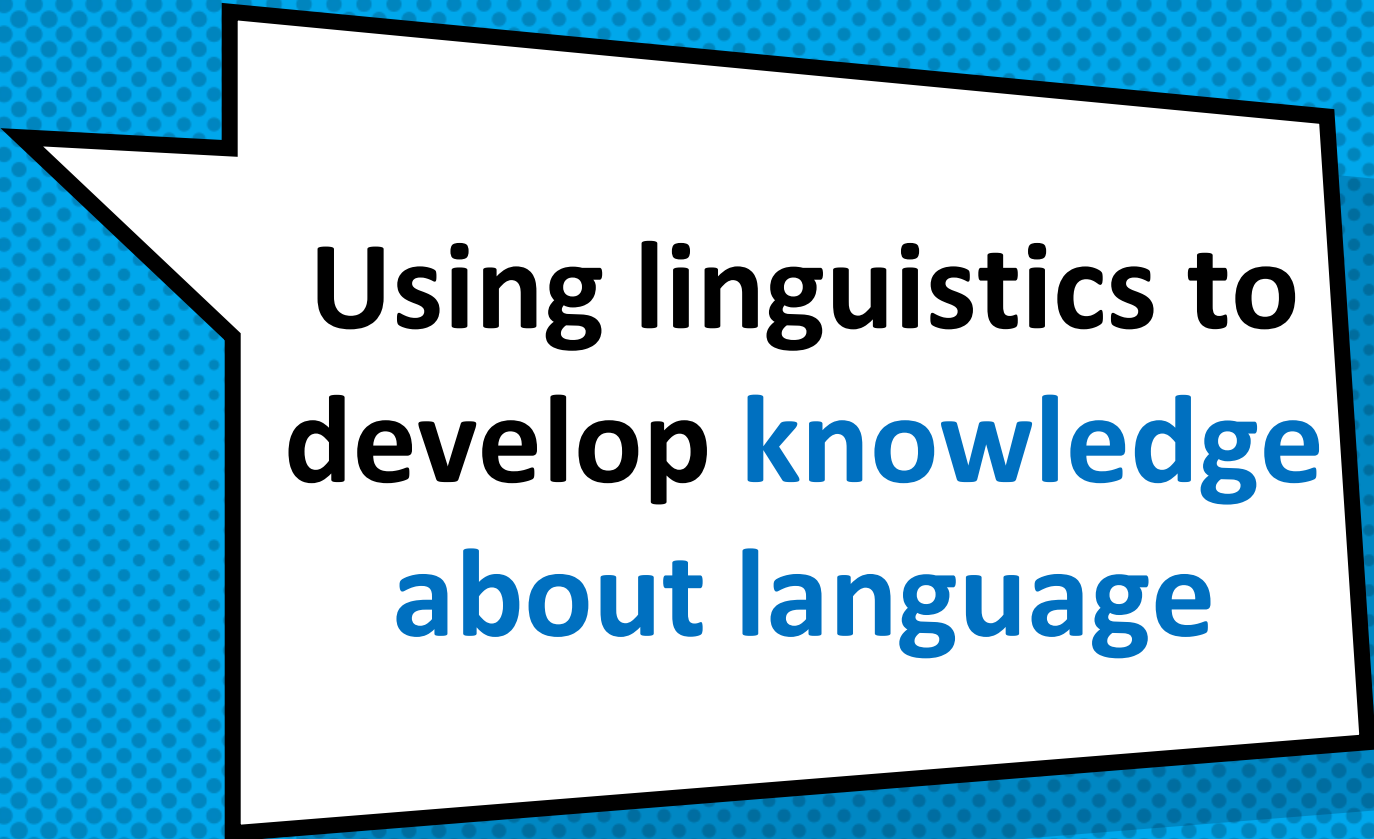
- (1) Dale al niño un pedacito de pan.
- (3) El café me gusta calentito.
- (2) Me voy a mi casita.
- (4) Eso está clarito para mí.

Corpus activity

- × Look up the following diminutive adjectives in <https://www.corpusdelespanol.org/web-dial/>

clarito, pequeño, bajito, igualito, cortito, calladito, justito

- × Do they always have this intensifier (very) meaning?



**Using linguistics to
develop **knowledge**
about language**

Numbers in the languages of France

- × Can you recognise the numbers 1-5 in seven of the languages spoken in France?
- × <https://wordwall.net/pt/resource/30601290/french/les-langues-de-france>
- × What makes some languages so easy and others so difficult?
- × All but one of these languages are related. Can you guess which is the outlier?



Pourquoi le basque est-il tellement différent ?

Les réponses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Le basque	bat	bi	hiru	lau	bost	sei	zazpi	zortzi	bederatzi	hamar
Le corse	unu	dui	trè	quattru	cinque	sei	sette	ottu	nove	dece
Le gascon	un	dus	tres	quate	cinc	shèis	sèt	ueit	nau	dètz
Le catalan	un	dos	tres	quatre	cinc	sis	set	vuit	nou	deu
Le franco-provençal	on	doû	trâi	quatro	cin	sî	sat	houit	nâo	dyî
Le breton	unan	daou	tri	pewar	pemp	c'hwec'h	seizh	eizh	nav	dek
L'alsace	eins	zwei	drëi	vier	fenf	sex	seve	acht	nin	zehn

Source : (<https://www.zompist.com/numbers.shtml>)



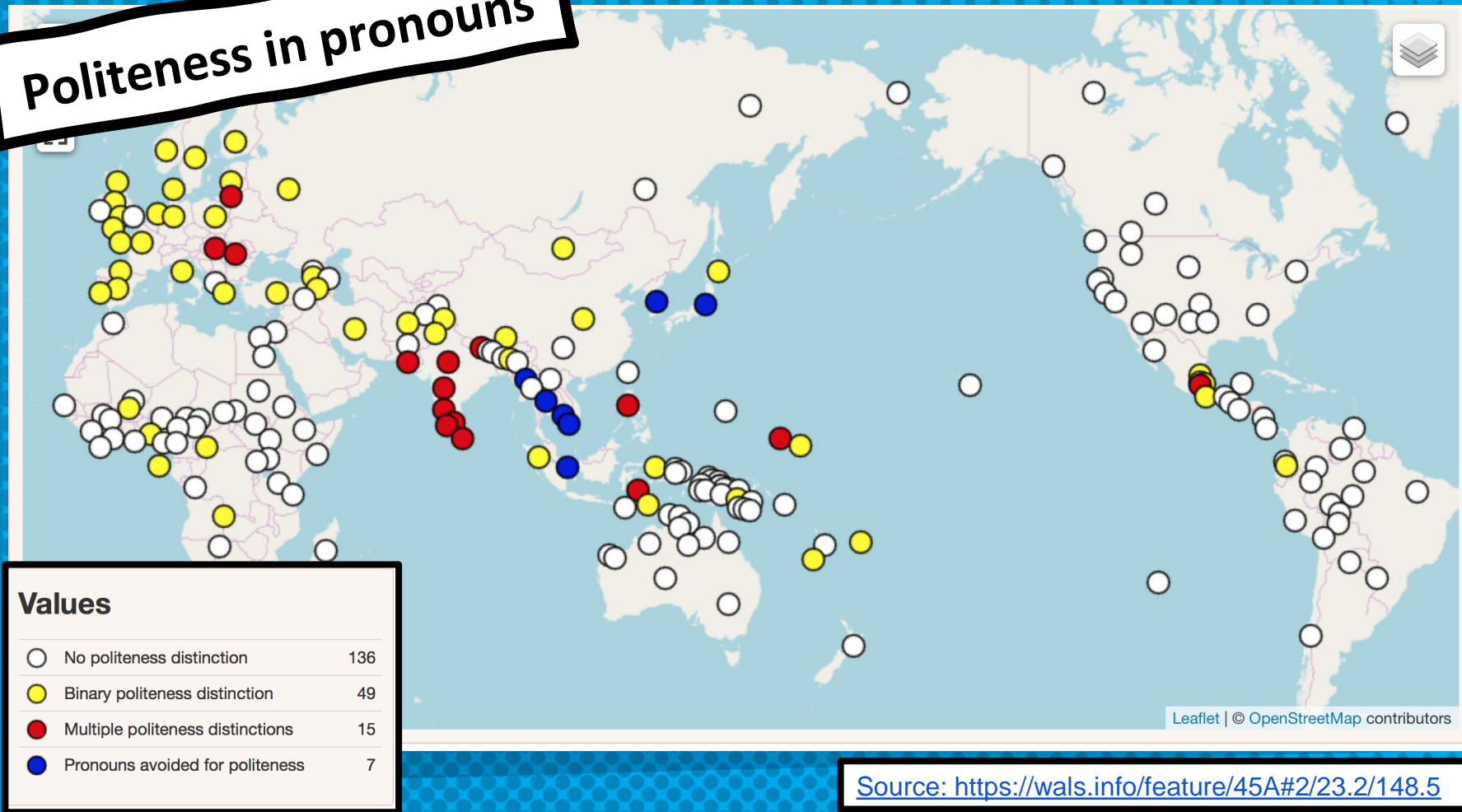
**Using linguistics to
develop
communicative
competence**

Politeness – it's all about context!

- × Societal notions of politeness are **fluid** and **ever changing**
- × They vary depending on **who is talking to who** and **where**
- × **Shouting** – rude in a meeting, fine at a football match
- × **Swearing** – fine with friends, not at parents' evening
- × Two basic notions
 - × Positive politeness – flattery, sweetness
 - × Negative politeness – tact, deference and non-imposition

Sources: Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpeper (2011)

Politeness in pronouns



Source: <https://wals.info/feature/45A#2/23.2/148.5>

Pronouns and politeness

- × Many European languages make a **two-way** politeness distinction in their pronoun systems.
- × The most common strategies are:
 - × Use of **2nd person plural** form (*vous, vy*)
 - × Use of **3rd person** form (*Sie, usted*)
- × Some originate in negative politeness (indirectness)
 - × (*Sie/vous*)
- × Others originate as positive politeness (flattery)
 - × *Vuestra Merced > vusted > usted*

Politeness and the T-V distinction

✗ French, German, and Spanish have two ways to address a single addressee: *tu/vous*, *du/Sie*, *tú/usted*

1. What does *vous/Sie/usted* indicate?
2. Which social factors play a role in their use?
3. What do you use in the MFL classroom?
4. Is there any flexibility in usage?

In fact, in all three languages the use of *tu/du/tú* seems to be expanding!



- × « Il est indispensable que les enfants vouvoient les professeurs et il est préférable que les professeurs ne tutoient pas les élèves, au lycée, pour que chacun soit à sa place », a déclaré le nouveau ministre. (L'OBS, le 22 mai, 2007)
- × What does this show about pronoun use in French schools?
- × Does it surprise you?

[Source](#)

El usted agoniza



- El empleado al jefe, el médico al paciente, el alumno a la profesora... En España, todo el mundo tutea y en todos los ámbitos, y el usted parece condenado a desaparecer.

Hay un director de negocios del sector Movistar de Telefónica –evitaremos el nombre – que me escribe de vez en cuando y a quien no conozco de nada. Quiero decir que nunca hemos ido juntos al colegio, ni frecuentado los mismos restaurantes con amigos comunes, ni trabajado en el mismo periódico, ni en la tele. Y sin embargo, fíjense, me tutea: «Estimado cliente. Nos complace comunicarte...». [Pérez Reverte, 2008]

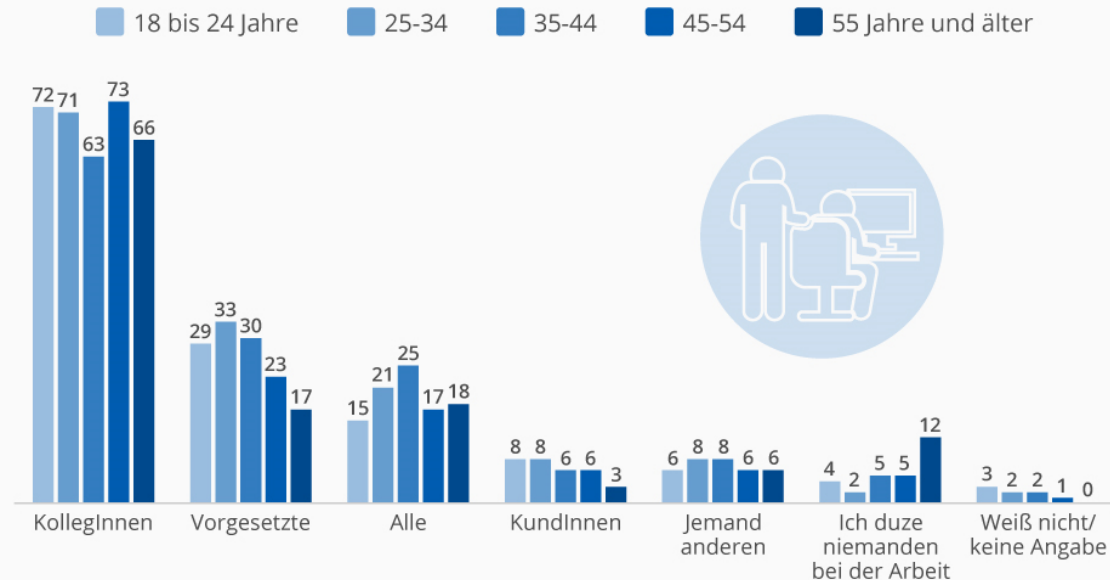
[Source](#)

Anrede am Arbeitsplatz: Siezt du noch oder duzt du schon? [Infografik]

Von Tamara Todorovic - 30. September 2019

Darf ich Ihnen das "Du" anbieten?

Befragte, die folgende Personen am Arbeitsplatz duzen (in %)



[Source](#)



Basis: 1.035 Berufstätige (ab 18 Jahren) in Deutschland;
3. bis 5. September 2019

Quelle: YouGov

YouGov® statista

Activity

- ✕ How many different ways can you think of to address a group of two or more people in English?
- ✕ Which of these is most formal/least formal?
- ✕ What do we mean by formal? What features are relevant?

What next?

- × If you try any of our exercises then please feed back to us!
- × Join our mailing list (via our website)
- × Download our resources (for free – via our website)
- × Sign up to take part in our project (via our website)
- × Visit our [website](http://www.linguisticsinmfl.co.uk) to read testimonials and fine out more...

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Further reading

Corr, A., Kasstan, J & Sheehan, M. (2019). A place for linguistics in Key Stage 5 Modern Foreign Languages. *Languages, Society & Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.40156>

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Sheehan, M. (2019). Five reasons English speakers struggle to learn foreign languages. *The Conversation* [online] <https://theconversation.com/five-reasons-english-speakers-struggle-to-learn-foreign-languages-119752> [1st October 2019]

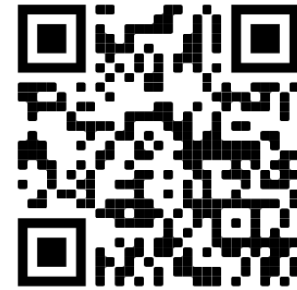
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Thank you

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Thank you

Please fill in the feedback survey at the end of the session!

<https://newcastle.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/ite-webinar-24042023-post-event-survey>

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