An introduction to sociolinguistics: Society and identity
Sharon K. Deckert and Caroline H. Vickers (2011)

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Reviewed by Suzie Telep

This book is an excellent introductory text to modern sociolinguistics that looks at the study of language and society through the concept of identity. It moves from looking at language varieties and globalization to a close examination of language in social interaction, covering the concepts of ideology and power and their influence on people's construction of identity. In the first introductory chapter, the authors start by defining the term 'sociolinguistics'. Moving away from a narrow definition which looks at language varieties and globalization, they lay the emphasis on the broader scope of the term by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that presents work from linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology and education.

The second chapter is dedicated to the definition of the key concept 'identity', which is presented as a central theme in linguistics. The authors adopt a constructionist approach to identity and provide an overview of the central role that identity plays in sociolinguistic scholarship, through a discussion of the construct of identity, including its history and significance in academic thought. They emphasize the importance of looking at language and identity construction from an interactional and dialogic perspective that includes notions of construction and co-construction, and they analyze the relationships between identity and stylistic variation, gender, expert-novice interactions, or migration.

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The third chapter provides an overview of language variation and its relation to a wide range of sociolinguistic issues. It starts by looking at early variationists' work and by examining their analyses of sociolinguistic patterns. Then, it moves to a discussion of variation, through an analysis of the notions of standard and non-standard language within a wide range of linguistic contexts. The relation between language variation and change is also discussed.

The fourth chapter addresses the social aspects of language development, particularly by analyzing the tension between individual language development and its connection to social aspects of life, and the way in which people construct aspects of their identities. It first looks at the notion of 'speech community' as it has been developed in the ethnography of communication framework, and introduces the related concept 'communicative competence'. After this, the chapter deals with the language socialization theory, and particularly, provides a discussion on the concept of 'community of practice', which is described as more fluid and less static than the notion of 'speech community'.

Then, in the fifth chapter, the authors explore the micro-interactional approaches to sociolinguistics and identity, by looking at interactions that happen between individuals within their local social frameworks. They summarize the work of linguist anthropologists, conversation analysts and sociologists such as Dell Hymes, Harvey Sacks and Erving Goffman, and they present some key concepts like 'frame', 'participation frameworks', 'footing' or 'face', which are commonly used in the analysis of face-to-face interaction.

In the sixth chapter, the authors explore conceptions of language, ideology, power and identity at the local, micro-interactional level. They discuss the role that language ideologies play in the construction of power and identity at this level. They also introduce the idea of indexicality and describe how it operates between the micro- and macro-levels of language and social understandings. While defining the key concept of 'indexicality', they discuss how indexicals, including deictics and particularly language sounds, become referential in terms of demonstrating social relationships. Then, they analyze different local contexts in order to demonstrate how identities are constructed in relation to family, educational, legal, medical, and workplace settings.

The seventh chapter explores conceptions of language, ideology and identity at the macro-societal level. It looks at how language is used at the societal and cultural levels and provides an introduction to the relationship between indexicality and language ideologies and hierarchies. Next, the chapter relates language ideologies to language in the public sphere, and finally considers notions of language ideology and hierarchy to address societal issues related to

language policy and planning. This chapter particularly focuses on how ideology shapes language use at the societal level and addresses how language varieties themselves can be indexicals and how this can influence language use at the societal level.

Finally, the last chapter provides an in-depth examination of many of the practices and empirical approaches fundamental to doing sociolinguistics. It focuses on methods of data collection and analyses, looking at many of the issues related to doing observation and transcriptions. It also provides a thorough reflection on ethical and legal issues related to fieldwork. Then, it describes the methodologies used in traditional approaches to analyzing data, like corpus linguistics, interactional sociolinguistics, narrative analysis, ethnography of communication and conversation analysis. The book ends with a rich bibliography of references and an index of the key notions.

One of the main strengths of this introductory book is its interdisciplinary approach. Throughout, the authors offer deep insights into all of the topics, issues and methods from different disciplinary fields, thus giving a rich overview of the state-of-the-art concepts in the study of language in society, which will be very useful for both undergraduate and graduate students of language and society. Besides, at the end of each chapter, a range of pedagogical features, including key terms, study questions, research activities, chapter summaries and further reading, is provided for professors.

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