What Is Sociolinguistics?
Linguistics in the World

*Linguistics in the World* is a textbook series on the study of language in the real world, enriching students’ understanding of how language works through a balance of theoretical insights and empirical findings. Presupposing no or only minimal background knowledge, each of these titles is intended to lay the foundation for students’ future work, whether in language sciences, applied linguistics, language teaching, or speech sciences.

*What Is Sociolinguistics?* by Gerard Van Herk
What Is Sociolinguistics?
Gerard Van Herk
## Brief Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Boxes</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in the Spotlight</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companion Website</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.   Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.   Language and Society</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.   Place</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.   Social Status</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.   Time</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.   Ethnicity</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.   Gender and Identity</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.   Style</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.   Interaction</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.  Multilingualism</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.  Language Contact</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.  Attitudes and Ideologies</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.  Language as a Social Entity</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.  Education</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.  What is Sociolinguistics?</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

List of Boxes xi
Research in the Spotlight xiv
Companion Website xvi
Acknowledgments xvii

1. Introduction 1

Types of sociolinguistics 2
Background: The history of sociolinguistics 3
Summing up 6
Exercises 7
Discussion 8
Other resources 8

2. Language and Society 10

Defining “language” in sociolinguistics 11
Sociolinguists vs. other linguists 11
Sociolinguists vs. normal people 12
Language vs. dialect 13
What is “society”? 15
Summing up 21
Exercises 21
Discussion 23
Other resources 23

3. Place 25

How regional differences develop 25
English, for example 26
English worldwide: Linguistic features 30
Isolation 33
Physical isolation: The case of Newfoundland English 33
Linguistic isolation: The case of Quebec French 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determining social class or status</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summing up</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other resources</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apparent time</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real time studies of language change</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The S-shaped curve of language change</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtle sound change: Vowel shifts</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: Change across the lifespan</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquiring sociolinguistic competence</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summing up</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other resources</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic language varieties</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic naming and depictions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crossing: Using the language of others</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summing up</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other resources</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Gender and Identity</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender and interaction</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference and dominance</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How languages encode gender</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender and language change</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity, performance, and practice</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language and sexuality (or something)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summing up</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **Style**

- Defining and measuring style 105
- Genre, register, jargon 110
- Using other people’s stuff 111
- Summing up 112
- Exercises 113
- Discussion 114
- Other resources 115

9. **Interaction**

- Ethnography of communication 117
- Face 120
- Solidarity and power 121
- Summing up 124
- Exercises 125
- Discussion 126
- Other resources 126

10. **Multilingualism**

- Multilingual societies 128
- Diglossia 128
- Code-switching 130
- Summing up 132
- Exercises 134
- Discussion 134
- Other resources 135

11. **Language Contact**

- Code-switching and borrowing 136
- Contact languages: Mixed languages, lingua franca, pidgins, creoles 139
- Summing up 143
- Exercises 145
- Discussion 146
- Other resources 146

12. **Attitudes and Ideologies**

- Investigating language attitudes 149
- Language beliefs (myths, ideologies) 153
- Reading and responding 156
- Summing up 159
- Exercises 159
Chapter 1
Personalizing sociolinguistics: Author’s introduction 5
Where to next? 6
How this book works 6

Chapter 2
Other naming issues: Dialect, slang, accent, variety . . . 15
Method: Variationist sociolinguistics 20
Where to next? 21

Chapter 3
As an aside: Dialect leveling 28
As an aside: The r-ful truth about American English 28
As an aside: Shibboleths 34
As an aside: Imaginary dialects 39
As an aside: The people in the neighborhood 40
Place features as social features: Talk like a pirate 41
Method: Dialect geography 42
Where to next? 43

Chapter 4
As an aside: Moving on up 54
As an aside: Spot the “error” 54
As an aside: Naming the poor 56
Where to next? 57

Chapter 5
As an aside: The Great Vowel Shift 61
As an aside: The Canadian Vowel Shift 62
Language change, media, and influences 63
Language change and age grading in Panama 65
As an aside: Rule Britennia – royal vowel changes over time 66
As an aside: Variation without change 69
As an aside: Those darn kids! 71
Where to next? 72

Chapter 6
As an aside: Ethnic hypercorrection – not sounding like your parents 76
Who’s ethnic? 77
As an aside: Calling people names 79
Noticing ethnicity 79
Where to next? 81

Chapter 7
As an aside: Gender vs. sex 86
As an aside: Ska pronouns 92
Why is this chapter so long? 100
Where to next? 100

Chapter 8
Different tasks, different attention to speech 106
Style shifting, authenticity, politics 108
Ahead of his time: Mikhail Bakhtin, style guru 109
Lots of jargon: Frequent flyers 111
As an aside: How well do we shift? 111
Where to next? 112

Chapter 9
As an aside: Communicative competence across languages 118
Method: Ethnography as a research practice 119
As an aside: You’re so negative! 121
Solidarity and childbirth 122
Where to next? 125

Chapter 10
As an aside: Multilingual enough 127
As an aside: Demonizing the demotic 130
As an aside: The linguistics of code-switching 131
Where to next? 132

Chapter 11
As an aside: When is something fully borrowed? 137
As an aside: Changing borrowings 138
As an aside: How much does contact actually change languages? 139
Acrolect, mesolect, basilect 143
Where to next? 143

Chapter 12
Method: Matched guise studies 152
As an aside: The power of noticing 155
As an aside: Princess vs. hyenas 157
As an aside: Ideologies of the non-standard 158
Where to next? 159

Chapter 13
As an aside: Death 164
Being careful with language shift data 165
As an aside: Diversity of languages and worldviews 166
As an aside: Let me elaborate 171
As an aside: English bitters 171
Where to next? 173

Chapter 14
As an aside: Talking and learning 178
As an aside: Code-switching in the classroom 180
As an aside: Elite trilingualism 181
Where to next? 183

Chapter 15
As an aside: “Back of the book” 189
As an aside: Ax me about history 191