

REVIEW

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HOLMES, JANET & KIRK HAZEN (eds.) (2014) *Research Methods in Sociolinguistics: A Practical Guide*, Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Wiley Blackwell, 352 pp.

Sociolinguistics presents itself as an inherently interesting field of study and, as researchers with an interest in language use, most of us are keen on finding out about the best and most appropriate research methodology in sociolinguistics. Janet Holmes and Kirk Hazen have succeeded to edit the much-needed and highly recommended single-volume guide, *Research Methods in Sociolinguistics: A Practical Guide*, which comprises a collection of twenty-one articles on the major approaches toward and tools of data collection, analysis and interpretation in sociolinguistics research. The book falls into three major parts. Like other volumes published by Wiley Blackwell in this series, the most pleasing characteristic of this volume is its practical approach, providing the reader with hands-on tips on how to collect and use various types of sociolinguistic data and data collection tools. The materials covered are as follows. In the Introduction Holmes and Hazen find the necessary space as to introduce the reader to the two major types of data in sociolinguistic research, namely, experimental and quantitative and anthropological and qualitative data. This part goes on to highlight the major focus of each chapter of the book. It is noteworthy that each chapter concludes with a number of excellent practical tips on the subject at hand. Chapter 1 deals with the two main types of research question which scholars ask when

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doing sociolinguistic research; of these, the first type of hypothesis is put forward by linguists and is more focused on the language and its features while the other type is concerned with society. This distinction has led to specification of various objectives for linguists and sociologists in that while linguists use society as a means of understanding how language works, sociologists use language to understand society. Part I, which constitutes four articles, highlights the various types of data that researchers come up with in the process of data collection as well as the methods of collection. These include interviews, written surveys and questionnaires, experimentally elicited data and computer-mediated communication data. The process of data collection through fieldwork and sociolinguistic interviews is treated in chapter 2. As a widely used data collection tool, interviews present an emic perspective in research, as opposed to an etic perspective. Critical issues in interviewing include: anonymity of participants, sample selection, observer's paradox and interviewing equipment. Two of the major approaches to sample selection, namely random sampling and judgement samples, are also discussed. Chapter 3 deals with questionnaires. Normally, a questionnaire is divided into three parts, namely, introduction, mid-section and conclusion. Items on a questionnaire can explore behavior, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and attributes. Types of questionnaire items are: close-ended and open-ended questions. Issues concerning how to construct and administer a questionnaire, write items, process, evaluate and analyze data obtained from a questionnaire are covered as well. Chapter 4 is concerned with experimental methods which have been long at the periphery of sociolinguistic work. Two major approaches discussed here include 'matched-guise technique' which examines how linguistic features as spoken by an individual affect the features attributed to that person and 'identification task' which treats how expectations raised about an individual influence the way his/her speech is heard and perceived. Associated ethical considerations are discussed as well. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the two approaches associated with CMC, namely text-based interpersonal communication (e.g. via email) and social networking sites, are covered in chapter 5.

Part II comprises eight chapters, with each chapter dealing with how sociolinguistic data should be analyzed and interpreted as taken from a perspective on

language features. Chapter 6 attempts to delineate the distinctions between research on the present and the past. It is discussed that sociohistorical analysis is entrenched in the contextual sociopragmatic and variational features. Chapter 7 is on the inclusion of corpus linguistics in sociolinguistic research which uses naturally occurring data by means of special computer softwares to build a corpus. The acoustic features of language are examined in chapters 8 and 9 with the former discussing the phonetic analysis and the latter addressing phonological considerations. In fact, these two chapters elaborate on how language use can be constrained not only by social factors (e.g. age and sex) but also by features of the linguistic system itself. Moving away from the sound system, chapter 10 explores the morphosyntactic issues of language use in an attempt to illustrate the critical issues of concern in such research including diachronic variation, linguistic levels, etc. Chapter 11 takes a lexicographic approach to sociolinguistic research by adopting the 'word' as the starting point of vocabulary analysis. The focus of chapter 12 is on the interdisciplinary field of research of discourse analysis. This chapter treats four approaches to analyzing discourse, namely, critical discourse analysis, variational sociolinguistics, conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics. Statistical analyses are addressed in chapter 13 which includes such basic quantitative statistics as ratios, central tendencies, tests of significance, chi-square and correlations.

Part III, comprising seven articles, focuses on the context and the relevant contextual components such as speech communities, style and variation in sociolinguistic research. This part provides up-to-date information on notions as diverse as communities of speech, communities of practice (CofP), identity, social networks and dialectology. In this regard, chapter 14 stresses the culturally and historically constructed context of language use, taking an anthropological stance on the analysis of the ideologies of language and recommending ethnography as the major data collection method. Chapter 15 takes a Conversation Analysis (CA) approach, stressing that the methodologies of CA can be equally applied to everyday social interactions as well as to institutional interactions. The three main elements of CA-led research consist of social action, turn and turn design. As an interdisciplinary study of linguistic variation, dialectology is addressed in chapter 16 which covers both

the old and traditional approaches to the study of dialects and the recent ones. In chapter 17, the focus of analysis gets narrower by taking the individual as the unit of analysis and research. The chapter introduces three frameworks as units of analysis: speech community, social network and community of practice (CofP). An important concept in this chapter is identity. Chapter 18 discusses what research in multilingual contexts should be like. It is commonly believed that today's world is characterized by multilingual features, rather than mono- or even bilingual ones. Chapter 19 addresses identity which is believed to play a central role in sociolinguistics. To elaborate on this highly significant notion, the author discusses how identity is related to the social context and style. Finally, a unique chapter which might attract its own readership to this collection is chapter 20, i.e., the final chapter. The uniqueness of this chapter lies in the fact that it reports on some of the latest developments in the area of child language acquisition with reference to sociolinguistic competence. This concept of sociolinguistic competence was first proposed by Canale & Swain (1980) as one of the four main components of the broader notion of communicative competence (i.e., grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence).

This single-volume guide does not presume advanced background in sociolinguistics on the part of the readers. The chapters, however, vary in their accessibility depending on the topic(s) the chapters are concerned with. This volume can serve as a highly needed source for both novice and advanced researchers who are willing to carry out sociolinguistic research. I would also recommend the book to academics who wish to conduct sociolinguistic research by means of a variety of tools, methods and types of data at the tertiary level. As for the style, the book has been written in a smooth and reader-friendly style. It does not include a large number of illustrations, tables and figures. The practical, along with the theoretical, hints provided for the reader so that s/he will carry out research more ably and precisely are an excellent feature of this guide.

References

CANALE, Michael & Merrill SWAIN (1980) "Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language testing and teaching", *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.

Further Reading

BAYLEY, Robert & Ceil LUCAS (2007) *Sociolinguistic variation: Theories, methods, and applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WARDHAUGH, Ronald (2006) *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (5th ed.), USA: Blackwell Publishing.