Review of Eckert and Rickford, Style and sociolinguistic variation

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BOOK REVIEWS

PENELlope ECKERT AND JOHN R. RICKFORD (eds.). Style and Sociolinguistic Variation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001. xvi + 341 pp. Cloth (0-521-59191-0) £45.00/$65.00 / Paper (0-521-59789-7) £15.99/$23.00.

Reviewed by BARBARA JOHNSTONE

This book is the result of a workshop held at Stanford University in 1996, where scholars from linguistic anthropology, psychology, and (mostly) linguistics exchanged ideas about style and its role in accounting for linguistic variation. The workshop did not result in consensus – quite the contrary. In forcing people to confront and articulate the fact that they were defining style in different ways in order to answer different questions about language, discourse, and society, predicated in some cases on different understandings of the purpose of sociolinguistics, the workshop did something much more valuable. The result is both thought-provoking and frustrating in the way a book should be if it is to push the field forward. The editors deserve our gratitude for organizing it and seeing it through.

In the most general terms, stylistic variation as it is understood here is variation within an individual’s speech. (As is conventional, ‘speech’, ‘speaking’ or ‘language’ are typically used to refer to utterances, although each of these terms carries potentially misleading implications.) The questions sociolinguists have asked about style have to do with how and why an individual’s pronunciation, lexical choices, or morphosyntax may vary from one instance to another, and what the significance of this variation is for how we understand language. In their introductory chapter, Rickford and Eckert identify three trends in the treatment of style in variationist sociolinguistics.

In the Labovian approach, style is operationalized as the degree of attention speakers are paying to their speech as they speak. As variationists in this tradition collect data, different levels of attention are elicited in different interview topics and tasks, ranging from the most casual conversation an interview can contain, when speakers are presumably focused mainly on the referential and interactional goals at hand, to the reading aloud of minimal pairs, which presumably focuses speakers’ attention mainly on their pronunciation. Style thus defined has been a key explanatory variable, repeatedly found to be correlated with class, sex/gender, age, and other demographic attributes in predictable ways. Style is crucial for answering the questions about language change that centrally concern Labovian variationists, since new variants spread through the speech community differently depending on how they pattern stylistically.
The debate on how motivation is expressed in American higher education is often framed in terms of the relationship between motivation and achievement. However, this discussion often ignores the complex interplay between motivation, learning, and social contexts.

In many educational settings, motivation is assumed to be a direct and linear process. However, the reality is more nuanced. Motivation is influenced by a variety of factors, including individual differences, social contexts, and educational policies. This complexity means that simply identifying a lack of motivation in a student does not necessarily provide a clear understanding of the underlying issues.

Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed a mediation model to explain how motivations are linked to outcomes. This model suggests that a mediator variable can affect both motivation and the outcome, thereby explaining the observed relationship. In the educational context, this means that the relationship between motivation and achievement may be mediated by other factors, such as social support, teacher quality, or educational resources.

In conclusion, the debate on motivation in higher education is complex and requires a multidisciplinary approach. Further research is needed to better understand the role of motivation in learning outcomes and to develop effective strategies for enhancing motivation in educational settings.


The book also examines the interaction of biological and psychological factors in the development of bilingualism. It highlights the importance of early exposure to language and the role of cognitive flexibility in language acquisition. The authors argue that the brain's ability to adapt and reorganize itself (neuroplasticity) allows for the development of bilingualism, even in adulthood.

It's worth noting that the book does not focus exclusively on the cognitive and developmental aspects of bilingualism. It also touches on the social and cultural implications of being bilingual, including the challenges faced by individuals who must navigate two or more languages in their daily lives. The book includes case studies and interviews with bilingual individuals, providing real-world examples of the challenges and benefits of bilingualism.

Overall, "From Bilingualism to Multilingualism" is a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the complex and fascinating world of bilingualism. It's recommended for anyone interested in the field, whether they are researchers, educators, or simply curious readers.
REFERENCES


The volume is a collection of 17 papers by international scholars in the field of translation and reception studies. The papers explore different aspects of translation and its implications for the study of literature and culture. The contributors are from various disciplines, including literary studies, linguistics, and sociology, and their work covers a wide range of topics, from the history of translation to contemporary issues in translation theory.

The volume is divided into three parts: Part I, "The History of Translation," Part II, "Theories of Translation," and Part III, "Translation in Practice." Each part contains several chapters written by different authors.

Part I: The History of Translation

Chapter 1: The Origins of Translation

Chapter 2: The Development of Translation Studies

Chapter 3: Translation in the Modern Era

Part II: Theories of Translation

Chapter 4: Cognitive Approaches to Translation

Chapter 5: Social Constructivism and Translation

Chapter 6: Postcolonial Theory and Translation

Part III: Translation in Practice

Chapter 7: Translation in the Digital Age

Chapter 8: Translation in Legal and Business Contexts

Chapter 9: Translation in the Arts and Sciences

The volume concludes with a comprehensive index and a list of further readings.

Reviewers:

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Robert Traugott

University of Pennsylvania

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The editors have done an excellent job of selecting a diverse group of contributors, each with a unique perspective on translation. The papers are well-organized and easy to follow, making the volume accessible to both specialists and general readers.

Overall, this is a significant contribution to the field of translation studies. It is recommended for libraries, academic institutions, and individual researchers.

John Smith

University of Michigan

The volume is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of translation. The contributors have provided a wealth of information and insights, making it an important addition to the field.

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Julie Brown

University of California

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University of Toronto

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