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“Allan Bell brings his great wealth of experience as researcher, teacher and editor of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* to tell us not just what sociolinguistics is but how sociolinguistics is done. Best of all, he shows how we can do sociolinguistics ourselves.”

*Jenny Cheshire, Queen Mary, University of London*

*The Guidebook to Sociolinguistics* offers students a comprehensive introduction to the main ideas and terms of sociolinguistics, along with an understanding of the aims, methods and findings of sociolinguistic research.

The book explores the main strands of sociolinguistics – multilingualism, ethnographic-interactional sociolinguistics and variationist sociolinguistics – from both macro to micro issues. It begins with multilingualism, and moves on through language choice and variation to style and identity. It also introduces readers to the methodology and skills required to produce hands-on sociolinguistic research, and leads students through the challenges involved in conducting their own project. Alongside practical examples, a range of helpful classic and contemporary case studies and exercises are included.

Informed by the latest social and linguistic theory, and written by one of the leading figures in the field, *The Guidebook to Sociolinguistics* offers illuminating insights into the complex relationship between language and the social nature of human beings.

**ALLAN BELL** is Professor of Language and Communication, and Director of the Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. He is the Editor of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* (Wiley Blackwell), and author or editor of several books on language and media and on New Zealand languages.
THE GUIDEBOOK TO
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**Praise for The Guidebook to Sociolinguistics**

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*Walt Wolfram, North Carolina State University*

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THE GUIDEBOOK TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Allan Bell

WILEY Blackwell
For K.
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Writing this text has been an odyssey through the field that has benefited my own understanding considerably. I have read more, more deeply and more widely in the discipline than ever before. And although I have been in sociolinguistics for decades, I have learnt a great deal that I had only been peripherally aware of in those strands of the discipline that I haven't practised directly. The historical review has been complemented by the up-to-the-minute reading required as Editor of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, at the rate of about three papers a week over many years. In that time I have also done a wide range of research of my own, which I have been able to make use of in many chapters, giving a hands-on flavour that I hope will benefit the text.

I have made my own task much harder in writing this textbook by taking an inordinately long time to deliver on it. At the time the book was signed, each of the chapters covered what was probably a major enough area of sociolinguistics to be served by its own textbook. By the time of finishing, each section within a chapter, and often subsections of those sections, has produced its own text. The field has grown exponentially in these years, increasing the challenge – and the fascination – of attempting to understand and corral the essence inside a single book.

Any textbook has to be selective, and I have omitted from this book some areas which I would like to have covered – most especially discourse analysis, which overlaps significantly now with much sociolinguistics. Discourse analysis does surface in several chapters, but I would have liked to give it its own chapter.

There are three areas of partiality within this text, which I hope will prove to be advantages. First, at times I break into the first person and use my own research practice, projects and publications as examples. I have always used hands-on examples from my own practice in teaching at all levels. Doing this puts students in touch with how research happens as well as what it finds. This occurs in many of the chapters: over 40 years in sociolinguistics my work has covered a good range of what the field does. The first person concentrates towards the end of the book where I tackle issues of language style and ideology, a primary research focus of mine.
Second, I refer to many studies that have been published in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, which I co-founded and edit. This is one of the two leading general journals in the field, and I am necessarily better acquainted with its contents than with *Language in Society*. I have read all the articles before publication, and interacted with their authors, across the past 15 and more years.

Third, the book offers what may look like a disproportion of New Zealand examples. My apologia for this is that while the country is small, it has been one of the most active sociolinguistic research sites on earth for the past 20–30 years, and much of that work earns its place in any international text. Our positioning in the world lends a perspective that is I hope beneficial to an international text. We are both periphery and centre – geographically and often socioculturally on the rim despite the internet, but at the same time part of the advantaged West, implicated as an active player in globalization. This dual perspective informs the book. I have been deliberately internationalist in the range of examples drawn on, as far as the available research permits.

Two themes arch over this book and are made explicit in the opening and closing chapters. One is a delight in the profusion that is language in all its variety. The other is a commitment to voices that are marginal in the world, to a sociolinguistics of equity. My hope is that students will be sparked by both of these.

One distinctive of my approach is that, as well as covering the content of sociolinguistics, the book is committed to acquainting students with how sociolinguistics is done. That is achieved by expecting students to conduct research themselves. This may be as small a project as a group undertaking conducted entirely in class, for example using internet data. Or it may be as major as a sole-authored thesis which takes many months under supervision. The experience of doing research is invaluable in flavouring the field for students, showing how findings are reached, and in encouraging them with the knowledge that they too can do research. In my experience, very few fail to rise to this challenge. The research activities in Chapters 3, 7 and 10 outline how to undertake a project.

The students in a sociolinguistics class are the most valuable of resources for information and data. In New Zealand my classes are usually marked by having a majority of bilinguals and multilinguals, but a class that is largely monolingual also has wide experience of linguistic variety that can feed into the content of the course. Many of the exercises invite this kind of involvement and reflection on students’ own situations.

I have ordered the sequence of topics within the book on the pattern that I have found best in my own classes. I start with the macro – multilingualism at large in society – and move towards the increasingly micro specifics of particular varieties. A main reason for this is that in my experience, many students come to a sociolinguistics course with very little linguistic training behind them. Rather than overwhelm them with new terms on both the social and linguistic fronts, I introduce the linguistics gradually as the book moves towards the variationist material that requires the most skills. Teachers with students who have little linguistic background can skip the exercises that require too much technical competence. Some of these begin in Chapter 4 on language birth and death, then Chapter 5 on code switching, where some parts require knowledge of morphosyntax. From Chapter 7, more particular phonological capability is needed. In all cases I
have tried to make the terminology as transparent as possible. Where help is needed, refer students to a dictionary such as the latest edition of Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. My aim has been that the writing should be accessible to students of all university levels, drawing on my long-term experience as a science journalist in trying to make the difficult understandable. More advanced students will be able to use the book in more depth, for instance the exercises.

For most levels of students, teachers will want to select within the contents I have provided here, so let me offer some guidance on specific chapters. The case studies in each chapter can often stand alone or be omitted depending on the class's needs. Chapter 2.1–3 covers the basics on traditional approaches to multilingualism. Chapter 3.1 on language contact is essential background to the following couple of chapters. In Chapter 4, the teacher could choose to cover either language birth (4.1–3) or death (4.4–5), rather than both. Chapter 5.4–5 form a section on code switching that could be taught as a unit. Chapter 6.3–4 on speakers and audiences, 6.5 on speech acts and politeness, and 6.6–7 on interaction can be treated as separate topics. In introducing variationism, Chapter 7.2 on class, 7.3–4 on ethnicity and 7.5 on gender (plus 6.7) can each be the basis of a whole lesson to suit the emphasis of a course (see references under further reading in Chapter 7). Chapter 8.1–5 forms very much of a unit on language change, but the three frameworks in Chapter 8.6 can be treated separately. In Chapter 9 the content on language and tourism, language and globalization and linguistic landscape can be selected and expanded to focus on these themes. Chapter 10.2 on language attitudes can be treated independently. Chapter 11.1–4 is much of a unity.

There are nearly a hundred exercises in the book, and many tables, figures and examples also have a question or two attached to them. This will enable teachers to be selective in choosing those that suit their classes. They can also select within exercises: although questions are sequenced through an exercise, some can be skipped to serve the purposes of the class. Some exercises are explicitly set up for in-class work, others for solo or group attention.

For quick acquaintance with the contents of a chapter, the summaries in the second-to-last section of each of the core chapters are bulleted to match the sections and subsections in the body of the chapter.

There are some internet links given directly in the text (valid at the time of going to press). Some exercises make explicit use of the affordances of the internet and for many others, internet data can be sought.

One interesting fact I discovered during the back-reading for this book was that some often-cited studies did not actually do or find what the secondary literature at large commonly reports them to have done or found. Or that the thing a publication is cited for was marginal to what the study was aiming to do. Or that the study on which a particular received fact is based actually provided a very slight foundation for that finding. I have tried to represent what I read in the primary sources rather than what subsequent derivations have presented.

Since this book draws on a long time in sociolinguistics, I am hard put to call up all my indebtedness to mentors and colleagues over that time. I have made an unusual career for an academic. Having for decades worked as an editor and journalist as well as a
freelance researcher, I came late to teaching – and discovered that I both enjoyed and was effective in it.

Thanks to institutions and colleagues who have hosted me during periods of writing on this book: the Research Center for World Englishes at the University of Regensburg and its Director, Edgar Schneider; the retreat centre of Schloss Mittersill in the Austrian Tyrol; and not least Catalina Café, Hobsonville Point, Auckland, where much of my reading occurs over a cappuccino. Also to colleagues, collaborators and mentors over several decades, especially Janet Holmes, Walt Wolfram and Donna Starks. I pay special tribute to the hundreds of scholar-colleagues whose work I have read and cited in this text, many of whom I know personally but many I don’t: I hope you will find I have done you justice.

To my colleagues at Auckland University of Technology I am indebted for the most constant academic support, especially in the Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication: Philippa Smith, Andy Gibson, Sharon Harvey, Jennie Billot. Alwin Aguirre has provided invaluable assistance with practical aspects of the book, and I am very indebted to his efficiency and reliability. And thanks to Trish Brothers for her meticulous proofreading skills, and to Thi Hang Nguyen for her assistance.

The students I have taught these past couple of decades from many countries have been especially central to this textbook. Some provided material which has informed the book, but in particular, our in-class interactions have shaped my approach although I have radically remoulded content covered in our courses.

My colleagues present and past on the Journal of Sociolinguistics have been my daily network in the field, and I have used the work of most of them in the book: Nik Coupland, Monica Heller, Adam Jaworski, David Britain, Lionel Wee, Devyani Sharma, Bonnie McElhinny, Rakesh Bhatt.

I am grateful to Philip Carpenter who commissioned this book so long ago he has probably forgotten, and to the current staff at Wiley-Blackwell, Danielle Descoteaux and Julia Kirk. My appreciation to Anna Oxbury for her high-quality copy editing.

Lastly to my whanau, for their support and sociolinguistic enthusiasm and expertise: my wife Karen, a Canadian Kiwi with her own track record in sociolinguistics, and Hester and Willem. I am proud of you and your different genius. And to Bonzer, a faithful companion who was named as an emblem of earlier New Zealand English and whose lifespan almost covered the length of the book’s preparation.
1

What Are Sociolinguistics?

Sociolinguists are professional eavesdroppers – not on what people say, but on how they are saying it:

I am on a train heading out of London and I can overhear a young family of four sitting a few rows ahead. When I heard them boarding the train, I thought they were speaking French, but now I am sure I hear German, and then English.

It turns out the father is speaking mostly English to his partner and their two young boys. He is obviously a native English speaker, but occasionally he switches into – fluent – French, and he uses some German to the older boy. The mother is speaking mainly French to her partner and especially to the younger boy. But she is also using a good deal of German, and a little English, although with a non-native accent. The older boy talks to his father largely in English but with a lot of German, and rather less French. His English accent has audible traces from both his father and mother.

Then, to keep the children amused, the parents begin a song, the round Frère Jacques. But the next verse is Bruder Jakob, and finally Brother John. The trilingual switching is remarkable to me, the overhearer, partly because it seems utterly ordinary to the participants themselves.

This book is about the profusion of voices in society. It is about language as social fact and as identity bearer; language as interaction, as communication, as a bridge between self and other; language as expresser; language as delight. We are immersed in languages, dialects, varieties, genres, accents, jargons, styles, codes, speech acts. They eddy and swirl round us in an always-changing current of linguistic reproduction and creation. Each voice has its time and its place, its desire to be heard, its timbre. This is the linguistic profusion of Babel, that ancient story that I believe champions rather than condemns language diversity (see Chapter 12 for a re-reading).
Language is also implicated in the shape of society. As well as a truth-teller, language can be a deceiver. Social inequities produce linguistic inequities, and language reproduces inequity in many areas of society: structures, demographics, power, gender, ethnicity, interaction, globalization. Not all voices are equally or easily heard. The founding theorist of sociolinguistics, Dell Hymes (1974: 195), distinguished three ways in which sociolinguistics may view the relationship between the social and the linguistic:

1. **the social as well as the linguistic**: addressing social issues which have a language component
2. **socially realistic linguistics**: basing linguistic investigation on real-society data
3. **socially constituted linguistics**: affirming that language is inherently social and society is inherently linguistic.

In opting for a socially constituted linguistics Hymes emphasized a concern for equity and how that is evidenced and substantiated in the voices of society – who speaks, who is listened to, who is valued, who is disregarded. ‘One way to think of the society in which one would like to live is to think of the kinds of voices it would have’, he wrote (1996: 64). In such a Sociolinguistics of Voice, linguistic equity is something that is not a given but needs to be achieved in society. It invites engagement. These are the two core ideas which run through this book: the profusion that is language, and the drive to a sociolinguistics of equity. I will return particularly to the second of these issues in the book’s concluding chapter.

### 1.1 WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

Sociolinguists probably don’t spend enough time pondering this most basic question. Sociolinguistics began in a time and place when most linguists treated language as if it occurred in a vacuum. In American linguistics of the 1960s the transformational-generative theory of Noam Chomsky was in the ascendant. This reduced language competence to an abstract ability to judge whether sentences were grammatical, and sidelined all other aspects of language behaviour as mere ‘performance’. The focus on ‘an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community’ (Chomsky 1965: 3) was at odds with any kind of interest in examining how language was actually used when people talked.

In this intellectual climate that was inhospitable to bringing the social into linguistics, Hymes became the leading early advocate of sociolinguistics. He took over Chomsky’s narrow notion of linguistic competence and broadened it to encompass much of what Chomsky had treated as performance, coining the term **communicative competence**. Hymes’s focus on ‘the competence that enables members of a community to conduct and interpret speech’ (1972: 52) shifts the interest away from the purely grammatical and on to native speakers’ ability to use language in a range of social situations. Any learner of a second language knows that even if you can speak totally grammatically, unless you also know the right ways to use those grammatical sentences, you will sound nothing like a native speaker. Worse, you may offend or insult those who are native speakers. You have to know when and how to use the language as well as what language to produce.
Communicative competence involves not just linguistic knowledge, but cultural knowledge and interactional skills. How speakers and hearers function linguistically with each other in social context is a central concern of sociolinguistics.

I offer four characteristics of what language is to a sociolinguist. They follow one from the other:

1. **Language is social**

The stuff – the matter – of language is to be found not in mental judgements on sentences but in the *utterance* – the minimal unit in which speakers say things. And beyond that, in the *discourses* and *conversations* in which utterances gather. Language is situated, it has a context. There are speakers and hearers, a time and a place, a topic and a purpose.

Some of the best statements about this sociolinguistic view of language come from non-sociolinguists, although the terms they use may be different such as ‘speech’, ‘discourse’, ‘message’ or even ‘the word’. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur argued against the view that language was a disembodied, de-social matter. The social life of speech and discourse does not bracket out the profusion of language in order to get at the formality of the code:

> Whereas structural linguistics simply places speech and use in parentheses, the theory of discourse removes the parentheses. (Ricoeur 1981: 133)

2. **Language is dialogue**

Language happens between people and is shaped by them. It involves listeners as well as speakers, with all the consequent messiness of verbal interaction, where turn follows turn with interruptions, overlaps, utterances completed by someone else. Such real-world complexity is both the delight and the challenge of the sociolinguist. We are interested in hearers, in the audience. We should no more conceive of language without hearers than of a language that has no speakers. Language is co-created, in the words of another non-sociolinguist:

> Word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee. Each and every word expresses the ‘one’ in relation to the ‘other’ … A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor. (Voloshinov 1973: 86)

3. **Language is profusion**

The fruit of dialogue is *heteroglossia* – linguistic variety. Language cannot be tamed to an idealized standard. It is always and everywhere variegated, according to a collaborator of Voloshinov:

> At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. (Bakhtin 1981: 291)
Exercise 1.1 Language myths

The book *Language Myths*, edited by Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill (1998), deals with 21 frequently expressed folk ideologies about language. Here are some of the chapter titles:

- French is a logical language
- Some languages have no grammar
- Italian is beautiful, German is ugly
- They speak really bad English down south and in New York City
- Aborigines speak a primitive language
- Black children are verbally deprived

1. These are language ideologies. Examine one or more of them. What sort of linguistic arguments can be advanced as evidence for it? How much do these justify the myth?

2. Are there linguistic counter-arguments to the myth? Specify them.

3. What are the social foundations of the myth? For example, what are the perceived characteristics of the people with whom a named language or variety is associated? How have these perceptions come about?

4. Where did the myth come from? Is there any truth in it?

4 Language is ideology

Language is not only – perhaps not even primarily – about communication of content. Rather it is about social meaning. That is, all language use ‘indexes’ social meanings, evokes places, periods, groups, classes, genders. It carries ideology, it serves power. Language ‘tastes’ of its former uses. Our hearers place us against the backdrop of all their prior experience of language. We cannot talk without giving ourselves away socially, ethnically, geographically. The indexing of social meaning is deeply embedded in language and its use. As George Bernard Shaw wrote in the preface to *Pygmalion*, words later paraphrased into one of the songs of *My Fair Lady*:

An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him,
The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him.

Exercise 1.1 debates some other language myths.

1.2 What is a language?

When I begin teaching a class in sociolinguistics, during the first session I will ask the members of the class what languages they speak. A typical list – for a New Zealand university graduate-level class – will include English, Mandarin, Cantonese and Japanese. Often also German, French, Bahasa Malaysia, Afrikaans or Korean. Sometimes there is Khmer, Samoan, Māori, Italian, Spanish or Russian. Most students in the class will be
speakers of two languages, several speak three or four. Occasionally someone claims to speak five or more languages – and usually there are one or two monolingual English speakers, from various dialect backgrounds. One student claims a language that is not spoken. New Zealand Sign Language is the native language of several thousand deaf New Zealanders. It was legislated as an official language in 2006. Sign languages have been recognized as full languages in a number of countries, but still struggle for recognition in many parts of the world.

This multilingualism offers a rich ground to examine and illustrate the social workings of language. A class with a dozen languages is a gift, because many of the topics and issues in the course are manifested in the experiences of the class itself.

**Naming languages**

But these acts of language naming are more problematic than they look. China regards Mandarin and Cantonese as dialects of the same national language, although many linguistic criteria – including mutual intelligibility – would differentiate them as distinct languages rather than ‘Chinese’. The cluster of Romance languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and so on) is arguably less linguistically diverse than ‘Chinese’. The character system in which the language is written does not represent pronunciation so it enables the fiction of a single Chinese language.

We have the puzzle, then, that there are in the world languages that have different names but are linguistically very similar – Hindi/Urdu, Swedish/Danish/Norwegian, Serbian/Croatian. And there are other sets of codes that are linguistically very diverse but bear a single name such as Arabic or English. In addition, such definitions may run in one direction but not the other: Bulgarians may see Macedonian as a dialect of Bulgarian, but Macedonians do not regard Bulgarian as a dialect of Macedonian. Languages can also be qualified by various adjectives. What does it mean to call Tamil a ‘minor’ language when it has 70 million speakers? And Piedmontese a ‘failed’ language because it has never been adequately standardized (Tosco 2008)?

Naming a language, then, is a very social, very political matter. This is not surprising. The linguistic anthropologist Susan Gal writes (2006: 14):

> It may seem odd to say so, but ‘language’ was invented in Europe. Speaking is a universal feature of our species, but ‘language’ … is not equivalent to the capacity to speak … Languages in this limited sense are assumed to be nameable (English, Hungarian, Greek), countable property (one can ‘have’ several), bounded and differing from each other.

The notion of a language, and its identification with a nation, is an eighteenth-century European construct – but one that was imposed on the rest of the world through European colonization, which enthusiastically distinguished, defined and named ‘languages’ wherever it went. To avoid such judgements, sociolinguists may choose to use the more neutral term **code**. And they may prefer **variety** over **dialect** to avoid the latter’s baggage of implied inadequacy and marginalization.
1.3 What then are sociolinguistics?

The easiest way to begin grasping a field is to visualize it. Figure 1.1 tries to map the components, traditions, strands that have gone to make up sociolinguistics, and Table 1.1 schematizes some detail on the main elements. The large oval in Figure 1.1 represents the notion of what sociolinguistics encompasses. The three mid-sized ovals show the main approaches as they have developed from the mid-twentieth century. Most of the

Figure 1.1  The shape of sociolinguistics
Table 1.1  Strands of sociolinguistics

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<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Sociolinguistics of Multilingualism</th>
<th>Ethnographic-Interactional Sociolinguistics</th>
<th>Variationist Sociolinguistics</th>
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<tr>
<td>How languages operate in a society</td>
<td>How language operates as social practice</td>
<td>How individuals and small groups use language</td>
<td>How linguistic features vary with social factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Towards society</td>
<td>Language, society, politics</td>
<td>Both society and language</td>
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<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Anthropology, education, linguistics</td>
<td>Sociology, linguistics, anthropology</td>
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<td>Premises</td>
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<td>Scale</td>
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<td>Micro</td>
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<td>Founders/leaders</td>
<td>Joshua Fishman</td>
<td>Monica Heller, Peter Auer</td>
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<td>Typical research question</td>
<td>What language is used?</td>
<td>What linguistic resources are drawn on?</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Typical method</td>
<td>Survey</td>
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<td>Typical findings</td>
<td>Language shift: from one language to another by different age groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example study</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Corsica</td>
<td>British/Indian English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joan Rubin</td>
<td>Alexandra Jaffe</td>
<td>John Gumperz</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>New York City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>William Labov</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
areas of these three main ovals lie within the sociolinguistic circumference, but part is shown as beyond. The small ovals represent other areas which have varying levels of commonality with sociolinguistics but also have more or less purchase in other fields. The diagram comes with due warning: this kind of display has to be a severe idealization. It draws hard lines to show boundaries that are ragged, fuzzy and porous. It cannot show the subtleties of fields and sub-fields (that both columns 2 and 4 in Table 1.1, for example, may deal with multilingualism, though at different scales). But such idealizations will help me to map the terrain for this book.

We turn to what I categorize as the three main approaches in sociolinguistics: multilingualism, ethnographic–interactional and variationist. Table 1.1 lists some characteristics of each of these (which are of course subject to the same warning about reductionism as the diagram). The sociolinguistics of multilingualism divides into two. While historically the study of multilingualism was dominated by the sociology of language (column 2), that has shifted in the past couple of decades. Now more recent critical–constructivist takes (column 3) are increasingly important. Columns 2, 4 and 5 of Table 1.1 represent the three historical strands of sociolinguistics as it originated from the 1960s, while the second column shows what multilingualism research is becoming in the twenty-first century.

Sociology of language

The sociology of language arose in the 1950/60s and its interests were those of the American structuralist sociology of that time. Its orientation is to the large scale – it is sometimes called ‘macro-sociolinguistics’. It concerns itself with whole languages and their distribution and usage within society and not, for example, with language features or structures or with more micro-social processes. Typically the focus is on the use of languages by particular groups. The usual research method is a survey asking who speaks what language – including that mega-survey of social information, the national census, which routinely includes a language question. The focus has often been on what languages a particular ethnic group speak, especially if their language preference is changing. Example 1.1 gives the flavour of a typical early study.

The sociology of language was founded by Joshua Fishman, its longtime chief advocate and theorist, and especially influential as an editor. He started the International Journal of the Sociology of Language and embarked on an editing and publishing programme. His Readings in the Sociology of Language (1968) and Advances in the Sociology of Language (1971, 1972) remain indispensable sources of early sociolinguistic work which ranged widely across the field. Fishman wanted to corral as much of sociolinguistics as possible into the sociology of language, and these early publications were very broad. But as work developed the label came to denote the specifically sociological strand. This approach still retains arole, as research instruments such as the survey remain arguably the best way to get rapid baseline information about languages in society. Chapters 2 and 3 major on this strand. With Chapter 4 on contact languages, they make up the first section of this book.
What Are Sociolinguistics?

Critical-constructivist sociolinguistics

As sociolinguistics has been increasingly influenced by shifts in social theory, research into multilingualism has changed radically. Language has come to be seen as a social practice, with speakers drawing on all kinds of linguistic resources for their own purposes. Such research still focuses on macro issues of language in society – including the most macro of all, globalization. It may look at how minority languages are commodified and take on commercial value in the linguistic ‘marketplace’ of the nation. The work of scholars such as Jan Blommaert and Monica Heller has taken a leading role over two decades in reshaping the way in which we see languages as constructing society as well as being constructed in society (e.g. Heller 2011). Example 1.2 shows the sociopolitical nuances of one language situation.

To some extent the critical-constructivist stream has overtaken the sociology of language and increasingly predominates in the conduct and theorization of multilingual research. It offers both new questions, and new answers to old questions. The shift is well illustrated in the differences between the available handbooks of bi- and multilingualism. Where Bhatia and Ritchie’s 2004 volume reflects the original paradigm, the handbook edited by Martin-Jones, Blackledge and Creese (2012) intentionally represents more recent critical and constructivist work. While some of the critical-constructivist work surfaces in my Chapters 2 and 3, it is more influential in Chapters 5, 6, 8, 9 and especially 10.

Example 1.1

Sociology of language
Choosing languages in Paraguay

Paraguay has two national languages – Spanish, as in many other Latin American countries, but also the indigenous Guaraní. So which language do people use and when? In the 1960s the American sociologist of language, Joan Rubin, conducted a survey asking what language speakers would use with a whole range of different people – their spouse, servant, godmother, boss.

Guaraní proved to be the language of intimacy, while Spanish is for acquaintances. Guaraní is the language of the country, Spanish is more likely in town. So what language do you speak with a barefoot woman? – Guaraní, of course. ‘With your sweetheart making love’? – surprisingly, Spanish. With ‘an unknown man wearing a suit’ – Spanish. And with ‘a woman wearing a long skirt and smoking a big black cigar’? – 89 out of 91 people said Guaraní (Rubin 1968: 519). Spanish was also used always and everywhere with a schoolteacher. In the capital Asunción more Spanish was used, and more Guaraní in the country. Spanish was favoured for formal occasions, but Guaraní for non-serious discourse.

It would be interesting to know whether and how these patterns have shifted over the intervening 50 years.

Example 1.2

Sociology of language
Choosing languages in Paraguay

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What Are Sociolinguistics?

Ethnographic-interactional sociolinguistics

Ethnography is an approach to social research which concentrates on how individuals and small groups behave and interact (Table 1.1). It has a strongly anthropological character, combined with the skills of linguistic analysis. The founding figures were John Gumperz and Dell Hymes, whose names are closely linked through their editing of one of the foundational collections of sociolinguistic articles (1972). Hymes's research concerned Native American languages and cultures, and in the 1960s he was the lead advocate for and theorist of emergent sociolinguistics, especially the 'ethnography of speaking.' In 1972 he founded the original sociolinguistics journal, *Language in Society*, which he edited for 20 years, exercising an enormous influence on the shape of the field. Hymes (1974) is a key collection of his writings.

Gumperz's and Hymes's approaches were broadly consonant with each other, but with very different working scales and methods. The 'interactional sociolinguistics' that Gumperz founded emphasizes research on the minutiae of language code choice in specific interactions. His fieldwork covered several countries. Two 1982 books bring together his own approach and contributions by his students. Example 1.3 is drawn from Gumperz's research.

Critical-constructivist sociolinguistics

Language politics on Corsica

Philippe owns *U Carminu* 'The Fireplace,' a tiny shop in the town of Bastia on the Mediterranean island of Corsica. He specializes in traditional Corsican products.

But Corsica is part of France, and Corsican is a minority language in retreat as the community shifts to the dominant language, French. Philippe speaks fluent Corsican and identifies deeply with the language. He won a prize in a recent Corsican-language short story competition. He filled out the researcher's questionnaire about the language with enthusiastic detail.

Philippe has also been in prison for nationalistic activity. His public identification with Corsican excludes Frenchness. He spoke only Corsican till he was 4 or 5, and still speaks it both naturally and intentionally.

But his personal life does not match his ideology, linguistic anthropologist Alexandra Jaffe found in the course of a year's participant observation (1999: 13). His wife comes from Tunisia and can speak no Corsican. His children bear French names and are growing up not just in a French-dominated society but in a home where French in fact also predominates. Philippe keeps the languages separate in public but cannot do so in private. Although speaking Corsican is closely bound to his linguistic and nationalistic identity, this is in unresolved conflict with his home life.

Example 1.2

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