

INTRODUCTION

Marianna Di Paolo and Arthur K. Spears

This introduction, like the entire book, is written primarily for students but also for instructors. Instructors will already be familiar with basic information presented in this and the other chapters, but we hope that this chapter in particular will assist them by presenting a brief look at the relationship of fundamental linguistic ideas to this book's goal of increasing diversity in the corps of linguists. **Linguists**, as you probably already know, are language scientists, conducting empirical research on *all* the world's language varieties—their grammatical structures and their roles and functioning in society and culture. (Important terms are in bold when they are defined.) The work of linguists is to describe the workings of language, not to prescribe what someone thinks language ought to be. Our work, in other words, is **descriptive**, not **prescriptive**, and this applies not only to grammar but also to what is said, even taboo words and messages. The chapter on diversity provides a more detailed discussion of the idea of diversity, so here we will limit ourselves to some basic comments on it.

This textbook is considered a beginning. We hope that it will be expanded in the future to include more language varieties, illustrating the scope of our concern. Consequently, if you, as a student, are not represented by a language chapter, we hope that at least your language background (for example, bilingualism), if not one of the languages you speak, is mentioned in these pages.

The Structure of the Book

This textbook is intended to be used as either a supplement to an introductory textbook covering core areas of linguistics, with additional chapters on historical linguistics and bilingualism or sociolinguistics, or as the main text of a course on

linguistic diversity in the U.S., following or taken concurrently with an introductory linguistics course that has included linguistic analysis.

As linguists, we care about the lives of the speakers of the languages we study, the socioeconomic conditions that allow these languages and their speakers to survive and thrive. A number of the language varieties that chapters are devoted to are endangered, notably, but not solely, American Indian languages. Other language varieties included in this volume, such as Southwest Spanish or African American English, are greatly misunderstood and often given little respect. In many cases the varieties were shaped in a multilingual community and continue to reflect that rich heritage. These concerns have led us to provide in each chapter remarks on sociolinguistics—that is, the condition of the language variety in culture and society along with the ways that condition affects and is affected by sociolinguistic variation. Each language chapter also has sources for further reading. The issues confronting that group and their language variety determined the topics selected for discussion.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION

Sociolinguistic variation refers to the many instances in language, reflecting sociocultural patterns, in which there are two or more ways to say the same thing, for example, *talking* vs. *talkin'*.

The culmination of each chapter is the set of exercises, which lead the beginning-level student to some understanding of language in general and of that language variety in particular. By working through a tiny area of each language variety's grammar, students can actually “experience” the grammar of these language varieties and gain some idea of why linguists find them fascinating.

We assume that beginning-level students will have some knowledge of a particular core area of linguistics before working through problem sets in that area. For example, before beginning a problem set on the phonology of Dominican Spanish, we recommend that the students read about phonology in their primary textbook and that the instructor review the basic concepts in phonology pertinent to the data in the problem. The students will then get the maximum benefit from working through the phonology exercises on Dominican Spanish.

Beginning with this introduction, Part I of the book sets the stage for the chapters on particular language varieties. In Chapter 1, “Language Contact,” Arthur K. Spears and Marianna Di Paolo present issues related to bilingual and multilingual societies that have shaped and may continue to shape many of the language varieties described in the language chapters. There are many basic facts about multilingualism of which most students are unaware, for example, that most of the world's peoples by far live and have lived in multilingual communities, no doubt

since the earliest days of human language. Consequently, in an important sense, multilingualism is the “natural” human condition. With multilingualism, there is always language contact, within one speaker (the bilingual, for example) and/or within one community. Many students may subscribe to the erroneous belief that multilingualism has a negative effect on a speaker’s cognitive abilities; in fact, more recent research indicates that the multilingual speaker has a cognitive advantage.

The chapter on language contact also clarifies that multilingualism has been a key factor in the history of languages; it is not simply a currently widespread situation globally. For example, multilingualism was present in the communities in which African American English and Jamaican Creole (Patwa) were created, via influences from several languages in contact—as a result of multilingualism. By developing a clearer idea of what multilingualism and language contact are about, to take two concepts treated in the chapter, students can begin to understand how important they are and see them as resources, not obstacles.

The language contact chapter ties into Spears’s chapter on diversity in a number of ways. As noted, understanding linguistic situations in communities helps students to understand groups in whose lives these linguistic situations are more prominent. Some of these groups are speakers of stigmatized language varieties, and they suffer various kinds of discrimination. The language contact chapter seeks to increase understanding and respect for largely stigmatized varieties, while the chapter on diversity seeks to increase understanding and respect for the speaker communities of these language varieties.

However, greater understanding and respect for speaker communities also require consideration of history, society, and culture as they relate to diversity in the U.S. Generally, language varieties are stigmatized because their speakers suffer from stigma and discrimination. Such speakers’ histories and contributions to society often go unrecognized, not only because of a lack of knowledge, but also because students and others buy into myths and stereotypes. The chapter on diversity draws on anthropology—the holistic, comparative, and historical study of humankind—to refute some of the myths and stereotypes that contribute the most to a lack of interest in or a rejection of increasing diversity in our national life. In addition, the chapter on diversity contextualizes issues of opportunity, inequality, internal oppression, bias, and discrimination—for instructors as well as students. It argues that linguistics can speak to students about their own languages in the context of their own lives.

Part II presents chapters on a selection of American Indian languages representing three large language families. We wanted to honor, so to speak, the indigenous language varieties covered in this book (Navajo, Shoshoni, and Mandan) by placing them before nonindigenous varieties, that is, in Part II. We start with the most spoken and least endangered one, Navajo (although it is endangered to some extent), and end with Mandan, which has only a handful of speakers and is most endangered. The problem sets on American Indian languages highlight the fact that languages are often complex in different ways.

The first of these chapters is by Keren Rice on Navajo, an Athabaskan language and the U.S. indigenous language with the greatest number of speakers. The chapter provides a short introduction to the Navajo people and the language's linguistic affiliation, followed by problem sets on Navajo phonology, morphology, syntax, and verb semantics (classificatory verbs), and then ends with problem sets based on the work of the Navajo Code Talkers from World War II.

The Shoshoni chapter, by Dirk Elzinga and Marianna Di Paolo, situates this Great Basin language as a member of the Uto-Aztecan language family. It includes a sketch of Sacagawea, perhaps the most famous Shoshoni speaker, and her linguistic role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It concludes with problem sets on Shoshoni phonology, morphophonology, and syntax.

Next is Mauricio J. Mixco's chapter on Mandan, an indigenous language of North Dakota, which begins with background information on the Mandan and their language, including a short grammatical sketch to facilitate solving the problems. The problem sets have Mandan phonology problems and an extensive set of morphology problems.

Nonindigenous language varieties follow in Part III. It presents chapters on U.S. vernacular varieties of English and other languages spoken in the U.S. Our selection is based on an attempt, within the confines of a single volume, to cover as many different types of varieties as possible that have an easily available linguistic literature. We decided to order the chapters on nonindigenous varieties by their relatedness, including lexical relatedness. Thus, Jamaican Creole "Patwa" is grouped with English varieties because it is "English-related." The bulk of its vocabulary came from English. Jamaican is not English and is not mutually intelligible with English. We hasten to point out also that Jamaican has its own grammar. In the same way, Haitian Creole is grouped with the Cajun variety of French and Louisiana Creole.

We then arranged these nonindigenous language-variety groups approximately by the number of speakers in the U.S., starting with languages having the highest number of speakers. Thus, English varieties and the English-related creole language, Jamaican, are followed by Spanish varieties, then Chinese, and so on. (Note that *Chinese* actually refers to a group of related languages, all treated in one chapter.)

Like chapters 3–5 in Part II, chapters 6–14 in Part III each begin with a brief discussion of the history and social context of the language variety, followed by a description of some of its salient linguistic features, and end with problem sets or exercises. The first of these chapters is Walt Wolfram's "Vernacular Dialects of English." It is presented first since it treats English vernaculars generally and thus serves as a useful starting point for considering English varieties. It gives students hands-on experience with data illustrating the highly patterned nature of vernacular varieties of U.S. English and guides students through an understanding of the difference between grammaticality and social acceptability. It includes problem sets on the phonology, morphology, and syntax of Southern American English

(focusing on the English of Appalachia and the Outer Banks of North Carolina) and the syntax and semantics of African American English.

Next is Spears's chapter "African American English." This U.S. variety, actually a group of varieties, has been widely studied by linguists and is sometimes widely misunderstood by the general population. The chapter discusses the various terms such as Ebonics that are also used to label African American English, the variety's origin and development, its present-day use, and some of its grammatical characteristics. The problem set deals with phonology (syllable-final /l/) and also the semantics and pragmatics of a disapproval marker, *be done*.

Carmen Fought's chapter, "Chicano English," tackles the question of what Chicano English is, its role in the Mexican American speech communities from which it arose, and its relationship to both English and Spanish. Based on data collected in Los Angeles, Fought's problem sets lead students to understand the phonological differences between the English of nonnative speakers whose native language is Spanish and the English of true native speakers of Chicano English, who may not know any Spanish at all.

Chapter 9 presents an English-related language, Jamaican Creole, which originated in the Caribbean nation of Jamaica but is now also spoken by a sizable community in the U.S.—and in Canada and Great Britain as well. Peter L. Patrick introduces *di Patwa*, the term used by its speakers, by providing a social and linguistic history of Jamaica, concentrating on the development of this creole from its multilingual roots. The problem sets allow students to explore the phonology of the language, its phonological relationship to British English, and its syntax and semantics.

Chapters 10 and 11 are on two Spanish language varieties spoken in the U.S. The first of these is "Southwest Spanish" by MaryEllen Garcia, which begins by defining the variety and providing a linguistic sketch of this regional vernacular compared to Standard Spanish, followed by a section on Pachuco Caló and codeswitching. Garcia has problem sets on phonology, the lexicon as a product of long-term Spanish-English contact, and codeswitching.

The next chapter focuses on Dominican Spanish. In comparison to colonial Southwest Spanish, it is a relatively recent arrival to the U.S. but also one of the oldest vernaculars of Spanish in the Americas. Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio's chapter situates Dominican Spanish both in its country of origin as well as in vibrant and growing communities in the U.S. They follow a linguistic sketch of Dominican Spanish with problem sets on phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Next we have Lauren Hall-Lew and Amy Wing-mei Wong's chapter on Chinese, which begins with a classification of Chinese homeland dialects and then discusses the varieties of Chinese brought by immigrants to the U.S. beginning in 1830. A short sketch of notable linguistic features of the language is provided as well as a basic description of the writing system. The chapter ends with problem sets on the phonology of words borrowed into Chinese from English, and on noun classifiers.

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The final two chapters move the focus to French-related creole languages and a variety of French spoken in the U.S. First we have Spears's chapter on Haitian Creole, the language created in colonial Haiti. Today, Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. To explain how the new language, Haitian Creole, emerged and is now regarded, the chapter reviews the multilingual history of Haiti, the relationship of Haitian to French, and the current languages of Haitians in the U.S. Spears provides problem sets on phonology and morphology as they interact with dialect variation and also problems on the semantics and pragmatics of tense marking.

Michael D. Picone's chapter on Cajun French and Louisiana Creole, which situates them within the complex linguistic history of Louisiana, completes the volume. In it, he distinguishes the two varieties both historically and linguistically. For Cajun French, the problem sets include items on Cajun inflectional morphology and that of English words used by Cajun speakers while codeswitching. The theme of the interaction of inflectional morphology and codeswitching is carried through in the problem set on Louisiana Creole.

The users of this book might notice that linguists seem to know much less about most of the language varieties discussed in the chapters than we know about Standard English, but that should not be discouraging. We linguists, as scientists of language, are excited about learning more about the unknown and helping others to understand what we have discovered. We hope that students using this volume will come to share that excitement and some day help all of us to understand their own language varieties better, whether or not we were able to represent them in this small collection.