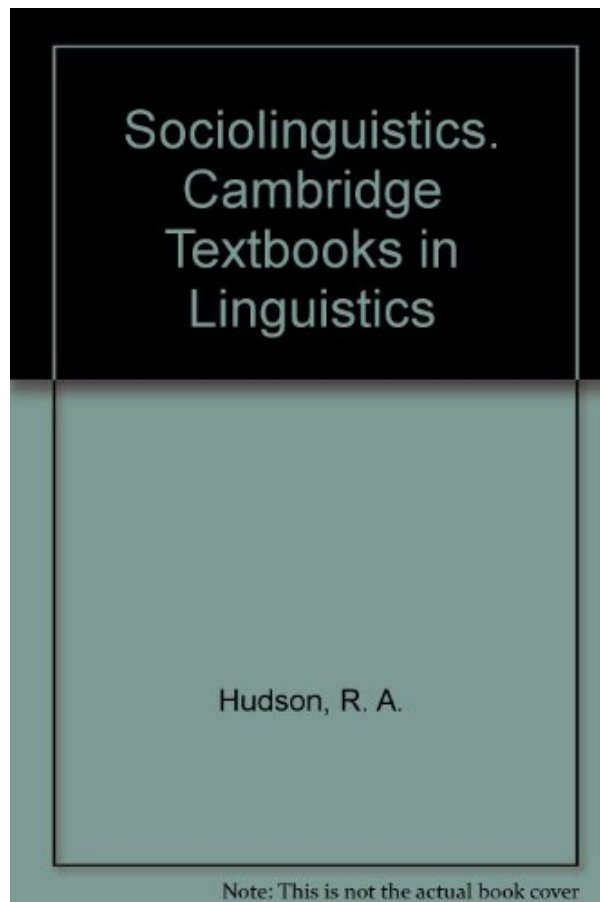


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- Binding: Paperback

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Wordy

By Amazon Customer

This is a passable, though wordy, introduction to the field. The book covers the standard topics in sociolinguistics, including: language variation, language varieties, code-switching, anthropological linguistics, gender differences, and educational implications of sociolinguistics (concentrating on Britain). The organization of topics often seems to circle back on itself, with points being repeated in different places rather than being grouped together. The author attacks the work of both Labov and Chomsky without following through with comprehensible arguments.

The explanations are not always clear, especially in the section on quantitative study of speech, which is replete with unlabeled or poorly labeled graphs. The author is also not very careful with his accuracy of comments. Consider for instance, this quote from page 61 about pidgins: "As for morphology, this is left out altogether, which again makes for ease of learning....The best way to illustrate these characteristics of pidgins is by discussing a sentence from Tok Pisin, the English-based pidgin spoken in Papua New Guinea. Bai em i no lukim mi. `He will not see me.'" Below this, luk- is glossed as `see', and -im is glossed as "added obligatorily whenever the verb has an object". It's hard to see how this example illustrates how morphology has been left out altogether! The book contains many examples of such blanket overstatements or carelessness.

Although the book is often used as a course text, it lacks suggested exercises, projects, or suggestions for additional reading. It does contain an excellent bibliography and index.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Illuminating work

By R. Tillman

Sociolinguistics by R. A. Hudson is an enlightening book that links language to the communities in which we speak. It acknowledges the limitations and successes of non-social linguistics and sociolinguistics. It is fairly easy for someone without an extensive linguistic background to follow. The excitement and importance of this field is entertainingly represented by the author. It is somewhat written like a textbook, with its sections, noted vocabulary, and summations. However, it is also a cohesive book in that each topic flows into the next. One of its limitations is that the simple stick figure illustrations do not help much with clarifying points. Also, while there are excellent anecdotal examples of specific languages and cultures, there is a lack of examples to make each linguistic topic easily understood. Even with these limitations this is a fascinating book and will be not only informative, but also enjoyable to anyone who is curious about the role

of language in society.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Lack of definitions promotes confusion.

By Peter Oliphant

Hudson calls his "theoretical conclusion" (Chapter 7), the "individual-versus-community focus. A speaker, as an individual, presents his "face" or "the public image that the speaker presents to the rest of the world." (230) A speaker, as community member, expresses "allegiance." Hudson says that to study this, he needs a theory of a speaker's (1) competence or awareness of people, (2) knowledge of social structure, (3) typical items like addresses, and situations, and (4) strength of "prototypes" (some kind of cultural category based on distinctive features). So, it seems that sociolinguistics is to study (1) personal motivation and (2) the kinds of solidarities in the speaker's social system.

Different types of languages (Chapter 2) display various degrees of motivation to social solidarity as "speech communities." Speech communities are standard languages; dialects; diglossia (bilingualism);, code switching (having different language by status), code mixing (using different status languages together), trade languages (like Amazonian Tukanó, a language of one of 25 tribes, that is used as a trade language by all tribes); pidgins; creoles; and registers (individual expressions).

He refers in passing to the relation of syntax to social structure. Syntax resists variation more than do vocabulary or morphology, he says. (43) Few are the studies of this, however, if only because it is easier to study morphology or vocabulary. For an example of how mixing languages suppresses syntactic variation, Hudson refers to Bulgarian, Albanian, and Romanian, which share a peculiar suffix-definite-article across their borders. Hudson does not develop this, except in the negative, by saying that variations in vocabulary and morphology mark social differences. Syntax marks cohesion. Vocabulary marks division in society.

Chapter 3 moves off to "language and thought." Hudson does not define his terms. First, as to culture, he reduces culture to social structure, in the manner of a dutiful British social anthropologist. Culture, he says, is "characteristics shared by a community [that] distinguish it from other communities." (70) Further, he reduces culture to personal behavior, quoting Ward Goodenough, to say that culture is "socially acquired knowledge...know how and know that...." Second, as to "thought" (not defined), he says the relevant categories are (1) memory, (2) inference, (3) concepts, and (4) propositions. He offers no theoretical grounding for these statements.

His conclusion about "language and thought" is that the meanings of words and sentences are concepts and propositions. Some concepts are "prototypes," or "organized around clear cases. In this theory a concept has a feature-based definition...an abstract definition of the most typical examples." (75) Or maybe concepts are "criteria" or "each concept consists of a set of features...which are necessary and sufficient for something to count as an instance of the concept." (75)

Now lost among his undefined "concepts" (which might be what the speaker thinks, or personality) and "prototypes" (which might be what the speakers think, or culture), Hudson reviews the "hypothesis" attributed to Sapir and Whorf. He ends up nowhere with "grammar does influence our thinking in ways that go beyond the use of language...contrary to the extreme view of linguistic determinism." (99)

Chapter 4 tries to recover order by identifying some norms in "speech as social interaction." Speech, as face-to-face interaction, confronts social constraints, so maintaining face motivates speakers (his personality focus). Speech rules are norms (his solidarity focus) "because they define normal behavior for the societies concerned without specific penalties for those who do not follow them." (116)

Some norms present a (1) "solidarity face" and (2) a "power face." Some norms are (1) frequency of

speaking, (2) number, (3) efficiency, and (4) directness of permitted speech.

Other norms present hierarchy and gender. Speakers express hierarchy and gender when they (1) acknowledge differences; (2) use consistent forms; (3) express greater power in expressing higher solidarity; (4) name others by roles or by their individuality; (5) choose subjects; objects; and verbs; (6) choose vocabulary.

Other norms ("discourse structure") are the structure of speech above the level of a sentence. (134) Examples are (1) taking turns, (2) choosing a topic, and (3) taking a personal versus an outsider's stance on a topic

Discourse may be marked for (1) relation (emphasizing solidarity or power), (2) structure (providing supportive feedback), (3) content, or (4) gender.

Chapter 5 is a statement of "methodology." Quantitative studies of speech are about phonetic variations by class, and the chapter is a programmatic statement about how these studies may define situation, style, group membership, and context.

An undergraduate would come out of this textbook pretty confused as to what he is supposed to learn about language and social structure because the book ranges around in culture, social structure, personality, and behavior without any theoretical framework.

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