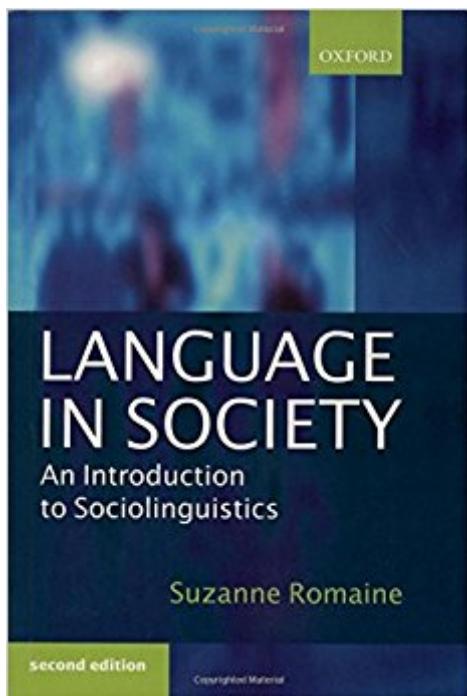


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Language In Society: An Introduction To Sociolinguistics



Synopsis

Why have 1500 separate languages developed in the Pacific region? Why do Danes understand Norwegians better than Norwegians understand Danish? Is Ebonics a language or a dialect? Linguistics tends to ignore the relationship between languages and the societies in which they are spoken, while sociology generally overlooks the role of language in the constitution of society. In this book Suzanne Romaine provides a clear, lively, and accessible introduction to the field of sociolinguistics and emphasizes the constant interaction between society and language. She shows how our linguistic choices are motivated by social factors, and how certain ways of speaking come to be vested with symbolic value, drawing from evidence from studies of cultures and languages all over the world. This new edition incorporates new material on current issues in the study of gender as well as other topics such as the linguistic dimension to the ethnic conflict in the Balkans, and the controversy over Ebonics in the United States.

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Customer Reviews

Overall Romaine's work is a very thorough introduction to the study of sociolinguistics. Greg Watson, Language and Literature, Journal of the Poetics and Linguistics Association

Professor Suzanne Romaine is Merton Professor of English Language at the University of Oxford and author of a number of books.

I read this book for a graduate school class on sociolinguistics. I do not have a background on

linguistics, so reading this with little knowledge and experience was challenging. There is a heavy emphasis on particular location's linguistics, and Romaine's writing on gender was very interesting. It contains a lot of information, but it will be quite an experience for a reader who is new to linguistics.

Excellent study of anthropological linguistics.

Suzanne Romaine takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of the field of sociolinguistics. The role of society in language use is examined from many different angles. Since this is an introductory book, it doesn't go into each subfield very deeply, but it does give you a broad overview of what we study in this field. I thought that the author paid particular attention to the issues of pidgins and creoles, and gender issues in language use. This would be useful for beginners in sociolinguistics and for those interested in the two specializations mentioned above.

This is a concise book on sociolinguistics. It does not dwell excessively on methodology or theoretical perspectives but offers through many examples, some presented via tables and figures, a taste of the kinds of issues sociolinguists struggle with, as well as some of their major findings. As a specialist in the Papua New Ginean languages, Romaine naturally makes good use of non-Western examples like Tok Pisin to illustrate such problems as language/dialect, language contact, language hierarchy, though she also draws examples from the Scandinavian languages as well as research on the social dialects of English. The book is highly readable even to a non-linguist like me. It probably does not cover all the conceivable major topics, but what it covers it covers well. The annotated bibliography at the end of each chapter is a useful guide to further reading. My only complaint regards her non-critical citation of the much-repeated "fact" (to illustrate the language/dialect problem) that speakers of mutually unintelligible Chinese languages share a common writing system. This of course is true only for the classical literary (written) language, not the vernacular varieties.

What is sociolinguistics? What does it aim to do? and in What respects does it diverge from other theoretical linguistic approaches?-if you have questions like these, there is every reason why you should buy and read this book. This inspiring introduction to a relatively new field of linguistics explains clearly and in a plain style why that field was born, what ends it can serve and what attitudes it takes toward lanaguge science; insomuch that those who has just started to take interest

in the field of linguistics have no difficulty understanding it; but, on the contrary, can enjoy reading it. Whether you can agree with the author's ideas, whether you find her arguments satisfying, I know not; but one thing is certain: regardless of whether you are for or against this book's assertions, reading this book can never be a waste of time.

This is the book you should read first if you have even a slight interest in Sociolinguistics, the branch of linguistics dealing with how society uses language. My particular area of interest is code-switching (when a person switches from one language to another within an exchange, i.e. "Have agua, please?") and I read Dr. Romaine's book to prepare me for a volume particularly about code-switching. Thanks to Dr. Romaine for a great read.

This was my first "read" in the area of sociolinguistic, though after working my way through texts in other linguistic areas I can say that this was the most enjoyable and understandable of the lot. Plenty of great examples provided, and the chapter on language and gender particularly compelling. It's good enough to make you want to take up sociolinguistics as a career.

Though it is difficult to define the field of sociolinguistics, the author succeeds to resume the complicated topics. Professor Ossan recommended it in favor of the sophistication and the usefulness. G-head, a friend of mine, said to me "The sentence structures in this book are a little bit difficult to non-native speaker", which I can agree. His opinion probably hints this book is suggestive in terms of not just its contents but also its readability.

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