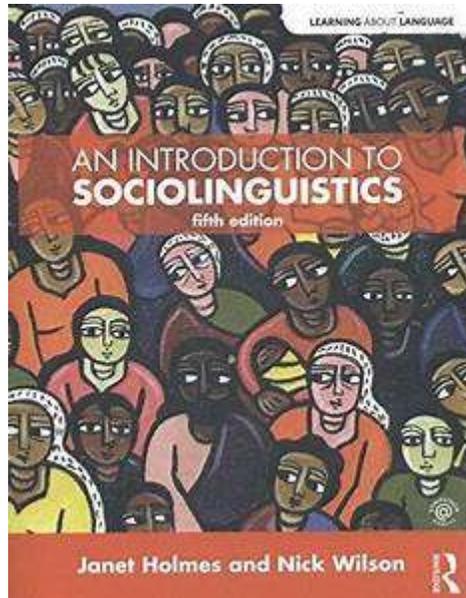


Book Review

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics



Authors: **Janet Holmes and Nick Wilson**

Title of the Book: **An Introduction to Sociolinguistics**

Year of Publications: **2017 (5th ed.)**

Publisher: **London and New York: Routledge**

Number of Pages: **538 pp.**

Reviewer: **Ms. Jutharat Jitpranee**

An introduction to Sociolinguistics has much value for sociologists, educators, and researchers, particularly in respect to the relationship between language and society and the differences in using language in different social communities and situations. Holmes and Wilson greatly contribute their knowledge to sociolinguistics novices, researchers, teacher practitioners, and students. The book is very practical for teaching and self-learning in language classes. The resources of the book are available online to facilitate readers' learning and understanding of the materials. The language is generally simple and understandable to the new learner to sociolinguistics, yet there is still a need for further study of some materials found in the book for richer information.

In terms of the content outlines, the book contains four main parts: 1) general knowledge about sociolinguistics study; 2) multilingual speech communities; 3) language variation: focus on users; and 4) language variation: focus on uses. The first part consists of the definition of sociolinguists, reasons underlying language use differently, and factors related to this particular field. The second part has four focuses, including choices in language use in the multilingual society, changes in language use, varieties of language use, and standard language in the national context. The third part has four factors concerning users' variation in language use. These factors are region, dialects, sex, age, ethnicity, social networks, and language change. The last part concerns the variables affecting the differences in language use through applications and authentic uses. The variables refer to “*style, context, register, speech functions, politeness, cross-cultural communication, sex, politeness, stereotypes, attitudes, applications, and conclusion*” (p. VII - IX).

Apart from the theories in the book, two outstanding points are taken into consideration: exercises in the book and the use of multimodalities and glossary. In terms of the book exercises, the overall content is based on four features. Firstly, they are linked with theories and examples provided in the book. For example, exercise 5 is instructed as “*using the information provided in example 1, draw a diagram like that in figure 2.1 summarizing the factors relevant to code choice for Kalala in Bukavu*” (p. 26). Secondly, there are many types of questions used in the exercises, including Yes-No questions, Wh-questions, and How-questions. For example, exercise 9 was assigned as “*How can the following three dimensions be used to distinguish between H and L varieties in a diglossic speech community?*” (p. 34). Thirdly, the exercises are mostly designed based on case studies in the examples and theoretical concepts in order to reflect the understanding of the readers. For instance, “*In 1855, Dean Trench, a leading architect of the Oxford English Dictionary, expressedWhat do you think of the claims of these men that studying standard English will develop a sense of national pride in England?*” (p. 110). Lastly, the authors apply a project-based approach for readers to practice and research by themselves. The example is taken from exercise 15 in the chapter 13, “*show the set of pictures below to a friend or family member and ask them to tell you the story portrayed by the pictures. Record what they say on tape. Identify the number of nouns they used and the number of pronouns they used in telling you the story*” (p. 378). These four features of the exercises help readers to reflect on their understanding about the texts in the book and practice them in order to apply the theoretical concepts of sociolinguistics to their own contexts. Also, the readers will be able to understand the nature of language use and enable them to describe the situations correctly and appropriately.

In addition to another outstanding point, it concerns about the use of multimodalities and glossary. The book consists of a number of multimodalities such as maps, cartoons, figures (e.g. pie graph, bar graphs), pictures, text boxes, tables, videos, and audios. Also, a number of words are provided in the glossary. Both multimodalities and glossary will support well for learning. If students do not understand the theories, they can figure them out from the multimodalities provided in the book. Also, if they do not understand the technical words, explanations are provided in the

glossary section. These sources can lead students to learning autonomously and independently which are matched with the current situation of education that tries to promote self-learning or learner-centered approach.

Overall, this textbook is valuable for those who are interested in studying language use in the world society. It is also practical to apply in the language teaching classroom because learners will be able to understand the text and context of that particular language easily. The textbook helps readers to be aware of the important social factors of language use. That is to say, language will not be functioned correctly if the language user does not know how to use it meaningfully and appropriately. Social factors influence the way we talk and live. I highly recommend this textbook to others because it is very practical and valuable in applying our real-life situation and providing important fundamental concepts of sociolinguistics theories. The book is also understandable because Holmes and Wilson use simple language, provide many examples across countries, create a lot of exercises, offer many relevant references for further readings, and use multimodalities to help readers to understand the texts easily, including cartoons, bar graphs, scatter graphs, pictures, maps, flowcharts, and tables. Audio voices and videos are also available on the website of Routledge (www.routledge.com/cw/holmes).

Even though there are many good points found in the book, there is still a need for further study of some materials found in the book for richer information. Two limitations are taken into consideration: exemplifying contexts and using the web-site. The book covers many different situations and contexts to understand the theoretical phenomena in the field of sociolinguistics. However, the examples from the Southeast Asian context are still limited. Readers in the sociolinguistics field should contribute theories and concepts founded in the book to their own contexts and understanding in order to generalize the effectiveness of the book applications and contributions. Even though technology has been taken to support the contents in the book including both audios and visual materials, there is still a limitation to the access to websites. It would be easier and a less technical process to have CDs available. Another point is the possibility to guide toward trendy topics for those who are interested in doing research in the field of sociolinguistics.

Reviewer: **Ms. Jutharat Jitpranee**

Ph.D. student at College of Foreign Languages and Cultures,
Xiamen University, The People's Republic of China (PRC)

Reference

Holmes, J. & Wilson, N. (2017). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (5th ed.)*. London and New York: Routledge.