

RESEÑA / REVIEW

Francisco Moreno Fernández:
A Framework for Cognitive Sociolinguistics

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In 2012, Dr. Francisco Moreno Fernández, Professor of Spanish Language in the University of Alcalá (Spain) and Executive Director of the “Instituto Cervantes” at Harvard University (U.S.A), published the book *Sociolingüística cognitiva. Proposiciones, escolios y debates*. Five years later, an updated version is published in English language by the title: *A Framework for Cognitive Sociolinguistics*. It is without doubt that, within this area of investigation, this work is an innovative proposal for the linguistic science.

The debates of discipline’s controversial and particular issues are presented in twelve chapters on the basis of well-founded propositions complemented or illustrated by annotations and commentaries. The book’s fundamental statement is that cognitive sociolinguistics represents a meta-theoretical model, attending to the linguistic and the social as realities analyzed from the perspective of human cognition. In this way, it aims to understand the language usage and explain it from the speaker’s subjective perception.

The language conception as a complex social dynamic product or resource is the main focus of the first chapter: “The Dynamic and Complex Nature of language”. The key concept of *perception* already appears in this chapter, as well as propositions that refer to the notions of *prototype*, *schema*, *category*, *frequency*, *usage*, *accommodation*, *attitude*, *variation* and *choice*. All these concepts put together some of the main aspects of cognitive sociolinguistics. Related to this chapter is the second one, “Social Reality and Perception”, that includes the notion of *culture* and its substantial feature, the *language*. The main focus of this section is the language usage into the social realities. It is also highlighted the difference between what is objectively called stratificational sociolinguistics and what the cognitive sociolinguistics suggest: a subjective and dynamic face-to-face interaction proposal.

The third chapter, “Worldview, Discourse and Society”, is based on the possibility of studying more complex language manifestations, like the *speech acts*, the *discourse* or the *conversation*. The author emphasizes the concept of *culture*, but this time stresses that the production and interpretation of the linguistic messages are determined by cultural, social and contextual factors and consecutively these contexts are mental subjective models. Besides that, he assigns an important value to the *discourse* and the *conversational interaction*, reporting different types of discourse determined by the speaker and the social context. In this discourse scenario, during the construction process, *style* plays a significant role. Furthermore, this chapter reveals basic notions, such as the *identity configuration*, the *communicative accommodation*, the role of *attitudes* and *beliefs*, the *politeness* and the *address forms* always in relation to the speaker’s perception.

The fourth chapter, “Cognitive Foundations of Linguistic Variation”, is connected to the following three chapters, concerning the socio-cognitive analysis of the semantic, grammatical and phonological level. In particular, the author highlights the significance of considering a cognitive process implicated in the sociolinguistic variation that permits to identify general

patterns of the speech community. It is on the basis of these propositions that is also discussed the concept of the *linguistic choice*.

We believe that the four first chapters present the theoretical foundation of cognitive sociolinguistics, having as a starting point the complex and dynamic vision of the language. It is presented the model's integrated and heterogeneous character and it is addressed the issue of the subjective perception and cognitive understanding of the social reality by the individual's point of view. Definitely, these chapters (1-4) deal with a general theoretical framework.

A more specific outline is presented in the following three chapters (5-7): "Sociosemantics and Cognition", "Sociogrammar and Cognition" and "Sociophonology and Cognition". In the first one, the *meaning* is highlighted as a priority matter of the cognitive sociolinguistics and it's been revised the meaning's value in the Labovian sociolinguistics as opposed to the concept of meaning from a cognitive perspective. The latter is a variable meaning that it's negotiable during the interaction and it can be specified within exact communicative situations. In the chapter "Sociogrammar and Cognition", Moreno Fernández emphasizes that the grammar, from a cognitive perspective, can be only understood by invoking the *discourse* and the *context*, the *communicative interaction* and the *speaker's experience*, hence a cognitive grammar must be also worded in socio-cognitive terms. In this way, the lexicon, the phonology and the grammar must always be conceived as inter-relational levels. It is worthwhile mentioning that in this chapter, a special attention is paid to the "constructionist" model, where the concept of construction features as a fundamental one.

Further on, in the chapter "Sociophonology and Cognition", the author highlights the phonology's and phonetics' projection in the grammatical level and underlines the idea of the integrated models for the language study. The fact that it is mainly referred to as sociophonology, unlike to variationist sociolinguistics that deals with topics from a sociophonetics standpoint, it seems to stay in line with the cognitive dimension of the model, since the phonemes and its variants are interpreted as categories related to the concepts of *schema* and *prototype*. We feel worthwhile highlighting the proposition upon the subjective perception of the phonic reality in three levels of abstraction: the *schema* that corresponds to what the speaker believes it is pronounced; the *prototype*, related to what the speaker believes he should be pronounced; and the *physical level*, related to what it is actually pronounced. It is our recommendation that these three levels must be taken into account by the investigator who aims to work with topics of phonetic variation, since this proposal could result on an interesting theoretical and methodological guide.

The three following chapters (8-10) present the main methodological consequences of the sociolinguistic interview's use and its internal dynamics. Especially, the chapter 8, "Methodology for a Cognitive Sociolinguistics", offers foundations substantially different from those of

the seventy's decade, regarding speech data collection and analysis. Special attention is paid to the primary bond between the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, in order to facilitate a better understanding of both perception and the social use of language. Later on, in chapter nine, "The Sociolinguistic Interview", the characteristics of the main technique of the data collection in the variationist sociolinguistics are being reviewed, giving primacy to the lack of an integral cognitivist interpretation.

In order to deepen even more in the methodology of cognitive sociolinguistics, in chapter 10, "The Perceptual Dynamics of the Sociolinguistic interview", it is emphasized that, from a cognitivist viewpoint, the interview is conceived as a discursive setting, shaped by perspectives' schemas that allow to study its perceptual micro-dynamics. In short, the chapters 8 to 10 deal with classic topics of the traditional sociolinguistic methodology, such as *the interview*, *the observer's paradox* and *the quantitative data analysis*, in order to propose an alternative methodology, from the speakers' cognitive perspective. Consequently, we consider significant the data approaching on a mixed way: on one side, to explain *why the things are what they are* and, on the other side, to show *why the things are the way they are*¹. We feel that this proposal resumes the point of view of this meta-theoretical model that treats the reality as the subjective way that it is perceived. In other words, for cognitive sociolinguistics, a good investigation demands an integrated and cognitively realistic framework for the sociolinguistic techniques' implementation.

The book ends with topics of linguistic varieties' perception and language in contact situations (chapters 11-12), presenting cases mainly from Spanish and English speaking world.² Regarding "The Perception of Linguistic Variation", the author stresses that the subjective perception performs a fundamental function in the linguistic varieties' origin, development, change and extinction. "The Perception of Linguistic Contact" is the topic of the final chapter of the book, with special emphasis to the socio-cognitive aspects that are relevant in all the

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- 1 An interesting reflection upon this point is made by Guerrero (2017), who for the purpose of some of the critiques that the sociolinguistic interview has received for data collection of oral narratives, compares the structure of personal experience narratives, individually produced by Santiago's speakers, with the structure of conversational narratives produced by speakers with the same characteristics. The contrastive analysis of the investigator's provided data permits to verify the applicability of the structural narrative proposal, developed, by Labov & Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972), not only in story telling registered in an ideal and no competitive setting, but also in those created during the conversational interaction. The results show figures pretty much identical. Consequently, the fact that a narrative is or not produced during a sociolinguistic interview, it doesn't seem to be a determining factor for its construction.
 - 2 Relevant are Sancho Pascual's works (2013 and 2014) about perception and linguistic attitudes of Ecuadorian immigrants in Madrid. The author uses various tests for the study of language attitudes, incorporating tools of direct and indirect measuring, as well as of qualitative and quantitative character.

contact stages, from the initial hallmarks till the complete formation of bilingual speakers and communities. In this chapter, the sociolinguistic perceptions and its constraints in linguistic contact situations are described, whereas the communicative settings are presented, with regard to the concepts of *linguistic variety* and *prestige* and the relation between language and territory. Briefly, it is shown the way that the notions of *prestige*, *beliefs*, *attitudes* and *linguistic maturation* are fundamental for understanding the linguistic reality's perception by the speakers who contribute to the dynamics of the socio-cognitive processes of variation and language change³.

Regarding the chapters' structure and relation, we feel that there is a certain intentionality by the author, that reflects an aspiration expressed from the first pages of this text: to study the language from a multidimensional and integrative point of view, not in a formalistic, neither a functionalist way, but a relational one. In fact, we can interpret the chapters' macro-structure as the proposed dialogue between the *cognitive* and the *social*: the *cognitive* is expressed through propositions without further citations that give to the reader the impression of a knowledge acquired in an integrated or, possibly, an innate manner. As it concerns the *social* part, the author's choice to illustrate these propositions through *scholiums*, it has, by definition, a social dimension, considering that the commenting act is socially indispensable for the individual's progress within the sociocultural context. Finally, the *debate*, an actually social act, shows the passage to the scientific, where the cognitive and the social find their relational crossing points, through a constructive discussion. Furthermore, as Moreno Fernández states, the text's principal expectation is to offer a sociolinguistics' cognitivist overview, allowing the reader to freely understand it either from a *cognitive sociolinguistic* or a *sociocognitive linguistic* perspective.

According to the thematic summary presented, we could state that the texts are in accordance with the study's objectives, which, in the first chapter, are represented in three areas: a) the *phylogenetic sociolinguistics (sociolinguistic genesis)*, that refers to the language's origins and interpretation as a complex adaptive system (chapters 1-3); b) the *phenotypic soci-*

3 It is worthwhile mentioning the author's reference on Folk Linguistics Language Theory, from the area of perceptual dialectology (Preston, 2004), where the perception is based on the speaker's interpretation of the language use. In this context, the key concept is the *Linguistic Regard*, concerning the languages' social and geographical positioning, according to the individual, consciously or subconsciously, reactions up to what people say. Within this proposal, different techniques are suggested in order to elicit the linguistic perception; the most known is the hand-drawn map (i.e. the speaker is asked to mark and label the geographical areas of a region where the way of speaking is different). We believe that this methodological approach, within cognitive sociolinguistics, seems to be extremely interesting, since it is following a relational proposal among the linguistic, the cognitive, the social and the folk aspect (cf. Moreno Fernández, 2015; Niedzielsky & Preston, 1999, 2009; Preston, 1989, 1996, 2010; among others).

olinguistics (sociolinguistic morphosis), related to the linguistic differences that constitute the variation's dynamics (chapters 4-8); and c) the *interactive sociolinguistics (sociolinguistic praxis)*, that includes the communicative interaction in all the dimensions of linguistic usage (chapters 9-12).

We estimate particularly useful the relationship between the world's vision, the discourse and the society, since it includes areas such as the discursive variation that is not yet so much accounted in the sociolinguistics manuals. We also draw attention to the proposal of a fundamental union between the quantitative and qualitative analysis, especially, because the investigations in variationist sociolinguistics are usually based on a quantitative analysis, making interpretations upon this foundation, but without suggesting any connection between these two types of study.

Finally, we would like to stress that a fully comprehension of the critical and synoptic analysis of the key concepts of sociolinguistics theory and methodology, from a cognitive approach, requires readers to be already familiar with both paradigms. We suggest to read this book complementarily to Caravedo's (2014) text, hence these publications jointly permit to move forward with studies that handle the close relationship between the cognitive linguistics and the sociolinguistics.

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