

RESEÑA / REVIEW

Carmen Fought:

Sociolinguistic variation. Critical reflections

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Over the last few decades, variationism was ensnared by a massive series of movements focused on language variation regarding social acts. The multitude of means of approaching and understanding this movement made Labovian sociolinguistics turn to a theoretical conundrum, mostly because this movement was not entirely reliable while interpreting social reality (Moreno, 2012).

The field of study in this paper is therefore variationist sociolinguistics. This volume offers a complete walkthrough of the different paths that affect this movement, by analyzing various academic studies that illustrate different scholars' opinions. Thus, this book should not be perceived as a manual, but as a guidebook for readers that are familiarized with Labovian sociolinguistics.

As far as the structure of the book is concerned, four aspects should be emphasized: the methods of sociolinguistics (the 1st part), the place (the 2nd part), the influences on the spoken language of the adults (the 3rd part), and, finally, approaches and ideologies (the 4th part). The starting point is given by an article written by Guy Bailey and Jan Tillery entitled "Some sources of divergent data in Sociolinguistics". In this article, the authors present only some disadvantages of the methodology implied by variationism that could be useful to move through if we want to acquire a homogenous methodology.

Quantitative sociolinguistics implies, undoubtedly, issues such as certainty and intersubjectivity. Taking into account the two characteristics we may draw the conclusion that the results of different researchers should be similar. Nevertheless, certainty and intersubjectivity are not conceivable in quantitative sociolinguistics when a standard selection of data of a speaking community is being analyzed. Also, prior studies are conclusive in this way, studies that have been published by different linguists. Some studies do not bring forward enough de-

tails of the interviewees' selection and the representativity of the demonstration, even though the interviewees' behavior influences this type of studies.

Insightful examples of sociolinguistic methodology are also given by the work of William Labov "Ordinary events". The linguist clearly unfolds the turning point in the development of sociolinguistic discourse, including not only fruitful achievements but also the weak points. Thus, he emphasized that some scholars focused on linguistic characteristics in the construction of the discourse (Schiffrin, 1981; Silva Corvalán, 1983), while others have focused on discourse as a whole (Laforest, 1996; Butters, 2001) or on the affective and social dimension (Macaulay 1991). In his research studies, Labov thoroughly describes the requirements of good narration, saying that the simpler the speech, the better the results.

It may seem that Natalie Schilling-Estes takes the intertextuality as the starting point for her article "Exploring intertextuality in the sociolinguistic interview". The linguist focuses on Robeson (North of Carolina) speech community. As she mentions, the intertextuality is tied to the sociolinguistic analysis since it shifts to a much greater extent than the individual speech. This is one reason why greater variability is generally observed. The speech of the informant shows clear interactions from the other people.

Barbara Johnstone's paper, "Place, globalization and Linguistic Variation", tries to look in detail at the variable of place, figuring both the physical and psychological notions. She stresses that the great amount of sociolinguistic research which has developed under the influence of this variable, has been much more objective.

Wolfram's paper "The sociolinguistic construction of remnant dialects" stands out here as an example of how one must interpret the concept of remnant dialect. He is keen to stress that

1 We are deeply indebted to prof. M.^a Jesús López Bobo (University of Oviedo) and Raluca Pinzari (University of Oviedo).

many of the findings reported to this concept should have been seen in larger terms as a more general manifestation of variationism and not of a remnant dialect.

The linguist Penelope Eckert raises the question about the role of the place variable in linguistic variation, too. Dr. Eckert captures an important facet of the concept. For example, if we examine the borders that exist between two speech communities, we typically perceive the border as a diverse space, not as a transition one that relates us to other domains.

A question which raises Gillian Sankoff has to do with *the grading time*. Such study is of course interesting since the grading time creates methodological problems. In order to cope with this problem, the linguist presents us another concept related to it: *the apparent time*.

Dennis R Preston's article examines three levels of variationist sociolinguistics which have emerged from his research in the field of this discipline.

One final paper which is worth mentioning is "Language Ideologies and Linguistic Change" by Lesley Milroy, based on the attitudes and ideologies in sociolinguistic field. The linguist came to the conclusion that all the sociolinguist researches use as a reference point the standard language, even though the definition of this concept does not appear to be heavily tied to them.

The following paper, "The radical conservatism of Scots", is rooted in the differences between the English from England and the one from Scotland. One point which emerges clearly from Ronald Macaulay's study is that the English variety from Scotland is unique in the way it is pronounced, although there are also some similarities with the one from England.

A full discussion of the language of the black Americans can be found in the last article "Spoken Soul: The Beloved, belittled Language of America". Taking such an approach, John R. Rickford emphasizes that the black Americans are

largely dependent on their social class, and that their linguistic behavior is entirely determined by it.

These considerations have focused on the linguistic variation and change. We have seen that the authors of the papers point to the need to recognize that the methodology of variationist sociolinguistics is heterogeneous. The discussions also show that in spite of the fact that variationism exists, and survives, there are some issues which have already been encountered in the previous papers, that can be sanctioned and modified.

Taking as a whole, this work is representative making us to raise at least one important question: to what extent one can innovate the variationism trend.

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