FOURTH EDITION

LANGUAGE, SOCIETY & POWER

AN INTRODUCTION

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and

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Language, Society and Power

An Introduction

Fourth Edition

Annabelle Mooney and Betsy Evans

Language, Society and Power

Language, Society and Power is the essential introductory text to studying language in a variety of social contexts.

This book examines the ways language functions, how it influences thought and how it varies according to age, ethnicity, class and gender. It considers whether representations of people and their language matter, explores how identity is constructed and performed, and considers the creative potential of language in the media, politics and everyday talk.

This fourth edition has been completely revised to include recent developments in theory and research and offers the following features:

- a range of new and engaging international examples drawn from everyday life – including material from social media and newspapers, cartoons, YouTube and television
- two new chapters which cover Linguistic Landscapes, including signs, graffiti and the internet; and Global Englishes, exploring variation in and attitudes to English around the world
- updated and expanded student research projects and further reading sections for each chapter
- a brand new companion website that includes video and audio clips, links to articles and further reading for students and professors.

Language, Society and Power is a must-read for students of English language and linguistics, media, communication, cultural studies, sociology and psychology.

Annabelle Mooney is a Reader in the Department of Media, Culture and Language at the University of Roehampton, UK.

Betsy Evans is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Washington, USA.

Praise for this edition:

'*Language Society and Power* stands out as the most exciting and unique introductory textbook available, primarily because it engages students where they live — this is language in the real world! The latest fourth edition offers a terrific range of recent case studies from around the globe. Each chapter leads students directly into theoretical ideas and analytic strategies applicable to their own research projects. The new addition of a companion multi-media website offers both students and professors a wide range of materials for lively and interactive classroom use.'

Brenda Farnell, *University of Illinois, USA*

'Since it was first published, this book has been the clearest and most student-friendly introduction to sociolinguistics I know of. This new edition brings the discussion up to date, including the role of the internet and social media, and the place of English in the world. I strongly recommend it to any teacher of sociolinguistics.'

Jonathan White, *Dalarna University, Sweden*

'The latest edition of Language, Society and Power offers an accessible, up-to-date and entertaining introduction to key concepts in sociolinguistics. It is sure — like its predecessors — to become an instant reading-list favourite.'

Mike Pearce, *University of Sunderland, UK*

'This new edition of Language, Society and Power is a great read and a fact-filled foundation for study. The story of the social lives of language is described with skill, humor, and artistry. In this new edition the story is brought up to date and expanded to cover Englishes around the world. It's a fascinating look at a twenty-first-century phenomenon.'

Richard F. Young, *University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*

For Debbie and Jen

Figures

Images

Tables

Newspapers, magazines and news outlets

ABC News	The Australian Broadcasting Commission (publicly funded) or the American Broadcasting Commission (private company)
The Atlantic	A monthly US magazine with a website
BBC News	The British Broadcasting Commission (publicly funded)
Daily Mail	A UK daily newspaper
Faking News	An Indian satirical news site
Fiji Times	A daily English language newspaper from Fiji
The Guardian	A UK daily newspaper
Huffington Post	An American-based news website
The Independent	A UK daily newspaper
London Evening standard	A free London daily newspaper
The Mirror	A UK daily newspaper
Montreal Gazette	A daily English language newspaper from Montreal, Canada
MSNBC	American news and current events television channel with a website
The Occupied Times	An online publication
Slate	A US online magazine
The Straits Times	A daily English language newspaper from Singapore
The Telegraph	A UK daily newspaper
The Times of India	An Indian English language newspaper
Washington Post	A US daily newspaper from Washington DC

Transcription conventions

Detailed transcription conventions are as follows:

{laughter}	non verbal information
xxxxxx *{laughing}*	paralinguistic information qualifying underlined utterance
[.....]	beginning/end of simultaneous speech
(xxxxxxxx)	inaudible material
(......)	doubt about accuracy of transcription
'......'	speaker quotes/uses words of others
CAPITALS	increased volume
%......%	decreased volume
bold print	speaker emphasis
>...<	faster speed of utterance deliver
/	rising intonation
yeah:::::	lengthened sound
-	incomplete word or utterance
=	latching on (no gap between speakers' utterances)
(.)	micropause
(-)	pause shorter than one second
(1); (2)	timed pauses (longer than one second)

Preface to the fourth edition

In this fourth edition, we have sought to maintain the structure and focus of previous editions while making some revisions in response to the changing nature of linguistic research and feedback from our students and readers. We have added a new chapter on Linguistic Landscapes, focusing on the language and semiotics found in both the physical and virtual worlds. We have also included a chapter on Global Englishes, to highlight the variation in meaning, use and perceived values of Englishes used around the world.

This book introduces readers to some of the key concepts and issues in the exploration of language, society and power. We have maintained some of the analytic tools used in previous editions as these approaches are applicable to a range of texts, utterances and linguistic use despite constant changes to the way language is used in the world. The issues related to language, society and power are so complex and extensive it's difficult to give every issue comprehensive treatment. As such there is much more that could be covered in each chapter. We have chosen examples from scholars in the field that we hope are both accessible and illuminating. It is impossible to do justice to this research in the space available, however, and we encourage the consultation of the original work where possible. We have also maintained the tradition of including classic texts and studies while also using more recent research and approaches to show continuity and change in the field. Ongoing debates about standard language, sexism and discrimination on the basis of age or ethnicity all show that while a great deal of research has identified the key issues and questions, and provided solutions, some ideological views are extremely firmly entrenched. Ideology, the construction and maintenance of power and the performance of identity remain central in this edition. These topics recur throughout the book as they underpin our central concerns.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce ideology and representation as well as some tools for analysing linguistic meaning at the level of the sign and sentence. We focus on the difference between description and prescription in Chapter 1 to make clear the connection between power and language ideologies. The attitudes that people hold about language use are intensely ideological and this can be seen in this and later chapters. Chapter 3 examines language and politics. While we touch on issues that are associated with routine meanings of 'politics' the emphasis in this edition is on the notion that a wide range of issues are, in fact, political. Thus, we employ a

broad understanding of politics and cover topics such as the ideologies suggested by children's toys and the politics inherent in the relationship between students and higher education providers.

Chapter 4 focuses on mass news media. While this might seem to be a narrow focus, given changes in technology, especially in relation to social media and the World Wide Web, taking this approach allows us to explore various dimensions of representation, ideology and the construction and reception of news. Chapter 5 is a new chapter exploring linguistic landscapes. This has become an important area of research in sociolinguistics and because it examines our everyday environment it forces us to consider important aspects of ideology and how we are positioned by it through the use of signs, language and other semiotics.

The following chapters deal with the classic sociolinguistic variables of gender, ethnicity, age and class. We have tried to balance coverage of classic work in these fields with new issues and research in order to show that while identity is always performed it is nevertheless understood through ideologies that expect identity to be essential and fixed. Chapter 10 deals with Global Englishes. As with all other linguistic variation, the effect of language ideology, power and politics are significant here. While linguists are clear that all varieties of English are equal as languages, the political, social and ideological structure of the world means that not all varieties are treated equally.

Chapter 11 contains some resources for further exploration, including suggestions for student projects and lists of texts and websites that may assist in seeking out and analysing language in relation to power and ideology.

In keeping with the last edition, a book symbol 📖 is included against texts that appear in the companion Reader to this text. We have also included 🌐 to indicate where material is included on the website. In addition, suggestions for further reading are included at the end of each chapter and we encourage consultation of works cited in the chapters as well. We hope readers find these resources, and the issues covered in the text, interesting, illuminating and challenging.

Preface to the third edition

In this third edition, we have sought to continue the traditions so well established in the first and second editions. The course, out of which this book grew, is still running as required for students on the English Language and Linguistics programme at Roehampton University. While we have kept the structure and tone of previous editions, there have been some changes. The previous editions were authored by academics who had at some time taught at Roehampton. We have kept to this in as much as all of the authors of the present edition have either worked or studied at Roehampton. Indeed, some have done both. What we all have in common is an enthusiasm for the course.

As previously, authors come from all over the world. While we have continued to include material about global Englishes, in this edition we have sought to include examples from other languages. We have also tried to include material from internet sources. The internet is indeed a global phenomenon; we hope you will be able to find your own 'local' examples of the kind of material which we have indicated.

This book introduces students to the central concepts around the topics of language, society and power. Since the previous edition, things have changed in the world of sociolinguistics, and we have tried to capture some of these changes as well as indicating where the field has come from. It is our belief that it is impossible to understand some of the current issues in the field of sociolinguistics without having a sense of how the various topics developed. Certainly the material is only indicative of these changes; we have tried to keep material accessible to students without a background in linguistics, while also wanting to whet the appetite of students and encourage them to take forward their studies in the area.

The importance of language is something that will never go away. The increasingly mediated nature of contemporary society means that it is important to be aware of issues related to representation and ideology. This critical stance is common in many disciplines; we understand it as crucial for meaningful engagement with the world in all areas. Because of this, in the first four chapters, we spend time on the concepts of ideology and representation.

The first two chapters set out our approach to language, society and power. The tools and concepts introduced in these chapters recur throughout the book. While we have indicated, by way of cross-referencing, particular topic links between chapters, the core ideas of ideology and discourse are relevant throughout the text. We have kept to the structure of the book

from previous editions with some minor changes. In the chapters on politics (Chapter 3) and media (Chapter 4) we have worked with a broad understanding of these concepts, in order to highlight the importance of power and the ideological choices that are made with any representation. We hope that such a broad focus will assist in developing critical skills and the 'making strange' of the familiar. The other topics we cover were chosen as we understand them to be the 'classic' sociolinguistic variables. We start with gender (Chapter 5), moving on to ethnicity (Chapter 6), age (Chapter 7), and class (Chapter 8). While each of these are areas of change in terms of the questions they ask, they have all, to some degree, also become implicated in a more general discussion of identity. We cover this in Chapter 9 and hope that the topics and issues from previous chapters will be borne in mind when thinking about identity. The final chapter has been altered slightly to address the issue of standard languages and attitudes towards language. While standard English is still an important area, and is included in this section, we thought it important to highlight the work conducted in the area of language attitudes. Further, we see this discussion as bringing the discussion back to where we start, that is, the question of what 'language' means and what ideas we already have about language.

A new addition is the projects chapter. We have sought to provide ideas for investigation of real language, building on the areas covered in the chapters. Included in this chapter is material to encourage students to think about research, issues around gathering and analysing data, as well as information about ongoing research and resources that may be useful in exploring some of the concepts introduced in this book.

As there is a companion Reader for the textbook (*Language, Society and Power: A Reader*, Routledge, 2011), we have indicated in the Further Reading sections any texts which are included in the Reader. The book icon 📖 is placed next to these readings.

Many of the changes have come about as a result of teaching the course. We would like to thank the students we have taught for their engagement, the sharing of their own thoughts and language, and their questions. The latter especially have helped us enormously in the writing of this book. Part of the reason for continuing to address our readers as 'you' is to try to capture the dialogue that we experience when teaching the course. Thinking about language is, for us, something which benefits from conversation, discussion and debate. We all have our own biases (something you should bear in mind when reading the book); reflecting on these in the company of others is, for us, an essential part of learning. In this spirit, as authors, we have benefited from the input of a number of people. Thus, alterations, at various stages, were prompted by incredibly helpful suggestions from current users of the second edition as well as reviewers of the draft of this edition. This detailed and constructive advice has been very useful and we are grateful for it.

We hope you enjoy thinking about language. While it can be challenging to develop the critical skills we believe are central to working with language, there is also a great deal of fun to be had.

Preface to the second edition

The first edition of *Language, Society and Power* was published in 1999, when the majority of the contributing authors were lecturers at Roehampton University of Surrey (then Roehampton Institute London). The book had evolved out of an identically titled course on which we had all taught, and which is still running as a required course for students on the English Language and Linguistics programme, and as a popular option for students in other departments. Since that first edition, several of us have moved to other universities and colleges, but we have all maintained an interest in studying language as a social entity. Thus, even though producing this second edition has required a great deal more co-ordination than the last time, we were all willing to be involved in revising and updating a project which has not only been enjoyable for us but which has also had a favourable reception from its intended audience.

The second edition has remained faithful to the first in many ways. We have maintained a focus on English (primarily British and American varieties). The first edition's glossary of terms potentially new to the reader (printed in bold in each chapter) has been retained but also updated. We have continued to make use of personal reference (something not typically found in academic texts), addressing the reader as *you*, and referring to ourselves as *I* or *we* as appropriate. We have also continued to assume that our readers are generally not, or not yet, specialists in the areas of language study and linguistics, and therefore need an introduction to the kinds of topics which feed into a broader examination of language and society. As such, the book does not offer comprehensive coverage of every possible issue within this vast subject area but, instead, provides a stepping-stone to exploring and thinking about at least some of them. Thus, each of the chapters deals with a topic that has been the subject of academic sociolinguistic investigation, and is supplemented with references to useful reading and other sources of material. There are substantial Activities throughout the text to help the reader engage more actively with the ideas being presented.

We have maintained the distinctive authorial 'voices' of the first edition, since they make for a more varied and interesting approach to analysis and discussion. One of the things that the majority of the chapters do have in common, though, is that they seek to interpret the ways in which language and language issues can be deconstructed to reveal underlying ideologies,

or beliefs. While all of the chapters have a solid academic grounding, it is important to bear in mind that any interpretation of what people do and say is necessarily going to contain a certain measure of bias. Thus, while we can justifiably analyse a newspaper headline about immigration, for example, and state that its 'slant' reveals an affiliation to politically left- or right-wing principles, it must be remembered that any such approach is in itself ideologically determined: it reveals the analyst's belief that language is not a neutral tool of communication but instead a channel for how we see and construct the world around us. This tenet will become clearer as you read through the text.

Each chapter of this book deals with a different area of language, although there are connections between many of the chapter topics. We have designed the book so that it can be read from cover to cover as a continuous text, but also so that individual chapters can stand alone and be read in their own right. We have divided chapters into subsections, partly to indicate the structure clearly with subtitles and partly to help you find the sections you need to read if you don't need to read the whole chapter.

Chapter 1 interrogates the notion of 'language', and raises some of the underlying questions and ideas that will be relevant as you move into the other chapters. Chapters 2–4 all concentrate on the ideological properties of language, and on how it can be used to influence the ways in which people think and behave. Chapter 2 is concerned with the connections between language, thought and representation, and considers the extent to which language can be said to shape and perpetuate our worldviews. Chapter 3 moves on from the conclusions of Chapter 2 to consider whether, and how, language can be used in politics, and in other fields, to persuade people of particular points of view. Chapter 4 considers how language is used, and to what effects, in media such as newspapers and television with particular reference to news reporting and advertising. Chapters 5–7 deal with language use in connection with particular subgroups within a population. The terms or 'labels' that can be or are applied to members of those groups, and the effect of those labels, are considered. The chapters also look at the kinds of language choices members of those groups sometimes make. Chapter 5 focuses on language and gender, Chapter 6 deals with language and ethnicity and Chapter 7 with language and age. Chapter 8 considers how a further set of subgroup divisions, namely those which go into the construction of social class, affect language use. The last three chapters, 9–11, are concerned with attitudes towards language, and the relationship between language and identity. Chapter 9 deals with language and social identity, and Chapter 10 with the debates that surround the use of standard English. Chapter 11 provides a conclusion to the whole book with an overview of attitudes towards language.

Finally, we hope that you will enjoy reading and using this second edition, and that it will add another dimension to how you think about language and language use. We have certainly enjoyed putting it together, and we hope that at least some measure of our passion and interest in this everyday but extraordinary faculty will prove infectious!