

Globalising Sociolinguistics

Challenging and Expanding
Theory

Edited by
Dick Smakman and
Patrick Heinrich



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GLOBALISING SOCIOLINGUISTICS

This book challenges the predominance of mainstream sociolinguistic theories by focusing on lesser-known sociolinguistic systems, from regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America, the European Mediterranean and Slavic regions as well as specific speech communities such as those speaking Nivkh, Jamaican Creole, North Saami and Central Yup'ik.

In 19 chapters, the specialist authors look at key sociolinguistic aspects of each region or speech community, such as gender, politeness strategies, speech patterns and the effects of social hierarchy on language, concentrating on the differences from mainstream models. The volume, introduced by Miriam Meyerhoff, draws together connections across regions/communities and considers how mainstream sociolinguistics is incomplete or lacking. It reveals how lesser-known cultures can play an important role in the building of theory in sociolinguistics.

Globalising Sociolinguistics: Challenging and Expanding Theory is essential reading for any researcher in sociolinguistics and language variation, and will be a key reference for advanced sociolinguistics courses.

Dick Smakman is Assistant Professor in the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics, the Netherlands.

Patrick Heinrich is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and Mediterranean African Studies at Ca'Foscari University in Venice, Italy.

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Ante Aikio is a Professor of Saami language at the University of Oulu and currently works as a visiting professor of Saami language at the Saami University College in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino). His research interests include the description, history and revitalization of Saami languages and comparative Uralic linguistics.

Jemima Asabea Anderson is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, University of Ghana, Legon. She teaches foundation courses in English, Phonetics and Phonology of English, Varieties and Functions of English, Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics. Her areas of research interest are cross-cultural pragmatics, speech acts and the codification of English in Ghana. Some of her research articles have appeared in local and international peer-reviewed journals.

Gladys Nyarko Ansah is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, University of Ghana, Legon. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Lancaster University, a Master of Research in Cognitive Linguistics from Brighton University, a Master of Philosophy in Linguistics and a BA in English and Linguistics, both from the University of Ghana. Her current research interests include language and cognition, language and culture, bilingualism/multilingualism, second-language acquisition, and language and politics. She has published several research articles on both local and international platforms.

Laura Arola is a PhD student of Finnish language at the University of Oulu and works as director of education at the municipality of Utsjoki (Ohcejohka) in the Saami native region of Finland. Her research interests include the sociolinguistic situation, vitality and revitalization of Northern European minority languages, especially Saami and Meänkieli. She is currently finalizing her PhD thesis on the sociolinguistic situation of Meänkieli among young people in Northern Sweden.

Sandra Nekesa Barasa is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication & Information Studies at the Radboud University of Nijmegen; she is a researcher in the Centre for Language Studies in the Non-nativeness and Communication research group. She holds a PhD from Leiden University. Her research interests include language and communication in social media, computer-mediated communication, youth language and slang, language contact, multilingualism and code-switching, especially in relation to the East Africa region.

Reem Bassiouney (DPhil, Oxon.) is Associate Professor of Linguistics at The American University of Cairo. Her academic books include *Functions of Code-Switching in Egypt* (Brill, 2006), *Arabic Sociolinguistics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), *Arabic and the Media* (Brill, 2010), *Arabic Language and Linguistics* (co-edited with Graham Katz; Georgetown University Press, 2012), and recently *Language and Identity in Modern Egypt* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014). Her research and publications focus on topics in Arabic sociolinguistics, including code-switching, language and gender, levelling, register, language policy and discourse analysis. She is also an award-winning novelist.

Elisa Battisti is an Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics, Philology and Literary Theory at Rio Grande do Sul Federal University. Before joining that university, she taught at Caxias do Sul University. She has taught courses in Linguistics (Sociolinguistics, Phonology) and her research is also in this field. She recently edited a book on language variation in Brazilian Portuguese (with Leda Bisol; EDIPUCRS, 2014), *O português falado no Rio Grande do Sul*, and has contributed to books and journals on sociolinguistics and phonology published in Brazil and abroad.

Bert Botma is a Lecturer of English language and linguistics at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics. His main research interest is in phonology. Part of his research is in collaboration with Hidetoshi Shiraishi and examines segmental and prosodic aspects of Nivkh phonology.

Irene Cenni is a Lecturer at Ghent University. She is currently teaching at the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication. She has taught language acquisition courses and courses in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at universities in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Her present research interests focus on Italian sociolinguistics and the didactics of Italian as a second language.

Hubert Devonish is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy at the University of the West Indies. He is also Coordinator of the Jamaican Language Unit, a Research Unit focusing on issues related to the status and corpus planning of the Jamaican language (Jamaican Creole). His research areas include sociolinguistics, language planning, creole linguistics, phonology and language description. His published books span the range from *Language in Liberation: Creole Language Politics in the Caribbean* (Arawak Press, 2008) through *Talking*

Rhythm, Stressing Tone: The Role of Prominence in Anglo-West African Creole Languages (Arawak Press, 2002) to *A Concise Grammar of Guyanese Creole* (with Dahlia Thompson; Lincom, 2008).

Marc L. Greenberg is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas and Director of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. He researches primarily Slavic diachrony, dialectology, and language contact, and he has taught sociolinguistics courses focusing on East-Central Europe, the Balkans and ex-USSR. In addition to co-founding and co-editing two Slavic linguistics journals, *Slovenski jezik/Slovene Linguistic Studies* and *Slavia Centralis*, he edited an issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (1997) and contributed to Fishman and Garcia's *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, vol. 2 (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Patrick Heinrich is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and Mediterranean African Studies at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Before joining Ca' Foscari he taught at universities in Germany, France and Japan. His present research interests focus on language shift dynamics, language policy and language ideology. His recently edited books include *Handbook of the Ryukyuan Languages* (with Shinsho Miyara and Michinori Shimoji; Mouton de Gruyter, 2015), *Language Crisis in the Ryukyus* (with Mark Anderson; Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), and *Language Life in Japan* (with Christian Galan; Routledge, 2011). His latest monograph is *The Making of Monolingual Japan* (Multilingual Matters, 2012).

Theresa Arevgaq John is an Associate Professor in the Center for Cross Cultural Studies, Indigenous Studies Systems, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where she received her PhD in May 2010, entitled *Yuraryaraput Kangiit-Ilu: Our Ways of Dance and Their Meanings*. President Obama selected Theresa to serve on the National Advisory Council on Indian Education in 2011. She recently co-authored a book entitled *Yup'it Yuraryarait: Yup'ik Ways of Dancing* (with James H. Barker and Ann Fienup-Riordan; University of Alaska Press, 2011), which received the prestigious 2011 Book of the Year award from the Alaska State Library Association. She collaborates on a linguistic project, *Improving Alaska Native Education through Computer Assisted Language Learning*. Theresa has published multiple articles in various academic agencies as well as local newspapers. Her professional interest areas include Alaska Native Studies, Indigenous epistemology, ontology, ecology, cosmology and worldview.

Niina Kunnas is Adjunct Professor and University Lecturer of Finnish language at the University of Oulu. She has taught courses in sociolinguistics and minority languages. Her research is also in these fields. She has 42 publications on current situation, variation and change as well as language attitudes of Finno-Ugric minority languages.

Rajend Mesthrie is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cape Town where he teaches Sociolinguistics, including language contact and variation. He

was head of the Linguistics Section (1998–2009), and currently holds an NRF research chair in migration, language and social change. He is a past President of the Linguistics Society of Southern Africa (2002–2009) and a past co-editor of *English Today* (2008–2012). Amongst his book publications are *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (with Swann, Deumert and Leap; Edinburgh University Press, 2009), *Language in South Africa* (ed.; Cambridge University Press, 2002), *A Dictionary of South African Indian English* (University of Cape Town Press, 2010) and *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (ed.; Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Miriam Meyerhoff is Professor of Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington. Her research is in language variation (especially in situations of language contact) and language and gender. She is the author of *Bequia Talk* (with James A. Walker; Battlebridge, 2013) and *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (Routledge, 2010), and is co-editor of *The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality* (with Susan Ehrlich and Janet Holmes; Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). She is a partner investigator in the Dynamics of Language Centre of Excellence (Australian Research Council). She is currently studying variation in a language of northern Vanuatu.

Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin is Head of Irish Language and Literature, an Irish-medium unit within the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Limerick. His main research interests are language policy, ideology and practice, particularly in the context of the modern sociolinguistics of Irish and the other Gaelic languages. His current projects include work on standardization and revitalization and the sociolinguistics of contemporary Manx Gaelic. He edited *An tSochttheangeolaíocht: Feidhm agus Tuairisc* (with Máire Ní Neachtain; Cois Life, 2012), a research-orientated reader in sociolinguistics seen through an Irish-medium lens.

João Ignacio Pires Lucas is an Assistant Professor in the Center of Human Sciences at Caxias do Sul University. He has taught courses in Sociology (sociology of law, political science) and Research Methodology. His research interests are interdisciplinary and focus on themes such as democracy, political parties, language variation, political theory, cultural politics, ideology and university management. He has contributed to books and journals on these themes published in Brazil.

Shobha Satyanath is an Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Delhi, India. She has taught courses on Phonetics, Sociolinguistics, Multilingualism, Language Contact and Historical Linguistics. Her research has focused on (variational) sociolinguistics of Guyana and of diverse Indian settings, language contact varieties in the North Eastern parts of India, dialect geography of Eastern India and on mapping of linguistic diversity of the North Eastern India and the Himalayan regions. Shobha Satyanath is the Editor of *Asia-Pacific Language Variation* (APLV).

Hidetoshi Shiraishi is Associate Professor at Sapporo Gakuin University. His research focuses on the phonology of Nivkh, a language spoken on the island of

Sakhalin and the Lower Amur region in the Russian Far East. His latest publication includes *Nivkh Palatalisation: Articulatory Causes and Perceptual Effects* (with Bert Botma; *Phonology*, 2014).

Dick Smakman is Assistant Professor at Leiden University. He has taught courses in Linguistics (sociolinguistics, phonetics), Applied Linguistics (second-language acquisition, language teaching didactics) as well as language acquisition courses (English and Dutch) at universities in the Netherlands, England, Poland and Japan. His interests include intra- and inter-speaker pronunciation variation, the effects of attitudes on language choices and the sociolinguistics of second-language acquisition. He is currently writing *Discovering Sociolinguistics* for Macmillan (expected in 2016) and in 2015 the second edition of *Accent Building: A British English Pronunciation Course for Speakers of Dutch* was published by Leiden University Press.

Cassie Smith-Christmas is a Research Fellow for Soillse, the inter-university Gaelic language research network. She is based at the University of the Highlands and Islands and also currently holds a fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. Her research focuses primarily on the intergenerational transmission of Scottish Gaelic, which was the subject of her PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow. Previous publications include articles in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* and *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, as well as chapters in the books *Sociolinguistics in Scotland* (Palgrave, 2014) and *Language Variation – European Perspectives IV* (Benjamins, 2013).

James N. Stanford is Associate Professor of Linguistics and Cognitive Science at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. His research focuses on language variation and change in less commonly studied indigenous minority communities, including languages of East/Southeast Asia (Sui, Hmong, Zhuang) and Native American communities. He also studies Eastern New England English features in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. He co-edited *Variation in Indigenous Minority Languages* (with Dennis Preston; Benjamins Publishing, 2009), and he publishes articles in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Language Variation and Change*, *Language in Society*, *Asia Pacific Language Variation*, *American Speech* and other journals.

Aone van Engelenhoven is a Lecturer of Southeast Asian Linguistics (specifically Austronesian languages) at the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies of Leiden University. His research focuses on linguistic and anthropological issues in Indonesia and East Timor and among Moluccan migrants in the Netherlands. He researches historical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, oral traditions, and language and cognition. He has worked on Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages in Southwest Maluku, minority languages in Indonesia and East Timor, and on Malay.

Maike van Naerssen is a Lecturer at Leiden University. She is involved in courses in the departments of Linguistics and International Studies focusing on pragmatics, intercultural communication and language and globalization. Her research interests include cross- and intercultural pragmatics and politeness, especially in everyday, mundane, talk-in-interaction. She is currently working on a dissertation about politeness in Dutch and Indonesian informal conversations.

Kadian Walters is a Lecturer of Linguistics and Communication at the University of the West Indies, Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy. Her research focuses on linguistic discrimination in Jamaica's public agencies. Her interests include language rights, language ideology, language attitudes and discourse analysis.

Daming Xu is Professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at the University of Macau. Before moving to Macau he taught at universities in Singapore, the US and Mainland China. He was founder-director of the China Center for Linguistic and Strategic Studies at Nanjing University. His English books include *Industrialization and the Restructuring of Speech Communities in China and Europe* (co-edited with Marinus van den Berg; Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) and *A Survey of Language Use and Language Attitudes in the Singapore Chinese Community* (co-authored with Chew Chin Hai and Chen Songcen; Nanjing University Press, 2005).

PREFACE

The motivation for this volume was the editors' awareness of a Western dominance in sociolinguistic theory-making. The incompatibility of several dominant sociolinguistic theories with those outside their Western domain is obvious and undisputed, and this dominance is often expressed by researchers in the field. However, despite this awareness, and despite the fact that non-Western language settings are described extensively in a multitude of publications, these settings somehow seem to contribute less to mainstream theory.

Rather than gathering a set of detailed investigations from various corners of the world, an effort has been made to take the aforementioned incompatibility as the point of departure. Authors were asked to choose one or more well-known theories or models that ill fit in the culture they are studying and to illustrate the incompatibility by referring to existing research. The resultant introductions to the sociolinguistics of various cultures in this volume thus go from case studies to theory, rather than the other way around.

In total, 27 authors from 20 universities across the globe have contributed. Together, they describe 12 larger regions and five smaller communities. Each chapter has its own approach to the issue of theoretical mismatches, and a wide variety of insights and approaches has emerged. Some chapters, for instance Marc Greenberg's chapter on the Slavic area, pay much attention to explaining the coming into existence of a situation in a region from a historical and political perspective. Other chapters, for instance Daming Xu's chapter on China, apply mismatches from a Labovian perspective and try to generate theories that apply specifically to the idiosyncrasies of the local situation and that might work universally as well. Other chapters, like the chapter on Northern Africa, straightforwardly take a certain theory and explain how the theory does not apply to a region or community. There are also chapters containing less predictable approaches, like the chapter on Yup'ik, which discusses the role of dance in social interaction

within a community. In their totality, the chapters draw a lively picture of types of theoretical issues that exist.

Structuring the volume on the basis of region was considered unsatisfactory, since "region" lumps together very different polities, languages and types of communities. Subdivisions on the basis of colonization history or writing traditions were other options, but these approaches were thought to lead to a Western categorization. We therefore took a leap of faith and decided to categorize the chapters on the basis of social and economic development, a factor that is key in shaping distinct types of society and which thus directly affects the sociolinguistic situation. We arranged the chapters according to their respective classification on the Human Development Index (<http://countryeconomy.com/hdi>). The chapters move from those furthest removed from the Western state of socio-economic development to areas and communities more resemblant of the West in this respect.

Africa and Asia are most strongly represented, together covering about half the chapters, as mismatches seem most pertinent in these regions and because of the relatively high number of living languages in these regions. The Slavic area, covering more than one continent, is described in two chapters, and Central and South America are represented in three. The West is in itself not a coherent unity and there is diversity within the West itself. This book includes chapters that cover parts of the region but do not fit Western paradigms: the North Saami, Yup'ik and Gaelic communities and the European Mediterranean region.

This volume opens with a chapter by Miriam Meyerhoff and James Stanford, who present their take on the issue at hand and who give their first observations on tendencies visible in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 tries to draw a factual picture of the nature and extent of the presumed Anglo-Western bias of the field of sociolinguistics by looking at the influence exerted by authors from certain regions as well as the choice of languages discussed in journal articles and books. Chapters 3 to 14 cover the major regions of the globe: each discusses a specific region, while in most cases focusing specifically on a country within that region. Each of these chapters illustrates how one, two or more well-known mainstream sociolinguistic frameworks fail to be easily applicable to the region in question. Chapters 15 to 19 describe the same types of mismatches but focus on smaller communities rather than larger areas.

Compiling this book took about two and a half years, and well over 1,000 e-mails now sit in the inboxes of the editors, suggesting that the Internet deserves the biggest thank you. Without this loyal and efficient friend, this volume would have been impossible or taken ten years. However, we prefer to thank the people behind all the e-mails. We owe much gratitude to the authors for their expertise, and the readiness and enthusiasm with which they shared it with us, in many cases without knowing the editors personally. The many colleagues and other intermediaries who helped find the authors also deserve a big thank you. We are also grateful to everyone at Routledge for helping us realize this volume, in particular Louisa Semlyen, Sophie Jaques, Rosemary Baron and Laura Sandford. Closer to home, we are indebted to Albertine Bosselaar and Max van Arnhem, who proofread the

chapters with much enthusiasm and precision. Tradition dictates us to state that any remaining shortcomings and errors are ours.

In discussing, developing and editing the individual chapters we were unashamedly egoistical and tried to produce a book we would ourselves enjoy reading most. Very minor issues aside, we instantly agreed on which direction to take and so we hope that readers will share our interest in the content of these chapters, and develop ideas on how to deal with the issues at hand in the future. Since the readers we imagine will read this book include our own students, we would like to dedicate it to those from whom we ourselves have learned so much. We dedicate this volume to Florian Coulmas and other such inspired teachers.

Dick Smakman and Patrick Heinrich
Nijmegen and Venice

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MAP OF PLACES DISCUSSED



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