

Sociolinguistics

Goals, Approaches and Problems

Roger T. Bell

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Sociolinguistics

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Goals, Aims

History

Dedicated to the memory of
Jephthah the Gileadite —
the first descriptive and
applied sociolinguist.
(*Judges* 12: 4 - 6)

Sociolinguistics

Dedicated to the study of
language and the culture
the first description of

Sociolinguistics

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Introduction

This book has arisen out of ten years of teaching sociolinguistics at undergraduate and postgraduate level in the department of linguistics at the University of Lancaster. It represents most of the topics dealt with in courses on sociolinguistics with students whose major or minor discipline was either linguistics or English, carrying, normally, in addition, another arts subject: a foreign language, history, philosophy and so forth; or one of the 'human sciences': psychology, sociology, etc.

The topics included here have been found to be consistently of interest to such students, especially since the interdisciplinary nature of sociolinguistics makes a natural bridge between the humanities on the one hand and the sciences on the other. The reader should however be warned that this book is by no means an introductory textbook. It is assumed that the reader will have already been introduced to the techniques and principles of modern descriptive linguistics and will therefore be well able to cope with phonemic transcriptions of data and with the major assumptions and methods of grammatical and semantic analysis.

The general principle underlying this book is to begin with the fundamentals of model construction, applying models to the analysis of data in micro- and macro- situations and to stress the ways in which these activities relate the interests of the linguist concerned with the social functions of language to those of scholars in other social sciences. The approach is, then, a cumulative one which probably does not recommend itself to a teacher in search of a textbook. We believe very strongly that at this stage in the development of sociolinguistics the individual teacher will achieve the most satisfying results by constructing his own course around his personal experiences and the easily available books of readings (see below), rather than by falling back on any existing textbook. Indeed, this book most probably recommends itself as a revision text which provides an integrated picture of the whole field; a general view which can often be