11 Study Guide

Language and the Social World

Terminology

You should be able to simply define or explain the following terms and concepts.

accent

alternation

bidialectal

code-switching

community of practice

dialect

diglossia

generic masculine

identity

indexicality

insertion

interactional roles

interlanguage

intersectionality

language ideology

lexical borrowing

linguistic activism

linguistic feature

linguistic repertoire

linguistic variety

loanword

monolingual

multilingual

persona

register

relational roles

slang

sociocultural linguistics

stance

standard

style

style shifting

tag switching

variable

variant

vernacular

"women's language"

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Important Points and Concepts
- Through the linguistic choices we make, we are constantly positioning ourselves and others as particular kinds of people who are members of particular social groups, and who have particular beliefs and attitudes; this is how language constructs identity.
- In addition to constructing identity, language also signals how we understand other's identities and our relationships with them.
- All varieties of a language are equally grammatically correct, cognitively complex and sufficient for its speaker's social purposes; there is no sense in which a dialect is a "corrupt" or "bad" version of a standard.
- Everyone speaks a dialect; everyone has an accent; everyone has a vernacular.
- There are social ramifications of speaking different varieties. Certain varieties that are institutionally less powerful may carry social stigmas in some situations. Language ideologies perpetuate social inequality.
- Social meanings of variants are not inherent; they may be different across groups and contexts, and may change over time.
- Speakers use linguistic features to create social identities within shifting social, cultural, and interactional contexts.
- Code-switching requires two (or more) speakers fluent in BOTH languages; code-switching is not a sign of disfluency in either language.
- "Women's language" is not a description of the speech of most women but rather a language ideology about how women are expected to speak.
- A single individual is simultaneously linked to multiple communities and identities that are differentially associated with experiences of power or oppression. Looking at the complex intersectionality of these identities provides a more holistic and contextualized view of speaker's identities.
- Membership in different communities of practice may override shared demographic membership in accounting for language use.
- Language may be used to display social identities at multiple levels, from brief interactional stances to more enduring personas and categories.

Skills
On completion of this chapter, you should be able to perform the following tasks:

- You should be able to distinguish style shifting, code-switching, diglossia, and interlanguage
- You should be able to distinguish dialect, register, style, accent, and slang
- You should be able to distinguish between different types of code-switching
- You should be able to identify linguistic features and analyze their social functions in language data
- You should be able to speak knowledgably about language ideologies and refute those that value some linguistic varieties or practices over others
- You should be able to provide examples of how language is used to create different forms of identity and distinguish between correlationist and constructionist views of language and identity
- You should be able to differentiate relational roles, interactional roles, stances, and personas
- You should be able to discuss how linguistic activism can address social inequality