AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

RONALD WARDHAUGH
AND JANET M. FULLER

EIGHTH EDITION

with website

WILEY Blackwell

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Blackwell Textbooks in Linguistics

The books included in this series provide comprehensive accounts of some of the most central and most rapidly developing areas of research in linguistics. Intended primarily for introductory and post-introductory students, they include exercises, discussion points and suggestions for further reading.

1. Liliane Haegeman, *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory* (Second Edition)
2. Andrew Spencer, *Morphological Theory*
3. Helen Goodluck, *Language Acquisition*
4. Martin Atkinson, *Children's Syntax*
5. Diane Blakemore, *Understanding Utterances*
6. Michael Kenstowicz, *Phonology in Generative Grammar*
7. Deborah Schiffrin, *Approaches to Discourse*
8. John Clark, Colin Yallop, and Janet Fletcher, *An Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology* (Third Edition)
9. Natsuko Tsujimura, *An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics* (Third Edition)
10. Robert D. Borsley, *Modern Phrase Structure Grammar*
11. Nigel Fabb, *Linguistics and Literature*
12. Irene Heim and Angelika Kratzer, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*
13. Liliane Haegeman and Jacqueline Guéron, *English Grammar: A Generative Perspective*
14. Stephen Crain and Diane Lillo-Martin, *An Introduction to Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition*
15. Barbara A. Fennell, *A History of English: A Sociolinguistic Approach*
16. Henry Rogers, *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*
    Benjamin W. Fortson IV, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction* (Second Edition)
17. Liliane Haegeman, *Thinking Syntactically: A Guide to Argumentation and Analysis*
18. Mark Hale, *Historical Linguistics: Theory and Method*
19. Bruce Hayes, *Introductory Phonology*
20. Betty J. Birner, *Introduction to Pragmatics*
21. Joan Bresnan, *Lexical-Functional Syntax* (Second Edition)
22. Henning Reetz, Allard Jongman, *Phonetics: Transcription, Production, Acoustics, and Perception* (Second Edition)
23. Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Eighth Edition)

Forthcoming:

Benjamin W Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction* (Third Edition)

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

RONALD WARDHAUGH
AND JANET M. FULLER

EIGHTH EDITION

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2021

Edition History
Basil Blackwell Ltd (1e 1986); Blackwell Publishers Ltd (2e 1992, 3e 1998, and 4e 2002); Blackwell Publishing Ltd (5e 2006, 6e 2010); Wiley Blackwell (7e 2015)

Registered Offices
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Wardhaugh, Ronald, author. | Fuller, Janet M., 1962– author.
Title: An introduction to sociolinguistics / Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller.
Description: 8th edition. | Hoboken, NJ : Wiley-Blackwell, 2021. | Series: Blackwell textbooks in linguistics | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021004384 (print) | LCCN 2021004385 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119473428 (paperback) | ISBN 9781119473497 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781119473541 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Sociolinguistics.
Classification: LCC P40 .W27 2021 (print) | LCC P40 (ebook) | DDC 306.44–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021004384
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021004385

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © ivector/Shutterstock

Set in 9.5/12.5pt STIXTwoText by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

I did the bulk of this eighth edition in the first half of 2020, during the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, which included sheltering with six other family members (three human, three canine) in my house, which was a bit too small for the seven of us. Embedded in the craziness of these times was also the stimulating environment of living with my three mentors for understanding contemporary culture. Our conversations often revolved around many of the issues of social inequality and power abuse which were put into sharp focus in these months. I am sure that many of my readers spent many hours, as we did, reading and discussing the many horrible developments of this time, and taking the edge off the despair by laughing at memes. The intensity of this situation is seen overtly in only a few moments of this book, but it arguably has permeated all of my writing. For this I owe a great debt of thanks to Indigo Nathani, Jayden Nathani and Niko Johnson-Fuller. In addition to providing me with new perspectives and ideas, they also read sections of the book and offered invaluable feedback. Niko has long acted as my youth culture/technology support staff and continued in that role for this book. (If what I've included is nonetheless cringey, he's not to blame.)

My co-workers Zorro Montenegro de Alemania, Guadalupe Runter vom Sofa, and Biene Fetzt also deserve a mention. Although their demands for walks sometimes seemed a burden, ultimately they helped us to stay sane.

Although this book was finished in the age of the corona, I started it much earlier. I signed a contract shortly before moving to Groningen in 2017, and while taking on this new position delayed work on the book, it also provided me with a fabulous context within which to grow as a sociolinguist. I know 'fabulous' is a strange word to use for the workplace, but there really is not a more appropriate word for my colleagues here. Especially the members of the Language & Society team, but all of the members of the European Languages and Cultures program, as well as many valuable colleagues in the Center for Language and Cognition in Groningen, have made my job a pleasure and provided me with a rich intellectual environment.

The field of sociolinguistics is increasingly concerned with issues of power and inequality, and as these issues become central, more and more sociolinguists are reflective about the history of the field and how we have brought our own biases to the study of language in society. I am proud to be part of a field that is addressing important social issues and doing the difficult work of reflexivity, while I am also aware that there is much room for improvement, in the field and in this book. Many of the chapter reviewers were helpful in

pointing out my own anglophone, binary, and Western biases; while I fear these biases are still present in this book, the extent to which I have succeeded in being more inclusive is due to the excellent feedback I got from reviewers. In addition, they provided input on the content to make this up-to-date and accurate. (Any errors are, of course, my own.) For reviews of book chapters I would like to thank Charlotte Gooskens, Marina Terkouafi, Tony Webster, Itxaso Rodriguez-Ordonez, Farzad Karimzad, Aurelie Joubert, Eva Daussa, Emily Davis, Lotte Verheijen, Joana Duarte, and Nanna Hilton. I literally could not have finished the book without their help. I would also like to thank Stefan Dollinger for helpful comments on various chapters which helped improve the content and text.

A special thanks goes to Itxaso Rodriguez-Ordonez, who, in addition to offering feedback on two chapters of the book, also discussed the book proposal for this eighth edition with me prior to its submission, providing many ideas about topics to include and how to repackage some of the information already included. Her input on this was invaluable.

I would also like to thank Roberto Barrios and Kelly McGuire for their insider expertise and advice in the making of Exploration 1.3.

I also owe a continued thanks to the first author, Ronald Wardhaugh, and the editors and staff at Wiley Blackwell, who have made this book possible.

About the Companion Website

This book is accompanied by companion websites for students and instructors.

www.wiley.com/go/wardhaugh8e

The instructor website includes the following information for each chapter:

- Discussion points
- Solutions and sample answers to explorations and exercises

The student website includes the following resources for each chapter:

- Review guide: summry, compare and contrast exercises, review questions, terms to know
- Additional exercises and examples
- Links to online resources

1
Introduction

KEY TOPICS

- What makes a system of communication a language
- What it means to 'know' a language
- How language varies across language users and within the language use of one person
- The social construction of identities
- The relationship between language and culture
- How to define and delineate the study of sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of our everyday lives – how we use language in, for example, our conversations or social media interactions, and how this language use is influenced by the presence of societal norms, policies, and laws which address language. Since you are reading this book, you may already have some idea what the study of sociolinguistics entails; you may already have an interest in, and knowledge about, regional dialects, multilingualism, language policy, or non-sexist language. And we will cover all of these topics, along with many others – for example, what social class and ethnicity might have to do with language use, why we do not always 'say what we mean,' and the role of language in education.

But we would like to encourage readers to approach the study of sociolinguistics not only as an empirical approach to studying language and society, but as a way of viewing the world around you. In sociolinguistics, we seek to analyze data so that we can make generalizations about language in society, but also to question both our findings and the very process of doing research. Take, for instance, the topic of nicknames. There is a stereotype that men use nicknames and women do not, exemplified in the following joke:

> If Diana, Natalie, Naomi, and Maria meet for lunch, they will call each other Diana, Natalie, Naomi, and Maria. But if Matt, Peter, Kirk, and Scott go out for a brewsky, they will call each other Dutch, Dude, Doofus, and Pencil.

We could investigate this sociolinguistic phenomenon by surveying people about their nicknames and also observing or recording interactions in which they are addressed by close friends and family members. We might find, indeed, that the men in our study are often called nicknames, while the women rarely are. But we would like to go deeper than

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Eighth Edition. Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller.

Companion website: www.wiley.com/go/wardhaugh8e

this generalization; why do we ask this question in the first place? Why do we assume that the categories of 'men' and 'women' are socially relevant? What is it about nicknames that makes using them, or not using them, significant social behavior? And even if most men are called by a nickname and most women are not, how do we explain the existence of individual men who do not have nicknames, and the individual women who do?

Thus, while in sociolinguistics we analyze linguistic interactions with the goal of making generalizations, we also question these generalizations and examine how they, in turn, influence how we use language. In short, the goal of sociolinguistics is not to make simple observations (e.g., men call each other nicknames, women do not) but to study the complex ways in which societal norms are intertwined with our language use (e.g., what it means to be a male or female member of a particular society may influence the terms we use to address each other).

We will come back to these points repeatedly: language, society, and sociolinguistic research findings must all be viewed in their social contexts, interpreted, and redefined. To begin, however, we will offer a starting point for discussing language in society. By society, we mean a group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose or purposes; this is a rather vague and broad term, and throughout this book we will be engaged in discussing how to draw meaningful boundaries around a group of language users for the purposes of studying their language (see in particular chapter 3). We use the term language to mean a system of linguistic communication; this includes spoken, written, and signed modes of communication. A note here about terminology: although the majority of the research we will refer to is on spoken language, there is an increasing number of studies looking at written discourse (especially from social media) and we also do not wish to exclude those who communicate through signed languages. Thus, we will use the term 'language user' instead of the more commonly used term 'speaker' as a general term.

The main idea we would like to convey here is that language is inherently social. A society must have a language or languages in which to carry out its purposes, and we label groups of people with reference to how they communicate – e.g., *Spanish speakers*, *bilinguals*, *American Sign Language users*. This connection is inevitable and complex; our purpose here is to study the relationship between language and society in more specific ways which help us more clearly define and understand both the social groups and the ways they speak.

In this introductory chapter, we will present some of the basic concepts in the field of sociolinguistics: what defines a language, what it means to 'know' a language, the nature of differences across and within languages, the importance of social group membership in language use, and different ideas about the relationship between the worldviews of these groups and the languages they use. Further, we will provide a brief discussion of how sociolinguistics draws on ideas from a variety of disciplines for key concepts and approaches to the study of language.

The Nature of Language

A mainstay of introduction to linguistics textbooks (see for example Yule 2017) is a discussion of the nature of language and, often, how it differs from animal communication. Although the human ability to learn language is innate, a person learns a language through

contact with others and thus language is **culturally transmitted** – an idea which is at the heart of sociolinguistics. Other features include **discreteness**, **productivity**, and **displacement**, which can be used to distinguish between non-linguistic means of communication such as gestures and language. Another important feature is that the relationship between the form and meaning of a linguistic sign is **arbitrary**; aside from a few onomatopoetic words, such as words for animal sounds (e.g., *meow*, *moo*), the form (including both the sound and the way it might be written) of a morpheme is not derived from its meaning, or vice versa. We see evidence for the arbitrariness of the form–meaning relationship in the presence of synonyms within languages (e.g., *sofa*, *couch*) as well as the fact that words from different languages may have drastically different forms but still have the same meaning (e.g., English *love*, Swahili *kupenda*).

By examining how language works in its social context, sociolinguistics has greatly advanced our understanding of the relationship between signs and their meanings. The philosopher Peirce (Hartshorne et al.1931) suggested a three-way typology of signs. A **symbol** is a sign which has developed a conventional meaning; for example, a heart shape indicates love. There is nothing about this shape which inherently leads to this interpretation; it is simply a correspondence which has grown out of use. As noted above, linguistic signs are generally symbols, that is, we understand them because of conventionalized meanings, not because of any 'natural' connection between the sign and its meaning. An **icon** is a sign which in some way resembles the object it refers to, such as a map. Although linguistic signs are not generally held to be iconic, particular varieties may be seen as having an iconic relationship with the people who use them (see chapter 3 for a discussion of this in the section on language ideologies). An **index** is something which 'points to' something – such as literal pointing with your finger to indicate what you are referring to, or the commonly used example of smoke indexing fire. Smoke does not resemble fire, but since the two often co-occur, we associate them with each other (as shown in the idiom 'when there's smoke there's fire'). The concept of indexicality is one which has drawn great interest in sociolinguistics. Put simply, certain varieties often come to index certain types of language users; thus indexicality is inherently a central aspect of the study of language in society. We will expand on the use of this concept in sociolinguistics in the next chapter.

Knowledge of Language

As mentioned in the last section, language is culturally transmitted, and while the ability to learn a language is innate, we are not born knowing a particular language, nor are we genetically pre-dispositioned to speak a certain variety, but we learn the language(s) we are exposed to. The system (or the grammar, to use a well-known technical term) is something that each language user 'knows,' but two very important issues for linguists are (1) just what that knowledge comprises and (2) how we may best characterize it.

In practice, linguists do not find it at all easy to write grammars because the knowledge that people have of the languages they speak is extremely hard to describe. Anyone who knows a language knows much more about that language than is contained in any grammar book that attempts to describe the language. One of the issues here is that grammar books tend to be written as **prescriptive** works; that is, they seek to outline the

standardized language and how it 'should' be spoken. What sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropologists do is provide **descriptive** grammars of languages, which describe, analyze, and explain how and why people actually speak their languages.

One example of this difference can be found in the *less/fewer* distinction. Prescriptively, *less* should be used with non-count nouns, such as water, rice, or money; *fewer* is used with count nouns (or noun phrases) such as drops of water, grains of rice, or pesos. So something may be worth *less money*, but it costs *fewer pesos*. Descriptively, however, this distinction does not hold; *less* is often used with count nouns. For example, it is common in the US to see signs in grocery stores indicating that certain cashier lines are for patrons with 'ten items or less,' although 'item' is clearly a count noun. Chances are you will also hear people saying things like *there were less students present today than yesterday*. While some speakers do still adhere to the *less/fewer* distinction, it is being lost in some varieties.

Linguistics are aware of prescriptive rules of language as dictated in reference grammars, and they are not irrelevant in sociolinguistics; as we will discuss below, language ideologies are also an important part of how language functions in society. However, in the study of language, linguists focus on descriptive grammar, that is, the rules inside the heads of language users which constitute their knowledge of how to use the language. This knowledge includes underlying rules and principles which allow us to produce new utterances, to know both what it is possible to say and what it is not possible to say. Most language users can't articulate these rules, but know how to apply them. It is this shared knowledge that becomes the abstraction of a language, which is often seen as something which exists independent of language users. How this knowledge is used by language users is the core of sociolinguistics. In the following sections, we will explore the ways in which sociolinguists and linguist anthropologists have conceptualized language and its users.

Competence and performance

Confronted with the task of trying to describe the grammar of a language like English, many linguists follow the approach associated with Chomsky, who distinguishes between what he has called **competence** and **performance**. He claims that it is the linguist's task to characterize what language users know about their language, that is, their competence, not what they do with their language, that is, their performance. The best-known characterization of this distinction comes from Chomsky himself (1965, 3–4) in words which have been extensively quoted:

> Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker–listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. This seems to me to have been the position of the founders of modern general linguistics, and no cogent reason for modifying it has been offered. To study actual linguistic performance, we must consider the interaction of a variety of factors, of which the underlying competence of the speaker–hearer is only one. In this respect, study of language is no different from empirical investigation of other complex phenomena.

However, it is exactly the interaction of social and linguistics factors that interests Labov, arguably the most influential figure in sociolinguistics in the last sixty or so years. He maintains (2006, 380) that 'the linguistic behavior of individuals cannot be understood without knowledge of the communities that they belong to.' This is the focus of sociolinguistics, and what makes it different from Chomskyan linguistics. We are primarily concerned with real language in use (what Chomsky calls performance), not the language of some ideal language user (i.e., an idealized competence). This distinction is reflected in methodological differences; syntacticians such as Chomsky will often use **grammatical judgments** to get at competence, while sociolinguists tend to use actual language production (see Part II for discussions of sociolinguistic methodologies).

Further, the knowledge which underlies language production, or performance, is more than just knowledge of grammar; language users must also know social norms for how to use a language – when it is appropriate to speak or to be silent, what topics are acceptable, what form of a question is appropriate to use with a friend versus your boss. There is thus another kind of competence, sometimes called **communicative competence**. This means knowing social rules for communication. These rules are often linked to language, but are also community-specific. Communicative competence can be independent of grammatical competence; that is, someone may understand the form of the questions 'What's up?' but

Exploration 1.1 Grammatical Judgments

Here are a number of statements that can be 'tagged' to make them into questions. Add a tag question to each with the tag you would be most likely to use and also add any other tags you might also use or think others might use. If you wouldn't use a tag question in this context, is there some other means for seeking confirmation, such as the use of *right?* or *okay?* which sounds more natural to you?

See (1) for an example of a potential answer. Indicate for each example which tag you believe to be the prescriptively 'correct' tag, or if you might associate certain tags only with certain types of speakers. Compare your results with those of others who do this task. If there are differences in your answers, how can you explain them? Do such differences challenge the idea of a shared communicative competence?

1) He's ready, *isn't he?*
   Other possible tags: 'innit,' 'ain't he.'
   Prescriptively 'correct' tag: 'isn't he.'
2) I might see you next week, . . . ?
3) No one goes there any more, . . . ?
4) Either John or Mary did it, . . . ?
5) Few people know that, . . . ?
6) You don't want to come with us, . . . ?
7) I have a penny in my purse, . . . ?
8) I'm going right now, . . . ?
9) The baby cried, . . . ?
10) The girl saw no one, . . . ?

not understand that this is a greeting, showing grammatical competence but a gap in communicative competence. The reverse may also be true; for instance a second language learner might use a polite form as dictated by the norms of a community, but not use prescriptively correct word order.

Variation

The competence–performance distinction just mentioned is one that holds intriguing possibilities for work in linguistics, but it is one that has also proved to be quite troublesome, because the performance of different language users, and the same person in different contexts, can vary quite a lot. For instance speakers in some areas of the Midwestern United States might utter sentences such as 'The car needs washed' while others would say 'The car needs to be washed' or 'The car needs washing.' Further, an individual speaker might use all three of these constructions at different times. (These different structures for expressing the same meaning are called **variants**; we will explain this term and how it is used in more detail below.) For sociolinguists, this **linguistic variation** is a central topic, and a core belief is that variation in language is socially meaningful. There is variation across language users, that is, reflections of different ways that people use a language in different regions or social groups, but also variation within the language use of a single person. No one uses language the same way all the time, and people constantly exploit variation within the languages they know for a wide variety of purposes. The consequence is a kind of paradox: while many linguists would like to view any language as a homogeneous entity, so that they can make the strongest possible theoretical generalizations, in actual fact that language will exhibit considerable internal variation. One claim we will be making throughout this book is that variation is an inherent characteristic of all languages at all times, and the patterns exhibited in this variation carry social meanings. (See the link to a website which provides an overview of the field, the sociolinguistics page for the PBS series *Do You Speak American*, in the materials associated with chapter 1 in the web guide to this textbook.) Thus, sociolinguistics is concerned with language not as an abstraction, but in the forms in which it is used.

Variation can occur on all linguistic levels, including lexical, phonetic, or morphosyntactic features. Lexical variation is exemplified by different words for the same thing – for instance, while Canadians go to the *washroom*, their US neighbors often say they are headed for the *bathroom* or the *restroom*, while elsewhere in the English-speaking world, people use the *toilet* or the *loo*. Phonetic variation has to do with different pronunciations, for example, the pronunciation of words such as *playing* with a final *-in'* (alveolar nasal) or *-ing* (velar nasal). *The car needs washed/washing* example above shows morphosyntactic variation; a further example of morphological variation is the use or non-use of verbal -s marking on third person singular verbs, e.g., *he plays* versus *he play*. These examples illustrate variation associated with different social meanings (a topic which will be taken up in the next chapter) – *washroom/bathroom/toilet/loo* and *needs washed/washing* are examples of regional variation, *-in'/-ing* variation has to do with the level of formality, and the use or non-use of verbal *-s* is part of standardized and non-standardized varieties of English. But of course, a single speaker might also use all of these variants, especially the phonetic and

morphological variants. Certainly every English speaker has said both *playin'* and *playing* in different contexts!

Further, while there is considerable variation in the speech of any one individual, there are also definite bounds to that variation: no individual is free to do just exactly as they please so far as language is concerned. You cannot pronounce words with random sounds, inflect or not inflect words such as nouns and verbs arbitrarily, or make drastic alterations in word order in sentences as the mood suits you. If you do any or all of these things, the results will be unacceptable, even gibberish. The variation you are permitted has limits (at least if you want to be understood!), and these limits can be described with considerable accuracy. For instance, although most of us would say 'the cow jumped over the fence,' we can say, 'It is the fence that the cow jumped over,' which is comprehensible if somewhat stilted; but most people would agree that 'the fence jumped the cow over' does not follow English word order rules and is largely incomprehensible. Most language users know what utterances are part of the language – or at least their variety of the language – although they do not usually know the linguistic rules; such explanations are the job of linguists!

Our task will be one of trying to specify the norms of linguistic behavior that exist in particular groups and then trying to account for individual behavior in terms of these norms. This task is particularly interesting because most people have no conscious awareness of how their linguistic behavior is conditioned by social norms. We will also see how the variation we find in language allows changes to occur over time and often points to the direction of change. A living language not only varies, it changes.

Exploration 1.2 Variation in Greetings

How do you greet your friends, your family, your colleagues, your professors and your acquaintances? Are there different verbal exchanges as well as different embodied practices (e.g., kissing, hugging, shaking hands, doing a fist bump)? Does the situation matter – that is, do you greet your family differently if you have not seen them for a long time, or friends in different ways depending on whether you run into each other by accident on campus or if you are meeting for dinner? Are there ways of greeting, either that you use or that you do not use, that index membership in particular groups? Are there ways of greeting that you find inappropriate – in general, or for particular addressees or in particular situations? Compare your own repertoires and practices with those of the other students in your class.

Variants and the linguistic variable

We discussed variants above, saying that variants are different forms which largely mean the same thing; we could also say that they are different forms which can be used in the same environment. A **linguistic variable** is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants. For instance, the variation between *washroom*, *bathroom*, *toilet* and *loo* gives us four lexical variants. Another example which has been studied extensively is the vowel system of US English (e.g., Gordon 2002), including, for example, the production of words such as

cot and *caught* – some people pronounce these two words the same, while others use distinct vowels.

These examples show that there are at least two basically different kinds of variation. One is of the kind with distinct variants, such as different lexical items. The other kind of variation is a matter of degree; pronunciation of vowels is not binary but includes production on a continuum within the vowel space.

An important principle in the analysis of variants is the **principle of accountability**, which holds that if it is possible to define a variable as a closed set of variants, all of the variants (including non-occurrence if relevant) must be counted. That is, the analysis is done by identifying all of the environments where the variable could occur, and then seeing which variants are used. Take, for example, the study of third person singular -s marking. Some speakers of English have variation between this marker and a **null variant** (e.g., *she goes* and *she go* may both be used). To study this, you would look at all contexts with a third person singular subject. While this principle applies to grammatical variables in general, for pragmatically motivated variables such as discourse markers (e.g., *you know*, *well*) the principle of accountability cannot be applied, as there are no mandatory environments for such particles. As we will see in Part II, the features of language studied is an important consideration when choosing a research methodology.

Language Users and Their Groups: Identities

In order to talk about how people use language, we must talk about both individuals and groups, together with the relationships between people within and across groups. One of the current ways of thinking about this focuses on language user identities. The term **identity** has been used in a variety of ways in both the social sciences and lay speech. In current social theory, identities are not seen as fixed attributes of people or groups but are dynamically constructed aspects which emerge through social behavior, including but not limited to language use. Although we do look at identities of individuals, what we are primarily concerned with is *social* identity: 'Identity is defined as the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories' (Kroskrity 2000, 111).

In such a view, identities are not preconceived categorical affiliations such as 'male' or 'female' but nuanced ways of being that we construct; while we may indeed reference such categories, our identities are not simply a matter of listing demographic identifiers (e.g., 'single white female, 45, architect, nature lover'). So while a speaker may introduce a comment by saying *As a mother . . .*, thus explicitly referencing this aspect of her identity, what will emerge is a more nuanced picture of what type of mother she is – for example, protective, feminist, one who encourages independence, one who is concerned with the upward mobility of her children. Named social categories such as 'single mother' or 'helicopter parent' are not our identities but concepts we use to construct our identities.

Further, our identities are fluid and we do not have a single identity but multiple levels of identity, and shifting and sometimes even conflicting identities which emerge in different contexts. To continue the example above, the speaker may reference her identity as a mother but then also focus on how she identifies strongly with her profession and struggles to balance this with the demands of parenthood; this may be intertwined with

her gender identity and her social class identity. In another conversation, this same person might use particular lexical items to focus on her regional affiliation to construct a different aspect of her identity, and to align herself with an interlocutor who shares this background. Thus, the identities we construct are constantly shifting, and also at different levels, from macro-categories such as 'woman' or 'southerner' to interactional positionings such as alignment.

Likewise, group identity categories are constantly being negotiated. What it means to be the member of a particular social category (e.g., 'gay,' 'educated,' 'Latinx') may vary over time, space, and situation, and how particular language users identify with or are assigned to these categories may also vary. We will revisit this concept of multiple identities throughout this text because it is highly relevant to our study of language in society.

So far, we have said that the term 'society' refers to a group of people unified through some purpose; other concepts such as 'speech community,' 'social network,' and 'community of practice' will be found in the pages that follow (see especially sections devoted to these concepts in chapter 3). We will see how these are useful if we wish to refer to groups of various kinds, since it is among groups that individuals form relationships or reject connections with others. The groups can be long-lasting or temporary, large or small, close-knit or casual, and formally or informally organized. This is, therefore, another level of complexity we must acknowledge in the pages that follow as we refer to 'middle class,' 'women,' 'speakers of Haitian Creole,' 'teenagers,' and so on. We must remember that these categorizations also have a process side to them: all must be enacted, performed, or reproduced in order to exist. Socioeconomic class, gender, language background, and age are only important aspects of our identities and groups if we choose to organize our lives in that way; in some contexts they may not be salient social categories and we may instead see ourselves as members of groups based on racial identification, sexual orientation, national belonging, or membership of a particular formal social group (e.g., a choir, a professional association, or a fox hunting club).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) provide a framework for the analysis of the linguistic construction of social identities. Central to this framework are the ideas of identity as emergent in interaction and encompassing different aspects of identity, simultaneously but also varying across interactions. In chapters 7 and 8, in our discussions of interactional sociolinguistics and multilingual discourse, we will return to this framework to discuss the linguistic means through which identities are constructed. In this introduction to the study of identities, the main point we wish to stress is the concept of identities as relational, which is inherent in group membership. Bucholtz and Hall note that the construction of identities is not done in a vacuum, but has to do with the relationships between self and other. Similarity and difference are thus central to the process of identity construction. For example, two people may construct themselves as similar in their identities as cycling enthusiasts by using jargon specific to that group (see Exploration 1.3 below). However, another participant in the conversation may construct difference in identity by avoiding such jargon or using words such as 'thingamajig' or 'whatchamacallit' to refer to bike parts. Another aspect of identity which has been the focus of sociolinguistic studies is authenticity (e.g., Jones 2011; Mason Carris 2011; Shenk 2008; Westinen 2014). These studies show that language is used to construct authenticity not just in linguistic groups but also in ethnic categories, sexuality groups, or in groups related to expertise and activity, such as hip-hop artists. Thus, the

Exploration 1.3 Identities

Members of cycling communities have a lexicon to refer to their social activities which is not shared with outsiders. Below is a list of terminology. What observations about group norms can you make based on these terms? What aspects of identity are constructed through the use of these terms, beyond simply being an avid cyclist?

Taking a pull: riding in the front of the line of cyclists and breaking the wind resistance
Wheel sucker: someone who drafts and never takes a pull
To hammer: pedaling hard
Hammerhead (pejorative): someone who likes to hammer a lot
Crit (abbreviation for criterium): a competition on a short distance course where cyclists do laps
Prime: prizes in a crit
Sandbagging: racing a category beneath one's abilities to get a prime
Granny gear: lowest gear
Off the back: getting left behind by the group
On your wheel: riding close to the cyclist in front of you (often used to describe someone's strategy in competition)
Clydesdale: a male cyclist over 220 pounds or a female cyclist over 160 pounds

Do you have any social groups which have specific lexicons and, if so, what are the consequences of using or not using these terms in ingroup or outgroup interactions?

construction of the social identities is inherently also about the construction of social groups in terms of boundaries and membership.

Language and Culture

There is a tradition of study in linguistic anthropology which addresses the relationship between language and **culture**. By 'culture' in this context we do not mean 'high culture,' that is, the appreciation of music, literature, the arts, and so on. Rather, we adopt Goodenough's well-known definition (1957, 167): 'a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.' Such knowledge is socially acquired: the necessary behaviors are learned and do not come from any kind of genetic endowment. Culture, therefore, is the 'knowhow' that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living; for language use, this is similar to the concept of communicative competence we introduced above. The key issue addressed here is the nature of the relationship between a specific language and the culture in which it is used. Of course, we must recognize that cultural norms are not static; they change over time and what is 'normal' is constantly negotiated by members of a society. Thus they do not just vary over space, but also over time.