

REVIEWS

MARTIN J. BALL (ed.), *Clinical Sociolinguistics* (Blackwell Language in Society Series 36). Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006. Pp. xx + 335. ISBN: 978-1-4051-1249-9.
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Language use is highly variable, both within and across languages, dialects, and speakers. This variation occurs at all levels of linguistic structure, from the formants of the vowel /æ/, to the form of the copula, to the mechanics for expressing coherence in spoken narratives. Research on language in the classic generative tradition treated this variation as ‘noise’, not directly relevant to the cognitive representation of language. A growing body of research suggests otherwise. It is clear that individuals are able to remember fine details about tokens of speech that they have heard previously, as summarized by the chapters in Johnson & Mullenix (1997). These may be used to form stereotypes about the phonetic differences among groups of talkers. Even in very low-level phoneme identification and word recognition tasks, social stereotypes appear to guide listeners’ perceptual responses (Strand 2000, Munson, Jefferson & McDonald 2006). Moreover, variation appears to be highly relevant in acquiring language. Rather than ignoring variability, children appear to use it as a key piece of evidence for discovering the underlying categorical structure of language (e.g. Maye, Werker & Gerken 2002). Linguistic variation is used in social contexts, and plays a role in establishing, strengthening, and conveying social relationships in large, heterogeneous groups, such as groups of adolescents (e.g. Mendoza-Denton forthcoming).

Variation is a central question in research on spoken language in many subdisciplines, including laboratory phonology and experimental phonetics. Two fields that are centrally involved in the study of variation in language are sociolinguistics and speech-language pathology (henceforth SLP). Sociolinguists have meticulously documented variation in language as it relates to numerous social variables, including social class, regional variety (particularly for the varieties of English spoken in the US, Canada, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England), gender, and other variables, as well as interactions among these categories. Sociolinguistics also examines the influence of power, ethnicity, and patterns of migration on language use. Moreover, sociolinguistics has examined how social institutions, such as legislative and educational systems, seek to guide the way that language is used or taught.

In contrast, SLP studies two broad topics related to variability. First, it has examined in detail how to determine when an individual’s language is so far from that of the rest of the language community that the person warrants being identified as having an impairment in communication. To this end, SLP has in common with sociolinguistics the goal of developing meaningful, quantitative measures of linguistic variability. Second, research in SLP has sought to identify the cognitive, perceptual, motor, neurologic, and structural factors that give rise to variation in communication. In particular, it seeks to uncover the factors that lead a person to be identified as having a communicative disorder.

The focus on variation shared by both disciplines suggests that intersections between them would be natural. An outsider to both disciplines would likely presume that each uses a common set of measurement tools and analysis schema to quantify variation. Moreover, searches for sources of variation in the two fields are highly complementary. Finally, both SLP and sociolinguistics are strongly concerned with the ways that language variation is dealt with institutionally. Linguistics has a strong tradition of resistance to legislative attempts to establish

officially supported languages at the expense of other, typically minority, languages. SLP has a fundamental concern with supporting legislation to develop and maintain educational and healthcare services to facilitate communication in individuals identified as having language disorders.

Unfortunately, intersections between sociolinguistics and SLP have been few and far between. The major professional organization for speech-language pathology in the United States, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, has an active, 20-year-plus history of arguing that normal diversity in language should not be treated as if it were a disorder (ASHA 1983, 2003). However, there is a perception that some communities of practicing SLPs have nonetheless treated all deviation from 'standard' American English as pathological. The reasons for doing this have not been formally documented, and may be due to a misunderstanding of the nature of linguistic variation or to externally imposed educational standards and policies that penalize children, either tacitly or overtly, for not speaking and writing a standard variant. Consequently, individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have been over-represented on SLP caseloads, and intervention approaches have historically focused on the achievement of a prescriptive standard, rather than the facilitation of linguistic competence in the varieties of language spoken in the person's environment.

These traditions are changing. SLP has seen a discipline-wide revolution in the way that variation is treated by clinical professionals. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has taken an active role in mandating training in the causes and consequences of variation in language. A number of research groups have begun to investigate the cognitive-linguistic bases of language disorders (e.g. Windsor & Kohnert 2004) and on the development culturally sensitive and culturally blind assessment materials (e.g. Gutierrez-Clellen 2000). Sociolinguistics has seen a similar revolution in the ways in which variation is related to broader language abilities (e.g. Hay, Warren & Drager 2006). Indeed, the causes and consequences of socially motivated variation has become one of the most widely investigated topics in psycholinguistics.

The book *Clinical Sociolinguistics* is published at this critical time. This book is a collection of 21 chapters, divided into two parts. The first reviews key areas in sociolinguistics, and the second discusses their application and integration into research and practice in SLP.

The first half of the book consists of chapters summarizing a number of classic content areas within sociolinguistics, including communities of practice (Britain & Matsumoto), regional and social variation (MacLagan), language and gender (Guendouzi), bilingualism and multilingualism (Edwards), code-switching (Müller & Ball), language and power (Damico, Simmons-Mackie & Hawley), and language and culture (Taylor & Mendoza-Denton). Some of the authors speculate on the potential clinical applications, or clinical consequences, of their research. A number of chapters in this section are of particular note. Wolfram provides an excellent overview of African American English (AAE). This chapter contains information that is critical to the assessment of AAE in clinical settings. Preston & Robinson provide an equally impressive review of listeners' 'folk' attitudes toward dialectal variation. Again, this chapter has immediate, transparent implications for clinical practice with respect to individuals who speak a regional dialect different from that of the local community. Watt & Smith's article on language change also has clear clinical implications, in that it reminds practitioners that forms may be used widely by one age group but not by another. Researchers and practitioners in SLP will likely find that Tonkin's chapter on language planning provides an interesting contrast to the types of language planning that occurs implicitly when policy makers develop practices for the identification and treatment of speech and language disorders.

One criticism of this section is that the articles vary somewhat in their focus and level of detail. This is particularly evident when they are contrasted with chapters on similar topics in two other, edited volumes, the *Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Coulmas 1996), and the *Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (Chambers, Trudgill & Schilling-Estes 2001). Nonetheless, each one serves as a competent introduction to its topic, and all of them provide additional reading for interested readers.

The second part of the book contains ten articles on a variety of topics that could be described as 'applied' or 'clinical' topics. It includes articles on normal processes, such as the chapter on the acquisition of stable sociolinguistic variation by Roberts, and the chapter on bilingual and multilingual language acquisition by Hua & Wei, and chapters on pure clinical topics, such as Isaac's chapter on the use of interpreters in clinical settings. Other topics in this section include bilingual aphasia (Gitterman), literacy in multilingual populations (Damico, Nelson and Bryan), and sociolinguistic aspects of sign languages (Lucas, Bayley and Kelly).

Oetting's article on the assessment of language impairment stands out as particularly impressive. She reviews conceptual frameworks and specific tasks used to identify language impairments in children speaking non-mainstream dialects. This chapter is complemented by Patterson & Rodriguez's chapter on the design of language assessments for children who speak multiple languages and Wei et al.'s chapter on differentiating language disorder from typical second language acquisition. Together, these chapters illustrate the progress that has been made in the field of SLP to better delineate linguistic diversity as opposed to language impairment. Clopper & Pisoni's chapter is an impressive literature on normal listeners' perception of social categories in the speech signal. It also reviews the small literature on the influence of talker variability on word recognition by people with cochlear implants.

As the above summaries suggest, the high quality of the chapters makes this book worth owning. In particular, speech-language pathologists who are unfamiliar with sociolinguistic facts and theories will find the essays in the first part of this book very useful. They cover an impressive range of topics in sociolinguistics that should be of interest to practicing clinicians and clinical researchers. The comprehensive reference list is particularly useful in this regard. Sociolinguists will likely find the chapters on disorders interesting. One general weakness of this section is that it presumes that readers know a fair amount about the clinical presentation of communicative disorders in culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This may not be the case for some readers. One suggestion for future volumes like this might be to present clinical case studies of individuals with communication disorders which draw on topics from both sociolinguistics and SLP.

Two criticisms apply to both parts of the book. The first is that the chapters mostly deal with morphosyntactic and lexical phenomena rather than sound structure, with the exception of Clopper & Pisoni's article. As documented by Foulkes & Docherty (2006), socially correlated variation in sound structure is pervasive. Moreover, individuals with disorders in speech-sound perception and production make up a large proportion of the caseloads of clinical SLPs. This volume would have benefited from a more in-depth treatment of the potential interactions between sociolinguistics and SLP with respect to the sound structure of language.

A broader critique concerns the general endeavor of melding sociolinguistics and speech-language pathology. The general motivation for this collection of chapters appears to be pragmatic, and oriented towards using sociolinguistic theory and findings to inform and enrich clinical practice in SLP. A secondary purpose appears to be outlining the types of language disorders that SLPs encounter for the non-clinical linguist and highlighting the common goal of uncovering the origins and consequences of variation in communication, presumably with an eye to finding broader models of variation. Laboratory phonology has already provided experimental paradigms and analysis schemes to feed the development of models of the cognitive architecture that supports variation (Pierrehumbert & Clopper 2006), whether it is due to a communication disorder, a social motivation, or something else.

In short, this book has much to offer to readers from a variety of disciplines. First and foremost, the articles in each section provide introductions to topics for scholars whose work is primarily in the other area. Sociolinguists will likely find valuable parallels between their work on variation and descriptions of clinical populations and clinical procedures. Conversely, the sociolinguistics chapters provide researchers in SLP a broader context on the work that they do. Most importantly, perhaps, this work provides a first step toward a more systematic intersection between the fields that study language variation. It will hopefully inspire future

collaboration between these two disciplines, with a hope of eventually enriching our collective understanding of the origins and ramification of linguistic variation.

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This book is designed as a textbook for students of communication disorders at all levels and as a sourcebook for clinicians working with communication disorders. It includes three major sections. The first gives an introduction to phonetics in general, the second concentrates on English phonetics and the third deals specifically with the phonetics of communication disorders. There are two appendices: one provides phonetic and voice symbols, and the other deals with phonology. In addition, two audio CDs are included, which provide transcription exercises.