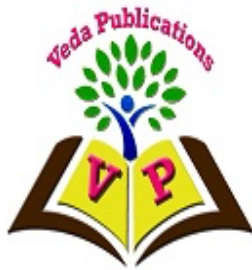




REVIEW ARTICLE

**BOOK REVIEW OF CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH METHODS**

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The second edition of **Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods** offers a comprehensive guide to sociolinguistic research grounded in critical theory. It discusses how language functions as a tool of power and control in various social contexts and provides both theoretical frameworks and practical methods for analyzing language in relation to social inequality, identity, and ideology. Below is a detailed breakdown of each major chapters of the book, along with examples that illustrate the key points.

General Information on the Book:

- **Title:** *Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods: Studying Language Issues That Matter*
- **Authors:** Monica Heller, Sari Pietikäinen, and Joan Pujolar
- **Edition:** Second Edition
- **Publisher:** Routledge
- **Publication Year:** 2024
- **Total Number of Pages:** 288
- **ISBN:** 978-1138886324 (Hardcover), 978-1138886331 (Paperback)
- **Main Focus:** The book offers a detailed guide to conducting sociolinguistic research from a critical perspective, emphasizing the study of language in relation to power, inequality, and social justice.
- **Audience:** This book is aimed at sociolinguistics researchers, graduate students, and those interested in studying language issues within a critical framework.
- **Key Concepts:** Critical discourse analysis, ethnographic methods, language ideologies, multilingualism, transnationalism, language and social justice, digital sociolinguistics.
- **Format:** The book is divided into an introduction, six core chapters, and a conclusion, offering both theoretical foundations and practical research methodologies.

**1. INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE ISSUES THAT MATTER**

The opening chapter establishes the core mission of the book: in order to understand language in ways that can respond to existing social crises. More importantly, the authors claim that language cannot be understood in isolation from the social setting of the speech community. Inverted commas Essentially, sociolinguistic Research needs to address questions of power, of uneven distribution of resources, and social justice. The authors state that language issues are 'issues that matter' not as abstract problems but because they affect the lives and the prospects of the targeted populations. They present instances where language policies in education, for instance in governments and other organizations reflect social inequalities of certain languages over others. Example: Both authors take language policy in Canada as an illustrative case, they show how policies dealing with English and French perpetuate Indigenous languages' minority status and inequitable treatment.

2. CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The reader is familiarized with major theories in critical sociolinguistics. This we by means of outlining how Language Practices index Social Structures using the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault. Selected notions including language ideologies, symbolic power, and habitus are mentioned to prove the point of how and why language turns into the field of power and identity construction. The authors describe how sociolinguistic concerns question the structural paradigms of language, which are assumed in linguistics. On the contrary, critical sociolinguists

are interest in learning how language is employed in real social activities, with particular consideration given to the manner, in which language practices are regulated by social relations of dominance, organizations and power. Example: Instead, the authors describe the manner in which prescriptive beliefs about language influence workings of language within organizations. For example, in global organizations English is often privileged as the language of power, business success and global economic integration while other languages are considered by extension to be devalued.

3. ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

In this chapter , the author defines the uses of ethnographic methods in sociolinguistic research. Ethnography is a method of researching and studying language use in contexts of daily and regular social practice. In their view, ethnographic research is conducted by participant observation, interviews, and field notes where the main idea is for researchers to focus on the social, political, and cultural uses of language. As a form of research methodology, ethnography is considered by some scholars as the means of identifying the cultural connotations of language in a communicative practice. Due to this the authors are keen to note that ethnographic research should always be reflexive; this implies that the ethnographer has to be aware of place of the self when conducting a study. Example: In one of the examples in this section, an ethnographic method of studying language use in a multilingual market in a European town was described. The researchers also noted how the market vendors switched their language of communication according to their customers'

country of origin affect large structures in the city in an economic and social perspective.

4. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The present chapter aims at giving a detailed explanation of discourse analysis as a core approach in critical sociolinguistics. According to the authors, discourse analysis implies the study of language as social practice. They concentrate on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which analyses how language makes particular versions of reality and sustains asymmetrical relations of power. This chapter takes the reader through the process of choosing the texts for analysis (these could be articles, speeches, or advertisements as far as the author is interested in exploring how linguistic choices lead to social implications). The authors strongly underlined that discourse is not just a given instrument, which is merely used to support ideologies, and maintain social relations. Example: While discussing the political discourse the authors effectively illustrate how through a particular choice of words politicians skillfully prepare the population for xenophobia while their actions are cloaked in a rhetoric of the necessity to protect the citizens from the aliens.

5. MULTILINGUALISM AND TRANSNATIONALISM

In this chapter the authors describe the nature of changes and shifts in linguistic landscapes due to globalization and migration processes. To explain the linguistic and cultural complexity emerging in urban environments, the concept of superdiversity is proposed. They also explain how the selling of languages in the global economy develop new form of language inequalities. The chapter also avoids

portraying multilingualism as the simple coexistence of different language but a social process where speakers interact with different normative 'language and cultures'. Predictably, the authors pay heed to the fact that in the global marketplace language is commodified and some languages are evidently valued more than others. Example: This chapter looks at language use in a transnational business organization with emphasis on the fact that while working, people use English, Spanish and dialects in the countries of operation interchangeably. English is widely associated with work and contacts abroad, whereas local languages are employed to unite the colleagues.

6. LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

This chapter is based on investigation of the ways in which language policies in education support social injustice. The authors also explain that schools are worked to reproduce the linguistic relations in that sense that dominant language are accorded prominence and superiority to the minority ones. The chapter provides a view on monolingual education policies and a presentation of the need for language policies and practices to embrace diversity. The authors provide information on principles such as bilingual education, language revitalization, and the responsibilities that school satisfies in relation to justice. Kaplan & Bal, 1996 state education systems can reproduce or transform social inequity through their language policies. Example: A case in South Africa shows that at the compulsory schooling level, language policies maintain colonial trends favoring English over indigenous languages and in doing so

perpetuated the existing educational inequality within the schooling system.

7. DIGITAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS: LANGUAGE IN THE NEW MEDIA

The chapter explores possibilities in sociolinguistic analysis offered by the manifestation of digital communication. The authors examine how language is employed in communication media, focusing on SNS, blogs, and other online communities; the authors stress that such online communities themselves are arenas of struggle. They describe how digital communication is a site of social justice but also a site that encourages oppression but also speaks back against it. The chapter in question offers the concrete guidance on how to organize data collection and analysis of various forms of digital data including social media and other forms of online communication, while at the same time underlining the ethical dilemma present in the process of researching online communities. Example: A depiction of the use of the social media platform, Twitter and the hashtag and activist feature of political protest illustrate both the maneuvers of agency for marginalized groups, and how the state might be using technology to actively police those groups.

8. CONCLUSION: REFLEXIVITY AND ETHICS IN CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The final chapter of the book concerns reflexivity and ethics in sociolinguistic research. It is very important for authors underlining the importance of positionality and ethical considerations for researchers. Reflexivity is important for critical sociolinguistics because it demands that scholars

periodically examine how the role of their own social positions, of the biases they bring to the work and relations of power that inform research. The authors for a purpose and direction of scholarship that is committed to the improvement of social conditions for social justice. They affirm that sociolinguistic investigation is not merely an identified intellectual field of study but a mode of politics that can subvert existing policing structures of power. Example: When addressing ethical issues of working with refugee populations the authors pay much attention to the issues of informed consent, status of participants, and to the premise that research should be inclusive of positive benefits for the researched population.

MERITS OF THE BOOK:

Critical Focus on Real-World Issues: Arguably, one of the major assets of the work in concern is the commitment to social reality as a focal point of analysis and as the medium through which power and oppression are figured in relation to language. The authors consistently re-associate linguistic scholarship to general social and political realities making the book concise for any scholar with concern in social justice.

Comprehensive Theoretical Grounding: It involves detailed theoretical framework and theories for the conceptualization of the various realities of the society, borrowed from such scholars as Bourdieu and Foucault. This makes it very useful for researchers who desire to explore the determinants of language practices from the social relations and identities points of view.

Practical Methodological Guidance: Besides the theoretical development of the issues, the book

presents straightforward and functional guidelines on how to engage in sociolinguistic research: ethnography, discourse analysis, and digital sociolinguistics. The two sections dedicated to methodological objectives are descriptions and offer quite specific and practical advice to be executable by the researchers.

Timely Focus on Digital Sociolinguistics: Another strong point is the emergence of the chapter on digital sociolinguistics; the trend in people's interaction is shifting to the online environment. Due to this, the book is of interest to scholars interested in technology mediated language practices and online communities.

DEMERITS OF THE BOOK:

Dense Theoretical Language: This book heavily uses some critical theory terms and arguments that could reach out to ordinary non-academic audience in the society. At times these sections become quite technical and the theoretical component can be difficult for a reader unfamiliar with the concepts of the book.

Limited Case Studies and Examples: While the book uses case studies to support the material, even more complex cases would add to the book's usability. The book is somewhat overly theoretical in emphasizing the critical sociolinguistic methods as a true way of taking language and linguistics forward, and concrete documentation of how such approaches have been applied in the past would be useful.

Overemphasis on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): However, as far as methodology is concerned, more attention should have been paid to other kinds of

discursive analysis apart from CDA which would make the readers appraised with more variety of approaches. Altogether, Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods can be named an indispensable reference for researchers who find themselves passionate about conducting the studies of the social justice nature with the language as the working tool. These are both theoretical frameworks and actual methodological guidance, as well as critical insights into the ways language constitutes social injustice. Despite these limitations, the book is useful contribution to the field of sociolinguistics as it is entirely devoted to the description of real language issues.

WHY I CHOOSE THIS BOOK

Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods : Studying Language Issues That Matter (Second Edition) is a valuable choice because it addresses language issues that are highly relevant in today's world, particularly in terms of power, inequality, and social justice. The book offers a critical approach to sociolinguistics, drawing on influential theories from scholars like Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. This perspective allows researchers to move beyond traditional linguistic analysis, focusing on how language reflects and perpetuates social hierarchies.

In addition to its theoretical depth, the book provides practical guidance for conducting research, making it useful for both theoretical understanding and hands-on application. It covers essential methods such as ethnography, discourse analysis, and digital sociolinguistics, helping researchers apply critical sociolinguistic concepts in real-world studies. The updated content on digital sociolinguistics is



particularly timely, reflecting the importance of language in online spaces and social media, which is a growing area of interest.

The book also emphasizes reflexivity and ethics, encouraging researchers to be aware of their positionality and the power dynamics in their research. This focus on ethical responsibility makes it a socially engaged and responsible resource for those studying language in diverse contexts, including multilingualism, education, and transnationalism. Overall, this book is a strong choice because it provides a comprehensive framework that combines theoretical depth with practical methodologies, making it an essential resource for conducting critical and socially relevant research in sociolinguistics.
