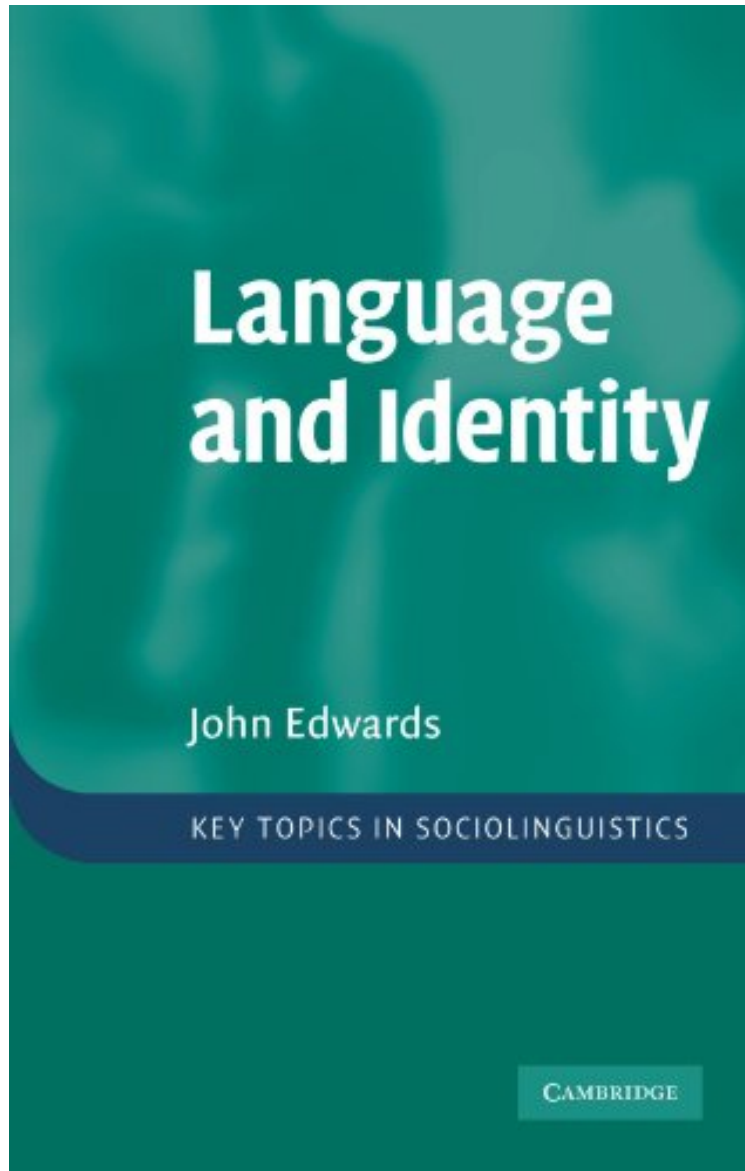


[Free pdf] Language and Identity: An introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics)

Language and Identity: An introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics)

John Edwards

*audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#830638 in Books Cambridge University Press 2009-10-30 2009-09-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1
8.50 x .67 x 5.43l, 1.00 #File Name: 052169602X324 pages | File size: 57.Mb

John Edwards : Language and Identity: An introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Language and Identity: An introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Sociolinguistically richBy C. R. KellyMore than a linguists look at

language history and language debates, John Edwards' *Language and Identity* delves into key ideas pertinent to sociological theories of group identity and the self. His initial conclusion that most discussions of the social life of language are not actually about language at all, they are about identity stands well as the guiding thesis of the entire work. He designates language to be the audible home and quintessential symbol of group (and, by extension, individual) identity. Because of this inextricable link between language and identity, he asserts that "[any] investigation of language that considers only language will be deficient" (This idea fits comfortably with Affect Control Theory's assumption of language as the natural affect repository of a culture's norms and values). This book is a wealth of new twists on old favored topics: he gives linguistic analysis to traditionally sociological topics such as gender, ethnic, and religious identity, and he gives sociological insights into traditionally linguistic topics, such as the criteria for determining what is and is not a dialect. The author makes insightful note of the unusual power of language, calling it one of the most compelling of the psychosocial anchors that humans, as symbol- and meaning-creating social beings, naturally require. Language can act as a marker of group identity, and as is fully explained with examples and references in the book, humans are astonishingly ready to baselessly form and to fiercely defend their groups. He goes far enough as to comment that cultures within group boundaries are more changeable and less important than the existence and maintenance of the boundaries themselves. Group defense takes the form of valuing in-group members and devaluing out-group members. This tendency leads to the linguistic evolution of terms for group members and non-group members such that names for ones own become some translation of the real people or the humans, making non-group members essentially "less than human" or "not real". Edwards offers a thorough analytical critique on the implications of this tendency to cause identity disruption in those groups when they are conquered or subsumed by now-dominant others whom they had previously categorized as fundamentally inferior to themselves. Validation of self and group identity at the expense and dehumanization of those outside the group is a powerful self-protection measure; when this viewpoint is forcibly invalidated, the people themselves feel extreme anxiety and loss of identity. Much of the analysis in this work is nuanced and intelligent, very rarely painting any group or situation with too broad a brush. For instance, in discussion of voice appropriation, Edwards rightly points out that though insiders may worry that outsiders will denigrate their culture, there is another worry just as real that outsiders may fall prey to the "noble savage fallacy", viewing all actions of the "more primitive" society in question as somehow being harmonious with their environments, when in reality the lack of environmental damage may be by merit of smaller numbers and less effective means. This careful attention is especially apparent in the section on gender difference and the difference of gender. Dialects and multilingualism of various types are a key focus in this book. Edwards quite sternly (and accurately) insists that all dialects are fully-formed linguistic vehicles, with rules as rigid as those of standard dialects, and that there is no linguistic basis for claims of language superiority--just as there is proof-positive of no truth to claims that one language is intrinsically more sonorous or intelligent-sounding than any other. The book's case-in-point example of dialect rigidity compares copula verb deletion in Black English Vernacular to copula verb contraction in standard English, and offers a political history of the dialect in America. This discussion acts as a segue to defining a dialect, which has strictly social as well as linguistic components. The theme of language-as-identity stays salient throughout the work; for identity scholars looking for a book from outside the discipline that offers new and thoughtful discourse on the topic, this is a considerable strength. Many of the dialect discussions focus nearly entirely on the identity aspects of language, touching on topics like covert prestige, minority group reaction to stigma, gender norms in speech and action, and status not only in the action of language but in the discussion of its differences. The book is broken up into well-developed chapters, each of which can be read independently of the rest of the volume. This approach allows for an overview, analysis, and discussion of several micro-topics in sociolinguistics which, while covering the necessary main points, leave a great deal of room for discussion and further reading. This makes this book a potentially valuable teaching resource. Edwards delivers his opinions on language planning by laypeople (no), on discussions of voice appropriation (both in- and out-group members must speak), on postmodernism, prescriptivism, language ecology (all unfavorable), dialect bigotry (linguistically irrational), talk of language superiority throughout the ages (entirely understandable but completely without basis), and many other topics unambiguously and without apology. Far from being off-putting, this approach adds a refreshingly forthright tone to the work. The author's statements are evaluative and calm, giving voice to most of the correlating or opposing arguments and viewpoints on each topic, but he does not refrain from summarily assessing those viewpoints as inferior before moving on to the next talking point. In only a few areas did I find the book to be lacking or in error; two of these few are nationalism and loss of worldviews. The disinclination for and strong argument against nationalism may be more emotional than intellectual; the argument hinges on the idea that racism underlies nationalistic fervor because it is the content of ethnic criteria rather than the feeling of "groupness" that is mutable, ergo nationalism is "organized ethnocultural solidarity". While the thought has a solid basis in natural group dynamics, he points out earlier in the book that there exist "imagined" ethnonational communities which came about in response to a loss of institutional meaning interpreters and the need for the familial nature of loyalty. In light of this earlier admission, the fearful arguments about the nasty undertones of all nationalistic feeling seems to be a bit of a slippery slope argument. Secondly, the short mention of disappearing worldviews merits criticism not just for tone and analysis but for brevity.

of an already underdeveloped argument. The idea of lost worldviews when languages are lost the author labels erroneous so long as, he argues, the language still exists in written form. This attitude is far too dismissive, particularly in light of the justified discussion surrounding the benefit of enhanced repertoire and perspective through bilingualism. Spoken language deviates strongly from its written form, and the Whorfian flavor of that language cannot be preserved without speakers. However, these are small and minor flaws, and Edwards does highlight the idea that our (humans) multiplicity of identity (or in more familiar terms, salience hierarchy of identities) is matched by a range of speech styles and behaviors such that we are all "at least bi- or multi-stylistic and probably bi- or multi-dialectal"...a slightly-to-vastly different manner of speech and thinking for each slightly-to-vastly different identity. The merits of the book outweigh the potential caveats. One must embrace the tone, perspective, and intent of the book. Language and identity are natural topics for synthesis, and this book does an excellent job of melding the two into the same discussion. It is a worthwhile book for any scholar or instructor interested in languages intersection with and fundamental place in discussions of politics, nationalism, gender identity, marginalization, religion, group identity, symbolic meaning creation and maintenance, cultural perspectives, status and power, and/or ethnographic studies. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer Really good book for beginners in linguistics or communications.

The language we use forms an important part of our sense of who we are - of our identity. This book outlines the relationship between our identity as members of groups - ethnic, national, religious and gender - and the language varieties important to each group. What is a language? What is a dialect? Are there such things as language 'rights'? Must every national group have its own unique language? How have languages, large and small, been used to spread religious ideas? Why have particular religious and linguistic 'markers' been so central, singly or in combination, to the ways in which we think about ourselves and others? Using a rich variety of examples, the book highlights the linkages among languages, dialects and identities, with special attention given to religious, ethnic and national allegiances.

'Written in a truly interdisciplinary spirit, this rich, lucid and irreverent book on language, culture and politics is bound to win admirers across the humanities and social sciences. Very readable, highly enjoyable, deeply enlightening.' Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo 'This wide-reaching book is of admirable clarity in presenting diverse, complex issues ... Edward's opinions ... are clearly explained and reasoned in relation to the scholarly literature and would certainly serve to generate lively debate in a classroom setting and interest scholars of nationalism seeking an introduction to related aspects of sociolinguistics.' Nations and Nationalism 'This volume gives a full overview of key issues, trends and research relating to its title Language and Identity in the following areas: personal identity (both individual and group), language and dialect, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and language planning and ecology. As such, it provides a useful textbook for students, with study questions and further reading at the end of each chapter.' Carol Sanders, Professor Emeritus, University of Surrey About the Author John Edwards is Professor of Psychology at St Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia. His previous publications include Language in Canada (Cambridge, 1998).