

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Why do men and women, adolescents and adults, taxi drivers and solicitors speak differently? Why are some accents highly respected and others despised? How do we choose our words and our languages? This accessible new textbook provides a clear introduction to sociolinguistics, the study of why we speak the way we do, and the social factors that influence our linguistic decisions. Based on the notion of 'choice' – that as speakers we select from the options open to us – it provides a solid theoretical framework to deal with the most fascinating characteristic of language: its variability and diversity. Topics covered include dialects, gender- and age-specific speech forms, professional jargons, diglossia, bilingualism, code-switching, pidgin languages and language planning, all of which are unified by the common theme that speakers, by making choices, create their language. Drawing on linguistic variation from a wide range of societies and their languages, this is set to become a key text for all students of sociolinguistics, and will be welcomed by anyone interested in the complex interaction between language and society.

FLORIAN COULMAS is Director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo. He has published widely in the field of sociolinguistics, and is associate editor of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. His previous books include *Literacy and Linguistic Minorities* (1984), *Language Adaptation* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), *Language and Economy* (1992), *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (1997) and *Writing Systems* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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Language is in large part what users
have made of it. Navajo is what it is
in part because it is a human language,
and in part because it is the language
of the Navajo.

Dell Hymes (1980)

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