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Language Regard

Bringing together a team of renowned international scholars, this volume provides a wide-ranging collection of historical and state-of-the-art perspectives on language regard, particularly in the context of language variation and language change, and importantly highlights the range of new methodologies being used by linguists to explore and evaluate it. The importance of language regard to the inquiry of language variation and change in the field of sociolinguistics is increasingly being recognized, yet misunderstandings about its nature and importance continue to exist. This volume provides scholars and students of sociolinguistics the tools and theory to pursue such inquiry. Contributions and research come from Europe, North America, and Asia, and language varieties such as Spanish, Dutch, Danish, and American Sign Language are discussed.

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Language Regard

Methods, Variation, and Change

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For Dennis and Carol

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Preface
Prestonian Language Regard

Pronouncements about language abound, and many of us can recall situations in which others were all too eager to explain the hows and whys of another group's speech patterns. Although thoughts and opinions about language are as pervasive as language itself, language scholars sometimes have a tendency to ignore these perspectives or dismiss them as less important than language itself as an object of study. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars began investigating unconscious and conscious beliefs about language and language variation, and few researchers have done more to advance this type of research than Dennis R. Preston. Recently, Preston (2010) coined the term *language regard.* As Preston (2010:7) describes it, "The study of language regard has overlapping targets of investigation and makes use of diverse methodologies, ranging from experimental work on the influence of specific linguistic variables to the study of the expression of linguistic opinions by nonlinguists in extended discourses." *Language regard* is a term that refers to various methods and data types focused on nonlinguists' beliefs, evaluative or not, conscious or unconscious, about language. The primary advantage of describing this type of work as research on language regard rather than using existing terms like *language attitudes* or *language ideologies* is that it reflects the fact that language regard encompasses a range of phenomena including language attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and ideologies as well as a range of methodologies. Language attitudes, for example, are often considered to entail evaluation, whereas language regard can include a wider range of research. Moreover, the cover term *language regard* has the added advantage of bringing related phenomena studied in various disciplines under one broader concept (Preston 2010, 2011).

Sociolinguists, in particular, explore language regard as a way of studying the intersection of language and society. Intersections such as language/dialect contact, social hierarchies, and migration, for example, may result in (or are reflected in) attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of particular social groups that are revealed by expressions of regard. Importantly, this type of research exposes attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies people have via expressions about the ways people use language, either in the forms of language they use or as metalanguage. With respect to the methodology of language regard, terms

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like *language attitudes* are often seen as referring only to particular experimental methods such as the matched-guise technique (Lambert et al. 1960). Language regard, however, is not confined methodologically. Attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs may be revealed in many other ways, such as in dialogue, through association tasks, in map-drawing and labeling activities, via grammaticality judgment tools, and many others. For these reasons, we feel that language regard is the most appropriate term for the research presented here. Research on lay perceptions of language (e.g., Lambert et al. 1960; Giles 1971; Giles & Ryan 1982; Niedzielski & Preston 2003; Preston 2013) has demonstrated the ubiquity and intensity of language regard for language diversity. The investigation of perceptions and beliefs about language reveals underlying ideologies about language and language users and provides a window into speakers' cultural beliefs. Nonlinguists often freely express judgments, beliefs, or other opinions about a language variety that they might hold but would not express directly about the people affiliated with the variety. As such, this type of research is also an important tool for the indirect inquiry of attitudes and beliefs.

Some scholars may come from a tradition in which, as one of our reviewers describes it, "[A]ttitudes are seen as less interesting/valid than ideologies, which are held to be more explanatory." This position seems to arise from a misunderstanding of the nature and roles of attitudes and ideology in language regard. In our view, ideology is one of several interdependent paradigms that provide explanatory value and meaning. Ideology about language certainly plays a very important role in language attitudes and language regard, in fact, so important that they are inextricable. While many scholars have arrived at definitions of *ideology* (e.g., Foucault 1970; Althusser 1971; Bourdieu 1994; Eagleton 2007), Wolfram (1998) seems the most appropriate for thinking about language regard. Wolfram (1998:109) refers to language ideology as "an underlying, consensual belief system about the way language is and is supposed to be." Following Wolfram, we take ideology to refer to sets of beliefs that are held by groups. These beliefs are held so strongly that they are sometimes unchanged in the face of counterfactual evidence or require complex justification processes (e.g., cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957)). *Attitude* has equally received much attention from scholars, particularly from the fields of psychology and social psychology. Again, scholars work with a variety of definitions. We consider an attitude broadly to be a reaction to a stimulus (Wyer & Albarracín 2005). This reaction may or may not be influenced by ideologies but, crucially, consideration of attitudes also concerns cognition. Cognition has been shown to have an effect on a variety of aspects of attitudes such as the level of accessibility and strength of association of a belief and an object (e.g, Fazio et al. 1989) or the cognitive flexibility of individuals (e.g., Crockett 1965). So while scholars may treat them independently, in fact, attitude and

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ideology are interdependent, and precisely delineating them in practice is often futile. The primary difference between an attitude and an ideology relies on a focus on individual versus collective/group beliefs and the cognitive processes that govern them. Language regard is a higher order concept that includes language attitudes and language ideology.

A central focus in this book is that research on lay perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to different varieties of language is a crucial component of the linguistic description and analysis of language variation and change. As Niedzielski and Preston (2003:41) note, "Overt folk notions of geographical variation, based on neither production nor responses to forms, provide a helpful corollary to both production and attitude studies." That is, language regard data can help the researcher identify which variants are socially salient through the investigation of which linguistic variants speakers overtly mention. In addition, researchers can elicit affective (i.e., involving feelings, emotion, or mood) implicit judgments about a variant that can also provide insight into the social meaning of a particular variant (e.g., Lambert et al. 1960; Labov 1966; Niedzielski 1999). According to Jaworski and Coupland (2004:11), "The distribution of linguistic forms is underpinned by patterns of social evaluation." Thus, in order to fully understand a particular language variety, the affective dimensions of those features are a critical part of that description. Moreover, study of language regard can help us better understand the internal structure of communities of speakers and how one community positions itself in relation to another (or how individuals position themselves with respect to surrounding communities of speakers), all of which are relevant to production studies of language variation and change.

The importance of lay perceptions to sociolinguistic research has been championed best by Dennis Preston. This program of research has its roots in perceptual map research conducted by Preston in Hawaii, which he then reproduced in other US states, such as Indiana and Michigan, and other countries such as Brazil (Preston 1986, 1989). Subsequently, many sociolinguists in the United States and around the world have taken up the exploration of language regard using and cultivating Preston's methodology (e.g., Preston 1999; Long & Preston 2002).

Preston (1999) and Long and Preston (2002) have been particularly influential. Preston (1999) is a collection of translations of some of the earliest research in Japanese and Dutch perceptual dialectological map research that had not previously been available to readers of English. Preston (1999) also presents some contemporary perceptual map research. Long and Preston (2002) demonstrates the viability of and enthusiasm for Preston's methods as it complements the previous collection by presenting twenty more contemporary scholars' research on dialect perceptions in the United States and around the world.

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Weinreich et al. (1968:186) highlight the importance of research on language regard for the exploration of language variation and change:

> The theory of language change must establish empirically the subjective correlates of the several layers and variables in a heterogeneous structure. Such subjective correlates of evaluations cannot be deduced from the place of the variables within linguistic structure. Furthermore, the level of social awareness is a major property of linguistic change which must be determined directly. Subjective correlates of change are more categorical in nature than the changing pattern of behavior: Their investigation deepens our understanding of the ways in which discrete categorization is imposed on the continuous process of change.

While some scholars have followed Preston's lead and explored the role of language regard in language variation and change, its importance seems to be nevertheless largely overlooked. The studies in the present volume were individually selected to provide historical and state-of-the-art perspectives on language regard, particularly in the context of language variation and language change, with a range of diverse methods for studying language regard. In this way, this volume provides new research in the dynamic and evolving field of language regard from key scholars in the field of sociolinguistics who have been influenced by Preston's long-standing scholarship in language regard.

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