

## Book Review: *Meaning and Linguistic Variation: The Third Wave in Sociolinguistics* (2018) by Penelope Eckert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

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This review appraises Penelope Eckert's 2018 publication *Meaning and Linguistic Variation: The Third Wave in Sociolinguistics* (2018). The book is a self-proclaimed personal account that traces Eckert's scholarly life within the context of the development of variation studies. Eckert places her autobiographical account through the development of the Three Waves of variation studies of sociolinguistics, identifying as someone who '...trained in the First Wave, participated in the Second Wave..' and found her '...center in the Third Wave (Eckert, 2018:xi). Although the Three Waves analogy originated from Eckert (Eckert 2012), she refines her premise within the preface that these waves are not mutually exclusive, informing the reader that Martha's vineyard study (Labov, 1963) can be viewed as a Third Wave study and discussions of social meaning and discourse of agency have always a part of academic conversations. The notion of covert prestige (Trudgill, 1972) is also redefined as an example of Silverstein's (2003) notion of indexicality. Her point being that each wave developed from the previous, making ideas explicit from those that were previously implicit. Eckert sets the scene for a presentation of papers that represent a chronological development of her perspective on meaning and linguistic variation. The book is a rare example of a personal academic autobiographical account and one that stands out as an accessible and comprehensive account of Third Wave sociolinguistics. This review will highlight the unique position Eckert has developed within the field of Third Wave studies within sociolinguistics, followed by a summary of some of the most profound aspects found within the book, ultimately appraising the purpose, and conclusions Eckert brings.

Penelope Eckert's work has made considerable impact on the field of sociolinguistics, ethnography, as well as linguistic anthropology. Those with an interest and background in these areas of study will have certainly come across Eckert's seminal work on social meaning of linguistic variables. One of her more salient studies focuses on the language of adolescence and was published most significantly in *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School* (1989), a book length ethnographic study that analyses the structures of social identity. Eckert's work also has developed the notion of communities of practice formulated by Lave and Wenger (1991) whom Eckert is cited as working alongside. Eckert used the idea of communities of practice to look at the commonalities of language and its use as a means of constructing and co-constructing identity, a theme which plays through her studies showing how variables such as phonemes, topic choice, and use of non-standard forms are used to negotiate power and identity within relationships. Her influential work on language and gender has also made great impact on the study of sociolinguistics, with much focus of her work developing the notion of gender as a social construction, a major progression from earlier studies (Labov, 1966; Lakoff, 1975), the development of which Eckert has been central. The significance of her achievements to date have yet to be narrated in a comprehensive form. Thus, this edition is an important account of Eckert's work so far as well as providing an extremely welcome insight into the development of the Third Wave of sociolinguistics.

The book is logically divided into three sections, with the first section introducing the reader to Eckert's grounding in dialect research on the southwestern French Gascony regional variety of Occitan. This first section details well Eckert's developing view of language as socially

symbolic as she concludes in her paper *The paradox of national language movements* 'The language [Occitan] is, therefore, not a language of these people's personal experience, but a symbol of that language' (Eckert, 2018:14). Similarly, there exists an allusion to linguistic symbolism in the second paper presented in this section *Diglossia: Separate and Unequal* as it describes diglossia within the regional areas of Gascon and highlights the high and low varieties adopting social meaning through their frequency and situational variety of use.

In the second section *My Participation in the Second Wave* the reader is rewarded with a cultivated account and perspective on the seminal study of adolescent linguistic variation and social categorisation *Jocks and Burnouts*. Eckert takes us through her original proposal and positions this within the second wave. Here, the reader is reminded of the implicitness of Third Wave notions, as she states here how social meaning and agency were an important part of this work. This second section neatly traces Eckert's main findings, personally contextualising each of her papers included for the purposes of this book. The tone is personable and carries the reader through each paper in a style that brings contemporality and a welcome addition to previously foregrounding works such as *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (2000). This is far from a dry academic book and Eckert narrates with an entertaining style and with evident honesty. The chapter *on the outs* stands aside as one of the book's richer sections, where Eckert introduces us to the difficulties associated with 'pushback' from dominant ideology and narrates us into her foregrounding studies on language and gender, explaining '...a fundamental problem in looking for gender explanations in male-female binary, and expecting that binary to have a single effect on variation across society' (Eckert, 2018:85). Eckert here proposes her work on gender started public difficulties with the variation mainstream and again Eckert's narration of this term of her career is insightful and enlightening and a fascinating commentary of the politic of academia.

To complete the second section, the book moves then to introduce the transitional phase between Eckert's Second and Third Wave with the sub-section *Foregrounding style*. Having made clear her underlying interest in style in relation to her foregrounding studies in language and gender, she posits how style shifting and the connection between this and meaning in variation led to the forming of the Third Wave. The introduction to the seminal paper which lays out the first perspectives on the Third Wave *Variation and Personal/Group Style* is included here and no doubt provides valuable background material for anyone working or interested in this field of research. As does the paper *Vowels and Nail Polish: The Emergence of Linguistic Style in the Preadolescent Heterosexual Marketplace* which is an excellent example of Eckert's work applying and developing Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory on communities of practice. Again, the reader is treated to meta-discussion about how Eckert's theoretical perspectives were evolving, referencing influential standpoints such as performativity theory (Butler, 1988,1993) and offering a unique insight into the movement of ideas contained in the work of Eckert's through the presentation of the papers comprised for this publication.

The book culminates with Eckert's transition to the Third Wave in the third and final part. The documentation of this transition is again fascinating with Eckert detailing the foregrounding aspects of this transition, giving context to this stage in her professional career interlacing theoretical as well as career focused discussion. Personal accounts of imposter syndrome for example are an enlightening touch and increase the reader's attention to the social within the boundaries of academia. The shift to a clearly defined Third Wave is documented with the paper *Demystifying Sexuality and Desire* and is rather humbly introduced by Eckert as a '...paper that reads like a kind of Third Wave manifesto' (Eckert, 2018:126). The section continues with a selection of choice papers and readings from Eckert's catalogue, invaluable introducing the reader to notions of indexicality, issues of agency and concepts of authenticity within the study of sociolinguistics. Here, examples of Eckert's most insightful work are included, and questions of meaning and linguistic variation are addressed at their most robust. This account then is particularly satisfying to anyone interested in current theoretical ideas

about language variation and change. The book ends neatly with a discussion of possibilities for further work, generously providing potential ideas for where the study of meaning in variation may well be taken. The book will be of interest to a wide audience as well as those working within the field of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and ethnography. The tone of the book is well-struck making for a very readable and welcome alternative to the conventionally formatted academic publication. The book presents academic papers with detailed descriptions which are not overbearing, and a good balance is made, making for an engaging as well as intellectually stimulating account of Eckert's profound theoretical contributions to the field of sociolinguistics.

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