

NIEDZIELSKI, NANCY A. and DENNIS R. PRESTON. *Folk Linguistics*. Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 122. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000. xx + 375 pages. Appendix, bibliography, maps, index. Cloth £121.69/approximately US\$119.00; ISBN 3-11-016251-2.

This is a book that aims to provide a descriptive introduction of a rich and largely untouched territory. It is written by two linguists who, unlike others, do not believe folk linguistic accounts are to be disregarded as being worthless and unscientific. Taking a nonquantitative and ethnographic approach, the authors analyze the comments of a group of speakers from urban and suburban southeastern Michigan (United States) to reveal its folk linguistic beliefs. The book is structured as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction: In this chapter, Niedzielski and Preston set out the overall aim of their book: to seek to understand the organizing principles behind folk accounts of language in a U.S. setting. They elaborate on their approach to folk linguistics and discuss its relation to other fields, such as sociolinguistics, folk dialectology, and ethnography. In the final pages they outline their methodology and fieldwork; specifically, they describe the procedures used for the ethnography of speaking and their network model, in which eleven trained researchers elicited data from a total of sixty-eight respondents.

Chapter 2: Regionalism: This chapter explores the folk conception that the language is an idealized abstraction but real language use is a personal and social phenomenon, the only form allowing one to maintain the correct form of the tongue. The authors therefore expect to find evaluative comments about language variations reflecting the degree to which the ideal is attained. The chapter starts with a survey of earlier studies, most of which have been carried out by Dennis R. Preston, one of the authors of this volume. The survey indicates that southern United States English and New York City English varieties are prejudiced against each other, leading the authors to conclude that correctness and related affective dimensions are folk notions that have geographical significance, at least in American English. The data gathered for the current project supplement and expand on this conclusion. The chapter is rich with hand-drawn U.S. dialect maps and figures presenting quantitative data from earlier studies, and transcribed conversations of the current project illustrating the respondents' caricature of the southern U.S. speech. The authors conclude by pointing out the role of prescriptive notions in the formation and maintenance of attitudes towards regional varieties and stress the importance of studying such linguistically oriented attitudes either for scientific purposes or for the purpose of understanding our attitudes towards one another.

Chapter 3: Social Factors: This chapter consists of the folk impressions of social factors such as ethnicity, status, gender, and notions of style, slang, register, and taboo. The discussion on ethnicity focuses on AAVE (African-American Vernacular English). Negative reactions to it are unraveled through conversation excerpts and phonetic descriptions of the sounds in AAVE words. Niedzielski and Preston show that the respondents conceptualize social factors in ways radically different from sociolinguists. For example, the respondents express annoyance with those who cannot learn the standard variety; they perceive stylistic selection as switching between one variety and another, which is in sharp contrast with the sociolinguistic characterization of style as a continuous dimension in which speakers move along a scale of formality. Some folk conceptualizations come close to those of sociolinguists, e.g., the respondents recognize that their reactions to taboo are to words rather than to the concepts. In the final parts of the chapter, the authors point out that the parallelism between most early researchers' view of language and gender and their respondents' perspective (e.g., women's speech is powerless, and they use more standard language). They warn the reader

that scholarly work on this matter should go beyond popular instincts. This is the longest chapter of the book and surely one of the most interesting ones in terms of tapping folk knowledge on a topic popular among professionals.

Chapter 4: Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics: In this second longest chapter, Niedzielski and Preston present data on a broad range of issues in first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition, including data on bilingual education and social factors on language acquisition. It will be interesting for the linguistically oriented reader to find that the fundamental question of modern linguistics—namely, whether there is a preprogrammed device allowing human beings to acquire language—is hardly reflected in the data. Instead, ordinary people are more concerned with social aspects of language acquisition. For example, the folk believe “improper” English is passed on from parents to their offspring (214). The respondents also comment on the learning of reading, writing, and spelling jointly, mentioning English spelling as a major impediment to literacy. Second language acquisition (SLA) is dealt with in two broad categories, namely, the more linguistically oriented features of SLA, such as phonology and syntax, and the socially related concerns for both acquisition and use of L2. In general, the respondents believe languages are “tricky” but the difficulty may be overcome by frequent use of the language in natural settings (251). The respondents’ comments on the social aspect of SLA reveal negative attitudes towards multilingualism and bilingualism in the U.S. but respect for those who learn other languages and tolerance for nonnative speech. Motivation and age, two central issues mentioned by the professionals, are also mentioned by members of the groups studied as bearing importance for SLA. This chapter draws attention to the need for the applied linguist (i.e., language teachers, curriculum designers, and material developers) to include folk accounts of L1 and L2 learning processes in their agenda to better serve the educational needs of the community.

Chapter 5: General and Descriptive Linguistics: The authors’ focus here is on folk responses to problematic sentences and passive language, as these have always been problematic for linguists, writers, editors, and educators. Comments of those within the group on phonology and lexicon are also included. The authors admit that although folk beliefs of lexicon would provide a rich source for a folk-linguistic account of what words are and what they mean, they have given lexicon short shrift in this volume due to lack of space. As for syntax, the response of the people to unacceptable sentences is not surprising: they dismiss ungrammatical sentences and offer better versions rather than pinpointing or describing the error. They discredit the grammar taught at school and express concern for naturalness, communicative appropriateness, and efficiency. They are prejudiced against long sentences and value polite and formal speech negatively. Colloquial and nonstandard speech is consistently disapproved. Violations like “ain’t” and multiple negation are accepted unless the focus is on ethnolinguistic minorities. Niedzielski and Preston conclude by suggesting that professional linguists pay attention to the folk linguists’ process of reasoning in language rather than paying attention to isolated items. This, they believe, would be more consistent with the recent approaches in folklore and interactive forms of discourse analysis.

Chapter 6: The Last Words: Niedzielski and Preston conclude their project with an exposition of two terms, namely, Metalanguage 1, which refers to overt and conscious folk linguistic comments they tried to discover, and Metalanguage 2, the underlying beliefs and the presuppositions behind the overt comments. They suggest that Metalanguage 2 beliefs can be uncovered through a more principled and linguistically oriented approach, namely “content-oriented” discourse analysis, the details of which they do not provide (314). They mention in passing that they envision a more linguistically oriented approach to show how structure is related to content and the underlying presuppositions of speakers. They wish to be forgiven for not approaching their data using such a principled analysis as their focus has

been on exploring a vast territory, much of which had been untouched prior to their effort.

Niedzielski and Preston have undertaken two difficult tasks: 1) that of bringing to light a great variety of folk linguistic comments in a U.S. setting; and 2) revealing the deeply rooted concerns and beliefs lurking behind them. The authors deal with people's comments in a way that requires familiarity with linguistics. Consequently, most of the book will be difficult for readers with little or no knowledge of linguistics. Those with a working knowledge of linguistics will find the book interesting and be drawn in by the carefully collected and transcribed data and the meticulous analysis. The book has little to offer the theoretically oriented linguist; the people the book will most likely appeal to are applied linguists, the teachers of linguistics, and linguistically oriented educators interested in serving the educational needs of their community. It will be equally appealing to ethnologists and folklorists because the authors approach folk linguistic beliefs as one of the most important aspects of ethnography and as a key to understanding a culture. It is unfortunate that they have left out of their scope the exploration of whether members of other speech communities share folk linguistic beliefs with those of English-speaking communities. For example, attitudes to AAVE, a strictly American English variety, might be similarly negative in communities where English is taught as a second language. Likewise, bi/multilingualism might not be thought highly of, but individuals learning a second tongue may be tolerated, even respected. If such similarities are indeed found to exist in the people's folk linguistic belief systems, it will be worthwhile to study the reasons for the existence of those belief systems to shed light on the nature of cultures that come into contact with English. All in all, the authors are to be applauded for being unafraid to tackle an issue that has long been left out of scholarly research in linguistics. The book is recommended to anyone interested in language and linguistics and in how ordinary people regard these topics.

Deniz ZEYREK
Middle East Technical University
Ankara, Turkey

JAPAN

ENCHI FUMIKO. *A Tale of False Fortunes*. Translation by Roger K. Thomas. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. Cloth US\$38.00; ISBN 0-8248-2135-1. Paper US\$19.95; ISBN 0-8248-2187-4.

Roger K. Thomas's translation of *Namamiiko monogatari* (なまみこ物語, 1965) is a timely gift to English readers. His translation arrives in the wake of Doris BARGEN's (1997) provocative study of representations of spirit possession in Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* (源氏物語 ca. 1010), which has focused the renewed attention of Japanologists on issues relating to the gendered dynamics of oppression and resistance in Heian times (794–1185). Where Bargaen argues that spirit possession offered Murasaki's female characters a liminal space in which to express their ordinarily unspeakable desires, Enchi's narrative, set in Murasaki's lifetime, depicts possession as a phenomenon that could also be orchestrated for political gain. Thomas's translation follows, as well, upon the publication of Nina CORNYEITZ's *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words* (1999), which analyzes representations of female empowerment in the texts of Enchi, Izumi Kyōka, and Nakagami Kenji. Finally, it arrives amidst the recent completion of a half dozen English-language dissertations that highlight the work of Enchi Fumiko (円地文子 1905–1986).¹ Thomas's introduction and translation thus contribute significantly to a new era in Enchi studies outside of Japan.