

Introduction

The present volume focuses on the empirically-based description, modelling and understanding of both native and non-native English-speaking communities. Some specific areas of interest are considered: i) interdisciplinary concerns in the description and modelling of spoken varieties in the contemporary English-speaking world; ii) more specifically, the interplay of social, psychological and cultural factors in phonological and phonetic variation and change (both at the dialectal and sociolectal levels); iii) the sociolinguistic investigation of new norms within spoken English, drawing upon the central notions of indexicality, self-perception and perception of speakers' linguistic environments and communities; iv) representations of native and non-native English-speaking communities and their relationship to traditional standard varieties.

Throughout these areas of interest, the volume highlights the importance of representations, which are examined along three perspectives which permeate in the different chapters: i) from the speaker's perspective, the construction of linguistic and cultural identities, and the speakers' perception of a linguistic environment and the sociocultural values attached to it; ii) from the researcher's perspective, the examination of the criteria and parameters of linguistic representations as devised by communities of speakers, as well as the historical and contemporary conditions of the demographic, social and cultural dynamics of linguistic communities; iii) from the artistic and stylistic perspectives, the ways in which the representations of linguistic and social identities in artistic productions feed the representations that speakers themselves have and produce of their own cultural, linguistic and social identities, and vice versa, which may notably question the issues of authenticity and stereotyping.

In the first chapter, Jose A. Mompean explores a phonological approach within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, Cognitive Phonology, suggesting a more comprehensive approach in understanding the phonology of human language, as part of human cognitive activities. He explains how Cognitive Phonology can provide phonologists of different backgrounds with valuable insights, taking into consideration language as a whole, undetachable from the rest of the human mind and body. In other words, language—or phonology in this case—is situated and usage-based.

As seen with Cognitive Phonology, the landscape of phonological theoretical frameworks is diverse and prolific, and has become more and more empirically-oriented these past few decades. Among new theoretical