Perhaps the modifiers “thought provoking” and “critical” best describe this third, extended edition of *Sociolingüística*, by Humberto López Morales. Although its structure is straightforward, this presentation of the discipline of sociolinguistics as applied primarily to Spanish misses very few opportunities to raise questions associated with points of analysis or applications of the discipline itself.

The prologue to the first edition, a “note” preceding the second, and the prologue to this third edition, all present here, place this edition in the context of the earlier ones as well as of other pioneering and introductory studies. In spite of the fact that the prologue to this third edition suggests that it may no longer be necessary to dwell on earlier antagonistic relations between sociolinguistics and theoretical linguistics, it clearly sets the stage for an insightful discussion of this relationship that is developed in Chapter I.

Chapters I through IX examine: the concept of sociolinguistics; the linguistic variable; the extralinguistic variable; the sociolinguistic variable; the monolingual speech community; the plurilingual speech community; sociolinguistic consciousness; beliefs, attitudes and linguistic change; and sociolinguistic competence. Carefully organized and replete with specifics, each chapter is more than an introduction to concepts or terminology.

Chapter I asks, “if performance is no more than a reflection of competence and in this performance extralinguistic factors have an integral part, should these proceed from competence?” (p. 43). As such it addresses the nature of competence in sociolinguistics vs. theoretical linguistics, and also addresses the detailed variationist way of accessing competence through performance that characterizes sociolinguistic research as compared to the more system-based, macro, or societal approaches of dialectology, the sociology of language, and the ethnography of communication.

Other issues raised are the nature of the phonological vs. the morphological and syntactic variable and whether these three should be equated, the validity of stratificational vs. network and linguistic market approaches to the extralinguistic variable, whether all variables have the potential to be “sociolinguistic”, whether the “speech community” is a social or a linguistic concept, the relationship between
classical diglossia and other forms of bidialectalism and bilingualism, and the potential for probabilistic analyses of variation to reflect sociolinguistic competence. While discussing areas and issues of analysis, Sociolinguística presents concrete examples of phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical variation in Spanish: from post-nuclear /s/ to intervocalic /d/, from verbal -mos/-nos to the use of -ría vs. -ba in the apodosis of conditionals, as well as the use of colloquial vs. technical word forms (‘testículos’ or ‘güevos’).

Issues and examples are discussed in the context of the work of recognized investigators of Spanish sociolinguistics and general sociolinguistics: in the latter case, from Labov and Trudgill to Eckert and, in the former case, from Cedergren and Silva-Corvalán to Poplack and Ranson, and in a variety of geographical contexts, but with heavy representation from Latin America.

Because of the critical and theoretical nature of Sociolinguística, it will probably continue to be of most use to scholars and advanced students who share questions about the nature of sociolinguistic research and its findings. Most particularly, Sociolinguística is not a guide to sociolinguistic field research. If it had been, it most certainly would have raised more questions about the relationship between findings and methods in sociolinguistic research.


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Núñez Cabezas and Guerrero Salazar carry out in this book a thorough analysis of Spanish political language, based on the data collected over a period of 9 years from Spanish newspapers, congress sessions, radio and television programs and websites of the main political parties. Another concern of this book is journalistic language and its relationship with political language. The book is divided into