

Jette G. Hansen Edwards, *Social Factors and L2 Phonetics and Phonology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024, 88 p.)

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The book *Social Factors and L2 Phonetics and Phonology* explores the interface of sociolinguistics and L2 acquisition by offering a detailed overview of the social factors that may affect the acquisition of the L2 sound inventory. Relying on the research on a number of world languages, the author tries to identify key principles that navigate L2 phonological acquisition in different social contexts. The book consists of eight chapters; each of them first provides a summary of the main points related to the topic, which are then discussed in more detail and supported by empirical data from numerous studies.

In the first chapter, Hansen Edwards defines some key terms that will help the reader to grasp the main concepts discussed in the book. She starts by explaining the terms *phonetics* and *phonology*, and then identifies a set of social factors that might influence L2 learners' pronunciation. The author proposes a view that although a lacking L2 inventory of a learner is usually associated with incomplete phonological acquisition, it can also be deliberate and caused by social factors such as gender, ethnicity, or a need for establishing one's identity or membership in a community. Therefore, the book presents a thorough analysis of the relevant literature and research findings that focus on two aspects of the topic: the connection between social factors and the overall L2 phonological acquisition, and the acquisition of L1 sociolinguistic variation patterns by L2 learners.

Chapter Two explores the connection between the choice of L2 phonetic and phonological characteristics that learners target for acquisition and their attitudes towards different L2 varieties and features. According to the author, the research in this field shows that L2 learners are aware of the differences between L2 varieties and might aim for a specific pronunciation model due to positive attitudes towards

it. Similarly, it is noted that positive or negative attitudes towards an L2 variety, its features, its speakers, their culture or a particular place might affect learners' L2 use; they might use some L2 features more frequently if they associate them with positive views, or avoid using them if they do not. Hansen Edwards highlights that learners find it easier to acquire features that are more salient perceptually, while more proficient learners are more aware of the variability within a language community and, therefore, show a greater use of specific features based on their social meaning. The author also expresses that teachers' attitudes (explicit or implicit) towards some varieties or features might influence learners' use of L2, i.e. if using a particular variant is not welcomed in the classroom, L2 learners might avoid using it.

In Chapter Three, the author examines the effect of social networks and peer groups on L2 acquisition and use. The discussed findings suggest that closer engagement with more diverse L2 social groups fosters learners' sociolinguistic competence. Additionally, stronger ties with the members of L2 community help the acculturation process and result in more native-like pronunciation. It is also noted that, depending on their social networks, L2 learners can opt for variants that are used by their peers (even if they are non-standard), to express belonging or a desire to belong to their social group. Such socio-phonetic choices, as research suggests, can be made at a very young age by children who acquire their L2 or a different dialect of their L1. Finally, Hansen Edwards tackles the connection between peer networks and gender and argues that the gender effect on learners' pronunciation might often be a result of a peer group influence, as friendship groups are commonly gender-based.

The fourth chapter discusses the role of L2 contact and exposure. The author concludes that L1 and L2 use both affect L2 acquisition, as increased use of L1 may be detrimental to learners' L2 development, while more frequent L2 use helps the acquisition process. Learners' age and whom they interact with are also highlighted as important, as older learners have more difficulties with establishing L2 social connections, while L2 use with other non-native speakers might not be beneficial for some learners' phonological acquisition. Special attention is also paid to another aspect which is nowadays especially relevant – the effect of media exposure. Analysing the results from various studies, Hansen Edwards concludes that "[m]ass media exposure may override educational influences in impacting which L2 features are targeted or acquired" (p. 30). This means that being exposed to different L2 varieties through media may lead to adoption of features that are not taught in the L2 classroom. As a final note, the author states that increased contact with L2 may not help with the acquisition of some features.

Chapter Five introduces the experience of studying abroad as a factor that may contribute to L2 phonological acquisition. The author highlights a general pattern of greater pronunciation improvement in the study-abroad context, compared to the at-home classroom setting. However, she also notes that this experience alone is not enough to make an impact on students' L2 pronunciation, as the focus is on how

learners engage with the L2 during their stay in the target-language environment. Many factors, such as duration of the study-abroad period, proficiency, age, cultural sensitivity, or ability to form L2 social networks, can help or hinder pronunciation development in a study-abroad context. Additionally, the author reflects upon how studying abroad may foster sociolinguistic competence by raising awareness of dialectal and socio-phonetic variation in the L2, which, consequentially, may affect the choice of variety or features L2 learners target for acquisition.

In Chapter Six, gender is discussed as a variable that may influence L2 pronunciation attainment. It is proposed that learners become aware of gender-based sociolinguistic variation patterns in L2 and may target them for acquisition. The research findings suggest that women more commonly adopt supralocal characteristics and lead in the usage of novelty L2 features, which is similar to variation patterns among native speakers. The author highlights that gender-based differences in pronunciation can often be contributed to peer-networks influence and vice versa, since these two factors often largely overlap. Additionally, historical factors on gender roles, as well as L1 cultural norms, may affect the access to L2 use opportunities and development of L2 social networks. The chapter closes with the observation that particular L2 gender-based features might be purposely avoided in learners' own language production if they conflict with learners' L1 identity.

Chapter Seven explores the effect of learners' identity and ethnic group affiliation on their L2 phonological acquisition. The author notes that pronunciation features seem to be more salient markers of identity than some other language characteristics, and are therefore more frequently targeted by non-native speakers. The findings also show that learners who strongly identify with the L2 community and are able to form an independent "L2 self" have greater pronunciation gains, while learners who wish to stick to their L1 identity may avoid using some L2 features. The latter is particularly important in immigrant contexts, where learners' L1 identity is "at stake" and they often want to preserve it by retaining L1 pronunciation features in the L2. Lastly, it is observed that some L2 speakers may adopt and combine unique pronunciation features to signify distinctive identity or belonging to a particular social or ethnic group.

The last chapter provides a brief overview of the main topics covered in the book, concluding with a list of certain issues related to L2 pronunciation and social factors that should be more thoroughly examined in the future. The author ends with the discussion of implications that the presented findings have for teaching L2 pronunciation and offers various practical suggestions for teachers, including ideas for assessments, discussions, perception and production exercises and implementation of authentic language materials through the media and online databases.

The book *Social Factors and L2 Phonetics and Phonology* offers a different and interdisciplinary view of the L2 acquisition process. It makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge by a concise and logical systematisation of relevant findings that show how various social factors intertwine and affect L2

pronunciation development. The book opens the question of the ability to acquire sociolinguistic competence in the L2, which is a topic that has not received extensive coverage in the modern academic world. Additionally, its easy-to-follow structure with thematically organised chapters, along with the list of topics for further investigation and suggestions for L2 teaching practice, make this book an excellent resource for both students and experienced researchers in the fields of phonetics and sociolinguistics, as well as language instructors and other professionals specialising in pronunciation training.