

points out that the 1997 Act of Parliament giving protection to the endangered Ainu language (endemic to Hokkaido) was a first step in moving away from this cultural monopoly. This will be an interesting area of Japan's political scene to watch in the near future, as the country comes to grips with the fact that many different ethnic groups now live within its borders, all of whom require language provision in varying ways, whether this be JSL support in schools for children, or JSL for employment or for basic daily life for adults (the book devotes sections to migrant factory workers, nurses and care workers, foreign spouses, and foreigners caught up in the Japanese legal system). Some local communities are pragmatically getting on with the job of supplying such needs, but how the government will grapple with this issue at the national level when it goes against the grain of centuries-old ideologies and the long-cherished *uchi/soto* 'home/outside' distinction, remains to be seen.

The other strand of this book is the impact of the electronic era on the traditional kanji, which previously had been written only by hand. Here, in contrast to the lack of language policy described above, the Japanese Government has shown that it can move to take positive action in response to changing circumstances, for instance, by issuing a revision of the List of Characters for General Use, expanded in recognition of the fact that larger numbers of kanji are now routinely used than in the pre-electronic age. In sum, this book affords fascinating insights into Japanese policy making and into the collective psyche that underpins it, especially with regards to Japanese concepts of themselves and 'others'.

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MATTHEW J. GORDON, *Labov: A guide for the perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Pp. xi, 252. Pb. \$24.95.

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Matthew Gordon's *Labov: A guide for the perplexed* is a clear, comprehensive, and remarkable presentation of the life and contributions of William Labov, the celebrated linguist considered by many to be the founder of modern sociolinguistics. In this book, Matthew Gordon masterfully weaves the narrative of Labov's life and work together with an overview of sociolinguistics and of sociolinguistic concepts, providing context to Labov's research and the innovative changes he made to the way we study language. This book is an intellectually stimulating read for

individuals at any level of interest in sociolinguistics, or linguistics more generally. Readers will find this book a witty, engaging, and illuminating description of Labov's work and contributions to sociolinguistics.

The stated goal of Matthew Gordon's book is 'to offer an overview of the framework that Labov operates in as well as to survey his contributions in several particular areas of research' (19), and the author does so in nine clear and well-organized chapters. He begins by explaining the importance of Labov's contributions to the development of variationist studies, and then gives a brief biographical sketch of Labov's beginning as a chemist who carried his scientific knowledge of empirical testing into his interest in language use (chapter 1). In chapter 2, Matthew Gordon describes the historical background of the field of linguistics before Labov and explains some foundational concepts in sociolinguistics, including phonetic and social variables that set the stage for the rest of the book. Matthew Gordon then reviews Labov's groundbreaking research as a graduate student: his Master's thesis on sound change in progress in Martha's Vineyard, and his dissertation on the social stratification of speech in New York City (chapter 3). Chapter 4 outlines Labov's contributions to the variationist approach, and chapters 5–8 cover his research agenda in the areas of stylistic variation, discourse analysis, social factors like ethnicity and gender in variation and change, and the study of and advocacy for African American English.

Throughout the book, Matthew Gordon provides readers with a clear trajectory of how Labov developed his ideas, work, and interests to cover a broad variety of topics in sociolinguistics. While he focuses primarily on Labov's contributions and innovations, he also discusses criticism of some of Labov's studies. This discussion helps the reader to analyze Labov's work thoughtfully and to understand how he fits into the broader study of sociolinguistics. Besides delivering engaging prose, Matthew Gordon also includes many charts, tables, and maps from Labov's work throughout all nine chapters, which give the reader a valuable complement to Matthew Gordon's lucid written descriptions of Labov's research.

Matthew Gordon has achieved an outstanding contribution to our understanding of Labov's life, work, and influence on sociolinguistics. This book is a must-read for any scholar interested in sociolinguistics and variation. It serves as an excellent example for writing about the lives and research of scholars in any field, and it has the potential to inspire more writing on other great thinkers within linguistics.

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