

Revisiting theory and method in language ideology research

Judith T. Irvine

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

It is now some decades since the study of “linguistic ideology” was first proposed (Silverstein 1979), and the time is ripe for taking stock. This presentation considers some of the developments in this field as it has emerged and, in some respects, become normalized. Yet, *normalized* can mean *backgrounded*, taken for granted – which can obscure important theoretical issues and methodological challenges. It is therefore worth revisiting what is entailed by “ideology” (and why studying “language ideology” is not just the same as “language attitudes” research); the debate between explicit and implicit sources of evidence (and why this binary is itself problematic); and questions such as the following: Must ideology be internally consistent? What does consistency even mean? Are ideologies big programs, distinct from local metapragmatic activity? I address these questions and also make some methodological recommendations about research sites, relationality in sampling, attention to flows and connections, and the long reach of ideological work.