A Glossary of Sociolinguistics furnishes the beginning student of sociolinguistics with useful introductions to many of the key concepts of the field. It also provides a helpful review for those whose previous study of sociolinguistics may have been in the distant past. Furthermore, its special emphasis on dialectology adds depth to its value for field use. Trudgill’s introduction puts it concisely:

[This book is] an introductory guide to the central concepts and most frequently used technical terms used in sociolinguistics. The focus is not only on the various branches of sociolinguistics itself, but also on dialectology, both traditional and modern, and on varieties of the English language, particularly those which have been of especial interest to people working in sociolinguistics. Classic studies in sociolinguistics are also cited. There is, too, a particular emphasis on individual languages of types which tend to be of special interest to sociolinguistics, such as minority languages, and pidgin and creole languages.

Terms included come from a range of subdisciplines of sociolinguistics: dialectology, language variation and change, conversational pragmatics, quantificational or secular linguistics, anthropological linguistics, and applied sociolinguistics, among others. The glossary is somewhat encyclopedic, in that it includes not only concepts, but also the names of authors of seminal works cross-referenced to the concepts they developed: such pioneers as Ferguson, Grice, Gumperz, Halliday, Hymes, and Labov. The glossary also includes names of specific languages or communities.

One of the most interesting features of the book is that Trudgill includes texts or word lists of several languages (mostly Western European) especially to show contrast between dialects or to illustrate development of a pidgin, such as: Angloromany/English, Bislama (Vanuatu), Nynorsk/Bokmal (Norway), French/Franco-Provencal, French/Occitan, Kriol (Australia), Russenorsk, Sranan (Surinam), Tok Pisin, and Ulster-Scots. Maps of speech communities, such as Basque, Bislama, Frisian, South/North Slavic, the Northern Cities Shift area, the Rhenish fan, the Western Romance continuum, and the West Germanic continuum, also add interest.
The glossary is organized alphabetically, rather than thematically, which makes finding a term simpler, but makes using this book to investigate a sub-area of sociolinguistics a challenge. The multiple cross-references aid in following concepts developed by a given author. The inclusion of alternative spellings and variant names is very helpful, as often minority language names are not standardized. (I also found the occasional plural forms and pronunciation guides written in the IPA informative, since so often technical vocabulary is acquired only by reading.)

To give somewhat of an overview, here are a few of my favorite terms:

- autonomy
- bidialectalism
- classical language
- diffuse
- forensic sociolinguistics
- graphisation
- historicity
- implicational sociolinguistics
- jargon
- koiné
- language missionary
- mother-in-law language
- negative politeness
- onomastics
- phatic communion
- quantative paradigm
- roofless dialects
- secular linguistics
- t-glottaling
- überdachung
- verbal duelling
- West Romance dialect continuum
- Yiddish
- Zulu pidgin

Given the claim in the blurb on the back of the book to provide “a full bibliography,” I was disappointed that the bibliography does not include the seminal works to which the author refers in the glossary entries, such as Labov’s (1966) *The social stratification of English in New York City*. However, the brief thirty-item bibliography presents a range of introductory works suitable for the beginning student and just a few of the classics, such as Fasold’s (1990) *The sociolinguistics of language*. The dates of publication range only from 1995–2002, with Fasold’s (1984) *The sociolinguistics of society* being the exception. Of extra benefit, four books on discourse are included.

In addition to the beginning student of sociolinguistics, this book would be a useful resource to a field linguist or language development worker who finds him- or herself working in a complex system of bilingualism and/or dialect continua and/or language shift, and who has not had any previous exposure to the field of dialectology. The foundational concepts (bidialectalism, domain, register, language shift, etc.) are in this glossary—which could be of considerable aid to someone who wants to read the literature in a given area but lacks the terminological background.

I would also recommend this book to those interested in sociolinguistics or anthropological linguistics, who would like to refresh their memory of the basics and learn a few more interesting concepts. Deductive learners might glean some useful principles for dealing with complex sociopolitical questions from the examples, histories and comparisons of the (mostly Western European) dialect continua, as well as from some of the material on English-based creoles and
pidgins. Global or inductive learners would be advised to use it chiefly to back up ongoing studies in sociolinguistics.

References

