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Sommario/riassunto

"The simplest and yet most important contribution of sociolinguistics [and similar disciplines willing to go under that flag] to social scientific knowledge is its insistence on recognizing the considerable variation in speech that exists within even the most homogeneous of societies. The second important contribution is the insistence that this variation is neither trivial nor a pale reflection of 'real' language, but that it is systematic and that the systematicity of linguistic variation is an imperative object of study in itself. Having recognized that different people talk differently, and that the same people talk differently at different times, a central problem of sociolinguistics is - or ought to be - to understand why people talk the way they do. It then becomes clear that the research questions of sociolinguistics are preeminently social questions." (Woolard 1985: 738).