The increased interest in identity described by Omoniyi and White and resulting in the “veritable explosion” in the number of researchers from the social sciences putting identity at the centre of their work (p. 34), culminates in this volume’s aim to appropriately reflect the current state of sociolinguistic study into identity. This impressive collection, consisting of 13 separate chapters including the editors’ introduction and a thorough index of terms and authors, stems from a seminar on language and identity at the University of Reading in 2004. Contributions also originated as papers presented at the AILA 2005 Conference. Considering the complexity of the term ‘identity’ and its elusive conception across all disciplines, this volume is a timely and noteworthy collection of experiences with language and identity, which provides an overview of documented positions and a view to contemporary directions of studies into the sociolinguistics of identity. With the variety of backgrounds and stances of the contributions in mind, the editors detail six common positions stated to be found within the contributions for greater internal cohesion. These six positions are that (1) identity is not fixed, (2) identity is constructed and may vary, (3) contexts are moderated by social variables and are expressed through language, (4) identity is salient in every communicative context, (5) identity informs social relationships and communicative exchanges, and (6) more than one identity may be articulated equating an interactive system of identities management. White and Omoniyi indicate when certain points are elaborated on in the ensuing chapters, however, the only points explicitly mentioned in relation to any of the contributed works are those of 1, 2, 3 and 6. Whilst it could be argued that point 5 is inherent in section two, this is not alluded to and point 4 not once overtly implied.

The declared focus of the editors is the variety of ways in which people position or construct themselves or are positioned or constructed by others in terms of identity “through the instrumentality of language” (p. 1). There is a preponderance, however, of identity being viewed as a negotiation instead of as a construction or positioning. This is seen not only in the individual chapters, but also in the introduction by the editors themselves, which could have been addressed in more depth within this volume instead leaving the obvious importance of this term to the field unchallenged. Omoniyi and White aptly see the demands of this publication as being threefold; to re-examine the analytical tools used in sociolinguistic studies into identity and comment on both their
efficiency and their applicability, to establish the roles of language within the identity claims of specific speech communities, and to determine the place of identity within various social contexts. The editors thus divide the contributions over three corresponding and clearly presented sections. For the sake of clarity, the latter two sections could indicate this more explicitly rather than being called Identity in micro-sociolinguistics and macro-sociolinguistics respectively.

The first section, aiming to analyse tools used in sociolinguistic research, features three contributions. Omoniyi provides a summary of approaches and theories in sociolinguistics before analysing his concept of the Hierarchies of Identity (HOI), which complexifies situations by defining the hierarchical nature of identity positioning within the period of a ‘moment. These moments, however, are more hypothetical in nature, as no truly quantifiable, non-inferential method was proffered for the study and comparison of them. Block’s link to this study tool analysis is more tenuous leading the section away from study tools in the sense of research methods, as he critically identifies flaws in strictly adhering to the poststructuralist approach to defining identity within sociolinguistics, instead affiliating himself with Wenger and Lave’s (1991) Community of Practice approach. Yet more subtle again is Suleiman’s analytical tool as he delves into the topic of national group identity asserting ‘polycentricity’ to be more apt than hierarchy in explaining the construction of identity. By exploring two roles that language plays in this context and also raising questions of how identity is constructed and may vary, Suleiman’s article would perhaps be better juxtaposed if placed in section two, which deals with the roles of language in community identity claims as well as investigates points two and three from the common positions list.

In the same way as the first section, section two contains three chapters. The editors make an interesting choice in beginning this segment with Jenkins’ paper as they admit the need to redefine ‘community’ to accommodate her contribution before the concept has even been developed through the subsequent two articles. Furthermore, identity is not considered central but merely constituent of personal perception and an outcome of preferential NS-like use in Jenkins’ investigation into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as she proposes a syllabus of pronunciation features necessary for inter-NNS communication intelligibility called the Lingua Franca Core (LFC). The subsequent contributions by Llamas and Burbano-Elizondo are both conducted within the scope of SuRE (Survey of Regional English) looking into distinct identity markers of local communities. A commonality expressed by all three contributors but not addressed by the editors is that community and thus identity construction is also contingent on the desire for membership with these communities.
The final section successfully determines the place of identity in different social contexts, the so-called macro-sociolinguistics. To achieve this, the contributions move slightly more into the social side of Sociolinguistics. Using narrative analysis, Mullany subscribes to theories of performativity in viewing gendered discourses in the workplace. Preece, Spotti and Van et al. then examine the place of identity within education focusing on college, primary and high school scenarios respectively. Preece also follows theories of performativity but her adherence to positioning in the construction of identity, although admittedly stating identity to be a dynamic process, could be seen as more static than the editors’ asserted wish for focusing on the fluidity of identity. Spotti and Van et al. analyse the identity negotiations of immigrant children with Spotti researching the role identity plays both inside and outside the classroom and Van et al. using discourse analysis to investigate linguistic means of negotiating identity. Both Sallabank’s interesting paper on whether language loss determines loss of identity by studying Guernsey French and White’s discussion of Irish national identity being linked to Irish English rather than Irish could have perhaps better complimented each other if placed contiguous with Suleiman’s article as their collective focus is one of national identity construction and maintenance.

The accounts presented in this volume are varied and rich in content and the authors’ accessible writing styles within a straightforward, clearly presented layout make for a valuable, and easy to follow collection where each chapter can be read for its own merit but contributes to identifying the diverse current tools of and interest areas in sociolinguistic research in identity. Moreover, possible new directions and pathways are illuminated in the multidisciplinary approaches to these topics and the critical analysis of both research tools and theories within the field. This makes the volume interesting not only to applied linguists, but also to researchers from other departments involved in identity studies or indeed as an introduction to the variegated field of sociolinguistic investigation and sets it apart from other more theoretical collections. Additionally, the frequent references to the disciplines of rhetoric, philosophy, performance and anthropology as well as branching away from purely linguistic lines and methods of study are both indicative of the areas Continuum hope to explore in The Advances in Sociolinguistics series as well as a credit to the editors in their desire to present multidisciplinary approaches. However, this in turn emphasises the fact that many major influences within linguistics are selectively being borrowed from other disciplines, suggestive of lacunas within the linguistic society, which we should encourage to be filled by linguistic based cross-departmental researchers. The editors recognise that these studies cannot be generalised and thus hope instead that they will be used to instigate further research. Whilst this achieves
both the editors’ goal and that of Continuum to present a diverse and detailed view of
the Sociolinguistics of Identity, the studies portrayed in the contributions predominantly
occur within English speaking fields or countries. This then additionally impinges on the
generalisable nature of the collection, but, and perhaps more importantly, poses the
question of whether this volume more accurately describes a snapshot of the sociolin-
guistics of Identity within the English speaking arena thus leaving the door open to further,
more internationally implemented reports.

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