



The Social Mind: Language, Ideology, and Social Practice

James Paul Gee

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Stepping behind cognitive science's new theory of "connectionism", Gee formulates a dynamic social theory of mind and meaning. With penetrating analyses, he illustrates how such psychological entities as memories, beliefs, values, and meanings are not formed in isolation but in a social or cultural context that is inherently ideological or political. As he weaves toward a conclusion that shows what socio-culturally situated linguistics would look like and points to some of the implications for human development, education and society inherent in this view of linguistics, Gee persuasively demonstrates how people often construct self-deceptive "stories" that advantage themselves or their group. In the first half of the book, Gee lays the groundwork for the overall theory of language, mind, and society that is developed in the two concluding chapters. He develops a concept of meaning as being rooted in "cultural modes", introduces a connectionist view of the mind/brain, and argues that memory is a social phenomena. Then Gee sketches together a theory of mind and society and the nature of socio-cultural-based psychology. He explicitly displays how language fits within social practices and exemplifies claims about the political and ideological nature of social practices. This is a thought-provoking contribution for courses dealing with discourse, narrative, social linguistics, education, social theory, cognitive science, social cognition, and linguistics in anthropology.

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