

## Preface

Well, this bit which I am writing, called Introduction, is really the er-h'r'm of the book, and I have put it in, partly so as not to take you by surprise, and partly because I can't do without it now. There are some very clever writers who say that it is quite easy not to have an er-h'r'm, but I don't agree with them. I think it is much easier not to have all the rest of the book.

A.A. Milne

The seventh edition of *An Introduction to Language* is dedicated to the memory of our friend, colleague, mentor, and coauthor, Victoria Fromkin. Vicki loved language, and she loved to tell people about it. She found linguistics fun and fascinating, and she wanted every student and every teacher to think so, too. Though this edition is completely rewritten for improved clarity and currency, we have nevertheless preserved Vicki's lighthearted, personal approach to a complex topic, including humorous and pithy quotations from noted authors (A. A. Milne was one of Vicki's favorites). We hope we have kept the spirit of Vicki's love for teaching about language alive in the pages of this book.

The first six editions of *An Introduction to Language* succeeded, with the help of dedicated teachers, in introducing the nature of human language to tens of thousands of students. This is a book that students enjoy and understand, and that professors find effective and thorough. Not only majors in linguistics have benefited from the book's easy-to-read yet comprehensive presentation. Majors in fields as diverse as teaching English as a second language, foreign language studies, general education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology have enjoyed learning about language from this book.

This edition includes new developments in linguistics and related fields that will strengthen its appeal to a wider audience. Much of this information will enable students to gain insight and understanding about linguistic issues and debates appearing in the national media, and will help professors and students stay current with important linguistic research. We hope that it may also dispel certain common misconceptions that people have about language and language use.

The second chapter, "Brain and Language," retains its forward placement in the book because we believe that one can learn about the brain through language, and about the nature of the human being through the brain. This chapter may be read and appreciated without technical knowledge of linguistics. When the centrality of language to human nature is appreciated, students will be motivated to learn more about human language, and about linguistics, because they will be learning more about themselves. As in the previous edition, highly detailed illustrations of MRI and PET scans of the brain are included, and this chapter highlights some of the new results and tremendous progress in the study of neurolinguistics over the past few years. The arguments for the autonomy of

language in the human brain are carefully presented so that the student sees how experimental evidence is applied to support scientific theories.

Chapters 3 and 4, morphology and syntax, have been substantially revised to reflect current thinking on how words and sentences are structured, in particular, with regard to the concept of *head*. Comparison of languages is intended to enhance the student's understanding of the differences among languages as well as the universal aspects of grammar. Nevertheless, the introductory spirit of these chapters is not sacrificed, and students gain a deep understanding of word and phrase structure with a minimum of formalisms, and a maximum of insightful examples and explanations, as always supplemented by quotes, poetry, and humor.

Chapter 7, phonology, is also substantially revised to reflect current paradigms, yet with a greater emphasis on insights through linguistic data accompanied by small amounts of well explicated formalisms, so that the student can appreciate the need for formal theories without experiencing the burdensome details. In this chapter as well as the chapters on morphology and syntax, "how to" sections on language analysis give students the opportunity for hands-on linguistic study. Exercises, many of them new, further increase the student's understanding of how language works.

The most significant revisions and additions to the seventh edition occur in Part 3, "The Psychology of Language." Chapter 8, "Language Acquisition," is rewritten "from the bottom up" to reflect the tremendous progress in our knowledge of how children learn language. Material on the acquisition of non-English languages supplements the generous amount of data already present on English acquisition. Bilingualism is taken up in detail with much new data, as is L2 – the learning of a second language. The arguments for innateness and Universal Grammar that language acquisition provides are exploited to show the student how scientific theories of great import are discovered and supported through observation, experiment, and reason. As in most chapters, American Sign Language (ASL) is discussed and its important role in understanding the biological foundations of language emphasized.

In chapter 9, the section on psycholinguistics is updated to conform to recent discoveries, and the section on computational linguistics has been entirely renovated to reflect progress in machine translation, speech synthesis, speech recognition, and language understanding.

Part 4 is concerned with language in society, including socio- and historical linguistics. Chapter 10 includes material on language variation and the study of ethnic minority and social dialects. Attitudes toward language and how they reflect the views and mores of society are included in this chapter. We establish the scientific basis for discussing such topics as Ebonics (a popular term for dialects of African-American English) and so-called "standard"

languages. Another section on language and sexism reflects a growing concern with this topic.

Chapter 11 on language change includes a greatly expanded section on language extinction, the reasons for it, and what may be done about it. The chapter has also been restructured to improve clarity, and is supplemented with additional exercises and examples of the comparative method.

Chapter 12 on writing systems has additional discussions on writing communication via the Internet, which has a flavor of its own. This chapter should be read by those interested in the teaching of reading, and offers some reasons as to “why Johnny can’t read.”

Terms that appear bold in the text are defined in the revised glossary in the appendix. The glossary has been expanded and improved with more than 600 entries.

The order of presentation of chapters 3 through 7 was once thought to be nontraditional. Our experience, backed by previous editions of the book and the recommendations of colleagues throughout the world, have convinced us that it is easier for the novice to approach the structural aspects of language by first looking at morphology (the structure of the most familiar linguistic unit, the word). This is followed by syntax, the structure of sentences, which is also familiar to many students, as are numerous semantic concepts. We then proceed to the more novel (to students) phonetics and phonology, which students often find daunting. However, the book is written so that individual instructors can present material in the traditional order of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (chapters 6, 7, 3, 4, and 5) without confusion, if they wish.

As in previous editions, the primary concern has been with basic ideas rather than detailed expositions. This book assumes no previous knowledge on the part of the reader. A list of references at the end of each chapter is included to accommodate any reader who wishes to pursue a subject in more depth. Each chapter concludes with a summary and exercises to enhance the student’s interest in and comprehension of the textual material.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals who have sent us suggestions, corrections, criticisms, cartoons, language data, and exercises, all of which we have tried to incorporate in this new edition. We owe special thanks to colleagues who reviewed the manuscript in progress: Jennifer Cole and Rajka Smiljanic, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Molly Diesing, Cornell University; Genevieve Escure, University of Minnesota; Patrick Farrell, University of California-Davis; Elly van Gelderen, Arizona State University; Maurice Holder, University of New Brunswick; Bruce C. Johnson, University of Northern Colorado; Jane Kaplan, Ithaca College; Chin W. Kim, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Elisabeth Kuhn, Virginia Commonwealth University; Seung-Jae

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Robert Rodman  
Nina Hyams