

The Study of Language

Designed for beginners, this best-selling textbook provides a lively introduction to the study of language. Starting from the basics, it provides a solid foundation in all of the essential topics, and introduces the analysis of the key elements of language – sounds, words, structures and meanings. A wide range of fascinating questions are explored, such as how conversation works, how children learn language, why women and men speak differently, and how language varies between regions and social groups.

This third edition has been extensively revised to include new sections on important contemporary issues in language study, including language and culture, African American English, gestures and slang. A comprehensive glossary provides useful explanations of technical terms, and each chapter contains a range of new study questions and research tasks, with suggested answers.

Unrivalled in its popularity, *The Study of Language* is quite simply the best introduction to the field available today.

GEORGE YULE has taught Linguistics at the Universities of Edinburgh, Hawai'i, Louisiana State and Minnesota. He is the author of *Discourse Analysis* (with Gillian Brown, 1983), *Teaching the Spoken Language* (with Gillian Brown, 1983), *Pragmatics* (1996) and *Explaining English Grammar* (1998).

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Preface

In preparing the third edition of this book, I have tried to present an updated survey of what is known about language and also of the methods used by linguists in arriving at that knowledge. There have been many interesting developments in the study of language over the past two decades, but it is still a fact that any individual speaker of a language has a more comprehensive 'unconscious' knowledge of how language works than any linguist has yet been able to describe. Consequently, as you read the following chapters, take a critical view of the effectiveness of the descriptions, the analyses and the generalizations by measuring them against your own intuitions about how your language works. By the end of the book, you should feel that you do know quite a lot about both the internal structure of language (its form) and the varied uses of language in human life (its function), and also that you are ready to ask more of the kinds of questions that professional linguists ask when they conduct their research.

To help you find out more about the issues covered in this book, each chapter ends with a set of Further Readings which will lead you to more detailed treatments than are possible in this introduction. Each chapter also has Study Questions, Research Tasks and Discussion Topics/Projects. The Study Questions are presented simply as a way for you to check that you have understood some of the main points or important terms introduced in that chapter. They should be answered without too much difficulty and an appendix of suggested answers is provided near the end of the book. The set of Research Tasks is designed to give you an opportunity to explore related concepts and types of analysis that go beyond the material presented in the chapter. To help you in these tasks, selected readings are provided on the book's website at <http://www.cambridge.org/yule>. The set of Discussion Topics/Projects provides an opportunity to consider some of the larger issues in the study of language, to think about some of the controversies that arise with certain topics and to try to focus your own opinions on different language-related issues.

The origins of this book can be traced to introductory courses on language taught at the University of Edinburgh, the University of Minnesota and Louisiana State University, and to the suggestions and criticisms of hundreds of students who forced me to present what I had to say in a way they could understand. An early version of the written material was developed for Independent Study students at the University of Minnesota. Later versions have had the benefit of expert advice from a lot of teachers working with diverse groups in different

situations. I am particularly indebted to Professor Hugh Buckingham, Louisiana State University, for sharing his expertise and enthusiasm over many years as a colleague and friend.

For help in creating the first and second editions, I would like to acknowledge my debt to Gill Brown, Keith Brown, Penny Carter, Feride Erkü, Diana Fritz, Kathleen Houlihan, Tom McArthur, Jim Miller, Rocky Miranda, Eric Nelson, Sandra Pinkerton, Rich Reardon, Gerald Sanders, Elaine Tarone and Michele Trufant.

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