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The Study of Language

Fourth edition



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Preface

This new edition

Extensive feedback from instructors during the writing of the fourth edition of *The Study of Language* brought forth suggestions for improvements and some excellent advice – many thanks to all. These suggestions have resulted in:

- a change in the overall organization of the book, with *Writing* moving to Chapter 16.
- revision of the internal organization of some chapters, with a clearer division of the material into main topics and subtopics, with additional topics including new accounts of language origins, text messaging, kinship terms and more than twenty new word etymologies.
- over fifty new Tasks, including thirty that involve data analysis, so that students can apply what they've learned.
- a new online Study Guide www.cambridge.org/yule to help students with those Tasks.

I hope these revisions will make the book easier to read and generally more user-friendly.

To the student

In *The Study of Language* I have tried to present a comprehensive 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. So, 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 then feel that you do know quite a lot about both the internal structure of language (its form) and the varied uses of language in