

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language

Third Edition

This new, thoroughly revised edition of the acclaimed *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* incorporates the major developments in language study which have taken place since the mid 1990s. Two main new areas have been added: the rise of electronic communication in all its current forms from email to tweeting and the crisis affecting the world's languages, of which half are thought to be so seriously endangered that they will die out this century.

- All language statistics have been updated, and additional information provided about their linguistic affiliation.
- All topics involving technology have been revised to take account of recent developments, notably in phonetics, language disability, and computing.
- Maps have been revised to include new countries or country names.
- Special attention has been paid to fast-moving areas such as language teaching and learning.
- The text design has been completely updated with many new illustrations throughout.

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Preface to the First Edition

My purpose in writing this book is to celebrate the existence of human language, and to provide a tribute to those who engage in its study. Its aim is to illustrate the enormous diversity of the world's languages, and the great range, complexity, and beauty of expression that can be encountered in any of them, whether spoken by millions or by hundreds – from the most polished formulations of respected literature to the most routine utterances of everyday conversation. At the same time, I want to convey something of the fascination and value of linguistic research, which has led to innumerable general findings about language structure, development, and use, and which has prompted so many important applications in relation to the problems of the individual and society. The book therefore operates on two levels. It reflects the kind of interest in language history and behaviour that we encounter daily as we argue over the history of a word's meaning or listen in fascination to a young child's early attempts to talk. At the same time, it reflects a deeper level of interest, arising out of our attempt to make sense of what we observe, and to find patterns and principles in it – an interest that can lead to a professional career in linguistic research or in one of the language-related professions, such as language teaching or therapy.

I have certain practical aims also. I hope the book will help promote an informed awareness of the complexity of human language, draw attention to the range of human problems that have a linguistic cause or solution, and emphasize the fact that people have language rights which should not be neglected. In early 1987, in fact [as the first edition of this book was going to press], I received a copy of a plea for a 'Declaration of Individual Linguistic Rights', sponsored by Francisco Gomes de Matos of the Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil. The plea points to the widespread occurrence of linguistic prejudice and discrimination around the world, and to the problems people face when they wish to receive special help in language learning and use. All people have the right to use their mother tongue, to learn a second language, to receive special treatment when suffering from a language handicap ... but in many parts of the world, these rights are absent or inadequately provisioned. Only concentrated public attention on the issues will promote the recognition of such rights, and it is my hope that this encyclopedia will play its part in helping to develop a climate where people will sense the importance of language in the individual and in society, and act accordingly.

I have used the term 'encyclopedia', but not without misgivings: if there were a term for 'embryo encyclopedia', it would be better. The subject of language is truly vast,

and it is possible only to make a start in under 500 pages. In particular, because my background is in linguistics, I am conscious of paying insufficient attention to other traditions of thinking and research, such as in philosophy, psychology, and artificial intelligence. Also, although I write from a linguistic point of view, this book is not an introduction to linguistics: I have stopped short of a discussion of the many approaches to the analysis of language that linguistics provides, and I give few technical details about theoretical differences, hoping that my references will provide sources for those who wish to enquire into these matters further.

This is just one of many apologies scattered throughout the book. Facts about the use of language are extremely difficult to come by, and, when obtained, fall quickly out of date. Language changes rapidly, as do the techniques and theories that scholars devise to study it. On the other hand, few books can have been written with such an optimistic outlook – thanks largely to the backing and enthusiasm of the team of editorial advisors appointed by Cambridge University Press: Charles Ferguson (Stanford University), Victoria A. Fromkin (University of California), Shirley Brice Heath (Stanford University), Dell Hymes (University of Virginia), Stephen Levinson (University of Cambridge), John Marshall (The Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford), Wilga Rivers (Harvard University), Sheldon Rosenberg (University of Illinois), Klaus Scherer (University of Geneva), Roland Sussex (University of Melbourne), Jan Svartvik (Lund University), Michael Twyman (University of Reading), and C. F. and F. M. Voegelin (Indiana University). To know that one's plans and material will be scrutinized by scholars of such eminence is immensely reassuring, and I have benefitted immeasurably from their advice while the book was being written. I am therefore delighted to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to these advisors: it has been a privilege to have their support, and I hope the result does them no disservice. Needless to say, the responsibility for what remains is mine alone.

Finally, it is my pleasant duty to thank members of the Department of Linguistic Science, University of Reading, and of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching, London, for help in researching aspects of the work; the editorial and design staff of the Press, for their invaluable advice during the period of this book's preparation; and, above all, the support and assistance of my wife, Hilary, in helping this project come to fruition.

DAVID CRYSTAL
 Holyhead, March 1987

Preface to the Second Edition

The late 1980s was no time to be writing encyclopedias. I recall, at the end of the revolutionary year of 1989, reflecting on the remarkable political changes which had taken place, and gloomily wondering how to cope with the hundreds of places in this book where alterations would need to be made. In particular, social developments of such magnitude wreak havoc with language statistics: the figures for old countries are immediately out-of-date, and new countries usually have more on their mind than the task of publishing linguistic data. However, help proved to be not far away, in the form of the many encyclopedia projects in linguistics which came to fruition in the early or mid 1990s, and which contained the latest data on the languages of the world. Their findings, along with 1990s census data, where available, have helped inform the relevant sections of this new edition, especially in Part II, Part IX, and Appendix III.

In addition to a thorough socio-political revision of the text, I have felt it necessary to add extra sections in relation to three topics where progress in the last decade has been substantial. I have added an extra spread on speech synthesis and recognition to Chapter 26; a spread on the world's endangered languages to Chapter 61; and a spread on natural language processing to Chapter 65. The typography section has also been thoroughly revised. New proposals on the classification of some language families have been incorporated, largely following the frame of reference presented in the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (ed. William Bright, 1992). The re-setting of the whole book in a new typeface has permitted the redesign of several pages, and allowed text to be added on a number of fresh topics, such as conversational

misunderstandings, principles and parameters, and Klingon.

The availability of full colour has given me access to a much wider range of pictorial material than in the first edition: all the pictures in the book have been freshly researched, and most are new. This has meant, for example, that I could use illustrations in which colour is functionally integral, such as in images of cortical language processing, television sub-titles, and typographic design; and in general, the greater realism and depth of detail which a colour print can provide is a significant improvement, especially in the sections on phonetics and linguistic geography. All maps have been redrawn, and – with the benefit of four-colour printing – language information is now presented far more clearly than was possible using the two-colour shading of the first edition.

I have several people to thank for their help in updating parts of this new edition, especially Doug Arnold, Andrew Boag, Mark Gresham, Bill Hardcastle, and Keith Johnson. The in-house editorial team at Cambridge University Press have, as ever, been wonderfully supportive – Adrian du Plessis, Clare Orchard, and Geoff Staff – along with picture researcher Paula Granados. Many users of the first edition, too numerous to name individually, have taken the trouble to send in suggestions for improvement, and I have also benefitted greatly from the reviews the book received when it first appeared. To everyone I am most grateful.

DAVID CRYSTAL
 Holyhead, February 1996

Preface to the Third Edition

It is remarkable to see how much the study of language has evolved during the last ten years. We seem to be entering a new era of linguistic study, heralded in the 1990s by the emergence of two themes which were but minimally represented in the second edition: endangered languages and the Internet. Today, both have become established areas of linguistic investigation and have attracted a growing body of research, and they thus provide the main areas of expansion for this new edition. Chapter 61 contains a new eight-page section presenting the issues surrounding endangered languages, with associated extra material on language typology and diversity in Chapters 14 and 59. Chapter 63 contains a new four-page section presenting electronically mediated communication, with associated extra material on pragmatics in Chapter 22.

Virtually every page of the book has had to be revised in some way. New technology has motivated considerable revision of such areas as phonetics, speech recognition, neurolinguistics, and language teaching – including the replacement of several pictures, for nothing is more off-putting than a view of outdated computer equipment. Some topics, such as pidgins and creoles, language typology, and sign languages, have required a

great deal of rewriting, in view of the conceptual (and often terminological) developments which have taken place. New census data from the early 2000s has been incorporated. And the entire demographic dimension to the book has been revised, notably in Appendix III.

I am most grateful to those who gave me much-needed advice on the directions that a new edition should take, or provided new pictorial material: Paul Boersma, Bernard Comrie, Bill Hardcastle, Nicholas Ostler, Peter Patrick, Rachel Sutton-Spence, Catherine Walter, and Yorick Wilks. I am especially indebted to Jan Wohlgemuth, who did the primary research for the sections on linguistic demography. My thanks are due also to the in-house team at Cambridge University Press – Kate Brett, Karl Howe, Jenny Landor, Kay McKechnie, and Steph Thelwell – and Jo Barker, Chris McLeod, and Sue Nicholas at Hart McLeod.

The year 2008–9 was a good year to be working on a revised edition, for it was the International Year of Languages – an event I celebrate in Chapter 59. May there be many more.

DAVID CRYSTAL
 Holyhead, January 2010