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Introducing Linguistics

Everything we do involves language. Assuming no prior knowledge, this book offers students a contemporary introduction to the study of language. Each thought-provoking chapter is accessible to readers from a variety of fields, and is helpfully organized across six parts: sound; structure and meaning; language typologies and change; language and social aspects; language acquisition; and language, cognition, and the brain. The book's companion website also offers three brief chapters on language and computers; animal communication; and dialectal varieties of English outside of North America.

The chapters feature illustrative tables, figures, and maps, along with three types of pedagogical boxes (Linguistic Tidbits; Pause and Reflect; and Eyes on World Languages) that break up the text, contextualize information, and provide colorful accents that give real data from languages across the globe. Key words are bolded and defined in a glossary at the end of the book, while end-of-chapter summaries and practice exercises reinforce the key points discussed.

Joyce Bruhn de Garavito is a Professor Emeritus of Hispanic Studies and Linguistics at the University of Western Ontario and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Ottawa. She is the recipient of the Western University Pleva award for excellence in teaching and the Graham and Gail Wright Distinguished Scholar award. Her research interests include theoretical linguistics (syntax, language acquisition, Romance languages); languages in contact (language change, bilingualism, Amerindian languages); and applied linguistics (language teaching, methodology).

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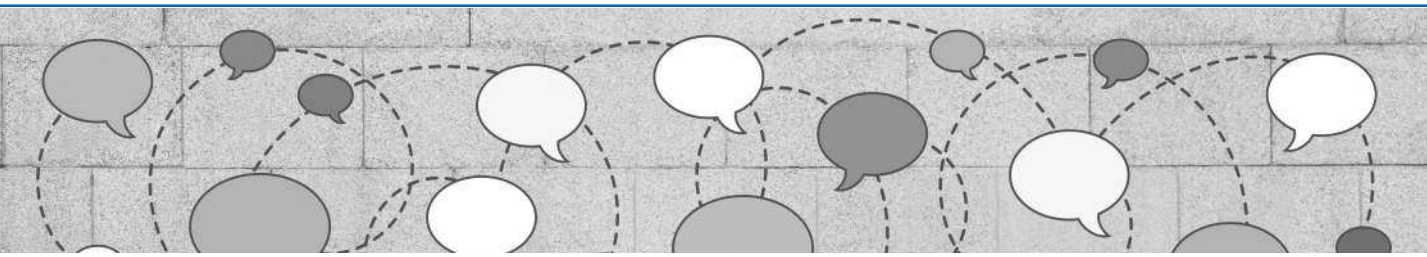

Introducing Linguistics

Theoretical and Applied Approaches

Edited by
JOYCE BRUHN DE GARAVITO
University of Western Ontario

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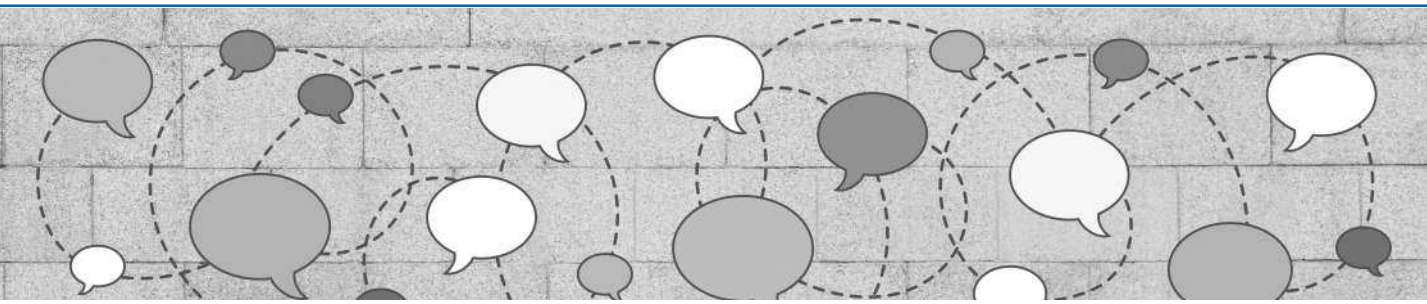

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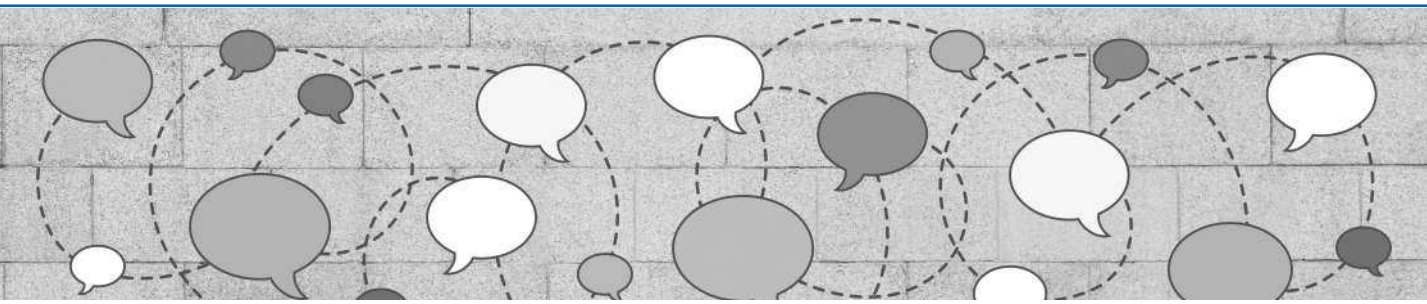

PREFACE

Have you ever wondered how you learned your language as a baby? Perhaps a better question is whether you remember doing so at all. How is it possible – and more difficult – to learn another language later in life (and why is this second language often less 'native-like' than the mother tongue)? How do we use language creatively to negotiate meanings in different stages of our life? You may not realize it, but language is involved in almost everything we do. It truly is what separates us from other animals that have far less sophisticated ways of communicating compared to humans. *Linguistics* – the study of language – is interested in these and many other related questions.

Imagine that you are in a crowded metro in a country where you do not speak the local language. There are many people around you speaking their language and since you don't understand it, for the most part, you tune it out. After all, why would you try to listen in on people's conversations if you understand nothing? But imagine that all of a sudden someone far away, but still within hearing distance, says "You're kidding!" in a language that you speak. Chances are, you will immediately turn your attention towards this individual. Why is this? Is it because you hear strings of sounds that you recognize? Maybe. Is it because you hear something different from everything else being spoken? Maybe but probably not, or everyone else would also turn their attention. Is it because "You're kidding" may trigger an emotional or heated response that could provide some entertainment that is worth eavesdropping on? Again, maybe. Is it because language is part of who you are and as a human, you are naturally drawn to those who share the same language? Linguists, in addition to numerous other issues, are interested in situations such as this in order to better understand humans and language.

Target Audience

This book is not only intended for individuals studying linguistics, perhaps as a major program or elective in their university, but it is also geared towards those who are interested in language and communication in general. In other words, the book assumes no

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prior knowledge of linguistics. To this end, we have built a comprehensive introductory textbook on linguistics that we hope will appeal to the widest audience possible.

Structure and Contents

The book contains 15 in-print chapters and three brief chapters that are available on the book's companion website. **Part 1: Introduction** includes *Chapter 1: Introducing Linguistics*, which contextualizes important foundations of modern linguistics. It presents the development of the field and offers insight on the importance of studying linguistics. You will also read about some common misconceptions about linguistics and linguists.

In **Part 2: Sound**, *Chapter 2: Phonetics* studies how sounds are articulated using our speech-producing system (i.e., the vocal cords, tongue, lips, etc.). You will learn about the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), a universal way of transcribing all human speech sounds. The chapter also introduces you to the acoustic properties of sounds, for example, the difference between vowels and consonants and some of the processes we use to make speaking easier. In *Chapter 3: Phonology*, you will learn about sound patterns and contrasts in specific languages. The chapter begins by defining a phoneme, or individual sound. You will then read about more detailed properties of sounds, both at the individual sound level and within syllables. You will see that analyzing larger units such as syllables and words is also part of what phonology studies. In fact, many rules governing phonetic change rely on syllables and elements such as stress for their application.

The first chapter in **Part 3: Structure and Meaning** is *Chapter 4: Morphology*, which familiarizes you with the study of word structure. You will read about the differences between simple and complex words in addition to how words are formed through different types of word formation processes. You will also learn about compound words and other ways of constructing words. *Chapter 5: Syntax* introduces you to phrase and sentence structure. You will first study the classification of words (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and how certain classes of words can naturally form what are known as *constituents*. The chapter then shows you how constituents are merged together to form phrases and sentences. You will also learn about how constituents may undergo movement in order to do or mean something different (e.g., *Bert does speak German* vs. *Does Bert speak German?*). Finally, *Chapter 6: Semantics* acquaints you with the study of meaning. The chapter begins by comparing and contrasting different types of meaning in language. You will read about how meaning is captured in words and how they are related to each other based on meaning. The chapter also describes how we put together word meanings to come up with phrase meaning and how syntax is used to create meaning. Finally, you will learn about some current theories on how meaning is accomplished in language.

Part 4: Language Typologies and Change begins with *Chapter 7: The Classification of Languages*, in which you will come to an understanding of the historical relationships

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among languages and linguistic typologies. The overarching question of the chapter is how languages can be classified. To answer this question, you will read about the genetic and typological classifications of languages. You will also learn about linguistic typology and change along with some typological similarities that apply to all world languages. Following this, *Chapter 8: Historical Linguistics*, will introduce you to how languages develop and change over time. In doing so, you will review types of language changes with respect to sound, structure, and meaning. You will have the opportunity to compare current language forms with past forms by applying methods such as comparative reconstruction. The chapter also talks about the reasons for language change and how we can gain knowledge of unattested languages.

Opening **Part 5: Language and Social Aspects** is *Chapter 9: Sociolinguistics*, in which you will read about how language functions in society. The chapter begins by defining important concepts that are used in studying language variation. You will discover factors that influence how distinct groups of people speak and the different ways they change their manner of speaking according to social needs. You will also learn about language variation in bilingual societies. In *Chapter 10: Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, you will become acquainted with language, meaning, and society, along with the different genres and styles of discourse. You will also learn about how and why spoken and written language are coherent. Finally, in *Chapter 11: Writing Systems*, you will read about the emergence of writing in human languages, how it is used, and how it has changed since its origins.

Part 6: Language Acquisition begins with *Chapter 12: First Language Acquisition*. In this chapter you will read about issues such as how phonology, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and communicative development occur in a first language (L1). You will also read about what can affect L1 acquisition such as a critical period for language acquisition, innate knowledge, and general cognition. The chapter concludes with a discussion on atypical language development, bilingual L1 acquisition, and some of the methods used to study language in infants and children. In *Chapter 13: Second Language Acquisition*, you will compare and contrast L1 and second language (L2) acquisition, read about how sounds, words, and structure develop in an L2, and learn about teaching pedagogies that are used in L2 learning. You will see that learning an L2 is affected by many internal and external factors (e.g., age, gender, motivation, etc.). The chapter ends by describing some of the frameworks and methods that are used in L2 research.

In **Part 7: Language, Cognition, and the Brain**, *Chapter 14: Psycholinguistics* introduces you to how language is processed and represented in the mind. You will also read about how sounds, words, and sentences are processed and you will consider innovative methods used in psycholinguistic research. The chapter ends by presenting how the bilingual mind processes more than one language. *Chapter 15: Neurolinguistics* explores language and the brain. The chapter begins with a look at the anatomy of the human brain. You will then read about the brain areas that are most involved in language. The chapter also reviews the methods and technologies used to study the brain, including lesion studies and autopsies, hemispheric connections, neuroimaging

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techniques, and measures of electric and magnetic fields. You will also read about language impairment from neurological trauma such as non-fluent and fluent aphasias, acquired dyslexia, and acquired dysgraphia, along with some of the techniques used in the rehabilitation of language(s) in impaired individuals.

Finally, **Part 8: Brief Chapters** is available on the book's accompanying website. *Chapter 16: Animal Communication and Language*, begins with a discussion on the difference between language and communication. In doing so, you will see that the information conveyed in animal communication is different, yet similar in many ways, to that of humans. You will also read about how we can decode animal signals and how research is conducted on animal communication using prairie dogs and honeybees as examples. *Chapter 17: Computational Linguistics*, will offer you insight on how humans and computers interact through language. The chapter begins by defining natural (i.e., human) languages and languages of computers. You will read about the effects of language ambiguity on computation, how computation is done, and which aspects of human languages are of most interest to computational linguists. *Chapter 18: English Varieties Outside of North America*, will broaden your perspective of how English came to be a world language historically. You will learn about the types of English that are spoken outside of North America and understand how Englishes are differentiated from native-, second-, to foreign-language varieties.

The book's accompanying website also includes additional information to enrich the material found in the main chapters for those of you who wish to satisfy your curiosity about language a bit more. For example, in relation to *Chapter 1: Introducing Linguistics*, on this site you will find a short section on different approaches to how language evolved. In the online materials for *Chapter 10: Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, you can read about how language helps us distinguish between old and new information. Complementary materials for *Chapter 12: First Language Acquisition*, include different methodologies for studying how children acquire pragmatics. And so on.

Linguistics Intersects with Many Other Disciplines

As you will see, linguistics is pertinent and complimentary to many (if not all) fields of study. Here are just a few examples – in no particular order – of how other fields and professionals can learn from linguistics:

- Speech and language pathologists, along with professionals working with individuals with speech impairments, can learn a great deal from phonetics (Chapter 2), phonology (Chapter 3), psycholinguistics (Chapter 14), and neurolinguistics (Chapter 15), to inform and improve assessment and treatment for their patients.
- Sociologists, anthropologists, community service personnel, and non-profit organizations can benefit from learning about how language works in society, how it functions and varies across cultures, how it shapes who we are as individuals

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(Chapter 9: Sociolinguistics), and in the case of English, how it varies in other places (Chapter 18: English Varieties Outside of North America).

- Business professionals and individuals working in communication studies and global relations may learn important things about human interaction such as appropriateness, politeness, and discourse patterns (Chapter 10: Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis) and meaning in general (Chapter 6: Semantics). These individuals will learn that these issues do not always transfer across other languages and cultures.
- Historians, geographers, and archeologists, among others, can gain a deeper understanding of the historical context of language, including language evolution (Chapter 8: Historical Linguistics), the emergence of writing in human languages (Chapter 11: Writing Systems), and the historical relationships among languages (Chapter 7: The Classification of Languages).
- Biologists, zoologists, and those working in the natural sciences can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of human language and communication by comparing how this works among other animal species (Chapter 16: Animal Communication and Language).
- Cognitive psychologists, medical professionals, and health care providers can inform their practices by learning about how the mind processes languages (Chapter 14: Psycholinguistics) and how the brain stores languages – which can be greatly affected if trauma occurs to certain brain areas (Chapter 15: Neurolinguistics).
- Developmental psychologists, teachers, educational administrators, and language policy makers can sharpen their understanding of how infants and children (Chapter 12: First Language Acquisition) and adults (Chapter 13: Second Language Acquisition) develop language. In turn, this can inform theories of human development across the lifespan, teaching practices, and important policies on language.
- Individuals working in math or computer science will appreciate the computational nature of language. If these individuals work on tasks such as equation building and computer programming or modeling, they will enjoy learning about how words are built (Chapter 4: Morphology), how sentences are structured (Chapter 5: Syntax), and how computers and humans communicate with one another (Chapter 17: Computational Linguistics).
- And much more!

Pedagogies and Special Features

There are several features that make this book the ideal tool to introduce you to the field of linguistics. Here are just a few of these that you will have at your fingertips:

- Every so often, you will come to a *Pause and Reflect* box which asks that you briefly stop for a moment to contemplate what you have just learned. These boxes often ask you a question based on your personal experience.

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- *Eyes on World Languages* boxes introduce you to how languages (other than English) work across the globe. These boxes, which are related to the text around them, encourage you to think about how different or similar languages function compared to the one(s) you speak.
- *Exercises* at the end of the chapter provide a series of problems designed to help you understand and apply the core concepts.
- To pique your interest about linguistics, *Linguistics Tidbits* boxes offer you situations reminiscent of the question "Did you know that … ?".
- The book includes a complete *Glossary* of the main terms used in the text. These terms are bolded throughout the text to make you aware of their importance.
- *Answers* to *Pause and Reflect* boxes are found at the end of each chapter.
- *Answers* to *Exercises* are available with instructor access on the book's accompanying website.

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