1 Introduction to the Linguistic Study of Language

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WHO THESE BOOKS ARE FOR

This is the first of two books for teachers about the English language. We believe that all teachers, not just English teachers, share the responsibility for helping students develop their abilities to speak, read, and write. Students must learn to communicate appropriately about math, chemistry, history, and every other school subject. Teaching students these skills necessarily extends across the curriculum. Thus, while one part of our intended audience is English K-12 teachers, we have prepared this book and its companion with teachers (and student teachers) from all disciplines in mind.

HOW TO USE THESE BOOKS

In these books, we use certain typographical marks to help you focus on key points. Important terms are bolded. You can find their definitions in the text and in the glossary. Examples are noted in italics or are separated from the text.

WHAT THESE BOOKS ARE ABOUT

These books are about language, but specifically about the English language

and its uses. The first book is about the grammar of English; the second is about related topics, including language variation (e.g., dialects), language learning, English spelling, and the history of the English language.

Generally, when people hear the word "grammar," they immediately think of "correct" or "incorrect" and "good" or "bad" language. Thinking about language in this way is said to be **prescriptive**. English has a long tradition of judging some expressions as "correct" and others as "incorrect." For example, expressions such as *We was* are viewed as "incorrect," even though a great many people use them. The "correct" version is said to be *We were.*

Counter-posed to the prescriptive tradition is the **descriptive** one, which developed in linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. This approach is concerned with describing and understanding the linguistic behavior of a community, without judging it. From a descriptive point of view, *We was* is unobjectionable when used by a member of a community of speakers who characteristically use this expression. However, it is unacceptable to the wider English speaking community in, for example, formal speaking and writing.

The point of view presented in these books is essentially descriptive. However, except where the topic is explicitly about linguistic variation, we describe the form of English used in relatively formal public speaking and writing. We recognize that language changes, and that consequently even the prescriptive rules have to change. We believe that these rules should be descriptions of the best accepted practices of the day rather than impositions (often irrelevant) on the language and its use.

COMMUNICATION

Communication occurs when one person acts with the intention of influencing the mind of another, for example, by getting him/her to entertain some idea, and when that other person recognizes the first person's intention to influence his/her mind. Clearly, it is possible to influence another person's mind unintentionally; for instance, if I (unintentionally) sneeze, I might prompt you to think that I might have a cold. However, this is a rather different kind of event than one in which I intentionally sneeze and you recognize that my sneeze was intentional. From my first (unintentional) sneeze, you cannot infer that I am trying to get you to think I have a cold; from my second (intentional) sneeze, you can infer that I am trying to get you to think something or another, perhaps that I have a cold.

Imagine that we have gone to a party together and that we want to coordinate our leaving. So, before we get to the party I say to you, "I'll pre-

tend to sneeze when I'm ready to go home," and you agree to interpret my sneeze in this way. When I sneeze at the party you can infer that I sneezed intentionally and interpret my sneeze as indicating my desire to leave.

For this communication to succeed two elements must be in place: first, the assumption that I intend to influence you in some way, and second, our agreement about the meaning of my intentional sneeze. There is nothing in the nature of a sneeze that requires it to mean "Let's go home." We could have agreed that it was to mean, "It's safe to slip upstairs to steal the host's jewelry." By specifying a meaning for a sneeze, we have created a little code, a sort of miniscule language.

LANGUAGE

Fortunately, we cannot read each others' minds. So, if we want to allow someone access to what we are thinking, we must provide them with clues that they can perceive. Language is a system that connects thoughts, which can not be heard, seen, or touched, with sounds, letters, manual signs, or tactile symbols (e.g., Braille) which can. In this way, one person's private ideas may be communicated to another person. For example, imagine that I want to communicate to you my idea that my study needs to be tidied up. You can't see, hear, touch, taste, or otherwise perceive that idea; it's locked away in my mind. To communicate it to you I have to cast it in a form that you can perceive—typically in spoken, visual, or tactile form—that is systematically connected to the idea, for example, the sentence, *My study needs to be tidied up*. Without this perceivable expression, you cannot know that I have an idea to communicate; without the systematic connection between the idea and the form of the expression, you cannot know which idea I want to communicate. So, language is a code that systematically connects private thoughts with public expressions. These books are about the systems we use to connect private ideas to public activities.

Language has been a major topic of research for well over two centuries. Linguistic research intersects with anthropology, biology, computer science, history, human development, literature, philosophy, politics, psychology, as well as reading and writing.

DISCOURSE

When we communicate we engage in **discourse**; that is, we deploy language with the purpose of providing our audiences with clues about how we want to influence them.

All discourse takes place in context; that is, the producer of a piece of discourse (speaker/writer) purposefully deploys, at some time and in some

place, clues about his or her intention which are to be interpreted by their intended recipient(s) (audience). The clues have, generally, been selected with that audience, in that time and place, and with those purposes in mind.

Some scholars argue that because different discourse situations require different patterns of communicative practice, we must speak of **discourses** rather than of discourse (Gee 1992, 1996). We have, for instance, the discourse in which we are currently engaged—the discourse of linguistics, which differs from the discourse of literary study, which differs from the discourse of chemical engineering, which differs from the discourse of history, and so on. A student who aims to be a practitioner in a field must master the ways in which practitioners in that field communicate with each other about topics in the field. Recognizing these specialized communicative practices has given rise to the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement.

TEXT

When people communicate, they produce **texts**. Texts always occur in some **medium**, which may be auditory, visual, tactile, or some combination of these. Texts also always occur in some **channel**, that is, the environment through which the medium travels from the text's producer(s) to its receiver(s). For ordinary face-to-face conversation, the medium is the air, which is set in motion by the producer and whose motions affect the ears of the receiver(s). Communication by telephone involves at least two channels—the air between the speaker's mouth and the phone, the mechanical and electronic devices that connect the speaker's and receiver's phones, and the air between the receiver's phone and his/her ear. Texts may incorporate non-linguistic elements such as pictures, diagrams, music, and the like.

GENRE

A **genre** is a communicative category. Genres differ from each other in participants, forms, and purposes. Texts come in genres; for example, a Shakespearean sonnet is a different type of text from a business letter, which is a different type of text from a casual conversation.

Communicative acts come in genres, too. The sales pitch of a car salesman differs from an end-of-term class presentation, which differs from texting a party invitation to a friend.

The various discourses require their own specific genres. For example, the discourse of creative writing in English includes the genres of the short story, the novel, and poetry (which includes such sub-genres as the lyric and the dramatic monologue). The discourse of business includes the annual report, various kinds of advertisements, and business letters.

IDEOLOGY

Many scholars stress the power of discourse and language to influence speakers' perceptions and conceptualizations of their worlds, and to create and maintain the structures of their societies. Educators interested in language emphasize its power to create and maintain **ideologies**, i.e., beliefs about the ways in which goods are distributed in society. Goods are "anything that the people in the society generally believe are beneficial to have or harmful not to have, whether this be life, space, time, 'good' schools, 'good' jobs, wealth, status, power, control, or whatever" (Gee, 1996: 21).

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

Language is central to education: it is the **means** by which educational content is communicated; it is an **object** of study; it is an object of **beliefs** that are important in education; it is a key element of students' **identities**; it poses potential **problems** in education, largely because of the beliefs we have about it; and it is a valuable **resource** for those who know how to make use of it.

Language is a *means of education* in that it is the primary medium of communication between students and teachers and between students and textbooks.

Language is an *object of education* because it is the material out of which texts are woven, and because language itself is the object of study in writing and speaking courses. We focus on language as we learn to edit our essays and speeches. We develop our vocabularies and learn the meanings, uses, and conventional spellings of words. We learn to control the genres required for various disciplines and the specific characteristics expected in those genres, for example, personal essays, academic papers of various sorts, business letters, reports, and magazine articles. Language is also an object of study in so far as we develop our skills in using it to communicate, to acquire knowledge from lectures and books, to integrate new information with old, to replace false beliefs with new true ones, and to increase or decrease our estimates of the likelihood that some belief we hold is true.

It is important to note here that students who are learning English as a second language labor under a double burden, because English is simultaneously both the means and an object of their education.

Exercise

When asked what she thought was the most important aspect of learning English as a second language, a Japanese student replied: "Knowing

many vocabularies." What do you think she meant? Is her expression an acceptable piece of English? How would you change it so it retains her apparent meaning and is acceptable? Why would you make that particular change? Is (your understanding of) her assertion true?

Language is also an *object of our beliefs*. Many people believe that some forms of English are good and others bad; that some languages are beautiful and others ugly; that some languages are limited in what they can express when compared to languages such as English; that people who speak certain varieties are uneducated, perhaps stupid, and unworthy of certain types of work. Beliefs like these constitute ideologies about language. Some ideologies are liberating and others quite oppressive. Whether liberating or oppressive, they must become objects of critical awareness for teachers and of critical discussion for students (Kress 1985; Fairclough 1989, 1992).

Language also represents one of the *key elements of our students' social, cultural, and personal identities*. Writing explores values our students may not be able to explore otherwise. As their writing improves, the range and sophistication of these identities increases.

Teachers have potentially powerful effects on students' lives. Our response to our students' language will influence their attitudes. Young children have a fascination with language and almost no inhibitions about it. Adults, in contrast, typically display considerable anxiety about their language. They often have "strongly negative attitudes towards their native speech pattern" (Labov 1972: 117). This anxiety is known as **linguistic insecurity**. This insecurity does not develop naturally; it is the consequence of repeated experiences in which their native speech patterns are disparaged, often by teachers (who should know better). This problem is particularly acute for students who are not native speakers of English, or who do not speak the variety of the language regarded as "correct."

Exercise

1. How do you feel about your ability as a singer? Would you be willing to sing Madonna's "Love Profusion" in front of your class? (It's on her *American Life* album, if you want to practice beforehand.) What experiences with singing have formed your attitude? What attitudes about singing do children have? What light does this shed on linguistic insecurity?

2. How many words do you have in your vocabulary? Consider first your **active** vocabulary, i.e., words you use regularly in speaking and writing, such as *often*. Then estimate your **passive** vocabulary, i.e., words that you recognize and understand, but which don't come readily to mind when you want them, for example, *prestidigitation*. Estimates based on objective study appear at the end of this chapter.

Language is *a potential problem* to the extent that it—or our beliefs about it—impedes students' learning. If we believe that students who speak English with a Latino accent, or who speak Black English (a.k.a. "Ebonics"), will be unable to keep up in our classes, then very likely they will not, because teachers' expectations strongly affect students' success in school. Because teachers respond to students' language on many levels, they must develop a critical awareness of their own linguistic preferences, prejudices, and beliefs—everyone has these beliefs, even linguists. They must also be able to critically evaluate textbooks, dictionaries, style manuals, computerized style analyzers, and newspaper articles on language, because these also embody assumptions about language, many of them just plain wrong, often destructively so.

Language is *a potential resource for teaching critical thinking*. We can evaluate our attitudes about other languages and other dialects and their speakers; we can collect linguistic data, observe its patterns, and articulate those patterns as hypotheses which we can then test; we can evaluate the ways we talk about language for their precision, and come to appreciate the value of precision in language use generally. Language data for analysis is very readily available. Students can collect their own data from bumper stickers, license plates, ads, poems—whatever. Schools (or the internet) can provide computerized collections of authentic spoken and written texts (**corpora**) along with computer programs to analyze them (**concordancers**). Because the linguistic study of language is fundamentally scientific, studying language in this way can provide us and our students with an understanding and appreciation of scientific methods.

Exercise

1. Write a brief essay on at least two of the ways in which language is an element in education.

2. In your college library, consult the journals *Linguistics and Literature*,

Style, and *Linguistics and Education.* Report back to the class on (a) the types of topics covered in each journal and (b) one article that interested you.

3. What do you understand by the term "grammar"?

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT LANGUAGE

Clearly, teachers must know about reading and writing, as well as about teaching their disciplines. But why should they learn about language? One answer is that teachers should have a well-developed critical understanding of at least some modern thinking about the nature of language and its roles in education because reading, writing, and all subject matters crucially depend on language. Good craftspeople always understand their materials, and as language is the raw material of the discourses of all disciplines, teachers should understand its nature.

Second, all modern approaches to reading and writing—cultural, feminist, Marxist, post-modernist, psychological—accord language a central place. Third, because the linguistic study of language is quite different in its approaches, goals, and methods from the approaches to the study of reading or writing, it complements those approaches. Fourth, societal attitudes to language (teachers', students', and parents') can profoundly affect students' learning and performance.

One of our goals is to enable you to **think critically** about language and the claims of those who write about it (including ours). Critical thinking has many facets, including creating and evaluating arguments, reasoning from premises to conclusions, and detecting covert claims in arguments. In language study, we think critically when we determine whether a grammar, style manual, or dictionary is appropriate for our students, or whether a linguistic claim (e.g., "double negatives make a positive") has any validity.

Exercise

Is it valid to say that double negatives make a positive in English? What evidence can you muster for your decision? How valid is your evidence?

Critical thinking is important in any discipline, but it is of particular importance in reading and writing. To be able to read in any discipline, students

must know how to accurately interpret the language of texts in that discipline and to be able to recreate their authors' meanings. Both of these tasks require, at a minimum, knowing the discipline's technical terms. Some disciplines may require readers to be knowledgeable about further aspects of the language. Literature students, for instance, must be able to understand language made difficult by archaisms, rhetorical figures, complex grammar, and willful grammatical and semantic violations (Dillon, 1978).

When writing, students think critically when they analyze their personal preconceptions and biases, when they assess the relevance and effectiveness of their ideas, and when they decide on the best linguistic formulation of those ideas for their intended audiences.

The ability to think critically about language is particularly needed now, because the school grammar tradition has generally become quite uninformed about research into current English discourse practices. The responsibility for this situation lies partly with linguists themselves. We have not been successful in our efforts to educate the public about language. However, the greatest share of the responsibility lies with institutions, journalists, and teachers who have vigorously defended an ultra-conservative *status quo*, who know little if anything about language, and who often misconstrue what linguists have to say about it. Many believe, for instance, that linguists claim that "anything goes in English these days." Nothing could be farther from the truth, as we will show in our chapter on Conceptions of Language.

STANDARD ENGLISH

Learning to read and write is partly a matter of linguistic development, i.e., the growth in a student's ability to communicate appropriately in an increasingly broad range of circumstances. Teachers who concern themselves with the linguistic development of their students typically view their role as twofold: (a) to promote their students' ability to speak, read, and write in their disciplines, and (b) to develop their students' ability to write in **Standard English** (SE), the variety of English generally expected in formal communication in various disciplines.

Exercise

1. Where around the world is English spoken? In what kinds of circumstances? For what kinds of purposes? Make lists from your own general knowledge before you consult sources such as Bernard Comrie's *The World's Major Languages;* David Crystal's *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language;* Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah's *International English: A*

Guide to the Varieties of Standard English; and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) website at http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=ENG (SIL is a Christian Bible translation organization.)

2. Why are things standardized? What would the consequences be if electrical outlets were not standardized throughout the US?

3. Consider the expressions We was and We were. Which is Standard English and which is not? How do you think that one became standard while the other did not? What do YOU think about expressions such as I ain't never been there, We was waiting for the ambulance, and the speakers who use them? Be honest.

4. Select a technical expression (from any discipline) that you believe all of your students should know and know how to use properly. Paraphrase that expression in non-technical English. Do the technical expression and its non-technical paraphrase have exactly the same meanings?

GRAMMAR

You probably answered exercise 3 on page 10 by saying that "grammar" tells us which expressions are correct. You would, of course, have meant "prescriptive grammar." However, linguists add at least two other interpretations to the word. First, they use it to refer to the knowledge that a speaker or writer of a language must have in order to be able to use the language at all. Second, they use it to refer to any attempt to describe that knowledge. We will return to these issues in the next chapter when we discuss prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language study more thoroughly. It is important, when we speak about "grammar," that we are clear, to ourselves and our audiences, which meaning of "grammar" we intend.

This first book is about the grammar of English. Some of our readers will be required to teach grammar classes *per se*; others will use information about English grammar while teaching composition; and still others will use it while teaching writing-intensive classes across the curriculum. It is important to note that grammar refers only to a part of language, and that these books deal with language, not just grammar. We believe that a teacher's knowledge of language is far more broadly relevant than just knowledge of "grammar."

It is also important to recognize that teaching "grammar" is highly controversial. To get a sense of the arguments, we recommend that you read

the relevant articles in *English Journal* 1996: 85.7 and 2003: 92.3, as well as other NCTE publications such as *Grammar Alive: A Guide for Teachers* (Haussamen et al 2003) and *Code Switching: Teaching Standard English in Urban Classrooms* (Wheeler and Swords 2006). You might also browse Freeman and Freeman (2004) and Honegger (2005). Neither you nor we can predict what you will believe about language, grammar, and the teaching of either by the time you have read these books. However, we do know that in discussions about how to teach writing, you will hear arguments that teaching grammar "out of context" does not improve students' writing. (Generally what is meant by "grammar" in those discussions is the set of prescriptive conventions for speaking and writing Standard English.) Certainly there is a large body of research going back more than a century purporting to support this position. However, we repeat, these books are not just about grammar; they are about language, including how grammar fits into language. It is as important for teachers to know about language as it is to know about their subject matter. A teacher who knows nothing about language is a cyclist without wheels. Worse, a teacher who knows nothing about language is a chemist who knows (and cares) nothing about the environmental consequences of the substances he or she creates.

Our approach to the study of language is heavily influenced by the results of recent linguistic research and methods. This allows us to tie our discussion to critical thinking, literature, Writing Across the Curriculum, and composition studies, as well as to philosophy and the social, psychological, neurological, and computer sciences (see Traugott and Pratt 1980 as well as journals like *English Journal* and *Style*).

Most of this book deals with English grammar. Aside from the fact that the general public expects teachers to have a mastery of grammar (by which is usually meant prescriptive grammar), you will probably be expected to teach the subject in one way or another. We do not suggest that you use this book as a syllabus. It contains too much material and is not geared to a junior or senior high-school audience. Nonetheless, in spite of the amount of material it covers, it's merely a good basis for continuing your study of language. We hope that you will find the analytic and critical methods of exploring language used in the books to be more productive and interesting than the more conventional handbook approach—exposition plus drill-and-practice.

More importantly, we hope that you will present to your students the broader conceptions about language that are expressed in these books. These conceptions are presented initially in our chapter on Conceptions of Language, but are developed in various ways in other chapters.

OTHER REASONS FOR STUDYING AND TEACHING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Besides its importance in the development of critical thinking skills, there are many other reasons for studying language. You might want to know about language variation ("dialects" of various sorts), about how languages change over time, about the history of English, about the standardization of languages, about how languages are learned, about language disorders, about the relationships between language and culture or society, or about how computers are programmed to understand or produce language. These are all to one degree or another relevant to teachers and we deal with many of them in these books.

Deciding what should be included in books like these is remarkably difficult. We have followed the guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) about what English teachers should know, and we depended on the research on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). Nonetheless, because such a huge amount is known about language generally, and about English in particular, and because (as in any area of vigorous intellectual activity) there are many competing approaches to these topics, it would be impossible to synopsize them all here. In the first book, we present a grammar of English which addresses traditional topics and concerns, but which is influenced considerably by current grammatical and discourse research. In the second book we present a range of topics that we hope will be of interest and value to teachers across the disciplines.

Fulfilling the goals of instruction becomes particularly important in a world growing in technological complexity, social diversity, and multiple "Englishes." (See the essays in Kachru 1992 and Kachru and Nelson 1996, as well as Crystal 2003; Jenkins 2003; McArthur 1998; Melchers and Shaw 2003.) Many students are passionate about their studies in literature, the physical and social sciences, business, or in other intellectual pursuits; unfortunately, however, many students and teachers see the study of language as merely the study of "correct grammar." We have already begun to sift through the various meanings of "grammar" and will develop this discussion in later chapters.

Teachers face a complex set of responsibilities. Parents, boards of education, and legislators look increasingly to school systems to prepare students for the demands of the future. Worries that American students lag behind those of other developed countries translate directly into concerns about public funding (i.e., taxes) and accountability in education, as the No Child Left Behind Act requires. These pressures appear in the form of demands for success on standardized tests, for "getting back to basics," for public funding of

private education ("vouchers" and "charter schools"), for longer school years, for ongoing competency testing for teachers, and for the assessment and ranking of schools.

From our perspective, teachers' responsibility is to their students. We must meet the needs of the learner rather than simply present material on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. As a result, the **learnability** of classroom material becomes more important than its **teachability** (how easily it can be taught), or its **assessability** (how easily it can be assessed).

Moreover, in the coming generation, the diversity of its students in US classrooms will change dramatically. The 2008 US Census Bureau projected percentages for the major racial/ethnic groups are displayed in the following chart:

	2008	2050
White	66	46
Hispanic	15	30
Black	14	15
Asian	5.1	9.2

(See U.S. Census Bureau National Population Projections.) In 2005 the percentage of the US population born abroad was 12.4.

These projections suggest that in addition to knowing their disciplines and how to teach them (ideally by incorporating lots of writing), teachers will also have to know about how to teach ESL (English as a Second Language).

In the rest of this introduction we will explain the organization of these books and provide some hints for working successfully with them.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THESE BOOKS

The next chapter of this book (Conceptions of Language) is on the nature of language. The remaining chapters are on various aspects of the English language, including its sound system, its vocabulary, its parts of speech, word meanings, and the ways in which words are combined into phrases, clauses, and sentences—essentially the grammar of English.

Book I gives you some basic information about English grammar, about how to do simple linguistic analyses, and about thinking critically about language. Because it is impossible to remember the analysis of every expression you might be asked about by a student (there are far too many), our main concern is to help you become independent by providing you with the means to do linguistic analysis as you need it.

We regularly use an analytic method, in which we formulate criteria for determining how to categorize words, phrases, or sentences. For example, whenever we want to know the part of speech of a particular word, we use these criteria to test a **hypothesis** about the word's part of speech. We will ask you to do similar activities in the exercises, sometimes by gathering data, sometimes by analyzing material that lies just a step beyond what is covered in the text.

Book II deals with selected topics of particular importance to teachers: spoken and written language; spelling; variation in language; usage; punctuation; history of the English language; and language acquisition. Our presentation brings together current studies in each of these areas and prepares you to read applied studies that you will encounter in your career. These chapters can be read independently of Book I, though on occasion you will find some cross-references to chapters in Book I, along with some phonetic notation that may send you back to our chapter on Phonetics and Phonology.

In many instances we will mention a topic, briefly discuss it, and return to it in greater depth later. Our hope is that this cycling will provide you with an opportunity to get an initial familiarity with a topic and then build on that familiarity later.

These books are far from covering the wealth of information on topics that you might be interested in as a teacher. To survey all of these would require several more books. We encourage you to consult your instructor for further references and bibliographical resources, for example on linguistics and literature, composition, or reading.

HINTS FOR SUCCESS

The study of the English language is demanding. First, you will find yourself confronting challenges to linguistic assumptions (and even prejudices) that have become ingrained in you through your education and that are widely accepted without critical examination by the majority of educated English speakers. Second, you may find yourself in a mode of analysis quite different from that of your own studies. Third, you will confront considerable linguistic detail and the large number of new terms required to conceptualize and describe it. While we cannot guarantee that these new ideas will be easy to master (although many people do find them so), we believe that they are worth your effort and will serve you well in your career.

Because what you will learn in these pages is as much skill as information, *do not expect to master this material in a single reading*. The best strategy for most people is to do a preliminary reading, do the exercises, and then reread (and reread again). Research on learning and remembering shows what

is perhaps obvious—the more frequently and deeply you review material the better you will remember and understand it. If you are a student, attend class and ask questions; if you are having difficulties, the chances are good that many of your classmates are too and will benefit from the instructor's answers to your questions.

Exercises are scattered throughout the book. We encourage you to tackle as many as possible. This need not involve working them out in full detail (unless your instructor requires it); you might just work out the outline of a solution. However, you cannot learn the analytic skills required to study linguistics or grammar without doing lots of hands-on work. If you have difficulties with a problem, try to identify them as specifically as possible. If you get an incorrect answer, make sure also to get an explanation of the correct one. Try to retrace the thinking that led you to miss the question. Sometimes you can learn more from mistakes than from perfection. One of our goals is to help you develop your skills in independent language analysis. Teachers are regularly called upon to answer questions whose answers cannot be found in textbooks or reference works. Doing exercises is essential for independence.

Terminology is plentiful in linguistics, just as in every other discipline. Remember that technical terms usually have specific meanings so you may not be able to substitute ordinary words for them. We have provided glossaries to help you identify definitions; you should consult them often. Be particularly careful with terms (e.g., **semantics)** that may have a familiar meaning in ordinary language, but a significantly different one in technical usage.

Definitions should be supplemented with *explanations*, elaborations of the minimal statements in the glossary. Remember, though, to use precise language in defining terms. Linguists like to think of themselves as scientists and so value precision and accuracy. Explanations may be taken from the text (or from class notes, if you are a student). Try to have a specific, prototypical *example* of each term. Select an example that is clear to you and is uncontroversial, and be sure to understand just why your example exemplifies the concept.

Memorization has had a bad press, but it is necessary more often than we think (and not only for exams). We do not encourage memorization for its own sake, but rather to make your passive knowledge more active. The best time to memorize is after you have become familiar with a concept through exposure. For long lists (e.g., the prepositions of English), do not try to remember every item; select a small number, and then only to illustrate a concept, and use the criteria given in the book for deciding which other items

belong to the list. As you gain experience, try to add gradually to that short list. We do not recommend that you require your students to learn lists of items, unless they are learning English as a second or foreign language (and even then only sparingly).

Second opinions aren't just good for your health. Reading other authors on the topics of these books will greatly help you to learn and remember what you study. We encourage you to seek out other books on these topics, beginning with those we've listed in the *References and Resources* at the end of each chapter.

At the head of each chapter, we list the chapter's key concepts. For teachers, we hope these will help you find topics you want to read about. For students, we imagine these topics serving as the focus for essays that might form a part of your course work. The internal parts of the chapters are clearly indicated by headings to allow for easy access.

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How many words are in your vocabulary? According to Aitchison (1994: 6), “the average college student turned out to know approximately 58,000 common ‘basic words,’ 1,700 rare ‘basic words,’ and 96,000 derivatives and compounds. The total comes to over 150,000. The highest student score was almost 200,000, while even the lowest was over 100,000.” Are you surprised by these numbers? Other scholars suggest even higher ones.

GLOSSARY

ACTIVE VOCABULARY: those words that we have ready access to for speaking and writing.

ASSESSABILITY: the ease or difficulty with which knowledge can be assessed.

CHANNEL: the environment through which the communicative medium travels from the text’s producer to its receiver(s).

COMMUNICATION: activities by which one person intends to influence the mind of another person.

CONCORDANCER: a computer program that allows you to search through computerized collections of linguistic data for specified expressions along with some of their context and to perform statistical operations on the data.

CORPUS/CORPORA: collection(s) of linguistic data, spoken or written, which may or may not be computerized.

CRITICAL THINKING: the process of evaluating the validity of assertions and arguments.

DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR: any attempt to describe the linguistic knowledge and behavior of individuals or communities without judging or evaluating them as "correct/incorrect" or "good/bad."

DISCOURSE: communicative activities, typically involving language, in particular contexts, whose purpose is to provide audiences with clues about how we want to influence them.

GENRE: communicative categories differing from each other in participants, forms, and purposes.

GRAMMAR: the word has several meanings. (1) conventions that judge which of several expressions belongs to Standard English (see **PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR**); (2) the knowledge that a speaker or writer of a language must have in order to be able to use that language at all (see **DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR**); (3) any attempt to describe that knowledge; (4) publications in which the prescriptions and descriptions are expressed (e.g., a Spanish/English/etc. grammar).

HYPOTHESIS: a prediction derived from a theory that may be tested to see if it is true or false. If it is true, the theory is strengthened; if it is false the theory is weakened, perhaps disproved.

IDEOLOGY: "a social theory which involves generalizations (beliefs, claims) about the way(s) in which goods are distributed in society... By 'goods' I mean anything that the people in the society generally believe are beneficial to have or harmful not to have, whether this be life, space, time, 'good' schools, 'good' jobs, wealth, status, power, control, or whatever. By 'society' I mean any and all groupings of people who share beliefs about what counts as 'goods' (and since probably all humans share *some* of these, all humanity counts as one sort of society). In this sense we all belong to many societies." (Gee, 1996: 21)

LANGUAGE: a system that connects private thoughts with public symbols.

LEARNABILITY: the ease with which material can be learned by students.

LINGUISTIC INSECURITY: the feeling or belief that one's language is in some way deficient, for example that one's accent is not as good as other accents.

MEDIUM: the sense(s) involved in communication—hearing, seeing, touching, or some combination of these.

ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY: an early to mid twentieth-century philosophy concerned with the meanings and uses of language.

PASSIVE VOCABULARY: those words whose meanings we recognize when we hear them spoken or see them written but cannot easily bring to mind in speaking or writing.

PRAGMATICS: the study of contextually situated meanings.

PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR: the set of conventions that define the standard variety of a language; generally couched in evaluative and judgmental terms such as "correct/incorrect" and "good/bad."

SEMANTICS: (the study of) the literal meanings of linguistic expressions.

STANDARD ENGLISH: the variety of English expected in formal writing and speaking, which is codified in dictionaries and style manuals, and taught in composition classes.

TEACHABILITY: the ease with which material can be organized for presentation in classrooms.

TEXT: the auditory, visual, and/or tactile artifacts produced by communicators.