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John Lyons

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Master, Trinity Hall, Cambridge



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Preface

This book is designed for the course, entitled 'Language and Linguistics', which my colleagues and I teach to first-year students at the University of Sussex. Very few of these students come to the University with the intention of taking a degree in Linguistics. Some of them, having had their interest aroused by the course, do in fact transfer into Linguistics from other subjects. The vast majority, however, go on to complete their degree-work, as we expect that they will, in the discipline which they originally chose as their major subject in applying for admission. Our aim, therefore, in teaching 'Language and Linguistics' is to introduce our students to some of the more important theoretical concepts and empirical findings of modern linguistics, but to do so at a relatively non-technical level and in a way that emphasizes the connections between linguistics and the many other academic disciplines that are concerned, for their own purposes and from their own point of view, with the study of language. I trust that this book will prove to be equally suitable for similar courses on language, which now exist at many universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, both in this country and abroad. I hope that it will be of some interest also to the general reader who wishes to learn something of modern linguistics.

This book is broader in coverage, and less demanding in its central chapters, than my *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (1968). It is correspondingly less detailed in its treatment of many topics. But I have appended to each chapter a list of suggestions for further reading. This should be comprehensive enough for lecturers and instructors using the book to make a selection according to their knowledge of the field and their theoretical preferences; and they can add to my list of books a number of important journal articles which, unless they have been reprinted

in accessible publications, I have as a matter of policy excluded. The Bibliography is geared to the annotated Suggestions for Further Reading and is representative of most, if not all, points of view. For the benefit of students using the book without specialized guidance, and to help the interested general reader who wishes to go further into the subject, I have picked out about twenty general textbooks and collections of articles and asterisked these in the Bibliography. Here too I have been careful to make a representative selection – representative both of different theoretical viewpoints and of different levels of exposition.

Each chapter has associated with it a set of Questions and Exercises. Some of these are straightforward revision questions that can be answered without further reading. Some – especially those containing quotations from other works on linguistics – will oblige the student to consider and evaluate opinions different from those which I put forward myself in this book. A few of the questions are quite difficult; I would not expect students to be able to answer them, without assistance, on the basis of a ten-week course in Linguistics. On the other hand, I think it is important that students taking such courses should be given some sense of what Linguistics is like at a more advanced, though not necessarily more technical, level; and it is surprising what can be achieved by means of a little Socratic midwifery!

I would make the same comment in respect of the one problem that I have included (after the chapter on Grammar). I invented this many years ago, when I was teaching a course at Indiana University, and it has been used since then, by me and by others, as a fairly demanding exercise in linguistic analysis. Anyone who can come up with a solution that satisfies the demands of observational and explanatory adequacy in less than two hours will not need to read the central chapters of this book!

Although *Language and Linguistics* is very different from my *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, it is informed with the same sense of the continuity of linguistic theory from the earliest times to the present day. I have not included a chapter on the history of linguistics as such, but within the limits of the space available for this I have tried to set some of the more important theoretical issues in their historical context. And I have written a

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brief chapter on structuralism, functionalism and generativism in linguistics, since the relations among these movements are, in my view, either neglected or misrepresented in most textbooks. In particular, generative grammar is commonly confused, on the one hand, with a certain kind of transformational-generative grammar, formalized by Chomsky, and, on the other, with what I have here called 'generativism', also propagated largely by Chomsky. In my own very brief treatment of generative grammar in this book, as also in my *Chomsky* (1977a) and elsewhere, I have tried to maintain the necessary distinctions. Personally, I am fully committed to the aims of those who use generative grammars as models for the description – for theoretical, rather than practical, purposes – of the grammatical structure of natural languages. As will be evident from this book, I reject many, though not all, of the tenets of generativism. Nevertheless, I have presented them as fairly and as objectively as I can. My aim, throughout, has been to give equal weight to both the cultural and the biological basis of language. There has been a tendency in recent years to emphasize the latter to the detriment of the former.

I must here record my appreciation of the assistance given to me in the writing of this book by my colleagues, Dr Richard Coates and Dr Gerald Gazdar. They have both read the whole work in draft and made many helpful critical comments, as well as supplying me with advice in areas where their expertise is greater than mine. Needless to say, they are not to be held responsible for any of the opinions expressed in the final version, the more so, as – I am happy to affirm publicly – we still disagree on a number of theoretical issues.

I should also like to express my indebtedness to my wife, who has not only given me the necessary moral support and love while I was writing the book, but has also served as my model general reader for several chapters and has corrected most of the proofs for me. Once again, I have had the benefit of the specialized and sympathetic editorial advice of Dr Jeremy Mynott and Mrs Penny Carter of Cambridge University Press; and I am very grateful to them.

Falmer, Sussex
January 1981