

The Study of Language

SEVENTH EDITION

This bestselling textbook provides an engaging and user-friendly introduction to the study of language. Assuming no prior knowledge of the subject, Yule presents information in bite-sized sections, clearly explaining the major concepts in linguistics and all the key elements of language.

This seventh edition has been revised and updated throughout, with substantial changes to the chapters on phonetics and semantics, and 40 new study questions. To increase student engagement and to foster problem-solving and critical thinking skills, the book includes over 20 new tasks.

An expanded and revised online study guide provides students with further resources, including answers and tutorials for all tasks, while encouraging lively and proactive learning. This is the most fundamental and easy-to-use introduction to the study of language.

GEORGE YULE has taught linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, the University of Hawai'i, the University of Minnesota and Louisiana State University.

“With a wide array of illustrative examples, accessible explanations, and engaging activities, Yule excels in transforming his readers’ inherent familiarity with language into explicit knowledge of linguistic concepts. In its seventh edition, *The Study of Language* thus retains its status as the pre-eminent text for introducing students to language as a field of study and guiding them through a broad range of linguistic analyses.”

Kristy Beers Fagersten, *Sodertorn University*

“*The Study of Language* provides a solid overview of an impressively wide range of areas in linguistics, not only “core” areas such as syntax and phonology, but also the origins of language, pragmatics, discourse analysis, historical linguistics and more. Each chapter succeeds in providing a thorough overview of its topic while remaining at a level appropriate to newcomers in the field. The book is written in a style accessible even to non-native English speakers. A great book for introductory undergraduate linguistics classes. The study questions and tasks at the end of each chapter are engaging and the discussion topics/projects are designed to push students beyond the material, and to use their own experiences and analytical skills to think about language.”

Kathleen O’Connor, *University of Lille 3 – Charles de Gaulle*

“... the 7th edition of *The Study of Language* continues the charm of Yule’s introductory method for student and instructor, offering intellectually manageable chunks of information to first-time learners of linguistics, with ample space for elaboration and practice in the classroom.”

Aaron Smith, *Illinois State University*

“In this beautifully exemplified and coherently structured book, Yule guides readers through the various aspects of language study. This is an ideal introduction to linguistics for students and practitioners with a general interest in language. This edition is enriched with study questions and tasks which will be particularly useful to readers.”

Sofia Lampropoulou, *University of Liverpool*

“... an impeccably organized introduction to linguistics.”

Geraldine Bard, *Buffalo State University*

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GEORGE YULE



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Preface

In This New Edition

Thanks to a number of constructive reviews by instructors familiar with earlier editions, I received some good advice and suggestions for improvements to this new edition. Detailed revisions and additions have been made to Chapter 3 (Phonetics) and Chapter 9 (Semantics), along with additional material on a possible musical source for language, phonetic transcription, manner of articulation, the pronunciation of diphthongs, componential analysis, corpus studies, concordances, right brain specializations, PET scans, infant gestures, Nicaraguan Sign Language, an epenthetic vowel, *terribly* and *literally*, non-standard grammatical features, the future in Aymara and singular *they*.

In addition, there are forty new study questions and twenty-six new tasks. The majority of the tasks are data based and designed to help develop analytic, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. There are new examples from languages as diverse as Arabana, Arabic, Daga, Dong, Hausa, Jamaican Creole, Lotuko, Maninka, Nahuatl, Setswana, Spanish, Wangkajunga, Wolaytta and Yoruba. Additional topics explored in the study of English include causatives, collocation, conversational features, developmental sequences, dissimilation, impoliteness, rhotic and non-rhotic varieties, palimpsests, the *Peterborough Chronicle*, semantic maps of the brain and word play. An expanded and revised Study Guide providing answers and tutorials for all the tasks can be found on the book's website, along with other resources including the full IPA chart: www.cambridge.org/yule7

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 continue to be interesting developments in the study of language, but it is still the case that any mature speaker of a language has a more comprehensive “unconscious” knowledge of how language works than any linguist has yet been able to describe. Consequently, as you read each of 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 feel that you do know quite a lot about both the internal structure of language (its form) and the varied uses of language in human life (its function), and also that you are ready to ask more of the kinds of questions that professional linguists ask when they conduct their research.

At the end of each chapter, there is a section where you can test and apply what you have learned. This section contains:

- **Study questions** that you can use to check if you have understood some of the main points and important terms introduced during that chapter
- **Tasks** that extend the topics covered in the chapter, mostly through exercises in data analysis, with examples from English and a wide range of other languages
- **Discussion topics/projects** that offer opportunities to consider some of the more general, sometimes controversial, language-related topics and to develop your own opinions on issues involving language
- **Further reading** suggestions provided to help you find more detailed treatments of all the topics covered in that chapter

The origins of this book can be traced to introductory courses on language taught at the University of Edinburgh, the University of Minnesota and Louisiana State University, and to the suggestions and criticisms of hundreds of students who forced me to present what I had to say in a way they could understand. An early version of the written material was developed for Independent Study students at the University of Minnesota. Later versions have had the benefit of expert advice from a lot of teachers working with diverse groups in different situations. I am particularly indebted to Professor Hugh Buckingham, Louisiana State University, for sharing his expertise and enthusiasm over many years as a colleague and friend. I must also acknowledge the support of the excellent production team at Cambridge University Press, with special thanks to Andrew Winnard, Charlie Howell and Jane Adams.

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