



SIXTH EDITION

THE STUDY OF  
LANGUAGE

GEORGE YULE

## THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

This best-selling 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 through all the key elements of language. This sixth edition has been revised and updated throughout, with substantial changes to the chapters on phonetics, grammar and syntax, and eighty new study questions. To increase student engagement and to foster problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, the book includes twenty 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.

“A genuinely introductory linguistics text, well suited for undergraduates who have little prior experience thinking descriptively about language. Yule’s crisp and thought-provoking presentation of key issues works well for a wide range of students.”

Elise Morse-Gagne, *Tougaloo College*

“*The Study of Language* is one of the most accessible and entertaining introductions to linguistics available. Newly updated with a wealth of material for practice and discussion, it will continue to inspire new generations of students.”

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“Its strength is in providing a general survey of mainstream linguistics in palatable, easily manageable and logically organized chunks. The chapter divisions allow for considerable flexibility, which has proved particularly important after recently restructuring our courses and reorganizing the order in which to cover the topics.”

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Torill Hestetraet, *University of Bergen*

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Daniel W. Hieber, Rosetta Stone, [eLanguage.net](http://eLanguage.net)

“... provides a clear and concise introduction to linguistics suitable for beginners.”

Dr. Jeffrey Gil, *Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia*

# THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

Sixth Edition

George Yule



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# *Preface*

## **In This New Edition**

Thanks to a comprehensive survey of instructors familiar with earlier editions, I received a lot of good advice and suggestions for improvements to this new edition. As a result, a number of revisions have been made to the internal organization of all chapters, with more than thirty new figures and tables. There are also substantial revisions in [Chapters 3](#) (Phonetics), [7](#) (Grammar) and [8](#) (Syntax), plus additional material on adjacency pairs, brain development, coherence, complementary distribution, diphthongs, emotional deixis, human breathing while speaking, insertion sequences, language typology, morpheme acquisition, pragmatic markers, referential meaning, slips of the tongue, stone tool use, subjects, objects and word order. I hope these revisions and additions will make the book more informative, easier to read and overall more user-friendly.

In addition, there are eighty new study questions and twenty new tasks. The majority of the tasks are data-based and designed to foster analytic, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. There are new examples from languages as diverse as Bislama, Cree, Lolovoli, Japanese, Malagasy, Manambu and Rotokas. Additional topics explored in the study of English include adjacency pairs, American versus British spelling, auxiliary movement, children's slips, English as a lingua franca, genitives, lenition, long and short vowels, mateship, morphophonology, prepositions and semantic roles, and the trochaic stress

pattern. An expanded and revised Study Guide providing answers and tutorials for all the tasks can be found on the book's website [www.cambridge.org/yule6](http://www.cambridge.org/yule6).

## 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.

For feedback and advice in the preparation of recent editions of the book, I would like to thank Jean Aitchison (University of Oxford), Linda Blanton (University of New Orleans), Karen Currie (Federal University of Espíritu Santo), Mary Anna Dimitrakopoulos (Indiana University, South Bend), Thomas Field (University of Maryland, Baltimore), Anthony Fox (University of Leeds), Agustinus Gianto (Pontifical Biblical Institute), Gordon Gibson (University of Paisley), Katinka Hammerich (University of Hawai‘i), Raymond Hickey (Essen University), Richard Hirsch (Linköping University), Fiona Joseph (University of Wolverhampton), Eliza Kitis (Aristotle University), Mairead MacLeod, Terrie Mathis (California State University, Northridge), Megan Melançon (Georgia College), Stephen Matthews (University of Hong Kong), Robyn Najar (Flinders University), Eric Nelson (University of Minnesota), Jens Reinke (Christian Albrechts Universität zu Kiel), Philip Riley (Université de Nancy 2), Rick Santos (Fresno City College), Joanne Scheibman (Old Dominion University),