

# AN INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

*Also by Stuart C. Poole*

CATALAN IN THREE MONTHS

# An Introduction to Linguistics

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Stuart C. Poole

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# Preface

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This book introduces the nature of language. It deals with the sounds that we make when we speak, with the way in which we construct sentences, with the ways in which our speech varies between social situations, and so on. It does so by the commonly adopted method of having chapters with such headings as phonetics, syntax, social variation. Less conventionally, it has a major chapter which, against the background of these aspects of linguistics, presents the principal features of the languages of western Europe.

You have at least one remarkable skill; you can speak a language. For at least one language you generally know what can and what cannot be designated by the everyday words, you know what is and what is not an acceptable way of combining words to form a sentence, you have a good idea of whether or not a particular statement would be acceptable in a particular social situation. As a skilled user, then, you already have a substantial foundation for the study of language. That foundation and an interest in language are all you need; given those, this introductory book can lead you to an understanding of what language consists of, of how it works. It serves as an introductory book for students of linguistics and as important background material for students of modern languages. Reflecting my work in continuing education, I have attempted to write in a readable style that will also make the book attractive to the many people who want to explore the fascinating world of language without entering full-time education.

I would like to thank my wife Beryl and a student, Arthur McIvor, for taking time to read and comment on my draft. I also thank Beryl for her support and tolerance while I was working on the book. I also thank Arthur as a representative of those students whose interest and enthusiasm help to inspire and reward my work. The facilities of the University of Edinburgh such as the library and word-processing facilities have been of great assistance.