LINGUISTIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS

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Geoffrey Finch

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For Mum and Dad

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

IF YOU ARE studying linguistics the chances are that you are looking not only for a book that will help you to come to grips with the larger themes and issues behind linguistic study, but also for a book that will help you understand the concepts and ideas that inform the terms linguists use. The aim of *Linguistic Terms and Concepts* is to offer you guidance on how to gain both of these important skills by providing the sort of vital information you need to understand linguistics as a discipline.

The first two chapters provide an introduction to the range and scope of linguistics as well as offering a clear overview of the subject as a whole. The chapters are intended to help students new to the subject who are looking for a sense of the overall nature and features of linguistics.

The following three chapters deal with the core areas of linguistics: phonetics and phonology; syntax; semantics and pragmatics. Each chapter has a brief, helpful introduction which is followed by a series of discussions and definitions of the main ideas and terms used in these areas, while the final chapter explores the main branches of linguistics.

Each chapter of the book can be read separately or dipped into for information or guidance. However, in the first instance, it may well repay you to look quickly through the book as a whole so that you gain a sense of what linguistics involves and how you can best use the volume. There is an index so that you can find particular terms, while the alphabetical listing of entries in each chapter provides a simple way of finding broader topics.

At once a guide to current ideas about linguistics and a dictionary of the terms used in the modern study of language, *Linguistic Terms and Concepts* is an essential book for all students at all levels.

John Peck
Martin Coyle

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Linguistic Terms and Concepts is a practical guide to the study of linguistics. Its main intention is to offer help and advice in understanding the principal linguistic terms and concepts which you will inevitably come across as a student. The guide itself is basically a dictionary of linguistic terms. It resembles other such dictionaries in that it attempts to provide essential information on a wide range of topics and ideas. It differs from other dictionaries, however, in its overall structure which is designed so as to include as much discussion as possible of those ideas and topics.

The book is divided into six chapters: 'Linguistics: a brief survey', 'General terms and concepts', 'Phonetics and phonology', 'Syntax', 'Semantics and pragmatics', and 'Linguistics: the main branches'. If, for example, you are studying syntax, you might find a number of useful ideas simply by browsing through the syntax section. If you know exactly what you are looking for, the quickest way of finding the relevant entry is to consult the index at the back of the book. You may, however, also be looking for guidance on broader ideas about these areas. Chapters 3–6, therefore, begin with introductory essays discussing the characteristics of linguistics as well as introducing some of the significant debates which inevitably form a part of their study.

These introductory essays, together with the survey in Chapter 1, are intended to provide a sense of the broad picture. They are followed by more specific entries, alphabetically arranged. I should point out that this is not an all-inclusive guide. Linguistics is a subject with a considerable range of technical terms and a wealth of critical literature. To have attempted to include all of that would have resulted in an encyclopaedia rather than a guide. The approach, therefore, is selective. The great advantage of this is that it has allowed me room to concentrate on the major topics you are likely to come across. The aim is to provide helpful information which is directly relevant to your studies, rather than cover, exhaustively, every avenue of the subject.

This idea also determined the approach adopted within each entry. I do not attempt to represent the entire history of any term; nor do I list all the linguists who have written about a topic. In their place I have substituted critical discussion, attempting to provide guidelines for your study of linguistics. Underlying many of the definitions is the idea that language is endlessly fascinating and that studying it in a systematic manner is a participatory, and open-ended, process from which no one is excluded. There are no ultimate authorities here but us, as users of language. My hope is that the definitions will show you how to get started and how to develop and express your own ideas about linguistics.

Probably the best way to use this book is to browse through it, stopping at whatever catches your attention. But, as I have said, there is an index which should enable you to find a specific term quickly. Given the nature of the subject it is inevitable that individual entries often build on other entries. Where this occurs the relevant entry is cross-referenced in small capitals and you can look it up, should you so wish, in the index. One other convention which you should be aware of is the use of * to indicate a linguistic unit, such as a sentence or a clause, which is improperly formed, and consequently ungrammatical. It is commonly employed by linguists for this purpose.

Those readers who are real beginners in linguistics will probably find it helpful to start by reading the first two chapters to get a sense of the overall range of the subject and the features which characterise it as an area of study. This can be followed up with topics which are reasonably familiar, such as 'noun', 'verb', 'clause', and 'sentence' in Chapter 4. Readers with more knowledge can branch off into 'X-bar syntax', 'transformational grammar' and other entries of a similarly specialised nature. The major shortcoming of most guides to linguistic terms is that they so often fail to tell you what you want to know; my hope is that I have gone at least some way towards providing the kind of basic information and critical discussion you are likely to find useful, as well as stimulating you to explore further.

A NOTE ON PHONETICS

A NUMBER of entries in this book make use of the International Phonetic Alphabet. This is a special alphabet used by linguists for representing pronunciation. If you are unfamiliar with it I recommend that you read the section on it in Chapter 3. For quick reference, however, you will find it helpful to know the following symbols and the speech sounds of English to which they relate:

Simple vowels

/i:/	as in southern British English	bead
/ɪ/		bid
/ɛ/		bed
/æ/		bad
/ɑ:/		bard
/ɒ/		box
/ɔ:/		saw
/ʊ/		put
/u:/		boot
/ʌ/		cup
/ɜ:/		bird
/ə/		about

Diphthongs

/eɪ/	pay
/aɪ/	pie
/ɔɪ/	boy
/əʊ/	go
/aʊ/	mouth
/ɪə/	beer
/ɛə/	bear
/ʊə/	cure

Consonants

/p/	pit
/b/	bit
/t/	tip
/d/	did
/k/	kick
/g/	give
/f/	field
/v/	vine
/θ/	thigh
/ð/	this
/s/	sign
/z/	zoo
/ʃ/	ship
/ʒ/	measure
/h/	hot
/tʃ/	chain
/dʒ/	judge
/m/	mouse
/n/	near
/ŋ/	pink
/l/	leaf
/r/	run
/j/	yatch
/w/	wet