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Margaret E. Winters
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Cognitive Linguistics for Linguists

 Springer

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*We dedicate this book to our teachers,
colleagues, and students who have helped to
shape our thinking as linguists.*

Preface

Those of us who study language believe that linguistics, like other behavioral sciences (the French *sciences humaines* captures the nature of the disciplines), is an objective, data-based discipline. And we are, indeed, practicing our discipline in that way. What is perhaps occasionally forgotten is that we are doing so within the framework of some theory as to the nature of language itself. And a theory is just that: a set of hypotheses which each of us believes best captures all or most aspects of language in an overarching way, allowing for these data-based studies. Theories change over time, of course, strengthened as one or another of its hypotheses is proven to be true or discarded because too much has been disproven and replaced by better hypotheses.

We have opened this preface with some very basic notions in the philosophy of science (“theory,” “hypothesis,” “data”) to say that our goal in this volume is not to change minds. Rather it is to lay out the basic beliefs of Cognitive Linguistics as a resource for those who base their work in other linguistic theories. Believing in one set of hypotheses (to state what should be obvious) does not preclude knowing how others think about language and how they come to conclusions, synchronic and diachronic, about how the many factors involved in understanding language may come together. What we hope to do is provide a short introduction, meant for fellow linguists and, perhaps, their more advanced graduate students.

Both of us have been practitioners of Cognitive Linguistics and involved in its development since its early days. Clearly, we think its conceptual framework is the right one. But, two things: first, we were not brought up (so to speak) in linguistics in the framework; Margaret Winters was trained in European Structuralism as practiced in Romance historical linguistics and Geoff Nathan had a mixed background including American structuralism, stratificational grammar, as well as far more mainstream generative theory. Secondly, perhaps stemming from this first point, we have over the years co-taught the history of the field; to do so, one touches on many theories as they flourished and/or expanded or were discarded over time.

One methodological comment is in order here. The SpringerBrief series is exactly that: a series of short monographs on relatively restricted topics. In one sense, this volume is restricted in that it is an overview, but it is an overview of a

comprehensive theory of language crossing, many if not all subcomponents of linguistics. In many cases, therefore, we have provided a mere glimpse into some topics, although with references for those who wish to read further.

We would like to thank Helen Aristar-Dry who proposed to us that we write this book and Helen van der Stelt and Anita Rachmat of Springer-Verlag who have been guiding and encouraging us. We are also grateful to two anonymous reviewers who provided feedback on the proposal we submitted; they have helped to shape our approach here.

Detroit, USA

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Geoffrey S. Nathan

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