



Linguistics in Language Teaching

By David Arthur. Wilkins

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The idea that linguistics is a subject of particular interest and value to foreign language teachers is one that has become increasingly accepted in recent years. In an exceptionally clear and undogmatic way, this book relates current linguistic thought to the practical problems of language teaching. The author has adopted a deliberately eclectic approach; he has not attempted to promote a single theoretical view or to provide a complete survey of theoretical linguistics. Rather, he selects features from various schools of thought and shows how a learning program might be influenced by the linguist's investigation of them. These major topics and controversies—among them, syntax, phonology, structuralism and transformationalism, behaviorism and mentalism, language attitudes in multilingual countries, motivation, and language aptitude testing—are first explained briefly but cogently, without assuming prior knowledge of linguistics on the part of the reader or simplifying unduly. The author then demonstrates how each topic relates to foreign language pedagogy. A major concern in the book is not only how language-learning programs might be influenced by linguistics but also whether in fact they should be; whether there are illegitimate applications of linguistics to language teaching as well as justifiable ones.

The author addresses the book specifically to teachers of foreign languages, including teachers of English as a foreign language. Examples for discussion are drawn from English, French, Spanish, and German. This book's clear format, lucid style, and thorough but nondoctrinaire approach make it a solid contribution to the field of applied linguistics.

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