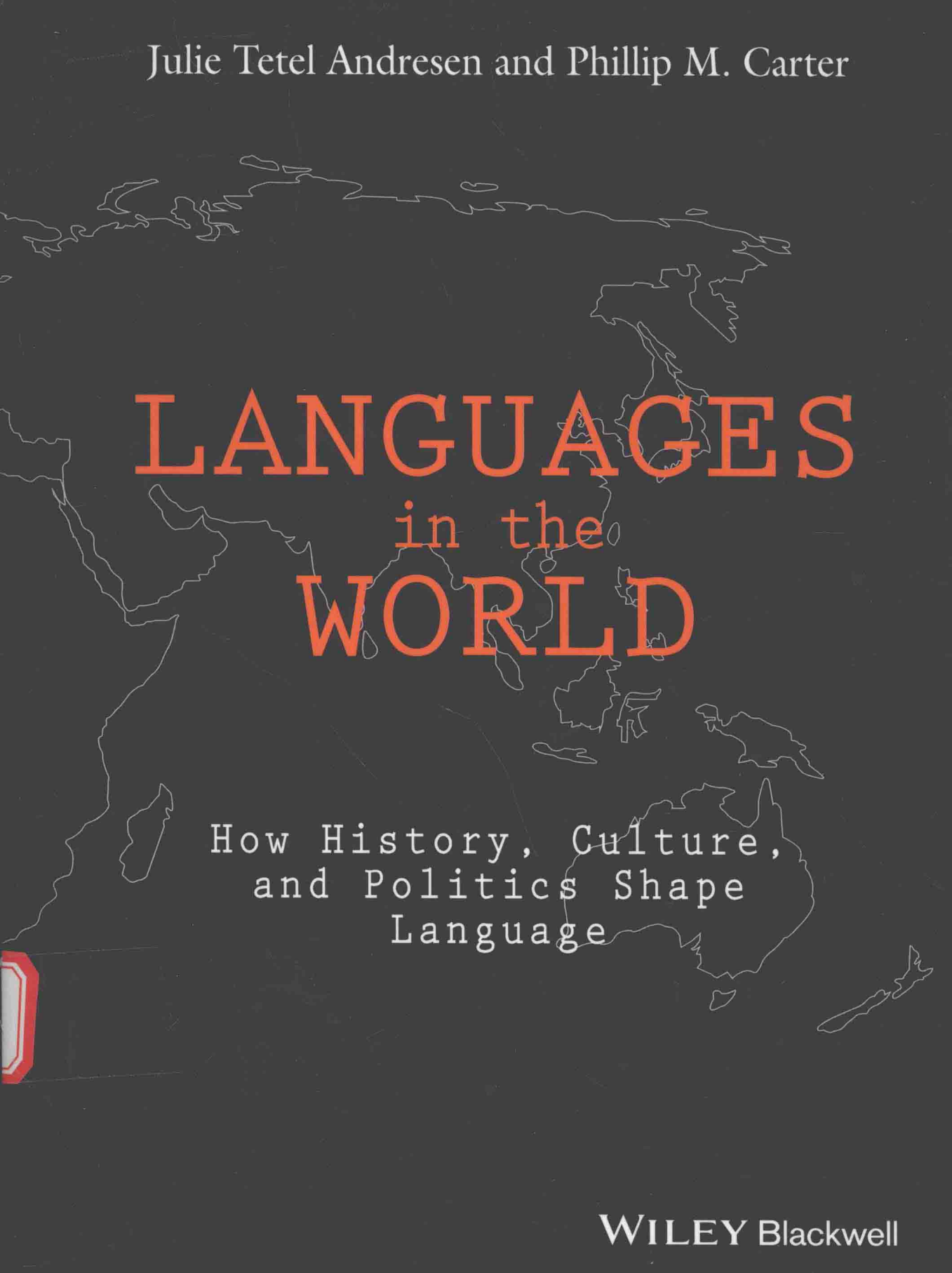


Julie Tetel Andresen and Phillip M. Carter



# LANGUAGES in the WORLD

How History, Culture,  
and Politics Shape  
Language

WILEY Blackwell

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Shape Language

Julie Tetel Andresen  
Phillip M. Carter

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This edition first published 2016  
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*Registered Office*

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

*Editorial Offices*

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Andresen, Julie Tetel, 1950– author.

Languages in the world : how history, culture, and politics shape language / Julie Tetel Andresen and Phillip M. Carter.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-118-53125-9 (cloth) – ISBN 978-1-118-53128-0 (pbk.) 1. Language and languages–Globalization. 2. Language and culture–History. 3. Languages in contact. 4. Historical linguistics. 5. Sociolinguistics. I. Carter, Phillip M. author. II. Title.

P130.5.A53 2016

306.44–dc23

2015019352

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12.5pt Galliard by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

# About the Website

Please visit the companion website at [www.wiley.com/go/languagesintheworld](http://www.wiley.com/go/languagesintheworld) to view additional content for this title.

- Short follow-up blurbs on one topic from each chapter
- Engaging links and images

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# Preface

## To Our Readers

This book began with a simple phone call. In the Fall Semester of 2010, Julie was in Durham, North Carolina, where she is a Professor of Linguistics and Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. Phillip was living in Los Angeles, where he was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Linguistics Department at the University of Southern California. We were on the phone to speak about the pleasures and challenges of teaching a course called Languages of the World. We found ourselves in familiar conversational territory: lamenting the lack of materials for teaching the course in the interdisciplinary approach developed at Duke. “Well,” Phillip said, “we could write our own book.” Julie laughed, imagining the amount of work required to pull together a project of the magnitude necessary to capture the dynamics of the pedagogical approach she had helped to create. But the seed had been planted. Only one question remained: Could we do it?

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Julie had been teaching Languages of the World taught at Duke, which was pioneered by Professor Edna Andrews in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies. They wanted their students to have a broad understanding of language. Thus, they balanced the traditional content of such a course – review of the language families of the world, emphasis on linguistic structures, historical reconstruction – with the many rich nonlinguistic contexts in which languages are actually used. So, as students learned about the case and aspectual systems of Russian, for example, they also learned about the history of the Slavic language family, Cyrillic writing, Russian folk songs, and more. This approach required a great deal of work on the part of the instructor, since no materials systematically crossing linguistic structural information with historical, sociocultural, and political contexts existed in one place.

Over time, the course became a resounding success with students, not only among Linguistics Majors, for whom it is a core course requirement, but also with students from across the Arts and Sciences and even Engineering. The students came for what they heard would be a perspective-shifting and challenging experience. In retrospect, it is easy to understand why this course was so compelling to so many of our students.

Our approach does not abstract language away from speakers, but rather situates it around them. It does not abandon experience and affect but makes space to acknowledge that experience and affect are fundamental to understanding why speakers make the choices they make about language. Simply put, students found themselves in the conversations the course made possible.

Once committed to writing our own materials Julie and Phillip agreed to meet in New York City in the Fall Semester 2011 when Julie was teaching the Duke in New York Arts and Media program. We went to work on a book proposal. The next summer, we found ourselves in a part of the world inspiring to both of us: Eastern Europe, with Julie in Romania and Phillip in Poland. We began to outline the book in Krakow, Poland where Phillip was attending Polish Language School, and we began writing the manuscript in Ukraine on a long train ride from Kiev to L'viv. Our research and writing continued nonstop for the next two and a half years, and our project went where we went: Bucharest, Romania; Durham, North Carolina; Los Angeles; Miami; Madrid, Spain; New York City; Saigon, Vietnam; Ulan Baatar, Mongolia.

During these years of writing, we have endeavored to stretch intellectually as far beyond our own experiences as possible. Nevertheless, our personal experiences are clearly reflected in the pages of our book. The most obvious example is that we have written about the languages we know and have studied, which include English, French, German, Mongolian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. In addition to being professional linguists, we are committed to language learning, and our knowledge of other languages has given us wide canvases to paint on. For instance, the Language Profiles on Vietnamese in Chapter 8 and Mongolian in Chapter 11 are the direct result of Julie's experience living and studying in Vietnam and Mongolia during the writing of this book.

We are also committed to interdisciplinarity, and our approach to linguistics is informed by a range of disciplines, all of which figure in *Languages in the World*: anthropology and anthropological linguistics, evolutionary theory, historical linguistics, history and philosophy of linguistics, genetics, language variation and change, poststructuralist approaches to critical theory, race and gender studies, and sociolinguistics. Our interdisciplinary commitment is reflected in our diverse intellectual interlocutors. Though you will not find explicit reference to all of the following names in our book, ripples of their thinking are nevertheless evident in our writing: anthropologist Stuart Hall; general scientists Jared Diamond, Charles Darwin, Francisco Varela, William James, and Humberto Maturana; historian Benedict Anderson; linguists (dialectologists, historical linguists, sociolinguists, and psycholinguists) Norman Faircloth, Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman, Joseph Greenberg, Jacob Grimm, Roman Jakobson, William Labov, Stephen Levinson, Johanna Nichols, Michael Silverstein, Michael Tomasello, Uriel and Max Weinreich, Walt Wolfram, and William Dwight Whitney; philosophers Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Julia Kristeva, and Gayatri Spivak; and sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Irving Goffman. All of these researchers share a general commitment to understanding the context, *the situatedness*, of humans in their psychosocial and sociopolitical worlds. In an effort to unburden our readers from excessive citations, we have tried to minimize references to these scholars throughout the book and acknowledge our debt to them here.

The familiar questions of a book addressing languages of the world are: What are the language families of the world? and What are the major structural characteristics of the languages in those families? These are, indeed, significant questions. We, too, want to address them here, and we also ask two more questions: Why does the current map of the languages of the world look the way it does? and How did it get to be that way? In order to answer these further questions, we need not only to broaden our perspective but also to create a new organizational framework. First, we acknowledge that the linguistic world goes around on the day-to-day interactions between individuals. Second, we see that the answers to the additional questions we are asking require our approach to focus less on the microdynamics of individual interactions and more on macroconcerns organized by the topics of power, movement, and time. Our extralinguistic attention in this book is thus given to political struggles, population movements both large and small, the spread of religious beliefs, and the ever-present effects of economics.

By organizing our presentation around the topics of power, movement, and time, we are able:

- (i) to put different languages in contact in order to compare and contrast linguistic structures as we go;
- (ii) to offer global reviews on subjects, whether it is the shift of writing systems when a new religion is introduced, the parade of official languages named in the last several hundred years, or the identification of the theorized homelands for the various language stocks;
- (iii) to think critically about language planning and language policy around the world;
- (iv) to acknowledge the importance of language attitudes in shaping language behavior and to factor those attitudes into the stories we tell;
- (v) to introduce the notions of linguistic residual zones and spread zones to help explain why the linguistic map of the world today looks the way it does;
- (vi) to include discussions of basic genetics and evolution in our account of the languages of the world; and
- (vii) to put at issue the very subject we are studying, namely language.

We have written this book with several audiences in mind. To undergraduate linguistics majors and minors, we intend for this book to complement the information presented in your introductory course, where you learned disciplinary metalanguage and reviewed the subdisciplines of linguistics. To undergraduate majors in other social sciences, we want to invite you into the world of language. To graduate students in linguistics who might not have always considered the historical and sociopolitical dynamics of language on a world scale, we hope the information provided here will be new and perhaps eye-opening, just as we hope it will be to graduate students in other disciplines who might not have always been aware of the importance of language in the areas they study. To professional linguists using this book as a teaching resource, we have worked to make a framework generous enough so that you can enrich our chapter discussions and end-of-chapter exercises with your specialties. To professional linguists using this book as a reference, we have endeavored to provide the widest



and most diverse archive possible and hope that you find our approach promising. To general readers, we hope to have answered your burning questions about human language. To all of our readers, we have tried to make this sprawling story of the languages of the world as lively as possible.

We acknowledge from the outset that our book will be challenging to many readers in many ways. First, our historical scope is large and extends back at times several hundred thousand years. We have also chosen to tell our story in a nonlinear fashion beginning in the present. To help you manage the weight of this history, we have put a timeline at the beginning of most of our chapters. The part of the timeline with the dates and events in black type is to situate you in the historical time frame that is the main focus of the chapter. The dates and events presented in gray-scale provide relevant background information.

Second, the sheer scope of our subject matter is immense. In order to make sure readers have an in-depth understanding of the kinds of linguistic structure found in traditional Languages of the World textbooks, we offer phonetic, phonological, and grammatical information in every chapter of *Languages in the World*. However, we appreciate that this information will not be enough for all readers to understand how structural phenomena work together. We have therefore also included Language Profiles at the end of Chapters 4–12. The eight languages portrayed are, in order: Kurdish, Arabic, Tibetan, Hawaiian, Vietnamese, Tamil, !Xóõ, Mongolian, and K'iche'. The languages featured in these profiles are furthermore the subjects of the opening stories of their respective chapters, and they often serve as the basis of the chapter's exercises. We hope to make our profiles attractive enough so that readers may be prompted to learn one of these languages or another language in the same family or stock.

We have also included exercises and discussion questions at the end of every chapter. The exercises give hands-on experience with maps, writing systems, linguistic structure, and linguistic methodology. The questions raise language-related issues many people in the world today confront – individual identity, shame, multilingual communities, language rights, language death – and we invite you to consider your own experiences and thoughts with respect to them. There are no right or wrong answers. Our concern is for you to have the occasion to grapple with language questions and conundrums affecting many lives, communities, nations, and beyond.

We hope that all of our readers will be inspired to engage with whatever language issues, however large however small, you confront in the future. In order to help you prepare for that future, we acknowledge the following points to be both true and pertinent:

- (i) we are living in a globalized world;
- (ii) the composition of student bodies at both large, public universities and small, private ones reflects this globalization, not only in North America but also in the rest of the world;
- (iii) human beings around the world tend to be multilingual; multilingualism is the norm; most people interact with more than one language and/or one speech variety during the course of their lives, and many do so on a daily basis;

- (iv) monolingualism is the exception; monolinguals tend to be either speakers of a prestige variety or people in isolated communities; and
- (v) the presence of variety does not translate into a hierarchy, where one variant is better or worse than another.

We want to stress at the start of this book that language is not a zero-sum game. Giving room to one language need not take away from another.

In the four years that we have been researching and writing this book, we have profited from many fruitful discussions with friends and colleagues. A small selection of these include: Edna Andrews, Melissa Baralt, Dominika Baran, Tometro Hopkins, Anne Charity-Hudley, Małgorzata Hueckel, Andrew Lynch, Ana Luszczynska, Kim Potowski, Gareth Price, Christine Mallinson, Norma Mendoza-Denton, David Neal, Heather Russell, Ana Sánchez-Muñoz, Kristine Stiles, Ellen Thompson, Priscilla Wald, and Walt Wolfram. We thank them collectively. We are grateful to Margaret Noodin, for providing the poem and narrative in Chapter 12, and to Lydda López, for working on our glossary, bibliography, and language index. We would also like to thank the students in Julie's Mind and Language Focus course at Duke as well as the students in Phillip's Languages and Cultures of the World course at Florida International University for having read the manuscript of *Languages in the World* in the Fall Semester 2014. They were the first student readers of our book, and we are grateful for their impressions, engagement, and feedback. We also thank Danielle Descoteaux at Wiley Blackwell for having so enthusiastically taken on our project and shepherded it through the complex editorial process.

Finally, we would like to remark that we have learned a great deal in writing this book: about the shape of specific languages, about the histories and political dynamics of particular parts of the world, and about the ways in which languages expand and contract over great spaces and great periods of time, to name only a few. However, of all the topics we have confronted in writing this book, one has affected us more than all the rest: the rapidly accelerating loss of the cultures and languages of the world. As professional linguists, we were of course always aware of the problem of language death, but in researching this book, we have come to understand the problem as urgent and entailing devastating consequences. We are so moved by the problem of language endangerment that we here pledge to donate our royalties from the first printing of *Languages in the World* to The Endangered Language Fund.

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# Part I

## Linguistic Preliminaries

### *Approach and Theory*

#### Introductory Note: On Language

Language is the water humans swim in from the age of five months' gestation, when hearing typically develops in the womb, to the day of death. We are surrounded by, and surround ourselves with, language at nearly every waking moment of our lives and even some nonwaking moments, such as when we dream or talk in our sleep. Only those put in solitary confinement, which is considered punishment, or those who take a vow of silence, such as Trappist monks, are cut off from the normal dynamics of language (but even these monks have developed a form of sign language, and they continue to read). There are also cases of severely handicapped infants who are never able to fully enter the human linguistic world. The rest of the 99.99% of us – that makes seven billion worldwide and counting – are in the never-ceasing flow of language and contributing our parts to the currents.

Because language is as natural as breathing in and out, we tend to take it for granted as we go about our daily business. The goal of *Languages in the World* is to bring the usually invisible workings of language to your attention through a global survey of some of the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical factors that shape language and language behavior. Our account is informed by two very basic observations. The first one is: language is always catching up to conditions. In Chapter 1, we outline some of the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical factors that have brought the particular language variety Spanglish into existence, and we discuss the ways that speakers have woven together the structures of their dual linguistic inheritance of Spanish and English to form a now-emergent language. The story of Spanglish illustrates the way that language is always catching up to the conditions of the movements and interactions of people going about their business.



The second basic observation guiding the stories we tell in *Languages in the World* is this: speakers' brains are always embodied, and speakers' bodies are always embedded in contexts. In Chapter 2, we introduce you to what we are calling *the language loop* and show how language loops in several directions at once: language links speakers to their fellows' cognitive domains, to their ambient landscapes, and to their cultures as a whole. Language is perspective taking, and particular languages reliably pull their speakers' attentions toward certain psychological understandings, views of the landscape, and social relations, while other languages make other distinctions in these same categories. Importantly, these perspectives are always bound to behaviors.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce you to some general linguistic terminology, although terminology as such is not the main focus of either of those chapters. In Chapter 3, by way of contrast, a fuller discussion of linguistic terminology is the main event, and our purpose is to review the four main ways linguists have come to categorize the languages of the world. This comparative/contrastive process has led to a rich understanding of languages and their structures. It is in this context of the study of linguistic structure that we place our wider investigation into the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical conditions that have shaped languages since the beginning of the time we can say that language has existed as such.