Our goal in preparing the fourth edition of this workbook has remained essentially the same as in preparing the earlier editions: to offer students experience with a broader range of languages than is provided in Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication. Linguistics focuses for the most part on the properties of English. As stated there, the main reason for this is that “it is essential that students be able to evaluate critically our factual claims at each step, for this encourages a healthy skepticism and an active approach toward the subject matter” (p. xii). Given that students have at least some command of English, we can assume that they are able to draw upon this knowledge to formulate, test, and revise linguistic hypotheses. Thus, they are introduced to the basic methodology of linguistics as a science.

Nevertheless, it is extremely important that students become familiar with the structural properties of languages other than English. In A Linguistics Workbook, therefore, we have provided exercises based on a wide variety of the world’s languages. We have preserved most of the exercises from earlier editions, though we have dropped some and have added a few new ones. We have also revised several on the basis of our experience in using these exercises in the university classroom.

In general, we continue to work toward improving the clarity of the exercises and broadening the scope of the workbook in terms of languages covered. In several chapters we have selected material from particular languages because they illustrate a desired range of structural types. We invite students to look for similarities and common themes amid the structural diversity. In this way they begin to carry out one of the central goals of current linguistic theory: to discover the basic and shared organizing principles of human language.

As in the earlier editions, the chapters follow the order of presentation in Linguistics; thus, the chapter on morphology precedes the chapters on phonetics, phonology, and syntax. We prefer this order for two reasons. First, students have little difficulty relating to words, as opposed to perhaps less intuitively obvious units such as phonetic variants and distinctive features. Second, words encode not only morphological information but also phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information; thus, the word can serve as an intelligible and unintimidating introduction to some of the basic concepts of linguistics.

This edition of the workbook also follows the earlier ones in that several of the exercises in the chapter on pragmatics would traditionally be placed in a syntax section. Even though these exercises require the student to recognize certain
syntactic properties and regularities, we have placed them in the chapter on pragmatics in order to illustrate the numerous ways in which the major moods can be marked in the world’s languages. In our exercises on moods we have also included examples of sentence negation, since negation frequently patterns with mood marking.

The exercises in this workbook vary in difficulty. This range makes the workbook appropriate for use in intermediate linguistics courses as well as introductory ones. The more difficult exercises also serve another purpose. There are frequently students who become extremely interested in linguistics and wish to do extra work. We have found that many of these exercises are both challenging and stimulating for such students.

We should also call attention to the following point. When one is dealing with a large number of languages, the problem of consistency across writing systems becomes very complex. For example, the symbol a (print-a) is typically used in texts to represent a lax low back vowel. In phonetic writing systems, however, the symbol for a lax low back vowel is a (script-a). We have nevertheless represented almost all of the low back vowels as a, in conformity with standard (not phonetic) convention. Unless otherwise noted, the user of this workbook should assume that the symbol a represents a lax low back vowel. Where appropriate, we have used International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols in place of the Smith-Trager transcription system used in the earlier editions. This change in transcription is consistent with the adoption of the IPA transcription system in *Linguistics*.

Finally, linguists are fond of saying that the best way to learn about linguistics is to *do* linguistics. This workbook is intended to make doing linguistics possible at an introductory level. We hope that students will find the exercises both interesting and instructive.