



Language

Edward Sapir

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This is without doubt the most important book ever written on the subject of Language and Linguistics. It is a basic book, covering all the then known branches of this large field. It is must reading for anybody interested in a deep study of languages. This is a book which is basic in its subject and popular enough to be of interest to the general reader. The psychological and formal characteristics of speech are carefully established and after studying the historical factors that have molded it the author has devoted his last chapters to the wider bearings of linguistic science and to furnishing a clear understanding as the ever changing instruments of our emotions and mental activity. "This book of Mr. Sapir's distinguishes itself from other general treatment of the problems of linguistics by its power to stimulate thoughts about the subject. There is nothing trite or matter-of-fact between the covers. The discussions spring from an unusually wide acquaintance with language in all its varieties and a scholarly understanding of the principles of psychology underlying expression. But, more than by its learning, the book impresses us by its quick insight and acute analysis. A capital illustration is the treatment of the problem of classifying languages. . . . There is also a great deal that is suggestive in what the writer has said about the process in phonetic change. Especially noteworthy in this connection is the emphasis he places on what he calls 'patterning'. . . . Closely related to patterning is the discussion of 'drift', the idea that changes in language are not random but move in a definite direction. . . . A gratifying feature, not unusual in books of this class is a chapter showing the dependence of literary style on the phonetic and formal characteristics of a language." The Nation

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