The Linguistics Delusion

by Geoffrey Sampson

DESCRIPTION:
Linguistics is a subject which came to the fore only in the 1960s. It is founded on a fallacy. Linguistics claims to be 'the scientific study of language,' but language behaviour is too open-ended and creative to be treated by the methods of science. In consequence, linguistic theories systematically distort the nature of language, and present a misleading picture of our human nature. Geoffrey Sampson shows how various traditions of linguistics, and their accounts of different aspects of language, are all infected by the delusion of scientism. And he offers positive examples of how language can be studied insightfully, once the scientistic delusion is given up.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:
1. Introduction

Section I: Language Over-theorized
2. Two Ideas of Creativity
3. Grammaticality Meets Real-life Usage
4. Rigid Strings and Flaky Snowflakes
5. Economic Growth and Linguistic Theory
6. The 'Cognitive' Alternative
7. One Man's Norm is Another's Metaphor

Section II: Writing Systems
8. From Phonemic Spelling to Distinctive Spelling
9. The Reality of Compound Ideographs

Section III: Language Complexity
10. A Linguistic Axiom Challenged
11. Complexity in Language and in Law

Section IV: And Now for Something Completely Different ...
12. A Phonological Paradox
13. How Many Possible Trade Names are There?
14. Envoi

CONTRIBUTORS BIOGRAPHIES:
Geoffrey Sampson is Professor Emeritus at Sussex University and has taught linguistics at the LSE, Lancaster and Leeds Universities. His recent books include Love Songs of Early China (2006), Electronic Business (2nd edn 2008) and Writing Systems (2nd edn 2015).