The genre of the preface to the second edition of a book requires to some extent self-congratulations: indeed the very existence of a second edition implies that the book itself was, if not well received, at least reasonably so. We are very gratified that so many people have found our work useful, and we are thankful to all those who provided us with much needed feedback. We have tried to integrate suggestions and requests in this second edition, without however radically changing the nature of the textbook, which was and remains a simple, straightforward introduction to linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Our work in the second edition has consisted of correcting any formal and factual errors (much to our surprise, there were still a few) and updating our figures and data, whenever possible (e.g., we now reflect the data of the 2000 census for the United States), as well as the bibliography. Elsewhere we have added a few paragraphs clarifying some areas that we found to be unnecessarily obscure. In a few cases we have added new material, most significantly about pedagogical objectives for prospective teachers, computer-mediated communication, and the glossary, which has now about 100 more entries. Perhaps the most notable change is that we have expanded significantly the treatment of English grammar, one of the most frequent requests/suggestions from our readers. We have at the same time simplified the treatment and presented more information in visual form, to aid memorization. Finally, the format of the book has changed significantly. All syntactic trees were redone using qtree, a (La)TeX utility by Jeffrey Mark Siskind and Alexis Dimitriadis. Another change is that the second edition of Understanding Language
Structure, Interaction, and Variation is accompanied by a workbook (ISBN 0-472-03068-X), which collects a wealth of exercises and activities that teachers can draw on to help their students familiarize themselves with the contents of the book. It should particularly help students in areas where more practice is beneficial: phonetics, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

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