The Interaction Engine

Communicative interaction forms the core of human experience. In this fascinating book Levinson, one of the world's leading scholars in the field, explores how human communicative interaction is structured, the demands it puts on our cognitive processing, and how its system evolved out of continuities with other primate systems. It celebrates the role of the 'interaction engine' which drives our social interaction, not only in human life, but also in the evolution of our species – showing how exchanges such as words, glances, laughter, and face-to-face encounters bring us our greatest and most difficult experiences, and have come to define what it means to be human. It draws extensively on the author's fieldwork with speakers across multiple cultures and communities, and was inspired by his own experiences during the COVID lockdown, when humans were starved of the very social interaction that shapes our lives. This title is also available as open access on Cambridge Core.

STEPHEN C. LEVINSON is Emeritus Director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics and author of over 400 publications on language, culture, and cognition. He holds an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University, is the recipient of the 2020 Huxley Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and he is a fellow of the British Academy, the Academia Europaea, and the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

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Language in Social Life and Human Evolution

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009570329

DOI: 10.1017/9781009570343

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009570343

First published 2025

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-57032-9 Hardback

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