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Marcel Den Dikken is a professor of linguistics at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.
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Preface

This handbook was an ambitious project – and as Sir Humphrey Appleby would never fail to remind his (Prime) Minister, Jim Hacker, in the episodes of the legendary BBC series Yes Minister and Yes Prime Minister, the epithet ‘ambitious’ usually means ‘beyond an individual’s capacity’ or even ‘dangerous’. If I have managed to avoid the many potential pitfalls of an undertaking of this magnitude and complexity, and have steered clear of the dangers inherent in it, I certainly have many people to thank for it.

Before I thank the people who have helped bring this project to fruition, I should mention the essential role played, at the very outset, by Maria Polinsky. If Masha had not suggested my name to the people at Cambridge University Press as a potential editor of the syntax handbook that they were seeking to publish, and had not instilled in me the necessary confidence to take this project on, I would never have been in the happy position to write this preface and to present this book to you, the reader. I will be eternally grateful to Masha for giving me this opportunity and for convincing me that I could pull this off.

Two of my compatriot colleagues, Hans Broekhuis and Norbert Corver, and my CUNY colleague Christina Tortora, also made immensely valuable contributions to this project at its inception. They served as sounding boards for the ideas that I had put together on the content and organization of the handbook. Whatever its shortcomings, the finished project is infinitely better than it would have been if I had not listened to and acted upon their input.

Masha, Hans, and Norbert all ended up contributing chapters to the handbook, and Christina served as the reviewer of one of the chapters. This leads me to some heartfelt words of gratitude toward the authors and reviewers for the handbook. It was very gratifying to see so many colleagues respond immediately and enthusiastically to my invitation to
contribute a chapter to the book. Almost all the linguists I approached signed on to the project. There were a few personnel changes along the way (I am especially grateful to Jon Sprouse and Ellen Lau for stepping in so late in the game, and for going about the writing of their difficult chapter so expeditiously and efficiently), and three of the chapters originally planned and solicited did not materialize; but overall, the response to this project has been overwhelmingly positive. I thank the authors for their excellent work on their chapters.

Each chapter, besides being commented on by the editor, was sent to one external reader. The reviewers were asked to evaluate their chapter for content and presentation as well as adherence to the detailed guidelines provided by the editor to the authors. I am very grateful for the highly valuable input provided by the reviewers, which led to many substantive and presentational improvements.

At the Press, I thank Helen Barton and Joanna Breeze for their excellent support throughout the project, and Adrian Stenton for his copy-editing work. Helen deserves special thanks for always backing me on my suggestions, responding promptly to my queries, and keeping my spirits up with her positive attitude.

At the CUNY Graduate Center, I am very grateful to Michelle Johnson for helping me to keep track of progress (there was a time at which some chapters had not been written at all, others were being reviewed, a third set was being revised, and a few chapters were already finished in their revised form; Michelle’s spreadsheets helped me to stay on top of things), and for her wizardry with Word’s index function in linking the index entries to their occurrences in the chapters.

Finally, my special thanks go to my most precious one, my friends and my family for their support throughout this period.