

## The Lexicon

What is the lexicon, what does it contain, and how is it structured? What principles determine the functioning of the lexicon as a component of natural language grammar? What role does lexical information play in linguistic theory?

This comprehensive yet accessible introductory textbook aims to answer these three questions, and explores the relation of the lexicon to grammar as a whole. It offers a critical overview of major theoretical frameworks, and puts forward a unified treatment of lexical structure and design. The text can be used for introductory and advanced courses, and for courses that touch upon different aspects of the lexicon, such as lexical semantics, lexicography, syntax, general linguistics, computational lexicology, and ontology design.

One of the authors' key objectives is to provide students with a set of tools which will enable them to work with lexical data for all kinds of purposes, and they have included an abundance of exercises and in-class activities for this purpose, which also ensure that students are actively engaged with the content and effectively acquire the necessary knowledge and skills they need.

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## Preface

This book is the first textbook on the lexicon in the Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series. It is intended as an in-depth introduction to the theory and structure of the lexicon in linguistics and linguistic theory. The text offers a comprehensive treatment of lexical structure and design, the relation of the lexicon to grammar as a whole, and to methods of interpretation driven by the lexicon.

The book examines the structure of lexical information within the context of both traditional and newly emerging views on the role of the lexicon in linguistic theory. No single syntactic framework in linguistics is assumed. Rather, the linguistic phenomena are observational, while the proposed mechanisms and explanations to account for these data can be seen as generally theory-neutral. Nevertheless, a strong theoretical claim is made for specific, generatively oriented, structural principles, characterizing the behavior of lexical items in relation to grammar.

### Audience

This book is written for anyone interested in knowing more about the lexicon and its general design, and in using lexical data for specific tasks, both theoretical and applied. In other words, it aims at answering the following questions: (1) what is the lexicon, what does it contain, and how is it structured? (2) what principles determine the functioning of the lexicon as a component of natural language grammar? and (3) what role does lexical information play in linguistic theory (e.g., how is lexical information exploited by other components of grammar)? The approach taken is strongly data-oriented and has as one of its essential goals to provide the reader with a set of tools enabling work with lexical data for all kinds of purposes.

Having a linguistics background is not required, although a basic (introductory course level) knowledge of grammar will make the formal details and representations easier to follow. For this purpose, we suggest *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar* (Huddleston and Pullum 2005) and other references listed in Section 1.9 of Chapter 1. Two more textbooks we highly recommend for acquiring additional background on different aspects of lexical theory are *The Lexicon: An Introduction* (Ježek 2016), which covers a wide range of topics related to the

internal structure of the lexicon and its usage, and *Lexical Meaning* (Murphy 2010), which deals with word meaning and different approaches to its study.

This textbook can be used for both introductory and advanced courses in the study of the lexicon and for courses that touch upon different aspects of the lexicon, such as: lexical semantics, lexicography, syntax, general linguistics, computational lexicology, ontology design, etc. The book is structured in such a way that its contents are easily customizable to a specific course level, set of objectives and requirements, and instructional strategies.

## Features

The overall structure of the book is uniform, where each chapter has an *Overview* and a *Summary* section, which are meant to help the student by adding context and connecting the various strands of the topic. The former is intended to introduce the content covered in the chapter and to contextualize it with respect to previously presented material. The latter sums up succinctly the main points addressed in the chapter, thus allowing the reader to reflect on what has been learnt. The *Glossary* may be used as review material, too, as it contains definitions of the key concepts introduced in the book.

Extensive problem sets offered in the *Exercises* section at the end of each chapter, as well as questions labeled as DISCUSS, which are integrated into the exposition of different topics, ensure that the students are actively engaged with the essential content and effectively acquire the necessary skills and knowledge of the topic. The discussion points are meant to ensure that the students approach the topics presented critically and open-mindedly, and are better suited for in-class activities and group discussion. The exercises may be preferably used for individual assignments and their ultimate goal is to provide the necessary feedback on the learning process results. Answers are provided in *Answers to Selected Exercises*.

Two more features are framed as boxes: CLUE/COMMENT and WARNING. The CLUE/COMMENT boxes (indicated by an image of a magnifying glass) contain additional comments (definitions, historical remarks, data from languages other than English, etc.). The WARNING boxes (indicated by an image of an exclamation mark) are meant to prevent common terminological misunderstandings and introduce important exceptions to the generalizations presented in the text.

The *Further Readings* sections provide lists of references on the topics covered in each chapter. *Primary references* are more appropriate for advanced students and as additional sources for the instructor, while *secondary references* are helpful for students who need to strengthen their background or look for a more detailed explanation of the contents included in the corresponding chapters. Additional resources available online are provided in *Online Resources*, which is structured in four sections: *General Links*, *Lexical Databases and Lexicons*, *Modern Theoretical Frameworks*, and *Corpora and Corpus Query Systems*.

The following brief cross-reference guide may be useful if the instructor plans on covering specific aspects of the lexicon in class:

- *word* and other key concepts in lexical study: Chapter 1
- lexical semantics: Chapters 4–7
- lexicon–syntax relations: Chapters 2, 3, 8, 11
- lexicography: Chapters 1, 6
- word meaning: Chapters 4–7
- lexical-semantic relations: Chapters 4, 10
- lexical ontology and type system: Chapter 10
- lexical morphology: Section 10.6
- syntactically and semantically oriented approaches to the lexicon: Chapters 3, 5
- lexical structures: Chapters 6–9
- verbal semantics and syntax: Sections 2.2, 2.3, 6.3.2, 6.3.3; Chapters 8, 9
- nominal semantics and syntax: Sections 2.3, 6.3.4; Chapter 7
- lexical data and empirical methods in lexicon research: Section 1.6

## Organization

A general “bottom-up” pedagogic approach has been followed in organizing the book, which we believe allows one to integrate the new ideas and topics with the previous ones as the book proceeds.

Part I (*The Lexicon in Linguistic Theory*) contains three introductory chapters on the key concepts in lexical study (Chapter 1), the relation between lexicon and syntax (Chapter 2), and the relation between lexicon and semantics (Chapter 4). Chapters 3 and 5 show how these concepts have been treated in different theoretical frameworks.

The component pieces of the lexical entry are dealt with in Part II (*Lexical Structures*): they are presented at a general level in Chapter 6, and are further detailed and applied to specific syntactic categories in Chapters 7, 8, and 9.

The various threads introduced in the above chapters come together in Part III (*Lexicon As a System*), in two chapters dealing with higher levels of lexical and syntactic organization: the general architecture of the lexicon (Chapter 10) and the mapping from the lexicon to syntax and its effects on compositional interpretation of complex linguistic expressions (Chapter 11).

## Conventions

The following typographical conventions are used in this book:

### **Bold face**

Indicates new terms, followed by definitions when necessary.

### *Italics*

Indicate previously introduced technical terms and signal a metalinguistic use of an expression (e.g., *book* used to refer to the word *book* in English rather than to the physical object this word represents).

### SMALL CAPS

Small capital letters signal major conceptual and linguistics categories, as well as semantic types (e.g., EVENT, LOCATION, HUMAN, etc.).

### \*, #, ?

When preceding a linguistic expression, these symbols signal different acceptability judgments (i.e., whether a native speaker would judge such an expression as “good” or acceptable, or not):

\* marks *grammatically* unacceptable (ungrammatical) sequences

# marks *semantically* and *pragmatically* odd expressions

?, ?? marks expressions which are not as bad as those following a star (\*), but which still are perceived as more or less odd or inadequate syntactically, semantically, and sometimes pragmatically.



This icon signifies a general note, an additional comment, or a clue.



This icon indicates a warning or caution.



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