Introducing Language Typology

Language typology identifies similarities and differences among languages of the world. This textbook provides an introduction to the subject which assumes minimal prior knowledge of linguistics. It offers the broadest coverage of any introductory book, including sections on historical change, language acquisition, and language processing. Students will become familiar with the subject by working through numerous examples of crosslinguistic generalizations and diversity in syntax, morphology, and phonology, as well as vocabulary, writing systems, and signed languages. Chapter outlines and summaries, key words, a glossary, and copious literature references help the reader understand and internalize what they have read, while activities at the end of each chapter reinforce key points.

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Cambridge Introductions to Language and Linguistics
This new textbook series provides students and their teachers with accessible introductions to the major subjects encountered within the study of language and linguistics. Assuming no prior knowledge of the subject, each book is written and designed for ease of use in the classroom or seminar, and is ideal for adoption on a modular course as the core recommended textbook. Each book offers the ideal introductory material for each subject, presenting students with an overview of the main topics encountered in their course, and features a glossary of useful terms, chapter previews and summaries, suggestions for further reading, and helpful exercises. Each book is accompanied by a supporting website.

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Forthcoming:
Introducing Historical Linguistics Brian Joseph
Introducing Language Typology

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Note: Every chapter begins with an outline and a list of key terms and ends with a summary, activities, and a list of further reading.

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Preface

The goal of this book is to offer a few glimpses into the vast research area of linguistic typology—the study of the similarities and differences among languages that hold across genetic, areal, and cultural boundaries. It is meant for students and a general audience with some prior exposure to linguistics, such as an introductory course, but not necessarily anything more. No knowledge of foreign languages is presupposed. The glossary in the back of the book explains terms specific to language-typological research and provides references that define general grammatical terms.

Here are four features of the presentation. First, the survey of language-typological research is intended to be broad in topical coverage. Beyond the basic components of grammar—phonology, morphology, and syntax—it also offers a chapter on lexical semantics and brief sections on writing systems and sign languages. In addition to synchronic data, crosslinguistic generalizations about historical development, language acquisition, and language use are also discussed.

Second, the approach is broad in another way as well. Instead of adopting a particular descriptive framework, data are presented in a pre-theoretical metalanguage that hugs the facts as much as possible. This feature should render the text relatively accessible to non-linguist readers.

Third, the pre-theoretical approach is also apparent in the selection of the crosslinguistic generalizations discussed. Hypotheses about language universals may be supported in three ways: by a set of crosslinguistic data, by a theory that predicts them, or by a combination of both. This book focuses on data-based, primarily inductive generalizations.

Fourth, a comprehensive survey of the literature on language typology is not attempted. The focus is mostly on analysis and documentation; the goal is to introduce the reader to the kind of argumentation used in crosslinguistic research and to show its close relationship to the modes of thinking employed in other sciences and in everyday life.

Here is a brief synopsis of the book.

Chapter 1 What is language typology illustrates differences and similarities among languages and presents the statement types that serve as tools to capture their similarities.

Chapter 2 The worlds of words is about similarities and differences in the meanings of words across languages, with a few comments on what this might mean for the way people actually see the world.

Chapter 3 Assembling words, Chapter 4 Dissembling words, and Chapter 5 The sounds of languages present crosslinguistic generalizations about syntax, morphology, and phonology, with a few remarks on writing systems and sign languages.

Chapter 6 Language in flux turns to the genesis of synchronic structure by presenting crosslinguistic generalizations about historical evolution, language acquisition, and language use.

Chapter 7 Explaining crosslinguistic preferences attempts historical, acquisitional, and usage-based explanations of synchronic crosslinguistic generalizations.

I am very grateful to my relatives, friends, and former students who have helped me with language data and comments. They are the following: Gustav Bayerle, Telle Bayerle, Yea-Fen Chen, Roberta Corrigan, Dina Crockett, Garry Davis, Fred Eckman, Nicholas Fleischer, Younghyon Heo, Gregory Iverson, John Kellogg, Ahrong Lee, Sooyeon Lee, Silvia Luraghi, Veronica Lundbäck, Julia Moravcsik, Corrine Occhino, Olesya Ostapenko, Hamid Ouali, Sueyon Seo, James Shew, Hyowon Song, Jae Jung Song, Jennifer Watson, Kathleen Wheatley, and Jessica Wirth.
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I would not have been able to write this book without the guidance I was fortunate to receive in my early years as a linguist from Gerald A. Sanders, who was my professor at Indiana University, and from the late Joseph H. Greenberg, my project director at the Stanford Universals Project. I am profoundly grateful to both of them.
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Chapter 2, Section 2.4 (38): Oksapmin counting Nicholas Evans 2010. *Dying words. Endangered languages and what they have to tell us.* John Wiley and Sons, page 60.


Abbreviations

Most of the abbreviations used here are taken from the Leipzig Glossing Rules (www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/files/morpheme.html).

A the agent noun phrase of a two-argument verb
ABS absolutive case
ACC accusative case
ASP aspect
CAUS causative case
CL class
CLF classifier
CMP comparative
DAT dative case
DC declarative clause marker
ERG ergative case
FEM feminine
GEN genitive case
GER gerund
IMPF imperfective
INDOBJ indirect object
INF infinitive
L1 first language (a language already acquired)
L2 target language (a language to be acquired)
MRK marker
MSC masculine gender
NEU neuter gender
NMLZ nominalizer
NOM nominative case
OBJ object
OM object marker
ORD ordinal
P the patient noun phrase of a two-argument verb
PART partitive case
PFV perfective
PL plural
POSS possessive marker
PREF prefix
PRF perfect
PRIV privative
PRT particle
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>the single noun phrase of a one-argument verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBJ</td>
<td>subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SING</td>
<td>singular</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUP</td>
<td>superlative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1S</td>
<td>first person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>second person singular</td>
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<td>third person singular</td>
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<td>second person plural</td>
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<td>third person plural</td>
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<td>A &amp; B</td>
<td>A immediately precedes B</td>
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<td>boundary between word and clitic</td>
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