Languages around the world organize their lexicons, or vocabularies, in myriad different ways. This book is a celebration of global linguistic diversity that brings together fascinating cases from a wide range of languages to explore how and why this lexical variation occurs. Each of the thirty-six short chapters shows how different culturally specific words, relating to a range of phenomena such as kinship, color, space, time, objects, smells, and animals, vary across languages and geographical locations. The book also explains the mechanisms of development in vocabularies, showing why this variation occurs, and how languages and cultures interact, to deepen the reader’s understanding of one of the most important aspects of linguistics. Assuming little to no prior knowledge of linguistics, and introducing concepts in an accessible way, this book is an entertaining, informative read for anyone who wants to learn more about the incredible variation and diversity of the human lexicon.

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The Geography of Words

Vocabulary and Meaning in the World’s Languages

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