



LINGUISTICS SPRING SCHOOL OCTOBER 13-24, 2025 UFJF | UFMG

Lexical typology

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This course offers an exploration of lexical typology, understood as the systematic study of cross-linguistic variation in words and vocabularies, and word meaning universals. It introduces some of the critical theoretical and methodological issues inherent in lexical typology, which has to find its way in balancing between theoretical semantics, lexicography and general typology. We will use several case studies to highlight both key concepts in the field, among others, co-expression, colexification, syn-expression and conflation, and advantages and disadvantages of different methodological approaches. A significant focus will be on examining which meanings can or cannot be lexicalized across languages.

A central challenge in all cross-linguistic comparison is to what extent an observed cross-linguistic similarity may be explained by universal tendencies, inheritance, contacts, accident, or a combination of these factors. We will consider this issue as applying to word meaning and lexico-semantic patterns. We will discuss precise and approximate meaning universals, and absolute, statistical, and implicational universals. While most lexical universals identified are statistical, absolute lexical universals are of significant theoretical interest, and we will review various approaches to identify them. We will also devote some time to genetic and areal patterns in word meaning and lexico-semantic patterns and give examples of how lexical typology can be used in historical research.

Lecture 1 – Foundations of lexical typology

Goddard, C. (2001). Lexico-Semantic Universals: A Critical Overview. *Linguistic Typology*, 5(1), 1-65. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lity.5.1.1>

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, M. (2008): Approaching lexical typology. In Vanhove, Martine (ed.), *From polysemy to semantic change : towards a typology of lexical semantic associations* (Studies in language companion series 106), 3–54. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, M., E. Rakhilina, and M. Vanhove. (2015). "The Semantics of Lexical Typology." In Riemer, N.(ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Semantics*, 434–54. London: Routledge.

Moore, R., Donelson, K., Eggleston, A., & Bohnemeyer, J. (2015). Semantic typology: New approaches to crosslinguistic variation in language and cognition. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 1(1), 189–200.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/lingvan-2015-1004>

Lecture 2 – Body

Majid, A. (2010). Words for parts of the body. In B. C. Malt & P. Wolff (Eds.), *Words and the mind: How words capture human experience* (pp. 58–71). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Brown, C. H. (2013). Hand and Arm. In Dryer, M. & Haspelmath, M. (eds.) *WALS Online* (v2020.4) (<http://wals.info/chapter/129>)

Brown, C. H. (2013) Finger and hand. In Dryer, M. & Haspelmath, M. (eds.) *WALS Online* (v2020.4) (<http://wals.info/chapter/130>)

Kraska-Szlenk, M. 2014. Semantic extensions of body part terms: Common patterns and their interpretation. *Language Sciences* 44: 15 – 39

Lecture 3 – Temperature

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, M. (2015). Introducing "The linguistics of temperature." In M. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (Ed.), *The linguistics of temperature* (pp. 1–40). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.107.01kop>

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, M. & D. Nikolaev (2021): Talking About Temperature and Social Thermoregulation in the Languages of the World. *International Review of Social Psychology* 34(1). 1–23.
doi:<http://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.410>.

Lecture 4 – Perception and cognition

Evans, N., & Wilkins, D. (2000). In the mind's ear: The semantic extensions of perception verbs in Australian languages. *Language*, 76(3), 546–592. <https://doi.org/10.2307/417135>

Norcliffe, E., & Majid, A. (2024). Verbs of perception: A quantitative typological study. *Language*, 100(1), 81–123. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lan.2024.a922000>

Vanhove, M. (2008). Semantic associations between sensory modalities, prehension and mental perceptions: A crosslinguistic perspective. In M. Vanhove (Ed.), *From polysemy to semantic change: Towards a typology of lexical semantic associations* (pp. 341–370). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/slcs.106.17van>

Viberg, Å. (2001). The verbs of perception. In M. Haspelmath, E. König, W. Oesterreicher, & W. Raible (Eds.), *Language typology and language universals: An international handbook* (pp. 1294–1309). Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lecture 5 – Areal semantics

Georgakopoulos, T., Grossman, E., Nikolaev, D., & Polis, S. (2022). Universal and macro-areal patterns in the lexicon: A case-study in the perception-cognition domain. *Linguistic Typology*, 26(2), 439–487.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2021-2088>

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, M. & H. Liljegen (2017): Semantic patterns from an areal perspective. In Hickey, R. (Ed-), *The Cambridge handbook of areal linguistics*, 204–236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.