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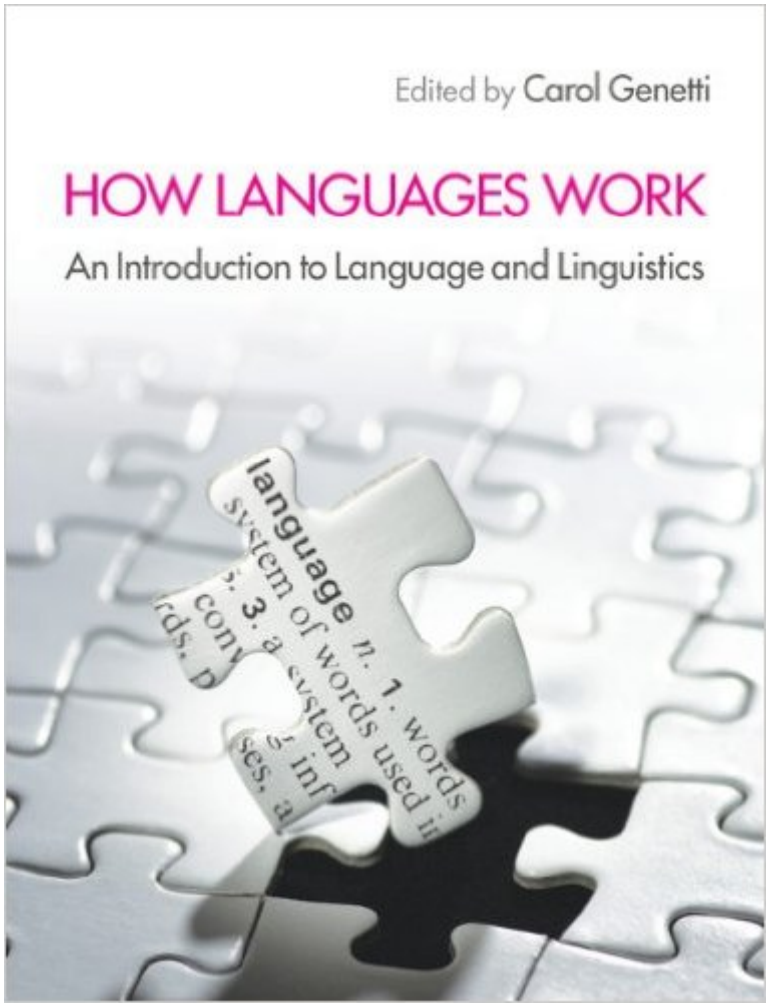
How Languages Work: An Introduction To Language And Linguistics



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Synopsis

A new and exciting introduction to linguistics, this textbook presents language in all its amazing complexity, while guiding students gently through the basics. Students emerge with an appreciation of the diversity of the world's languages, as well as a deeper understanding of the structure of human language, the ways it is used, and its broader social and cultural context. Chapters introducing the nuts and bolts of language study (phonology, syntax, meaning) are combined with those on the 'functions' of language (discourse, prosody, pragmatics, and language contact), helping students gain a better grasp of how language works in the real world. A rich set of language 'profiles' help students explore the world's linguistic diversity, identify similarities and differences between languages, and encourages them to apply concepts from earlier chapter material. A range of carefully designed pedagogical features encourage student engagement, adopting a step-by-step approach and using study questions and case studies.

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Customer Reviews

I have been looking for a textbook to be used in an introductory linguistics course and was quite

excited when I first got hold of How language work by Carol Genetti. It is always difficult for a introductory textbook of linguistics to find a balance of what topics to include and what to leave out. I appreciate the choices that have been made in this volume, the depth with which the individual topics are covered, and the order in which they are presented. I also appreciate the supplemental material that is available on the website.There are not many other introductory textbooks of linguistics out there that promote a functional perspective of grammar.The collection of language profiles in the second part of the book not only illustrates a bit of the variety of languages that are out there but also introduces the student of samples of the kind of work that linguists produce. As the book probably contains more material than be covered in one 3 credit course, part of the book, especially the language profiles could easily be used in subsequent courses on morphology, syntax, language typology etc.One reviewer complained that the language of this text is too technical. However, I find it a lot easier to read than the textbook we used before (Linguistics - An Introduction by William McGregor)

From the perspective of an instructor, I really like this textbook a lot, especially as it covers such a wide range of topics for an introductory work. The chapters are written by experts in their respective fields, but are presented accessibly and clearly to the introductory Linguistics student. I love that there is a strong component of semantics, pragmatics, discourse, and prosody, in addition to foundational chapters on structural analysis of phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax. They all tie together very well. The semantics and pragmatics components have really helped me redefine how I introduce these concepts to students, and the discourse and prosody chapters provide a good opportunity to apply the analytic tools to naturally occurring data.I have also found the website to be an excellent resource for additional pedagogical tools. It seems complete to me, with supplementary materials for every chapter.

While this is a very comprehensive book, there are several things that proved problematic for me.The construction is less than desirable. Within one week of owning this book, sections of pages began to fall from the binding and had to be glued back in.Though this is an introductory text for the subject, the narration style tends to be a bit advanced and understanding the chapters can require frequent use of the glossary. Vocabulary terms are in bold, but they are frequently not defined in their initial introduction. There are also a few typos in each chapter...a more thorough proofreading would have been beneficial.There is an online site for further study materials that has proven very helpful. There are, however, practice examples within the book listed as having answer keys

available on this website, but they do not exist. There are also some broken links and incorrect answers in the test bank.This is a good first edition of the book and contains a lot of useful and well organized information, but some revisions are necessary to make it a textbook that I would regularly recommend.

The content of this book is good but the binding job is terrible. I've been using this book for my linguistics class for less than 4 weeks now and groups of pages are falling out at the front and back already. I've only had this kind of wear happen on books that I've read several times over a number of years so I think the binding work is just very poor.Also, there are chapter tools on a corresponding website but they are only available for the first 5 chapters (out of 15). These tools have been really helpful but it's very disappointing to be without them as the content becomes harder in Chapter 6. This mainly frustrates me because the text refers to exercises on the website that are simply not there.Some positive points: The lines in the chapters that are most helpful are in boldface which is quite helpful when doing a quick skim of a chapter for review before an exam. And there are language profiles in the back of the book that really help to apply the terms you learn throughout to diverse languages from around the world.Overall, I would say the value of this book is not worth the discontinuity with the website and the substandard condition. If you have a choice, go for a different Linguistics book.

This book is extremely dense, and often uses technical language that only a specialist in the field would know, before defining that technical language. The author is very clever, and the topic is absolutely riveting. Do not take the Linguistics course you are enrolled in if this is the assigned textbook, unless you are taking a full 3 month semester. My linguistics course was only eight weeks, that is simply far too short a time to grasp such an intricately rigorous discipline.

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