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978-0-521-85140-4 - Language, Usage and Cognition
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Language, Usage and Cognition

Language demonstrates structure while at the same time showing considerable variation at all levels: languages differ from one another while still being shaped by the same principles; utterances within a language differ from one another while still exhibiting the same structural patterns; languages change over time, but in fairly regular ways. This book focuses on the dynamic processes that create languages and give them their structure and their variance. Joan Bybee outlines a theory of language that directly addresses the nature of grammar, taking into account its variance and gradience, and seeks explanation in terms of the recurrent processes that operate in language use. The evidence is based on the study of large corpora of spoken and written language, and what we know about how languages change, as well as the results of experiments with language users. The result is an integrated theory of language use and language change which has implications for cognitive processing and language evolution.

JOAN BYBEE is Distinguished Professor Emerita in the Department of Linguistics at the University of New Mexico. Her previous publications include *Phonology and Language Use* (Cambridge, 2001) and *Frequency of Use and the Organization of Language* (2007).

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521616836

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First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Bybee, Joan L.
Language, usage, and cognition / Joan Bybee.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-85140-4 – ISBN 978-0-521-61683-6 (pbk.)
1. Language and languages–Usage. 2. Cognitive grammar.
3. Linguistc change. I. Title.
P301.B84 2010
415–dc22 2010003266

ISBN 978-0-521-85140-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-61683-6 Paperback

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Acknowledgements

A researcher's primary debt is to her teachers, students and colleagues, with whom she has exchanged ideas, critiques and inspiration over the years. In my case, a whole community of linguists exploring functional issues, diachronic change, typology and usage effects are cited in the pages of this work for contributing to it through their example and support. This book is based on a forty-year tradition of functional-typological and cognitive linguistics and is dedicated to the men and women who during this period showed the courage to think outside the (black!) box. The book aspires to sum up their work from my own perspective, to apply a consistent set of hypotheses to phonology, morphosyntax and semantics, and to formulate specific new hypotheses about how domain-general processes contribute to the structuring of language.

As for contributions of a more personal nature, I am honoured to name two of my closest friends and colleagues, Sandra Thompson and Rena Torres Cacoullos, who lent personal support and provided their scholarly perspective on drafts of various chapters. I also thank Clay Beckner, who worked with me on Chapters 5 and 8, and came up with much of the data and many of the arguments cited in Chapter 8 (as we collaborated on a paper on a similar topic). I am also grateful to Ben Sienicki for technical support and to Shelece Easterday for constructing the index.

Finally, to my family and friends, who support my activities in many ways, and to my husband, Ira Jaffe, I extend heartfelt thanks.

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