

# Linguistics for Communication

Lexicology and Lexical Semantics  
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**Lecturer**

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# WORDS

Words are the smallest **free form** found in language.

They have a certain degree of **independence**,  
can be **separated** from neighboring elements,  
don't have to occur in a fixed position and can even appear in **isolation**.



ambiguous definition

*cat* and *dog*: how many words are there?

What about *cat* and *cats*?

# LEXEMES AND WORD FORMS

A **lexeme** is an abstract entity of lexical meaning concretely represented by one or more word forms.

**Word forms** are the realizations of a lexeme, and in addition to a lexical meaning they also express one or more grammatical meanings.



- i. A single lexeme may correspond to multiple word forms
- ii. Lexemes are abstract, word forms are the actual words we use to communicate

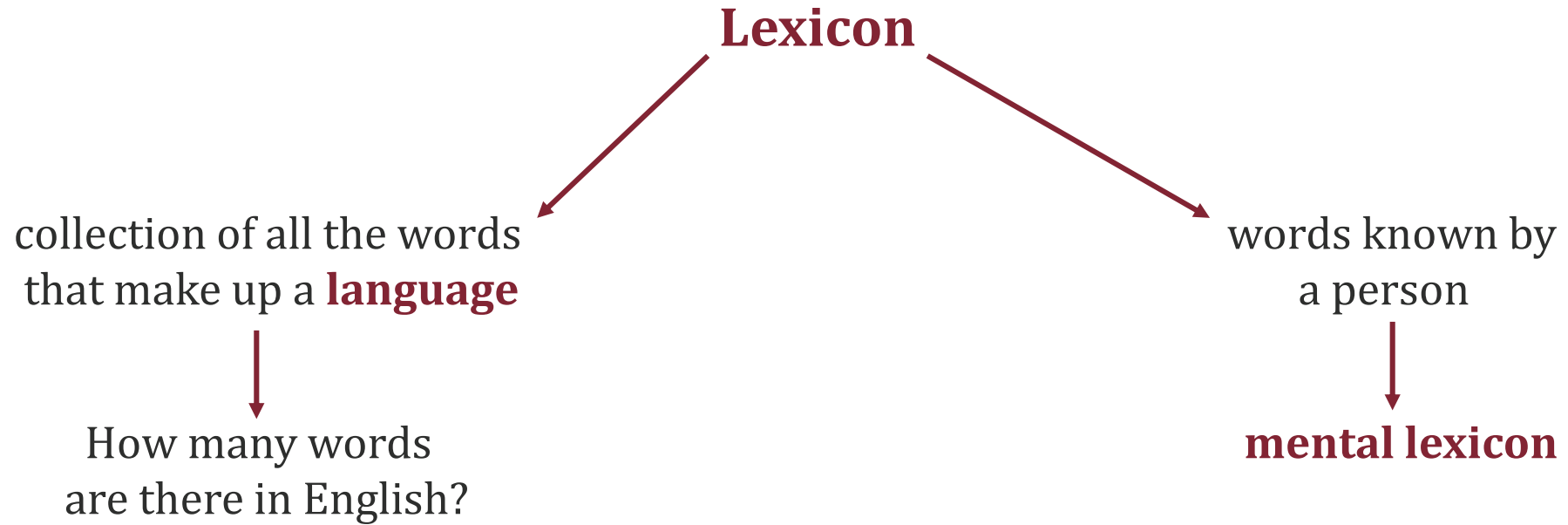
E.g. *cat*: lexeme → *cat* ~ *cats*: word forms

*walk, walked* ~ *see, saw* → different word forms

*walk* ~ *see* → different lexemes

*walk* ~ *walked* → different word forms, same lexeme

# LEXICON



Outlining the lexicon of a language is challenging

- **extensive**
- **ever-changing**

# LEXICON OF A LANGUAGE

The lexicon of a language is subject to a constant evolution.

**Why?**



# LEXICON OF A LANGUAGE

The lexicon of a language is subject to a constant evolution.

## Why?

It mirrors the changes that occur in the **world** and **society**.

New words are needed to:

- identify and communicate **new** objects and concepts;
- adapt to different **attitudes** towards certain things and ideas.

E.g. role of technology → new words: *smartphone* ~ *app* ~ *emoji* ~ *selfie* ~ *streamer*

cultural changes → shift in meaning/connotation: *trigger* (trigger warning) ~ *woke* ~ *lockdown*



# LEXICON OF A LANGUAGE (2)

The lexicon provides individuals with ample opportunities to express their **creativity**.



They can **invent** new words,  
**modify** existing ones,  
use them in **novel ways**.

Lexical creativity is possible because it typically does not impede communication, unlike breaking grammatical rules or subverting language structures.

Words that are complete inventions are called **coinages**.  
E.g. *nerd* ~ *barf*.

# LEXICON OF A LANGUAGE (3)

The lexicon is a dynamic and constantly evolving aspect of language that is shaped by technological, social, and cultural changes.

It is also an area that provides ample opportunities for individual creativity.

Consequently, it is an impossible task to catalog the entire lexicon of a language.





# LOANWORDS

Borrowing words from another language is a common way to enrich the lexicon.

Words taken from other languages are called **loanwords**



**Adjusted** to the morphological and phonological patterns of the receiving language.

E.g. *age* (fr. *âge*) ~ *mercy* (fr. *merci*) ~ *wine* (lat. *vīnum*)  
*artichoke* (it. *articiocco* < ar. *al-ḥaršūf*)



**Non-adjusted** to the phonological and morphological patterns of the receiving language.

E.g. Italian *computer* ~ *hardware* ~ *bar*

# LOAN TRANSLATION OR CALQUES

**Loan translations** or **calques** are word-for-word translations of compounds and phrases from a source language.

- E.g. *brainwashing* ← Chinese *xǐ nǎo* 'wash+brain'  
*rainforest* ← German *regenwald* 'rain+forest'  
*masterpiece* ← (possibly) Dutch *meesterstuk* 'master+piece'  
*wisdom tooth* ← Latin *dentes sapientiae*  
*flea market* ← French *marché aux puces* 'market [of the] fleas'

# WHY BORROW WORDS?

Loanwords are often a byproduct of **contact** between populations, **exchange** of knowledge, product **trade**, and **spread** of ideas.



They are used to name referents associated with another culture or a new technology.

The **prestige** of a population and its language also plays a crucial role.



Non-essential words are borrowed just for the sake of imitation, to elevate one's own language.

E.g. *baby sitter* ~ *record* ~ *news* ~  
*train manager* ~ *act* ~ *audience*  
have replaced, or are in the process of replacing, the original Italian words.

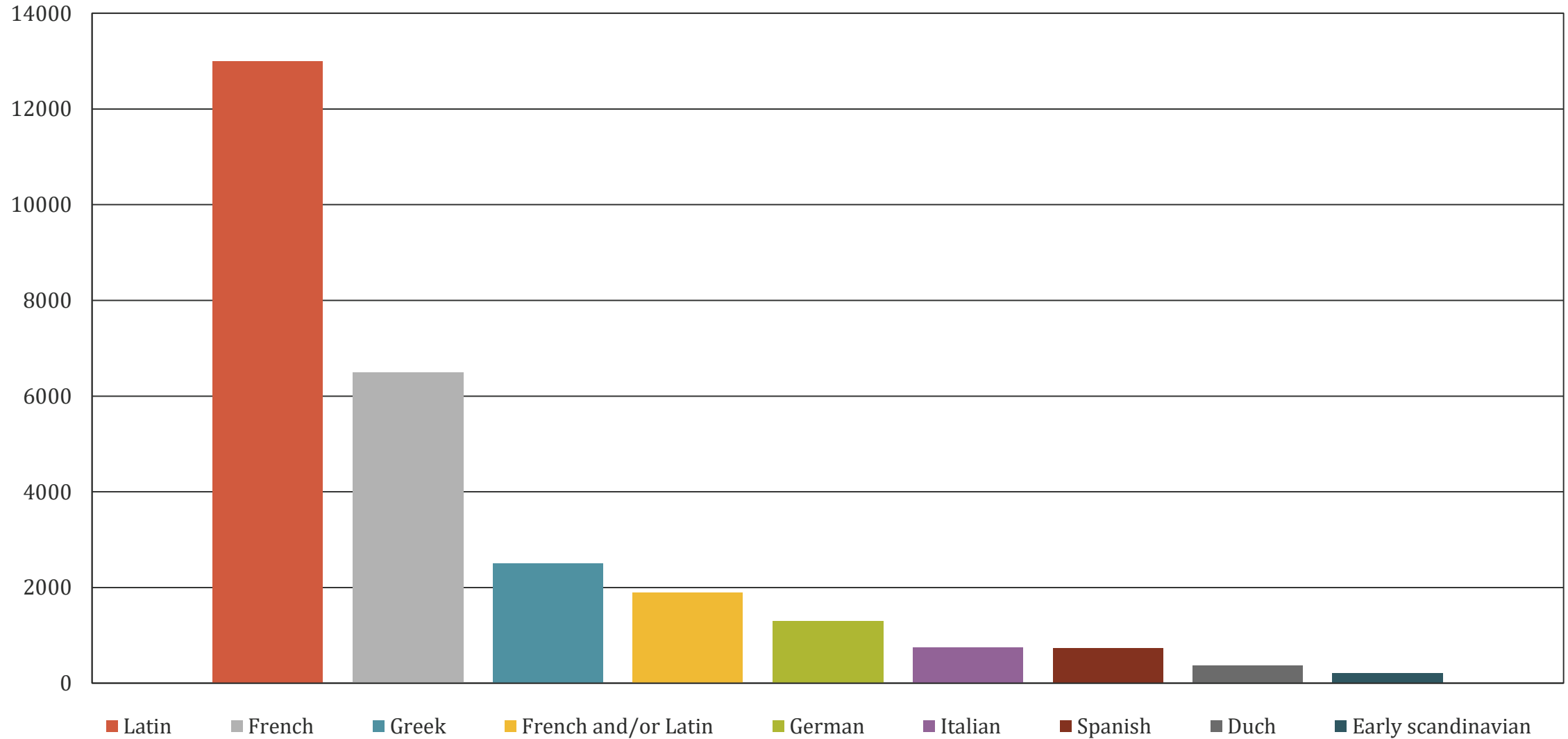
The adoption of loanwords is not always driven by necessity. Rather, it involves cultural exchanges, languages prestige, and the desire to be recognized as part of an international community.

# ENGLISH LOANWORDS

English has a long history of borrowing words from other languages:  
**loanwords** are estimated to account for **over 60%** of the English vocabulary.

- 900 – 1000: Germanic tribes from Denmark introduced many Danish words.  
E.g. *egg* ~ *sky* ~ *sister* ~ *thing*.
- 1066 Norman invasion: French became the second language for many inhabitants, resulting in the adoption of numerous loanwords.  
E.g. *aunt* ~ *calendar* ~ *cost* ~ *duke* ~ *easy* ~ *labour* ~ *rent* ~ *uncle*.
- 1000 – 1700: Significant borrowings from Latin and Greek in the scientific, legal, and philosophical domains.  
E.g. *gravity* ~ *history* ~ *legal* ~ *solar*.
- Colonization of America: adoption of many words from Native American languages, mostly through Spanish.  
E.g. names for plants (*maize*, *tobacco*, *tomato*) and animals (*caribou*, *moose*, *skunk*).
- Colonization of Australia: over 200 words were borrowed from Australian languages.  
E.g. *boomerang* ~ *dingo* ~ *kangaroo* ~ *koala*.

# ENGLISH LOANWORDS (2)



Data from: Philip P. Durkin, *Borrowed Words. A History of Loanwords in English*



# ENGLISH LOANWORDS (3)

- *route ~ dime ~ menu ~ amateur*
- *balcony ~ casino*  
*arsenal ~ violin*
- *plaza ~ guitar ~ rodeo ~ mosquito*
- *noodle ~ pretzel ~ kindergarten*
- *yacht ~ coleslaw ~ cookie*  
*waffle ~ freight*
- *sofa ~ alcohol ~ mattress*  
*algebra*
- *yogurt ~ tulip ~ jackal*

# ENGLISH LOANWORDS (3)

## French

- *route* (route < lat. [via] rupta) ~ *dime* (disme < lat. decima) ~ *menu* (menu < lat. minūtus) ~ *amateur* (amateur < lat amātor)

## Italian

- *balcony* (balcone < palco ‘scaffold’ < German balcho ‘beam’) ~ *casino* (casino < casa < lat. casa ‘cottage’)  
*arsenal* (arsenale < arabic al-ṣinā‘a ‘workshop’) ~ *violin* (violino)

## Spanish

- *plaza* (plaza) ~ *guitar* (guitarra < gr. Kithára, see also Hindi sitār) ~ *rodeo* (rodeo) ~ *mosquito* (mosquito < lat. musca ‘fly’)

## German

- *noodle* (nudel) ~ *pretzel* (bretzel) ~ *kindergarten* (kindergarten: kinder ‘children’ + garten ‘garden’)

## Dutch

- *yacht* (jaghte, now jacht ‘light sailing vessel’) ~ *coleslaw* (koolsla < kool ‘cabbage’ + salade) ~ *cookie* (koekje ‘little cake’)  
*waffle* (wafel) ~ *freight* (vrecht/vracht ‘hire of a vessel for the transport of goods’)

## Arabic

- *sofa* (ṣoffah) ~ *alcohol* (al-kuḥl ‘eye unguent’) ~ *mattress* (maṭraḥ ‘place where something is thrown, hence carpet’)  
*algebra* (al-jabr ‘the reunion of broken parts’)

## Turkish

- *yogurt* (yoğurt) ~ *tulip* (tuliband < Persian dulband ‘turban’) ~ *jackal* (čaqāl)

# ENGLISH LOANWORDS (4)

- *caravan*
- *tea*
- *ski*
- *pajamas*
- *tycoon*





# ENGLISH LOANWORDS (4)

- *caravan* (Fr. carouane/ It. carovana < Persian kārvān ‘company of travellers’)
- *tea* (Amoy dialect [China] te)
- *ski* (Norwegian ski)
- *pajamas* (Urdu pāy-jāma < Persian pāy-jāma ‘trousers’)
- *tycoon* (Japanese taikun ‘great lord’)

## Origin of Italian words:

- Latin
- Other languages
- Created within Italian

# WORDS OF LATIN ORIGIN

≈35,000 words. They constitute the foundation of the Italian lexicon

## Words evolved from Latin

≈4,500 words. They have shown remarkable resilience and form an unbroken tradition dating back at the origin of the Italian language.

They account for more than 50% of the basic vocabulary.

They have often been subject to transformations not only in form but also meaning.

E.g. *casa* 'home' < *casa* 'hut'  
*bocca* 'mouth' < *buccam* 'cheek'

## Latin loanwords

≈30,000 words. They disappeared for centuries and were borrowed from Latin at a later stage, particularly within technical and scientific domains such as medicine, law, and architecture.

E.g. *arteria* 'artery', *clavicola* 'clavicle',  
*femore* 'femur', *contratto* 'contract',  
*cemento* 'cement'.

Some more recent borrowings:  
*ad hoc*, *curriculum vitae*, *par condicio*, *mass media*,  
*raptus*

# LOANWORDS

Origin	Number of loanwords
English	8576
French	6845
Spanish	1300
German	758
Japanese	289
Russian	279
Portuguese	249
Turkish	209
Hebrew	175
Chinese	81

# GREEK LOANWORDS

Greek exerted a significant influence, contributing more than 8,000 loanwords.  
Most of them were **mediated** by Latin.

E.g. names of animals (*acciuga* 'anchovy', *tonno* 'tuna'), plants (*ciliegio* 'cherry-tree', *mandorlo* 'almond tree', *ulivo* 'olive tree') and everyday items (*ampolla* 'vial', *anfora* 'amphora', *lampada* 'lamp'), anatomy (*braccio* 'arm', *gamba* 'leg', *spalla* 'shoulder') and sciences (*aritmetica* 'arithmetic', *filosofia* 'philosophy', *retorica* 'rhetoric').

Direct influence from Greek is primarily dependent on the contacts with the Byzantine Empire.

E.g. administration (*catasto* 'cadastre, real estate registry office', *anagrafe* 'civil registry') and navigation (*argano* 'winch, capstan', *molo* 'jetty, pier', *ormeggiare* 'to dock').

# GERMANIC LOANWORDS

The Germanic peoples introduced a multitude of words related to everyday life and warfare, forming a lexical layer that is now **fully assimilated** in the Italian lexicon: their origin as loanwords is no longer recognized.

E.g. Langobardic name of colours (*blu* 'blue', *bianco* 'white', *bruno* 'dark brown'), horse care (*briglia* 'rein', *staffa* 'stirrup'), anatomy (*anca* 'hip', *guancia* 'cheek', *milza* 'spleen', *schiena* 'back') and various items (*balcone* 'balcony', *bara* 'coffin', *panca* 'bench', *sapone* 'soap', *vanga* 'spade').  
Also: *guardare* 'to look'.

E.g. Franconian *guerra* 'war' (lat. *bellum*).

Loanwords from German mostly date back to the 19th century.

E.g. Sciences and psychology, often based on Greek (*autismo* 'autism', *dinamo* 'dynamo', *entropia* 'entropy', *paranoia*, *psicosi* 'psychosis').  
Also: *blitz*, *hinterland*, *strudel*.

# ARABIC AND TURKISH LOANWORDS

Arabic influenced Italian due to the conquest of Sicily,  
and as a consequence of the extensive **trade** with the Arab world.  
Most Arabic loanwords can be traced back to the end of the **Middle Ages**.

E.g. plants and food (*albicocca* 'apricot', *arancia* 'orange', *carciofo* 'artichoke', *limone* 'lemon', *melanzana* 'eggplant', *zafferano* 'saffron', *zucchero* 'sugar'), trade (*arsenale* 'dockyard', *darsena* 'wet dock', *dogana* 'customs', *facchino* 'porter', *magazzino* 'warehouse', *tariffa* 'fare').

Important contribution to science and medicine (*alambicco* 'alembic', *alchimia* 'alchemy', *algebra*, *almanacco* 'almanac', *cifra* 'digit', *sciroppo* 'syrup', *nadir*, *talco* 'talcum', *zenit* 'zenith', *zero*).

More recently: *tazza* 'cup', *tafferuglio* 'brawl', *moschea* 'mosque'.

**Turkish** loanwords are limited in number.

E.g. *caffè* 'coffee', *sorbetto* 'sorbet', *yogurt*; *divano* 'couch', *sofà* 'sofa'.

# HEBREW LOANWORDS

Limited borrowings, mostly related to the **religious** sphere.

E.g. *alleluja* 'hallelujah', *amen*, *cherubino* 'cherub', *manna*, *messia* 'messiah', *osanna* 'hosanna', *serafino* 'seraph'.  
Also: *sabato* 'Saturday'.



# FRENCH LOANWORDS

French played an important role in shaping the Italian lexicon. Its influence can be attributed to the close **geographical proximity**, which led to extensive interactions shaped by political and cultural factors.

Loanwords dating at the early **Middle Ages**.

E.g. *oste* 'innkeeper', *ostello* 'hostel', *stendardo* 'banner', *viaggio* 'travel'; feudal organization (*cavaliere* 'knight', *conte* 'count', *dama* 'dame, lady', *damigella* 'damsel', *vassallo* 'vassal'); attire and furnishing (*cuscino* 'pillow', *fermaglio* 'barrette', *gioiello* 'jewel').  
Also: *mangiare* 'eat'.  
Suffixes: -aggio, -iere, and -anza.

Loanwords from the **XVII century**.

E.g. Clothing (*cravatta* 'tie', *giarrettiere* 'garter', *stoffa* 'fabric') and gastronomy (*bignè* 'cream puff', *brioche* 'brioche, croissant', *cotoletta* 'breaded cutlet', *menu*, *meringa* 'meringue', *purè* 'mashed potatoes', *ragù*, *soufflé*; previously: *burro* 'butter' and *formaggio* 'cheese').

# SPANISH LOANWORDS

Spanish loanwords can be primarily traced back to the **XVI and XVII centuries**, when Spain ruled over a large part of Italian territory.

E.g. sailing (*flotta* 'fleet', *nostramo* 'boatswain', *rotta* 'course') and military domain (*guerriglia* 'guerrilla', *recluta* 'recruit', *ronda* 'patrol').

Spanish has served as the medium for various products from **America**.

E.g. *cacao* 'cocoa', *cioccolata* 'chocolate', *mais* 'corn', *patata* 'potato'.

# ENGLISH LOANWORDS

English contributed nearly 8,000 loanwords.  
Almost 90% of these borrowings occurred after the **Second World War**.

Some loanwords date back to the **XIX century**.

E.g. *colonizzazione* 'colonization', *fuorilegge* 'outlaw', *locomotiva* 'locomotive', *meeting*, *tunnel*, *vagone* 'coach, wagon'.



# MENTAL LEXICON

Highly-educated individuals know around 40,000 lexemes, while the average native speaker knows approximately 20,000.



Words known by a person are stored in their **mental lexicon**.

It is highly efficient and organized:  
within a fifth of a second from the beginning of a spoken word,  
it can be recognized by our brain.

## It **contains**:

- roots and bound morphemes;
- semantic, grammatical, phonetic, and graphic information;
- morphological rules and processes used to create and understand new words;
- irregular inflectional word forms: they can't be predicted;
- idioms (e.g. *kick the bucket*, *know by heart*, *kill time*): their meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual words involved.

# MENTAL LEXICON (2)

The mental lexicon is a **structured network** of words linked by various associations, from connection between their meanings to their co-occurrence in specific contexts.

- **Domain-specific vocabulary:** words associated with a particular situation or field (e.g. Linguistics, soccer, or cooking); since they frequently occur together, they are linked in the mental lexicon, making them easier to retrieve.
- **Lexical field:** words that have a semantic link.
  - Non-branching: words that just share a significant aspect of their meaning (e.g. *ocean ~ sea ~ lake ~ pond ~ puddle; scorching ~ hot ~ warm ~ lukewarm ~ cool ~ cold*).
  - Branching: taxonomy, characterized by clearly identifiable levels.
- **Word family:** words derived from a particular root  
(e.g. nation: *national ~ nationally ~ nationalize ~ nationality ~ nationalism ~ nationalist ~ international ~ etc.*)

# HOW TO CLASSIFY LEXICON

The lexicon of a language is a diverse, intricate, and ever-changing entity.

In order to effectively describe it, it is essential to establish criteria that facilitate the classification of words into broader groups.

- **Frequency of use**
- **Context of use**
- **Origin**

# FREQUENCY

Words occur with different **frequency**:  
some appear in almost every written and spoken text,  
others are rarely used due to their highly contextualized and specific meanings.

These aspects have been studied by **Tullio De Mauro**,  
who created the Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana (Great Dictionary of the Italian Language)  
and the Vocabolario di Base della Lingua Italiana (Basic Vocabulary of the Italian Language).



Which words are universally known among Italian speakers? What constitutes the average mental lexicon?

To answer this query, De Mauro identified the most **frequent** words across a diverse range of texts.

Assumption: the knowledge of frequently used words is widespread.

However, certain words are infrequently used but still widely **recognized**.

Solution: assessment of the comprehension of lists of words by a sample of individuals.

# CURRENT VOCABULARY

≈52,000 words, known by the majority of speakers: the current vocabulary is the **core** of the Italian lexicon.

## Basic vocabulary

≈7,000 words that are essential for effective communication and are known by those who have completed middle school.

- **Fundamental vocabulary:** ≈2,000 words, the most frequently used: they account for 85% of an average written or spoken text. It includes conjunctions, articles, pronouns, and prepositions (e.g.: *e* 'and', *il* 'the', *con* 'with', *per* 'for', *quello* 'that'), as well as some verbs, nouns, and adjectives that express fundamental meanings (e.g.: *andare* 'go', *vedere* 'see'; *casa* 'house', *pranzo* 'lunch'; *bello* 'beautiful', *vecchio* 'old').
- **High usage vocabulary:** ≈3,000 words that make up between 6% and 8% of an average text. While they are less frequent, they are still widely used in everyday communication.
- **High availability vocabulary:** ≈2,000 words that are not frequently used but still known by most speakers. E.g.: *antipasto* 'appetizer', *forchetta* 'fork', *ombrello* 'umbrella', *pantofola* 'slipper'.

## Common vocabulary

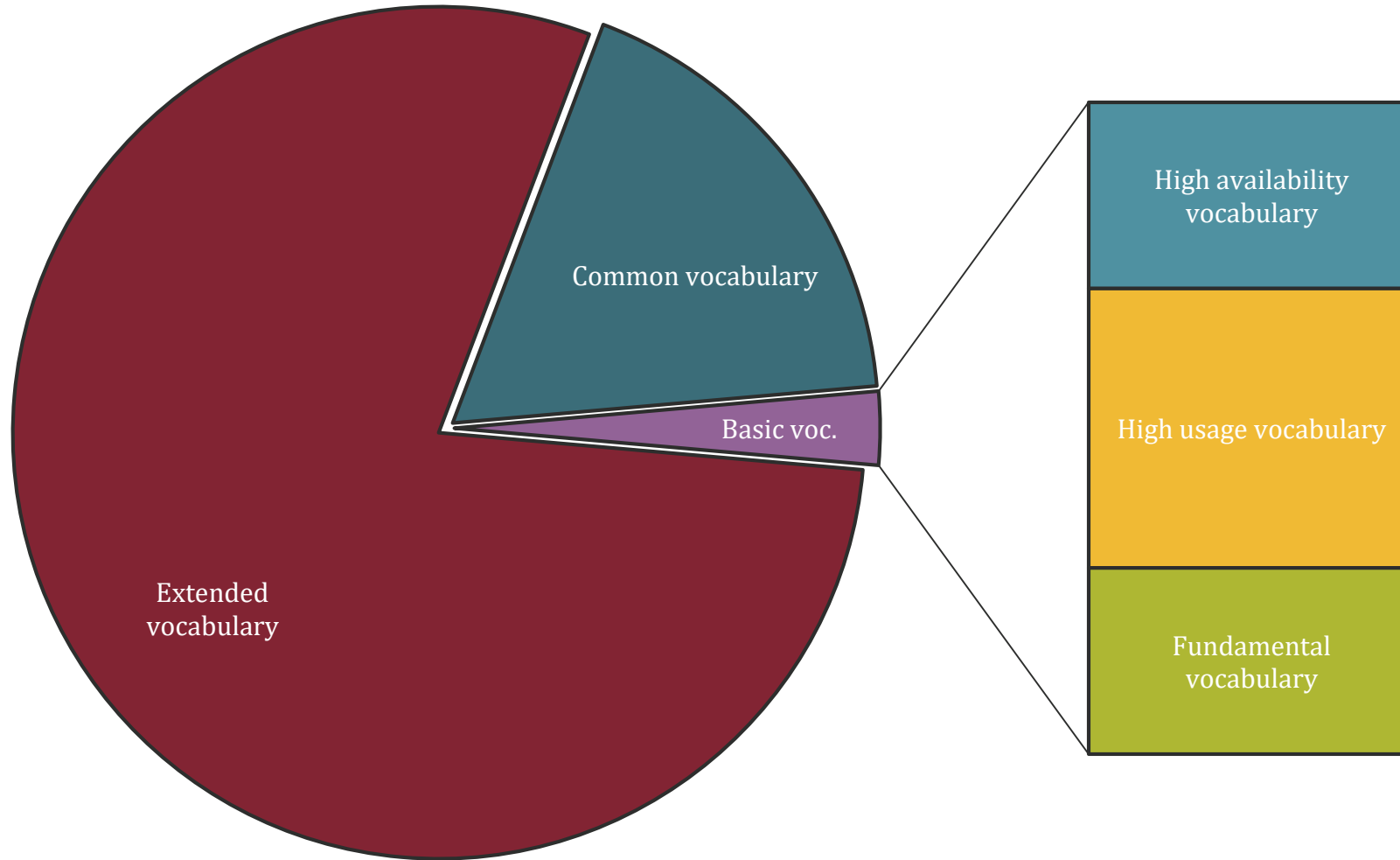
≈45,000 words known by individuals with a higher level of education. It does not include the terminology of specialized topics, however it encompasses certain technical and scientific concepts that may be familiar even if not fully mastered (e.g.: *insulina* 'insulin', *orbita* 'orbit', *radiografia* 'x-ray').





# EXTENDED VOCABULARY

## Italian lexicon composition



The **extended vocabulary** includes approximately 200,000 words. Although they significantly outnumber the basic and common vocabularies, they make up only 2% of an average text.

Words confined to technical, scientific, artistic, and literary domains: they occur rarely and are primarily known by speakers who have expertise or involvement in those **specific fields**.

The **basic vocabulary** is resistant to innovation, and it has remained largely unchanged since the XIII century. The **extended vocabulary** is subject to a continuous expansion as it incorporates new terms associated with technological advancements, discoveries, and innovative ideas.

# SEMANTICS

Semantics is the branch of Linguistics that explores the **literal meaning** embedded within words, phrases, and sentences.



Meanings **encoded**  
within the context of a language system.

We will focus on **lexical semantics**.



# MEANING

Meaning is the **content** conveyed in communication, the message or thought in the mind of a speaker **encoded** in language and **decoded** by a hearer.

But...

what's exactly the nature of meaning?



## MEANING (2)

An option is to think of meaning in terms of **reference**: the connection between the **language** and a **referent**, which is something that exists **outside** language itself.



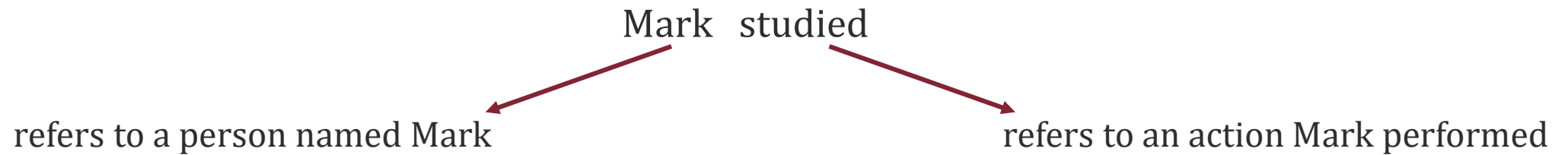
The “things” we are talking about.

However...

There is more to meaning than just reference.

# REFERENTIAL MEANING

**Referential meaning:** component of meaning that associates a word with a specific referent.



Reference is not limited to tangible entities.

E.g.: *mermaids, freedom, hornless-unicorn*

# BEYOND THE REFERENCE

Identifying the referent is **not always sufficient** for a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of a word.

*dog ~ doggy ~ canine*

refer to the same entity, and yet a distinction in meaning can be observed.



**What** exactly sets these words apart?

**How** is their meaning different?

# DENOTATION VS CONNOTATION

## Denotation

is the component of meaning that indicates the specific thing, state, or event to which a linguistic expression refers.

It is primarily objective in nature and is agreed upon by all speakers of a language.



It represents the referential meaning.

## Connotation

encompasses all the non-referential elements associated with a word, such as particular attitudes or emotional overtones.

*dog* ~ *doggy* ~ *canine* have the same **denotation** but differ in their **connotation**.

**What** connotations do these words evoke?

**What** associations or emotions are attached to them?

## DENOTATION VS CONNOTATION (2)

**Connotation** is not strictly related to a word itself,  
it is influenced by personal and cultural factors.  
E.g.: different connotations of *war*.



Denotation is commonly **accepted** and relatively **stable**,  
connotation is more **fluid** and subject to **interpretations**.

Nevertheless, connotation is not purely subjective:  
it possesses a **conventional** component shared within a community.



# DENOTATION VS CONNOTATION (3)

**Denotation** is neutral and objective  
as it simply identifies an object or a concept.

**Connotation** conveys meaning beyond the mere reference,  
expressing an attitude, symbolic values, or emotions.



# POLYSEMY

Polysemy refers to the capacity of words of possessing two or more interconnected meanings.  
It's the norm for the majority of lexemes.

The distinct meanings must be both separate and interconnected.

E.g.: *bitter*

- 'unpleasantly sharp taste' → *this coffee tastes very bitter*
- 'something that causes pain or anger' → *Linguistics was a bitter disappointment*
- 'someone who experiences pain or anger' → *I feel very bitter about what happened*



Distinct meanings that share a **common thread**. How are they connected?

## POLYSEMY (2)

- a. My **legs** are very tired
  - b. There's a hole in his trouser **legs**
  - c. The **legs** of the table are slightly damaged
- 
- a. He suddenly **grasped** my head
  - b. I think I was able to **grasp** the main points of the lecture
  - c. We must **grasp** every opportunity to improve ourselves

# POLYSEMY (3)

The different meanings of a word or a linguistic expression are often connected through **metaphor** or **metonymy**.

*lend me your ears* → the association of “ears” with “attention” is metonymic  
→ the verb "lend" is used metaphorically

**Metaphorical extensions** are frequently observed in polysemous terms, there is often a transition from concrete experiences to abstract domains.

- color terms can represent emotions (*feeling blue*);
- perception verbs can describe thoughts (*I see what you mean ~ she felt certain*);
- meanings that refers to body parts can extend to spatial relations (*the head of the line*).
- the concept of "difficulty" can be understood in terms of heaviness or hardness: we refer to challenging problems as *hard* or *tough*, *weighty* or *heavy*.

# HOMONYMY

Homonyms are words that **sound** and/or are **spelled the same** but have different meanings.  
The formal similarity is **coincidental**, and the meanings are not related.

E.g.:	<i>bark</i>	'outer covering of a tree'	}	homophones and homographs
		'noise made by dogs'		
	<i>bank</i>	'organization that manage money'		
		'edge of a river'		
	<i>boy</i>	'young male'	}	homophones but not homographs
	<i>buoy</i>	'floating object used for directing ships'		
	<i>tear</i>	'drop of liquid from the eyes'	}	homographs but not homophones
	<i>tear</i>	'hole in a piece of material'		

# POLYSEMY VS HOMONYMY

A word is **polysemic** if it has developed multiple meanings overtime,  
**homonymy** refers to words that have coincidentally acquired a formal similarity.



The **semantic connections** between words contribute to the organization of the mental lexicon and facilitate the **retrieval of words** and their meanings.

Three main types:

- similarity (synonymy);
- inclusion (hyponymy and meronymy);
- opposition (antonymy).

# SEMANTIC RELATIONS: SYNONYMY

Synonyms are words with the **same or similar** meaning.  
True, but also an oversimplification.

**Absolute synonymy** is nearly non-existent:  
most synonyms are not fully interchangeable in every context.

**Near-synonymy** is prevalent:  
many words share a core meaning but differ in relatively minor respects.





# SEMANTIC RELATIONS: SYNONYMY (2)

- Near-synonyms may share the same denotation but differ in **connotation**: they can't be swapped with each other without transforming the overall meaning conveyed.  
E.g.: *rapid vs hasty ~ thrifty vs cheap ~ bold vs reckless ~ spare vs deprive.*
- They may belong to different **registers** such as formal, literary or colloquial: the choice of which term to use mostly depends on the context.  
E.g.: *automobile vs motor vehicle vs car vs wheels vs ride.*
- They may be used exclusively or predominantly in specific **regions**.  
E.g.: *fall vs autumn ~ hood vs bonnet ~ garbage vs rubbish.*  
*Italian anguria vs cocomero 'watermelon' ~ rosetta vs michetta 'type of bread' ~ spazzatura vs monnezza 'trash'*  
*branzino vs spigola 'seabass'.*
- They may differ in the **lexical contexts** in which they are commonly used.  
E.g. *the strong arm of the law, but \*the powerful arm of the law*

# SEMANTIC RELATIONS: INCLUSION

## Hyponymy

Relation between a word with a broader or more general meaning (**superordinate**, or **hyperonym**) and a word with a narrower meaning (**hyponym**).

E.g.: *beagle* is a hyponym of *dog* ~ *Dog* is a hyponym of *animal* ~ *Cat*, *lion*, and *horse* are co-hyponyms of the same superordinate – *animal*.

This relation can be expressed as “an X that is a kind or type of Y”.

E.g.: a *beagle* is a type of *dog* ~ An *apple* is a type of *fruit* ~ A *beer* is a type *beverage*.

## Meronymy

Relation between a word that represents a part (**meronym**) and a word that denotes the whole (**holonym**).

E.g.: *page* is a meronym, *book* the corresponding holonym ~ *hand* is a holonym of *finger*, but a meronym of *arm* ~ *window* and *door* are meronyms of *room* ~ *wheel* and *pedal* are meronyms of *bicycle*.

## Gradable antonyms

**Gradable antonyms** are pair of words, typically adjectives, that represent opposite ends of a scale: there are **intermediate values** between them.

E.g.: *hot* and *cold* ~ *long* and *short* ~ *fast* and *slow* ~ *big* and *little* ~ *difficult* and *easy*.

They may both be false, but they cannot both be true at the same time.

E.g.: a drink can't be *hot* and *cold* at the same time, but it can be neither *hot* nor *cold*.

They can be modified with intensifiers.

E.g.: *very hot* ~ *very cold* ~ *extremely hot* ~ *extremely cold* ~ *a little hot* ~ *a little cold*.

## Complementary antonyms

Complementaries do not allow for intermediate degrees and instead cover the entire range of relevant possibilities: they are **non-gradable**.

E.g.: *dead* and *alive* ~ *present* and *absent* ~ *inside* and *outside*.

If one complementary antonym is false, the other must necessarily be true:  
negating either term logically implies the truth of the other.

E.g.: if something is not *dead*, it must be *alive* ~ if it is not *present*, it is *absent* ~ if it is not *true*, it *false*.

## Reversive antonyms

**Reverses** are pairs of words denoting **movements** in opposite directions  
(e.g.: *come vs go ~ raise vs lower ~ push vs pull*).

This category includes also words that signify the change between **reversible states** or the reversal of an action sequence (e.g. *melt vs freeze ~ dress vs undress ~ tie vs untie*).

## Converse antonyms

**Converses** describe the same relationship but from a **different perspective**, often indicating the participants in a **binary relation**.

E.g.: *above vs below ~ parent vs offspring ~ buy vs sell ~ student vs teacher ~ husband vs wife*.