

A Historical Linguistics Lexicon

The following is a lexicon of terms commonly found in discussions of historical linguistics. It is not meant to be comprehensive, and there are many terms that could be included but have not been. The list focuses on English, but most of the terms and concepts can be applied to many languages.

* **(asterisk)** Historical linguists mark words and elements of words that are believed to have existed, but for which there is no documentary record, with an asterisk. For example, the word *dove* is thought to come from the **Old English** **dufe*, but no record of that word exists; *dove* is not attested until c.1200, during the **Middle English** period.

accusative case, see **declension**

active voice, see **conjugation**

adjective, see **part of speech**

adverb, see **part of speech**

affix An affix is an element that is added to a word or root to produce an **inflected** or **derived** form. For instance, in English *-s* is an **inflection** added to produce a plural form of a noun, and *anti-* is added to derive a word that means the opposite of the root. The types of affixes are:

An **infix** is an affix added to the middle of a word to change its meaning or function. Infixes are rare in English, but they can serve as expletives in informal speech and writing, for example, *-fucking-* in *abso-fucking-lutely*.

An **interfix** is similar to an infix in that it appears in the middle of a word, but it unites two roots in a compound. For example, the *-a-* in *rent-a-car*.

A **prefix** is added to the front of a root. In English, prefixes are chiefly **derivational**, forming new words. For example, the *auto-* in *autobiography*. In other languages, they may be **inflectional**.

affix (cont.)

A **suffix** is added at the end of a root. For example, *-ness* is a derivational suffix added to an adjective to form a noun, as in *darkness*, and *-ing* is an inflectional suffix added to form a progressive form of a verb, as in *going*.

Anglicization The process by which a **borrowed** word becomes fully incorporated into English. When a word ceases to be glossed, italicized, or put in quotation marks, we can assume it has been fully Anglicized. An Anglicized word will tend to take English inflections, e.g., the plural of *octopus* becomes *octopuses* instead of the Greek *octopodes*, and its spelling and pronunciation may be altered to conform to familiar English words, e.g., the French *chaise longue* becomes *chase lounge*. The process does not follow a strict timeline, with words that appear to be foreign or where the original language carries prestige, as with Latin, generally taking longer than words that are similar to existing English ones.

Anglo-Latin The term relates to Latin and Latin texts written in England during the medieval period (c.500–c.1500 C.E.)

Anglo-Norman This term is the name of the dialect of French that was spoken by in England from 1066 until c.1400 C.E. It is also an adjective relating to the aristocratic class who ruled England following the Norman conquest in 1066.

Anglo-Saxon A term traditionally used to refer to the people and culture of England from c.500–c.1100 C.E. and also as a synonym for the **Old English** language. The term is inaccurate in that it conveys a sense of cultural, political, and linguistic uniformity that did not exist. Also, today the term has racially charged connotations. As a result, use of the term should be avoided, with, *English* (for the people and culture), *Early Medieval* (for the period), and *Old English* (for the language) preferred.

antedate To antedate a word is to find an earlier example of it than was previously known.

aspect, see **conjugation**

auxiliary verb, see **part of speech**

back-formation A method of word creation in which an element is removed, rather than added, to the root word. Back formations often, but not exclusively, occur when a verb is created from a noun. For example, *to burgle* from *burglar*, and *enthuse* from *enthusiasm*.

blend Also known as a *portmanteau word*. A blend is the combination of two distinct roots to form a new word. But unlike a **compound**, one word is not simply appended to another. Instead, they are fused into an amalgam where the boundaries of the original words are blurred. *Slithy*, from Lewis Carroll's poem *Jabberwocky* is a blend of *slimy* and *lithe*. Another example is *motel*, a blend of *motor* and *hotel*.

borrowing The importing of a word or phrase from one language into another, and a word or phrase so imported. When a word was borrowed long ago, it may no longer be recognized by native speakers as coming from another language. For example, *schadenfreude* is obviously a relatively recent (i.e., mid nineteenth century) borrowing from German, and *zero* is old one (i.e., late sixteenth century) from French, Italian, and Spanish, which, in turn, borrowed it from Arabic.

British / Briton In present-day contexts, these words refer to the people of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, but in the context of the Classical and **Early Medieval** periods, they refer to the Celtic-speaking inhabitants of the island.

calque Also known as a *loan translation*. A form of borrowing where the word or phrase is translated. For example, *superman* is a calque of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.

case, see **declension**

clause A clause is distinct element of grammar that contains a subject (noun) and predicate (verb). A clause that can stand on its own as a sentence is an independent clause; one that cannot is a dependent clause. For example, in the sentence *Vinnie "the Squid" Calamari is a loan shark, but doesn't like to get blood on his hands*, the opening *Vinnie [...] loan shark* is an independent clause, and *but he [...] hands* is a dependent one. The subject of both clauses is *Vinnie*, and the predicates are *is/doesn't like*.

closed class, see **part of speech**

cognate Cognates are words in two or more languages or dialects that share a common root from which they descend. The English *desk* and the German *Tisch* are cognates, sharing a common root in Latin, *discus*. Cognates do not necessarily have to resemble each other. For example, the English *five*, the Latin *quinque*, and the Greek *πέντε* (*pente*) are cognates, descending from a common Proto-Indo-European root, **penkwe*. Nor do cognates have to share a meaning. For example, the present-day English *silly* is cognate with the German *selig*, meaning holy or blessed. (Once upon a time, the English word did mean holy, but no longer.) Cf. **false friends**.

compound A compound is a word formed by the joining of two or more others. Examples include *blackbird* and *skyscraper*. In English, the final root is usually the primary one, with the preceding ones acting as modifiers (e.g., a *blackbird* is a *bird* not a *black*). As a general rule, compounds start out as open (e.g., *black bird* or *sky scraper*), then start to be hyphenated (e.g., *black-bird*, *sky-scraper*), and eventually close (*blackbird*, *skyscraper*). Pronunciation also tends to change, with stress initially placed on the primary or final element but as it closes, shifting to the first element.

conjugation The system of inflections and auxiliaries for verbs, encompassing *tense*, *aspect*, *mood*, and *voice*.

Tense: The time frame in which the action of the verb occurs. English, like all Germanic languages, inflects for two tenses, *present* and *past* (or *preterite*). Futurity is expressed through *auxiliary verbs* (e.g., *she will go*) or adverbially (e.g., *she goes tomorrow*), although this is commonly called the *future tense*.

Aspect: The state of completion of the action of a verb is its aspect. *Perfect* aspects, which express completed actions, are also expressed through auxiliary verbs (e.g., *she had gone*). Some dialects of English, notably Black English, have a progressive aspect (e.g., *she be going*), which expresses an ongoing or continual action.

Mood: English has three moods, the *indicative*, *imperative*, and *subjunctive*. The first two are common, the last is a dying form and is often ignored. The indicative is the usual mood (e.g., *she goes*, *she went*). The imperative is used for commands and often the subject, the person being commanded, is implied (e.g., *You go!*, *Go!*). The subjunctive is used for requests, suggestions, wishes, hypotheses, purposes, doubts, and statements that are contrary to fact. In English, the subjunctive only operates with the present, singular, third-person, and often the indicative is used in such cases (e.g., indicative: *if she was to go*; subjunctive: *if she were to go*).

Voice: English has two voices, *active* and *passive*. In the active voice, the subject performs the action of the verb (e.g., *she read the book*). In the passive, the subject receives the action of the verb and the performer of the action is omitted or relegated to a prepositional phrase (e.g., *the book was read [by her]*). Only **transitive** verbs use the passive voice; *intransitive* verbs, including the full verb *to be*, are always active (e.g., *she is a reader* is in the active voice).

conjunction, see **part of speech**

copula Also known as a *linking verb*, a copula is a verb that links the subject of a clause with a descriptive complement. In English, the most common copula is the verb *to be*. But other verbs often act as copulas, such as verbs that refer to the state of the subject (e.g.,

feel in feels fit and sound as in sounds pleasant) or verbs that indicate an ensuing result (e.g., *become in becomes wet and grow in grows old*).

corpus 1) A collection of texts that is complete, or nearly so, and self-contained. For example, the corpus of Old English texts or the corpus of Shakespeare's plays. 2) A digitized body of texts or specimens of speech or writing that is representative of a particular language or mode of language that is used for linguistic and lexicographic research.

creole A dialect that arises out of contact between two other dialects. Such contact dialects start out as **pidgins**, with a simplified grammar and limited vocabulary derived from the two parent dialects, but as children grow up speaking the pidgin as a native language, it becomes more complex and expansive, a creole. In degree of complexity and expressiveness, creoles are no different than dialects that do not arise out of contact.

Danelaw The area of England ceded to the Danes from 878 to the late tenth century C.E. and the system of law in that area. Generally, the Danelaw encompassed the area north and east of the line running from London to Chester. The dialects of English spoken in the Danelaw have been heavily influenced by Old Norse.

dative case, see **declension**

declension The system of inflections for nouns, pronouns, and adjectives in a language. Present-day English does not decline adjectives, but it does decline nouns and pronouns for number (singular or plural). It also declines personal pronouns into three cases, *nominative*, *genitive*, and *objective*. Languages can have more cases. For example, Old English and present-day German have four: *nominative*, *accusative*, *dative*, and *genitive*. Finnish has fifteen cases.

accusative The accusative case is used for direct objects of clauses and the objects of certain prepositions.

dative The dative case is used for indirect objects of clauses and the objects of certain prepositions.

genitive (or possessive) The genitive case is used to mark words that have a relationship to, such as being possessed by, another word.

nominative The nominative case is used for nouns and pronouns that are the subjects or descriptive complements of the subject. In English, the nominative case is unmarked (i.e., it is the base form, not inflected).

objective A combination of accusative and dative, in Present-Day English the objective case is used for direct and indirect objects of clauses and the objects of prepositions.

derivation 1) Generally, the processes by which the forms and meanings of words change over time. 2) Specifically, a process of word formation by which more complex word forms are created through the addition of **affixes** to a root. For example, *antitrust* is derived from the prefix *anti-* + the root *trust*.

determiner See **part of speech**.

dialect A particular form of language. English, for instance, is a dialect. The distinction between *dialect* and *language* is a socio-political one, not a linguistic one and is often expressed in the denotation “a language is a dialect with an army and a navy.”

doublet A doublet consists of two words that differ phonologically but ultimately come from the same root. Doublets can develop within a language, such as the English *to* and *too*, or they can be **cognate**, borrowed from different but related languages. In English, many doublets come from **Anglo-Norman** and from Latin. For example, *frail* is a fourteenth-century borrowing from Anglo-Norman that ultimately comes from the Latin *fragilis*, and its doublet *fragile* was a direct borrowing from Latin in the early seventeenth century.

Early Medieval England The period of English history running from c.500–c.1100 C.E, that is roughly bounded by the withdrawal of the Roman legions through to the Norman Conquest. As with any categorization of a period, the dates are arbitrary and may vary somewhat depending on what source you consult.

Early Modern English English, and its dialects and variations, as it was spoken and written from c.1500–c.1700. As with any categorization of a period, the dates are arbitrary and may vary somewhat depending on what source you consult.

eggcorn, see **folk etymology**

eponym A word that comes from a person’s name or the person whose name is so used. For example, *boycott* is an eponym for Charles Boycott, a nineteenth-century, Irish land agent, and *chauvinist* is an eponym of diehard, French patriot Nicholas Chauvin.

etymological fallacy The assumption that a word’s original meaning or the literal meaning of the combination of its root and affixes is the meaning of the word. For example, the idea that *decimate* can only mean killing one in every ten people is an etymological fallacy. A word’s meaning is determined by how it is used, not where it comes from.

false friend A word that resembles a word in another language in form but differs significantly in meaning. For example, the English *embarrassed* is a false friend to the Spanish *embarazada* (pregnant). False friends are often, but are not necessarily, **cognates**. The term is also applied to words that have changed significantly in meaning over the centuries. For example, the Present-Day English *adventure* is a false friend to the Middle English *aventure* (fate, chance).

finite verb An inflected form of a verb.

folk etymology A type of **reanalysis** where unfamiliar components of a word are changed to more familiar ones that seem to make more sense. For example, the Anglo-Norman *berfrei* (tower) was altered in the fifteenth century to *belfry* because such towers often contained bells.

The term *eggcorn* is often applied to folk etymologies that have not come into general use. Eggcorns are often considered errors, while folk etymologies have become an accepted, if not the generally used, form of the word. Examples of eggcorns include *old-timer's disease* for *Alzheimer's disease* and *baited breath* for *bated breath*. The term *eggcorn* was coined by linguist Geoffrey Pullum, with *eggcorn* being one person's term for an *acorn*.

full verb, see part of speech

gender In linguistics, gender refers to classes of words that are distinguished by inflectional endings. Typically, the classes are referred to as *masculine*, *feminine*, *neuter*, and *common* (English does not have a common gender), but the grammatical classes are not necessarily related to biological sex or socially constructed gender. For example, the German word for girl, *Mädchen*, is neuter and the word for bridge, *Brücke*, is feminine. Typically, nouns, pronouns, adjectives inflect for gender. And languages can have more (or fewer) genders than the typical four. The Bantu language Shona, for example, has twenty genders.

In English, only the singular, third-person, personal pronouns (i.e., *he*, *she*, *it*) inflect for gender, and the only genders are masculine, feminine, and neuter. English also follows the convention of *natural gender*, in which pronouns are inflected according to the sex of its antecedent noun. For example, a *girl* would use *she/her/hers* and a *bridge* would use *it/it/its*.

genitive case, see declension

Germanic Not to be confused with the language German, the Germanic languages are a subgroup of the **Indo-European** family of languages that is further subdivided into the *West Germanic* languages (English, German, Dutch, Frisian), the *North Germanic* languages (Swedish, Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, and Norwegian), as well as languages derived from these, such as Scots (from English), Afrikaans (from Dutch), and Yiddish (from German).

idiolect The **dialect** peculiar to one individual.

idiom An *idiom* can be one of two things: 1) an **idiolect** or a phrasing in an idiolect, that is unique or characteristic of an individual's speech; 2) an expression unique to a dialect whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings or arrangement of its constituent elements (e.g., *a piece of cake* meaning an easy task).

imperative mood, see **conjugation**

indicative mood, see **conjugation**

Indo-European / Proto-Indo-European / PIE Indo-European is the family of languages with the most speakers. It consists of over 440 languages, including English and most European languages (notable exceptions are Basque, Finnish, and Hungarian), Persian, and many languages of the Indian subcontinent, including Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, and Gujarati.

Proto-Indo-European, or *PIE*, is the progenitor language of this family. It is thought to have been spoken prior to 2,000 B.C.E. on the steppes of eastern Europe/southwest Asia (although this location is disputed by some historical linguists). Although PIE left no written record, many of its word forms and the rudiments of its grammar have been reconstructed from the commonalities among present-day daughter languages.

infinitive verb The base, uninflected form of a verb. In English, the infinitive is usually expressed with the preposition *to* (e.g., *to break*)

infix, see **affix**

inflection An inflection is a grammatical form of a word, a variation on its root that can take into account number, gender, tense, and case. English typically inflects words by adding **suffixes**. For instance, *-ed* to inflect for the past tense of **weak verbs**, or *-s* to inflect nouns for plural. Some verbs in English, the so-called **strong verbs**, inflect for tense through vowel changes, such as *broke* as the past tense of *break*.

intransitive verb, see **transitive/intransitive verbs**

irregular verb, see **part of speech**

language 1) A structured system of communication using vocal sounds, or more rarely discrete signs (as in sign languages for the deaf); 2) a particular instance of the above, a dialect.

lexical item A word or a phrase as it might appear in a dictionary. Phrases that operate as a single unit are lexical items. For example, *the whole nine yards*. The **inflected** forms of a word are subsumed under the lexical item, e.g., *mice* is part of the lexical item *mouse*.

linking verb, see **copula**

loan translation, see **calque**

loan word, see **borrowing**

Middle English English, and its dialects and variations, as it was spoken and written from c.1100–c.1500 C.E. As with any categorization of a period, the dates are arbitrary and may vary somewhat depending on what source you consult.

modifier, see **part of speech**

mood, see **conjugation**

natural gender, see **gender**

neologism A newly coined word.

nominative case, see **declension**

North Germanic, see **Germanic**

noun, see **part of speech**

number Nouns, pronouns, and, in many languages other than English, adjectives are **inflected** for number. In present-day English, this is the distinction between singular and plural. Old English also inflected pronouns for dual, so its pronouns had three numbers, singular, dual (two), and plural (more than two).

objective case, see **declension**

Old English English, and its dialects and variations, as it was spoken and written from c.500–c.1100 C.E. As with any categorization of a period, the dates are arbitrary and may vary somewhat depending on what source you consult.

open class, see **part of speech**

part of speech The parts of speech are classes of words (and sometimes phrases). They include those traditionally taught in school (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections), and classes used by linguists that cut across these traditional categories (i.e., modifiers, determiners). Part of speech is not an inherent quality of a word but depends on how it is used in context. Words can be, for instance, both a noun and a verb (i.e., *impact*) or a preposition and adverb (i.e., *up, down*). As with any classification system, there are anomalies, words that do not quite fit into any category or words that fit into multiple categories. Hence the different classification systems, which are useful in different situations.

adjective A class of words that are chiefly used to precede and modify nouns or to act as the complement of a **copula**. For instance, the adjective *menacing* in *the menacing loan shark* or *the loan shark is menacing*.

adverb A class of words that are chiefly used to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. English adverbs often, but not always, end in *-ly*. For instance, the adverb *menacingly* in *Vinnie “the Squid” Calimari advanced menacingly toward Doug*.

article A type of *determiner* that marks a noun phrase. In many languages, articles are declined like nouns, but not in English. In English, the articles are *a/an* and *the*.

closed class This grouping consists of parts of speech that remain fixed over long periods of time, rarely admitting new words to them. In English, the closed classes are articles, conjunctions, determiners, prepositions, and pronouns.

conjunction A class of words used to connect words or clauses. *Coordinating conjunctions* (e.g., *and, but, or*) connect words or clauses of equal status (e.g., *Vinnie “the Squid” Calamari was big, hulking, and menacing*). *Subordinating conjunctions* (e.g., *because, if, although*) connect words or clauses of unequal status (e.g., *Vinnie broke Doug’s leg because Doug didn’t repay the loan on time*.)

determiner A class of words that specify or limit a noun phrase. Determiners include articles and certain adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns. Determiners can mark whether a noun phrase is definite or indefinite (e.g., *the, a/an*), demonstrate which item is being referred to (e.g., *this, that, those*), mark possession (e.g., *my, your, hers*), mark quantity (e.g., *each, every, some, much, no, any, two, first, all, both, half, double*), and can refer to the subject of an exclamation (such, what).

part of speech (cont.)

modifier A class of words that gives description to a noun or verb. Modifiers are adjectives, adverbs, and their associated clauses and phrases. Modifiers are grammatically optional; they can be removed without affecting the grammar or structure of a sentence.

noun A class of words that can serve as the subject or object of a sentence. Typically, nouns denote a person, thing, or abstract idea. See also **declension**.

open class This grouping consists of parts of speech that are unfixed, readily admitting new words to them. In English, the open classes are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

preposition A class of words that mark a spatial or temporal relationship or that mark a particular semantic role. Unlike many other parts of speech, prepositions cannot stand alone, but must appear in a phrase with a noun or pronoun complement. The preposition appears at the head of the phrase, hence the *pre-* + *position*. Some languages, but not English, have *postpositions*, which appear at the end of such a phrase. Together, prepositions and postpositions are called *adpositions*. Simple prepositions consist of a single word (e.g., *for, up, at, after*), while complex prepositions consist of two or three words (e.g., *according to, as well as, in favor of*). Some prepositions also at times function as adverbs (e.g., *up, down*) and form part of phrasal verbs (e.g., *see to, look down on*.) The faux rule that sentences should not end with prepositions is a misunderstanding of the class. When functioning as prepositions, they cannot end a sentence because they need to be followed by a complement, but when functioning as adverbs or in phrasal verbs they often legitimately end sentences.

pronoun A class of words that can substitute or stand in for nouns. English has eight subclasses of pronouns:

- 1) *personal pronouns* (e.g., *I, she, you, they*);
- 2) *possessive pronouns* (e.g., *my, hers, their*);
- 3) *reflexive pronouns* (e.g., *myself, herself*);
- 4) *demonstrative pronouns* (e.g., *this, that, these*);
- 5) *reciprocal pronouns* (e.g., *each other, one another*);
- 6) *interrogative pronouns* (e.g., *who, what, when*);
- 7) *relative pronouns* (e.g., *who, that*); and
- 8) *indefinite pronouns* (e.g., *any, somebody, none*).

Some pronouns fall into multiple subclasses (e.g., *that* can be demonstrative or relative). And demonstrative pronouns function as the demonstrative part of speech.

part of speech (cont.)

verb A class of words that indicate the occurrence or performance of an action or the existence of a state or condition. English verbs can be subdivided into *full verbs* or *auxiliary verbs*. Full verbs can be further subdivided into *weak* (or *regular*) verbs vs. *strong* (or *irregular*) verbs). Weak verbs inflect by adding standard endings (e.g., *-s* for third-person, singular, present tense; *-ed* for past tense). Strong verbs inflect via vowel changes (e.g., *to break* becomes *broke* in the past tense). Auxiliary verbs function alongside full verbs to express mood, voice, or tense. They can be subdivided into primary auxiliaries (*be, have, do*), which can also function on their own as full verbs, and into modal auxiliaries (e.g., *may, can, will, must*), which only function as auxiliaries alongside a full verb (although they can stand alone with an implied full verb, e.g., *I will [do the thing previously mentioned]*). See also **conjugation**.

passive voice, see **conjugation**

perfect aspect, see **conjugation**

phrase A distinct element of grammar that lacks either a subject (noun) or predicate (verb). The sentence *Vinnie “The Squid” Calamari will break Doug’s legs if he doesn’t pay the hefty and onerous vig tomorrow* consists of several noun phrases (*Vinnie “The Squid” Calamari, Doug’s legs, he, and the hefty and onerous vig*), two verb phrases (*will break Doug’s legs* and *doesn’t pay hefty and onerous vig tomorrow*), an adjectival phrase (*hefty and onerous*), an adverbial phrase (*tomorrow*), and a prepositional phrase (*if he doesn’t pay the hefty and onerous vig tomorrow*). While phrases are typically multi-word, a single word can form a phrase. And phrases can be nested inside one another.

pidgin A contact language consisting of a simplified grammar and limited vocabulary derived from its parent languages.

PIE *Proto-Indo-European*, see **Indo-European**

polysemy The quality of a word or phrase such that it has more than one meaning (e.g., *shark* is polysemous because it can mean both a predatory fish and a predatory human, as in *Vinnie “the Squid” Calamari is a loan shark*).

portmanteau word, see **blend**

predicate The verb **phrase** in a sentence.

prefix, see **affix**

preposition, see **part of speech**

Present-Day English English, and its dialects and variations, as it was spoken and written from c.1700 onward. As with any categorization of a period, the dates are arbitrary and may vary somewhat depending on what source you consult.

preterite tense, see **conjugation**

productive The capacity of a word or word element to form new words or meanings (e.g., the suffix *-ness* is productive, while the prefix *be-*, meaning at, about, or near, as in *behind* or *before*, is no longer productive).

pronoun, see **part of speech**

Proto-Indo-European, see **Indo-European**

reanalysis Change in how a word's constituent elements are perceived that results in a shift in form or meaning. Reanalysis can be 1) **folk etymology**, where the word is changed to resemble a more familiar form (e.g., *bated breath* becomes *baited breath*); 2) rebracketing where the word's elements are divided differently (e.g., *a napron* becomes *an apron*, or *hamburg* + *-er*, something from Hamburg, becomes *ham* + *burger*, in this case resulting the substitution of other food items, as in *cheeseburger* or *veggieburger*); or 3) backformation, where elements are removed to create new meaning (e.g., the verb *to burgle* is a backformation of *burglar*).

reduplication Repetition of a word or element of the word with little or no change (e.g., *hurdy-gurdy*, *chit-chat*).

regular verb, see **part of speech**

root 1) The core element of a word after **affixes** have been stripped away; 2) the word or element of a word in the source language from which a word or element is borrowed.

semantic change Change in a word's meaning over time.

strong verb, see **part of speech**

subject A noun or pronoun phrase in a clause on which the rest of the clause is predicated (i.e., about which a statement is made, a question asked, etc.). In English, and all Germanic languages, the subject typically comes before the verb, or **predicate**. Subjects are in the **nominative** case.

subjunctive mood, see **conjugation**

suffix, see **affix**

syntax The order of words in a clause. In languages which do not rely heavily on **inflection**, like English, the order of words often determines their function within the clause. In heavily inflected languages, like Latin, the order may be altered without change in meaning (as is often the case with Latin poetry), but for which there may be a usual and expected order (as in Latin prose).

tense, see **conjugation**

toponym A place name.

transitive/intransitive verbs A *transitive* verb is one that takes an object, the action of the verb is performed on or received by something (e.g., in the sentence *Vinnie breaks Doug's legs*, the object is *Doug's legs* and the verb *breaks* is transitive). In contrast, an *intransitive* verb cannot take an object (e.g., in the sentence *Doug hobbled home*, the verb *to hobble* is intransitive).

verb, see **part of speech**

voice, see **conjugation**

weak verb, see **part of speech**

West Germanic, see **Germanic**