LINGUIST 168 Introduction to Linguistic Typology

LECTURE 2: METHODOLOGY

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March 31, 2021

Plan for today

- Questions about Lecture 1 or reading; homework

- Terminology: types and universals

- Data sources

- WALS (World Atlas of Language Structures)

- Language sampling

Questions

- How are sign languages grouped?

- What's the role of semantics in typology?
  Evans, Nicholas (2010) Semantic Typology. In Song, Jae Jung (ed)
  The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology. OUP.
  (Files > Additional resources)

For Monday, April 5

- Homework 1

- Reading: Velupillai 2012, Ch.3

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Linguistic types

- Main method of classifying languages in typology

- Certain linguistic properties tend to co-occur

- If combination of properties is common cross-linguistically, it can be labeled a **type**

- Practical use: simple label denotes a list of properties

- Theoretical significance: potential for generalization and predictive power

Example: word order

S = subject
V = verb
O = object

S	**V**	**O**	
You	saw	me.	**English**

	V		**S**	**O**	
Na	va'ai		e	oe	a'u.
PAST	see		ERG you	I.	**Samoan**

Types:
SVO
VSO
SOV

S	**O**			**V**		
se	we	sə-	p-	ɬeʁʷə	-ʁ	
I	you	1SG-	2SG-	see	-PAST	**West Circassian**

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Larger word order types

Samoan

	V	**S**		**O**	
Na	va'ai	e	oe	a'u.	
PAST	see	ERG	you	I.	

possessum	**possessor**
le maile	a le teine
the dog	of the girl

preposition	**noun**
mo	le teine
for	the girl

HEAD	**DEPENDENT**

West Circassian

S	**O**	**V**	
we	se	sə-p-ɬeʁʷə-ʁ	'You see me.'
I	you	1SG-2SG-see-PAST	

possessor	**possessum**	
pŝaŝem	jə-ha	'the girl's dog'
girl	3SG.POSS-dog	

noun	**postposition**	
pŝaŝem	paje	'for the girl'
this girl	for	

DEPENDENT	**HEAD**

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Major word order types

- Head > dependent **head-initial** Samoan

- Dependent > head **head-final** West Circassian

Questions?

Key components of typological analysis

- Types

- Universals

Framing typological generalizations

- Existential statements

  In some languages, there is X.

- Universals

  In all languages, there is X.

Universal statements

- Based on subset of languages:
  - › unrestricted

  In all languages, there is X.

  - › implicational

  In all languages, if there is X, there is also Y.

- Based on probability:
  - › absolute

  - › statistical

  In most languages, there is X.

  In most languages, if there is X, there is also Y.

Potential universals for word order typology

- All languages have VSO word order.

  Unrestricted, absolute
  False!
  Counterexs: English, West Circassian

- In most languages that have VSO word order, the possessum precedes the possessor.

  Implicational, statistical
  True

- Most languages have a fixed basic word order.

  Unrestricted, statistical
  True

Universal statements

- Based on subset of languages:
  - › unrestricted
  - › implicational
- Based on probability:
  - › absolute
  - › statistical

Data sources

- Descriptive grammars

- Questionnaires

  › for researchers

  › for native speakers

- Elicitation with native speakers

- Language corpora

Questionnaire

- Direct questions about construction of interest

What is the basic order of verb, subject and object in language X?

Does language X have case marking on nouns? On pronouns?

Elicitation

- Questions about primary linguistic data

How would you say "I see you" in language X?

How would you say "I see the cat"?

What if I move "the cat" to the front of the sentence?

Data sources

- Descriptive grammars

- Questionnaires

  › for researchers

  › for native speakers

- Elicitation with native speakers

- Language corpora

What are the pros/cons of each data source?

Pros/cons of data sources

Descriptive grammars   Questionnaires   Elicitation with native speakers

Questions?

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wals.info

Quick end of class survey

https://bit.ly/3u3XrPJ

Questions?