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Abstracts:

ON AGENT NOMINALIZATIONS AND WHY THEY ARE NOT LIKE EVENT NOMINALIZATIONS

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We consider agent-denoting nominalizations like *the finder of the wallet*, contrasting them with the better-studied action/event-denoting nominalizations. We show that in English, Sakha, and Mapudungun, agent-denoting nominalizations can have none of the verbal/clausal features that event-denoting nominalizations often have: they cannot contain adverbs, voice markers, aspect, or negation. The one apparent exception to this generalization is that (only) Sakha allows accusative-case objects in agentive nominalizations, but we show that this is due to Sakha's special rule of accusative case assignment, not to a difference in the structure. We explain these restrictions by saying that agentive nominalizers have a semantics like that of a Voice head (Kratzer 1996). Given this, the natural order of semantic composition implies that agentive nominalizers, like Voice, must combine directly with a bare VP. We conclude by presenting the results of a seventy-eight-language survey, confirming that human languages in general avoid clause-like syntax inside agentive nominalizations, although it is permitted in reduced relative clauses, which may look superficially similar.

Keywords: nominalization, agent nominals, event nominals, participles, gerundives, morphological typology

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PRESCRIPTION VS. PRACTICE: THE EVOLUTION OF FUTURE TEMPORAL REFERENCE IN FRENCH

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Because many of the forms participating in inherent variability are not attested in the standard language, they are often construed as evidence of change. We test this assumption by confronting the standard, as instantiated by a unique corpus covering five centuries of French grammatical injunctions, with data on the evolution of spontaneous speech over an apparent-time span of 119 years.

Reasoning that forms salient enough to have attracted the attention of grammarians were likely widespread in the speech of the time, we demonstrate how these materials may be used to (i) infer the existence of prior variability, (ii) trace the evolution of normative dictates associated with the variants, and most revealing, (iii) discern hints of prior linguistic conditioning of variant selection. These are then operationalized as factors in a multivariate analysis and tested against the facts of usage.

The linguistic focus is on future temporal reference, a notoriously variable sector of the grammar in which competing exponents have persisted for centuries. Systematic comparison of grammatical treatments with actual speaker behavior shows virtually no correspondence between the motivations offered in the literature and those constraining actual variant choice. Prescriptive efforts to explain variability, by ascribing to each variant form a dedicated reading or context of use, have had no effect on speech, which is shown to be governed by a powerful set of tacit variable constraints. These in turn are unacknowledged by the grammatical tradition. The result is a great and growing disconnect between the variable rules governing speech and the normative dictates that underlie the notion of the standard. We explore the implications of these findings for the use of grammarians' observations as data for linguistic analysis.

Keywords: morphosyntactic variation, language change, future temporal reference, French, prescriptive grammar, standardization, sociolinguistics

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RECONSTRUCTION OF MORPHOSYNTACTIC FUNCTION: NONSPATIAL USAGE OF SPATIAL CASE MARKING IN TSEZIC

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The reconstruction of genealogical relationships between languages is traditionally performed through lexical comparison and the establishment of regular sound changes. The historical analysis of other aspects of linguistic structure, like syntactic patterns or the function of grammatical elements, is normally understood to depend on a previously established thorough understanding of the genealogical structure of the family. In this article we show that it is possible to reconstruct historical changes in morphosyntactic function without assuming detailed knowledge about the genealogical developments of the languages involved. Even more surprisingly, we are able to accurately reconstruct the genealogical structure of a language family using only a limited amount of morphosyntactic variation.

As a case study, this article focuses on the nonspatial usage of spatial case marking in the Tsezic languages, a subgroup of Nakh-Daghestanian, spoken in the Caucasus. A new semantic-map-like visualization is developed to represent functional differences in case marking between the various Tsezic languages. Using MAXIMUM PARSIMONY, a reconstruction is proposed for the historical development of the case marking, and the same visualization is used to present the reconstructed historical developments in an insightful manner. Besides various new insights regarding the development of Tsezic case marking, the approach used in this article presents a generally applicable method for the reconstruction of morphosyntactic function.

Keywords: Tsezic languages, Nakh-Dagestanian languages, maximum parsimony, historical reconstruction, case marking

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SIL INTERNATIONAL AND THE DISCIPLINARY CULTURE OF LINGUISTICS

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Practical language development: Whose mission?

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SIL International: An emic view

Kenneth S. Olson
SIL International

Keywords: SIL, missionary linguistics, linguistic fieldwork, history of linguistics, international development, Bible translation, endangered languages

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ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN REGULAR AND IRREGULAR INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY: EVIDENCE FROM DINKA

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Bert Remijsen

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Discussions of the psycholinguistic significance of regularity in inflectional morphology generally deal with languages in which regular forms can be clearly identified and revolve around whether there are distinct processing mechanisms for regular and irregular forms. We present a detailed description of Dinka's notoriously irregular noun number inflection and suggest that no pattern can usefully be designated as regular. Psycholinguistic studies of Dinka would make a valuable contribution to our understanding of inflectional morphology crosslinguistically.

Keywords: Dinka, Nilotic, dual-route hypothesis, number marking, irregular morphology, supra-segmentals

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