



Newsletter: October 2007

Welcome to the LSSA newsletter, we hope you find the information useful.

If you would like to add information to the LSSA newsletter please send the information to Prof Naudé: naudej.hum@ufs.ac.za.

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Review: What's in a verb?

EDITORS: Rowicka, Grazyna J.; Carlin, Eithne B.

TITLE: What's in a verb?

SUBTITLE: Studies in the verbal morphology of the languages of the Americas

SERIES: LOT Occasional Series

PUBLISHER: Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics / Landelijke

YEAR: 2006

Michael Maxwell, Center for Advanced Study of Language, University of Maryland

SUMMARY

The morphology of verbs is typically more complex than that of nouns, and this is nowhere more true than in the Americas. This volume brings together a dozen studies, each around 20 pages, of the verbal morphology of a diverse set of languages of North, Central and South America. It goes without saying that most of these languages are endangered, and some are moribund (or even extinct as I write this). Each article is written by a linguist from the Netherlands, or a linguist who has been affiliated with an institution in the Netherlands. Themes range from a sketch of inflectional affixation to

the semantics of a particular affix.

Together, the papers give a reasonably broad view of the typology of morphology in the Americas. As one might expect, the quality of the papers varies. Since I cannot cover all twelve articles in detail, I will concentrate on some high points. A theme that recurs is that these languages do things that one might not expect if exposed only to languages of other parts of the world (or indeed, to just one region in the Americas). Many of the articles can therefore be profitably read as a way to broaden one's typological horizons.

Peter Bakker's article on Cree morphology manages to introduce three topics of interest that those who only know languages from other parts of the world may not have encountered: obviation, stem selection based on animacy, and person hierarchies. The latter refers to the fact that both subject and object agreement is marked on Cree transitive verbs, but not by separate subject and object affixes. Rather, first, second and third persons (and the obviative person) are marked by affixes; but whether a given affix represents the subject or the object is dependent on a hierarchy in which, for example, second person outranks first, in conjunction with a separate affix which determines whether the higher ranked person is subject (so-called direct mode) or object (inverse mode, perhaps analogous to a passive in more familiar languages).

Jan van Eijk's article in this book constitutes a typological overview of person marking systems, and could profitably be used as an introduction to Bakker's more detailed exposition of a direct/ inverse system.

The transitivity vs. intransitivity distinction should be familiar to most readers. But Annette Veerman-Leichsenring brings to the reader's attention a different categorization of verbs from a Popolocan language of Mexico. This categorization is based on marking of subject and/or object, but it completely cross-cuts the transitivity/ intransitivity distinction. I confess to having approached this article with a sense of disbelief; how can an intransitive verb mark an object? (The answer is that the intransitive verbs in question have only implicit subjects, with meanings like "(it) is known to a person" or "(it) gets lost to a person." Those interested in the unergative/ unaccusative distinction are advised to read this paper carefully.) Other verbs are obligatorily reflexive, or while transitive mark the subject but not the object. The latter appears again to be related to person hierarchies, although this point of contact between analyses is not developed.

Another article developing a typologically unusual theme is that of Mily Crevels, concerning "verbal number" in a Bolivian language. While the concept is not unknown to typologists, Crevels nicely lays out the semantics of the construction in this particular language.

Willem Adelaar discusses directional suffixes in a variety of Quechua. Intriguingly, the analysis draws a distinction between so-called "final" and "non-final" suffixes. While the non-final suffixes tend to be more derivational than the final suffixes, this is not always true, and they have apparently shifted their status in both directions during the development of the Quechuan languages. Adelaar traces the development of what were clearly directional affixes (and as such largely derivational) at an earlier stage of the language, but which often have an aspectual (and therefore more inflectional) usage now. The result is perhaps analogous to the distinction between the so-called 'conjunct' and 'disjunct' affix domains in Athabaskan languages.

Simon van de Kerke undertakes a study of Leko, a moribund language of Bolivia, and in particular the nature of object indexing on verbs. A frustration in reading this paper is the fragmentary nature of the data; the author draws conclusions, but one can't help the feeling that a different analysis is in order, or else that further data is needed to justify

the conclusions. His conclusion, for example, is that the use of "object cross-reference markers...is not unconstrained and not fully predictable. The constraints are syntactic/semantic but also pragmatic." In other words, we don't know what the constraints are. The author is aware of the problems, and of course cannot be blamed; the language was declared dead some years ago, and if it had not been for van de Kerke's fieldwork (done with elderly speakers who had partially shifted to Spanish), we would know even less about the language. Salvage linguistics, at its best and its (unavoidably) worst.

Hank Nater studies alternations in the affixes of Tahltan, an Athabaskan language. Athabaskan languages are rightly notorious for their complex verbal morphology, and Tahltan is no exception. This is nowhere more apparent than in the fusion of affixes resulting from phonological reduction processes operating across morpheme boundaries. Nater presents a bewildering number of cases of allomorphy, particularly with stems, and suggests that the synchronic morphology can only be clarified by reference to the diachronic changes, and therefore through comparison with related languages. Those who studied generative phonology in the 1960s or 1970s will recognize this theme, and will be aware of the potential abuse of this methodology.

Other papers touch on historical reconstruction of morphology (Grazyna J. Rowicka's article on a Salish language, Pieter Muysken and Katja Hanns's article on an Uru or Uru-Chipaya language of Bolivia), address the semantics of affixes (Eithne B. Carlin's description of verbalizers in a Cariban language), evidentiality (Stella Telles and Leo Wetzels' article on a Nambikwara language of Brazil), or the language-particular status of parts of speech (Sérgio Meira's article on stative verbs in a Tupian language; the question is whether and how they differ from nouns).

EVALUATION

What you will not find in this work is theoretical studies of morphology, nor in most cases much discussion of the theoretical implications of the results. You will also not find an in-depth description of the verbal morphology of any of these languages. Both limitations are a result of the article length: twenty or thirty pages is simply not enough to accomplish either of these goals, given the complexity of verbal inflection in these languages. What you will find is bite-sized sketches, suitable for reading at a single sitting, with frequent comments that further study is needed (a comment that is surely superfluous, given that it could apply to any topic in linguistics and language description).

Given this perspective, many of the articles in this book will be of interest to morphologists, to those who specialize in one or another language family of the Americas, or to typologists. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that most researchers would need this book on their shelves, and while the book's price is quite low, one wonders how many libraries would order it, given that all the papers are available on-line, at <http://lotos.library.uu.nl/index.html>. Perhaps the time has come for our field to consider web-published papers (if they have been reviewed and accepted for "publication") as having equal standing with papers which appear in printed books or journals.

As is typical with analyses that display considerable complexity in the realms of morphology, phonology or diachronic changes, one may wonder whether some of the analyses actually work. In my opinion, it is high time that linguists verify their analyses computationally. The sheer number of phonological processes and etymologies in Nater's paper, to take just one example, makes it virtually impossible to hand-verify the analysis. (I speak from the experience of writing morphological and phonological analyses which, when implemented on a computer, turn out not work.) Computational morphology and phonology is still not as simple as one might like, but it is doable, particularly for the straightforward phoneme-based rules which are used in most of these papers. (Confirming an OT-based analysis, or even a rule-based analysis in

autosegmental phonology, is more difficult.)

Another drawback to some of the papers in this book is the use of Americanist phonemic characters in place of IPA characters. While the use of orthographic transcriptions is reasonable, it is not clear in this day why non-IPA phonemic transcription should be used.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr. Maxwell is a researcher in computational morphology and other computational resources for low density languages, at the Center for Advanced Study of Language at the University of Maryland. He has also worked on endangered languages of Ecuador and Colombia, with the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

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Vacancy: Applied Linguistics (University of Johannesburg)

The University of Johannesburg has the following vacancy in the Department of Linguistics and Literary Theory: [Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor: Applied Linguistics \(Translation/Interpreting and editing\)](#).

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Master's programmes: University of Stellenbosch

The Department of General Linguistics (Stellenbosch University) advertised its Master's programmes in the Sunday Times of 30 September and Rapport of 14 October. The information is available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/linguist> or can be requested from linguis@sun.ac.za.

'n Advertensie i.v.m. die Departement Algemene Taalwetenskap (Universiteit Stellenbosch) se Meestersgraadprogramme het op 30 September in die Sunday Times en op 14 Oktober in Rapport verskyn. Die inligting is by <http://www.sun.ac.za/linguist> beskikbaar. Inligting kan ook per e-pos verkry word van linguis@sun.ac.za.

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Postdoctoral fellowship: Sociolinguistics at UCT

Here is an [advertisement](#) that recently appeared in the Mail & Guardian offering a Postdoctoral fellowship in Sociolinguistics at UCT.

Kind regards
Raj

Vind aangeheg 'n [advertensie](#) wat onlangs in die Mail & Guardian verskyn het en geleentede bied vir nagraadse studie in Sociolinguistiek by Universiteit van Kaapstad.

Vriendelike groete
Raj

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Wikipedia Update Project: Sociolinguistics

Linguistic Field(s)

General Linguistics
Sociolinguistics

Dear Subscribers and Readers,

We are now well into the academic year, when many linguistics students have undoubtedly been clicking away on their well-worn bookmark to Wikipedia to check out topics for their class assignments. And what a wealth of information there is for them to consult. Were you aware that there are already hundreds and hundreds of Wikipedia pages and articles, each with numerous links to other articles and subfields, for the field of linguistics alone!

As you may recall, The LINGUIST List started a "Wikipedia Update Project" in mid-June in response to a pledge we had made to you to organize such an effort. We reasoned that those who might be in the best position to make any corrections and additions would be you, our community of 25,000 scholars and readers that make up the readership of LINGUIST. A recent chronicler of the Wikipedia phenomenon has suggested that academics need to accept its open-based collaborative model and view further contributions to it as a unique form of community service scholarship: "We are in a position to contribute to the construction of individual articles in a uniquely positive way by taking the time to help clean up and provide balance to entries in our professional areas of interest" (Daniel Paul O'Donnell, If I were "You": How Academics Can Stop Worrying and Learn to Love "the Encyclopedia that Anyone Can Edit." The Heroic Age. Issue 10, May 2007; <http://www.heroicage.org>).

We are more than half-way through the time we had set aside for this project, which is to the end of December 2007. While we have made some headway, we have frankly not received as great a response from volunteers as we had hoped for. In our last update call, we drew your attention to Wikipedia's own pages of article "stubs" in the subfields of morphology, phonetics, syntax, and, earlier, biographies of linguists. Would any of our readers be willing to check out such flagged stubs as, e.g. benefactive case, continuant, dependency grammar, and Ilse Lehiste, currently listed in those pages?

The target of today's letter is sociolinguistics. Please consider the short list of stub articles under sociolinguistics that is appended to this message, noted with their Wikipedia URLs and a short explanation of what is needed.

To edit any Wikipedia page, click on the link, "Edit this article," located at the top of the screen. After you have typed in your changes and saved them, the new text will become

immediately available to other online readers. Please keep in mind Wikipedia's guidelines, found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars

And please be sure to let us know of any editing activities you do on behalf of our Wikipedia Update Project. We will even help you post it to Wikipedia if you send us the text.

In the meantime, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following people who have provided these latest updates to linguistics articles:

- Biolinguistics - addition by Anna-Maria Di Sciullo, University of Québec at Montréal
- List of linguists - additions by Oliver Steven, SIL
- R.M.R. Hall - created by Procrastinatrix
- Yaghan language - updated by Jess Tauber, Oakland, NJ
- Tamil language - updated by Sanford Steever and E. Annamalai
- Rochelle Lieber - created by Patricia Irwin, New York University

You are welcome to track the overall progress of our collective efforts at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Linguistlist>

As always, the LINGUIST List is grateful for your continued participation in the Wikipedia Update Project. We would be delighted to hear from you if you have any questions or points of discussion to share.

Please contact us at: hannah@linguistlist.org, or roxana@linguistlist.org.

Best regards,
Roxana Ma Newman and Hannah Morales

SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUBS

Apparent-time hypothesis (incomplete--empty links: age graded variation, real-time):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apparent-time_hypothesis

Code shifting (incomplete):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_shifting

Decreolization (incomplete--empty link to Keith Whinnom):

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decreolization>

Dialect levelling (incomplete):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialect_levelling

Dialectology (incomplete--section on data collection methods):

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectology>

Diaphone (incomplete):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaphone_%28linguistics%29

Diaspora language (incomplete--references missing):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora_language

Jargon code (incomplete):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jargon_code

Language convergence (incomplete):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_convergence

Language merger (incomplete--references missing):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_merger

Linguistic divergence (incomplete):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_divergence

Mergant dialect (incomplete):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mergant_dialect

Real-time hypothesis (article missing)

Sociolect (incomplete):
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociolect>

Sound change (incomplete--references missing):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_change

Variable vs variant (in sociolinguistics) (article missing)

Variationist sociolinguistics (article missing)

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Conference: 8th International Language, Literature and Stylistics (LLSS)

Date: 14 May 2008 to 16 May 2008

Location: Izmir, Turkey

Contact: Nihal Yetkin

Contact Email: symp2008@ieu.edu.tr

Meeting URL: <http://dti.ieu.edu.tr/ieu-dilsempozyum>

Linguistic Field(s): General Linguistics

Meeting Description

Department of Translation and Interpretation at Izmir University of Economics is proud to host LLSS, the 8th International Language, Literature and Stylistics Symposium to be held in Turkish, English, French and German between 14 May 2008 to 16 May 2008. This Symposium brings together linguists, professional translators, publishers, researchers and academicians working on literature and translation studies, and others interested in linguistic studies of all types.

The programme will include plenary lectures, parallel sessions, a special (non-parallel)

session for poster presentations, a book and software exhibition, and social events for participants and their guests. The symposium will run from Wednesday afternoon through Friday evening. The sessions will be held on the main campus of Izmir University of Economics, which is centrally located and easily reached by public transportation.

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Chomsky's Thesis: Chomsky's original 1955-56 Thesis

PDF Version of Chomsky's Original 1955-56 Thesis

Chomsky's thesis draft (1955-56), the one he was preparing for publication as "The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory" is freely downloadable (436MB): <http://alpha-leonis.lids.mit.edu/chomsky/>

The full document contains chapters that were left out of the LSLT published version, e.g., an information-theoretic method to construct linguistic categories, that Chomsky developed in conjunction with Peter Elias.

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Conference: The 4th International Conference on Social and Organizational Informatics and Cybernetics: Soic 2008

We invite you to submit a paper/abstract to The 4th International Conference on Social and Organizational Informatics and Cybernetics: SOIC 2008 (<http://www.socioinfocyber.org/soic2008>). It will take place in Orlando, Florida, USA, on June 29th to July 2nd, 2008.

The deadlines are the following:

Submissions: November 14th, 2007

Acceptance: January 14th, 2008

Camera-ready: March 5th, 2008

Submitted papers or extended abstracts will have three kinds of reviews: double-blind (by at least three reviewers), non-blind, and participative peer-to-peer reviews.

Authors of accepted papers who registered in the conference can have access to the reviews made to their submission so they can accordingly improve the final version of their papers. Non-registered authors may not have access to the reviews of their respective submissions.

Awards will be granted to the best paper of those presented at each session. From these session's best papers, the best 10%-20% of the papers presented at the conference will be selected for their publication in Volume 6 of JSCI Journal (www.iiisci.org/Journal/SCI) and sent free to over 220 research libraries. Libraries of journal author's organizations will receive complimentary subscriptions of at least one volume (6 issues).

Also, we would like to invite you to organize an invited session related to a topic of your research interest. If you are interested in organizing an invited session, please, fill out the respective form provided in the conference web page. We will send you a password, so you can include and modify papers in your invited session.

More details about the reviewing process, the acceptance policy, organizing invited sessions, and submission deadlines can be found at our web site.

If the deadlines are tight and you need more time, let us know about a suitable time for you and I will inform you if it is feasible for us.

Professor José Vicente Carrasquero
soic2008@mail-socioinfocyber.org
SOIC 2008 General Chair

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Obituary: Peter Hans Nelde

Dr. Peter Hans Nelde, Professor of Germanic Linguistics and Director of the Research Center on Multilingualism at the Catholic University of Brussels (Belgium), died on August 31, 2007 after a long illness.

He established 'contact linguistics' as an integral part of our discipline, supported by annual international symposia on 'Contact + Confli(c)t' between linguistic minorities and majorities, and through the series 'Plurilingua', which he maintained as editor-in-chief. Peter Nelde had taught at the universities of Buffalo, Gent, Leipzig, Nijmegen and Vienna and directed the international research project on linguistic diversity (LINEE) sponsored by the European Union. His long list of publications includes the International Handbook on Contact Linguistics (1996/97) and the EUROMOSAIC reports on the linguistic minorities of Europe (1996, 2004). Peter Nelde had occupied the Leibniz Chair at the University of Leipzig and was a Knight of the Royal Belgian Court.

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Conference: Exploring Transdisciplinary discourses

This is the [2nd call for abstracts](#) for the Exploring Transdisciplinary discourses conference.

All abstracts received by no later than 30 November 2007 will receive a R200 discount on the conference fee. We are looking forward to a wonderful diverse conference. Do not hesitate to pass the information on to your students and/or research partners.

Kind regards and enjoy the day
Petra Lawson
Senior Administrative Official

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