2011

Morphological Typology

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Repository Citation

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Notes/Citation Information
Published in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*, Patrick Colm Hogan (Ed.), p. 515.

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ev   -ler- im   - iz -den
house -PL -POSS. 1-PL -ABL.

The third type of language expresses differences in morphosyntactic and lexicosemantic properties through contrasting modifications, or "inflections" of a word's stem. These are *inflectional* or *fusional* languages. The classical languages, Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, belong to this type. In Latin "you (sg[singular]) loved" is expressed by various modifications of the root *am-* "love" to yield *amāvistī*: stem formative *-āv* to express perfect, and *-istī* to express perfect (again) + 2d person + singular. Typically, properties are "fused" in one exponent: Here aspect, person and number agreement are expressed together. Equally, a property can be expressed by more than one exponent: Here perfect is being expressed twice.

There has been general unease among modern linguists with the classical typology. One reason is that languages rarely fall cleanly into one of these types. For example, Mandarin Chinese productively uses what looks like a derivational suffix to build agentive nouns, the word *qì* "mechanism": *sàn-rè qì* "cooler," *jiān-cé qì* "monitor," *yáng-shēng qì* "speaker"; compare the English *-er/-or* agentive suffix (Hippisley, Cheng, and Ahmad 2005). More importantly, there is some doubt that the typology offers any theoretical insight, a point argued as far back as Sapir (1921). Part of the reason is that morphological type is really a function of other grammatical structures worthy of typological investigation, and is, therefore, epiphenomenal (Anderson 1990).

A more promising approach is to focus on much more narrowly defined word structures and to investigate how they cross-cut languages that may or may not be genetically or typologically related. The result is then a typology of narrowly defined structures of words that answer the question "What is a possible word?" This is the approach taken by Greville G. Corbett and colleagues, who look at "unusual" morphology such as suppletion, deponency, and defectivenesss, recording such structures in a large number of individual languages and inducing diachronic and synchronic models of their appearance and use in syntax (e.g. Corbett 2007; Baerman and Corbett 2007).

– Andrew Hippisley

MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY

TYPOLOGY has its origins in nineteenth-century morphological typology, a method of grouping languages not according to genetic relatedness but to structural similarity, where the structure was specifically word structure (see MORPHOLOGY). Traditionally, there are three possibilities for phonologically expressing morphosyntactc (inflectional) and lexicosemantic (derivational) properties at the level of the word. In an *isolating* or *analytical* language, complex words are built from existing words, free forms. Mandarin Chinese could be viewed as an isolating language. Productive coining of new terms is through compounding. The word for "Internet" is *hù-lián wǎng* with *hù* "inter" + *lián* "related" + *wǎng* "net." In *agglutinating* languages, the pieces of a complex word map onto specific meaning elements biuniquely, both at the lexical and grammatical level. Turkish *evlerimizden* "from our houses" is glossed as

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