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Abstracts:

CANONICAL TYPOLOGY, SUPPLETION, AND POSSIBLE WORDS

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I specify a typology for the extreme of inflectional morphology, namely suppletion (as in *go ~ went*). This is an unusual enterprise within typology, and it requires a ‘canonical’ approach. That is, I define the canonical or best instance, through a set of converging criteria, and use this point in theoretical space to locate the various occurring types. Thus the criteria establish the dimensions along which specific instances of suppletion are found, allowing me to calibrate out examples from the canonical. The criteria fall into two main areas, those internal to the lexeme and those external to it. Moreover, I find interactions with other morphological phenomena and discuss four of them: syncretism, periphrasis, overdifferentiation, and reduplication. These remarkable instances of suppletion, particularly when in interaction with other phenomena, extend the boundary of the notion ‘possible word’. Besides laying out the possibilities for the specific phenomenon of suppletion, I show how a canonical approach allows us to make progress in typology, even in the most challenging areas.

FREE PREFIX ORDERING IN CHINTANG

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This article demonstrates prefix permutability in Chintang (Sino-Tibetan, Nepal) that is not constrained by any semantic or morphosyntactic structure, or by any dialect, sociolect, or idiolect choice—a phenomenon ruled out by standard assumptions about grammatical words. The prefixes are full-fledged parts of grammatical words and are different from clitics on a large number of standard criteria. The analysis of phonological word domains suggests that prefix permutability is a side-effect of prosodic subcategorization: prefixes occur in variable orders because each prefix and each stem element project a phonological word of their own, and each such word can host a prefix, at any position.

EVOLUTIONARY GAME THEORY AND TYPOLOGY: A CASE STUDY

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This article deals with the typology of the case marking of semantic core roles. The competing economy considerations of hearer (disambiguation) and speaker (minimal effort) are formalized in terms of EVOLUTIONARY GAME THEORY. It is shown that the case marking patterns that are attested in the languages of the world are those that are evolutionarily stable for different relative weightings of speaker economy and hearer economy, given the statistical patterns of language use that were extracted from corpora of naturally occurring conversations.

LOCALITY, CYCLICITY, AND RESUMPTION: AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE GRAMMAR AND THE HUMAN SENTENCE PROCESSOR

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We present an experimental investigation of the role of resumptive pronouns. We investigate object extraction in WH-questions for a range of syntactic configurations (nonislands, weak islands, strong islands) and for multiple levels of embedding (single, double, and triple). In order to establish the crosslinguistic properties of resumption, parallel experiments are conducted in three languages, viz. English, Greek, and German. Three main experimental results are reported. First, resumption does not remedy island violations: resumptive pronominals are at most as acceptable as gaps, but not more acceptable. This result disconfirms claims in the literature that resumptives can ‘save’ island violations. Second, embedding reduces acceptability even in extraction out of nonislands and declaratives, structures standardly assumed to be fully grammatical. Third, nonislands and weak islands pattern together and contrast with strong islands in terms of the effect of resumption and embedding. Our experimental findings show a remarkable consistency across the three languages we investigate; crosslinguistic variation appears confined to quantitative differences in crosslinguistically identical principles. We argue that these experimental results can be explained by the interaction of grammatical principles with resource limitations of the human parser. In particular, extraction from nonislands and weak islands imposes increased demands on the computational resources of the parser. We extend Gibson's (1998) syntactic prediction locality theory in order to formalize this intuition and account for the processing complexity of A-bar dependencies.

ARTICULATORY FEATURES FOR DESCRIBING LEXICAL DISTINCTIONS

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The sounds that distinguish words in the world's languages can be described in terms of properties that are often called (distinctive) features. The best-known attempts to describe sounds in this way are the acoustic features of Jakobson, Fant & Halle (1952) and the innate cognitive abilities described by the feature theory of Chomsky & Halle (1968). This paper provides a more comprehensive answer to the problem of specifying contrasting segments, but one that still leaves some questions open. It also considers the constraints on possible combinations of features, using a development of the notion of a feature hierarchy suggested by Clements (1985).

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