

Preface

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Typology of Resultative Constructions: Translated from the original Russian edition (1983)

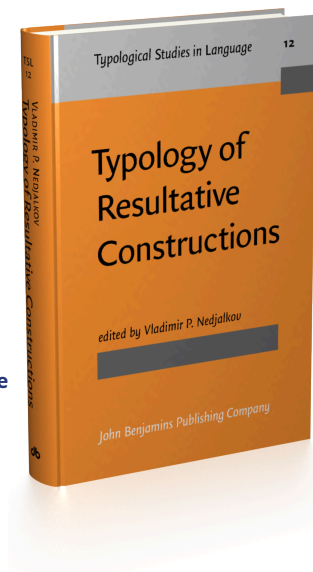
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In memory
of Aleksandr Alekseevič Xolodovič
(1906-1977), the founder of the
Leningrad school of typology

PREFACE

1. For an easier understanding of the chapters on the resultative in individual languages the reader is advised to read Chapter 1 first (at least sections 1-5 and 9 of this Chapter).

2. This book is not a mere translation of the Russian original. It differs from the latter as follows:

- a) six new chapters have been added; four of them are concerned with the resultative in various languages, Aleut (ch.9), Ewe (ch.13), Tongan (ch.17), Dogon (ch.27), a fifth chapter explains the grouping of languages in sections (ch.4), and a sixth contains a critical review of some results obtained in the book (ch.28);
- b) eight of the original chapters on the resultative in a number of languages have been thoroughly revised and/or augmented with new linguistic data; the languages are Eskimo (ch.10), Mongolian (ch.11), Uzbek (ch.12), Indonesian (ch.18), Russian (ch.20), Lithuanian (ch.21), Norwegian (ch.24), Armenian (ch.25);
- c) the list of references is slightly expanded;
- d) the chapter on the resultative in Fula is omitted.

The preparation of the English version of this book has been enthusiastically assisted in a variety of ways by E.Š. Geniušienė, I.Š. Kozinskij and M.S. Polinskaja. The contribution by S.Je. Jaxontov is especially great. My sincere thanks to all of them.

I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Bernard Comrie, an old friend of mine, who not only took the responsibility to recommend this volume for publication in the TSL series but also improved the English translation of the whole book gratis. I hope I may some day have a chance to reciprocate his invaluable assistance!

It is for the reader to judge whether the book provides good or bad value for money. Whatever the outcome my gratitude is due to Professor Talmy Givón, General Editor of the TSL, and Mr John Benjamins, the publisher, for their kind support of this venture.

3. I hope that this book is a practical application of the approach to a typological study of grammatical categories which took shape during the years of my work under the guidance of A.A. Xolodovič. This approach is roughly outlined in the following statement: "... the fact that we find virtually identical terminology in grammars of widely diverse languages probably indicates that the meanings of comparable grammatical categories in different languages coincide to a greater or lesser degree. Partial coincidence is characteristic not only of meanings whose relatedness is obvious (e.g. some meanings of the perfect...) but also of those meanings that at first glance may appear totally unrelated and occur within the semantic limits of the grammatical form by accident, as is the case with the causative and passive meanings in some languages,... We have reason to assume that at least for some comparable grammatical categories in different languages there exists a certain limit (or limits) of possible polysemy ... According to the range of various meanings expressed by comparable forms in them, individual languages differ from one another and can be subjected to classification" (Nedjalkov 1964:301-302).

4. This book appears in a typological series whose editorial board is comprised mostly of American linguists. Russian and American linguistics are sometimes viewed as antipodes in some respects. It is not accidental that Johanna Nichols, who is on the editorial board of the TSL, has elected these two trends (in their prototypical manifestations) for comparison in her shrewd article "The meeting of East and West: confrontation and convergence in contemporary linguistics". Her estimate of the grave theoretical and terminological differences, which unfortunately hinder mutual understanding, as well as of parallel development in these trends is significant in this respect. With regard to the differences, she writes:

"The differences ... are not differences in actual content, or in the primary linguistic data considered. In fact, it is striking that popular issues have tended to coincide. In recent years both schools have witnessed flurries of interest in causatives (e.g. Xolodovič ed. 1969; Shibatani ed. 1976); ergativity, subjects, and voice (e.g. Xolodovič ed. 1974; Li/Thompson eds. 1976); valence ...; semantic roles ...; and a growing emphasis on lexical semantics (works of Apresjan; Fillmore). In each instance the parallel

developments appear to have been spontaneous: there is little evidence of mutual influence (the major Russian publications coincide with the American ones, or precede them by a few years; yet the American bibliographies rarely include the Russian publications)" (Nichols 1979:268).

I should not like to attach too much importance to the chronological relation this book may stand in to its probable American counterpart and I do not expect that its publication will lead to more references to Russian linguistic works in American bibliographies (whoever might need it). But I should like to believe that the effort that is embodied in this book may diminish, however slightly, the distance between the two trends and contribute to a better mutual understanding in linguistics.

P.S. And if possible not only in linguistics?

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