Preface

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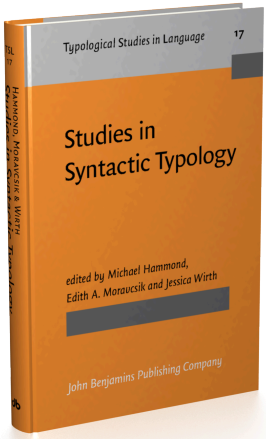

Pages ix–xiv of
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Preface

The introduction and the fifteen papers to follow were originally presented at a meeting entitled "Language universals and language typology" held March 29-30, 1985 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. They constitute about half of the total program of the conference. Almost all of the papers that appear here are in revised form.

Most of the papers focus on the syntactic and pragmatic functions that determine various aspects of sentence structure in human languages and on two of the crosslinguistically recurrent ways in which such functions may be coded: verb agreement and constituent order. The three papers discussing *Verb agreement* — those by Fisher, Rudin, and Schwartz — make up the first part of the book. *Constituent order* is central to the next four studies, by Abe/Hatasa/Cowan, Dryer, Harlig/Bardovi-Harlig, and Kim: these constitute the second section of the book. The three papers concerned with *Syntactic and pragmatic functions* per se, by Blansitt, Faarlund, and Gundel, appear in the third section. While concern with *explaining* crosslinguistically consistent patterns surfaces in all of the papers, five of them address this question in a particularly explicit way. These studies — by Givón, Gundel/Houlihan/Sanders, Haiman, Hawkins, and Perkins — make up the last section.

Within the broad domain of grammatical agreement in general, the three studies by Fisher, Rudin, and Schwartz all deal with the particular phenomenon of verb agreement. Fisher's and Rudin's papers are even more closely connected in that both are concerned with the role of verb agreement in defining domains within which anaphors require antecedents. Both Fisher and Rudin deal with the distribution of anaphoric elements such as reflexive pronouns under the approach of Government and Binding theory. Based primarily on evidence from Khmer and some other Asian languages, *Fisher* argues that in some languages anaphors can occur in subject position in embedded clauses — a structure ruled out in English — and she argues that this is because, whereas English has instances of the con-

stituent type 'AGR' in such clauses, languages belonging to the Khmer type do not. *Rudin* brings evidence mainly from the languages of the Balkans to confirm the mutual correspondence between the presence of agreement in a clause, on the one hand, and the clause being an opaque domain, on the other.

The *Schwartz* paper is focussed on a special kind of verb agreement known from some Slavic and many other languages. Dubbed verb-coded coordination, the pattern involves plural subject agreement on the verb without there being an explicit plural subject phrase in the context (e.g. "with mother we-went to-the-movies" to mean 'Mother and I went to the movies.'). While the Fisher and Rudin papers are concerned with what the presence or absence of agreement can predict about the rest of the language in question, Schwartz attempts to delimit both some of the conditions and the some of the consequents associated with the occurrence of this particular agreement pattern.

Of the two logically possible ways in which a structure type may function in typological generalizations — either as a structure *predictable* on grounds of other features of the language or as the *predictor* of other features — patterns of constituent order figure either way in the four relevant papers included in the volume. Constituent order functions both ways in Dryer's paper and in those of Harlig/Bardovi-Harlig and Kim. *Dryer* deals with the position of the negator constituent in the sentence. Based on a large language sample he delimits certain strong positional tendencies for the negator and shows that these tendencies are manifested to various extents in OV as opposed to VO languages.

Both Harlig/Bardovi-Harlig and Kim are concerned with the relationship between basic constituent order and the position of focus, and both take off from a proposal made by Dezső according to which, in OV languages, focus position directly precedes the verb, while in VO languages, it directly follows it. *Kim's* study, which seeks to validate the proposal based on crosslinguistic investigation of twelve rigid OV word order languages, provides a measure of empirical confirmation of Dezső's claim and suggests that it may be possible to predict focus position using other properties of Greenberg's Type XXIII languages (postpositions, genitive and adjective each preceding noun), rather than the word order of verb and object, as a basis of prediction. *Harlig/Bardovi-Harlig* test Dezső's claim, originally made in terms of OV and VO *languages*, for OV and VO *sentences* in a language — Hungarian — that has both kinds, and conclude that it does not

hold for split word order languages.

The three papers by Dryer, Harlig/Bardovi-Harlig and Kim all have in common a concern with predicting constituent order patterns. The fourth paper in this section of the book, by *Abe/Hatasa/Cowan*, presents results that show that constituent order can be predictive of structural patterns beyond this general area. This paper discusses factors that enter into defining sentence complexity. Adding results that emerge from the authors' own experiments with speakers of Japanese to evidence already known from studies on English, they suggest that both "garden path sentences" (such as English "The horse raced past the barn jumped over the fence.") and sentences with stacked constituents (e.g. "The snow the match the girl lit heated melted.") constitute a source of sentence complexity in SOV languages just as they do in SVO languages. They further show that the latter pose more of a problem than the former. Figuring the possible ways in which stacked constituents can be produced in languages of different major constituent orders, the authors conclude that verb-initial languages provide the fewest occasions for such structures and are therefore simpler than SOV languages, with SVO languages having the most possibilities for the occurrence of this pattern and thus being the most complex of the three types.

The third part of the book consists of three papers focussing on syntactic and pragmatic functions. Blansitt's is about the morphological expression of certain verb complements, Faarlund's deals with the morphological and positional marking of subjects, and Gundel's discusses the morphological, positional, and intonational coding of topic and comment. *Blansitt* brings a broad range of crosslinguistic data to bear on the question of how direct objects, datives, allatives, and locatives are morphologically marked, and proposes a number of implicational universals in terms of which the marking patterns of some of these constituents can be predicted from the marking patterns exhibited by some of the others. *Faarlund* identifies three types of languages depending on two parameters: whether morphology is involved in marking subjects of a language; and how the labor of coding semantic and pragmatic properties of subjects is divided between the various coding devices available in a language. He justifies this typology by proposing that particular semantic and syntactic properties that characterize subjects in a language as well as the presence and absence of relation-changing rules (such as passive) are predictable based on this typology. *Gundel*'s is a comprehensive study of the content and expression of topic and comment which presents a number of unrestricted and implicational

universals within this domain. While the occurrence of topic markers in a language apparently remains un-forecast in terms of other structural characteristics of the language, the presence of this phenomenon can provide a basis for predicting a number of additional structural features.

The five papers that constitute the last part of the book are all crucially concerned with explaining language universals. Three of them — those by Givón, Haiman, and Perkins — are empirical studies themselves that both propose and attempt to explain crosslinguistic generalizations. *Haiman's* study deals with the distribution of periphrastic and affixal comparatives (e.g., *more intelligent* and *nicer*, respectively) in various languages and notes a correlation between their use, on the one hand, and the occurrence of clausally and phrasally expressed standards of comparison, on the other. In particular, he finds that whereas clausal standards of comparison cooccur with both periphrastic and affixal comparatives (e.g., English *I am more angry than I am sad*, *I am angrier than I am sad*) phrasal standards of comparison occur only with periphrastic comparatives (cf. English *I am more angry than sad* but **I am angrier than sad*). He shows that this phenomenon is part of a more general requirement that comparative phrases and their standards of comparison show parallel structure. This in turn is explained, he suggests, by the general, independently motivated focussing effect of structural parallelism.

The psychological nature of the explanation proposed is more explicit in *Givón's* paper. Givón investigates the ways in which topicality influences word order variability in languages with non-rigid word order. He finds a correlation between preverbal and postverbal position, on the one hand, and the novelty and importance of the content of the constituent so ordered: less predictable and/or more important information tends to stand early in the sentence. He suggests this follows from a general psychological principle which requires urgent tasks to be attended to first.

The universal correlation proposed and explained by Haiman is one between two aspects of linguistic form; the one Givón is concerned with is between form and message. The universal correlation *Perkins* proposes is between a feature of linguistic form and a feature of culture. Based on a principled sample, Perkins notes a strong tendency for languages spoken in more 'complex' cultures to employ syntactic means such as relative clauses (as opposed to morphological devices, e.g., bound deictics) for uniquely identifying referents while both means of identification are found in languages spoken in less complex cultures. He explains the use of bound deic-

tics in simpler cultures by the fact that in such cultures there is more shared information about referents among interlocutors and thus identification without description is more likely to suffice.

The remaining two papers discuss the very notion of explanation as it applies to cross-language generalizations. The *Gundel/Houlihan/Sanders* study is concerned with the explanation of implicational universals of the sort, *'If X, then Y'*. While attempts to explain such asymmetrical distribution patterns are normally restricted to proposing reasons why Y should be more widely distributed crosslinguistically than X, Gundel/Houlihan/Sanders raise two issues: why Y should be preferred to X and why, in spite of its less preferred status, X should occur at all. They propose to relate the asymmetry of X and Y to the characteristics required of an optimal communication system. Such a system, they argue, is one where linguistic features that facilitate decoding by the listener are more widely distributed than are those that facilitate encoding by the speaker. They suggest there is a strong tendency for Y, the 'implied' property of an implicational relation, to be a structure that is advantageous from the listener's point of view in all linguistic contexts and for X, the "implying" property of the relation, to cater to the needs of the speaker in some contexts. The claim is shown to have support from a number of phonological and syntactic areas.

While the Gundel/Houlihan/Sanders paper is concerned with the completeness of explanations, *Hawkins* discusses two further desiderata. Surveying a number of putative explanations of universals, Hawkins emphasizes the importance of greater *explicitness* in relating explananda to explanantia; he also calls for an *interactive* view which allows for several different kinds of principles playing a role in an explanation. He then demonstrates the benefits of such explanations in regard to a number of word order phenomena all having to do with a cross-type preference for a position; such as that relative clauses and affixes tend to be postposed even in languages that otherwise prepose satellite constituents.

The conference was the fourteenth in the series of annual linguistics symposia of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. It was made possible by financial support provided by various units on and off campus. We gratefully acknowledge these contributions, which came to us from the College of Letters and Science, the Department of Comparative Literature, the Department of German, the Graduate School, the Master of Arts in Foreign Language and Literature Program, the Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute, and the Wisconsin Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Lan-

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