

Preface

This book provides a description of a typologically unusual phenomenon of overt classification of both nouns and verbs using the same linguistic means. My goal in this research is to demonstrate that such a cross-categorical use of the same classificatory devices is not random. Rather, it reflects a semantic categorisation of entities and events/states that nouns and verbs denote, respectively. Many of the ideas presented here are either existing ideas that are debated in typological research on noun class/gender systems, or they are novel. For example, the best way to analyse African noun class systems in order to make them more comparable to typologically similar agreement-based systems of nominal classification is debated. This book addresses this issue by offering a new approach to analysing complex noun class and agreement systems like that of Eegimaa. It includes a detailed study of the complex interactions in gender and number feature values which appear in agreement mismatches triggered by lexical hybrids. The analysis is done from the perspective of canonical typology. Canonical typology is also used to analyse Eegimaa non-finite verbs and their classification into several overt verb classes. The role that semantic principles play in the grouping of nouns into classes is also highly controversial in Niger-Congo noun class systems. My investigation of the semantic properties of the Eegimaa overt nominal classification system shows that physical properties like shape and culture-specific factors are fundamental principles underlying the semantic categorisation of entities denoted by nouns. I also show that the classification of verbs in their non-finite form has underlying semantic motivations. However, with verbs and the events/states they denote culture-specific factors are the dominant principles of categorisation.

The idea that the use of the same linguistic means to classify nouns and verbs in their non-finite forms reflects a semantic categorisation of events and states is a novel idea I developed following a discussion of Eegimaa non-finite verbs with Eva Schultze-Berndt in 2004. My subsequent research on this topic revealed that the classification of verbs is also intimately linked to that of nouns and relates to other aspects of Eegimaa grammar, such as complementation, non-finiteness, transitivity hierarchy distinctions, pluractionality and event individuation. It also reveals the existence of parallels between the nominal and verbal domains based on features such as boundedness.

